

European Landscape Convention

Natural England's 2009/2010 Action Plan



Natural England is in its second year of implementing the European Landscape Convention in England. Our Action Plan sets out the activities, reports progress and records achievements of our national and regional landscape work.

Our European Landscape Convention activities over 5 -10 years, aim to:

- Lead on improving the protection, planning and management of all England's landscapes
- Raise the quality, influence and effectiveness of policy and practical instruments
- Increase the engagement in and enjoyment of landscapes by the public
- Collaborate with partners across the UK and Europe.



FLORENCE, 20 OCTOBER 2000

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE
CONVENTION



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1. Introduction to England's Landscape

Landscapes throughout England are the result of the action and interaction of natural (geodiversity, climate and biodiversity) and cultural influences (historical and current land uses, settlement patterns and human interventions). Our landscapes include urban, rural and coastal areas, and, where they extend out from our coasts into the marine environment, seascapes.

Landscapes have undergone past, often dramatic, change yet they provide a wide range of natural services such as soil, water, air and biodiversity as well as a range of cultural services such as aesthetics, sense of place and enjoyment. England's future landscapes will continue to be influenced by changes in climate, natural processes, agriculture, housing and development needs, and by progress towards a low carbon society.

Rich and varied landscapes, the marine environment and the biodiversity and wildlife they both support, are fundamental to a sustainable future. Achieving this future requires an inclusive, overarching landscape approach, which shows how the cultural and natural aspects of the environment are interlinked and interdependent. Also it requires detailed and expert attention to local landscapes; to wildlife, on land and in the sea; to geodiversity; to cultural heritage; to the way that land and marine resources are managed; and to the way people are engaged and inspired to value and use the natural environment.

The English landscape sets a context for peoples' lives which provides both a physical and an emotional presence. It is a meeting-ground between the past, the present and the future as well as between both natural and cultural influences. People's perceptions are an inherent part of how landscape and its character and qualities are experienced and valued.

2. Background /Summary

The European Landscape Convention is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with the protection, management and enhancement of European landscapes. Natural England is in its second year of implementing the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in England.

Our Aim is to place landscapes and people at the heart of social, economic and environmental decision making so that future generations inherit the highest quality landscape possible. Through integrated landscape management, good planning and design, protection and through public engagement and stakeholder involvement it will lead to wider understanding and appreciation, improved knowledge and care as well as a sense of inspiration, well-being and connection between people and place.

Our Success will be when all England's diverse landscapes are valued and well looked after, providing a sense of place and identity relevant to people's lives, and that their complex ecosystems function well.

ELC Action Plans are a key mechanism for implementation and an important component of the ELC England Framework for Implementation. The England Framework was agreed between Defra, English Heritage and Natural England in October 2007 and it provides an organising structure, for us and for others in England, to prepare and implement ELC Action Plans.

Natural England's landscape activity spans the entire organisation and our ELC Action Plan sets out the activities, reports progress and records achievements of our national and regional landscape work. Under each of the Framework headings we have set out a baseline, what we want to see after five years as well as detailing the current year's actions.

The 2009/10 ELC Action Plan records progress made in year 1 (Annex 1), it also refreshes and rolls forward our ELC implementation activities in section 6.

From the 26 actions in our first year of ELC implementation (2008/09) our progress included:

20 actions achieved; 5 actions partially achieved and; 1 not achieved (our embryonic seascape work)

Information on all ELC matters, such as the official text, the England Framework, Natural England and others Action Plans, latest news, implementation and other explanatory material, is publicly available on the Landscape Character Network website at: www.landscapecharacternetwork.org.uk or contact Gary Charlton: gary.charlton@naturalengland.org.uk ph. 0300 060 0064; Richard Partington: richard.partington@naturalengland.org.uk ph 0300 060 4556.

3. The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with the protection, management and enhancement of European landscapes. It is a Europe-wide agreement, developed through the Council of Europe (CoE) and was opened for signature in October 2000 and by August 2009 36 countries have signed with 30 ratifications.

The ELC definition is short and simple, yet comprehensive: 'landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. The definition is inclusive: it applies to all urban and peri-urban landscapes, towns, villages and rural areas, the coast and inland areas. It also applies to ordinary or even degraded landscape as well as those areas that are outstanding or protected.

The Government considered that the UK was compliant with the ELC's requirements and it signed and ratified the ELC during 2006. It came into force in the UK on 1 March 2007. However, the government wishes to facilitate a strengthening of performance through policy and practice across as wide a section of society as possible, linked to its PSA Delivery Agreement 28 which sets out a vision for a diverse, healthy and resilient natural environment. The ELC is mentioned as part of a range of levers and incentives which will be used to deliver the PSA outcomes: notably, the Government wants to see sustainable, living landscapes with their best features conserved.

4. Implementation in England and the United Kingdom

In October 2007 Defra, English Heritage and Natural England agreed an England ELC Implementation Framework. The England Framework provides an organising structure, for us and for others in England, to prepare and implement ELC Action Plans. Actions are organised under five headings:

- Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory frame
- Influencing future legislation, regulation and advice, including contributing to gap analysis
- Improving the understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and the monitoring of change and trends
- Engaging people through comprehensive and accessible awareness and understanding activities as well as through, promotion, education & training
- Sharing experiences and best practice

The England Framework suggested a vision is required for England's future landscapes which encompass the diversity of landscapes so they are valued, looked after and considered as a whole for their aesthetic, cultural, historic and ecological dimensions. The vision, guided by two broad outcomes, is set within the context of sustainable development.

- ***Strengthening of institutional frameworks***

Promoting a landscape perspective to influence spatial planning, land-use and resource management nationally, regionally and locally.

- ***Creating an inclusive, people centered approach***

Raising awareness with the public and fostering community engagement as well as working with professionals, specialist bodies and politicians.

Defra asked Natural England to take the lead on the implementation of the ELC in England, working closely with English Heritage, the Forestry Commission, NGO's, Local Authorities, professions and the public. Natural England has been specifically asked to:

- Act as Project Manager to the ELC England Project Group (*comprised of Defra, English Heritage and Natural England*).
- Promote and coordinate actions within the ELC England Framework to key audiences
- Be a centre of expertise and advice on how to implement the Convention through researching, innovating, public participation and promoting best practice.
- Advocate that the Convention is applied regionally and locally level through plans, SEA/EIA & development proposals etc.

In addition to the England ELC project group a UK ELC monitoring group was also set up by Defra in 2007. It includes Natural England and English Heritage plus the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as their respective Agencies concerned with landscape and heritage. It is through this group that Defra report on UK compliance and implementation of the ELC to the Council of Europe.

5. The Importance of the ELC to Natural England

Natural England works for people places and nature to conserve and enhance landscapes, biodiversity and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public well-being; and contributing to the way natural resources are managed so that they can be enjoyed now and in the future. Our landscape activity spans the entire organisation and we consider landscape as an integrating and unifying concept.

Natural England's 2010 -13 Corporate Plan highlights how a healthy natural environment secures a wide range of ecosystem services that benefits everyone. Engaging people in conserving and enhancing our landscapes and the marine environment, lies at the heart of what Natural England does.

Natural England will take action to:

- show how a landscape approach, embracing both natural and cultural influences and the way people perceive them, is essential to the integrated delivery of a healthy natural environment that delivers the ecosystem goods and services that we need;
- embed a integrating landscape approach to the delivery of all our outcomes, retain the diversity and unique character of all England's landscapes and secure effective planning and management to deliver the ecosystem goods and services that we need, enabling us to respond to challenges such as climate change;
- manage ecosystems, habitats and sites at a landscape-scale so that our biodiversity and geodiversity can thrive and adapt to climate change;
- conserve and enhance the marine environment, which has lacked the level of protection and management that the terrestrial environment enjoys.

Natural England's Position Statements set out our approach in key areas and activities and describe what we want to see happen. Our overarching Landscape Position (February 2008) sets the context and frame for a suite of detailed landscape positions address:

- Future Landscapes;
- Protected Landscapes;
- The Historic Environment: and
- All Landscapes Matter.

The All Landscapes Matter position sets out the approach that Natural England will adopt when addressing the conservation and enhancement of England's landscape. It sets out how we will consider and work with landscapes everywhere, at all scales and in all contexts. It also sets out how we will continue to lead on and implement the European Landscape Convention, applying its principles to all of our work, integrating thinking and delivery to achieve multiple outcomes and benefits, both in relation to Protected Landscapes and the wider landscape.

All landscapes matter and in particular the importance of the relationship between people and place and an understanding and awareness of a 'sense of place'. Our aim is to place landscape and people at the heart of social, economic and environmental decision making.

As we developed our own thinking with Defra, English Heritage and our key NGO partner, the ICOMOS-UK/IUCN-UK Landscape Working Group, it became evident that many of the activities under consideration needed more thought and deliberation before being turned into identifiable actions with measurable outputs. Some were very complex; some required more research and some simply needed a better understanding of the present picture across the UK and Europe. Some of this thinking was developed during the first year of the plan to better influence our approach in this and future years.

Future generations should receive the highest quality landscape possible and through integrated management, good planning, design, protection, public involvement and good information, we believe, through these actions the intent and objectives of the European Landscape Convention can be achieved. Whether rural, coastal, urban, ordinary or outstanding, landscapes are important to people's quality of life everywhere and provide a range of goods and services from food production, clean air, water, biodiversity and geodiversity to a recreational, tourism and health resource.

Our work will need to be realistic, pragmatic and highly prioritised given the prevailing economic conditions. We will need to work collaboratively to draw down additional resources and embrace a wide range of actions from developing appropriate monitoring schemes to strengthening capacity building within local Government, NGOs, voluntary and community sectors. We will also need to look beyond our shores, through learning from neighbours, and participate in European programmes and partnerships to strengthen ELC implementation.

Our achievements/results from Year 1 can be found in **Annex 1**.

6. Our activities / milestones / outputs in 2009/2010

Our work contributes to the two broad outcomes set out in section 4 and below, under each of the five headings from the England Implementation Framework, we have set out a baseline and what we want to see in five years time as well as in year detailed activities.

1. Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory frame

Baseline

In the autumn of 2007 Natural England commissioned Newcastle University to examine how policy in England reflected the intent and aims of the ELC and how performance could be improved. Whilst this was not meant to be a fully comprehensive survey it did aim to provide a good enough baseline to help identify the need for further policy advice devise ways to help focus further on the aims of the Convention and provide a starting point for monitoring. In total 91 documents were examined (30 national, 27 regional and 34 based on two case study regions). Examination of all the national documents showed that although the majority used the term landscape, closer examination of the language used showed that very few really embodied the Conventions intent.

When the assessment focussed on Article 5 it was found that the role of public participation is the area that is most often overlooked in policy and guidance documents.

No significant evidence could be found of a trickle-down effect between levels of government in relation to "good" policy thinking. There appears to be a better relationship between the sectors at each level (for example between different national bodies) rather than within sectors at different levels (for example, national to local).

What we want to see by year 5

- more explicit use of landscape language in policy and guidance documents which communicate intent and understanding of landscape and its potential role as set out in the Convention.
- more consistency in terms of language used which ensures that meanings and intent are clear, especially via the facilitation of stakeholder Action Plans.
- our stakeholders and partners to create their own action plans for the implementation of the ELC
- an increased understanding of people's perceptions of landscape and/or an increased level of public participation in landscape related issues.
- more synergy between all levels of government and across sectors to recognise the positive contribution played by England's landscapes to local, regional and national prosperity and people's quality of life.

Actions for year 2

- (a) Scope, develop and produce further ELC guidelines based on identified themes/sectors including land management, economic development and protected landscapes by end March 2010.
- (b) West Midlands Region – develop and implement a Landscape Partnership Advocacy Project: (i) develop a regional scale landscape framework (start October 2009). (ii) produce a regional landscape advocacy document by end February 2010

- (c) South West Region - develop and implement Landscape Partnership Advocacy Project: (i) map and develop the partnership links with all relevant partners (ii) develop communications, including web pages and promote understanding of activity within the region by end February 2010
- (d) Influencing of South West sub regional and local landscape groups (eg Devon Landscape Policy Group) by end March 2010
- (e) Undertake qualitative research on the cultural services and experiential qualities of landscapes provided to people in order to develop our evidence base and support policy on the public perceptions and values of landscape and the benefits provided by March 2010
- (f) East Midlands Region – undertake pilot regional Woodland Opportunity Mapping exercise and produce landscape character guidance to help ensure new woodland creation is steered to most suitable landscapes by April 2010
- (g) East Midlands Region – support Peak District National Park and Derbyshire RIGs group to consolidate geodiversity evidence base for the sub region by April 2010
- (h) North East Region – hold ELC workshop and promote guidelines for strategy, policies and plans by 27 February 2009
- (i) North East Region – develop work plans prioritising delivery of the ELC by 29 July 2009
- (j) North East Region - undertake an analysis of LCAs and a feasibility for a regional landscape framework by 15 March 2010.
- (k) Yorkshire and Humberside Region – development of a regional 'landscape' road show (inc. power-point presentation plus supporting text and information) – to be completed by March 2010 and then taken out and about to local authorities to address landscape issues in local decision making.
- (l) Yorkshire and Humberside Region – work with the regional Geodiversity Forum and support four geodiversity groups to complete the survey and description of regionally important Geodiversity Sites by March 2010, which will enable a more strategic approach to their conservation and interpretation to be developed. NS
- (m) London Region - launch and consult on the London Regional Landscape Framework and publish final framework by end March 09.
- (n) London Region - Work with the London Geodiversity Partnership to produce a London Region Local Geodiversity Action Plan to consultation draft stage by end March 2010.

2. Influencing future legislation, regulation and advice, including contributing to gap analysis

Baseline

Landscape protection and landscape management is considered in a range of UK legislation but most comprehensively within the spheres of spatial planning, environmental protection and designated landscapes policies. Landscape planning, in terms of policies that encourage a more forward look or

deliberately designed action to restore or create new landscapes, appear to be more indirectly recognised within national legislation and advice.

In England a single overarching Government strategy or national level policy statement for the protection, management or planning of landscape does not exist. Instead, landscape is mainly dealt with as a consideration in a range of other sector's policies, where the delivery of those policies are likely to have implications or opportunities for landscape.

There are a range of key sectors and issues, where legislation and policy is emerging or likely to emerge over the next few years and where the objectives of the ELC and a landscape perspective should be an influence in both the legislation and the policies that will flow from them. These include energy infrastructure and production, water planning through the Water Framework Directive, food security and farming, terrestrial and marine spatial planning and development, climate change (adaptation and mitigation) and regional and local governance (i.e. Sub-National Review and Place Shaping agenda).

Government Natural Environment policy is being built on the foundations of an ecosystem goods and services approach. Measures in the ELC and advice on the role of landscape in delivering these goods and services, needs to influence and shape the way in which the ecosystems approach can be understood and applied in different places that have different characteristics.

What we want to see by year 5

- benefits of a national strategy for landscape debated & explored for England.
- clear integration of landscape objectives within energy and renewable energy strategies and policies.
- ELC objectives and opportunities made clear in climate change strategies and policies for agriculture and food security.
- alignment of landscape and spatial planning (terrestrial and marine) processes and policies, including a landscape perspective in National Policy Statements.
- ELC objectives embedded within and helping to guide the delivery of strategies and policies through new governance structures at the regional level (e.g. Integrated Regional Strategies) and the local level (e.g. landscape at the heart of Place Shaping)
- integration of the objectives of the ELC and the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), translated for places through an ecosystem services approach
- landscape character led approaches and policies embedded in legislation, regulation and advice at all levels e.g. all landscapes matter
- seascape character understood and associated approaches and policies embedded in legislation, regulation and advice at all levels

Actions for year 2

- (a) Develop an approach, by March 2010, to help facilitate judgement on landscape change options based on an increased understanding between landscape character, functions, dynamics and people.
- (b) Develop integrated objectives for NCAs in the South West Region by end March 2010
- (c) Building on integrated objectives work a set of South West regional landscape principles will be developed by January 2010 to inform regional strategies and provide context for a regional ELC Action plan

- (d) Publish and communicate a suite of Natural England Landscape Positions and develop associated guidance by July 2010 for:
 - (i) All landscapes matter (published December 2009);
 - (ii) Future landscapes (published December 2009);
 - (iii) Historic Landscapes;
 - (iv) Protected landscapes;
- (e) Work with Planning, Transport & Local Government Team to: champion delivery of Green Infrastructure; influence Heritage Protection legislation; influence National Policy Statements and revisions to Planning Policy Guidance Notes to promote a landscape approach to decision making across government, at all levels.EAA
- (f) East Midlands Region – implement a comprehensive and consistent regional tier landscape and seascape character assessment & guidelines (EMRLCA) by end march 2010.
- (g) East Midlands Region – create an Advocacy Document to communicate key landscape messages to ensure the appropriate consideration of characteristic landscapes in regional agendas by end March 2010
- (h) East Midlands Region – create interim objectives for each of the 24 East Midlands NCAs by end March 2010.
- (i) North East Region - develop interim NCA objectives by end February 2010
- (j) South East Region - development of interim NCA objectives by February 2010
- (k) South East Region – Implement Old Surrey Downs HLFproject by end December 2009
- (l) Yorkshire and Humberside Region – preparation of interim integrated objectives for the 15 National Character Areas within the region for completion by February 2010.

3. Improving the understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and the monitoring of change and trends

Baseline

Every landscape has its own distinctive character made of a consistent and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics. An understanding of landscape character is a powerful aid to organisations involved in managing and monitoring change. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is widely acknowledged as the established methodology for understanding the character of our landscapes. About 60% of local authorities have LCAs that follow the approach of the most recent guidance, (CAX84).

A national picture of landscape character across the whole of England (at 1:250,000 scale) is provided by England's Character Map (CAX 191) which gives the context for the more detailed local authority studies at county and district level (1:50,000 – 1:25,000 scale).

There is also a well-established national monitoring programme – Countryside Quality Counts (CQC) - for monitoring changes in landscape character and quality, which has reported for the periods 1990-1998 and 1999-2003³ and with a third assessment being scoped currently. This is exploring ways of incorporating an assessment of those ecosystem services associated with the conservation of landscape character.

Seascape characterisation of England will extend our understanding of character to marine/coastal areas and will provide a valuable baseline for SEA/EAI, but has yet to be undertaken.

What we want to see by year 5

- evidence of improved decisions and outcomes along with a set of tools for landscape evaluation as a basis for monitoring change
- updated LCA Guidance in place and being widely used by local authorities and other decision-makers to guide the undertaking and use of LCAs;
- expanded and updated descriptions for all 159 national character areas (terrestrial);
- Condition and Quality of England's Landscapes (CQuEL) established as the replacement to CQC; continuing and improving our national scale assessment of landscape change completed for the period 2004-2009, and informing a range of national and regional agencies and programmes.
- a seascape characterisation of the whole of the English coastline completed and informing planning and management decisions;
- an approach established for delivering ecosystem services at a landscape scale that also helps to conserve and enhance landscape character;
- Natural England established as a leader in the implementation of the ELC and the development and implementation of landscape positions.

Actions for year 2

- (a) Develop an 'Integrating landscape Tools project' which principally identifies sound landscape policies for LDFs and promotes the embedding of landscape tools in decision making by Development Control Planners. A South West Region joint project with local authorities by end February 2010
- (b) Develop a South West Region joint project with Dorset County Council in progressing approaches to landscape sensitivity by end March 2010
- (c) Support and encourage South West Regional local authorities (including Dartmoor NPA) to develop LCAs by end February 2010
- (d) Development of the methodology for Character and Quality of England's Landscapes (CQuEL) established as the replacement to CQC; continuing and improving our national scale assessment of landscape change and provision of ecosystem services to report in 2012 for the period 2004-2009
- (e) Pilot study commenced to help inform a longer term programme of reviewing and updating all National Character Area descriptions, taking account of expected drivers of landscape change. Roll-out of updating NCAs to be completed by Spring 2011
- (f) Interim integrated objectives prepared for all National Character Areas by March 2010, with final versions in place by Spring 2011

- (g) Produce interim objectives for Inner London NCA by February 2010 and contribute to ones that overlap SE and EE regions.
- (h) East Midlands Region – host the first regional landscape partnership Seminar held on 23 November 2009 at BGS HQ Keyworth.
- (i) East Midlands Region – host internal regional landscape photographic competition to help raise awareness of regional LCA and increase engagement of Area Team staff in the regional landscape agenda by end December 2009
- (j) East Midlands Region – Provide training on the use of EMRLCA to regional staff by end January 2010
- (k) East Midlands Region – Support Charnwood Forest landscape and geodiversity exhibition in partnership with Leicestershire County Council and BGS by end March 2010
- (l) South East Region - develop a LCA project examining region-wide LCA gap analysis to identify evidence base/ wider landscape partnership in 2 regional spatial areas - phase one by March 2010 and phase 2 rolled out to rest of region by July 2010
- (m) North West Region – building on the completed phase 1 of the NW Landscape Character Framework Phase 2 will be complete by end of March 2010 and will also deliver the interim NCA integrated objective as well as:
 - provide an evidence base for landscape planning and management, including assessing sensitivity to change, past and current forces for change and potential future pressures.
 - enhance the '*integrating*' power of the Framework by strengthening biodiversity, historic environment and geodiversity aspects.
 - address gaps in current urban and marine coverage.
 - engage partners and stakeholders.

4. Engaging people through comprehensive and accessible awareness and understanding activities as well as through, promotion, education & training

Baseline

Rural, coastal, urban, ordinary or outstanding landscapes are important to people's quality of life everywhere and provide a range of goods and services from food production, clean air, water and biodiversity to a recreational, tourism and health resource. People perceive and react to landscapes in different ways and we need to find ways of tapping into their concerns and values as part of our commitment to strengthening the relationship between people and place.

Landscapes matter to people. Local landscapes are most likely to be the scale that communities are most strongly connected with and aware of change. Such landscapes contribute significantly to the sense of place and local distinctiveness of an area or place. They will very often act as a gateway for people's interest, understanding and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. As landscapes change, they should continue to reflect or incorporate those characteristics that are valued by the public. The public therefore needs to be encouraged and supported to have a greater and more inclusive role

in the management, protection and planning of landscapes, whilst understanding their perceptions and the local pressures and global issues (such as climate change) that face those landscapes. The Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme is a good practice example of ELC implementation and in which NE collaboration should be explored.

The general purpose of the ELC is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe so as to maintain and improve landscape quality and bring the public, institutions and local and regional authorities to recognise the value and importance of landscape and to take part in related public decisions².

Much activity under the term 'environmental education' has been undertaken over the past 40 years, starting in the US National Park Service and spread around the world and has engaged many in understanding, appreciating and enjoying the natural world. This has typically focussed on specific species or habitats and less on the broader landscape. Research is suggesting that a landscape or 'place-based' approach to delivering ecosystem goods and services has the advantages of dealing with real places, as decisions tend to focus on places and landscape can provide a context for understanding the interactions that exist in that place.³ There is evidence of social and emotional benefits associated with different experiences of the landscape and how this might influence preference and use.

Natural England ran a series of workshops in 2007/2008 which included raising awareness of landscape, the ELC and the scope of our landscape work. Training was also given to almost 90 staff on providing landscape advice in development control consultations.

What we want to see by year 5

- a well-established internal landscape training programme providing staff with the skills and confidence to provide fully integrated, nationally consistent, relevant and timely landscape advice in their day-today work.
- demonstrate what conservation at the landscape scale, in a time of climate change, really means
- engage many more people in learning about and doing things in and for their landscapes
- produce practical guidance showing how people can work with landscapes in our towns, cities, growth areas, rural countryside and the coast.
- engage partners and stakeholders in visioning for a secure environmental future, where changing landscapes are managed sustainably, highly valued, distinctive expressions of local identity.

Actions for year 2

² Explanatory notes to European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, 2000

³ See for example: Haines Young, R. & Potschin, M. (2008) England's Terrestrial Ecosystem Services and the Rationale for and Ecosystem Approach. Overview Report, 30 pp. (Defra Project Code NR0107) and 'Spearhead' Ecosystem and Landscape Services (SELS) Research Project, Wageningen University, Netherlands (SELS is a long-term research program aimed at improving the understanding of the capacity of ecosystems and landscapes to provide services and quantifying the related benefits - socio-cultural, ecological and economic - at various scales to assist integrated planning, management and decision-making processes).

- (a) Devise an internal Natural England landscape training programme for 09/10 (by end March 2010) for incorporation into NE's Development Framework.
- (b) Develop an internal training package on 'assessing the landscape and visual impacts of developments on the landscape' (by end -March 2010) and hold workshop for Regional Landscape Advisers (by end March 2010) on how to deliver the training package to area NE staff during 2010/11.
- (c) Develop an internal training package on 'Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment' (by end March 2010) for local and national delivery in 2010/11.
- (d) Develop thinking on future landscape scenarios during winter 09/10 as preparatory work ahead of a major report "Landscapes of the 21st Century" to be launched in November 2010
- (e) Development of web pages for South West Regional Landscape Partnership by end December 2009
- (f) Complete a 'project scoping study' about building stones in London in partnership with University College London by end of February 2010.
- (g) Yorkshire and Humberside Region – a programme of guided walks, leaflets and activities will be developed and offered to the public during 09/10, along with the excavation and interpretation of an Iron Age Fort all as part of the 5 year 'Lime & Ice' project that raises understanding of the links between geodiversity, history and the present landscape.
- (h) North East Region – promotion of NE's ELC guidance and Landscape Positions via the Regional Landscape Forum, regional RTPi and internal colleagues (Landscape Forum -7 December 2009; RTPi – 4 November 2009; Regional cascade – 16 December 2009)
- (j) North East Region – development of four sub-regional Landscape Partnerships at:
 - East Durham Magnesian Limestone NCA
 - Druridge Bay Landscape Partnership
 - Hadrian's Wall Landscape Partnership
 - Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership - all ongoing during 2010.
- (k) All nine English Regions - continuing support of Regional Landscape and Regional Geodiversity Partnerships

5. *Sharing experiences and best practice*

Baseline

Landscapes are key resources providing the physical settings for everyday life. The best loved, iconic landscapes are protected by statutory designations, however all our landscapes matter and Natural England has a real opportunity to demonstrate what this means in different places and at different geographic scales

England's landscapes are already being affected by major challenges such as climate change. We need to ensure that, as they change, our landscapes continue to evolve in distinctive, diverse and special ways. The diversity and character of England's landscapes should be a basic component of European and International natural and cultural heritage, contributing to the health and prosperity of wider society. The learning from our neighbours approach could be usefully developed to share

experience and best practice. For example, in 2008 Natural England participated in an English Heritage sponsored trans-frontier study visit of historic landscapes in east Devon and in Normandy.

Partners such as IUCN, ICOMOS, EUROPARC, the Landscape Institute, the European Geopark Network and other traditional nature and culture conservation bodies are key to awareness raising and best practice study. In 2006 ICOMOS -UK & IUCN-UK hosted a workshop to highlight the ELC through case study, best practice examples. We must actively share our own experiences as well as learn from the work of others, such as Scotland's Landscape Forum and from engagement in the networks of civil society, universities and regional/local government, e.g. CIVILSCAPE, UNISCAPE & ENLEC (European network of local & regional authorities) and the UK Geodiversity Action Plan partnership. Also engagement with European-wide academic and research institutions, e.g. Alterra, to highlight useful experience or inspirational models of ELC best practice.

What we want to see by year 5

- provision of good, easily accessible information on landscapes that enable positive and informed response to major drivers such as climate change and continues to ensure the best care for all landscapes
- benefits to the natural environment of integrating the conservation of both natural and cultural heritage through best practice examples
- an understanding of why and how the public value landscapes and a mechanism in place to extend this knowledge to more people
- strong connections between people, place and local identity based on increased knowledge and study

Actions for year 2

- (a) Development of e newsletters for South West regional landscape community by September 2009.
- (b) Showcase and promote our work on the ELC through running an interactive workshop, demonstrate what it means for protected areas across Europe through examples of successful implementation, share experiences, views and examples of practical actions at the Europarc Assembly in Sweden, September 2009.
- (c) Provide a keynote address on 'Character & Convention' and also run an interactive workshop at the Irish Landscapes Conference, October 2009, both to promote international co-operation and showcase our work on implementing the ELC through good practice examples.
- (d) Contribute time, expertise and resources to the planning and development of two major UK events raising the profile of the ELC in 2010. A major Landscape Conference (Liverpool, 8 – 10 November 2010) at which the winners of the UK Landscape Award will be announced.
- (e) North East Region – hold three learning sessions during 2009/10 to promote best practice and joint working via the regional Landscape Forum
- (f) North West Region - produce E-newsletter and learning workshop to share best practice and experience of the NW Landscape Partnership and Landscape Character Framework by December 2009

- (g) Yorkshire and Humberside Region – organise and run in November 2009, a conference with regional partners: *“60 years on: how can we maintain our distinctive landscapes in times of change?”* The event reflects on the achievements since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, and considers the challenges facing us in the future.

Annex 1 – Achievements from Year 1 of our ELC Implementation Activities

1. *Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory frame*

Year 1

(a) Based on research undertaken by Newcastle University for NE, scope the production of guidelines (internal to NE and external) to identify how the levels of ELC/landscape language, consistency and intent can be increased;

Achieved - Scoping/Discussion paper produced and circulated widely both internally and externally. Approach discussed and agreed via UK and England ELC Project groups.

(b) Scope, develop and produce ELC Action Plan Guidelines for others to help in the development of their own Action Plans. Work with English Heritage and the National Forest Company in the production of their ELC Action Plans and in scoping the development of future guidance;

Achieved - Contract let, ELC Expert Panel established, two participatory workshops undertaken and presentations completed to NE and Defra. ELC Checklist launched at the NW region landscape conference. Supporting Guidelines widely circulated and placed on LCN website. EH and TNFC ELC APs produced and promoted via the LCN website. More detailed Guidance to be produced in 09/10 (following circulation of scoping paper) and “call” for more APs to be made by Defra. Will have implications for future AP

(c) Produce internal guidance on how to incorporate landscape into Local Development Frameworks and consider landscape issues in planning casework for protected landscapes and landscapes outside those designations;

Achieved - Internal guidance produced in liaison with NE Planning team. More in depth ELC guidance on spatial planning and protected landscapes to be produced in 09/10. Will have implication for future AP.

(d) Increase synergies and consistency of approach between the nine English regions through:

- (i) Establish an internal NE national/regional landscape Fora
- (ii) Establish integrated landscape & geodiversity partnerships & policies.
- (iii) Establish a national and a regional ELC Challenge Fund to help kick start activity.
- (iv) Develop a UK Geodiversity Action Plan to aid integration of geodiversity conservation into ELC delivery;

Achieved -Activity to drive synergies and consistencies between the nine regions has developed on a number of fronts:

(i) The internal national/regional grouping of staff with landscape responsibilities met on four occasions and is the practical expression of technical landscape activity within NE. It will continue alongside two

new horizontal level groupings called the Landscape Community of Practice and the Landscape Community of Delivery. Together these structures will have overview of resource, the role, goal and consistent delivery of landscape across England.

(ii) All 9 regional Landscape Partnerships and 9 regional Geodiversity partnerships have been established. Some embryonic and some stronger than others. The forthcoming year will see a consolidation.

(iii) The ELC Challenge fund of approximately £0.5million resulted in a diverse range of 16 projects and activities which raised the profile of landscape. Thinking developed around more focused criteria to consider brigading activity around one aspect, democratization, of the ELC Convention

(iv) Developmental work on a UK Geodiversity Action Plan was undertaken during the year and it will come to fruition/launched in 09/10.
Will have implications for future AP

(e) Scope approach to gathering better evidence on public perceptions of landscape and/or how to increase levels of public participation in landscape related issues.

Achieved - Scoping/Discussion paper produced and widely circulated which helped establish good, cross organisation liaison e.g. MENE. Mini project developed but could not be sustained due to landscape policy team staff shortages. Issue has now been integrated into the Landscape Evidence Review and highlighted in the All Landscapes Matter policy. Cultural services of landscape developed via NCA review work. All will have an impact on the revised Action Plan.

2. Influencing future legislation, regulation and advice, including contributing to gap analysis

Year 1

(a) Develop and communicate a suite of Natural England landscape positions.

- (i) All landscapes matter;
- (ii) Future landscapes;
- (iii) Historic Landscapes;
- (iv) Protected landscapes;

Achieved - All four developed and circulated in either draft or consultation formats. All areas continuing to be developed and elements will roll forward in future AP including a programme of internal/external implementation guidance.

(b) Work with Planning, Transport & Local Government Team to: champion delivery of Green Infrastructure; influence Heritage Protection legislation; influence National Policy Statements and revisions to Planning Policy Guidance Notes to promote a landscape character approach to decision making across government, at all levels.

Achieved - Ongoing work/liaison with Planning colleagues. Key to developing NEs approach to "landscape as an integrating framework" e.g. agreed that approach is central to Single Regional Strategy development and to revision of PPSs. Will have implications for roll forward AP.

(c) Work with Energy and Climate Change Team to influence DECC Renewable Energy Strategy, general best practice and Climate Change legislation.

Achieved - Good engagement with Energy and Climate Change team established, especially in helping to influence good practice. This included input and comment on National Policy Statements and renewable energy developments. Much of this activity will roll forward into a revised Action Plan.

(d) Work with other Government departments and stakeholders to ensure an understanding of landscape character and related methodologies are promoted by way of legislation, regulation and advice prepared and produced by others (eg. Environment Agency, Department for Transport, the Highways Agency, the Landscape Institute etc.).

Achieved - Good engagement maintained with both the Department for Transport and the Highways Agency. Work continues with the former on valuing transports impact on the natural landscape and the latter on the design manual for roads and bridges volume 11 (landscape) – both areas will roll forward into revised Action Plan.

(e) Work with Europarc Atlantic Isles and others to raise awareness of the importance of the connections between land and sea, and promote associated good practice. Working with colleagues in the Marine, Freshwater and Coastal Team to instigate a project aimed at exploring the interface between terrestrial and marine planning, to help inform policy guidance to influence planning for sustainable management and design of the environment at the land-sea interface.

Achieved - Good engagement established between NE and Europarc Atlantic Isles enabling positive and timely interventions in the development of the Marine Bill. This was helped and raised awareness via the publication "Making the Connection Between Land and Sea". Good engagement also maintained between the Landscape EAA team and the Marine and Freshwater and Coastal teams in the development of the report "Planning at the Coast" highlighting the potential " . . . integration of marine planning with the system of land use planning . . . ". Will roll forward into revised Action Plan.

(f) Influence, and shape the development of the Marine Spatial Planning System so that seascapes and seascape character are explicitly mentioned and valued, by influencing Defra's consultation on high level marine objectives ("Our Seas - a Shared Resource") that will be key to framing the UK Marine Policy.

Achieved - Seascape characterisation incorporated in the High Level Marine Objectives. Seascape incorporated in developing marine policy inc. The Joint Marine Policy Statement. Specific policy included in NEs All Landscapes Matter policy. Seascape work to be included within future AP.

(g) Influence the Marine Bill to ensure the marine environment is conserved and enhanced, by raising awareness of the importance of seascapes and adjacent landscapes.

Partly achieved - Also 2 f above. Scoping work undertaken throughout the Action Plan period and a brief is to be prepared for the development of a methodology for Seascape Character Assessment – this will therefore roll forward into the revised Action Plan.

3. Improving the understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and the monitoring of change and trends

Year 1

(a) Review the LCA Guidance.

Partly Achieved - Scoping work undertaken throughout the Action Plan period and a brief is to be prepared early within 09/10 along with meetings with SNH. Will therefore roll forward into revised Action Plan and has implications running through into 2011 and beyond e.g. review of topic papers, communication and publication issues

(b) Commence a pilot study of England's national character areas to help inform a longer term programme of reviewing and updating all character area descriptions, taking account of expected drivers of landscape change and the development of strategic objectives for planning and management.

Achieved - Pilot study initiated along with "experiential" study. Will roll over in future AP e.g. phase 2 pilot will explore setting of landscape objectives for NCAs.

(c) Scope out CQuEL, building on experience of the CQC project, considering options for incorporating an assessment of the ecosystem services provided by landscape.

Achieved - Scoping activity continued within Action Plan period including the development of a methodology for CQuEL assessment which will have roll over implications for the revised Action Plan.

(d) Work with others as appropriate, to undertake a seascape characterisation of the English coastline.

Not Achieved - Also see 2g above. General recognition that seascape character assessment of the English coast is needed and that further discussion and scoping is required. Therefore has implications for roll forward into revised action plan.

(e) Scope NE involvement and possible support to European-wide benchmarking research to highlight useful or inspirational models of ELC/landscape implementation.

Partly Achieved - Study commissioned using landscape planning (as defined by the ELC) to promote European exchange. Report entitled "comparing landscape planning in England, Germany and the Netherlands using the ELC" to be published during 09/10 and will therefore have implications in the roll forward of the Action Plan.

4. Engaging people through comprehensive and accessible awareness and understanding activities as well as through, promotion, education & training

Year 1

(a) Support the Heritage Council of Ireland to develop and prepare contributions to the 2009 Landscape Conference in Tullamore.

Achieved - Good engagement established with the Heritage Council of Ireland enabling agreement of NEs role and support for the October 09 Landscape Conference. Agreed that there should be a NE key speaker and papers forwarded to conference organisers. NE is also to provide a European co operation workshop highlighting NEs approach to the implementation of the ELC. NE financial support agreed. Will have implications in revised Action Plan.

(b) Pilot two awareness raising events (one on landscape, another on the historic environment), re-run the 'landscape as a statutory consultee' training, and establish landscape as one of the key elements of Natural England's 'Technical Development Programme'.

Partly Achieved – The "landscape as a statutory consultee" training and establishing landscape as one of the key elements of NEs "Technical Development Programme" both met Achieved status. The "awareness raising events" did not take place due to staffing issues although the regional Historic Environment advisers did run their own HE training programmes. Landscape training to be rolled forward into revised Action Plan.

(c) Develop a three year NE Landscape Engagement Plan to promote and advocate the ELC and relevant landscape policies and tools to key stakeholders/audiences such as the professions (planners, engineers etc), local authority members, NGOs etc.

Achieved - Engagement plan produced by Landscape Policy team but stalled. Will have implications for future AP

(d) Undertake activity to explain our ELC work, e.g. conferences, events, media, promotions, publications, web-based material as necessary, inc:

- (i) presentation to the Association of Gardens Trust national conference – April 08
- (ii) presentation to the ICOMOS Cultural Landscape national conference – June 08
- (iii) presentation to Government Office Environment leads – July 08
- (iv) provide technical information/material for the Landscape Character Network, NE's Technical Information Exchange, & CoE website.
- (v) presentation to the Rural Churches Network – October 08
- (vi) publication of Earth Heritage magazine – Jan 08 & July 09

Achieved - Will have implications for future AP.

(e) Develop/collate a calendar/diary of events and activities relevant to ELC implementation.

Partly Achieved - Some key dates initially circulated via ELC England group. However, no central resource (person) identified to lead and manage this area of work.

5. *Sharing experiences and best practice*

Year 1

(a) Use and keep up to date the web-based Landscape Character Network as the main repository of ELC public information identifying and promoting best practice, technical material and communications for professionals, stakeholders and the general public.

Achieved - Good use of LCN website including hosting the England Framework for Implementation, evidence research, ELC Action Plans and Guidance for the production of Action Plans and the integration of the ELC into policy and practice. Membership is currently at circa 900 with approx 10,000 "hits" per month (including non members). Will have implications for future AP.

(b) Engage with other UK countries and with European partners (principally the UK Monitoring Group and its individual members; ICOMOS-uk/IUCN-uk landscape working group; EUROPARC, the Council of Europe ELC events/workshops/conferences & programme of activities; ENLEC; Alterra / Landscape Europe) the European Geo-park Network to inform & share good practice of ELC implementation as well as learn from others experience.

Achieved - NE maintained good representation on the UK ELC Group and also on the ELC Monitoring and Evaluation Steering group. Engagement with other named organisations maintained. NE ELC Checklist and Guidance forwarded to COE members. Will have implications for future AP.

(c) Participate in May 08 Euroscape 2020 Seminar to discuss European Landscape Policies and contribute NE article to 'European Landscape' journal. **Achieved**

(d) Participate in the French/English (Normandy/Devon) 2008 trans-frontier programme to strengthen implementation through leaning from neighbours. **Achieved**