

Scottish Workshop on Advisor and Authority Perspectives

27th October 2009

Introduction:

The following report provides a brief summary of the workshop discussions. The delegate list is appended.

Aim of Workshop:

- To get important information about working with farmers from agricultural advisors and regulatory agencies particularly in relation to climate change and farmers as water managers;
- To get feedback on the climate change indicators; draft flood risk maps and criteria to assess possible natural flood management options; and
- To update key stakeholders on the trans-national project 'Aquarius: Farmers as Water Managers' using Tarland and Aboyne areas as a Scottish case study.

The data collected at the workshop will form part of a trans-national baseline, allowing us to compare the authority (regulatory) and advisory contexts across the six countries involved in the Aquarius Project.

A short presentation was given describing the overall aims of Inter-reg projects (see <http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/projects>); the aims of the overall trans-national project (see <http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/projects/details/&tid=90>); and the aims, timetable and funding arrangements for the Scottish case study (see <http://www.macauley.ac.uk/aquarius/index.html>). We need to hear the views of the stakeholders and farmers at every stage of the project and that we wanted them to help us spread the word about what we are learning. Farmers and land managers have been contacted and asked to fill in a questionnaire about their views and a workshop in Tarland will be held to discuss their perspectives on the baseline information.

Results of Advisor and Authority Perspectives

11 people then took part in the transnational baseline activity to answer questions about how advisors and authorities work with farmers. 4 people answered the Authority Questions and 8 (making 7 post it notes as one worked as a pair) answered the Advisor Questions. The individual post it notes have been summarized under each question.

Authorities:

Q1. What is the main aim of your organization? There were four different aims: to achieve the Scottish Government 5 objectives (Smarter, Greener, Safer, Fairer, Wealthier); Statutory Nature Conservation; to deliver quality of life and environment protection to local communities via planning and to protect properties through flood prevention.

- Q2. What are your remits and responsibilities with respect to land use and water management?** To implement regulations (e.g. Natura 2000; environmental health); to administer grant schemes; to provide planning permission; and to work with land owners to protect properties from flooding.
- Q3. What measures do you use to affect land managers' behaviour? (e.g.: statutory planning; licenses, grants, inspections etc)** Applying regulations; inspections; statutory consultee for planning; provision of grants; environmental impact assessments for planning and regulatory regimes.
- Q4. Do you work with other sections within your organisation? If so which one(s) (e.g. economic development; building control; inspectors; advisors)?** Regulators work with advisors within organisations; within the Local Authority work with other departments e.g. roads, environment, education, economic development; planning; and most Scottish Agencies coordinate with each other within the SEARS family (Scottish Environment and Rural Services).
- Q5. What are the most common academic subjects represented within your organisation? (E.g. agronomy, biology, engineering?)** Biology; Botany; Zoology; Geology; Ecology; Agriculture; Planning; Geography; Countryside management; engineering.
- Q6. In your organisation, what experience do you have working with farmers to resolve environmental problems?** A variety from very little to extensive experience. Experience from regulating farmer practices, administering grants and pilot projects (e.g. replanting vegetation, diffuse pollution measures and access projects).
- Q7. How is climate change taken into account when working with farmers?** Some do not take it into account; others do but it is secondary to other pressures; some have a rule of thumb (add 20%) when advising and others see climate change as something being increasingly addressed in grant applications.
- Q8. Thinking of the current state of the water environment in Tarland - What are the main opportunities for farming/forestry/estate management to improve the water environment in the Tarland catchment? Do the same opportunities apply to the whole Dee catchment area?** Riparian management (buffer strips and wetlands); riparian planting; avoiding hard engineering; attenuate runoff; restoration of natural water courses. The measures would work for both the Tarland and the Dee, although the Dee provides opportunity to try a range of options.
- Q9. Thinking about the uptake of various agri-environmental schemes in the Tarland catchment, how effective do you think these schemes are in achieving their aims?** One felt biodiversity was increasing; pollution was decreasing; land management was improving but there has been little change in flood prevention. Another agreed there had been continual improvement and this showed that farmers and land owners are interested their environment. Two could not comment.
- Q10. When, as an authority, you make decisions concerning water quality, water quantity and climate change – who are your statutory consultees? How do you work with them?** [Please note if climate change is not an issue for you] The following consult one another for the delivery WFD, Natura and Floods

Directive: RPID¹, SNH, SEPA, Aberdeenshire Council and DDSFB [the last one was seen as a statutory consultee by one person but put in the group below by others]

Q12. Who else do you discuss issues with, regarding decisions concerning water quality, water quantity and climate change (i.e. non-statutory bodies that provide advice – can be very informal)

Advisors and land agents; land owners and occupants; other agencies (CNPA, FCS); partnerships e.g. Grampian LBAP, Dee Partnership; NGOs e.g. RSPB, WWF; other local authorities; researchers (e.g. Macaulay Institute).

Q13. I'd like you to describe your cooperation with other authorities in matters concerning the Tarland catchment. Who do you cooperate with? (E.g. council, Government, agencies) How do you cooperate?

(use a specific example) Consult agencies e.g. FCS, SEPA, SNH for information for grant applications e.g. RPAC assessment of agri-environmental schemes in Tarland; Consult as part of statutory implementation of WFD and Floods but also work on demonstration projects; Consult SEPA for license conditions and flood storage options; Scottish water on existing infrastructure capacity; work with land managers and DDSFB to discuss license applications.

Q14. In what ways might politicians and political agendas have an impact on your day-to-day activities?

National and European politicians change regulatory and grant regimes; create the context for actions on the ground; local and national politicians give things priority but can also make other things take priority ahead of climate change and water management.

Advisors:

Q1. What is the main aim of the advisory organization that you belong to? A variety of answers: 3 advisors aimed to combine economic development with environmental advice to ensure a sustainable land based industry; one sought to improve economic development in the area; and 2 aimed to protect, enhance and restore the aquatic and terrestrial environment. (This question was not relevant for one attendee).

Q2. Are you a private, not for profit or state funded advisory service? 3 were privately funded; 2 were state funded and 2 were not for profit partnerships.

Q3. What kind of advice is provided by your organization? (E.g. production advice, environmental advice, business advice? For agriculture? Forestry? Estates? Households? Industry? For individual businesses or community groups?) Most gave advice to individuals and businesses rather than groups.

Two gave environmental advice for land based industries, households and businesses. Three advisors integrated production, business and environmental advice to the land based sector; and one provide business advice to all economic sectors.

¹ RPID = Rural Payments and Inspection Directorate; SNH = Scottish Natural Heritage; SEPA = Scottish Environmental Protection Agency; DDSFB = Dee District Salmon Fishery Board; CNPA = Cairngorms National Park Authority, FCS = Forestry Commission Scotland; RSPB = Royal Society for Protection of Birds; WWF = World Wildlife Fund for Nature; AHB = Aberdeen Harbour Board; SRDP – Scottish Rural Development Programme.

Q4. What kind of advice do you provide within the Tarland catchment? Most of the Q3 answers were relevant; although one has not worked in Tarland (yet) and another felt there would be more focus on water quality and diffuse pollution in Tarland.

Q5. Does your organization integrate different forms of advice? (E.g. combination of production – environmental – business advice) Three linked environmental, production and business advice; two linked environmental and funding advice and one noted that tended to put farmers in touch with people who could give complementary advice.

Q6. What are the most common academic subjects represented within your organisation? (E.g. agronomy, biology, engineering?) Agronomy, Biology, Business Studies; Ecology, Engineering, Environmental Management; Food Technology; Geography; Pollution Management; Silviculture

Q7. In your opinion, what is the role of advice in getting farmers to act as water managers? Awareness raising and empowering farmers to be part of a solution to societal problems; provide information on how to fund projects; provide information on how they can link water management to improved business; how their farm is part of a wider catchment or ecosystem.

Q8. In your opinion what do farmers/foresters/estate managers in Tarland want from your advisory service? Have you had to change as a result of these expectations? Farmers want to know acting on advice will improve their business and/or environment; what are their choices and how might their actions be funded; what is the evidence base for the need to manage differently; what are the long term implications of changing management. Farmers want things in their language and measures that are financially neutral and low in bureaucracy. This is getting more difficult to deliver!

Q9. In your opinion, what are the most important issues for your advisory service to communicate to farmers/foresters/estate managers? Environmental awareness & relationship between biodiversity/diffuse pollution/flooding and land management; Sustainability; Impact on their management systems – costs and benefits; profits; Need for action; what is their role; why they should help; Information about the whole ecosystem/catchment.

Q10. In your opinion, what measures, with respect to farmers'/foresters'/estate managers' water management, would be most beneficial within the Tarland catchment? Measures to slow down run off; reduce artificial drainage; Conversion from arable to grass; Riparian management (buffer strips, wetlands, trees); Placement of gates and tracks; Restoration of natural water courses; Septic tank care; Evidence base for flood storage and wetlands; Beneficial to whom (environment, land manager, community?)

Q11. How is climate change taken into account in the present advisory service? Advisors try to take account of climate change but it is not easy – if funding allows or encourages a climate change focus then advice is more likely to focus on this but both farmers and grant schemes tend to be more focused on the short to medium term, and climate change is a long term variable. The best way to factor in climate change is to encourage flexibility in management and to protect vulnerable species or habitats.

Q12. How has WFD, the Floods Directive and/or Habitats Directive influenced your advice? WFD has influenced a focus on diffuse pollution; Habitats on management of habitats and species and the flood directive may influence management and funding availability. Statutory mechanisms influence funding priorities for land management grants and projects. There seems to be more influence on environmental than holistic or rural development advisors.

Q13. How have funding mechanisms influenced your advice? Please name the funding sources. Three advisors nominated SRDP as the main influence. One noted a range of funding sources (landfill tax, LEADER, SNH, Trusts and private sources of funding although SRDP most dominant now). Two noted that the objectives were set and then funding sought to implement them.

Q14. Thinking about the uptake of various agri-environmental schemes in the Tarland catchment, how effective do you think these schemes are in achieving their aims? Three advisors did not know or have enough information to say. One thought biodiversity had improved. One thought uptake of these schemes had helped achieve their organisation's aims. Two advisors felt the uptake was patchy; the competition and bureaucracy was off-putting and these would limit the ability to achieve the scheme objectives.

Q15. Which authorities (organisations with statutory powers) complement the advice that your organisation provides? SEPA, RPID, Local Authorities (e.g. Aberdeenshire Council); SNH; CNPA; FCS; AHB; DDSFB.

Further comments made during the group discussion:

- Advisors need to listen to farmers and focus on what farmers need to know – although sometimes they need reminding that long term care for their environment is needed as much as immediate profit
- Advisors know why measures work and have an evidence base – the evidence can come from other areas
- Farmers define themselves as producers of food and feel it is crime to lose good land if it means they can't feed the nation
- Measures tend to be driven by grant funding options and other, more innovative measures, might be given lower priority
- Most measures are implemented on more marginal land; so options at top of catchment matter
- Easy to give advice on climate change but is it acted on? Some farmers do not see climate change as an issue
- Need to look at the implications of measures .e.g. wet grasslands may increase liver fluke infestations

- Further measures - separating clean and dirty water will help
- Important to get a baseline and measure change to illustrate why farmers should put in new measures.

Presentation of specific Climate Change Metrics and Draft Flood Risk Maps

After a short explanation of how the metrics were developed, a series of indicators were presented including average temperature, precipitation, start and end of growing season, start of field operations; last spring air frost; end and return to field capacity; field access days; and soil and water profiles. It was noted that some of these trends were different from the generic trends for North-East Scotland and there were some challenges (notably difficulties to get onto the ground in spring and potential droughts in late summer) for farming operations. Participants were given a booklet of the metrics to take away – please contact us for further copies (k.matthews@macaulay.ac.uk).

The process by which flood risk maps were generated was discussed. Three sets of maps covering the whole catchment were given out, illustrating the model outputs for the Qmed (two year average); 1:10 and 1:100 flood risks. There was some discussion about particular sites and whether properties and/or farmland were at risk. As the maps were still draft and the model is still being refined, the maps were not available to take away. Final draft versions of the maps and the metrics will be made available on the website (<http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/aquarius/index.html>) in the near future (December 2009).

Attending Delegates (in no particular order):

Bob Booth – Birse Estate (owned by Dunnecht Estate)

Derek McDonald – Aberdeenshire Council

Stephanie Fergusson – Landcare North-East

Alison Espie - Consultant

Stewart Johnston - SG Rural Payments and Inspection Directorate

Gavin Elrick - SAC advisor

Elizabeth Clements - Scottish National Heritage

Estelle Gill & Lorna Anness - Grampian LBAP officers

Susan Cooksley - Catchment Plan Officer

Team: Lee Watson, Linda Mathieson, Dave Miller, Jill Dungleinson, Keith Matthews, Kevin Buchan, Kirsty Blackstock, Mike Rivington, Simon Langan

Apologies:

Julia Straherne – Strutt and Parker

Alistair Aboyne – Aboyne Estate

Simon Power – MacRobert Estate

Factor - Tillyphronie Estate

Edward Humphrey – Dinnet Estate

Ian Francis – RSPB

Sam Gardner - WWF

Roger Owen – Scottish Wildlife Trust

Stephen Field; Julie Tuck; Rebecca Fitton David Ogilvie, Alasdair Matheson; Roy Richardson, Andrea Johnstonova - Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Alison Lee – Joint Nature Conservation Council, Freshwaters

Mark Bilsby – Dee District Salmon Fishery Trust

Eiligh Johnstone - North East Area Advisory Group coordinator

Malcolm Taberner - Aberdeenshire Council

Matthew Young - Forestry Commission

Lorna Paterson - NFUS regional officer

Amanda Hutcheson – Scottish Water

Tom Johnston/David Clark – Scottish Tenants Farming Association

Drennan Watson – Landwise consultants