

# LINKING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE BY INVOLVING MANAGERS AND POLICY MAKERS



## ISSUE

Practitioners are rarely involved in research and their knowledge and experience is not easily integrated or used to inform research and policy or to improve the management of natural resources such as deer.

We developed the concept of 'participatory interdisciplinary research'. This involved researchers, practitioners and policymakers in research development, implementation and dissemination.

## APPROACH

By involving managers and policymakers at all levels through site visits, interviews, choice experiments, mapping of deer density and movement we gathered their expertise and knowledge.

We used questionnaires to explore researchers' and stakeholders' perceptions of how well this had worked and asked

- the natural and social scientists to reflect on their experience of working together across disciplinary boundaries.
- the stakeholders involved in the project to reflect on their involvement and any positive or negatives aspects that have arisen out of this.

Figure 1 shows the range of roles that the stakeholders had and Figure 2 illustrates which activities they were involved in. Choice experiments and interviews were a key means of stakeholder involvement.



Figure 1: The different roles of stakeholders (122 replied)

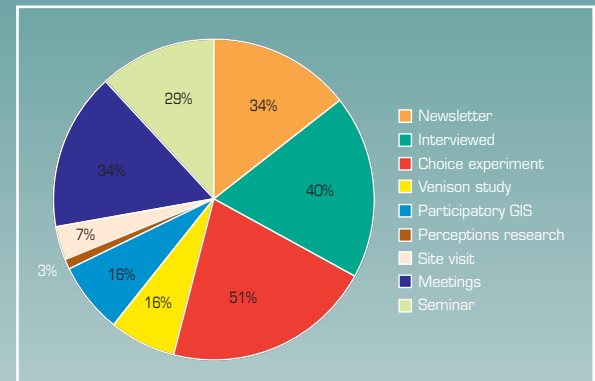


Figure 2: Percentage of stakeholders engaged in the research activities. Stakeholders could be involved in a number of different activities.

## WHAT DID WE FIND?

Researchers recognised the need to allow time to meet with a broad range of stakeholders and the difficulties of integrating different forms of stakeholder knowledge. They became increasingly aware of the importance of different types of knowledge in addressing rural resource management questions. Stakeholder involvement in the project varied depending upon their regional location and job description. Stakeholders identified the impacts of getting involved as:

- **collaboration** – a realisation of its importance and understanding
- **understanding others and sharing information** – hearing other viewpoints, gaining a wider perspective of deer management, the opportunity to share information and discuss issues.
- **learning and changing behaviour** – increasing their knowledge of the latest research. The project prompted people to think about issues such as cull numbers, road traffic accidents, and the potential range of stakeholders with an interest in deer. Some of this increase in knowledge also led to stakeholders changing their behaviour.
- **no impact** – some stakeholders said it was too early to identify the impact of the project, they were not involved enough for it to have an impact on them or they felt the research was not relevant to their particular needs.

## RESULTS FROM USING PARTICIPATORY INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

- Benefits - improved social networking, social and technical learning and academic achievements.
- Challenges - time and cost of involving stakeholders, building relationships within the constraints of the research project, the need to address stakeholder feedback requests and meet diverse exceptions.

For more details, visit [www.macaulay.ac.uk/RELU](http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/RELU) or contact Liz O'Brien [liz.obrien@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:liz.obrien@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)