

Q1. What broad characteristics should we use to define the uplands?

I believe that the Land Use Capability mapping produced by the Soil Survey of Scotland is the best approximation for defining the uplands. The National Vegetation Classification could also have a role to play in a more detailed analysis. It is important to understand the ecology of the land and avoid trying to create 'tidy' definitions based on too few criteria, such as altitude. Definitions should also consider likely future changes due to climate change.

Q2. What are the key social, economic and environmental benefits that the uplands provide for Scotland?

I would argue that the key economic benefits provided by the uplands are NOT being realised to their maximum potential, such as flood prevention, montane scrub habitat diversity, and food production. Well-managed uplands can combine environmental stewardship with farming and job creation. The Autumn 2016 issue of the Reforesting Scotland Journal covers this issue. Do let me know if you would like to see a copy; a few articles are available online here:

<http://www.reforestingscotland.org/reforesting-scotland-journal-54/>

Q3. How can upland land use help to prevent or reduce the impacts of climate change?

Planting trees creates a root network which slows down the passage of water from uplands to lowlands. It is likely that Britain will see wetter conditions in future and flood management is key. Rivers should be allowed to meander, not be straightened for our convenience, with sizable flood plains and riparian planting (these also form unique habitat). There are excellent examples of such work taking place in the Borders by Borders Forest Trust and elsewhere.

While many cite carbon storage by trees as an advantage, I do not agree with offsetting. Reduce fossil fuel use AND plant trees for the benefits they bring. Yes, carbon is stored until the tree is burned or rots but we must be aware of poorly-thought out schemes. We must think like the ecosystems we are working and living in.

Q4. A strategic vision could inform decisions about the balance between different land uses in different parts of the uplands. What are the key choices that an upland vision should address, and why?

Over much of the uplands, the current land use regime is maintaining, and even exacerbating, the low productivity of the land. Significant reductions in grazing and burning would result in natural regeneration of woodland and shrubs, as pioneering projects at Abernethy, Creag Meagaidh, Glen Affric and Glen Feshie have shown. Southwest Norway also provides a good example of a region, similar in climate and soils, where this has occurred. A landscape with an increased cover of mixed woodland, in mosaic with open areas, would provide richer, more productive and more stable ecosystems.

I have no problem with people hunting for the meat they eat. However, I am totally against managed grouse moors and deer hunting estates which fulfil no ecological function. I believe other European countries provide excellent examples of how hunting can co-exist within vibrant ecosystems.

Q5. Are there any other topics or issues that should be included in an upland vision, and if so why?

Scotland can have a well-forested and productive landscape as well as a culture which values the contribution that trees and woods bring to our lives. Reforesting Scotland has helped bring about a transformation in the way we, as a nation, view Scotland's forest resource and the level to which communities have become involved in managing their local woodlands.

Q7. Which stakeholders do you think it would be particularly important to involve, and how? Would particular approaches be needed, for example, to reach particular groups?

This consultation needs to include all land users and land owners, despite their often vastly different outlook on the environment. Upland farmers, sporting estate owners, communities living in the uplands, environmental groups with expertise in land issues should all be involved. All parties should realise that there has to be compromise over what we all wish to see prioritised.

Q8. What are your views on the process that might be needed to bring together the key interests and develop a shared vision?

People should be brought together for face-to-face debates and information exchanges. Farmers should hear how alternative practices might benefit them. The process will need time, expertise, and patience. I believe Reforesting Scotland and others with direct knowledge of the land should be involved.

Yours sincerely,

Mandy Meikle
42 Woolfords
by West Calder
West Lothian
EH55 8LH