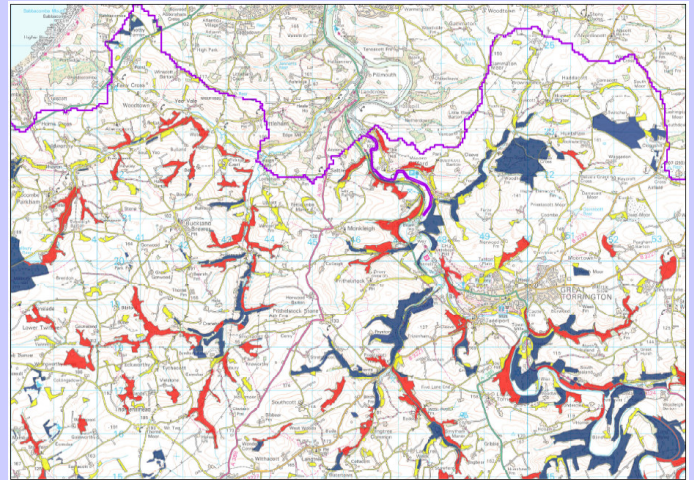


Land-Manager Identification and Engagement for Forestry

Identifying land-managers, including woodland and forest managers, has long been a key obstacle for public officials seeking to promote sustainability. Not only is this information relatively limited, it is held by various organisations and its use is fragmented. This project set out to establish an easy to use, systematic method for identifying land-managers at a landscape scale. It achieved this by drawing lessons from prior efforts and testing the proposed method in Devon.



Background

In order to achieve its principle objectives, namely afforestation and the sustainable management of existing forests, the Forestry Commission (FC) must engage with many private land-managers. However, obtaining information regarding *who* land-managers are, along with *what* land and *where* they manage, has long been recognised as a major obstacle. Prior studies have shown that considerable information regarding the identity of land owners and managers is held by public and non-governmental organisations, but accessing these records can be problematic. These studies have usually focused on the *identification of owners* which has important drawbacks and limitations: notably surrounding the exchange of personal information. Land-managers can, however, be *engaged* (i.e. communicated with) without identifying them formally. For example, messages and information can reach land-managers through their established social networks. This project described a method and baseline information focused on identifying *and* engaging managers, with which the Forestry Commission can adapt the organisation's practices to achieve wide-scale engagement at a landscape scale.

Objectives

- To describe a spatially referenced method via which the Forestry Commission can identify and engage woodland managers and other land managers
- To test the method within the Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area landscape (proof of concept).

Methods

Design of the method was achieved through reviews of both prior efforts to address the problem of land-manager identification (which had most frequently been done at a local level) and the information available and accessible through existing data-sets. The effectiveness of the method was then tested through its implementation within a 'real' landscape setting – Northern Devon. At each stage of the testing the project team recorded resource effort and 'return' in terms of woodlands with ownership and/or management information.

Findings

A spatially referenced staged method for land-manager identification and engagement was successfully described and tested. Although the method does not prescribe a specific software package, it does require some spatial analysis software skills. As such requires a level of expertise of the user, or appropriate technical support. The research revealed unrealistically high expectations regarding the scope and quality of spatial data and significant resource deficiencies in relation to fully exploiting available data. After production of a 'base map' of the forest landscape, the method directs the user to map current levels of knowledge of management and ownership. At each of its five stages, the method sets out the key sources of data in a list, describes the required outputs, and suggests criteria for prioritisation. The method centres on the production and use of a 'Gap Map' which identifies and locates 'target' woodlands for the user.

Ownership and/or management information for approximately half of target woodlands in the test landscape was available from data-sets to which the FC already has access. Knowledge held by local professionals provided information on a further quarter of target woodlands. The research showed that if implemented fully the method could potentially provide information on 80-90% of target woodlands. This full implementation would, however, be a daunting challenge for time-constrained Woodland Officers and other local staff, and require significant increases in resource allocation both locally and centrally. Our research noted the resources required to implement each stage of the method. Other public and non-governmental organisations hold substantial information about woodland management which could be more effectively utilised. This is particularly true of the Rural Payment Agency's *Customer and Land Database (CLAD)*.

Recommendations

- Develop the method in partnership between central FC data managers and local 'user' staff.
- Increase in capacity both locally and centrally to process spatial data.
- Support the implementation of the method with extra resource for local users and clear prioritisation within the local context (i.e. to address local priorities).
- Develop an effective and efficient technical process for information exchange between local users and relevant spatial analysts.

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Reports and Publications

Dandy, N., P. Handley, D. Moseley, K. Watts & B. Ambrose-Oji (2012) Land Manager Networks Project WP1 Final Report: Landscape Scale Method to Identify and Engage Land Managers. Forest Research, Farnham.