

Do the Malawi principles contribute to managing 'wicked' natural resource management problems?

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Why look at the ‘Malawi principles’?

- Ecosystem Approach relevant to ‘wicked’ problems

- “*a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*”

- “*....to deal with complex situations*” arising from ecological processes, human involvement and uncertainty



- Implemented via 12 ‘Malawi principles’

- “*complementary and interlinked*”

- Yet need flexibility “*There is no single way to implement the ecosystem approach*”

- See handout

<http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/description.shtml>

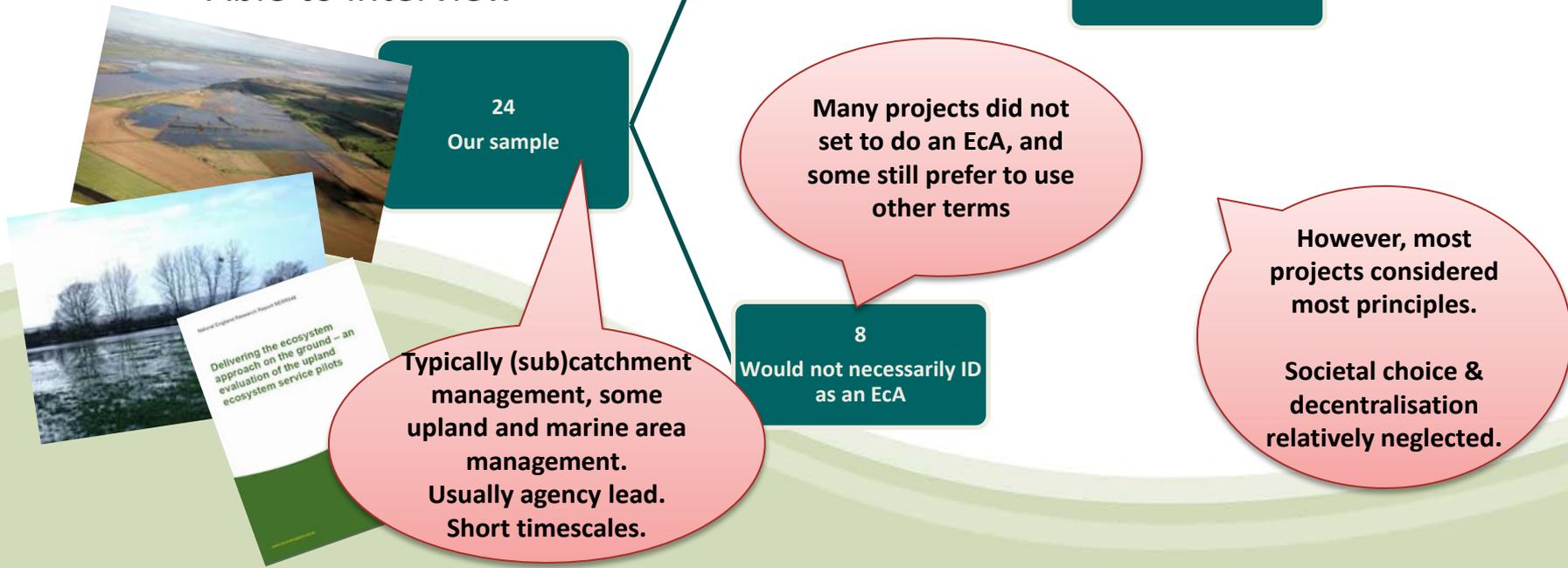
<http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/principles.shtml>



Findings: projects in the UK

- Unclear what this might mean for Scotland
- We identified 24 projects

- Labelled as an EcA
- Appeared to involve people in NRM
- Able to interview



Findings: project progress

- Generally positive feelings about progress
- However...
 - Self-report problems with achieving decentralisation
 - Plus we observe problems with using different knowledges, working with ecological processes and limits, and with handling uncertainty and long-term change
- What is different about these projects?
 - Degree of stakeholder involvement or systems thinking is not unique, certainly not revolutionary *vis a vis* recommendations from the literature
 - However, they nearly always go beyond pre-existing or statutory approaches
- So what do the principles add?



Early conclusions

- Principles don't by themselves provide new solutions but they are useful for highlighting challenges to tackling 'wicked' problems
 - Consider all principles in planning
 - Give particular attention to those which seem to easy to neglect
 - ▶ involving & empowering multiple stakeholder groups & knowledges
 - ▶ handling long-term (imperfectly understood) ecological processes
- Higher-level institutional structures matter
 - Funding cycles and project timescales
 - Pre-existing fixed statutory targets



Need more academic and policy attention to exploring these venues of “institutional stickiness”.

Thank you

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- See handout for more information and contacts