

# **Integrated Land Use Conference 2024**



***'Land Use Through the Years (Past, Present & Future)'***

Final report

*May 2024*

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## Background

The Integrated Land Use Conference began in 2012 with the aim to bring together our land use-based students from across the Highlands and Islands to both meet and learn from one another. This was initiated in response to concerns from industry about the breadth of focus of land managers.

Three types of activity operate together to provide students with a comprehensive experience including field talks with interactive and practical elements, conference style talks, and student-led group tasks that run throughout the event, addressing specific integrated land use issues. This event also provides a forum for students to talk to industry professionals and learn about potential career opportunities.

This year's conference took place on 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March at the Duke of Gordon Hotel and in the Kingussie area. It was the 11<sup>th</sup> conference, and the theme was *Land Use Through the Years (Past, Present & Future)*. The event was a real success. The students gave us a lot of positive feedback and one or two minor areas of improvement. They were all really engaged with all sessions and all speakers. There was a lot of discussion between the students from different disciplines. There was a real buzz in the room!



## Attendance

A total of 110 people attended the event over the course of the three days – our largest conference since 2012. This included 63 students of which 45 were from UHI, and 18 from other universities. The courses represented were:

- Forestry – 13
- Horticulture - 4
- Environmental Science - 8
- Wildlife & Conservation Management - 16
- Archaeology & Environmental Studies – 2
- Freshwater Conservation – 1
- Sustainable Energy Solutions – 2
- Marine Biology – 1
- Sustainable Mountain Development – 1
- Sustainable Rural Development – 1
- Net Zero Communities – 1
- Geography – 3
- Island Tourism & Tour Guiding – 1
- Material Culture & History – 1
- Tertiary and Higher Education – 2
- Scottish Heritage – 2
- Geosciences – 2
- Land Economy – 1
- Agroecology, Water and Resilience – 1

An extra 17 non-students/professional delegates were present.

We had 7 field sessions led by:

- Deer Management and new Technologies – Forestry & Land Scotland
- Pressure on land and its costs – Caledonian Climate Partners and Savills
- Changes in legislations through time – NatureScot
- Energy from Community hydro and community projects – Kingussie Community Development Company, Cairngorms National Park Authority Board and CBEC Eco-Engineering
- Conservation and biodiversity – RSPB and RZSS
- River Calder restoration and riparian planting – Spey Catchment Initiative and Savills
- Water distribution issues – SEPA

We had 5 talks at the hotel:

- Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Strathspey Farmer
- Community projects - Cairngorms National Park Authority Board
- Rothiemurchus Estate
- Badenoch Heritage and Badenoch Storylands

We had 2 student debate/discussion sessions:

- Changes in attitude
- Managing land for tourism and recreational activities

This year we also had the honour to have the visit from HRH Princess Royal during the field session held in Glenfeshie Estate.

## Location / facilities

The event took place at the Duke of Gordon Hotel in Kingussie and the field sessions at Glenfeshie Estate, Kingussie village, RSPB Insh Marshes Reserve and Glen Banchor Estate.

### ➤ Feedback

- ✓ The hotel was well situated for the fieldwork locations and the transport was very well organised. The organising staff were all lovely too. The conference was well priced, very affordable especially being students and not having lots of disposable income.
- ✓ Moving between our different stations was smooth with very little hanging around.



All 7 planned field sessions and 5 planned talks took place. The Royal visit meant that the Glenfeshie sessions were held in a way to facilitate HRH Princess Royal each of the groups. Fortunately, although the temperatures were relatively low, the sun was shining and it remained dry. The 2 student's debate/discussion sessions were really successful with a strong engagement from the students and all non-student delegates.

➤ Feedback

How would you rate the preparation and administration of the conference?

59% Excellent  
37% Good  
2% Fair  
2% Unsatisfactory

How would you judge the duration of the conference?

93% Adequate  
2% Too long  
5% Too short

How would you rate the cost vs. value of the event?

80% Inexpensive for what we get  
17% Adequate  
2% Too expensive for what we get

How would you rate the effectiveness of the student activities?

49% Excellent  
46% Good  
5% Fair



- ✓ I really enjoyed being in a space with so many other people who shared my interests. I particularly enjoyed hearing the perspectives of gamekeepers and deer stalkers, which is something we don't often get in an academic setting.
- ✓ Excellent opportunity to network with those in other fields (quite literally in some instances!) and a chance to make new contacts.
- ✓ The field visits were brilliant, hearing from different perspectives was great too.
- ✓ I liked the diversity of speakers, diversity of audience, meeting Princess Anne, interactive vs listening was a nice balance.





## What skills have been used/developed by the students?

95%	Communication skills
85%	Networking and social skills
80%	Teamwork
73%	Sector knowledge
61%	Flexibility
61%	Negotiating
61%	Assertiveness and diplomacy
56%	Problem solving
54%	Decision making
54%	Empathy
51%	Passion
24%	Leadership



- ✓ I don't feel my attitudes towards land use and ownership have changed but made me think about it in broader terms.
- ✓ I hadn't realised quite how complex deer management is. As a deer lover I'm often adverse to discussions about culling, but I appreciate now why lethal control is sometimes necessary and it was encouraging to meet the deer stalking guys in Tuesday's fieldwork session who really prioritise the welfare of the deer.
- ✓ It's changing my mind how I would go from running an estate from traditional to a more modern outlook.
- ✓ Got more inspired to learn about the different sides of land use and management.
- ✓ I have gain insight into the competing priorities and objectives of different stakeholder's. My personal 'conservation' focused mindset has broadened and reminded of the equally important social and economic aspects of sustainable land use.
- ✓ I am still unsure about what I would like to do long term but the conference has certainly opened my eyes to more fields than I had previously considered.
- ✓ I definitely see more opportunities for myself across the rural sector now. Identifying transferable skills and remembering passions I had left behind.





Asked to describe in one word how each participant felt at the end of the conference.....



## What is next?

- The conference payment should be made at registration and not using a different link.

This year's conference costed a total of £12,385 for 3 days and 2 nights.

The conference's bank balance is in credit of about £3,580. This is due to the extra fund overcarried forward from 2023 and additional research funding made available from the Scottish Funding Council.

### Suggested timeline for next year's event if going ahead:

- Early September 2024: venue and theme must be confirmed.
- September/October/November 2024: scheduling and inviting speakers.
- w/c 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024: marketing 'keep the date' campaign and open 'early bird' registration
- w/c 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025: extra marketing campaign and open full registration
- February 2025: marketing activities and reminders
- w/c 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025: registration close
- w/c 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025: ILUC25 event

- Feedback

- ✓ Having name tags would be useful as you meet so many people in a short period.
- ✓ If there were a way to incorporate more movement into the field sessions it would be appreciated.
- ✓ Change the timetable of field activities and stagger them to allow a rest period in the middle of the conference.
- ✓ More quizzes, surveys based of the talks/activities and encouragement to take notes and testing out knowledge to make sure we absorb the information especially if relevant to our field.



Thank you to all our generous sponsors.

