

Notes of the ELC Workshop:

York, 28th January 2009

Natural England has commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to produce guidelines on what the European Landscape Convention (ELC) means in practice. This involved two open participatory workshops held in London and York in January 2009.

This note summarises the main points raised at the ELC workshop held in York on 28th January 2009. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an early opportunity for stakeholders to influence the shape and content of the ELC guidelines. The guidelines are being prepared on behalf of Natural England and have a two-fold purpose:

- provide guidance on incorporating the intent of the ELC into their plans, policies and strategies;
- to encourage and provide advice to organisations who wish to produce a specific ELC Action Plan.

The aim of the workshop was to:

- Increase awareness of the ELC;
- Highlight benefits to organisations of engaging with the ELC;
- Show how the intent of the ELC can be integrated into policies, strategies and plans;
- Provide guidance on developing an ELC Action Plan.

GENERAL Q&A

The York workshop included a general Q&A discussion session. For the most part comments have been incorporated into the two main workshop themes below. Any overarching comments are set out at the end of the document.

DISCUSSION 1: INCORPORATING THE PRINCIPLES AND INTENT OF THE ELC INTO PLANS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Note that general changes to the checklist identified at the London workshop (e.g. relating to ELC Articles, making it more pro-active, identifying a wider landscape baseline and incorporating 'raising awareness') were incorporated prior to the York workshop.

There was overall support for the guidelines and their intended use. It was noted that it is important that these guidelines relate to the SEA of plans and policies as well as to the plans and policies themselves.

Widely held view that the guidance needs to be developed as a 'suite' of information, providing interpretation of the ELC from the strategic to the local application and with specific advice targeted at individual organisations. The layout and format 'ideally' should be 'inspirational' with case study examples (e.g. European examples) to bring 'alive' and capture imagination and pull people in.

An important comment was the need to include 'Training and Education' as part of the checklist. Although this particular contract does not cover the wider education/training themes under Article 6B, it was agreed that this should be incorporated into the checklist and opportunities for organisations both to raise awareness and training of landscape internally as well as with partners and stakeholders. (Possibly include under the theme of raising awareness).

It was recognised that Green Infrastructure is a complementary theme – and can provide a vehicle for incorporating the ELC.

In addition the guidelines for plans and policies need to make reference to:

- The importance of having clear actions relating to the landscape.
- Clear identification of how the landscape and landscape change will be monitored. Especially important that this is captured in the monitoring required by the SEA of plans and policies.

GENERAL COMMENTS BY PRINCIPLE	
Principle	Main actions for this project
I: Clarity in terms and definitions	
<p>The ELC definition needs breaking down and restructuring in simple language for educational purposes and to aid understanding.</p> <p>Need to open up 'definition' to what it means in practice. The key concepts that need clarifying are:</p> <p>'Perception' – perceived by people. We also need to understand further role of subjectivity – subjective response is key to ELC definition.</p> <p>'Landscape Quality Objectives' - a further definition that requires clarity and interpretation (does not relate to LCA 'quality'). The term is unfortunate. It should refer to a professional judgement informed by what people value.</p> <p>'Landscape Value' – should be values not value.</p> <p>Ownership of different terms and language by different professions – can ELC help bring together?</p>	<p>The guidance aims to provide an interpretation of the ELC in simple language.</p> <p>Guidance must capture and interpret key messages.</p> <p>Avoid use of jargon (consider 'place' instead of landscape) and note that landscape occurs at any scale.</p> <p>Strong need for education and communication of landscape and ELC (NE role).</p> <p>Note that the flexibility of the ELC leave it open to interpretation. This can be an advantage and organisations can make it work for what they want. Need to ensure guidance does not become too rigid.</p> <p>Guidance must be simple, non technical and accessible and engage people quickly</p>

GENERAL COMMENTS BY PRINCIPLE	
Principle	Main actions for this project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use the term landscaping • Need to make it clear that landscape-scale is not the same thing as landscape • Landscape is more than the sum of its parts. 	
2: Recognise landscape in the holistic sense intended by the ELC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise cultural context – parks and gardens • Landscape may continue to have separate headings e.g. Cultural Heritage • Considerable debate around ‘as perceived by’, ‘perceptual qualities’, and ‘intangibles’. Agreed that all relate to how people interpret the landscape – how it is perceived and understood by them’, what is in their mind. • ‘Perceptions’ explain the meaning of landscape, which is a good way of improving understanding • Add ‘experience’ into the checklist <p>Paradigm shift to ‘place – landscape as ‘sense of place’.</p>	<p>Note that landscape is at every scale. Bring out ‘perceptions/experience’ of the landscape further in the checklist. Note that it is the intent of the ELC that is important.</p>
3: Apply to all landscapes	
<p>It is recognised that many organisations do not understand ‘landscape’ or think landscape only applies in rural areas (e.g. Highways Agency).</p> <p>Consider relationship to language of urban design – the ELC needs to recapture this ground.</p> <p>Landscape can be defined as the outdoor environment. Should apply to parks and gardens.</p>	<p>Need for NE to raise awareness of ‘landscape’ generally. Specifically for HA – need to get a clearer understanding of landscape into the revised DMRB.</p> <p>Avoid landscape jargon.</p> <p>Note comments about landscape as terminology = ‘place/surroundings/outdoor environment’.</p>
4: Understand the baseline	
<p>Need to consider what the framework for landscape is. The BAP process works well as the national BAP targets provide the framework. What is the comparable national landscape framework? Will this study lead to PPS</p>	<p>Consider how the NCA and RLF can provide an overall framework and make links within the guidance.</p> <p>Provide guidance on ELC and spatial planning.</p>

GENERAL COMMENTS BY PRINCIPLE	
Principle	Main actions for this project
<p>updating?</p> <p>An understanding of landscape can provide a spatial vision that local communities can engage with.</p>	
5: Integration	
<p>GIS has a key role in bringing layers of information together.</p> <p>Landscape is framework for 'Green Infrastructure' and 'Grey Infrastructure'.</p> <p>Note comments on natural beauty and landscape.</p> <p>Need to play up 'functionality' of landscape and engage with other agendas – e.g. health, education, well being. What guidelines will health authorities need? Will they prepare an Action plan?</p> <p>Local Area Agreements –could be a mechanism to achieve integration. The environment is currently poorly represented.</p>	<p>Be explicit and give examples of role of GIS.</p> <p>Guidance to emphasis integrating role of landscape and make link with other agendas.</p> <p>Possible deliverers of the ELC include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLG – place shaping agenda • EH – Power of Place • Local area Agreement
6: Involve People	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people perceive themselves as a community? • May need to define which people • The people involved will depend on the landscape function being looked at. 	<p>Guidance to be more prescriptive of who, how and when to involve people and link back to landscape as perception.</p>
7: Raise Awareness	
<p>See comments noted above</p> <p>Incorporate opportunities for training/education</p>	<p>Key awareness/communication role for NE for this work generally.</p> <p>Include reference to training/education or have as a separate principle.</p>

Other Points

- Consider adding transnational/European co-operation to the checklist?

DISCUSSION 2: ELC ACTION PLANS

There was broad agreement on the principles of the approach to encourage others to prepare ELC Action Plans and the general process outlined in the draft guidelines.

The Guidance should:

- Make it clear that ELC action plans are small manageable documents
- Indicate that identified actions may be small actions (not huge, costly requiring organisational change) to fill gaps in existing activity. There may be build up of actions over time
- Link to existing Action Plans – need examples of good practice
- Make reference to LQOs – these may be relevant in Action Plans if the organisation is already involved in public consultation

PREPARING AN ELC ACTION PLAN	
Comment	Main actions for this project
<p>How to get Action Plans produced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential to influence CLG and the LGA • EN pay towards cost of preparing them (unlikely) • Influencing – start at the regional level • Regional partnerships should draw up an ELC Action Plan as an example to others • Within each organisation identify an ELC ‘champion’. EN then to organise training days and get-togethers for these champions, as well as supporting materials • Mentoring of ‘champions’ or of the preparation of ELC Action Plans within organisations shows that Action Plans are a process and not a new task • Sell Action Plans as ‘low cost’ • The guidance will need to be accompanied by a covering letter or equivalent that underlines the benefits of drawing up ELC action plans. • Make the most of the ELC Award (as carrot). • Ensure compliance with the ELC is an element in the scoring of all landscape planning awards. 	<p>Pointes relate to wider NE ELC engagement.</p>
<p>Purpose of AP</p> <p>The Action Plan process provides the opportunity to put what an organisation is already doing into focus. This alone can help raise awareness.</p>	
<p>Benefits of preparing an Action Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages democracy as encourages liaison with people 	<p>Guidance to bring out benefits of preparing an AP, relating to individual organisations.</p>

PREPARING AN ELC ACTION PLAN	
Comment	Main actions for this project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to deliver well-being and quality of life (well-being for people and the natural environment) • Landscapes are the consequence of a wide range of decisions. As a consequence they require integrated thinking for their conservation and planning • Helps understanding of inter-relationships and dynamics • Thinking about landscape can encourage cross departmental and integrated thinking within organisations. 	
<p>Who should produce APs? There is a key opportunity and need for AP's to be produced. Suggested that guidance should prioritise: Highways Agency Defra RDAs CLG Suggested that APs can help 'join up' approach. NE Regional Landscape Partnerships will have a key role in bringing key people together. Is there an opportunity for a National Landscape Fora (as in Scotland?) Noted that some AONB Man Plans are in effect ELC Action Plans – can NPs and AONBs set the standard?). LAs have to produce so many plans and strategies – how can we encourage to produce another (sell benefits)</p> <p>Should encourage organisations to identify a 'landscape champion' to take actions forward. In a local authority this could be a member role. Needs cross departmental actions not just within 'landscape' section of an organisation.</p>	<p>Guidance to consider what 'priority organisation's need.</p> <p>Guidance must 'sell benefits' of producing APs – how it can help.</p> <p>Action plans must result in actions not plans for the sake of plans. Need to identify a process for taking actions forward and implementation.</p>
<p>Targets and Framework for APs BAP Analogy – need a performance indicator for landscape (PPI97). Is there an opportunity to rewrite PPS7? The BAP process is useful as it prioritises what is important, but this is more difficult for landscape as 'all landscape matters'.</p>	<p>Make clear the overall framework for APs and how they should integrate and work together. Collectively, what should they aim to achieve?</p> <p>Link to CQUEL – monitoring landscape change</p>

PREPARING AN ELC ACTION PLAN	
Comment	Main actions for this project
<p>Can NE develop a landscape indicator?</p> <p>Guidance needs to set a prescriptive framework/common standard. This will help in monitoring change.</p>	
<p>Resources</p> <p>Need to make sure AP's are used and useful, not just a plan for its own sake.</p>	
<p>Differentiation of Guidance for different organisations (who should produce and AP?)</p> <p>The 10 actions identified in the guidance are a useful approach. These could be targeted to different types of organisations.</p> <p>There is a need for a hierarchy of ELC APs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national - regional (involving all organisations) - local plans to fit in this framework. 	<p>Consider options for targeting 10 actions to different types of organisations.</p>
<p>Format and Presentation</p> <p>Guidelines need to be presented in an attractive way – ‘a practical toolkit’ (see Market Towns toolkit).</p> <p>Need to be prescriptive – clear framework for all plans , but also ‘user friendly’ and flexible</p> <p>Include local contacts e.g. NE Regional Landscape Specialist and Regional Landscape Partnerships.</p>	<p>Consider toolkit approach.</p> <p>Balance of prescriptive v flexibility</p> <p>Include ‘model’ templates appropriate for different organisations.</p>

NEXT STEPS

The comments and suggestions made at the workshops will be reviewed by LUC and NE and incorporated into the guidelines. The final guidelines will be produced in March. They will be publicised by Natural England and placed on the LCN website (www.landscapecharacter.org.uk). All workshop participants will be notified at this point.

Defra and Natural England are currently scoping out next steps for implementing the ELC in 2009/2010 and beyond. Please keep an eye on the LCN website for further updates.

Any organisation thinking of producing an ELC Action Plan should contact Gary Charlton, Natural England (Tel: 01242 533264, or email: gary.charlton@naturalengland.org.uk) for current information and to share best practice.

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