



# South West Landscapes Partnership

## **Action Plan**

2010-2015

*Implementing the European Landscape Convention in the South West*

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The South West Landscapes Partnership (SWLP) was established in 2008 by Natural England, as part of its role in implementing the European Landscape Convention (ELC). It brings together those involved in the understanding, management, planning and protection of one of the region's most valuable assets; its landscape.
- 1.2 The aim of the Partnership is to champion all landscape in the South West<sup>1</sup>. It is a strong voice for landscape issues at strategic and local levels. It seeks through the means of communication, collaboration and targeted projects to encourage consistency of approach across national, regional and local partners in landscape policy, delivery and research. The Partnership involves all those with a vested interest in the understanding, managing and planning of landscape. With a broadening membership, working towards common aims, the Partnership functions within the context of the ELC.
- 1.3 To fulfil its aim, this Action Plan identifies the areas of work where the Partnership can be most effective and influential. It complements the ELC Action Plans of Natural England and English Heritage and has been produced in line with recently published guidance<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4 This Action Plan is specific to the work of the SWLP. It is hoped it will stimulate the production of further, locally or organisationally focussed plans, produced by partners and those with an interest in the landscape of the South West. Integration and linkage with and between national, regional and local bodies is seen to be key to the delivery of the aims of the European Landscape Convention (3.0, below).
- 1.5 The Partnership undertakes most of its work by commissioning specific projects, communicating best practice amongst partners and disseminating information.
- 1.6 The Action Plan has been produced from information and feedback gathered at several Partnership meetings to May 2010.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document and the SWLP, the South West is defined by Government Region, i.e. Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset and all land to their west.

<sup>2</sup> European Landscape Convention Guidance Part 3: Preparing an ELC Action Plan, *Natural England and Land Use Consultants, 2009*

## 2.0 Summary

- 2.1 This Action Plan sets out the aims and vision of the South West Landscapes Partnership for the next five years (to 2015). It also identifies the principal activities of the Partnership for the year 2010/11. Achievements will be reviewed each year when setting out the following year's activities.
- 2.2 In developing the above, the Action Plan identifies the connections to, and relationship with, the ELC. The plan aims to illustrate the flow and process of protecting, managing and planning all landscapes at all scales.
- 2.3 The vision and activities of the Partnership are described under five themes, which correlate with the articles of the ELC and the Natural England ELC Action Plan. The relationship to specific articles of the ELC is identified throughout the document.
- 2.4 The Action Plan cannot, and is not intended, to capture all of the work and activity carried out by or within the Partnership, but does identify:
- work to date carried out under the auspices of the Partnership
  - the landscape evidence baseline
  - current work in progress
  - scope for new work
  - the priority work for the coming year
  - methods for monitoring and identifying positive outcomes

### 3.0 The European Landscape Convention (ELC)

- 3.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international treaty to address the protection, management and planning of landscapes<sup>3</sup>. Developed and agreed through the Council of Europe (CoE), adoption of the Convention is voluntary by participatory national governments. The ELC is a treaty and not a directive or statutory instrument.
- 3.2 The ELC has been signed and ratified by the UK Government and the provisions of the Convention came into force in the UK on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007. Defra is the Government department with responsibility for delivery of the aims of the ELC. Natural England is the body leading on implementation in England, working closely with English Heritage and all interested parties and organisations.
- 3.3 The ELC promotes the positive protection, planning and management of all landscapes and defines landscape as *'...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'<sup>4</sup>*.
- 3.4 The aims, articles and aspirations of the ELC are applicable at all levels; national, regional and local; public and private; institution and community.

---

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this document the term 'landscape', in line with the definition included in the ELC, includes 'seascape' and 'townscape' also.

<sup>4</sup> Article 1 (a), *European Landscape Convention, 2000*

## 4.0 ELC and the South West Landscapes Partnership

- 4.1 To date the work of the Partnership has centred on expanding general information and understanding about issues facing the landscape of the South West. Specific projects have considered planning and development control matters, future landscapes, key principles for the management of broad-scale landscape types, and promoting the importance of landscape to the South West.
- 4.2 Workshops held at the 2010 annual meeting of the Partnership suggested a framework, based on the Natural England Action Plan, within which future activity could be organised. The framework of five key themes is sub-divided into specific areas of work identified in the workshops. 'In-year' actions, or projects, have also been identified.
- 4.3 Much of the work of and within the Partnership is ongoing and clearly linked to the intentions of the ELC. Identification of specific projects within the structure of this Action Plan, and related to the articles of the ELC, encourages further continuity and consistency of direction.

## 5.0 The Baseline

- 5.1 The activity of the Partnership to date is recorded and accessible on a dedicated webpage:

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south\\_west/ourwork/swlp.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/swlp.aspx)

- 5.2 A profile of the South West landscape can be found at the South West Observatory website:

<http://www.swenvo.org.uk/themes/land/landscape/>

- 5.3 The South West Environment Network (SWEN), an independent network of environmental organisations, agencies and groups in the South West, have identified a range of environment priorities including 'valued landscapes'. More information can be found at:

<http://www.swenvo.org.uk/swren>

## 6.0 Themes for Action

6.1 The Action Plan has been developed through the identification of key strategic themes. The themes are expanded on through the development of visions and actions. Each vision is constructed from a number of objectives. The visions represent the overall ambition of the Partnership and not precisely defined actions. Short-term actions (within year) that will help the Partnership realise these visions are described in Section 8.0. Their successful delivery will be measured and reviewed against the wider visions (fig. 1).

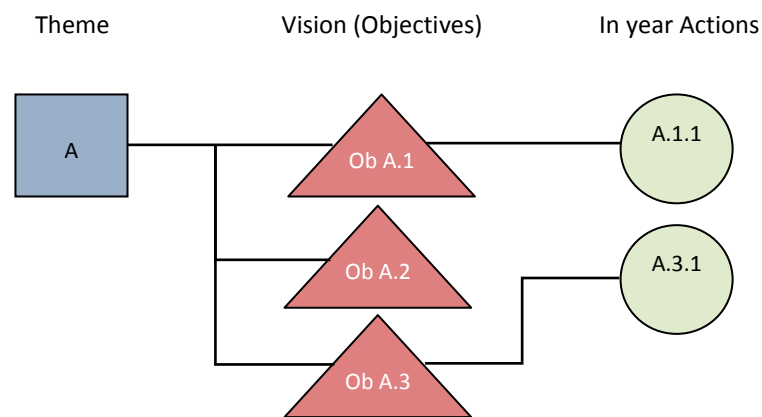


Figure 1. Action Plan structure

6.2 This Action Plan groups the activities of the Partnership into five strategic themes. These are consistent with the Natural England ELC Action Plan and are derived from the articles of the ELC (in brackets).

- A. Improving the identification and understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and monitor change and trends (6C, 6D)**
- B. Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory framework (5a, 5b, 5d)**
- C. Influencing the development of future legislation, regulation and advice (5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 6E)**
- D. Engaging people; raising awareness and understanding of landscape, getting involved with landscape and, promoting, educating and training (5c, 6A, 6B)**
- E. Sharing experiences and best practice (8)**

## 7.0 Vision and Objectives (to 2015)

- 7.1 This section describes the medium to long-term (within five years) vision of the South West Landscapes Partnership, developing the framework of the five principal themes. Again, the numbers in brackets following each statement identify the relevant article in the ELC.

### **A. Improving the identification and understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and monitor change and trends.** We want to;

- A.1** Continue to develop and extend our knowledge and understanding of the South West landscape (6C)
- A.2** Gain universal coverage of high quality landscape assessment and characterisation across the South West; all areas having some form of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), etc. (6C)
- A.3** Encourage organisations with existing assessments and characterisation studies to update and review their evidence and knowledge on a regular basis (6C)
- A.4** Link the understanding and valuing of landscape to future economic, social and environmental planning (6D)

### **B. Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory framework.** We want to;

- B.1** More actively advocate the role of landscape, and landscape characterisation and assessment, as the framework and method for informing regulation, legislation and planning for local areas and at all scales; to see a better understanding of landscape translated into well-informed decisions (5b, 6C)
- B.2** Ensure landscape is more effectively linked with other, parallel regulatory tools, policy and strategy development; principally, habitat and species, and heritage legislation, and economic planning and regulation (5d)
- B.3** Translate the positive experiences of protecting, planning and managing landscape in designated areas, reinforcing what makes it distinctive and special, to all landscape (5a)

### **C. Influencing the development of future legislation, regulation and advice.** We want to;

- C.1** Ensure that landscape is recognised and referenced in developing Core Strategies, Development Plan Documents and other local planning and strategic documents (5b, 5d, 6E)
- C.2** Make sure partners are aware of and can contribute to consultations on new, and proposed changes to existing legislation and regulation (5c)

- C.3** Promote the message that the protection, planning and management of landscape is key to ensuring sustainable and distinctive places (6E)
- C.4** Integrate landscape into land management and planning advice within all organisations and groups with a vested interest in quality of place (5b)

**D. Engaging people; raising awareness and understanding of landscape, getting involved with landscape and, promoting, educating and training.** We want to;

- D.1** Engage with and influence all tiers of local government – parish, town, Borough, District and County – and all individuals and groups active in managing land to ensure landscape provides the defining framework for securing sustainable and distinctive places (6A)
- D.2** Encourage the development and use of ‘Landscape Champions’ within organisations and groups (6A)
- D.3** Ensure pilot studies and research are shared with appropriate partners in accessible and repeatable ways (6A)
- D.4** Produce guidance that is practical and applicable for the intended audience (6A, 5c)
- D.5** Target groups and organisations not traditionally engaged by the landscape community who have a vested interest in the landscape (5c; 6A)
- D.6** Seek to provide, and encourage others to provide, opportunities to increase skills and knowledge within and beyond the landscape community (6B)

**E. Sharing experiences and best practice.** We want to;

- E.1** Continue to build internal and external communications networks within and beyond the Partnership (8)
- E.2** Demonstrate to others, both those with an existing interest in landscape and those without, the work carried out by the landscape community in an accessible and targeted way (8)
- E.3** Develop and nurture local landscape groups, directly sharing skills and experiences (8)
- E.4** Build on relationships between government, non-government and private sector bodies and organisations, and professionals and communities (8)
- E.5** Ensure local experiences and practice contribute to, and are framed within, a wider context (8)

## 8.0 Implementation (Action 2010/11)

- 8.1 From the key themes and general visions identified above, the following specific actions for 2010/11 have been identified. The activities are defined as ‘projects’, ‘communications’ or ‘collaboration’<sup>5</sup>:

### **A. Improving the identification and understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and monitor change and trends**

**A.1.1** Work collectively to extend coverage and quality of landscape assessments and characterisations (**collaboration**)

**A.1.2** Contribute to the development of National Character Area (NCA) profiles and integrated objectives by responding to consultations when and where appropriate. Share information about and resulting from the review of NCAs and integrated objectives with any and all interested parties (**communication/collaboration**)

**A.4.1** Produce a report identifying and summarising past studies concerning the economic and social value of landscape in the South West. Test the summary findings of the collective evidence on a specific area of the South West (**project**)

### **B. Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory framework**

**B.1.1** Produce a technical guidance note on how best to embed landscape evidence (assessments, characterisations, landscape strategies and design guidance) in Development Plan Documents (**project**)

### **C. Influencing the development of future legislation, regulation and advice**

**C.1.1** Complete current project on identifying ‘sound’ Core Strategy policies tested at public inquiry and produce accompanying technical guidance note (**project**)

**C.2.1** Ensure partners are aware of proposed changes to the planning system, national planning policy and guidance (**communication**)

### **D. Engaging people; raising awareness and understanding of landscape, getting involved with landscape and, promoting, educating and training**

---

<sup>5</sup>

For the purposes of this Action Plan the following definitions of work apply:

- ‘projects’ – single pieces of work carried out according to a brief. Projects can be completed by partners, consortia of partners or consultants on behalf of the Partnership
- ‘communications’ – exchange of information between partners via written papers, electronic media and principally the SWLP web page
- ‘collaboration’ – combined effort between partners around common areas of work, minimising resources and maximising delivery and opportunity

**D.1.1** Complete current work on promotional media highlighting the ways of valuing landscape and set out a programme of opportunities for using the material (**collaboration**)

**D.5.1** Identify ten organisations not traditionally engaged with landscape and pursue opportunities to present promotional media to them (**project/collaboration**)

**E. Sharing experiences and best practice**

**E.3.1** Ensure local landscape groups exist in all seven counties in the South West and support regular meetings of those groups (**collaboration**)

**E.4.1** Arrange meetings with Royal Town Planning Institute South West, the South West branch of the Landscape Institute and the Royal Institute of British Architects South West and Wessex (**communication /collaboration**)

## 9.0 Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 The success of the Action Plan will be monitored and measured at the end of the year 2010/11 at the annual Partnership meeting. Reports on actions and projects will be given.
- 9.2 Priorities for action for the year 2011/12 will subsequently be identified and the Action Plan for that year drawn up based on a review of the visions, identification of new issues and opportunities and the successful delivery of identified actions.