

Investigating the Historic Landscape of Wiltshire and Swindon!

We are delighted to announce that the Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project started in early April 2012. This three year project is sponsored by English Heritage and is being run by Wiltshire Council in partnership with Swindon Borough Council.

The project aims to examine Wiltshire and Swindon to investigate the historic and archaeological processes which have influenced the landscapes that we currently use and enjoy today. This will help us to understand the origins and evolution of both the countryside and urban areas of the county, and to identify what makes each place special and distinct. This innovative approach to studying the heritage of an area is called Historic Landscape Characterisation.



Silbury Hill, near Avebury, a landscape clearly influenced by past human activity

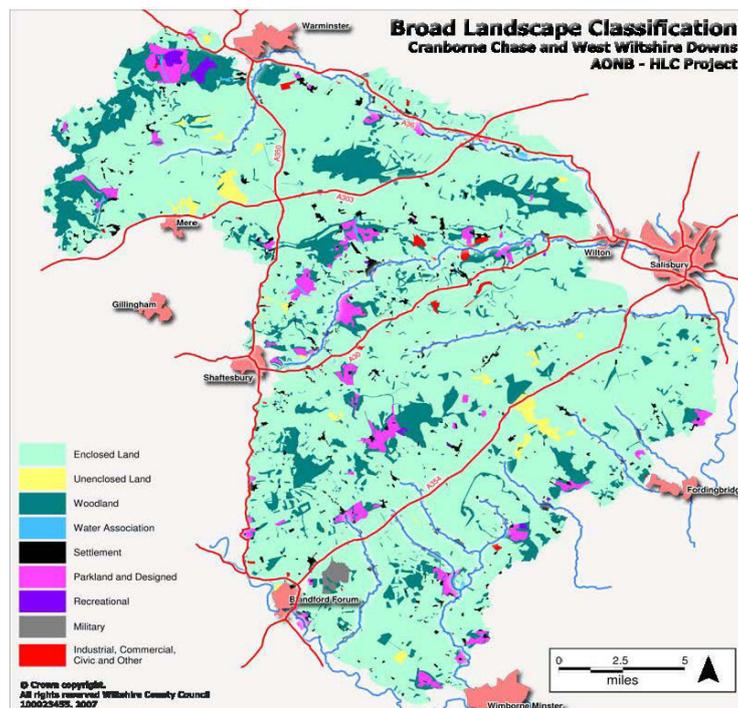
It is intended that the historic landscape character study will be of benefit to local communities. The data will be used to inform development strategies, management of heritage areas/sites and academic research into the county. It will also be available for general interest and enjoyment.

In order to carry out this work a wide variety of sources will be used. These include modern OS maps, aerial photographs, historic maps and archaeological information from the county Historic Environment Record (HER). All of these fantastic resources are available at the History Centre based here in Chippenham.



Salisbury depicted on historic mapping (Andrews & Dury 1773) and modern aerial photography of Westbury

All of this research will go towards producing a detailed and interactive digital map, descriptions and photographs of the landscapes visible across the county, analysis of archaeology present in the landscape and so much more! The project also intends to integrate the historic landscape character studies that have already been produced for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (<http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk/index.html>) and the North Wessex Downs AONB (<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=12848>).

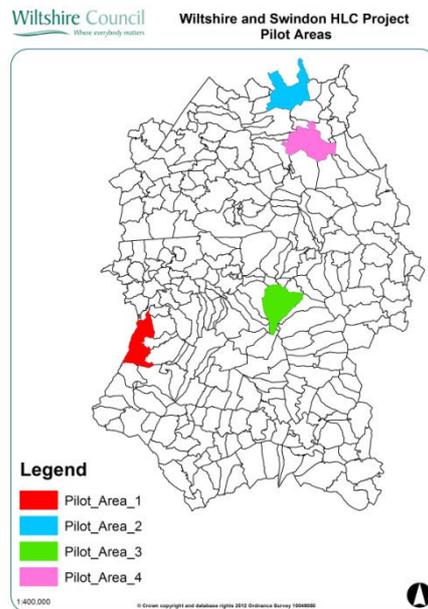


HLC mapping for Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs

To produce this wide-ranging study input will be sought from organisations such as the National Trust, Natural England and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). However, involvement in the project is open to a wide audience so please look out for the

project webpage which will be launched shortly. This will provide information on how to contribute to the project.

It is also worth noting that mapping for the project pilot areas (the first parts of the county to be characterised) will be posted on the webpage, along with a 'Project Totaliser' so that you can see the progress being made!



The four proposed pilot areas for the HLC project

In the meantime, if you would like more information about this exciting project then please feel free to contact Tom Sunley on Thomas.Sunley@wiltshire.gov.uk or telephone 01249 705526.

Tom Sunley
Historic Landscape Characterisation Officer
Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service