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SUII Knowledge Exchange Programmes

**The centrality of ‘folk, work and place’ in the UN  
SDGs: learning with Falkland Estate towards  
Scotland’s Land Use Strategy**



**Final Report**

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## Introduction and aims

Landscapes and places shape people and cultures; land holds species and habitats; land can deliver shared prosperity or privilege for a few. Patrick Geddes' triad of 'place, work, folk' provides a framework for shifts in land use that address social, environmental and economic challenges. Well managed land provides ecosystem services including food and forest products, carbon emission mitigation, catchment flooding reduction, decreased pollution and biodiversity conservation. Together with provision of recreational and cultural services for local communities and tourists, these benefits are increasingly being delivered in multifaceted approaches that could align well with the holistic approach of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Scotland, the unrealised Land Use Strategy lays out objectives relating to the environment, economy and communities, whilst the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement indicates stakeholder principles. It is unclear to what extent these policies map to the SDGs and their interactivities, although the Scottish Land Commission is addressing their practical implications. Falkland Estate is a timely example of a system in transformation, exploring integrated land use and governance change. In this programme, a partnership between Universities, Falkland Estate and the Land Commission came together to address the following aims:

- To critically investigate how the framework of the SDGs and their interactions might influence the transformation of integrated land use and governance models in Scotland and beyond
- To facilitate action learning for development of a land use strategy for Falkland as a real world exemplar of land and people ready for innovative integrated land use and governance
- To bring together international experience, policy makers and academics to relate empirical context to conceptual understanding
- To inform the implementation of the LUS, the LRRS, the work of the Land Commission, and engagement with the SDGs

## Activities

Three online workshops explored theoretical framings, policy context and practical experiences (especially from Falkland Estate) of shifts in land governance to achieve more sustainable outcomes for land use in Scotland and beyond. A briefing paper analysed methods to assess progress against the SDGs whilst considering their interactivity. A film and an art project crafting items on Falkland Estate supported empirical understanding and permitted appreciation of values held. Additional presentations and discussions informed outputs.

## Outputs, Results and Impacts

Our Briefing Paper explored how a systems approach and policy coherent development enable the SDGs to be addressed in ways that identify synergies and minimise negative trade offs. However, systematically analysing all of the complex interactions between the SDGs and their targets remains a challenging process that is undertaken mainly by large organisations such as the UN, OECD, some national governments and some large corporations with insights from researchers. We developed a SDGs 7Step Integration Cycle and analysed



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relevance and applicability of 17 tools to incorporate and assess SDG interactivity. Tools are context specific, with applicability dependent on scale, purpose and form of organisation or initiative, location and other factors. The workshops revealed that the overarching framework of Scottish Government policies was Net Zero, the Just Transition and the Wellbeing Economy, with the addition of Resilient Communities and Better Greener Places at local level.

Key findings included recognition of tensions around the pace of change; urgency is required but the genuine engagement with stakeholders takes time. We need policies and actions at different scales to be aligned. SDGs offer global aspirations for our globalised world, but we need relevant national and local policies. Whilst we have recently focused more on human rights in relation to land access in Scotland, we need to consider the rights of nature more and recognise the responsibilities of land users, local people and also large developers. The recent pandemic has increased appreciation of local nature/land and the need for wellbeing benefits from nature, but has generated challenges in land management that should be seen in this wider policy framing. Dialogue and shared goals are crucial to implemented change in people's behaviours (such as food choices) which facilitate sustainable land use, but structural changes (such as cycle lanes) will also be needed. Conflict, if managed, can trigger positive change. Art is essential to provoke, inspire and inform people, especially local people around a place with which they connect. Given the urgency of global challenges and their manifestation at local levels, we propose that it is a Just Transformation rather than a Just Transition that is required.

The programme has catalysed several impacts, although these are still evolving. These include capacity development of the project team, and of participants in workshops, film, making, brief writing as well as though who read/view these outputs. We will initiate conceptual impact through a paper written on implementation of the SDGs at local level for sustainable land use. Connective impact was evident through new and strengthened networks. There were instrumental impact through strengthened policy, and practice at local levels. Relational impact occurred through creation of trust and understanding across a team that can work together again, and at local level on the Estate by strengthening mutual understanding.

## **Key recommendations**

We need urgent, greater involvement of stakeholders in identifying and implementing effective policies on land use to maximise synergies and minimise unintended consequences. We need to address SDG interactivity to ensure holistic outcomes, but the challenges are complex and there is no "easy fix" among the available tools. Action is required at all scales from national to regional, communities to individuals; both behaviour change and structural change are required. Policy makers need to collaborate with organisations such as SDG Network Scotland and with academics, but everyone needs to contribute to meeting the challenges. Case studies such as Falkland Estate demonstrate how engagement, dialogue and collective decision making are required between local communities, land governors and land users. Such processes benefit from professional facilitation and innovative engagement, for example, through art as well as dialogue.