

The Proposed Cross Party Group on Sustainable Upland Management

28 October 2021

13:00 to 13:45, online via Teams

Minutes

Welcome

Mr McLennan welcomed and thanked everyone for coming to the first CPG meeting. He said that it was his hope that this proposed CPG has a shared vision going forward and he felt that everyone wants the same outcome as a whole.

Introductions

All of the MSPs introduced themselves and their relevant party and committee roles. All echoed Mr McLennan's view and they were there to listen and they hoped that the CPG would be shaped by its members with an aim of influencing relevant work at parliamentary and government levels.

Election of Office Bearers

Co-conveners

Messrs McLennan and Burnett were elected as co-conveners of the proposed CPG. Mr McLennan was proposed by Mr Burnett and Mr Mountain and this was seconded by Mr Carson. The same process was taken forward for Mr Burnett but with Mr McLennan as a proposer.

Vice Convener

Mr Mountain was elected vice convener after being proposed by Mr McLellan and Mr Burnett and seconded by Mr Carson.

Secretariat

SLE was elected Secretariat after being proposed by Mr McLennan and seconded by Mr Burnett.

Purpose of Group

Stephen Young (SLE) suggested the group needed to consider what the group wanted the uplands to do, what are they were for and what were the associated challenges. He suggested further consideration of upland management in relation to food production, sustainable tourism, biodiversity and climate change and the relevant public and private funding required.

Davy McCracken (SRUC) agreed with Mr Young and wanted to know how the CPG will work. Mr McLennan said that the CPG will have to link up and down, feeding into relevant committees, government and policy work. Mr Burnett stated that the CPG was a forum for people to come in and air issues and ask questions of MSPs and ministers. Mr Carson said as rural affairs committee convener his role was to listen to stakeholders and he thought the CPG would be valuable.

Key Themes/Programme of Work

Ross Ewing (BASC) said the key issues for BASC members were grouse moor management and specifically what the planned license scheme would look like. He added it was important to take some time to over the Scottish Government's response to the Deer Working Group and recommended looking at the people who live and work in the uplands. He said gamekeeper welfare was important given the Scottish Government commissioned research that hasn't been actioned yet.

Jake Swindells (Scottish Countryside Alliance) echoed Mr Ewing's thoughts and added the issues of fox hunting, sustainability and rural issues as a whole.

Mike Daniels (John Muir Trust) suggested looking at the idea of a just transition, climate change, carbon and biodiversity. On a just transition, he made the point that while respecting the rights of people who live in uplands, there needs to be recognition that change is coming.

Anne Gray (Heather Trust and Scotland Moorland Forum) suggested looking at how decisions about the uplands are taken and trying to get synergy regarding the different interests. She also asked the group remained conscious on the Regional Land Use Partnership pilots, which are currently underway.

Mr McLennan suggested given the comments so far that a piece on what the uplands actually do could be useful and the need to push forward the needs of the sector.

Nora Casey (RSPB Scotland) echoed the points made regarding biodiversity and stated 1 in 8 species are threatened with extinction. They reiterated that it was really important to remember the nature crisis.

Dee Ward (Rottal Estate) said all points were good and valid and as an uplands estate manager the key was a holistic approach with peatland restoration, carbon capture, biodiversity. He questioned how Scotland gets to that point and the need to strike balance between jobs, community and access. He reiterated that a holistic approach is required to come to a solution that will work for everyone.

Rosalind Bryce (Centre for Mountain Studies) said CMS had recently held a challenging uplands forum in Perth that ties into many of the themes relevant to the group; biodiversity, climate change, good practice and community engagement, optimising special scale land use, just transition. She advised that she is putting together an outcomes from event document and was happy to circulate to the group members in a few weeks and may be helpful in defining themes.

Bruce Wilson (Scottish Wildlife Trust) wanted to reiterate the importance rural community and economy and said that those who work rural settings were just as broad as urban settings.

Mr Mountain said there was a really interesting mixed view of habitats in uplands and mentioned the need think about large companies buying large tracts of Scotland and his concern about this practice in the highlands.

Pete Mayhew (Cairngorms National Park Authority) said he had an offer rather than comment and said every issue mentioned so far was absolutely being dealt with in CNPA's work. He said he was more than happy to share with the CPG where things were working and where further work needed to be done.

Mr McLennan said that with a possible third national park that was a good point to make.

Mr McCracken said Mr Mayhew touched on what he was going to say, issues where there are different issues, attitudes, different examples of stakeholder management and conflict

management. He asked how to push through, not just developing policy and how to manage individuals in reaching those goals.

Mr McLennan said the key role was identifying the issues then working through them. He advised he was trying to bring people together and understood that uplands can sometimes be an emotive issue but reiterated that everyone wants to look after uplands.

Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland) emphasised the issue of access and recreational management as they are huge contributors to health and employment.

Anne Gray raised a point that Robbie Douglas Miller (Hopes Estate) had made in the meeting comments section regarding the Scotland Moorland Forum developing series of guidance such as valuing moorland and recognising the range of different uses of the uplands. Ms Gray advised she was happy to circulate those to the group.

Jake Swindells said that Chloe Forbes of Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group had access to relevant figures and could be a good addition to the CPG.

Mr McLennan said that if anyone who is not here today that should be, please let him know as he was happy for any interested parties to attend future meetings.

Jen Craig (NSA Scotland) advised in the comments that she was having technical difficulties but raised NSA Scotland's main priority would be ensuring the importance that sheep have in managing the uplands is included and recognised and ensuring that upland farming businesses remain viable and able to continue producing food whilst playing their part in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.

Date of Next Meeting

Mr McLennan said the plan for the next meeting would be the end of January 2022. He advised that he and Mr Burnett would meet in due course to discuss the key themes from the meeting.

Attendees:

MSPs

Paul McLennan MSP

Alexander Burnett MSP

Edward Mountain MSP

Finlay Carson MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Members

Anne Gray, Heather Trust/Scotland's Moorland Forum

Alex Hogg, SGA

Ross Ewing, BASC

Mike Daniels, John Muir Trust

Patrick Krause, Scottish Crofting Federation

Bruce Wilson, Scottish Wildlife Trust

Calum MacLoed, Community Land Scotland

Karen Rintoul, NatureScot

Dee Ward, Rottal Estate

Stephen Young, Scottish Land & Estates

Joan Mitchell, SUP and Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

Jake Swindalls, Scottish Countryside Alliance
Rosalind Bryce, Centre for Mountain Studies (UHI)

Robbie Douglas Miller, Hopes Estate

Pete Mayhew, CNPA

Chris Wernham, BTO

Nora Casey, RSPB

Jen Craig, National Sheep Association

Tim Baynes, Scottish Land & Estates

Andrew Henderson, Scottish Land & Estates

Apologies:

Jim Fairlie MSP

Jenni Minto MSP

Mercedes Villalba MSP