

Resonance Big Tent Event

SUMMARY AND TAKE OUTS, MARCH 2025

Land Use for Net Zero, Nature and People: UK Uplands and Protected Landscapes

The *Resonance* LUNZ Hub Big Tent event was held in Cumbria, March 27-28 2025, in partnership with the *Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas*. It focused on the challenges of scaling up and replicating successful examples of land use change in the UK's Uplands and Protected Landscapes.

Attention to these areas is needed: Protected Landscapes account for over 25% of UK land mass, and uplands encompass huge areas of peat, are important for water management, tree cover, and climate change resilience, and are sites of rural cultures and farming practices that are in a process of transition. These areas are relatively sparsely populated and can be poorly understood and marginalised in policy discussions; yet their potential contribution to nature recovery and net zero, while enriching rural communities and valuing specialist land-based skills, is huge.

The two-day event was designed with transdisciplinarity at its heart, bringing together people from across the land use sector, including farmers, foresters and woodland specialists, academic researchers, landowners, land managers, and Defra representatives, and including the land in the conversation through site visits and with living artwork.

It began with site visits in the Ullswater Valley, which offered a foundation for the discussions on Day 2. Delegates were able to experience place-sensitive transformations in land use first hand, and hear from key players who have been part of collaborative working to enable change.

The *Resonance* event took place during the consultation period for the new UK Land Use Framework. While the event did not focus exclusively on this, many delegates, including members of the LUNZ Hub, are engaged in developing responses.



Day 1: *See the Change, Meet the Changemakers* Site Visits in the Ullswater Valley

- 1 A visit to Goldrill Beck, to see and learn about the impact of river re-routing, in the company of Becky Powell, National Trust Riverlands Project Manager, Jez Westgarth, National Trust Director of Operations, and Ullswater Catchment Management CiC directors Danny Teasdale and Maddy Teasdale. Work has freed the river from a constrained canalised course so that it can expand and braid, with impacts including slowing the flow of water during high rainfall events and increasing sequestration of carbon in the newly wetted land. This was awarded the UK River Prize in 2024.
- 2 At Glencoyne Farm, the group met tenant farmers Candida & Sam Hodgson, with National Trust lead ranger John Pring and Farming Officer Andrea Meanwell. The farm has been in the care of the Hodgsons for almost 30 years, during which time the landscape has been transformed, with changes in numbers and types of livestock, increases in bioabundance and biodiversity, and a recent audit showing their business as being carbon-negative.

In between the visits, the 55 delegates were treated to delicious locally-sourced food served in Glenridding Village Hall – a long lunch break with plenty of time to chat. And there were short presentations from Gavin Capstick, CEO of the Lake District National Park; Jack Hannam, co-lead of the LUNZ Hub's England team; and Jez Westgarth, National Trust Assistant Director of Operations Cumbria and North Lancashire.

"I loved the site visit and how that threaded into the workshop the following day. I often go on site visits but it is the drawing out and digging in deeper that really impressed me."

Day 2 : Brainstorming and Discussions

The second day of the Resonance event was held at the Ambleside Campus of University of Cumbria, which is the seat of the Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas. 86 people attended.

Welcome and Introductions

- Harriet Fraser, co-founder, the PLACE Collective
- Prof. Heiko Balzter, LUNZ Hub co-Lead
- Prof. Bob Montgomery, Director of Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas
- Steve Ratcliffe, Director of Sustainable Development, Lake District National Park

Poem and Film

Harriet Fraser performed a poem written for the event, and a short film introduced the *Resonance* project which brings people together from across the Land Use sector in the co-creation of a living sculpture.

Lightning Talks

- Nic Renison, Farmer & co-founder of Carbon Calling
- Professor Mike Morecroft, LUNZ Hub England co-lead, and Deputy Director; Head of Climate Change Science, Natural England,
- Professor Julia Aglionby, Professor of Practice, University of Cumbria and Executive Director of the Foundation for Common Land
- Ian Crosher, Natural England, Senior Specialist in Climate Change
- Jim O'Neill, Forestry Commission, Agroforestry Development Manager
- Helen Avery, Director Nature Programmes (GFI Hive) within the Green Finance Institute

Systems In Action

Delegates took part in a systems game to experience dynamics of complex systems in action; led by Anita Lazurko and Sarah Sinclair (UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology).

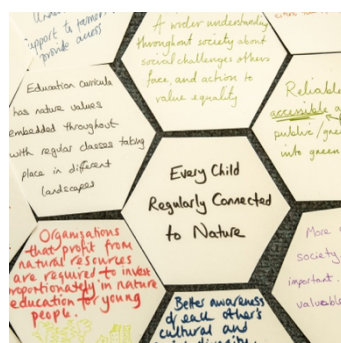
Breakout sessions

- Multifunctional land use and landscapes: putting principles into practice**
 Led by James Morison, Forest Research, co-lead of the LUNZ Hub Land Use Change Topic Advisory Group; and Jack Hannam, Cranfield Environment Centre, co-lead of the LUNZ Hub England team.
- Pathways: building bridges between here and where we want to be – visioning future kith and kin, place and culture**
 Led by Anita Lazurko, Scenario Developer at UKCEH and LUNZ Hub Early Careers Research Board Lead; Sarah Sinclair (UKCEH); and Ali Foxon, PLACE Collective artist).
- Enabling transitions to net zero in land use in the uplands and protected areas**
 Led by Julie Ingram, Professor of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture at Countryside & Community Research Institute, and LUNZ Hub Topic Advisory Group lead 'Enabling on the ground transitions to net zero in land use'; with *Professor Lois Mansfield*, Emeritus Professor at University of Cumbria, former Director CNPPA, and Director, Environmentors Ltd.

Closing Panel

The day closed with a panel discussion, followed by audience questions and contributions. The discussion was chaired by Paula Harrison, Principal Natural Capital Scientist at UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Professor of Land and Water Modelling at Lancaster University.

- David Smedley: Head of Soil and Peatland Science, Defra
- Dr Frances Ryfield: Environmental Improvement Plan social research and evaluation lead, Defra
- Mike Innerdale; Regional Director for National Trust in the North of England and Chair of the Nature North Network.
- Naomi Oakley, Dartmoor farmer, and co-founder of the Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster, and Natural England Peat Specialist
- Rose O'Neil: CEO, Campaign for National Parks



MAIN TAKE AWAYS

People First

- Goals and targets around net zero and nature recovery are often discussed in the abstract, and without sufficient inclusion of the people who are involved in the work towards these targets.
- At all stages of the two-day event, conversations turned to the importance of valuing and respecting the people living in and caring for the places where change is needed.
- Landscape Recovery Projects and CiC approaches are good examples of what's possible with local partnerships, outcome-driven approaches and local community involvement.
- FiPL scheme has proved a good example of an outcome-driven approach, that uniquely includes a 'people and place' theme and is supported by named coordinators (e.g. LDNPA rep).

Relationship building and trust need to be prioritised

- Where relationships are good, changes in land use are likely to be sustainable (including good relationships between tenants and landowners, and between multiple land managers, and between land-based practitioners and policy makers).
- Social capital is a critical foundation for change and should not be overlooked, specifically in local contexts. National policy frameworks often fail to account for the ecological complexity, cultural heritage, and diverse land management practices across commons and upland landscapes.
- Poor relationships are common barriers to change; and may lead to change that is made without due consideration for multiple needs, involving conflict rather than collaboration, reducing resilience.
- There's a need for facilitators or intermediaries to be trained and funded: people who can support farmers and land managers, can work with groups to strengthen governance structures and access funding and upskilling opportunities, are familiar with specific landscape contexts, and can act as brokers when there is disagreement between people sharing management of the same area of land.
- People from a range of specialisms need to be brought together, through a range of events, to reduce knowledge gaps and assumptions about 'best' practice and to provide opportunities for sharing insights and raising important questions. This event provided opportunities for networking and capacity building, with regional and national connections rekindled or started anew.
- Governance, especially within commons, was identified as outdated and fragmented, with complex social dynamics and legal ambiguities often stalling environmental progress and commoners are not able to get the economic benefit that flows from schemes.

Multiple benefits of change and multi-functional land use in practice are possible:

- Restoration of natural systems can align with the business goals of farming, with different degrees of adaptation, and with the continuation of cultural farming practices, while improving climate change resilience and carbon sequestration, and contributing to economic growth.
- What is success? Using multiple metrics for measuring impact is important for sharing learning, and for demonstrating integrated, multi-functional land use.

Place-specificity matters

- The site visits underlined the importance of solutions being rooted in local contexts, and stimulated discussions about ways to tailor funding, policy, and actions to individual places. A one-size-fits-all approach is not the way to go. Governance structures to suit local contexts are important.

Integration: joined-up thinking and doing

- Hierarchies of knowledge, and working in silos, can be obstructive to progress. Instead, an integrated approach is needed, where different forms of knowledge and skill are can be combined: a transdisciplinary approach is essential for enabling land use change.
- 'Land Use' must be considered in integration with other challenges including food production and distribution, water management, transport and planning. Greater integration and information sharing at the level of government departments is part of this.
- Data sets from across the UK need to be integrated and made more accessible to farmers and land managers.
- A call for the formation of a '*Ministry for Joined Up Thinking*' might have been 'tongue-in-cheek' but hit a chord; there is perceived fragmentation of environmental policies, projects and initiatives. Within the LUNZ Hub this ambition to join up and integrate data, insights and skills is a core purpose; and is a key element of design for the team working on Plausible Pathways to Net Zero.

Funding and investment approaches need refining: to be fit for purpose

- Economists and Treasury representatives need to be more visible and more frequently involved in events such as this that include people from across the land use sector.
- Concern was shared about poor recognition of the wider financial impact of investment in nature recovery on other areas, including health and wellbeing and climate resilience.
- There were concerns about perceptions that farming is separate from nature recovery; in many cases farmers want to adopt nature and climate-friendly practices but may be inhibited from doing so by inadequate funding; where long term funding (10-20yrs) exists, success is more likely.
- Cuts in budgets to National Parks and uncertainty around government funding for farming, with particular difficulties in upland areas, are a symptom of disconnect between expectations and ability to deliver change.
- Ground-up approaches, which can be hugely successful, often happen with small budgets and with big doses of grit and determination – more financial support is needed to replicate and scale up.
- Immediate and short-term easy-accessed funding is needed to kickstart actions and systems that can support change within the necessary timescales; at the same time continuity of funding is important to allow time for relationship building, trust, evaluation, upskilling and motivation.
- There were calls for a 'one-stop-shop' to make funding more accessible. Well trained facilitators or intermediaries could be part of this.

What's the Narrative? Storytelling is vital

- Examples from across the UK show that 'the future that we're aiming for is already happening in many places' as one delegate put it, but lessons are not being shared widely enough.
- There are many strong case studies. These need to be highlighted and shared to improve land managers' confidence about making change, and share with policy makers to guide decisions.

- In peer-to-peer sharing of success stories, step-by-step reflections and the financial costs and benefits need to be made clear to reduce the risk of feeling overwhelmed by complexity or uncertainty.
- Stressing the case for nature recovery and pathways to net zero needs to be done in a way that aligns with the government's 'growth' narrative to have an impact on funding and policy decisions.
- Attention needs to be given to hidden or quiet voices and perspectives that are currently underrepresented. This is fundamental for a just transition.

Power at Play

- Many of the LUNZ Hub events to date have touched upon issues of power imbalance, and this was no exception. There is concern that in current systems, large landowners, organisations and NGOs have huge advantage when it comes to accessing funding; with many smaller farmers unable to benefit.
- Issues of land ownership and alternative systems of land management were touched on but require more discussion.
- Attention to mechanisms of enablement is needed, including proper investment and upskilling for facilitators to support smaller scale farmers, foresters and other land-based specialists, and clusters of farmers and land managers, to navigate the funding landscape.
- Young people need to have greater inclusion in cross-generational, transdisciplinary discussions; and education about land use and people who live and work in rural areas is part of this.

Knowledge and Research Gaps

- The event highlighted some notable gaps in knowledge exchange. One example is to bring insights about wetlands, tidal mudflats, salt marshes and other coastal areas into discussions about pathways to net zero; another is to have a wider exchange of insights from upland areas across the four nations.
- There's a need for critical analysis of processes of change in small-scale case studies, including timescales, key players, and leverage points. This has the potential to reveal transferable 'ingredients' of change in rural settings, across different scales that can be applied to replicate and scale up change, in a range of UK landscape types.
- Critical analysis of the impacts of change in a greater number of case studies is needed to provide robust evidence; through evaluation of impacts (e.g. biodiversity impact, flood resilience, soil quality, carbon sequestration, human wellbeing, quality of farm-produced food).

Time pressures: slow down to speed up

- Change can take a long time, and this needs to be recognised: there are quick wins but not all wins are instant. A critical factor that takes time includes building relationships and trust; and there are timescales of seasons, livestock maturation, tree growth etc. to consider.
- Knowing about examples of change, and what was needed to make change possible, can enable faster processes when new actions are taken.
- Quality may be equally or more important than quantity – quality time given to listening, to relationships, and to place-specific attention. This can speed the process of establishing trust, building social capital, and sharing relevant data, as foundations for collaboration and resilience.



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