

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do the 2011-2016 strategic priorities remain robust and relevant for the period 2016-2021?

Comments

Due to the pace of environmental change we are particularly supportive of policy and practice as an overarching strategic priority. It is important that scientific research feeds into policy directly and that projects undertaken are relevant in the wider political context. However, given that there is not an explicit statement about advice and delivery we think it is difficult to deliver the first two strategic priorities.

Question 2: Do these 'enabling principles' set the right context or should additional principles be adopted?

Comments

In general we are content with the three enabling principles; however, we think that the order is not quite right. We think that 'inspiring innovation' should be the first priority as this includes 'facilitating interdisciplinary research' and 'cross-partner working' which should include communicating the results or findings to the end user. By placing inspiring innovation as the top enabling principle GWCT think that the second principle of exchanging knowledge will be easier.

Question 3: Are the high level outcomes sufficiently clear, if not, what changes would you propose?

Comments

It is disappointing that at no level is the 2020 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy acknowledged, nor is Scotland's wider biodiversity obligations beyond 2020 mentioned within these research themes. These high level outcomes are particularly focused on land use and productivity. GWCT applaud the aspirations for productive and sustainable land use and we firmly believe the same approach should be applied to maximising biodiversity through the intensification of conservation.

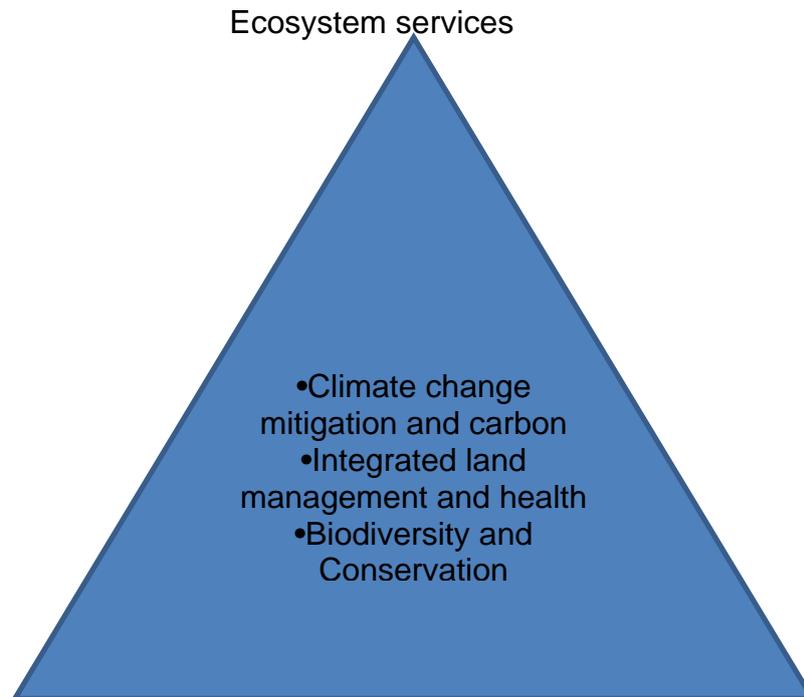
Question 4: Are the three broad themes identified an appropriate way of structuring our work? If not, what alternatives should be considered?

Comments GWCT feel that the layout of the broad themes needs to be changed. In our view both health and land use are part of ecosystem services, which is a holistic approach to viewing and researching our environment. Separating out particular services such as health risks not efficiently delivering these objectives. We think that figure 1. needs to be reviewed and we would propose the following changes:

- The overarching heading should be ecosystem services but within

the triangle service priorities can be highlighted.

For example:



Changes to the high level research themes within the triangle, in our view, would be useful as the above would reflect existing policy and Scottish Government Strategies.

Question 5: How can the SG maximise the benefits of on-going investment in the MRPs to build and benefit from connectivity with the wider science base?

Comments

We think that MRPs should be encouraged, if not obliged, to collaborate with outside organisations or non MRPs. This would significantly improve connectivity with wider science based organisations.

Question 6: What are your views of the performance and operation of the CoEs to date, are there any additional areas that would benefit from such support?

Comments

As a research focused NGO we have had no contact with CoEs and to us they appear largely irrelevant to outside research bodies.

Question 7: Do you agree with the SG's proposal to end support for SPs and to explore alternative mechanisms to strengthen engagement between its investment in research and the business sectors it aims to support?

Comments

GWCT are supportive of ending financial assistance to Strategic Partners as it has been identified that there are better ways of integrating science and business.

Question 8: Do you have any proposals for how the research portfolio can better link to the business community to deliver the desired outcome?

Comments

As a research charity we would suggest that better links are established with businesses, research organisations and charities. Outwith forestry and agriculture, land based businesses can often be forgotten when promoting research findings to the business community. It is noticeable at consultation meetings and conferences (including the recent SEPA/SRUC Conference) that big businesses, local government and land based industries are not present to engage with research findings or policy discussions.

We would therefore propose that the research strategy includes engaging with not only big businesses but as a priority also works with smaller research bodies and NGO's who may be able to disseminate findings to a wider community and bridge the gap between science/policy and delivery on the ground.

Question 9: Is the purpose and value of underpinning capacity sufficiently clear, if not how can it be improved?

Comments

We think that the value of the underpinning capacity is not explicitly clear and would find it useful to see a full breakdown on how this funding is distributed.

Question 10: Do you have any views regarding the performance and use of the Contract Research Fund including how it could be improved?

Comments

GWCT view the contract research fund to be very important. The contract research fund allows RESAS to apply a flexible approach to research funding and for policy to steer research projects. We think this is particularly important given rapid changes in our environment and the need for more immediate scientific input to policy decisions. As a research based organisation, we were unaware of the contract research fund until recently and it has been a steep learning curve understanding how such funds operate.

With regards to the performance of the contract research fund, we are not aware of previously funded projects and their outcomes.

Question 11: Could the overall delivery model be further simplified in a way which still enables SG to meet its strategic priorities for the portfolio, if so how?

Comments No response.

Question 12: Do you have specific suggestions as to how the RESAS research strategy can contribute to the delivery of the objectives of the CAMERAS partnership?

Comments No.

Question 13: Do you have any suggestions for developing the partnership with other research funders?

Comments

For developing partnerships GWCT would recommend that formal and transparent cross boarder discussions are held between SG, MRPs and the research councils, at both the UK and EU level to identify key areas of interest and cross boarder research topics. We feel that this approach will significantly improve relations at a governmental research level and help identify partnership opportunities for common interests and priorities.

Question 14: Do you have any particular suggestions as to how greater engagement with the HEI sector might be achieved?

Comments

GWCT would recommend that Scottish Government adopt the CAASE funding approach.

Question 15: Are the research outputs from the RESAS portfolio of research readily accessible or can this be further improved, if so how?

Comments

GWCT feel that there is always room for improvement! We would suggest that stakeholder events, seminars, talks and presentations are useful ways for engaging with stakeholders and provide research outcomes in a digestible format. However, in our experience the most important way of engaging with land managers and farmers is in the form of demonstration of practice through farms or Estates. A network of demonstration properties which show both good and bad practice is absolutely essential for engaging with land managers/farmers/ foresters.

We would also recommend collaborative stakeholder events with an external organisation, this would help to maximise the opportunities for promoting RESAS research and potentially reach new audiences.

Question 16: Is the current performance management approach fit for purpose or can it be improved, if so how?

Comments No response.