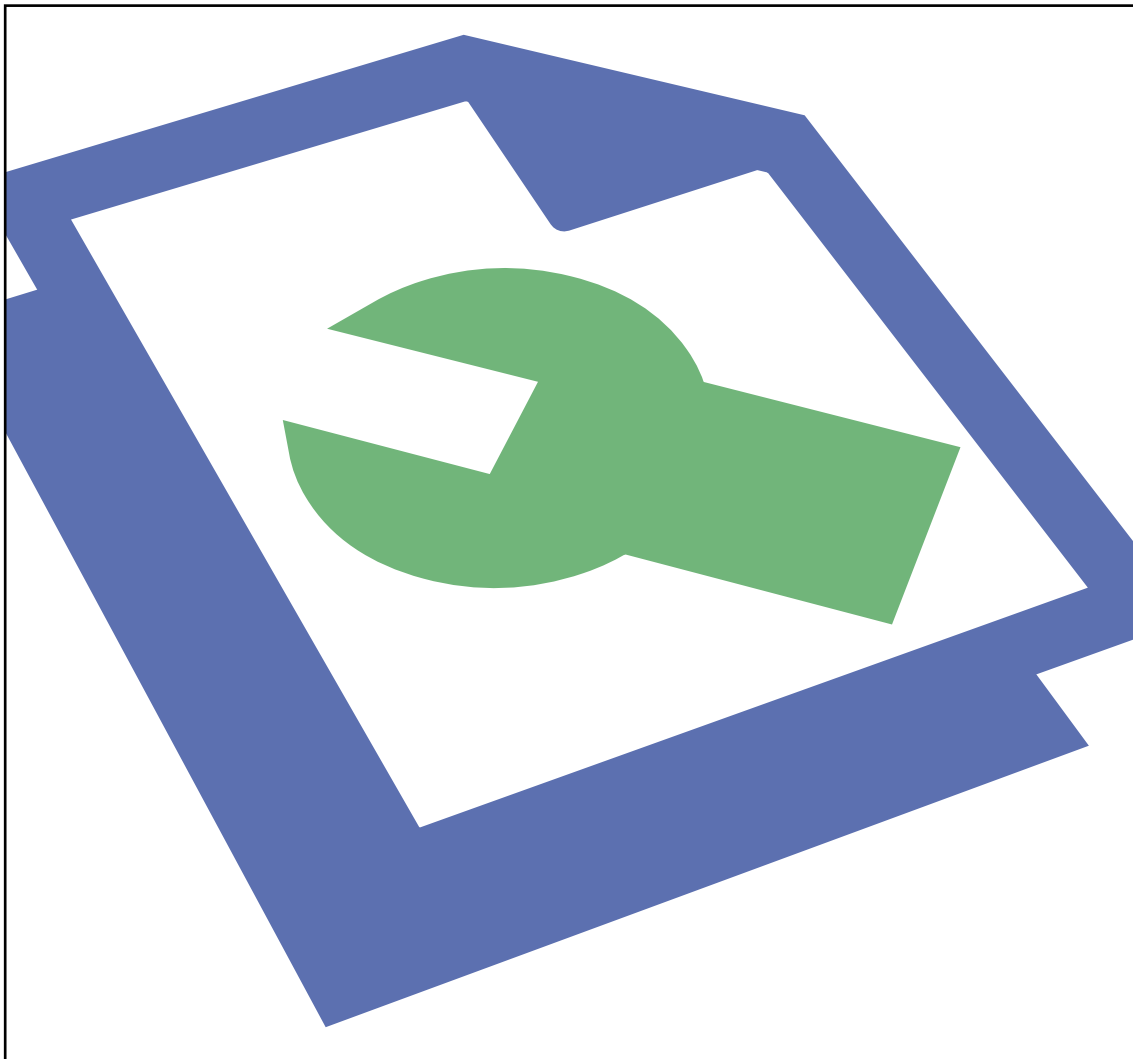


CCN Workshop

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

26th May 2004 • 9.30am - 4.00pm (approx)
The Presentation Suite, 100 Temple Street, Bristol BS 6AG



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The Countryside Character Network is an informal network, open to anyone who has an interest in Landscape Character Assessment and its applications. The CCN is supported by the Countryside Agency and is co-ordinated by Countryside.

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Countryside Character Network Workshop

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

**The Presentation Suite,
100 Temple Street, Bristol BS 6AG
26th May 2004**

Chair:

Chair: Terry Robinson,
the Countryside Agency

Countryside:

Jonathan Porter,
Network Coordinator -
jonathan@countryside.org

Gavin MacDonald,
Network Administrator -
gavin@countryside.org

- 9.30 Registration and Refreshments
- 10.00 **Welcome**
Chair: Terry Robinson,
the Countryside Agency
- 10.05 **"Community Futures - Landscape
Visions: Bridging the Gap"**
Andrew Wharton, the Countryside
Agency
- 10.25 **People and Landscape: the Test
Valley Community Landscape
Project"**
David Carman, Hampshire County
Council
- 10.50 Refreshments
- 11.10 **"Landscape and Community: Some
Ways and Means of Engagement"**
John Gittins: Cheshire Landscape
Trust
- 11.35 **"More Than a Consideration - a
Nationally Important Landscape
at the Heart of a Community
Strategy: the Blackdown Hills
Experience"**
Lisa Turner, Blackdown Hills AONB
- 12.00 Chaired Discussion
- 12.30 Lunch
- 2.00 **"The Thames Gateway's New
Clothes"**
Alex Nickson, Thames Gateway
Partnership
- 2.25 **"People, Places and Participation:
Working with Stakeholders to
Enhance Sense of Place"**
Joanne Tippett, Centre for Urban
and Regional Ecology, University of
Manchester
- 2.55 Chaired Discussion
- 3.40 Refreshments and Close



Chair:

Terry Robinson, the Countryside Agency
terry.robinson@countryside.gov.uk

Terry Robinson is a Cornishman so it's hardly surprising he felt a need early in life to devote effort to looking after the environment. His first forays into serious work however saw him teaching in Paddington, London and then serving as a headmaster of a rural school in Fiji.

On return to the UK he worked in a number of roles in the Cheshire Ranger Service, including setting up England's first country park on the Wirral. Following a spell working on a Countryside Commission experimental project in the Exmoor National Park, he then joined the Commission itself in 1978. He worked in a broad variety of roles for the Commission until it was replaced by the Countryside Agency in 1999.

In the Agency his jobs have included responsibility for access and recreation policy and our Finest Countryside areas and a spell as Head of Planning and Sustainable Development during which time he oversaw the establishment of Countryside Character Network and the publication of the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland.

He now leads the work the Countryside Agency is doing to ensure the Communities Plan growth areas achieve the high standards of development, liveability, and greenspace that the government has set for them. He sees this as a return to the business of ensuring that the countryside delivers quality of life to all citizens, including those who live in our towns and cities.

Speakers:

Andrew Wharton, the Countryside Agency
andrew.wharton@countryside.gov.uk

Andrew joined the Countryside Agency in 2001 and is a Policy Adviser in the Positive Planning team. Current key areas of work include research, policy development, experimental projects and preparing national advice for the Agency on spatial planning, landscape planning and community engagement in the planning process. Andrew is also responsible for the development of Landscape Character Assessment and related topic papers as well as the Countryside Character Network. From 1997 he worked in the Policy and Conservation team at Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Prior to this Andrew was a land use consultant in a multi-disciplinary team with the environmental planning consultancy CPM. He studied at the University of Gloucestershire. He is currently involved in a local regeneration partnership in his own community on the fringe of Cheltenham, which has received major ODPM funding to improve public spaces.

David Carman, Hampshire County Council
david.carman@hants.gov.uk

David Carman is Principal Landscape Planning Officer with Hampshire County Council, with a background in both the public and private sectors. His team is responsible for addressing landscape policy in planning, through involvement in Regional and sub-Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Plans, Local Development Frameworks and Development Control. It also addresses land management issues through management plans for AONB's and non-designated land, and through countryside management projects, and is responsible for historic and designed landscape. He has been developing Landscape Character Assessment as a management plan tool, and is working on the development of capacity and sensitivity approaches to planning policy.

John Gittins, Cheshire Landscape Trust
jgittins@cltrust.fsnet.co.uk

John Gittins is a geographer with over 30 years experience in land use planning, community development, environmental and outdoor education, landscape and nature conservation. He has worked in the public, statutory, local government, academic and voluntary sectors in Britain and Europe. He is still learning.



Speakers: (Continued)

Lisa Turner, Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership lturner@devon.gov.uk

Lisa Turner is Community Planning Officer for the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership (BHRP), the Blackdown Hills AONB service. Since joining the AONB team in August 2002, Lisa has been responsible for developing, co-ordinating and implementing the preparation of the Blackdown Hills Plan, a process that has uniquely combined the review of an AONB management plan with a community strategy. Her role also involves contributing to community planning processes in the constituent local authorities, responding to land use planning consultations and developing guidance on planning issues, as well as supporting parish level involvement in the planning process.

Before taking up her current post, Lisa worked for several years at Taunton Deane Borough Council in Somerset as Rural Policy Planner, dealing with economic development matters as well as planning policy, and having involvement in county-wide rural regeneration partnerships. Lisa studied Town Planning at Newcastle University, which included a year's placement with the North York Moors National Park.

Alex Nickson, Thames Gateway London Partnership alex@thames-gateway.org.uk

Alex joined the Thames Gateway London Partnership (TGLP) in 2000 to manage an ongoing EC-funded environmental regeneration project between Thames Gateway, Greece, Sicily and East Germany. Developing the London-based projects provided the opportunity to integrate these pilot studies into TGLP's mainstream regeneration agenda. Subsequently, Alex has taken on the environmental remit for TGLP and now works closely with the London and regional governance to develop environmental and sustainability policies for the sub-region.

Alex also co-ordinates two strategic environmental projects looking at enhancing the functional and aesthetic environment of the Thames Gateway. Alex is seconded on a part-time basis to the Thames Estuary Partnership to manage one of these projects - developing a strategy for the east Thames that will shape the regeneration of the area through maximising the Thameside as a setting for sustainable development.

Previously, Alex has worked on capacity-building conservation programmes in Zimbabwe, Nepal and the Philippines and has led eco-tourism tours in a further 14 countries. Alex read Zoology at Nottingham University and has completed post-graduate courses on sustainable utilisation and climate change.

Joanne Tippett, Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology jo@holocene.net

Joanne is currently conducting research into participatory planning, with a focus on the EU Water Framework Directive. During her PhD. research, she developed ecological plans for the Irk Valley in North Manchester and a site level plan for Moston Vale, working with stakeholders and community members (see www.holocene.net/irk/htm). Her postdoctoral research will further explore this participatory approach, also based in the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, University of Manchester. She holds a BA in ecological design and cultural studies from Lancaster University, a MA in Social Science Methods from the University of Manchester and a Diploma of Permaculture Design.



List of Attendees

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jess Allen | Herefordshire Council |
| Andrew Baker | Countryside Agency |
| Chris Bolton | Defra |
| John Brownscombe | Isle of Wight AONB Partnership |
| Liz Bray | Newcastle City Council |
| David Carman | Hampshire County Council |
| Stephen d'Este Hoare | East Hampshire District Council |
| Sue Dampney | Dorset County Council/Dorset AONB |
| Matthew Davies | Norwich Fringe Project |
| Nick Delaney | Dover District Council |
| Georgina Dobson | CPRE |
| Rosy Eaton | Countryside Agency |
| Rachel England | Groundwork Wigan and Chorley |
| John Gittins | Cheshire Landscape Trust |
| Mike Greatbatch | Newcastle City Council |
| Ian David Houlston | Landscape Design Associates |
| Richard Jackson | Durham County Council |
| Anne Jacob | Nottingham City Council |
| Emma-Jane Lee | Land Use Consultants |
| Gavin MacDonald | Countryside |
| Paul Mahony | Countryside |
| Peter Mansfield | Cornwall AONB Partnership |
| Amanda Mathews | The Countryside Agency |
| Kayte McSweeney | English Heritage |
| Adele Metcalfe | Peak District National Park Authority |
| Alex Nickson | Thames Gateway London Partnership |



List of Attendees (Continued)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Adele Palmer | Countryside Agency |
| Gary Pattison | Dorset County Council |
| Leslie Pearman | Countryside Agency |
| Janet Popham | Carrick District Council |
| Jonathan Porter | Countryside Agency |
| Sophia Price | Cotswold District Council |
| Terry Robinson | Countryside Agency |
| Patricia Roberts | English Heritage |
| John Scott | Creswell Heritage Trust |
| Andrew Sharland | Bath and North East Somerset Council |
| Terry Sneller | Dorset County Council |
| Kenneth Spelman | K.J.Spelman & Associates |
| Janet Swailes | Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park |
| Steven Swan | Swan Paul Partnership |
| Terry Sweeney | Dorset County Council |
| Bridgit Symons | Countryside Agency |
| Jaqui Taylor | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Ed Thompson | Cornwall AONB Partnership |
| Joanne Tippett | Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology |
| Christine Tudor | The Countryside Agency |
| Esmond Turner | West Sussex County Council |
| Lisa Turner | Blackdown Hills AONB |
| Ben Ward | Forest of Dean District Council |
| Andrew Wharton | Countryside Agency |
| Caroline Whiteman | Dorset County Council |
| Mark Wilson | Hampshire County Council |



Community Futures - Landscape Visions: Bridging the Gap

Andrew Wharton, Countryside Agency andrew.wharton@countryside.gov.uk

Andrew joined the Countryside Agency in 2001 and is a Policy Adviser in the Positive Planning team. Current key areas of work include research, policy development, experimental projects and preparing national advice for the Agency on spatial planning, landscape planning and community engagement in the planning process. Andrew is also responsible for the development of Landscape Character Assessment and related topic papers as well as the Countryside Character Network. From 1997 he worked in the Policy and Conservation team at Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Prior to this Andrew was a land use consultant in a multi-disciplinary team with the environmental planning consultancy CPM. He studied at the University of Gloucestershire. He is currently involved in a local regeneration partnership in his own community on the fringe of Cheltenham, which has received major ODPM funding to improve public spaces.

Community Futures - Landscape Visions: Bridging the Gap

We need to make better connections between the objectives for sustainable communities and landscape as a resource and as a holistic idea. Landscape as a holistic and integrating "idea" could be very powerful in the way we set visions, plans, policies and strategies for creating more sustainable communities.

The holistic "landscape idea" is one which recognizes that landscape means much more than scenery and has a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits and meanings to communities. This broad landscape idea should influence the shape and nature of our future communities. Landscape Character Assessment is a good tool to help us understand this concept, but we also need processes for making the creative leap to how it can be used to inform the success of new communities and people's quality of life.

Landscape is an integral part of our communities" and individuals" lives - it acts as a reminder of our past and as a foundation for building future communities and future landscapes. We need to reconnect with our rural and urban landscape and better understand the interrelationships between people and place.

More and more we need to set visions for places and communities, sustainable communities. Landscape, through the application of LCA is a medium that can be used to project new environments and also help establish priorities for quality of life and management of valued assets.

Landscape can be an integrating idea. Landscape in its broadest sense should be underpinning our Community Strategies as well as informing Local Development Frameworks. Could landscape be the 'common thread' that will help tie these two together and help construct spatial plans?

To progress the holistic landscape idea in creating sustainable communities, we need to make landscape a core consideration for non-landscape professionals and develop new multidisciplinary approaches as part of wider community planning processes. Locally, we need to make landscape meaningful and relevant for communities and other stakeholders, involve them in developing and making stronger connections with their quality of life.

The time is right for promoting the role of landscape in this way. Thinking about landscape as an asset and an opportunity and not simply a constraint to creating sustainable communities. The European Landscape Convention, new community planning processes and the introduction of Local Development Frameworks and a spatial planning approach to managing places and communities means that landscape as the integrating idea has an important and central role.



People and Landscape: the Test Valley Community Landscape Project

David Carman, Hampshire County Council david.carman@hants.gov.uk

David Carman is Principal Landscape Planning Officer with Hampshire County Council, with a background in both the public and private sectors. His team is responsible for addressing landscape policy in planning, through involvement in Regional and sub-Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Plans, Local Development Frameworks and Development Control. It also addresses land management issues through management plans for AONB's and non-designated land, and through countryside management projects, and is responsible for historic and designed landscape. He has been developing Landscape Character Assessment as a management plan tool, and is working on the development of capacity and sensitivity approaches to planning policy.

People and Landscape: the Test Valley Community Landscape Project

The presentation will look at the Test Valley project and the contribution it can make to the "sustainability agenda" in Test Valley Borough. The scope of the presentation is:

- summary of the Hampshire landscape designations
- the approach to work in Hampshire
- public participation- who, when and how
- the Test Valley Project
- background
- project objectives
- project team
- methodology
- findings
- recommendations

The Test Valley Project was designed to address the issue of drawing ordinary members of the public (the community), as opposed to interest

groups (stakeholders) into Landscape Character Assessment. It developed a methodology for engaging the community across a largely rural Borough through facilitated focus group and workshops.

The aim of the project was to develop a methodology for understanding the attitudes and values of local communities towards the landscape of Test Valley Borough as part of the process of producing a Landscape Character Assessment. Its objectives were:

- to record the value that local communities attach to the landscape
- to encourage links between the rural and urban community
- to raise understanding and awareness of issues affecting the landscape
- to involve the public in strategic decisions about the future management of the landscape
- to inform Local Strategic Partnerships of environmental aspects of the community strategies.

The presentation will consider the difficulties of engaging the local community at a meaningful level in a district-wide LCA. Questions of who to invite, how to recruit, what to present to them, the problems of language and the value of the research itself will be addressed. The focus of the presentation, against a background of the way Hampshire County Council works, will be on the methodology for engagement and on the feedback from the participants, as contained in the report on the process from the consultants. It will also consider the extent to which the objectives of the project have been met and what still remains to be done.

Finally, the presentation will look at the community strategy process in Hampshire, the need for landscape to be considered as part of the process, and the obstacles to this. It will also refer to land management plans as a vehicle for securing sustainable communities.



Landscape and Community: Some Ways and Means of Engagement

John Gittins,
Cheshire Landscape Trust
jgittins@cltrust.fsnet.co.uk

John Gittins is a geographer with over 30 years experience in land use planning, community development, environmental and outdoor education, landscape and nature conservation. He has worked in the public, statutory, local government, academic and voluntary sectors in Britain and Europe. He is still learning.

Landscape and Community: Some Ways and Means of Engagement

Landscapes have meaning for people of all ages. Indeed, landscape provides the setting for our lives. For the child, the home area and school playground can be magical places. As we progress through the seven ages of man, landscape plays an important role either directly or indirectly. For some of us, it may lead to a lifetime's calling in one of the land based professions. To others it provides a base for leisure time activities or simply a back cloth to our lives. For all, it can contribute to our quality of life.

Over the years, communities of place and interest have contributed in various ways to caring for their local landscape. In an era in which community participation and empowerment have become keywords, it is understandable that local people, defined as "communities of place" have demonstrated their desire to influence the quality of the landscape where they live. "Communities of interest" have likewise expressed their views and sought to influence the quality of the landscape, which may be where they live, where they spend their leisure time or where they have "interests".

Having been involved in the Community Strategy Process in Cheshire as a member of the Cheshire Partnership, I am well aware of the need to ensure that Community Strategies are grounded in the real world, for after all, "fine words butter no parsnips." The landscape provides a common base on which to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area. But is this generally recognised by those engaged in preparing, developing and sustaining the Community Strategies?

For a number of years, the Cheshire Landscape Trust, a registered charity has worked with communities across the county to prepare Parish Maps, Village Design Statements (VDS) and Parish Landscape Statements (PLS). In the first case,

we developed a concept originated by Common Ground, in the second, we used the toolkit produced by the Countryside Commission and in the latter we tested the Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines as a tool which a community could use to produce a PLS.

Throughout, we have taken a two pronged approach, in which the **process** is as important as the **product**; The importance of which is not always recognised in a world where targets and indicators are paramount.

Lessons have been learnt. For example, the process takes time; funding is required and that the pace must be that set by the volunteers.

Successes include the number of Village Design Statements which have been approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance. We expect the two pilot Parish Landscape Statements to achieve the same status in the not too distant future. At the county level in Cheshire, the importance of both the VDS and PLS has been recognised in the Sustainable Cheshire Forum's Action Plan, and is fed into the countywide Community Strategy. A VDS and a PLS can also become part of a community generated Parish Plan and could help a parish to achieve Quality Parish Council status.

Recent consultation documents produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, for example, Planning Policy Statement Number 1 Consultation Draft Paper: Creating Sustainable Communities, clearly lists how opportunities for community involvement are provided at three levels: (1) in the context of National Planning Policy, (2) in the Regional Spatial Strategy process and (3) in producing Local Development Documents. Furthermore, Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, makes specific reference under the heading of "Design and the character of rural settlements" to local planning authorities utilising tools such as Village Design Statements prepared by local communities when preparing positive planning policies. In addition there is the role which community participation can play in the context of proposals for consulting the community on planning applications and in the Community Strategy process.

Today it is recognised that landscape quality can have a profound impact on people's health and well being, and thereby, on the quality of life of



Landscape and Community: Some Ways and Means of Engagement (Continued)

the individual and the community. This being so, the role which landscape can play in the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area and its inhabitants has a key part to play. Our experience demonstrates that local people can use Landscape Character Assessment to produce a Parish Landscape Statement, which includes the assessing and describing the landscape in maps, text and photographs; developing a strategy which contains a vision for the future, based on the assessment and leading to an Action Plan in which a wide range of stakeholders have a part to play.

However, one thing is certain, landscapes change. Whatever, I for one am certain that community based action is and will be a key ingredient in shaping our future landscapes. In my view we are barely at the end of the beginning, in recognising the fundamental importance of landscape in Community Strategies and other community based visions.



More Than a Consideration - a Nationally Important Landscape at the Heart of a Community Strategy: the Blackdown Hills Experience

Lisa Turner,
Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership
lturner@devon.gov.uk

Lisa Turner is Community Planning Officer for the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership (BHRP), the Blackdown Hills AONB service. Since joining the AONB team in August 2002, Lisa has been responsible for developing, co-ordinating and implementing the preparation of the Blackdown Hills Plan, a process that has uniquely combined the review of an AONB management plan with a community strategy. Her role also involves contributing to community planning processes in the constituent local authorities, responding to land use planning consultations and developing guidance on planning issues, as well as supporting parish level involvement in the planning process.

Before taking up her current post, Lisa worked for several years at Taunton Deane Borough Council in Somerset as Rural Policy Planner, dealing with economic development matters as well as planning policy, and having involvement in county-wide rural regeneration partnerships. Lisa studied Town Planning at Newcastle University, which included a year's placement with the North York Moors National Park.

More Than a Consideration - a Nationally Important Landscape at the Heart of a Community Strategy: the Blackdown Hills Experience

Introduction

Our approach is based on the premise that the Blackdown Hills AONB exists as a functional and discrete area, having a distinct sense of place, not just a designated landscape. The work of the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership (BHRP) embraces economic and community issues as well as landscape and environment, and as such, the BHRP was asked to undertake a process that would contribute to community planning as well as prepare an AONB management plan on behalf of partner local authorities.

The Blackdown Hills straddle the Devon and Somerset border, an identifiable landscape block to the south of the M5 and north of Honiton and Axminster. It was designated as an AONB in 1991, covering an area of around 360 km², affecting 40 parishes and with a population of around 13 000

within its boundary. The area is characterised by a sense of relative remoteness and tranquillity, and although displaying a range of landscape types the integrity of a past pastoral landscape remains intact. Four main elements gave rise to the AONB designation:

- An isolated and unspoilt rural area
- Diversity of landscape patterns and pictures
- A unique geology
- A landscape with architectural appeal

About the BHRP

The Partnership evolved from the more traditional Joint Advisory Committee and brings together public bodies, local organisations and voluntary groups with an active interest in the area. Policy and resource decisions are made by the Management Group, which consists of the seven key funders (local authorities and Countryside Agency) plus 8 community based representatives. Since the AONB designation, it has always been recognised that landscape protection or management is only part of the picture, and that such measures would only be successful if related to economic and social objectives and based on community initiative. A non statutory management strategy was produced in 1997 that focused on many "community priorities" established through consultation and was thus wider in scope than a traditional management plan.

Given this background, it was not surprising that following the Local Government and Countryside & Rights of Way Acts in 2000 those involved in the management of the AONB identified an opportunity to reduce overlap and confusion of different "planning" processes by producing an AONB plan that would be a community plan for the 40 Blackdowns parishes and sit within the LSP framework. It was felt that one option could be for the AONB Plan to restrict its focus to landscape issues and hope that it could then influence other plan processes. However this approach would run counter to the Partnership's twin track approach of balancing environmental and economic well being. It would also miss the opportunity to build on the good community relations developed to date and focusing energies toward a meaningful community owned plan. Thus the BHRP embarked on a process that combined two planning elements.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



More Than a Consideration - a Nationally Important Landscape at the Heart of a Community Strategy: the Blackdown Hills Experience (Continued)

Methodology

Of course we were not starting from zero. The previous management strategy, an annual community conference and research undertaken in order to (successfully) bid for EU Leader+ funding amongst others, had provided a solid grounding on which to base a new plan. In drawing up the plan, our aim was to make sure that the wishes of the local population were interwoven with the duty to care for a nationally protected landscape. Whilst clearly and positively accepting that the area cannot stand still, there was a definite desire that changes should be of a scale and type that do not threaten those valued characteristics, and perhaps even enhance them.

An important principle was to recognise that the process was just as important as the end product, to fully engage local people and verify that identified issues were not just the views of a few stakeholders (the usual suspects). Equally it was important to keep a reality check on what was being proposed in terms of resources, legislation and remit. There were two key elements to the management of the process: we established a steering group to support and broker, bringing together those from the community planning agenda with landscape and environment professionals and progress was overseen by the BHRP management group. Their ongoing involvement was a crucial part of the process, being able to input local knowledge and experience to “proof” what was emerging.

The preparation of the plan was very much a participative process, incorporating different methods of engagement at different stages that built on what had gone before. In summary this involved:

- Assessment and data gathering/existing research and knowledge/review of existing strategy/identification of other key strategies
- Identification of issues and scoping
- Verification through community consultation, existing groups, professionals
- Period of formal consultation, redrafting and final document

The End Product

Of course the publication of the plan document is not the end, but a starting point. However the result of work so far is a strategy inextricably linked to landscape, and by demonstrating the interdependence of the environment, economy and

community of the Blackdown Hills, aims to provide a framework for sustainable development. Five key themes emerged from consultation and these were carried forward to form the basis of the plan. The overall aim for each of the themes is as follows:

- **Landscape**
To recognise, understand and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the nationally important landscape resource of the Blackdown Hills AONB
- **Natural Environment and Land Management**
For the land and natural environment to be actively managed, appreciated and understood for its contribution to the landscape character and distinctiveness of the Blackdown Hills AONB
- **Living in the Blackdowns**
To have flourishing and cohesive communities with access for all to a range of services and facilities
- **Work and Business**
To have a thriving local economy with jobs for local people, that makes wise use of local resources, benefits the community and conserves and enhances the landscape and environment
- **Settlements and Infrastructure**
To ensure that all necessary new development enhances the landscape, reflecting the strong rural vernacular and contributing to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Blackdown Hills

The Plan and Landscape Character

The Blackdown Hills Plan has landscape at its heart. The landscape - its special qualities and nationally important status - is both a “driver” and a constraint, and even if it doesn’t necessarily figure upmost in the mind of “the man in the street” has some bearing on many aspects of daily life. Unlike some other AONBs and National Parks, the Blackdown Hills does not have tracts of wild open moorland; it is very clearly a landscape that has been shaped by human activity and the actions of land managers will continue that process.

It was heartening therefore that our experience of community consultation supported our premise and the approach taken. Certainly people were concerned about issues of affordable housing and access to services, but topics such as teenage pregnancy or refuse collection (random examples



More Than a Consideration - a Nationally Important Landscape at the Heart of a Community Strategy: the Blackdown Hills Experience (Continued)

of topics that appear in some of the more agency driven community plans) did not appear as priority concerns. Community priorities were very much related to landscape and environment, and when asked what they valued about living in the area or what was important to them, the answers almost without exception related to the essence and character of the area. This varied from recognition of defining key features (i.e. hedges) to appreciation of tranquillity, to favourite places - whether bluebell woods or a lane dropping into a valley. Key messages were also expressed about potential threats to the special character, including planning decisions, agricultural change and tourism.

Although landscape character is the backdrop to our plan, we recognise that we have used it in a descriptive way, and a theme running through the plan is the need for a more thorough understanding in order to reach a more objective management position. A priority action in the plan is therefore to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment, to help fill knowledge gaps and assist decision making in a number of areas, for example the capacity of the landscape to accommodate wind turbines say, or the impact of alternative crops, and to inform spatial strategies.



The Thames Gateway's New Clothes

Alex Nickson,
Thames Gateway London
Partnership
alex@thames-gateway.org.uk

Alex joined the Thames Gateway London Partnership (TGLP) in 2000 to manage an ongoing EC-funded environmental regeneration project between Thames Gateway, Greece, Sicily and East Germany. Developing the London-based projects provided the opportunity to integrate these pilot studies into TGLP's mainstream regeneration agenda. Subsequently, Alex has taken on the environmental remit for TGLP and now works closely with the London and regional governance to develop environmental and sustainability policies for the sub-region.

Alex also co-ordinates two strategic environmental projects looking at enhancing the functional and aesthetic environment of the Thames Gateway. Alex is seconded on a part-time basis to the Thames Estuary Partnership to manage one of these projects - developing a strategy for the east Thames that will shape the regeneration of the area through maximising the Thameside as a setting for sustainable development.

Previously, Alex has worked on capacity-building conservation programmes in Zimbabwe, Nepal and the Philippines and has led eco-tourism tours in a further 14 countries. Alex read Zoology at Nottingham University and has completed post-graduate courses on sustainable utilisation and climate change.

The Thames Gateway's New Clothes

The Thames Gateway has been declared one of the most, if not the most important regeneration project in Europe. National and regional government have identified the extensive brownfield sites of the Thames Gateway as key to providing the opportunity to build the UK out of its housing crisis and secure London's position as a world city. Estimates vary, but the number of new homes planned for the London end of the Thames Gateway range between 59,500 and 93,000 by 2016.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has been careful to state that this is not about development at any cost, but about creating sustainable communities. The definition of what exactly constitutes a "sustainable community" varies almost as widely as the belief that you can actually

"create" sustainable communities, but what is agreed is that a "sense of place" is fundamental to enabling "sustainable communities".

The Thames Gateway bears the legacy of an industrial heritage. The informal precedence for the bias against residential development in the east of London was defined by the prevailing westerly winds. This predisposition was reinforced during the Victorian era and culminated with the London County Council defining the River Lea as London's eastern boundary and decreeing that all noxious and dirty businesses should be located outside the London boundary, therefore in the Thames Gateway. The dockers' strikes against the mechanisation of unloading ships and the increase of rail freight sealed the decline of docks and further degraded an already precipitous situation. Today, sites that used to house munitions factories, chemical works and power stations are now windswept grasslands, car breakers' yards and shipping container storage areas.

For this reason, much of the Thames Gateway is currently perceived as industrial, dirty and downgraded. The brooding hulks of infrastructural buildings together with raw displays of utility services are viewed as relics of a former era. The treatment of this industrial archaeology verges from twee mimicry through blatant ignorance to wholesale destruction, yet it is the very cultural heritage that has so much to inform the future development and provide a context for the regeneration.

At the heart of the Thames Gateway lies the river Thames. It is both the physical centre of the area and the focus for much of the regeneration. One project capturing the essence and diversity of the riverside character is Thames Strategy East. The characterisation work that underpins the Strategy has described 9 character "reaches" for the river, which chart the progression of the landscape character from tight, urban grain to wide expanses of salt marsh and open skies. Using a carefully composed cocktail of townscape, riverscape and landscape assessment, further definition is achieved to describe character areas (predominantly based upon the prevailing land-use) and provide an evaluation of their quality. The characterisation work provides the baseline for guidelines in the Strategy that will enable the areas of positive, strong character be retained and to use the regeneration to enhance areas of poor or negative character

It is intended that Thames Strategy East will be



The Thames Gateway's New Clothes (Continued)

adopted by the 11 local authorities involved as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Through formal application of tried and tested characterisation methodologies (albeit applied in a composite fashion), Thames Strategy East will have the vision, purpose and teeth to enable new development to “learn” from the existing character and reinforce a sense of place that will enable the sustainability of the proposed new communities.



People, Places and Participation: Working with Stakeholders to Enhance Sense of Place

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Joanne is currently conducting research into participatory planning, with a focus on the EU Water Framework Directive. During her PhD. research, she developed ecological plans for the Irk Valley in North Manchester and a site level plan for Moston Vale, working with stakeholders and community members (see www.holocene.net/irk/htm). Her postdoctoral research will further explore this participatory approach, also based in the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, University of Manchester. She holds a BA in ecological design and cultural studies from Lancaster University, a MA in Social Science Methods from the University of Manchester and a Diploma of Permaculture Design.

People, Places and Participation: Working with Stakeholders to Enhance Sense of Place

Introduction

In this action research, an approach for eliciting active stakeholder involvement in planning (DesignWays) was tested, working with stakeholders and residents to develop plans for the open spaces of the Irk Valley in North Manchester. This trial was conducted in partnership with the Mersey Basin Campaign¹, the Irk Valley Project² and the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology³.

Between February and June of 2003, community members and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the early stages of creating a long-term vision for sustainability in the Irk Valley. Envisioning was carried out with participants from NGOs, community groups, academia, public and private sector organisations at two levels of scale. At the landscape level of scale, a vision was created for the Irk Valley Project, and at the site level, a landscape plan was created for Moston Vale, a 22-hectare former landfill site and culverted stream (see www.holocene.net/irk.htm for more information).

The objective of the envisioning process was “to develop a framework for the regeneration of the open spaces of North Manchester, encouraging creativity and consideration of sustainability principles”. It comprised a series of 8 workshops,

to which a broad range of stakeholders was invited. A landscape plan was developed for Moston Vale in 3 workshops run in parallel to this process. An additional workshop was targeted at local businesses. Participants, local and regional stakeholders were invited to a presentation of results and discussion of the plans.

Active Engagement in Planning

Landscape character can be seen as the product of dynamic interaction. The forms and patterns of landscape can be seen as temporary waves in a long process of change. This change includes geological, biological and cultural processes. Kropf (2003) discussed the addition of design to two processes more commonly associated with Landscape Character Assessment, characterisation and making judgements.

This paper focuses on the process of active stakeholder engagement in planning and design, an imperative recognised in European and National legislation (e.g. European Commission 2001; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004).

SUNsustainable DesignWays is a toolkit for engaging participation in planning. It offers an integrated approach to active participation in the design of plans and projects. Its colourful tools and creative methods aim to deliver dialogue that is animated and engaging. It is built on a framework for understanding sustainability, helping participants to take a holistic view. The expected results are twofold:

- plans that reflect resident and stakeholder aspirations and the particular character of an area,
- and capacity building, such that participants learn skills of communication and ecological design.

This capacity building enables participants to better contribute to sustainable planning. DesignWays provides a bridge between local and professional knowledge, which helps to integrate bottom-up and strategic planning, for example between site and river catchment levels of scale.

Landscapes are seen as the central organising framework for thinking of sustainability in the area. The participatory process helps develop knowledge of the valuable characteristics of the landscape and how it can be used as a framework for sustainable regeneration. In this paper, three inter-related aspects of developing a sense of place will be



People, Places and Participation: Working with Stakeholders to Enhance Sense of Place (Continued)

discussed and illustrated with examples from the action research:

- drawing on the rich texture of local knowledge to understand the character of a place and develop possible ways to enhance it;
- enhancing the possibility of developing landscapes meaningful to residents, which will be used and looked after over time;
- and a consideration of the wider sustainability of the landscape and the areas surrounding it in terms of maintaining ecological integrity.

Texture of local knowledge

The river Irk was described in 1887 by Engels as “a narrow, coal-black, foul smelling stream, full of debris and refuse” from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic gas constantly arise and bring forth a stench unendurable even in the bridge forty or fifty feet above the surface of the stream”. The landscape carries the legacy of centuries of industrial development, both in its historical features (especially from water mills and dye works) and in areas of derelict and contaminated land.

The extent of social disadvantage in North Manchester is revealed in health related statistics. The “Standard Mortality Rate” in North Manchester Primary Care Trust, at 158, is well above the North West and national averages of 111 and 100 respectively (Manchester City Council 2002). The four wards in the North Manchester Housing Market Renewal Strategy are within the 8% of the most deprived in the country in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 indicators for income, employment and health (Neighbourhood and Renewal Unit 2003).

The perception of the area’s landscapes has been very negative. They have been used as convenient dumping grounds for the waste of Manchester. Indeed, several of the open spaces are still open because they were originally used for landfill. This case study illustrate how landscapes, even in this state, can act as catalysts for sustainable planning.

Local knowledge and stories can help to uncover the history of a place and to identify distinguishing features that may not be obvious from other methods of landscape analysis. The use of a participatory design process can help to provide information about what Steiner et al (2000) terms “perceptual and cultural critical areas”, areas which

are of significance to local people, and which may not be obvious from landscape data. An example of this arose in the workshops with residents in the Moston Vale area, in which the significance for local people of a particular stone (the witches” stone) was revealed. Residents told stories of standing on the stone and making a wish, a tradition that had been passed on by their grandmothers. This stone is in an area that is about to have a water treatment structure built by the water utilities company, and it could easily have been lost or bulldozed in the construction. Instead, it is to be placed at the convergence of several paths, to form a landscape feature and a focus for interpretation of the history of the site.

In the initial stages of planning for Moston Vale, participants were dubious about looking at the assets of the area. The workshop started very slowly. Several techniques were used to stimulate discussion, and by the end of the workshop 80 assets had emerged. Project officers and community members discussed the area. At the end of the evening community members said they had remembered more and learned more about their area than they thought possible.



Figure 1: Using an aerial photograph of Moston Vale in workshop

Some of the key assets that emerged from this process included: the old hedgerow trees on site, and the associated history of the witches” ravine, where the witches” stone and cottage used to stand. Looking at historical maps showed that there used to be a stepping-stone near the brook, and the ideas of creating seats and a mounting block from a stepping-stone (which could also be used by horse riders from the nearby stables) emerged from this historical information. The history of the site was seen as important in the final design, despite the fact that much of the landscape has been buried by landfill.

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Ideas about turning the history of the site into an asset included:

- preserve existing trees and hedgerows in construction of United Utilities monitoring station;
- turn the history of landfill in the area to an educational resource;
- and to recreate a water feature, echoing the former meander of Moston Brook (the brook runs through the site in a culvert under the landfill. The former path of the brook can be seen on the 1849 Ordinance Survey map of the area), using scrapes and reedbeds in the existing marshy depressions, accentuated with sculpture and interpretative information.

Meaningful landscapes

As landscapes are inherently related to human activities and actions, the way that landscape character is to be maintained in the future needs to be related to the way that people understand and wish to use their landscapes.

Active involvement in design can help create viable plans that reflect stakeholders' aspirations. The form of the participation matters, and can encourage dialogue and learning between participants. As can be seen from the chart below, many more assets were identified than problems in these workshops. This is not necessarily a reflection of a lack of problems in the area. Indeed, there is high unemployment, with many social and environmental problems. One resident said "To be honest go back 10 years and I thought there was no future around here". Rather, the high proportion of assets reflects DesignWays' ability to encourage participants to draw out the positive aspects of the area.

In the Moston Vale area there were significantly more assets perceived under the "Social capital"

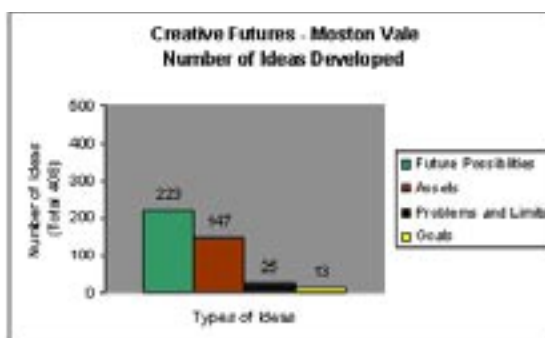


Figure 2: Summary of types of ideas developed during workshops

category, e.g. the organisations, networks, and institutions in the area, than under the other categories used to stimulate brainstorming (Economics, Activities, Elements and Settlements and Landscapes). This was somewhat surprising, given that the main focus of the workshops was the former landfill site, part of the physical environment. This could reflect participants' sense of the importance of links to existing social and economic programmes and activities in developing the site. These can form a very important resource for regeneration. Local participants saw the open space partly in terms of activities and programmes that could increase their use of it and help to build a sense of local ownership. It is hoped this would reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour on the site.

Sustainability of the landscape

"Effective conservation delivery needs to do more than just create and maintain a network of protected areas. This is because such areas are inextricably linked with their surrounding landscape and cannot be separated from this context which often has a direct effect on the health of the special features that are present for which the sites were originally protected" (Catchpole 2003, pg. 21).

This quote from an earlier Countryside Character Network presentation points to the necessity of seeing landscapes as an integral part of their surrounding context. Many attempts at planning for sustainability mention the need to conserve biodiversity, but fail to address the spatial patterns that may be essential to preserving ongoing processes of ecosystems, and which maintain the vitality and resilience of ecosystems.

In the DesignWays process, key points of historical and ecological interest were identified, and later used to develop ideas for historic features for interpretation and themed trails. The potential for linking adjoining areas of woodland using green links, such as street trees and tree-lined bicycle paths, was noted. The possibility of integrating water recycling into the landscape was also discussed, (e.g. through household water recycling, and the use of constructed wetlands and swales to help filter run-off from potentially polluted sites).

Landscapes themselves are also impacted by the activities of humans and the flows of resources and materials through them. Sustainability of landscapes has to take into

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account the environmental and physical impacts of surrounding land uses. In this process, at both levels of scale more “future possibilities” were developed in the category of “Elements and Settlements” (the built environment), followed by ideas for Landscapes. Given that the starting point of these workshops was planning for green spaces (the remit of the Irk Valley Project), the emphasis on the built environment might seem surprising. What this may reflect is that in a heavily urbanised area participants see the open spaces as intimately linked to the urban fabric. The DesignWays process encourages participants to consider interconnections between the built and natural environment, between aspects of social and economic life, and between physical form and activities.

Including sustainability principles at the core of participatory planning provides demonstrable benefits. In DesignWays local ecology is seen as a source of inspiration. Ecological principles are taught as a vibrant model for new possibilities. Exploring a worldview in which humans are an integral part of nature helps re-embed people into the workings of the natural system. This research has shown that an approach consistent with a living systems paradigm can contribute to the development of more integrated, ecologically sound plans. The process itself can help all participants extend their understanding of the underlying dynamics of ecosystem processes, and the interactions of human systems with those dynamics. It is thus possible for stakeholders to enhance their understanding of the links between society and ecosystems. By including a broader picture of sustainability in thinking about landscapes, it is possible to ask about viability and the long-term implications of design decisions. In an area such as the Irk Valley, the long-term implications of human impacts are more obvious, in the legacy of contamination, in increased urban run-off from new developments, etc. They are also, however, important in more rural areas, both from global environmental change and the impacts of cumulative land use decisions on ecological systems.

New environmental legislation such as the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) offers an unparalleled opportunity for improving river basin management, whilst moving towards a sustainable future. Sustainable management of water requires integrated planning, recognising connections between different levels of scale. In

order to achieve the ambitious goals set by the Directive, changes will be necessary not only in the water sector, but also in urban planning, industrial design, architecture, agriculture, infrastructure planning and landscape management. This will require an innovative approach to planning. The ambitious nature of the goals also implies the need to engage the participation of many stakeholders early in the planning process. Active involvement of stakeholders in developing options and plans on this scale is still uncommon.



Figure 3: Participants working on the Integrated Decision-making stage of DesignWays

This research has examined the emerging role of active participation in ‘planning for sustainability’ in the context of river catchments. It has demonstrated the benefits of an iterative process, in which planning at the landscape level of scale informs, and is informed by, work at the site level. Use of a consistent design language with in-built ecological principles facilitates linking across scales and between sectors. Several recommendations for improving the process of planning have emerged from this research.

Recommendations

- Provide opportunities to imagine the future differently through active involvement of community members and stakeholders early in the design of options and plans.
- Provide increased opportunities for active stakeholder involvement in integrated planning at the landscape level of scale.
- Catalyse stakeholder interest in planning at the landscape level by linking it with planning at the site level. Thus small-scale projects can be implemented as part of a larger envisioning process.
- Develop a regional (or River Basin level) participatory planning resource team (“Design

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Team”) to provide support for developing plans at the landscape level of scale.

- Use existing programmes and organisations to broaden the range of input from stakeholders and community members.
- Use site and landscape level planning to inform creation of plans at the regional level in a two-way flow of information
- This planning process should create opportunities to use landscape level planning to provide information and inspiration for statutory planning processes, including: Local Development Frameworks, Regional Spatial Strategies and River Basin Planning for the Water Framework Directive.
- Outcomes of participatory envisioning should feed into regional data bases, such as those being coordinated by the Regional Intelligence Units.

These recommendations relate to the need for capacity building in the process of facilitation of “planning for sustainability”, one aspect of the range of skills needed for delivering regeneration.

“The lack of relevant skills is the single biggest barrier to the development of sustainable

communities” in particular, in the discipline of managing community involvement in the design and development processes” (CABE 2003, pg. 3 - 4).

- Develop a professional academy to co-ordinate training, regulate accreditation and disseminate information about best practice and up-to-date toolkit materials. Setting up a National Centre for Sustainable Communities Skills has been recommended in the “Egan Review - Skills for Sustainable Communities”(Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004). Such a centre would be an obvious place for housing an academy for coordinating training of “planning for sustainability” facilitators.
- Develop three tiers of accreditation: NVQ or OCN accreditation for community members and stakeholders, CPD accreditation for professional stakeholders who attend workshops (these provide incentives for participation), and a Diploma for facilitators of the process.
- Training should include “learning through doing” so that facilitators and planners learn through helping to deliver participatory processes. It should allow for a “cascading of skills” such that all participants are able to improve skills through attending planning workshops.



Figure4: Mechanism for added-value planning to link site, landscape & regional levels of scale.

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Conclusion

It is possible to say in broad terms what a sustainable system requires. The challenge lies in working out how to imagine and design human systems that function more "like ecosystems". This will require the efforts of a multitude of stakeholders rethinking their relationship to the environment.

Teaching participants skills and principles of ecological design can help produce designs that go beyond "end-of-pipe" to eco-systemic solutions. Thus, settlements and infrastructure modelled on ecosystems can be developed. Landscapes provide not only the essential backdrop to such a process, they provide a common theme to encourage communication about the future and a source of inspiration to rethink the nature of human settlements.

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Footnotes

¹ The Mersey Basin Campaign was founded in 1985 as a 25-year initiative aiming to regenerate the NorthWest, following the Toxteth riots in Liverpool. The Mersey Basin comprises 2000 kilometres of waterways and canals. The 4,680 km² area of the Basin is home to over 5 million people (www.watersnorthwest.org).

² The Irk Valley Project (IVP) is a partnership between Manchester City Council, NGOs, residents' associations, and local businesses. It works to create sustainable and accessible green spaces in North Manchester. The project began in May 2001 and covers 500 hectares of managed open space, within a 5000 hectare area. It contains seven miles of the River Irk, as well as several of its tributaries (<http://www.irkvalley.info/>).

³ "The Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology (CURE) was established within the Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, in 1999. Research at the Centre focuses on the organisation and activity of complex communities, both natural and human" (<http://www.art.man.ac.uk/PLANNING/cure/>). The authors' research was based in CURE.



Report from the Discussion Sessions

Morning discussion session minutes

The meeting heard from a delegate working with heritage interpretation in an urban, heavily industrialized landscape, one which escaped extensive regeneration in the 1960s. It has strong historic character which has survived mainly through neglect. The delegate told the meeting that he manages a project that promotes community history and heritage, working with 30-40 community groups in the city, helping them articulate what they value in terms of local history, and therefore what landscape features have value as historic landmarks. It is important that an effort is made to connect with local people and their expertise, particularly long term residents. However, not all local authorities have someone working in this role. It takes a lot of time and investment to make this kind of connection with a community, but it is worthwhile. The effort needs to be made to broaden the range of professionals working in this area, so that wider audiences are reached.

Terry Robinson commented that this echoes Andrew Wharton's comments about the need to broaden the appeal and membership of the Countryside Character Network. That can be expanded, to ask how can we get a broader range of people and skills involved in landscape generally?

A delegate commented that there was little mention of how participation translates into action: how do these good intentions relate to policy decisions? Isn't there a danger that these processes might get communities involved only to frustrate their ambitions.

John Gittins responded that the key to good community development is to make it clear what is on offer, on both sides, and to work in the common ground between. The action plans that will emerge from the Burwardsley Parish Landscape Statement will have specifics which will relate on one level to the statutory process, and on another level to tangible ground level activities.

Terry Robinson responded that it is well understood that a sure way of killing community engagement processes is through encouraging people to get involved and then ignoring their input. Despite that, the fact that community engagement is such a burgeoning area suggests that this isn't the case, and that people do get listened to. However, it is important that there are firm examples and evidence about where these processes have been

translated into both statements and action. He asked the floor to offer examples of successful community engagement, where community involvement has resulted in a community getting what it wants.

The meeting heard from a delegate working in the North East: his project area is now a conservation area, though his project pre-dates that designation. A lot of the local, detailed information in the Conservation Area Character Statement and the Conservation Area Management Plan came from local residents. This was information and evidence which would not have gone into the Conservation Area documents had a community involvement scheme not been in place. There is one group of buildings in particular which have been saved from demolition as a result of this community input and the expression of community values.

David Carman spoke about Landscape Character Assessment as part of the broader planning process, and as a component of management plans. There is a lot to be learned from the AONB planning process, and that the work done in the Blackdown Hills demonstrates that. Landscape Character Assessment comes into its own when it is part and parcel of a management plan. In a management plan you are engaging people in a vision, and in the objectives and policies that are going to deliver that vision, and ultimately in the actions that emerge out of that plan. Consider an AONB management plan, which is generalized and covers a large area: you can then work on smaller scale management plans at a parish or two/three parish scale within that area, where you are communicating directly with local communities. Management plans are a really good vehicle for community engagement. Landscape Character Assessment on its own does not address enough, but it is an important component.

Andrew Wharton advised that at the start of any community planning process or community involvement process those communities need to know how things can be delivered, and on what timescales, to set the context. It's important to explain the realities of delivery to communities.

The meeting heard from a delegate working on an English Nature funded Lifescapes project which has a community involvement element. Regarding David Carman's observation within his presentation that he had found a general lack of knowledge about landscape issues, this delegate had found exactly the opposite. However, most of the people



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

who came to these consultations were older people, in their fifties, and perhaps better informed about the landscape. Is there a connection between the constituency of the groups and David Carman's perception of their lack of landscape knowledge?

David Carman responded that he didn't think you could make these connections, and that this was a specific group which displayed, in his opinion, a lack of landscape knowledge; it was in no way representative of consultation groups generally.

David Carman was asked what his definition of hard to reach groups was. Did it mean geographically or socially isolated?

David Carman responded that it was both.

David Carman was asked if the Test Valley project had involved consulting a broad demographic?

David Carman responded that the Test Valley project had used social researchers and group recruiters, themselves using a combination of street survey research and door-to-door canvassing, to recruit as wide a demographic spread of participants as possible. However, certain groups, for example the young, tend not to get involved.

John Gittins commented that piggybacking on existing events is a good way of attracting participants: in one community where a Village Design Statement was being prepared, a preliminary exhibition was installed in a room adjacent to the polling station for the general election. This proved very successful. Regarding difficult-to-reach groups, one of the things that had emerged from the initial conference during the Future Search work conducted by the Cheshire Landscape Trust in Frodsham was the need to involve young people, so a future search conference was organised solely for young people.

The meeting heard from a delegate that the holistic landscape slide in the opening presentation had illustrated an important point; that of the relationship a community has to the land. In this country the link between communities and the land is being degraded all the time, and has been for decades. In this country we are in the privileged position of being able to talk about landscape; the majority of the world's population have a relationship with the land based purely on subsistence: landscape in the broader sense is not an issue for most of the world.

Responding to the earlier comments concerning translating participation into action, a delegate

commented that such projects are learning processes for both sides. A lot of the ideas that the speakers are talking about have come out of Participatory Rural Appraisal, which was renamed Participatory Learning in Action - this reflects that learning process. It's a learning process both for the communities and the agencies involved in facilitating that process.

The speakers were asked about the importance of involving landowners in consultation. If we do not do this, might we be in danger of letting community members' expectations regarding what is feasible run too high?

Joanne Tippett commented that in considering the land as a productive unit, there is a tension between keeping the character of the land, which may be a result of historic land practices no longer being viable, and the need to produce more and better quality, healthy food. Are these concerns being considered in Landscape Character Assessment?

Andrew Wharton responded that Landscape Character Assessment does not, by itself, give us the answers to questions like these. The debate about future landscapes, for example whether or not to change, preserve or restore the landscape, is very important, and not happening enough.

Lisa Turner told the meeting that the Blackdown Hills is an Environmentally Sensitive Area, so for as long as it has been an AONB farming processes have been about preservation, conservation rather than food production. In the Blackdown Hills the debate about change, as mentioned by Andrew Wharton, has not yet begun.

David Carman told the meeting that there will be massive changes in the near future as a result of the new two-tier Environmental Stewardship Scheme, and these changes should be beneficial. However there is a worry that some landscapes will disappear; for instance those landscapes that are reliant on grazing animals for their maintenance.

Terry Robinson asked the speakers and the delegates about the extent to which landowners have been singled out for involvement in community participation.

The meeting heard from a delegate about experiences from Herefordshire, where there are so few areas actually owned by the local communities that it is essential to involve landowners. Unfortunately, a very small percentage of landowners are prepared to have community projects on their land, but it's vital if



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

the recommendations of participation projects are to be implemented.

John Gittins told the meeting that the Cheshire Landscape Trust has always tried to work as closely as possible with landowners: in the case of Burwardsley, 90 percent of the land is owned by two landowners, so there has been no option but to work with them. The Cheshire Landscape Trust has built up a close working relationship with the Cheshire Agricultural Society, and two of the trustees are practicing farmers. Because the Cheshire Landscape Trust is a small body, it is unlikely to be perceived by landowners as a threat. Building relationships like this takes time and effort.

The meeting heard from a delegate who stated that while it is encouraging to hear of successful examples of community involvement where the outputs of participatory projects have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, there is a danger that if planners do not demand design that is sensitive to its setting, design that is calculated to sustain sense of place, guidance of this sort may be falling on deaf ears. There is a need to observe and use local materials and traditional design. Planners must be required to perpetuate sense of place: only a minority of planning authorities are actually making this demand.

Terry Robinson responded The Countryside Agency has monitored development in villages which have conducted Village Design Statements, and generally observed that the statement has been taken heed of in development decisions. He asked the floor, and particularly those delegates who were acquainted with PPS1, to assess whether PPS1 delivers a greater demand of planners than has previously been the case.

One delegate responded that it does have a greater design emphasis, and there is scope for design to be taken greater account of, but the skills aren't there in the local planning authorities for it to be successful.

Lisa Turner asked how much of this is the fault of individual planning officers and how much is the fault of the planning authorities.

Terry Robinson stated that on paper the requirements for community consultation within the new planning system are extensive. In his experience, as someone who has tried to influence that legislation, design was not on the agenda of the policy makers and legislators, but they

recognise that if locally distinctive design is to be part of an area, it must be communities who demand it and qualify what they mean by it. It is an arena in which people need to become active, to stimulate a greater level of interest and readiness to engage with the planning process much more than has been in the past. The challenge is there to be taken up.

Regarding design and local distinctiveness, the meeting heard of experiences of community planning from the Peak District National Park. There the problem is reversed; the design guidelines are very strict regarding appropriate materials, and in a lot of cases that is thwarting the ambitions of the local community.

John Gittins told the meeting that the way in which planning applications are handled by elected members is often without depth, insight or discussion.

David Carman told the meeting that if quality in design is to be insisted on, the performance-led demand on planning authorities to process applications within a certain time will have to be removed. League tables have nothing to do with quality, and whilst there is pressure on planning authorities to process quickly, or be seen to be failing, good design will not flourish.

Terry Robinson concluded the morning discussion session by telling the meeting about European legislation that is delivering a new agri-environment scheme across the European community, called Environmental Stewardship. This will come into force in Late 2004/early 2005. In England there are two tiers of environmental stewardship, in which farmers will receive a per acre payment for managing their land to a certain prescription. It is open to everyone, and more or less 100 percent of farmed land is expected to meet the base level (tier 1) requirements. It is predicted that tier 2 funding will cover 50 percent of farmed land. These demands have not yet been codified. In the next six weeks, and to a strict timetable, the Countryside Agency is employing consultants to look at each of the 159 Landscape Character Areas and draw up targeting statements specific to each area. These will inform the Tier 2 requirements. The consultants are being advised by agricultural specialists within each of the Countryside Agency's regional offices: those delegates who might want to influence these targeting statements are advised to contact the Countryside Agency's regional offices.



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

Afternoon discussion session minutes

The speakers were asked about the financial cost of community participation.

John Gittins told the meeting that the cost of facilitation in the Burwardsley Parish Landscape Statement came to £3,000. However, the equivalent of £6,500 worth of volunteers' effort and time went into the project.

Joanne Tippet responded, stressing that the cost of not developing sustainably will inevitably be greater in the long run than investing the money upfront. This is not an easy message to get across in our target-driven culture, which is why there is a need for pilot projects that demonstrate this lesson. However, she acknowledges that it doesn't follow that it is therefore easy to allocate budget. One way of working with limited budgets is by sourcing finance from lots of different organisations; a successful project would therefore be one which add value to various programs from the different partners. In the instance of the Irk Valley Project, Red Rose Forest was able to meet some of their targets, Groundwork and Newlands were all able to meet some of their targets. Pooling resources via partnerships will mean the most effective use of financial resources and in-kind support. It is to be hoped that there is a climate developing in which it is recognised that it is worth spending the money on participation upfront rather than later.

Derek Carman told the meeting that the cost of the Test Valley Community Landscape Project had been somewhere around £14,000 for the social research contract, including hire of halls and payment for volunteers time. Within that, payments for the community participants' time cost about £2,700.

A delegate replied that the cost of the Test Valley Community Landscape Project compared quite favourably with the cost of the participation element of New Forest District Council's Landscape Character Assessment, which came in around 30,000. That study was done in perhaps a more traditional way, rather than a focussed way which the Test Valley study was conducted.

Regarding the sourcing of funds from different partners, the meeting heard from a delegate working with participatory planning in the Cornwall AONB. The Heritage Lottery Fund have been approached for funding because the project will be a learning exercise, and it will help them hit their targets for funding educational projects. Educational partners are possible sources of

additional funding for participatory planning projects.

Alex Nickson told the meeting that there have been 7 public consultation events thus far, in the Thames Strategy East project and these have generally tried to use existing structures, groups and organisations, such as charities and Local Strategic Partnerships. Because of this reliance on pre-existing groups, identifying individual costs within that can be quite difficult, although around £20,000 has been allocated community consultation. This will mean that these existing groups get significant presence through the process. One of the difficulties facing the Thames Strategy East project is the need, in every consultation exercise, to break down, both the Mayor's London plan and John Prescott's Sustainable Communities plan, into identifiable constituent elements that will have relevance to the communities involved. Another difficulty is that Local Strategic Partnerships have different roles and statuses across different boroughs, and that in some boroughs local, organic partnerships which are completely against the use of Local Strategic Partnerships have evolved in response to particular issues.

Terry Robinson told the meeting that in the case of the Quality of Life assessment carried out in Epping Forest, there exists both an identifiable figure for the cost of the exercise and a list of what that assessment has generated in terms of savings and value. Thurrock, to the East of London, is currently in the early stages of a visioning exercise using community artists. This community arts approach will have some firm figures attached to it.

A delegate stated that the key question which should be addressed to community members through participatory planning in the Thames Gateway growth area should be whether or not they wanted 200,000 new homes in the Thames Gateway. Without asking that question, attempts at participation or consultation become tokenism. It should be remembered that there are existing communities in the growth areas. Are these new homes and their supporting infrastructure being built on existing open and green spaces?

Andrew Nickson responded to the point about existing open and green spaces. He stated that the figure stipulated in PPG17, that is, 1.6 hectares of open space for every 1000 residents, hasn't been relevant in London since the 1950s. There is a great deal of pressure on open land in London; with the 2012 Olympic bid and with the establishment



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of zones of change, a lot of open space is being gnawed away at. In addition, the Thames Gateway area suffers from a variety of problems, including flooding, adapting to climate change, image, and business retention. The task at hand is to show how environmental and sustainable approaches can be used to solve all those problems, through the planning of a network of park and green spaces which will solve access and transport problems, that provide flood storage capacity, ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation, and then to look at how new development can be sewn into that space, looking at high density around public transport nodes and so on. That is the only way to achieve a true, sustainable end.

Alex Nickson was asked if local people would actually be employed within the Thames Gateway growth area.

Alex Nickson replied that the intention was to intensify the work possibilities within the Thames Gateway area, to attract businesses to the town centres and transport nodes within it. They are also looking at ways of using the river more creatively, for instance, exploring the possibilities of developing a river based public transport system, rather than building another infrastructural boundary like a new railway line.

The meeting heard from a delegate working on a heritage-based project working in the North Nottinghamshire/North Derbyshire coalfield, trying to use heritage as a catalyst for regeneration, and using the landscape to emphasise that the area is an area of change rather than an area of decline. This delegate told the meeting that he has been encouraged by hearing talk about landscape characterisation and sense of place in various places, such as a recent conference for the AHI (Association for Heritage Interpretation). Hopefully sense of place and landscape character will provide a focal point for different disciplines working with landscape.

The speakers were asked what effect they thought paying people to participate might have on a community's sense of ownership of the ideas and strategies that come out of participatory exercises, and whether or not the speakers thought it was sensible to make a distinction between stakeholders and members of the community

Andrew Wharton replied that in some cases paying participants may be appropriate; there are issues about who should and should not get paid for their

time. There are some people who cannot afford to take time out from earning a living, and payment is worth considering in such cases, but a situation where some people will be paid for their time and some will not may be unfair. Some more thinking on the subject is needed.

David Carman responded that he didn't see why a consultant should be paid for their time and not a community member. However, he told the meeting that one of the first questions asked by a member of the local community Test Valley Community Landscape Project consultation workshops was "If we are here for our benefit, why are you paying us?"

The meeting heard the comment that payment for participation recognises that communities' opinions are worth something in real, financial terms. It says that we put a real value on both their opinions and the fact that they are giving up their free time to sit in a room and talk about landscape.

A delegate told the meeting that, from an ethical standpoint, it is standard practice in several European countries to pay individuals involved in participatory planning and consultation exercises.

John Gittins told the meeting that, in his experience, it has never been raised as an issue. Participants in Cheshire Landscape Trust projects may receive some benefits and expenses, but not payment as such.

The speakers were asked for a request for clarity over the definition of the term 'stakeholder'.

Joanne Tippett responded that stakeholders should be defined on a case-by-case basis. However, the approach whereby stakeholders are defined as belonging to either 'communities of interest' or 'communities of place' has a lot to recommend it, but the distinctions between these two groups can be unclear; individuals can belong to both groups simultaneously. Whichever approach to the terminology is used, the important thing is to involve as many people as possible.

Joanne Tippett told the meeting that she could see the point in socially stratified workshops, but the real issue is our process of communication and our ability to elicit a decent dialogue. We need to develop ways of managing these workshops which do not favour the loudest, most vocal participants. We need to come up with inclusive processes, ones that do not necessarily rely on people standing up



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and speaking in front of an audience, as this can be very intimidating.

Joanne Tippett told the meeting that it was vital to get communities of place and interest communicating with the project officers and delivery organisations, partly so that these stakeholders can understand some of the constraints. It's important to be realistic about what is possible but at the same time to develop a vision, because at least some part of it may be achievable. People are smart enough to understand that a vision is not necessarily a promise. It's also important that the process is ongoing, so that the vision can be referred back to.

The meeting heard from a delegate with experience of community participation in northern America. The meeting was told that such meetings always used a circular seating arrangement, as this was demonstrative of the fact that everybody in attendance was of equal importance.

Joanne Tippett agreed that the medium, or process, important. It is important to break down social barriers and give people an easy way to give input.

The speakers were asked how professionally run consultation exercises fit in with the national landscape typology and more technical, scientific survey based approaches? How do they work together to produce policy or guide planning?

John Gittins replied that the Parish Landscape Statement process certainly fits within the structure of Landscape Character Assessment as it is laid out in the 2002 guidance. The fact that the resulting statements are awarded SPG status is acknowledgement that they are on the planning ladder. It is to be hoped that the results of these projects will, with a little work, be able to be incorporated within the new planning system. It would be very frustrating for the communities who had been involved in producing these statements if the new planning system cast their work aside.

John Gittins was asked about the relationship of political boundaries, such as parish boundaries, and the units used in Landscape Character Assessment, for instance Landscape Character Types and Landscape Description Units. These do not necessarily correspond. Are the community participants involved with Parish Landscape Statements consulted regarding the boundaries of the units within Parish? Were they given an open book in defining how the units work in their parish?

John Gittins replied that during the Parish Landscape Statement process, the participants themselves defined the units. This is an important part of the process. It is important to stress that the participants own the results of the process, whereas the professionals merely facilitate.

David Carman responded to the same question, telling the meeting that the Test Valley Community Landscape Project was very much a professionally led project. Public stakeholders worked mainly to refine the units rather than define them. It is an issue of scale; at the parish level, the level that the Cheshire Landscape Trust are working at, it is possible to let participants take responsibility for defining the units. At the district scale it is not.

The meeting heard that the challenge for the future is to get data structures in Landscape Character Assessments that we can inform district and county level studies with emerging parish level statements, so that it is a two way process. The 2002 guidance recommends a review cycle for revisiting assessments; that is where attention needs to be focussed, so that the local studies can feed up in to county, regional and national pictures into the future.

Terry Robinson concluded the afternoon's discussion session with some closing comments.

He stated that the meeting had been reminded during the day that landscape was not 'out there', rather it was 'in here', and it operates inside all of us. Landscape is an expression of the way people feel about their surroundings - therefore, this being the case, how can you possibly deal with landscape issues if you don't start with the way people feel about landscape, through exactly the same kinds of participatory techniques that had been the focus of this workshop. Dealing with landscape without taking people's feelings into account will result in a very different and much less valuable idea of landscape.

Some of the exponents of community participation hold the view that you can handle all of society just by relying on communities to come up with their own solutions.

There is a fair amount of controversy associated with that view. No community will vote to have an airport, no community will vote to have housing growth near it, and yet we all live in a modern society in which we benefit from air travel and decent quality housing at a reasonable price. Someone has to take the downside of these



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developments, they have to go somewhere, so we do have to rely on some higher authority which is prepared to provide leadership. Saying communities can do it all doesn't actually solve all the problems we have in managing a highly complex set of decisions that have to be taken, and interests that have to be integrated, in the way we run a modern society. What we return to is the planning system, perhaps not the planning system as it is, rather the planning system as it was originally envisaged and as it needs to become. We need a system to blend the decisions that an authority makes and decisions made by a community.

We have to recognise that development must go somewhere: what we need to achieve is a situation where that growth is mediated. We need to ask how do you get the right level of benefits for the community that has to accommodate that growth. The planning system should be able to do this. That is the challenge we heard about this morning, of trying to get elected members to see their role as something much less parochial.

Now that the planning bill has been enacted, work really starts. The level of cultural change, powering up, reorientation and reinvigoration of those involved in the planning system is going to have to be a bigger exercise than perhaps anyone has yet recognised. It is a huge task, but one that needs to be tackled.

Another theme that has emerged from this discussion is the cost of sustainable development; There is enough information available now to silence the argument that says sustainability costs too much money to be practical, because we have the information to show that if we don't develop sustainably you will spend an awful lot more, and end up with an inferior product. This is one of the 'killer facts', the conclusive arguments that are being deployed to promote sustainability. Arguments like these show that sustainable development is actually the cheapest and best value for money option. Part of this argument is that you cannot develop sustainably if you do not involve people from the start. There are upfront costs associated with this, but the costs of not doing it are far greater, and this is demonstrable in the same way as the cost of installing insulation in houses.

Regarding paying for consultation, we all know that information is a huge financial asset. If people are paid for the information and knowledge they give

it is a sign that that knowledge is valued and has gone into the general community information bank. We should be doing more to actually recognise that when people give us their views and information, it is being properly put into the treasure house of wisdom that we need to govern ourselves better.

There is a need to be clear about the scope and limits of participation, and especially to be candid about what is feasible with those who offer their time, thought and knowledge be being consulted. Terry Robinson recalled telling the meeting that there was no quicker way of killing community participation than getting them involved only for nothing to happen as a result. Perhaps this doesn't recognise how resilient people really are. There are places where people have been disappointed after being consulted, but there are also places where people have been spurred on to fight even harder.

The real place where they fight, however, is in stopping bad things happening. The planning system needs to stop being a system for stopping bad things happening and become a system which acknowledges that change does and must take place. The planning system needs to help communities get what they want out of that change.

In the balance between process and product, the process is itself important. For example, having gone through the process of conducting a Village Design Statement, the community in that village will be readier and more capable, and willing to exercise that power. When authorities recognise that a community has woken up and started taking notice of what is going on, they tend to be a bit more on their toes and careful about some of the decisions that elected members and officers make on their behalf. In this way, there is often value to community participation even when the output is not immediately obvious.

The day's discussion has shown that we do need to broaden the range of people that we work with. Landscape should be a much bigger, community based forum and arena for ideas, rather than an area for specialists. The CCN and the broader landscape community need to think of ways of getting more people interested in quality of life, of seeing themselves as part of what we're talking about. The quicker that we can do that and the broadly we can draw that canvas, the better.