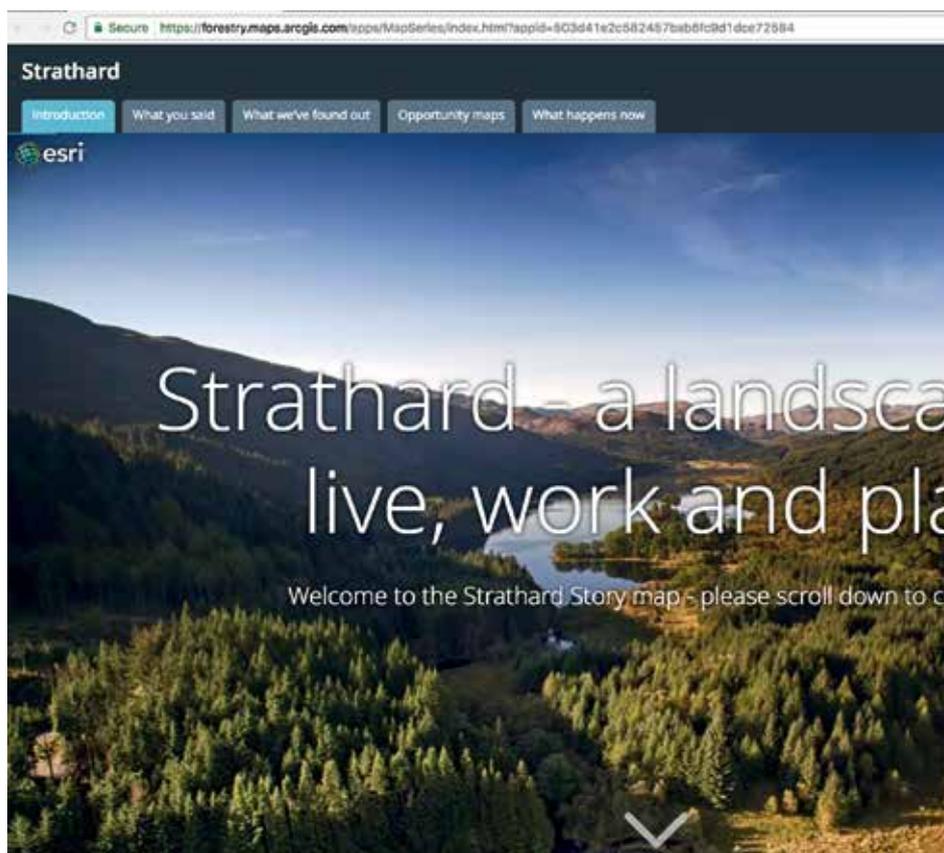


Story Map - harnessing the power of maps

The Strathard Initiative is a good example of how good stakeholder management can bring landscape managers and communities together. **Chloe Bellamy** and **Andrew Rattey** of Forest Research talk about their experience of using a new visualisation tool to aid community engagement.

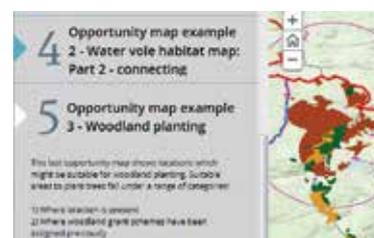
The Strathard Initiative is a collaborative project that is developing and trialling more effective and sustainable water and land management decisions in a rural area of western Scotland. It was established by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, who had been encouraged by the government to look for opportunities to improve joint working between public bodies, land managers and communities whilst implementing an 'ecosystems approach' to land management.

Boiled down to its core principles, an ecosystems approach must involve everyone with an interest in the local natural environment, whilst taking into account the multiple benefits it provides and considering the role of ecosystem functions and condition. Forest Research's role in the project has been to help collect and analyse the varied information needed to develop the project's plans and to co-design surveys and other approaches to consult with local stakeholders. www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/strathard



How does stakeholder engagement contribute to successful land management? The degree of success of stakeholder engagement will have a huge role in determining the overall impact of any project aiming to improve the way a landscape is managed. The people living, working and visiting the area should be involved from the start, in order to pinpoint the priority issues that the project should aim to tackle and to build a shared understanding of their values and opinions.

The process should be iterative to enable stakeholders to feedback ideas at each stage. This is essential for improving understanding and gaining trust, which in turn can enable local people to feed into the decision making process. Tapping into local knowledge provides a more nuanced, accurate reflection of the regional context, informing the de-



Story Map resource requirements

Story Maps are a feasible means of communication in a wide variety of cases. All you need are the fundamental ingredients: a) a story to tell, b) moderate to high quality imagery to use and c) accompanying data to visualise.

To develop a Story Map you need an Esri software licence and ArcGIS online account. The cost of the software licence may be prohibitive for some organisations or

The Strathard Story Map was part of a set of stakeholder engagement activities

- Local events
- A film
- Twitter account @StrathardLand
- Surveys
- An interactive 'MapMe' mapping survey
- In depth interviews with local people
- A Community Partnership Project webpage
- Community e-newsletter
- Guided Forest Tours
- A community mapping workshop





development of more bespoke management strategies that are most likely to be accepted and effective.

Visualisation tools: why use them?

In contrast to traditional methods of presentation, such as written reports and PowerPoint slides, using interactive maps and visualisations in the Strathard Initiative enabled us to share our work in a format that was accessible over the internet, visually engaging, and easy to follow.

There are a number of visualisation tools available; we used ESRI Story Maps. It allowed us to capture and hold people's attention, by taking the viewer on a journey that covered all aspects of the project, from its inception and aspirations, to the data collection, analysis and map making phases.

The user had control of their experience, choosing whether they interact with a map to reveal additional information or not. They could also decide how long they spent on each section, which helped us cater for people with varied interests. We took care to include imagery which connected to the study area and the people that live there, a decision which we felt contributed to the sense of local ownership and involvement in the project.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en>

The Strathard Story Map

We used the Strathard Story Map to provide a reminder of the project aims and to update the local community on our progress and future plans. We were able to communicate the information we had collected and how we had mapped, analysed and interpreted these data to inform the decision making process. The service also allowed local people to formulate their views and feed into the process in their own time and at their own pace.

Initial feedback has been positive, with the clear presentation and easy to use layout singled out for praise. By incorporating all stages of the project we created a comprehensive resource that the local community could access at any time with ease. This is believed to be one of the main strengths of the approach for this project.

The link to the Strathard Story Map is publically accessible and we have used it to raise the profile of the project and to broadcast our approach and findings more widely. The Story Map also provides an easily digestible overview to anyone considering a similar project elsewhere.

Why not take a look? <http://arcg.is/2AbY7dq>

individuals. However, there is a reduced fee for charities.

In terms of the time and skills input, once the required maps, images and text had been assembled, it took one of our spatial analysts with no prior experience of the tool roughly two days to pull together the first draft. It was then improved iteratively as feedback came through from project partners.

If you would like to find out more about our use of interactive mapping or have an idea of how you can collaborate with us, please get in touch!



What do Confor members think?

Andy Howard, Doddington project

This tool looks brilliant! I found throughout the Doddington project that engaging with stakeholders as early and informatively as possible produced hugely positive results.

By providing them with information and explanations of rational as early as possible we were able to engage with them and find a resolution to their concerns in a timely manner. The use of maps, designs and images in this from an early stage was vital, as more often than not these stakeholders would not be 'forestry literate', and hence found having something they could look at and relate to much easier to understand.

I would envisage a tool like this would therefore be hugely beneficial in combination with public meetings. It would enable the stakeholders to review and understand the proposals in their own time, and hopefully lead to more informed comment and conversations through the consultation process.

Jerry Langford CEnv, Policy Lead Wales

These are good examples of opportunity maps – illustrating the point that we need different opportunity maps for different purposes. It enables opportunity maps to be presented in the context of the work done to derive them. An issue might be good computer and internet access of rural users.

Andrew Vaughan, Tilhill Forestry

This seems very useful as a tool for making key site data publicly available for consultation and as a record of progression. It could allow stakeholders to get caught up on and monitor progress, potentially reducing the need for ongoing stakeholder face to face contact, as projects develop.

It probably needs high quality photos and map work to set up, and provides a record of site map data and stakeholder views and is useful for landscape-wide projects. Cost might be limitation and it would need to be a significant project to justify. Perhaps this style of output should be a goal for the FCS Public Register.

Potential applications for interactive maps and visualisation tools in the forestry sector

- To illustrate potential future scenarios and consult the community on forest design plans or operations
- To advertise a forestry service/company/product
- To provide an engaging overview of an event
- To influence local perceptions of forestry operations
- To provide information on forestry-related issues

