

2030 vision for the Cambridge sub-region

Workshop summary: Agriculture and Green Spaces

Issues

- We cannot separate ourselves from the global scene: food security is a key issue. We have an increasing population yet we grow only 60% of our own food.
- Water availability is uncertain and fuel prices will rise.
- We live in an agrarian region. Both its scale and products are very diverse. It depends on an ability to produce food for people and animals which, for economic viability, must be exported out of the region. Good transport links are essential.
- Farms are bound to continue getting larger and more specialised and intensive. Land ownership is becoming more remote and relying on local management by professionals.
- Traditional farmer-owners are under pressure from supermarkets and seeking alternative (local) markets.
- Farmers are concerned by the increasing number of protected predators and by the problems caused by public access to agricultural land.
- Many urban dwellers with increasing access to the countryside do not feel 'connected' to the green environment and lack information about where they can go.
- We have no way of 'valuing' open space.
- Possible erosion of the Green Belt is a major concern to many.

Propositions

- Agricultural yields must be increased – sustainably – with the aid of massive increases in genetic modification and other plant biotechnologies.
- Agriculture is about more than food production. It relates to land use, water use, carbon capture, and landscape and design.
- Green space managers will have to work with farmers.
- Integrate green space planning with development – a balance needs to be established between development and green infrastructure. See the [Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy](#).
- Build as far as possible on brown land.
- Rather than continued competition between agriculture, urban development and nature conservation, we need to develop a strategic approach embracing different synergies and skills for multi-functional landscapes with different connected activities.
- Change landscape to make it more productive for food and nature conservation. Use low grade land for green spaces. Focus on small deliverable projects that can eventually be linked.
- Concentrate animal production in key areas and modify the land to improve quality. Increase animal weight by making sward sustainable
- Use land to manage, store and release water. Use landfill tax to create wetlands. Consider establishing a market in water.
- Use only low grade land for energy generation through solar farms and so on. Balance the needs of food production with those of energy for agriculture.
- Improve public access to the countryside while at the same time enhancing environmental awareness through education.
- Encourage the creation of community orchards and allotments. Exploit small bio-diverse urban spaces. Localism will allow money to be raised for site purchases.
- Develop the possibilities for bringing skilled young people into agriculture.
- Involve the LEP and major landowners such as the Colleges.
- Universities have a major role to play. The older University should establish a virtual agriculture school to lead a local cluster of agricultural research firms capable of exporting and selling expertise and exemplars.
- Establish a local forum to review the role of technology in agriculture and another in which different practitioners and land managers can exchange ideas.

