



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

# Unlocking the landscape





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## Foreword

**We are privileged to have such fascinating landscapes. We should be proud of them and should defend them fiercely from indifference, neglect, insidious damage or destruction. The satisfaction and value that comes from understanding our surroundings and sharing that knowledge is one of the most precious aspects of our relationship with the environment.**

All too often, selfishness, shortsightedness or mediocre aspirations are imposed upon our towns and villages and the countryside surrounding them. But by working with the planning system it is possible to achieve wise, positive and high quality decisions about development and change. Your community can play its part.

The Government has taken a lead by recognising the importance of local landscape designations in the key planning policies for the countryside. It has also supported the assessment of landscape character as a key aspect of the planning process. Now is the time to secure the best possible future for our local landscapes by gathering thorough and carefully prepared information on how we value our surroundings and why. This understanding and loyalty to our local landscapes can then be used to inform local planning policies and individual planning decisions.

We are increasingly encouraged to care for and support the improvement of our local hospitals and schools, and rightly so. We should and can do the same for our local landscapes. This document shows how you can do this.



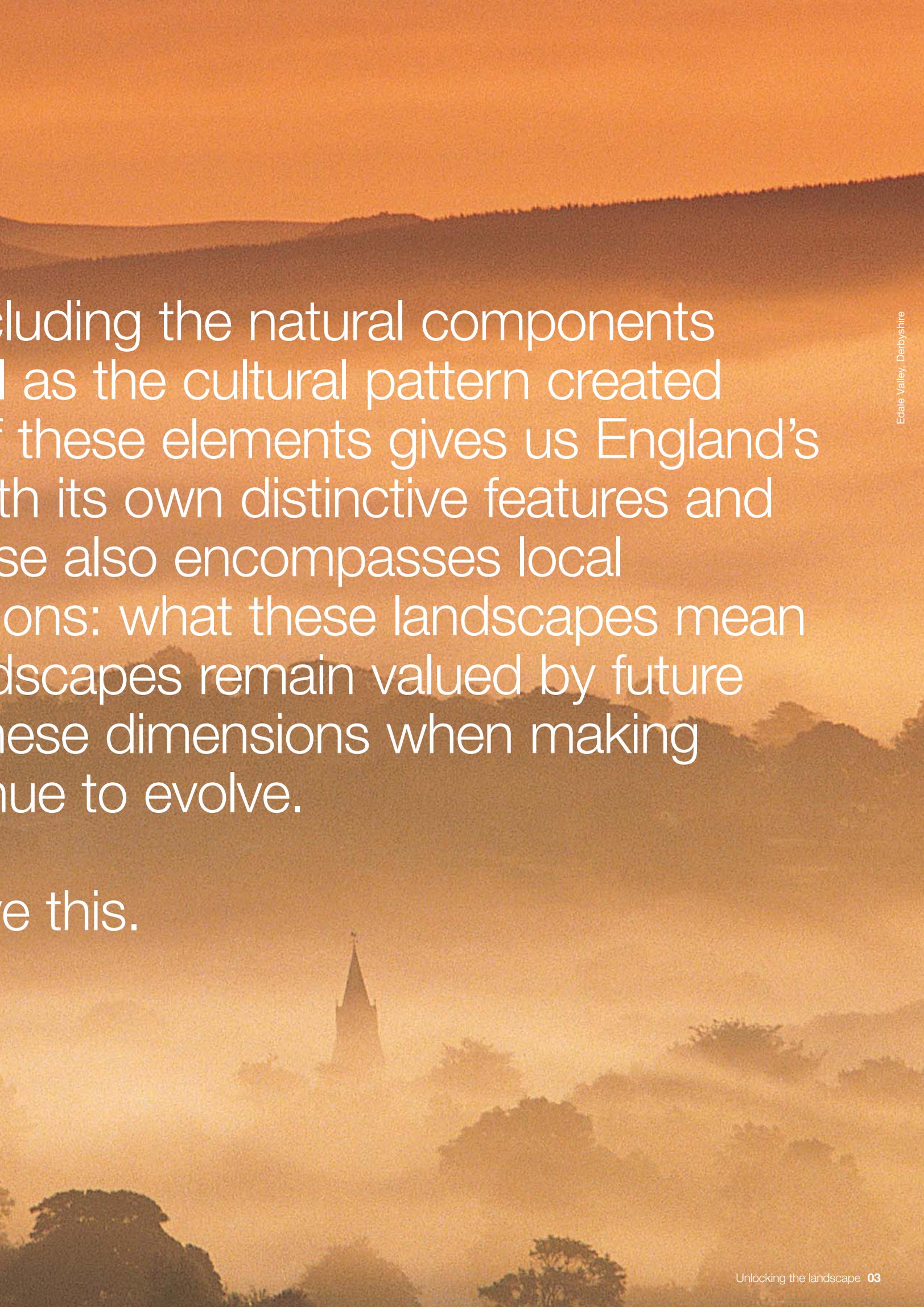
**Shaun Spiers**  
Chief Executive, CPRE

## Introduction

The aim of the action pack

Landscape has many dimensions, including geology, landform and soils, as well as human activities. The interaction of these elements creates a unique variety of landscapes, each with its own patterns. Landscape in its widest sense is a combination of knowledge, associations and perceptions that we have of the world around us. If we are to ensure that our landscapes are of high quality for future generations we have to consider all the choices about how landscapes continue to evolve.

This action pack will help us to achieve our goals.



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## Introduction

### Why we need an action pack



Many of our finest landscapes have been designated as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Others have local designations. Such designations not only acknowledge the aesthetic importance of these landscapes to us, but also help to ensure that what makes them important is protected. Many other highly valued landscapes, however, remain vulnerable to development pressure and steadily declining distinctiveness. Furthermore, there is little recorded understanding of what makes these landscapes special and valued by local communities.

‘Happy are those who see beauty in modest spots where others see nothing. Everything



Recognising this, landscape planning has changed in recent years to focus more on what makes one place different from another using a process called Landscape Character Assessment. This new focus on a landscape's character recognises the distinctiveness of our 'ordinary' landscapes as well as nationally protected areas, and therefore values our whole countryside: everywhere has significance, for what it is, what it contains, and for what it means to us.

The process of Landscape Character Assessment can help us appreciate and record the beauty and individuality in the 'ordinary' as well as more celebrated places. We need to ensure that local knowledge, perceptions and aspirations are a central part of this process. The aim of this action pack is to do just that. Many local authorities have prepared a Landscape Character Assessment for their area. This action pack gives you the tools to influence and strengthen a local authority Landscape Character Assessment by producing your own **Community Landscape Character Statement**. This Statement describes and champions the special qualities of your local countryside and records the community's views on, and aspirations for, its future use and management.

is beautiful; the whole secret lies in knowing how to interpret it.' Camille Pissarro

## Introduction

### What's included in the action pack

**To ensure that the views expressed in the Community Landscape Character Statement are taken seriously by decision makers it is important that the knowledge, memories and values of communities are recorded in a way which is compatible with planning processes: the action pack helps you do this. The pack takes you through all the steps you will need to follow to produce a Community Landscape Character Statement, providing you with background information about the work of local authorities and the planning system, advice about co-ordinating people and events and ways of making the most of this process.**

The action pack includes:

- > background to help you understand how your Statement fits into local authority landscape work in the section *Understanding Landscape Character Assessment*;
- > advice on how to use your Statement, and how it fits in with other similar initiatives in the section *Community Landscape Character Statements*;
- > guidance on what you need to do at the start of the process in *Getting organised*;
- > steps to ensure that all organisations and bodies who can contribute to the process are aware of the project and are involved from the start in the section *Introducing the project*;
- > guidance, based on experience from pilot projects, of how to get local people involved in *Getting the community involved – the outreach event*;
- > some pointers to help you draw together the findings from the outreach event in *Recording your findings*;
- > advice on feeding back information to all those involved in *The evaluation workshop*;
- > advice on making the most of your Community Landscape Character Statement in *Making it count*; and
- > sources of additional information in *Further reading and useful contacts*.

'There is nothing in which the birds differ more from Man than the way in which they o



can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before.' Robert Lynd

## Introduction

### Deciding to prepare a Community Landscape Character Statement

‘The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes  
but in having new eyes.’ Marcel Proust



**There are many good reasons why you might decide to prepare a Community Landscape Character Statement. You may wish to protect and improve your local landscape, or celebrate the importance of the landscape to your community. You may wish to discover how to bring your community closer together, drawing on the quality and local distinctiveness of your surroundings.**

**Many, if not most people care a great deal about their local landscapes and securing a positive future for them. To help you make the most of the process, the next section explains how your Community Landscape Character Statement can fit into the wider picture.**



## Understanding Landscape Character Assessment

The starting point for a Community Landscape Character Statement is your local Landscape Character Assessment. Almost all local authorities will have carried out such an Assessment, either at county or district level, which will provide you with the foundation upon which to build your Statement. To help you understand how the Landscape Character Assessment can feed into your Statement, we have included some information about how the Assessment process is carried out and about the resulting map and document.



Broughton, Hampshire, Mark Diacono



Lancaster Canal, CPRE/Robinson

### The Landscape Character Assessment process

The process of Landscape Character Assessment aims to describe the characteristic patterns and features in our countryside and explain how they have developed over time. It seeks to record the character of an area rather than to judge or rank it. This results in a chosen area being defined as a number of landscape areas that are of broadly similar character. Different layers of information are overlaid, either in paper form or using a computer. Typically, these layers include information about the landform (for example whether it is steep or undulating); the underlying geology and soils; and the strong influence of human activity as seen in patterns of settlement, land and tree cover. The existence of national guidance<sup>1</sup> means that this is carried out to a consistent set of principles.

### The Landscape Character Assessment document

Local authority landscape planning is usually guided and underpinned by the Landscape Character Assessment, which is available to the public as a published document.

This document will usually include (as a minimum):

- > a map which divides the region, county or district into areas of broadly similar landscape;
- > a description of each of these areas; and
- > an outline of the key characteristics of each area.

You can find out whether your local authority has carried out a Landscape Character Assessment by using the online Database of Landscape Character Assessments in England (follow the link from [www.ccnetwork.org.uk](http://www.ccnetwork.org.uk)). The database contains details of the area covered, when the Assessment was undertaken, the availability of maps and other data and contact details. If your area does not appear on the database, contact the landscape officer or planning department in your local authority to find out if an Assessment has been carried out and, if so, where a copy may be obtained. You should seek to use the Assessment at the most local scale available. Use the district Assessment if one has been carried out; otherwise, use the county level Assessment.

### Using your local Landscape Character Assessment

Having found your Landscape Character Assessment document, choose the area of concern for your Community Landscape Character Statement and identify the relevant landscape areas on the map. These will usually be numbered or named, and come with associated descriptions and a list of key characteristics. Make copies of the maps and other related information as this will provide the structure for your Community Landscape Character Statement work. By organising what you do so that you are adding information to these same landscape areas, you are adding value to the original work in the way that will influence decision makers most effectively.

<sup>1</sup> Swarwick, C & Land Use Consultants, 2002.  
*Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.*  
The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

## Your Community Landscape Character Statement should help you to:

- > feed in information on local landscape character during the preparation of these documents to ensure that the policies in the development plan take the issue seriously;
- > make sure that Development Plan Documents contain policies that help protect and enhance landscape character when decisions are made; and
- > persuade your local authority to produce a Supplementary Planning Document providing more detailed advice on landscape character, preferably incorporating your Statement.<sup>2</sup>

Both county and district level authorities are likely to have some form of Landscape Character Assessment which should already play a key role in the preparation of development plan policies.

The changes to the planning system outlined above also place a greater emphasis on the importance of involving communities. The system requires that Local Development Frameworks are integrated with other plans and strategies and involve local communities. As part of this, local authorities have to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement setting out their plan for involving communities in the preparation and revision of local planning documents and major planning applications.

By taking on an existing local authority Landscape Character Assessment and adding the community dimension to produce a Community Landscape Character Statement, you are articulating local views in a way that satisfies this new approach and has most potential to influence planning policy.

### Applications for development or change of land use

You can also use the Community Landscape Character Statement to challenge or encourage proposals for development or change of land use. Most development in England requires planning permission from your district council or unitary authority. This process usually involves the submission of a planning application which members of the public are entitled to examine and comment on. The local Landscape Character Assessment is likely to be a key source of information when considering the application. Once produced, a Community Landscape Character Statement will provide the local landscape context within which you, the local authority's planning department and the planning committee, can evaluate a development proposal or change in land use.

### Influencing planning policy

In 2004 the Government reformed the planning system in England. Strategic planning decisions will now be made at a regional level. Each region has a Regional Assembly that draws up a Regional Spatial Strategy which is then approved by Government. This covers the strategic planning issues for a region over a 15 or 20-year period. Key issues for the Regional Spatial Strategy include the scale and broad location of housing and employment development. As a 'spatial' plan its scope stretches beyond land use to other issues such as education, health and energy. The Regional Spatial Strategy sets the framework for local planning.

District councils and unitary authorities must now create Local Development Frameworks in line with the regional strategy. The Local Development Framework is a collection of local planning documents produced by district, metropolitan and unitary authorities. It is made up of Local Development Documents. The most important of these are known as Development Plan Documents. These documents have legal status and will include a vision, core policies and, optionally, Area Action Plans for key areas of change or conservation. Other Local Development Documents are called Supplementary Planning Documents. These provide extra guidance, but do not carry the same weight as Development Plan Documents. The Local Development Framework sets out in detail where development and change is or is not acceptable, and the guidelines for how it should be done.

The planning system is plan-led. This means that, by law, planning decisions must be made in accordance with development plan policies unless there are good reasons why not. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Development Plan Documents make up the 'development plan' and form the basis for making local decisions on planning applications. It is therefore extremely important to ensure that these documents take account of local landscape character.

<sup>2</sup> Your local authority can only work on Supplementary Planning Documents that it has mentioned in its Local Development Scheme (the project management plan for the Local Development Framework). You should lobby your local authority to make sure they include a commitment to produce a Supplementary Planning Document on landscape character in their Local Development Scheme.

# Community Landscape Character Statements



Ashridge, Hertfordshire, CPRE/Robinson

There are a number of steps that can be taken to evaluate a planning application.

1. Look at the application and talk to your local planning officer.
2. Visit the site of the proposed development to assess its likely effects.
3. Examine local planning documents and consider whether the policies they contain could be used to support your view.
4. Decide on your action: Do you want to support or oppose the application, in part or completely?
5. Decide whether the preparation of a Community Landscape Character Statement would be a good way to articulate local opinion and, if so, follow the approach in this action pack.
6. Ask for an opportunity to speak about /raise your concerns at a district planning committee meeting.

Further information on the planning system is available at [www.cpre.org.uk/planninghelp](http://www.cpre.org.uk/planninghelp). In particular see Government policy on *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (Planning Policy Statement 7); referenced in *Further reading* on p44.

Even if you don't intend to produce a Community Landscape Character Statement, this action pack may still provide some useful information to help organise a local response, and provide the platform for articulating community views.

## Other ways to influence local planning policies

Producing a Community Landscape Character Statement may complement other existing initiatives, such as Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. It can indeed be tailored to include aspects of these initiatives if required. A Community Landscape Character Statement considers the parish in the wider context of the landscape in which it is located. Where there is other existing work, it is important to review and incorporate anything appropriate from it into the preparation of the Statement as long as your community agrees with it. To help you do this, we have included a short description of the most common initiatives.

## Village Design Statements

A Village Design Statement sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in a village, based on its character. It is an advisory document produced by the village community in partnership with the planning authority. Village Design Statements are intended to influence the operation of the planning system, so that new development and change is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment.

While the objectives for Village Design Statements refer to the village in its landscape context, they have largely been interpreted as relating to the built environment – the layout of the village or the style of new building.

# Community Landscape Character Statements

**While Landscape Character Assessments usually describe what makes an area distinctive and why, they do not capture what landscapes mean to local people, how individuals and groups interact with them, and the issues of key importance to the people who live and work in them. The purpose of the Community Landscape Character Statement is to do this job, and provide communities with the opportunity to protect what is valued about their local landscapes for future generations.**



River Stour, Essex, CPRE/Brabbs

## Using the Statement

The Community Landscape Character Statement can help local people influence the decisions that local authorities and landowners make about local landscapes and help to ensure that future change protects local distinctiveness in a number of ways. This action pack illustrates how communities can use their Community Landscape Character Statement to:

- > add value to an existing Landscape Character Assessment and influence local planning policies;
- > support local views in a consistent and well informed way when considering planning applications and other proposals which may change the landscape;
- > complement other planning documents such as Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and Community Strategies; and
- > raise awareness of local landscapes and how they are valued.

In order to see how your Community Landscape Character Statement fits into the wider picture, and where the opportunities are to use it, it is helpful to know a bit about some of the basics of the planning system.

While the immediate landscape, especially the land adjacent to village buildings is usually incorporated, the wider landscape context of the parish and its setting is often not included. The objectives of Village Design Statements and Community Landscape Character Statements are mutually reinforcing, and it is a very good idea to prepare both.

### Parish Plans

Parish Plans have a wider role than Village Design Statements and consider other issues, including transport, employment and economic development. The purposes of Parish Plans are to:

‘set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future.’<sup>3</sup>

While Parish Plans extend the scope of the Village Design Statement, the focus of interest remains the built environment of the village. The landscape context, while important, frequently remains a secondary issue. To put the surrounding landscape at the heart of local planning, it's a good idea to take account of the information contained in an existing Parish Plan.

### Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships

*The Local Government Act 2000* places a duty on local authorities to prepare a Community Strategy in partnership with the community. Community Strategies should set out a vision for a local authority's area along with actions and commitments to further economic, social and environmental well-being. Community Strategies are usually prepared by a Local Strategic Partnership, made up of representatives from local bodies and interest groups.

#### According to Government guidance, Community Strategies should:

- > allow local communities to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities;
- > coordinate council, public, private, voluntary and community organisations' actions;
- > focus and shape existing and future activity of those organisations to meet community needs and aspirations; and
- > contribute to the achievement of sustainable development locally and more widely.

Community Strategies and local strategic partnerships are likely to have a significant impact on your area, shaping its future development and setting priorities for the services, strategies and spending of bodies such as the local authority, police and health service. It will also be used to inform your Local Development Framework. Because of that, you should press for your Community Strategy to contain commitments and actions needed to address rural and environmental issues. A Community Landscape Character Statement is an excellent way of presenting your views and helping to influence the context within which local planning policies will be developed.

If a Community Strategy has already been carried out, it may be useful to draw relevant information from it and it may also provide an important source for identifying local networks to help with the development of your Community Landscape Character Statement. In drawing out relevant information from any of these initiatives, your focus should be on incorporating only directly relevant information. This saves repetition in your Statement and saves time by not duplicating information.

### Raising awareness

The process of preparing a Community Landscape Character Statement should involve a wide range of local people, all with their own perspectives on what makes the landscape distinctive and their own range of interests and concerns. The process:

- > brings parties together to discuss their various views and aspirations;
- > provides the opportunity to raise awareness of the value of local landscapes;
- > offers a way to take part in guiding the future of the local countryside;
- > can galvanise the formation of local groups and co-operation with others;
- > provides a structured means of articulating views and aspirations within the framework of the planning system; and
- > draws these views and aspirations together into a cohesive whole, which also stands as a statement of community values and goals, and in turn may stimulate further involvement by others.

The great thing about a Community Landscape Character Statement is that it is yours. It can be used in any way you see fit, and it can change and evolve as circumstances change or new opportunities come to light.

<sup>3</sup> Countryside Agency, 2004.  
*Parish Plans: Guidance for Parish and Town Councils*, p.60

## Getting organised

**When you prepare a Community Landscape Character Statement you need to make the best use of the resources available to you. Experience from the two pilot projects CPRE carried out to develop this action pack indicates that careful preparation and organisation is vital to a smooth running process and a successful operation. This section will help you plan the process, form and co-ordinate a project team, prepare a budget and set up initial partnerships.**



Lilleshall, Shropshire, Mark Diacono

## What do I need?

### Project team

The enthusiasm and commitment of a few people will be essential if the project is to succeed. At least one person needs to commit a significant amount of time to co-ordinating the project. If additional funds are available, employing a project assistant to undertake a set number of hours of work per week can make things considerably easier. However, there is often a wealth of experience within the community from which the project will be able to benefit.

Make sure you make best use of the skills available to you and ensure that the people involved have agreed roles and responsibilities. The following list outlines the key roles that you may encourage individual volunteers to take on:

### Spokesperson

promoting the project and acting as the key point of contact;

### Community liaison

sending out and following up invitations to the various meetings;

### Stakeholder liaison

informing interested groups about the project and keeping them involved and up to date about activities;

### Sponsorship co-ordinator

encouraging local producers to supply refreshments for the various events and possibly sponsor the printing of the Statement itself;

### Event planner

organising when and where events will take place;

### Activity co-ordinator

planning routes and organising other mapping activities;

### Media and publicity co-ordinator

promoting your activities both within and outside the community;

### Catering organiser

organising refreshments for meetings, in particular for the outreach event; and

### Statement writer

researching local authority landscape character material, drafting the Statement and incorporating comments from both the outreach and evaluation events.

### The timetable

You should allow about six months for the process but this can be shortened if you have a lot of committed volunteers and community enthusiasm for the idea from the start. There are key activities in the process, such as the meetings, workshops and writing of the Statement that will take at least a couple of months even with the most well supported team. The timetable outline we provide assumes a six-month project duration.

Organisation is a crucial factor throughout the process, and you will need to agree dates for key meetings at the beginning and ensure that you have sufficient time to send out invitations, organise activities and write up your findings between meetings.

There are three key meetings that will need to be organised as part of the survey. There should ideally be at least one month between each of these events to allow you to take comments on board and prepare for the next activity. One or two months should also be allowed for getting the project started and another month or two to collate, write and produce your Statement. The following suggested timetable should provide you with a rough model to work with.

<b>Month 1</b>	Project start up and introductory workshop for key stakeholders
<b>Month 3</b>	Outreach event to bring the whole community together
<b>Month 4</b>	Evaluation workshop
<b>Month 5</b>	Write and produce the Community Landscape Character Statement

It will also be important to time these events carefully to enable as many residents as possible to attend. For example, young families with children may be away during school holidays. Likewise, holding daytime meetings during the week will exclude the people who will be out at work.

Both the stakeholder and evaluation workshops are manageable evening events but a full day, preferably a Saturday, needs to be allowed for the outreach event, the most important event of the assessment process. A significant proportion of this day will be spent outdoors surveying the landscape so it is also important to consider likely weather conditions. If possible, therefore, it is preferable to hold the outreach event between April and October, when the landscape looks at its best and the weather is likely to be kinder.

# Getting organised

## Budget

The most significant expenses incurred undertaking the assessment process will be for organising events and refreshments and producing your Community Landscape Character Statement. However, costs will vary considerably, depending on your ability to secure sponsorship, for example getting the parish council to let you use the village hall free of charge and getting local produce donated for your outreach event.

The costs of producing your Community Landscape Character Statement will vary according to the materials used and whether it is professionally printed. A QuarkXpress 4 template for your Statement is included on the accompanying CD; by using this you should significantly reduce the costs that would otherwise be incurred getting the Statement professionally designed. However, you should still allow approximately £450 for the digital production of 100 full colour copies of your Statement. You could see if your local authority or parish council could help with these costs.

## Building a partnership network

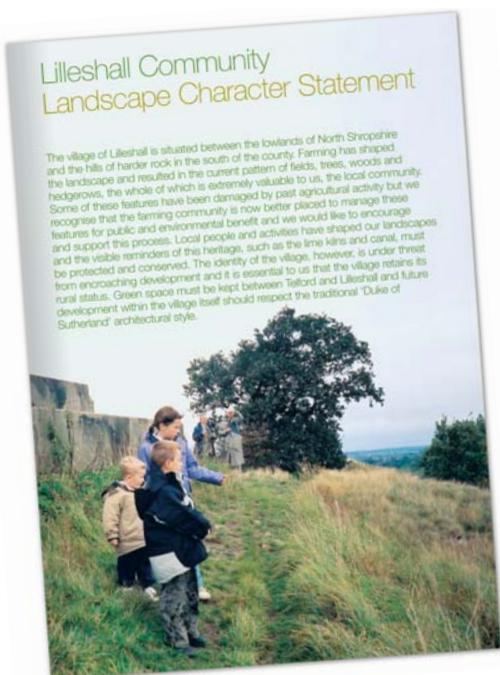
Your local authority may well have carried out Landscape Character Assessment work which you can use to contribute to your Statement, and you should seek to work closely with staff and elected members. This action pack gives you the tools for making your views and aspirations known within the planning process, but also offers the local authority a tested method for delivering their commitment to community involvement. There is great potential for mutual benefit. However, while every effort should be made to work in partnership, some local authorities may be more responsive than others. If you meet with indifference, you should have the courage of your convictions. Press on and maybe you will encourage a more responsible approach from your local council.

You will need to make links with local community networks as early as possible. Often the most important groups will be your parish council or your local residents' association. You should discuss the assessment process with these groups and ensure they are committed to taking the project forward.

It is also important to get a good cross-section of the community involved to ensure that the Community Landscape Character Statement is an accurate reflection of the views of the whole community. The wider you consult, the broader your support will be. The best way to ensure everyone is aware of the project is a leaflet drop to every home but you can supplement this by working with other local networks or groups.

### These can include:

- > neighbourhood watch groups;
- > your local Women's Institute;
- > farmers and landowners;
- > local businesses;
- > local churches and faith groups;
- > local environmental organisations; and
- > local sports clubs and interest groups.



## Broughton Case Study

One of the two places chosen by CPRE to pilot the approach presented in this action pack was the parish of Broughton in Hampshire. Broughton was chosen because it is located in the Test Valley, an area which has been the subject of a detailed Landscape Character Assessment. It was important to see how our approach could supplement and enhance this existing work.

The choice of Broughton provides a number of valuable lessons about community engagement – lessons that are important for you to be aware of before embarking on producing your own Community Landscape Character Statement.

First of all, not all parishes will immediately see the benefit of undertaking a Community Landscape Character Statement.

### This can be the result of a number of factors including:

- > a feeling that the parish is fine as it is and there are no immediate threats or challenges to the character of the local countryside;
- > the fact that a Parish Plan or Village Design Statement may already have been produced, resulting in uncertainty about what a Community Landscape Character Statement would add to these documents;
- > failure to engage with and work alongside existing community networks, such as the parish council or residents' association, and get their support right at the start of the project; and
- > the assumption that the project will 'sell itself', failing to explain and promote the idea of preparing a Statement face to face with individual residents and community groups.

### Learning from the pilot project, here are some suggestions:

- > engage the local community association or parish council – it is important that you have their support right from the start;
- > it is important that the parish council sees the benefits of undertaking a Community Landscape Character Statement as they may not immediately do so; and
- > do not assume that the project will 'sell itself'. You will need to advertise and promote the project to reach individual members of the community.

All the issues encountered in Broughton highlight the importance of careful planning – making sure that the community understands what the project is about, why it is important and the level of involvement required to make the project a success.

While an enjoyable and informative outreach event was held in Broughton, there were considerable problems getting a sufficient number of residents to attend both this and the evaluation event. Those who did attend provided some extremely valuable information on the character of their local countryside and its importance to them. However, with only a small number of residents participating, it was not possible to present this information as a comprehensive and representative expression of the views of the community as a whole.

Despite strenuous efforts to get the parish council involved there was also a poor response to the invitation to attend the evaluation event. At this point it became evident that the project did not have the community support and engagement necessary to produce a Statement that was a legitimate expression of the views of the residents of Broughton. This was in strong contrast with the pilot project in Lilleshall, where community involvement was strong and enthusiastic.

The draft version of Broughton's Community Landscape Character Statement is included on the accompanying CD as another example of what a Statement may look like.

## Introducing the project – the stakeholder workshop

**The stakeholder workshop is the first of the three events you organise. It introduces the project to the people and organisations that are most likely to be involved in preparing or using the Community Landscape Character Statement.**



Blore Heath, Staffordshire, CPRE/Robinson

### **Who to invite**

'Stakeholder' organisations to invite include the local parish council(s), residents' association and any other community groups and community leaders. It is also a good idea to invite a member of your local planning department to ensure that they are aware of the project from the start.

### **Where to hold it**

The meeting should be held at a venue, and a time, that will be most convenient to those attending. Usually this will be the village hall or community meeting rooms. An evening event is likely to be much better attended than a daytime meeting.

### **What to do**

This workshop introduces the project, its aims and the approach, to the stakeholder groups. It is likely to be the first time that those attending have come across a Community Landscape Character Statement and it is the best opportunity to engage people with the project.

There are a number of steps we suggest you include:

- > outline the concept of Landscape Character Assessment, its purpose and role in informing the planning process;
- > introduce the concept of Community Landscape Character Statements, why they are important, what they are trying to achieve, how they are produced and the link to Landscape Character Assessment; and
- > inform participants of the main steps in the process and how you hope they will become involved.

The stakeholder workshop is also the ideal place to:

- > set dates for subsequent events and meetings;
- > get support from the local authority representatives to attend later events and to use the Statement when it is produced;
- > assign key tasks to individuals; and
- > form a committee of volunteers, if this has not already taken place.

This is also a good opportunity to raise awareness and generate enthusiasm, and there should be plenty of time allowed for discussion and ideas to be shared. With this in mind, you may wish to offer refreshments, allowing a break in proceedings and the opportunity for informal discussion.

## Getting the community involved – the outreach event

**Good planning will pay off when involving the wider community. The aim of the outreach event is to inspire people to think and talk about the character of their local landscapes by engaging them in a range of creative activities including indoor and outdoor mapping exercises. The event is an important information gathering opportunity but it is also a celebration of all the things that make your local landscape distinct and special. It's therefore important that participants really enjoy the experience. A walk in the countryside followed by a lunch of local foods is a good way to encourage people to attend and to inspire them to think about their local landscapes.**



Tring Park, Hertfordshire

Key staff from your local authority, such as the head of planning or the officer responsible for landscape or countryside issues, should also be encouraged to attend the outreach event. This is likely to make them more receptive to the resulting Community Landscape Character Statement. They will know the process has been inclusive and that the end product represents a range of community views.

## Planning for the event

### Booking the venue

Confirm the date for your outreach event early on in the project so that you can book the most convenient and suitable venue and start to let people know about the event. The pilot project experience suggests that the outreach event should be held at a weekend, preferably on a Saturday, to encourage as many members of the community as possible to participate.

### Practicalities you should consider when researching your venue include:

- > facilities for safe food preparation, such as appliances and crockery;
- > toilet and hand-washing facilities;
- > the quantity of chairs and tables that are available;
- > wheelchair access; and
- > parking.

Village halls are usually the cheapest place and often provide all of the above facilities. Other options may be the local school hall or sports club. Make sure you book enough time to allow for setting up and clearing up.

Whatever venue you decide upon, visit it to ensure you know exactly what you're getting. Ask yourself: Will your seating arrangements work? Do you want people sitting around a table, or would you prefer a layout like a theatre or assembly? Is there scope to move tables and chairs around during the event for different activities? Is there an area suitable for children's activities? Is there a separate room/area for catering? It can be quite distracting to hear background noise while the meeting is going on.

You will also need to think about what technical and other equipment is required, such as overhead projectors (for which you might need an extension lead), flip charts and display boards.

## Organising catering

By attending the outreach event, residents are committing a significant amount of their weekend. Make it as enjoyable as possible for those attending. Getting the catering right is a key consideration. In order to get people really thinking about their local landscapes it is a good idea to try and source local food and drinks for lunch. Local producers may be keen to provide refreshments at reduced cost in return for some publicity. Local wines and beers are also very popular but you will also need to provide non-alcoholic alternatives.

If your event is being covered in the local press, offer to mention suppliers in your press release. These are some options for providing local foods:

- > visit your local farmers' market and speak to each trader. There is normally a site within your local district council's website which will give you the dates and places for the coming year;
- > go to [www.localfood.org](http://www.localfood.org), or your county/district council website, which will often have good links to local food producers in the area;
- > find a local farm shop that will be able to provide all the food you may require at a discounted price; or
- > get your local Women's Institute to help with refreshments.

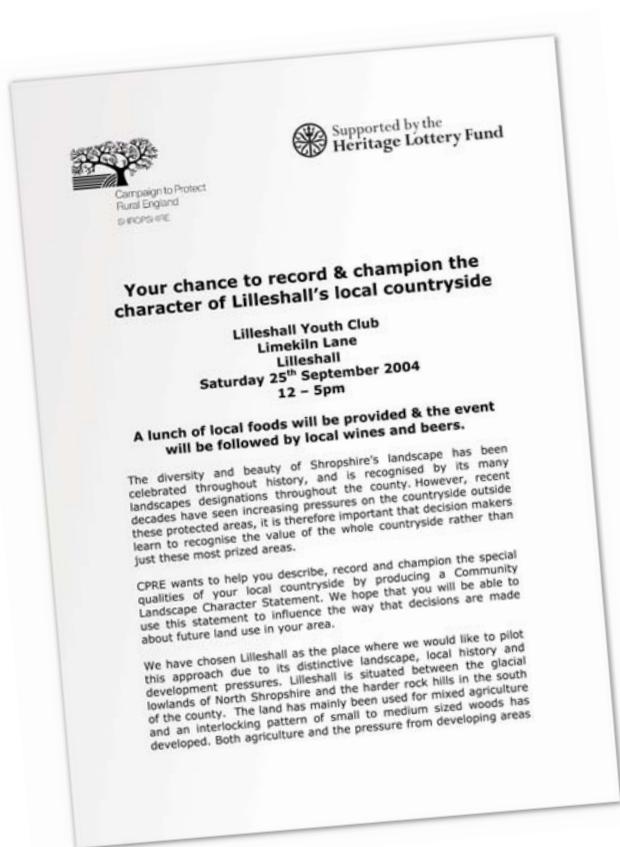
It is important to set yourself a clear budget before ordering any refreshments. A buffet menu is often the simplest and most cost effective. Alternatively, if funds are limited, you could get participants to bring a picnic lunch with them and enjoy it when out walking in the landscape.

## Inviting participants

The size of the venue and the number of volunteers available to co-ordinate activities will generally dictate the maximum number of people you will be able to accommodate. It will probably be quite difficult to manage more than 70 people. But remember that you may need to invite at least three times your target number to get your preferred turnout.

Send out your invitations as far in advance as possible. Use your parish magazine as a key publicity tool. Keep invitations brief but ensure all the necessary information is included. You will need to 'sell' the event to possible participants, so emphasise that the aim is to have an enjoyable day celebrating the character of their local countryside, not just sitting in a meeting. Have a reply slip at the bottom asking for the information you need from your invitees such as special dietary requirements and contact details. Suggest that those who receive invitations spread the word to others as well.

# Getting the community involved – the outreach event



You will also need to let people know when confirmation details will be sent to them. These details should include:

- > an agenda with times;
- > directions and map of the venue location;
- > what to expect, what to think about beforehand, what to bring; and
- > any further documentation that could be useful as background reading – be careful that this is not too technical and is only included if it is really useful.

It will be easier, cheaper and more effective if invitations are delivered by hand to as many residents as possible. This ensures no one is missed out and saves time and money mailing out invitations. The event should be open to all residents but you should keep track of those wishing to attend, bearing in mind the maximum number you can accommodate. Invitations should encourage residents to respond to a designated volunteer who can keep a track of responses and provide additional information where required.

The initial wave of invitations should be followed up with posters and flyers, and possibly phone calls and one to one chats to ensure that you get a good turnout.

## Health and safety

Health and safety is an important consideration when organising your outreach event. You should make every effort to minimise potential risks or hazards. The table right gives a list of things you need to check or put in place before the outreach event.

# Health and safety checklist

## Preparation

- Check whether you need to have any insurance for the event.
- Inform people that there will be outdoor activities. They should bring clothing and footwear suitable for walking on uneven surfaces and in wet or cold conditions.
- Ask people to provide details of disabilities or special requirements.

## Outdoor surveying activities

- Ensure that the planned walks minimise potential hazards such as busy roads and use designated footpaths where possible by planning routes with reference to Ordnance Survey maps and undertaking a risk assessment.
- Each group should have two appointed marshals, one at the front and one at the rear.

## First aid

- Check that first aid facilities are available at the venue and if not, provide them.
- Small first aid kits and mobile phones should be provided for each group for outdoor sessions.

## Food

- Ensure all caterers and suppliers have stored and prepared food to appropriate standards by checking their health and safety certification.
- Ensure facilities are available at the venue to store food at appropriate temperatures.

## People with special requirements

- Establish which people have special requirements and inform them of the facilities at the venue.
- Liaise to establish the most suitable outdoor activities for those with disabilities. Confirm that they are comfortable with these arrangements.

## Venue facilities

- Ensure the venue has toilets and hand washing facilities.

## Children

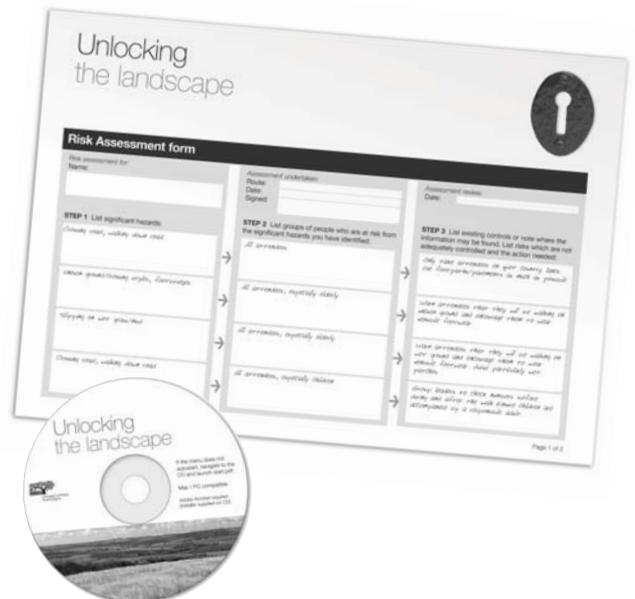
- Ensure all children are supervised, either by their parents or a childcare professional, at all times. (Remember that children should also participate if possible!)

A risk assessment form is included on the accompanying CD with some initial suggestions on risks that may be encountered. The form should be completed in advance of the outreach event for each of the walks undertaken on the day. The purpose of the form is to identify potential hazards and the risks they pose and decide how they can be reduced by taking sensible precautions. There are four key steps to the risk assessment process:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>STEP 1:</b> | Look for hazards.   |
| <b>STEP 2:</b> | Decide who might be harmed and how.   |
| <b>STEP 3:</b> | Evaluate the risks and decide what precautions you can take to minimise them. |
| <b>STEP 4:</b> | Record your findings and take appropriate action.                             |

In the unlikely event that an accident does occur the incident should be recorded thoroughly for future reference. You should include the time and date; where and how it happened; the name and contact details of the affected individual(s); the sort of injury; and any first aid provided.

Further information can be found on the Health and Safety Executive's website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).



# Getting the community involved – the outreach event



## Publicity

In order to attract as many participants as possible to the outreach event, supplement your invitations to individual residents with some more general publicity. This could be posters advertising the event and presentations to local community groups. You could try to get local newspapers or radio stations to cover the event. Local media coverage both promotes the outreach event to local residents and increases awareness of the initiative with local decision makers.

The best way of letting the local media know about your event is to send them a press release. An example of the press release used to advertise our pilot events is included on the accompanying CD. There is also a template you can use to create your own press release.

The key to writing a good press release is to keep your messages short and simple and to include interesting local facts that will get people's attention. You need to include the contact details of an agreed spokesperson for the project prepared to talk to the local press. Remember that local newspapers in particular need some notice if they are to cover your event. You should also provide contact details of someone prepared to deal with queries from members of the public wishing to attend the event. You want a good turn out on the day but you will need to know how many people to expect at the event in order to plan activities and refreshments.

The main point is to organise an outreach event including as many people from the local community as possible. The outreach event provides a forum for local people to meet, examine information (principally the existing Landscape Character Assessment), walk the areas of interest, exchange ideas and opinions and come to a consensus about the way forward, including the preparation of the Community Landscape Character Statement.

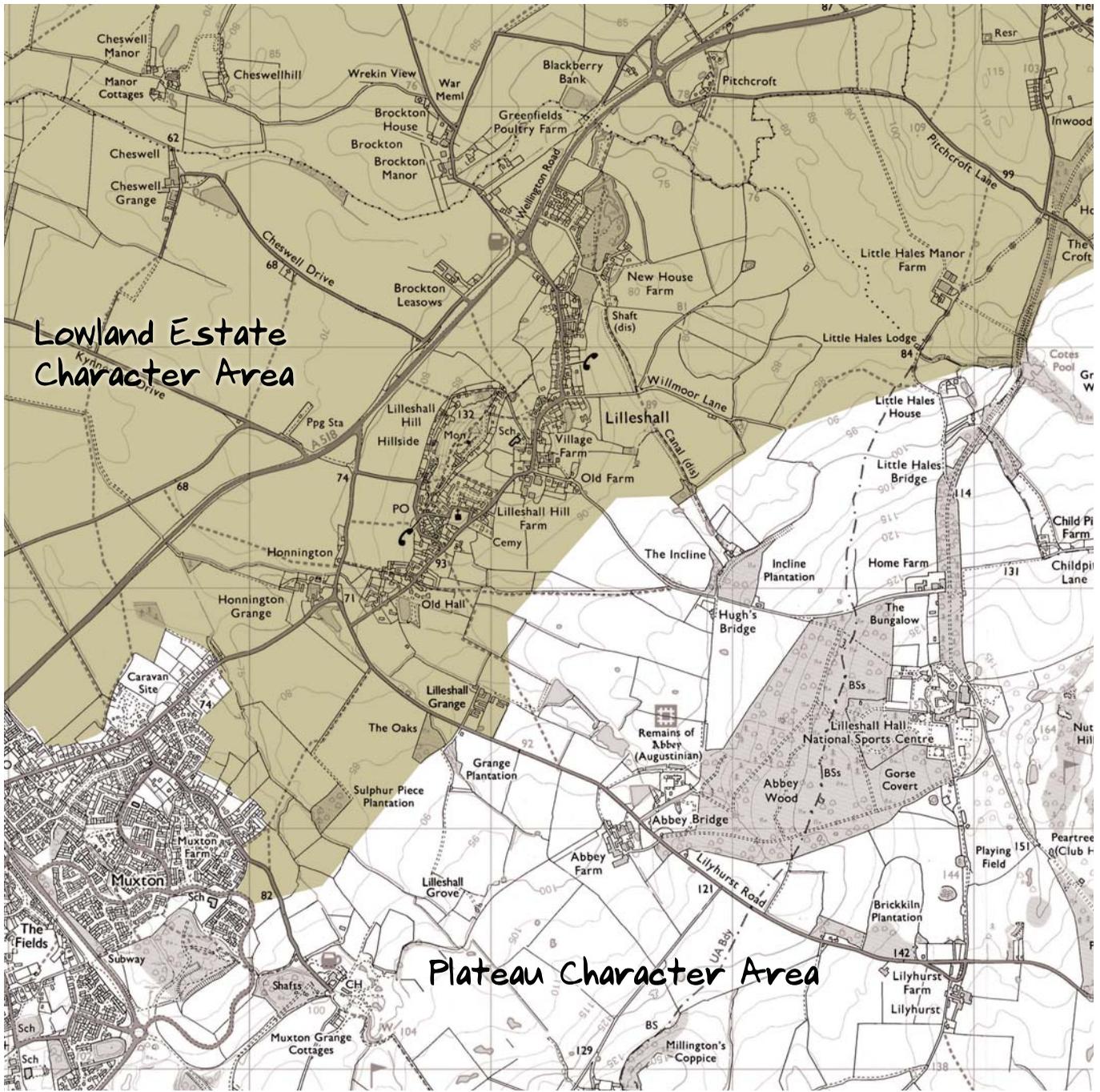
## Getting to know your area

### Accessing character maps and descriptions

All Landscape Character Assessments share common elements – a description of each landscape, a list of its key characteristics and a map showing the different landscapes in each county or district. You need to extract this information for your area from the assessment document. First, contact the appropriate department at your district council,<sup>4</sup> usually the landscape, environment, countryside or planning department. An Internet search may help to narrow your search, or provide you with precise information. The Landscape Character Assessment national online database ([www.landscapecharacter.org.uk](http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk)) is a useful resource, and should give you the details for the main county/district contact for your local Landscape Character Assessment.

You will need a large-scale map to highlight the project area at the outreach event mounted on a board. This will enable you to stand it up for display and provide the base for the flag mapping exercise. Your local authority may print out a large-scale map for you, showing the landscape character area boundaries – this should be your first port of call. Ordnance Survey (OS) restrictions prevent you from photocopying and enlarging OS maps, so if it is not possible to obtain a map from your local authority you should obtain the 1:25 000 Scale OS Explorer Map for your project area. These maps are available in most bookshops and can be purchased online – you will also need one for each of the field survey groups that will go out during the outreach event. You should mark the boundaries of the landscape character areas in a broad nibbed pen (preferably a highlighting pen, which will not obscure the detail below) on both the display map and the maps for field survey.

<sup>4</sup> You will have either a district, borough or unitary council for your area.

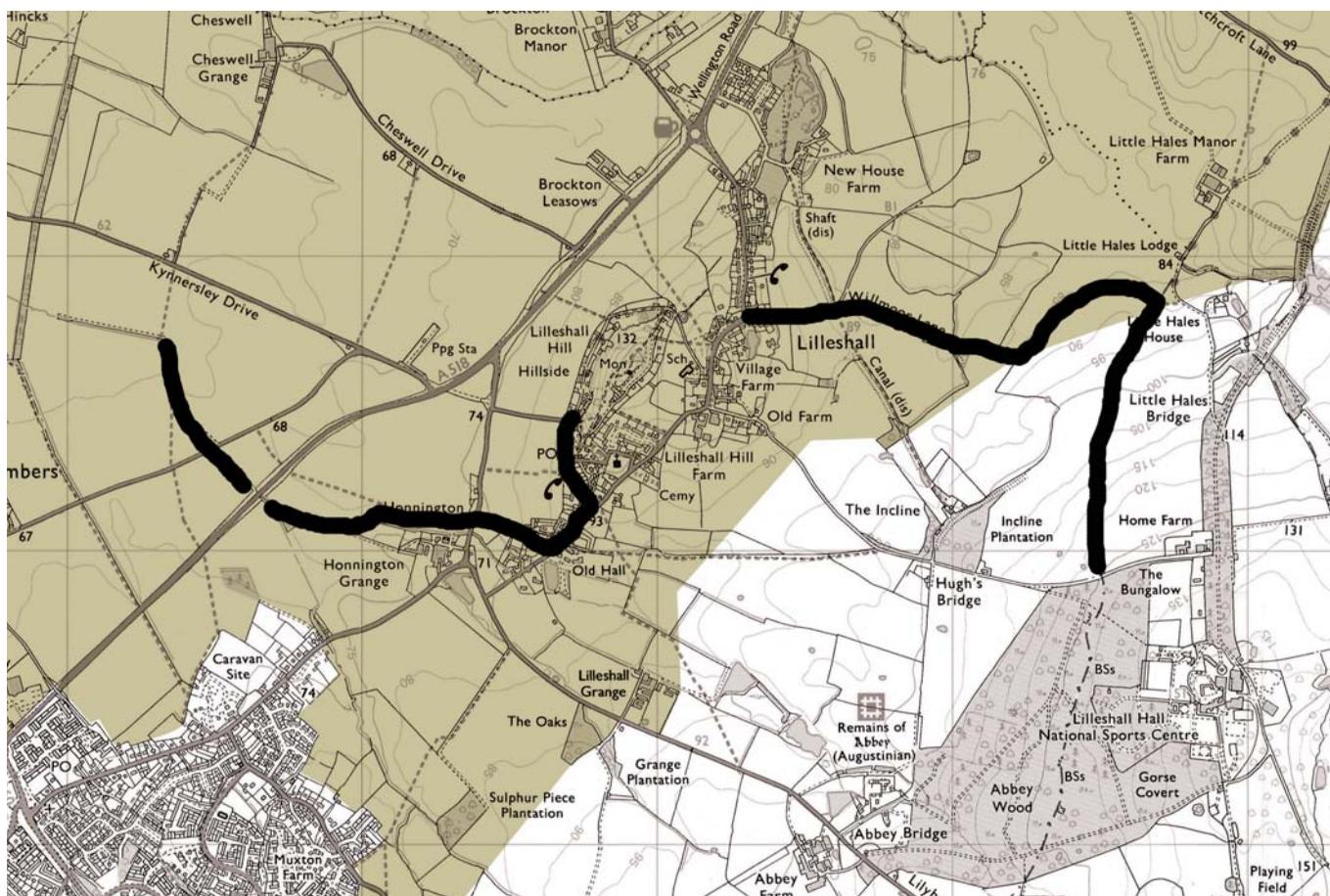


### Identifying landscape types

The countryside in your area will be divided into areas of broadly similar character, either landscape types or landscape areas. A landscape character type indicates a sort of countryside that can occur repeatedly around the country (such as chalk downland), whereas character areas are the locally named representation of them (for example the Hampshire Downs or the North Kent Downs). Either can be used as the basis for this project.

Usually these areas have been defined by physical attributes, such as landform, geology and soils, and cultural pattern, such as tree cover, field pattern and the pattern of settlement, in combination with the landscape's visual aspects. Once defined, each is described and a number of key characteristics listed. The map, descriptions and characteristics will all play an important role at the outreach event, and sufficient copies of each should be made to allow for group activities.

# Getting the community involved – the outreach event



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## Planning your route

Planning the route for each survey group to take on the outreach event should be done very carefully. Take time, beforehand, to locate a number of possible routes across each character area. The OS Explorer Map should be used for this. Walk each of these routes a few days before the event to ensure footpaths are clear and there are no significant risks or obstacles.

### The main considerations are:

- > access by footpath to all the character areas;
- > a route which can be completed in under two hours (allowing sufficient time to discuss and fill out your survey sheets);
- > absence of danger or hazards such as main roads, lack of pavements, broken stiles;
- > a good range of views of the area in question; and
- > an alternative, shorter route for those unable or unwilling to undertake a long walk.

When you are out on your walk ensure that everyone abides by the Countryside Code. Details can be found at [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk).

## Activities on the day

### Outreach event agenda

12 noon	Introduction to the day and what you are trying to achieve.
12.10	Introduction to the concept of landscape character and the reasons for producing a Community Landscape Character Statement.
12.30	Gather into groups, each with an assigned leader. <sup>5</sup>
12.35	Leave the venue for field survey.
2.15 - 2.30	Return for lunch, preferably of local foods.
3.15	Start afternoon activities.
4.00	Swap afternoon activities.
4.45	Discussion, what will happen next and close.
5.30	Drinks.

<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of the day, organise a group leader for each survey team. It may be useful to use people from the project team who are familiar with each stage of the project. Giving each person a coloured sticker as they enter the venue speeds group organisation up enormously. Ensure each group has survey sheets, pens, clipboards and maps.

## Outdoor survey work

You will already have identified the routes that you plan to take for your outdoor surveying work prior to the event. These should cover each of the character areas identified in your local Landscape Character Assessment. You should encourage the group to discuss the local landscape as you walk and regular stops should be made to allow people to fill in their survey sheets. Some people may prefer to make notes as they go along and fill the form in more fully at the end of the walk. Each of the groups should be given at least one camera (preferably digital) with which to take pictures. Digital photographs can be used in the afternoon activities and you may also wish to include them in your final Statement.

In order to ensure that information for each area (and indeed each study nationwide) is collected in a consistent manner, we have included a pre-prepared survey sheet on the accompanying CD. It includes questions designed to stimulate thinking and discussion, as well as provide opportunities to record consensus views and individual contributions. These sections start with factual responses about the nature of the landform and landscape elements to encourage different ways of looking at the landscape and its characteristic features. Later sections build on this in an attempt to draw out other aspects not usually included in the existing Landscape Character Assessment, for example smells, stories and perceptions.

There are also opportunities to identify worries and concerns about the future of the local landscape, and also to offer suggestions about how these might be addressed. People should feel free to add additional comments and observations if they want to.



Broughton, Hampshire, Mark Diacono

## Indoor activities

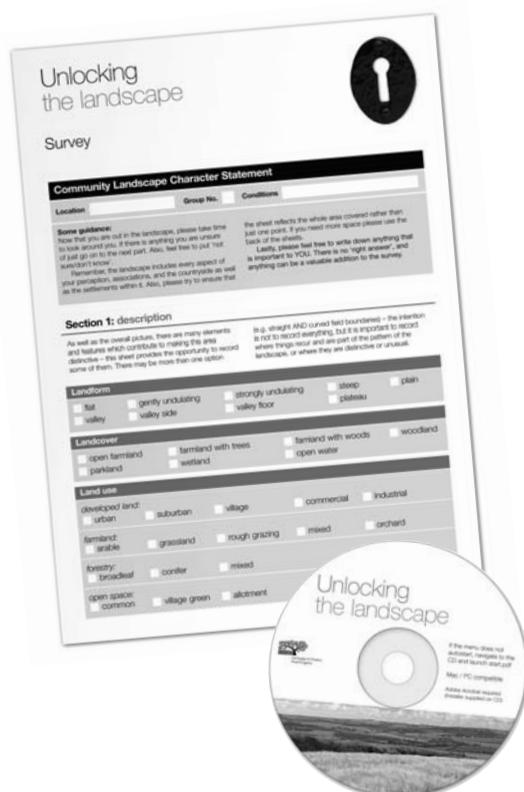
The indoor activities are all about building on the survey, and trying to draw out community views on local landscapes. They should be complementary to the survey, and in many cases will highlight some of the points made by people using their survey sheets. People express themselves in different ways, and the mixture of activities is aimed at giving everyone the opportunity to have their knowledge and opinions heard. These group exercises also allow for a wider group to spark ideas in others and to develop a consensus. You should bear in mind that views may be wide ranging, and that you should not lose this breadth of responses in trying to reach a consensus.

In the pilot studies we tested four activities designed to draw out a mixture of written, drawn and spoken responses. You may have other ideas to enable the group to achieve this so don't be reluctant to experiment. During your outreach event it is unlikely that you will have time for each group to do more than two activities and these should be carefully paired to offer different and complementary activities.

The four activities we suggest are:

- > photography – using pictures, taken by the group on their walk, as the basis for discussion about the landscape;
- > rich pictures – encouraging people to draw and illustrate their values and concerns;
- > mind mapping – creating a network of themed and linked views and aspirations; and
- > flag mapping – giving groups the chance to represent their thoughts on a map of the area.

The pilot studies showed that the mind mapping exercise pairs well with the photography, and that flag mapping and rich pictures also worked well together.



# Getting the community involved – the outreach event

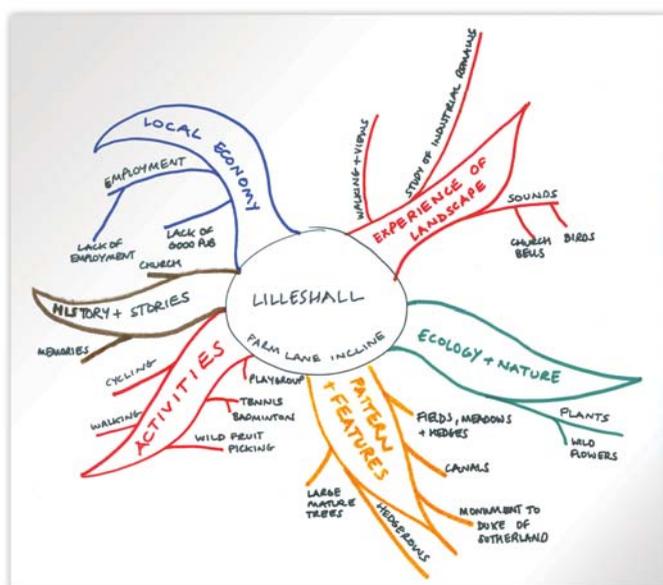


Lilleshall, Shropshire, Mark Diacono

## Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a technique that aims to stimulate thinking and presents information by developing a web-like picture of people's responses. It is a technique often used in the business world, and one which can be applied to everyday problems equally effectively.

A large sheet of paper is used, with the name of the main issue (in this case the settlement) written in the centre. From this, spokes radiate outwards covering particular themes that relate to this issue and which help to clarify and structure thinking and responses.



In the pilot studies, the spokes used were:

- > ecology and nature;
- > history and stories;
- > activities;
- > local economy;
- > experience of the landscape (such as sounds, smells and feelings);
- > patterns and features in the landscape (including settlement); and
- > an additional spoke for miscellaneous comments can be included.<sup>6</sup>

As a group of people write their thoughts about the character area onto the mind map, the spoked system ensures that these are recorded in a structured way, while clarifying any connections between other aspects. It is a cumulative exercise: as each person in the group writes down their contribution it provides further material to stimulate others.

### **Carrying out a mind mapping exercise**

You should prepare your mind mapping sheets prior to the event to ensure that you make best use of time on the day. You will need one sheet of A3 paper for every 7 participants. In the centre of the piece of paper you should write the name of the landscape area you will be studying. There will probably be more than one so make sure you have enough sheets for each of the landscape areas. You should then draw 7 spokes out from the centre and label them with headings such as local economy, experience of landscape, ecology and nature, patterns and features, activities, history and stories. You should leave one of the spokes blank so that participants can add another heading if they wish. You will also need to make sure that you have a plentiful supply of felt tip pens (in strong colours), biros (for more detailed comments), post-it notes and 2 different coloured packs of stickers available.

## **Getting started**

### **Stage 1**

After giving the group a brief overview of mind mapping and the reasons for the exercise you should sub divide your group into separate working teams of about 7 people per mind map. Mind maps for the different landscape areas should be divided as equally as possibly between teams. Members of the group should discuss the mind map and identify characteristics of the landscape area which they associate with the different spokes of the diagram. Ask a couple of people in each group to lead the writing, but do encourage everyone to pick up pens and add ideas. The team leader can help to generate discussion by asking questions such as: What features do you most associate with this landscape? How does this landscape make you feel? What do you value most about this landscape? You should allow 15 minutes for this initial discussion.

### **Stage 2**

Once each team has completed this initial exercise teams should swap mind maps with their neighbouring team and spend 10 minutes looking at the work that the other group has done. Each group should be given post-it notes so that they can write comments and ask questions about what the other team has written. Each team member should also be given three coloured stickers so that they can highlight the three features/comments on the mind map that are most important to them.

### **Stage 3**

Teams should now move back to their original mind map and spend 10 minutes responding to, and discussing, the comments and questions raised by their neighbouring team. They should then repeat the sticker exercise recording the features that are most important to them on their own map. Once this has been done each team member should be given three more stickers (using a different colour to the previous exercise) to identify the features/comments on the map that are likely to influence, or be influenced by future changes in the landscape.

An example of a completed mind map is shown opposite and further information on mind mapping can be found in Tony Buzan's book *How to Mind Map: the Ultimate Thinking Tool That Will Change Your Life* (see *Further reading*).

<sup>6</sup> You may wish to pre-prepare your mind map sheets using these headings.

# Getting the community involved – the outreach event



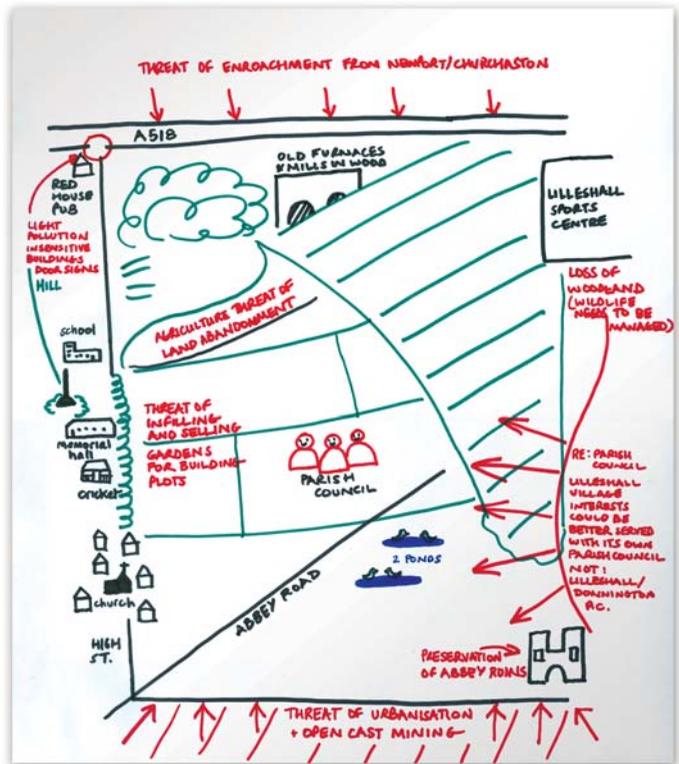
Lilleshall, Shropshire, Mark Diacono

The strength of the rich pictures approach is that it provides a different medium for expressing views. The other approaches draw out vocal, written and geographical views, whereas some may find a visual approach works best for them. We found in the pilot work that rich pictures works well for a group if done in tandem with either the photography or flag mapping activity, whilst mind mapping is akin to a word-based equivalent of rich pictures, drawing little extra information from a group which does both. You should also make the group aware that these drawings need not be of artistic merit and that cartoon-like or diagrammatic depictions are also valuable.

## Rich pictures

'Rich pictures' is a process in which groups draw symbols or diagrams showing local features of importance and identifying potential threats. This can be a valuable way for local people to exchange ideas, discuss common concerns and come to a consensus about future action for example, in the face of a proposal for a major new development.

Members of a group are given a large, blank sheet of paper and a set of coloured pens. They are then asked to draw the features that characterise their local landscape and to represent any threats to it. Finally, they are asked to write a list of agreed actions for combating identified threats. The experience from our pilot events provided a useful insight into public understanding of the local landscape and current threats. The two groups used in the pilot work arrived at different but complementary views about their local landscape and identified threats.



## Flag mapping

This activity uses flags and a map and can help some individuals who might be less vocal in their response than others. The simplicity of this exercise can encourage discussion. This exercise was devised to:

- > encourage unfettered responses from individuals through group interaction and personal response;
- > validate the Landscape Character Assessment work by eliciting local responses to the accuracy of boundaries; and
- > augment the 'value' and 'change' parts of the survey sheet completed earlier in the day.

In this activity, the group gathers around a large-scale map of the area surveyed earlier in the day, with the Landscape Character Assessment boundaries coloured to distinguish them. Plenty of small blank flags (sticky-back address labels mounted on cocktail sticks) are provided and all are encouraged to place the flags on the map according to each part of the exercise.

The exercise has three parts:

- > boundary definition;
- > values; and
- > change.

The group is first asked to evaluate the boundaries shown on the map and consider the extent to which they are in agreement with it. This usually prompts considerable discussion, following which everyone should be given the chance to use the flags to indicate any changes they would make.

The group should then be invited to reconsider the comments they have added to their survey sheets earlier in the day (without reference to the sheets themselves) and to give them geographical locations on the map. You may find that a range of non-landscape elements (relating to village facilities such as the church or school) are included as well as those that are more obviously landscape related. It is important to consider both aspects, and to make links between the two. Groups should also be asked to consider and to write/note on their flags reasons why they value a particular element.

For the final part of the activity group members are invited to comment, using notes written on flags, on potential change within the area. This should include changes they might expect to see in the near future and whether they would find such change welcome or not. Direct the group to their survey sheets at this point as they will have identified some types of change they anticipate. It is also useful to have someone recording spoken comments and observing group feelings and consensus.



Broughton, Hampshire, Mark Diacono

## Getting the community involved – the outreach event



Lilleshall, Shropshire, Mark Diacono

### Using photographs

Photographs can be enormously powerful in stirring up memories of place, changes, stories and associations. The advent of digital cameras makes taking and immediate viewing of images possible, although a laptop is required to ensure everyone in the group can see the pictures. Alternatively you could use a Polaroid camera. The images will also provide useful visual material for your Community Landscape Character Statement.

If possible each group should be given a camera and, as part of the field survey, asked to take pictures of:

- > representative views, both positive and negative;
- > characteristic features;
- > unusual or notable features; and
- > places or items which link with stories or other associations.

Back at the venue, these images should be displayed using the laptop projector or a notice board. The activity leader then takes the group through each image, asking why the image was taken and stimulating discussion. It is useful to have one person talking and showing the images while another records the group's views. A form for recording these views is included on the accompanying CD.



**The activity leader should:**

- > try to encourage all to contribute;
- > try to get the person who took the photograph to say why he or she did so;
- > develop a consensus where possible, but also record individual responses;
- > write a brief description of the photograph at the beginning to ensure you know where it was taken, it may also be useful to include a grid reference from the Ordnance Survey map;
- > attempt to draw out any associations with place, for example any stories; and
- > make sure the location where the photograph was taken from is recorded on the map.

**Children's activities**

As you will be inviting local families to come to the outreach event it is likely that a number of children will also attend. This, and the participation of local schools, should be encouraged and the children should be included in the day's activities. You should ask people to let you know if they plan to bring their children with them and how old they are so you can plan suitable activities.

Your local Wildlife Trust may have some good suggestions for children's activities that are relevant to the countryside and may even be able to run children's activities for you. The children should also be encouraged to participate in the afternoon workshops, either supported by their parents or on a separate table with professional supervision. The children can be encouraged to complete their own 'mind map' or draw pictures of the things they saw on their walk in the morning. Where possible, these should be incorporated into your final Community Landscape Character Statement.

It is important to ensure children are supervised by their parents at all times and that any activities without parental supervision, organised specifically for the children, are overseen by a qualified childcare professional. Events of this nature require that childcare providers be, at the minimum, police (Criminal Record Bureau) approved. So, even if you have a willing volunteer, unless he/she has this certification you won't be able to accept their offer of help.

**Potential sources of certified people are:**

- > Guide/Brownie/Cub/Scout leaders;
- > playgroup staff;
- > school teachers; and
- > mobile crèches (although these are often very expensive).

## Recording your findings

One of the most interesting and important tasks in preparing a Community Landscape Character Statement is the careful analysis of the field survey sheets filled in by people during the outreach event. Each section of the sheets included in the templates on the CD has been developed with a purpose in mind. You will need to take account of this when considering the data.



Llleshall, Shropshire, Tom Oliver

### What do your survey sheets tell you?

Section 1 is designed to get people looking at the landscape and identifying some of the characteristics which contribute to making it what it is. It is not intended that the findings contribute to the Statement as they will already be taken into consideration as part of the Landscape Character Assessment.

The remaining sections examine distinct areas of interest, from sensory matters in Section 2 through subsequent Sections looking at change, associations, the future of the landscape, threats and solutions. In each case the primary method of dealing with the responses should be to create a table, which allows you to draw all responses together into an overall picture. The example for Section 2 from one of the pilot studies is shown below:

The crosses indicate that the person has recorded something as a negative impact (e.g. traffic noise). By drawing up a table for each Section, you not only draw up a picture of common themes and threads, but you are able to see linkages more easily. Take time to consider whether there are any issues that run through the survey, or important links. For example, hedgerows may be noted as a distinctive feature, as providing a local source of elderflowers, which may also be one of the distinctive smells identified. In turn, this may be at the heart of a recipe used by people to make cordial, which may remind people of picking elderflowers as children. Any threat to these hedgerows, or their condition, may have many knock-on effects, which, while perhaps modest in themselves, are together highly significant.

Distinctive sounds	Distinctive smells	Characteristic colours
Church bells ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	Grass fire ✓✓✓✓✓	Red brick houses ✓✓✓✓✓✓
Traffic ✗✗✗✗✗✗✗✗	Farm smells ✓✓✓✓✗	Green pasture ✓✓✓✓
Birdlife ✓✓✓✓✓✓	Sugar beet factory ✗✓✓	Brown stubble ✓✓✓
Chickens ✓✓✓✓✓	Burning firewood ✓✓✓✓✓	
Children playing ✓✓		
Farm machinery ✓		
Farm animals ✓✓✓✓✓		
Wind whistling ✓✓✓✓✓✓		



## Writing your Community Landscape Character Statement

You will need to record carefully all the information gathered at the outreach event for your Community Landscape Character Statement. The details recorded in the survey sheets should be used to supplement the material you will already have from the Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by your local authority. It is especially important that the comments made at the afternoon workshops at the outreach event are recorded and included in your Statement. Either group leaders or nominated note takers will need to be responsible for recording comments made during each of the workshops and writing a summary of the discussion. These activities will be particularly important in drawing out the issues that residents feel most strongly about.

In preparing to write the Community Landscape Character Statement, you should refer to the example Statement included in this pack, which may serve as a template from which to develop your own. We think the structure we have used provides a good balance between the original local authority Landscape Character Assessment and the community dimension that your project will add to it.

### The sections we recommend you include in your Statement are:

- > a short introductory paragraph;
- > a description of the landscape types or areas identified by the local authority (it is best to include these word for word to ensure the local authority work is being properly represented and to avoid subjective rewriting);
- > a description of the key characteristics, subdivided as in the Landscape Character Assessment. Again it is best to include these as they have been written by the local authority;
- > any other important themes or issues which were raised at the outreach event but are not included in the Landscape Character Assessment;
- > key concerns; and
- > positive steps.

Having drawn on the local authority Landscape Character Assessment for the descriptions and the key characteristics, you should seek to integrate community findings into the key characteristics section. This approach is shown in an excerpt from the Lilleshall Landscape Character Statement below:

‘There has been extensive hedgerow loss. Remaining thorn hedges are declining in some areas due to over-management or neglect. Fields are predominantly large with sub-regular field patterns. **We feel that the condition of hedgerows is poor and that they are sensitive to changes in farming practice. Hedgerows around Honnington Grange have been removed and this has led to visible soil erosion. We are concerned**

**that more trees and hedges will be lost in the future and would like to see all existing hedgerows protected and better managed. The hedges along Willmoor Lane are of particular importance. We would also like to see new hedgerows planted both for the associated wildlife benefits and to screen roads such as the A518, limit traffic noise and prevent soil erosion. Thorn and holly hedgerows are an important characteristic of the local area.’**

It is important to try to build on the Landscape Character Assessment; repetition of existing text should be avoided. It may also prove useful to differentiate these added elements, as in our excerpt, where the bold text indicates community views gathered at the outreach event.

You may also have to add further key characteristics subsections if the findings of the project require it. In our Lilleshall pilot project several were added, including a ‘Development and urban encroachment’ section to detail a common and repeated issue, while outlining others in an ‘Other local features’ section.

The Community Landscape Character Statement also provides the means to communicate areas of concern to local people. Analysis of the field survey sheets and activity findings should provide you with a clear picture of what the community feels are the main threats to their local landscape. We recommend that you present these in as clear and succinct a form as possible: they should tie in with some aspects already covered in the Statement. In order to avoid repetition and maximise their impact we have presented them as a short list of ‘Key concerns’.

The Community Landscape Character Statement also offers the chance for the community to make positive statements about how threats might be addressed, or how improvements to the landscape might be made. Generally these will relate to the list of ‘Key concerns’. If the project findings include detailed suggestions about how an issue or threat might be positively addressed (for example, improve hedgerow management by introducing a rotational hedge-laying regime) then incorporate this too. Otherwise, direct and less detailed statements of proposed action (for example improve and reinstate hedgerows) are useful in providing a concise summary of community views. This will provide local decision makers with clear guidance on the actions required of them by the community.

You should try to ensure that all sections of the community are involved in the writing up and that the Statement benefits from photographs and other visuals (representing key concerns or features, not necessarily of high artistic quality). In our Lilleshall pilot local school children helped record features on the map included in the Community Landscape Character Statement and provided pictures to illustrate the document.

## The evaluation workshop

The evaluation workshop is the last of the three events in the Community Landscape Character Statement process. Having introduced the project at the stakeholder workshop and held the outreach event, where the community had the chance to express their views and aspirations, the evaluation workshop completes the process and agrees the final Statement.



Meibury Abbas, Dorset, CPRE/Robinson

### **Purpose of the evaluation workshop**

#### **At this event, you can:**

- > review the draft Community Landscape Character Statement and collect comments to incorporate into the final publication;
- > gain a sense of the relative success of the project;
- > publicise the publication of the final document;
- > encourage those involved to keep working together, and raise awareness of the Community Landscape Character Statement; and
- > draw the process to a close and thank all concerned.

### **Planning for the event**

The format of the evaluation workshop should be similar to that of the earlier stakeholder workshop. Again, holding the meeting in the evening will allow more residents to attend. A date for the evaluation workshop should be set before the outreach event so that you can let people know then when it will be held and encourage them to attend. It is a good idea to get those who are interested in the event to leave their contact details so that they can be sent the draft version of the Statement prior to the meeting.

When considering when to hold the meeting, it is important that you allow sufficient time after the outreach event to draw together the information from the day and draft the Statement. This will then need to be circulated to participants at least a week before the evaluation workshop so they have time to consider the draft carefully.

### **On the day**

#### **Presenting your findings**

The main presentation at the evaluation workshop should centre around the draft Community Landscape Character Statement. You will need a volunteer (preferably the person responsible for drafting the Statement) who is prepared to run through each section of the Statement with the group to assess whether they agree, disagree, want to add any extra information to each section or wish for clarification of any part of the document. You will also need a volunteer to record these comments so that they can be incorporated in the final version.

Once you have run through the draft Statement (this should take approximately 1½ hours) you should gather round a large table to ensure that all the features you want to record on the map are present and correct!

#### **Incorporating comments**

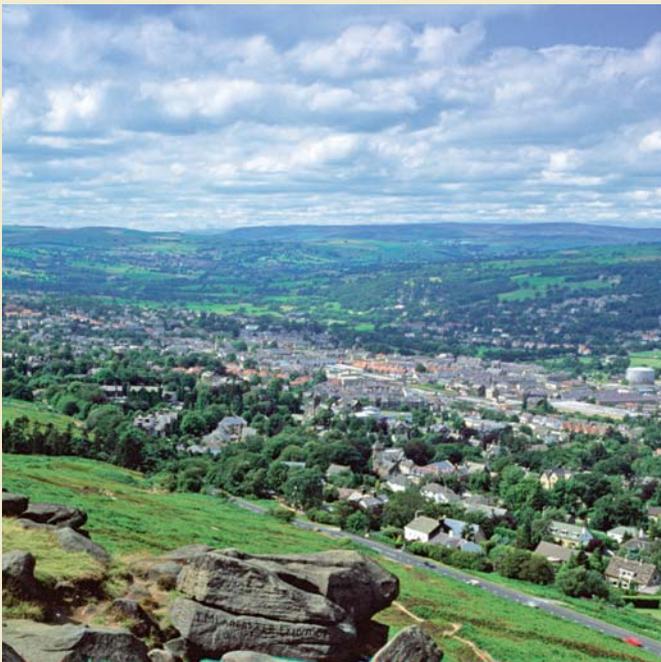
Incorporating comments from the evaluation workshop should be fairly straightforward. Once you have made the necessary changes you may want to get the final version approved by the key members of the project steering group. It is now ready to be printed in preparation for its launch.

# Making it count

**It's a significant achievement to have prepared a Community Landscape Character Statement. Now it is important to use the Statement effectively and to press home your views to those who make decisions that will affect your local landscape. The Statement should be launched as vigorously as possible and then used whenever it can make a difference.**

## **Publishing your Community Landscape Character Statement**

We have provided you with a QuarkXpress 4 template on the accompanying CD, which you can use to give your Statement a professional feel without the expense of employing a designer. You should also make use of any designing, publishing or printing skills that members of your local community may have. You will then need to find a printer who is able to produce the required number of your Statements. Remember that it is cheaper to order a larger number of copies to start with than to have to order more at a later date.



Ilkley, Yorkshire, CPRE/Robinson

### Using the local media to promote your Statement

You should let the local media know about your Community Landscape Character Statement. Local radio and television stations and local newspapers may be interested in covering the launch of the Statement and the outreach event itself.

To create some media interest, write a short press release that makes it clear to the journalist why you intend to produce your Community Landscape Character Statement. Be sure to feature local details because journalists know that their readers are interested in specific local issues. You could also mention any issues that are particularly important to the community at the time, for example particular development pressures. You could send a note to journalists with a list of ideas for how they may be able to use the process in stories such as features and profile articles. It is worth making use of the letters page, because it is one of the most frequently read sections of local newspapers.

Be sure to make a list of which journalists publicise your outreach event, because, having already shown interest, they are likely to continue to follow your story. When you send out a second press release publicising the publication of the Statement, call up those journalists and let them know you're about to send out a release, to improve your chances of securing media coverage. Find out what deadlines your local paper has so you know when they will need information from you.

Why not write a letter about the fact that the Statement has been written, perhaps focusing on some of the interesting moments of the character event?

Finally, think about the long term. Once media involvement is secured it is good to keep a list of contacts and keep them updated, even if only by email: this can be useful if you want to raise the profile of issues affecting your local landscape in the future.

### Influencing local planning policies

It is important that you use your Community Landscape Character Statement to try and influence the planning policies in your Local Development Documents. You should:

- > contact the local authority officers who are preparing the Local Development Documents and try and organise a meeting with them to discuss your Statement in more detail;
- > encourage them to consider your Statement as evidence when they are developing their Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans; and
- > ask your local planning officers to include a document on Landscape Character or establish a local landscape designation within their Local Development Scheme – this could mean that your Statement is incorporated into a Supplementary Planning Document and help to inform local decisions on planning applications.

Advice on the planning process can be found at [www.planninghelp.org.uk](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk) or at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk) for policies on rural development, housing and transport.

### Influencing other decision makers

You should also send a copy of your Statement to other local decision makers. These might include:

- > all parish councillors and local amenity societies in the area. They may find the Statement helpful when they are examining planning applications and contributing to their local development framework;
- > members of the planning committees on your district and/or county council and your regional assembly. This Statement should help guide them when they are looking at planning applications and wider planning policies including making a local landscape designation;
- > your local Members of Parliament. It is important to let MPs know what is important to members of their constituency;
- > your Countryside Agency and English Nature regional offices. A new integrated agency is due to replace these organisations in 2007. As the Countryside Agency pioneered the concept of Landscape Character Assessment they will appreciate seeing how people are taking forward the idea on a very practical level;
- > officials in your Government Regional Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Sending the Statement to relevant officials, such as those in teams dealing with planning and community strategies, is a good way of letting them know that people wish to be involved in influencing how their area develops. Their contact details can be found at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk) or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk); and
- > your CPRE county branch. Details of your local CPRE branch can be found at [www.cpre.org.uk/contact-us/local-groups.htm](http://www.cpre.org.uk/contact-us/local-groups.htm).

## Acknowledgements, Further reading and useful contacts

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#### Further reading

CPRE, *Campaigning for Countryside Character*, 2003.

CPRE, *Lie of the Land*, 2003.

Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage  
*Landscape Character Assessment: guidance for England and Scotland*, 2002.

Buzan, T, *How to Mind Map: the Ultimate Thinking Tool That Will Change Your Life*, 2002.

OPDM, Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, The Stationery Office, 2004.  
[www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm\\_index.hcst?n=5473&l=3](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=5473&l=3)

#### Useful contacts

[www.planninghelp.org.uk](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk)

[www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

[www.ccnetwork.org.uk](http://www.ccnetwork.org.uk)

[www.livinglandscapesproject.co.uk](http://www.livinglandscapesproject.co.uk)

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

[www.landscapecharacter.org.uk](http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk)

[www.floralocale.org](http://www.floralocale.org)

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)

### Using the CD

Insert the CD-ROM into your computer; in Microsoft Windows, the menu should autorun. If it does not, navigate to the CD and launch start.htm.





Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We promote positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside to ensure change values its natural and built environment. Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have 59,000 supporters, a branch in every county, nine regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in central London. Membership is open to all. Formed in 1926, CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. Our President is Sir Max Hastings.

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