

RES-224-25-0088, Dr K Hubacek, University of Leeds
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Sustainable Upland Management for Multiple Benefits

In this scoping study, natural and social scientists teamed up with local interests and policy makers to develop a “learning process” that could help people better anticipate and monitor future change throughout UK uplands, and harness it for their advantage. Building on local knowledge and experience, the learning process combined new ideas from local people with the latest science to develop a choice of options for the future. The initial stages of the proposed learning process were tested in the study, in preparation for a major research project (RES-227-25-0001) in which the full process will be implemented and refined.

The researchers used a combination of stakeholder analysis and social network analysis to identify relevant stakeholders in the uplands of the Peak District National Park. Scoping interviews highlighted managed burning as a key issue which incorporated social, economic and environmental aspects of future rural change. The researchers explored the current needs and aspirations of those who work, live and play in the Park, and explored their concerns for the future. Current and future drivers of change were identified and a range of future scenarios and sustainability indicators developed.

This study has developed a learning process that is designed to help people better anticipate, monitor and respond to rural change. It has identified data sources, gaps and methods that can be used to further develop, test and streamline the process in the next phase of the research. Descriptions of the learning process, data and analyses have been disseminated through project publications sent to stakeholders and made available at meetings, conference and workshop presentations in the Peak District, nationally and internationally.

The research team briefed members of Defra’s Uplands Management Branch about the research at its outset. Synergies were identified between the proposed work and Defra’s ongoing work to review the Heather and Grass Burning Code, and the team was asked to provide an in-depth case study from the Peak District in response to the review consultation.