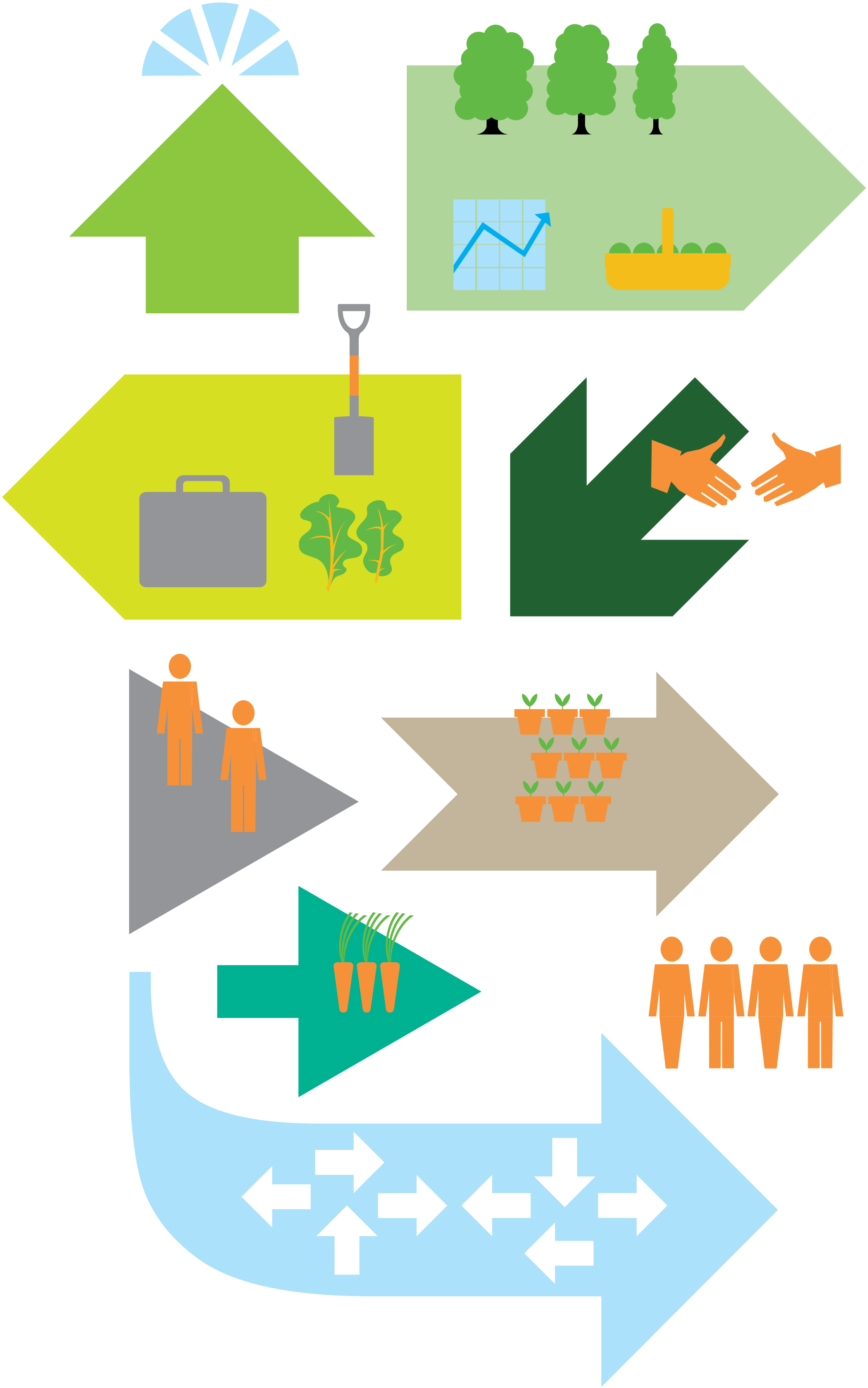
COMMON GOOD LAND USE IN ENGLAND
STATE OF THE SECTOR REPORT 2019



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SHARED ASSETS

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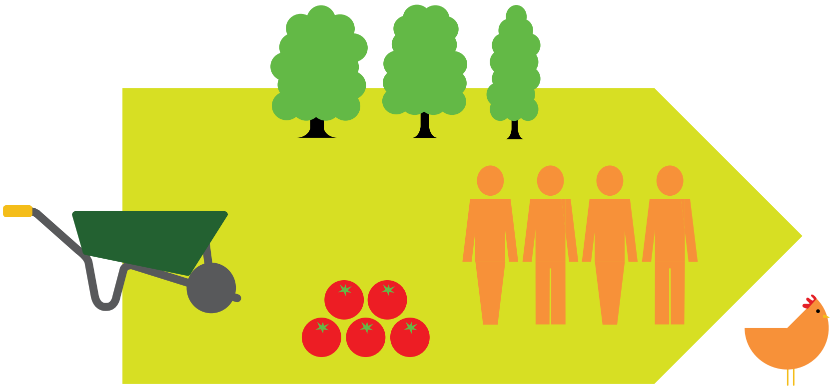

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This research was funded in 2018 through the Power to Change Research Institute’s open research grants programme. The open research grants programme aims to support the community business sector and its partners to deliver the evidence the sector needs for its own development, and to make the case for the value of community business. The research is conducted independently of Power to Change. The work and any views presented are the authors’ own.

ABOUT SHARED ASSETS CIC

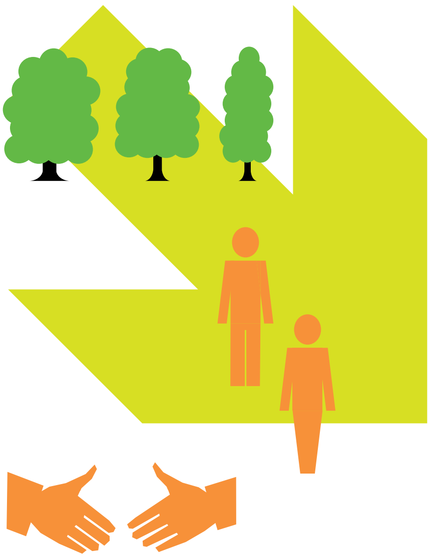
Shared Assets CIC is a social enterprise think and do tank that specialises in new models for the management and governance of land for the common good. We exist to support ‘common good land users’, and to create the conditions in which they can thrive. We have a particular focus on parks, green spaces, woodlands, agricultural land and open countryside. At Shared Assets we believe that land is a common good, regardless of who owns it formally. We believe those organisations and individuals who are managing land sustainably for shared social, economic and environmental benefit, who we call common good land users, can make a substantial contribution to local economic resilience, social cohesion and environmental quality. In our experience of working with and alongside common good land users, they are creative, entrepreneurial, ambitious, and often see their work in explicitly political terms; frequently as a response to climate change or peak oil. The interpretation of the findings of this report, and the surrounding narrative and conclusions, are a product of our positionality and reflective of our goal to galvanise a common good land movement. This report was written by Kim Graham and Kate Swade.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shared Assets would like to thank Power to Change for funding this research, and particularly Suzanne Perry (Research Officer) for her support and guidance throughout the research process. We are also immensely grateful to the many people who gave up their time to contribute to this research in 2019, from the representatives of membership and infrastructure organisations who advised on its structure, to everyone who filled in details of their activities on the land through the online surveys. We would particularly like to thank Ken Greenway, Keith Tomkins, Gareth Davies, Ian Solomon-Kawall, Simbi Folarin, Katie Rees, Steph Wetherell, Tristan Faith, and Simon Platten who spoke to us in depth about their experiences through interviews, and to everyone who attended workshops in Sheffield, Bristol and London to enthusiastically discuss the challenges faced and support needed by people using land for the common good. We hope that this research report, and the resources which accompany it, are a source of inspiration and guidance which help you advance your wide-ranging initiatives to support people and the environment. Shared Assets wants the conversations generated through this research to continue, and reach a wide audience of policy makers, funders, and anyone interested in land as a social justice issue. Please get in touch with us at **hello@sharedassets.org.uk** if you would like to be involved in this ongoing work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across England, there are groups and organisations that are managing woodlands, parks, waterways, green spaces and food-growing land in ways that create shared social, economic and environmental benefits. Against a national backdrop of rising land prices and concentration of land ownership, increasing food insecurity, sustained health inequality, and the climate emergency, these spaces are vital in connecting people to each other and the environment. They also showcase possibilities for how land, if managed in ways that prioritise the common good rather than individual gain, can be the starting point for tackling a range of interconnected and urgent societal issues, and for imagining and creating a different future. Shared Assets calls groups managing land in this way 'common good land users' as a shorthand, but they go by lots of different names. In this piece of research, we set out to find out more about them.



What do we know about Common Good Land Users?

According to our findings, common good land users are:

- Generally managing small parcels of land (although some operate at a significant scale)
- Most often working on woodland, horticultural land, or parks/open space (and in many cases on more than one type of land)
- Highly dependent on freelance or part-time staff and volunteers
- Usually working with small budgets and surpluses
- Earning income through selling products and services, but also reliant on grants and fundraising
- Managing a mix of legal organisational forms and relationships to the land
- Part of vibrant and effective local networks and relationships, and drawing on their local community for advice and support
- Needing external support for more technical issues such as legal advice, but are most in need of more skilled staff and secure funding streams

Building on calculations from Power to Change's 2018 Community Business Market Report, we cautiously estimate there are 900 common good land users in England, of which 10% contributed to this research in some way. Of the 9% of common good land users who filled in the survey, 39% met all the criteria of Power to Change's 'community business' definition, but 31% thought of themselves as a community business, and almost all respondents (99%) met at least one element of the Power to Change definition.
This report gives further detail on each of these characteristics of common good land users, gathered through the survey, interviews and workshops we conducted.

Key recommendations

This research has shown just how diverse the common good land use sector is – there is no 'one size fits all' solution to its challenges. However, if the key recommendations below are implemented by landowners, policy makers, funders, and current and potential common good land users, we believe we could see a growth in the number of organisations managing land for the common good, and much better support for those who already are:

For people wanting to create common good land use projects

- Be clear about your purpose and build in time for reflection
- Visit existing projects and ask the hard question
- Research the best land tenure and legal structure for your project

For existing common good land users

- Use your networks, but look beyond your silos to build a broad base of support
- Consider cross-subsidising, so different elements of your project can support each other
- Think widely about how you make and demonstrate an impact, as this can be hard to quantify through traditional means

For landowners

- Make your interest in working with common good land users known, detail the type of land you have to offer, and lay out any restrictions you have
- Don't treat common good land users like standard commercial partners
- Set out everyone's rights and responsibilities clearly at the start of a relationship via a formal agreement

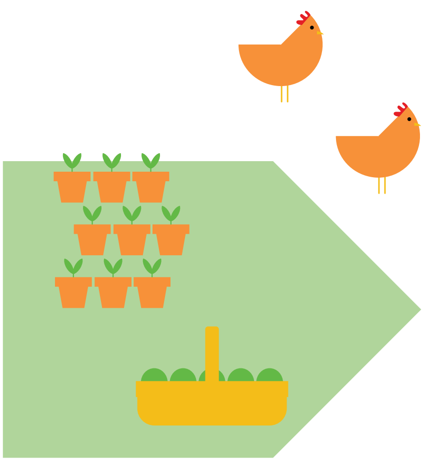
For policy makers and funders

- Make transparent and detailed information on land readily available
- Consider strengthening community right to buy legislation and the creation of a Land Fund in England
- Make ecologically sound and socially valuable land management material considerations in planning decisions
- Get up to speed on common good land use, and be led by groups' aims and the support they say they need to fulfil their objectives over the long term
- Look to build on the networks and connections that already exist, rather than creating new support programmes
- Fund multi-year core costs (not just project costs) to support growth and sustainability – including staffing, to challenge the reliance on volunteers and on low pay

You can also look at the 'Quick Guides' to common good land use (**http://bit.ly/CGLUQuickGuides**) we've made for each of the audiences above, with more detailed recommendations and resources.

The way forward

There is increasing recognition that our entire pattern of land use and land management needs to change for environmental, social and economic reasons, particularly in the face of imminent climate collapse, and the government is beginning to take steps to address this, for example through new commitments to tree planting and afforestation and the creation of new 'garden towns' across the country. This likely means there will be increased need for farmland, woodlands and new parks and green spaces to be proactively and sustainably managed for both the environment and society, and common good land users could potentially step up to fulfil this role, if adequately supported to do so. A key question for supporters of this movement of common good land users is – how can we help remove the structural barriers they face to make luck less of a factor in their success?



This research has allowed us to build a detailed 'snapshot' of the common good land use sector, including understanding its current needs in order to be able to expand to meet these emerging challenges and opportunities, but has also sparked many more ideas about useful future collaborations – from a programme of community organising around land use, to action research with common good land users about what community accountability looks like in practice. We would be delighted to hear from people interested in partnering on these or related projects.

For now, the optimism, ambition, and creativity displayed by so many common good land users to have an impact, in spite of limited resources, gives us hope for a bright future for the sector. Shared Assets will continue working to build a common good land movement which recognises itself, its shared values and goals, works together to achieve these, and contributes to an overarching cultural narrative about land as a common good. We welcome contact from anyone who shares this vision.

INTRODUCTION

Land is one of our most important fundamental resources. Ownership of land is a source of power, wealth and privilege, and controlling its use and management are key elements of modern capitalism. Attempts to make a fairer and more just society throughout history have often focused on land and who owns and controls it - from the 16th Century Diggers wanting the make the earth "a common treasury for all", to the Land Settlement Act of 1919 providing land for returning soldiers after World War I. More recently, the rise of housing coops, development trusts and community land trusts (CLTs) have created models of community-led control of land and property which are growing in popularity and impact. There are now 677 mutual housing organisations,[1] 600 development trusts[2] and 263 CLTs[3] in the UK, and in England alone, 6,300 community-owned assets contribute nearly £220 million to the economy every year.[4] Regulations and policy supporting the transfer of public assets to communities and the provisions of the Localism Act have also gone some way to creating supportive legislative frameworks for community-led control of land and buildings.

St Clements CLT, Mile End –
The first CLT in London

Lianna Etkind/London CLT

However, the English context in many ways lags behind Wales and Scotland when it comes to supporting community and other alternative models of land management. In Scotland, community ownership and management of land is seen explicitly as a tool for community empowerment and local economic development – very much aligned to Power To Change's vision of "creating be er places through community business."[5] For instance, Community Land Scotland has shown there is a higher level of local participation, and a stronger sense of local belonging and satisfaction in community owned estates when compared with the wider population [6] In Wales, new models of land management are recognised in the planning system through the One Planet Development Framework.[7] In England, there is not the same explicit recognition of these new forms of land management that create livelihoods while delivering environmental and social benefits. The Localism Act puts a framework around a (more limited than Scotland) set of community rights, and there is a track record of successful asset transfer[8] of buildings and land to community organisations

[1] Co-operati e Housing International (2019). *About United Kingdom*. [online] Available at: https://www.housinginternational.coop/co-ops/united-kingdom/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019]. [2] DTA Wales (n.d.). *Home - DTA Wales* [online] Available at: https://dtawales.org.uk/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[3] National Community Land Trust Network (n.d.). *About CLTs* [online] Available at: http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/what-is-a-clt/about-clts [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[4] The Centre for Regional Economic Social Research and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (2019). *Our assets, our future: the economics, outcomes and sustainability of assets in community ownership*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Assets-Report-DIGITAL-1.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[5] Power to Change (2019). Our ambition for community business. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/about-us/our-ambition/ [Accessed 6 Nov. 2019].

[6] Community Land Scotland (2015). *Results of Pilot Study of Social Impacts of Community Land Ownership*. [online] pp.10-11. Available at: https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CLS-Social-Impacts-Pilot-Survey-Final-Report-for-Release-290115.pdf [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[7] Welsh Government (2012). *One planet development practice guide*. [online] Available at: https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/oneplanet/?lang=en [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[8] The transfer of a public (usually a local authority) asset to a community organisation at "less than the best consideration that could reasonably be obtained" - i.e. less than market value.

Harvesting calendula on Elder Farm, Devon

Ecological Land Cooperative

across England. Communities, and the social sector more broadly, are also increasingly being seen by local authorities and others as an answer to the management of parks, woodlands and other public land. This was shown in our survey, with 44% of respondents (22 groups) reporting that the local authority was the freehold owner of the land they were working on; this compared with 22% (11 respondents) who said the freeholder for their land was a private individual or family.

Despite this less ambitious, and less supportive, policy framing in England, we know from our work that there are creative and entrepreneurial practitioners managing land in ways that generate shared social, environmental and economic benefits. However, there is a lack of good quality data that could help to inform the development of this nascent sector. Recent Community Business Market reports commissioned by Power to Change[9] have highlighted issues including a lack of consistency in terminology, and the fragmentation of data about community organisations managing land, who are more often classified depending on their varied and often multiple areas of focus (e.g. food growing, and/or woodland management). This fragmentation also impacts the support, resources, and peer learning opportunities available to community organisations managing land, which are often channelled through sector-specific programmes and platforms. This approach may result in missed opportunities to share experiences and limit the range of inspirational or more holistic 'possibility models' available to newer land-based organisations.

More broadly, there is an emerging wider recognition of the fact that our entire pattern of land use and land management needs to change for environmental, social and economic reasons, particularly in the face of imminent climate collapse. The recent International Panel on Climate Change report on Climate Change and Land Use[10] focuses on how sustainable land and forest management can not only prevent and reduce land degradation and maintain productivity, but reduce and even reverse the adverse impacts of climate change. The UK Government is both funding the planting of substantial numbers of trees,[11] and supporting the creation of new 'garden towns' across the country.[12] The government has also made it clear that farming subsidies post-Brexit will value environmental land management.[13] [14] All of this means there will be increased need for farmland, woodlands

[9] Social Finance (2016). *The community business market in 2015*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PTC-State-of-the-market-2015-research-report-tagged_AW-REV1.pdf [Accessed 7 Nov. 2019]., Social Finance (2016). *The Community Business Market in 2016*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-Community-Business-Market-in-2016-Digital-Revised-1.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019], CFE Research (2017). *The Community Business Market in 2017*. [online] Available at: http://www.powertochange.org.uk/research/the-community-business-market-in-2017/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].'

[10] International Panel on Climate Change (2019). *Climate Change and Land - Summary for Policymakers*. [online] Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/Edited-SPM_Approved_Microsite_FINAL.pdf [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[11] Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Forestry Commission, and Gove, M. (2019). *Government delivers new £10m fund to plant over 130,000 urban trees*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-delivers-new-10m-fund-to-plant-over-130000-urban-trees [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[12] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Malthouse, K. (2019). *£3.7 million to fund 5 new garden towns across the country*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/37-million-to-fund-5-new-garden-towns-across-the-country [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[13] Downing, E. and Coe, S. (2018). *Brexit: Future UK agriculture policy*. Briefing Paper Number 8218, 31 January 2018. [online] Available at: https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-library/Brexit-UK-agriculture-policy-CBP-8218.pdf [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

[14] Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Rural Payments Agency, Environment Agency, Animal and Plant Health Agency, and Gove, M. (2018). *Landmark Agriculture Bill to deliver a Green Brexit*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-agriculture-bill-to-deliver-a-green-brexit [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

and new parks and green spaces to be proactively managed for both the environment and society. Is there a role for the social sector and community businesses to play here?

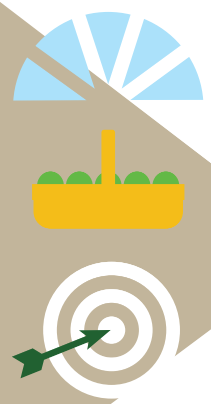
We responded to Power to Change's open research call with a proposal to find out more about the land-based community business sector in England, particularly focusing on the activities of such groups, their networks, the barriers they are facing, and the support they require to succeed. Given the context above, we wanted to begin to establish to what extent the management of land for the common good could begin to meet some of the challenges and opportunities brought about by the growing importance of land use at a time when the public sector is increasingly stepping back from a land management role.

This report discusses the research results, draws some conclusions about the usefulness of the term 'common good land use' and provides some recommendations on ways to bolster the broader movement or sector of community-motivated organisations working on land.

In this report, we sometimes talk specifically about land-based 'community businesses' (which are defined by Power to Change as being locally rooted, trading for the benefit of the community, accountable to the community, and having a broad community impact).[15] Elsewhere we use the term 'common good land users', to include community organisations working with land for social and/or environmental benefit, but which may not meet all of the criteria for being a community business. Common good land users is the more general term.

We define common good land use as the management or use of land which:

- Creates shared benefit
- Supports sustainable livelihoods
- Enriches the environment
- Produces the things people need
- Has an element of community control
- Is at the centre of a wider system change



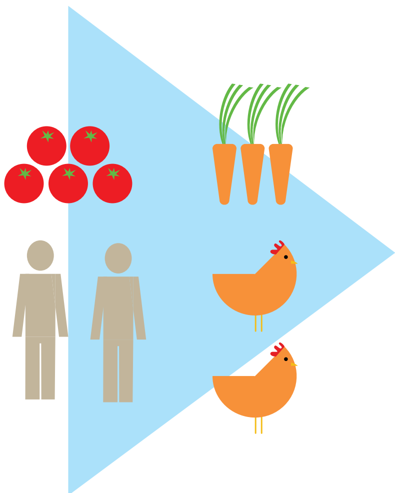
Common good land users range from horticultural worker cooperatives supplying local families with veg boxes, to community businesses restoring local woodlands, to 'friends of' parks groups establishing cafes and other businesses to revive their open spaces. We have rich anecdotal and experiential knowledge of these groups and their activities, but wanted to establish a more complete and robust evidence base to help us understand more about the social and community enterprises we exist to support.

The rest of this report is structured into four main sections: Methodology, Findings (with ten thematic subsections), Conclusions and reflections, and Recommendations and further research.

In addition to this report there are four 'Quick Guides to Common Good Land Use' (**http://bit.ly/CGLUQuickGuides**) aimed at four audiences (Potential Common Good Land Users, Current Common Good Land Users, Landowners, and Funders and Policy Makers), a network map (**http://bit.ly/SOTSNetworkMap**), a geospatial map (**http://bit.ly/SOTSGeospatialMap**), and the anonymised survey dataset (**http://bit.ly/SOTSDataset**) available online.

[15] Power to Change (2019). *What is community business?* [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/what-is-community-business/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

METHODOLOGY



This research used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyse data on common good land users. Its methodology developed iteratively over the course of the project to meet participant needs, in response to participant feedback, and ultimately to increase the amount of data collected.

Research questions

Our initial research proposal put forward the following questions to guide the research:

1. How many community organisations / social enterprises are managing land in England across a range of sectors, and what proportion of those could be defined as community business?
2. What networks exist within and between land based community business sectors, and how well connected are they?
3. What are the barriers to the establishment and sustainable operation and growth of land based community businesses, what are the support needs at different stages in their development, and to what extent are these common across different sectors?
4. To what extent are existing sector specific tools and resources known about and accessed across different sectors, and how useful are they?
5. What gaps, or duplication, currently exist in support and resource provision for land based community businesses?
6. What is the extent of, and potential for, peer learning between sectors nationally and locally?
7. What infrastructure and resources are needed to support peer learning / provide other support for land based community businesses?

We set out to answer each of these questions using the methodology described below.

Data collection

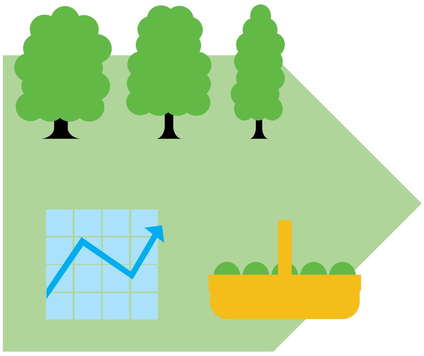
Desk-based research and infrastructure interviews

The first stage of the research was a desk-based investigation of the key existing networks and support organisations for common good land users, building on Shared Assets' existing knowledge and contacts. This was followed up by interviewing three people from the most prominent infrastructure and support organisations identified – Groundwork UK, Plunkett Foundation, Locality – as well as a representative from the Centre for Regional Economic Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, which co-authored a recent report on the national scope of community asset ownership.[16] A full list of interviewees is provided in Appendix 1 (**http://bit.ly/SOTSAppendix1**). These conversations provided useful information on:

- the resources they already have available for land-based community businesses
- their experiences of doing surveys in the community sector (noting the issue of survey fatigue, but that a cash incentive can help overcome this)
- their thoughts on 'naming' this sector, and who particular terms appeal to or exclude
- potential geographic clusters to focus on and run workshops in (although these did not always align with where the bulk of survey responses came from)

These and other infrastructure organisations were also instrumental in promoting the research to a wide audience, through sharing the survey, and advertising workshops in their newsletters or on social media.

[16] The Centre for Regional Economic Social Research and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (2019). *Our assets, our future: the economics, outcomes and sustainability of assets in community ownership*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Assets-Report-DIGITAL-1.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].



Common Good Land Use Survey

The survey was developed after consulting the infrastructure organisations, and used a range of question styles to gather substantial data about the groups which filled it in, from basic information about their size, turnover and legal form, to more in-depth questions about the support they have received from and offered to peers, their staffing structure and approach to pay, and how they would describe their organisation and its activities. Initially, two similar surveys were designed, one specifically for woodland enterprises who had taken part in the Making Local Woods Work programme (which had a few extra questions about woodland management),[17] and one for all other types of land-based community businesses. Both of these surveys took about half an hour to complete. In response to some feedback about the length of the survey, we also produced a shorter version, which captured the most important information, only took about five minutes to fill out, and linked to a longer version if people had extra time to complete it. The three versions of the survey questions are included as Appendix 2 (**http://bit.ly/SOTSAppendix2**).

In total, 11 cash prizes of £150 were offered to incentivise participation, and this seemed successful, as fewer responses were submitted during the period when the incentive was removed (although this may also have been a function of the audience being saturated with advertising the survey by this point). The survey opened on 1st March and was closed on 21st August 2019, having received 106 responses[18] across the three types of survey, and having given out £1,650 directly to the community land sector, which was reportedly used for activities from restoring woodlands in Cornwall to reseeding wildflower meadows in Sheffield. After data cleaning for blank or multiple responses, 102 responses remained in the dataset.

As an online survey, promoted via our networks and through social media, we received 23 responses from land-related organisations operating in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, many of these from Making Local Woods Work participant organisations. These responses showed there were many similarities in the experiences of and challenges faced by organisations from elsewhere in the UK, when compared with those in England. Whilst this report focuses on the data from organisations operating in England, as per Power to Change's funding focus, the shorter 'Quick Guide' documents produced to accompany this report, the network and geospatial maps produced, and the open-access dataset, include data from all respondents.

We have embedded some of the most interesting graphs and charts within the narrative below, however many more can be found in the full anonymised dataset (**http://bit.ly/SOTSDataset**). For each of the graphs, we have put the number of responses received for each question (N) – these figures vary depending on whether the question was asked in both the shorter and longer forms of the survey, whether the question concerned land, and whether all respondents filled in that particular answer (as few of the questions were compulsory, some were simply skipped). In most graphs, both the absolute number of respondents who gave a certain answer, and this number as a percentage of the total number of question respondents, is given – denoted by a different colour as explained, where relevant, by the graph legend.

Workshops

Three workshops were held for land-based community businesses to come together, meet their peers locally, and discuss the themes of the research in more depth. Workshop locations were chosen based on geographical clusters of survey results as they stood at the end of May 2019, and were advertised through social media, on Eventbrite, and by promotion to survey respondents and our wider network. For practical reasons, the workshops were held in urban areas with good transport links – Bristol, Sheffield and London, but they attracted participants working in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, providing opportunities to collect varied data.

[17] Given that the Making Local Woods Work support programme was coming to an end, and the programme team were going to be issuing a similar survey, we agreed to work together to avoid groups being asked to fill in two very similar surveys in a short period of time. Making Local Woods Work is a network of partners working to support and grow woodland social enterprise around the UK – find out more here: https://www.makinglocalwoodswork.org/.

[18] A table showing the spread of respondents across each survey, arranged by country, is provided in Appendix 3 (http://bit.ly/SOTSAppendix3).

Each workshop was designed to be highly interactive and productive both for the participants and the researchers. The workshops involved getting to know each other's projects, and discussing the challenges and opportunities for their activities, as well as the forms of support needed to help them reach their goals. The rich information gathered from these events helped flesh out the data from the survey and incorporate information from a further 12 common good land users, and is woven throughout the discussion of findings below. Perhaps more importantly, the workshops brought together people involved in different types of land-based community work[19] who might not usually meet, and gave them space to begin forming relationships.

Participants discuss future plans for their land-based projects at the Bristol workshop

Shared Assets

Interviews

Nine semi-structured interviews were carried out in parallel with and shortly after the first two workshops. Purposeful sampling of survey and workshop participants was used to put together a list of interviewees who were well-informed about the themes of the research, and covered a range of project types, geographic areas, and land uses – more detail on this is provided in Appendix 1.

The interviews were used to probe some of the themes emerging from the research at the level of individual projects, and gather further qualitative data about some of the quantitative questions asked in the survey. For example, interviewees were asked about the relative importance of the social, environmental and economic benefits of their projects for their communities, and how they balanced these elements, providing more detail than the simple scoring question in the survey on this topic did.

Data analysis

Data collected through the surveys, workshops and interviews were analysed according to their format and type. Quantitative data were collated in graphs and charts, or using simple descriptive stati tics, such as averages, the most informative of which can be seen in the Findings section below. For the qualitative data, the information was synthesised, and key emerging topics, needs, and motivations of participants were identified, drawing on thematic analysis techniques.[20]

[19] And in the afternoon of the London workshop, representatives from various support organisations

[20] Thematic analysis strives to identify patterns of themes in interview data through coding language and organising codes into categories – for more information, see: Mortensen, D. (2019). *How to Do a Thematic Analysis of User Interviews*. [online] Available at: https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/how-to-do-a-thematic-analysis-of-user-interviews [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Mapping

Two types of mapping were undertaken through this research – geospatial and network. An anonymised network map (**http://bit.ly/SOTSNetworkMap**) was created using GraphCommons, which shows the connections between support organisations, local land-based partner organisations, and participant organisations. In each case the map shows whether participants were aware of, a member of, or had collaborated with various partner or support organisations, for example through funding, support or other forms of guidance. This allowed for analysis of the size and strength of the network.

Survey participants were also asked if they consented to their organisational details being published on a publicly accessible geospatial map (**http://bit.ly/SOTSGeospatialMap**), which shows the geographic spread of responses. An artistic depiction of this map is given in Figure 1 on the next page, but please explore the more detailed version online via the link above.

Limitations

Although the methodology above produced a wealth of useful data to draw upon, there were also associated limitations which we would bear in mind for similar research undertakings in future:

- **Online survey approach and platform** – we received a good number of responses to the survey, but through our professional and personal connections, are aware of many other common good land users in England who did not fill it in – many more hours of desk-based research and on-the-ground follow-up visits would be needed to get a comprehensive picture of the sector. Also, the 30-minute estimated length of the initial survey may have been too long for some, hence why we later decided to shorten it to some key questions which could be followed up by interviews if desired. Unfortunately, the survey platorm used – Typeform – does not record partial responses, only full ones, so we may have lost additional data where people began the survey, but decided not to continue to the end. Online surveys have a notoriously low response rate,[21] yet still require a significant amount of work to write and promote for the amount of data collected, so future research on this sector may want to consider a different approach to data collection

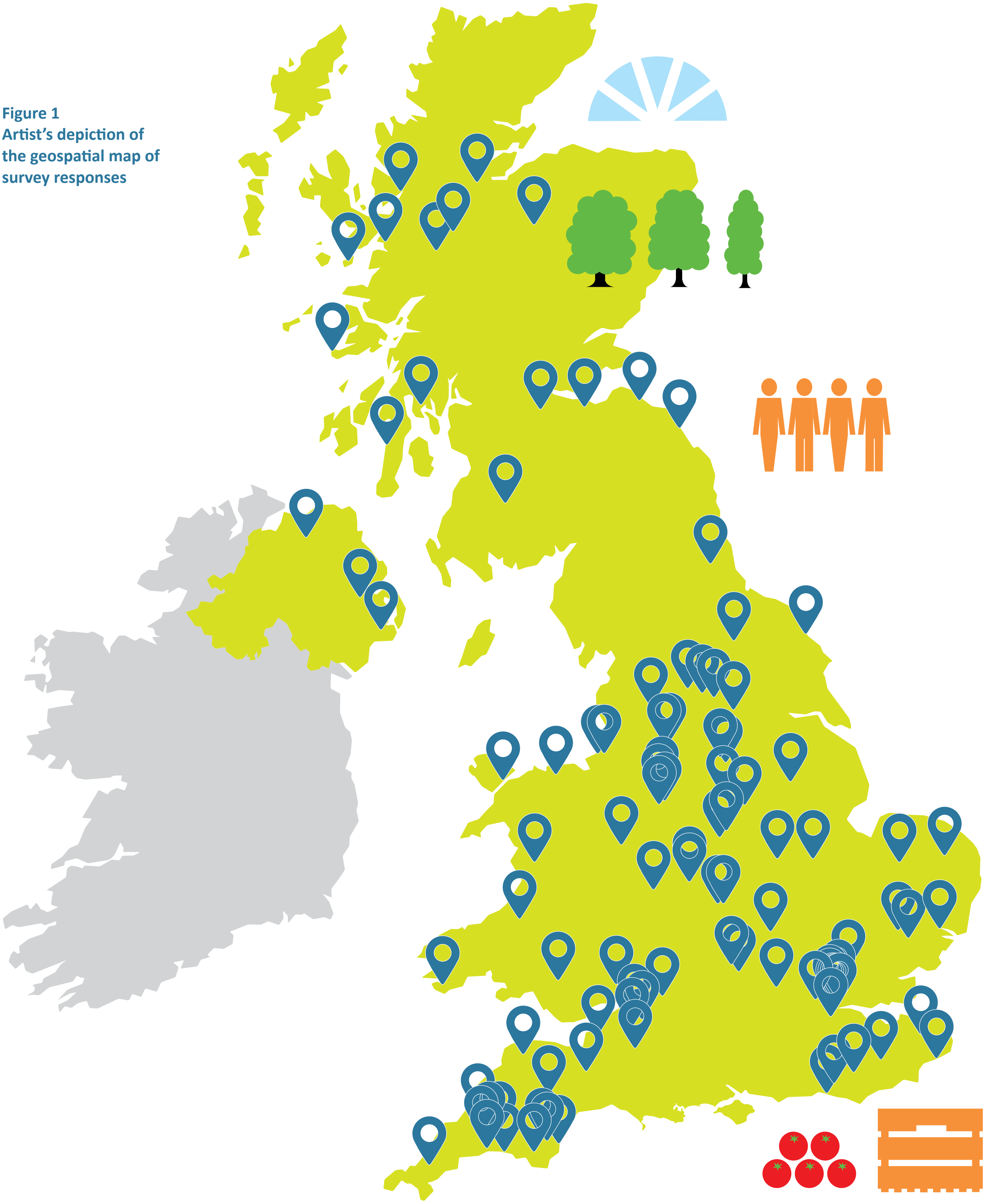
- **Engaging with people working on the land** – related to the point above, our decision to use an online survey and urban-based workshops, during the late spring and summer, for the bulk of data collection, may have made research participation difficult for some land-based organisations. In rural areas, decent broadband access is more likely to be lacking than in urban regions,[22] and projects focused on agriculture may have found it challenging to make time for computer-based tasks when there is lots to do outside. The workshops, held in July and September, seemed to be a difficult time to get people to attend, likely because it is the peak of the growing and harvest season, and many people also go on holidays then. However, the winter is often a very busy time for woodland-based organisations, so similar problems may have been encountered in the winter. The issue of timing and seasonality is something to consider for future similar research.

- **Sampling strategy** – A formal sampling strategy was not used for the survey, given its planned method of distribution mainly via social media and through our existing networks. However, a more stratified and targeted approach to sampling may be useful for future similar studies to gather data from a more demographically diverse group of people. Moreover, although the Making Local Woods Work network was very helpful in promoting and responding to the survey, their high levels of participation (averaging 71.2% completion rate, compared with 10.3% for the general survey) may have skewed the dataset towards woodland-based projects.

[21] Fan, W. and Yan, Z. (2010). Factors affecting response rates of the web survey: A systematic review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, [online] 26(2), pp.132-139. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222389093_ actors_affecting_response_rates_of_the_web_survey_A_systematic_review [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[22] Ofcom (2018). *Connected Nations 2018.* [online] Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/130736/Connected-Nations-2018-main-report.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Figure 1
Artist's depiction of the geospatial map of survey responses



FINDINGS

In the themed sections below, we share the results of the research, combining insights from the surveys, interviews and workshops. Each section has a short summary ('Headline points') at the start, followed by more in-depth discussion and analysis ('Further discussion'). The majority of quantitative data and further discussion features responses from participants from England; where these cannot be separated out, it is clearly noted the analysis/discussion includes all responses from across the UK.

1 Organisations and motivations

Headline points

- The survey received 77 individual responses from organisations managing land in England – based on a rough calculation, there are estimated to be around 900 such organisations in the country, meaning about 9% of them responded to the survey, and 10% participated in the research in some way
- 39% of organisations met all the criteria of the Power to Change definition of a community business
- However, 31% of respondents said they would describe themselves as a community business
- Over half (65%) of these organisations were formed in the last ten years

Further discussion

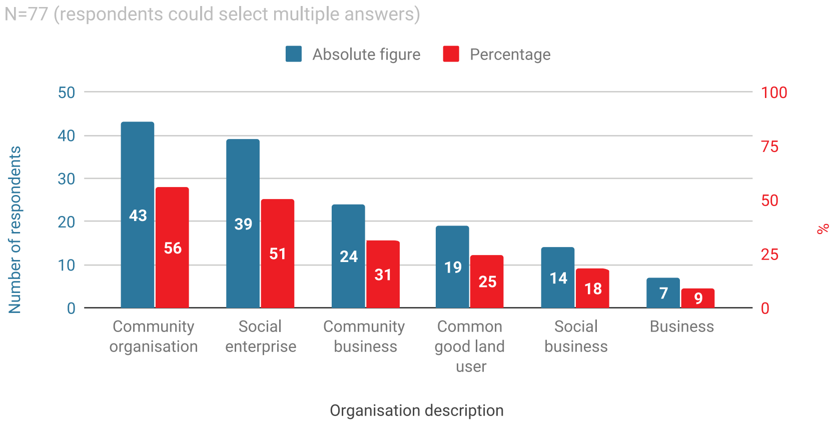
We provided a selection of common terms for community initiatives (as shown in the graphs below) from which respondents could select as many as they thought were relevant descriptions for their work. The most commonly chosen term was the fairly generic 'community organisation , selected by 43 respondents (56%), but many participants selected more than one term, giving an initial indication of the range of motivations and activities undertaken by such organisations, as well as the difficulty in pinning down the most applicable nomenclature for a highly varied sector.

In trying to estimate the total number of land-based community businesses in England currently, we used the 2018 estimates from the latest Community Business Market Report[23] for community businesses in the 'Housing', 'Food catering and production farming' and 'Environmental' sectors. This gave an estimate of 900 organisations. However, from looking at the data sources for the latter two of these sectors in particular, data sources are patchy, and may only take account of more formal organisations, such as Community Supported Agriculture schemes and food cooperatives, not the many smaller community gardens and conservation groups which answered our survey, so this may be an underestimate. Respondents to our survey also mentioned working on areas related to the 'Health and social care', 'Energy' and 'Community hub' sectors, amongst others. Adding these three sector estimates alone to the total number brings it up to 3,500 organisations.

[23] CFE Research (2018). *The Community Business Market in 2018*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Report-19-Community-Business-Market-2018-FINAL-DIGITAL.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

24 (31%) of the survey respondents identified as community businesses, but further analysis showed that 42% of these (10) did not meet all the community business criteria. On the other hand, 16 survey respondents (21%) did meet all criteria while not identifying as community businesses. This is not uncommon in other sectors,[24] and may be to do with the ambiguity of the various criteria in the community business definition. The discussion below also shows that many more respondents than the 39% who met all four of Power to Change's community business criteria, would at least partly meet the definition of community business.

Figure 2
England only:
How would you describe your organisation, if someone asked?



When asked to provide more information on the purpose or nature of their organisations, respondents most frequently said that they were at least in part land-based (58, 82%), and their primary purpose was to generate economic, social and/or environmental benefits to their local community (56, 79%). When asked to rate the relative importance of each type of benefit out of five, environmental benefits were most highly rated (scoring 4.68 on average), followed by social benefits (average score of 4.67), with economic benefits slightly less important (3.82). The interviews revealed all three aspects were often connected:

"The social, economic and environmental elements are all intertwined and hard to disentangle."

However, the emphasis put on one or more elements might depend on the priorities of funders rather than the organisation:

"We found a lot more funding for 'community' projects; when you say climate breakdown, funding bodies tend to shy away, but are easier to engage via the 'community' or 'social' aspect."

Almost all organisations had clear or at least an approximate mission and/or vision for what they wanted to achieve (69, 99%), but only about three quarters (51, 74%) had a business model or plan. Whilst this level of formality might not be essential for all groups, it could also indicate an area where further support is needed.

Close connections to the local area were also a common theme in many groups' work (37, 52%), having been both established by local people and working for the benefit of a local community. This is a key part of the community business definition. There seems to have been an upsurge in interest in setting up such organisations in the last decade or so – 54 (76%) respondents' organisations had been set up since 2007, but only 17 (24%) in all the years before that. This could reflect that such projects are often short-lived, or that they are a response to the new 'localism' agenda, or austerity, and may warrant further research.

[24] See, for example, page 12 of this report: Community First Yorkshire and Durham Community Action (2018). *Village halls, rural community hubs and buildings: The size, scale, scope and potential of these community business*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Villages-open-call-report-1.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

2 Land

Headline points

- 33% of respondents were engaged with more than one type of land
- Woodland, horticultural land and green spaces were the most popular types of land managed
- 61% of respondents worked on less than ten hectares of land
- 19% had an informal arrangement with a landowner

Further discussion

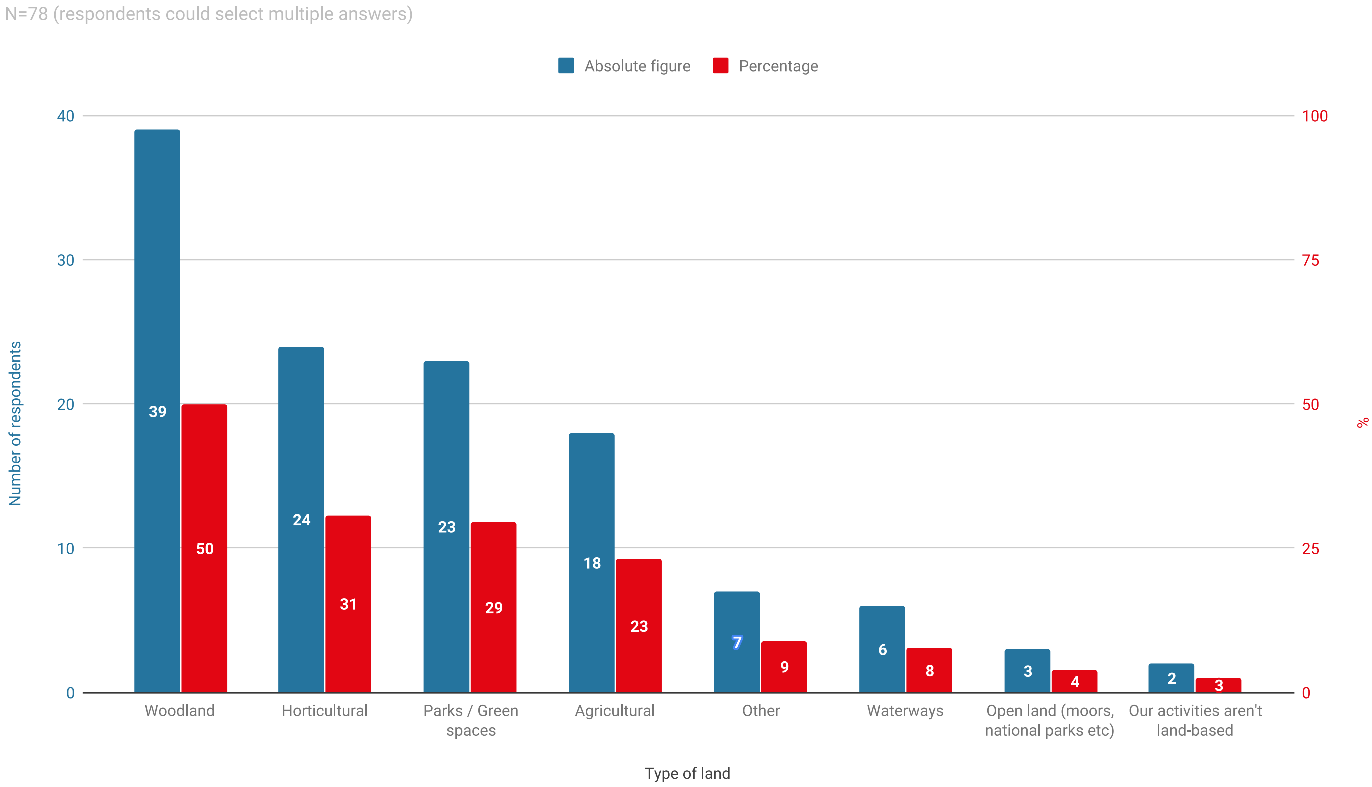
The most popular types of land in which organisations' activities were based were woodland, horticultural land, and parks/green spaces, respectively.

The high proportion of respondents selecting woodland likely reflects the bias in the survey sample towards woodland groups (which were specifically targeted through the Making Local Woods Work programme). Respondents could also select multiple categories, and 26 did (33%) – again showing the potential diversity of land uses even within a single organisation.

Mixed land use at Organiclea, London

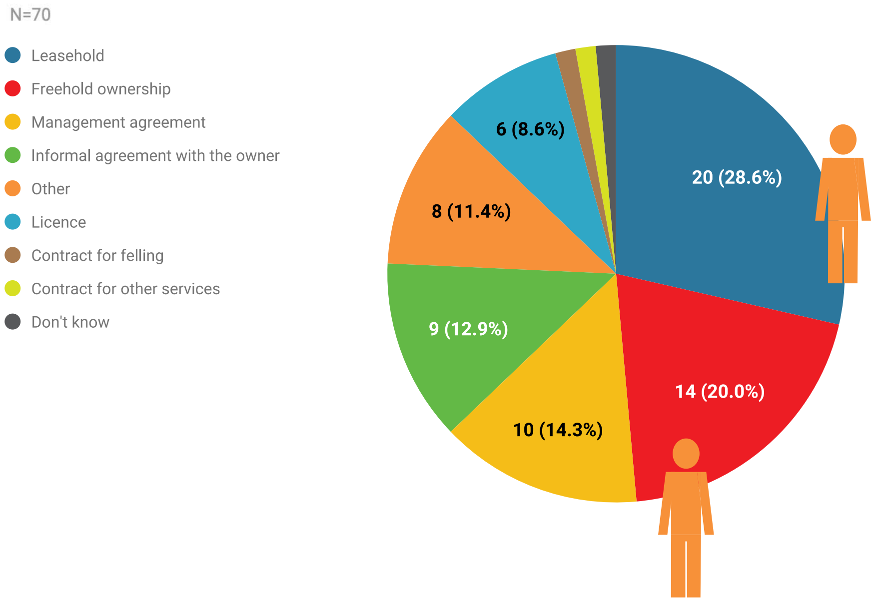
Shared Assets

Figure 3
England only:
What kind of land does your organisation work on?



Most organisations surveyed were working with very small amounts of land – 61% with less than ten hectares (38 respondents) – and had a wide range of legal relationships to the land they were operating on – with leasehold being the most common (20, 26%), Of all the types of legal relationships mentioned, 19% of respondents (15) were operating with at least some element of informal agreement. Length of leases, where in place, ranged from one to 125 years (with five or 20 year leases proving the most common).

Figure 4
England only:
What's your organisation's legal relationship to the land?



3 Governance

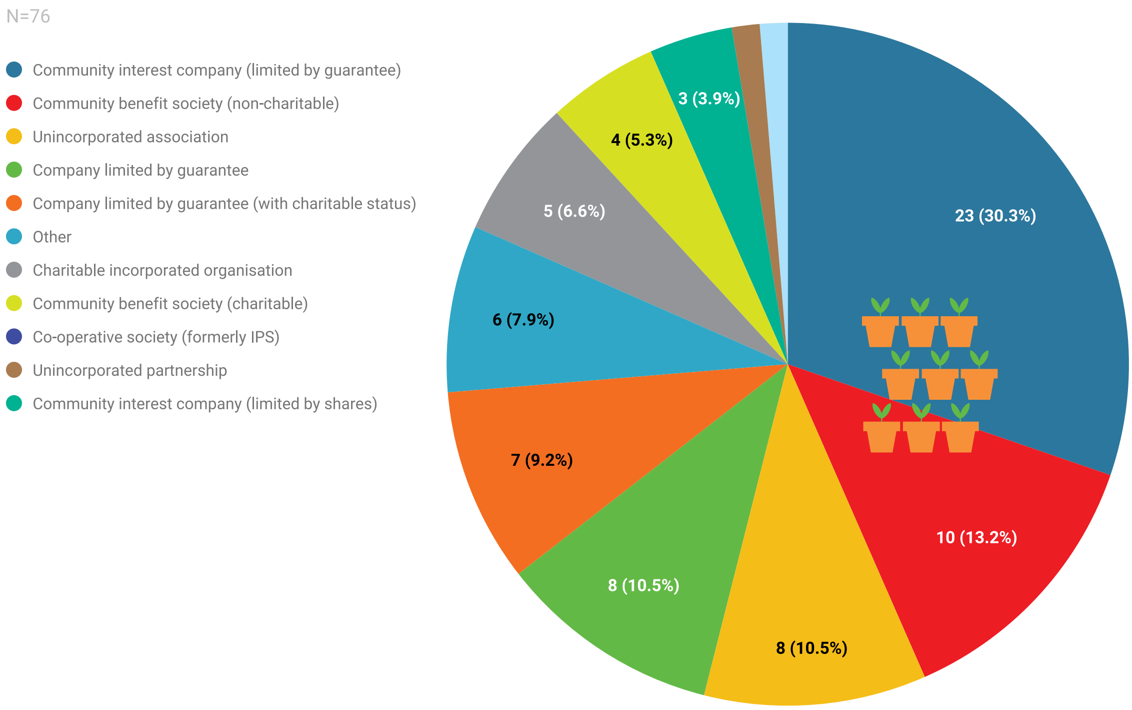
Headline points

- The two most common types of legal form were community interest companies. (CICs) (30%) and community benefit societies (13%)
- About a third of organisations do not feel confident they have the best legal structure to achieve their aims
- 56% of organisations said they were accountable to their communities

Further discussion

Organisations had a wide range of legal forms, ranging from informal unincorporated associations, to charities and companies. The CIC structure was most popular. However, regardless of their precise type, legal structures with broadly charitable or community-focused aims were much more popular than those designed for private profit, reflecting a key pillar of what we term common good land use – creating shared benefits

Figure 5 England only: What is your organisation's legal form?



The myriad forms of legal structure to choose from may make it difficult for organisations to select the best one for their activities both now and as they develop. 35% of survey respondents (23) were not confident (or not sure if they were confident) that their organisation had the best legal form to achieve its aims. For the seven respondents who shared why they were not confident, most (5, 71%) did not know which form was best for them, or indeed how to determine which the best structure would be, or how to go about getting to that structure. As one interviewee said:

"We are not confident at all navigating all these things – we're all activists, we didn't want to wait, we just wanted to do something...It would be great to have links to bodies that could help us there, as we can't afford to go to solicitors all the time."

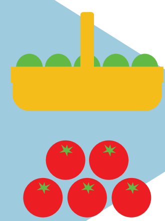
It is interesting that 11% (8) respondents were unincorporated associations, which do not carry limited liability and would leave members personally liable for, for example, debts incurred in delivering their work. This would certainly be an inadvisable structure for organisations entering into lease arrangement with landowners.

The degree and nature of community accountability amongst the organisations surveyed was interesting. At first glance, 56% of organisations (39 respondents) said they were accountable to their local communities. When asked for more detail, most of these organisations said their community accountability came from community members sitting on the board, or consultations with the community (19, 43% for both), although it is difficult to tell how meaningful or useful such relationships are in day to day running of activities. Also, a number of organisations which explicitly said they were not accountable to the community still chose organisational descriptions which included reference to their community-based credentials – ten groups selected ‘community organisation’ and six ‘community business’. This calls into question the reliability of such terms.

4 Finance

Headline points

- Over a third (35%) of community organisations engaged with land were dependent upon grant or fundraising income
- 46% of organisations stated that staffing costs were the most significant
- 22% of respondents made a loss in the last financial year, and 32% had a surplus of less than £1,000



Further discussion

Respondents were engaged in a number of activities to generate income from their work – mainly selling products (such as wood fuel, vegetables, or room hire – 29 respondents, 41%) or services (educational courses, woodland management, fulfilling contracts – 31 respondents, 44%) to generate income,[25] but around 35% of organisations (25 respondents) were reliant on grant income or fundraising in their local communities, although seven of these organisations also undertook some other form of income generation. Interviews with common good land users shed some more light on this balance – having the freedom to use money as you wish is ideal, but this often requires income that not all CGLUs have the ability to generate themselves (yet). While grants can help fill this gap, they often entail some ceding of direction or strategy:

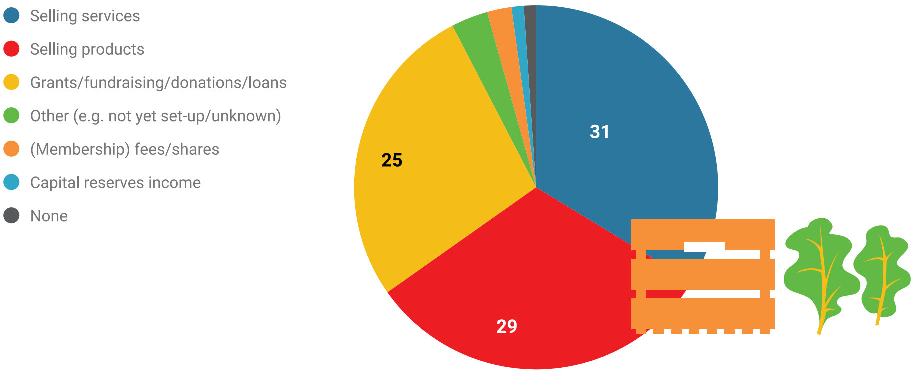
“You often end up changing your proposals to what unders want – i you get unders to trust you about what you know needs doing, that’s perfect...The worst is when funders ‘read a report’ or something and tell you what needs to happen in [LOCATION]’s fields from an office in London – it’s often well-meaning but misguided. Another problem is that lots of funders want to lightly reach a lot of people, but that’s not what [ORGANISATION]’s about, it’s about meaningful change, so it can be difficult to secure funding.”

[25] Selling services includes – education, green care, woodland management, fulfilling contracts. Selling products includes – site hire, wood fuel, housing, energy, fruit and veg. Some choices were determined to be selling both a product and a service (e.g. ecotourism, coppicing).

FINDINGS CONTINUED

Figure 6
England only:
What are your main sources of income?

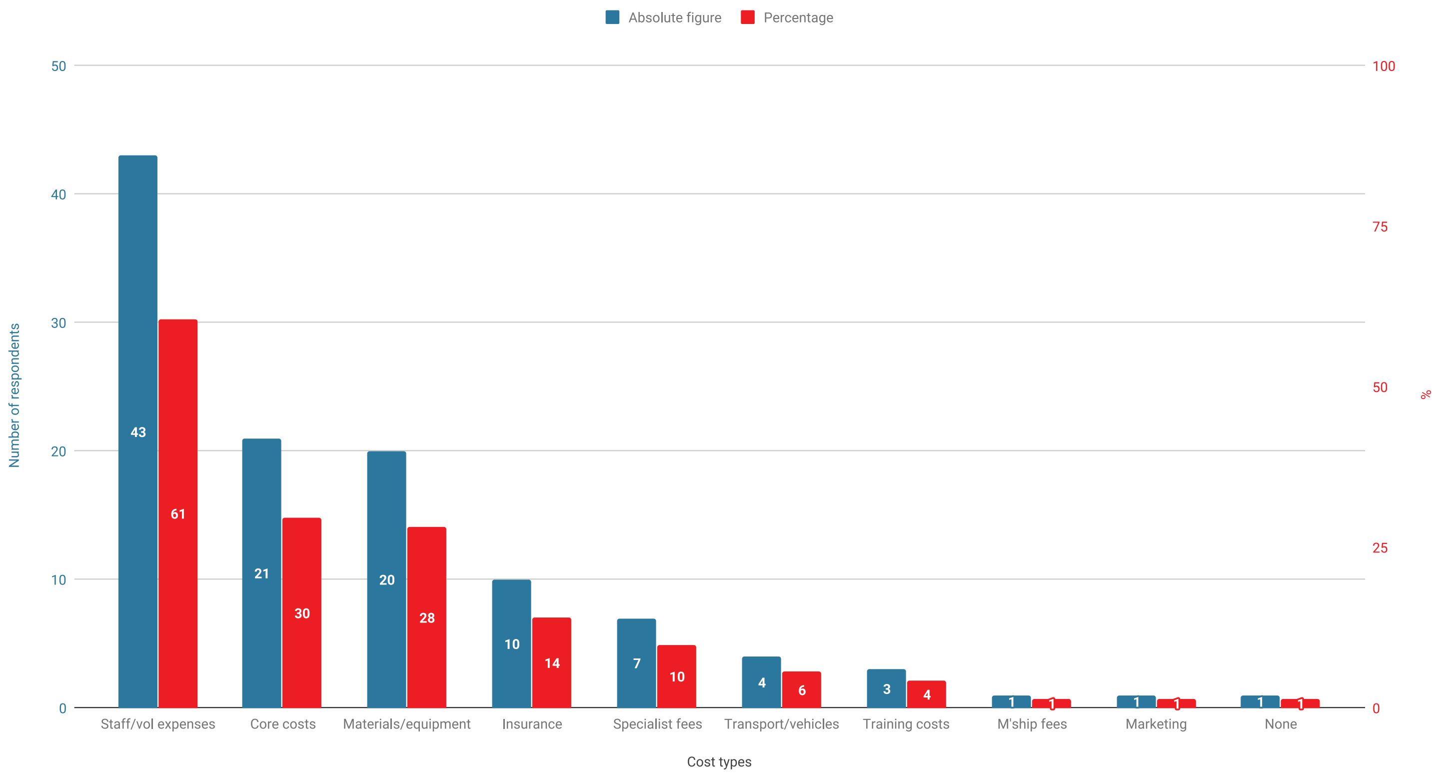
N=71 (but free text answers were sometimes sorted into multiple categories)



Staffing expenses, core costs (including rent and utilities) and materials/equipment for activities were most frequently listed as organisations' main costs.

Figure 7
England only:
What are your main costs?

N=71 (but free text answers were sometimes sorted into multiple categories)



We also asked organisations for an idea of their annual turnover and surplus. While 20 organisations had a turnover of £10,000-£49,999 (the most frequently selected category – 33% of respondents), just seven had a surplus of this amount (11% of respondents), with 22% of organisations (14 groups) reporting they made a loss, and 32% (20 organisations) with a surplus of under £1,000. It is also worth noting that 21 respondents (35%) had turnovers of over £50,000 and seven (12%) had a turnover of over £500,000, so some 'common good land users' were operating at a larger scale.

Figure 8
England only: What was your turnover in the last financial year?

N=60

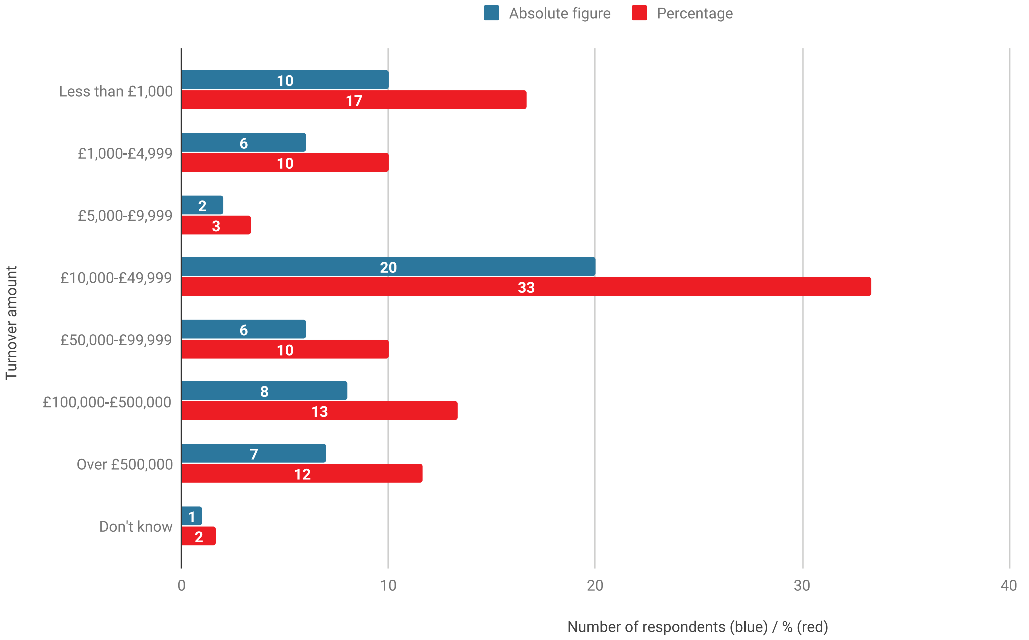
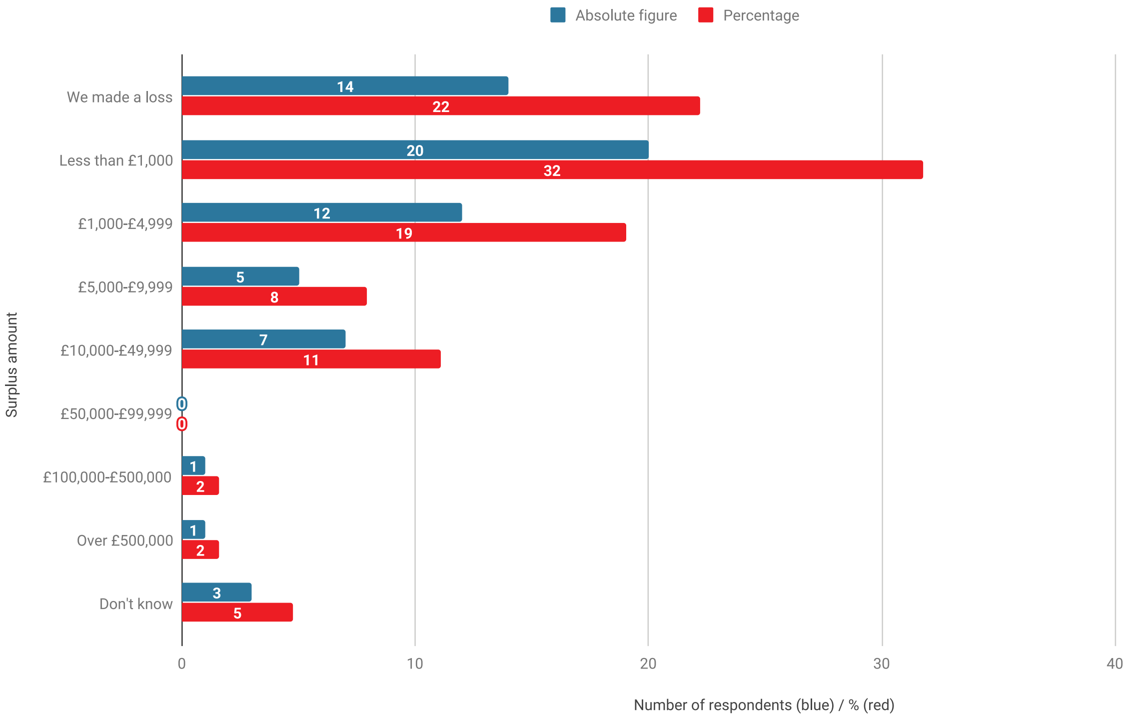


Figure 9
England only: What was your surplus in the last financial year?

N=63

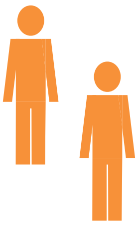


While turnover and surplus amounts in isolation may not be the most reliable indicators of an organisation's financial health, these figures, plus those that follow in the next section on Workforce, paint a picture of a sector that is constrained by low levels of funding, and that is trying to do a lot whilst reliant on donations and the hard work of volunteers. For example, one interviewee described how difficult business planning can be when funding is so uncertain:

"We did have a business plan in the past but found it became redundant so fast – so much is funding reliant, but this is so unpredictable. We have a general overall outline of where we are trying to get to, and for funding bids we often have to state exactly what we want to achieve, but we don't have a detailed current business plan, as it's hard to know from week to week what money will be coming in."

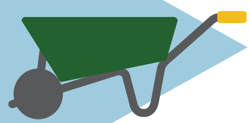
This is not unusual in the community business and broader social sector world, but does raise questions about the sustainability of the sector – and illustrates why grants and donations continue to be important.[26] There seemed to be a trend towards organisations with higher surplus levels being more likely to have a clear business plan, when compared with those which made a loss or little surplus – but this requires further investigation with a larger sample size.

5 Workforce



Headline points

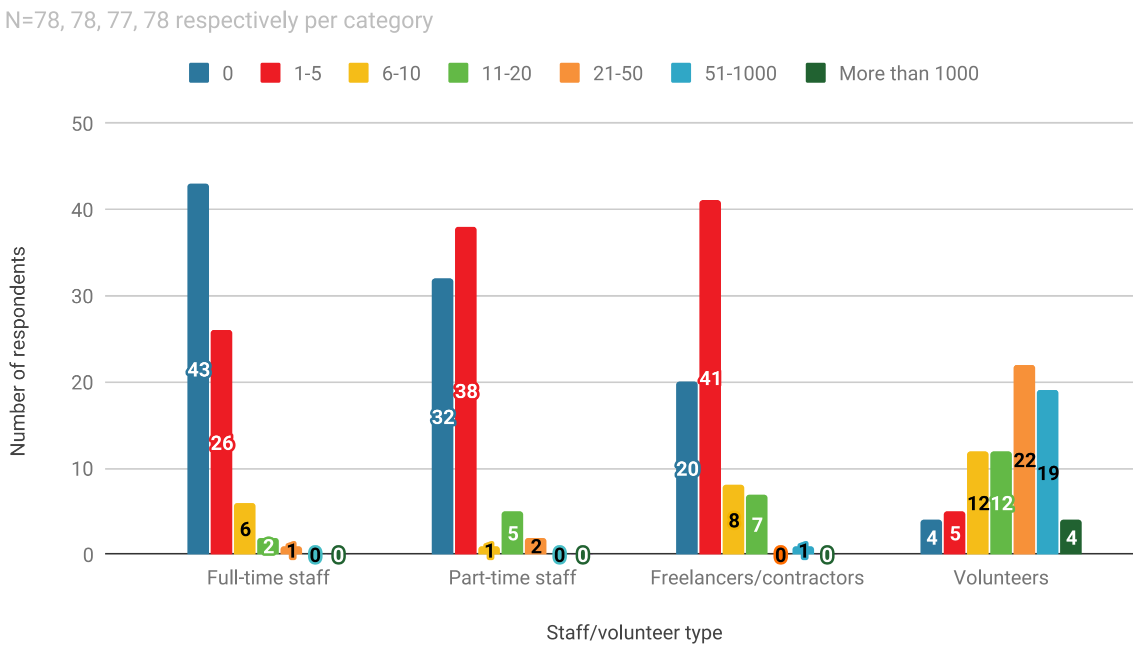
- 55% of respondents said their organisation had no full-time staff
- 70% of respondents said they expected to have over 20 volunteers a year
- Most organisations compensated their staff and volunteers in some way, even if not monetarily



Further discussion

Most organisations which responded to the survey were reliant on volunteer labour, with usually only a few full or part-time staff and some support from freelancers. Over half of the respondents (43, 55%) had no full-time staff, and at the same time just over half (45, 58%) expected to have over 20 volunteers per year.

Figure 10 England only: How many staff/ volunteers does your organisation have?



[26] See also Durham University (2019). *Striking a balance: A study of how community businesses in Bradford, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough build working relationships with the public, private and third sector*. [online] Available at: https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Open-call-report-Striking-a-Balance-DIGITAL-V6.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Despite limited funds, many organisations tried to use creative means to compensate the people that support them, at least in some way (although 45% [13] said they were unable to offer pay or expenses). For volunteers, this might mean getting their expenses paid, having some food provided, being able to access training opportunities, or receiving gifts of plants. For paid staff, it was noted by ten organisations (22%) that they paid above a minimum or a living wage, but a few organisations noted that pay rates could depend on funding available, and a significant proportion of work was sessional (15, 33%).

Figure 11 England only: What is your approach to staff pay?

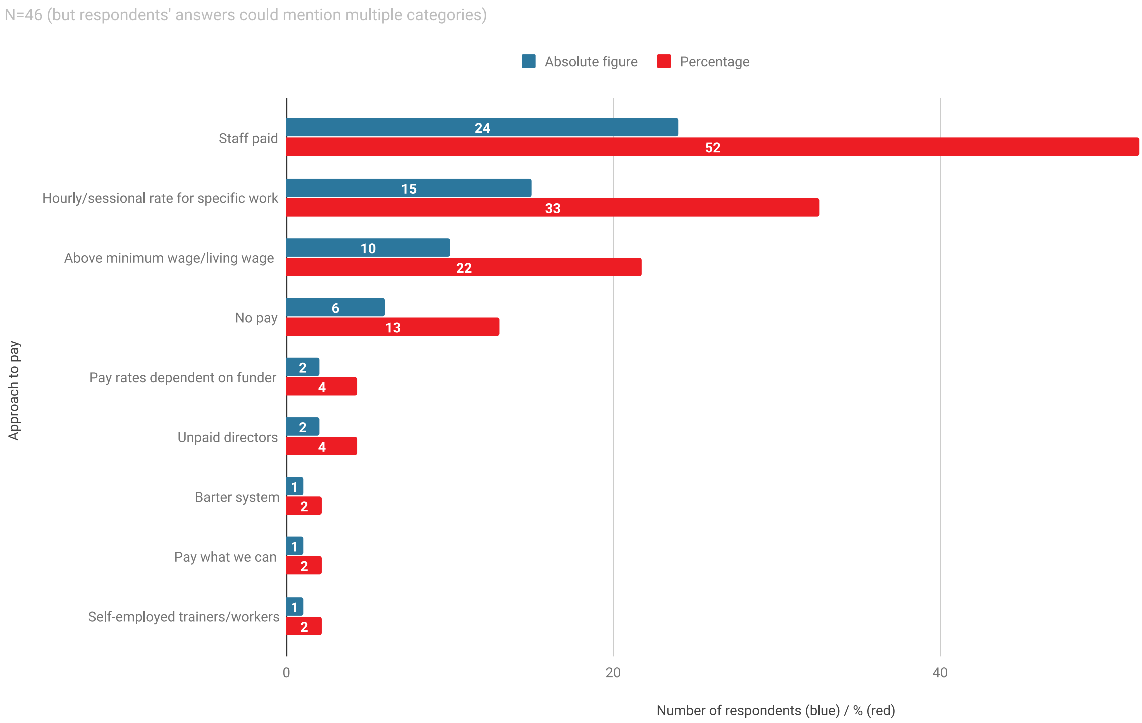
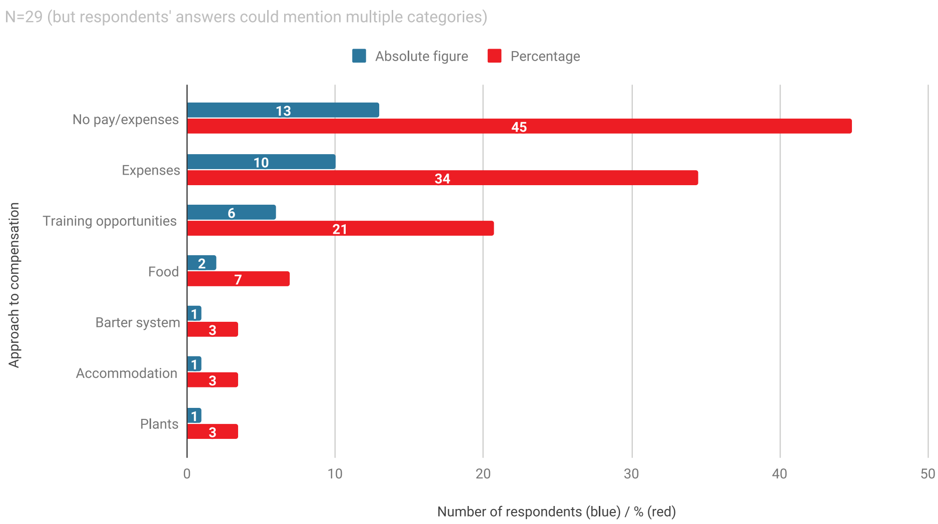


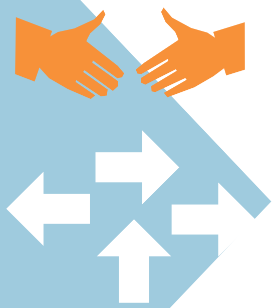
Figure 12 England only: What is your approach to volunteer compensation?



6 Networks

Headline points

- All the land-based organisations surveyed (across the UK) were connected to at least one other group or organisation, and most have several connections
- The majority of connections were based in collaborative relationships (e.g. provision of funding or support) as opposed to being a member of an organisation, or simply aware of its existence
- In England, 41% of organisations directed half or more of their spending to local organisations
- Most organisations in England said they did not have enough opportunities to meet organisations similar to themselves, particularly those who prefer to meet face to face
- There is a balance to be struck between deepening local networks, and engaging with broader national ones, based on organisational capacity

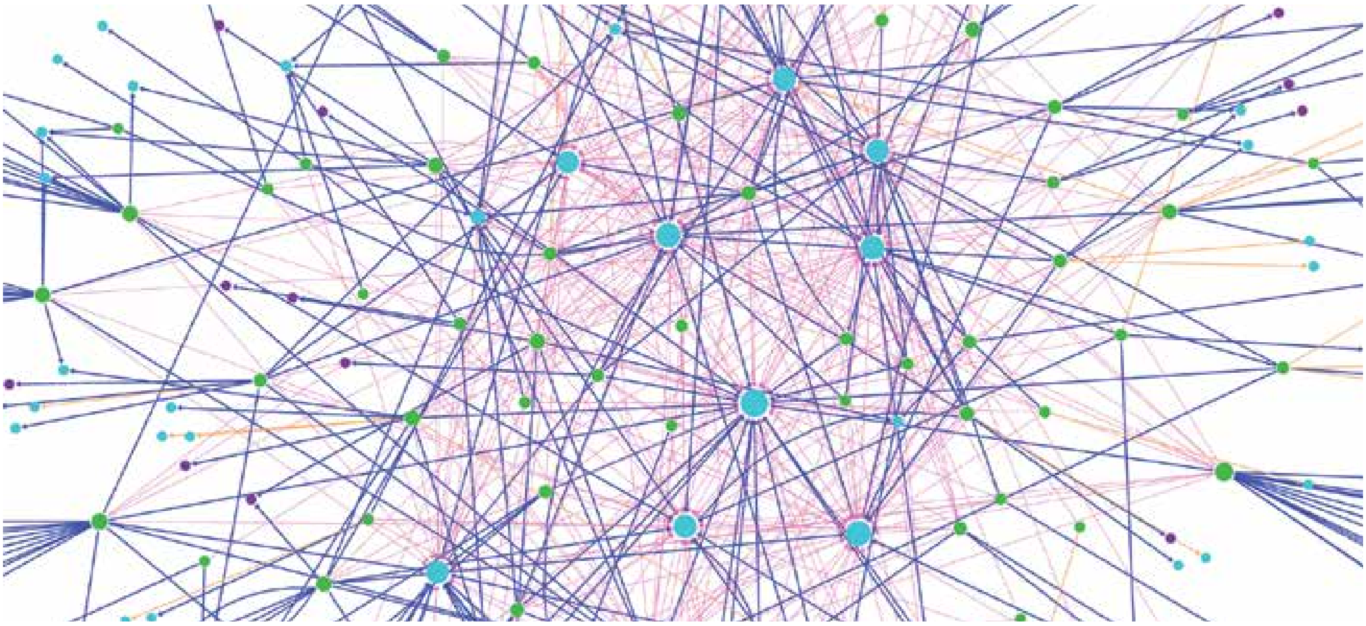


Further discussion

The survey asked a number of questions to give an indication of the type and strength of networks around land related community organisations, as a starting point to assess if and how these should be further developed.

Based on the organisations survey respondents named as being connected to (i.e. being aware of them, being a member of them, or collaborating with them in some way, for example by receiving funding or other forms of support), we compiled a network map of all the organisations which answered the survey.[27] This map is dynamic and hard to express in a static image – the screenshot provided below provides a taster, but please explore the full, more interactive map online (**http://bit.ly/SOTSNetworkMap**).

Figure 13
Screenshot of network map



[27] Please note the data included in this map are from across the UK.

Organisations in the network map are divided into three categories: 'Participant organisation' (those that answered the survey – green dots), 'Support/information/funding organisation' (blue dots), and 'Local land-based partner organisation' (purple dots) (both the latter categories as sorted by respondents). In total, 100 participant organisations mentioned 178 support/information/funding organisations, and 122 local land-based partner organisations. However, this is likely an underestimate of the network size, as the majority of respondents mentioned they went to members of the community or local businesses/government for support (discussed further in the next section), but only specific, named organisations could be included in the map.[28] Although most organisations in the network map are anonymised, we have left labels on some of the key support organisations visible, as these were specifically asked about in the survey. Of these, the Forestry Commission was the most frequently connected to participant organisations (55 connections) (possibly due to the bias towards woodland organisations mentioned in the Methodology section above), closely followed by the Plunkett Foundation (54 connections), the Environment Agency (46), Shared Assets (44), and Power to Change (42).

On average, participant organisations had connections to eight other organisations, but the modal number[29] of connections was three – a small number of organisations had a large number of connections which skewed the overall average – and every organisation mentioned at least one connection. It was encouraging to see that most connections were those of 'collaboration' – there were 474 connections based on this stronger type of relationship, compared with a further 337 connections simply of 'awareness' of the support organisation. Membership-based connections were the least common, with only 67 connections of this type described within the network. In the survey, organisations were also asked if they received support from organisations that were not related to land use, and a significant proportion did (about 44 respondents [43%] of the UK total).

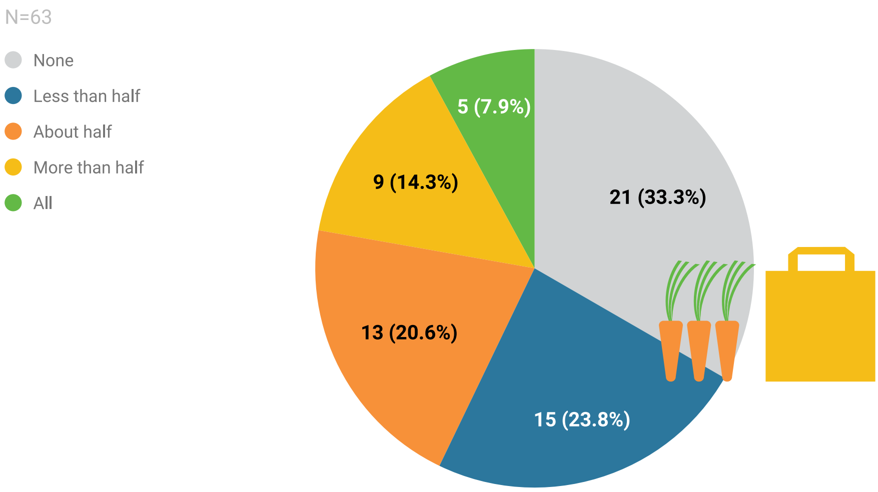
The survey also analysed how respondents like to connect with other organisations. In England, email was the preferred method of communication (selected by 35 respondents, 53%), However, when asked whether respondents had enough opportunities to meet organisations similar to theirs, less than half said yes (34 respondents, 48%). We looked more closely into this result by breaking it down by preferred mode of communication; people were less likely to think they had enough chances to meet if they preferred to meet face to face, whereas groups which preferred email were more likely to say they had sufficient opportunities to meet others.

We also asked organisations to estimate how much of their spending on products and services went to local organisations. In England, 41% of organisations (26 respondents) said half or more of their spending was directed to local organisations.

[28] For example, if a respondent just wrote they are supported by 'local council' or 'local community voluntary service', that was too generic a term to include in this sort of network map. Also, the connections between the various participant organisations could not be included, as each organisation in the map could only be assigned one 'node type' or category.

[29] The number that appears most often.

Figure 14
England only:
How much of your spending goes to local organisations?



We also asked roughly how much organisations invested in local community projects in the last year, but this proved tricky for organisations to answer, given many of them consider themselves to be 'community projects' – it would be worth probing this further in future research using a specific methodology such as the New Economics Foundation s Money Trail[30] to calculate their impact on the local economy.

These results point to the importance of networks for land-based community organisations, but that their usefulness is determined by whether organisations have the opportunities and capacity to be able to engage with them in meaningful ways, which suit their context. One interviewee mentioned more coordination between the national support organisations would be useful:

"It's the duty of all these organisations to coordinate and come up with shared events regionally, what tends to happen will be that Landworkers' Alliance and Community Supported Agriculture Network will organise separate things...at the end of the day it's a bit too much. A good coalition for regional events would be great."

In the workshops, we also heard that whilst national networks may be useful for working towards advocacy and policy change, often smaller organisations do not have the capacity to engage in these processes, but if they are represented by a network such as the Landworkers' Alliance, their voices have more chance of being heard. There is a balance to be struck between the expansion of connections between land-based community groups and support organisations to achieve longer term goals and secure funding, and the deepening of local networks which support groups day-to-day, including connecting with organisations which perhaps have shared values, but have a different area of focus.

[30] New Economics Foundation (2002). *The Money Trail*. [online] Available at: https://neweconomics.org/2002/12/the-money-trail [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

7 Support needs

Headline points

- Survey respondents were overall less confident with the more technical aspects of running a land project, such as land law and the planning system, but more confident on skills such as business planning and financial planning
- More had accessed support from other businesses in their area than from any formal support organisations for the community sector
- 70% had turned to their local community for support

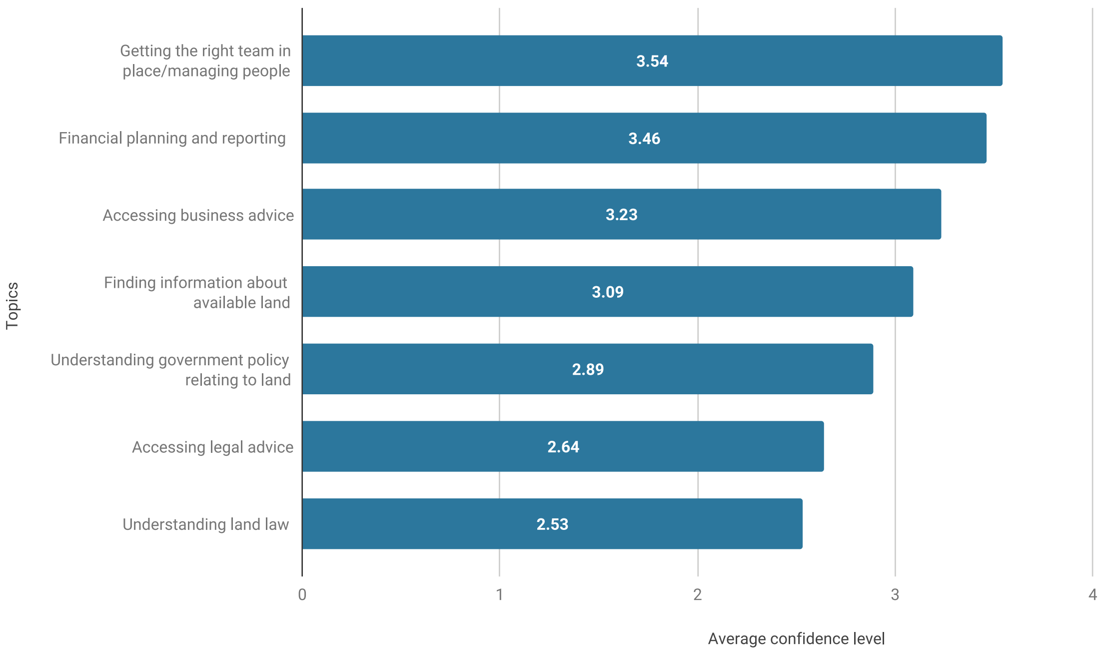
Further discussion

All businesses need support – whether with respect to technical knowledge, ways of working or finances. There are a number of potential support sources for common good land users, from funders to national and local infrastructure organisations, and their peers. A key purpose of the survey was to establish what kind of support common good land users need, whether they were currently able to access that support, and what gaps exist in the support available.

The survey asked respondents how confident they were regarding a number of issues. The chart below shows the average of their responses.

Figure 15 England only: How confident are you and your colleagues regarding the following? (Scale of 0-5 where 0 is 'Not at all confident' and 5 is 'Very confident')

N=70, 69, 70, 69, 70, 69, 70



The key areas where respondents felt less confident, were, unsurprisingly, the more specialist and technical topics, including understanding land law, and government policy relating to land – these are complex topics that even experienced practitioners may find it hard to grapple with.

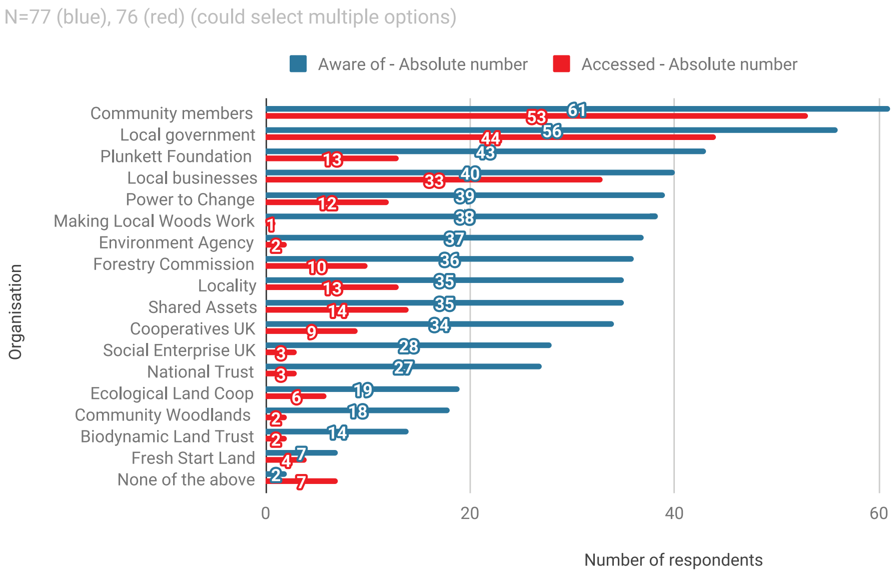
Accessing legal advice was also an area where people felt relatively less confident. In some cases this was because of cost, and some survey respondents mentioned that they were being asked to meet the landowner's legal costs,[31] which was proving prohibitive. A key challenge or gap we find with groups we work with is not knowing when or how to bring a lawyer in, and how to effectively brief them. Land law is a specialist issue and not all lawyers will be qualified to advise on leases, licences, company incorporations or negotiations.

Business and financial planning are more transferable skills which people may have had experience of before creating their project or organisation. Other topics that respondents mentioned they needed support in included marketing and communications, partnership building, and fundraising and other income generation.

Accessing support

Respondents were asked about which sources of support they were aware of, and which they had recently accessed. Their responses are summarised in the graph below.

Figure 16
England only:
Which of the following sources of advice, support or information were you aware of versus have you accessed in the past year?



The local authority remains a primary source of support for people seeking to manage land in ways that benefit the community and environment. The ongoing effects of austerity and the reduction in community empowerment staff in local authorities may impact this primacy in the future.

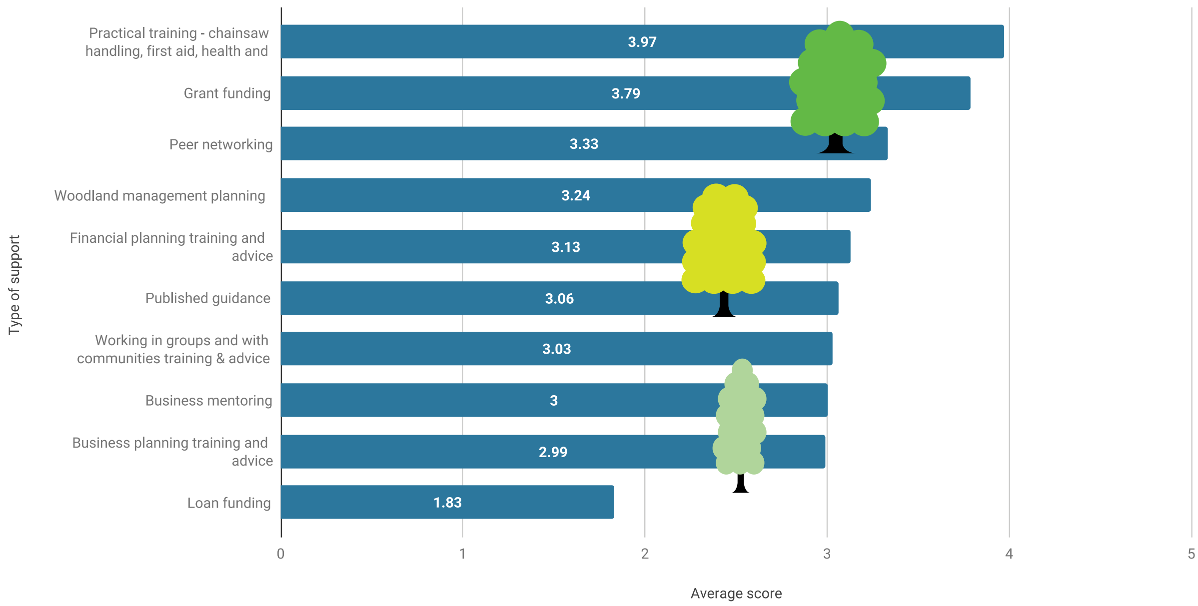
The other key source of support mentioned is members of the local community, with 70% of respondents (53 groups) turning to their community for support. Over half of the organisations (52%, 40) had accessed support from other businesses in their area, more than had turned to any of the formal support or infrastructure organisations. This is an interesting finding from the point of view of a support organisation – and reinforces the point made above about the power and value of networks and local connections to these projects.

[31] This is standard practice for local authority landowners in commercial transactions, and so often gets carried over to negotiations with the social sector.

Potential future support

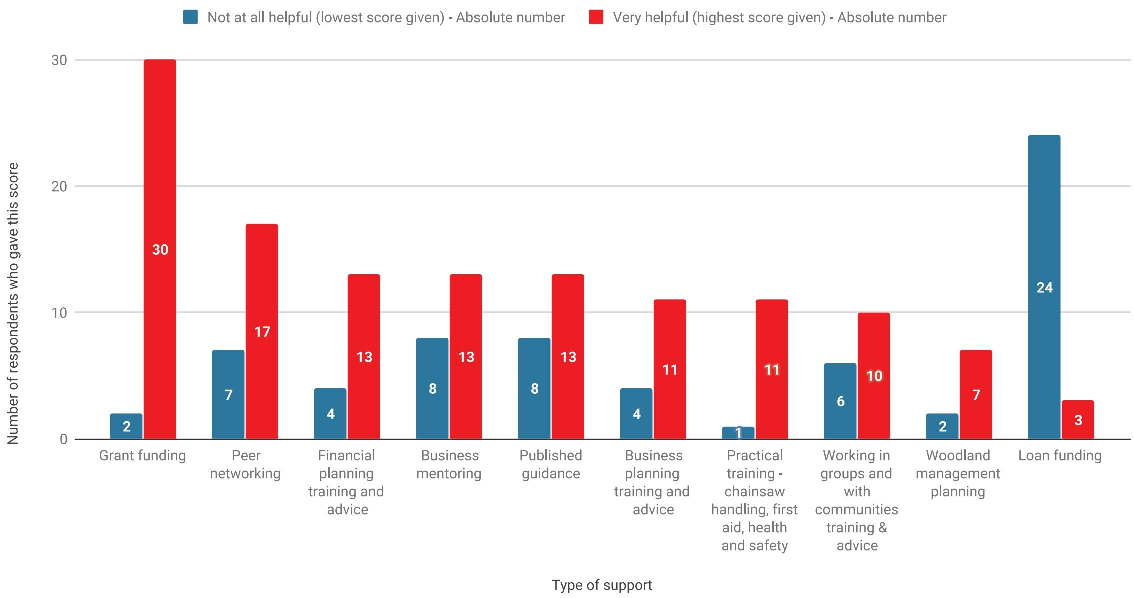
Respondents were asked about the types of support that would be most useful for them. The averages are shown in the graph below. It is notable that grant funding was considered to be the most helpful, on average, of the categories all types of groups were asked about,[32] and loan funding the least helpful.

Figure 17 England only: How helpful would the following forms of support be? (Scale of 0-5 where 0 is 'Not at all helpful' and 5 is 'Very helpful')



However there was substantial variation in the responses, with some groups saying that, for example, published guidance would be very helpful, and some that it would be not at all helpful, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 18 England only: How helpful would the following forms of support be?



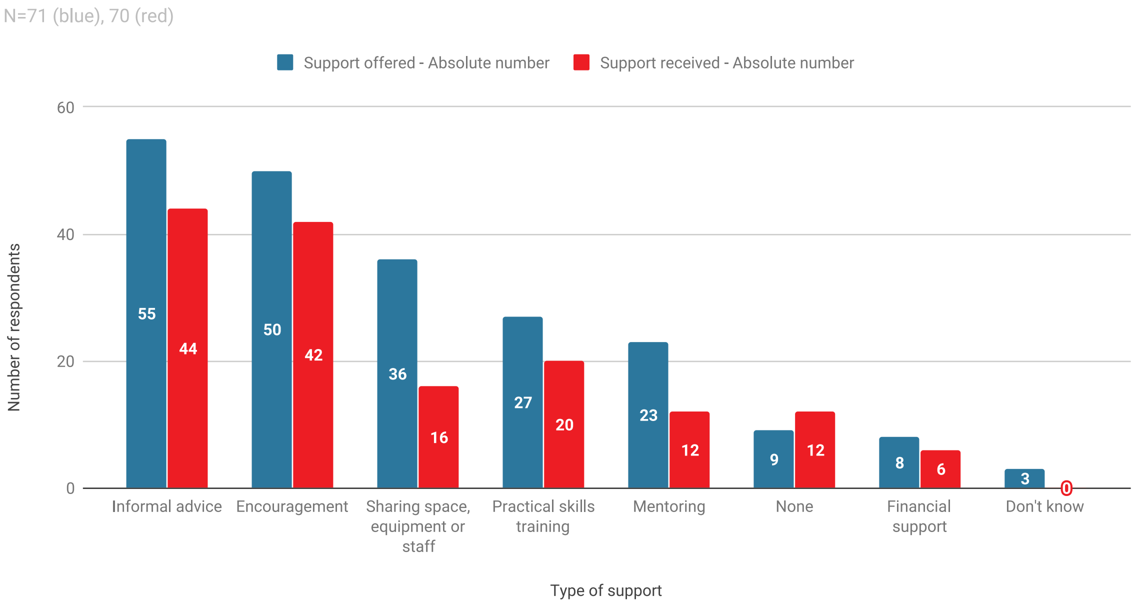
[32] Only groups which answered the Making Local Woods Work version of the survey were asked about practical training (the most popular choice) and woodland management planning.

Respondents were also asked (as free text), what one thing would make the biggest difference to their organisation in the next two years. 20 respondents (27%) said some kind of advice or support would be needed. More money and secure income was a key repeated need (37 respondents, 50%), as well as more skilled people being willing to get involved and take responsibility (12, 16%). Other common support needs included securing a physical site for their activities, better community engagement, and overcoming land/lease issues. Some respondents also mentioned more extensive changes being needed, beyond the scope of their project, including changes to government policy, or food retailers reflecting the true costs of production in their prices.

Peer support

Most survey respondents had either offered and/or received support from other land-based businesses in the past year. As the graph below shows, the majority of these instances of support were informal advice and encouragement, rather than more formal mentoring or sharing of resources.

Figure 19 England only: What types of services or peer support have you offered to versus received from other land-based businesses in the last year?



Optimism about the future

Respondents who filled in the Making Local Woods Work version of the survey were asked how positive they were about the future of their organisation on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being very positive. Most were very positive, with the average score being 8.5, and no one rating their positivity at less than 5.

Many comments in the surveys backed this up:

"We are at the beginning of our 'life', and much has been achieved with minimal funding, which is encouraging."

"We are always positive! We have a lot of community support and are very encouraged by people's responses to what we are doing here."

8 Challenges and barriers

Headline points

- Access to land, finance, infrastructure support, and peer support and relationships are amongst the key areas where support needs are framed
- In some areas, common good land users face the same barriers as any other small enterprises (e.g. managing cashflow), but others are specific to their multifunctional and social/environmental aims

Further discussion

Many of the support needs referenced above could be re-cast as barriers or challenges that common good land users are facing. The workshops and interviews provided an opportunity to dive more deeply into some of these challenges.

Drawing on the information provided by survey respondents, the workshops examined four key categories of challenge: access to land, access to finance, infrastructure support, and peer support and relationships. The interviews asked specifically about what kind of support participants would have found helpful to overcome barriers they had faced. This section summarises the discussions at the workshops and in the interviews.

Access to land

A key challenge for anyone looking to access land is the lack of readily available information on land ownership, availability and price.[33] This is particularly pertinent for community businesses who are unlikely to have the resources to employ land agents, repeatedly search the Land Registry, or to be able to move quickly if land suddenly comes on the market. Land-based community businesses are also often constrained to a geographical area, unlike private sector players or even social enterprises, which may have more flexibility to create their business where the opportunity arises.

The local authority is still a primary source of support for land-based social enterprises and community businesses, and a source of land for their activities. A key success factor for many workshop participants was an individual responsible person or ‘champion’ within the local authority, who had helped them navigate from the inside the challenges of getting different parts of the council (planning, procurement, legal) to work together. A common feature of local authority staff is transience, which has been exacerbated by cuts to budgets, and we heard stories of changes in staff scuppering previously promising projects.

Access to finance

The price of land, and the capital needed to purchase it (or to lease it), varies across the country, but is a significant barrier in certain areas. Access to capital (whether grants, loans or other mechanisms such as community shares) is key. As noted above, many survey respondents tended to think that loans were unlikely to be for them – likely due to the often marginal levels of profitability we can see across the sector but possibly also simply due to a lack of familiarity, or information, about this option for capitalising a business. Grants and community shares, whilst more familiar and more widely used, can also often take a large amount of time to source, and come with demands such as reporting and community involvement, which take at the very least an investment of time.

[33] See also Shared Assets (2016). *Exploring Land Data: Getting Better Information to Common Good Land Users*. [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Exploring_Land_Data.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Some key challenges were those shared by small businesses everywhere: clients not paying on time for work that has been completed, and the need for easy access to short term funding to help smooth out cashflow fluctuations.

Infrastructure support

As noted above, more survey respondents said they looked to their local community and local businesses for support rather than some of the more formal infrastructure support organisations that exist. This was reflected in the workshops, with several participants mentioning they were aware of (and in many cases had accessed) the support that exists to help people start social enterprises of various kinds. However, there was perceived to be less support for already existing enterprises and community businesses that had evolved past the 'start-up' phase.

A general cultural lack of understanding of horticulture and land issues was also raised – both making it hard to find good staff, but also creating blocks and misunderstandings with potential supporters.

A key challenge raised was about 'real' infrastructure – projects often have a need for access roads, toilet blocks, education buildings, etc. The fact that their business model (and ethos) is about multifunctional land use, and creating multiple benefits, can be very challenging for the planning system to engage with.[34]

Market gardening in Somerset

Ecological Land Cooperative

Peer support and relationships

Relationships are important for community businesses in general, and we know from the survey that the majority of respondents had given and received informal support to other land-based businesses. All of the workshop participants and interviewees felt that they were part of something bigger than their organisation, and wanted to collaborate with like-minded groups and people. However there were a number of challenges raised, particularly the sense that there were lots of groups chasing the same scarce funding, and often there is an onus to prove to grant funders that your organisation is uniquely well-placed to run a particular project or solve a particular problem.

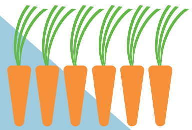
[34] See our other reports: Shared Assets (2017). *Planning for the Common Good: Adapting the Planning System for Common Good Land Use*. [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Planning-for-the-Common-Good.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019], and Shared Assets (2017). *Seeing the Wood and the Trees: Woodland Social Enterprises and the Planning System in the UK*. [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Planning-and-WSEs.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

This sense of competition means that people were unlikely to openly share their failures – although there was substantial appetite for finding ways to have more honest conversations. There were also mentions of interpersonal issues (including clashing egos and personalities) – and structural inequalities, such as those associated with race, class, and gender, that stand in the way of successful engagement, collaboration and information sharing.

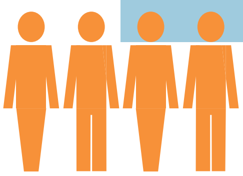
The intertwinings of land, power, wealth, and identity may be rarely discussed, but have a profound effect on various individuals' and communities' access to all the resources listed above, and more broadly on their sense of belonging in the land sector. We are grateful to the participants who took the time to raise these issues during the research, and made us consider our own practice and assumptions, and believe there needs to be much more of this sort of engagement and reflection amongst all common good land users, in order to build a just and equitable land movement.

9 Reflections on language and movement-building

Headline points



- The term 'common good land use' resonated with some groups, who associated it with stewarding the land, and appreciated the focus on the use of land, as opposed to it being a speculative investment, but some participants suggested alternative terms such as 'public value'
- Land as a connecting factor between respondents came up more frequently with interview and workshop participants, but less spontaneously in the survey
- Participants felt it was important to have language that is flexible for talking to different stakeholders, but also to have access to more detailed terminology to properly explain the complexity of their activities



Further discussion

A key motivator for this research was to understand whether there is a sense of common purpose, identity or understanding amongst land-based community businesses or social enterprises. Is there what we could call a 'common good land use' sector?

Our experience as a support organisation that runs lots of events is that there is a growing number of groups and organisations managing land for a social purpose, and often with explicitly political motives – they are managing a woodland as a direct response to national climate change policy failure, for example. We have found that people enjoy coming together to talk about land as the common factor connecting their work, even when their projects are quite different.

As referenced above in the Organisations and motivations section, around a fifth of respondents said they identified with the term 'common good land user', often alongside more common terms such as community organisation or social enterprise. We have discussed some of the limitations of using surveys in the Methodology section, but another challenge is that it can 'flatten' the vibrancy and energy of what in our experience is a lively and connected sector. But is even talking about a 'sector' flattening somehow? For this reason, we think it's important to consider the language used, and there were in-depth discussions at the workshops (particularly in London), and in the interviews, about whether there is a 'common good land use' movement or sector, and if so how it should be described without losing its diversity and vibrancy. Some of the main thoughts shared are summarised below.

Community growing at Wolves Lane, London

Shared Assets

People who liked the concept of 'common good land use', associated this phrasing with stewarding or looking after the land, as opposed to owning it. They noted the fundamental importance of land, and of thinking about it in terms of 'use', not as a commodity or investment, and that access and tenure are critical. This linked into discussion of the broader concept of 'the commons',[35] which was felt by some participants to be an important counter to dominant ideologies about land and its management that focus more on the competing roles of the market and the state.

Other potential terms were suggested, as well as some of their limitations. For example, 'land-based social enterprise', was posited as a possible alternative, but participants recognised not all relevant organisations are land-based, or meet the definition of social enterprise (or community business). Many participants had issues with the concept of 'charity' or 'community benefit', feeling that they can be paternalistic and offensive. In line with the current policy narrative about 'public money for public goods', it was suggested that 'public value' sometimes resonates more than terms such as 'common good'.

Overall, participants felt it was important to use terms which strike a balance between flexibility and specificity. The overarching terminology used needs to be flexible enough to resonate with different sectors involved (e.g. sustainable development instead of regeneration, or sustainable land management rather than permaculture), but at the same time, it is vital to retain more specific language to explain the complexity of activities many land-based social enterprises and community businesses need to deliver to survive. Several organisations also mentioned the importance of avoiding the co-option of radical terms for more conservative political aims.

[35] The term 'commons' "...can be used to refer to a broad set of resources, natural and cultural, that are shared by many people." For more information see: The International Association for the Study of the Commons (2019). *About the Commons*. [online] Available at: https://iasc-commons.org/about-commons/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Figure 20 – Word cloud of organisations' descriptions of their activities

We asked all respondents to the survey how they described their work. The word cloud above shows the variety of ways people from across the UK described their groups, with words which appear bigger those mentioned more frequently. Many focused on community, locality, and people. Interestingly, some of the terms raised in the workshop discussions barely appear at all, like commons. 'Land' itself also does not appear very strongly – which may be a reflection of the fact that survey respondents were asked to reflect on their individual activities, and not about whether there is a wider movement. Land as the connecting factor seemed to have resonance with interview and workshop participants, but it did not come up spontaneously in the survey.

This may also be reflective of the fact that, as discussed in the introduction above, most funding streams and support programmes are aimed at particular sectors, such as woodlands or food. More broadly, land is not something that has been on the political agenda in England in the 20th and early 21st centuries, and was last actively considered as an economic factor in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, 2019 has seen the publication of a number of reports from sources as diverse as the International Panel on Climate Change,[36] the Campaign to Protect Rural England,[37] and the UK Labour Party,[38] all calling for a more strategic approach to land and land use – so we may see an upturn in community businesses actively describing the land element of their work as well as the specific sectors in which they work.

Our description of common good land use – that it creates shared benefits, supports sustainable livelihoods, enriches the environment, produces the things people need, has an element of community control, and is at the centre of a wider system change – resonated with many interview and workshop participants, although for many groups it remains aspirational rather than a description of current activity. We think it is still a useful framing but would continue to value comments, input and ideas on the best way of talking about the broad sector of not for profit organisations managing land in innovative and interesting ways.

[36] International Panel on Climate Change (2019). *Climate Change and Land*. [online] Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

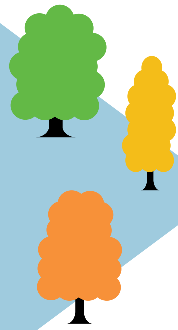
[37] Campaign to Protect Rural England (2017). *Landlines: why we need a strategic approach to land*. [online] Available at: https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/item/4534-landlines-why-we-need-a-strategic-approach-to-land [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[38] Labour Party (2019). *Land for the Many: Changing the way our fundamental asset is used, owned and governed*. [online] Available at: http://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/12081_19-Land-for-the-Many.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

10 Opportunities for supporting the growth of the sector

Headline points

- The survey responses and input from workshop and interview participants indicate that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be appropriate for this sector
- Supporting and valuing the complexity and activity that already exists is vital; new support should look to build on this, not replace it
- Considering how best to offer meaningful opportunities for people to meet and build connections and networks will be important
- Published resources can be useful, but only if people know where to find them



Further discussion

Land-based community businesses and common good land users are diverse and varied, and a key finding of this report is that one size does not and will not fit all when it comes to the infrastructure needed to support them. For example, when asked about the usefulness of published guidance (Figure 18 above), 13 respondents said it would be 'very helpful', while eight said it would be 'not at all helpful'. A key challenge – and limitation – of providing resources is getting them into the hands of people who need them, at the time that they need them.

Some survey respondents indicated they felt they had enough opportunities to network and meet other similar organisations, while others did not. As noted above this was partly dependent on their contact preferences, with those who preferred face to face interactions tending to feel like they did not have enough opportunities to meet other organisations. We know from the survey responses that people are already providing and receiving informal support from other groups, their local community, and other local businesses, reflecting a nascent set of peer support networks. There is a need to value and build on this already existing peer support to create more supportive local ecosystems and networks – something we reflect further on in the recommendations.

Discussions at the workshops and in the interviews highlighted the value people put on peer networking, especially when it involves visits to others' sites and projects, and creates space for people to talk about challenges and failures. However, all recognised the practical difficulties of finding the time to do this, particularly when it takes time to travel to a site. This reinforces the value of building on and deepening already existing local connections. This approach also opens up the possibility of broader networking and collaboration across wider civil society (and private sector) organisations, helping break down any silos that may exist between different sectors.

However, the results of this research also highlight the many systemic barriers that stand in the way of successful common good land use. The high cost of land, the precarity of land work in general, an often unsupportive planning and policy environment – all of these need more national lobbying and work to create a more supportive environment, particularly for people without a background in land work, or without ready access to capital. Discussions at the workshops recognised the value of national networking and advocacy but also that it can be hard for very small organisations to have their voices heard and make the time to input.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

What do we know about common good land users?

In summary, this research paints a picture of a field of small, diverse, complex organisations. They are rooted in their communities, with strong social and environmental values. They are optimistic about the future of their projects, but financially many are very precarious. Many have the ambition to step up and meet the connected challenges of climate change and rising social injustice, but currently do not have the capacity, support or resources to do so.

Their 'smallness' comes both in their organisational size, with 63% turning over less than £50,000 a year, and in the size of the plots of land they engage with – 60% managing less than ten hectares. They all manage land – or work with those who do – in ways that create social and environmental value, but within that have a wide range of business models, approaches and legal structures. A third are working on more than one type of land. One hallmark is diversity of activities and seeing land as multifunctional – both providing education services and selling woodland or food products, for example. One survey respondent described their organisation's activities as follows:

"We run weekly after school session for learning disabled children; herbs for health workshops for women living with mental health; volunteer sessions for deaf adults; nature play sessions for local children."

This multifunctional approach often puts such organisations in conflict with systems that currently govern our use of land, in particular the planning system, which may not see the infrastructure required to deliver this mix of activities as fundamental to the sustainability of their land management activities.

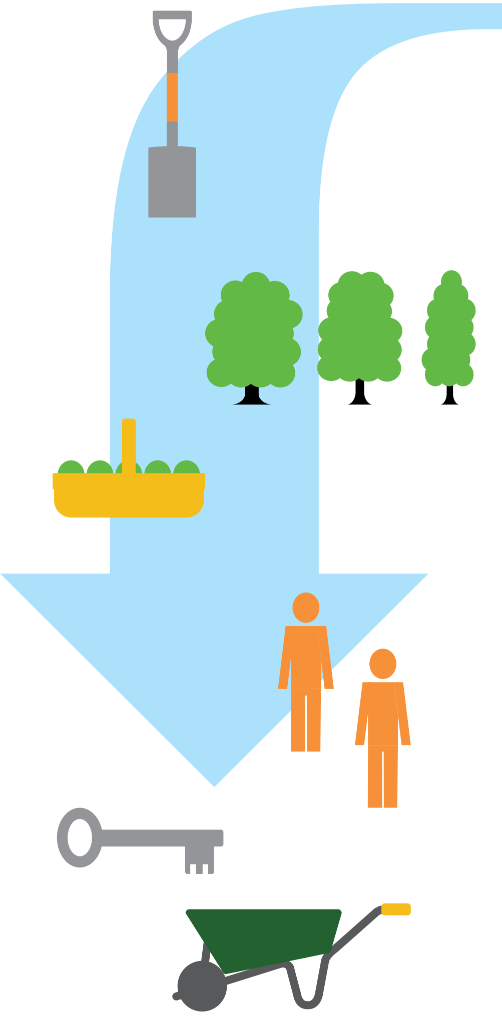
Although small, these are well-connected organisations, with a dense web of collaborators and connections in their local areas, and sometimes regionally and nationally. They draw on local businesses and the community for support far more than they access formal infrastructure or social sector support, but do have some clear needs for technical advice, and of course, for funding and working capital.

Future community woodland site near Bristol

Dorian Wainwright/Avon Needs Trees

Financially, they are precarious, with around a fifth having made a loss in the last year, and many more making only a very small surplus. While two-thirds have an element of trading, many are reliant on grants and donations. Paid staff capacity is limited. The 'common good land use' principle of providing sustainable livelihoods is one of the hardest to achieve in the current system.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS CONTINUED



This precarity is closely linked to some of the large, systemic barriers in the way of sustainable land use more generally, and socially-purposed sustainable land use in particular. For example, in 1957, people in the UK spent 33% of their income on food, on average; today that has fallen to 16%,[39] although the lowest income households tend to spend the highest proportion of their earnings on food.[40] The true cost of producing food under any conditions is not reflected in the price that consumers pay; while some food producing community businesses are able to charge a premium due to their locally rooted nature, it is still hard to make a surplus whilst balancing their social objectives.

19% of organisations have at least some element of informal or insecure tenure arrangements and 35% are not sure that their current legal structure is the right one for them. Despite this uncertain outlook, common good land users are optimistic about the future of their projects.

"Things are tough, and yet we are well rooted and connected. We are in a good place to offer things to locals and to help people in this time of climate breakdown."

"We have been running our wellbeing work for more than 8 years now, and many local people see us as a resource that is staying around. We also have good links with local agencies despite all the turmoil in [LOCAL COUNTY COUNCIL] (which was close to going bankrupt) and the merger of districts. People see us as a safe place to come to, to work with. We are reliable and consistent, even when contracts and funding are tough."

There are some inspiring success stories despite the structural challenges, but too often they have come about because of extreme strokes of luck, or intense personal commitment. At the workshops and in the interviews we heard many stories of promising projects falling at the last hurdle, or being scuppered by situations outside of the group's control.

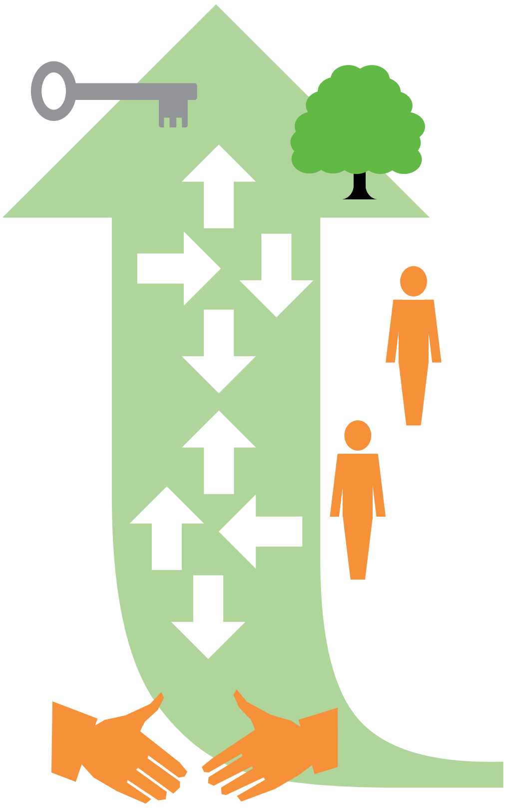
Our key question as supporters of this movement of common good land users is – how can we help remove the structural barriers they face to make luck less of a factor in their success?

The Recommendations section below attempts to answer this question.

[39] Data from the Office of National Statistics – see useful summary here: Sloman, J. (2018). *How UK spending patterns have changed over the past 60 years – The Sloman Economics News Site*. [online] Available at: https://pearsonblog.campaignserver.co.uk/how-uk-spending-patterns-have-changed-over-the-past-60-years/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

[40] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2018). *Family Food 2016/17: Expenditure*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-food-201617/expenditure [Accessed 24 Oct. 2019].

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH



This research has given us more detail and depth on a sector of common good land users, with huge ambition and optimism, and the creativity to have an impact, offering solutions to significant emerging environmental, social and economic challenges and opportunities with very limited resources and in often precarious situations. These recommendations focus on considering how the common good land use sector could respond to the opportunities offered by an increasing need for environmentally positive land management in the future.

This is a diverse group of organisations and one size will not fit all, but the recommendations below aim to summarise the main areas in which we believe change is needed to support a growth in the number of organisations managing land for the common good, and to bolster those who already are.

Recommendations for existing common good land users

Use your networks, but look beyond your silos

- Deepen local connections with others who share your values, but also more widely to include other local businesses, groups and organisations who may be able to provide support. For example, local law firms may be able to offer pro bono support on negotiations with a landowner.
- Nurture connections with communities which have closer ties to common spaces currently under threat, as this may help build a broader base of support for a project
- Consider the make-up of your group, and the ways in which your approach may be re-entrenching existing hierarchies within the land sector – then do the work to engage with alternative philosophies and models of land work, whilst not asking under-represented groups to contribute their energy and labour for free to improve your practice
- Use land as a tool to bring together different groups and projects and discuss ways to work together and support each other on a specific site – for example, food growers, nature conservationists and policy makers

Consider cross-subsidising

- Ensure your business model/approach takes into account the multiple barriers to making sustainable living from the land. Many of the most successful common good land use businesses have different elements which cross-subsidise each other (e.g. different businesses under the same umbrella, or different contracts or products that pay more than others).

Think about how you make an impact

- Consider creative ways that you can measure your impact, and explain it clearly to potential funders. The impact of a well-managed local green space, or a community healthy food enterprise, goes well beyond your particular project, but can be hard to quantify.
- Taking some time to think about how your work adds value to other local organisations and groups, and how you play a role in local economic resilience,[41] may help you find unlikely allies
- Consider embracing 'community business' credentials – many common good land users meet a number of the definitions of community business already, and there may be value in exploring how can you can more fully meet those criteria (e.g. by strengthening your business model and community accountability), to meet the challenges of scaling up

[41] See our previous work on local land economies and economic resilience here: Shared Assets (2018). *Local Land Economies*. [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/innovation/local-land-economies/ [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

Recommendations for people wanting to create common good land use projects

Many of the recommendations above will be pertinent for people looking to create common good land use projects. In addition:

Be clear about your purpose

- Have a clear vision and way of describing what you're doing, and why. This will help build the networks and connections of allies and collaborators that so many common good land users rely on, and enable you to understand the type of land and tenure you need.
- Think deeply about the structure your group will have and approach it will take (examining your own position and/or level of privilege in intersecting systems of oppression such as white supremacy or patriarchy, as part of this process), as this will influence the community members who feel welcome and able to join in with its work. The beginning of a project is the best time to embed diverse ways of working. It can be much harder to create a group or organisation that is genuinely able to challenge the status quo further down the line if you haven't done this work at the start.
- Build in time for reflection, planning and recovery if you can – these projects need tenacity and things may not turn out exactly as you plan

Visit existing projects – and ask the hard questions

- Find other people who've done similar things – even if not in exactly the same field. It's not easy to make a sustainable living from the land, especially when you want to create shared social benefits while you're doing so. Talking to others will give useful insight and advice on what to do – and what not to do.
- Join an existing project – you may feel after some visits that this is a better use of your time and resources than the pressure of starting from scratch

Research the best land tenure and legal structure for your project

- Decide the type and length of tenure you need, depending on the type of work you want to do – look at our online guide for a brief overview to get you started[42]
- Ask others about the pros and cons of the legal structure they have chosen, and try to allow yourself flexibility to be able to change your structure as your organisation develops

Recommendations for landowners

For public landowners

Common good land users are entrepreneurial, creative and tenacious. They can make excellent partners who can help you achieve outcomes around wellbeing, environmental quality and social cohesion. They are not the same as standard commercial partners, however, and should not be treated as such. This means:

- Pay the legal costs of common good land users where possible in lease or land access negotiations, since these can be prohibitively expensive for small non-profit organisations. Unlike in commercial transactions, common good land users should also not be expected to pay your legal costs.
- Designate a 'champion' within the local/regional authority tasked with helping common good land users and other social sector organisations navigate these systems. This would go a long way towards creating successful partnerships, and save multifunctional common good land use organisations, operating across a number of areas, from having to coordinate different parts of public bodies, which takes extra time and energy.

[42] Shared Assets (2019). *Land tenure choices.* [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/themes/sharedassets/tenure-choices/tenure-choices.html [Accessed 14 Nov. 2019].

For private landowners

Common good land users can offer many benefits, including bringing un- or underused land back into management, supporting farm diversification, and bringing new visitors or customers to your land. Often the relationship with a common good land use group starts with a personal approach or connection, and an informal arrangement is initially arrived at.

- Draw up a lease, licence or service level agreement which clearly sets out what each of you will do. Taking the time to do this is crucial as it will help prevent projects from falling apart, and hard work being lost.

For both

- Make your interest in working with common good land users known, perhaps via social media, websites or local newsletters. People looking to use land for the common good often struggle for a long time to find a suitable piece of land and a sympathetic landowner – making them aware of opportunities to work with you can save time. When doing this, be clear about the type of land you have to offer, the services you are interested in, and any restrictions you have, so as not to waste your time, and that of the potential land users.
- Ensure a realistic balance of risk and responsibilities is reflected in the lease/tenure agreement you draw up, to offer groups sufficient freedom to operate in a way that gives them the best chance of sustainability and does not require them to take on onerous liabilities at a stage when they are not ready to do so

Recommendations for policy makers

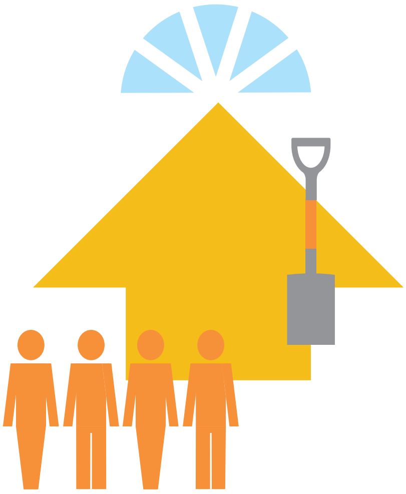
- Make transparent and detailed information on land ownership and characteristics readily available (e.g. by opening up Land Registry data on ownership, and establishing data standards for local authorities, to enable their data to be more easily accessed)
- Undertake changes to the planning system which can be beneficial for common good land users
    - Make ecologically sound land management and the creation of social value material considerations
    - Give preferential treatment, such as free pre-application advice, to common good and community organisations
    - Consider a new set of 'use classes' for land-based activities in planning system[43]
- In England:
    - Consider development in policy along the lines of the Welsh One Planet Development policy supporting low impact developments, and the Future Generations Act, which places an onus on public authorities to take into account impacts on future generations
    - Strengthen community right to buy legislation and create a Land Fund, as Scotland has done,[44] to support community land ownership

Recommendations for funders

- Get up to speed on common good land use, and try to understand specific groups' activities and challenges. Be led by their aims, and the support they say they require to fulfil their objectives over the long term. Aim to reduce the time organisations spend justifying or reframing their activities to answer project-based funding calls. This uses up considerable time and energy needed for the land management from which activities should flow, and can be particularly challenging for small groups.

[43] See Shared Assets (2017). *Planning for the Common Good: Adapting the Planning System for Common Good Land Use*. [online] Available at: http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Planning-for-the-Common-Good.pdf [Accessed 22 Oct. 2019].

44 Scottish Government (n.d.). Land reform: Scottish Land Fund. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform/scottish-land-fund/ [Accessed 25 Oct. 2019].



- Build on the networks and connections that already exist over creating new support programmes
    - Focus on enabling peer support, networking, and collaboration, and reduce the fierce competition for small pots of money
    - New and early stage organisations often require fairly generic support with respect to legal structures, financial management etc., which may be best provided by more general community business support programmes. More sector-specific support should be focused on scaling, financial sustainability and strengthening the delivery of wider social and economic impact.
- Fund multi-year core costs (not just project costs) to support growth and sustainability at the timescale needed for a land-based business
    - Cover staffing costs but also getting systems and processes in place
    - Enable them to buy in specialist advice as necessary on topics such as publicity, marketing, legal advice, and land valuation
- Challenge the reliance on volunteers and low pay – encourage people to pay themselves properly and fund those costs (e.g. of a Living Wage). Too often these organisations are held together by one or two very dedicated people – they should be paid properly for their time, if nothing else to ensure sustainability of the organisation when they move on.
- Provide funding and adapt resources to be specifically aimed at supporting people without a background in land work to get into the sector, informed by their needs

Further research

Shared Assets has an ongoing interest in land use for the common good, and we will be working both to support existing and potential common good land users, and to create an environment in which they can thrive. There are a number of potential further research and practical project ideas that we would like to scope or see carried out by others as a result of this report. We would be delighted to hear from people who would be interested in partnering or collaborating on any of the following:

- Community organising around land use. Given the importance of local connections and networks, we would like to develop and test a programme of community organising in a number of pilot areas with differing levels of land-based activity, aiming to both build and more deeply understand networks at a local level. This could potentially offer the opportunity to bring groups in those areas together to talk honestly about failures and challenges as well as successes. It could also include action research, working alongside local authorities, to scope out what a 'common good land use champion' in an authority would be tasked with doing, and what resources they would need.
- A strategic conference bringing all groups, institutes and organisations who have done research and policy work on land use in the recent past, to share findings, identify common ground, and map the current system and the potential routes to change
- Further research into the different business models at work in the sector, specifically to better understand their potential to scale and the conditions that need to be in place to sustain repayable finance (loans/social investment etc.), to help us advocate for, and support the development of, more appropriate funding
- In-depth research on common good land use in a particular local authority, city, or small region – to test a non-survey based methodology for estimating the size of the common good land use sector for a particular area, to look further into the life cycles of community land projects, to understand how learning from those no longer active can be carried forward, and to calculate more comprehensively their impact on the local economy/links to community wealth building
- Action research, working alongside common good land users, to understand more about what community accountability looks like in practice (to develop some guidelines to support groups to become more accountable), or to prioritise the involvement of communities currently excluded from, or disadvantaged within, the land sector, due to structural inequalities
- Scoping the potential for a peer-led accelerator programme for common good land users who are beyond the start-up phase and are looking to consolidate or grow

**Next page:
Community orchard at
Forty Hall Farm, Enfield**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NOTES

NOTES

Shared Assets CIC's mission is to make land work for everyone. We exist to support 'common good land users', and to create the conditions in which they can thrive. To find out more, please visit **http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/**, or get in touch at **hello@sharedassets.org.uk**

SHARED ASSETS

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