

## 1. Introduction to the project

### 1.1 The North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

The North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project was begun in April 2005 and the digitisation completed in January 2010. The project area encompasses the whole of North Yorkshire as well as the Lower Tees Valley, a total area of over 891,100 hectares. This covers a number of local authority areas: the county of North Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority<sup>2</sup>, the North York Moors National Park Authority, the City of York and the unitary authority boroughs of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees. Also included are the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and that part of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that lies within North Yorkshire (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). This means there is an exceptional variety in the character of the landscape, in terms of the topography as well as the historic and natural environment.

The project steering group comprised representatives of all the above local authorities (with Tees Archaeology representing the unitary authority boroughs of the Lower Tees Valley) and English Heritage, who sponsored the project as part of their national programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation.

The project was carried out by an Historic Landscape Characterisation Project Officer employed by North Yorkshire County Council for the duration of the project, and an Historic Landscape Characterisation Project Assistant for the final twenty months of the project. Additional support was provided by Tees Archaeology, who undertook the characterisation of the urban settlement areas of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Billingham.

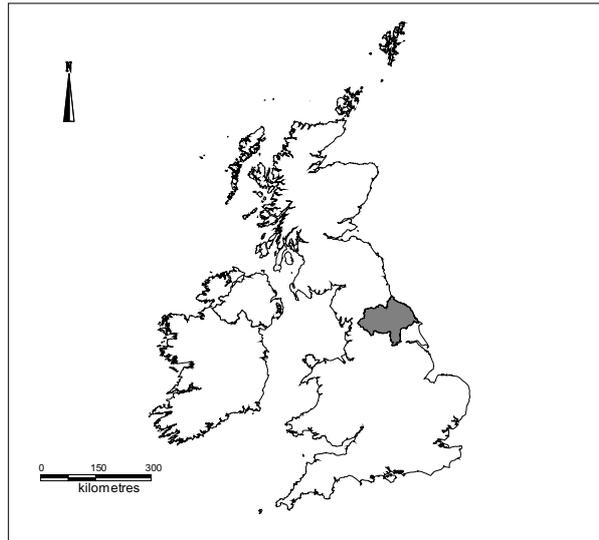
The project has been a five year undertaking to gain a better understanding of the surviving historic character of the modern landscape, recognising that this historic character is the product of landscape changes over many centuries. Such information and understanding has a variety of applications and can be used to inform landscape management, landscape character assessment and strategies, spatial planning, and learning and outreach<sup>3</sup>.

The main product of the project has been the creation of a body of data identifying, mapping and characterising the distinctive historic dimension of the present urban and rural environment of the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley area. This is a comprehensive product in database and geographic information system (GIS) format, created using a number of sources of information, including digital historic maps and aerial photographs. Having identified aspects of the natural and built environment that have been shaped by human activity in the past, attributes have been grouped together using a classification of broad character types, which in turn have been subdivided into more detailed HLC types of current and previous historic character.

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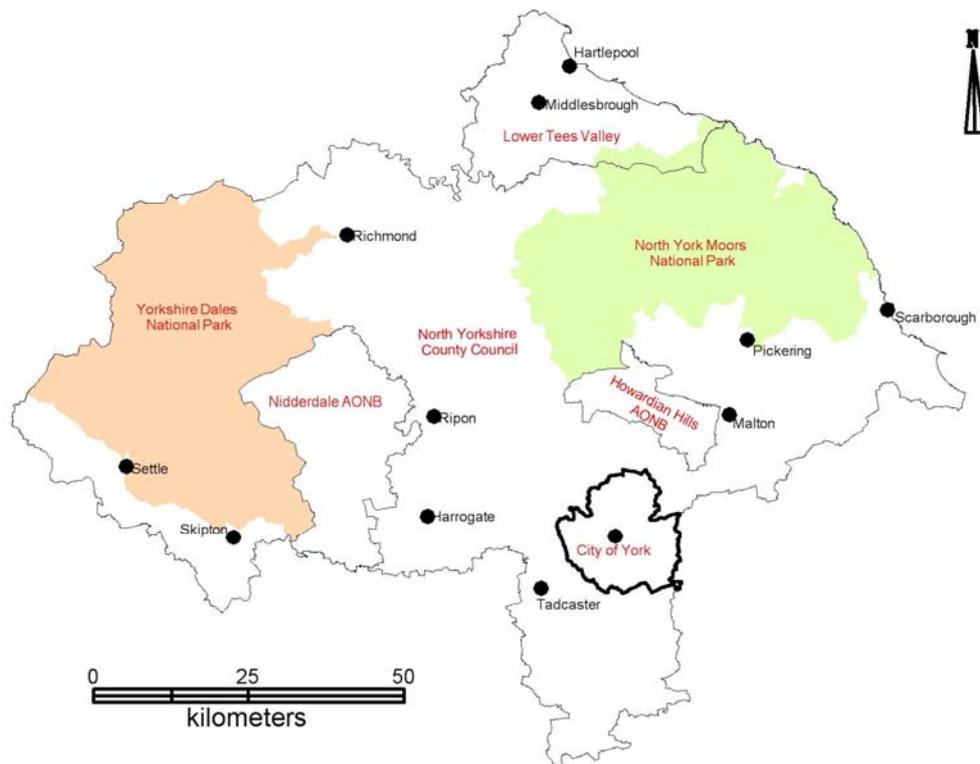
<sup>2</sup> Excluding that part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park that lies within Cumbria. This had been covered by Miles Johnson as part of the Cumbria HLC project and data for this area is held within the YDNPA HER and by Cumbria County Council.

<sup>3</sup> Clark, Darlington and Fairclough 2004



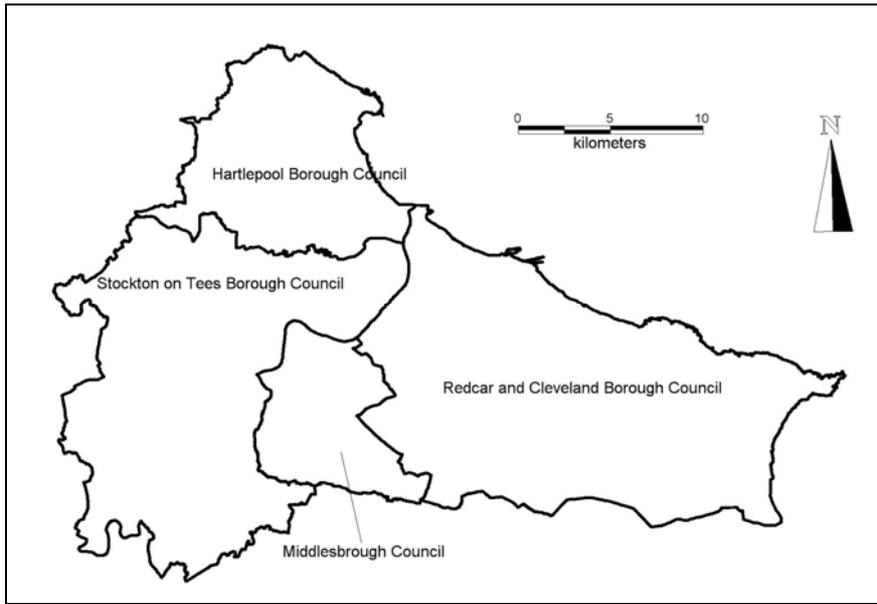
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Figure 1 Area covered by the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley HLC project (in grey) in relation to the UK



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Figure 2 North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley HLC project area showing local authorities, AONBs and main settlements



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*Figure 3 The unitary authorities of the Lower Tees Valley*

Particular patterns or groupings of areas of similar current historic character have been mapped as GIS polygons with linked database descriptions. Additional details about the project methodology and sources of information used can be found in Section 3.

## **1.2 Scope of the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley Characterisation Project Report**

As mentioned above, the main products of the project are the digital data in database and GIS format. The amount of data collected on historic landscape character for the project area, and as a result the physical character of the landscape, is vast. The total number of HLC types recorded within the project itself totals 205, although some occur only once. The total number of records in the database is 15461. Digital data has been disseminated to each of the project partners and is held within the respective local authority Historic Environment Records (formerly known as Sites and Monuments Records).

Whilst the historic characterisation and mapping has covered every part of the project area, this report does not aim to identify and describe every aspect of this information, for this will be found in the database and GIS data. The Historic Landscape Characterisation database can be queried in an almost endless amount of ways. The report does not aim to produce a definitive account of the historic landscape character of North Yorkshire and the Lower Tees Valley landscapes, rather it is to demonstrate the ways in which the data can be interrogated and explore some of the broad trends that emerge.

Section 4 of this report will explore each broad character type, exploring distribution, survival and form. Chart 1 provides a broad overview of the total percentage of each broad type within the project area. Each broad type is discussed with a brief summary of the main HLC character types. In some cases, for example planned

enclosure, the results for a number of HLC character types are presented together, to allow more meaningful analysis to be carried out.

To show how this data can be used at a more focussed level, Section 5 of the report will use the HLC data to examine the historic landscape character of each of the partner areas: the two National Parks, the City of York, Lower Tees Valley and the North Yorkshire HER area, drawing out the broad trends that are visible within these contrasting landscapes. A similar approach has been applied to three of the National Character Areas which fall within the project area, and the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Howardian Hills and Nidderdale.

To show the flexibility of use of HLC data at different scales and for different purposes, the report also looks at a specific parish, Scrayingham, to show how HLC can inform our understanding of the historic character of a modern parish landscape. A specific estate, that of Birdsall, is also studied, which formed one of the earliest areas to be characterised within the project in 2005 and was used subsequently to inform the development of a farm environment plan.

### 1.3 General introduction to Historic Landscape Characterisation

Characterisation is an important tool which allows us to expand our view away from individual monuments and buildings to gain an understanding of the wider historic landscape. As an approach, characterisation has its origins in the 1960s, and the concept of 'character' outlined in the 1967 Conservation Area legislation<sup>4</sup>. Other influences include Landscape Character Assessment<sup>5</sup> and the English Heritage Historic Landscape Project carried out between 1992 and 1994<sup>6</sup>. Following the highlighting of characterisation in both Planning Policy Guidance note 7 on 'The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development'<sup>7</sup> and Planning Policy Guidance note 15 on 'Planning and the Historic Environment'<sup>8</sup>, it was used as an approach in the Countryside Character Map, produced jointly by the Countryside Commission, English Heritage and English Nature<sup>9</sup>.

The methodology for Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) was pioneered in Cornwall<sup>10</sup>, following an invitation from the Government for English Heritage to produce a list of special historic landscapes. It was felt that as the whole landscape is the product of human, historic activity a methodology was needed which encompassed the historic environment in its broadest sense. A number of methodologies were trialled before HLC was decided on as an approach.

Before HLC, no method existed for assessing the historic character for the whole landscape. Many of the studies that existed at the time, carried out on a local basis, were excellent but focussed in on particular areas. HLC differs in that it takes an holistic approach to the landscape, allowing it to be assessed on its own terms, including the typical and commonplace rather than just perceived 'high value' areas.

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<sup>4</sup> HMSO 1967

<sup>5</sup> Swanwick and Land Use Consultants 2002

<sup>6</sup> Fairclough *et al* 1999

<sup>7</sup> DoE 1997

<sup>8</sup> DoE 1994

<sup>9</sup> Countryside Commission and English Nature 1996

<sup>10</sup> Herring 1998

At its heart, HLC has nine guiding principles:<sup>11</sup>

- Present not past
- Landscape not sites
- All aspects of the landscape
- Human landscape - biodiversity is a cultural phenomenon
- Interpretation not record, perception not facts
- People's views
- Management of change, not preservation
- Transparency
- Jargon free, easily accessible
- Integration

HLC projects are carried out, in the main, by local authorities in partnership with English Heritage. This has meant that there has been flexibility to the methodology allowing it to be adaptable to local character. At the time of writing, nearly 90% of the historic characterisation of England has either been completed or is underway<sup>12</sup>.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007 the European Landscape Convention came into force, following ratification on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006<sup>13</sup>. HLC is fully compliant with the aims and aspirations of the Convention.

#### **1.4 Previous Landscape Character Assessment in the Project Area**

Prior to, and during the life of, the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley HLC project, a number of landscape character assessments have been undertaken for areas which fall within the project area. The earliest of these date to the early 1990s, and the most recent is a landscape character assessment for North Yorkshire undertaken in 2009/10<sup>14</sup>. Details can be found in the online Landscape Character Network 'Database of Landscape Character Assessments in England'<sup>15</sup>.

Within the Lower Tees Valley, there has been landscape character assessment or landscape assessment for Redcar and Cleveland<sup>16</sup>, the Cleveland Community Forest<sup>17</sup> and Hartlepool<sup>18</sup>. Within the City of York there has been a landscape appraisal<sup>19</sup>. There has been a landscape character assessment of the Yorkshire Dales National Park<sup>20</sup>, and North York Moors National Park<sup>21</sup>, as well as for a North York Moors Upland Land Management Initiative<sup>22</sup> and the CAN DO Hambleton and Howardian Hills Landscape Partnership Area<sup>23</sup>. The Howardian Hills Landscape has

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<sup>11</sup> Clark, Darlington and Fairclough 2004

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/landscapes-and-areas/characterisation/historic-landscape-character/>

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe 2000

<sup>14</sup> Chris Blandford Associates forthcoming

<sup>15</sup> <http://landscapecharacter.org.uk/db/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council 2006

<sup>17</sup> Cleveland Community Forest 1992

<sup>18</sup> Hartlepool Borough Council 2000

<sup>19</sup> City of York Council 1996

<sup>20</sup> Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority 2001

<sup>21</sup> White Young Green 2003

<sup>22</sup> North York Moors National Park Authority 2000

<sup>23</sup> The Hambleton and Howardian Hills CAN DO Partnership in association with the North York Moors National Park Authority 2007

also been assessed by the Countryside Commission<sup>24</sup>, and elsewhere in North Yorkshire, there have been landscape assessments for Northern Ryedale<sup>25</sup>, Selby District<sup>26</sup>, Scarborough Borough<sup>27</sup>, Harrogate Borough<sup>28</sup> and Hambleton District<sup>29</sup>. Part of Craven District was covered by a landscape character assessment for Lancashire commissioned in 1999<sup>30</sup> and the area of Craven outside the National Park studied in 2002<sup>31</sup>. More recently, landscape character assessment has been carried out for the Forest of Bowland AONB<sup>32</sup>.

Currently in production is the 'North Yorkshire Landscape Character Assessment' which North Yorkshire County Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to produce in late 2009<sup>33</sup>. This work has been informed by the full HLC digital dataset.

## 1.5 The National Character Areas<sup>34</sup>

The HLC project area covers fifteen national character areas, see Figure 4. These give us an insight into the broad character of the landscape, and each national character area has been defined taking the cultural aspects of the landscape into consideration.

The definition of the national character areas used a methodology developed from a pilot in the South West, which was subsequently rolled out nationally. This utilised twelve national datasets, seven of which are explicitly concerned with the historic landscape: farm types, settlement patterns, woodland cover, field density and pattern, visible archaeology, industrial history and designed parkland.

These datasets were combined using a system of statistical analysis to provide an overview of the character. Each square kilometre in the country was assigned an attribute for each dataset. The process then worked on the principle "...that all the kilometre squares in the sample (the whole of England) can be divided up into a number of groups on the basis of the presence or absence of a particular attribute. This subdivision continues until an appropriate number of end groups are reached, each of which will contain kilometre squares with similar attributes. The map which resulted from this then informed the definition of character areas<sup>35</sup>."

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<sup>24</sup> Countryside Commission 1995

<sup>25</sup> Gillespies 1999

<sup>26</sup> Woolerton Dodwell Associates 1999

<sup>27</sup> Scarborough Borough Council 1994

<sup>28</sup> Harrogate Borough Council 2004

<sup>29</sup> Hambleton District Council 1991

<sup>30</sup> Environmental Resources Management 2000

<sup>31</sup> Landscape Design Associates 2002

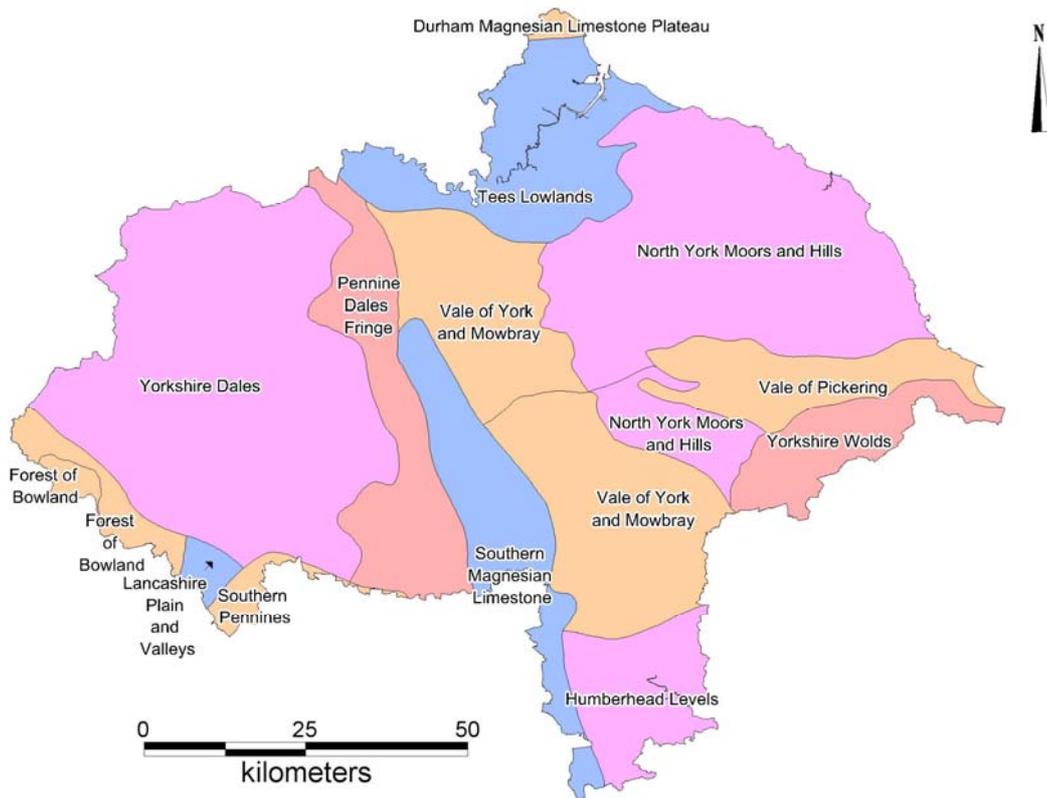
<sup>32</sup> Lancashire County Council 2009

<sup>33</sup> Chris Blandford Associates forthcoming

<sup>34</sup> Countryside Commission 2005 and

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/englands/character/areas/default.aspx>

<sup>35</sup> Countryside Commission 1998, 8-9



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Figure 4 National character areas within the HLC project area

## 1.6 Applications of HLC

HLC has many different applications within the management of the historic environment. A key application is to address the need to build a landscape-based approach into our understanding of the historic environment. As communities, both now and in the past, engaged with the landscape and each other, they have a wider impact than can be expressed purely by the study of monuments. Over the past twenty years, the heritage community has become increasingly aware of a need to develop a landscape-based approach. This can take many forms, and has many tools at its disposal; for example aerial survey, topographic survey, rapid field survey, map regression and documentary evidence. All of these techniques add a different body of information to the way the historic landscape can be assessed. HLC provides a further approach to contribute to, and enhance, these other methods.

Due to its broad-brush approach, the use of HLC information allows a rapid assessment to be made of the historic character of landscapes to inform decision making and planning at a strategic level. Whilst it would be desirable for rapid field survey, at the very least, to be carried out for as much of the historic landscape as possible, this is an enormous task. To survey the whole of the area covered by the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley HLC project on foot, working on the basis of coverage of approximately 1 hectare per half a day, it would take approximately 2,225 years to complete. What HLC can do, is provide a starting point, a framework for more detailed work to be undertaken thereafter.

HLC takes a comprehensive approach to the landscape, considering all aspects as contributing to the historic character. This means that the information collected is especially well placed to inform positive landscape management<sup>36</sup>. The compilation and maintenance of HLC data in a GIS system allows a large amount of complex and in depth information to be provided rapidly for a variety of landscape management outputs.

Within local government, the historic environment services provided by the local authorities who are partners in this HLC project regularly provide historic environment data and advice to inform a wide range of schemes, from those requiring planning permission to those concerning land management, and those for which grants are available through national agencies, such as Natural England and Defra.

The availability of HLC data to be included in the information provided to inform agri-environment schemes, for example farm environment plans as part of higher level stewardship<sup>37</sup>, can enhance the scope, depth and understanding of the historic environment within a particular land holding. In the same way, the holistic approach which HLC embodies means that it has a particular role to play in the management of woodland, and the allocation of English woodland grant schemes<sup>38</sup>. As will be shown later in the report, the woodlands identified during the project are a product of human activity whether through passive or active management.

Due to the scale at which HLC is carried out, it sits neatly between different levels of landscape assessment. It can inform and enhance landscape character assessment at different scales, from county-wide approaches, such as the North Yorkshire Landscape Character Assessment<sup>39</sup>, to district-wide approaches to support the evidence base for local development frameworks, such as the special qualities study of Ryedale's market towns<sup>40</sup>.

Other applications of HLC include its role in informing spatial planning and strategies, including for example, strategic environment assessments and sustainability appraisals and minerals and waste development frameworks, as well as area management plans, such as those for an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>41</sup>. All this work can be underpinned by the information provided from the HLC project, enabling the historic environment to be considered from a landscape perspective.

HLC provides an excellent opportunity to develop partnerships, both internally and with external partners. Because the data collected is inclusive, in terms of geographical extent and time depth, it provides a mechanism to start dialogue with many different groups. Because HLC data records aspects of the natural environment, for example in terms of boundary type, woodland character and unenclosed land ground cover, it provides a mechanism to develop close working between natural environment and historic environment colleagues. HLC can inform the creation of green corridors to ensure that they enhance and respect the historic character of the landscape.

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<sup>36</sup> Clark, Darlington and Fairclough 2004; 13

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/es/hls/default.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs>

<sup>39</sup> Chris Blandford Associates forthcoming

<sup>40</sup> Ryedale District Council 2010

<sup>41</sup> Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee 2009

In recent years, there has been a rise in interest in local distinctiveness, with organisations such as Common Ground engaging with communities to draw out these themes. HLC can, on a local level, provide a framework through which there can be a dialogue about local character and distinctiveness, complementing or enhancing the understanding of the historic landscape gained from the project.

The historic character of the landscape forms an important aspect of what attracts people to the region, which in turn feeds into the local economy. HLC can enhance our understanding of the historic character in these areas, for example the wider environs of the City of York Authority. It can also draw attention to the historic character of the wider landscape, promoting these as possible destinations.