

Prepared for Fáilte Ireland by:



FEASIBILITY STUDY

TO IDENTIFY SCENIC LANDSCAPES IN IRELAND



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

<https://www.mosart.ie/>

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Executive Summary

This feasibility study provides a sound, practical and well researched framework for the development of a national scenic landscapes map for Ireland. The first concerted effort to prepare such a map was in 1977 by An Foras Forbartha¹, and there has been little or no advance on this challenging issue since then. Instead, all Local Authorities have embarked on independent assessments of their own landscapes, the result of which is a disparate collection of maps differing in methodology and resulting policies. It is time to prepare a coherent national map of scenic landscapes, to be used in conjunction with the proposed national landscape character assessment proposed recently by the Heritage Council².

The development of a national scenic landscape map should be completed in parallel with assessment of landscape character. It is important firstly to establish 'what' is there and then to make a judgment on how 'valued' it is. The study should be coordinated by one body (for example the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government) guided by an external expert group, and would probably be best implemented by a panel of experienced consultant firms. It must involve stakeholder consultation as this is an integral part of establishing landscape values, which is also a requirement of the European Landscape Convention 2000.

The mapping of scenic landscapes should be preceded by the preparation of a graphically illustrated suite of practical guidance documents detailing the stepwise approach that should be used nationally to identify and protect what is our greatest tourism asset – the Irish landscape. The survey of Local Authority attitudes regarding landscape assessment carried out as part of this project supports such a coordinated approach, wherein 50% of those surveyed feel that a national system for identifying scenic landscapes is required.

The implementation of the landscape character map and the scenic landscapes map will finally put to rest the uncertainty that has existed regarding landscape assessment since the publication of the DoEHLG draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2000. Instead of the chaos that currently prevails, these national maps will provide a nationally integrated digital GIS based resource that will be a valuable tool for both decision makers and the public alike. The feasibility of developing such a GIS database, along with a thorough review of the planning consultation process in relation to scenic landscapes, has been separately investigated by Macro Works. There will no longer be inconsistency of classification and zoning at county boundaries, landscape terminology will be clarified and simplified using an agreed set of descriptors and classes and the maps will be much more meaningful in terms of their practical application and policy relevance.

A structure has been proposed in both this study and that of the Heritage Council for delivering the long awaited national character and values maps. There is currently sufficient legislation in place to afford protection to Ireland's scenic landscapes but such powers are not being exercised as much as might be expected. The power to protect is totally at the discretion of individual Local Authorities and because such designations bring with them development restrictions implementation can be politically difficult.

It is high time that the Irish landscape is afforded the level of attention and concern that it so deserves. Future generations will not thank us if we needlessly erode the special character and quality of Ireland's landscape. The completion of such studies would be a fitting legacy of the Celtic Tiger, that time was taken in the rush of the booming economy to provide a sound basis for protection of what is one of our best assets, the Irish landscape.

¹ An Foras Forbartha Teoranta was The National Institute for Physical Planning and Construction Research Limited, formed in 1964 and dissolved in 1992, that published a number of documents on rural Irish landscapes in the 60's and 70's.

² The Heritage Council 2006, Landscape Character Assessment in Ireland: Baseline Audit and Evaluation, published by the Heritage Council, prepared by Julie Martin Associates, UK.



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the study

Fáilte Ireland recently carried out a preliminary review of landscape and amenity policies in County Development Plans, which revealed that a wide variety of approaches has been adopted by Local Authorities in seeking to preserve the character of their landscapes through their Development Plans. These approaches differ in relation to the following aspects of the designation process:

- (a) methodology used to identify important scenic areas;
- (b) range of designation types and terminology used (e.g. high amenity landscapes, scenic landscapes, scenic routes, views and prospects, etc.);
- (c) level of detail used to describe designated areas;
- (d) policy framework associated with the designated areas;
- (e) mapping method used to illustrate designated areas.

In 2006, the Heritage Council undertook a very revealing study of the current situation in Ireland with regards to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)). The Report reveals a summary of how the process is being applied throughout the country. In short, there appears to be a widespread lack of understanding among Local Authorities of how landscape characterisation might best be applied resulting in broad scale inconsistencies in methodology and, accordingly, usefulness of the studies. The Heritage Council's study is critically important insofar as it serves as a wake-up call regarding the state of play of landscape characterisation in Ireland. A more coherent approach is clearly needed, to be driven by a revision of the current (Draft) Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2000.

Following the Fáilte Ireland and Heritage Council studies, the aim of this project is to carry out a feasibility study to examine the following two issues:

- ▶ Introduction of a standardised designation system for scenic landscapes which could apply to all local authorities providing good practice standards for designation types such as scenic landscapes, tourist amenity areas, scenic routes, and views and prospects.
- ▶ Creation of a centralised GIS-based database of designated scenic landscapes and views and prospects as well as a digital planning referral system which could be used to ensure that Fáilte Ireland is only referred planning applications that might adversely affect Ireland's most valued landscapes. This second issue has also been investigated by MosArt (in conjunction with Macro Works) and will be presented in a separate report.

Footnote: Landscape Character Assessment, referred to hereafter as LCA(1) should not be confused with Landscape Conservation Areas which is hereafter referred to as LCA(2).

1.2 Methodology

The methodological processes used during the course of researching and drafting this report were a combination of desk study and consultation with a wide number of stakeholders, the details of which are outlined in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Study Methodology

Desk Study

- ▶ Explore the role of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)) process and how scenic landscape designations might link in with LCA(1) methodologies.
- ▶ Compare existing landscape designations in use by various local authorities and their associated planning policies.
- ▶ Review examples of international best practice in designating scenic landscapes.

Stakeholder Consultation

Consultation with a wide number of stakeholders was required in the Project Brief, the value of which was greatly appreciated by the consultants. Stakeholder consultation methods used were as follows;

- ▶ Meetings of the Steering Group;
- ▶ A focus group meeting;
- ▶ Telephone interviews and;
- ▶ The circulation of a local authority questionnaire.

Analysis and Recommendations

The information gathered during the desk study, consultation and survey stages was reviewed and analysed. The recommendations developed thereafter propose a combination of measures that could provide long term permanent solution to the current incoherent system of designating scenic landscapes.

Reporting

The project Steering Group met a number of times at different stages of the research and drafting process to discuss the progress of the report. The Steering Group comprised of representatives from the Environment Unit of Fáilte Ireland, The Heritage Council and Ordnance Survey Ireland.

1.3 Landscape Definitions

What Do We Mean By 'Landscape'?

The Heritage Act 1995 includes a definition of Landscape as including "areas, sites, vistas and features of significant scenic, archaeological, geological, historical, ecological or other scientific interest". Furthermore, the Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines issued for Consultation by the DoEHLG in 2000 suggest that Landscape "embraces all that is visible when one looks across an area of land". Further, the complexity of landscape is described as "a context that is nature based but which also is typically modified by humans. It comprises physical elements and processes as well as visually perceived compositions. It is at once physical and symbolic and is never static but always dynamically changing. It includes all landscapes and not only the scenic and important prospects".

At a European level, Article 1 of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), Florence 2000, defines landscape as follows:

- a). 'Landscape' means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors...[That] landscape forms a whole, whose natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately.
- b). 'Landscape protection' means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity.

There has been an intense debate in the UK in the past decade about 'landscape' in trying to arrive at an agreed set of concepts and definitions for the purpose of clarification and consistency. Landscape is now generally considered in terms of (a) Characterisation (which is value-free) and (b) Making Judgements (which is value laden). This process is known as Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)). The Characterisation stage is the focus of a recent report published by The Heritage Council, *Landscape Character Assessment in Ireland: Baseline Audit and Evaluation 2006*, whereas the Making Judgements stage is of primary concern to this study.

Both this and the Heritage Council's report represent both sides of the same landscape coin, therefore, and collectively aim to contribute to a fuller understanding of this complex and challenging issue.

1.4 Describing the LCA Process

The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)) process has been used throughout Europe since the early 1990s to assess landscapes. It has been developed as a tool for driving landscape policy and managing change in the landscape.

In 2002 the Countryside Agency and the Scottish Natural Heritage published *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* which is generally regarded as the most authoritative and widely referenced LCA(1) guidance document published. It clearly outlines the three key stages in the LCA(1) process: 1) characterisation, 2) making judgements about values and quality and 3) making judgements about sensitivity and capacity. The outcome of LCA(1) is a series of landscape character maps at different scales, accompanied by written descriptions. A Historic Landscape Character (HLC) study may be required in order to give a 'time-depth' description of a landscape, and the 'Forces of Change' should be established.

The making of judgements happens in the second stage of the process. This stage is especially challenging because it requires the making of subjective judgements to establish Landscape Value and Landscape Quality. This stage is critical as it 'democratises' (ie. involves public consultation) landscape assessment and, in doing so, fulfils one of the core principles of the ELC 2000. Having established Landscape Value, Landscape Quality and the Forces of Change, the process can then move on to establish Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity (Figure 2).

Step 1: Classify Landscape Character

(Focus of Heritage Council Study (2006))

DoEHLG expected to initiate national classification in 2007/2008

- ▶ Landscape Character Types: Generic types, occurring in different parts of the country.
Example - Limestone Pavement
- ▶ Landscape Character Areas: Geographically specific examples of a given landscape type
Example - The Burren Limestone Pavement



Step 2: Classify Landscape Values and Quality

(Focus of Fáilte Ireland Study (2007))

- ▶ Landscape Values: Scenic Beauty, Relative importance, Quality, Rarity, Representativeness
Example - The Burren is of international significance, whereas the Glen of Aherlow is of Regional significance



Step 3: Classify Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

- ▶ Landscape Sensitivity: Inherent sensitivity to change of a landscape resource, including reference to visual sensitivity
Example - The Burren is inherently sensitive to change and attracts a high number of visitors
- ▶ Landscape Capacity: the degree to which a particular landscape can accommodate change without significant effects on its character. depends on type of change being introduced.
Example - A given landscape might be capable of accommodating scattered one-off housing but not wind farms

Figure 2: Overview of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)) Process

1.5 Definition of Key Landscape Concepts

Even experienced practitioners in Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)) can find the terminology used in the process awkward and confusing. For this reason there follows a series of definitions of the key terms used, some of which are drawn from the above mentioned Heritage Council's report (which in turn drew from the Countryside Agency and The Scottish Natural Heritage's *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland 2002*):

1. Landscape Character
2. Landscape Character Types
3. Landscape Character Areas
4. Landscape Value
5. Landscape Quality
6. Landscape Sensitivity
7. Landscape Capacity
8. Forces of Change
9. Historical Landscape Character and Historical Landscape Assessment

The relationship between these concepts and their role in the whole landscape character assessment (LCA(1)) process is presented graphically in Figure 2 above

1.5.1 Landscape Character

Landscape Character is the recognisable pattern of physical elements which makes an area distinct from other types of landscape and gives it its particular sense of place. It is the combination of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement that creates landscape character.

1.5.2 Landscape Character Type

Landscape Character Types are distinct landscapes that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but where ever they occur they broadly share similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use and settlement pattern. For example drumlins and mountain moorlands are recognisable and distinct landscape character types.

An example of a county assessed at the level of landscape character types is provided in Figure 3 overleaf (prepared by MosArt and Macro Works in 2000).

1.5.3 Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Areas are unique, geographically-specific examples of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type. This distinction is reflected in the naming of types and areas: landscape character types have generic names, but landscape character areas take on the names of specific places. Example might be the south Leitrim drumlins and the Wicklow mountain moorlands.

An example of a county assessed at the level of landscape character area is provided in Figure 4 below (prepared by MosArt and Macro Works in 2000).

1.5.4 Landscape Value

Landscape Value is concerned with the relative importance that is attached to different landscapes. Highly valued landscapes may be recognised through designation or may simply be valued locally without any formal designation. Criteria or reasons why a landscape is valued may include its landscape quality, scenic beauty, rarity or representativeness, conservation interests, wildness, tranquillity and cultural or historical associations. The existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally, may also be relevant.

The Consultants conclude that it is the issue of Landscape Values that is of central concern to this project and will thus be the focus of much of this report.

Examples of three landscapes (Croagh Patrick, Mayo, Vinegar Hill, Wexford, and the Sugar Loaf, Wicklow) which are of similar character type, comprising conical shaped rocky mountain profiles, but which may be considered of different importance are illustrated in Figure 6. Croagh Patrick is classified in the Mayo County Plan (2003 – 2009) as 'Croagh Patrick Association' and views of the mountain are designated as Highly Scenic. Views from Vinegar Hill are protected in the Enniscorthy Town Plan (2003) and the hill itself is designated as Recreational, Amenity and Open Space. The Sugar Loaf is designated in the Wicklow County Development Plan (2007) as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are several designated viewpoints listed which provide views of it. Within their own county development plans, therefore, each of these mountains is afforded similar levels of protection. However at a national scale, they would likely be rated differently, with Croagh Patrick perhaps being of international importance, Vinegar Hill of national importance and the Sugar Loaf of regional importance.

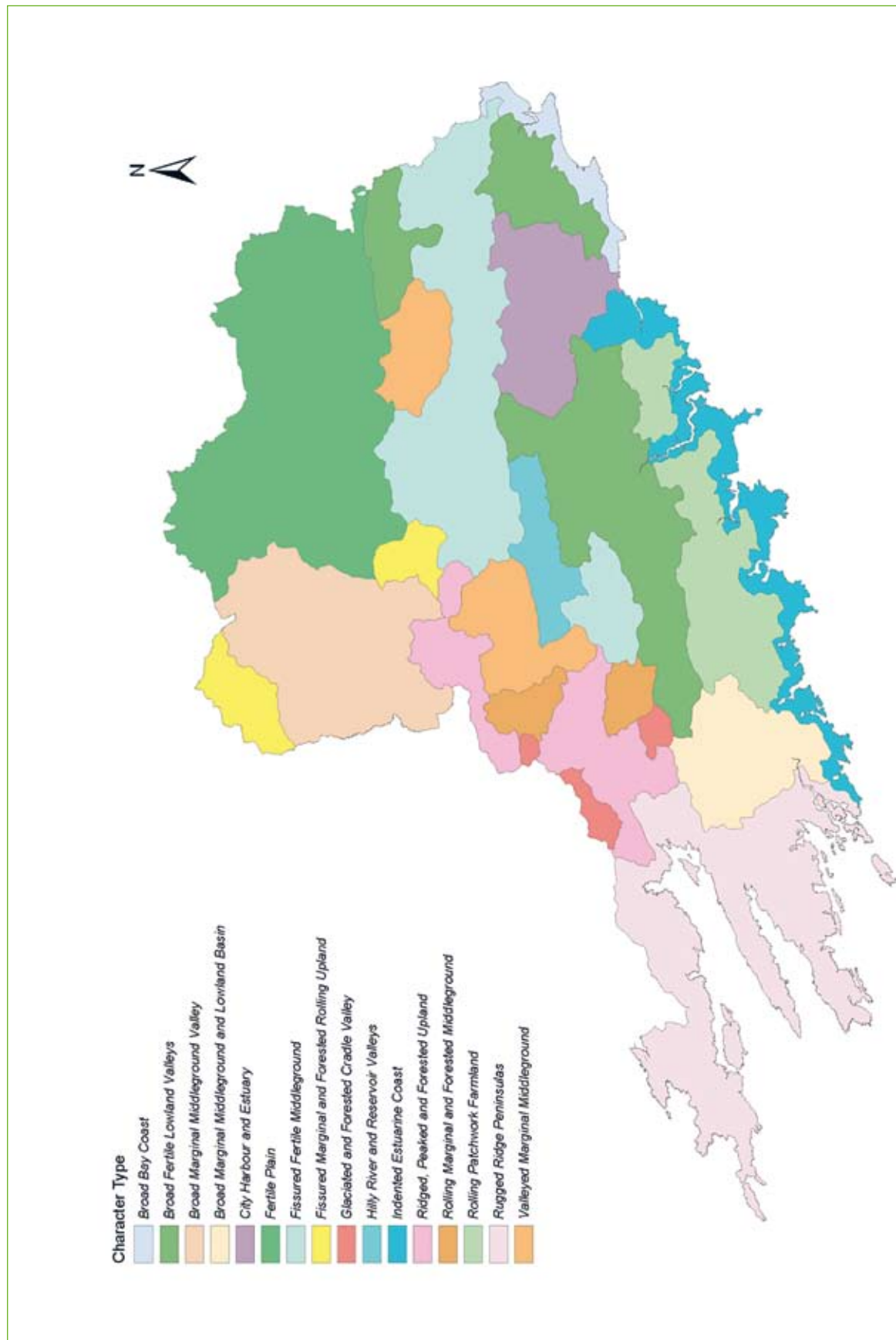


Figure 3: Landscape Character Types for County Cork (MosArt) and Macro Works, 2000)

1.5.5 Landscape Quality

Landscape Quality (or condition) is based on judgements made about the physical state of the landscape and about its intactness, from visual, functional and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.

An example of a high and low quality landscape is depicted in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: High quality lakeland landscape compared to low quality landscape with quarrying and abandonment of farmland



Figure 6: Three landscapes of perhaps different importance, Croagh Patrick (International), Vinegar Hill (National), Sugar Loaf, Wlcklow, (Regional)

1.5.6 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity refers to the inherent sensitivity to change of the landscape resource, in terms of both its character as a whole and its individual elements as well as the visual sensitivity of the landscape in terms of views, visibility, number and nature of viewers and scope to mitigate visual impact. Landscape sensitivity is usually classified in relation to a specific development type. In Figure 8, for example, a draft landscape sensitivity map for wind farms in County Waterford is presented. In that map, four different categories of acceptability of wind farm development are proposed, including No Go areas (highest sensitivity), Open to Consideration, Preferred and Strategic (least sensitive). This map was produced as a result of professional interpretation of landscape sensitivity in the field by landscape architects but was also influenced by two local stakeholder workshops.

1.5.7 Landscape Capacity

Landscape Capacity refers to the degree to which a particular landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed. It should reflect the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, its sensitivity to the particular type of development in question, and the values attached to the landscape or elements within it.

The capacity of different landscapes to accommodate change through, for example, the introduction of wind farms can be explored through the use of photomontages such as those depicted in Figure 7 below.

Landscape capacity is normally assessed by firstly examining the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, but more specifically its sensitivity to the particular type of development in question. This means that capacity will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource as well as the value attached to the landscape or to specific elements in it.



Figure 7: Landscape Capacity for change through Wind Farms (Macro Works)

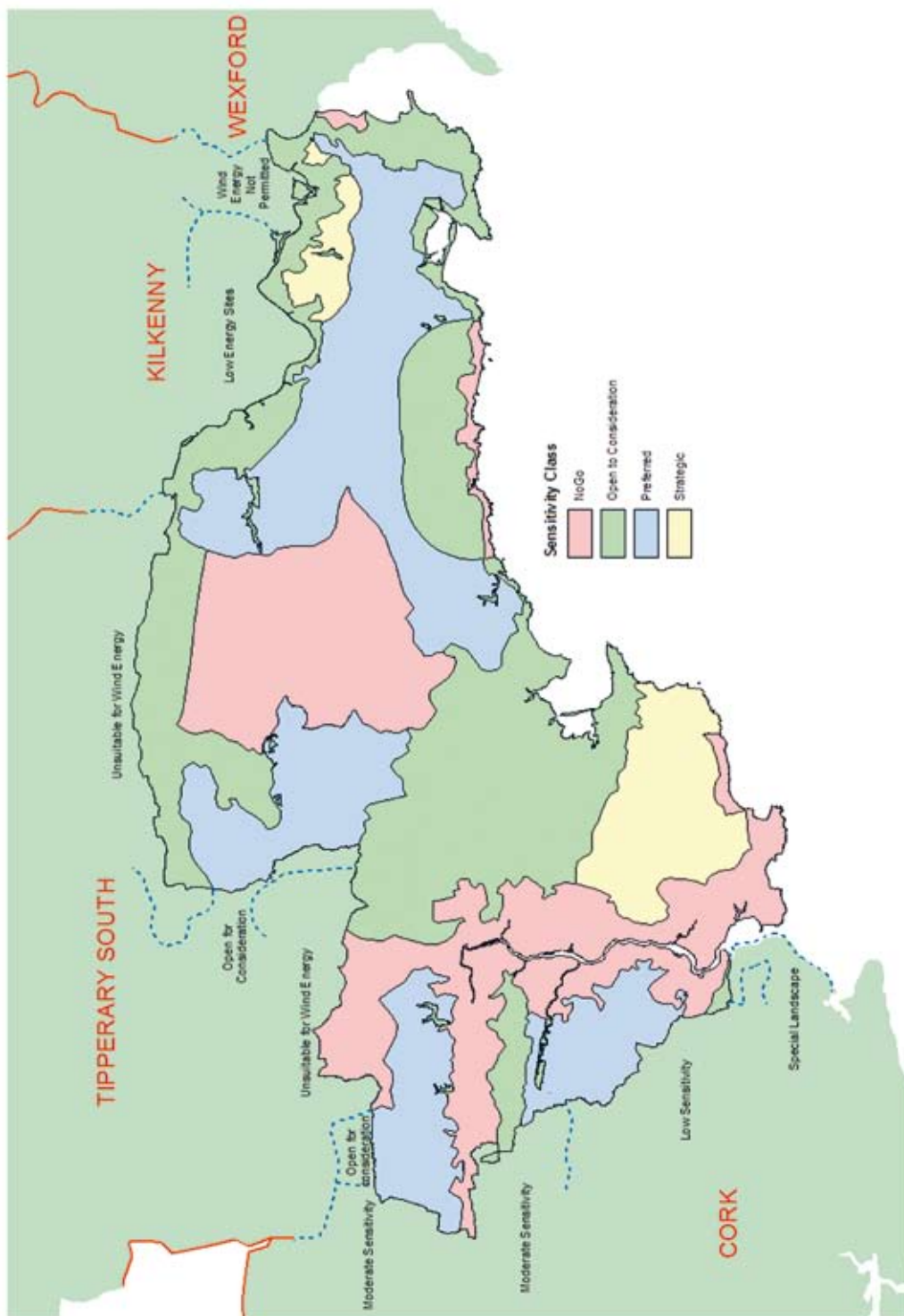


Figure8: Draft Landscape Sensitivity Map for County Waterford Pertaining to Wind Farm Development (MosArt & Macro Works, 2006)

Detailed guidance on this issue can be found in the document entitled Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland. TOPIC PAPER 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, produced jointly by Scottish natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency.

1.5.8 Forces of Change

This is a description of natural or land management trends that may affect the landscape character of an area. These issues are identified by information gathered during the LCA(1) process, including knowledge gained through stakeholder participation.

1.5.9 Historic Landscape Character & Historic Landscape Assessment

There are two approaches used in the UK to record areas historic landscape character; Historic Landscape Character (HLC) which is used in England and Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA) which is used in Scotland (in the text below 'HLC' will be used as an acronym for both approaches). HLC helps to explain how the combination of natural factors and human activity that have influenced the present day landscape. The difference between HLC and LCA(1) is that the former is based mainly on types rather than on the discrete heterogeneous areas that form LCA(1)'s main output³. HLC tends to work at a finer grain than LCA(1). The findings of historic landscape character are typically incorporated into character area descriptions. HLC is therefore complimentary to the LCA(1) process. For Irish landscapes HLC may have particular relevance and it may be appropriate to conduct a HLC in order to give a 'time-depth' description of a landscape. A HLC was conducted for the County Clare Pilot LCA (2000), presented in Figure 9, as well as a more recent assessment coordinated by MosArt in County Roscommon (2007 – Figure 10).

³ Countryside Agency & Scottish Natural Heritage LCA Guidance for England and Scotland, Topic Paper No 5, Understanding Historic Landscape Character

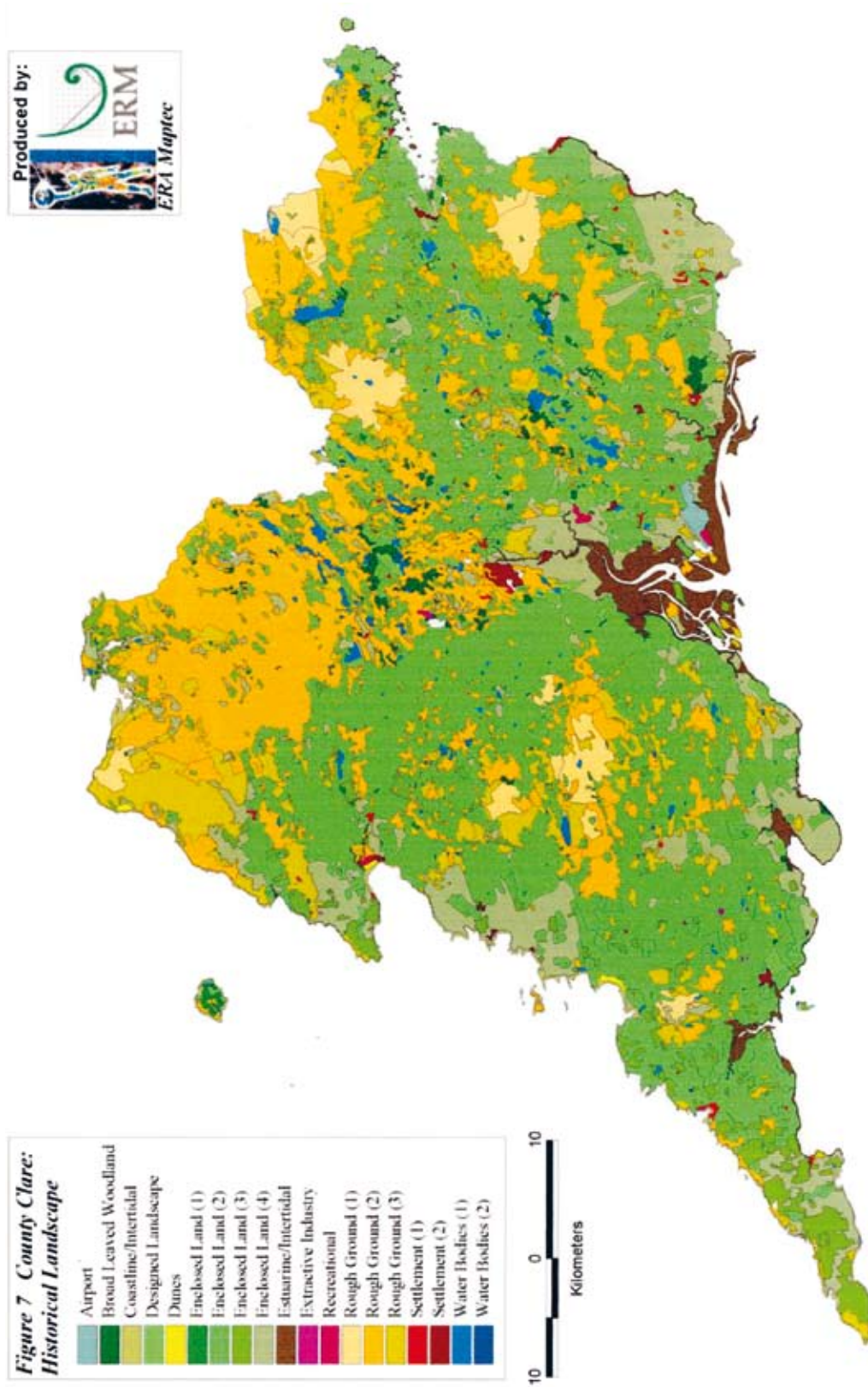


Figure 9: Historical Landscape Character (HLC) Map of County Clare. Pilot Study on Landscape Characterisation in County Clare
Environmental Resources Management & ERA-Maptec Ltd. Published by the Heritage Council, April 2000

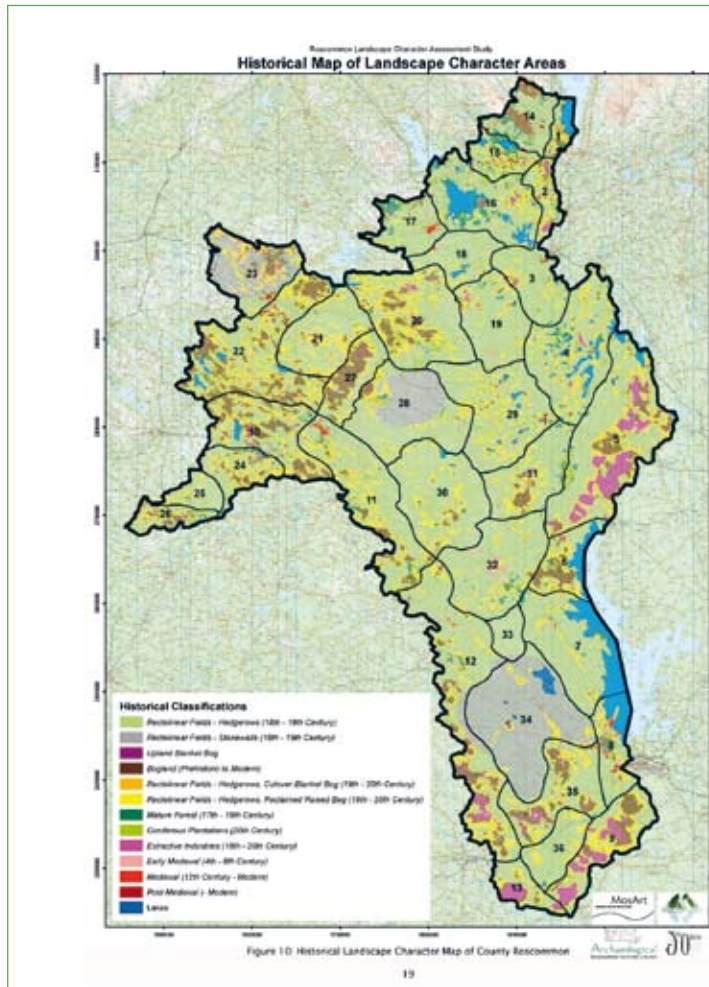


Figure 10: Historical Landscape Character Map of County Roscommon

1.6 Structure of the Feasibility Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 *Background to Scenic Landscape protection in Ireland* aims to outline the context within which a Scenic Landscape Designation System will be set. It will discuss the Landscape Character Assessment LCA(1) process in Ireland and Europe. It will also examine the provision for landscape protection under the Planning and Development Act 2000 and will look at the role of Fáilte Ireland as a prescribed body.

Chapter 3 *Stakeholder Consultation Research Findings* will provide an overview of the findings from the stakeholder consultation including the Local Authority questionnaire and the Focus Group meeting.

Chapter 4 *A National Approach to Designating Scenic Landscapes in Ireland* will propose a possible methodology for mapping Landscape Value. It will discuss the various participative processes involving stakeholders and it will put forward a sample set of criteria for assessing scenic landscapes.

Chapter 5 *Conclusion and Recommendations* will draw together the findings of the report. The principle study conclusion will be outlined in this chapter as well as detailing actions that need to be taken.



Chapter 2

Background to Scenic Landscape Protection in Ireland

Fáilte Ireland has a clear mandate in ensuring that the character and quality of landscapes is maintained and enhanced. The current means of contributing towards this is through its role as a Prescribed Body, wherein all Local Authorities are required, under the *Planning and Development Act of 2000*, to refer all 'relevant' planning applications to Fáilte Ireland for their consideration. A chronological overview of key landscape-related legislation, including the above 2000 Act, is provided below, referring to the landscape initiatives listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Irish Landscapes Initiatives since 1932

Date	Landscape Initiatives
1932	National Parks movement which commenced in Killarney
1963	Local Government (Planning & Development) Act
1977	National Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes
1994	"Developing Sustainable Tourism" Bord Fáilte Tourism Development Plan 1994 - 1999
2000 & 2001	The Planning and Development Act & Regulations
2000	Existing (draft) landscape guidance issued by the DELG*
2000	European Landscape Convention
2002	Ireland signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention

2.1 Scenic Landscape Protection Pre 2000

1932 – The National Park Network

The first major step towards protection of special Irish landscapes was the formation of Killarney National Park. This was Ireland's first National Park and came into being in 1932 when the Muckross Estate (the core of the present day National Park) was presented to the Nation by Senator Arthur Vincent from California and his parents-in-law Mr. and Mrs. William Bowers Bourn, in memory of his late wife Maud.

In recognition of the status of Killarney National Park, it was designated in 1981 by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve, part of a global network of natural areas with conservation, research, education and training as their major objectives. There are now six National Parks in Ireland, including Glenveagh in Donegal, Ballycroy in Mayo, Connemara in Galway, the Burren in Clare, Killarney in Kerry and Wicklow Mountains in Wicklow.

1963 – Local Government (Planning & Development) Act

This Act was introduced in 1963 which required every planning authority to make a plan indicating development objectives for their area. The development plan would consist of a written statement and a plan indicating the development objectives for the area in question, including objectives for preserving, improving and extending amenities. This was the first piece of legislation in Ireland which specifically established objectives for all local authorities to set about protecting their landscapes. The legislation was very vague and open to interpretation at a county level, however, with the result that there emerged a huge variety of approaches used by different Local Authorities. Guidance for Local Authorities on this challenging issue would not emerge for another 40 years or so, and even then there remains to this day a highly inconsistent approach across the country.

* Now the DoEHLG

1977 - The Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes

The Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes has been used by many planning authorities for the last 30 years to identify and locate the most exceptional landscapes in their county and develop objectives in their County Development Plans (CDP). To this day The Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes (Figure 11) is still used by some Local Authorities for this purpose, despite the fact that there has been a lot of landscape initiatives introduced in the meantime, including the Planning and Development & Regulations Act (2000 and 2001) and the European Landscape Convention (2000).

The Inventory was commissioned at the request of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and was intended to complement the UN List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves and the World Directory of National Parks and other Protected Areas. The Inventory describes landscapes in terms of 'character' and contains a map of 'landscape types' including written descriptions and a list of 'Hazards' (Forces of Change). However, given the advancement of methods for assessing landscapes particularly in the last decade, the Inventory might now be regarded as outdated as explored below:

- ▶ The 'Outstanding Landscapes' chosen were based on areas already identified in previous County Development Plans as well as the National Coastline Survey. There was no fresh or independent assessment of all potential landscapes. To this day the term 'outstanding' is still used in landscape classification by some local authorities despite the fact that there is no such designation in Irish law.
- ▶ The document does not outline the methodology used for making complex subjective judgements about landscape. The Inventory did not separate the processes of firstly establishing landscape character and then making judgements based on character and landscape value. As a result one landscape is considered 'Outstanding' over another, while also assessing it in terms of sensitivity and capacity. Therefore, 'Outstanding' also means 'most at risk from development'. There is no distinction between the two.
- ▶ The inclusion of the whole of Western Galway and Mayo on the map, compared to the limited areas representing Cork and Kerry, points to a narrow focus on macro 'open' landscapes as being 'outstanding'. The criteria used for designating 'outstanding' landscapes are thus unclear.
- ▶ The authors repeatedly state that the Inventory is a '*first attempt*' at establishing a national overview of '*outstanding landscape value throughout the country*'. Given that it was published in 1977 and that there has been an unprecedented level of development it is unquestionable that The Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes needs to be updated.

1994 – “Developing Sustainable Tourism” Bord Fáilte Tourism Development Plan 1994 -1999

In 1994 Bord Fáilte published “Developing Sustainable Tourism” with the objective of putting in place a sustainable tourism product that would be strong enough to achieve the full market potential of the tourism industry in Ireland. As part of this initiative, the strategy identified 25 ‘national scenic landscapes’ which are judged to be of great natural beauty and which demand special management attention. A four fold approach to management of these landscapes was proposed as outlined below:

- ▶ Appropriate planning controls to conserve landscape beauty;
- ▶ Development of recreation and access facilities;
- ▶ Conservation of landscape features; and
- ▶ Provision of countryside information services.

The 25 national scenic landscapes are depicted below in Figure 12.

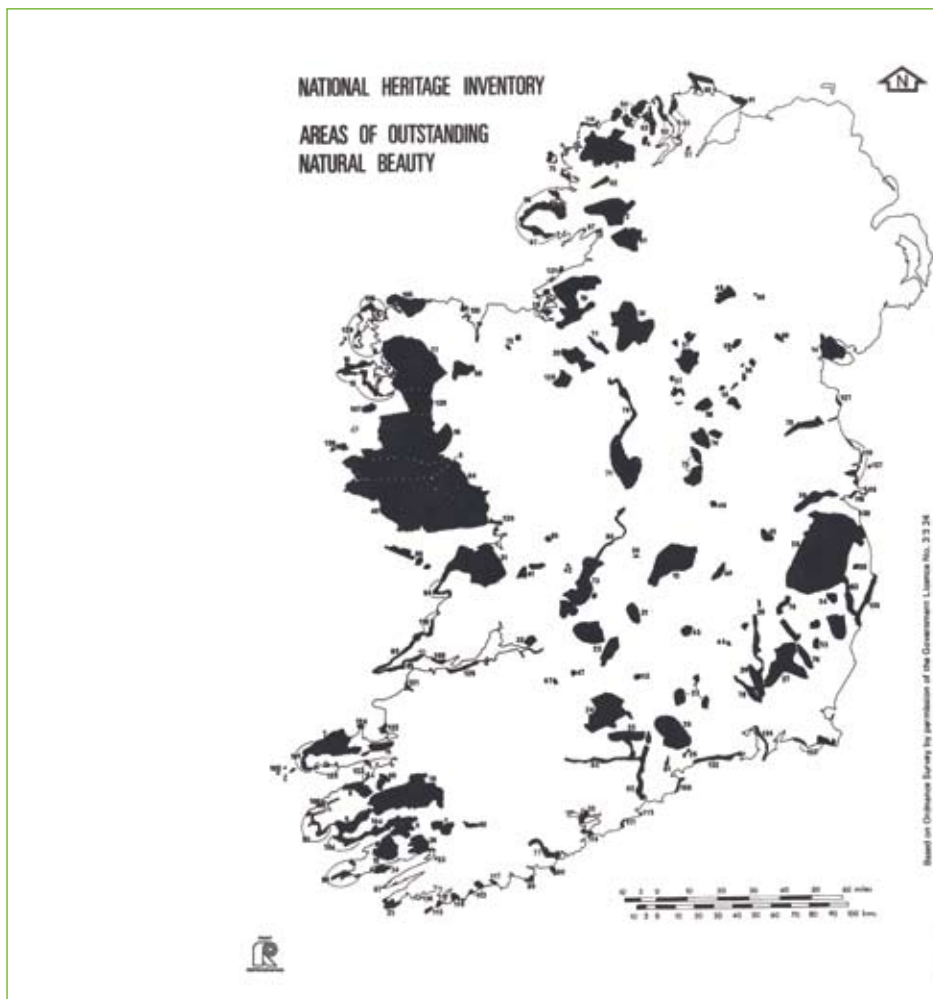


Figure 11: An Foras Forbartha: Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes 1977

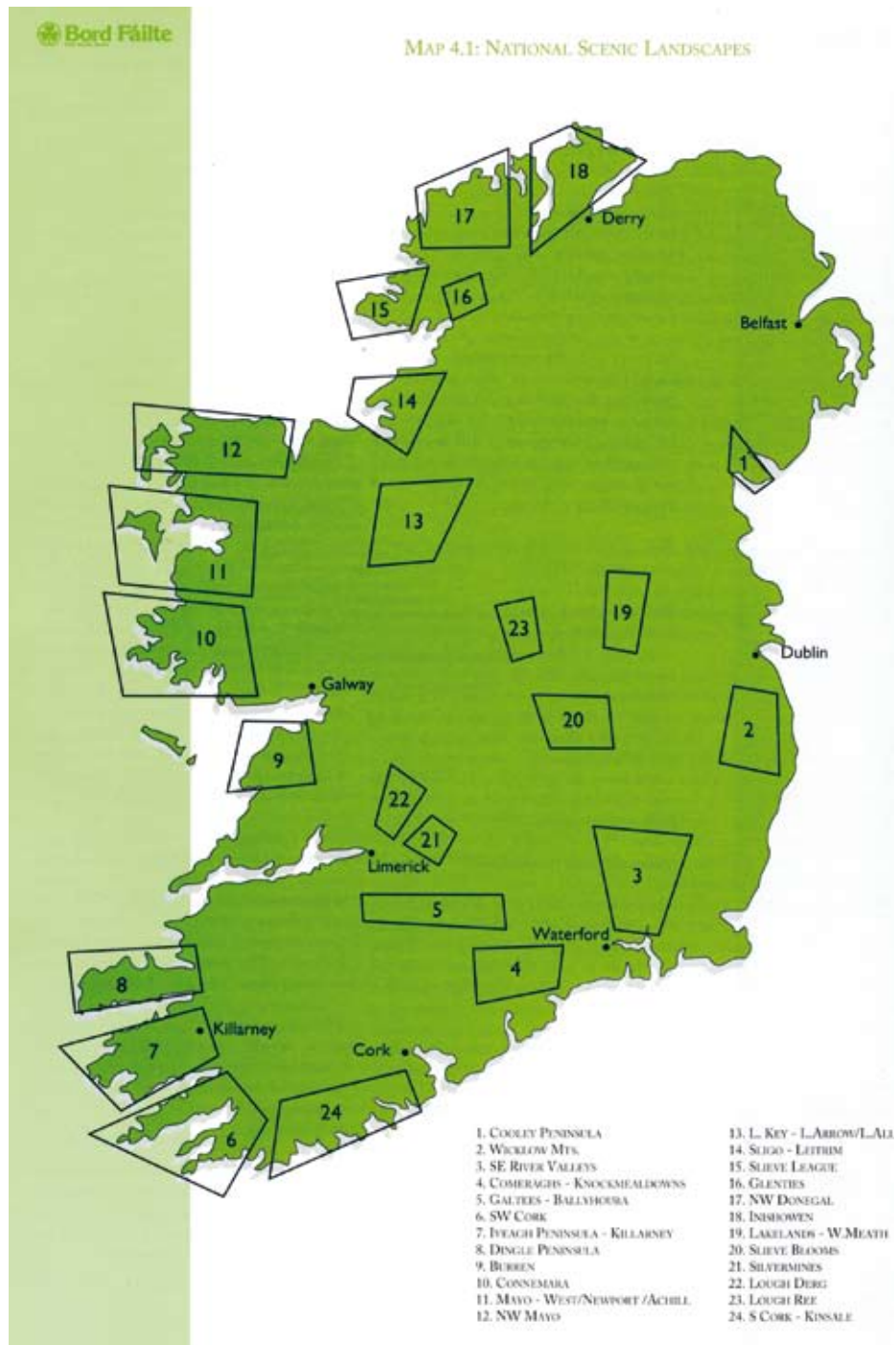


Figure 12: National Scenic Landscapes Map Drafted by Bord Fáilte in 1994

1997 – Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscapes

The publication entitled 'Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape' by Aalen et al is widely referred to in landscape assessment studies across Ireland and provides a highly informative insight into how the Irish landscape was moulded by human activities from prehistoric times. The book seeks to increase the appreciation of the Irish rural landscape as a central element of national heritage, to demonstrate its relevance to public policies and to inspire fresh approaches to landscape study and management. It provides some very useful information on landscape characterisation and values.

2.2 Scenic Landscape Protection Post 2000

2000 - The Planning and Development Act

There is currently no legal definition of *landscape* in Irish law. There are, however, provisions in Irish law that relate to the preservation and conservation of the landscape under the Planning and Development Act 2000 including Sections 10, 202 and 204 (described below).

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, requires Local Authorities to include objectives for the following in their Development Plans:

*(2)(e) the preservation of the **character of the landscape** where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the **preservation of views and prospects** and the **amenities of places** and **features of natural beauty or interest**.*

Section 10 of the 2000 Act, therefore, gives Local Authorities the discretion to make objectives in their Development Plans for the protection or preservation of their landscape. The power to designate areas for protection lies with the elected members of Local Authorities who make an Order to the Minister of the Environment. However, because such Orders attach heavy development restrictions to areas, often the elected members are challenged with striking the balance between fulfilling their duties in accordance with the Planning & Development Act 2000 and looking after the interests and needs of their constituents. The system of local government in Ireland promotes a short term perspective in landscape matters.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 also gives planning authorities the power to assign two types of 'special' landscapes with planning control designations for the purposes of protection or conservation. The first type of special landscape is an Area of Special Amenity. Section 202, of the 2000 Act, gives Local Authorities the power to designate areas of special amenity:

- (1) Where, in the opinion of the planning authority, by reason of:
 - (a) its **outstanding natural beauty**, or
 - (b) its special **recreational value**,*and having regard to any benefits for nature conservation, an area should be declared under this section to be an area of special amenity...*

The second type of special landscape is a Landscape Conservation Area. Section 204, of the Planning and Development

Act 2000, gives Local Authorities the power to designate a place as a Landscape Conservation Area (LCA(2)).

- (1) *A planning authority may, by order, for the purposes of the preservation of the landscape, designate any area or place within the functional area of the authority as a landscape conservation area.*

2000 - DoEHLG Landscape Character Assessment Guidance

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published *The Landscape and Landscape Assessment Draft Guidelines 2000*, in order to help Local Authorities to conduct their own LCA. This document was published around the same time as the Planning and Development Act 2000 which required Local Authorities to consider the issue of landscape character when making policy objectives in their CDP. The expectation of the DoEHLG was that all the information gathered at Local Authority level would be combined to produce a National Landscape Character Map. However, these guidelines still remain in *Draft* form seven years after they were issued by the department and as such have no formal status. Furthermore, the DoEHLG have no plans to finalise the draft guidelines at present¹. The guidelines were recently reviewed by the Heritage Council in *Landscape Character Assessment in Ireland: Baseline Audit and Evaluation, 2006* which concluded that they needed to be substantially reviewed, with a view to following the UK and Scottish model of LCA(1). In particular, the section of the guidelines which deals with assessment of landscape values and sensitivity needs to be re-structured to present a more easily understood approach to this most challenging issue.

2000 - Pilot Application of LCA(1) in Clare

In 2000 The Heritage Council conducted a *Pilot Study on Landscape Characterisation in County Clare* (Figures 13 and 14), which explored the potential of the LCA(1) process in Ireland. One of the findings of the study proposed using a two-tiered system which combined a 'top-down' National Landscape Characterisation (NLC) which forms a structure within which more detailed 'bottom-up' LCAs are conducted at local authority level. This system enables local authorities to develop more detailed landscape objectives which respond to local level development needs, but would link back into national planning objectives such as the National Development Plan (NDP) or the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

2000 - European Landscape Convention

As a member of the Council of Europe, Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention 2000, in March 2002. The ELC aims to promote landscape protection, landscape management and landscape planning. It aims to organise European wide co-operation on landscape issues. There are a range of specific measures to be undertaken by each signatory including the identification and analysis of landscape characteristics and their forces of change, as well as to document the associated landscape value of both interested groups and the general population. Based on this information, each member state, must define the landscape quality objectives for all landscapes (not just the outstanding ones). Ireland signed up to implement the European Landscape Convention in 2002, but it will be seen later that there is a long way to go before the commitments made therein will be honoured.

Heritage Council Review of the Status of LCA in Ireland 2006

In its 2006 study The Heritage Council reviewed the status of landscape characterisation in all counties nearly seven years after the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the publishing of the *Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2000*. Their review highlighted that many County Councils have yet to complete or even commence a landscape characterisation study. The Heritage Council report does not present an overview of the judgement-based classifications of landscape (values, quality, sensitivity and capacity) which is the focus of this report.

¹ Personal communication with DoEHLG planning representative in April 2007

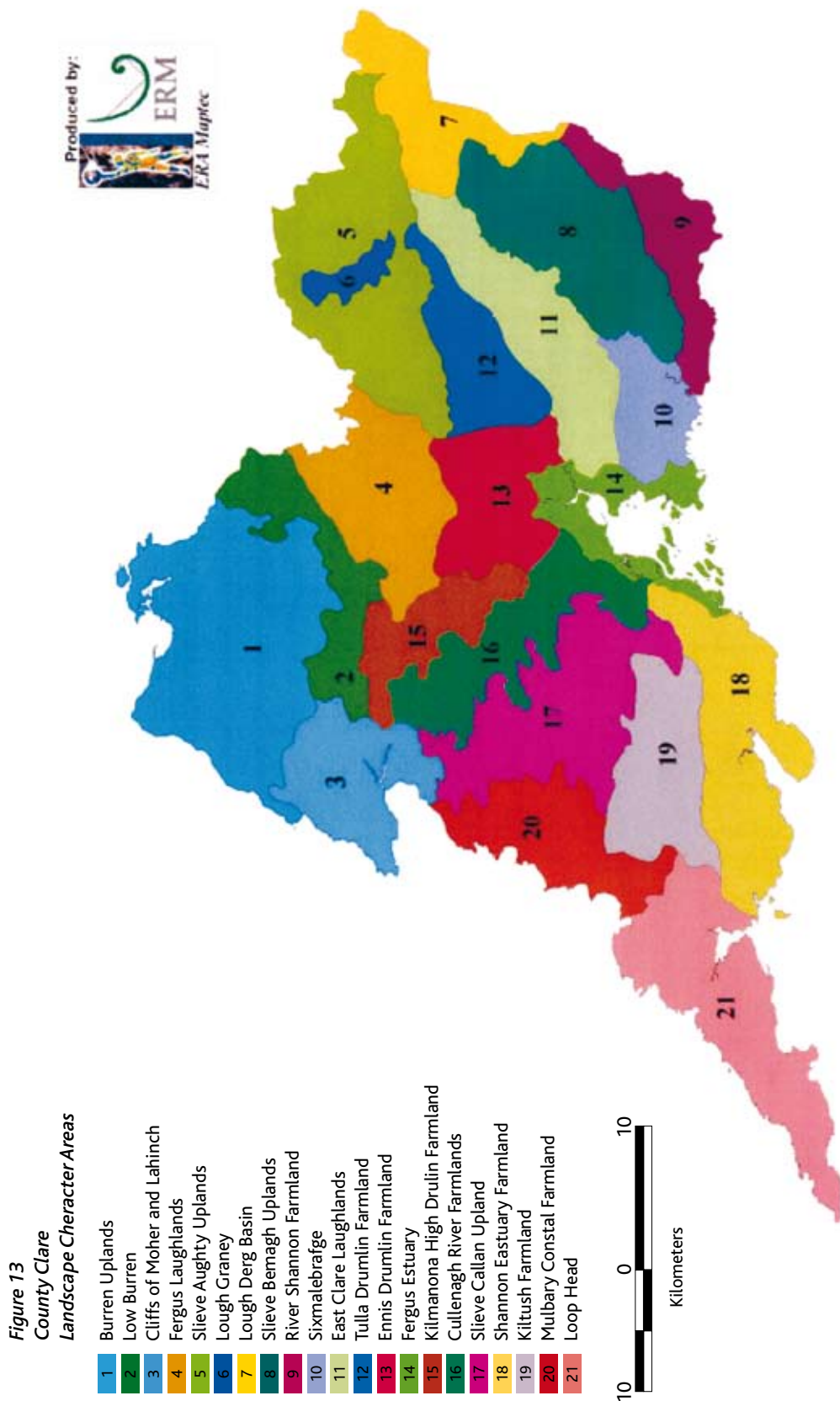


Figure 13: Landscape Character Areas from the Pilot Study on Landscape Characterisation in County Clare. Environmental Resources Management & ERA-Maptec Ltd. Published by the Heritage Council, April 2000

Figure 14
County Clare
Landscape Character Types



Figure 14: Landscape Character Types from the Pilot Study on Landscape Characterisation in County Clare. Environmental Resources Management & ERA-Maptec Ltd. Published by the Heritage Council, April 2000

2.3 Current State of Play in Classifying Landscapes in Ireland

2.3.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1))

On the basis of research carried out for this project, to date two thirds of the County Council's have prepared a landscape character map (not to be confused with the broader *Landscape Character Assessment Process* outlined in Figure 2), as demonstrated in Table 2 overleaf. Of the 21 counties that have been completed² 14 have made their landscape character maps along with their County Development Plans available on the council's websites.

The following can be discerned from the review of Landscape Characterisation to date:

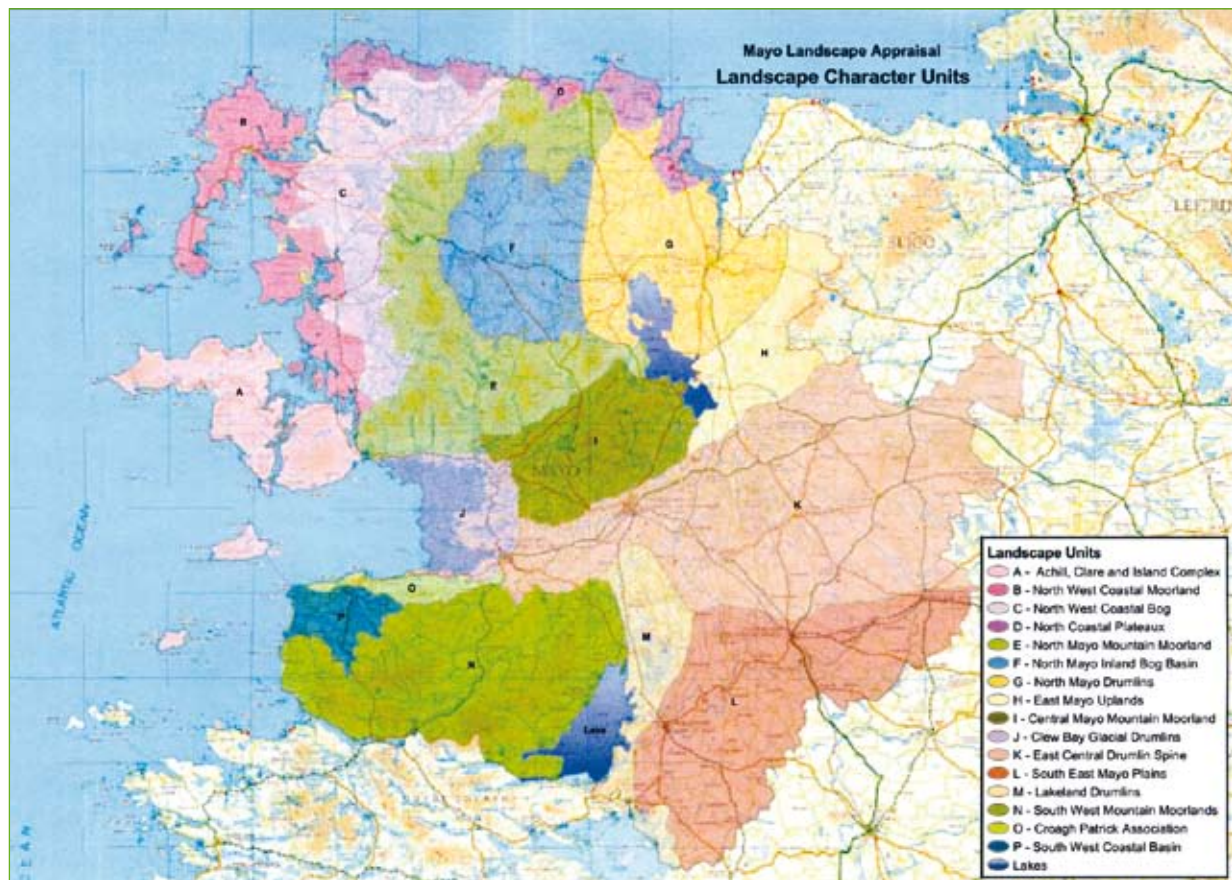
- ▶ The scale of landscape character areas varies considerably between different counties, with very large areas in Limerick, for example, and smaller units in the neighbouring County Clare.
- ▶ There would appear to be a miss-match of classifications along some county boundaries, referring for example to southwest Louth and northeast Meath.
- ▶ The basis used for character assessment appears to be quite different in many counties, with the Offaly study resembling a land cover map and the Mayo classification consisting of very fluid shaped areas.
- ▶ In simply graphic terms there are no two counties alike in terms of colouring and hatching, boundary definition, naming / numbering and background details (eg. in some counties roads are included for orientation purposes).

A more detailed view of the differing approaches to mapping landscape character in three sample counties is illustrated in Figure 15.

²The precise number of studies undertaken at Local Authority level is constantly changing. As an example, Meath County Council recently posted their completed Characterisation Report to their website (March 2007) and Monaghan County Council is initiating a landscape character assessment study in October 2007

Table 2: Review of Landscape Character Mapping in Ireland

County	Landscape Character Map Completed?	Map on Council Website?	CDP Date
Carlow	No	No	2003
Cavan	No	No	2003-09
Clare	Yes	Yes	2005
Cork	Yes	Yes	2003-09
Donegal	No	No	2006-12
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	Yes	Yes	2004-10
Fingal	Yes	Yes	2005-11
Galway	Yes	Yes	2003-09
Kerry	Yes	No	2003-09
Kildare	Yes	Yes	2005-11
Kilkenny	Yes	No	2002
Laois	No	No	2006-12
Leitrim	Yes	Yes	2003-09
Limerick	Yes	Yes	2005
Longford	No	No	2003-09
Louth	Yes	Yes	2003
Mayo	Yes	Yes	2003-09
Meath	Yes	Yes	2007-13
Monaghan	No	No	2006-12
Offaly	Yes	Yes	2003-09
Rocommon	Yes	No	2002
Sligo	Yes	No	2005-11
South Dublin	Yes	Yes	2004-10
Tipperary North	No	No	2004-10
Tipperary South	No	No	2003
Waterford	Yes	No	2005
Westmeath	Yes	No	2002-08
Wexford	Yes	Yes	2007-13
Wicklow	Yes	No	2004-10



2.3.2 Landscape Values

Referring back to the model of the Landscape Character Assessment Process presented in Chapter 1 (Figure 2), the second stage in examining landscapes at a county or national level should be directed to assessing and mapping landscape values. For the purposes of this study, landscape 'values' deals with the specific issues of (i) Scenic Landscapes and (ii) Scenic Routes and Views & Prospects. These are both dealt with separately below. Just as with mapping of landscape character, there is also a widespread diversity of approaches to landscape values along with confusion between the landscape concepts discussed earlier (Section 1.5). Since the 1963 Planning & Development Act, there has been a totally chaotic and uncoordinated approach to identifying, designating and managing scenic landscapes, scenic routes and views and prospects in Ireland.

2.3.2.1 Scenic Landscapes

This section will review the scattered approach to mapping what can broadly be referred to as 'scenic landscapes', as follows:

- ▶ Five counties appear to have no classification of landscape values on the basis of the research carried out as part of this study.
- ▶ Some Local Authorities use five classes of 'landscape' (for example Wicklow - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Special Amenity, Corridor Area, Rural Area and Urban Area) whereas others use two categories (for example South Dublin - High Amenity Areas and Outstanding Natural Character) and some just one classification (for example in Donegal - Areas of Especially High Amenity). The use of just one category of landscape value is regarded as insufficient in the opinion of the authors.
- ▶ In some counties a classification of 'Low' Value is used (for example in Meath and in Galway). The authors of this report strongly contend that all landscapes are at least of 'some' value and that the classification of 'low value' could suggest that there is little need for protection or concern regarding forces of change. There are certainly plenty of landscapes in Ireland which are of low quality, but this does not imply that they are of low value. At worst landscapes should perhaps be classified as Moderate in terms of value.
- ▶ Some Local Authorities have confused the concepts of landscape values with the making judgements on the sensitivity or capacity of areas to accept change. In Sligo and Waterford, for example, 'Visually Vulnerable' ridges are highlighted without firstly identifying those locations as being of high value. A further problem with using such a classification is this it is not development specific. One ridge might be 'visually vulnerable' to wind farms but not to afforestation, for example, whereas another might be vulnerable to one off houses but not to farm buildings.
- ▶ Judging from the titles used for landscape classes in some counties, there appears to be confusion between character and values. In Wicklow, for example, one of the categories of landscape value is entitled 'Corridor Area' which generates an impression of a character type rather than being concerned with quality.
- ▶ Just fifteen counties use the classification of 'amenity' in some form or other in their mapping and four of them use the term 'natural beauty'. However, Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, requires Local Authorities to preserve *'the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest'*. In classifying landscape value, therefore, the majority of Local Authorities have not taken the lead of using the terminology used in the Planning and Development Act, 2000.
- ▶ Even where neighbouring counties use the same or a very similar classification system for valuing landscape, conflicting judgements can arise on different sides of a county boundary. What is highly valued in one county might not be so highly valued in a neighbouring county. A county with very few mountains (such as might exist in the midlands) might place a high value on areas of elevated ground whereas the same 'elevated

ground' might not be valued so highly in a neighbouring county which comprises extensive areas of dramatic mountains. This can lead to an inconsistency of classification of landscape values.

- ▶ The uncoordinated and chaotic approach used in relation to the identification of landscape values and scenic landscapes makes it impossible to get an overall nationwide impression of where the most special areas in Ireland are located. This is in stark contrast to our nearest neighbours in the UK where the identification of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) back in 1949 (Figure 16) presents a coordinated and fully integrated approach. The current Irish approach also has adverse implications for tourism insofar as if there was a similar system in Ireland as exists in the UK, then it would be far easier to market those most special landscapes. The English AONB's are described as the jewels of the English landscape, designated solely for their landscape qualities for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty (which includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries).

An illustration of the different classification and mapping approaches to landscape values in Ireland is presented in Figure 17.

Table 3: Review of Landscape 'Value' Designations in Ireland

County	Designation Terminology	Map on Council Website
Carlow	5 no. Major Amenity Areas	No
Cavan	High Landscape Amenity Areas	Yes
Clare	None	No
Cork	Scenic Landscapes	Yes
Donegal	Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity	Yes
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	High Amenity Areas	Yes
Fingal	Amenity	No
Galway	Map of 4 categories for Landscape Value Low/ Medium/ High/ Outstanding	Yes
Kerry	Prime Special Amenity Areas/ Secondary Special Amenity Areas	Yes
Kildare	Special Landscape Areas	No
Kilkenny	Areas of High Amenity/ Scenic Views	Yes
Laois	None	No
Leitrim	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/ High Visual Amenity	Yes
Limerick	None	No
Longford	None	No
Louth	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty/ Areas of High Scenic Quality	Yes
Mayo	Scenic Evaluation Map in Landscape Appraisal	No
Meath	Exception Value/ Very High Value/ High Value/ Moderate Value/ Low Value	Yes
Monaghan	Areas of Primary Amenity Value, Areas of Secondary Amenity Value	Yes
Offaly	Areas of High Amenity	Yes
Rocommon	Moderate Value, High Value, Very High Value and Exceptional Value	No
Sligo	Visually Vulnerable Areas	Yes
South Dublin	High Amenity Areas/ Outstanding Natural Character	No
Tipperary North	Areas of Primary Amenity	No
Tipperary South	None	No
Waterford	Visually Vulnerable Areas	Yes
Westmeath	High Amenity Areas	Yes
Wexford	Scenic Areas map	Yes
Wicklow	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/ Special Amenity/ Rural Area/ Corridor Area	Yes



Figure16: Areas of Outstanding Landscapes in England (first mapped in 1949)

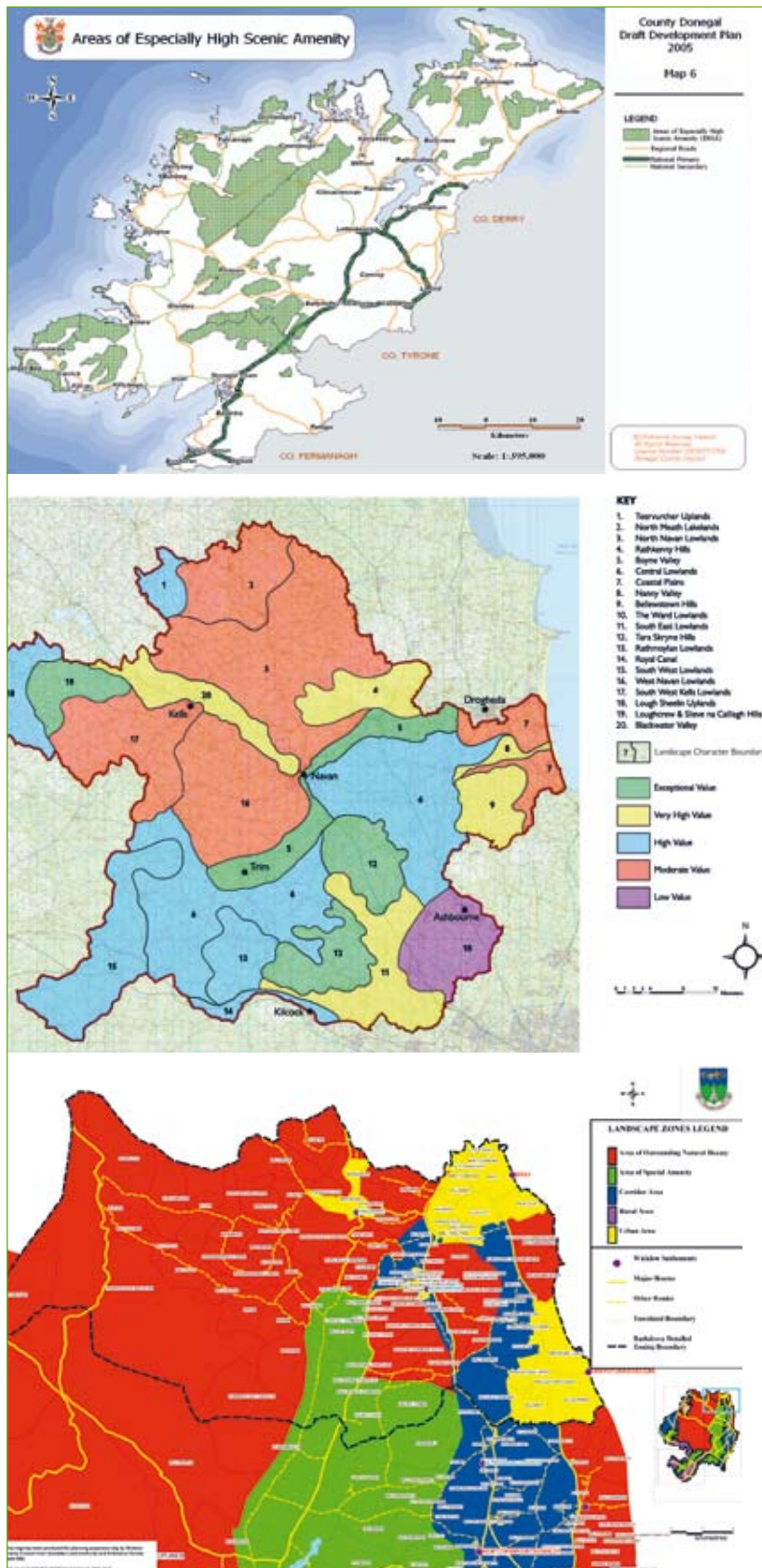


Figure 17: Illustration of Different Approaches used to Classify and Map Landscapes Values in Wicklow, Donegal and Meath

2.3.3 Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects

The concept of Values in its most simple form in Ireland is typically represented by the designation of Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects and in this specific issue alone there is again widespread variance in approach, graphic presentation and associated policies. An overview of this variation of approach is outlined below:

- ▶ Some CDPs still have no map illustrating the location of scenic routes or views and prospects, whereas others have very high quality background mapping complemented by panoramic photographs. Arrows should be used to indicate the primary direction of the view or prospect in all such maps and reference numbers are needed so that interested parties can easily refer back to any written assessment of the view in question as well as establish what policies, if any, are applicable. In short, the mapping and referencing needs to be much more user-friendly.
- ▶ In relation to policies for scenic routes and views and prospects, the minimal policy statement typically includes such text as *"it is the policy of the Planning Authority to maintain the scenic and recreational value of these areas by restricting all adverse uses and negative visual impacts"* (Cavan County Council). In other instances, a much more direct and unequivocal policy recommendation is provided, such as *"Development proposals will not be permitted if it is considered they will cause significant harm to the intrinsic character, cause undue visual intrusion, be inconsistent with local character, harm the setting of buildings, structures or landmark features, harm historical / ecological value or harm local and strategic views of significance"* (Cork County Council). While there is a danger in being overly prescriptive in policy statements, the latter approach above is generally preferred over the former.
- ▶ The protection and maintenance of views and prospects is something that is rarely highlighted in CDP's, one such exception, however, being Kilkenny County Council wherein *"it is the policy of the Council to remove and or alter walls, fences, hedges or other obstructions and to control development so that views or prospects are not obstructed"*. This issue is becoming increasingly important with afforestation projects often enclosing views and prospects and single rural dwellings built on crests and hilltops availing of the best views.
- ▶ There are a few examples where County Councils approach the issues of scenic routes and views and prospects not just from a protection-orientated stance but also from a promotional and tourism perspective, such as Leitrim County Council *"It will be the Council's policy to continue to improve signposting in areas of particular interest and to facilitate access to features of outstanding quality by improvements to roads and creation of new rights of way. Lay-bys and viewing areas will be developed as appropriate and as funds allow"*.
- ▶ Lastly, a more integrative and coordinated cross-county approach is needed in respect of scenic routes and views and prospects, perhaps following the lead of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council who state that *"the Council will take into account the views and prospects of adjoining counties in assessing applications for development"*.

In short, there seems to be as many different approaches as there are Counties and some graphic samples of these are included for illustrative purposes in Figure 18 overleaf. A detailed table of all the various classifications used throughout the country is presented in Table 4.

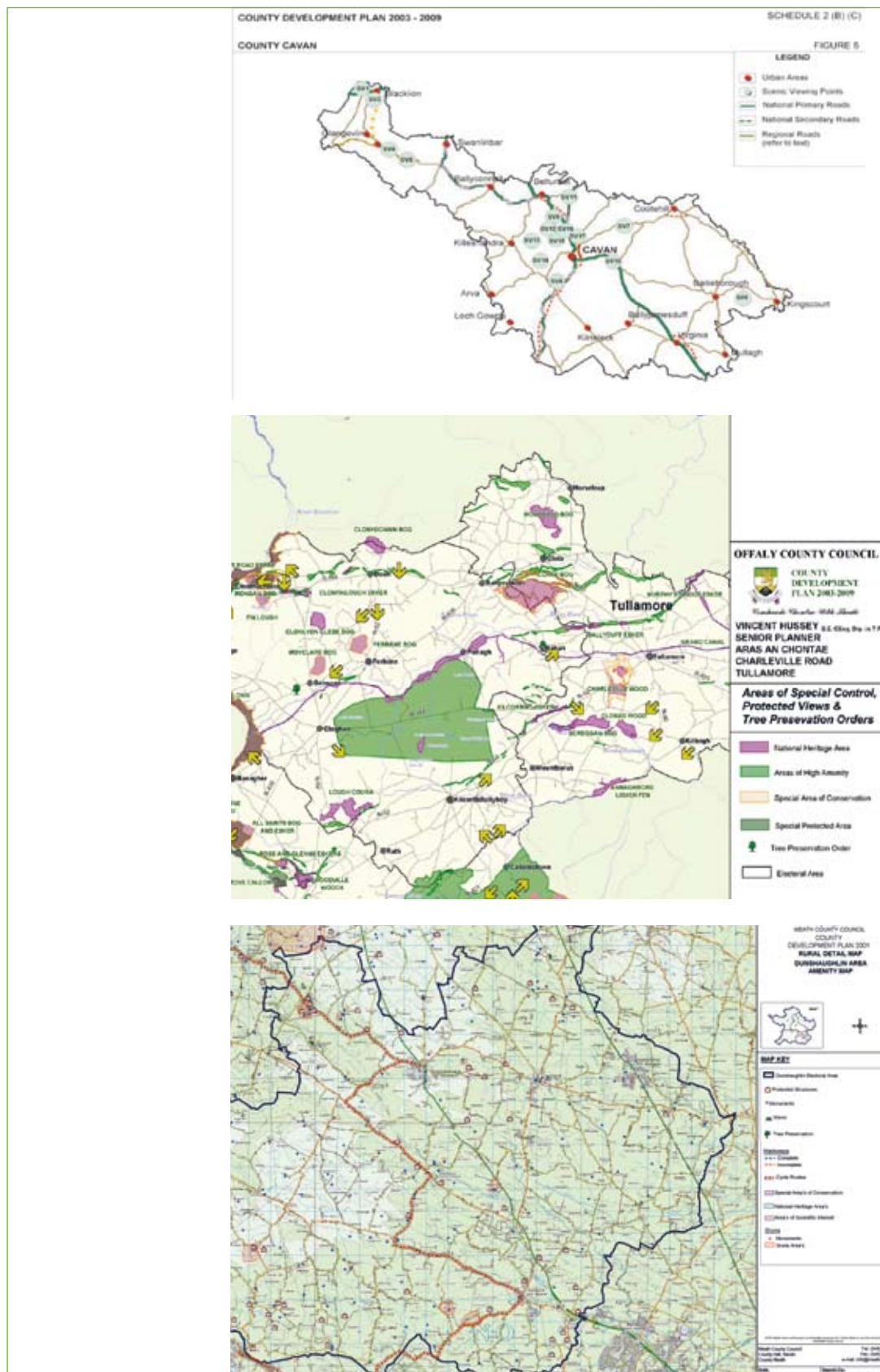


Figure 18: Variety of approaches used in Cavan, Offaly and Meath County Development Plans to map Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects

Table 4: Review of Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects Maps in Ireland

County	Scenic Views & Scenic Routes terminology used	Map on Council Website?
Carlow	Scenic Views	Yes
Cavan	Walking Routes/ Scenic Viewing points	Yes
Clare	Scenic Routes	Yes
Cork	Scenic Routes	Yes
Donegal	Views & Prospects/Scenic Roads/ Tourist Roads	Yes
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	Preserve View/ Preserve Prospect	Yes
Fingal	Preserve Views/ Visual Compartment	Yes
Galway	Focal Points/ Views	Yes
Kerry	Views & Prospects	Yes
Kildare	Scenic Roads/ Hilltop Views/ Scenic View points	Yes
Kilkenny	Scenic Views	Yes
Laois	Scenic Views	Yes
Leitrim	Outstanding Views & Prospects/ Long Distance Walking Routes	Yes
Limerick	Views & Prospects/ Views	Yes
Longford	Views & Prospects	Yes
Louth	Scenic Routes/ View to Prospect	Yes
Mayo	Highly Scenic View/ Scenic View/ Scenic Route	Yes
Meath	Key Viewpoints	Yes
Monaghan	Views from Scenic Routes listed	Yes
Offaly	Protected Views	Yes
Rocommon	Scenic Views and Scenic Routes	No
Sligo	Scenic Routes	Yes
South Dublin	Views from Scenic Routes listed	No
Tipperary North	Protected Views listed	No
Tipperary South	View from location/ View along road	Yes
Waterford	Scenic Routes	Yes
Westmeath	Views to Be Preserved	Yes
Wexford	Scenic Routes	Yes
Wicklow	View of Special Amenity	Yes

2.3.4 Landscape Sensitivity

Thus far in this report it has been illustrated that there is a huge variety in approaches used throughout Ireland in classification of landscape character, landscape values as well as scenic routes and views and prospects. It will come as no surprise, therefore, to close this section of the report in highlighting that there is also total divergence nationally to the manner in which the issue of landscape sensitivity is dealt with.

A summary of the variation in classification of landscape sensitivity is presented in Table 5 overleaf with key issues highlighted below:

- ▶ It would appear that some five Local Authorities have not yet included any classification of landscape sensitivity in their CDP and a further four counties use the map of 'scenic landscapes' as their sensitivity map despite the fact that scenic landscapes should not necessarily be assumed to be 'sensitive'.
- ▶ Of those that do classify landscape sensitivity, quite a number are generic (for example, High, Moderate and Low Sensitivity) and not development-specific. This is clearly contrary to draft guidance provided by the DoEHLG (2000) on this matter.
- ▶ Of those that deal with specific development kinds, wind farming above all other possible forces of change is by far the most prevalent (approximately 12 counties deal specifically with this matter). Just three Councils currently appear to have explicit and comprehensive sensitivity analysis for a broad variety of development kinds.
- ▶ Examples of cross-border inconsistency of classification in regards to landscape sensitivity can be found in many instances, as illustrated in Figure 19 below in relation to acceptability zoning for wind farm development in Clare, Limerick and Kerry.

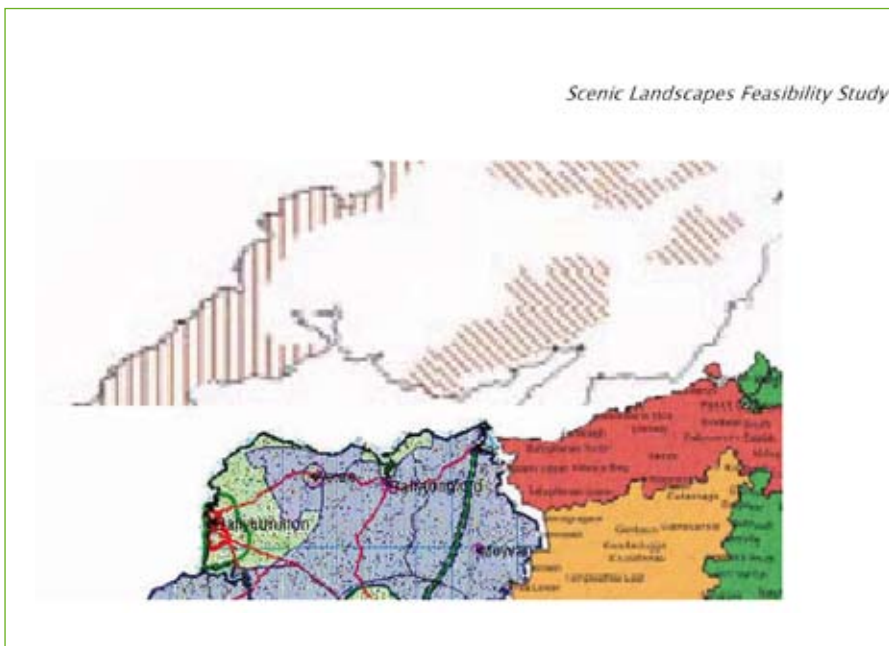


Figure 19: Mapping of Acceptability of Wind Farms in Clare, Limerick and Kerry

Table 5: Review of Landscape Sensitivity Maps in Ireland

County	Landscape Sensitivity Mapping	Map on Council Website?
Carlow	None	No
Cavan	Wind Farm Sensitivity	No
Clare	Vulnerable Landscape	Yes
Cork	Wind Farm Sensitivity	Yes
Donegal	Same map as per scenic landscapes map	Yes
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	None identified	No
Fingal	None	No
Galway	Unique, Special, High, Moderate, Low	Yes
Kerry	Wind Farm Sensitivity	Yes
Kildare	Presented in tabular format: Sensitivity to 7 development types in 11 Character Areas with a numerical sensitivity rating and rating of High/ Medium/ Low	No
Kilkenny	Wind Farm Sensitivity/ Areas of Development Pressure	Yes
Laois	Special Areas of Development Control	Yes
Leitrim	Wind Farm & Forestry Sensitivity Maps	Yes
Limerick	Wind Farm Sensitivity	Yes
Longford	Visually Important/Sensitive	No
Louth	Wind Farm Sensitivity	Yes
Mayo	Landscape Protection Policy Areas Map and Landscape Sensitivity Matrix table for development types	Yes
Meath	High/ Moderate/ Low Sensitivity Also mapped is Landscape Capacity indicating development types	Yes
Monaghan	None	No
Offaly	High/ Moderate/ Low Sensitivity based on landcover	Yes
Rocommon	Special Policy Areas	No
Sligo	Normal Rural/ Sensitive Rural	Yes
South Dublin	Same as landscape designations, includes Green Belts	No
Tipperary North	5 Sensitivity Categories Low/ Moderate/ High/ Special/ Unique	No
Tipperary South	Wind Farm Sensitivity in upland areas only	No
Waterford	Sensitive/ Normal/ Robust areas	Yes
Westmeath	Same as per scenic landscapes map	Yes
Wexford	Wind Farm Sensitivity	Yes
Wicklow	Same as per scenic landscapes map	Yes



Chapter 3

Stakeholder Consultation Research Findings

Consultation with a wide number of stakeholders was required in the Project Brief, the value of which was greatly appreciated by the consultants particularly when dealing with landscape issues. Stakeholder consultation methods used are listed below and the outcome of the first two of these is presented in outline directly thereafter:

- ▶ The circulation of a local authority questionnaire;
- ▶ A focus group meeting; and
- ▶ Meetings of the Steering Group

A questionnaire was sent to the Planning and Development Department of all 34 planning authorities (29 County Councils and 5 City Councils). The questionnaire was divided into two sections; one dealing with GIS aspects¹; the other relating to landscape issues. The questionnaires were circulated in July 2006. Four months were allowed for the respondents to reply, after which the total number of completed questionnaires received was 18 out of 34 (53% response rate). A copy of the questionnaire as well as detailed answers to each question is available in Appendix 1.

The questionnaire involved quantitative and qualitative questions, the former designed to produce statistical data, the latter designed to reveal the attitudes and opinions of those implementing landscape objectives at local authority level.

A focus group meeting was held at the Fáilte Ireland Head Offices, Amiens Street, Dublin in July 2006, involving a presentation by the Consultants followed by discussion on the key issues involved in the feasibility study. The focus group comprised of key figures from the government departments, local authorities, government agencies and NGO's (a list of attendees can be found under the Acknowledgements to the fore of this report as well as in Appendix 1). A number of key issues emerged during the focus group meeting relating to the implementation of a proposed standardised scenic landscapes designation system. The issues are also outlined in bullet point form in Appendix 1 and are broadly grouped under the headings of Legislation, Landscape Designations and Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes 1977.

¹The results of the questionnaire pertaining to GIS are presented elsewhere to Fáilte Ireland by Macro Works and MosArt

3.1 Conclusions from the Stakeholder Consultation Study

The main conclusions arrived at following the analysis of the results from the questionnaire and the issues discussed at focus group meeting are summarised below.

Satisfaction with Existing Scenic Landscapes Designation

- ▶ Half of the respondents are dissatisfied with their existing scenic landscape designations and the majority of them believe that development pressure is responsible for the down grading of their scenic landscapes.
- ▶ Many local authorities are unaware of how their scenic landscape designations compare with their neighbouring counties and just 10% of the respondents grade their scenic routes, views and prospects in terms of quality. An exception to this can be found in Mayo, for example, where they use 'Highly Scenic View' versus 'Scenic View'. The authors of this report suggest that such grading should be considered nationally as not all views are of the same quality.
- ▶ There are a variety of processes used by Local Authorities when evaluating the potential impact of a development on a scenic landscape. As an example, less than one quarter of respondents require the submission of before and after photomontages of the proposed project.

Need for a National Scenic Landscapes Map

- ▶ There is wide support among Local Authorities for a national scenic landscape classification system. However, it must have regard to the LCA(1) process to avoid the concern expressed by some local authorities where a landscape that is locally designated as being scenic might be down-graded on a national level.
- ▶ The focus group meeting also concluded there is an urgent need for an integrated map designating scenic landscapes at a national level. However, when drawing up such a map it is important to address issues of 'scale' when determining landscape values (for example, should the focus be on trophy landscapes of international status or on all landscapes irrespective of scale of importance).
- ▶ A standardised terminology should be agreed for dealing with landscape designations and existing legislation for the protection of landscape should be reviewed with respect to application in practice.

Application of Planning and Development Act 2000

- ▶ Local Authorities are under resourced in terms of appropriately trained professionals with responsibility for tackling landscape planning issues.
- ▶ There are currently no LCA(2)'s and only 3 SAAOs in Ireland. Most local authorities are either simply not fulfilling their duties under Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 or, are unaware they have the power under the same act to designate an area an LCA or ASA.
- ▶ A number of respondents cited lack of political will (both at a local and national level) for the dearth of such designations in Ireland.



Chapter 4

A National Approach to Designating Scenic Landscapes in Ireland

The approach, methodology and criteria presented in this report are meant to provide a framework within which it would be possible to prepare a National Map of National Scenic Landscapes. This is not to be considered at the only option, but demonstrates that it would be possible to prepare such a map and provides a framework of how it could be done. It should be clarified at this point that landscapes are valued for many reasons and that scenery is just one dimension, albeit a critically important one. There will be many landscapes in Ireland that are not especially 'scenic' but which are, nevertheless, highly valued because of their built heritage, natural heritage or cultural associations (dealt with previously in Section 1.5.4). An approach to mapping landscape values in Ireland is outlined below and from this all-encompassing values map, those landscapes that are valued specifically for their scenery would be extracted to produce a National Map of National Scenic Landscapes. A phased approach is thus advocated, firstly mapping values in a general sense followed by segregating out scenic phased landscapes.

4.1 Long Term Solution to a Long Term Problem

The widespread stakeholder consultation employed in this study provides broad support for a national scenic landscapes map. The main concern with producing such a map, however, is that there will inevitably be landscapes that are currently valued within certain Local Authority areas that might not feature on a national scale. There might therefore be a perception that some landscapes have been 'devalued'. However, the process that is being advocated in this study is about raising the status of some landscapes and not down-grading other landscapes.

In the UK, The Countryside Agency uses the following criteria for defining landscapes of 'Scenic Interest':

Land that has qualities well in excess of scenic land of its general type, **assessed by national and not regional or local standards**. Not all land within existing National Parks (NPs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will meet the high standards applicable to conditional exemption. Conversely, some land outside of NPs and AONB may qualify. Buildings and woodland may also be considered if they contribute to the outstanding interest¹.

The benefits of a national scenic landscapes map are manifold, but the principal advantages are seen as follows:

- ▶ Instead of the total disparity that currently exists between local authorities, there would be a single nationally integrated map depicting the location of all scenic routes, scenic views, prospects and scenic landscapes.
- ▶ A national approach would ensure complete agreement of designations along county boundaries. In fact, the county boundaries would be overlaid on top of the national scenic landscapes map as the last stage in the entire process.
- ▶ The process required to produce such a map would result in the development of a single GIS coverage which could be made available digitally to interested parties. The availability of such a national digital map would be of benefit to parties engaged in the planning of large scale projects. Examples would include the upgrading of a national route that passes through a number of counties, or the assessment of an offshore wind farm that might be visible along a substantial section of coastline connecting several local authority areas. The same map would be of benefit to bodies with a concern for Ireland's landscape at a national level, including Fáilte Ireland, the Heritage Council, An Taisce, the National Roads Authority and many others.

¹ <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/LH/outstanding.asp>

4.2 Outline Approach to Preparing a National Landscape Values Map

The Heritage Council have advocated a nationally coordinated landscape characterisation study, establishing a fully integrated map detailing character areas and character types. The most efficient method of producing a national scenic landscape map would be to prepare it as part of a broader landscape values map in parallel with the landscape character map, perhaps involving the same independent assessment team coordinated by an identified national landscape agency. In reality, preparation of the landscape values maps would follow slightly in the wake of the characterisation study. The principle of this approach would be to (1) establish what physically exists (character), (2) determine the value of those landscapes and (3) identify those landscapes that are valued for their scenery (Figure 20).

The mapping of scenic landscapes at a national scale would identify different classes of landscape, from those of international significance to those of national significance, regional significance and, lastly, those of local significance. A cut-off would be established whereby only those landscapes judged to be of international and national significance (by an identified National Landscape Agency) would be afforded national statutory protection (and mapped at a scale of 1:250,000 and 1:50,000). Such protection would be assured through the designation as either a Landscape Conservation Area or an Area of Special Amenity under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Sections 204 and 202 respectively). The authors of this report do not believe there is a need to introduce new legislation over and above that which exists currently. The legislation is already in place – the challenge now is to implement it as intended in the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Landscapes of Regional and Local significance would be determined by the respective Local Authority, and afforded protection through the Local County Development Plan* (and mapped at a scale of 1:50,000).

* Landscapes of International & National significance would also be presented on a county by county basis by LA's, however this would tie back in to the overall national map of landscape values (and through this the National Map of Scenic Landscapes).

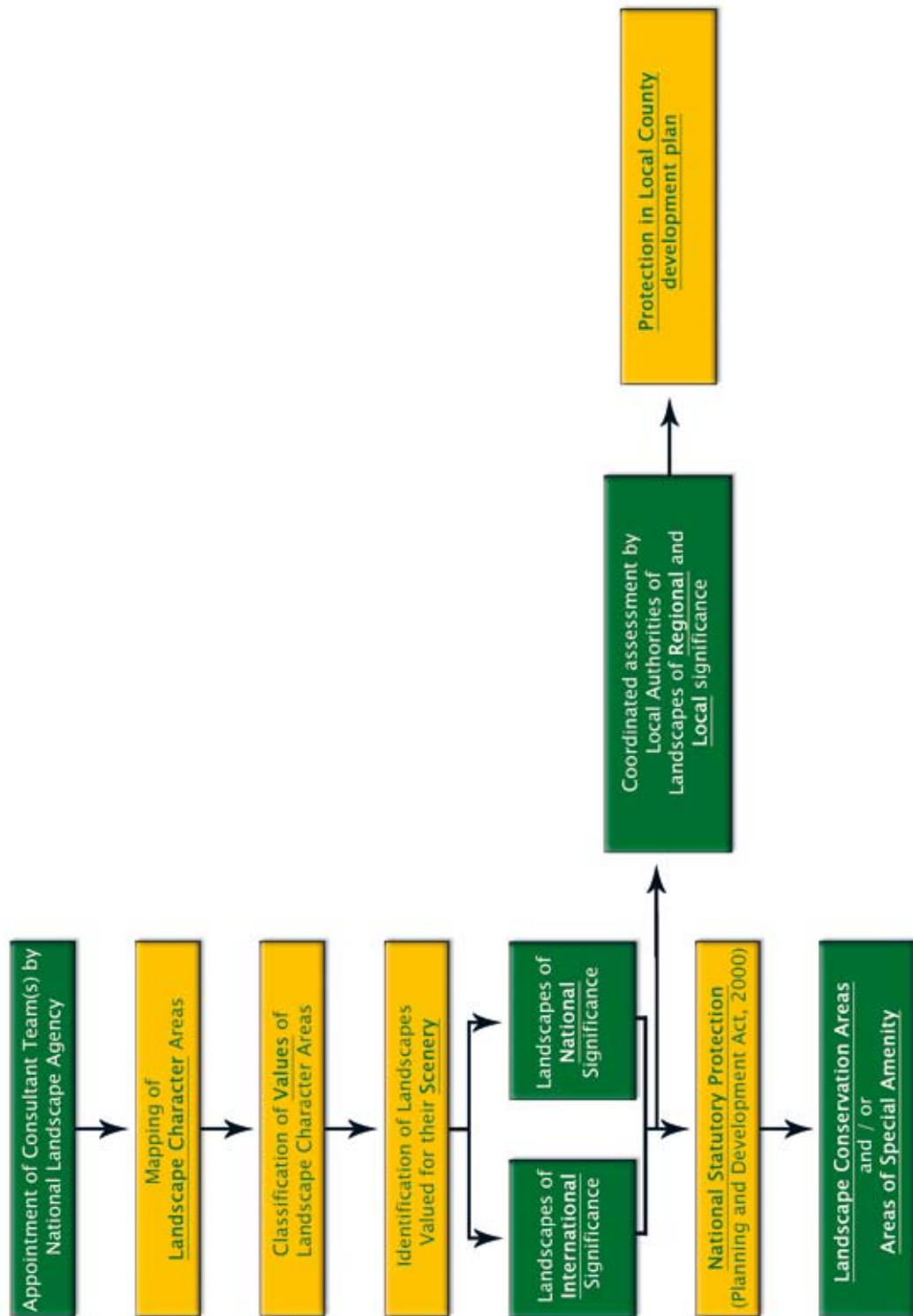


Figure 20: Stepwise Approach to Mapping Character, Values and Scenic Landscapes at a National Level in Ireland

While all Local Authorities would be partners in the preparation of the national map, the concluding classification and resulting official designations would effectively be 'handed down' from some higher level authority. This will ensure that national interests are to the fore in protecting landscapes of importance. There are several examples of such a procedure currently in use in Ireland, including the designation of cSAC's, NHA's, SPA's and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Those landscapes that are highly valued but which do not make the above class for national designation could be adopted locally within County Development Plans using a coordinated classification system. This would solve the problem of the current menagerie of classifications currently in use.

The above approach would thus produce two outcomes, namely (1) a list of national scenic landscapes worthy of statutory protection and (2) a coordinated landscape values classification system in all County Development Plans in Ireland.

The outline procedure below might be used to develop a national map of landscape values:

- Identify the body that might lead the initiative;
- Establish an expert panel group of less than 10 members;
- Develop a project Brief and Scope of Works;
- Place the study out to tender and select panel of competent consultants (perhaps 3 to 5 groups) to work simultaneously and in partnership on the national study;
- Carry out review of existing county designations as well as field work and develop draft landscape values map (note: ignoring county boundaries) (refer to Section 4.3 below – Methodology for Assessing Landscape Values);
- Categorise all valued landscapes according to why they are of value, including scenic landscapes;
- All Local Authorities would be invited to make submissions on the draft map - It would also be made available at a series of regional workshops;
- Engage interested parties through focus group meetings and refine draft values map;
- Integrate all draft maps onto national GIS map;
- Present findings at national conference to ratify findings and consider legislation implications (if any);
- Issue draft map for consultation; and
- Publish final map of values for Ireland.

4.3 Methodology for Assessing Landscape Values

Assessing landscape values is a complex issue and there are no quick-fix assessment checklists available. Nevertheless, an overall approach is outlined in this section which will provide a practical way forward while also following best practice elsewhere.

There is a broad consensus from material published in the UK and elsewhere (Spain, Hong Kong, New Zealand – See Appendix 2) on what the core approach to dealing with landscape values might comprise:

- **Define Study Purpose** – the purpose of the study should be clearly identified. As an example, is the study being specifically developed to serve the interests and needs of Fáilte Ireland in the protection of our best tourism assets or does it have wider application for other bodies. The entire study would have to be project managed, with a project plan and including a review process.
- **Identify what is there** – most advice on the subject of landscape values and quality assessment emphasises the need to firstly classify landscape character. After classifying 'what' is there, it is then possible to make

judgements on its 'value'. A strong dimension of classifying landscape character should be the historical landscape aspect. The authors believe it would be unwise to proceed with preparing a national scenic landscape map prior to the completion of a landscape character map and landscape values map, therefore.

- ▶ **Evaluation** – judgements regarding the value of any given landscape can be made on the basis of assessment criteria which are explored below (refer to Section 4.4 below - Criteria for Assessing Scenic Landscapes). It is generally accepted that this phase of the work should involve both professional evaluation as well as consultation.
- ▶ **Develop a vision statement** - a vision statement should be developed for each landscape ('what do we want this landscape to be like in 20 years'). This vision statement can provide the focus for Objectives and Policies.
- ▶ **Identify forces for change** – trends in such matters as development, land use and settlement should be identified and consideration given to what effects this might have on the qualities of the landscape that makes it special.
- ▶ **Policies and Objectives** – policies and objectives will need to be developed in order to guide change that will help to realise the vision for the landscape.
- ▶ **Monitoring** – it is important to monitor the condition of the landscape over time to ensure that its special qualities do not deteriorate.

4.3.1 Synchronisation of Mapping Landscape Values with Mapping Landscape Character

It has been recommended that the identification of landscape values would take place in parallel with a national assessment of landscape character. The latter study is likely to be coordinated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The Heritage Council's assessment of the landscape character studies completed in Ireland thus far has highlighted the need for more coordinated and coherent approach. It seems prudent, therefore, that the DEHLG would use one team (perhaps involving a number of consultants) to complete the national landscape character map thereby safeguarding against repeating mistakes of the past. The likely timing of such a national landscape character assessment is unknown.

4.4 Criteria for Assessing Scenic Landscapes

Assessing landscape values is complex and multidimensional. Landscapes can be valued for different reasons, and not just for their visual or aesthetic qualities. One landscape might be highly valued for its historical associations without being especially 'scenic', whereas another landscape might be of very high aesthetic quality while at the same time being of low ecological value. Some of the key dimensions of landscape value are listed below. It should be noted that many of these aspects were specifically mentioned by the Local Authorities that completed the study questionnaires in describing the highest quality landscapes in their county (included in *italics* below):

- ▶ **Natural** – landscape, biodiversity, geology: *"Lakeland views framed by topography and field enclosure"*.
- ▶ **Cultural** – archaeology, historic landscape, built environment, local traditions: *"The majestic grandeur of unencroached landscapes with literary, historic, archaeological and iconic associations"*.
- ▶ **Environmental** – air quality, soil quality, water quality: *"Highly scenic extensive upland area prominent in views from all parts of the country providing easily accessible relief from urban environment"*.

- ▶ **Recreation** – rights of way, access land: *“Parks and open spaces enhance the quality of life for residents”*.
- ▶ **Visual and sensory** – views, tranquility, sense of place: *“Views south across the county & north allow extensive visibility”*.

The above landscape dimensions, once identified, can then be further assessed using significance criteria such as those listed below:

- ▶ **Distinctiveness** – is the landscape distinctive from its surrounds as being easily identifiable in its own right?
- ▶ **Quality** – is the landscape of high quality and in good condition?
- ▶ **Rarity** – is the landscape rare at a national or international level?
- ▶ **Representativeness** – does the area represent such a particularly good example of a given landscape type that it might be put forward as an especially good representation of that type?

4.4.1 Sample Field Work Assessment Sheet

Criteria that are drawn from the landscape dimensions mentioned above (natural, cultural, environmental, recreation and visual and sensory) are explored in Figure 21(a) and 21(b) below in the form a checklist of questions. The primary purpose of such a checklist is to ensure that assessors consider the full complexity of landscape when making judgements about value. One possible disadvantage, however, is the potential danger of becoming complacent and over-relying on prescriptive criteria. A checklist that has been used by MosArt for many years in their landscape impact assessment work is completed below for a real landscape, in this case Allihies, in west Cork, for the purposes of illustration (Figure 22).

4.5 Reviewing Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects

The identification of scenic landscapes has been dealt with in outline above. This issue is the principle dimension of landscape value that is of interest to Fáilte Ireland. The other dimension is that of scenic routes and views and prospects.

The survey questionnaire highlighted that many Local Authorities feel their scenic routes need to be reviewed. Some guidance developed as part of this study on how this might be approached is provided in Figure 23 below.

The checklist criteria explored above could also be used in the review of scenic routes and views and prospects.

4.5.1 Case Study in Scenic routes mapping – Kilglass Lakes, County Roscommon

MosArt and Macro Works are currently preparing a landscape character assessment LCA(1) for Roscommon County Council to be included in their next County Development Plan (2008 – 2014). As part of the field work required for that project, MosArt took the opportunity of testing the procedure set out in Figure 23 for qualification and mapping of existing routes. The results of this review are presented below in a step-by-step practical guide.

The following five stages were used for the case study review of the scenic route in Roscommon:

- ▶ Stage 1: Review Current Views and Prospects Designations
- ▶ Stage 2: Desk Study Appraisal of Landscape Context
- ▶ Stage 3: Use GIS Technology to Highlight Theoretical Visibility
- ▶ Stage 4: In-the-field Verification and Assessment
- ▶ Sub-Stage 4.1: Experience the character of the landscape
- ▶ Sub-Stage 4.2: Identify roads that provide views of the landscape
- ▶ Sub-Stage 4.3: Select and map the chosen Scenic Route
- ▶ Sub-Stage 4.4: Prepare written descriptions of the view on offer
- ▶ Stage 5: Mapping and Incorporation into CDP

Stage 1: Review Current Views and Prospects Designations

Some County Councils have not yet mapped their scenic routes, including instead just a written list of views and prospects. If this written description is not sufficiently detailed, it is likely that the specific location of the scenic route would be unclear and the protection of that view could therefore be undermined. The current Roscommon County Development Plan (2002) provides a useful example of this. While Roscommon County Council are in the process of preparing a detailed Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)) for their county, their views and prospects are currently presented as a list as can be seen in Figure 25 overleaf. In this extract from their current CDP, the Consultants have highlighted the Kilglass Lakes area as a case study for outlining a practical approach to mapping of scenic routes.

Stage 2: Desk Study Appraisal of Landscape Context

The map depicted in Figure 25 shows the Kilglass Lakes area on the OS Discovery Series map. As can be seen from this map, the area includes a scattering of small and medium sized lakes set in a rolling drumlin landscape. The lakes are contained by hills to the southwest and southeast and they ultimately all connect to the River Shannon to the east. There appears to be a considerable area of woodland throughout and the area is served by a network of roads including one regional road and a plethora of local roads. The rolling nature of the drumlin hills coupled with the woodland would suggest on the basis of a desk study that there would be limited long distance views available.

Stage 3: Use GIS Technology to Highlight Theoretical Visibility

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology is widely used amongst Local Authorities in Ireland and there are many tools in such systems that can be very helpful in landscape assessment. One such tool is identifying what is referred to as the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, or ZTV. Put simply, it is possible to highlight a feature in a landscape (in this case study a lake, for example) and find out using GIS what locations might 'theoretically' be able to see that feature – theoretically because the GIS assumes a completely naked landscape, without screening by trees, hedgerows or buildings. This ZTV exercise was carried out using all the lakes in the Kilglass Lakes area and the resulting map is included below in Figure 26. The map illustrates all the locations that can theoretically see the lakes in the Kilglass Lakes area

Stage 4: In-the-field Verification and Assessment

There are four sub-stages recommended in this element of the process, namely:

- (1) Experience at first hand the character of the landscape;
- (2) Identify which roads in the area actually provide views of the features of interest;
- (3) Map the location and extent of the road(s) that will be designated as a Scenic Route; and
- (4) Prepare written descriptions of the view on offer from the Scenic Route.

Checklist Criteria for Assessment of Landscape Values – Part 1

Is there an elevated panoramic view provided?



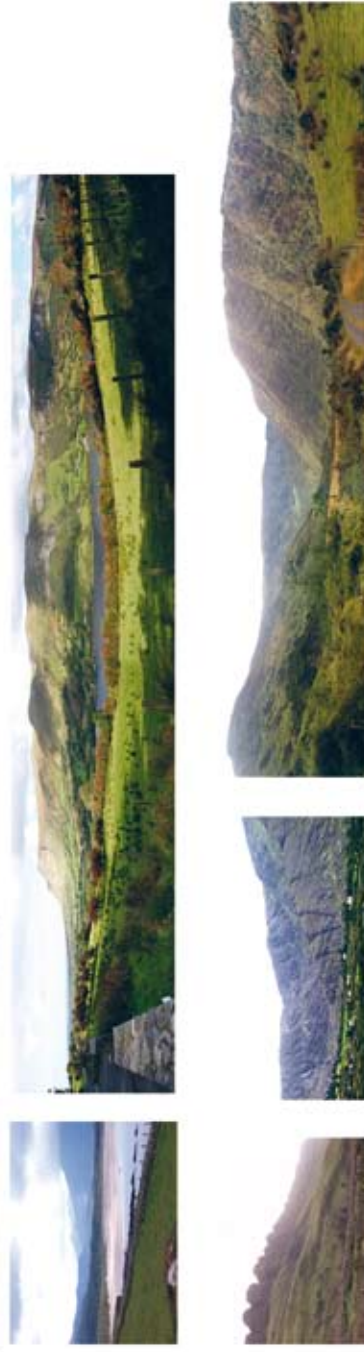
Is there a strong sense of perceived remoteness and tranquility?



Are views provided of water (river, lake, sea)?



Are there mountains strongly present in the view?



Is there a strong presence of rugged landform / exposure of rock outcrops?



Is there an overall sense of naturalness?



Figure 21(A): Sample Criteria for Assessment of Landscape Values

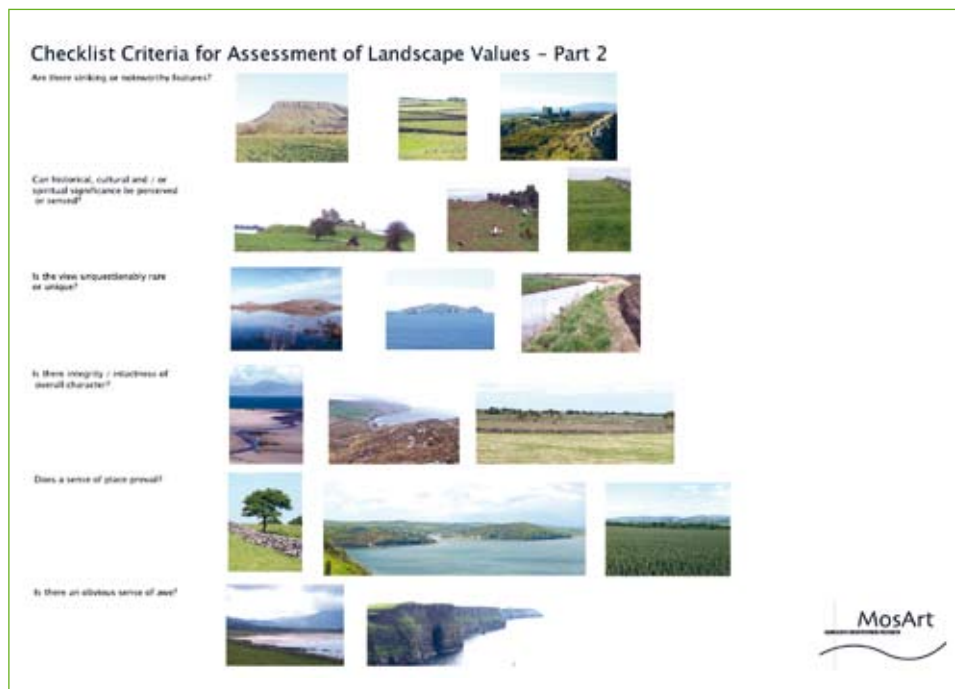


Figure 21(B): Sample Criteria for Assessment of Landscape of Landscape Values

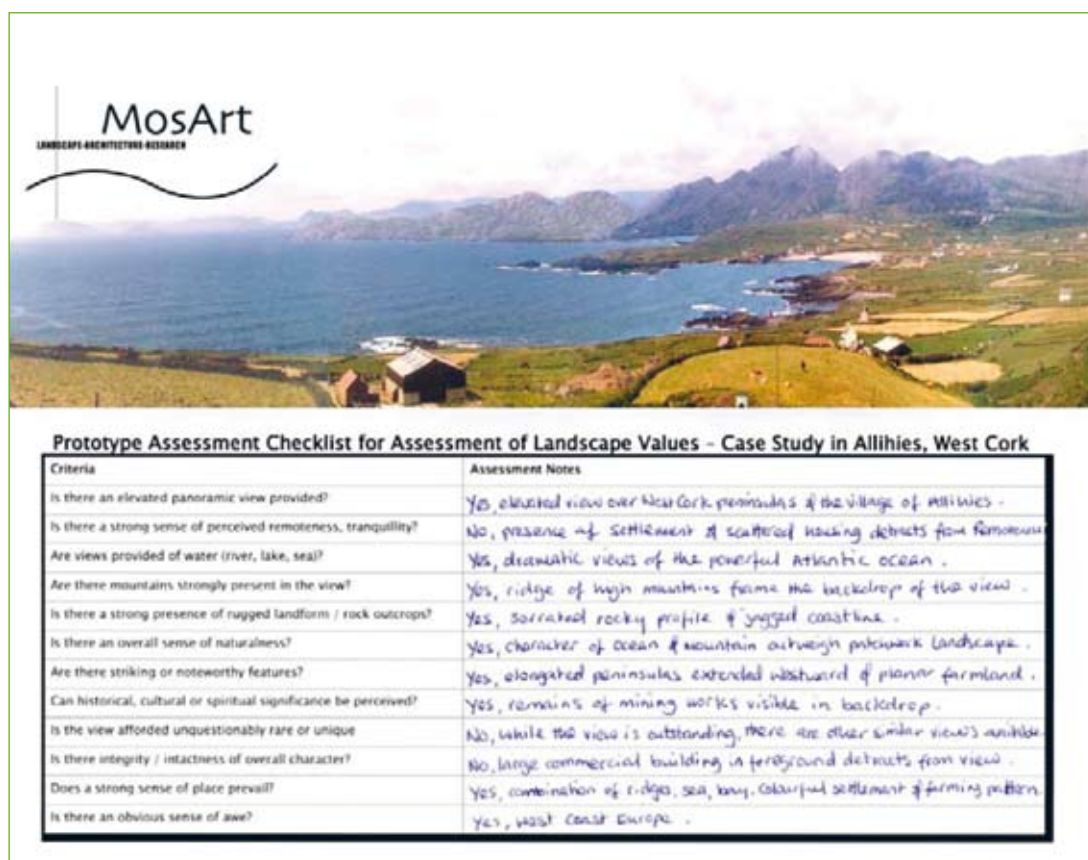


Figure 22: Application of Prototype Landscape Values Assessment Checklist

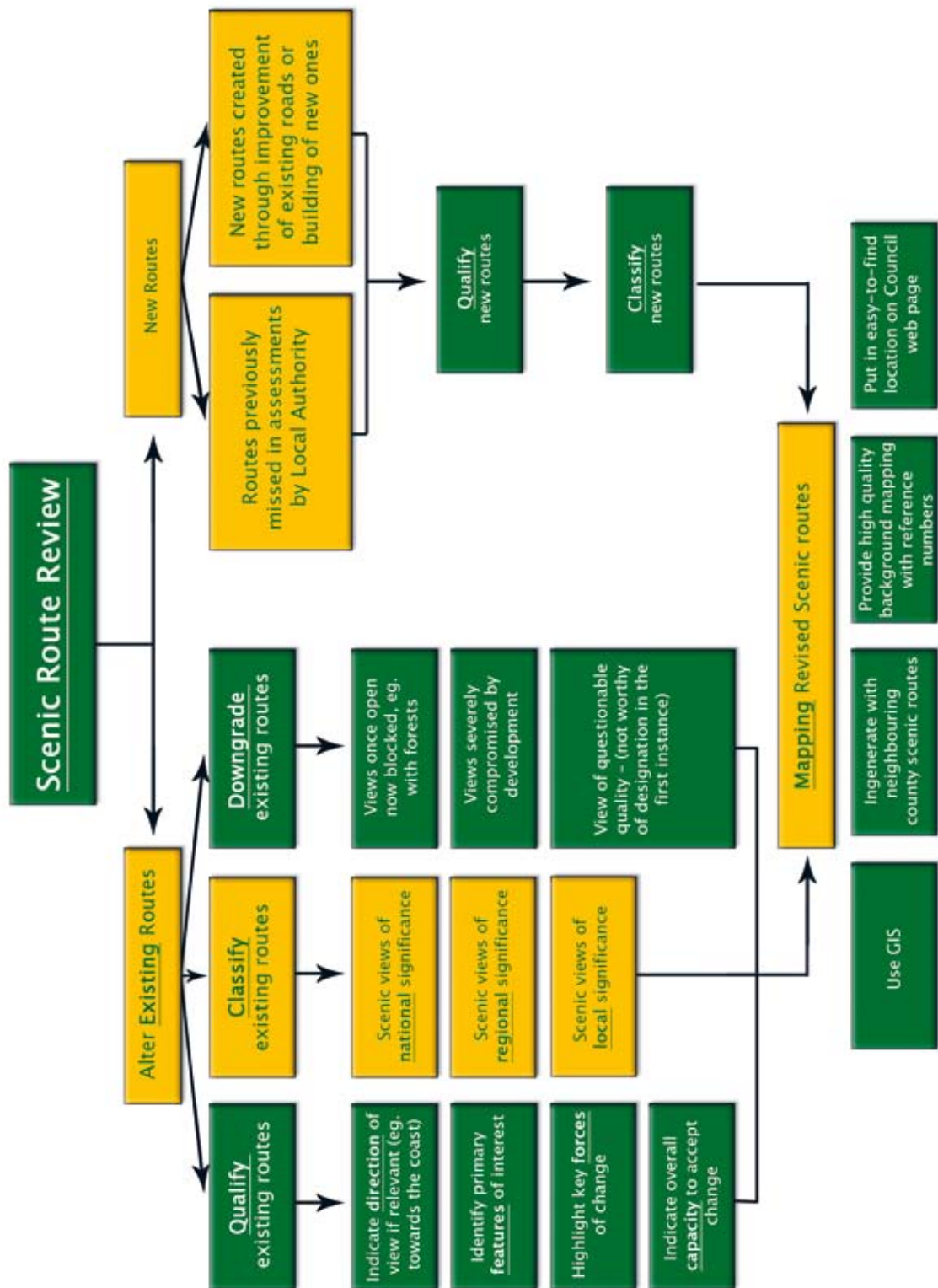


Figure 23: Diagram Illustrating the sample process for reviewing Scenic Routes

SCHEDULE 10**AREAS OF HIGH AMENITY VALUE**

Description	Features of Interest	Intended Action
Lough Key Area	Area of excellent amenity value - contains beautiful lake surrounded by trees and open space	To follow those recommendations as contained within the Lough Key Study
Mountainous areas in the Arigna/Lough Allen/Ballyfarnon Area	Beautiful scenery	To conserve and protect the amenity value of the area
The Rindoon Peninsula at Lough Ree and St. John's Wood	High quality scenic landscape	To conserve and protect the amenity value of the area
Hodson's Bay	High general scenic value overlooking Lough Ree. Berthing facilities available	To follow the recommendations in the Athlone Environs Plan
Kilglass Lakes Area	Lake-studded landscape of high visual quality	To protect the amenity value of the area

SCHEDULE 11**VIEWS AND PROSPECTS**

- View 1. Over mountainous areas of north of Ballyfarnon.
- View 2. Eastwards over Lough Allen.
- View 3. In the Lough Key area.
- View 4. Over the Kilglass Lakes area.
- View 5. Over Lough Ree at Ballyleague, Kileenrevagh and Carrigan.
- View 6. Views east and west over central plain.

Figure 24: Extract from Current Roscommon County Development Plan Dealing with Views and Prospects as well as Areas of High Amenity Value (note highlighting of Kilglass lakes Area)



Figure 25: General View of the Kilglass Lakes area in northeast County Roscommon

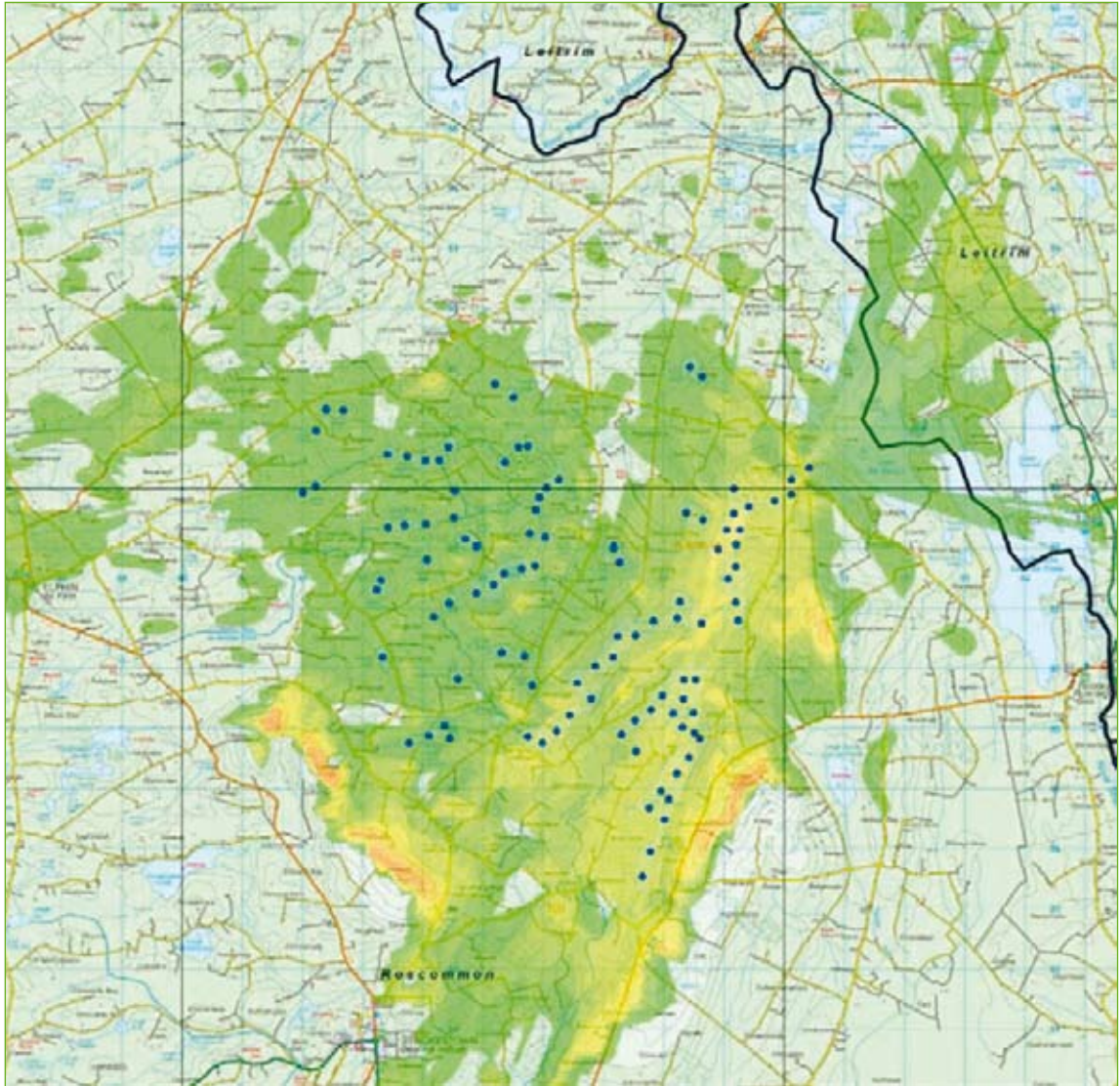


Figure 26: Use of GIS technology to identify locations that have a view of the Kilglass Lakes

Each of these four sub-stages are described below in outline.

Sub-Stage 4.1: Experience the character of the landscape

Armed with the ZTV map depicted above, the landscape assessors can head out into-the-field and establish what the landscape looks like in reality. The image included below (Figure 27) illustrates the essential character of the Kilglass Lakes area, namely lakes, woods and amenity areas. It is useful to take high quality digital photographs of representative views in the landscape for later incorporation into the CDP. They will also serve as a useful reminder to the assessors of what the landscape has to offer in terms of character and quality.



Figure 27: View of Kilglass Lakes Amenity Area

Sub-Stage 4.2: Identify roads that provide views of the landscape

The field work should then focus on finding out exactly where the best views are provided of the feature of interest (in this case the lakes). The ZTV map depicted in Figure 26 will often grossly exaggerate the availability of views which will be screened in reality by trees and buildings. The assessors visited the Kilglass Lakes area and found that there are just two roads that provide open views over a reasonable stretch of the features of interest. Of these roads, the busier regional road provides the most elevated and panoramic views over the landscape, so it was decided to use this road as the basis for the proposed Scenic Route (Figure 32).

Sub-Stage 4.3: Select and map the chosen Scenic Route

The third task for the field work is to map the extent of the Scenic Route. In other words, where does the route begin and where does it end. The direction of the view should also be recorded, namely, whether it is a complete 360 degree panorama or whether it is in one direction only. In the case study in question, MosArt employed a satellite navigation (SATNAV) system to map the location and extent of the route (Figure 28). As one assessor is driving, the other is examining the view and also looking at a real-time map on the SATNAV which shows exactly where the car in which they are travelling is located. Once the view opens out in the direction of the Kilglass Lakes, the location was marked on-screen as was the location where the view eventually disappears (Figure 29). The beginning and end locations can then be directly downloaded into a GIS back at base.



Figure 28: Use of Satellite Navigation Equipment in-the-field for Landscape Assessment



Figure 29: Detailed Mapping of Scenic Routes using satellite Navigation Systems

Sub-Stage 4.4: Prepare written descriptions of the view on offer

The fourth and final task to complete while on-site is to prepare a written assessment of the view, noting such things as character, grid reference, direction of view, features of interest, forces of change and overall quality. These notes can later be incorporated into the Council's GIS system. Highlighting forces of change will help to alert Planning staff to development that might bring about a change in character and overall quality. A sample assessment sheet completed by MosArt in the Kilglass Lakes area is included below (Figure 30) for the purposes of illustration. A panoramic photograph of the view is also included below, the likes of which should be included in the CDP along with the map of the Scenic Route (Figure 31).

[illegible]

Figure 30: Sample Field Assessment Sheet for Scenic Routes and Scenic Landscapes



Figure 31: Representative Panoramic Photograph of View from Scenic Route

Stage 5: Mapping and Incorporation into CDP

The final stage in this process is to depict the designated Scenic Route on OS Discovery Series background maps, including providing an indication of the direction of view. The sample route in the case of the Kilglass Lakes area (indicative only) is depicted below in Figure 32.

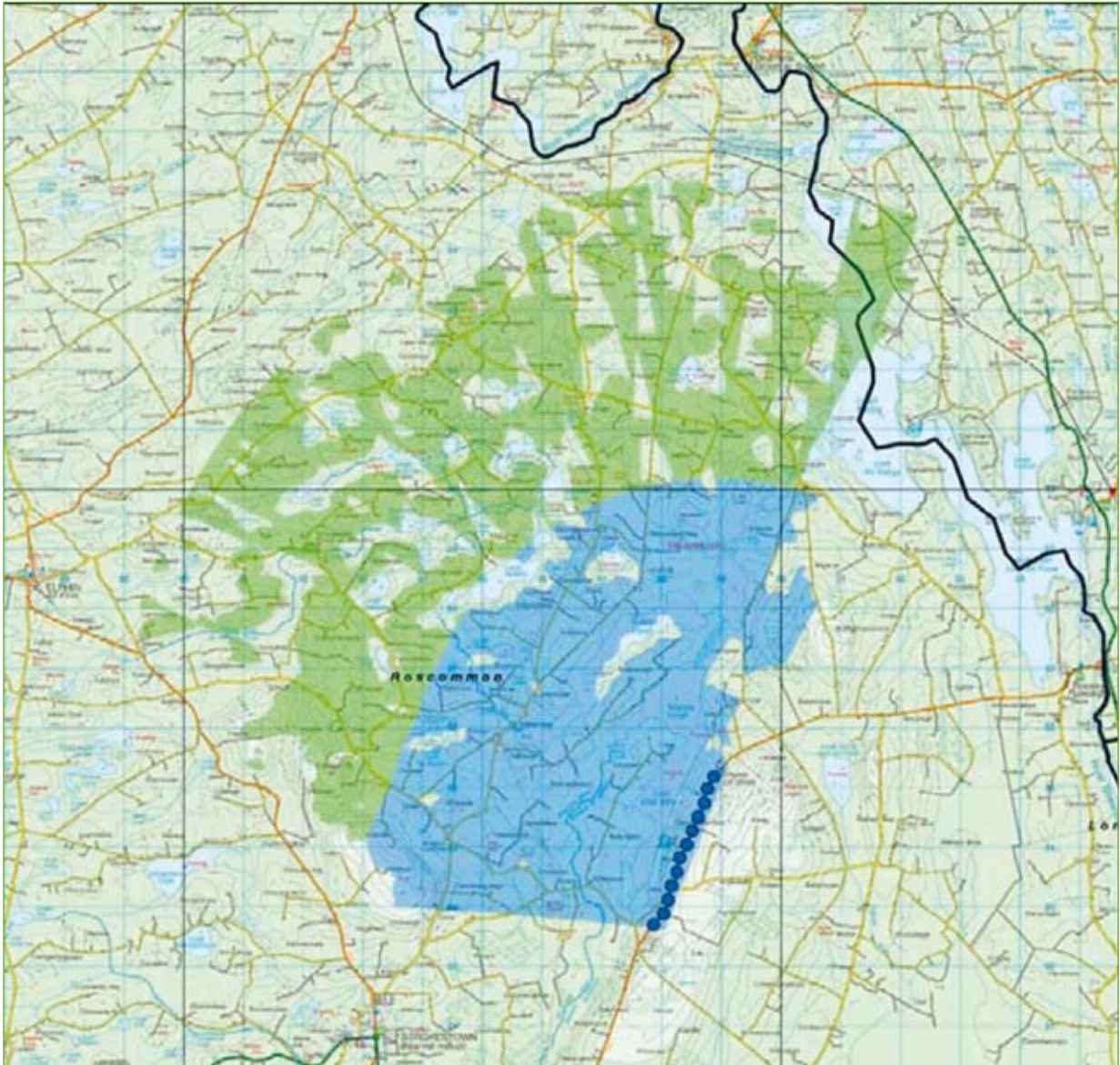


Figure 32: Location of Indicative Scenic Route as well as Scenic Landscape visible from that Route



Chapter 5

Conclusion and Key Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Issues

There are a number of means by which Ireland's special landscapes are afforded protection which include designation as either a Landscape Conservation Area¹, Special Amenity Area² or National Park³ or more generally through Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act which focuses on preservation of views and prospects as well as amenities and features of natural beauty or interest. Taking the above three national designation methods, one might reasonably imagine that given Ireland's internationally renowned reputation as a highly scenic country that there would be several such designated landscapes throughout the State. Further, since Ireland has ratified the European Landscape Convention (ELC⁴), specifically requiring the protection of landscape, it might be assumed that each county had at least one, if not more of, such areas. Bizarrely, however not a single Landscape Conservation Area (LCA(2)) exists, there are just three Special Amenity Area Orders and these in the immediate context of Dublin City and six National Parks, five of which are located in the western Atlantic counties.

This lack of protection is happening at a time when, in the last three years alone, there has been over quarter of a million new houses built in Ireland⁵, with 40% of these being one-offs in the countryside. The NRA is coordinating an unprecedented road building programme, wind farms are being erected to serve our energy needs and farmland is being abandoned due to downward pressure on farm incomes. Ireland is undergoing massive forces for change in parallel with the raging Tiger Economy and now is the time, more than ever, when we need to take stock of our landscape assets in establishing what exists and what requires protecting. The last effort to present a national overview of our best landscapes was almost thirty years ago and until very recently, there has been a deafening silence on the issue. Now is the time to rectify the lack of an integrated strategic approach to landscape management.

In 2006, the Heritage Council undertook a very revealing study of the current situation in Ireland with regards to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA(1)). The Report reveals a summary of how the process is being applied throughout the country. In short, there appears to be a widespread lack of understanding among Local Authorities of how landscape characterisation might best be applied resulting in broad scale inconsistencies in methodology and, accordingly, usefulness of the studies. The Heritage Council's study is critically important insofar as it serves as a wake-up call regarding the state of play of landscape characterisation in Ireland. A more coherent approach is clearly needed, to be driven by a revision of the current (Draft) Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2000.

In a questionnaire survey of Local Authorities in Ireland carried out as part of this study, it was found that there is a need for a revision of the current landscape designations on the basis that the process used in evaluating the potential impact of a planning application on a scenic landscape is inconsistent. Many local authorities are unaware how their scenic landscape designations compare with their neighbouring counties. Half of them are dissatisfied with their existing scenic landscape designations and the majority of them believe that development pressure is responsible for the down grading of their scenic landscapes.

¹ Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, enables a planning authority to designate any area or place as a Landscape Conservation Area, for the purpose of the preserving of the landscape.

² Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, enables a planning authority to declare an area to be of special amenity, by reason of its outstanding natural beauty or its special recreational value and having regard to any benefits for nature conservation.

³ In 1969, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommended that all governments agree to reserve the term 'National Park' to areas sharing specific characteristics. It is the policy of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, endorsed by successive governments, to abide by the criteria and standards for the National Parks laid down by the IUCN.

⁴ Wishing to provide a new instrument focused exclusively on the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe, member states of the Council of Europe came together at The European Landscape Convention in 2000. They acknowledged the role landscape plays in the social needs, economic activity and the environment. They agreed that, in the interests of sustainable development, the landscapes of Europe should be assessed and mapped. This information would then inform landscape and land use policy at local level.

⁵ <http://www.cso.ie/statistics/newdwelling.htm>

5.2 Main Conclusion

The principle conclusion that can be drawn from this report is outlined below:

That a national Scenic Landscapes Map would be both feasible and useful as a long term solution to the existing chaotic collection of disparate approaches designation of scenic landscapes in Ireland.

Furthermore, following in the wake of preparing first a character map, followed by a values map, the scenic landscapes map would lead to the identification of landscapes of national and international renown, as well as those of regional and local importance. The feasibility of producing a national landscape values map is outlined in detail in chapter 4, along with an overview of the overall approach. It is stressed that existing landscape legislation can be used to protect those most important landscapes. There would be two outcomes of a national study on landscape values, namely (1) a national map of National scenic landscapes worthy of statutory protection and (2) a coordinated landscape values classification system in all County Development Plans in Ireland.

In addition to investigating the feasibility and benefit to Fáilte Ireland and other prescribed bodies of conducting a general landscape values map, the report proposes criteria for assessing scenic landscapes and provides a practical example of how to identify and assess scenic landscapes in the field (including a checklist). A detailed case study on identification, mapping and assessment of scenic routes, views and prospects is also provided.

5.3 Recommendations

The conclusion that this study has arrived at can be achieved through three stepwise actions.

Action 1: Pilot Study

It is proposed as part of this report that a Pilot Study be implemented, as a fore runner to a national study to implement and test an outline methodology for identifying and mapping landscape values and scenic landscapes. This pilot study might involve a number of counties, including County Clare where the Heritage Council conducted their Pilot Landscape Character Study (2000).

Action 2: Revised and Illustrated Guidance to Ensure Consistency among Local Authorities in dealing with Scenic Landscapes, Scenic Routes and Views and Prospects

The most recent guidance on landscape assessment in Ireland was issued in Draft in 2000 but notably contains no detailed or practical advice on how to identify, designate, map and manage development in what might loosely be referred to as scenic landscapes. There is an urgent need to develop a graphically illustrated suite of practical guidance documents detailing the stepwise approach that should be used nationally to identify and protect what is our greatest tourism asset – the Irish landscape. The diversity of approaches, products and policies concerning scenic routes and views and prospects in Ireland would make it very difficult to produce a fully integrated national map. In the future all counties should adopt a standardised approach in reviewing their scenic routes and views and prospects, including high quality mapping and user-friendly referencing. Policies should not be solely focused on protection, but should seek opportunities for enhancement and enjoyment, provide examples of what might 'injure visual amenities', make reference to possible impacts on neighbouring counties and link with the overall approach to Landscape Characterisation.

Action 3: Prepare a full and detailed landscape values map

Detailed maps of landscape values and scenic landscapes should be prepared in parallel with a national assessment of landscape character in Ireland. This map would be GIS based and would require extensive field work as well as consultation. The Landscape Values map of Ireland will be used by Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland, as well as other prescribed bodies, in the planning process. In terms of appearance, such a map might resemble the English map of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 16).

5.4 Order of Magnitude Cost of Preparing a National Landscape Values Map

The Heritage Council's study highlighted that the average cost of preparing a 'landscape characterisation' study in Ireland is between €30,000 and €70,000 per county, in other words €50,000. A lot of these studies involve both character as well as some kind of values / quality / sensitivity. It is noted that many of the studies carried out thus far have not involved local consultation (for example through public meetings) and have not incorporated the use of GIS. The use of both of these elements would increase the cost of the studies. Compensating for such cost increases, however, is the fact that the study would run in parallel with a national landscape characterisation appraisal. There would be an overlap in terms of desk studies, field assessments, data resources and mapping.

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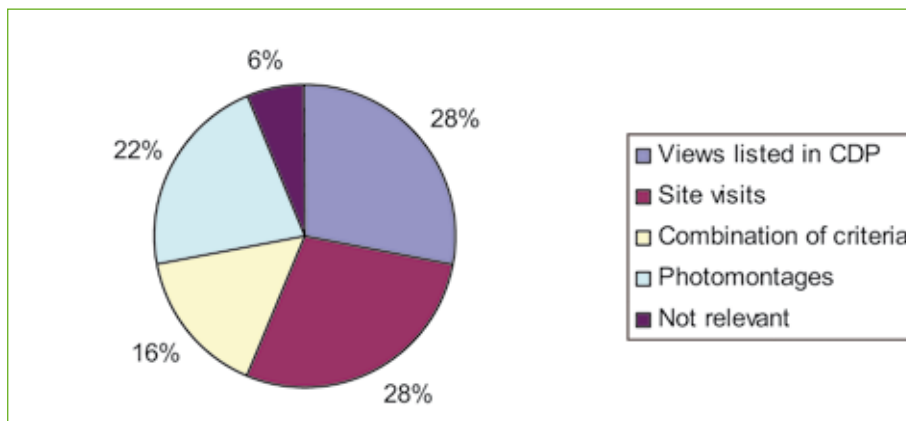
Appendix 1

Local Authority Survey Questionnaire and Results And Focus Group Meeting Findings

Survey Questionnaire Results

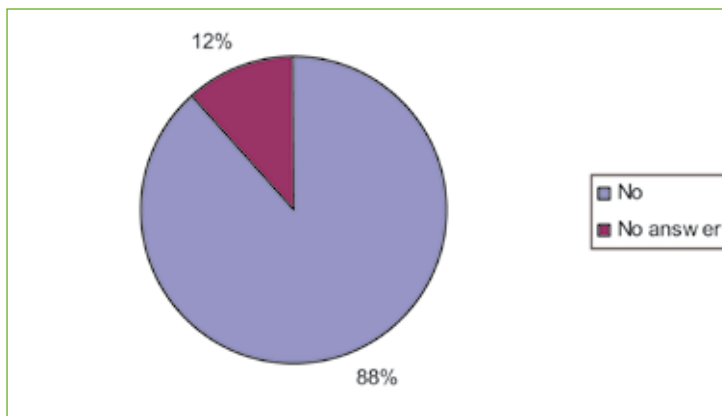
The results of the quantitative questions from the landscape aspect of questionnaire are presented below in pie chart form and followed by analysis, where as the qualitative results are discussed in more detail.

Question: Outline the process used by your Planning and Development Department in evaluating the potential impact of a planning application on a scenic landscape or scenic route / view / prospect?



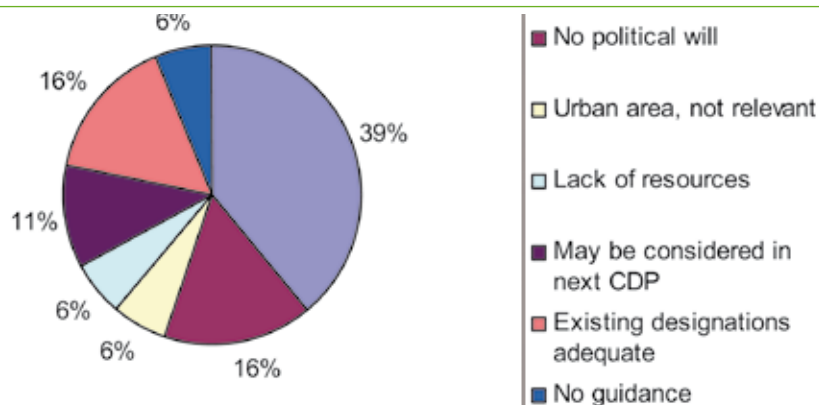
Only 28% stated that they require a planner to make a site visit when evaluating the potential impact of a planning application on a scenic landscape. Another 28% stated that they consult the list of scenic landscapes in their CDP. 22% said they request the applicant to produce photomontages. 16% said they use a combination of criteria including site visits, the erection of ridge/marker poles and the use of photomontages. Overall the results show that there are a variety of processes used by local authorities when evaluating the potential impact of a planning application on a scenic landscape.

Question: Have there been any Landscape Conservation Areas designated in your county (under Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000)?



This result compares well to the Heritage Council's findings, which states there are currently no Landscape Conservation Areas in Ireland designated under Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Question: If the answer to the above question is No, please tell us why not ...

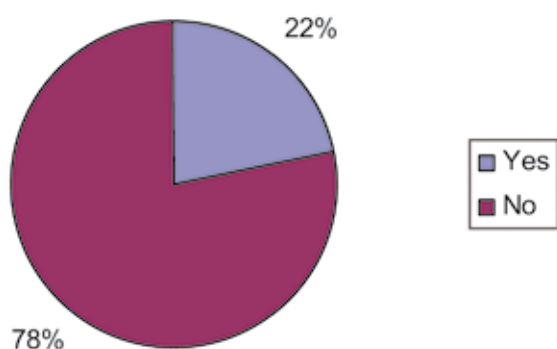


16% of local authorities specifically stated there was *no political will* to designate Landscape Conservation Areas. Some of the comments put forward were as follows:

- ▶ *It will have to be voted in by elected members. One proposal to extend an area of development control was sadly defeated.*
- ▶ *No Ministerial direction has been received (in fact, the Minister only has the power to make regulations prescribing development which shall not be exempted development within LCAs).*

16% said that existing designations were 'adequate'. While 1 local authority cited the lack of guidance and another stated a lack of resources as to why there are no Landscape Conservation Areas, 39% gave no reason at all, which perhaps demonstrates a lack of knowledge of the duties and powers local authorities have in respect to Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

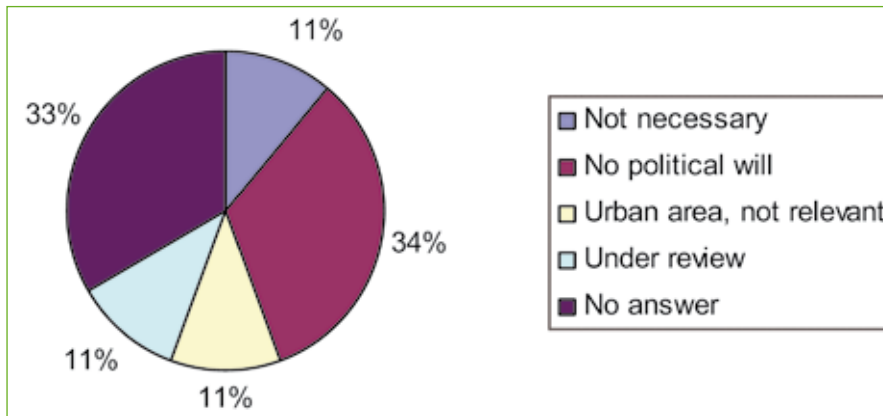
Question: Have there been any Areas of Special Amenity designated in your county (under Section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000)?



What is revealing in this result is that 22% of local authorities replied that they did have an SAAO in their county. This result was unexpected, as according to the DoEHLG there are only 3 SAAOs nationally, all of which are in County Dublin¹. Further research into this result (follow up phone calls with local Authorities) revealed that there seems to be a lack of understanding as to the definition of an SAAO. The question had been misinterpreted as meaning other types of landscape designations, for example: scenic routes or views.

¹ Howth Head SAAO, North Bull Island SAAO and Liffey Valley SAAO.

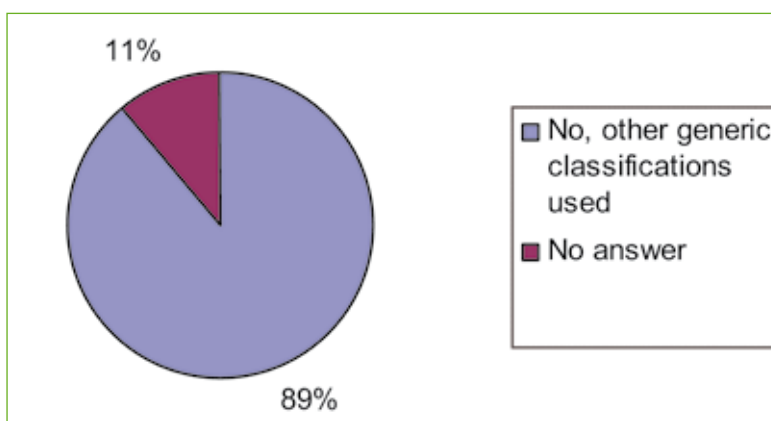
Question: If the answer is No, please tell us why not...



Although 33% gave no answer the question, 34% of local authorities specifically stated there was *no political will* to designate SAAOs. Some of the comments were as follows:

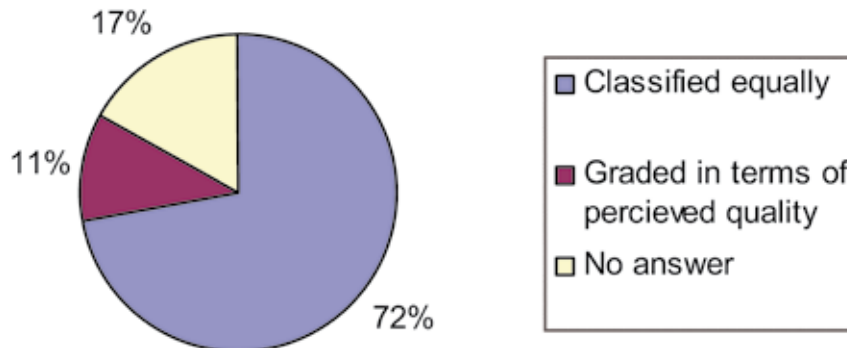
- ▶ There is no particular impetus or demand from any quarter.
- ▶ There is no direction from the Minister [although the Minister may direct a local authority to make an SAAO and the local authority must comply with a direction from the Minister in this regard, each local authority has the power to designate areas of special amenity].
- ▶ It will have to be voted in by elected members.

Question: Does your County Development Plan specifically designate Tourist Amenity Areas as distinct from other generic classifications such as scenic areas, scenic routes / views and prospects?



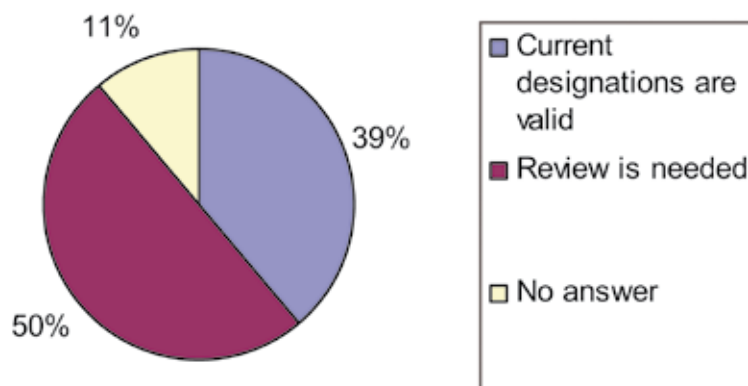
The vast majority of local authorities have no Tourist Amenity Areas classified in their CDPs. One local authority however stated that they use an 'Integrated Leisure Development' classification which seems to suggest they have identified areas suitable for the development of (built) tourist facilities, as opposed to the identification of *landscapes* which are suitable as a tourist amenity.

Question: Are all scenic routes / views and prospects classified equally in terms of perceived quality, or are they graded (for example 'highly scenic' versus just 'scenic').



The predominant lack of a classification system that grades landscape quality prompts the question that surely not all views are the same or equal? A national system would propose that scenic landscapes are classified according to landscape value primarily (as per Landscape Character Assessment) and would also consider the aspect of quality.

Question: Are you entirely satisfied with the current designations of scenic routes views and prospects or do you think that they should be reviewed perhaps in order to (a) identify potentially new examples or (b) to downgrade others which perhaps have deteriorated in quality over the past years?



Half of respondents were dissatisfied with the designation of their scenic routes views and prospects. Possible reasons for this might be:

- ▶ They felt that some of the scenic routes, views and prospects designated are unworthy of the designation.
- ▶ They felt that the system that was used to assess to set the designation was inadequate.
- ▶ That the designation itself had not been effective in preserving the quality of the scenic routes, views and prospects.

The result demonstrates that there is a need for guidelines that local authorities can implement in the assessment of scenic landscapes.

Question: In what situations, if any, might an existing designated scenic route, views or prospects be downgraded / declassified?

9 out of 18 Local Authority respondents cited '*development pressure*' as the main reason for the downgrading of existing scenic routes, views and prospects. 3 respondents specifically cited *forestry* as the main type of development that can compromise the quality of a scenic landscape. This result reveals a perception that forestry can be an unattractive change in the landscape, although we do not find out if it is a specific type of forestry (i.e. conifer or broadleaf) or if it is the management of forestry that is the basis of the negative impact on the scenic landscapes.

Question: According to your opinion, could you please list the top five landscapes in your county and tell us why you think they are so special...

The aim of this question was not necessarily to find out where the most scenic landscapes in the country are, but rather to reveal what makes them so special. The language used to describe why these landscapes are considered highly scenic was very interesting. The descriptions provided by the respondents can be grouped under the following criteria; Physical; Perceptual; Emotional; and Association.

Physical

- ▶ Lakeland views framed by topography and field enclosure.
- ▶ Highly scenic linear river valley landscape extending from mountain area
- ▶ Many different landscape areas available.
- ▶ Mixture of natural and manmade water ways of industrial archaeological importance.
- ▶ Provides a natural backdrop to the city.
- ▶ Interface between sea and rocky shore interspersed by secluded beaches, is highly dramatic.
- ▶ The patchwork of agricultural landscapes.
- ▶ The north ridges contribute to setting & character of Cork City.
- ▶ Views of landmark buildings are visual landmarks of the city.
- ▶ The majestic grandeur of unencroached landscapes with literary, historic, archaeological and iconic associations.
- ▶ The spectacular seascapes with indented coastlines.
- ▶ Inherent landscape variations due to land uses.
- ▶ The river provides an excellent centre piece for settlements in the county.

Perceptual

- ▶ Views south across the county & north allow extensive visibility.
- ▶ The scale of visibility.
- ▶ Scenic road access and light quality.
- ▶ Rural in character with views limited to the immediate environment.

Emotional

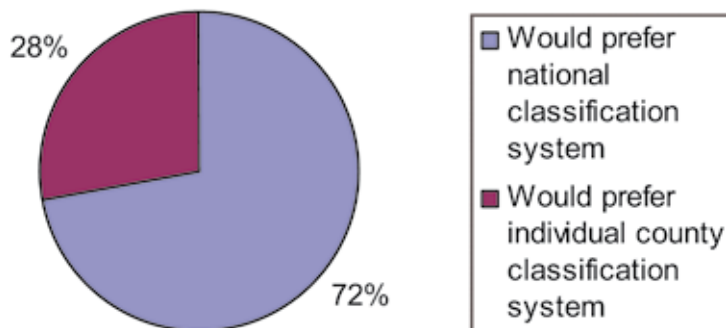
- ▶ Highly scenic extensive upland area prominent in views from all parts of the country providing easily accessible relief from urban environment.
- ▶ Parks and open spaces enhance the quality of life for residents.
- ▶ The inland textured landscape, contrasting the lake and the historic mountain landscape with variations in intimacy.

Association

- ▶ Strong *mythological* associations.
- ▶ Highly scenic extensive river valley landscape with significant *historical associations*.
- ▶ The continuous mountains from a distinctive *feature for the region*.

When listing the Top Five Landscapes in each county, some respondents listed Landscape Character Types and some listed Landscape Character Areas.

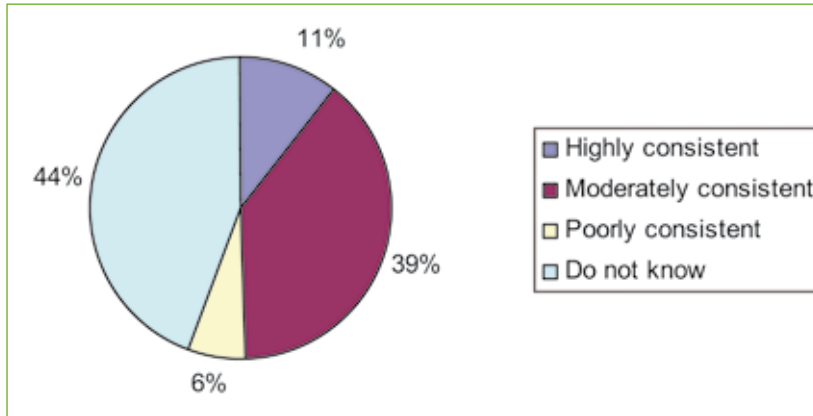
Question: At present there appears to be a broad variety of approaches used in Ireland in the assessment of scenic landscapes and scenic routes, views and prospects. Do you think it would be better if the same approach and classification system was used nationally or should each Local Authority have the freedom to use whichever system they feel best suits their county?



The vast majority of local authorities, 72%, indicated that they would prefer a national approach when assessing scenic landscapes. Of those that indicated they would prefer to use their own county system for assessing scenic landscapes, 1 of these specifically stated that a national system would devalue the scenic landscapes of their county. They stated that their county would be compared to counties that are well known for their scenic landscapes.

Overall there appears to be a need for a national assessment system, however there is some fear that a national system could in fact serve to devalue some scenic landscapes. The challenge therefore is to develop a system that will on the one hand classify scenic landscapes at a national level, but on the other hand protect the best landscapes available in counties that are not generally renowned for being scenic.

Question: How would you describe the degree of consistency between the designated scenic landscapes and scenic routes / views and prospects in your county compared with those of your neighbouring Local Authority?



44% of local authorities did not know how consistent their scenic landscape designations are compared with their neighbouring counties. Two of these commented that there is no consistency between urban and rural landscape designations within their own local authority boundary. Of the 39% that said they were moderately consistent, one commented that the management policies of scenic landscapes neighbouring local authorities also needed to be more consistent.

Focus Group Meeting Findings

A focus group meeting was held at the Fáilte Ireland Head Offices, Amiens Street, Dublin on Thursday 20th July 2006. A number of key issues emerged during the focus group meeting relating to the implementation of both a proposed national GIS and standardised scenic landscapes designation system. The issues pertaining to the latter can be grouped under the following headings:

Referrals System

- ▶ Many planning application referrals are made without giving supporting documentation as to why the referral is being made. The Prescribed Body might not know, therefore, why they are being referred the planning application.
- ▶ The referral process between Local Authorities and Prescribed Bodies is generally regarded as being highly inconsistent.

Legislation

- ▶ Local authorities are legally required to adhere to designations such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). However it is at the *discretion* of local authorities to implement any 'landscape' guidelines issued by the DoEHLG.
- ▶ A legislative vacuum exists between the requirement of local authorities to implement Section 202, of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the reality at local authority level. Currently, there are currently no 'Landscape Conservation Areas' in Ireland.
- ▶ Fáilte Ireland will need to identify the 'central issues' in order to drive strategic change. The 'central issues' identified were:
 - The National Development Plan.
 - County Development Plans
 - 'e-Planning' and its potential to link in with a National Landscape Character Map.

Landscape Designations

- ▶ Local authorities sometimes use designations such as 'high amenity areas' for development control purposes. This effectively means that potential 'development sites' are designated as 'landscapes' with protection policies attached. A national map would prevent Local Authorities inappropriately designating areas.
- ▶ The process of making 'value judgements' about landscapes should be removed from local authorities.
- ▶ There are opportunities for identifying landscapes with future tourism potential. In particular looking at the changing face of Irish landscapes. For example, the decline in agriculture and the changes in farming process in the peat lands for example.
- ▶ Landscapes such as turloughs, peat lands or unique 'seasonal' landscapes have tourism potential and perhaps should given a landscape designation for this reason.

Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes 1977

- ▶ The 1977 map does not include peri-urban areas.
- ▶ Any scenic landscapes map should come with guidelines to ensure its appropriate use.
- ▶ Local authorities started adding designations to the 1977 map, but there was inconsistency and many different terms were used.
- ▶ Overall the 1977 map is useful, but there is a need for a good GIS system that incorporates 'value judgements', perhaps using public consultation.

Other models

- ▶ A document called 'Inspire' is a 2007 Draft European Directive dealing with spatial data infrastructure (a mechanism for different data to come together on an internet data base for sharing data and common standards). See www.ecgis.org/inspire
- ▶ Mayo County Council and Donegal County Council have established an excellent GIS system that links into an online planning system.

Focus Group Attendees

The focus group comprised of key figures from the following governments departments, local authorities, government agencies and non governmental agencies. It should be noted that not all comments listed above are attributable to all members of the Focus Group.

The Attendees are listed below:

Mr. Bruce McCormack, Inspector, Heritage and Planning, Department of the Environment, Custom House, Dublin 1.

Mr. Noel Casserly, Comhar: The National Sustainable Development Partnership, 17 St. Andrew Street, Dublin 2.

Mr. Michael Starrett, Chief Executive, The Heritage Council, Rothe House, Parliament Street, Kilkenny.

Mr. Philip Jones, Vice-President, Irish Planning Institute, c/o An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

Mr. Aidan Ffrench, President, Irish Landscape Institute, c/o Dún Laoghaire County Council, County Hall, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

Ms. Claire Gilligan, Local Government Computer Services Board, Phoenix House, Conynghan Road, Dublin 8.

Mr. Pat Farrington, Landscape Architect, Forest Service, The Department of Agriculture and Food, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Mr Frank Barrett, Department of Agriculture and Food, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Mr. Ian Lumley, Heritage Officer, An Taisce, Tailor's Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8.

Ms Fiona Lawlor, GIS Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford.

Darragh McDonagh, Donegal County Council, County Hall, Lifford, Co. Donegal.

Paddy Mathews, Environment Unit, Fáilte Ireland, Baggot Street, Dublin.

Nik Hennessy, Managing Director, MacroWorks, Dublin.

Tomas O'Leary, Managing Director, MosArt Landscape Architecture Research, Wicklow

Lisa Smyth, Landscape Architect, MosArt Landscape Architecture Research, Wicklow



Appendix 2

International Best Practice of Methods for Assessment of Landscape Values

Some examples of international best practice in the field of landscape assessment are included below. An abstract description of various studies, guidelines and methodologies is initially provided below, followed by key extracts from the source material.

1. UK – Overview Report - Quality of Life Capital Approach (Country Agency, English Nature English Heritage & the Environment Agency)

Developed jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency to provide a consistent and integrated way of managing for quality of life. In 1998/9, eighteen pilot projects applied the approach to a range of different tasks. One finding from these pilots and other research is that the approach is as valid for social and economic as for environmental benefits. An overall approach is recommended including specifying study purpose, identify what is there, determine benefits and services, evaluation, prepare policy and management implications and monitoring.

2. UK – Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (Natural England)

Natural England in the UK has developed a suite of practical guidance documents dealing with landscape assessment. Chapter 7 of these guidelines focuses on Making Judgements Based on Landscape Character and includes key criteria that might be used in evaluating landscape value, namely landscape quality, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, wildness, associations and tranquillity. Such evaluation will of necessity be based on professional input but should also include stakeholder consultation as an integral part of the process.

3. UK – Guide to Best Practice in Seascape Assessment (Countryside Council for Wales, Brady Shipmen Martin & UCD)

The Countryside Council for Wales, Brady Shipman Martin and University College Dublin developed a comprehensive guide to seascape assessment in 2001. These guidelines propose a stepwise approach to assessing and mapping coastal landscapes, including the use of GIS to determine landscape visibility as well as a field-work assessment checklist of aesthetic and perceptual factors.

4. UK – Mapping Tranquillity, Defining & Assessing a Valuable Resource (CPRE & The Countryside Agency)

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) North East and The Countryside Agency commissioned a report to develop a methodology for mapping tranquillity. The methodology had to be robust and could support a range of activities, with land-use and landscape planning foremost amongst them. It has established that qualitative consultation of a wide range of countryside users and other groups can be accommodated within a quantitative framework for analysis and mapping, thereby drawing tranquillity into the range of available countryside quality indicators.

5. Spain – Catalan Landscape Observatory (2005)

The Landscape Observatory is an advisory body of the Catalan Authorities and for awakening society to matters of landscape. It studies landscape, monitors it, prepares proposals and sensitises society to the appropriateness of better protection, management and planning of the landscape in Catalonia in the context of sustainable development. It supports the application of the European Landscape Convention in Catalonia and is conceived as a centre for thought and action in relation to landscape.

6. Hong Kong – Mapping Character, Condition, Sensitivity and Values

An approach to landscape recently applied in Hong Kong outlines a stepwise appraisal of mapping character, condition, sensitivity and values. Landscape value is appraised on the basis of a number of attributes, including a landscape's visual coherence, complexity, rarity, relief and condition, key heritage/natural features and visual attractors / detractors. The evaluation has been applied to determine which are the best and most attractive landscapes and which are not so good, so that actions which may adversely affect attractive landscapes can be avoided.

7. New Zealand - Landscape Assessment Methodology (LA4 Architects Ltd.)

A landscape architectural practice based in Auckland, New Zealand, have developed an approach to rating and mapping landscape achieved through a combination of landscape quality (value) and landscape vulnerability. An abstract of their work is included below.

8. US – Journal of Landscapes & Urban Planning, Whither scenic beauty? Visual landscape quality assessment in the 21st century (Daniel, Larry C.)

A Journal Paper by Terry C. Daniel et al entitled 'Whither scenic beauty? Visual landscape quality assessment in the 21st century' proposes a psychophysical approach to landscape evaluation which integrates the 20th Century emphasis on expert and perceptual assessment with the 21st Century need to consider a deeper ecology and green philosophy. The author is one of the world's leading authorities on the theory of landscape and landscape assessment.

1. UK - Overview Report - Quality of Life Capital Approach (Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency)

March 2001

prepared by CAG Consultants and Land Use Consultants

Quality of life capital: determining what matters and why

The Quality of Life Capital approach was developed jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency to provide a consistent and integrated way of managing for quality of life. It has been developed by CAG Consultants and Land Use Consultants, originally under the name of Environmental Capital. In 1998/9 eighteen pilot projects applied the approach to a range of different tasks. One finding from these pilots and other research is that the approach is as valid for social and economic as for environmental benefits. It has thus been renamed the Quality of Life (QoL) Capital approach.

Introduction

This guide describes how to use the Quality of Life Capital approach as a tool for identifying what matters and why, so that the consequences (both good and bad) of plans, development proposals and management options on quality of life can be better taken into account by practitioners and decision takers.

This guide concentrates on those benefits for human quality of life that come from the environment, because the method has been most thoroughly piloted and tested on these, and because planners and practitioners often need a tool for this specific purpose. However as the box above explains, the same method can embrace social and economic capital too. Guidance on these will be added to the website as and when these applications of the method are well enough tested in practice. Meanwhile it should be remembered that this guide deals in detail only with the environmental aspects of quality of life capital.

It offers a strategic overview of

- ▶ what this approach is;
- ▶ what tasks it can potentially help with (including two worked examples);
- ▶ where it is appropriate to use;
- ▶ how it relates to other appraisal methods and decision support tools.

What is Quality of Life Capital for?

Politicians, policy makers, planners and developers continually face decisions which seem to set different social, economic and environmental goals against each other. Where should new development be accommodated? Is a loss of green space or outlook justified to create jobs or housing? How should visitor pressures be managed in a beautiful but fragile landscape?

Decisions like these cry out for a fair and comprehensive method for setting out and comparing all the different pluses and minuses of different options, taking account of both expert and lay views. This is what QoL Capital seeks to provide. It:

- ▶ stands back from things or places and considers the **benefits or services** that they provide for human well-being (“what matters and why?”)
- ▶ provides a **consistent, systematic and transparent** evaluation framework **for all scales of decision making**
- ▶ **Integrates environmental, social and economic issues**
- ▶ emphasises **improvement of quality of life** rather than acceptance of the status quo
- ▶ **values the commonplace** as well as the unusual and rare
- ▶ **facilitates participation**, putting professional/expert judgements alongside the concerns of local people
- ▶ **works with other tools and processes** including environmental impact assessment, sustainability appraisal, Community Planning and Best Value.

In a specifically planning context, it shows where and in what form and with what conditions development can be accommodated with the least possible loss or damage, and helps to halt the creeping erosion of quality of life.

The core idea: benefits and services

The core idea of QoL Capital is that the environment, the economy and society provide a range of benefits for human life, and that it is these benefits or services which we need to protect and/or enhance. (We use both terms, ‘benefit’ and ‘service’, because neither captures the meaning perfectly on its own.) For example consider a small mixed woodland on the edge of a town. QoL Capital says it’s not the hectares of woodland that matter in themselves, it’s the capacity of the wood to provide tranquil recreation, habitat for rare species, stabilise the soil, retain water, mop up carbon dioxide and local air pollution - and perhaps also support a livelihood in charcoal burning or coppice timber products.

Of course this is not a new idea. The idea that a stock of assets should be safeguarded to ensure a flow of benefits underlies much of economics and previous thinking in this area. It has guided a great deal of good planning practice for years. Many development plans, appraisals, planning officers’ reports on proposed developments and such like already apply the ideas behind the QoL Capital approach. All that’s new is to set out in a thorough and explicit way what has previously been more piecemeal, partial and implicit, and a methodical framework to make it easier for all practitioners to do thoroughly and consistently what some are already doing.

The advantages this offers are:

- ▶ putting all kinds of social, economic and environmental service - from the most technical and scientific to the most subjective and social - in the same framework;
- ▶ combining a range of specialist, technical and community inputs;
- ▶ providing a systematic framework for deriving policies or management objectives from them

The Quality of Life Capital process

All applications of the approach involve the same 6 basic steps. This section introduces them; subsequent ones discuss them in more detail (see also “further information” at the end of this report).

Step A: Purpose The same basic approach can help with a wide range of different decisions and planning processes, from site briefs to regional planning guidance. But the details of what you need to do vary greatly with the purpose. So the essential first step is to be clear about the purpose of the study. This guide concentrates on examples from planning and environmental management.

Step B: Identifying what is there The purpose of the exercise (step A) will imply which sources of social, economic and environmental benefits need to be studied. A variety of techniques including traditional survey methods and character assessment may be useful for identifying environmental features depending on scale and circumstances. For example, regional planning guidance will need to look at what is special or important at the level of the region. At the other extreme, a development control application can look solely at the ways the proposed development would affect the local area. For comparing potential development sites already identified, QoL Capital could concentrate on the differences between them, whereas an exercise carried out to identify possible sites would need to consider the whole area.

Step C: Benefits and services The key to the method is to ask: what are the benefits and services which are potentially affected by the planning process or the decision at issue? Many places or environmental features provide a wide range of different services, and being clear about the purpose of the study enables the work to concentrate on the issues that matter and can be influenced.

Step D: Evaluation This examines the benefits and services systematically, using a series of questions:

who the services matter to, why, and at what spatial scale: for example habitat quality may matter for biodiversity at a regional or national scale, while recreational access may matter for quite specific groups of people from a small local area;

how important are they, which is a distinct question from the previous one: a service that matters at national level is not necessarily more important than one that matters only locally;

whether we have enough of them - it is more important to maintain services which are in short supply (or in danger of becoming so) than ones that are plentiful (though obviously there are degrees of scarcity, and the method should not be used as an excuse to let things decline to the minimum acceptable level). Where we currently do not have enough, the aim should be increase;

what (if anything) could make up for any loss or damage to the service - for example other places local people could go equally readily for the same types of recreation, or other areas that could be managed to support displaced communities of bird species. (Many services - notably historical and cultural significance - can not be substituted.)

Expert judgement and community views both need to be reflected, so QoL Capital draws on both public consultation and involvement processes and technical appraisal methods including (for environmental benefits and services) environmental impact assessment, landscape, ecological, archaeological and characterisation studies.

Step E: Policy / management implications From the evaluation, this step draws clear messages about the aims or policies which would be needed to ensure that social, economic and environmental benefits were maintained or enhanced rather than damaged. The form these take will depend on what decision or process the exercise is feeding in to. For example structure plan policies need to be framed very differently to planning obligations for a particular site - another reason why it is so important to be clear about the purpose for the study in advance.

Step F: Monitoring The benefits and services identified as important in the process are, for this very reason, the aspects of the environment which should be monitored. QoL Capital thus provides its own performance indicators.

2. UK-Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England & Scotland (Natural England)

Chapter 7 - Making Judgements based on Landscape Character

7.1 The use of Landscape Character Assessment in making judgements is a fast-moving scene amongst practitioners. This chapter sets out some main principles on the subject. Topic Paper 6, *Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity*, will be issued in the Summer of 2002 to address one of the key areas where practitioners need to make judgements on this topic.

7.2 The main value of having a Landscape Character Assessment is to help in the process of managing change in a particular place. All sorts of change will shape future landscapes, and by applying this tool in an appropriate way, alongside other tools, we can help to ensure that such changes make a 'positive' contribution.

7.3 For this reason, most assessments will usually move beyond the characterisation stage to the stage of making judgements to inform particular decisions. Making judgements as part of an assessment should not concentrate only on the maintenance of existing character. This may be one part of the judgements made. The focus should be on ensuring that land use change or development proposals are planned and designed to achieve an appropriate relationship (and most often a 'fit') with their surroundings, and wherever possible contribute to enhancement of the landscape, in some cases by creating a new character.

7.4 Judgements based on landscape character need to take account of several factors. Most importantly it is vital to decide who is going to be involved in making the judgements. For practical reasons some assessments may still rely mainly on judgements made by professionals. It is nevertheless important to involve stakeholders in this part of the process if the judgements are to command wide support and are to be as fully informed as possible. Many different stakeholder groups need to be given opportunities to contribute, especially:

- ▶ those who manage the land, especially farmers and foresters;
- ▶ local residents and community groups;
- ▶ other users of the land, including visitors and those who take part in recreational activities.

7.5 An historical perspective is important to help understand the way in which a landscape has evolved over time to take on its present character, and how both natural forces and human intervention have contributed to its evolution. With such understanding, decisions about future change can be placed in an historical context and ideas about, for example, restoration of some earlier historic character can be well-informed and based on a sound historical rationale (see Topic Paper 5).

What Types of Judgements ?

7.6 Ways of making judgements based on character will vary depending upon the particular issue that is being addressed. This in turn will reflect the purpose of the assessment and the type of judgements that are required. As set out in Chapter 2 (para 2.10), these judgements will either:

- ▶ be specifically related to decision-making based on landscape character; or be designed to contribute to wider environmental decision making
- ▶ tools where landscape is only one of several topics to be addressed.

7.7 A number of such environmental and sustainability decision-making tools now exist. Some, like Environmental Impact Assessment and landscape capacity studies, are well established. Others, like the Natural Heritage Futures programme (used in Scotland), and Quality of Life Capital (in England) are newer and still emerging. Landscape Character Assessment links to these tools in different ways. Topic Paper 2 provides information about these tools. It particularly highlights the way that these tools and initiatives can be informed by Landscape Character Assessment.

Main Considerations in Making Judgements

7.8 Approaches to making judgements that are focused on landscape character, as distinct from these broader environmental tools, have continued to evolve particularly over the last ten years as practitioners have gained more experience in the practical application of techniques. These approaches are generally based on one or more of the following considerations, namely the character, quality (condition of features), value of the landscape, and its sensitivity to change. These terms need to be understood if there is to be consistency in approaches taken. The definitions recommended by the Agencies are as follows:

- ▶ **Landscape character** means the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how these are perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.
- ▶ **Landscape quality (or condition)** is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
- ▶ **Landscape value** is concerned with the relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
- ▶ **Landscape capacity** refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.

7.9 In deciding on the approach to making judgements there must be a clear rationale which is explained to the assessment's users. This will help make the assessment and its application more robust and accountable.

Defining Objectives

7.10 The rationale for judgements will need to establish the balance between the following objectives for landscape types and areas:

- ▶ **Conservation and maintenance** of existing character;
- ▶ **Enhancement** of existing character through the introduction of new elements and features or different management of existing ones;
- ▶ **Restoration** of character, where this is appropriate to current land use activities and stakeholders' preferences, and is economically viable through either public or private money or a mix of both;
- ▶ **Creation** of or accelerating change towards a new character;
- or
- ▶ **Some combination of these options**, especially where regeneration activity is occurring, involving much development and change.

7.11 Developing such a rationale will require careful thought about the overall character and key characteristics of the landscape today, and the dynamics of the landscape, in terms of recent change, current trends and future forces. This will help to determine both the desirability and practicability of maintaining current character.

Approaches to Making Judgements

7.12 The approach taken to making judgements will usually vary depending on the particular applications for which the assessment is to be used. One of the following four approaches is usually adopted.

i. Landscape strategies

7.13 A Landscape Character Assessment may lead to a strategy for the landscape based on what change, if any, is thought to be desirable for a particular landscape character type (or area) as a whole. The judgements underpinning such strategies need to be transparent but not overly complex, and will usually relate in some way to the objectives set out in para 7.10. To ensure they are widely owned and can be implemented, they should be devised and tested through stakeholder involvement where possible.

7.14 To date, practitioners have used landscape strategies to guide thinking on the desirability of: maintaining the existing landscape character; enhancing character; restoring some former landscape, or creating a new one.

7.15 When used in the field of planning policy, for example as a basis for structure or local plan policies, the strategy approach may be used to indicate the preferred approach for each policy zone within the plan and to provide a basis for landscape and development policies. In other circumstances, aspects of landscape value (paras 7.21 - 7.23) may help to identify areas for some form of landscape status or designation.

Box 7.1: Steps in developing landscape guidelines

Review from field survey

- key characteristics of the landscape;
- current state of landscape - condition of features and elements and overall intactness;
- evidence of landscape change and of its consequences.

Identify by research and consultation

- trends in land use that may cause future change;
- potential development pressures.

Predict

- consequences of land use trends and development pressures for the landscape;
- effects of predicted change on key characteristics, both negative and positive.

Define

- threats to key characteristics as a result of adverse consequences of change;
- opportunities for enhancement where scope for beneficial change;
- guidelines on intervention required for different land uses to counter threats and realise opportunities;
- priorities for action and methods of implementation.

It is often helpful to prepare guidelines at several different levels - for the whole of a study area where they are common, for each landscape character type and for individual landscape character areas where there are specific requirements for action.

ii. Landscape guidelines

7.16 A Landscape Character Assessment will normally identify the character of an area and those factors that are particularly important in creating that character, usually referred to as key characteristics. If the distinctive character of a certain landscape is to be maintained, the assumption must be that its positive key characteristics should be protected from adverse change and, conversely, that the effects of negative characteristics will be overcome by some form of enhancement. This assumption provides the basis for judgements about the actions necessary to achieve this (Box 7.1).

7.17 Field survey should identify the physical state of individual elements and features, and, in combination with consultation and additional research, should indicate the probability of future change, and its nature and direction (trends or 'forces for change'). Considering all this information together should then reveal opportunities either to prevent those changes which may have adverse consequences for landscape character, or to maximise opportunities for enhancement. This requires careful thought about the importance attached to characteristic features and about the likelihood of either 'positive' or 'negative' change.

Box 7.2: Example of landscape guidelines

Fife Landscape Character Assessment **Landscape character type: Lowland Dens**

Agriculture

- Encourage maintenance of the relatively small-scale irregular field pattern.
- Where land is taken out of arable use encourage permanent woodland planting.
- Improving grasslands and drainage schemes could disturb the characteristic land cover and vegetation patterns and adversely affect the contours and textures of the landscape and its ecological value.

Forestry

- Encourage the planting of broadleaved trees along the river and burns to link existing woodlands and other habitats and to reinforce the semi-natural patterns of drainage and riparian vegetation and habitats.
- Encourage new planting to enhance the interlinking of new woodlands to existing plantations and semi-natural woodlands on the hills and in the lowlands.

Settlement and built development

- Concentrate new built development in the form of well landscaped extensions to existing settlements well-related to landform and of a scale appropriate to the size of the settlement.
- Encourage the use of existing building styles and materials such as grey stone with grey or dark blue slate-like roofs.

Mineral workings

- Mineral extraction in this landscape type would be inappropriate owing to its potentially adverse effects on the character of the landscape and the potential for the workings to be conspicuous bearing in mind that any effective, large-scale screening measures themselves would be inappropriate features.

Other development and structures in the landscape

- Avoid locating any high or bulky new structures in this landscape type or, where essential, they should be subject to rigorous landscape and visual impact assessment and should be sited carefully and designed to minimise their impact.

Source: David Tyldesley and Associates (1999) *Fife Landscape Character Assessment*, Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh.

7.18 This type of analysis usually results in the drawing up of landscape guidelines to indicate the actions required to ensure that distinctive character is maintained or, if appropriate, enhanced. This approach has been adopted in the majority of published assessments in England and Scotland. Such guidelines are often produced in written form, and are sub-divided according to both the landscape type in question and the main pressures likely to result in landscape change, namely agriculture, forestry, settlement and built development, mineral working, tourism and recreation, and infrastructure (Box 7.2).

7.19 Guidelines can also be presented graphically. This is particularly useful when dealing with design issues. In the Sussex Downs AONB graphic guidelines are available in a loose-leaf folder designed to assist in communicating ideas to farmers and land managers (Figure 7.1). The Skye and Lochalsh character assessment in Scotland has also taken a highly graphic approach to both the descriptions of landscape character and to the guidelines (Figure 7.2).

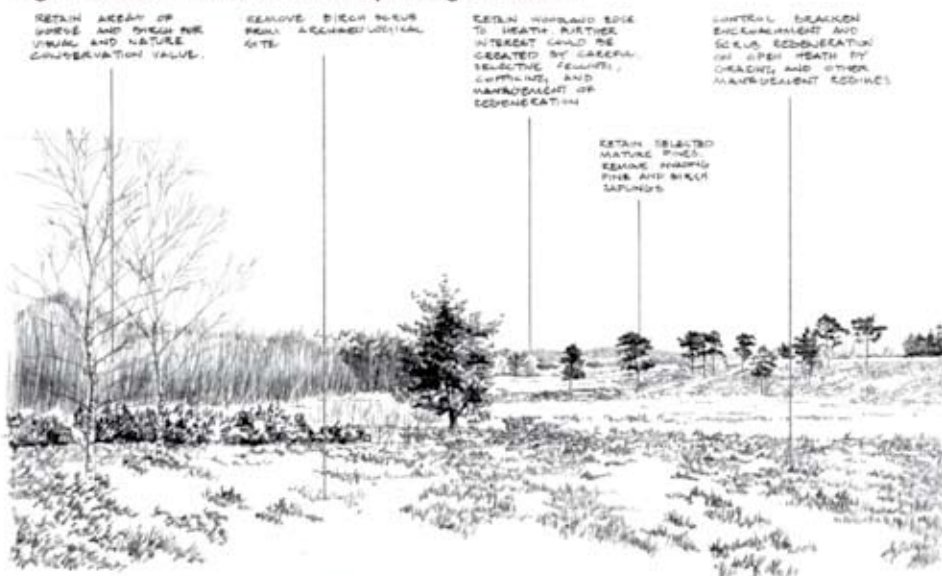
7.20 As guidelines are designed to influence the way in which landscapes are managed it is highly desirable that the many stakeholders involved in day-to-day management are actively involved in the process. This will help to ensure that the guidelines are based on a good understanding of 'real world' land uses and land management practices, and that there will be a good prospect that they can be practically implemented.

iii. Attaching status to landscapes

7.21 Where a tract of landscape is selected for special recognition, judgements need to be based on a range of different considerations. National landscape designations in England and Scotland are based on criteria that encompass much more than landscape alone. The key considerations are:

- ▶ **natural beauty:** encompasses flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features and is the term that has been used in defining AONBs and National Parks in England;
- ▶ **recreational opportunity:** opportunities afforded for open-air recreation, having regard both to landscape character and position in relation to centres of population. (Also used in defining National Parks in England);
- ▶ **natural beauty and amenity:** a composite term, used in the founding legislation of SNH contained with The Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. The Act defines the natural heritage as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology, physiographic features and natural beauty and amenity. This combination of terms covers the physical landscape, but also the less tangible aspects such as remoteness or tranquillity, and aspects of landscape experience which appeal to senses other than sight, such as the sound or smell of the sea.

Fig 7.1 Sussex Downs AONB Landscape Design Guidelines



Source: Landscape Design Associates (1997) Sussex Downs AONB Landscape Design Guidelines. Countryside Commission and Sussex Downs Conservation Board, Cheltenham.

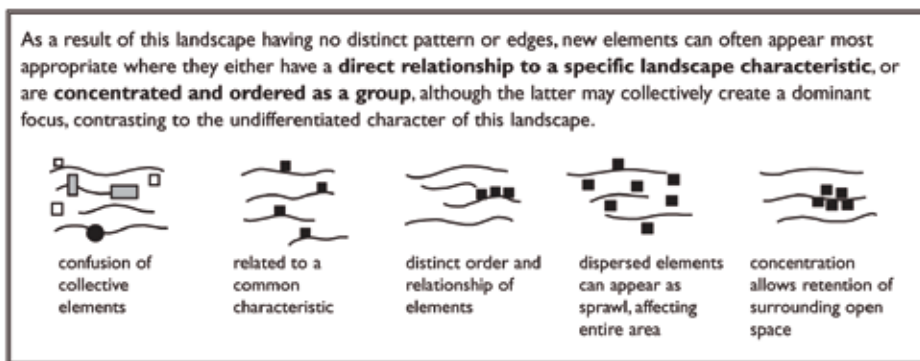
7.22 In considering natural beauty and amenity, and in any other situation which requires that a landscape be identified as requiring special attention, judgements must be based at least in part on the concept of landscape value (para 7.8). This refers to the relative value or importance that stakeholders attach to different landscapes and their reasons for valuing them. The reasons may be set out according to a range of more detailed criteria that may include the following:

- ▶ **landscape quality:** the intactness of the landscape and the condition of features and elements (para 7.8);
- ▶ **scenic quality:** the term that is used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses;
- ▶ **rarity:** the presence of rare features and elements in the landscape, or the presence of a rare landscape character type;
- ▶ **representativeness:** whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which is felt by stakeholders to be worthy of representing;
- ▶ **conservation interests:** the presence of features of particular wildlife, earth science or archaeological, historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;
- ▶ **wildness:** the presence of wild (or relatively wild) character in the landscape which makes a particular contribution to sense of place;
- ▶ **associations** with particular people, artists, writers, or other media, or events in history. There may often be a consensus of opinion about the value of an area encompassing one or more of these criteria, which can be traced over time from the views expressed by different stakeholders.

Figure 7.2: Skye and Lochalsh landscape guidelines

Rocky moorland landscape character type

- The introduction of **numerous elements** within this landscape character type often results in visual confusion, due to the difficulty in creating any kind of order and sense of relationship between elements upon a variable landform; each element, even if part of a collective group, tends to have a different relationship with the landscape.



Source: Stanton, C. (1996) *Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment*. No 71. Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh.

7.23 Tranquillity: In addition to these landscape-related criteria there is another criterion, 'tranquillity', that is a composite feature related to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. Authors of Landscape Character Assessments must state their criteria for 'low levels' clearly and should also consider whether one or more of the factors needs to be addressed individually, rather than in combination. Policy makers and practitioners may find it useful to refer to the Tranquil Areas maps [54]. Tranquil area mapping is currently underway in Scotland, as is the identification of core wild land areas.

7.24 The full range of criteria set out above may be used to identify valued landscapes that merit some form of designation or recognition. They can be used, either individually or in combination, to assist the definition of nationally important areas throughout England and Scotland. These include National Parks, areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Scenic Areas, and equivalent areas.

7.25 The criteria of 'natural beauty', 'recreational opportunity' and 'natural beauty and amenity' can be the starting points for selecting the broad area of search for designation or recognition of special areas. The criteria listed in paras 7.22 and 7.23 could be used to provide a supporting statement about why a particular area is valued. Boundaries can then be determined by assessing the character and quality of the landscapes within the area of search to determine whether or not they should be included (see Chapter 9 for further detail).

iv. Landscape capacity

7.26 Many Landscape Character Assessments will be used to help in decisions about the ability of an area to accommodate change, either as a result of new development, or some other form of land use change, such as the introduction of new features, or major change in land cover such as new woodland planting. In these circumstances judgements must be based on an understanding of the ability of the landscape to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Criteria for what constitutes significant change need to be identified in planning policies or landscape strategies, and will usually be informed by potential effects on character and/or particular features and elements.

Good Practice Pointers

- ▶ It is particularly important to find ways of involving stakeholders in this part of the process if the judgements made are to command wide support.
- ▶ The approach taken to making judgements based on character will vary depending upon the issue being addressed and must be designed to meet the particular circumstances.
- ▶ Some approaches to making judgements are an integral part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. Others are wider environmental evaluation processes to which Landscape Character Assessment can make a valuable contribution.
- ▶ There must be a clear rationale behind the approach to making judgements, which will help to determine the eventual outcome. This will require careful thought about the overall character and key characteristics of the landscape, its history and origins, and the opportunities that may exist to create new landscapes to meet the emerging social, economic and environmental needs of stakeholders.
- ▶ It is particularly important that:
 - the reasons for adopting a particular approach to making judgements are made clear;
 - the approach (or combination of approaches) used must be clearly explained and transparent;
 - the extent and nature of stakeholder involvement should be made clear.

3. UK - Guide to Best Practice in Seascape Assessment (Countryside Council for Wales, Brady Shipman Martin, UCD)

1 Summary of the process of characterisation for national units.

As part of a desk study the national unit, within which the regional or local unit is located, should be identified and the issues arising understood. As suggested in Chapter 4, the national units would be mapped by national agencies on the basis of the following criteria:

- ▶ Zone of Visual Influence (both land and sea)
- ▶ Unique or rare geomorphologic or landscape features
- ▶ Major public access points to the coast and the sea
- ▶ Access to the sea for commercial and recreational use
- ▶ Marine and coastal recreation
- ▶ Cultural and historic links
- ▶ Landscape designations
- ▶ Conservation designations
- ▶ Marine and coastal habitats

Pre-Study Familiarisation

In order to properly structure the assessment it is necessary to undertake the following:

- Familiarisation with the National unit within which the area is located.
- Ordnance Survey maps, sea charts, pilot books and almanacs should be obtained.
- Familiarisation with the tidal range and tidal features.
- Familiarisation with scientific or other designations.
- The cultural associations and history of that particular section of coast should be researched and the relevance to particular landmarks and features in the sea understood.
- Familiarisation with social, commercial, and amenity uses.
- Familiarisation with any landscape characterisation studies carried out on the coast and adjoining lands.

2 Summary of the process of characterisation for regional and local units

There are 4 basic stages required to assess regional and local units, they are:

- ▶ **Area** definition by visual criteria, and appropriate buffers;
- ▶ **Visual** analysis of visibility, view points and views ;
- ▶ **Characteristics** for sea, coastline and land parts of each area;
- ▶ **Integration** of sea, coastline and land components together.

Stage 4, integration, actually describes seascape character and provides the necessary information to be taken forward to evaluation. The stages are described in some detail in the following sections. See flow diagram, following page.

4. UK - Mapping Tranquillity - Defining & Assessing a Valuable Resource (CPRE, The Countryside Agency)

The word 'tranquillity' appears in a great many policy and planning documents, and also numerous publications which promote places for tourism and inward investment. It is clear that whatever tranquillity is, and wherever it is to be found, it is important and judged to be worth protecting.

Previous psychological research has highlighted why tranquillity is important. Being in tranquil places allows people to relax, to escape from the stresses and strains of everyday life and to 'recharge their batteries'. However, tranquillity remains relatively poorly understood as a concept. Tranquillity is seen as an indicator of environmental quality, but most environmental indicators focus on tangible, quantifiable attributes such as the length of hedgerows, water quality or the accessibility of green space. Qualitative, experiential aspects of landscape are far harder to account for. Tranquillity runs the risk of being overlooked because of this perceived difficulty.

This research was commissioned to develop a methodology that was robust and could support a range of activities, with land-use and landscape planning foremost amongst them. It has established that a qualitative consultation of a wide range of countryside users and other groups can be accommodated within a quantitative framework for analysis and mapping, thereby drawing tranquillity into the range of available countryside quality indicators.

Method: assessing and mapping relative tranquillity

Tranquillity mapping is not a new concept. It was first developed by Simon Rendel of ASH Consulting for a Department of Transport study in 1991. The original study led to the production of a set of Tranquil Area maps covering England, produced by Rendel and ASH Consulting, and published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the former Countryside Commission (1995).

In these maps, 'Tranquil Areas' were defined as: 'places which are sufficiently far away from the visual or noise intrusion of development or traffic to be considered unspoiled by urban influences'². These places were identified through specific criteria, with Tranquil Areas being found certain distances away from features such as roads, towns, airports and power stations.

We have built on this body of work. More sophisticated mapping techniques are now available, and we have used extensive public consultation as the basis for the maps. This means that the maps produced by our research are not an update of the original maps because the methodology is not directly comparable. However, our work significantly advances our appreciation of what comprises tranquillity, what detracts from it, and how to identify tranquil areas within a given region. The methodology developed here differs from the previous work on tranquillity mapping in four key ways:

- ▶ Rather than starting with an 'expert' definition of what compromises tranquillity, we have started with extensive public and stakeholder consultation to define what factors contribute to and detract from tranquillity;
- ▶ Previous work has focused exclusively on factors that detract from tranquillity. Our approach includes factors that contribute to, as well as detract from tranquillity;
- ▶ We use the term 'relative tranquillity' to describe what we are mapping. Relatively tranquil areas are those which have higher scores for the positive factors, and lower scores for the negative factors, than other areas. Our maps reveal areas, both large and small, where people are likely to experience tranquillity. But they do not include sharp lines dividing tranquil from non-tranquil areas; and
- ▶ Our approach incorporates more advanced modelling techniques to look at the diffusion of these factors' impact over distance. This has allowed us to produce detailed surface maps which give every place a tranquillity score rather than crude zones of tranquil/non tranquil, or high/medium/ low tranquillity.

In 2000, a detailed critique of the original CPRE maps was published³. It argued that what was needed was a measure of tranquillity that included all, and only, those sources of disturbance which people feel actually damage tranquillity; and which weighted them in proportion to peoples' perceptions of their relative impacts on tranquillity. This is exactly what we have done.

WHAT IS TRANQUILITY?

- Perceived links to 'nature'
- Positive features in the landscape
- The importance of wildlife
- Peace, quiet and calm

WHAT IS NOT TRANQUILITY?

- Disruptive behaviour of other people
- Noise, especially from cars
- Overt signs of human development - negative features in the landscape



Above: Countryside near Medomsley in the West Durham Coalfield and traffic on the A167(M), Newcastle

Assessing people's experiences: using Participatory Appraisal

Our new maps were drawn on the basis of what tranquillity means to people, why it is important, and where it is to be found. To do this, we carried out 'Participatory Appraisal' (PA) with people in two pilot study areas in North East England: the Northumberland National Park and the West Durham Coalfield in County Durham. PA is a method of understanding people's values and beliefs. It enables them to discuss what is important to them in their own words. In this research, PA involved groups of key local stakeholders in both study areas and people at countryside access points. The table below shows our 'headline findings' from PA about what contributes to and detracts from tranquillity.

5. Spain - Catalan Landscape Observatory (2005)

www.catpaistge.net/eng/index.php

Why is it important?

- ▶ Because the quality of life of people depends on landscape: the urban or rural surroundings, degraded areas or others of high quality, unique areas or everyday areas.
- ▶ Because it reflects the good or ill health of the relationships between society and the land. It is an excellent indicator of environmental quality.
- ▶ Because it is another factor in well-being. The European Landscape Convention makes the quality of landscape into a right (the right to enjoy agreeable, harmonious landscapes, not degraded, which transmit various cultural and territorial identities).
- ▶ Because It offers pleasing sensations (aesthetic, sensory, emotional).
- ▶ Because it identifies us with the land, with the country. Landscape is a reflection of past lifestyles and, specifically, our history, and thus it has value as part of our heritage.

What is the Landscape Observatory?

- ▶ The Landscape Observatory is an advisory body of the Catalan Authorities and for awakening society to matters of landscape. It studies landscape, monitors it, prepares proposals and sensitises society to the appropriateness of better protection, management and planning of the landscape in Catalonia in the context of sustainable development.
- ▶ It is the meeting point between the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia), local authorities, universities, professional groups and, in general, Catalan society, in connection with the management and preservation of landscape.
- ▶ It supports the application of the European Landscape Convention in Catalonia.
- ▶ It is conceived as a centre for thought and action in relation to landscape.
- ▶ The Landscape Observatory, legally formed on 30 November 2004, is organized as a consortium and is included in the Act for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape of Catalonia.

Functions of the Observatory

- ▶ Establishing mechanisms of observation of the evolution and transformation of landscape.
- ▶ Fixing criteria to establish the objectives of landscape quality and adopt the measures of protection, management and planning of landscape necessary to achieve these objectives.
- ▶ Proposing actions directed to the improvement, restoration or creation of landscape.
- ▶ Preparing the landscape catalogues of Catalonia, destined to identify and evaluate the various landscapes.
- ▶ Preparing a four-yearly report on the state of the landscape in Catalonia for the Catalan Parliament.
- ▶ Following up European initiatives in landscape matters.
- ▶ Stimulating scientific and academic collaboration in landscape matters, and the exchange of work and experiences among specialists from universities and other academic and cultural institutions.
- ▶ Promoting campaigns of social sensitisation with regard to landscape, its functions and how it evolves and is transformed.
- ▶ Dissemination of studies and reports, and establishing working methodologies in landscape matters.
- ▶ Organizing seminars, courses, conferences and exhibitions on landscape policies.

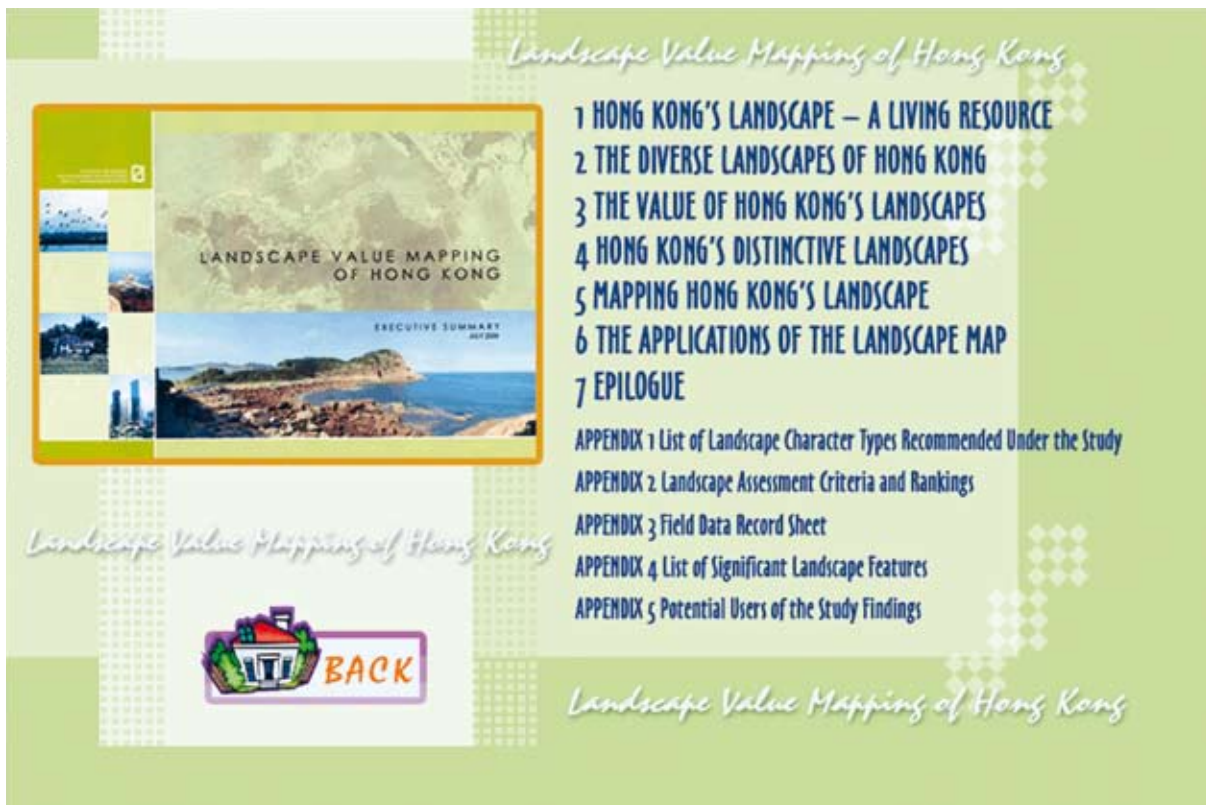


The landscape catalogues of Catalonia



- ▶ The Act for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape of Catalonia defines these as "documents of a descriptive and prospective nature which identify the types of landscapes in Catalonia, their values and state of preservation, and propose the quality objectives to be met."
- ▶ The landscape catalogues are tools which enable us to know what our landscape is like and what values it has, the factors that explain why we have that type of landscape and not another, how it has evolved with regard to current social economic and environmental dynamics and, finally, the catalogues define what types of landscape we want and how to achieve them.
- ▶ Seven landscape catalogues have been prepared, coinciding with the seven territorial regions in which the new territorial organization of Catalonia will be structured.

6. Hong Kong - Mapping Character, Condition, Sensitivity & Values



APPENDIX 2 Landscape Assessment Criteria and Rankings



Criteria	Ranking	Description
Character The aggregate impression created by the most significant landscape features within a given landscape.	Not Applicable	Typical elements in the description include location, character, topography and relief, geological features, built form and vernacular features, vegetation, land use, hydrology and communication and aesthetic and perceptual factors.
Condition The integrity of the pattern of positive landscape features which make up the character of the landscape is assessed. Landscape condition of each LCA is graded 'Good', 'Moderate' or 'Poor' and a corresponding landscape management strategy (conservation/ enhancement / reconstruction) is recommended.	Good	The landscape is in good condition when the pattern of natural resources is coherent, largely intact and un-interrupted. This means that there is limited disturbance to natural terrain, natural features and watercourses and a significant presence of vegetation (either natural vegetation in rural locations or street trees and ornamental vegetation in an urban context).
	Moderate	The landscape is in moderate condition when the pattern of natural resources is to a significant extent altered or diminished. In the case of a rural landscape, this means that there may be some disturbance to natural terrain, watercourses or patterns of vegetation. In an urban context, it means that there will be considerable adaptation of terrain and slopes and/or very limited vegetation cover.
	Poor	The landscape is in poor condition when the pattern of natural resources which make up the landscapes is highly degraded. This means that there will be almost total disturbance to natural terrain, natural features and watercourses with little or no vegetation.
Sensitivity The ability of a landscape to accommodate change without prejudice to its existing landscape character. For each LCA, landscape sensitivity is assessed as 'More Sensitive' or 'Less Sensitive' to a given list of potential development types.	More Sensitive	A limited amount of a proposed development type is likely to have a significant prejudicial effect on the character of a landscape. Such development may not be in keeping with existing patterns of land use and built form in the landscape, such that a small amount of this development is likely to significantly change landscape character. Alternatively, the physical characteristics of the landscape (landform, vegetation cover, etc) mean that the proposed development is unlikely to be accommodated within the landscape without negatively affecting existing qualities.
	Less Sensitive	A limited amount of a proposed development type is unlikely to have a significant prejudicial effect on the character of a landscape. Such development may be in keeping with existing patterns of land use and built form in the landscape, such that a small amount of further such development is unlikely to significantly change landscape character. Alternatively, the physical characteristics of the landscape (landform, vegetation cover, etc) mean that the proposed development is likely to be accommodated with the landscape without significantly compromising existing qualities.
Value Landscape value represents the importance we attach to a landscape. Specifically, landscape value is attributed taking into account visual coherence, complexity, rarity, relief and condition, key heritage/natural features and visual attractor/detractor.	High	Most high value landscapes are landscapes in good condition and which possess a high level of visual coherence, with no significant visual detractors. Their value is augmented by a number of factors such as the presence of a significant natural resource or heritage feature that has a visual manifestation; or by unique features contributing to the landscape's distinctiveness; or by one or more visual attractors; or by high levels of visual relief, the presence of a water body, high levels of visual complexity or rarity.
Landscape value is judged as 'High', 'High(Qualified)', 'Moderate' or 'Low'.	High (Qualified)	High (Qualified) landscapes are those which have consistently high levels of landscape value (as per the definition above) but which do not quite fall into the 'High' value category. Typically, either their scenic value or their condition is diminished slightly by one or more features or aspects of their character. Such landscapes otherwise typically possess high scenic and landscape values and will possess no visual detractors.
	Moderate	Moderate value landscapes typically contain a variety of features which affect the value of the landscape in both negative and positive ways. Though they may contain visual attractors or visual detractors, these landscapes cannot be described as particularly 'scenic', nor can they be described as particularly 'unsightly'. Such landscapes normally have moderate visual coherence and are in moderate condition. They are in effect, Hong Kong's 'ordinary' landscapes, with neither very positive nor very negative attributes.
	Low	Most low value landscapes are in poor condition, possess low levels of visual coherence and no natural resources or heritage features that have a visual manifestation. They will also contain one or more significant visual detractors.

PREVIOUS



MAIN PAGE

NEXT

7. New Zealand Landscape Assessment Methodology (LA4 Landscape Architects)

LA4's brief is to carry out a landscape assessment of the landscape value of, and potential management strategies for, the landscape of the Central Otago District. More specifically, in order to help the Council to meet its obligations under the Resource Management Act 1991, the landscape assessment sets out to:

- ▶ Identify landscape units and landscape categories on the basis of consistent homogenous landscape character, and describe their main physical characteristics. As part of that process LA4 will include aspects of the history of the land, particularly in terms of their effects on landscape;
- ▶ Assess landscape values in order to identify:
 1. natural character values;
 2. landscape quality including aesthetic, heritage and rarity values;
 3. iconic landscapes or landscape features;
- ▶ Determine the landscapes visual absorption capability (i.e. its ability to absorb change), and its vulnerability to change taking into account different viewing audiences and user groups - leading to an evaluation of overall sensitivity to subdivision, use and development or change in general;
- ▶ Come to conclusions about the values and sensitivities of all the units and categories;
- ▶ Develop a landscape ranking. This is likely to include:
 - proposed outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes;
 - proposed regionally significant landscapes;
 - landscapes in which a landscape assessment must accompany development proposals;
 - areas with potential for expansion of settlements or countryside living areas.
 - significant Landscape features.

(This ranking may change depending on what other landscape architects have done in the surrounding areas districts)

- ▶ Work with Mike Garland and Ian Brown re focus groups;
- ▶ Input into the formation of objectives and policies for the statutory management of the Central Otago landscape.
- ▶ Prepare maps that identify the landscape units, the landscape features and the outstanding and regionally significant landscapes. These will use the Land Information topographical maps (1:50,000 and 1: 100,000 scale) as a base.
- ▶ Prepare final landscape report.

Detailed Methodology

Landscape Assessment

An intensive field survey is being carried out and a photographic record obtained (both standard and digital). Each landscape unit is identified and assessed using a "Landscape Assessment Worksheet". Where appropriate boundaries were revised and units subdivided to more accurately relate to the landscape themes present in the landscape. A photographic record for each landscape unit will be attached to each worksheet and the individual units were assessed on a scale of 1 – 7 (high) for a number of criteria to provide composite ratings for VALUE (quality) and VULNERABILITY. These are then combined to establish SENSITIVITY ratings for each unit.

The next step was to identify and record on the Landscape Assessment Worksheets the specific factors that contribute to the value and vulnerability ratings, and to assess their relative importance. These factors are important at both the micro and macro level.

They include:

- ▶ Physical elements that enhance landscape character and value;
- ▶ Patterns and compositional factors that enhance landscape character and value;
- ▶ Elements and patterns that adversely affect landscape character and value
- ▶ Elements that contribute to visual absorption capability
- ▶ Audiences exposed to the unit and their relative scale.

As part of this stage of the assessment the important iconic or distinctive landscape features for each unit will be identified.

Overall Sensitivity Ratings

For each landscape unit an overall sensitivity rating is assigned on the final page of the Landscape Assessment Worksheets. The sensitivity classes range from 1 (no or very low sensitivity) through to 7 (extreme sensitivity). These sensitivity classes, which are derived from the value, the vulnerability and the influential factors in each unit, are then related to the requirement under the Resource Management Act 1991 to protect outstanding landscapes (Section 6 – Matters of National Importance) in the following way:

Rating	Sensitivity	Protection level RMA
7	Extreme sensitivity	Outstanding Landscape
6	High sensitivity	Outstanding Landscape
5	Significant sensitivity	Regionally Significant
4	Moderate sensitivity	
3	Limited sensitivity	
2	Low sensitivity	
1	No / very low sensitivity	

The sensitivity ratings, which are achieved in this methodology, are a combination of landscape quality (value) and landscape vulnerability.

Natural Character

Natural character effects are considered in relation to:

- ▶ natural processes,
- ▶ natural patterns, and
- ▶ natural elements.

Landscape Character Categories

Once the landscape units had been identified, these were amalgamated into landscape character categories. These categories incorporate landscape units of consistent landscape character, thereby facilitating the definition of objectives and policies for types of landscapes.

Overall the assessment establishes the relative importance that should be attached to different types of landscape and their individual components, enabling analysis of the likely effects of different types of development upon the wider landscape. This is based on the implications for individual landscape features and components and identification of specific audiences that would be affected.

Significant Landscape Features

These are features which are either significant in the local area or its immediate surroundings or over a much wider area. These features can be part of an outstanding landscape or isolated. They add interest and character to an area. Such features as specific peaks, headlands or landforms (Sugar Loaf) could be identified as significant.

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8. US - Journal of Landscape & Urban Planning, Whither scenic beauty? Visual landscape quality assessment in the 21st century (Daniel, Larry C.)

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Résumé / Abstract

The history of landscape quality assessment has featured a contest between expert and perception-based approaches, paralleling a long-standing debate in the philosophy of aesthetics. The expert approach has dominated in environmental management practice and the perception-based approach has dominated in research. Both approaches generally accept that landscape quality derives from an interaction between biophysical features of the landscape and perceptual/judgmental processes of the human viewer. The approaches differ in the conceptualizations of and the relative importance of the landscape and human viewer components. At the close of the 20th century landscape quality assessment practice evolved toward a shaky marriage whereby both expert and perceptual approaches are applied in parallel and then, in some as yet unspecified way, merged in the final environmental management decision making process. The 21st century will feature continued momentum toward ecosystem management where the effects of changing spatial and temporal patterns of landscape features, at multiple scales and resolutions, will be more important than any given set of features at any one place at any one time. Valid representation of the visual implications of complex geo-temporal dynamics central to ecosystem management will present major challenges to landscape quality assessment. Technological developments in geographic information systems, simulation modeling and environmental data visualization will continue to help meet those challenges. At a more fundamental level traditional landscape assessment approaches will be challenged by the deep ecology and green philosophy movements which advocate a strongly bio-centric approach to landscape quality assessment where neither expert design principles nor human perceptions and preferences are deemed relevant. On the opposite side of the landscape-human interaction, social/cultural construction models that construe the landscape as the product of socially instructed human interpretation leave little or no role for biophysical landscape features and processes. A psychophysical approach is advocated to provide a more appropriate balance between biophysical and human perception/judgement components of an operationally delimited landscape quality assessment system.

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Abbreviations

LCA	Landscape Character Area
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
ELC	European Landscape Convention
NPs	National Parks
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
CDP	County Development Plan
GIS	Geographical Information System
ZTV	Zone of theoretical visibility
NHAs	Natural Heritage Area
SACs	Special Area of Conservation
SPAs	Special Protection Area
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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