



How to implement landscape-scale conservation: A recipe for success

Summary report



Introduction

How to do landscape-scale conservation for the benefit of wildlife, people and the economy.

Nature is in trouble and we need to do more about it. Landscape-scale conservation is an important solution to this problem, and it is now a widely accepted approach that delivers multiple benefits, not just for wildlife, but also for people, communities and the wider economy.

In March 2015, over 150 practitioners from across Europe came together at a workshop in Bristol, UK, to form a "Super Brain". This was tasked with tackling some of the most important challenges for landscape-scale conservation today.

From this event came a recipe for success: a guide to developing landscape-scale conservation. This is arranged around five broad themes. These are: engaging, planning, doing, evaluating and sustaining.

The recipe reflects the experience of many landscape-scale conservation initiatives and partnerships including The Wildlife Trust's Living Landscapes, the RSPB's Futurescapes, England's Nature Improvement Areas, and the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnerships Schemes.

The following pages provide a summary of that experience and expertise.

"The future of landscape-scale conservation is not just about delivering more, bigger, better and joined up nature reserves. It is also about winning hearts and minds."

Sir John Lawton



Engaging

Good quality engagement is vital. Engage the wider public, as well as partners, throughout the process.

Involving partners

The partnership should represent those who live and work in the landscape, including businesses, the local community, the health sector, amongst others. This will ensure a multi-sectoral partnership that can consider many perspectives. Partners should add value to the project, and provide a range of skill sets. Be sure to clearly identify the most relevant audiences, and when to involve them – it is easy to underestimate the importance of this. It can be different from project to project.

Charismatic individuals can be a great help, inspiring others and driving the vision forward. Between you all, develop a shared vision that takes account of the goals of all partners; this will need careful facilitation.

The vision should be inclusive, inspiring and creative, but also realistic and achievable. Use appropriate language, and be sure it encapsulates and enhances the sense of place, and that it considers the resilience of the landscape. Once again, you must consider long-term funding at the outset (see Planning).

Wider engagement

Involve everyone, within the partnership and beyond, to help you fully understand what is special about the landscape, particularly its wildlife and natural process. All relevant audiences should, ideally, be involved throughout the process, although at some stages it may be more useful to involve some more than others (for example, it may be most useful to involve funders at the planning stage). Engaging as many audiences that represent the landscape as possible gives a strong understanding of what is special about the landscape. Think about how you might involve the general public, land managers, funders, schools, conservation professionals, businesses, politicians, policymakers, and academics.

It's important to involve less interested or even hostile audiences. They will give you a different perspective, and if you can successfully engage them, they can become great advocates.



Methods for engagement

Be creative! Consider the most effective methods at different stages, and for each audience. What could be gained from them? For example, local knowledge, understanding the sense of place, local support or advocacy, involvement in delivery or in sustaining the project.

The quality of engagement is just as important as the method used, so create conditions that will ensure good discussion and useful results. Some of the most effective engagement methods are social media, field visits and workshops. "Champions" or key individuals can be useful in gaining support.

Key points

- **Develop a shared vision that includes everyone, even hostile audiences.**
- **Different audiences may need different engagement methods.**
- **Creative, effective and well-facilitated engagement is important.**
- **Find and support key individuals who are enthusiastic and charismatic, and who can inspire change.**

Planning

Good planning at the outset will ensure appropriate funds and skills are available to carry out the project. Consider where you are going to work, how you will fund your project (in both the short and long term), and then what skill set you and your partners will need.

Funding

Draw up a funding strategy from the start, and consider how to fund each stage to provide for the long term.

A joined-up approach, that sees partners working across the environmental sector and beyond, helps in developing applications and drawing in as much funding as possible.

Consider traditional grant sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, LEADER or LIFE, public and private sector sources and charitable organisations such as The Esmee Fairburn Foundation. Funding may be available via the general public (event fundraising, legacies, membership payments, local taxes/levies).

It can pay to be innovative, so think about crowd-sourcing, payment for ecosystem services, visitor payback schemes or community bond/shares. The “doing” stage is often easier to fund, as funders prefer more glamorous capital projects.



Choosing a partnership area

Depending on your aims, there are various ways to choose your partnership area. Be sure you understand the character and cultural heritage of the area; you will need good quality engagement with partners and the wider community, to see what will resonate locally.

Think about key features (eg SSSIs, rivers, mountain ridges or priority habitats), and the habitats of focal species. You may need a core area which is fixed, but making the boundaries flexible means you can tweak them to ensure ecosystem functions are fully considered.

Skills required

One person or organisation does not need to possess all the skills you will require; a skill set can be shared amongst the partners.

A core team ensures continuity, but recognise the importance of external expertise, such as facilitators or economic experts. Building the capacity of the local community means they can contribute effectively, too.

You are likely to need to draw on many important skills, such as project and programme management, marketing and publicity, facilitation and engagement and financial management, bid development and fundraising. You will also need practical and technical skills (eg ecology, Land Character Assessment, field/survey skills, data management, mapping and planning policy). You may need political awareness and an understanding of economics (such as of agriculture or ecosystem services), and science to take an evidence based approach.

Look for personal skills such as leadership, motivation, passion, communications and creativity.

Key points

- Consider a range of factors when choosing your area, and keep the boundary flexible.
- Consider multiple traditional and innovative funding sources.
- Identify and find the multiple skills you need from partners and obtain additional support.

Doing

This is the practical work that will achieve your vision. Success will ensure resilient landscape-scale conservation that works across different scales.



Working at different scales

It is important to implement landscape-scale conservation at multiple scales. Some methods are important across all scales, such as climate change adaptation. Others, like agri-environment schemes, are particularly important at the site-scale, because of the need to work with individual farmers and landowners. Broader, landscape-scale targeting and increased collaboration between landowners can increase wider benefits and deliver ecological networks. Species conservation can be key at different scales, ranging from site-based species to international migrants.

There is a strong relationship between landscape-scale conservation and land use planning. Strategic planning policy must extend across local planning authority boundaries, either through national and regional scale planning, or by cooperation between adjacent authorities. Payments for ecosystem services schemes are most effective at the landscape scale, as there are clear links between services and their beneficiaries.

Conservation volunteering is usually focused at site/community scale, but the volunteer experience could be enhanced by showing the conservation benefits at a landscape scale. At a local scale, volunteering can be linked to green infrastructure planning and management.

Choosing inspirational species

Different kinds of people are inspired by different species of wildlife. Choose focal species according to the particular audience to be engaged.

Consider those that are characteristic of the landscape, and those most impacted by landscape-scale conservation. Others might be species that are in decline or endangered, of economic importance, indicators of climate change or ecosystem health. And of course there are species that have mass appeal, are locally important or easily recognisable.

Making landscape-scale conservation climate smart

Landscape-scale conservation is an important approach to mitigating against, and adapting to, climate change. Adaptation in particular acknowledges that things will change, so identification of species at risk and new species that will arrive (eg those from farther south) is required. An understanding of possible climate change impacts is important, as is an understanding of the uncertainty involved, and plans must be able to respond to new evidence. This will need to be supported by good monitoring (see Evaluating) to assess their effectiveness over time.

Robust mitigation and adaptation plans require a multi-sector input, beyond just the environmental sectors. Focus on multiple species and make important wildlife sites bigger, of better quality and create more of them, to ensure a landscape is better joined up for wildlife to move more easily.

Engaging clearly and creatively with the public about these issues is crucial (see Engaging).

Key points

- **Consider the local scale, but also regional, national and international scales.**
- **Choose focal species carefully.**
- **Creative engagement with the public is crucial.**
- **Make your project climate smart.**

Evaluating

Once the evidence base has been established, it will provide a baseline against which the effects of short, medium and long-term actions can be monitored.

Measuring biodiversity impacts

You will need to set aside considerable resources for monitoring. It is not possible to measure all biodiversity impacts, so have a clear plan, prioritising where it will be most useful. It is easier to measure outputs (eg area of habitat restored) than outcomes (eg increase in target species numbers), so consider relationships between the two. Link biodiversity monitoring with existing programmes (eg the Farmland Bird Indicator), as benefiting these programmes adds value to your monitoring activity.

A range of spatial indicators can be used for monitoring at a landscape scale, such as the relative proportions of edge and core habitat areas, and fragmentation indices. It is important to underpin monitoring with the latest research in landscape genetics, which is increasing our understanding of how the distribution and dispersal of species may respond to landscape-scale conservation. Monitoring data relating to charismatic or iconic species is very helpful in communicating with the general public (see Doing).

Photographic evidence can powerfully communicate the effects of landscape-scale conservation. Take photos from fixed points at the start of the project.

Measuring social/economic impacts

Plan your monitoring programme from the start (see Planning). Social and economic evidence is essential if you are to engage politicians or decision-makers, so work with social scientists, economists and health experts to build an evidence base. You can then focus on aspects the partnership wants to influence, and indicators for measuring the impact can be agreed. Communities can help to define desired changes and impacts.

Indicators can include: jobs created, impact on property prices, number of people engaged, distance travelled by visitors to (and within) the landscape, or number of visits to the GP. Some can measure change across multiple aspects of society. Don't forget qualitative data, as this is also valuable. For example, videos of people's experiences can tell important stories.



Developing and maintaining the evidence base

The evidence base can demonstrate the need for change, and that desired outcomes are achievable. Set clear objectives, and be sure to understand the partnership's aims for this.

Don't re-invent the wheel; there is lots of existing data. Partners should identify between them who holds it, if it is accessible and any licensing issues. Include both socio-economic and ecological data. Multiple sources will usually be used, including biodiversity, health, socio-economic and ecosystem services data, but new research may be needed.

Non-scientific data can be useful for engaging and motivating people, and citizen science is good for engaging people and collecting additional data.

A dedicated data manager is required. Future-proof the data to ensure the format continues to be accessible. Any existing data or new data produced should be archived.

Key points

- **Develop the best possible evidence base that you can.**
- **Use existing data sources and add value to them through local knowledge.**
- **Qualitative information is important too.**
- **Include social and economic evidence alongside the ecological data.**

Sustaining

Don't leave thinking about the legacy of a project until the end. Keep it in mind throughout, but particularly when establishing the partnership.

Establishing a resilient partnership

Good planning at the start is crucial to ensuring the project's success. Selecting the right partners from the beginning is vital – a resilient partnership involves tenacious, motivated, and enthusiastic partners who are focused over the long-term. Build trusting relationships, communicate effectively, compromise, and be open and transparent. If you plan well at the start you're on the way to ensuring the partnership continues beyond the life of your project (see Planning). You will need Terms of Reference, a Memorandum of Understanding, or a contract which outlines an agreed framework for project management, decision-making, delivery and details of partners' roles and responsibilities. Continuity of funding is vital and should be considered at the start. This is not the responsibility of just one partner; the partnership needs to work together.

Continuity of staff can help, but review the membership regularly to ensure it remains relevant. Plan for potential change, such as people leaving their jobs, and do not rely on a few individuals. Publicity should be shared by the whole partnership, regardless of who contributes most funding. Rise above individual brand issues to ensure long-term recognition of the partnership.



Inspiring others

There are many ways to inspire others to share knowledge, good practice and resources for landscape-scale conservation. Choose the method most appropriate to the target audience (see Engaging). A central landscape-scale forum/hub may help different organisations interact with each other and share lessons learnt. Knowledge should be shared across boundaries, especially across the UK.

The communication methods identified as most useful are: field visits (all stages of the Recipe for Success); social media (all stages, but especially Engaging, Sustaining); guidance/toolkits (Planning, Doing, Sustaining); websites (all stages) and training/development (Planning, Doing, Sustaining).

Sharing success

Key messages that help people to understand why landscape-scale conservation is important include: savings to national spending and the contribution to the local economy; the contribution to people's health and wellbeing; benefits to ecosystem services eg food, clean air, water, energy, biodiversity. They may also like consideration of the cultural value of landscapes in terms of their historical value, as well as for their personal memories and stories. See Engaging for more information.

Key points

- Consider long-term sustainability and how it can be achieved at all stages of the process.
- Share responsibility, knowledge and the credit for success.
- Focus on building trust, tenacity and transparency.
- Communicate success, matching the message to the audience.

A landscape at a crossroads

A weather-hardened traveller
Bearing the weight of generations,
Rests awhile at a crossroads.
His grandfather's wisdom of the seasons,
The coal-black hands of winter
And hayseed fingernails of summer,
Tell the story of his childhood beginning.
Through land of myths and legends,
Along hollow-way and turnpike road;
Past collapsed coal-mine shafts
And rubble-filled old lime kilns;
Forgotten relicts of landscape past.
His proud field barn, once shelter
To hardy cattle after the hay cut,
Now tumbledown and empty
Even of summer's swallows.
Which path to take through watershed moors
And fading echoes of the curlew's cry?
Visiting travellers from silk towns around,
Drink from this land, yet
Have been oblivious to his struggle.
Now they will join and lend a hand
On the path where wisdom and innovation
Meet to pave a smoother road.



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This document summarises the results from the workshop "The Future of Landscape-scale Conservation in Europe" that was held in Bristol on the 4 and 5 March 2015. The workshop was facilitated by Countryside. For further details visit landscapescale.com

