

May 2025

Land Use Consultation

Land is central to national prosperity, and we all have a stake in better land use decisions - whether it's for housing, energy, infrastructure, nature, climate adaptation or more healthy and resilient food and farming. Our land use decision-making tools are not currently up to the task of taking on the complexity and multifunctionality that is required. The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) has been leading conversation and testing trials on integrated approaches to land management and decision making since we began in 2017.

After many years of debate and many calls for action, Defra's launch of a land use consultation is an important step forward. We are delighted to be supporting the consultation and continuing to build momentum and consensus on how society can best approach the puzzle of land use change.

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) ran four workshops across England in April 2025, to support Defra in its Consultation on Land Use. The workshops were facilitated by FFCC, and participants were invited to ensure a variety of relevant experience and opinion. The workshops addressed both the core questions of the land use consultation and discussed how a land use framework would enable better decision making more broadly. The workshops were held in Cumbria & Northumberland, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire and Devon. A broad range of sectors were represented – farming and land management, food, nature, water, development, planning, energy, education, local government and governance, community groups, national landscapes and local businesses as well as others.

THE KEY FINDINGS

- Broadening the consultation discussion by asking fresh questions created depth within workshop dialogues, allowing participants to interrogate fundamental concepts such as the purpose and delivery of a land use framework (LUF).
- There is enormous enthusiasm for and interest in the national conversation on land use, from across a mixture of sectors and multiple viewpoints. Overall, there is huge appetite for a LUF to enable better decision making.
- Multifunctional land use and land sharing is the best way to understand and leverage the potential of land, it is important to avoid land sparing mindset.
- The spectrum of land use issues and potential for change is far broader than the current scope of the consultation. Land use pressures differ to varying degrees in different locations across the country. To be truly effective land use change must take account of all land, and sectors.
- The necessity of land use change and a LUF is very clear. However, the national objectives and intentions for land use change are less easy to pin down. There is a need for a clear, overriding 'purpose' to galvanise action.
- A LUF is crucial to enable the delivery of government targets in an integrated way, for the long term.
- A LUF must be the UK's key spatial framework; the overriding government instrument through which all spatial strategies are delivered across all types of land.
- A LUF must have departmental buy-in across government. It could be led by a delivery board with cross department membership which includes Cabinet Office and Treasury.
- A LUF must operate at both a local and national scale, and the two scales must interact with each other.
- A LUF needs to be dynamic in order to be fit for the long term. It should be a process-led instrument that can react and evolve.
- Discussions on land use and change mustn't just focus on simple models or maps. This overlooks the underlying economics, skills and structures required to enable effective,

long term and resilient change. However, overlaying models and maps as part of the LUF process can vividly reveal competing pressures and taken for granted assumptions.

- A vital outcome from this consultation is a government decision on standardisation of the data systems used to articulate land use and management.
- The mechanics required for the delivery of better land use decision making, through a LUF, are not understood. Where a LUF will sit politically and locally, how it will enable change, which policy mechanisms it will leverage are all critical questions that need to be explored with bodies responsible for delivery, and answered.
- The uncertainty over how a LUF might operate and how the UK government intends to create an enabling environment for change reinforces the need for pilots to be carried out across the country, to allow 12 months of testing new mechanisms, upskilling and outcomes.

Everyone agrees that better land use decisions are the key to enabling us to deliver critical solutions society desperately needs. Good land use decisions are a huge opportunity for prosperity across our nation. No one is underestimating the complexity and scale of the challenge; we are supporting government to think deeper and more laterally to create an enabling environment for innovative and resilient land use change.

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Workshop synopses

METHODOLOGY

FFCC hosted four workshops throughout April 2025 instigating debate and feedback on Defra's Land Use Consultation. The four workshops were held in locations chosen for their varied experience of land use pressures. They are locations in which the FFCC has previously facilitated pilots and dialogue on multifunctional land use, meaning there is an existing level of engagement and expertise. FFCC ensured there was a well-represented mixture of voices, experiences and opinions in the workshops. FFCC's existing connections and reputation on the ground with farmers and land managers helped to encourage participation across all four workshops. There was diversity in opinion and experience which create meaningful discussion.

Participants were sent guest lists and agendas before the event. Each workshop was hosted and facilitated by FFCC chief executive Sue Pritchard and one of FFCC's commissioners with strong local connections. Additional members of the FFCC team were present to take notes, facilitate roundtable discussion and ensure all feedback was recorded.

During the workshops, participants sat on tables of 6 – 10 people and given time (between 20 – 40 minutes) to discuss the questions the facilitators posed amongst the table. They used post it notes and flip charts to write down the discussion and then fed back to the room with key themes, ideas and examples. Participants were encouraged to sit next to people from different sectors to create a mixture of views around each table in the morning. After lunch participants moved into sector-based tables to discuss the delivery of a Land Use Framework (LUF) in groups familiar with similar existing tools, processes and governance.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

Session
0930: Arrival refreshments
1000: Welcome and introduction - plenary
1015: Stocktake – local and national policy proposals, LU consultation, Devon context
1030: What are the critical issues in Devon and how could a LUF help? Roundtable (in mixed sector tables)
1130: Break
1145: LUF Principles – what works, what doesn't, what's missing? Roundtable (in mixed sector tables)
1300: Lunch
1400: Delivering a LUF - What land use tools, processes, resources are needed locally to support better LU decisions? Roundtable (in sector specific tables)
1500: Break
1515: National and local governance of land use - What governance mechanisms would help to facilitate LUF delivery; locally and nationally? Roundtable (in sector specific tables)
1550: Summing up, next steps and close

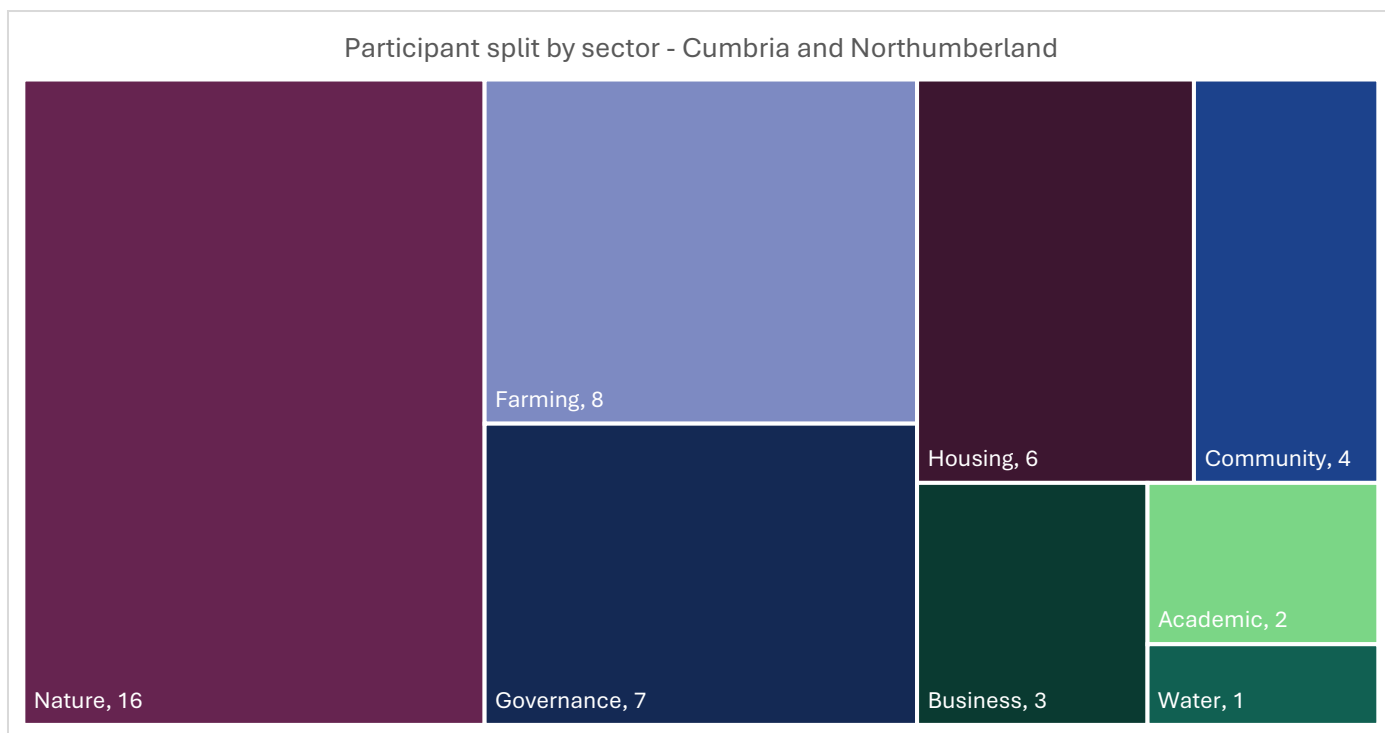
CUMBRIA & NORTHUMBERLAND

Date: 08/04/25

Location: University of Cumbria

Reason for workshop location: FFCC has carried out specific projects with farmers in the uplands, including co-creating a toolkit for helping farmers navigate post-Brexit support schemes. FFCC commissioner Julia Aglionby is also a professor at the University of Cumbria.

Hosts: Julia Aglionby and Sue Pritchard



47 participants attended the workshop in Carlisle, including representatives from the Federation of Cumbrian Commoners, The Royal Association Dairy Farmers of Britain, and the Upper Duddon Landscape Recovery project.

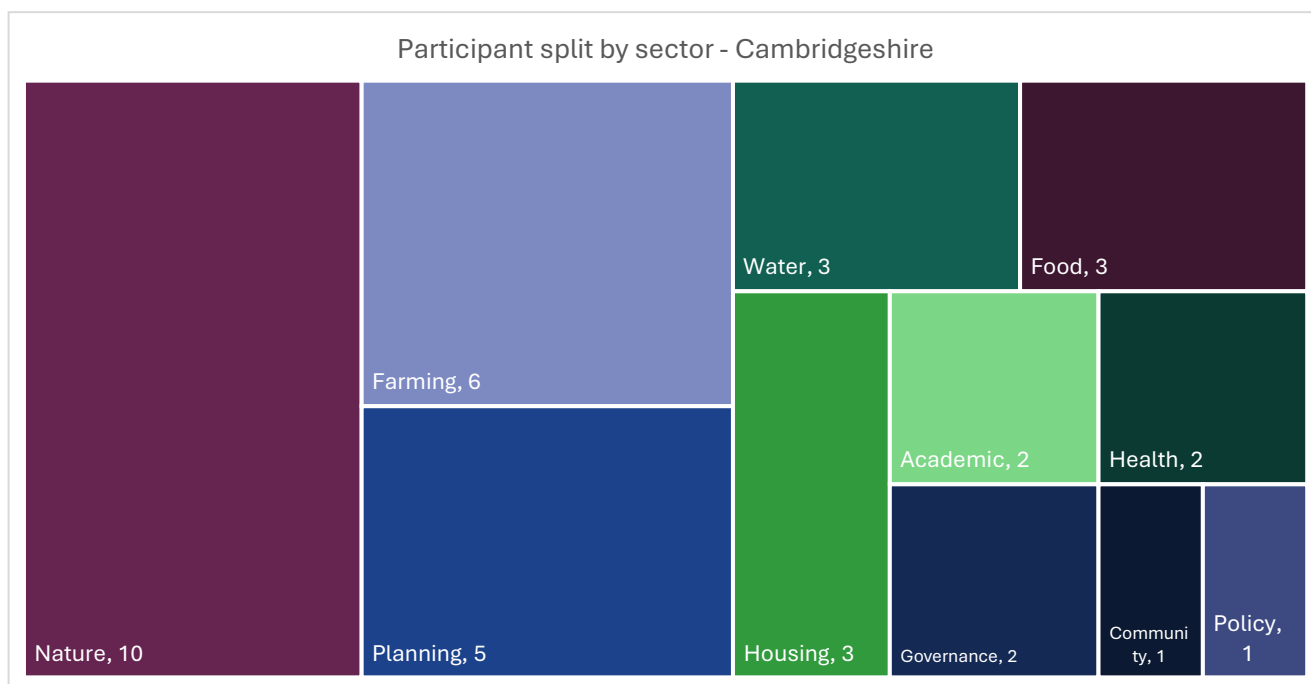
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Date: 09/04/25

Location: Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge

Reason for workshop location: From 2020 – 2023, the FFCC trialled how a Land Use Framework might be designed at a local level within Cambridgeshire, meaning there is an established and experienced cross-sector group keen to engage in discussion on land use within this area. We have published [a report](#) about this pilot, alongside three Learning Papers and a Case Studies Collection.

Hosts – Fiona Reynolds and Sue Pritchard



38 people attended in Cambridge, with a strong representation across food and farming organisations such as Cambridge Food Hub and G's Fresh. There were several planning and housing organisations in attendance and representatives from the Parish level.

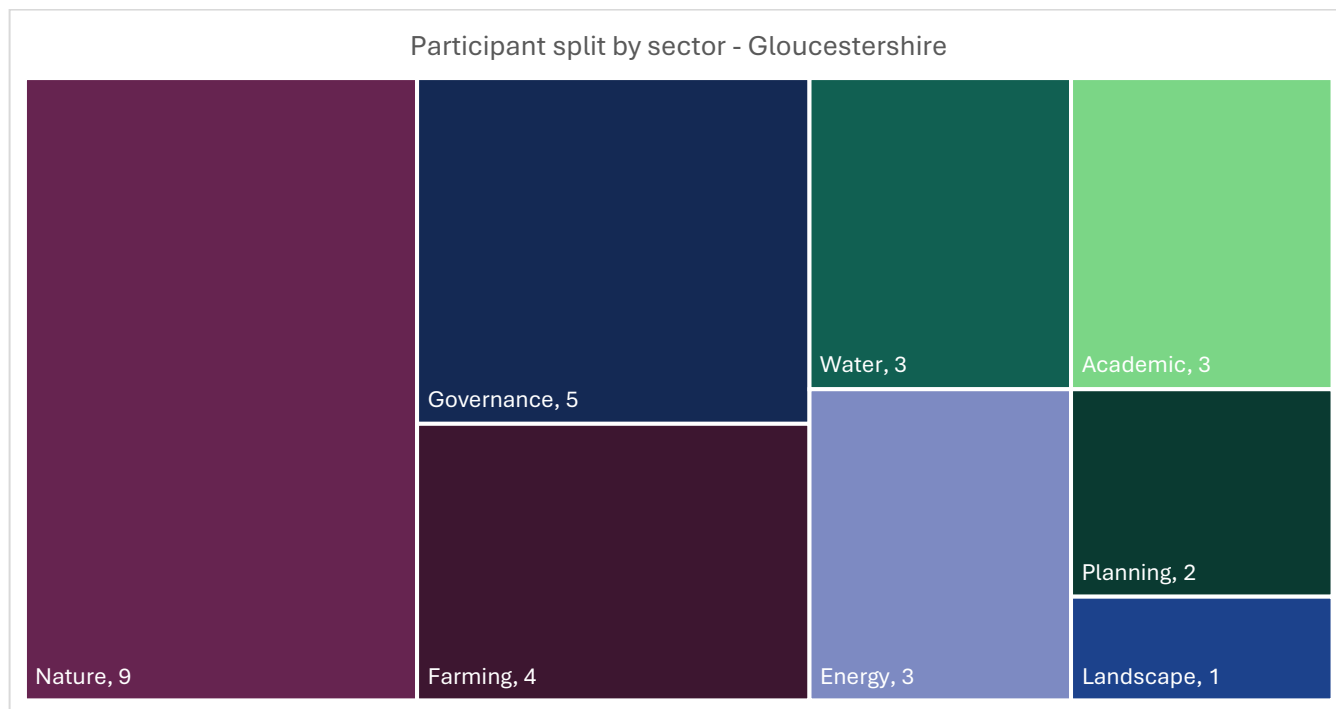
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Date: 15/04/25

Location: Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester

Reason for workshop location: The Royal Agricultural University has a well-established land-based curriculum which added further relevance to the location. Dame Fiona Reynolds and Sue Pritchard are chair and governor, respectively.

Hosts: Fiona Reynolds, Roger Mortlock (CPRE) and Sue Pritchard



30 participants joined us at the Royal Agricultural University. There was strong County and District Council representation, a Member of Parliament, individuals from Wild Hydrogen and the Severn Rivers Trust.

DEVON

Date: 16/04/25

Location: Devon County Agricultural Association

Reason for workshop location: The 2020 – 2023 FFCC Land Use Framework pilot was also run in Devon, meaning there is an established group of organisations and individuals keen to engage in the consultation process.

Hosts: David Fursdon and Sue Pritchard



We welcomed 36 participants to our roundtable in Devon, including representatives from the Southwest Coast Path Association, Devon Communities Together, Plymouth University and Devon Environment Foundation.

Discussion of key themes emergent across all four workshops

There are clear themes that consistently appeared across all four of the workshops, which we discuss below. We categorise these themes under land use ‘problems’, ‘principles’ and ‘practices/processes’. We then focus on the regional specificities and differences across workshops.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Throughout all four workshops, there were high levels of engagement, energy and participation. All participants have opinions on land use they want to share and enjoyed being involved in the conversation. There is recognition that although land use discussions can be complex and challenging, it is important to build a framework for having these difficult but essential conversations. Overall, there is clear support for the Land Use Consultation and for a Land Use Framework (LUF) to enable these tricky conversations to happen, and to assist with decision making.

There were differences of opinion within each workshop, and tricky conversations created productive debate, however, with the help of careful facilitation, enthusiasm and energy for discussing land use and teasing out these gritty issues remained high through to the end of each workshop.

All discussions were locally rooted but nationally significant. Participants used local and regional examples that spoke to recurring themes seen across all our national dialogues.

Not only is there support for a LUF from a national perspective, but it is also agreed that a well delivered LUF would provide an example to cement the UK’s position as an international leader in addressing environmental and social crises.

‘A land use framework could allow us to do things better’

PROBLEMS

At the start of each workshop, attendees were asked to discuss and share the critical issues within their region and how a LUF might help to address these issues.

It is agreed that a LUF could

- Help to prioritise land use pressures and enable us to deliver multifunctionality. The key land use pressures that were identified were similar to those outlined in the Consultation, however there was greater emphasis on the problems that can arise from these pressures, with many regional examples providing important context:
 - People - the impacts of recreation and tourism, and the pressures created by new housing developments.
 - Nature – the need to restore and protect ecosystems, the potential on nature-based solutions, the importance of access to nature.
 - Housing – pressures and economics of new housing, the need for well-located and serviced houses.
 - Water – risks of more frequent floods and droughts, the need for water resilience and better water infrastructure.

- Food – access to nutritious healthy food, the importance of local food systems and supporting British farmer livelihoods.
- Energy – scaling a transition to greener energy sources and the infrastructure required to do so.
- Transport - ensuring resilient sustainable transport and infrastructure systems
- Carbon (sinks / sources) - the potential of land to sequester more carbon and the risks of carbon emissions from certain land types.
- Cultural/heritage/spiritual value.
- Livelihoods – the livelihoods and communities that depend upon land; the majority of the UK is owned and managed by farmers, the need to work with farmers and enable farmers to deliver solutions through thriving businesses.

It is agreed that a LUF could

- Deliver existing and often elusive government targets in an integrated and sustainable way
- Help build long term environmental and economic resilience across the UK
- Help organisations break out of silos and join up action across land use types, funding, data and governance (enable multifunctionality)
- Enable better engagement, communication and consultation with people about land (and the services we ask of it)
- Ensure land use decisions are made at the appropriate scale, linking local action on the ground with national objectives and statutory targets
- Enhance access to better, more useful data (on all things related to land use)
- Ensure a just transition for workers and communities, prioritising equity and inclusion alongside change
- Enable better education and upskilling on critical skills needed to manage land for optimal outcomes
- Improve funding opportunities for land use change and good land management
- Set the standard for good land management, across all land use types
- Emphasise the importance of place making across the economy, sectors and government departments.
- Reinforce the need to create resilient and well-functioning places in which society can thrive

On the issues we currently face:

‘All the easy wins have gone; everything is contested’

‘Dog shit, fly tipping, people’

‘We have an inefficient land take; we’re not making the most out of existing housing or land’

‘Second homes, the death of local’

‘Nostalgia versus climate emergency’

‘Coastal protection – it’s almost a blind spot’

‘Low carbon transport and infrastructure’

① **CRITICAL ISSUES**

'HUB' VILLAGES
MAKE BEST USE OF
EXISTING, UNDERUSED
RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE.
/ + HISTORIC?

**MAPPING OF HISTORICAL
INFRASTRUCTURE TO HELP
INFORM NEW DEVELOPMENT**
of jobs, mine shafts → to
inform planning for new dev or
heat networks

**INNOVATION TO
BRING BACK
FORGOTTEN
RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ALLOW 'ORGANIC'
GROWTH OF RURAL
+ GREENBELT -
HYPOCRISY OF
URBAN SPRAWL** (housing supply)

**CAN THE FRAMEWORK ENABLE
US TO ACHIEVE GOV TARGETS VS
CUMBRIA REALITY? SO WE
CAN SAY TO GOV 'NO, CAN'T
DO THAT' OR 'WE NEED EX
TO DO THAT'.**

**HOW TO 'MAP'
WHAT HAPPENS
WHERE + IMPACTS
(SOCIAL + CLIMATE)
/ ECON**

**CUMBRIA LACK OF
FUNDING AND
DEVOLUTION**

**ABILITY TO PRIORITISE
FROM THE LONG LIST OF
ISSUES of flooding vs water
quality vs habitat restoration**

**Sustainable
Food
Production**

**HOW CAN LAND USE
BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH
TO RESPOND TO CHANGING
EVIDENCE (OR NEED)?**

**CUMBRIA SHOULD
CONTRIBUTE
DISPROPORTIONATELY
(SEEN AS A 'LEADER')
- HOW DOES THIS EFFECT FUNDING?**

**Nature
Restoration
FLOOD PREV.**

**Livestock
production**

**WE WANT
MULTI-FUNCTIONAL
USES**

**FUNDING FOR LOCAL
ENGAGEMENT ON LAND
USE (eg more FFLC type pilots)**

**CLIMATE
RESILIENCE &
ADAPTATION**

**WE HAVE targets for carbon
sequestration (peat / trees) +
need to 'map' when they could
go + facilitate the transition
from current land use to
2050 carbon land use**

**FOR CUMBRIA - IT
A LACK OF
FUNDING. (WILL
WE LOSE OUT?)**

**NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY
BOTTLE NECKS +
LACK OF ACTION
5% NATURAL ENGLAND**

**Water
quality +
quantity**

**WE INCREASED
BIODIVERSITY.
- DISTRIBUTION +
ABUNDANCE
(LANTON PRINCIPLES + CONNECTED
HABITATS)**

**NPPF conflict
giving large % of
in Rural Areas**

**Small rural communities
'left behind' in favour
of some other agenda.
(broadband, housing, nature)**

**Consider existing
use of land + poss
efficiencies
(existing houses, flood defences
best agric areas etc...)**

**HOUSING - HOW DO
WE MAKE SURE WE
RE-USE / REPURPOSE
EXISTING PROPERTIES
BEFORE ALLOCATING
LAND FOR NEW
BUILDS**

**WINNERS +
LOSERS. THE
'MONETISATION' OF
DRIVERS OR LEGAL
INCENTIVES?**

**PEAT - HAS BEEN
NEGLECTED IN
CUMBRIA - WE HAVE
TO DO MORE.**

**(Perceived?)
Contradictions and
tensions - nature
recovery vs housing.
[strategic + local]**

**De-population
of rural
communities**

**ALSO NEED TO CONSIDER
WHY WE HAVE HOUSING
ISSUES IN CUMBRIA:
- SECOND HOMES
- HOUSING LETS
- TRANSIENT WORKFORCE
STAYING TUES - THURS IN
W. CUMBRIA NEEDING
TEMP. LETS**

**IS LUF LOOKING AT
LU FOR HOUSING?
OVERUSE AS HOLIDAY
AREAS, STRUGGLES FOR
AFFORDABLE LOCAL.**

**Infrastructure:
- Water Energy
- Transport Health
- Housing Critical
development.**

**Risk averse local
Authority environment
disabling local
action + ownership.**

**Monetisation of
credits (eg BNG / NW)
sequestration etc.
Long term risk.**

**COASTAL
PROTECTION - IT'S
ALMOST A BLIND SPOT** + WATER
BODIES.

**BALANCE - ENERGY
WITH IMPACTS ON
COMMUNITIES - NOT
ALWAYS JUST THE
EASIEST WINS.**

**TABLE - MIDDLE.
CHRIS FAWCETT, ABI TEWARD, KAREN MITCHELL
JODY FERGUSON, GILES ARCH, + IERMINA ELY,
FRAN RICHARDSON.**

PRINCIPLES

Participants were introduced to the five principles proposed within the Consultation and asked to discuss the efficacy of the principles and a principle-led approach.

There is unanimous support for the having a strong set of principles underpinning any LUF. However, participants highlighted the need for a clear 'purpose' statement to ground the principles.

What works, what doesn't

The principle of **multifunctionality** is well liked; however, there is concern that it is hard to deliver and mustn't lose its power and potential by becoming merely a buzz word. Some people commented that lip service is paid to multifunctionality within the principles and then disregarded within the consultation document, particularly in figures 4 and 5, and the maps within the Annex at 4.3.

'How do we get to a point where we start to understand things as a whole?'

Co-design is well received as a concept, but similarly to multifunctionality, there is significant scepticism as to whether it can 'actually be done properly'. There is recognition that done well, with trained and knowledgeable facilitators and given a proper position within decision-making, it can be very powerful. Participants would like co-design to be an intrinsic part of a LUF but stress the need for it to be effective and impactful.

There is a clear preference for local decision making, and the need to ensure that local people - those for whom the decisions are most relevant – are properly involved in the decision-making processes.

'You can't work this out in Whitehall; it needs to come down to the people on the ground'

'The risk is that those that shout loudest are likely to be heard. We are getting similar voices. How do we ensure that we engaged with the unengaged?'

'People are being excluded for their geography or demographic'

Playing to the strengths of the land is seen by some as important and relevant, but others question its inherent subjectivity, throwing up debate on who gets to decide what the strengths of the land are. There is also concern on the tension between multifunctionality and playing to the strengths of the land, however some agree that the two together provide appropriate flexibility.

'Targets are difficult – 9% for X or Y – when applied at a regional level. It becomes subjective. There's a lot of farmland we shouldn't be farming because its unproductive or not profitable, but then you can't get permission to plant trees on it.'

Decisions fit for the long term is a principle participants endorsed. Many ask that it goes further and echo concepts such as the Future Generations Act in Wales. The question of what constitutes 'long term' is frequently raised, with recognition that there will be different objectives for different time frames. The tension between long and short-term decision making is acknowledged, and a need to ascertain which objectives should be prioritised when such tensions arise.

The desire to ensure policy, funding and other government led schemes are genuinely long term is clear and was highlighted several times. Evidently, decisions for the long term need to be supported by resources for the long term.

Missing principles

Across all workshops, participants identified additional principles that would create a more effective LUF.

Responsiveness and adaptability – many participants agree that the LUF must be dynamic and iterative, able to adapt to changing contexts and uncertain futures. Ensuring the LUF is iterative and allows us to ‘learn as we go’ is important.

‘How can we be flexible enough to respond to changing evidence or need?’

‘Whoever governs needs to be willing to be open to new ideas, paradigms and thinking to enable delivery’

Innovation and an appetite for risk – to innovate in land use, and to generate new solutions, we will need to take risks. Therefore, as organisations and government, we need to be able to learn from our mistakes and encourage a continual process of research and development. The question of how we ensure we don’t penalise mistakes and instead ensure we incentivise innovation was raised. Participants agree that the current system does not make it easy to reverse land use mistakes. There is also discussion around clear degrees of risk. For example, solar panels can be deconstructed and ‘undone’, but it is much harder to uncap soils when they’re built over.

‘We have become unwilling to take risk into account, we need to consider the optimization of risk in what we know are going to be contested tricky decisions.’

‘It would be easy to say no to everything if we have a zero-risk attitude.’

‘How do we work with squeeze when we need to grow?’

Urgency – participants note the need to act fast in delivering land-based solutions, and a desire that the government does not underplay this necessity. There were several comments on not losing sight of the environmental and social crises we face and ensuring the outcome of this consultation provides a ‘call to arms’.

‘This document makes it seem like it’s all sorted. It isn’t, and we need to change a lot to deliver solutions’

‘This is all a very human centric lens’

‘How do we bring everyone along in a polarised world?’

Joining up – there is unanimous agreement on the need for systems thinking on land use. Participants would like better knowledge sharing across Whitehall departments, government agencies, regional and local governments, businesses and civil society organisations, and between those working on different land uses. There is agreement that many elements of land use need better joining up – datasets, processes, funding and skillsets.

There is a clear desire that government at all levels be more joined up. This includes integration of all the government-led spatial strategies. Joining-up isn’t just about laterally connecting but also focused on vertical integration. There was frequent discussion about the need to ensure top-down objectives are well linked with bottom-up realities.

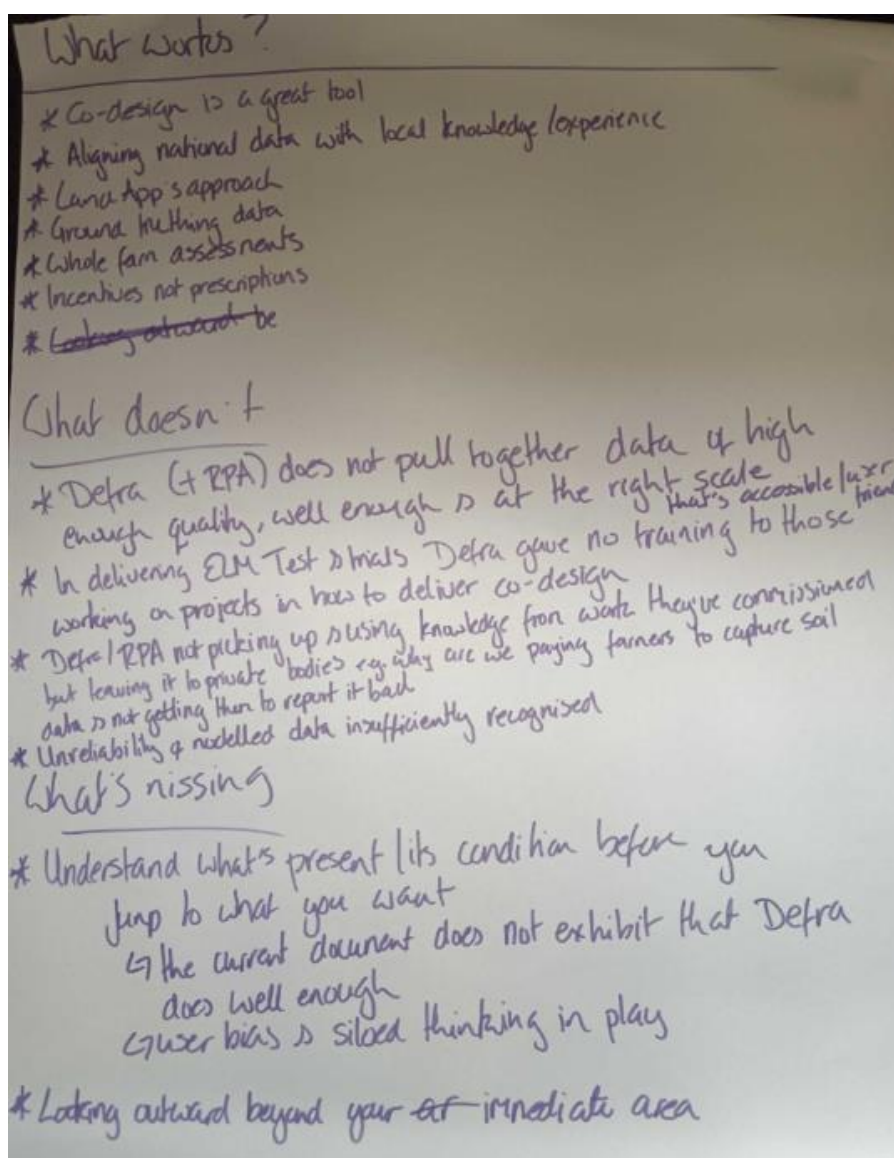
‘You get siloed thinking from siloed money’

‘We just have too many disconnected strands, but we don’t have the systems to connect them to share what we do know’

'So many agencies involved in water – sewage, main rivers, water courses – it's been talked about for years to combine them, but we're still stuck with them in different agencies. Until we integrate them, how we engage with land is going to be complicated.'

Health – health was mentioned across all four workshops as being underplayed within the consultation. Participants proposed that human and environmental health could be the connective tissue that pulls together the diverse objectives of the Land Use Consultation. This framing could also encourage people to engage with the decision-making process.

'Health is really important and needs to be a key part of a LUF'



PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

After lunch, participants moved into sector-specific tables to discuss how to deliver a LUF, specifically what land use tools, processes and resources are needed. After tea the final roundtable discussions focused on what governance mechanisms would help to facilitate LUF delivery, both locally and nationally. The practices and processes identified as being necessary for a LUF are below.



The economics of land use

Participants strongly agree that the Consultation needs to better acknowledge the economics that sit at the heart of enabling land use change. The most commonly cited barrier to creating change is 'a lack of money', whether that be because of dwindling government budgets, a lack of private or publicly funded incentives, or a dearth of demand drivers for the services land can provide.

Participants believe that within the Consultation there is not enough recognition of the impact of land values and tax regimes on land use motivations. Ignoring the economic realities of land makes land use change impossible.

There is consensus that the government should do more to step in to help land managers deliver benefits and ecosystem services where markets cannot.

'We are missing a realisation of market failures and where the government can step in to help us deliver'

Economic incentives for land use change need to be long term and joined up. It is suggested that current government resources are deployed ineffectively, and alongside increasing budgets, there should be a focus on re-allocation.

'You have to think about why it's not profitable too though – the food system that we have, the way supermarkets run things. Land is not profitable now.'

Enabling and enforcing land use change

There is a desire from all sectors to make better use of incentives and regulation to enable land use change. Participants wanted to know how a LUF would unlock policy levers to create positive change.

The need for government to become an enabler of land use change by creating the business case for the delivery of multifunctional ecosystem services is clear. Environmental Land Management Schemes and nature markets for the delivery of services such as Biodiversity Net Gain were frequently mentioned as key mechanisms to enable this. There is agreement that the government needs to use regulation to increase demand drivers for private nature markets. Ideas such as broadening the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to include nature-based carbon removals were suggested.

Government incentivisation alongside government enforcement of good practice is a popular concept. Some attendees discussed the potential of codes of good practice to set precedents and baseline requirements for land management.

The opportunity to use existing statutes and the need for regulation to underpin objectives was discussed. Farming representatives raised concerns about the lack of any food-related targets.

'Things only happen if they are statutory or funded. When there is funding you can get people together'

Debates on enabling land use change demonstrated the need to ensure all new Defra strategies (the Food Strategy, Farming Roadmap and Land Use Framework) are aligned, given their interdependence. It is also important that relevant proposals from other departments (such as DESNZ's consultation on voluntary carbon and nature markets) align.

'You need something that aligns all the strategies, a tool that helps people understand the effects of the decisions they're making, e.g. on people and communities'

Skills

The need to build skills, understanding and land use literacy across all sectors is evident. The land use skills gap was a recurring theme within workshops, and participants agree there are several types of skills we need more of:

Better, more co-ordinated and impactful land management/farming advice. Shortages of skilled practitioners in key roles were identified, such as ecologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, and drone flyers. The quality and trustworthiness of general current land management advice is also questioned, due to its partiality. The proliferation of advisors and intermediaries with a product to sell makes it difficult for novices to navigate the advice marketplace. It is agreed that advice needs to be locally and regionally rooted, independent and apolitical. There is consensus that government led incentives would benefit from more consistent advice on the ground.

'We need an on-the-ground government-linked generalist to provide advice to land managers, someone who likes a cup of tea and a proper, helpful conversation'

Participants note that a LUF will require clear and competent leadership, coordination, facilitation and communication skills across relevant sectors and government. These skills will be required to enable complex land use conversations and should be duly valued. Sometimes seen as 'soft' skills, participants were clear that they are critical to the success of a LUF.

'Coordinatorship rather than leadership'

'How do we get everyone to share ownership and awareness of these issues?'

It is also noted that planning departments need upskilling, as a legacy of reduced funding has led to substandard planning decisions that cannot afford to be repeated in the future, particularly if local authorities are responsible for the delivery of a LUF.

'If we don't all have the right skills to make these decisions we are going to be scuppered'

Data

The need for standardised, joined up and consistent land use data is loud and clear across workshops. With multitudes of datasets already existing, participants agree the barriers to effectively leveraging this data are its accessibility (publicly funded datasets should not be behind paywalls) and the lack of standardised and interoperable metrics (for example Defra schemes rely on land use codes whereas BNG uses UKHAB to refer to land use). A vital outcome from this consultation is a government decision on standardisation of the data systems used to articulate land use and management.

Data is the language needed for land use change, but participants acknowledged that data must be helpful, well understood and interpreted correctly in order to be useful. The tension between high level national data sets and the need for localised ground-truthing is evident. There is a call for a cohesive national evidence base with 'local granularity'.

'It comes down to local knowledge – a model can spit out things, but things change over time, and ground testing the models is critical'

Ensuring datasets are relevant is important, participants agree on the need for an update to the Agricultural Land Classification and more informative data on food production such as nutrient density. The potential of using data to model outcomes and create predictions, particularly to better understand the impacts of climate change was also repeatedly raised.

'What happens to Hinkley in the flooding scenarios?'

Participants agree on the need for better support for data collection and monitoring, particularly for land managers on the ground. The question of 'how do we log change' was raised and it was proposed that we need a 'shared sense of KPIs'.

Scale

The issue of scale arose repeatedly across our discussions. Ensuring land use decisions and change occurs at the right scale is important, and working out what constitutes the 'right scale' was frequently debated.

'How does the local fit within the national?'

Participants want a land use framework to cover all land use types. There is concern that the Consultation is overly focused on agricultural land, and that to be effective, a future LUF must address all land types, including national infrastructure.

The question of who 'holds' a LUF, who is responsible for its delivery, is hard for participants to answer. There is consensus that at a local level it would suitably sit with the local authority, however ongoing devolved authority reform is a barrier to knowing what this would look like in practice. The uncertainty caused by current council reorganisation is a recurring theme and needs to be acknowledged in delivery of a LUF. There is also concern over the resourcing and historic efficacy of the county-local interface.

'Whose issue is this? Who's data? Who decides? What trumps what?'

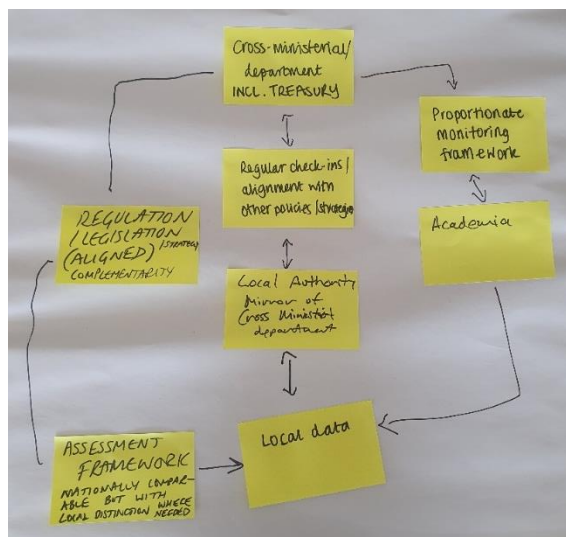
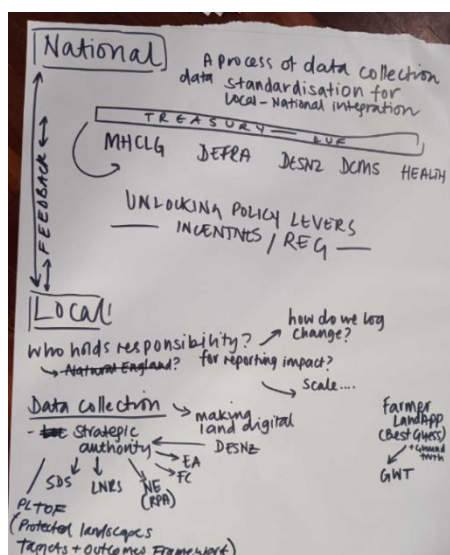
'We need to understand the governance feedback loop'

Scale is not only raised within the context of local delivery, but participants also discussed where a LUF should sit within national government, and there is agreement that to be effective it should sit above all other national spatial strategies. This therefore requires a LUF to be cross-department, perhaps operating as part of a delivery board or similar. The analogy of matryoska or nested Russian dolls resonates with participants to visualise how spatial strategies nest together at different scales. It is evident that the feedback link between the local and national delivery of a LUF needs to be established, piloted and well communicated.

In one workshop, there was a productive and philosophical debate on how to align the delivery of public benefit through land managers with private intentions.

'Is it possible? Who is involved?'

'Power issues'



REGION-SPECIFIC THEMES

As highlighted above, there were clear themes across all four workshops, and all conversations were wide ranging. However, there were also examples and issues raised that were specific to the location of each workshop. These added depth and character to the conversations, demonstrating locally specific priorities as detailed below.



Cumbria & Northumberland

In Carlisle, the power of community identity, on the ground decision making and grass-roots action is evident. An example discussed was when North Sunderland Community Energy's (a not-for-profit Communities Benefit Society) application to install solar panels on a church roof was rejected by the local Planning and Conservation Officer, but a community campaign upended the decision.

'I'd like decisions to move out of policy and into the hands of people and those who manage land and know how to deliver'

There is a proud sense of cultural heritage in Cumbria & Northumberland, and a united belief that the region is incredibly 'well placed to deliver multifunctionality'. There was conversation on improving current land use as well as making changes. However, depopulation is a concern, particularly in relation to the economic growth potential of the region.

Farmer livelihoods are critical across the region, the increasing need to support farmers struggling to survive was raised repeatedly. Farmer support is also highlighted in relation to the importance of equity and the need for a just transition, particularly when it comes to expectations around digital connectivity and skills. There is clear concern around the pressures facing upland farmers and ensuring the LUF does not add to these pressures but instead helps to alleviate them.

'This needs to be a just transition, not all farmers have access to digital systems'

'Adaptive and resilient, outward and future focused is so important. Society's demands and requirements from land and the way we use it has changed. The way land is managed now has not caught up with those changing demands.'



Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire is a pressure point for land use decision making, where embedding the principle of multifunctionality is critical to avoid land sparing. Water scarcity is a real threat, particularly given the growing population and development of Cambridge and surrounding settlements, combined with water requirements from agriculture across the region. The challenges of rising sea levels and increased flood risk add pressure to the debate.

The future of agriculture in Cambridgeshire is contested – currently the area holds much of Britain's most productive agricultural land, particularly for vegetables, however a significant proportion of this is on eroding peatland soils that are a problematic source of greenhouse gas emissions. And these landscapes have huge potential nature value. Whether this land will be suitable for food production in the future due to rising sea levels threatening its viability was debated.

The challenge and opportunity for Cambridgeshire is that it is one of the most economically productive and fast-growing parts of the UK. Huge amounts of new house building and commercial development is occurring and more is planned. This growth puts pressure on public services as well as land.

'In Cambridgeshire, we're not only the breadbasket of the UK but also the fastest growing tech centre'

Of all the areas, Cambridgeshire participants were those most well versed in the technical aspects of the land use decision-making. Highly active local groups are involved in these conversations, many of them run by volunteers. But for all this energy and intellectual background they still see need for a framework for bringing in a multiplicity of perspectives and making smart long-term decisions.

'Where is the information coming from, who is hearing the information about how decisions are made?'

Gloucestershire

There is pride in the diversity of Gloucestershire's land types, with particular reference to the area's heritage as something that should be celebrated. Tourism is both an opportunity and a pressure to be managed, particularly in relation to people's impact on precious habitats.

'God gives you lemons, make lemonade - we have unique topography and relief and let's make the most of it, need to use what we have and do what we are best at'

The uplift in housing targets is a clear regional pressure, with 80 – 120% uplift across the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean. There are concerns that the pace and scale of these targets exceeds existing plans which therefore results on a reliance on unplanned development through appeal. This uplift in pressure leads to suboptimal place making, ignoring the potential of bolstering existing settlements and using retrofitting to increase housing numbers.

The lack of infrastructure to support these housing targets is a problem. Participants identified a need for different scales (such as county level infrastructure and locally planned housing development) to be talking to each other. An example of this not happening was when the Stroud District plan was defeated due to not being aligned with county wide plans for road junctions.

Flooding is a concern across Gloucestershire, particularly due to the modified nature of the Severn and the exposure of being located at the bottom of the catchment. Climate resilience - the region's susceptibility to drought as well as flooding, combined with shallow soils poses a serious threat. Participants agreed regenerative agriculture could be a way to deliver solutions to these threats.

'Regenerative farming – a moment for Gloucestershire to have a fertility reset'

Within the context of water resilience, nature is identified as an opportunity, with appetite for more support for natural flood management across the region to reduce the impacts of flooding and droughts.

Energy came up many times throughout discussion, with the local relevance of Hinkley Point and Botley West Solar. There is concern that there is a lack of national and regional infrastructure required to meet the increasing demands of electrification (a lack of grid capacity, battery storage sites etc).



Devon

Within Devon, the issue of people-pressure and growing populations is very clear. This pressure is two-fold, originating from the increased number of new houses and from the ongoing pressure of tourism. Devon is a tourism honeypot, and participants recognise that this is both an opportunity and a threat. Public access is a commonly discussed theme, with attendees keen to identify the differences between 'good' and 'bad' public access. The problem of 'too many people' was raised multiple times.

*'It all comes down to the A303 and M5 on a Friday night. Expansion of urban centres, tourist honey pots.
Double the number of people and the consequence of development'*

Similarly to Cumbria & Northumberland, the importance of farming livelihoods was much discussed; the need to have markets and policies that support the delivery of ecosystem services and enable farming businesses to thrive.

The diversity of farm business structures and sizes across Devon, creates added complexity to the farming landscape. It is clear that the multifunctional landscapes we require are not well aligned to the aggregated large scale commoditised supply chains that dominate the food sector. There was a call for alignment of the LUF vision of multifunctionality with policies that support disaggregation of power within supply chains and new routes to market (through a National Food Strategy for example).

Historical conflicts over designation (e.g. Dartmoor National Park, Commoners Rights, wild camping rights) were also raised. The nuances of these historical tensions reinforce the need for local decision making and context building.

Unique to Devon is the fact that it has two coastlines, creating yet more opportunities (tourism, habitat restoration) and threats (sea level rise, pollution, marine economy decline).





SO WHAT?

The FFCC commends the government on its decision to launch a Consultation on Land Use. However, it is critical that we now define the next steps towards creating a LUF. A report that sits on the shelf in Defra is the worst possible outcome of this consultation, and the FFCC looks forward to supporting the government in building momentum on land use change and decision making. We commend the Secretary of State's identification of three major and fundamentally interconnected strategies – this land use consultation, the food strategy and the farming futures consultation. It is essential that departmental leadership connects these three projects, which - if developed together - have the potential to be transformative across food, farming and land use.

Meanwhile, and echoing the sense of urgency expressed in the workshops, we are proposing a set of actions to kickstart the creation of the LUF, categorised into quick 'do it' wins that can be done straight away, 'test it' ideas that need piloting and 'debate it' concepts that require further advice and consultation. This action-research approach echoes calls from the Cabinet Secretary and other ministers to accelerate the pace of change to delivery government missions, and to modernise the mechanisms for delivery.

<p>DO IT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better define a clear 'purpose' statement for the LUF • Standardise and increase access to data. Invest in interoperable datasets such as openly accessible layered maps. Build on the existing work from LUNZ and UKRI in this space • Identify the key economic enablers for land use change. For example - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide clarity on how government intends to support rural businesses in delivering ecosystem services, through bolstering private nature markets (with regulation to encourage demand) and/or long term and committed support through ELMS. Defra must ensure all its strategies are aligned and there is a clear vision from the department - Support local food system actors and infrastructure to support more multifunctional food production, policy levers such as public procurement would help catalyse this • Set up pilots in regions across the UK for 12 months to test economic enablers for land use change and to test mechanisms for upskilling. This short action research project would enable cross-sector learning and the opportunity to test and innovate • Support the development of upskilling in land literacy, identify and develop the critical skills gaps needed for the delivery of a multifunctional LUF • Ensure conversations around land use sit wider than just within Defra and are suitably integrated across government departments. A LUF should be the overriding government instrument through which other spatial strategies are delivered across all types of land
<p>TEST IT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position the LUF as the UK's key spatial framework, led by a delivery board with cross department membership which includes Cabinet Office and Treasury • Establish clear links and feedback loops to devolved authorities who hold the LUF on the ground. Set up pilots in regions across the UK for 12 months to test mechanisms for local delivery • Establish KPIs for change – identify a way to monitor impact that is directly related to national statutory targets • Effective co-design and multifunctionality – set precedents, create examples 'practice what you preach' and generate case studies • Design codes for 'good' multifunctional land management which can set the baseline expectation for land management • Adopting a health mindset/angle to the LUF
<p>DEBATE IT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory food production and food security targets which must be integral components of the food strategy and the 25-year farming roadmap • Regulatory drivers for change