

PART 1: THE MAIN REPORT

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

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“The outstandingly beautiful landscapes of rural England are our most cherished inheritance. For generations they have provided inspiration for poets, artists and writers and they are fundamental to how we see ourselves today. The unique character of the English Countryside is the most significant legacy we can pass on to future generations. We have a duty to care for it at all costs”.¹

This report is one of the principal outcomes of the Cumbria and Lake District National Park Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, which commenced in 2000. The mapping of the Lake District National Park was completed in 2005, and the mapping for the rest of Cumbria remains to be completed. This report, whilst concentrating on the National Park, is set within the wider context of the entire county. The four case studies within this report are intended to highlight the distinctiveness of the historic landscape of the Lake District National Park. Two case studies outside the Lake District cover designated landscapes, the Arnsdale/Silverdale and Solway Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and a third is an area likely to be considered for designation.

The Lake District is the largest National Park in England. It was established in 1951 and contains England's highest mountain (Scafell Pike at over 987m), sixteen lakes (the largest being Windermere) and countless tarns. Around one quarter of the National Park is owned by The National Trust which looks after over eighty working farms. The National Park owns about 4% of the Park, including Bassenthwaite Lake.

Among other major landowners are North West Water whose assets include Haweswater and Thirlmere; and the Forestry Commission which manages, among its woodlands, the forests of Ennerdale, Grizedale and Thornthwaite. The Lake District is currently being considered for World Heritage Site inscription.

Historic Landscape Characterisation and its Uses

The present day landscape of Cumbria is the product of thousands of years of human activity. It is shaped by peoples' exploitation of their physical environment and reflects underlying trends such as political, social, economic and cultural influences. The need to study archaeological sites, not in isolation but in terms of wider landscape character has long been appreciated and was highlighted in the late 1980's.² From this has developed the study of historic landscape character, as part of an holistic analysis of the wider historic environment. The historic environment has also been recognised as an important aspect when considering wider landscape value and character.³ In 1991 the Government White Paper *This Common Inheritance* proposed that English Heritage develop a register of historic landscapes.⁴ One year later English Heritage started the Historic Landscape Project,⁵ which helped to define an approach to historic landscape assessment and identified further the need for a broad, integrated and holistic approach to landscape matters. The challenge put forward in this project was taken up in the first county historic landscape characterisation project,

¹ Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman, Heritage Forum and English Heritage quoted in Heritage Counts 2005

² Darvill *et al*, 1987

³ eg Countryside Commission 1987, 1993

⁴ HMSO 1991

⁵ Fairclough *et al* 1999

which commenced in Cornwall in 1994.⁶ In 2002, English Heritage undertook 'The National HLC Method Review'. This led to the publication of two reports which advocated greater standardisation in methodology and terminology and a greater use of earlier cartographic sources.⁷

Landscape issues are now embedded into the planning process through guidance given in PPG15 and the

assessment techniques.¹⁰ The purposes of this approach are to:

- understand how and why landscapes are significant
- promote the appreciation of landscape issues
- assist the successful accommodation of new development within the landscape
- guide and assist in the management of landscape change.



Plate 1: The central Lake District looking north-west from below High Street towards Brothers Water (© Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd)

sustainability agenda enshrined in PPS7.⁸ Conservation of the historic elements of the current landscape clearly relies on good management based on information and understanding. This is the ultimate aim of the historic landscape characterisation (HLC) process.⁹ In England, the HLC approach is in line with the landscape assessment philosophies inherent in the Countryside Commission's general landscape

Landscapes are dynamic, the result of human endeavour and an ever changing reflection of the forces which act upon them.¹¹ They will continue to change, and indeed must change, to meet human needs, and HLC provides an important tool in the management and understanding of the processes of change. Characterisation is based on the need to understand the present historic environment as a product of past changes and as the basis for future change. It is the first step towards evaluating places and making assessments of distinctiveness and significance. In England, it is not a

⁶ Herring 1999

⁷ Rippon 2004, 55

⁸ DOE and DNH 1994; ODPM 2004

⁹ Clark *et al* 2004, 13

¹⁰ Rippon 2004, 54

¹¹ Cadw 2003, 9

mechanism for fixed judgemental valuations of landscape, and does not seek to define certain landscapes as more important than others. Rather, it seeks to establish the significance of aspects and features as distinctive attributes of local landscape character. Through this process, significance can be dynamic and shifting, relating to local identity, individual perception and evolutionary processes. The ordinary and typical are recognised as having their own special value. These views are shared by, and made explicit within, the European Landscape Convention.¹²

*“What underlies it [HLC] is a desire to capture our overall feeling for the totality of a place – not just to collect facts about a building, what style it is, whether it is rare, what an archaeological site can tell us about our predecessors or how a designed park reflects 18th century taste, but about what the place as a whole means to us”.*¹³

Characterisation can be undertaken at many scales. The English Heritage HLC projects operate at a sub-regional or county level, although the technique can be applied to smaller areas or even thematically. These approaches have been used in a series of seven case studies, each designed to explore a different geographical area or theme.

HLC maps the landscape as it appears now, but can then be used to manage and record change. By attempting to characterise every field and mountain top, it invites debate and promotes dialogue. The process helps us to understand better the “*complex intertwining roads of past decisions, actions and inaction*”¹⁴ that have resulted in today’s landscape. We can map the evolution of a piece of land and then set out choices about its future. The approach is designed to create an appreciation of the time depth of landscape to align alongside scenic or

ecological perspectives. The emphasis of characterisation is therefore on providing context – an understanding of the historic continuity into which current and future development should fit, if the distinctive quality of a place is to be maintained and enhanced.

*“England’s distinctive countryside is a living asset which fosters thriving communities, attracts visitors and brings valuable economic benefits. For the 80 per cent of England’s population who live in cities, the rural heritage is not just a beautiful backdrop for a day out – it serves as a potent force to shape people and remind them who they are”.*¹⁵

The Cumbria and Lake District HLC will have a wide variety of uses. It has already been used in the consideration of the debate on whether currently undesignated land outside the National Park should be included within existing national parks or AONBs.¹⁶ It will also be of use in the current effort to define a boundary for a possible Lake District World Heritage Site. It will help to inform the process of defining the outstanding universal values of the Lake District landscape. The landscape is being considered for inscription on the basis of its cultural associations,¹⁷ and these are particular aspects discussed in both the Derwent Water and Rydal case studies. The HLC will also be used to complement the National Park’s Landscape Character Strategy, and the County Council’s Landscape Classification. The new requirements on local authorities for strategic environmental assessment can also make use of HLC as the basis for historic environment sensitivity analysis. It is vital that any pre-existing or future landscape character assessments or strategies takes into account historic

¹² Clark *et al* 2003, 6-7

¹³ Grenville and Fairclough 2004-5, 2

¹⁴ Grenville and Fairclough 2004-5, 3

¹⁵ Bill Bryson, English Heritage Commissioner, quoted in Heritage Counts 2005, Traditional Farm Buildings Under Threat

¹⁶ Natural England, www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape

¹⁷ ICOMOS UK 2004

human influences in the landscape. This is essential if they are to provide a meaningful interpretation of the landscape and its character. It is also clear that much of Cumbria is already designated to protect its landscape or ecological assets, however its cultural and historic significance are not always reflected in these designations. HLC can bring a deeper appreciation of the historic value of landscape to a wider audience than historic environment specialists.

HLC projects have now been completed in areas adjoining Cumbria in Dumfriesshire and Lancashire and are underway in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Northumberland and Durham. A regional HLC for the North West is anticipated following completion of the HLC projects for Cumbria, and Historic Urban Characterisation for Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This will provide an overview of the historic landscape at a regional scale to inform initiatives such as the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Landscape policy

Since the Historic Landscape Characterisation programme began, all the principles of the approach have been endorsed by the European Landscape Convention (2000) which was adopted by the United Kingdom in 2006. The main aim of the Convention¹⁸ is to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues. It aims to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment and acknowledges that all landscapes contribute towards the quality of life for people everywhere. The Convention also acknowledges that economic changes whether building development, forestry, quarrying or tourism all have an impact on landscapes and that this common

resource needs the cooperation of European countries to help protect, manage and plan our landscapes. HLC is a first step in this process. In order to protect a resource, we need to identify it. By mapping our historic landscapes it allows us to recognise what we have and make decisions about how it should be transformed or conserved for the future.

At a UK regional level, the Regional Planning Guidance for the North West¹⁹ includes general policies (RU2 and ER2) on the natural, historic and cultural assets of the region and encourages an holistic approach to protecting them. More specifically Policy ER2 deals with landscape character and seeks to preserve and enhance the rich diversity of landscapes. The policies refer to strategies which existed at the time of its publication, such as the Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Programme and English Nature's Natural Areas initiatives²⁰ and with the addition of HLC, more informed decisions can be made regarding the future management of these landscapes.

HLC sits alongside other landscape characterisation programmes, such as the Countryside Character Programme developed by the Countryside Commission which developed Joint Character Areas (JCAs)²¹ for all of England. The following areas cover Cumbria and the Lake District National Park:

- Character Area 6 – Solway Basin
- Character Area 7 – West Cumbria Coastal Plain
- Character Area 8 – Cumbria High Fells
- Character Area 9 – Eden Valley
- Character Area 10 – North Pennines
- Character Area 17 – Orton Fells
- Character Area 18 – Howgill Fells

¹⁸ Council of Europe, www.coe.int/t/e/Cultural_Co-operation/Environment

¹⁹ GONW 2003

²⁰ Both organisations are now part of Natural England

²¹ Countryside Commission 1998

- Character Area 19 – South Cumbria Low Fells
- Character Area 20 – Morecambe Bay Limestones
- Character Area 21 – Yorkshire Dales

This current report concentrates on character areas 7, 8, 17, 19 and 20, which are covered by the Lake District National Park, with the majority of the National Park made up of area 8, the Cumbria High Fells. In addition, most of the Lake District National Park was designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area in 1992.²² This scheme recognised that the Lake District was composed of several distinct types of landscape each with its own characteristics. The resulting landscape areas differed from the Countryside Commission's JCAs in that they defined areas based on physical and topographical landscape types rather than broad character areas. The ESA scheme identified the following landscape types:

- Type A: High and low fell
- Type B: Enclosed and wooded fellsides
- Type C: Parkland and woodland
- Type D: Craggy pasture and woodland
- Type E: Pastoral land
- Type F: Valley bottom and lakeshore
- Type G: Valley plain

The ESA Scheme alongside the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which covered land outside the ESA areas, aimed to conserve and enhance the landscape, wildlife and historic interest of the area. Farmers were invited to enter into a voluntary agreement with MAFF, now DEFRA, for ten years. In return for annual payments farmers agreed to manage their land in ways that enhance and sustain the conservation interest. These schemes have been superseded by the new Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment schemes. Their

relationship to HLC, however, remains broadly the same, in that HLC helps to define the local historic environment and landscape targets in the region, which are used to evaluate applications.

Regional policy will in the future be defined within the Regional Spatial Strategy, which over time will replace county-level policies in the current Structure Plan. The North West Region's Regional Spatial Strategy,²³ under policy EM3 on Green Infrastructure, states that,

"Historic Landscape Characterisation and Landscape Character Assessment as a means of identifying and describing the green space. Historical and cultural assets of the local landscape should feature within Green Infrastructure plans".

The Joint Structure Plan for Cumbria and the Lake District was placed on deposit in 2006²⁴. Policy E31 includes an implementation statement which requires the use of landscape character assessment.

"A 'character based' approach will be used when assessing development proposals outside the National Park. This involves assessing the effect on the character and distinctive features of the particular landscape. Such features include built features such as traditional farmhouses, barns and walls and natural features such as hedges, woodlands, hay meadows or wetlands. Proposals will be judged to ensure that they enhance or are in sympathy with local character. Further information on landscape character has been published and should be incorporated into Local Plans 10. The Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme should also be used to help understand the historic character and local distinctiveness of the landscape across the whole County. Within nationally designated landscapes

²² MAFF 1997 under the terms of the Agriculture Act 1986 (Section 18)

²³ GONW 2003

²⁴ Cumbria County Council and LDNPA 2006

such as the National Park or AONBs, development proposals will be tested against Policies E31 and ST8”.

At a National Park level, the Local Plan will remain in place until 2008, when it will be fully replaced by the Local Development Framework which will comprise a number of planning documents including the draft Joint Structure Plan. Policies NE 1-3 in the Local Plan²⁵ cover development in open countryside, larger settlements and villages. These policies recognise the special qualities of the National Park and seek to ensure that development does not detract from the character of the countryside. The National Park has also prepared a Section 3 Conservation Map in the Local Plan which shows those areas of mountain, moor and heath, woodland and coast, the natural beauty of which the National Park Authority feels is particularly important to conserve. The area defined includes much of the fell land that was one of the key reasons for the National Park’s designation. In the draft Joint Structure Plan under Policy ST8, it states that,

“The character of land identified on the Section 3 Conservation Map, lakes and shores, quieter areas, and other sensitive areas will be protected and enhanced. Development which would cause demonstrable harm to the environment, setting or special qualities of the National Park will not be permitted”.

Under policy E31, it also states that,

*“development and other land use changes in areas or features of national or international conservation importance, or within their settings, and that are detrimental to their characteristics will not be permitted”.*²⁶

The Lake District National Park Management Plan dating to 2004,²⁷ one of the delivery vehicles for the Regional Spatial Strategy, has a range of policies which seek to ensure that the Park continues to be renowned for the special landscape qualities that set it apart, its outstanding cultural landscapes and its natural beauty. These policies are discussed in more detail under specific chapter headings.

Within Cumbria, all three AONBs have reference within their Management Plans relating to historic landscape character. Landscape character assessment is seen as one of the mechanisms necessary to secure the conservation of distinctive landscape attributes and features. For example, on the Solway Coast there is a recognition that a wider range of information is needed on the landscape character of the AONB, and that this information can then be used to enhance the contribution of landscape heritage to the overall vision of the AONB.²⁸

It is clear that the planning policy system is presently in transition. Whilst the mechanisms and requirements for the use of HLC are not defined precisely within the policy structure they are, nevertheless, highlighted as a key element for the assessment of development proposals. Landscape characterisation is also specified as an important mechanism for defining the attributes of our most valued landscapes (national parks and AONBs) and ensuring their effective management.

Lake District Historic Environment Strategy

The Lake District Historic Environment Strategy was adopted by the LDNPA and partners in 2007. The HLC forms part of that strategy which is available on the LDNPA website.

²⁵ LDNPA Local Plan 1998

²⁶ Cumbria County Council and the LDNPA 2003

²⁷ LDNPA 2004

²⁸ Solway Coast AONB 2004, section 4.1

The Cumbria and Lake District HLC Programme

“Albeyt the countrey most in wast grounds and ys very cold hard and barren for the winter, yet ys very populous and bredyth tall men and hard of nature, whose habitaciouns are most in the valleys and dales where evry man hath a small porcion of ground; which, albeit the soyle be hard of nature, yet by continuall travel ys made fertile to there great releyf and comfort. ...They have but little tillage, by reason whereof they lyve hardly and at ease, which makyth them tall of personage and hable to endure hardness when necessity requyryth”.²⁹

The landscape is an important factor in a sense of identity. It is a key environmental factor in the quality of life of communities, and is a vital part of their heritage. Thus priority should be afforded to its protection and enhancement. HLC, when integrated with other assessments, enables us to come to an understanding of landscape diversity. The Cumbria and Lake District HLC project has recorded the visible evidence of human history which forms the modern landscape, through a number of attributes held in a database and whose extent is recorded spatially in a Geographic Information System (GIS). Analysis of these attributes allows the creation of a number of HLC landscape types which help define the historic character of a given area and elucidate the historical processes behind the formation of landscape character. GIS allows this data to be shown cartographically.

The principal aims of the Historic Landscape Characterisation project are:

- to improve understanding of the historic character of the landscape of the Cumbria and the Lake District

- to provide data in order to enable high-quality resource management and conservation at a strategic level
- to assist integrated working with other environmental and conservation agencies
- to contextualise individual sites within their wider landscapes
- to enhance awareness of local distinctiveness and identity
- to identify local landscape significance.

The Report Area: An Introduction

The project area is a highly varied landscape as the wide range of Countryside Character areas testify. At the heart of Cumbria is the Lake District National Park, which forms the focus of this report. The Lake District combines a distinctive physical landscape with a recognisable cultural identity, heightened by the romantic aura with which its rugged fells and narrow, steep sided valleys have been endowed since the eighteenth century. It is surrounded by lowland landscapes the character of which varies greatly from the coastal plain to the rich red sandstones of the Eden Valley. Some of these areas may be included within the Lake District National Park in the future as part of a package proposed extensions to designated landscapes.³⁰ Within the Lake District National Park, the most striking aspect of the landscape is the contrast between fell and dale, the result of glacial action during the last Ice Age. The sharpness of this boundary is illustrated well by the contrasts in land capability as mapped according to the Ministry of Agriculture’s land classification.³¹ Almost all Cumbrian lowlands are classed as Grade 3 land, potentially good agricultural land, the principle restriction on use being that imposed by the area’s cool, moist climate. The upland fells and moors, classed as Grade 4 or 5, afford little scope for modern arable farming, with

²⁹ Crown Survey of the Earl of Northumberland’s Estates in Cumberland, 1570. PRO; E164/37, f3 reprinted in Winchester 1987, 1

³⁰ Alison Farmer Associates and Julie Martin Associates 2006

³¹ Winchester 1987, 8

steep slopes, thin acidic soils and a rapid deterioration in climate, with elevation rendering them suitable only for rough pasture. It is this upland land classification which dominates most of the Lake District National Park,³² and ensures that modern agriculture largely consists of highly marginal hill farming, dependent on cattle and primarily sheep rearing. This of course is the pattern of land use developed since the agricultural improvements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The medieval agrarian landscape would have been quite different. Peasant subsistence-based farming ensured that arable land was, of necessity, quite extensive within the settled valleys of the Lake District, though restricted by poor drainage and heavy boulder clays.³³

For many people the Lake District landscape epitomises a 'natural' landscape and, to an extent, this was reflected in the initial designation of the National Park. Even today, the conservation agenda is focussed primarily on the natural environment, with human influence being seen as a subset of natural habitat types.³⁴ From the open fells to the wooded lakesides, however, the entire landscape is partly a product of human activity, of both farming and industry. The Lake District is a cultural landscape just like any other part of Cumbria. The interaction between people and the products of glaciation are what has made the Lake District's scenery internationally famous and provide its greatest historical significance.

Topography and Geology

The upland landform produced by glaciation has variety within it brought about by the underlying geology. The Lake District is a small dome of Lower Palaeozoic rocks, protruding from below a cover of Carboniferous and Permo-

Triassic rocks. The edge of the Lower Palaeozoic core is marked by a distinct change of slope. The Lake District



Plate 2: An aerial view of Coniston, looking towards the fells which were extensively exploited for copper (© LDNPA)

National Park boundary and the 250m upland contour coincide with this change in geology.³⁵ Three main geological divisions contribute to the different appearance of landscapes across the Lake District. The Skiddaw Group is the oldest group of rocks in the Lake District. They were formed during the Ordovician period, about 500 million years ago, as black mud settling on the sea bed in relatively deep water where occasional layers of coarser silt and sand were also deposited. The Skiddaw Group forms a roughly triangular mountainous zone in the north of the Park, reaching a maximum height of 931m on Skiddaw itself. The mountains which have developed on the Skiddaw are generally smooth in outline.³⁶

³² DEFRA 2003

³³ Winchester 1987, 10

³⁴ LDNPA, www.lake-district.gov.uk/index/understanding/countryside_conservation/lakedistrict_habitats

³⁵ Dodd 1992, 1

³⁶ Jackson 1978, 79-98

South of the Skiddaw Group lies the Borrowdale Volcanic Group. These rocks are the product of pyroclastics flows which erupted during a phase of cataclysmic volcanism 450 million years ago. Ash and lava fragments thrown up by the volcano settled out in the encircling waters to form Tuffs and Agglomerates. The rocks underlie the highest and craggiest central part of the Lake District, including the well known peaks of Scafell (964m) and Scafell Pike (978m), Helvellyn (950m), Conistone Old Man (803m) and the Langdale Pikes (736m). The ruggedness of the terrain makes this the most popular area with fell walkers and rock climbers.³⁷

Further south again is a zone of slates, siltstones and sandstones, also formed in the sea, during the Silurian period about 420 million years ago. These rocks are known as The Windermere Group, and include rocks of the Conistone Limestone sub-group.³⁸ They are softer than the Borrowdale Volcanic Group and so form more gentle foothills stretching from the Duddon estuary to Kendal. They provide a markedly different landform to that of the higher and craggier relief of the Borrowdale Volcanics to the north.³⁹ They are possibly the most familiar part of the Lake District to many visitors as they lie across the A591, the main tourist route into the National Park, and include the lakes of Windermere and Conistone Water.

Facing the Lake District is the steep scarp face and peaty plateaux of the Cross Fell range and North Pennines. A curving band of limestone forming a series of plateaux and valleys, stretching from Shap to Kirkby Stephen. South of this lie the flat-topped but steep-sided Howgill Fells. More limestone hills are found around Sedburgh, Dentdale and Garsdale, and further south at lower altitudes, between Kirkby Stephen and the Lune valley and in the Arnside-

Silverdale area. South of the Lune the gritstone Bowland fells are acid and covered with extensive areas of blanket peat.

Between these uplands are valleys and coastal lowlands with more fertile soils, particularly in the Eden valley draining to the Solway and, to a less marked extent, in the lower Lune valley and west Cumbria.⁴⁰ Around Morecambe Bay are extensive areas of lowland peat moss and salt marsh ripe, much of which has been reclaimed for farmland since the seventeenth century. In many places though, as with the country north and east of Kendal, or around Cockermouth, the lowlands are broken up by ridges which, although not high and impressive, were still unimproved in the later eighteenth century.⁴¹

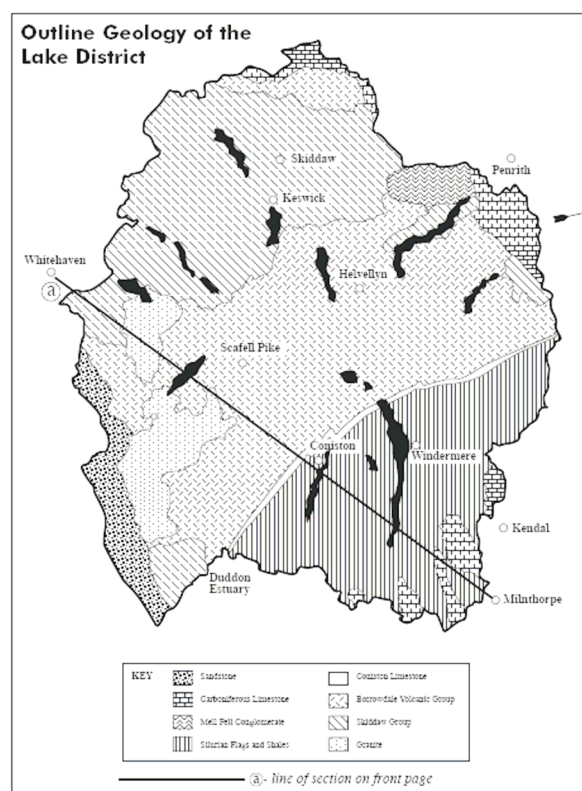


Figure 2: A simplified geology of the Lake District, taken from the Lake District National Park Geology fact sheet (www.lake-district.org.uk)

³⁷ Millward *et al* 1978, 99-120

³⁸ Kelly 1992, 41-5; Ingham *et al* 1978, 121-29

³⁹ Kelly 1992, 45

⁴⁰ Ratcliffe 1997, 13-16

⁴¹ Whyte 2003, 15