

# Notes from the North West regional landscape meeting, Wigan, 27 November 2008



Chair: Colin Maddison, Regional Advocacy and Partnerships Manager, Natural England.  
(See Annex 2 for participants list)

## Update on Natural England policy and activity on landscape

Andy Wharton presented Natural England national policy and activity. Summary points:

- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on Natural England to help conserve and enhance the landscape
- Natural England is committed to help implementation of the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC). The ELC emphasises public engagement in landscape planning, protection and management. It covers all landscapes, both outstanding and ordinary, as well as rural, coastal and urban, and provides an opportunity to raise performance and outcomes for landscape across all sectors. Natural England are developing an Action Plan for implementation as well as supporting others to develop their own Action Plans.
- Natural England is developing a suite of policies on landscape which cover an overarching policy on landscape, plus All Landscapes Matter (ALM); Future Landscapes; Historic Environment; and Protected Landscapes. The ALM policy will be out for consultation soon.<sup>1</sup> The Protected Landscapes policy will be subject to stakeholder consultation in Spring 2009. Also a possible scoping of seascape policy.
- Natural England is strengthening the landscape evidence base, via a review of National Character Areas (formerly known as Joint Character Areas) and guidance on landscape character assessments.
- A new assessment of landscape character change for 2004-2009 will be reporting in 2012. This will aim to include experiential qualities and cultural services provided by landscape. Research is being conducted now into these experiential qualities.

Stuart Pasley presented Natural England's regional interpretation and delivery of Natural England's national priorities. Summary points:

- Natural England's NW team provide policy dissemination and landscape advice both within Natural England and wider
- AONB Management support for the three AONBs in the North West
- Lake District/Yorkshire Dales Designation Review project is a high priority for Natural England but is currently on hold waiting the outcome of the public inquiry into the South Downs review.
- Landscape issues are fed into other work of Natural England in the region, eg Higher Level Stewardship targeting, biodiversity work, development planning and control
- A project to develop a NW Landscape Character Framework is about to begin (see below)
- There is also a Spatial Planning Project, joint funded by 4NW, to follow from this Landscape Character Framework project. This will scope out landscape concerns for forthcoming regional spatial strategy (RSS)/Single Regional Strategy review, as well as help deliver the current RSS. It is hoped that the Spatial Planning project will start in the New Year.

<sup>1</sup> NB - the policy will be slightly altered from the Board paper version given out at the meeting.

- The proposed NW Regional Landscape Partnership is a corporate target within Natural England's work. Natural England is keen to get stakeholder views on partnership development (see below).
- Natural England is planning a high-profile seminar, for a wider audience than today's meeting, relating to the European Landscape Convention in Spring 2009. Provisional date for this is 26 March 2009. Please pencil the date into your diaries!

*NB - Both Powerpoint presentations are available - email Clare Mumford to request copies. Available as handouts: Natural England policy position statement on landscape, and a Board paper outlining a draft policy on All Landscapes Matter.<sup>2</sup>*

### **How could a regional landscape partnership best help local authorities?**

Informal group discussions over lunch captured some ideas which were then summarised and shared in plenary later (see below, Feedback). Annex 1 contains the information from group discussion sheets.

### **NW Landscape Character Framework project**

Stuart Pasley introduced the background rationale for the project to develop a regional landscape character framework. (*Powerpoint presentation available: request by emailing Clare Mumford.*) Funding has been contributed by Natural England and 4NW.

The project's aims are to help implement and promote the principles of the ELC in the North West; to deliver a regional landscape character framework which allows existing landscape information to be better used including across boundaries; to be as pragmatic as possible and to make this information more accessible and easy to use by stakeholders; to contribute base information to assist with forthcoming regional strategic landscape planning and management needs.

There will be four stages, to be complete by end March 2009.

- Stage 1 encompasses stakeholder engagement, information collation and audit.
- Stage 2 will develop a methodology for the Regional Landscape Character Framework
- Stage 3 will create the Regional Landscape Character Framework
- Stage 4 will produce a final presentation and reporting summaries. This will be at the ELC seminar in March.

A request was made for information, and permission to use them, for Stage 1.

*ACTION: Please send materials (LCAs, LDF policies, specific project outputs, etc) to Ruth Benson who will project manage. (Annex 1 contains participants' ideas on good practice that the project steering group might want to consider incorporating.)*

### **Feedback, conclusions, next steps**

Summary and specific discussion points:

- There is enthusiasm and support for a regional partnership.
- Suggested roles for a partnership included: encouraging consensus in decision-making, national-regional join-up, sharing best practice, developing monitoring systems

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<sup>2</sup> Natural England's landscape policy position statement is available at:  
<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/research/policy-position-statements/docs/landscape-pps.pdf>

- Training for planners and elected members was supported. Councillors could be encouraged to engage by promoting the ELC's provenance from human and democratic rights discourses: ideas of "sense of place" as an expression of what the public want.
- Landscape is useful as a means of engaging with the general public, since it means something to them. Perceptions and values of landscape would be a useful discussion for the partnership.
- Regional Spatial Strategy policy EM1 gives us an integrated approach to environmental matters: we need to think how landscape fits into this. The landscape framework project could help develop indicators for RSS.
- Engage beyond the landscape community, especially NW Development Agency, 4NW. This may be especially important to join up with green infrastructure work, where landscape could be seen as a function of GI which delivers benefits such as Quality of Life, inward investment, etc. But need to keep landscape distinct from GI.
- It could be useful to have a sub-regional approach, possibly some sessions per year at sub-regional and others at regional level. "People will want to talk to similar, but learn from different."
- Support for looking at "all landscapes matter" issue: think about future landscapes and landscapes in transition

Natural England will now consider how to develop the regional landscape partnership in the light of people's comments. Clare Mumford will maintain the list of contacts for a partnership.<sup>3</sup>

*ACTION: If people have not already commented via the web survey, they are encouraged to do so.*<sup>4</sup>

For more information on, or inputs into, the landscape character framework and spatial planning projects, contact Stuart Pasley or Ruth Benson.

The next actual meeting of a partnership is likely to be the ELC seminar planned for 26 March 2009 (tbc).

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<sup>3</sup> We aim to circulate some proposals in January about the establishment of a regional landscape partnership.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=9fH5kWROQIoOPc4RH\\_2fkQTQ\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=9fH5kWROQIoOPc4RH_2fkQTQ_3d_3d)

## ANNEX 1

### Discussion notes: How could a regional landscape partnership best help local authorities?

#### sheet 1

- partnership: could there be a group/forum where major development planning apps are passed across their desk?
- regional partnership could provide a content for landscape "value" - from different perspectives - eg natural / historic / scenic etc
- must have training for planners & elected councillors
- cross-border communication
- clarity needed at national, regional & local level
- core strategy level too
- spatial planning project needs to look at existing good practice re DC/DP policies
- tension between "designation" approach and "character driven" approach
- all landscapes valuable - advantages in regional strategy - no designations

#### sheet 2

- does landscape figure on the radar at district level?
- could help where there are no in-house landscape specialists in a local authority
- guidance - could highlight where it is needed
- support
- can raise awareness of what information is available and how it could be used. Training sessions would be very useful for strategies etc.

#### sheet 3

- consistency of approach
  - with neighbouring authorities
  - with individual strategies / plans
  - consensus in decision making
- forum for
  - sharing best practice / case studies
  - disseminating guidance
  - advocating landscape externally
- training
- regional landscape "voice"
- strategic approach local - regional - national
- "ownership" of outcomes

#### sheet 4

- who in local authorities - regen, community & neighbourhood, biodiversity, land managers, archaeologists, spatial planners.
- a partnership supporting landscape professionals is lacking and would be really good (must)
- LCN website to have a regional section to support the partnership
- e-briefings - ie from this meeting, and to promote March conference now (must) (use network to disseminate info further within local authorities)
- talk about green infrastructure - sense of place / quality of life / inward investment
- (must) need to keep focused on landscape but fit into GI agenda
- sub regional approach? (should) - northern & Mersey Belt
- is there a rural / urban split? 2 x all region, 2 x sub-groups
- 2 meetings for north and south; then 2 meetings for all region? landscape characters are v.different?
- should the regional partnership have geographical sub-sets?
- partnership could take on a monitoring advice role in the future (post LDF core strategies)

- (should) partnership should go beyond the landscape community to include biodiversity, historic environment, communities
- NWDA (economic benefits of landscape) & 4NW (spatial planning) to engage in partnership
- must use language in the partnership that resonates with other organisations (eg RDA - green infrastructure)
- provide a learning & sharing network
- (must) needs to provide guidance on how / why "all landscapes matter"
- (must) include future landscapes agenda, for transforming landscapes
- look at environmental character assessment (should)

**In the region, is there any good practice in landscape work that you want to highlight?**

- Cumbria Woodland Vision' based on JCA scale. Strategic tool to inform which type of woodland goes where. Will be 'refreshed' in 2009 (JWCCC)
- Cumbria Wind Energy SPD – underpinned by landscape capacity assessment based on county landscape types – 200. (NW RTPi commendation)
- Cumbria landscape evidence base – being developed Jan-May 2009 and will include a refresh of the Cumbria Landscape Strategy.
- Cumbria HLC now complete
- Cumbria Biodiversity evidence base completed July 2008
- Forest of Bowland AONB Sense of Place study.

## ANNEX 2

### Attendees:

Lucy Barron	AONB Manager	Arnside Silverdale AONB
Ruth Benson	Regional Landscape Specialist	Natural England
Natalie Blackston	Regional Planning Assistant	4NW
Jill Collens	Project Leader, Historic Environment & Landscape; Regional Convenor, Association of Local Govt Archaeologists NW	Cheshire County Council
Faith Crompton	Assistant Landscape Architect	Sefton MBC
Anne Donkin	Senior Landscape Officer	Congleton Borough Council
Kay Foster	Landscape Officer	Chester City Council
Jan Gomulski	Principal Landscape Architect	Cheshire County Council
Gary Harold		Wigan MBC
Colin Maddison	Regional Advocacy & Partnerships Manager	Natural England
Peter McCrone	Historic Environment specialist	Natural England
Simon McGaughey	Landscape Regeneration Manager	Bolton Council
Clare Mumford	Regional Advocacy & Partnerships Specialist	Natural England
Mandy North	Planning & Conservation Adviser	Natural England
Jim O'Neill	Woodland Officer	Forestry Commission
Stuart Pasley	Regional Partnerships team leader	Natural England
Jonathan Porter	Landscape Character Network facilitation	Countryside
Rick Rogers	Countryside Development Officer	St Helens Council
Mike Savage	Operations Manager	Red Rose Forest
David Stirzaker	Planning Officer	Chorley Borough Council
Caron Taylor	Planning Officer	Chorley Borough Council
David Vose	Regional Planning Senior Specialist	Natural England
Jenny Wain	Principal Planning Officer - Landscape & Countryside	Cumbria County Council
Andy Wharton	Senior Specialist, Landscape	Natural England
Keith Williams	Chairman	NW Geodiversity Partnership

Apologies from Steven Brereton, Lancs County Council; Don McKay, Forest of Bowland AONB; Judith Nelson and Andy Wimble, English Heritage; Paul Nolan, Mersey Forest