

**Refreshing the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy  
“Greening the North West”:  
Discussion Paper**

**April 2009**

**University of Liverpool  
Civic Design**

Sue Kidd  
Dave Shaw



**University of Manchester  
Planning and Landscape**

John Handley  
Adam Barker



# Refreshing the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy

## “Greening the North West”: Discussion Paper

### Introduction

As part of the process of implementing and reviewing the current North West Regional Spatial Strategy and the on-going development of the new Integrated/Single Regional Strategy, Natural England is considering the need for, scope of, and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West. This discussion paper, which has been prepared by a team drawn from the University of Liverpool and the University of Manchester, has been commissioned by Natural England to guide the way forward.

Preparation of the report has been informed by:

1. A 1 day scoping workshop attended by all members of the study team. This entailed:
  - a rapid review of uses of and progress with implementing the 1996 “Greening the North West” strategy;
  - a rapid review of the changed/changing context in which a ‘regional landscape strategy’ would currently sit;
  - a rapid review of the main factors/forces for change that have affected landscapes in the NW since 1996;
  - a rapid review of the main factors/forces for change predicted to affect the landscapes of the NW over the next 25 years;
  - drawing initial conclusions and recommendations regarding the need for, scope of and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West.
2. Presentation of these draft conclusions and recommendations and subsequent workshop discussions with key stakeholders which formed part of the ‘North West Landscape Matters: New Perspectives on People, Places & Nature’ conference held on Thursday, 26 March 2009.

The report is divided into five parts. Part 1 describes the background to and the content of the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy and reviews how it has been used. Part 2 considers the changed and changing institutional context in which a new regional landscape strategy would fit. Part 3 summarises some of the main factors and forces for landscape change in the NW since 1996 and considers how these might change over the next 25 years. Part 4 summarises the main findings of the discussions at the North West Landscape Matters conference. Finally, Part 5 draws conclusions and sets out recommendations on the need for, scope of and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West..

## **Part 1: The 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy “Greening the North West”**

### **Background**

The North West region of England stretches from the uplands of Cumbria in the north to the lowland landscapes of Cheshire in the south. It is flanked to the east by the Pennine ranges and to the west by the Irish Sea. It is a region of great landscape contrast encompassing areas of the highest international quality such as the Lake District and coast as well as substantial areas of environmental degradation and dereliction associated with its industrial heritage and more recent economic restructuring. Concern to protect and improve the environmental quality of the region has been a long-standing feature of regional level planning in the North West dating back to the publication of the first regional strategy in 1973 prepared by the North West Joint Planning Team. This theme was retained as a central element in the new regional strategies produced in the middle of the 1990s - The Regional Economic Strategy for the North West published by the North West Regional Association and North West Business Leadership Team in 1993 and North West Regional Planning Guidance known as RPG13 published by Government Office for the North West and Government Office for Merseyside in 1996. Both documents encompassed a vision for the North West as:

- a world class centre for the production of high quality goods and services;
- a green and pleasant region;
- a region of first class links to the rest of Europe and the world.

In 1996, Sustainability North West (SNW) was established as the environmental arm of the North West Partnership, a coalition of local government and business leaders that was a predecessor of the North West Regional Assembly and now 4NW. SNW was charged with assisting in the realisation of the vision for the North West as ‘a green and pleasant region’. In order to help in this task one of the first initiatives taken by SNW was the commissioning of a Regional Landscape Strategy. This had as its overall objective the fuller articulation of the North West vision of a ‘green and pleasant region’. The detailed remit was to review landscape condition and appraise current strategic environmental initiatives with a view to identifying the scope for co-ordination, reinforcement and innovation. The work was sponsored by the then Countryside Commission, United Utilities and English Nature and was undertaken by a small team drawn from the Department of Planning and Landscape at the University of Manchester and The Department of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool.

## Approach to the Work

Two underlying principles informed the team's approach to the work. Firstly, landscape was interpreted in its broadest sense following the landscape ecologist perspectives of Forman and Godron and Zonneveld who defined landscape as:

‘distinct, measurable unit(s) defined by ... recognisable and spatially repetitive cluster(s) of interacting ecosystem(s), geomorphology and disturbance regimes.’

(Forman and Godron 1986, p.11)

‘... (a) part of the space on the Earth’s surface, consisting of a complex of systems, formed by the activity of rock, water, air, plants, animals and man and that by its physiognomy forms a recognisable entity.’

(Zonneveld, 1990, p.55)

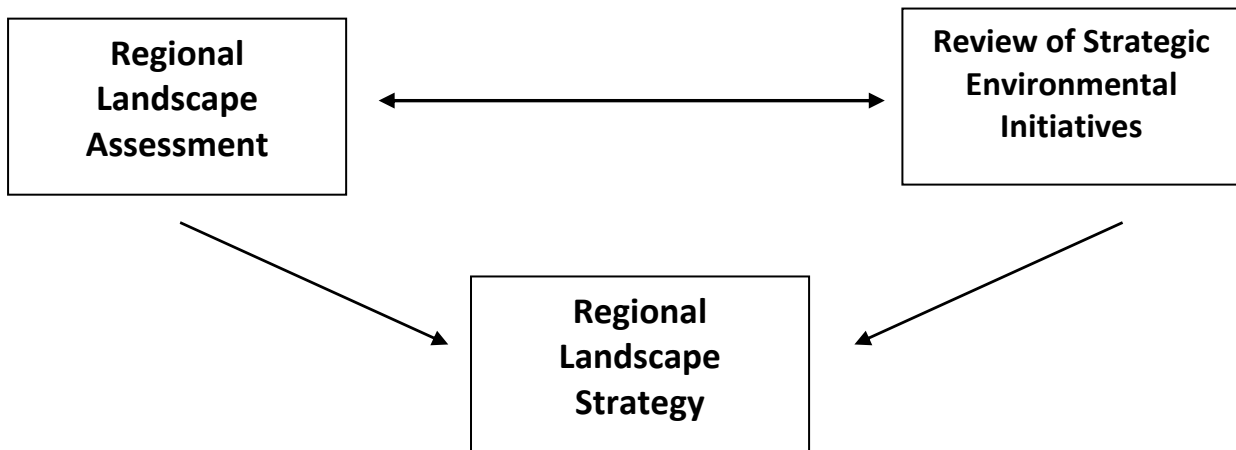
In developing the strategy therefore, landscape was considered both as a set of features embracing both natural and built elements, and as a dynamic entity affected by all aspects of its environment and human use. Hence, air and water quality as well as the nature and condition of land were regarded as important. In addition, the more intangible significance of landscape as ‘symbolic expressions of cultural values, social behaviour and individual actions worked upon particular localities over time’ (Menieg, 1979) was encompassed.

This rather broad perspective, was in line with continental notions of landscape grounded in landscape ecology principles of structure, function and change, rather than simply a concern with visual quality and aesthetics which has, until recently, pervaded much landscape practice in a UK context (Thompson, 2000).

Reflecting this broad based definition, the Study Team was fortunate to be able to draw upon work that had been recently completed for English Nature and the Countryside Commission related to the definition of Natural Areas and Countryside Character Areas. The Countryside Character Areas which nested within Natural Areas defined areas of distinct landscape character which expressed the interaction of people with the natural environment. 30 such areas had been identified for the North West region and these were seen to provide a solid foundation and important building blocks for landscape strategy development.

The second principle underlying the Study Team's approach to the work was the perception that it was critical to create a direct relationship with the established regional policy framework set out in the Regional Economic Strategy for the North West and North West Regional Planning Guidance. These documents were key determinants in directing new investment and development in the North West and it was considered that the Landscape Strategy would have greater status and a better chance of influencing implementation agencies if it was seen as an extension of these established regional policy approaches.

These two considerations permeated all aspects of the work, which was divided into two stages.



In Stage One the Study Team undertook two parallel baseline surveys - a Regional Landscape Assessment and a Review of Strategic Environmental Initiatives in the Region. Both these exercises were structured to reflect the environmental agenda identified in RPG 13, which covered the following elements:

<b>Natural Environment</b>	<b>Built Environment</b>
Natural Heritage	Built Heritage
Coast	Recreation and Sport
Urban Fringe	Energy
Water and Air Quality	Urban Greenspace
Non-Energy Minerals	Derelict Land

Whilst this broad based definition of landscape potentially extended the task in hand and posed the risk of losing a tight focus to the work, it was considered that such problems were more than offset by the benefits of its adoption. The extent of coverage was generally consistent with the Study Team's commitment to a holistic definition of landscape, with all the RPG categories impinging to a significant extent on the quality and character of the landscape in the Region. The categorisation also offered the benefit of having some statutory weight with the outputs of the survey stage being capable of being related back to RPG13.

### **Outputs**

The output from the Regional Landscape Assessment was a compendium of regional level information grouped under each of the environmental themes with associated commentary. The exercise revealed areas of particular information scarcity especially in relation to built environment themes such as urban greenspace, and waste. However, for most areas it was possible to bring together much valuable information on the current state of the North West landscape. The key conclusions of the assessment included a clear recognition of the great landscape diversity of the region and the extent of nationally and internationally important environmental assets of great

aesthetic, cultural, recreational and ecological value. Amongst these assets was the built inheritance of the industrial revolution, but the assessment also highlighted that this phase in the region's history had also created a legacy of environmental damage. Current problems were typified by increasing urbanisation of the landscape, a growth in derelict land in the lowlands, acid deposition in the uplands and the prospect of sea level rise along the coast.

The output of the review of Strategic Environmental Initiatives was a regional directory of non-statutory, collaborative and promotional environmental initiatives that were of significance at a district level or above. The directory detailed the objectives, area covered, start date and lead organisation(s) of each initiative. This directory was accompanied by an overview of the development, coverage and orientation of environmental initiatives in the Region. The exercise revealed the great diversity of environmental activity in the region and the substantial increase in the number of initiatives since the beginning of the 1990s. The durability of initiatives was also significant. Once established they tended to continue even in difficult funding circumstances. Environmental initiatives were a feature of all parts of the region. The majority were multi-dimensional with nature conservation and recreation being the most common concerns. Finally, it was evident that the public sector played a prominent role in directing and nurturing initiatives but the private and voluntary sectors also contributed significantly through funding and manpower.

The results of these two baseline surveys informed the second stage of the work, which entailed the development of a Regional Landscape Strategy itself. This took as one of its starting points the 30 Countryside Character Areas that had been identified for the North West. These reflected distinct physical and cultural parameters that combined to make each area unique. In theory, therefore the Countryside Character Areas provided an appropriate scale at which to develop landscape planning responses. However, from a regional perspective the level of disaggregation was unhelpful, as it required a level of detail in policy that is difficult to accommodate at the regional scale. The challenge for the Regional Landscape Strategy was to provide a meaningful framework for landscape planning at the regional scale that could be effectively translated into action at the local level. In assessing the merits of the Countryside Character Areas, the Study Team noted that while each had a unique identity many significant attributes recurred in different areas. With this in mind the Team sought to aggregate Countryside Character Areas that had common physical characteristics and management issues associated with them and this was achieved by the definition of five landscape domains. The criteria for defining the landscape domains are set out below

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Coast	Character areas abutting coast or estuary
Urban Core	Character areas over 90% urbanised
Urban Fringe	Character areas abutting the Urban Core and/or over 25% urbanised
Rural Lowland	Character areas contiguous with CIS Arable/Pastural zones but not Urban Core
Rural Upland	Character areas contiguous with CIS Upland/Marginal zones

The landscape domains were felt to be valid in both an abstract and a concrete sense; abstract in that they represent a broad ‘feel’ for the landscape, concrete in that there are distinct physical characteristics and management issues associated with them. They were felt to be helpful as a means by which issues of common interest to geographically disparate areas could be explored.

In developing the content of the Landscape Strategy, the Study Team again tried to build upon the established policy framework set out in the Regional Economic Strategy and RPG13. Close consideration was given to the environmental objectives of both these documents and these were drawn together to form the 6 objectives for the Regional Landscape Strategy.

<b>North West Economic Strategy Objectives</b>	<b>Regional Landscape Strategy Objectives</b>	<b>Regional Planning Guidance Environmental Themes</b>
Improving the region’s environmental assets	Protection and enhancement of environmental assets	Natural heritage The Coast Built Heritage Urban Greenspace
Improving and maintaining water quality	Improvement of environmental quality (air, water and land)	Water and air quality Landscape in eth urban fringe
Improving the environment in prominent areas of dereliction	Reclamation and reuse of derelict and despoiled land	Derelict, contaminated and unstable land
	More sustainable resource management	Energy Non-energy minerals Waste
Develop European centres for leisure and tourism	Improving opportunities for leisure, recreation and tourism	Recreation and sport Urban Greenspace
Improving the region’s image by promotion and marketing of assets	Projecting a positive regional image	

With the spatial framework and general objectives defined the Study Team then began to flesh out the detailed content of the Regional Landscape Strategy which in line with its original remit sought to provide a framework for current and future environmental action, provide guidance on its reinforcement and co-ordination, and indicate areas where innovative activity may be required.

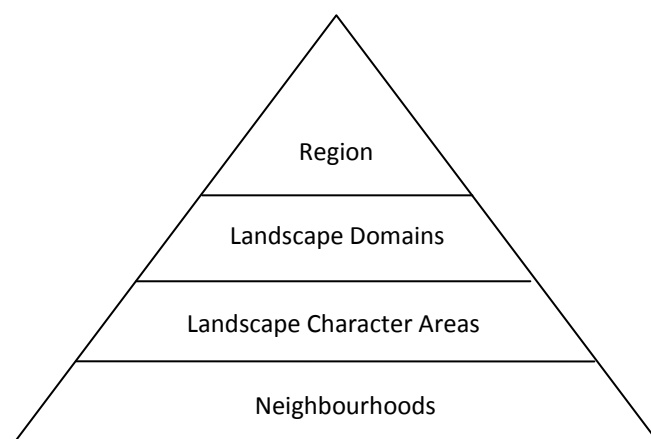
Strategy development was undertaken at two levels. For each of the domains a standard approach was adopted. A descriptive environmental profile of the domain and a review of relevant strategic environmental initiatives set the context. This was followed by discussion of the environmental future of the domain and priorities for action which were informed by a series of stakeholder informed SWOT exercises (See Appendix 2) were then grouped under each of the 6 landscape

strategy objectives. Finally, links with other domains were considered. A flavour of the approach with reference to the Urban Fringe Domain is set out below.

### North West Landscape Strategy Some Examples of Findings for Urban Fringe Domain

Environmental Profile	Environmental Initiatives in Train	Priorities for Action
<p>Buffer between town and country</p> <p>Complex but distinct character</p> <p>Arena of intense activity</p> <p>Problems of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• degraded and despoiled land</li> <li>• pressures for waste disposal and mineral extraction</li> <li>• urban pollution</li> <li>• fragmented farmland</li> <li>• low-grade management practices</li> <li>• poor environmental quality of Green Belt</li> </ul> <p>Positive Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• role of greenbelt in preventing urban sprawl</li> <li>• accessible countryside to large urban population</li> <li>• opportunities for farm diversification</li> <li>• rich industrial heritage</li> <li>• arena for innovative management solutions</li> </ul>	<p>Alt 2000</p> <p>Beal River Valley Project</p> <p>Bollin River Valley Project</p> <p>Canal and Countryside Project</p> <p>Darwen River Valley Project</p> <p>Groundwork Macclesfield &amp; Vale Royal</p> <p>Groundwork Blackburn</p> <p>Groundwork East Lancashire</p> <p>Groundwork Manchester</p> <p>Groundwork Oldham, Rochdale &amp; Tameside</p> <p>Groundwork Rossendale</p> <p>Groundwork Salford &amp; Trafford</p> <p>Groundwork St Helens, Knowsley, Sefton</p> <p>Groundwork West Cumbria</p> <p>Groundwork Wigan &amp; Chorley</p> <p>Groundwork Wirral</p> <p>Knowsley Community Woodland Initiative</p> <p>Leeds Liverpool Canal Management Scheme</p> <p>Mersey Basin Campaign</p> <p>Mersey Forest</p> <p>Red Rose Forest</p> <p>Mersey Valley Partnership</p> <p>NUVIL Project</p> <p>RIVA2005</p> <p>Sankey NOW</p> <p>Stockport Planting Strategy</p> <p>Wasteland to Woodland</p> <p>Weaver River Valley Project</p> <p>West Pennine Moors Management Scheme</p> <p>Wigan and Salford Mossland Strategy</p>	<p><i>Environmental Assets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect and improve wildlife corridors and spaces linking town &amp; country</li> <li>• safeguard industrial heritage</li> </ul> <p><i>Environmental Quality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain and improve water and air quality</li> <li>• enhance landscape quality through positive management of Green Belt</li> </ul> <p><i>Derelict &amp; Despoiled Land</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote strategic approach ensuring appropriate use of brownfield sites</li> <li>• recognise the process of natural colonisation in reclamation</li> </ul> <p><i>Resource Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote development of sustainable energy sources such as coppice woodland</li> <li>• integrate plans for landfill with community forest objectives</li> </ul> <p><i>Recreation/Leisure/Tourism</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expand and enhance greenways traversing urban fringe</li> <li>• provide new recreation resources to divert pressure from wider countryside and reduce leisure travel</li> </ul> <p><i>Image</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote positive image as accessible and valued countryside</li> </ul>

The priorities for action for each of the Domains were designed as pointers for public, private and voluntary sector agencies with a common interest in the domain. It was recognised that many of the actions highlighted were already being addressed through local policy mechanisms, such as local development plans and Local Agenda 21 initiatives. However, it was the first time that these issues had been brought together in a way that could provide a basis for discussion and policy development at both regional and sub-regional level, uniting the neighbourhood with related Countryside Character Areas and the region.



From a regional level perspective, a number of issues emerged from the domain accounts that were clearly of common concern and these informed the development of a region wide landscape agenda again grouped under the five landscape domain headings but also clearly related to the environmental themes set out in RPG13.

The Strategy concluded with a set of recommendations for Sustainability North West related to ways in which it could promote coordination, reinforcement and innovation to support implementation of the strategy.

### **Application**

The North West Landscape Strategy remains a unique example in the UK context of a landscape plan at the regional scale. It is very much a product of a particular time and place and in many respects it was quickly overtaken by changing regional arrangements which in the context of the current discussion document is in itself of interest. The Strategy was fairly typical of many landscape plans in that it did not have any statutory status and despite the very best efforts of the Study Team to link it into formal policy documents, this limited the extent to which key organisations were prepared to commit themselves to its delivery. Equally, no new resources were available for its implementation and, in the context of a rapidly changing regional scene, priorities for action were clearly elsewhere. In addition, the changing focus and ultimate demise of Sustainability North West left the strategy without a champion and the existence of yet another strategy - the Regional Landscape Strategy – was not helpful as organisations became over-faced with a proliferation of such documents.

Despite these circumstances, it would not be fair to imply that the North West Regional Landscape Strategy has been without influence. There are many illustrations of ways in which it either directly or indirectly has been reflected in actions and events. The examples set out below give some pointers as to the future value of updating the strategy.

#### *Coordinated regional funding bids*

Following production of NW Regional Landscape Strategy, Sustainability North West in association with the North West Partnership drew together a £20 million Millennium Fund bid for a programme of projects designed to address the strategies key objectives. The programme encompassed a range of local and region-wide initiatives aimed at enhancing the environmental quality of the region and securing positive landscape change. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful.

#### *Regional information resource*

SNW also established ENWEB, a regional web site providing information on the North West environment and environmental initiatives in the region. This was an updated and extended version of the two baseline studies that fed into the development of the Regional Landscape Strategy and its establishment was one of its key recommendations. A notable feature of the site was its links to other relevant sources of information and for a time this provided the North West with an excellent resource which was of benefit to landscape and environmental planning at all levels and in all areas of the region.

#### *Policy Development*

More subtle influence can perhaps be observed in the new formal regional policy documents that subsequently emerged for the North West. The first to be published, following completion of the Regional Landscape Strategy was the 1999 version of North West Regional Development Agency's economic strategy. This clearly set sustainable development at its heart to an extent that was unusual in such documents at that stage and perhaps reflects the relative sophistication of the North West in this respect. With sustainability at its core, it is therefore not surprising that environmental, as well as economic and social concerns featured prominently in the document. Examples of environmental considerations which may have been derived from the Regional Landscape Strategy, and certainly reflect its content, include the weight attached to the protection and enhancement of the region's varied environmental assets. In this context it is significant that the Region's built industrial heritage, which had previously attracted little attention in regional policy documents, was highlighted as an area for particular attention with World Heritage Site status proposed for the Liverpool waterfront (now designated) and the Ancoats area of Manchester. In addition to these concerns, the RDA strategy also gave its support to the protection and enhancement of landscape diversity in the region and made specific reference to the Countryside Agencies Countryside Character Areas in this context.

The revised version of North West Regional Planning Guidance published in 2003 was the second key regional policy document to draw upon the North West Regional Landscape Strategy. Indeed the strategy was specifically mentioned as a key source of advice for the RPG. Prudent management of environmental and cultural assets and physical regeneration and environmental improvement were highlighted as key themes for policy development and within this broad frame concepts of regional and local distinctiveness received an unprecedented level of attention and support. Equally, a more holistic approach to environmental concerns than in the previous RPG was evident and this was most notable in relation to the coast where a separate chapter on integrated coastal planning was included. The North West remains the only English region to have taken this approach. This emphasis on the coast was partly influenced by discussion of issues at a domain level within the North West Landscape Strategy where the case for action within the Coastal Domain was particularly persuasive. There was also recognition within the RPG consultation documents of the need in preparing the guidance to consider issues on a geographical basis and the landscape domains were put forward as a potentially useful framework in this respect.

### *Su-regional partnership working*

In developing the domain concept the Study Team were aware that the domain framework could be of value beyond policy formulation. One aspect of the Study Team's task was to identify the scope for co-ordination, reinforcement and innovation and the domains offered a coherent basis on which to bring together at a sub-regional scale disparate areas, organisations and interests groups that shared common experiences and challenges. To this end, the North West Landscape Strategy proposed the establishment of Domain fora, which would extend many aspects of SNW's remit to the Domain level. These would provide an opportunity to improve the co-ordination of initiatives, reduce duplication of effort, disseminate good practice, give added weight to lobbying activities and funding bids and facilitate new areas of work of benefit to the wider domain community. The establishment of the North West Coastal Forum in 2000 reflects in part the strength of coastal partnerships in the North West, but was also informed directly by the recommendations of the North West Regional Landscape Strategy. The wide ranging activities of the North West Coastal Forum and the regional, national and international recognition it has attracted indicates that value of sub-regional partnerships of this type. However, it is recognised that the domain fora idea has not as yet attracted wider support and perhaps could be seen as adding another layer of organisational complication in some localities.

### *Regional research*

The need to take a strategic review of the implications of sea-level change was one of the key recommendations within the Coastal Domain section of the North West Landscape Strategy. SNW responded to this issue by extended its focus to consider the implication of Climate Change more generally in the Region. In a pioneering study funded by a wide range of North West partners the implications of various climate change scenarios were considered. This included an assessment of the implications for various economic sectors such as manufacturing industry, tourism and recreation, and insurance as well as those for each of the landscape domains. It concluded that the

impacts of climate change will vary between domains with, for example, the coastal experience being quite distinct from that of the rural uplands. This study is a further example of the value of a regional approach to landscape planning and the potential use of landscape domains as a framework for analysis that acts as a bridge between the landscape and regional scales.

## **Key Messages**

A number of key messages emerge from this account of the 1996 North West Regional Landscape Strategy which may inform the need for, scope of, and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West.

### *Need*

The 1996 North West Regional Landscape Strategy reflected a longstanding commitment to protect and improve the environmental quality of the region and a recognition by key regional stakeholders that there was a need for improved coordination and strategic reinforcement of existing environmental initiatives and for encouraging innovation in key areas of concern. The production of the 1996 document was seen as a key vehicle for progressing these considerations.

The application of the strategy in terms of: producing coordinated regional funding bids; drawing together a wide range of environmental information and making it available as a regional resource; informing regional policy development; stimulating sub-regional partnership working; and informing other areas of regional research also give pointers as to its value.

### *Scope*

In terms of scope, the strategy deliberately took a holistic and integrative view of landscape. Landscape was considered both as a set of features embracing both natural and built elements, and as a dynamic entity affected by all aspects of its environment and human use. In this way the strategy attempted to:

- Integrate biodiversity, natural process and resource management perspectives with those related to landscape aesthetics and culture;
- Address landscape issues across the region encompassing urban as well as rural areas;
- Emphasise landscape improvement as well as landscape protection;
- Focus on the future and positive management of landscape change.

### *Mechanism for production*

The mechanism through which the strategy was produced was specific to the time but perhaps demonstrated a number of attributes that are still relevant in the current context. In particular:

- It had a strong regional champion in the form of Sustainability North West who was charged by other regional players with developing and extending the environmental agenda for the region;
- At every step in the production of the strategy efforts were made to integrate the approach with the key regional planning documents of the time and to structure the document in a way that connected in a clear way with these documents.
- Regional stakeholders were involved at key stages in the production of the strategy with the intention of strengthening the content and also developing ownership of the final product.
- The concept of the 5 landscape domains was seen as a key mechanism for connecting place specific agendas with regional thinking by bringing together landscape character areas with common interests and facilitating discussion and the development of strategic policy objectives and identification of priorities for action at this level.

## Part 2: Changing Institutional Context

As has already been discussed, the institutional framework has changed significantly since the North West Regional Landscape Strategy was produced in 1996 and it is important that consideration of the case for refreshing the strategy should take account of the current institutional context. Part 2 of this discussion paper sets out a short overview of some of the key institutional changes that have occurred and assesses their implications in relation to the need for, scope of, and mechanisms for producing a new North West Regional Landscape Strategy.

At an international and national level there are a number of developments that interact to shape the current landscape agenda in England. Some of the key ones are summarised below.

Source of Change	Nature of Change	Possible implications for NW Landscape Strategy Refresh
<b>1992 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity</b> Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2007 Ecosystems Approach Action Plan 2007 Public Service Agreement 28	Development of the Ecosystem Approach to environmental planning and management Development of 'ecosystem services' thinking – e.g. supporting services, provisioning services, regulating services, cultural services.	Strengthening support for holistic/integrated approach to environment and development. Increased emphasis on landscape processes and interconnection with socio-economic perspectives on the environment. Supporting the development of green infrastructure initiatives
<b>1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</b> 1997 Kyoto Protocol 2006 Stern Review 2008 Climate Change Act	Increased prominence of climate change in policy making.	Increased awareness and focus on adaptation and mitigation measures and management of landscape change
<b>1992 World Health Organisation Commission on Health and Environment</b> 1994 Helsinki Declaration on Action for Environment and Health in Europe 2004 Tackling Health Inequalities Programme for Action.	Revival of concern for environmental determinants of health, for example links between natural environment and mental wellbeing and urban environment and obesity	Strengthening interest in strategic landscape planning in support of health objectives. Supporting the development of green infrastructure initiatives.
<b>2000 European Landscape Convention</b> 2007 European Landscape Convention Framework for Implementation	Establishes a new requirement to conserve and maintain significant or characteristic landscape features, guide and harmonise change, take strong forward looking action to enhance, restore and create landscapes.	Requires the development of policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation
<b>2007 EU Rural Development Regulation</b> England Rural Development Plan	Major shift in the form of agricultural support from production subsidies to environmental management	Environmental Stewardship an increased source of funding for landscape management and change.

Interest in a possible refresh of the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy has emerged in particular as a result of Natural England's activities related to implementation of the European Landscape Convention and many attributes of the original document would seem to be consistent with the spirit of the ELC. For example, the ELC definition of landscape '*landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*' parallels the definition adopted in the 1996 strategy. The ELC's concern not only with protection but also with landscape enhancement, restoration and creation mirrors the forward looking, action orientated approach of the earlier document. Equally, the ELC's emphasis on establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation resonates with the ambitions for the Domain fora that were put forward by the 1996 Study Team. A possible conclusion to emerge therefore could be that a straight refresh of the earlier document would be appropriate.

The table above highlights however, a range of other developments that closely intertwine with the possible updating of the NW Region Landscape Strategy and suggests the need for an integrated approach to 'landscape' planning in the region. The bringing together of planning for biodiversity, ecosystem services, green infrastructure, climate change, agricultural support and traditional landscape concerns associated with cultural diversity and local distinctiveness would seem to be consistent with a range of obligations not only those related to the ELC. Such an approach could help to facilitate synergy between the various elements of the 'environmental' agenda in the North West and potentially minimise duplication of effort and confusion among stakeholders.

With the demise of Sustainability North West, clearly the original champion for such an approach is no longer available to take the lead. However, with the establishment of Natural England in 2007, there now is a government agency with a wide ranging remit covering many aspects of the agenda discussed above which seems well placed to spearhead such an initiative. This seems to be consistent with the integrated approach to environmental matters that Natural England is beginning to develop.

The creation of a new separate 'landscape' strategy for the region even if, as previously, it makes every effort to dovetail with other key regional policy documents does however seem to run counter to other recent institutional developments. In particular the move towards the production of a new Integrated Regional Strategy produced jointly by the North West Development Agency and 4NW reflects general concern about the proliferation of strategies and the desirability of drawing together various aspects of public policy within one overarching regional document. In this spirit it would therefore appear desirable to subsume the new regional 'landscape' strategy within the new IRS.

The scale of material to be covered (perhaps most notably the inclusion of a regional strategy for agricultural support) may present some difficulties here and an alternative that may need to be considered would be the creation of a linked daughter document to the IRS. In either case this

would suggest that the timescale for the production of a new landscape strategy should be closely coordinated with that of the IRS.

Clearly whatever approach is adopted, consultation mechanisms will be key to the production and implementation of any future 'landscape' strategy for the region and it is worth reflecting on what mechanisms are currently in place to facilitate this. It would seem that a central role here might be given to the embryonic North West Landscape Partnership but the form and membership of this would require careful alignment to be consistent the scope of the new strategy. If a wide ranging approach is adopted, the membership will clearly need to reflect this. Beyond this, the complexity and varied nature of the regional landscape agenda still suggests that sub-regional groupings of interests could have a valuable role to play and the landscape domain concept put forward in the 1996 strategy is worth reflecting upon here. However, it seems desirable to build as far as possible on existing groupings rather than add to organisational complexity. With this in mind it is suggested that domain interests could be represented by the following current arrangements.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Lead Organisation</b>
Coast	North West Coastal Forum
Urban Core	Community Forest – Green Infrastructure Groupings
Urban Fringe	
Rural Lowland	New Grouping or Rural Affairs Forum
Rural Upland	New grouping or Rural Affairs Forum

Beyond this, reference back to the review of environmental initiatives undertaken in 1996 suggests that there have been significant changes in the number and type of initiatives currently in existence in the region. There has certainly been consolidation in some areas, for example in relation to the Groundwork Trusts. Equally a range of new, potentially significant delivery vehicles such as Multi Area Agreements and new delivery partners such as Primary Care Trusts have emerged. It is important that any new strategy engages fully with the new institutional architecture of the region.

## **Key Messages**

### *Need*

The requirements set out in the European Landscape Convention suggest that there is a need for a new strategy for landscape in the North West that takes a forward looking, action-orientated approach to landscape protection, enhancement, restoration and creation in the region.

## *Scope*

In addition to the ELC there are a range of other environmental initiatives in the region, all of which recognise the need for integration. There seems to be much to be gained in drawing these various aspects of environmental action under the 'landscape' umbrella. Equally in developing such a strategy it is important that full account is taken of the new institutional architecture in the region.

## *Mechanisms for production*

Natural England seems to have a key role in leading new landscape strategy work , but it seems desirable to link strategy development as closely as possible (in terms of commissioning, management and timetable) with the emerging Integrated Regional Strategy. The new North West Landscape Partnership could play a key role in coordinating stakeholder input to the strategy at the regional level while existing sub-regional partnerships could provide 'domain' /local level input.

### Part 3: Forces for Landscape Change

In thinking about the nature of a future NW landscape strategy it is helpful to reflect on the forces and factors affecting landscape change since 1996 and how these might change over the next 25 years. This is the focus of Part 3 of this discussion paper.

#### NW landscape change since 1996

The Regional Landscape Assessment which informed the production of the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy provides a useful benchmark against which change can be assessed, using both contemporary data sets and also intermediate benchmarking documents such as Environment Agency, 1998, and Pion Economics, 2006. This does however represent a significant task which is well beyond the present brief. Instead we propose to revisit the regional SWOT analyses on the state of the environment which were developed by the Regional Landscape Assessment and to provide a brief commentary on this. The matrix refers to the region as a whole and is outlined below.

#### The Regional SWOT Analysis (Wood et al, 1996)

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environmental assets</li><li>• Built heritage</li><li>• Contrasts of landscape</li><li>• Variety and synergy</li></ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Geographical spread</li><li>• Legacy of industrial pollution</li><li>• Continuing dereliction</li><li>• Continuing pollution</li><li>• Neglect</li></ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential for revitalisation</li><li>• Sensitive use of environmental assets</li><li>• Management of existing landscape resources</li></ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Damaging agricultural change</li><li>• Socio-economic change</li><li>• Creeping urbanisation</li></ul>

With regard to air quality the 1996 NW Regional Landscape Strategy (RLS) commented on the continuing decline of smoke and SO<sub>2</sub> levels in population centres. However a comparison between the North West and UK as a whole showed a slower reduction in pollutants which are declining

(SO<sub>2</sub> and smoke) and a more rapid build up of those pollutants which are increasing nationally (NO<sub>x</sub>, CO and VOC). Increasing vehicle numbers and congestion during the intervening period is likely to have negated benefits associated with technical progress in emission control but the frequency with which high levels of secondary pollutants such as ozone is experienced in any year is strongly weather dependent. In the mid 1990s long range transport of sulphur and nitrogen oxides produced levels of deposition in the region's upland ecosystems which greatly exceeded critical loads for soils (Critical Loads Advisory Group, 1994). We can anticipate significant progress in ameliorating this problem due to the UNECE protocol for large combustion plants.

The North West includes one of the most heavily populated and industrialised water catchments in Europe in the Mersey Basin. Remarkable progress has been made in improving water quality through the Mersey Basin Campaign (Wood and Handley, 1999). In fact the North West stands out as the English Region achieving much the most significant relative improvement in river quality over the period 1990-2004 (Pion Economics, 2005). However, as water quality at point sources (notably waste water treatment plants) has improved, the more intractable problem of diffuse pollution in both town and country has been brought into sharper focus.

The North West has long had the unenviable reputation as the region with the greatest concentration of derelict land and buildings and vacant land in England and this situation continues today (National Land Use database, 2007). Syms (2008) has assessed the effectiveness of brownfield land recycling over the period 1974-2007 and concludes that derelict and vacant land are being reduced at a much slower rate in the North West than in other regions. Furthermore he comments that 'failure to maintain and develop national policy initiatives to encourage the reuse of land will result in a slowing down, or even a reversal, of the brownfield stock reduction trend that has been evident since in 1974. This is highly likely in the significantly weaker property market of 2008 and especially so in the North West' (Syms, 2008). Recognition of the stubborn nature of the problem and its detrimental effect on regional image led the NWDA to promote land restoration to 'green' after-uses (e.g. the Newlands programme). There has also been a growing recognition that derelict and despoiled land provides a diverse starting point for natural succession and it is here that some of the more significant gains in regional biodiversity have occurred (Handley and Wood, 1999).

One striking finding of the RLS was the creeping urbanisation of the countryside measured as a reduction in 'tranquillity.' Subsequent work on tranquillity mapping has only reinforced the evidence for this, especially in the southern part of the Region.

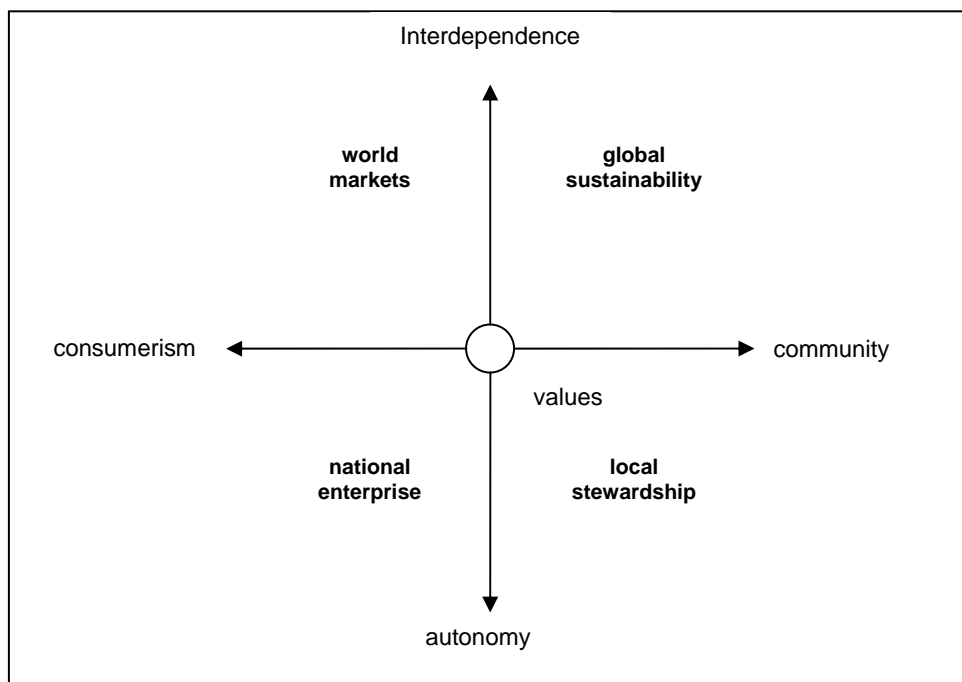
## **Landscape Futures**

The methodology for exploring landscape futures is complex and necessarily involves the use of socio-economic scenarios. It is this approach which underpins the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change through the Special Report on Emission Scenarios (Houghton, 2001). The

SRES scenarios are based on a set of four different story lines within each of which a family of scenarios has been developed.

In the UK these scenarios have been refined to produce the UK Climate Impacts Programme socio-economic scenarios (UKCIP, 2001). In the development of these scenarios the two dimensions of governance and values are taken as fundamental and independent determinates of future change, with changes in all other variables being a function of the interaction between these defining parameters. This gives rise to four scenarios: World Markets, Global Sustainability, Local Stewardship and National Enterprise. Within the Building Knowledge for a Changing Climate (BKCC) programme of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) the quantitative dataset of UKCIP, 2001 has been extended and refined to provide a regional indicator set in the areas of economic, demographic and household characteristics for each scenario up to the 2050's (Nakicenovic, N. and Stuart, R. (eds), 2000; UKCIP, 2001 and Ekins for Policy Studies Institute in Walsh et al, 2007, p. 14 – 21).

### UKCIP socio-economic scenarios



This scenario framework has been used by Simpson (2004) to explore alternative landscape futures for the lowland mosslands of the Mersey Basin but this is a demanding type of exercise. Nevertheless, a scenario based approach is being used in a Europe wide project (PLUREL) to explore the impact of 'environmental drivers' of change on environmental resources and peri-urban land use relationships (see below) in a European science programme (Framework 6) project led by the University of Copenhagen (Carter and Ravetz, 2007).

## Exploring the impact of environmental drivers on environmental resources and per-urban land use relationships

Scenarios	A1 Hyper-tech	A2 Europe H2O	B1 Peak Oil	B2 Bladerunner		
↓						
Environmental drivers	Climate change	Environmental pressures				
Sub-themes	Direct impacts	Urbanisation	Transport	Energy	Agriculture	Tourism
↓						
Environmental resources	Air	Biodiversity	Soil	Water		
↓						
Impact of environmental resources on peri urban land use relationships						

The Greater Manchester City Region is a case study ‘landscape’ within this programme (Ravetz, 2009) and this will provide valuable insights about the drivers of landscape change of relevance to the entire North West Region.

A rather different but no less effective approach has utilised four stakeholder generated scenarios outlining potential energy futures for 2050, backcast to 2020 (Carney, 2000). It would be both interesting and worthwhile to explore the implications of these alternative ‘energy futures’ for the regional landscape. Just such an approach was taken in the development of the North West regional assessment of climate change impacts (Shackley et al, 1998) which utilised the ‘rls’ domain framework. Although this approach was subsequently further refined within ‘REGIS’ the MAFF/DETR project on regional climate change impacts (Shackley and Wood), the original impact matrices are still of contemporary relevance. Subsequent research on climate change impacts within the North West region has refined our understanding (e.g. McEvoy et al, 2006, McEvoy et al, 2008 and Handley in Walsh et al, 2007) but the original matrices still provide a valuable summary of the landscape impact of climate change in the North West Region (Table 4). The intervening period has however seen a very significant increase in appreciation of the role of green infrastructure in moderating climate change impacts (Gill et al, 2007) and the critical importance of this functionality

at the regional scale has recently been evaluated as an input to the Regional Strategy (Gill, 2008). The Principles and Issues Paper of Regional Strategy itself (NWDA, 4NW, 2009) contains a valuable summary of key issues to be addressed over the next 20 years, many of which impact directly or indirectly on the regional landscape. Of particular relevance are:

1. Low Carbon Economy, Resource Use and Water
2. Urban Growth
3. Connectivity
4. Places and Communities

See Annex 3

## **Key Messages**

### *Need*

This brief review of landscape change in the North West reveals a shifting pattern of landscape concerns. While significant improvements are evident in some areas as a result of concerted efforts from regional partners, notably in relation to water quality, other aspects have seen continuing deterioration, such as tranquillity. Equally, it is evident that new areas of concern have emerged, such as diffuse water pollution. Looking to the future it appears that the scale of the landscape challenges facing the region are just as great if not greater than they were in 1996 and the need for a proactive strategy to address them seems as great as ever.

### *Scope*

It is suggested that climate change and energy considerations, biodiversity, soils and health in particular should receive further attention in any updating work.

### *Mechanism for Production*

Since the 1996 strategy was produced a considerable body of work has emerged exploring alternative futures drawing together social economic and environmental factors, and it is felt that this could provide the foundation for a stronger futures component in subsequent updating exercises.

## **Part 4 : Key Findings from the North West Landscape Matters Conference.**

A presentation on the material set out above was given at the 'North West Landscape Matters: New Perspectives on People, Places & Nature' conference which was held in Wigan on Thursday, 26 March 2009. The event was attended by over 60 delegates drawn mainly from the North West and included people with a wide range of interests in landscape matters in the region. The purpose of the presentation was to inform delegates about the past regional landscape strategy work and to stimulate discussion regarding the need for, scope of and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West. This was assisted by a series of workshop sessions and a summary of the main findings to arise from these is set out below.

### *Need*

It can be seen from Annex 4 that the workshop discussions were wide ranging, but it is evident that there was general support among delegates for improved landscape planning at a range of different scales. The critical importance of the local scale was emphasised, as this is where detailed decisions about targeting, in terms of landscape protection or improvement, ultimately take place. However, it was recognised that sub-regional and regional scale planning was also helpful in promoting a coherent and coordinated approach and better integration of landscape planning with other planning activities that occur at this scale.

### *Scope*

There was much discussion about the potential scope of landscape planning and how it related to the wide range of 'environmental' initiatives that were underway in the region. Particular attention was given to the green infrastructure planning that was taking place on a county-wide basis, biodiversity related activities concerning the development of ecological networks and the emerging ecosystem services approach. There was a general concern that a variety of landscape planning processes currently exist but tend to be undertaken in isolation of each other and that there was a real need to bring these together. Equally, some frustration and confusion was expressed about the complexity of terminology and it was generally considered that a more coherent and holistic approach to landscape related matters was required. This would be beneficial both for the professionals working in the field and for presenting a clearer, more unified and stronger picture of landscape planning ambitions to those working in other areas. While all were anxious not to get 'hung-up' about terminology, there was some support for bringing the spread of environmental activities in the region under the 'landscape' umbrella, not least because this was a term in common usage which elicited strong levels of public engagement.

In terms of the work needed to develop a more coherent regional approach to landscape planning, it was recognised that the North West Landscape Character Framework commission was a helpful start. However, many felt that more work was needed, for example to develop a finer grained understanding of urban landscape character and the role and function of urban landscapes. In

addition, it was considered that there was a need for an up to date regional overview and evidence base related to landscape condition and change and the range of environmental initiatives and organisations in train. A key concern here was the need to adopt an evidenced based approach to targeting activities related landscape enhancement, restoration and creation. Equally, the need to build upon existing planning and implementation arrangements and to avoid duplication of effort was stressed. It was also felt that these baseline studies would help to clarify which landscape issues would benefit from regional guidance and which were more appropriately handled at the sub-regional or local levels. In this context there was some discussion about the merits of taking forward the domain approach adopted in the 1996 North West Regional Landscape Strategy and it was considered that the value of this would need revisiting in light of a review current institutional arrangements.

### *Mechanisms for Production*

It was recognised that one of the weaknesses (as well as strengths) of landscape planning in the region, was the range of agencies involved. While Natural England now embraced many aspects of the environmental agenda, its remit is not comprehensive. Many believed however, that there is a clear need for a strong regional landscape champion to raise the profile of landscape concerns amongst key agencies and steer the development of regional landscape strategy work. While there was much interest in the role that the North West Landscape Partnership could play in bringing interested stakeholders together, it was felt that to be effective, appropriate resourcing was needed. The work of Natural Economy North West and the North West Coast Partnership were put forward as exemplars which could be drawn upon, the suggestion being that for the partnership to be effective it needed dedicated staff and an outward looking and proactive approach.

A strong view to emerge from the discussions was that any future regional landscape planning initiatives should be embedded as far as possible in the new Integrated Regional Strategy and that if it is judged that a separate free-standing document was helpful, this should be connected in a formal way to the Integrated Regional Strategy and Local Development Framework structure and to the county level green infrastructure strategies.

## North West Landscape Matters Conference: Summary of Main Findings

### Identification of thematic landscape issues and priorities

Landscape Theme	Biodiversity	Green Infrastructure	Trees, woods, forests	Public perception
<b>Key issues</b>	<p>Clarification required of relationship between landscape and biodiversity</p> <p>Landscape planning should be responsive to biodiversity targets</p> <p>Connectivity of ecological networks fundamental to planning at the landscape scale</p> <p>Biodiversity to be promoted as means of integrating people with landscape</p> <p>Stakeholder integration required to overcome sectoralism</p>	<p>GI planning should operate at multiple scales but with particular emphasis on landscape scale</p> <p>GI should be used to reconcile tension between landscape character and landscape resources</p> <p>'Ground truthing' via demonstration projects necessary to guide intervention</p> <p>GI planning needs to prove responsive to landscape change</p>	<p>Clear association between habitat type and perception of landscape significance.</p> <p>Dominant habitats types can be used to promote community engagement.</p> <p>Street trees, hedgerow trees, and less valued areas to be promoted in future strategic activity.</p> <p>Partnership activity seen as fundamental to future status of trees, woodlands and forests within the landscape.</p>	<p>Future interventions needs to recognise power of landscape within public consciousness</p> <p>Need to assert importance of 'value' systems for landscape which recognise that landscape value will vary according to perception.</p> <p>Landscape value should be determined by the public as well as expert bodies</p> <p>Monitoring of existing intervention required in order to determine impact on landscape value. Particularly important in determining how traditional and contemporary landscapes are understood.</p> <p>Need for greater understanding of role and function of urban landscape in policy formation.</p>

## North West Landscape Matters Conference: Summary of Main Findings

### Assessment of priorities for implementation of European Landscape Convention

Thematic Issue	Knowledge and understanding	Institutional roles and responsibilities	Methodological tools and techniques	Policies, plans and programmes
<b>Priorities</b>	<p>Landscape means different things to different people. There is a need for a common conceptual understanding of landscape coupled with clearer use of associated terminology.</p> <p>Need for up to date evidence base which highlights current landscape threats. Particular emphasis should be given to emerging climate change related pressures.</p> <p>Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of existing or earlier initiatives (particularly the 1996 Regional Landscape Strategy).</p> <p>Landscape exists as a multifunctional entity. As such links to economic sector need to be more clearly understood and communicated.</p> <p>The 1996 Regional Landscape Strategy asserts the importance of 'domains'. The value of these needs to be revisited and greater recognition needs to be given to the variation which exists within the urban landscape. Concern that the term 'domain' is confusing to the public.</p>	<p>Landscape has a relatively low profile amongst with the key agencies of government. There is a clear need for a landscape champion within the region. The role of the natural Economy North West team in promoting GI offers a good example.</p> <p>A variety of landscape planning processes exist but currently these are undertaken in isolation. Greater lines of cooperation and communication need to be established between stakeholders.</p> <p>LA officers are a valuable part of landscape protection and enforcement. Yet, further training and expertise is required in order to promote effectiveness.</p> <p>A greater role for communities in landscape planning needs to be considered.</p>	<p>Biodiversity mapping and landscape Character Assessment need to be undertaken with cross reference to one another.</p> <p>Methods need to be developed which can account for the perceptual values afforded by landscape to the public.</p> <p>There is a need for consistency in approach to landscape characterisation. Tools are required to help identify those areas that require protection and those that require enhancement.</p> <p>Greater methodological understanding of how to evaluate urban landscape character.</p>	<p>Planned responses should operate at the regional, sub-regional and local scale. Whilst regional strategic provisions will serve to achieve integration with other initiatives (including the Integrated Regional Strategy), local level planning should target interventions.</p> <p>An independent regional landscape strategy could prove effective but would need to be part of a plural planning process with other plans. Links with GI planning will be crucial</p> <p>Key role identified for IRS and LDF framework in working toward a finer grained appreciation of urban landscape character.</p> <p>PPP making needs to be supported by clearer guidance.</p>

## Part 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Finally we draw together the key conclusions from the discussions set out above in relation to the need for, scope of and mechanisms for producing a new strategy for landscape in the North West. This is followed by a number of recommendations regarding next steps.

### *Need*

The 1996 North West Regional Landscape Strategy was seen by regional stakeholders of the time as a key mechanism for coordination and strategic reinforcement of existing environmental initiatives and for encouraging innovation in areas of environmental concern. The subsequent application of the strategy in terms of: informing regional policy development; producing coordinated regional funding bids; drawing together environmental information and making it available as a regional resource; stimulating sub-regional partnership working; and informing other areas of regional research, gives pointers to the valuable role a new strategy could play. The requirements set out in the European Landscape Convention suggest that there is a need for a new strategy for landscape in the North West that takes a forward looking, action-orientated approach to landscape protection, enhancement, restoration and creation in the region. Looking to the future it appears that the scale of the landscape challenges facing the region are just as great if not greater than they were in 1996 and the need for a proactive strategy to address them is as great as ever. Discussion among regional stakeholders at the North West Landscape Matters conference on 26 March 2009 indicates general support for reinvigorating a regional scale of landscape planning in order to promote a stronger, more coherent and coordinated approach and better integration with other planning activities that occur at this scale.

### *Scope*

In terms of scope, the 1996 strategy deliberately took a holistic and integrative view of landscape. Landscape was considered both as a set of features embracing both natural and built elements, and as a dynamic entity affected by all aspects of its environment and human use. In this way the strategy attempted to:

- Integrate biodiversity, natural process and resource management perspectives with those related to landscape aesthetics and culture;
- Address landscape issues across the region encompassing urban as well as rural areas;
- Emphasise landscape improvement as well as landscape protection;
- Focus on the future and positive management of landscape change.

This approach is consistent with the requirements of the recent European Landscape Convention and a range of other current environmental initiatives in the region, all of which recognise the importance of integration. Discussion at the recent Landscape Matters conference highlighted a

strong desire for a more coherent and holistic approach to environmental issues in the North West and some support for drawing the environmental agenda together under the 'landscape' umbrella.

In terms of the work needed to develop a more coherent regional approach to landscape planning, regional stakeholders welcome the North West Landscape Character Framework commission as a helpful start. However, more work is needed in relation to urban landscapes and to provide an up to date regional evidence base on landscape condition and change and environmental initiatives in train. These are required to deliver an evidence based approach to targeting activities related to landscape enhancement, restoration and creation and to build upon existing planning and implementation arrangements and avoid duplication of effort.

### *Mechanism for production*

The mechanism through which the 1996 strategy was produced was specific to the time but demonstrated a number of attributes that are still relevant in the current context. In particular:

- It had a strong regional champion (in the form of Sustainability North West) who was charged by other regional players with developing and extending the environmental agenda for the region;
- At every step in the production of the strategy efforts were made to integrate the approach with the key regional planning documents of the time and to structure the document in a way that connected in a clear way with these documents.
- Regional stakeholders were involved at key stages in the production of the strategy with the intention of strengthening the content and also developing ownership of the final product.

At present the region lacks an equivalent organisation to Sustainability North West and responsibility for landscape matters is shared among a wide range of organisations. While Natural England now embraces many aspects of the environmental agenda and is therefore well placed to take a leading role, its remit is not comprehensive. In this situation stakeholders are attracted to the potential role that the embryonic North West Landscape Partnership could play in bringing related public, private and voluntary sector interests together, steering the development of regional strategy work and championing landscape matters. Adequate resourcing and a proactive approach following the example of Natural Economy North West or the North West Coastal Forum are however clearly needed if the partnership is to be able to fulfil the championing role.

Finally, drawing upon the experience of the 1996 Landscape Strategy, it is evident that any new landscape strategy work should be embedded as closely as possible in the new Integrated Regional Strategy and the current sub-regional and local level planning framework of the North West.

## ***Recommendations***

Based upon the above discussion, the following recommendations are put forward:

### *Recommendation 1*

The North West Landscape Partnership should be charged with:

- championing landscape matters in the region;
- integrating and reinforcing regional, sub-regional and local responses to landscape protection, enhancement, restoration and creation;
- promoting innovation in key areas of concern.

### *Recommendation 2*

With this in mind consideration should be given to the following:

- defining the scope of membership of the Partnership
- identifying an appropriate chair
- establishing an initial management structure and modus operandi
- agreeing the objectives of the Partnership
- establishing an initial business plan to guide the early operation of the Partnership

### *Recommendation 3*

With the aim of informing stakeholders, strategy development and implementation activities in the North West, the North West Landscape Partnership should commission as a matter of priority the following:

#### A North West Concordat on Landscape Planning Terminology and Principles

Objective: To establish a common framework of understanding that promotes a consistent, holistic and integrated approach to landscape planning in the region.

The Concordat should provide clear guidance on the scope and purpose of landscape planning, the use of terminology and the inter-linkages between different areas of landscape-related activity. The framework should reflect current international, national and regional thinking and best practice and the results of stakeholder engagement. It should be endorsed by the North West Landscape Partnership as the basis for its activities and as guidance for organisations working in the region.

## A Regional Landscape Assessment

Objective: To provide a shared regional evidence base of landscape quality and landscape change in the North West.

The assessment should build upon the 1996 Regional Landscape Assessment but be extended as appropriate in light of the Concordat, the new North West Landscape Character Framework and the availability of new data sets. It should provide a compendium of regional level information grouped under agreed themes together with an associated commentary identifying key landscape assets, problems and areas of change. It is suggested that climate change and energy considerations, biodiversity, soils and health in particular, should receive further attention in any updating work.

## A Review of Strategic Environmental Initiatives

Objective: To provide a shared regional evidence base on the range of strategic environmental initiatives in the North West

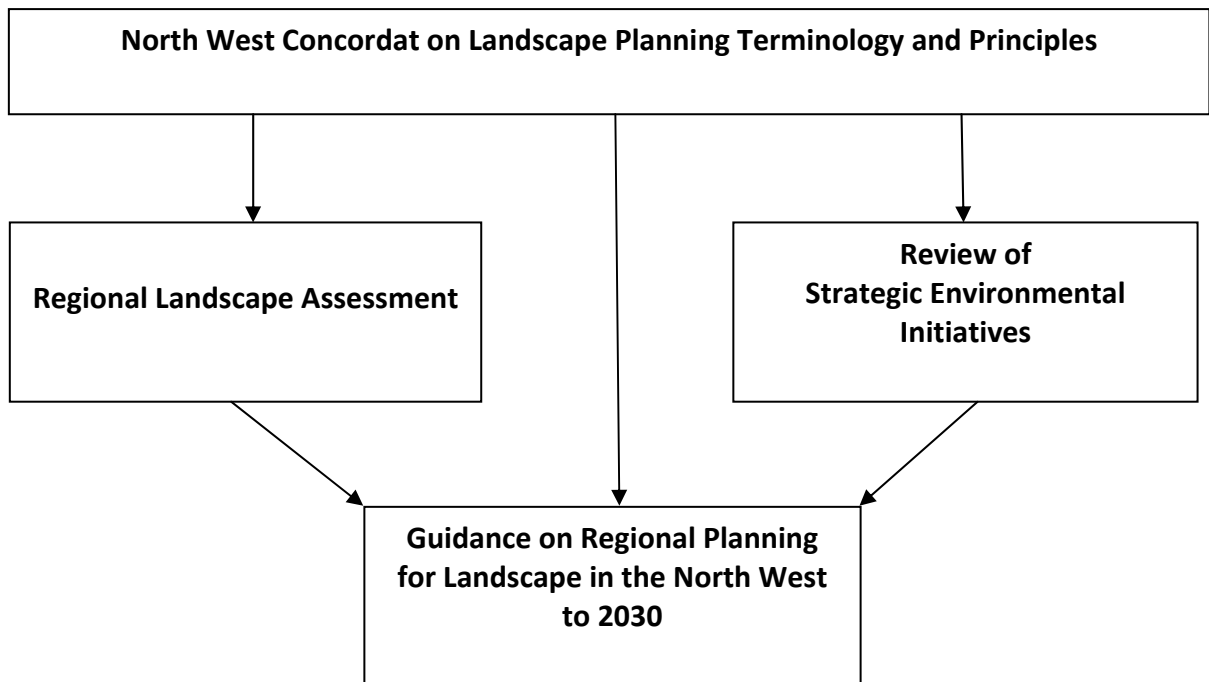
The work should build upon the 1996 Review of Strategic Environmental Initiatives to produce a regional directory of initiatives of significance at district level or above. The review should include a commentary of the coverage and orientation of the initiatives and their relationship to the framework of landscape planning in the North West set out in the Concordat. Particular attention should be given to the role that the county-wide Green Infrastructure Strategies are playing in providing sub-regional guidance across the spread of landscape concerns.

## Guidance on Regional Planning for Landscape in the North West to 2030

Objective: To inform the development of an integrated approach to landscape planning at the regional level.

Reflecting on the on the above, the work should draw together the assessment current landscape condition and strategic environmental initiatives in the North West and consider the implications of various future scenarios for landscape planning in the region in association with stakeholders. This should inform the development of regional level guidance which, as appropriate, directs, integrates and reinforces regional, sub-regional and local responses to landscape change and promotes innovation in key areas of concern. In undertaking this work particular attention should be given to ensuring that the activities and recommendations dovetail closely with the emerging Integrated Regional Strategy and the current sub-regional and local level planning framework of the North West.

**Recommended Work to be Commissioned by the North West Landscape Partnership**



## Bibliography

Brooke, D. (1994) A countryside character programme, *Landscape Research*, 19: 128-132.

Carter, J. and Ravetz, J. (2007) Environmental drivers of change: research strategy and baseline profile, *Peri-Urban Land Use Relationships- Strategies and Sustainability Assessment Tools for Urban- Rural Linkages (PLUREL)*, University of Copenhagen, Unpublished.

Critical Loads Advisory Group (2006) Critical Loads of Acidity in the United Kingdom, Department of the Environment, London.

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *National Land Use Database 2007*, HMSO, London

Ekins, P. (2007) Building economic and social information for examining effects of climate change (BESEECH), in Walsh, G.L. et al. (eds) *Building Knowledge for Changing Climate*, Newcastle University, Newcastle.

Environment Agency (1998) *The State of the Environment in the North West of England*, Environment Agency, Warrington,

Farrar, A.R. (2000) *Action for Biodiversity in North West England*, Government Office for the North West, NWRA and the North West Biodiversity Form. Warrington.

Forman, R. (1995) *Landscape Mosaics: the Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*, Springer, New York.

Forman, R. and Godron, M. (1986) *Landscape Ecology*, Springer, New York.

Gill, S., Handley, J., Ennos, R., and Pauleit, S. (2007) Adapting cities for climate change: the role of green infrastructure, *Built Environment*, 30(1), 97-115.

Greenwood, E.F. (1999) *Ecology and Landscape Development: a History of the Mersey Basin*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.

Handley, J. (2007) Adaptive strategies for climate change in the urban environment, in Walsh, C. et al. (eds) *Building Knowledge for Climate Change*, 44-53, Newcastle University, Newcastle.

Handley, J. and Wood, R. (1999) The consequences of landscape change: principles and practice, problems and opportunities, in Greenwood, E.F. (ed) *Ecology and Landscape Development: a History of the Mersey Basin*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.

Handley, J., Wood, R. and Kidd, S. (1998) Defining coherence for landscape planning and management: a Regional Landscape Strategy for North West England, *Landscape Research*, 23: 133-158.

Higham, N. (2004) *A Frontier Landscape: the North west in the Middle Ages*, Windgather Press, Oxford.

- Kidd, S., Handley, J., Wood, R. and Douglas, I. (1996) *Greening the North West: a Regional Landscape Strategy, Working Paper 2: Strategic Environmental Initiatives*, Occasional Paper No.53, Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, Manchester.
- McEvoy, D., Handley, J.F., Cavan, G., Ayleu, J., Lindley, S., McMorrow, J. and Glynn, S. (2006) *Climate Change and the Visitor Economy: the Challenge and Opportunity for England's North West*, Sustainability North West (Manchester) and UKCIP (Oxford).
- McEvoy, D., Cavan, G., Handley, J.F., McMorrow, J. and Lindley, S. (2008) [Changes to climate and visitor behaviour: implications for vulnerable landscapes in the North West Region of England](#), *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(1): 101- 121.
- Meinig, D. (1979) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Nakicenovic, N. and Stuart, R. (eds) (2000) *Special Report on Emissions Scenarios*, A Special Report of Working Group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- NUDA/4NW (2007) *Principles and Issues Paper: RS 2010*, Regional Strategy for England's North West, NUDA (Warrington) and 4NW (Wigan).
- Pion Economics (2006) *State of the North West Region: VITAL Signs 2005*, Government Office North West, Warrington.
- Ravetz, J. (2009) Exploring the metro-hinterland: prospects for Manchester city-region, *PLUREL Newsletter 1: Manchester City-Region*, University of Manchester, Manchester.
- Selman, P. (1999) *Planning at the Landscape Scale*, Routledge, London.
- Shackley, S.; Wood, R.; Hornung, M.; Hulme, M.; Handley, J.; Davies, E. and Walsh, M. (1998) *Climate Change Impacts in the North West Region of England*, Technical Overview, UMIST and University of Manchester, Manchester.
- Simpson, J. (2004) *Planning for Environmental Sustainability in the Green Belt of the Mersey Corridor*, PhD Thesis, Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, Manchester.
- Syms, P. (2008) Taking a strategic approach to the efficient re-use of land, paper presented to Manchester Statistical Society, December, 2008, to be published in the *Proceedings of the Manchester Statistical Society*.
- Thayer, R.L. Jr. (2003) *LifePlace: Bioregional Thought and Practice*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Thompson, I.H. (2000) The ethics of sustainability, in Benson, J.F. and Roe, M.H., *Landscape Sustainability*, 12-32, Spon Press, London.

UKCIP (2001) *Socio-economic Scenarios for Climate Change Impact Assessment: a Guide to their Use in the UK Climate Impacts Programme*, UKCIP, Oxford.

Wood, R., Handley, J., Douglas, I. and Kidd, S. (1996) *Greening the North West: a Regional Landscape Strategy, Working Paper 1: Regional Landscape Assessment*, Occasional Paper No.53, Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester., Manchester.

Winchester, A.J.L. (2006) *England's Landscape: the North West*, Collins, London.

Zonneveld, I. (1990) 'Scope and contents of landscape ecology as an emerging science', in Zonneveld, I. And Forman, R. (eds) *Changing Landscapes: An Ecological Perspective*, Springer, New York.

## Annex1: Original NW Regional Landscape Strategy methodological framework

Landscape Domain	Likely Sensitivities and Effects		Comments
	Beneficial	Detrimental	
<b>Urban Core and Urban Fringe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More outdoor activities (community life, 'caf. Society', etc.)</li> <li>• Healthier lifestyles</li> <li>• More active population, (walking, cycling, etc.)</li> <li>• Economic benefits for the leisure industry</li> <li>• Greater potential for community forests (temperature, growing season, CO2 concentration, policy measures to off-set emissions)</li> <li>• Lower winter heating bills</li> <li>• Lower mortality from cold winters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water shortages for garden irrigation</li> <li>• Stresses on parks and gardens in their traditional form and on street trees</li> <li>• Increased risk of food poisoning</li> <li>• Heat island effect: unpleasantly hot micro-climatic conditions in homes, workplaces, retail and recreational areas</li> <li>• Health risks through sunburn; greater air pollution from sunlight, temperature and inversion effects (e.g. PM10s, SO2, O3)</li> <li>• Structural damage from storms to buildings and other infrastructure</li> <li>• Additional stress for remnant seminatural habitats</li> <li>• Flood risk from streams, rivers and sewers</li> <li>• Increased uptake of air conditioning, increasing energy costs</li> <li>• Rise of water tables upwards in industrial areas accelerated</li> </ul>	<p>Dependent upon other socio-economic and environmental factors, e.g. 'greying' of the population, greater mobility, higher disposable income, new households, and shifts in lifestyles.</p> <p>Reduction in disposable income also possible, however. This would reduce the potential benefits of climate change resulting from more cultural-based recreation.</p>
<b>Coast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for coastal zone</li> <li>• Regeneration (including nature conservation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher sea water flood risk</li> <li>• Intermittent or permanent loss of land</li> </ul>	<p>Significant pressures already along the coastal zone include natural erosion, development pressures and tourism.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher incomes from tourism</li> <li>• Expansion of more temperature and moisture dependent species, e.g. blanket bogs, beech trees, reptiles and insects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expenditure on coastal defences (with attendant loss of amenity value and biodiversity)</li> <li>• More unpredictable coastal dynamics e.g. beach erosion</li> <li>• Habitat loss (particularly salt marshes and mudflats)</li> <li>• Loss of distinct temperate maritime coastal ecosystems</li> <li>• Change in dilution and dispersal of effluents discharged to sea (industrial, sewage, power station, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Managed retreat is a serious policy option, but will be controversial. Its applicability in the North West is limited by the high level of development.</p>
<b>Rural Uplands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration of new species</li> <li>• Enhanced vegetation growth due to higher temperatures and longer growing season</li> <li>• New opportunities for farmers and landowners, e.g. extended stocking of land, higher productivity of grasslands</li> <li>• Greater recreational opportunities and associated economic benefits (e.g. outdoor pursuits)</li> <li>• Possible accumulation of carbon in peat soils in wetter conditions with longer growing season</li> <li>• Greater potential for upland forestry in right context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of niche habitats and species</li> <li>• Erosion (localised and widespread), especially of peat soils</li> <li>• More grazing opportunities on young shoots with detrimental effects upon vegetation.</li> <li>• Potential for decreased vigour of vegetation due to water deficit</li> <li>• Increased fire risk in dry springs / summers</li> <li>• Increased risk of windthrow of forests</li> <li>• Potential for shifting and more intensive patterns of agricultural cultivation with adverse ecological impacts</li> <li>• Recreational pressures</li> </ul>	<p>High dependence on agricultural policy, i.e. grazing pressures. Limited understanding of the complexities of the interactions between climate, land-use and ecosystems. In Cumbrian lakes, however, strong coupling between weather events (position of the Gulf Stream) and lake physics, chemistry and biology has been established.</p> <p>Whether upland peat soils will act as an enhanced source or sink of carbon is uncertain. Research is required to provide a clearer answer to that question.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of new water supply / transfer options</li> <li>• Low water flows / levels with impacts on biodiversity and water quality</li> <li>• Increased 'flashiness' of streams and rivers, increasing flood risk and affecting biodiversity</li> <li>• Possible release of carbon from peat soils due to decomposition</li> </ul>	
<b>Rural Lowlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farming opportunities e.g. new crops, more productive grasslands, longer stocking periods, better conditions for arable farming</li> <li>• Recreational opportunities</li> <li>• Migration of new species</li> <li>• More rapid vegetation growth and longer growing season</li> <li>• Many animals, birds and insects do better in warmer winters (including pests)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water supply problems, specially for potatoes, vegetables and currently irrigated farming</li> <li>• Vegetation change; competitive species will out grow species with a greater conservation value</li> <li>• Stresses on particular plant and animal communities e.g. ponds, meres (from algal blooms for example) and trees (e.g. beech) on light and clay soils</li> <li>• Species migration limited by extent of development</li> <li>• Stream, river and sewer outlet flood risk</li> <li>• More cracking of land and higher soil moisture contents over winter, increasing risk of pollution runoff</li> <li>• Farm waste water systems not designed to cope</li> </ul>	<p>Heavily modified seminatural Ecosystems already severely impoverished. Climate change likely to be an additional stress, especially for species unable to adapt or migrate relatively quickly.</p> <p>Low connectivity between present habitats will prevent migration of species, reducing their ability to adapt to climate change.</p>

		<p>with increased rainfall, especially given possibly reduced period for disposal of manure on land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Animal husbandry (heat stresses on animals)</li><li>• Adverse effects on aquaculture</li><li>• Water logged soils more susceptible to damage from cattle and farm equipment, limiting time available for working / grazing.</li></ul>	
--	--	---	--

## Annex 2: Original SWOT of landscape domains

### THE COAST

<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine heritage</li> <li>• Ecological and landscape diversity/quality</li> <li>• Statutory protection</li> <li>• Coastal management schemes</li> </ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological and landscape sensitivity</li> <li>• Unmanaged stretches</li> <li>• Complicated division of responsibilities</li> </ul>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desirability/accessibility</li> <li>• Tourism/recreation (e.g. planning control, NW Coastal Path)</li> <li>• Consolidation of existing development</li> <li>• Woodland/dune balance</li> <li>• Renewable energy (e.g. wind)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Threats:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sea level changes/storminess</li> <li>• Pollution (marine &amp; land-born)</li> <li>• Sand/gravel extraction</li> <li>• Oil/gas exploitation</li> <li>• Visitor pressure</li> <li>• Development pressure</li> <li>• Agricultural reclamation</li> <li>• Desirability/accessibility</li> <li>• Renewable energy (e.g. wind)</li> </ul>

### URBAN CORE

<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Density (sustainable development)</li> <li>• Built heritage (residential, commercial and industrial)</li> <li>• Greenspace network (nodes and links)</li> <li>• The developing urban forest (street trees and woodlands)</li> <li>• Focused regeneration programmes</li> </ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established urban form</li> <li>• Derelict land (legacy and continuing)</li> <li>• Accessibility of countryside</li> <li>• Poor quality parkland landscapes</li> <li>• Canalised/culverted rivers</li> <li>• Energy use</li> <li>• Energy use</li> <li>• Waste generation</li> </ul>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability (focus on urban centres)</li> <li>• Urban forestry</li> <li>• Cycleways</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Urban nature conservation</li> <li>• Landscape regeneration of parkland</li> <li>• Greenways/blueways</li> </ul>	<p><i>Threats:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability (esp. quality of life)</li> <li>• Traffic-generated pollution (air/noise)</li> <li>• Vandalism/crime/anomie</li> <li>• Groundwater pollution</li> <li>• Contaminated land</li> </ul>

## URBAN FRINGE

<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Robust' character</li> <li>• History of management</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Statutory protection</li> <li>• Canal/river network</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Local character</li> <li>• Industrial heritage</li> </ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management neglect for hope value</li> <li>• Low grade management (horsiculture)</li> <li>• Poor river quality</li> <li>• Derelict land concentration</li> <li>• Fragmentation of habitats and landscapes</li> </ul>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry and nature conservation on derelict and underused land</li> <li>• Landscape restructuring (Community Forest framework)</li> <li>• Links between town and country</li> <li>• Wildlife corridors</li> <li>• Cycleway networks</li> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Agricultural diversification</li> <li>• Strengthening canal network</li> </ul>	<p><i>Threats:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban intrusion</li> <li>• Pollution (open-cast coal working)</li> <li>• Pollution (solid waste management)</li> <li>• Pollution (sewage disposal)</li> <li>• Neglect (green belt to brown belt)</li> <li>• Deteriorating air quality (ozone/NOx)</li> <li>• Pressures on farm management</li> <li>• Contaminated land</li> </ul>

## RURAL LOWLAND

<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural land quality</li> <li>• Healthy rural economy</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Local distinctiveness (landscape/local vernacular)</li> <li>• Statutory designation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland/hedgerow neglect</li> <li>• Scale of land management agenda</li> <li>• Urban intrusion</li> <li>• Sparse woodland cover</li> <li>• Historic removal of landscape features (hedgerows, trees, stone walls, ponds)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland management/reinstatement</li> <li>• Agricultural restructuring</li> <li>• Development of agri-environment programmes</li> <li>• Rural diversification</li> </ul>	<p><i>Threats:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urbanisation</li> <li>• Commercial afforestation</li> <li>• Agricultural pollution</li> <li>• Agricultural improvement</li> <li>• Recreational pressure</li> <li>• Farm amalgamation leading to loss of landscape structure</li> <li>• Over-mature landscape</li> </ul>

## RURAL UPLAND

<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wilderness</li><li>• Distinctiveness</li><li>• Ecological diversity</li><li>• Vernacular architecture</li><li>• Degree of statutory protection</li></ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ecological sensitivity</li><li>• Peripherality</li><li>• Fragile economy</li></ul>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Woodland management</li><li>• 'Green tourism'</li><li>• Development of agri-environment programmes</li><li>• Changing land ownership</li><li>• Renewable energy (wind/hydropower)</li></ul>	<p><i>Threats:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Socio-economic change</li><li>• Visitor pressure</li><li>• Urbanisation</li><li>• Agricultural change</li><li>• Ecological change (bracken and scrub encroachment)</li><li>• Commercial afforestation</li><li>• Mineral extraction</li><li>• Changing land ownership</li><li>• Global warming</li><li>• Acid deposition</li><li>• Photochemical pollution</li><li>• Renewable energy (wind/hydropower)</li></ul>

### Annex 3: North West of England IRS Issues and options 2010

#### THEMATIC AREAS OF CONCERN

**Low Carbon Economy, Resource Use and Water:** We will need to improve efficiency of energy and resource use, reduce waste generation and manage waste, and define what sustainable consumption and production mean for the Northwest in order to achieve a sustainable growth. The region needs to reduce its carbon emissions and develop a low carbon economy whilst maintaining sustainable economic growth - which is a tough challenge. We will require both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Government carbon reduction targets are likely to mean that we need to "de-carbon" electricity production and all/most rail and road transport. This region could have an ability to become a net exporter of electricity from low carbon sources given its potential nuclear, wind and tidal resources. Although this is a challenge it is also a potentially significant opportunity and driver of growth. The region's innovation, R & D and science assets will be essential in maximising this opportunity and gaining competitive advantage in the energy and environmental sectors.

**Urban Growth:** Growth will continue to be driven on by our cities and towns. Manchester is, and will continue to be central to the Northwest and the North as a major driver of growth and the largest urban conurbation outside London. Similarly Liverpool is a significant driver of growth and together these cities offer huge assets and opportunities for the region, including a quality and depth of employment opportunities not found elsewhere outside London. Preston also has potential for stronger growth, particularly if urban growth takes place in a complementary way, which each of our cities and towns having different strengths. The cultural, sporting, built heritage, living environment and education/higher education offer of our major cities will determine the extent to which they become places in which people continue to want to live, work, visit and invest and themselves can drive growth. However there are still serious deprivation in some of our urban areas and in some places inequalities and deprivation have worsened. Issues of housing, transport/congestion, flood risk and lack of capacity in critical utilities (or grey) infrastructure could also potentially seriously limit growth in some parts of the region. Summer heating of cities could also become an issue. It is essential that our cities develop in order to create the breadth and depth of opportunity that will attract and retain talent in the region. In this regard we will also need to think carefully about the relationship between where people live and work and ensure an adequate supply of employment and housing land in sustainable locations - this may require us to undertake a strategic review of the green belt.

**Connectivity:** An increase in knowledge workers could lead to greater levels of longer distance travelling. However reducing the need to travel will also increasingly be a priority, which will require a significant shift in mindsets and behaviours. In order to support the continued growth of our major cities, the region will need to make better use of its existing transport assets and significantly improve its sustainable transport infrastructure and wider connectivity (since 1996 traffic on major NW roads has increased 16%). This will be vital for movement of both people and goods not only within the region but beyond, particularly to London, Europe and the wider international community, given our westerly location at a time when the centre of world economic activity is moving eastwards. The region is well-placed to

achieve this, with assets such as the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal and one of the most extensive rail networks outside London and the South East. However, the quality of many local rail services and infrastructure is poor, so significant further development in the region's light and heavy rail infrastructure would appear essential. The role of Manchester Airport is also vital in terms of international connectivity of the region. Connectivity is not just about transport links. The importance of strong digital connectivity cannot be underestimated, in a future which is likely to see continued rapid technological change. This digital connectivity itself should help to reduce the need to travel.

**Places and Communities:** Places thrive when they have a clear sense of purpose, combined with strong communities and local leadership. The role of places can change over time as they develop their assets. The Regional Strategy will need to be clear about the potential future strengths of places and their inter-relationships in order to create the conditions to succeed and enable communities and businesses to thrive as well as ensuring growth in various parts of the region to be complementary and not competitive. Several places in the region appear to be changing fast - the unique opportunities and challenges of West Cumbria, Blackpool, East Lancashire and Crewe will all need to be carefully considered in the strategy. There are many ways to analyse places - and many of these have a statutory basis - local authorities and local area agreements, sub regions with statutory sub regions and multi area agreements, travel to work areas, housing market areas, and functional, rather than administrative economic geographies. Many communities are disadvantaged because of where they are, rather than what they do and the regional strategy will have to address issues to do with spatial disadvantage. It will also have to consider the changing nature of communities and the way people inter-relate, often now associating more with other people across the world, via the internet, rather than in the physical place in which they live.

**Natural Environment and Rural Areas:** Not all growth will take place in our cities and other urban areas however, with currently over twenty percent of the region's economic activity taking place in rural areas. The quality of life benefits that sustainable rural communities can bring could be considerable for the region. The outstanding natural environment (including the coast) and the rural economy are clearly very important part of the region and its attractiveness, not least being essential parts of the success of our towns and cities. They will need active and sensitive management to ensure their future survival and enhancement and maximise the social and economic benefits of these natural assets for the region as a whole. The natural environment, including air, water, soils, landscapes and biodiversity, provide crucial "ecosystem" services to the region and therefore we need to manage these to achieve sustainable growth. For example, a strong agricultural and forestry sector could help to protect our landscape and could offer other benefits such as food security, reduced "food miles", improved health from fresher food and renewable energy via biomass. We will face increasing pressure on land, environmental landscapes, biodiversity, air, soil and water quality. We will also need to address the twin track nature of our rural economy.

NUDA/4NW (2009)