

## **PARTICIPATORY AND DELIBERATIVE TECHNIQUES FOR EMBEDDING AN ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH IN DECISION-MAKING (NR0124)**

### **Overall project aims**

Building on the work of Defra's natural environment strategic research programme this research is how the ecosystems approach (EsA) can be embedded further into policy and practice through the use of participatory and deliberative decision making techniques (PDTs). Specifically the research aims to

- *identify and review the most effective participatory and deliberative techniques for involving sectors of society in national, regional and local decision-making processes relevant to an EsA;*
- *produce guidelines to help decision-makers and analysts to use appropriate methods at key points in the policy and decision-making process and in the process, assess which techniques are most valuable for drawing out the fields of knowledge that each of these sectors have; and,*
- *establish the contribution that participatory techniques can make to improving the way in which non-monetised costs and benefits are taken into account alongside monetised costs and benefits at key points in decision making such as appraisal processes.*

The study is being conducted by the University of Exeter, University of East Anglia and Fabis Consulting over a 12 month and will report at the end September 2010. However, the research process is being conducted in consultation with wider stakeholders and experts. An overview of this consultation process is described below.

### **Programme of work**

The overall programme of work for this project compasses three key phases of research: scoping, appraisal and guidance.

#### **1. Scoping Phase    *Project Months 1-4***

The first phase of research involves identifying areas of policy where different types of people/organisations take decisions that impact on the delivery of ecosystem services and the types of participatory and deliberative techniques that may be use and value to them. This phase is primarily desk-based in approach combined with some targeted stakeholder consultation. The outcome of the first phase is a general overview of the types of PDT available to decision makers and their appropriate application across different policy scales, planning jurisdictions and sectoral areas of natural resource management, specifically as this relates to the delivery of ecosystem services. It is planned that this overview will be complete by the ***end of Jan 2010***.

#### **2. Appraisal Phase    *Project Months 5-8***

The second phase of the research develops, refines and extends the review devised in phase one, through wider stakeholder consultation and a more detailed treatment of the literature. It will identify and exemplify good practice in the application of PDTs across

different policy areas and processes, demonstrate how PDTs can be used in conjunction with economic approaches to valuation at relevant points in the policy and decision-making process, clarify the organisational factors that foster or impede progress towards the application of these techniques in different policy settings, and finally, develop criteria to help guide the appropriate choice of participatory methods in different contexts. The result of this phase will be a full and systematic assessment of the way PDTs can be deployed through the policy making processes. It is planned that this assessment will be complete by the *end of May 2010*.

### 3. Guidance Phase *Project Months 9-10*

The third phase of the research distils the insights of Phases 1 and 2 into practical guidelines for further embedding an EsA into policy delivery. Specifically this phase will develop user-friendly guidelines for decision-makers and analysts to help them select the most appropriate participatory and deliberative methods for different ecosystem services in different contexts, and provide additional guidance specifically with regards to the coupling and decoupling of these techniques with assessments of monetised costs and benefits. It is anticipated that draft guidelines will be available at the *end of June 2010*.

#### **Approach to consultation**

The project team recognise that a wider strategy of engagement in this project is necessary to ensure robust and meaningful outcomes. This engagement process is being approached in three ways.

First, an expert advisory panel (EAP) is being convened to play a periodic comment, debate and review function on project findings and draft materials. The panel will include representation from organisations working specifically in the area of natural resource management, such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Forestry Commission. The EAP has involvement in all stages of the research.

Second, the wider consultation with relevant policy and practice stakeholders will be conducted through a combination of interviews (Phase 2) and written feedback on guidance materials (Phase 3) between February-August 2010) of the study. This process is designed to refine outputs and insights in ways that will have practical purchase for different arenas and contexts of environmental decision making.

Third, the result of this study will be communicated at final stakeholder event for final review and feedback. It is anticipated that this event will take place in London at the beginning of September 2010.

#### **Making contact**

Further details about this study can be obtained from the project co-ordinator:

Dr Robert Fish, Department of Politics, University of Exeter Amory Building,  
Rennes Drive, Exeter, Devon. EX4 4RJ

*r.d.fish@exeter.ac.uk*