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Land Use Policy

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Editorial

Land use futures—Land use policy journal introduction[☆]

Along with our human capital, land is possibly the UK's greatest asset. It provides the basic services that we need to survive and flourish, the environment in which we all work and live our lives, and it literally forms the historical and cultural bedrock of the country. It is difficult to imagine a national asset that affects us all so profoundly.

However, our land is a finite resource, and it is set to come under increasing pressure as the century unfolds. Factors such as climate change, demographic shifts, and changing patterns of work and habitation will all create major challenges. Also, as these pressures intensify, so will the demands we make on our land. This is already happening as we seek to deliver economic returns, and as we recognise its potential to yield benefits in diverse areas such as mitigating climate change and human health and wellbeing.

Deciding how to balance these competing pressures and demands is a major challenge of our time, and one that is all the more pressing due to the time that may be needed to implement new land-use policies. For this reason, the Government Office for Science has, with the assistance of leading stakeholders and

experts, undertaken a Foresight study on the future of land use. The papers presented in this special issue of Land Use Policy are reviews of the latest science and opinion commissioned by the project. Importantly, they are all intended to be understandable and accessible to experts in other fields.

Whilst the individual papers are important in their own right, their greatest worth is realised when brought together. Although a single journal edition cannot comprehensively cover the land use field, I hope readers will find that the papers presented provide a substantial resource that will attract broad interest and wide use.

The Government Office for Science would welcome your response to this special issue. Any comments can be made via: www.foresight.gov.uk. The project's final report will be published on this website in January 2010.

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[☆] While the Government Office for Science commissioned this review, the views are those of the author(s), are independent of Government, and do not constitute Government policy.