



# Looking forward to the future



Prospectus for  
Futures Framework

Prepared by  
Waverley Consultants

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## What we do

[Waverley](#) provides consultancy in strategy development and futures thinking to clients in government, the wider public sector and higher education. We find futures thinking to be an engaging and effective process for structuring conversations about change - both the external change that may be happening in the market or policy area and the internal change to policies, to strategies or to programmes that clients may need to make in response. Futures thinking is particularly useful for gathering the wide range of perspectives about future priorities that can exist across multiple stakeholder groups; and for developing a shared view of what success means and shared action plans to deliver it.

Our approach is flexible and customised to meet the particular requirements of our client. This means, for example, that we can provide horizon scanning content and then run stakeholder workshops to identify the emerging priorities for a new plan; or we can help the client to design and run their own process for horizon scanning and stakeholder workshops. It also means that, should our client decide partway through a project that they would prefer to create a single vision rather than multiple scenarios, we can adjust the approach with minimal disruption.

We specialise in five areas:

- Gathering intelligence about the future
- Exploring the dynamics of change
- Describing what the future might be like
- Developing future focussed policy and strategy
- Training in futures thinking and futures techniques

Our services in each of these areas are described on pages 3-5.

## Post COVID-19

We have migrated all our workshop and training processes online as a result of COVID-19. We now deliver our full range of services on our client's preferred platform - Teams, Webex, Zoom, BlueJeans and Skype for Business are all popular - and we use a variety of collaborative web based facilitation tools to support futures conversations.

We find that online workshops work best with some design changes to structure and timing and we work with each client to provide a customised solution.

## Recent clients



Government  
Office for Science



Department  
for Transport



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



The Scottish  
Government



Northern Ireland  
Executive



UK Research  
and Innovation



National Physical Laboratory



Scottish Enterprise



Scottish Environment  
Protection Agency



National Audit Office



HERIOT  
WATT  
UNIVERSITY



University of Dundee

## Who we are

Our team is Alister Wilson, Patrick Harris, Simon Hooton and Jennifer Russell.



**Alister Wilson**, project director and lead consultant, has 20 years' experience working with central and devolved administrations to support teams develop and practice foresight. Alister is a skilled facilitator and process designer who works closely with clients to build a detailed understanding of their requirement and to develop a customised approach to meeting it. He is particularly experienced in designing and supporting multi-stakeholder processes and in utilising futures techniques to build agreement on policy and delivery priorities.

**Patrick Harris** is a Senior Associate of Waverley and Director Foresight for Future Agenda, an open source think tank and strategic advisory which operates the world's leading global open foresight initiative. Patrick has extensive cross sector experience in innovation, strategy and foresight and works with organisations to help them identify emerging opportunities and to make more informed strategic decisions. He is particularly skilled in helping clients to see the future in a new light. Patrick is the founder of [thoughtengine](#) and was previously Director of Creativity at Orange and Director of the Futures Company.



**Simon Hooton**, Senior Associate, has over 30 years' experience of producing strategies and plans for governments, companies, charities and regional agencies. He is particularly insightful in horizon scanning and is experienced at working with senior teams to help them characterise and understand the future impacts of drivers of change and to identify how to adapt to secure future success. Simon focusses on economic development, sustainability and climate change.

**Jennifer Russell**, Senior Associate, is an expert researcher, analyst and problem solver who works across a range of sectors and who consequently brings a fresh perspective and new ideas to projects. She is particularly experienced in working in complex areas with a large number of diverse stakeholders and in supporting them to explore options and reach agreement on the way forwards. Her approach is underpinned by strong analytical research and reasoning. Jennifer's clients include UK Government, local authorities, nondepartmental organisations, universities and third and private sector organisations.



## Futures tools



When to look



Where to look



How to look



What to look for



Futures dilemma



Horizon scanning



7 questions



Issues paper



Driver mapping



Axes of uncertainty



Scenarios



Visioning



Stress testing



Road mapping



Securing attention



Influencing strategy

## Gathering intelligence about the future

We use two techniques to gather intelligence about the future: horizon scanning and futures interviews.

We can conduct **horizon scanning** on our client's behalf or advise them on how to develop their own process. Our horizon scanning workshops allow clients to explore scans in detail and to determine the medium and long term planning implications.

We conduct **futures interviews** - using the 7 question methodology - to gather a range of opinion from stakeholders on emerging strategy and policy issues and to highlight levels of agreement on the way forward.

### Links

We worked with Cranfield University to develop a [Horizon Scanning Toolkit](#) for the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

We worked with Ash Futures to produce a [Horizon Scanning report](#) for the Gwent area Public Service Boards.

There is an [extract from an issues paper](#) using 7 questions on our website.

## Exploring the dynamics of change

We use **driver mapping** to identify the political, economic, societal, technological, legislative and environmental (PESTLE) drivers that are shaping the future and to determine which are most important for development of the policy area. This typically takes place in workshops and allows our client to identify certain outcomes which need to be addressed; and uncertain outcomes which need to be explored further through scenario analysis.

**Axes of uncertainty** are a precursor to scenario building and a useful technique in their own right, providing an opportunity for client groups to identify how strategically important - but uncertain - drivers might play out in the future. We use the approach to determine the nature of future uncertainty; the forces pushing the driver in one direction or the other; and the future policy challenges and choices emerging as a consequence.

### Links

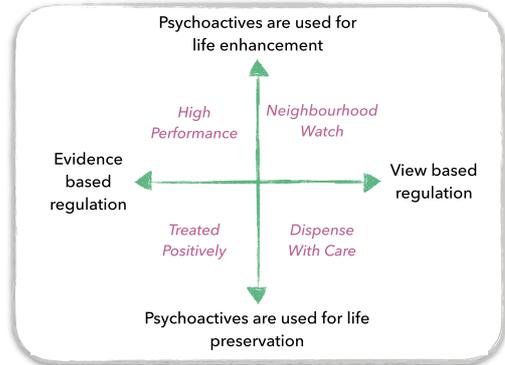
A 2017 presentation which illustrates how we talk about trends and drivers is [available on our website](#).

Our [report from Foresight's Land Use Futures project](#) (2010) illustrates how we use axes of uncertainty.

## Describing what the future might be like

We use scenario and visioning techniques to describe what the future might be like.

**Scenarios** are stories that describe alternative ways the external environment might develop in the future. Each scenario explores how different conditions might support or constrain delivery of policy and strategy and allows policy makers to consider how key actors - government, businesses, citizens - might behave under those different conditions. These discussions allow policy makers to develop and stress test flexible policy responses.



We can develop scenarios through workshop discussions or through desk research. Each approach offers different benefits; and it is possible to combine both to build outline scenarios in a workshop and then add further detail through a research process.

Scenarios set out how the external policy environment might change; **visioning** focusses on defining common aims and objectives for a project or policy and describing what a successful outcome looks like. The process allows participants to identify the key steps required to achieve the vision and the critical pathway towards delivery.

### Links

We wrote the scenarios for Foresight's [Drugs Futures 2025?](#) project.

Annex 1 of the [Futures Toolkit](#) provides a more recent example of a scenario.

Annex 1 of the [Futures Toolkit](#) also provides an example of a vision written with a private sector client.

## Developing future focussed policy and strategy

**Case Study: Using futures thinking to support development of local government delivery plans in Gwent**

76 scans	4 scenarios	5 partner organisations	25 wider stakeholders	120 participants
3 futures workshops	1 futures conference	6 planning workshops	25 cross cutting themes	
43 emerging opportunities	34 emerging threats	5 new delivery plans	5 futures risk registers	

Our approach to policy and strategy development is customised to client need. We address a range of variables at the start of the process - purpose, desired outcomes, timescales, number of stakeholders, reporting requirements, for example - and work with the client to produce a detailed project plan which acts as a roadmap for all key activities. Project plans usually contain a mix of futures inputs - horizon scans, scenarios, interviews - and a number of workshops to explore futures trends and to agree future priorities.

### Case Study: The Futures toolkit for policy makers and analysts

We worked with GO Science to produce the [Futures toolkit for policy-makers and analysts](#) and have trained over 500 people across government and NDPBs in how to use it. We train both mixed groups - drawn from different organisations or from different parts of the same organisation - and individual teams who may be starting out in futures or who have been working in futures for some time and want to refresh their skills. The training programme generally takes place over one day but some clients now seek a second day to allow them to be coached through applying key techniques to a live policy issue of their own.

## Training in futures thinking and futures techniques

Our Futures toolkit training programme can be delivered online or in a classroom setting.

The most popular **classroom** training is a one day programme. We also run two day programmes that introduce concepts and techniques on day 1 and allow participants to apply them to a live policy issue of their own choosing on day 2.

Our **online** training mixes presentations, group conversations and breakout discussions in virtual rooms. Each programme is customised to client need and can be delivered across two, three or four modules.

In addition to training in the Futures Toolkit, we also provide short training modules in specific techniques which can range from 1 hour to a full day.

### Case Study: UK Research and Innovation Infrastructure Roadmap

Waverley worked on a number of strands of the UK Research and Innovation Infrastructure Roadmap. We ran individual workshops for NERC, BBSRC, ESRC and AHRC during the development phase and we assisted UKRI with a series of regional cross cutting workshops towards the end of the project.

The individual workshops took place in the early stage of the project and were designed to (i) identify key themes and challenges that UK science will need to address in the next 20-30 years, (ii) identify consequent skills needs and infrastructure requirements and (iii) identify the priority issues for ensuring the UK science base has access to the infrastructure it needs. Each workshop was different in scale and approach, reflecting the particular requirements of each client.

In the final stage of the project, we facilitated a series of regional workshops around the UK to (i) test and validate the cross-cutting issues identified in the interim Roadmap report and identify any key gaps, (ii) explore key cross-cutting issues in more depth and determine what the roadmap should say about them, and (iii) explore additional issues around delivery of the longer-term goals of UKRI and the roadmap.

### Contact details

e-mail: [info@waverley-consultants.com](mailto:info@waverley-consultants.com)

telephone: 07810 835173