

# 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>

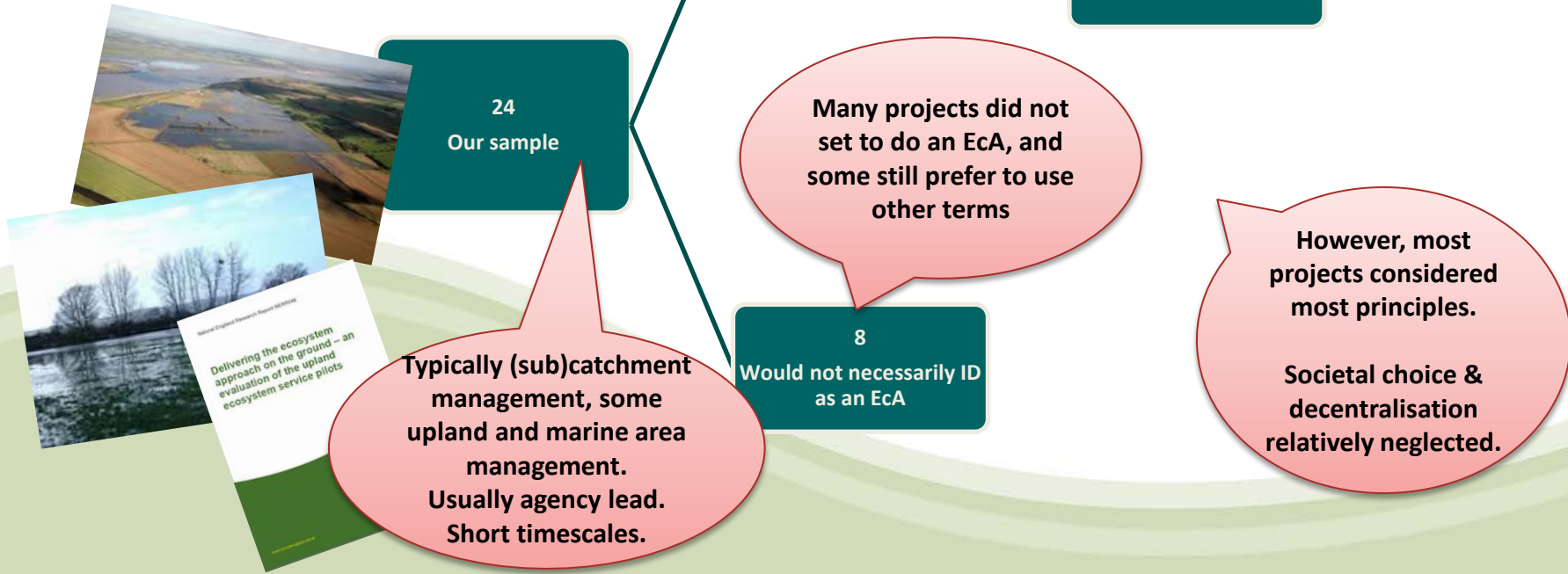
<http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/principles.shtml>



# 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

- This research is funded by the Scottish Government's RESAS Strategic Research Programme 2011-2016. Many thanks to all our participants who agreed to our interviews!
- See handout for more information and contacts