Food, Farming & Countryside Commission

DECEMBER 2023

The Multifunctional Land Use Framework

The key to better land use decisions

Cover image:
Barnstaple in Devon

> **"The best example of a Land Use Framework that I have come across has been created by FFCC."**
>
> HENRY DIMBLEBY

> **"It's great to see clear messages emerging from the [FFCC] pilot projects designed to test out a Land Use Framework."**
>
> SIR MICHAEL BARBER

Land is a finite resource under increasing pressure. Land for housing, green space, energy, nature recovery and food production all need to work together. But our land use decision-making tools are not currently up to the task of taking on the complexity and multifunctionality that is required. Decisions about housing are taken separately from those about food production, and food production is often seen as needing separate land from nature recovery when in fact both can happen together with agroecology. Learning from its pilot programmes in Devon and Cambridgeshire, FFCC has honed the Multifunctional Land Use Framework to build the answer to competing requirements for land.

The government's plans concerning a *"land use framework that will reflect all our objectives for English Agriculture, the environment and net zero"* triggered the question – what sort of Land Use Framework is most effective?

FFCC has consulted on and researched Land Use Frameworks for a number of years. Our pilot programmes in Devon and Cambridgeshire show that a Multifunctional Land Use Framework (MLUF) offers the greatest potential to maximise delivery of social, economic and environmental objectives and align resources to provide public value and create a sustainable future. It is the optimal way to meet the many demands made of our country's land.

This two-part paper sets out:

PART ONE: WHAT IS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL LAND USE FRAMEWORK AND WHY USE ONE?

We examine how a Multifunctional Land Use Framework can benefit decision makers, policy developers, strategic infrastructure planners, landowners, communities and the finance sector:

IN PART TWO, HOW TO GET STARTED IMPLEMENTING A MLUF

Part One

What Is a Multifunctional Land Use Framework and Why Use One?

Key Features of a Multifunctional Land Use Framework

Our approach is inspired by the Public Value Framework, designed by Sir Michael Barber and adopted by the Treasury in 2017. Using a framework (rather than a strategy) gives choices and freedom to act collaboratively to all involved, whilst defining boundaries and interlinkages to encourage holistic systems thinking. In designing this framework, we looked closely at existing government mechanisms that aim to deliver and evaluate policy interventions, including the Treasury Magenta Book, the companion publication to the Green Book. This framework, therefore, is anchored in what works, and what will work alongside other government policies.

Through FFCC's consultations, research and pilots, it became clear that any strategic approach to land use must focus on multifunctionality – meaning that each piece of land should consider delivering multiple benefits. This is critical to delivering strong economic outcomes while also providing social and environmental benefits. By examining trade-offs and synergies between different land uses, multifunctionality encourages land to be used effectively – recognising where outputs can be stacked, and where they are best separated. And the importance of this approach is now supported by a wide range of scientific research[1,2].

Explainer: What Is A Multifunctional Land Use Framework?

- A Multifunctional Land Use Framework is a process that helps manage complex land use decisions.
- It mediates competing pressures and encourages multifunctionality, enabling land to provide multiple benefits and deliver value to the public.
- It consists of a set of agreed principles and practices for local and national organisations, businesses and communities.
- It brings together a comprehensive range of key data and expertise to guide leaders through better land use decisions and optimise land use for multiple benefits.
- FFCC pilot programmes show that it is most successful if all sectors and departments that rely on land are involved, including local authorities and stakeholders, as implementation partners.
- Multifunctionality helps meet the many demands made of land – food and energy security, housing, climate and biodiversity goals, among others. Land can produce many benefits at once.

1 DES7483_Multifunctional-landscapes_policy-report-WEB.pdf (royalsociety.org)
2 Modelling an agroecological UK in 2050 – findings from TYFA-REGIO | IDDRI

Taking a systems view is central to all of FFCC's work, but stakeholders can be put off by the language and being asked to be systems thinkers, sometimes feeling ill-equipped to change their way of thinking. In our pilots we found that the MLUF approach built systems leadership skills almost by osmosis – those taking part were thinking like a system by working like a system in the MLUF process. This means the process of the MLUF is as important as the Framework that emerges, and by boosting their systems leadership skills the participants are more confident in their decision making and more able to take a holistic view of the issues.

The growing case for a Land Use Framework

There is growing momentum and consensus around the idea of holistic and integrated approaches to managing land. Organisations supporting this approach include:

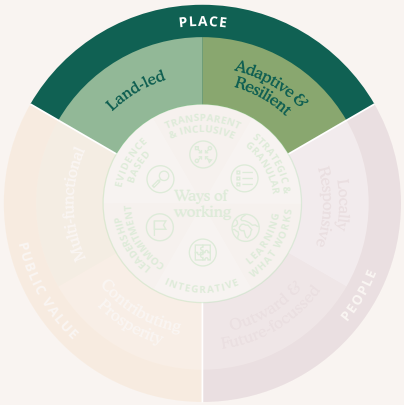
- The 2021 National Food Strategy, Recommendation 9, proposes a rural Land Use Framework to understand better the incentives, payments and regulations to achieve nature, climate and food goals (among others).
- In its Government food strategy, the government committed to publishing a Land Use Framework in 2023.
- The 2022 House of Lords Land Use in England Committee's report recommends a Land Use Framework and a Land Use Commission, which would serve as a body across different government departments to break down policy silos.
- The Geospatial Commission's 2023 Finding common ground report, which looks at land use decisions through spatial data needs, recommends a Land Use Analysis Taskforce to bring together critical datasets across different sectors and government departments to inform better land use policy.
- The Royal Society's 2023 Multifunctional landscapes report recommends a spatially explicit Land Use Framework to ensure coherent policymaking.
- Green Alliance's 2023 Shaping UK land use for food and nature report proposes a holistic view of land use to achieve multiple goals in food and nature.
- The RSPB's 2023 paper examines spatial targets for nature-based solutions, and concludes that a systems approach is key.

Multifunctional Land Use Framework

Six Principles

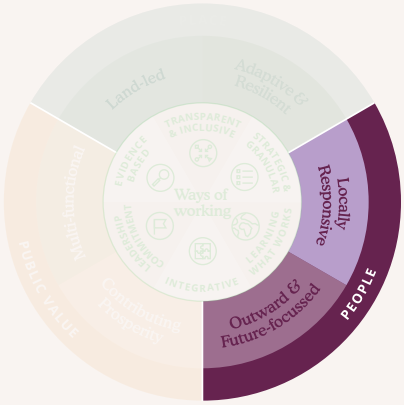
The Multifunctional Land Use Framework is guided by Six Principles. Our pilot programmes in Devon and Cambridgeshire deepened our understanding of Six Ways of Working which make the MLUF most effective. These are summarised in the graphic above.

The Six Principles in the graphic are grouped together around Place, People, and Public Value.



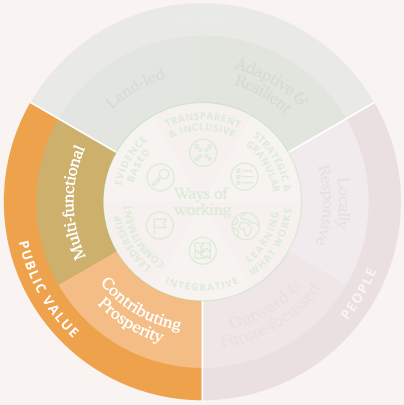
PLACE

Land use decisions should be **land-led** to ensure that land is used for what it is best suited – ensuring that the best agricultural land is used to produce food and not afforested, for example – and that that land is managed to be **adaptive and resilient** to future climate impacts.



PEOPLE

A Land Use Framework must be **locally responsive**, ensuring that local stakeholders and citizens can be genuinely included in decision-making, and those land use decisions strongly relate to their connections with other places and **future generations**.



PUBLIC VALUE

Land must be used to encourage **multifunctionality** in order to meet the challenges of the country, and **contribute prosperity** to local communities.

A six-step systems approach to implementation, and a detailed Multifunctional Land Use Framework Assessment organised around the Six Principles, including questions to ask and data/evidence to look for, can be found in Part Two of this report.

How do we know a Multifunctional Land Use Framework will work?

FFCC roots its proposals in both original research and curating other expert perspectives, wide-ranging consultations and on-the-ground pilot programmes. Our February 2020 consultation at St. George's House, Windsor, identified that the Multifunctional Land Use Framework offers government a clear way of considering all of its promises and targets within a shared frame of reference for delivery. The participants said only a systems-wide approach that encourages multifunctionality and considers all the country's assets and needs in the round could deliver the government's objectives.

In December 2022, FFCC's Proposed Land Use Framework for England was published. The Multifunctional Land Use Framework is centred on ensuring that land use decisions deliver public value. For effective delivery, and for ease of policy uptake, the proposed Multifunctional Land Use Framework is structured similarly to the government's Public Value Framework, and would be applied similarly. It would:

- **Be embedded across all sectors and offices to work effectively.**
- **Bring in multiple perspectives to inform policy design to deliver better policy decisions and better land use outcomes.**
- **Be based on a valuable shared evidence base and offer a dynamic system view of the issues.**
- **Improve policy delivery by helping to align and pool resources across different departments with similar aims.**
- **Share data, knowledge and skills to enable better decisions throughout the delivery process; and**
- **Reduce conflicts and trade-offs by avoiding unintended or unforeseen consequences or tensions.**

To gain on-the-ground experience of a Multifunctional Land Use Framework, land use stakeholders and FFCC agreed that it would be useful to trial how a Land Use Framework might work at the local level, while awaiting a national position. In 2020 FFCC was invited by local institutional and community leaders in Devon, and then in Cambridgeshire, to begin testing how a local Multifunctional Land Use Framework might work in practice. This built on our propositions in the Proposed Land Use Framework, to embed local Multifunctional Land Use Frameworks at the county level. While there are many boundary options for ' local' – catchment, landscape, bioregional – we opted to trial a political scale, both to anchor the framework alongside other initiatives and to offer local citizens a degree of democratic accountability over the process. Devon and Cambridgeshire are large and complex county arrangements, and we suggest that for other places in England consideration would be given to the most appropriate boundary – such as groups of unitary authorities, or combined authorities.

These pilot programmes affirmed the value of the Ways of Working set out in the Proposed Land Use Framework report and in the Land Use Framework graphic. Taken together, these six factors underpin the success of the MLUF:

EVIDENCE BASED

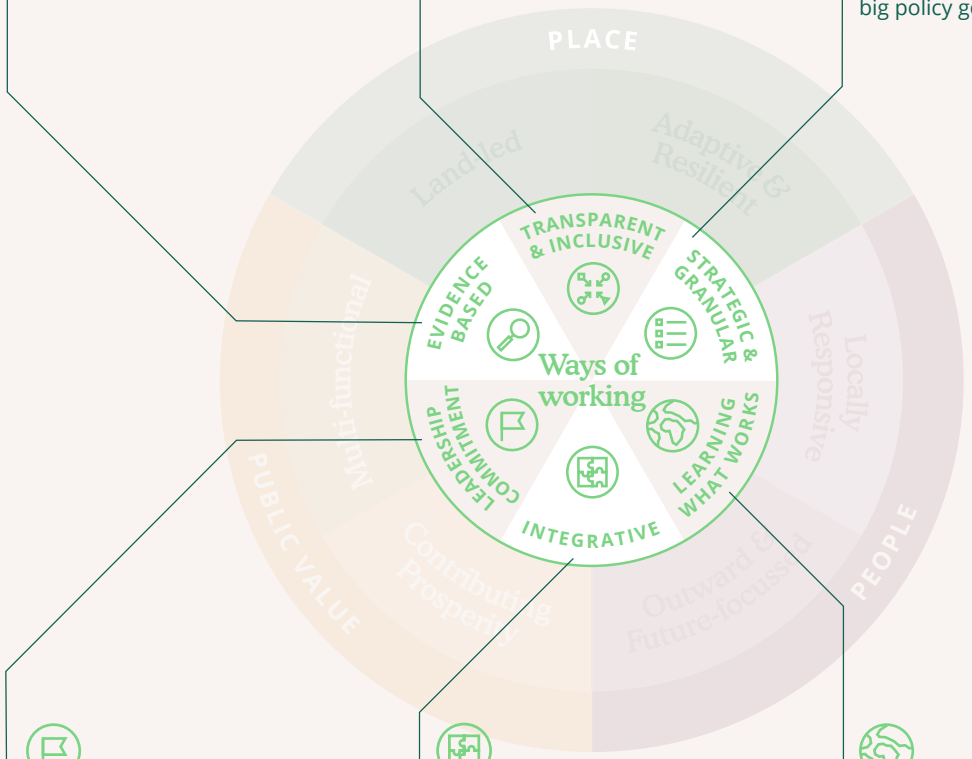
Land use decisions should be informed by critical inquiry and appropriate and reliable data (including using mapping tools, and scientific and qualitative data) to evaluate risks, costs and benefits at several spatial scales and over time, drawing on the best available research for long-term resilience.

TRANSPARENT AND INCLUSIVE

The Multifunctional Land Use Framework should involve multiple stakeholders (appropriate to the scale and the problem) in a genuinely inclusive and participative process. This will ensure legitimacy, mediate conflicts and negotiate robust solutions.

STRATEGIC AND GRANULAR

The Multifunctional Land Use Framework should be able to work at multiple scales – taking national, landscape and catchment scale perspectives to allow for strategic investment and nature recovery, and also ensuring their applicability at smaller scales – on farms, land holdings and in communities – where big policy goals become real.



INCLUDE COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

The Multifunctional Land Use Framework must be backed by senior institutional leaders across the system, who will often have the statutory responsibilities for policy implementation, and who are willing to work together to create the right conditions for success.

INTEGRATIVE

Land use decisions should have all the nation's targets, needs and aspirations for land in view, to be considered coherently and collaboratively across a wider area.

ENSURE LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS

A Multifunctional Land Use Framework should learn from good practice past and present. Many initiatives have experimented with forms of coordinated decision-making at different scales, developing a deeper understanding of local and regional leverage points.

What did we learn about Ways of Working from the pilot programmes?

In our work in Devon and Cambridgeshire, it became clear how practical and effective a Multifunctional Land Use Framework could be – improving decision-making and encouraging multifunctional landscapes. Each pilot programme is described below.

Why a MLUF? Evidence from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough pilot

In October 2020, when the first Covid lockdown lifted, 80 people gathered in Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Reflecting the broad range of people and organisations with a real stake in land use decisions, we were there to explore whether to trial a Multifunctional Land Use Framework in the area. We heard fascinating and heartfelt contributions from experts and professionals in different sectors; but the pivotal moment came when the groups sitting around big maps on eight tables were asked to mark on their maps the areas or issues they thought would be most influential on land use in the next 10 years. Half of the tables coloured their maps in blue, reflecting the consequences of even modest sea level rises in a low-lying region. Commentators pointed out that if substantial and long-term discussions on climate and nature were not progressed quickly, then the county would be facing an existential crisis.

From that initial meeting, a group of around 40 people, reflecting a broad range of communities, professions, sectors and organisations formed an informal leadership and advisory group, essentially committing to work together to co-design and trial a different way of tackling these critical land use dilemmas. Cambridgeshire is a lively and beautiful place, known for its world class institutions. It is also in the eye of the storm, responding to some deeply challenging dilemmas – where to put 250,000 houses; where to grow food; how to restore sensitive peatland and wetland in one of the most nature depleted counties in England; where to locate energy infrastructure; how to tackle the social inequalities that are often masked by its presenting face?

Our first meetings were about gathering more information about what was already happening, and where; and how it was working. We heard about progress towards the new Local Nature Recovery Strategies; about initiatives between businesses and farmers to promote regenerative farming; about citizen engagement for public health, and more. Already, people in the room, from their different vantage points, were learning more about their communities, and started to connect and contribute fresh perspectives to those existing initiatives. And it raised new questions.

So we devised a 'Listening Tour' which comprised 10 listening events around the county. Most people expressed a strong affinity with their locality and many spoke movingly about what the nature and countryside and rural community meant to their lives. Those living in urban locations also described how important local green spaces are to residents in towns and in Cambridge itself. The word cloud below summarises what came up and some key themes stand out: landscape, community, heritage, food, nature, access, villages and the green of the countryside.

One of our colleagues introduced a tool they had seen in use. We invited Vizzuality to present their work, and with support and funding from our partners, WWF and Geospatial Commission, we invested in a simple prototype data visualisation tool, co-produced with the leadership group. This tool offered a practical, accessible and engaging way of understanding different land use pressures. An example of this output can be seen in the Ways of Working section.

A number of questions arose from about data. What is available to guide decisions? And who is it available to? How does it interface with other datasets? The data visualisation tool both surfaced these questions and could provide the answer to many of them.

The team found a real appetite for doing things differently and better. Participants had a good grasp of how the current system failed in multiple ways and why poor land use decisions continued to be made.

Communities have creative and innovative ideas and suggestions which would improve land use decision-making. Key lessons include:

- **The need for a better way for communities to input and influence decisions**
- **Systems need to encourage and incorporate people's ideas, information, aspirations, knowledge, warnings**
- **Integrate broader expertise on things like health, social care, education, biodiversity, and the climate into planning processes**
- **Respondents saw the need to prioritise people, places and nature over profits**

A Cambridgeshire Multifunctional Land Use Framework will integrate these points.

Why A MLUF? Evidence from the Devon pilot

The thorny and age old questions around delivering national policy at local scales were integral to our Devon MLUF pilot work. We benefited enormously from having Devon resident Sir Michael Barber as co-chair, working alongside FFCC Commissioner David Fursdon, himself a chartered rural surveyor and local landowner.

However, FFCC's work in Devon started back in 2017 when FFCC's Devon Programme Management Board started to explore questions of how Devon could become more resilient and adaptable in a rapidly changing world.

The Devon plan started out with a core process based on leading practice in multistakeholder and community engagement in planning, from scoping the initial questions, to detailed co design to delivery. With a leadership group including senior representatives from Devon County Council (Ecology and Planning), the National Trust, the National Farmers Union, the Environment Agency, Devon Net Zero Taskforce, the Duchy of Cornwall, Westcountry Rivers Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, the Country Land and Business Association, and Exeter University, work started to identify the key issues for Devon. We worked with local consultants and facilitators, who coordinated community engagement to explore different perspectives on what a more resilient and sustainable future could look like. Focussing on the particular climate, topographical, economic and social strengths of Devon, and the South West more broadly, four areas for further work were identified, all of which were contingent on land use decisions.

In the end, there were two elements to the pilot in Devon, in part shaped by the local or regional responsibilities of national actors.

Building on the recommendation for national (England) and local Land Use Frameworks in FFCC's 2019 report *Our Future in the Land*, the Environment Agency, Devon County Council and FFCC incorporated the approach into the county Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Plan (FCRIP) in 2021. The Devon leadership group put together a MLUF Design Group to identify the stakeholders and sites to develop and trial a Multifunctional Land Use Framework. Through a process of engagement and deliberation, we brought together seven catchment or landscape scale sites to engage with the LUF process through this flood resilience approach.

Secondly, later that year the Geospatial Commission's Pilot land use data project launched in the county. In a further partnership with the British Geological Survey, we contributed insight into the Geospatial Commission's National Land Data Programme. Working with BGS and West Country Rivers Trust, we explored questions about the content and approach to evidence gathering and sharing in a land use framework, particularly the design of a prototype decision support tool to for carbon-focused land use decisions. Here we joined a range of stakeholders in a facilitated 'design sprint' to understand the what functionality users would need from such a tool.

FFCC collaborated with both projects working with multiple overlapping partners. This shows the importance of the convening role of the MLUF: and of the ability of the MLUF approach to incorporate new aspects of work "on the run". In questions of land use we are never starting with a blank canvas, and an effective Framework must be able to accommodate existing programmes of work and new ones as they arise.

While stakeholders found the MLUF useful on this granular scale, county-wide coordination would bring the appropriate resources and manage landscape-scale land use change, and tackle other critical land use decisions facing the county. This will be the next step we will explore in our work in Devon.

Distilling the combined learning from the pilots

The two county pilots produced a rich trove of learning which are being compiled into detailed MLUF Learning Papers for release early in 2024. This will cover learning on Leadership; Scope and Scale; and Data and Evidence in the MLUF context.

KEY LEARNING ON LEADERSHIP WAS:

- Stakeholders in Devon and Cambridgeshire saw the opportunity to save on effort and expenditure by joining up land use decision-making with a strong leadership commitment.
- Stakeholders want to understand how existing statutory instruments will integrate with a Multifunctional Land Use Framework.
- There is a strong appetite for change across both counties and disciplines.
- The success of local Multifunctional Land Use Frameworks will rely on their statutory weight.
- Expert facilitation is essential to delivering local Multifunctional Land Use Frameworks.

ON SCOPE AND SCALE, THE PILOT EXPERIENCE TOLD US:

- Land use decision-making ranges from the local to the strategic: a Multifunctional Land Use Framework must be able to accommodate top-down targets and bottom-up detail, and – critically – capacity for implementation.
- Scale determines available evidence, which actors can be engaged and the kind of actions that are possible.
- Choosing the right scale matters, and often that means choosing a scale that people understand.
- The Multifunctional Land Use Framework must have a broad scope and a long-time horizon, encompassing all major land uses and likely future scenarios.
- Stakeholders want to understand how a Multifunctional Land Use Framework operates at different scales.
- Some standardisation of the Multifunctional Land Use Framework process is desirable for operating across boundaries.

AND FOR DATA AND EVIDENCE IN THE MLUF THE COMBINED LEARNING WAS:

- Land use decision makers would benefit from a shared evidence base to help break down silos and encourage multifunctionality.
- Spatial data and land use modelling initiatives would benefit from greater integration.
- Access to data can be a challenge and there is demand for better standards around data sharing and utilisation.
- Wider utilisation of spatial data depends on designing a tool that makes it easy for non-experts to access, understand and manipulate that data.
- Spatial data could be improved by devolving power to amend datasets to trusted actors at the county level.

Multifunctional farming practices like agroforestry integrate nature and climate benefits into food growing landscapes.

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Six Ways of Working

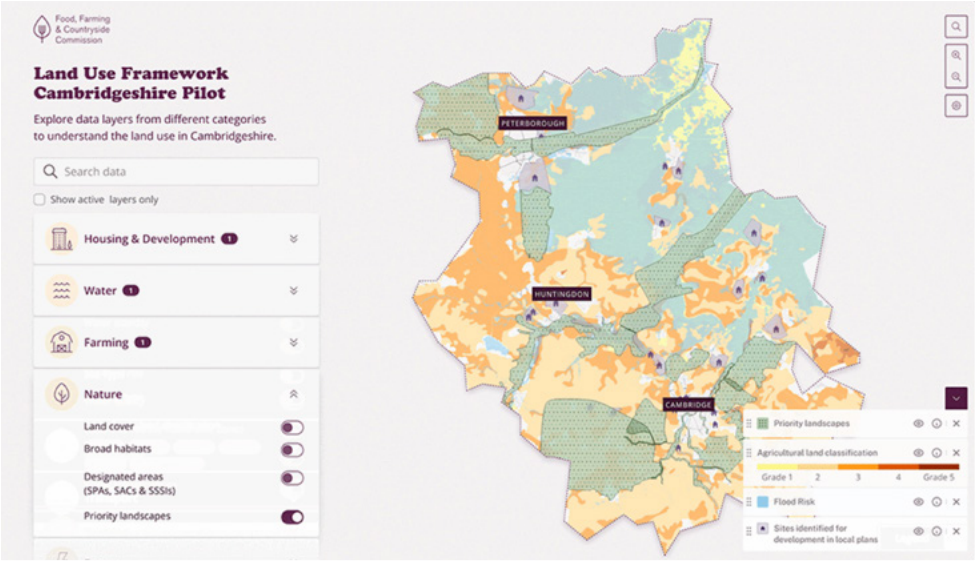
Our on-the-ground experiences confirmed the value of our Six Ways of Working:

COMMITTED LEADERSHIP was central to success: bringing together relevant stakeholders and evidence, discussing the trade-offs and tensions inherent to land use issues, and attending regular meetings to build trust and knowledge in the process required significant commitment from the leadership groups. In both Devon and Cambridgeshire it became clear that strategic decision-making for land use had dwindled since the discontinuation of planning instruments such as the county-based structure plans and regional spatial strategies. Many participants suggested that the statutory application of a Multifunctional Land Use Framework at a national level could ensure commitment and resources for application at the local level.

> ***"Key to getting a LUF [Land Use Framework] implemented is it becomes statutory and embedded in everything we do, that's what we need, because it risks not having teeth otherwise. Local plans are very weak in terms of rural land use, this is exactly where the Devon Land Use Framework comes in."***
>
> **Tim Youngs, Blackdown Hills AONB**

INTEGRATIVE meant, in our pilots, having the tools and information to break down silos. The challenge was to create a process where all viewpoints and perspectives were included. In Cambridgeshire, the leadership group valued the way that the prototype tool from Vizzuality enabled spatial visualisation of the land which effectively integrated a broad spectrum of data and evidence to support more holistic decision making for land use. One Cambridgeshire leadership group member welcomed the ability to make interventions on a 'human scale' that 'people understand as their home and their landscape.'

EVIDENCE BASED seems an obvious aspiration for decision making but accessing appropriate datasets for land use decision-making can be difficult. Users often face conflicting advice and many lack the technical skills to use appropriate datasets: the Vizzuality prototype spatial data visualisation tool made data far more accessible to the entire leadership group.



The prototype spatial data visualisation tool developed as part of our Cambridgeshire pilot

The feedback on the tool from the leadership group and other stakeholders was very positive. Being able to see the competing demands on land – for example, where housing developments were planned, over an area of high flood risk – facilitated discussion and supported decision makers to engage with a truly 'land-led' process. In Devon, our work with the Geospatial Commission's pilot land use data project showed the potential of enriching the MLUF with better quality evidence which leads to better decision making and increased benefits from the data.

STRATEGIC AND GRANULAR thinking at the same time could be a challenge, but in both our pilots we found working at the county scale anchored the work in the fundamental principle of democratic accountability, while also bringing enough institutional 'clout' to bring together leaders to explore land use decision-making. It also gave a strategic perspective of land use while maintaining a high level of relevance and connection for stakeholders. Both leadership groups noted the importance and usefulness of engaging with citizens on the ground to inform the Multifunctional Land Use Framework – both for evidence and priorities – which is achievable at a county level.

> *"What most long-time planners (in two-tier authorities) regret is the loss of county-based Structure Plans. Structure Plans still felt local enough for all parties to be interested, and the public understood them because they lived in that county. Structure Plans worked across local boundaries and were strategic enough to enable bigger-than-local decision to be made. But they were homely enough that both the public and the professions could see and understand the trade-offs, such as where some things should be located and where other things should not."*
>
> Richard Kay, Manager of Planning Policy and Environment Lead, East Cambridgeshire District Council

TRANSPARENT AND INCLUSIVE is a key Way of Working with significant benefits to the MLUF process. By involving stakeholders from the start, the leadership groups were able to identify a range of viewpoints, clarify and improve evidence and data, as well as uncover potential conflicts or tensions. Very often it is the institutional actors who are most easily involved – the local authorities, businesses, water companies, developers – who have either scale, resource or democratic legitimacy. It is rare that farmers and landowners are included, both as important 'small businesses' and as key actors in food resilience (for which there are as yet few national targets).

Existing public consultations were criticised:

> ***"It needs to be easier to input into consultations – people are consulted but only at late stages. This needs to be turned upside down and people consulted at the beginning before the plans are drawn up."***
>
> **Cambridgeshire listening tour participant**

And of course, communities contribute multi-faceted, historical and grounded knowledge. Their early involvement in the process fostered transparency and inclusion.

LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS: the Multifunctional Land Use Framework is designed to wrap around and support existing policy and practice. Many of the processes tested in Devon and Cambridgeshire already exist in some parts of local government, such as digital planning in the new National Planning Policy Framework or data gathered as part of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
The MLUF isn't a big new idea – it brings together what has worked in the past and what is working on the ground with an integrated perspective from leaders with local and national perspectives. The Learning from what works approach allayed initial concerns that a Multifunctional Land Use Framework would duplicate local efforts or create another layer of red tape. In fact, stakeholders saw that it could enhance existing practices whilst also reducing costs and potentially minimising regulatory intervention.

Better land management around rivers (like in the Fens, below) can restore nature, and prevent pollution and flooding incidents (pictured right, in Leeds)

How should the Multifunctional Land Use Framework be governed?

The governance of the Multifunctional Land Use Framework must meet the twin objectives of national oversight of targets and obligations, whilst supporting the well-founded local decision making which was a consistent feature of our Devon and Cambridgeshire pilots.

Creating an independent cross-departmental body that brings together all government land use targets could solve many of the current challenges facing land use. This supports the findings and recommendations of the House of Lords Land Use Committee and the Geospatial Commission. A cross-departmental body would provide clear national leadership by integrating priorities, setting targets and supporting local arrangements. It will also link with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland who, along with the Republic of Ireland (with whom the UK has an important land border), are developing their own land use decisions processes.

The cross-departmental body should provide seven important functions:

- Leadership, system engagement, advocacy.
- Setting obligations – across government departments, arms-length bodies, local authorities and regulated sectors.
- Clarifying the detail and resourcing of how the framework is enacted through the planning, infrastructure and environmental land management systems.
- Land-led data assembly and coordination, compiling national targets, and ensuring quality evidence is available to track progress towards them.
- Commissioning, curating and disseminating research.
- 'Deep-dives' into specific cross-sectoral challenges and issues that need further examination.
- Monitoring the progress of local frameworks for national alignment and reporting regularly on progress to ensure the sum total of local delivery meets national commitments and aspirations.

If the recommendation from our stakeholders that the MLUF should be statutory is followed, the need for a cross-departmental body becomes even more acute.

The body's support for local decision-making is key. Working at the county scale in Devon and Cambridgeshire offered both a strategic perspective of land use while providing access to ground-level stakeholders. A Multifunctional Land Use Framework would be valuable and useful to local landowners, farmers, planners and others. Rather than attempting to 'tell people what to do with their land', a local framework approach would create room for engagement and learning and help land managers and planners develop their long-term vision for the area. Our pilots suggested that upfront engagement could reduce conflict down the line and improve the evidence base for policymakers – reducing pressure on resources and leading to more coherent policymaking. Success at the local level needs to add up, in aggregate, to national targets, so the national land use body needs to operate a mechanism to communicate and integrate between the national and county scales.

Getting better land use decisions

It is clear from our research, consultations and on-the-ground pilots that the Multifunctional Land Use Framework has great potential to achieve integrated, collaborative and place-based decision making which optimises land use decisions. What is needed is a practical process that supports better, more sustainable decisions about land, by all those who need to make them. The Multifunctional Land Use Framework stands ready to be just that.

In Part Two, we present the practical steps required to implement a Multifunctional Land Use Framework.

Housing developments, like these in Cambridgeshire can incorporate space for food growing, nature and green transport links.

Part Two

How to Get Started Implementing a MLUF

> **"FFCC is making a unique and vital contribution to the development of Land Use Frameworks"**
>
> **DAME FIONA REYNOLDS**

Part One of this report outlined the key features of a Multifunctional Land Use Framework and used the experience of two pilot programmes in Devon and Cambridgeshire to corroborate and reinforce the six Principles our consultations and research had determined for the MLUF. The two pilots confirmed the Ways of Working we had proposed for the MLUF and gave us an unrivalled depth of experience in using the Framework.

This Part Two aims to bring that experience onto the page to guide others who wish to implement a Multifunctional Land Use Framework. In addition to the high-level information presented here, there is a wealth of experience contained within the FFCC team and the stakeholders who powered the Devon and Cambridgeshire pilot programmes. In moving on from focus on these two pilots, FFCC is now brokering a 'community of practice' for local leaders who want to start work on a Multifunctional Land Use Framework; and designing a development programme to create a cadre of facilitators who can support the work.

We are happy to make this available to any group wishing to move towards implementation: FFCC's contact details are at the back of this report. A rich selection of reports and research is available in FFCC's website.

A six step systems process

Our experience in Devon and Cambridgeshire led us to refine a six step systems process and a series of Land Use Framework Assessment questions to align locally specific considerations to the Multifunctional Land Use Framework Principles around Place, People and Public Value.

The six step systems process is designed to build trust and is itself built on trust. Skilled culturally sensitive facilitation is essential to shepherd the stakeholder group through the processes of the MLUF, and the six key Ways of Working will need to rise and fall in prominence as the process evolves. At the outset, leadership commitment will need to be evident to encourage all the necessary participants to join the journey.

The six step systems process is described here in linear fashion, but as it is a systems approach it overlaps, and embodies constant looping back to integrate new arrivals, react to unexpected or new system responses, and incorporate learning gathered as each stage unfolds.

1 ESTABLISH

- Convene a cross sector group of leaders from the public, private and third sectors, representative of a wide range of land use interests, to work together to lead the process.
- Establish effective partnerships with key stakeholder organisations, ensure clear communications and close alignment with other initiatives.
- Work with key land decision makers to curate the questions they are trying to answer and how better data would improve land use decisions.
- Engage lesser-heard voices and perspectives to ensure genuine collaborative and co-creation processes.

2 SCOPE

- Develop a shared overview of land use priorities and demands.
- Evaluate relevant data, mapping, documents and systems to identify overlaps, gaps and inconsistencies, any poor functionality, missing perspectives and to establish what is known and not known.
- Expose current land use decision-making processes, who is involved, what data and evidence are used, what factors and objectives are considered and identify gaps, limitations and constraints, identifying the implications, opportunities and constraints.
- Establish the objectives the land use decision makers are trying to achieve, questions they are trying to answer, surfacing underpinning values and assumptions.

3 CREATE

- Facilitate the co-creation of a 'working framework' which establishes shared principles and processes against which future decisions on land use should be taken.
- Use participatory methods, spatial mapping tools, data assembly and analysis to imagine and model the impacts and value delivered by decisions for different future scenarios.
- Test early iterations of the framework on sentinel priority issues and data sets, widening application as the framework develops.
- Incorporate multiple data sets to trial how land use challenges can be mediated and outcomes integrated, seeking convergences and ways that resolve any potential conflicts.
- Prioritise ways of resolving issues at source and using sustainable, circular economy and nature- based solutions, wherever appropriate.

4 TEST

- Test and trial the framework and principles in an iterative process in the real system, to identify what is achievable, how to maximise benefits and improve data and evidence.
- Coordinate more detailed network/issue analysis where necessary.
- Organise additional citizen and stakeholder engagement activities, including ensuring the voices of the citizens of tomorrow are heard.
- Deploy creative, spatial modelling and visualisation mechanisms, and other powerful tools, to help landowners, decision makers and stakeholders envisage and scenario-plan alternative futures.
- Model exemplars of varied multifunctional landscapes and places to give confidence in the direction of travel for these long-term decisions.

5 LEARN AND ADAPT

- Design processes which regularly and systematically collect and analyse the formative and summative lessons learned, in cycles of reflection, action and adaptation.
- Identify where there are tensions and win-win opportunities and how conflicts can be better resolved or reduced.
- Ensure learning is owned by and informs the work of key decision-making structures, including the design of local agricultural support schemes, those involved in Local Nature Recovery Strategies, the planning process and national infrastructure bodies, as well as individual landowners and managers.

6 EMBED AND SHARE

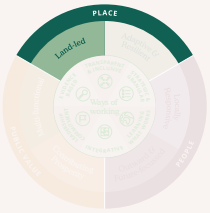
- Ensure that the Multifunctional Land Use Framework process and relationships are valued, embedded and sustained longer term amongst stakeholders.
- Report on progress to national, technical or professional bodies to ensure goals are delivered.
- Disseminate evidence and learning to policy, academic and professional bodies.
- Continue to connect and collaborate across institutional boundaries on landscape, catchment or strategic priorities.

Carefully planned green energy can co-exist with food production, and the latest research suggests potential for integrating agrivoltaics within the horticulture industry

Aligning with the Six Principles of the MLUF

As the six step systems process unfolds, it is important to continually check alignment with the six principles of the MLUF. We have developed a draft working version by setting out questions in a table.

The Six Principles – questions

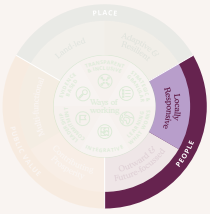


LAND LED

Is the land being used for the things which it is best at, going with the grain, learning from experience/history, appropriate to the geology, habitats, soil and landscape character?

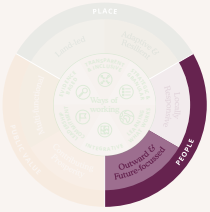
ADAPTIVE AND RESILIENT

Is the land being used in a way that adapts to and mitigates change created by the climate crisis and the uncertainties and risks brought by increased flooding and drought, shifting seasons and temperatures and new pests and diseases, enabling communities to respond to multiple future scenarios?



LOCALLY RESPONSIVE

Are those who own, manage or farm land leading decision-making, integrating local needs and aspirations into plans and mindful of responsibilities to their local environment and community? Does the decision-making process bring together views from across local urban and rural communities and varied expertise, building shared understanding?



OUTWARD AND FUTURE FOCUSSED

Is local decision-making taking into account impacts on other communities, the nonhuman world and on the needs and wellbeing of future generations?

MULTIFUNCTIONAL

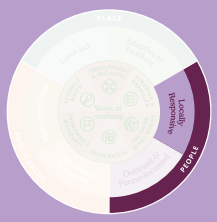
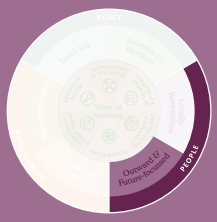
Is the land being used to its full capabilities to bring about multiple benefits to address varied human and ecological needs for food, water, clean air, energy, nature, health and wellbeing? Are organisations and agencies working together to consider the potential multifunctional uses and values to take more coherent account of potential unintended consequences?

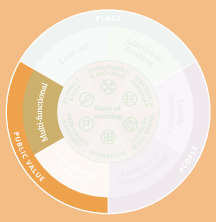
CONTRIBUTING PROSPERITY

Is the land being used to sustain local livelihoods, jobs and supply chains, without waste and whilst also delivering other public benefits?

These questions are further developed in the table which follows, which links each question to potential practices, protocols and data which can help check each principle has been applied.

Principles	Questions	Process, data and evidence
PLACE		
1. LAND-LED 	What would be the optimal uses of the land given its geology, morphology, soil types and prevailing weather?	Soil survey, BMV classification, geological maps, aspect, slope and climate data
	What has the land been used for in the past, how was it managed and does that have relevance for future uses and management?	Historical maps, local knowledge, culture and food traditions
	Will the proposed land use enhance existing wildlife habitats (including riverine/ coastal/marine habitats), biodiversity and ecosystems services?	LNP opportunity mapping, environmental impact assessments including air and water pollution
	Is the proposed use appropriate to its wider setting and the local landscape character?	Local Landscape Character assessments, National Character area profiles, NP and AONB Management Plans and local neighbourhood plans
	Is the proposed land use consistent with government environmental principles of prevention of harm, the polluter pays, precautionary principle?	Environmental impact assessments, scoping for foreseen and unforeseen impacts
2. ADAPTATIVE AND RESILIENT 	Is the land being used in a way that adapts to and mitigates change created by the climate crisis and the uncertainties and risks brought by increased flooding and drought?	Flood risk maps and forecasts, local knowledge about flooding and droughts, water supply and energy demands, abstraction data
	Does the proposed land use help mitigate or reduce the effects of shifting seasons and temperatures and potential new pests and diseases?	Long term weather predictions, risk assessments and government alerts/guidance, integration of water, energy, waste, design efficiencies
	Will the land use be affected by coastal erosion or vulnerable to coastal flooding?	Coastal erosion risk maps, shoreline management plans, coastal defence investment/disinvestment
	Does the proposed land use help address national net zero targets?	Carbon credits, renewable energy generation energy use efficiency, active travel provision removal/reduction of GHGs, low carbon energy and transport infrastructure
	How adaptable are the proposed land uses in responding to multiple future scenarios and social changes/socioeconomic risks?	'What works' reviews from international and national research. 'Futures' research and analysis from different disciplines

Principles	Questions	Process, data and evidence
PEOPLE		
3. LOCALLY RESPONSIVE 	How are those who own, manage or farm the land involved in and incorporating local needs and aspirations into plans?	Neighbourhood plans, community surveys/ forums, engagement around ELMS, housing needs, land ownership
	What is being done to strengthen or extend community engagement and strengthen social cohesion longer term?	Volunteer opportunities, citizen science projects, increased access, further outreach to hear more views, new community and citizen ways of organising
	Does the decision-making process bring together views from the rural communities, local towns and villages and urban settlements?	Incorporating service plans at different scales – local and regional health services, primary, secondary and tertiary education, transport links, business/employment hubs, urban fringe land uses and issues
	How are health and wellbeing benefits for local people being integrated into the proposed land use(s)?	Local access strategies, health improvement plans, consultation with local user groups, GP practices, health advisory boards. Deprivation indices and mapping, green space provision, tranquil area and dark sky mapping.
	How are local environmental experts being consulted during the decision-making?	Biological records, local recorder network
4. OUTWARD AND FUTURE FOCUSED 	Is local decision-making taking into account impacts on communities outside the immediate area?	Impact assessments e.g. further down the catchment, in the wider landscape and along transport routes. Plus supply chain impacts nationally and in communities overseas
	How are impacts on the nonhuman world being addressed?	Biological surveys, habitat enhancements
	How might the proposed land use be impacted by future population shifts?	Strategic plans in different sectors
	How are the needs and wellbeing of future generations being integrated and addressed?	Long term planning and forecasts, engagement with young people, considering potential new technologies and innovations (plus the business models which underpin their implementation)

Principles	Questions	Process, data and evidence
PUBLIC VALUE		
5. MULTI-FUNCTIONAL 	Is the land being used to its full capabilities to bring about multiple benefits to address varied human and ecological needs?	Assessments of complementary opportunities; food production, clean air and water, energy, carbon sequestration, nature recovery, public access, community health, wellbeing, diversity and resilience
	How will organisations and agencies work together to take more coherent account of potential unintended consequences?	Internal risk assessments, data from external regulators, campaign groups
	How will multifunctionality be measured? monitored and maintained or extended longer term?	Monitoring programmes, metrics to assess ecosystems services and progress against
	How effectively is management and planning joined up across functional boundaries across interorganisational boundaries, to achieve better outcomes?	Reviewing collaborative and inter-organisation processes and mechanisms
6. CONTRIBUTING PROSPERITY 	Is the land being used to sustain or increase local wellbeing, livelihoods and jobs?	Economic impact and opportunity assessment, skills assessments, knowledge sharing
	Is the land being used appropriately for productive agriculture?	RPA maps, agricultural methods, soil analysis, runoff risk, river catchment status, waste management plans
	Will the proposed land use link to and strengthen local supply chains?	Supply chain mapping and local sourcing, circular economy and recycling
	Will the proposed land use attract additional public or private funding and investment and how/where will the benefits be experienced?	Grants, ELMs, community levies, natural capital credits, investment in infrastructure
	Will profits from the proposed land use be retained/ invested locally or extracted to other parts of the country or world?	Beneficial ownership, shareholder registers, responsible governance
	Will value be created, missed or destroyed with the proposed land use change?	Value mapping of economic, natural capital, ecosystems services, food production, social and public values

Our aspiration: testing on a wider basis

We hope these practical guidance tools will encourage other areas to design and test the Framework. FFCC's Land Use National Group, chaired by Dame Fiona Reynolds, has tested the case for a framework, pooled ideas about how it might work and how the approach could be incorporated in government department planning. In June 2022 FFCC convened a policy workshop 'Landing a Land Use Framework' where 30 leading thinkers from academia, think tanks, government and NGOs shared how they thought a Multifunctional Land Use Framework might best be introduced.

FFCC's two pilot Multifunctional Land Use Framework projects were located in places which were keen to trial the approach; Devon and Cambridgeshire. Both are large, multi-tier counties with a contrasting mix of intense land use pressures and complex governance arrangements. The pilots brought together land use stakeholders to adapt their own version of a framework and test it out in practice through action research. Working together, local authorities, farmers, landowners, government bodies and other stakeholders can design and test a Land Use Framework for their own place, with the potential to answer other land use questions, so that all are better aligned to delivering the same broad goals in the context of the climate and nature crises.

COMING SOON

FFCC has a large body of data and research conclusions from the Cambridgeshire and Devon pilot programmes, which will be published as Learning Papers in early 2024. These will cover key findings on data and evidence within the MLUF, lessons for the leadership of the MLUF process, and a detailed examination of the issues around the scope and scale of the MLUF. The key points are summarized in Part One of this report.

If you would like to receive an email alert when these papers are released, please email georgie.barber@ffcc.co.uk who will add you to the Learning Paper alerts.

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The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission focusses on food and farming, climate, nature and the public's health, for a just transition to a greener, fairer world. With partners in governments, businesses and communities, we generate radical ideas and practical actions to transform our countryside and our economy. We help convene collective leadership on the difficult questions and resource communities to become more resilient and adaptable for the challenges ahead.