



Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit

Briefing Paper

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The need for guidance

The project will be prepared to accord with Planning Policy Statement 7, RSS Policy EM1 and Saved Policy E37 in the Cumbria Joint Structure Plan. These support the need for a 'character based approach' to be taken with regard to protecting and managing landscape. The Structure Plan policy contains a series of criteria against which the effects of new development is assessed to ensure that the distinctive characteristics of Cumbria's landscapes are protected. However, the Structure Plan policy has only been saved to RSS policy on the basis that local planning authorities develop character based policy.

The objective of the project will be to prepare guidance to assist local planning authorities across Cumbria to develop and implement character based landscape policy through their local development frameworks. It will include an up to date landscape evidence base.

This project is being developed in partnership with Cumbria County Council, Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden, and South Lakeland Councils and the Lake District National Park Authority.

1.2 What the guidance will contain

The document will include:

- Detailed information on landscape character and the classification of Cumbria's landscape including the Lake District National Park.
- Detailed information on landscape strategy and management/development guidelines for Cumbria, including the Lake District National Park.
- General guidance on the 'character based' approach for policy formulation and development control, including the role of biodiversity and geodiversity features, ecological networks and semi-natural habitats and the historic environment.
- Examples of criteria based policy and good practice approaches using the landscape character approach for development around towns, villages, hamlets and the open countryside.
- Advice on the need to move away from local landscape designations and the need to develop finer grained landscape character assessments for areas that might be considered locally sensitive.
- General guidance on carrying out district based landscape character assessments, sensitivity and capacity analysis for the district as a whole or to help make LDF allocation decisions.
- Links to broader Environmental Character Assessments (see www.rnrpenvironmentalcharacter.org.uk for information on this approach).

1.3 Links to RSS policy

The guidance should incorporate existing studies and review how it can help identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of landscape character and support criteria based policy in the LDFs to reflect Policy EM1 of the Regional Spatial Strategy - Integrated Enhancement and Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets. EM1(a) focuses on landscape and seeks for plans, strategies, proposals and schemes should identify, protect, maintain, and where possible enhance, natural, man made, and historic features that contribute to the character and culture of landscapes, places and local distinctiveness within the North West. It refers to the need for plans etc to be informed by and recognise the importance of detailed character assessments and

strategies set in the context of the North West Joint Character Area map.

1.4 Links to Joint Structure Plan Policy

The guidance should explore the best way of encouraging LPAs to develop policy in the LDFs that reflect the principles set out in the Joint Structure Plan. Saved Policy E37 Landscape Character states that development and land use change should be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Cumbria's landscape types and sub types. These are defined in the documents set out above. Proposals are to be assessed in relation to:

- Locally distinctive natural or built features
- Visual intrusion or impact
- Scale in relation to the landscape or features
- The character of the built environment
- Public access and community value of the landscape
- Historic patterns and attributes
- Biodiversity features, ecological networks and semi-natural habitats and
- Openness, remoteness and tranquillity.

Guidance will be developed to demonstrate how criteria based policy like this could be developed and implemented at the local level. Guiding principles will be provided on assessing the effect of a development proposal on the character and distinctive features of a particular landscape. It will highlight where the information can be found in landscape documents to help with the assessment and what else should be looked for in more detailed landscape assessments.

1.5 Status of Local Policies

There is scope for LDFs to incorporate saved policies from existing Local Plans (or the Joint Structure Plan) and it is anticipated that this will occur for the policies relating landscape. A full list of the relevant Local Plan policies is contained in Appendix 1. However, the landscape policies in these plans are not yet fully consistent with PPS 7 or Saved Policy E37 above. The guidance will seek to influence the development and implementation of landscape character based policies that protect and enhance the landscape of Cumbria.

2 SCOPE OF THE GUIDANCE

2.1 The Scope of the Guidance

The document would include:

- Information on landscape character and the classification of Cumbria's landscape by cross referencing to
Cumbria Landscape Character (Technical Paper No 5 updated)
Landscape Strategy – following a refresh to take into account changes in landscape during the last ten years and align with LDNPA guidelines and Technical Paper 5.
The Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines
- General guidance on the 'character based' approach for policy formulation and development control, including the role of biodiversity and geodiversity features, ecological networks and semi-natural habitats and the historic environment on landscape character.

- Examples of criteria based policy and good practice approaches to landscape character for development around towns, villages, and hamlets.
- Advice on the need to move away from local landscape designations and the need to develop finer grained landscape character assessments for areas that might be considered locally sensitive.
- General guidance on carrying out district based landscape character assessments, sensitivity and capacity analysis.

The project will also draw on:

- Landscape character assessment for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The Wind Energy Landscape Capacity Assessment (2006) identifies landscape sensitivity and value criteria that could have relevance to the landscape character guidance.
- Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (January 2008) provides character information for the Lake District National Park area. The work will be finalised for the rest of the county by July 2008.
- Biodiversity of Cumbria - an evidence base is currently being prepared and will link into decisions on landscape character.

Collectively these could provide the environmental character evidence base for the whole of Cumbria. They also all have a role to play in determining the effects of development or land management regimes on landscape character. Benefits would be drawn from providing strategic guidance on landscape character that identifies the key, up to date documents that should be used to support policy formulation and implementation. The approach should accord with PPS7 and provide advice on the move away from the landscapes of county importance approach and give advice on general principles of landscape character assessment at the local scale.

2.2 Work Area 1 - Review of Cumbria Landscape Strategy

The Cumbria Landscape Strategy was published in 1997. Since that time there has been considerable change to policy and practice and significant events effecting Cumbria, such as the foot and mouth outbreak. A review of the Strategy is needed to reflect new policy initiatives, strategies and frameworks, changes in funding regimes, new trends in land management and farming practices, and development trends or pressures. It should also be reviewed to increase its compatibility with emerging guidelines for the Lake District National Park. It is expected that this work will be carried out on this by CCC staff, ECCP staff and an MA student placement and involve a stakeholder questionnaire and several follow up stakeholder events.

The review will update existing information in the Strategy for each landscape character type and incorporate stakeholder feedback on trends and changes arising from:

- National, regional and sub regional planning policy
- Agriculture and land management policy
- Changes in land management and agricultural practice
- Effects of foot and mouth
- Potential effects of climate change
- Development opportunities and pressures
- Potential landscape designation review

Any other relevant issues that become apparent as the above list is not meant to be exhaustive.

The final output will be as compatible as possible and make reference to the Lake District National Park Landscape Character Guidelines.

Descriptions of landscape character will be short and reflect Technical Paper 5/Cumbria Landscape Classification.

2.3 Work Area 2 - Landscape Character Assessment Guidance

The guidance will include a section explaining the principles of the landscape character approach, as advocated in Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, and how this should be used to influence planning policy development and implementation.

This would include text on:

What Landscape Characterisation is

How it can be used to influence policy development (including good practice examples).

How it can be used to influence policy implementation (including good practice examples).

The role of the historic environment and Historic Landscape Characterisation.

The role of biodiversity and geodiversity features and ecological networks.

Introductory text on the landscape character assessments available for Cumbria (will be made available in the document from existing resources and contained in a separate section).

2.4 Work Area 3 Scope – Advice on local landscape designations

This part of the work will be scoped in detail later in the process but will provide guidance on the need to move away from county and local level landscape designations. Guidance will be developed to encourage the development of finer grained landscape character assessments for areas that might have a high landscape value, quality and sensitivity. Consideration will need to be given to the objectives of the European Landscape Convention.

2.5 Work Area 4 Scope – Guidance on carrying out local landscape assessments

This part of the work will be scoped in detail later in the process but will provide guidance on the need for district level landscape character assessments to be carried out. This would focus on both the role of district wide landscape character assessment and development guidelines and the role landscape character assessment can have on determining LDF sites and allocations. It would also contain guiding principles for the development of district level Supplementary Planning Documents. It could also include the identification of a pilot area to test how best to carry out finer grained landscape character assessment/guidance and to test a broader approach to environmental assessment that looks at landscape, historic environment and biodiversity.

3 WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The Roles of the County Council, National Park Authority, District Councils and other partners

The preparation of the guidance should be steered by a working group of planning/landscape officers from the Lake District National Park Authority, the six District councils and the County Council. A working group will be set up and include representatives from Natural England, Friends of the Lake District and ECCP. The project will be led by the Principal Planning Officer - Landscape and Countryside in the County

Council's Environment Unit and who would be responsible for commissioning work from outside contractors, for conducting consultations and for preparing and reviewing the draft documents.

3.2 Developing the Guidance

There are 3 stages to developing the guidance:

Stage 1: Pre-production - including evidence gathering, key stakeholder involvement and buy in to the guidance, the removal of SPD reference in relevant local planning authority Local Development Schemes (LDS) and the review of the Cumbria Landscape Strategy.

Stage 2: Main Production – development of the guidance and approval for consultation by each local authority; consultation with key stakeholders, such as those listed in appendix 2; revision of guidance. Note the formal process attached to SPD will not need to be followed at this stage.

Stage 3: Publish as Specialist Supporting Document to LDFs - including formal agreement to use as SSD by each local authority, monitoring of use and review of need.

3.3 Proposed Timetable

The following is a draft timetable for the three stages:

STAGE	PROCESS/PRODUCT	TIMETABLE
Pre production	Evidence Gathering	Dec – Feb 2008
	Establish Joint working process (CC & LPAs)	April 2008
	Agree scope of project	April 2008
	Delete/defer reference to SPD inclusion in LDS and linked to DPD policy (saved or new)	May 2008
Production	Review Cumbria Landscape Strategy and develop new guidelines	Jan – March 2009
	Prepare Draft Guidance	March – April 2009
	Consultation with key stakeholders and LPAs	March – April 2009
	Finalise guidance	May 2009
Publication	Joint Approval as Evidence Base Document	May 2009

The approach was agreed by an officer Steering Group which met 9 April 2008. Dates have been amended to reflect suspension in work programme.

Appendix 1

Relevant Local Plan Policies

Allerdale Borough Local Plan (1996-2006), Adopted November 1999 – Policies EN19, EN22, EN 25.

Barrow Borough Local Plan (1996 -2006), Adopted August 2001- Policies D1, D2, D3.

Carlisle District Local Plan Review (2001-16), Adopted 2008 – Policies CP1 and LE1 – LE5.

Copeland Borough Local Plan Review (2001 -2016), Deposit February 2004 – Policies ENV6 -ENV9.

Eden District Local Plan Alteration (1996 -2006), Deposit Plan January 2002 – Policies NE1, NE2, NE3.

Lake District Local Plan (1996-2006), Adopted May 1998 – Policies NE1,NE3-NE8; NE14 and NE18.

South Lakeland District Local Plan Alteration (1996 -2006), Modifications January 2004 – Policies follow Adopted Structure Plan Policies 12, 13.

Appendix 2

List of Stakeholders/Consultees

Local Authorities:

CALC

Parish Councils

Durham County Council

Lancashire County Council

Northumberland County Council

Northumberland National Park Authority

North Yorkshire County Council

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Government Agencies:

Government Office for the North West

Natural England

Scottish Natural Heritage

Defra

Environment Agency

English Heritage

Forestry Commission (NW Region)

Cumbria Vision

North West Regional Development Agency

Cumbria Tourist Board

Environmental Partnerships and Voluntary

Bodies:

Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Lake District

Open Spaces Society

Ramblers Association

Cumbria Local Access Forum

Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Solway Coast AONB Unit

Arnside Silverdale AONB Unit

North Pennines AONB Unit

East Cumbria Countryside Project

Solway Firth Partnership

Morecambe Bay Partnership

Duddon Estuary Partnership

Cumbria Woodlands

Cumbria Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

National Farmers Union

Country Landowners Association

Voluntary Action Cumbria

Consultants:

Land Use Consultants

Countrywise Consultants

Alison Farmer Consultants

Stephenson Halliday Consultants

Woolerton Dodwell Associates

Julie Martin

Jeff Stephenson

Coates Associates

Appendix 3

Source Documents

ODPM: Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (2004).

Countryside Agency Planning *Position Statement, Local Development Frameworks*, 2006

Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage: *Landscape Character Assessment: Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (2003/4)

Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage: *Landscape Character Assessment: Topic Paper 2: Links to other sustainability tools*

Scottish Natural Heritage: *Visual Effects of Windfarms – Best Practice*, 2002 (Section on Cumulative Effects)

UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Habitat Action Plan

The Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan: Habitat Action Plan (2001)

NWRA: *Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG 13)* (Partial Review of Chap 8 – Active Management of Environmental Resources, 2004)

Cumbria County Council, *Cumbria Landscape Classification* (1995)

Cumbria County Council, *Cumbria Landscape Strategy*, (1998)

Cumbria County Council and Lake District National Park Authority, *Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan 1991-2006* (1995)

Cumbria County Council and Lake District National Park Authority, Technical Paper No 5, *Landscape Character* (2003).

Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan 2001-2016, Examination in Public, *Report of the Panel* (Jan 2005)

Derbyshire Dales Landscape SPD 2007

East Hertfordshire Landscape SPD

Forest of Dean Landscape SPD March 2007

Hampshire Strategic Sensitivity Analysis 2006

High Peak Landscape SPD March 2007

Northamptonshire Environmental Character Toolkit 2007

Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity study 2005

South Gloucestershire Landscape SPD

Thurrock Council Landscape Capacity Study March 2005

Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape SPG August 2002