

2 The Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 The approach to the study follows the current national guidance on Landscape Character Assessment¹¹ and seeks to be compliant with the requirements of the European Landscape Convention¹², as described in **Chapter 1 Introduction**.
- 2.2 A large number of studies are available to inform the work, in particular the Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB Statutory Management Plan 2014-2019¹³ and Arnsdale & Silverdale Special Qualities Report,¹⁴ as well as characterisation studies produced for Lancashire, Cumbria and the Lake District National Park. This landscape/seascape assessment reflects current aims and objectives for the area developed in these documents, as well as current national and local planning policy.
- 2.3 Information has been compiled on the natural and historic environments, including geodiversity, ecological designations, habitats, flora and fauna, as well as the historic and cultural interest of the area, as described in the historic landscape characterisation studies for both Lancashire and Cumbria.

Key Stages

- 2.4 The landscape and seascape characterisation included the following stages.
Stage 1 Desk Study
- 2.5 This stage involved the review of existing landscape character studies (at national and county level) that included the AONB area and wider landscape as well as existing map data, which informed the identification of draft Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character areas.
- 2.6 GIS was used as a tool to overlay many different layers of information to help with the identification of the AONB's Landscape Character Types and Areas. This included the existing character units from Natural England's National Character Area profiles of England, and those Landscape Character Types and Areas from the Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment and the Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance Toolkit. These units provided a framework and terms of reference within which the following layers of information were interrogated:
 - Geology;
 - Air and climate;
 - Soils;
 - Topography;
 - Hydrology and Environment Agency flood data;
 - Landcover and habitats;
 - Landuse and land management, settlement and enclosure;
 - Cumbria and Lancashire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC);
 - Registered Parks and Gardens and non-registered designed landscapes of historic importance;
 - Cultural associations such as paintings, literature, descriptive writings, music, events, memories and associations;
 - 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey mapping;

¹¹ Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Countryside Agency, 2002. *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland* [pdf] Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/2672917> [Accessed 08 July 2014], *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 2014 Christine Tudor, Natural England* [pdf] and *An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment*, 11 October 2012, Natural England [pdf] both available from <https://www.gov.uk/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments>

¹² Council of Europe, 2000. European Landscape Convention.

¹³ Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB Partnership, 2014. Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB Statutory Management Plan 2014-2019. Arnsdale: Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB Partnership

¹⁴ Skelcher, G., 2014. Arnsdale & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Special Qualities Report [pdf]. Available at: http://www.arnsidesilverdaleaonb.org.uk/images/stories/pdfs/mp_specialqualitiesreport.pdf [Accessed 04 July 2014].

- Aerial photographs;
- Landscape tranquillity using analysis and mapping undertaken by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England;
- Tides and coastal processes;
- Bathymetry;
- Water Surface;
- Coastal Features;
- Surface water features;
- Sunken and buried features.

2.7 In addition to data interrogation, the desk study stage involved:

- an analysis of the above natural, socio-cultural, and perceptual information to identify common patterns and combinations of elements, features and key characteristics that create landscape character;
- a review of the planning policy and designation background;
- identification of transition zones between different emerging Character Types and Areas;
- production of a mapped draft classification of Character Types and Areas.

2.8 As defined in the current national guidance on landscape/seascape character assessment¹⁵ from which Table 2.1 below has been produced, it can be seen that Landscape/Seascape Character Types and Landscape/Seascape Character Areas share similar characteristics but there are some notable differences:

Table 2.1 Definitions of Landscape/Seascape Character Types and Areas

Definitions			
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS	SEASCAPE CHARACTER TYPES	SEASCAPE CHARACTER AREAS
These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but where they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern.	These are single unique areas and discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape character type. Each has its own identity even though it may share the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same character type.	These are distinct types of seascape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different locations but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, bathymetry, ecology, human influences and perceptual and aesthetic attributes. For example, sheltered bays, rocky coves, sandy beaches or harbours are recognisable and distinct seascape character types.	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular seascape character type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other seascape character types.

¹⁵ Scottish Natural Heritage, & the Countryside Agency, 2002. *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland* [pdf] Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/2672917> [Accessed 08 July 2014] *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 2014* Christine Tudor, *Natural England* [pdf] and *An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment, 11 October 2012, Natural England* [pdf] both available from <https://www.gov.uk/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments>.

Stage 2 Field Work

- 2.9 Field work is an essential part of the Landscape Character Assessment process as it provides an opportunity to 'test' the draft character types and areas identified during the desk study work directly in the landscape/seascape through:
- observing how natural and cultural factors appear/interact and are experienced on the ground;
 - identifying other factors not evident from this desk work;
 - recording aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape/seascape; and
 - refining/justifying draft boundaries and classifications.
- 2.10 Extensive field work was undertaken by landscape architects in 2010 to verify and refine the draft character types and areas developed through desk work and make more detailed notes on landscape/seascape character, views, experiential qualities and condition. A survey pro-forma was used to record information, an example of which is provided in Appendix 3 Survey Sheet Example
- 2.11 Following from the field work, the draft character types and areas were further refined and their boundaries digitised in GIS and key characteristics and descriptions drafted.

Stage 3 Stakeholder Workshop

- 2.12 Further testing and information gathering was undertaken through workshops to enable input from a wider audience. Two workshops were held for invited audiences allowing local people and stakeholders to input into the process.

Stage 4 Draft Report

- 2.13 A draft report was prepared following the stakeholder workshop. This was circulated to the steering group.

Stage 5 Consultation

- 2.14 Consultation by the AONB Partnership on the document with statutory bodies, land managers and conservation organisations was undertaken throughout this study, with the involvement of the project steering group, the lead AONB officer and other AONB staff as well as volunteers for the AONB. The forces for change and appropriate guidance to manage change set out in this report were informed by the workshops and in consultation with the steering group.

Stage 6 Final Report

- 2.15 This stage involved the updating and finalising of the draft characterisation, with AONB team and local authority partner's involvement.
- 2.16 The GIS outputs provide an updatable resource of information as an integral part of the study complementing and supporting the written text.