

# Foresight Tool Review

## Futures Tools

TABLES Project 2012: Mini reviews	
<b>Guidance</b>	<i>Using your experience and expertise, consider the following tasks in relation to the tool. It may not be possible to complete all tasks for each tool due to a lack of available information, the task not applying to the tool, etc. <b>Please note where this is the case by writing in the reason in the space provided.</b> Please use a maximum of 6 pages of A4 (excluding diagrams and appendices). <b>Your responses are required in the white spaces.</b></i>
<b>Task 1: Basic information</b>	
<b>Name of the tool</b>	Foresight
<b>Type of tool (list all that apply)</b>	Futures
<b>Group members</b>	1. Michael Hardman
	2. Gary Kass
	3.
	4.
	5.

**Please provide a brief synopsis of the tool**

Foresight is a method which aims to predict future trends to better inform policies (EUR-Oceans, 2011). The idea concerns not necessarily *predicting* the future, although this plays a part, but weighing up the pros and cons of reasonable possibilities: selecting the best according to the situation and principles (Caldwell, undated). This idea has been used in a variety of contexts, from management studies (Costanzo and MacKay, 2009) to strategic studies (Kuosa, 2012): foresight is applicable in many areas and can be tailored to suit particular needs. Perhaps unlike other futures tools, the idea of foresight involves constantly reviewing predictions and revising as necessary (Loveridge, 2009). Simply, the idea of foresight involves looking beyond the futures veil and attempt to predict future scenarios; although this often involves not one vision, but a multitude of them acting in parallel (see Forward Engagement, 2009).

Examples of foresight in practice can be found in a variety of areas: from climate change to issues surrounding migration and environmental change (see Foresight.gov.uk, 2012). For instance, the UK's 'Foresight' government department carried out a series of workshop events which aimed to inform future policies surrounding global food security. These workshops involved a variety of stakeholders, and ultimately identified areas which needed more input from businesses and the government itself; it became clear 'that there [was] very considerable scope for the food industry to play a significant role in facilitating greater sustainability' (Foresight, 2011).

## Task 2: Use of the tool

Position / Use	Stage	Currently used	Could be used
	Ideas	Y	Y
	Survey	Y	Y
	Assess	Y	Y
	Policy / decision	Y	Y
	Implement	N	Possibly

Please add any further comments here: Foresight can be interpreted in a variety of ways and is a loose concept: deployed depending on the actors involved.

## Task 3: Existing literature about the tool

Are you aware of any KEY policy and / or academic literature evaluating your tool?	Author & Date	Title Vol pages	Web link (if available)
	Costanzo, L. A. and MacKay, R. B. (2009).	<i>Handbook of Research on Strategy and Foresight</i> , Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.	
	Kuosa, T. (2012).	<i>The Evolution of Strategic Foresight: Navigating Public Policy Making</i> , Farnham: Gower Publishing.	
	Loveridge, D. (2009).	<i>Foresight: The Art and Science of Anticipating the Future</i> , Abingdon: Routledge.	
	Wilkinson, A. and Mangalagiu, D. (2011).	Learning with Futures to Realise Progress Towards Sustainability: The WBCSD Vision 2050 Initiative, <i>Futures</i> , 44 (4): 400 – 412.	

Please add any further comments here:

## Task 4: Your experience of working on the tool

Have you done any research/consultancy work on this tool in terms of its development, testing and/or evaluation?

<b>Guidance</b>	For Tasks 5-7, please also try to consider the <b>future</b> development and application of this tool in the TABLES project in your answers.
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**Task 5: Incorporating the ecosystem approach (EA) and ecosystem services (ES)**

<b>Using examples (from practice, research or consultancy), explain how EA and/or ES are currently incorporated in/by the tool</b>	Foresight is currently used in predicting changes to natural landscapes, taking into account a variety of factors. In the context of fisheries management for instance, the FAO (2012) claim that foresight tools, including elements of scenario building, enabled the construction of the Ecosystem Approach for Fisheries (EAF); aiding with clarifying uncertainties with regards to fisheries. The UK government has used foresight in a variety of contexts, from anticipating issues with food supply, to climate change and future landscapes. The former involves predicting the needs of the rising population and the food security which comes along with this.
<b>How could the ecosystem approach and/or ecosystem services be (further) incorporated within the existing tool?</b>	Foresight could be used to predict future trends affecting ecosystems, from an explicit focus on ES, to a more holistic overview of EA: prediction places an important part in both contexts. The approach is already incorporated in some versions of the tool, with foresight being used in a variety of situations to anticipate changes and alterations to ecosystem based on a variety of decisions made.

**Task 6: Situating the tool within priority questions/criteria arising from the scoping interviews**

<b>Explain how the tool can be situated within the priority questions/criteria that arose in the scoping interviews</b>	<b>Priority question/criteria</b>	<b>Does your tool address/implement this question/criteria? Or does it have the potential if it was better integrated with an EA/ES approach?</b> <i>Please explain how.</i>
	<b>Language and communication</b>	
	1. Contribution to aiding the development of shared vocabulary within which principles of EA and ES can be shared with multiple stakeholders across built and/or natural environment	Foresight relies on multiple views to generate several scenarios surrounding a specific theme. In this case EA/ES-related issues could form the brunt of a prediction. A prediction could centre on how decisions, which follow the EA principles, could affect a specific environment.
	2. Capacity of the tool to develop shared understandings of the many identities and values of places from the perspectives of multiple visitors, residents and businesses	Foresight involves a variety of stakeholders to generate predictions and thus eventually influence policy: perspectives are thus an important part of the tool.
	3. Capacity of the tool to improve or enable engagement across	The tool is entirely flexible, and a foresight workshop

different publics so avoiding the usual suspect problem	could enable the unusual suspects to play a part in generating predictions, for instance.
<b>Learning from experience/pedagogy</b>	
4. Capacity of the tool to help reveal and value 'hidden' assets that are not recognised by communities or publics that use them	Generating predictions involves the reworking of ideas and a detailed understanding of scenarios, thus hidden assets and previously unknown (or unappreciated) options could be discovered.
5. Extent to which tool is building on other tools or EA/ES progress	The tool is effectively building on current knowledge regarding EA/ES and using this to generate predictions to ensure they are sustained for the future.
6. Extent to which tool is locally derived or grounded or can be adjusted to closely reflect 'local' context. Is the tool suitable for an open source approach?	Foresight predictions can be wide or specifically focused on a particular context, therefore there is great potential for the tool to be used in local situations: workshops perhaps focussing on a specific locale and using actors from that area to generate future knowledge.
7. Extent to which the tool is open to interpretation and application in a variety of forms (that reflect 'cultural' differences)	The tool can be interpreted in a variety of ways, with coordinators able to shape the discussion, or session, around specific topics or events.
<b>Developing and selecting tools</b>	
8. Is the tool dependent on a specific funding source? How onerous is the application procedure? What are the chances of success?	Depending on how predictions are generated, funding may be required. The UK government's foresight department offers opportunities.
9. Does skills development (essential or optional?) and support exist for the tool or is there a body to ensure the optimal and correct use of it?	Several bodies exist, from organisations to government departments, which aim to advise on foresight (see review of typology).
10. Extent to which current statutory hooks can be exploited by the tool or will benefit the quality or application of the tool (e.g. NNPF's duty to cooperate, SUDS, ecol. networks)	The vagueness of this tool results in its application being varied and thus depending on the context it is employed, some hooks can be exploited.
<b>Informing resultant policies effectively</b>	
11. Extent to which the tool informs or improves policies/decisions. What does the tool cover? (full range of positive and negative economic, social and environment impacts / tradeoffs?)	At the centre of foresight is its aim to influence policy and predict future changes to better prepare such documents. In a similar manner to the previous section, the coverage of the tool depends on the context in which it is employed.
12. How does the tool link into the planning system (applications	The tool can be used in conjunction with the planning system to anticipate change, both on the macro and

and processes). At what cost / extra burden?	micro levels.
<b>Delivering management objectives</b>	
13. Suitability or capacity of the tool to assist with managing visitor needs and pressures within protected areas / the considered area? How?	Foresight can focus specifically on this issue and create multiple predictions to better manage such areas: choosing the most effective on comparison.
<b>Local ownership/new governance</b>	
14. To what extent can the tool assist in developing statutory plans (local and management plans) and improve ownership and use by publics?	The tool can be used implicitly in such plans to demonstrate forward-thinking and anticipation on behalf of the strategy's creators. This can then be communicated across to the public for dissemination.
15. To what extent does/could the tool contribute to a new form of community governance in management of the environment?	Foresight's often reliance on workshops to create predictions could enable communities to play a part in the future decision-making process; engaging with policy which could be developed from such events.
<b>Improved tools: understanding flows, interconnections and spatial issues</b>	
16. Capacity to improve spatial understandings of the flows and interactions of various ecosystem services between sectors and at different scales	The predictions generated via foresight could enable decision-makers to better understand future flows with regards to ES and scale: grasping that if certain decisions were made now, this could result in positive, or negative, impacts in years to come.
17. Capacity of the tool to reconcile assessments of options and benefits across different scales (and sectors)	Foresight predictions generate several options, which can be compared and contrasted to establish the best for that particular situation or context.
18. Extent to which the tools is capable or can be manipulated to work across sectoral and administrative boundaries	The tool is entirely flexible and can be manipulated to work across boundaries.
19. Extent to which the tool can handle data shortages and gaps (or is effectiveness considerably compromised?)	Whilst foresight generates multiple predictions, gaps will evidently be present and thus this should be taken into consideration when using this tool.
20. To what extent has/could the tool put landscape/nature conservation and designated species/sites on the radar (positively or resulting in resentment?)	The tool's direct link to policy could raise awareness about overlooked areas: putting these on the radar of decision-makers.

*Please add any further comments here:*

## Task 7: A SWOT analysis of the tool

Referring back to the relevant policy and academic literature (listed in Task 3), plus your own expertise (listed in Task 4) and the way in which the tool is situated within the priority questions/criteria (listed in Task 6), please complete a summary SWOT analysis ensuring that each point is well justified

### **Strengths** *(of the tool in delivering intended outcomes)*

- Can engage a variety of actors on various scales to produce predictions.
- Has strong support from government and other organisations.
- Is not too narrow, unlike other futures tools, in that it creates multiple predictions.

### **Weaknesses** *(factors that detract from the tool's ability to deliver intended outcomes)*

- Funding may be required to make the tool a viable resource: workshops for instance would need to be organised in a central location to be attractive to attendees.
- There are various incarnations of the tool and thus it can be interpreted in a multitude of ways.

### **Opportunities** *(consider opportunities for application of the ecosystem approach and services)*

- EA and ES can become the focal point of this tool, with actors engaging the concepts on an informal level and discussing related issues.
- The tools education angle could inform communities on the concepts and how they play a part in decision-making processes.
- Ultimately, communities can play a part in this decision-making process: providing those without a voice, something to say on EA/ES-related issues.

**Threats** (*factors which negatively affect the tool and its outcomes*)

- Logistical issues could play a part in affecting this tool: accommodation needs to be sought close to communities or other actors involved in these groups. A mutual, central location tends to make this easier for those taking part.
- On the topic of logistics, it is important to realise that focus groups involve a variety of people, and thus it may be difficult arranging a suitable time for everyone, depending on the context.

Threat	Seriousness (high, medium, low)	Probability of occurrence (high, medium, low)
Logistics	Medium	High

Please add further comments here:

**Guidance**

*Please now use the remainder of the document (box below) to make any general comments, observations or analyses of the tool*

**Further comments**