

# Sustainable Uplands

Sustainable Upland Management for Multiple Benefits



University  
of Durham



The  
University  
of  
Sheffield



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## The Project

Britain's uplands are changing fast but researchers from the Universities of Leeds, Durham and Sheffield with the Moors for the Future partnership have joined forces with locals from the Peak District National Park (PDNP) to make it a change for the better. Existing challenges from accidental fire, water colour and declining biodiversity may be exacerbated by impending changes to government subsidies and moorland burning regulations, and the continued loss of rural livelihood options.

Natural and social scientists have now teamed up with locals and policy makers to develop approaches that could be applied throughout the country's uplands to discover new ways for people to detect change and harness it for their advantage. Building on local knowledge and experience, they are combining new ideas from local people with the latest science. The result will be a choice of solutions that could never have been developed by either group alone.

## Update

This newsletter summarises project progress:

- Adapting the project to feedback from Scoping Interviews with key people in the PDNP
- Initial results from research interviews with local people and key organisations
- New people contributors to the research
- Projects we are linking with
- Reviews of existing literature and models, identification of data needs for follow-on research
- Future work



## Adapting to Feedback

Researchers started by identifying which groups have an interest in upland management in the PDNP. The focus group, attended by staff from the PDNP Authority, National Trust and Moors for the Future, produced a long list of groups including: statutory bodies; water companies; farmers; grouse moor managers and game keepers; recreation groups, tourism interests and forestry interests. A number of key people representing these interests were also identified and consulted at the earliest opportunity.

The project's objectives were compatible with those of local stakeholders and broadly matched their priorities. However, in order to achieve these objectives in the time available and actively engage people's interest, they recommended that the project focus on a single upland management issue. The one issue that all stakeholders agreed was most important and likely to engage people's interest was moorland burning. This is a contentious issue that provokes a wide range of opinion, and has a range of environmental, economic & social implications.

Last year, English Nature successfully lobbied Defra to review its Heather and Grass Burning Code. Defra have invited the team to take part in their consultation, and are planning to use the research as an in-depth case study for their review.



Photo: Heather Trust

## Initial Findings

Initial findings from interviews suggest there are many (mainly socio-economic) drivers that may threaten current land use and livelihoods in the PDNP. These arise partly from the range of conflicting visions for a sustainable future held by those who live and work in the Park. Given the uncertainty associated with these drivers and the potential scale of their impacts, there has been widespread and enthusiastic support for the project.

This support ranges from statutory bodies like Defra (who are using it as an in-depth case study for their ongoing review of the Heather and Grass Burning Code) and the PDNP Authority (who have provided data and an ecologist for our Advisory Panel) to stakeholder groups such as farmers and game keepers who feel they have been unable to use their knowledge and experience to inform or influence the regulatory changes that affect their livelihoods. Despite poor relations between some stakeholder groups and statutory bodies, the research has identified a number of overlaps between their land use management interests and activities.

## New Project Links

- The project is contributing to workshop organised by the Rural Economy and Land Use programme, "Learning from the South: mixed farming in stressed environments"
- Contributing to a workshop organised by the Climate Change and the Visitor Economy project (commissioned by Defra and UKCIP)
- Contributing to a workshop organised by the UK Population Biology Network, "Large scale upland manipulation"
- Contributing findings to a UNEP-funded Wetlands International and Global Environment Centre handbook for "Management of Peatland for Biodiversity and Climate Change"

## Literature & Model Review

Annotated bibliographies have been completed on "Interdisciplinary methods for participatory adaptation to rural futures" and "Integrated rural development and rural futures".

Conceptual models have been developed for environmental, social and economic components of the upland system in the PDNP. A wide range of models have been reviewed for potential integration, and data needs have been identified.

Principle Investigator, Klaus Hubacek (right) and Mark Reed (left), Co-Investigator and Research Assistant, are part of a 15 member team of researchers



## New Contributors

- Dr Lindsay Stringer and Dr Laura Shotbolt have joined the team as Research Assistants, reviewing literature and models and identifying research and data gaps (see below)
- We have expanded our Advisory Panel to include Rhodri Thomas, Ecology Service Manager for the PDNP Authority and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Co-ordinator
- Prof Scott Moss, a specialist in agent-based modelling joins the team from Manchester Metropolitan University as a Co-Investigator. He will be integrating individual and group behaviour into natural and socio-economic models of land use change in proposed follow-on research (see Future Work)
- Dr Bill Kunin, from the University of Leeds School of Biology, also joins as a Co-Investigator for proposed follow-on research. He will be contributing his knowledge of biodiversity and land cover modelling



## Future Work

Research interviews are ongoing, and will be followed up with social network analysis telephone interviews and a focus group to discuss adaptive management options under a range of future scenarios.

An outline proposal for follow-on research that was submitted to the Rural Economy and Land Use programme received positive reviews and has been short-listed for funding. A full proposal will be submitted in February with results announced in summer.