

# Experiencing Landscapes: Towards a judgement-making framework for ‘cultural services’ and ‘experiential qualities’

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# Foreword

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

## Background

Natural England commissioned extensive qualitative social research to provide baseline evidence of the cultural services and experiential qualities that landscapes provide. It is generally recognised that England's landscapes provide a range of 'services' which contribute to people's quality of life, including spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.

A key aim was to understand whether such services correlate to particular landscape characteristics or particular landscape features. The detailed objectives for the study were to:

- Establish and refine evidence from national/regional public surveys and research through more focused work with the public in a selection of England's National Character Areas.
- Make judgements about whether and how the findings correlate to particular landscape characteristics and relate to particular landscape features.
- Make recommendations on whether the outcomes could provide a sufficiently representative baseline that could be used either at national, regional or a National Character Area scale.
- Provide qualitative material that will aid in the updating of National Character Area descriptions and associated strategic objectives for the future. It is envisaged that this research will be valuable in a number of ways, including:

- Informing policy making on the connections between people and landscapes and in the potential development of a cultural services 'indicator' in the wider monitoring of landscape change.
- Development of a broad typology of landscapes and the key cultural services they provide that can be applied and described in the updating of England's National Character Areas.
- Demonstrating the value of engaging with the public on their perceptions and aspirations for landscape, in line with the objectives of the European Landscape Convention.
- Provide practical evidence to Defra's National Ecosystem Assessment.

This report sets out the findings of the second phase of this research project (the findings of the first phase are set out in Natural England Commissioned Report NECR024). This report sets out the research findings in an additional six National Character Areas featuring different landscape characteristics to those considered under the first phase but using the same methodology. The findings are integrated and compared with those from the first phase. Based upon the qualitative findings from both phases, a framework and process to help make judgements about the type and nature of cultural services and experiential qualities relating to different landscape characteristics and features is proposed.

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**Keywords** - Landscape, cultural services, perceptions, experiential qualities, character

### Further information

This report can be downloaded from the Natural England website: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk). For information on Natural England publications contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3078 or e-mail [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk).

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**Natural England**

**Experiencing Landscapes  
Phase II:  
Towards a judgement-making  
framework for 'cultural services'  
and 'experiential qualities'**

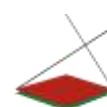
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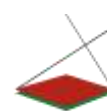
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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In 2008, Natural England commissioned a programme of qualitative social research with the public in eight National Character Areas (NCAs) to better understand the cultural services and experiential qualities that those landscapes provide to people<sup>1</sup>. The research considered how those services and qualities are provided by landscapes as a whole, as well as by their component parts. In autumn 2009, Natural England commissioned further research, using the same methodology as in Phase I, for a further six NCAs that reflected a different range of landscape types.

This second phase of study aimed to capture and present the range of experiential benefits and cultural services that landscapes provide to people in the six additional NCAs and to synthesise the analysis and findings with the conclusions of the existing research, to help understand the range of cultural services and experiential qualities provided across a range of landscape typologies. It was the aim that the resulting typologies and associated qualitative material should be capable of being transferred across all NCAs as well as being accessible as an evidence base for policy making and in supporting policy implementation.

### 1.2 Objectives

The main aims of the Phase II study were to:

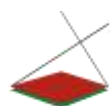
- research and capture the range of cultural services and experiential qualities that are provided by landscapes and how and why they are valued by the public in six National Character Areas
- integrate the findings with those from Phase I, to create a typology and narrative of cultural services and experiential qualities associated with different landscape types, landscape characteristics and features.

Within these aims, the specific project objectives were, to:

- repeat the qualitative research methodology used in Phase I with samples of the public to ensure compatibility and robustness of approach
- make judgements about whether and how the findings from Phase II correlate to particular landscape characteristics and relate to particular landscape features
- integrate the overall findings with the Phase I research to provide a sufficiently representative baseline that could be used either at national, regional or Character Area scale
- provide additional qualitative material that will aid in the updating of Character Area descriptions and provide some evidence on cultural services that will be relevant in the framing of strategic objectives for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Research Box, Land Use Consultants & Rick Minter (2009): Experiencing Landscape – Capturing the experiential qualities and cultural services of landscape NECR024. Natural England, Sheffield





The six NCAs chosen for the Phase II study to represent different landscape types were:

- Fens, levels and marshes
  - The Fens (CQC 'Enhancing'<sup>2</sup>) – East of England (46)
- Claylands
  - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (CQC 'Maintained') – East of England (88)
- Coal measures
  - Lancashire Coal Measures (CQC 'Diverging') – North West (56)
- Upland
  - Dark Peak (CQC 'Maintained') – East Midlands (51)
- Forests and parklands
  - Arden (CQC 'Diverging') – West Midlands (97)
- Lowland heath
  - Dorset Heaths (CQC 'Neglected') – South West (135).

### 1.3 Structure of the Report

This report contains the full findings from the Phase II study. The report starts with a brief summary of the key findings together with key comparisons with those discovered in Phase I – see Chapter 2.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, there is a description of the methodology used for the research.

There are then five chapters (4-8) that address, in turn:

- general landscape experiences
- cultural services
- features in the landscape
- NCA-specific findings
- other issues, such as people's perceptions of other ecosystem services.

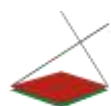
The final three chapters (9-11):

- bring together the findings and draw comparisons
- consider the broader context of the study, including the MEA and NEA
- consider how the research findings could be applied to other NCAs that were not researched in either phase of this project.

An annex containing pen portraits, derived from the in-depth interviews is included with this report (see Annex 2). The photographs that appear have been chosen by people to represent the subject matter of each section of the report and usually have an accompanying comment below.

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<sup>2</sup> Indicators based upon Countryside Quality Counts assessment of changes in landscape character of the National Character Area from the period 1999-2003. Definitions of categories and evidence supporting findings can be found at [www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk](http://www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk).



## 2. Summary of Key Findings

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly sets out the key findings that are the outcome of the second phase of qualitative research. These findings are compared with those from the first phase.

### 2.2 Key Findings

In terms of what people get from landscape, all eight cultural services were found to be present in the six NCAs that formed Phase II of the study. However, two of the character areas were poor at delivering the full range of cultural services (Claylands and Lancashire Coal Measures); two were able to deliver some services strongly, but not others (Fens and Arden); two areas delivered all services excellently (Dorset Heaths and Dark Peak).

The character areas that did not deliver cultural services well tended to have less variation in the landscape, or had very little accessible green space. They suffered from some sort of intrusion on peace and tranquillity and did not have strong aesthetic appeal. However, people here were able to find at least some spaces in which they could thrive – they were just not plentiful. So Claylands was redeemed by its watery places and Lancashire Coal Measures had experienced great improvements – and had good accessibility to iconic, but only neighbouring, landscapes.

The Fens and Arden were felt to have strong characters and had the capacity to be loved – but people thought they lacked variation. Both could be very calming and could offer inspiration at times but, on the whole, these areas were not multi-faceted in cultural-service terms. The Arden NCA suffered from having areas close to cities that were perceived to be generally 'bland'. People in the Fens often related to the productive land aspects of landscape as much as to 'natural fen' components.

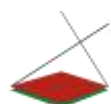
People are reliant upon the natural landscape<sup>3</sup> to help them put balance into their lives. Many benefits they described related to their health – and to the freedom they feel when out in the open, away from modern-day life. The best performing areas seemed to generate much enthusiasm, have quite dramatic scenery, variation and a high degree of protection and variation.

As was the case in Phase I, there appeared to be a number of positive factors that caused more cultural services to be provided in an NCA, such as having:

- water
- height or variation in height
- coast
- good land cover
  - trees
  - hedges

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<sup>3</sup> Whilst the formal definition of landscape makes clear it is the result of the interplay between natural and cultural (human activity) factors and can exist across rural urban or coastal areas, the term 'natural landscape' is used here and throughout the report to represent the perception that people had in considering that landscape is mainly the 'natural looking' green, rural or countryside parts of an area, rather than the built up areas.



- small fields
- distinctive villages
- distinctive identity
  - a National Park
- country lanes
- variation
- strong historical interest
  - large (stately homes)
  - small (stone walls, buildings)
  - archaeology (iron age forts).

There were also a series of negative factors, or detractors, which were important to people:

- flatness
- large fields
- traffic
- sprawl
- few rural/green spaces which are accessible
- little variation.

Then there are some more subtle factors including:

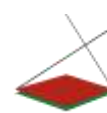
- whether the NCA is positively or negatively affected by tourism
- whether it can be viewed as 'my secret' or hidden
- whether there is a pro-active re-generation for recreation going on
- if there is a clear separation between towns and the rural spaces.

Whichever NCA people came from, there tended always to be a defensiveness about their area and a desire to show it in its best light. People wanted particular places mentioned in the character descriptions.

There were often issues to do with a lack of awareness and terminology. For example, 'wetlands' as a term was more positively evaluated than was 'marsh'. People in the Dark Peak were unaware of the peat bogs within the NCA; people in the Fens were unaware of 'natural fen'; people generally confuse heath and moorland. These issues suggest that local promotion could have a beneficial impact upon the extent of the cultural services that people derive from their local area.

## 2.3 Comparisons with Phase I

Phase II of the Experiencing Landscapes project has provided a broader understanding of cultural services and has helped to confirm many of the findings from Phase I. During the course of this phase of research, people were gaining the same benefits from their experiences as before – although to a greater or lesser degree, depending on where they can find the benefits. There was, perhaps, more emphasis on calm and escape this time and even greater evidence that the open landscape provided stress relief for people. The effect of the recession (that has had its greatest impact between the two pieces of research) may have affected this and may be the cause



of people wanting to get back to simplicity and basic values.

There were more negative landscape perceptions revealed this time within some of the character areas, with perhaps fewer people being able to experience 'inspirational' landscapes on a regular basis (the marked exceptions were Dark Peak and Dorset Heaths). However, and similar to the Eden Valley last time, respondents from Dorset were also gaining significant benefits from the nearby coastline, that is not within the NCA boundary itself. Nevertheless, even when people stated that they live in a 'boring' landscape, they could still obtain some benefit from it, although they do have to supplement these experiences elsewhere.

It would appear that there is a hierarchy of experience within cultural services that can be grouped into three:

1. the 'nuts and bolts' services (such as leisure and activities, sense of place, sense of history and learning) that rely on quite structured organised landscapes, that are relatively easy to find and appeal to the more rational and physical aspects of mankind. They are well communicated, more easily delivered and more appealing for younger people and families
2. the more unstructured and slightly more self-generated services (escape and calming) that deliver on a more emotional level and are extremely important for people's well-being
3. the more special and unusual experiences (inspiration and spirituality) that occur only seldom.

There were many similarities in the findings about what the landscape helps to deliver, with the 'big hitters' remaining the same: the presence of water, height, woodland and variation. There was still emphasis on the built elements of rural lanes and villages, but perhaps slightly less this time on historical features, except notably in Arden and Dorset. There was even more emphasis on the need for openness with big skies and a strong affinity towards farmland, though the difference between small and large fields continued. There was more this time about disappearing hedgerows, the lack of woodland and traffic/road nuisance.

This phase has provided a greater understanding of flat land, showing that there are variable attributes to flatness, which people can perceive negatively or positively depending on landcover, the extent of the flatness and the ability to see into the distance. However, flat land is still found to be a negative performer in terms of cultural services unless it has various redeeming qualities.

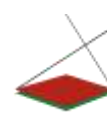
More detail is available this time on the perception of fen, marsh, heath and moorland because of the NCAs chosen.

Phase II has therefore been mainly consistent with the previous phase, but has provided greater coverage of different landscape types and greater potential to extrapolate to other NCAs.

## 2.4 Common Lessons

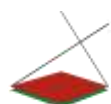
There are a number of common lessons that have emerged from the two Phases of study:

- all landscapes matter, even if unremarkable



- people desire landscapes with a strong and recognisable character
- landscape is more than the sum of its parts – the range of cultural services delivered is highly dependent on the interaction of features and context
- the delivery of cultural services in any NCA may be affected by the character of adjacent NCAs
- delivery of cultural services is not directly related to the scale of the features in question – and the relationship is also not necessarily a linear one
- temporal factors, such as the weather and season, can strongly influence emotional responses to landscapes
- there are various forces of change that concern people – urban sprawl, infrastructure development and intensive agriculture being the most important.

These factors, in combination with other findings contained in this report, have influenced the conclusion, by the study team, that mapping cultural services from one NCA onto another is not a straightforward process – the shortcut of a typology-led mapping would not appear possible. And whilst a features-based approach would appear feasible, there are significant practicalities that argue that the results from using databases of features to derive cultural services may be misleading. Instead, a 'holistic judgement' approach has been put forward (see Chapter 11). This approach could also be applied at smaller scales than that of the National Character Area.



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Overview

This second phase of qualitative research was conducted with members of the public who live or work in or close to the selected character areas, or who visit these areas. In outline, the qualitative research involved a multi-method programme, as follows:

- 6 general-public **focus groups** (eight people per group)
- 6 **extended creativity sessions** (ditto)
- 12 **post-experience in-depth interviews**, for example with families after they had walked and experienced a part of the landscape in question..

Each is described in more detail below.

The methodology was chosen to ensure creativity, to obtain a general mapping of the current status of public perceptions, to ensure that bias was not introduced, and to obtain technical detail within a qualitative context – and all with a broad cross-section of the public. A copy of the topic guides used for the research are included in Annex A.

#### 3.2 Focus Groups and Extended Creativity Groups

**The focus groups** were of a standard length of 1½ hours and were conducted with a snapshot of the local population, regardless of how directly engaged they were with the area's landscape. They included people who live or work inside or close to the area, who have visited the area, or who use the area in some other way.

There were six standard-length (1½ hour) focus groups, kept relatively homogenous in terms of socio-economic characteristics and age. A table showing the make up of the groups is shown on a later page.

**The extended creativity groups** were longer than the focus groups (typically about 2½ hours) and included people who were more engaged with the landscape, were more expressive, or had more knowledge about the area (for example, people who used the area frequently for walking, cycling, or watching wildlife, or who worked intimately in the landscape).

There was one extended creativity group in each of the NCAs included in Phase II

For all groups, any people who claimed they were attitudinally against the landscape were screened out at the recruitment stage, as they would have had difficulty in participating in the discussion. Otherwise, people who attended were a broad cross-section of local residents.

The groups were conducted in suitable venues, chosen to allow the respondents to feel at ease. A small financial incentive was paid to encourage attendance and to cover any costs (such as taxis or babysitting) that respondents might have incurred.



### 3.3 Post-experience In-depth Interviews

In addition to the focus group research, a series of in-depth interviews was also carried out, two interviews in each character area. The reason for including in-depth interviews within the overall programme of work was:

- to look, in a 'prompted' way, at the specifics of a single landscape
  - the respondent was asked to consider particular characteristics prior to being interviewed
- to sample specific target audiences who might not be adequately represented in the 'group' samples
  - younger family members such as teenagers, or children with their parents were included
- to counter-balance any peer-pressure effects that might arise from the group discussions.

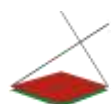
People were recruited and asked to go to part of the character area and experience it by walking or doing some other recreational activity (in a locality of their choice). They were asked to do the following:

- be out for at least an hour and to cover some sort of contrasts within their walk/ride
- take pictures with disposable cameras of positive/negative aspects of their experience, moments when they felt inspired or felt a sense of history etc
- write a 'diary' of their experiences and what they valued
- draw sketches and write verse, if appropriate.

An interview was conducted by the consultants a short time afterwards to discuss their tasks and to examine the other objectives of the research. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about this approach and happy to oblige although they wished that the research was being conducted in Summer. Again, they were financially incentivised to conduct the activity. The findings from these depth interviews have contributed to the main research findings and will be written up in the final report.

### 3.4 Sample

The research sample is set out in the table that is presented on the following page.



<b>Character Area (NCA)</b>	<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Method type</b>
<u><i>Fens, levels and marshes</i></u>  The Fens (CQC 'Enhancing') – East of England / East Midlands (46)	ABC1 Younger	Traditional Focus Group
	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	C2DE Family	Post-experience Depth Interview
	ABC1 Couple Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
<u><i>Claylands</i></u>  Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (CQC 'Maintained') – East of England (88)	C2DE Older	Traditional Focus Group
	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	ABC1 individual Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
	C2DE Family	Post-experience Depth Interview
<u><i>Coal measures</i></u>  Lancashire Coal Measures (CQC 'Diverging') – North West (56)	C2DE Older	Traditional Focus Group
	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	ABC1 Family	Post-experience Depth Interview
	Individual ABC1 Older	
<u><i>Upland</i></u>  Dark Peak (CQC 'Maintained') – East Midlands (51)	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	C2DE Younger	Traditional Focus Group
	Couple ABC1 Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
	Individual ABC1 Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
<u><i>Forests and parklands</i></u>  Arden (CQC 'Diverging') – West Midlands (97)	ABC1 Younger	Traditional Focus Group
	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	Individual C2DE Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
	Couple ABC1 Older	Post-experience Depth Interview
<u><i>Lowland heath</i></u>  Dorset Heaths (CQC 'Neglected') – South West (135)	ABC1 Older	Traditional Focus Group
	Mixed Age & SEG	Extended Creativity Group
	C2DE Family	Post-experience Depth Interview
	Individual ABC` younger	Post-experience Depth Interview



## 4. General Landscape Experience

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of four chapters that report and discuss the key findings that arise from the programme of qualitative research – the focus groups and interviews – that was carried out across the six Phase II character areas.

Most of the focus groups and interviews started with a general discussion about landscape and, both during this and later sessions, people's general attitudes towards landscape emerged (spontaneously and in discussion) that indicated how respondents felt about landscape and why it is important to them. These attitudes showed that, although people may access the landscape with varying frequencies, there were many commonalities in how they felt they benefited from their experience of landscapes.

### 4.2 Importance of the Natural Landscape

Respondents found the open, natural landscape around them to be very important. It reminded them about the 'balance of life' and the presence of nature seemed to make them feel more grounded. The natural environment was something that gave them a sense of perspective in a 'very crowded world'. Quite often when talking about 'nature' itself, people were helped by the constant sense of renewal that living plants and vegetation have in the way they grow and re-grow. The seasons were considered to be an important part of living in Britain, watching a particular view change over the year gave people the ability to see time passing and to have hope.

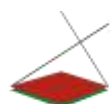
The level of connection that people had with the landscape varied amongst the Character Areas. Those from the Dark Peak (for example) felt more aware of the open countryside than those from the Bedfordshire Claylands, where the natural landscape had less of cultural influence on the community. There were also varying levels of enthusiasm between the NCAs about the landscape immediately around about – people in the Dark Peak and Dorset were very enthusiastic, with those from the Claylands and Lancashire Coal Measures being less so (although this did not reduce their enthusiasm for the generic natural landscape in the UK).

*There is something inside you just releases when you see countryside; it is beautiful and you just think happiness!* Lancashire Coal Measures

It was felt extremely important and refreshing that England has widely varying landscapes that change within a short distance, in contrast to what people called 'endless European land'. No matter where you live, it doesn't take long to escape to special landscapes, to the coast or mountains if you want to.

*It is part of the whole range. We have got everything in this country, we don't have a desert but we haven't got the weather for that but look at the countryside, we've got mountains, valley rivers, lakes, woodland, country lanes, we've got the lot and some countries aren't as blessed as we are!* Lancashire Coal Measures

Another common theme was freedom, with people feeling trapped in their everyday lives. The



landscape allows you to return to the more natural things that are free in a recession and are away from the complications that have occurred in recent times.

*Very therapeutic, if you're feeling depressed just go outside and walk and see the countryside, puts everything to perspective. Lancashire Coal Measures*

*It's peace, you know, you can actually think that you can actually sort of be on your own and just not worry about anything else. Claylands*

*Yes, you start appreciating the things about you really, that you would not normally take any notice of in an ordinary working day of the week. Claylands*

The recession was also more of a theme in this second phase of the study, with people talking more about what they can do for 'free':

*It is quite nice to go out in the countryside because it is free. Dark Peak*

The simplicity of the natural world provides freedom from the constraints of modern society:

*Whenever you are in a city there is CCTV and you feel like you are constantly being monitored, whereas you go out to the countryside, not that you would do anything wrong, you are not breaking any rules most of the time, unless you are going through farmers fields, but when you are not really worried about that you feel less constrained or something. Arden*

*Just a sense of freedom, I think, just the waves crashing against the rocks and it's natural. Claylands*

Some admitted to needing to be persuaded to use the natural landscape by having something organised for them:

*Also sculpture trails is something that I have used the country for before, because I think because city people are a little bit scared, we are here, what do we do with it, so I think it helps to kind of get you out, and you have got a little shoot and you can tick off the sculpture trails, the sculpture trails as you go along until you have completed something. Arden*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

Phase II corroborates the findings of Phase 1 (see sections 4.3 and 4.4).

The portfolio pyramid was particularly interesting with regard to people in the Midlands who had a high propensity to travel to difference landscape types. We can perhaps also add from Phase 2 a new attitude type – 'semi-reluctants', as there were a few people who were unconvinced that they benefited greatly from the landscape.

Urban dwellers who said they 'rejected the landscape' or 'never went there' were not included in the sample of both phases.



## 5. Cultural Services

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second of four chapters that report and discuss the key findings that arise from the programme of qualitative research – the focus groups and interviews – that was carried out across the six Phase II character areas.

As well as being revealed in general discussion, respondents were asked to specifically look at eight cultural services in a generic sense, regardless of the context of the character area. Those cultural services were:

- identity / sense of place / feelings of 'being at home'
- understanding of the past (cultural heritage values)
- inspiration
- escapism / 'getting away from it all'
- relaxation / tranquillity / peace and quiet
- spiritual values
- learning and education
- leisure and recreation.

These eight cultural services do not comprise an official list and they are adapted from those in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. They were felt to represent a wide scope of services that would offer a structure and a prompt for capturing people's responses.

Participants were asked to try and identify types of landscape, landscape features and emotions that they linked to each service. This linkage was examined through speech, drawing, picking out generic photos of landscapes and features (some of which have been used throughout this chapter to illustrate the services that people felt such landscapes provided).

This section discusses the feedback obtained on these cultural services mostly in a generic sense. It touches on some of the trends in these services as they relate to particular character areas.

### 5.2 A Sense of History

A 'good' landscape experience was not felt to depend on having experienced a sense of history<sup>4</sup>. The main emotional benefits were felt to come from other sensations emanating from the more natural elements to the experience, such as the presence of water or being near living green things. And it should be noted that people in two or three of the character areas did not consider that they had much history anyway.

Nevertheless, many did feel that encountering history could be an important as part of an experience, particularly if encountered as a 'surprise' when the overall objective was just an encounter with nature. Small-scale built features were greatly valued as part of the experience – a landscape that delivers well is one where old stone buildings are preserved or original stiles

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<sup>4</sup> All landscapes have history but people experience a 'sense of history' from specific physical remains, from connections to a significant event and from associations with people/families through time.

exist within a predominantly green environment. Larger-scale features, such as viaducts, gave a sense of wonder at how 'they' had built things without the help of machinery and modern know-how, reminding people that man was able to get by and live without the crutch of technology or the convenience of what we have now. In some ways, people find this knowledge refreshing and re-assuring about themselves – it might help them learn the lesson of not being quite so dependent.

Clearly, people often chose to be a 'tourist' or a visitor by incorporating a planned, purposeful trip, such as to a stately home or castle.

Beyond built features, there was a general lack of awareness about whether forms of the landscape were historical, in the sense of having been created by man (eg by quarrying or draining). Unless the historical activity that shaped the landscape had been in recent memory, people thought it was natural because it was green and overgrown. People thought that they needed to be 'told' about such things in the form of information signs or general publicity.

Landscapes that were quite remote, including few or no built features, gave a sense of history because of the perceived 'pristine' quality of them. The feeling was that they had not been touched and had existed like that before man. This sense was important in providing people with a perspective on life, that they were 'insignificant' because the landscape being viewed would carry on without them. This links, therefore, into stress relief and seeing how small your worries can be.

#### Key Comparisons with Phase I

Phase I mentions both hard and soft history, the latter being more the feeling that people have shaped a landscape in the past. In Phase II people focussed more on 'hard' (built) history, as historical features were more important for giving interest to the more bland landscapes being researched. There was also a cultural pride in history that was not a key outcome in Phase I. Both phases reveal how unaware people are that landscapes have been altered and affected by man unless the effects are obvious, such as in a farmed landscapes.

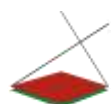
### 5.3 Spiritual

Feeling spiritual about a landscape was not something that everyone could experience on a regular basis with everyday landscapes. It tended to be a much deeper level of 'service' given by a special landscape experience, so was not a common theme. However, respondents did talk about the moment of feeling 'transported' by a high view or finding something special that felt secret or rare, like a waterfall.

*A waterfall for me, just watching a waterfall. Yes, especially if it's fairly high and you've got, sort of, caves and that around the bottom, you know, somewhere like Matlock, Derbyshire or places like that, you know, the Peak District, that's quite nice around there. Claylands*

*The only time I've ever felt that was Glastonbury and there is something about that place. Lancashire Coal Measures*

There were also expressions of feeling 'humbled' by being on top of a crag or being 'in the middle of nowhere'. Such moments seemed to make people more aware of themselves, or



aware of the concept of a 'soul' which could be akin to something spiritual. Most people could say they had had this kind of experience at least once in their life, so it was more likely amongst older people.

The general concept of Nature being a force all of its own was also recognised as something awe-inspiring by many. Often wild or remote places were associated with this cultural service.



© Countryside Agency / Paul Girdell

08-442

*Against the elements, wind, natural stone, sky, clouds, emptiness. Awareness of our life and what we have. Lancashire Coal Measures*



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Mike Williams

*High up, wildness, solitary, able to sit and think. Arden*



Many respondents thought of 'spiritual' as being about religious experience and so did not associate landscape with being spiritual, unless they were religious themselves. However, a few people believed that the landscape was created or run by something 'bigger' than man, such as God or other types of 'spirits' – spirits of the woods, fairies, Mother Earth or Druids. The overwhelming beauty or scale of a place would make people feel spiritual.

Woodlands were regarded as quite 'spiritual' places:

*I feel spiritual in the Forest or anywhere I think you can always feel God I suppose or I think you can talk to God in a Forest. Without being Goddy or happy clappy but I think God is there. Spiritual and Calm go together. I think it is amazing, I don't think there is a being there. The New Forest and walking along Durdle Door you've got to think it is amazing.* Dorset

*"I'm glad we are talking about this because there is not enough of it in this country. In Ireland they won't cut down woods if they are believed to have fairy glens in them."*  
Claylands

*I think spiritually it reminds me a little bit of Zen, that kind of spontaneity you get, but I think it also can bring people together perhaps. My artist friend, I took her to .. woods or something like that, and she said 'Yes, let's grab some pencils and let's draw what we see' and as we were walking through the woods somebody had taken it upon themselves to do a sculpture of a tree or something, and you do come across weird things every time you go, people do twigs and baskets and things and just leave them there, so I think it is very spontaneous.* Arden

Also individual tors, stones or rocky places gave people spiritual vibes:

*"There's quite a lot of it round here with the hippies and all. They go up to the stones here and perform ceremonies, like the Druids and stuff"* Dark Peak

Photographs often chosen to represent 'spiritual'



©Countryside Agency/Charlie Hedley 03-4383



© Countryside Agency Photo: McGee Wynne 03-4281

*A feeling of my ancestors looking at this sunset, scene of a connection with them, of where I come from.* Fens

Otherwise, people would refer to a well-known rock, or places with folklore surrounding them such the 'Witches Tree' or the 'Winking Eye' (a hole in the rock near New Mills) or 'spooky' places where there is supposed to be a 'ghost' (eg a hangman's crossing).

There were also certain places in some of the NCAs where iron-age historic remains or stone circles could feel spiritual, such as Bradbury Rings in Dorset. Isolated ruined castles and churches could also do this.



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Mike McCann

*Church isolated, people only able to access it by walking, worshipped the same for 100's of years. Arden*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

There is much similarity in these findings with the same section of the Phase I report, although in this current phase there are more elaborate comments made than before. There were still many people who didn't recognise this cultural service, certainly not as a regular experience. Phase II confirms that spiritual feelings are often linked to moments of extreme solitude or very dramatic landscapes that 'take people out of themselves' and therefore the landscape needs to be quite distinctive to generate this service. Iron age history, standing stones and stretches of water/waterfalls were mentioned in both phases as being associated with spiritual experiences.

## **5.4 Learning**

Learning was considered to be mainly linked with historical features or built features such as stone walls:

*And obviously that's before mechanical cranes and all of that so. That would have been sort of, how do you get all of that weight up there before it can actually lean together?  
Fascinating. Fens*

There was also an interest in geology as a learning point, with people talking about cliffs and fossils and the formation of hills.



© Countryside Agency Photo: McCoy-Wynne 03-8397

*So many elements here which define the countryside. Building, waterways, trees, hills.*  
Fens

Learning about wildlife and food production for children was also mentioned as a reason to improve understanding about the natural world.

*We have got Oversly Woods which are near here, just near .. and that is a lovely walk, you know, a really very nice walk, and they have actually there, they have actually put, there is a short trail because it's shaped like a star so you can walk all the way around or you can cut up through the middle, but there is actually one section that has actually been labelled with trees, and that's for local school children to come and visit and have a look at the learning experience of the trees, you know. Arden*

Often the 'learning' part of a landscape was considered to be more for children than adults, unless they were on holiday or exploring somewhere new. However, in NCAs that were more rural (such as Dark Peak or the Fens) learning about survival in a wild landscape was discussed. Learning could be gained from dealing with a force of nature or understanding that something (such as a mountain) should not be taken for granted. Whereas in the more built-up NCAs, the natural landscape was perceived to be more controlled and benign.

This cultural service was often delivered by wildlife in a landscape, rather than by a landscape feature or type. This meant that landscapes that were good wildlife habitats would provide good learning – spotting a Dartford Warbler for the first time on a heath, or seeing deer on an estate.

Built features (from stately homes to the remains of mill houses and iron-age forts), were valued for their ability to make people learn about history. For adult learning, the unknown was important and anything which provoked a question in their minds was associated with learning, such as an unusual geological feature or something particularly rugged or rocky such as an outcrop, a tor, or a cliff. It is interesting that learning is perceived to come from being provoked to think (about something different or unusual) rather than from immediately getting the answer.





© Countryside Agency - Photographer Mike Williams

*Would like to know who put it there and why? And what it was originally? Arden*



© Countryside Agency/Charlie Hedley 03-4383

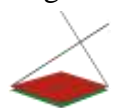
*Rock formation in the middle of nowhere. Odd shape, what caused it to be that way? Fens*



© Countryside Agency - 04/08

*Then we put for learning, obviously that's a salt marsh but why is it there? Why has it formed in that specific point, you know, why is it 50 miles up the coast? How has it formed? Yes, what process is creating that salt marsh and how is it still there. Is it declining, is it expanding? Fens*

When experiencing remote places, town dwellers gained a sort of amorphous type of learning



from imagining how they might survive living there.



*How people manage living in the countryside? Dark Peak*

People who had access to wide stretches of perceived to be natural landscape tended to feel the land regularly taught them something:

*"It is an unrecognised learning. You don't really take it in.. You just think oh I never spotted that before and you end up a little bit the wiser. You don't realize. Dark Peak*

*"You learn something new every time you go out. There's always something different."*  
Dark Peak

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

This section is very similar to Phase I in that there is a learning about oneself as well as an 'academic' kind of learning. The landscape experience is seen as an addition to 'academic learning'. There was more in the current phase relating to school activities (eg. 'pond-dipping' and learning about wildlife on the curriculum).

Both phases confirm that 'learning' isn't a service that people seek out from the landscape, but it can be a benefit that comes in many different forms. There are also very clear signals in both phases that the provision of simple signposting and information points can enhance people's learning experience (eg about a habitat or an historical feature). People mentioned explanatory boards such as 'this site is a special heathland site, home of the xx blue butterfly', punctuating their experience and giving it context.

Phase II further identified an interest in learning about rural ways of life (for example, could we be more self-sufficient and survive without industry?) This didn't come up in Phase I, and may be a recessionary effect, because it tallies with the tendency for people to focus on simpler basic values in times of hardship.

## **5.5 Recreation: Leisure and Activities**

Coastal landscapes were frequently linked to the cultural service of leisure and activity. The presence of water in a land-locked NCA delivered this as well (a lake or man-made waterway was considered to be important). Sometimes these places were associated with water sports and people would often know where their nearest large stretch of water would be and travel to it.



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Rob Cousins

*This reminds me of the Norfolk Broads. I got to drive a speed boat for the first time.*

Arden

*This reminds me of fishing with my Dad as a small boy.* Lancashire Coal Measures

In the Dark Peak and Dorset, people thought that the landscape offered a variety of opportunities for leisure and activities. It was all on their doorstep and many people from the other NCAs holidayed in both these places too.

*There are plenty of things to do here you can cycle, you can walk you can even rockclimb. There is so much choice.* Dorset Heaths

The presence of well-established tourist attractions also delivered opportunities for leisure and recreation, such as the cave sites in the Peak district. The Fens and Claylands thought they had few such organised sites.

Some respondents travelled to forest or woodland sites for activities for which they needed good paths. Examples included Kielder Forest for rally driving, Wales, Thetford Forest, and Cannock Chase. People in the Claylands, Lancashire Coal Measures and (to a certain degree) Arden were all regularly accessing sites outside their NCA for some of their leisure, whether active or passive. In the Fens, people drove for an hour (as far as the Norfolk coast or even to Rutland Water)

*And some parts of Thetford Forest are like that and they do mountain biking and they do have some quad biking and all that round there as well and that's simply because of the good chunks in between the trees, you can sort of, make your way round it.* Fens

Clearly lanes and road were also seen to be important for leisure and activity as they could be used themselves for the riding of vintage cars or 'meets' at famous motorbike spots (Castleton, Dark Peak). The flatness of land could be valued for cyclists (Claylands).

Paths or clearly marked points of interest could also be important for families, or in winter periods when going 'off-road' was more difficult. Such sites were needed more in NCAs where the natural landscape was in short supply or where it was felt to be inaccessible or unattractive.

Managed sites were valued places for getting out into without, at the same time, feeling too exposed. Examples included canals with locks (Tempsford), reclaimed railway track (Loggendale trail) and high spots with clear and carefully managed car parks (Clent Hills



National Trust heathland) Also, large long-established parks were hugely valued, although in a suburban or urban context eg. Sutton Park in north Arden. Equally well-managed Country Parks delivered this service well eg Haigh Hall in Lancashire Coal Measures just north of Wigan.

A rocky or more rugged landscape could also be associated with activities such as climbing which was important for excitement.

*I love the rocks and the crags when you go walking in the Lakes. It gives you an adventure. Lancashire Coal Measures*



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Mike Williams

*These are good for rock climbing/abseiling because of the large rock formations you could also simply walk this landscape. Dark Peak*



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Eric Dale 24929

*Very peaceful, rivers to fish freedom, different levels of ground. Rockclimbing. Fens*

### Key Comparisons with Phase I

Both phases show that mainstream public opinion links recreation to more organised sites, or at least to sites that are accessible. The availability of forestry sites, National Trust sites and other places of interest were more likely to supply the service of leisure and recreation. If an NCA had a coast then this was regarded as particularly strong in delivering this service.

Beyond sites that are specifically geared towards leisure or tourism, both phases show that there is a smaller group of people who are more from an attitude type that prioritises being outdoors in the wild who would be looking for a more unstructured experience. In these cases, the favoured landscape types tended to be more rocky, have variation in height or had stretches of water (eg to canoe on).

## 5.6 Calm

On the whole, this 'service' is one of the most important for the landscape to deliver, as it appears to be where people gain the most benefit. The 'peace and quiet' of the landscape experience was frequently mentioned – other words or phrases used were 'chill', 'empty your mind', 'forgetting', 'tranquillity'. It seemed to be quite important for calming places to be quiet, or quiet enough to hear a natural sound such as moving water or birdsong.

*Just watching buzzards. I am into fishing as well. I also love scrambling down screes and it is an adrenalin rush but water is tranquil, by a waterfall you can sit there for hours just daydreaming.* Lancashire Coal Measures



© Countryside Agency - Photographer John Morrison

*Very local looking. The ideal country view.* Dark Peak





© Countryside Agency - Photographer Ann Seth

*Leafy, Can imagine birdsong, would like to cycle along here Arden  
Sights, nature, paths, adventure Fens*

The ability to see a long way into the distance was considered to be calming; sky and clouds were also mentioned.

*"We all have such busy lives...we don't actually switch off until we go out and actually visit the particular areas on our doorstep." Dorset Heaths*

*"I just work all the time – there's no let up in my life, ever. Just to have 20 minutes peace driving through the forest is just magical." Dorset Heaths*

There was also mention that some experiences, if competitive, might look calming (fishing is an example) but were actually quite thrilling and 'positively stressful' because there is the quest of trying to achieve something.



© Countryside Agency - Photographer David Burton

Photograph associated with 'a sense of calm'

*Yes, I go out walking the dogs and that, I take them out in the countryside, different places and that, Paxton Pits, Wyboston Lakes and sort of different places, you know and we've also got a caravan as well, a tow along one, so all our holidays and quite a few weekends, we sort of just hitch the caravan up and go off into the countryside. Sometimes we stay on, sort of, biggish sites, but other times, we'll stay on a site where*

*there's about five caravans there and it's just for the peace and quiet, see the nature and stuff, yes. Claylands*

*I chose water, valleys and historical buildings, there's definitely something about being around water that's very relaxing and like I said the best view in Henley is that one over there which looks down this amazing valley, yes it is, you said about stressful lives, I think we do live stressful lives partly because of all the cars and partly because the communication level that we have, you know you can't really get away from your phone, your computer or anything and so it's nice to be able to walk away, just move away and see an impressive view and take a break. Arden*

The peacefulness of a place could be relative to where a respondent had originally lived. So Arden, Lancashire Coal Measures and Claylands were overall seen to be busy by people who had lived there for a long time. But there were people who had settled there from Birmingham, Liverpool and London respectively and they saw their locality as having a slower pace of life – less traffic, less noise, fewer buildings, but people who say hello. The landscape can therefore be seen by these people to be more calming than it would otherwise be to the majority.

Often calming landscapes were considered to be very open, gentle, flatter and pastoral.



*I like it as it is very open, bright and also very green. I like this as it makes me feel calm and peaceful. Dark Peak*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

There is a similarity between the two phases in the emphasis that calmness comes from stillness and the smaller-scale sensory things like birdsong. Phase II makes the point more strongly that such spaces are important to provide contrast to busy urban or suburban experiences.

### **5.7 A Sense of Place**

The continuity of a view was shown to be conducive towards people having sense of place because of their memories. A landscape that had remained largely unchanged for many years had more effect on local identity than if it had changed. One respondent took a photograph of a place where she had stood as a child and made sure we saw the original photo of her as a child in the same place.



Historical features were also quite strong in delivering a sense of place because they engendered local pride:

*We have got the heart of England here so I walk out through the Mount, and of course the Mount which is you all know, I'm sure, is the open area and that is actually being protected as a site of special historic interest, and actually it was planned that there were going to be houses built all over that, and we have a very good parish council here who fought and fought, and in the end they brought in the Time Team. Arden (Henley-in-Arden)*

*I am very fascinated with Dorset iron age hill forts and we've got about 30 of them. And the vista of landscape that you can record from these hill forts. Also the flora and fauna that you will find there because they have never had any fertilizers on them. Dorset Heaths*

Some stately homes and cathedrals were strong cornerstones of local identity, for example Ely Cathedral in the Fens. Also, the remnants of pit workings, spoil heaps or mills gave people a sense of place, although not always positively.

In the Dark Peak, the uniformity of stone used for villages and cottages was seen as a unifying feature, being strongly associated with 'home'. Iconic geological features could also give a sense of place – such as Big Stone or Kirber Edge in the Peak District.

Though not within the NCA, the Dorset coastline was also hugely important to people from the Dorset Heaths area.

*"The coast around here is very characteristic of Dorset. It changes even as soon as you go into Hampshire and it is different from Devon and Cornwall. The way the coast is constantly changing. The piece you think you know quite well looks very different on your next visit. It characterises the County."*

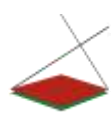
#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

There is much similarity between Phases I and II about how people derive a sense of place from the landscape, with people highlighting local iconic places or monuments in the landscapes as places they anchor themselves to in terms of local identity. Particular special views were also used as a way of reminding oneself about a place and its permanence (counting the passage of time but with the place staying the same). The less distinctive landscapes in Phase 2 (eg Claylands) showed, in addition, that some places could have a low 'sense of place' in landscape terms.

## **5.8 Inspiration**

People seem to be inspired quite often by special moments in the natural landscape, caused by light or the seasons – but also by quite rare things that they don't see everyday, such as a carpet of snowdrops, a waterfall or a high distant view. Often this was somewhere isolated that had taken some effort to get to. Seeing patterns could also be important, such as gnarled tree bark or something with a freeform organic shape that could not be man-made.

*I absolutely love growing things, planting, particularly flowers and I love to see a great carpet of snowdrops.....It actually makes me want to paint. Arden*





*It depends really. You can go walking for weeks and not be inspired and then suddenly something silly will just inspire you. Dark Peak*

In this phase of the study, perhaps only the Dark Peak and Dorset were seen as inspirational as whole landscapes. Otherwise Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and the Lakes were mentioned in this respect. The need for a beautiful view or some 'breathtaking scenery' seemed to be important for this.

*To me for something to be inspirational it has to be more dramatic than the landscape around here. I think it is a beautiful place, but I don't know if it would necessarily inspire me, like I said before it is quite warm and cosy, it is calm. Arden*

*I am certainly inspired by the countryside around here seeing the beauty of it and enjoying the wildlife here. I love photographing the wildlife here. Dorset Heaths*

The coast or seeing the sea also had the ability to produce this inspirational effect for many people.

*I feel inspired when I go to the coast. Dark Peak*

Some people were inspired by the variety of landscapes we have in Britain:

*I feel inspired by Country lanes and woodland pathways, hills and mountains because they always serve to remind me what a lovely country we have around us. Lancashire Coal Measures*



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Ann Seth



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Graeme Peacock 02-5721

### Key Comparisons with Phase I

The findings for this cultural service were very similar in both phases. Inspiration requires something special or beautiful, whereas some of the other services can be provided by more straightforward landscapes, or even pockets of greenery.

## 5.9 Escapism

Many people felt they were leading quite stressful lives, so escaping 'everyday life' was very important, with different people doing this in different ways. Being enveloped in 'green' and focusing on nature was important for a sense of escape, so experiencing fields, hedges, trees and flowers was regarded as a first level of escape. Some people had particular passions and so their escape would be link to that, such as cycling, birdwatching, fishing or even searching for WW2 aircraft crash sites!

*Any countryside is good for escape. I use it for stress relief. I get back from work and I just go out because it is nice, having had a headset on all day listening to people, to just say nothing and hear nothing. Just not listening to anyone speak! I go out and forget about everything. Dark Peak*

In terms of the landscape, it seemed to be important to not have to see modern residential or industrial buildings and for some, true escapism meant going a long way. The fewer the number of modern built structures around, the more people got a sense of escapism. Also, traditionally for some, (Fens and Claylands) going to the Norfolk coast was an automatic escape. In Arden, people used local walks for a quick escape but for a more effective escape there was a hankering for places in Wales and Cornwall that provided a more 'rugged' landscape. Often to 'escape' meant going somewhere different than where you live.

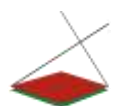
*For me I just forget about work, when I get past Shirley in the train I forget about work totally, and it is the same all the way through the weekend, it is so different from the grey and concrete in Birmingham, it is just a nice escape. Arden*

*Recently, we've been up to the RSPB reserve at Snettisham and Titchwell, up on The Wash, on the tip of Norfolk, mainly just to bird watch and just to get away from the rat race of millions of cars, just to escape from it all, just to get away. Claylands*

Some people found it more and more difficult to escape. Older people, for example, derived stress from there being too much perceived change in the landscape as they looked around their homes. Mainly this was related to the increased building of roads and increased levels of traffic. Escaping from areas with large numbers of cars, bottlenecks or tourist traps could be difficult. Flat land meant you could find it hard to get away from the sound of motorways, for example. In the Peak District the dangerous roads and number of tourists/coaches was felt to be claustrophobic.

If you were able to live away from these problems then they felt more able to feel 'escaped'. Clearly it depended where a person's house was; some people had reached a stage in their lives where they were able to afford to live somewhere that gave them daily escape (moving to a house on the edge of a river in the Fens, moving to an isolated village in the Claylands or Arden). Also, anyone who had settled in a place that they regarded to be more peaceful than where they had been before could see that area as more like 'escape' than people who had been brought up there.

*I can get up in the morning and look out of the bedroom window and apart from the village hall, which is right in front of us, there are fields to either side, which is great. That's mine and my wife's reasons for moving to a country location, because neither of*



*us wanted to live in a cramped, built up area, so to a certain extent, we're lucky and also there's a sort of a conservation order on the village as well, so the village is privately owned by Thornhill Estates and he's, to his credit, he sort of... Claylands*

The escape provided by Dark Peak was considered to be enormous by residents who benefited themselves but they also believed that the proximity of the Dark Peak to Sheffield and Manchester meant it was well-used as an escape by other people. Certainly it was easier to escape in some NCAs than others:

*It's all on our doorstep. Dark Peak*

*Just getting away from everything there is no phone, no computer no children sometimes. There is no "Mummy". Feeling that I can actually breathe. A beautiful landscape without a phone mast. Dorset*

*You've got to travel further afield to get out and about in the countryside now, whereas before, I could just sort of walk down the end of the road and be out in the fields and stuff and now, like, round the back of Tesco's, I used to walk all the way back round there, that's all, like, new buildings and everything. Claylands*



© Countryside Agency Photo: Chris Chapman 02-6888

*Nobody else for miles and miles. Fens*



© Countryside Agency/Charlie Hedley 04-1478

*Peaceful with a variety of natural breathtaking scenery. Solitude. Stream makes it feel tranquil. Fens*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

Phase II seems to find this service to be more important than in the first phase of the study, with more discussion surrounding stressful lives and the effect of the recession. Escapism was more linked to wilder places than in Phase I (where people were more easily accessing places locally to escape). This may be a function of the differences in the NCA samples between the two phases.

The ability to easily escape is highly dependent upon the amount of rural space that is accessible within an NCA. An NCA can be particularly good at providing escape (eg Dark Peak) but if it is very built up (eg, Lancashire Coal Measures) then the green spaces that are available become almost more important, valued and praised.

## 6. Features in the Landscape

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the third of four chapters that report and discuss the key findings that arise from the programme of qualitative research – the focus groups and interviews – that was carried out across the six character areas.

It examines the findings concerning individual features within the landscape.

### 6.2 Overview

This study has looked at a pre-agreed list of individual features as a way of understanding the services and benefits associated with them. This agreed list of features contained the following:

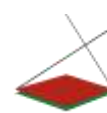
- trees (eg woodland, forest or 'feature' trees)
- boundaries (eg hedges and walls)
- fields
- industrial features (eg quarries, collieries)
- villages
- water (eg streams, rivers, lakes, sea)
- moorland
- bogs and marshes
- wildlife
- rocks and crags
- historic buildings or remains
- farms
- parkland
- coast
- hills
- mountains
- valleys
- lowland (eg. plains, fens, heath)
- lanes and roads
- grassland.

The following analysis shows how certain features appear good at delivering benefits to people in terms of the perceptions of these people alone (their values, emotions, thoughts and beliefs).

### 6.3 Hills, Mountains and Upland Areas

The need for some hills was frequently mentioned as being important. Although a few people from very flat areas felt a little in awe of high mountains, they still loved hills and 'undulation', or some variation in the landscape.

*I went into Scotland recently as well, the Highlands, that was beautiful. I don't think I could live there, as much as I loved it, some of the views it really does take your breath away but I don't think I could live there, it's just too, like you said drive three hours to find a shop. Yes, but it was gorgeous for a holiday, to go and look around and walk around all day Like I say it used to take my breath away, it was just incredibly beautiful, quite outstanding and obviously you don't get the mountains and that round here. It almost seems like you are in a different sort of*





*world really. Arden*

*It's just the sheer scale of it, you know, to go on top of some of the higher mountains and that and just see for miles. And sometimes on some days you get the mist below you and you're in above the clouds, it's..... But they're high (Brecon Beacons) It's just the scale of it, it makes you feel so small, you know. Puts you in your place. Well it's peaceful and makes you realise you know, how beautiful this country is. Fens*

*I love mountains but we don't have any. It is very dramatic when mountains sweep down to the sea. They are very dramatic and the geology of how they were formed: they are majestic and dramatic. You can't do much with them but they are great to look at. They are fantastic. It is somewhere different to go. We've got almost everything else here really. Dorset Heaths*

A rolling landscape was considered to be very beautiful and whilst some in Arden thought they had a rolling landscape others thought it was still too flat. On the whole, people in three of the NCAs considered their area did not have 'decent' hills – they would access hills in Wales or the Malverns.

The ability that hills give to look over the landscape was valued and considered to be very special although not experienced on a day-to-day basis in some of the NCAs. Even small heights, such as "The Pit Bonk" (an old slag heap in Lancashire Coal Measures) could be important and exhilarating for people to climb, even if the view was not spectacular. Such places could be important community places, especially good for sledging in the snow! Otherwise the high heathland views available in Dorset (and even from driving around in the Peaks) were considered magical.

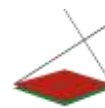
The Dark Peak was the only NCA with high hills and this area was considered to be very special, in that – wherever you went, whether by car or foot – there were views. The peaks themselves however, could be seen to be a little inaccessible and daunting. Kinder Scout was spoken about with great respect for the potential danger it could pose and locals were not necessarily 'comforted' by it.

The Peak District was mentioned by people from other NCAs as being beautiful but also frightening, largely due to the perceived bleakness or lack of trees and cover. It was considered to be important for people from Lancashire Coal Measures, who also regarded the Lakes and North Wales as convenient playgrounds.

As a general rule, people tended to talk about the hills and mountains in Scotland, Wales and the Lake District in glowing terms.

*We've recently got married, we got married in May and we went to Scotland for our honeymoon and stayed on the edges of Loch Lomond, mainly because neither of us had ever been to Scotland before in our lives, so we'd always wanted to go, so that appealed to us greatly. Claylands*

*I love Snowdonia national park. It's obviously constantly hilly and mountain and there's huge lakes and very, very ancient forests everywhere. And it's just a very*



*lovely place to be, absolutely. You know, really sort of, wild and old England, like I say history everywhere...And it's like, you could be in any time there or, it's nothing to do with modern life. Fens*

*Probably the first time I went to the Lake District which was fairly recently. I had heard of the Lake District but I didn't really know that much about it, and I was blown away by the beauty of it really. I couldn't believe that I hadn't been to this beautiful place before. Yes. I think one of the most memorable days was when we went up the Honnister Pass which is just a really hairy trip up a mountain, and getting out the car and just getting hit by the wind, and it was just a real free feeling, and not being able to see a building in sight, it was really special. Arden*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

The overall findings about hills and mountains are the same in the two phases – that, generally, the ability to gain height is important for a more positive landscape experience (and certainly more for the services of spirituality and inspiration).

Phase II has enabled a more detailed analysis of people's perception of height, showing that (for some) the required height needn't be very high, but just *different* in relation to the majority of land around. Variation in height seems more important here, therefore, than the height itself.

Another finding is that 'rolling' is better than 'flat', and so is 'undulating', when providing cultural services. Flatter land can be perceived positively if high on a plateau or otherwise in an elevated position, whereas lowland flat land seems to be perceived more negatively in providing services, unless it is adjoined by a beach or 'useable' coastline.

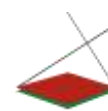
Phase II showed, in addition, that some people see very high mountains as inspiring to view rather than to climb and that there is a tailing off in the perceived benefits of height above a certain level (if that was all there is available) because of inaccessibility.

## **6.4 Water, Rivers and Streams**

Water was an important theme for the Claylands and Fens NCAs – it is a distinctive part of their landscape. However, rivers were generally much valued and access to long stretches of water could be missed because of their absence (eg in Arden).

There was a therapeutic element to water that enabled people to feel refreshed in such places. Canals and the waterways were also thought to be important to in some of the NCAs (to varying degrees in the Fens, Dark Peak and Claylands). Around Ely and elsewhere, activity on the waterway was a source of constant enjoyment – the Cambridge rowing club, fishing, or watching the canal boats and chatting to the owners as they go by ("they are a friendly lot").

In the Dark Peak, water gave a strong sense of history because it has driven the mills and been the reason for past prosperity as well as providing local industrial architecture. It was also obliquely mentioned as an important creator of such landscape features as valleys, caves and potholes.



Man-made stretches of water were considered important breathing spaces for built-up areas (eg, the Lancashire Coal Measures 'Flashes' and the gravel pit lakes in Claylands). The reservoirs in Dark Peak were valued, as are canals wherever they appear. The Tors in New Mills Dark Peak provided a welcome easy walk in Dark Peak and provided a good experience of the sound of water. More natural streams are loved, but are often seen to be inaccessible.

Beautiful deep-cut river valleys or gorges are often mentioned as special places and waterfalls (in the Wye Valley, Brecon Beacons, or Peak District) are revered.

*Nice calm, slow moving, shallow river, like up in Yorkshire, in Bolton Abbey, watching the old fishermen doing the old fly fishing there. Claylands*

*..it's a place it's miles out in the countryside away from nowhere and there's a tree-lined lake, it's just peaceful. You know, there's nothing there, all you can hear is the birds singing and the ducks doing your head in. Fens*

*It is almost as if you are pulling power from the water for your own resources if you are really low. The movement of it, hearing it trickling..it recharges your own batteries. Dorset Heaths*

#### Key Comparisons with Phase I

Both phases show that access to water is felt to be important and contributes towards relaxation. An NCA can be weaker in what it provides culturally if it doesn't have water – and is stronger if there is a variety of rivers, lakes and coastline. Also an NCA which is less distinctive (or that doesn't provide cultural services from height or woodland) can make up for this by having large stretches of water – eg Fens and Claylands.

Interestingly, water did not need to be very natural in order to provide elements of escape, calm or recreation (canals and reservoirs can both do this) but the more special experiences, involving being inspired or uplifted, were more likely to be from natural rivers, streams within gorges, or the sea.

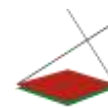
Both phases showed that there was probably a lack of awareness about where rivers were and of how to access them. But they provide a special experience if close to where a person lives.

## 6.5 Woodland

Woodlands were felt to have high amenity benefits, with people most often knowing where their local accessible woodlands were. On the whole there was considered to be a lack of woodland in many of the researched NCAs, except Dorset.

Special memories of woods often came from childhood. They were considered to be important to children to play in for wildlife habitats and for the environment. Interestingly it seemed important to get lost in them! Woodlands were generally sought out as places to go and trees were considered vital in some NCAs, such as Claylands and Fens to provide some kind of feature in otherwise featureless landscapes.

The presence of ancient oaks in Arden was considered to be special and distinctive of the





area. These oaks were much valued, as were the old hedge patterns and farmed landscape. The awareness of the old 'Forest' was low and not now considered to be part of the identity in terms of what is currently seen.

*You see, the thing is, I went over to a place over in Wales, a friend's place and you could literally walk for miles, you could get lost in the woodlands there and you can't do that here, that is impossible. Claylands*

*I guess walking through woodland has an element of innocence, everything around is just peaceful ... there aren't going to be any cars, any infrastructure, it is you and nature, the birds and the trees that you hear. Fens*

*I like the greenery in woodland and walking through trees. I like the rustle of the leaves and to hear the breeze and you can hear the birds in the trees which you don't hear in the fields. Lancashire Coal Measures*

*I don't know if anyone else feels the same, but whenever I walk through woodlands where there are big trees, you look at them and you think, how many years has that tree stood there? How many tales could that tree tell if it could speak? What changes has it seen in its lifetime? That sort of thing fascinates me. Claylands*

The single tree or line of trees could be a focus. Respondents would find beauty in the berries on a tree or a nest in a tree. Sometimes a tree could retain its nostalgic wonder if still there when a respondent it older they go back to visit it.

*I think woods are good. Sydenham wood and around Mosley Bog and things like that, but they are lovely mysterious kind of spaces as well, it's really nice and they are also quite scary as well. Arden*

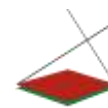
#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

There was less discussion of woodland in Phase II because there were fewer wooded areas in the NCAs this time. In Phase II, woods were regarded as special places that could add character to featureless landscapes. Many people felt in both phases that man had slowly removed woodland over the centuries and that it should be put back. However, they did not want this to be at the detriment of open spaces and opportunities to view distances. This clearly indicates that there is a perceived saturation point of woodland, where it becomes too 'dense' and predominant in any one area.

The relativities involved here are unknown, but there is certainly a strong emotional attachment towards being inside woodland that comes from childhood experiences. Both phases show that tree lines are considered important to add pattern and to be visually pleasing; these can add strong benefits in their own right, so it is not always huge tracts of woodland that people are requesting.

## **6.6 Coast**

The coast held an important place in respondents hearts. It represented an important place of escape for people in England generally. Respondents were very aware of it being part of our culture. There was much affinity with the coast in all NCAs but especially those



with their own coastline or close to it.

*I think the air as well, it is just so different. And the sea is so tranquillising I think, it makes you feel so calm.* Fens

*Just the size of some things and the power of the sea and whatever, it just makes you, I think, realise what a small thing you are in the universe perhaps, I don't know.* Claylands

*"I need to be near coast and water – I pull the power from it".* Dorset

Everyone remembers a childhood experience at a beach and often those who were not otherwise particularly 'outdoorsy' were inspired by the coast. It would be the one landscape they would go to.

*Being a kiddie when you were there at the seaside. Ice creams. Everyone goes to the coast if they have got some spare time, they go to the coast, I don't know why it is but I think people are naturally drawn to it.* Fens

On the whole the more preferred coastline was a rugged one with cliffs interspersed with beaches to sit on. Flatter, marshy land was less valued. If flat, the coast could be valued when there were long endless stretches of sand (eg in Norfolk) or when there was another element of interest (such as history).

*That is one place where I did see a big open flat place to walk into on the beach in Norfolk. I like to see that, like in Silverdale. You don't like it on the land but it seems alright on the coast.* Lancashire Coal Measures

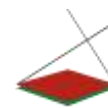
The Pembrokeshire coast path was also cited by many as being exciting. The Great Orme in Llandudno was valued by the Lancashire Coal Measures' respondents. Places like the Jurassic Coast, Durdle Door, were mentioned as iconic places that everyone knows.

People mentioned that the immediately-adjacent Jurassic coastline of Dorset offered strenuous walking because of the gradients. It was also pointed out and agreed that the nearby rocky cliffs around Swanage and Old Harry Rocks gave a very different experience and felt like 'being abroad'.

The Dorset coast's Portland area was thought to offer a very wild experience, and its former industrial basis was still apparent in some of the industrial history remains. The Lyme Regis area was also appreciated for its wild coast. People spoke favourably of the iconic Lulworth Cove along the coast in Dorset. Its natural beauty was enjoyed, but people were disappointed it had become so commercialised, and preferred to visit it out of season.

People were pleased that Dorset still had areas of rugged coast that remained quiet and uncommercialised.

*I'm a big fan of trees and willowed areas, but I also like a nice rugged coastline, so the rugged Cornwall coastline tends to appeal as well, although there are not a lot*



*of wildlife features there, apart from obviously the sea life. Claylands*

*Yes, I enjoy seeing different types of coastline. I mean, you get all the cliffs and that, you sort of get loads of birds and stuff, don't you, if you get a good vantage point, where you can look across and that, the same with, sort of, like, the mudflats and the estuaries, you know, you get a lot of wildlife in that, so it is nice to see varied. Claylands*

The use of motorhomes or caravans was also a traditional way of escaping and quite often to the coast. Some people thought that the coastline wasn't always very accessible, either in terms of being able to walk there and also of being able to park or live there. The desirability of living by the sea having made it somewhat too exclusive for many in this country although many wanted to retire there.

*And I do like, when I have been near the sea and places like that, watching the tide come in and go out, seeing the water slowly get higher or slowly receding and that calms me, I find that a really calming thing. The passage of time thing more, it is not a sound thing, it is a passage of time and seeing the sand become exposed slowly or covered up slowly, I think is really good. Arden*

*I spent many childhood days there on those flats getting absolutely disgusting, so I like that. Well it is just the memories you have of it. As I say, it was mud, filth, I am sure a lot of people wouldn't go there, but for me as a child it was escapism, you would go over the wall and there were the flats, and it was like that is civilisation and that was in your imagination anywhere you wanted it to be. Fens*



© Countryside Agency Photo: Ian Dargatzis 03-9048

*That time is endless. That we are only here on earth for a short time. Lancashire Coal Measures*



*Sitting appreciating the beauty of the bay. Arden*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

The cultural services provided by coastline were considered to be many and, if people lived close to a coastline, they felt a great sense of enhanced well-being. There were more NCAs in Phase I that had coastlines, whereas most NCAs in Phase II had very little or no coastline.

People accessed their favourite coastline regardless of whether it was in their locality and some NCA had traditional affinities with specific coastlines, such as Claylands and Fens with the Norfolk coast. Other coastlines were mentioned as being nationally important eg. Pembrokeshire, Norfolk, Dorset, Cornwall.

### **6.7 Fields**

Fields were quite important in this research sample as providing the only form of open landscape in some NCAs.

*There is a sense of freedom and exhilaration. When we grew up in a city and you live on streets it is nice to see green fields here now. Lancashire Coal Measures*

Where farmers were respectful of walkers they were appreciated. In the Fens and Claylands they were regarded as somewhat repetitive and monotonous although very fertile and indicative of the area.

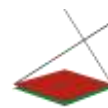
*There should be some, a certain amount let to go wild because it's just so much farmland around here it's just flat and farmland wherever you look. Fens*

*Trouble is if you let everything overgrow on the farmland then we're going to have to start bringing in stuff from abroad, which we're doing already but we'll have to do it even more.. I mean, they say Kent is the garden of England but I suppose we're sort of, the root veg patch of England. I mean, the majority of the bran comes from here, the sugar beet and the potatoes. That's basically our core diet. Fens*

Elsewhere, the generic look of 'farmland' was often cited as being special for people who dream of old farmhouses and the sort of romantic countryside they see on TV programmes. This was often the mainstay image of younger people who didn't have much access to the countryside.

*You've got in your mind a little farm with the smoke coming out of the chimney and the sheep. I'd rather see the small farms than the large historic buildings. With chickens and sheep. Lancashire Coal Measures*

*I have got my little patch and I always wanted a meadow, and you could never have a big enough garden to ever achieve that, and if you did you wouldn't have the time to probably maintain it anyway, so there is this longing to, I just love the whole idea of meadow, meadow flowers, wild flowers growing crazy, hollyhocks or*



*whatever. Insects, butterflies, all that kind of thing, colour and again the time of year as well that it is.* Arden

*The majority of the farmers are pretty good. They do keep the paths clearly. They understand that they don't really own it. As long as you stick to the countryside rules. It is where they live and it benefits us all if we are allowed to go through their fields and they are allowed to farm it.* Lancashire Coal Measures

With the rise of the local food movement and farmers markets, people have become more interested in specific farms and what they produce.

Whilst there is a general confusion between field, grassland and meadows, they all seem to represent, colour, variation and if they are there, houses are not. They can be the only green space people have:

*When we first moved here there were green fields at the end of our road and now it is a housing estate.* Lancashire Coal Measures

They can also be the main determinant of whether you can consider yourself rural or semi-rural:

*When we first moved here there were fields at the back of our house you could jump over the gate straight onto moorland. Now it's a housing estate.* Dark Peak

*This is the best we can do for our budget. So there is a very busy road our front but at least we can look over green fields at the back.* Arden

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

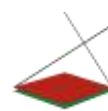
Both phases recognise the importance of fields as being key indicators of a non-urban environment. Whilst it seems to be the patterns from the hedges that provide the interest, it is also livestock and the idea of farming that seems to provide a 'cultural service' (eg. of escape, history and simple values). The field patterns need to be seen in conjunction with a valley, or a river, or woodlands to be valued as a landscape (not in isolation does it provide a service). Often it is by driving, walking or riding past the fields that is important. A field pattern provides variation for people and this seems to be more culturally important than a landscape that is perceived to be monotonous.

## **6.8 Moorland**

Moorland was not spontaneously mentioned as a favourite type of landscape. For the mainstream (and especially for females) it seems to be too featureless, windswept and a scary place.

People from the Dark Peak loved the landscape in their area for its hills and valleys, but professed not to think of it as moorland, and certainly not as 'bog'.

The positive values associated with moorland were to do with the endlessness of it and the possibilities for escape. Again, people of a certain constitution could find it threatening



and not readily accessible, although the edges (where you can park, or where it falls off into wooded slopes) were liked, as was the view of heather provided from afar (eg in Scotland).

The wildness of the landscape was regarded as being important to protect and there were a few, more hardier, types (such as those who belonged to a mountain rescue team) who wanted to be right in the middle of moorland for its isolation. The naturalness and perceived 'untouchedness' of moorland was also appreciated – it just wasn't accessed very much and so did not deliver many cultural services.

Where a moorland was on a smaller scale, or where it was in patches as part of a hilly landscape, it seemed more positive to people. But there was much negative imagery around; the following two images are examples of the positive and negative images chosen by respondents.

*Yes, the Moors, on the way to Manchester. 's on the way from here it would be (unclear).. Yes, and I think that's a really spooky place. I used to drive, do that drive all the time and that used to make me feel scared, it did. Yes, because it's just all hilly and like, I don't know, just a really, it's got a really scary history, I think and like, I would not like to drive through there on my own at night time, certainly not. Yes, it's really, it is, it's a really scary place and there's just hills upon hills upon hills and then little houses on their own and.... Fens*



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*I was thinking, is it, perhaps I've got this wrong, it must be moors, up at Yorkshire, you come along and you've got all the heathers and the hills there, that's my little, that's a bit of thing that sticks in my mind, come over the hills, the heather in the hills and you can see Whitby in the distance down below. And that for me is quite a nice scene in my head. Arden*

*Moorland: it just seems very empty, very bleak you know over at Saddleworth. It is so bland there are no trees just sheep. It is because it is featureless. Dark Peak*





© Countryside Agency - Photographer Mike Williams

*You got up onto the moorland you can't say that is particularly beautiful because there isn't that much to see I mean I used to go just to listen to the silence and because there was no-one there. So it doesn't have to be beautiful. It is the escape thing, the peace. The hills further down are beautiful. Dark Peak*

*I like them for the bleakness and the isolation. The grouse, the pheasants. It is not nice when the mist comes down. I quite enjoy it. It adds to the rawness of nature does moorland. Dark Peak*

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

Phase II has revealed more information about moorland and why it is perceived to deliver few cultural services (and to fewer people). It appears that the more negative associations are with isolated moorland that doesn't have coast, trees or a valley associated with it. Moorland is regarded as a more extreme type of experience and is more valued, therefore, by people who seek isolation for its own sake.

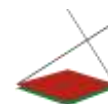
Where moorland is on a smaller scale, and has rocky outcrops and crags, it is considered more beautiful. Moorland is considered more attractive when the heather is out or when there is lots of wildlife to see. This phase has confirmed that moorland can provide inspiration, but performs less well for services like 'calmness' because it provides a more challenging experience. It can also provide leisure and recreation, but not for the mainstream population unless it is particularly accessible (provides good walking on bridleways, or gives views over coastlines).

People are frightened by being in the middle of a 'desolate' place.

I should be remembered that this is about their experiences and not about whether people think that moorland areas are important to protect.

## **6.9 Bogs and Marshes**

There is a difference in perception between a bog and a marsh. The former is regarded as



brown and muddy, with the latter regarded as green and watery. Both can be regarded as dangerous places to be where there are no walkways.

There is also a lack of awareness of where marshland is – even amongst people living in or near the town of March! Similarly, areas of bog on the top of the peak in Peak District were not known about.

*These were where we are now would be on dry land but 400 years ago if you went out anywhere else it would just be marsh land and swamp land and the phrase Fen tidings comes from that which people what lived out in the swamp and made their living by trapping eels, shooting birds and were completely against (unclear) when he turned up this Dutch man said right we're draining that bugger. Fens I can't say I've been near marshes. I don't even know where the nearest one is actually. Fens the salt marshes up in Norfolk on the coast. I mean, we go up there specifically to walk along the marshes. Fens*

However, people do clearly value the wildlife they see coming from 'wetlands' or areas where (as they see it) there are bulrushes. So terminology can be important.

*You've got to respect them...It is there for a reason. I went somewhere in Wales, in mid-Wales an RSPB place and you wouldn't gone to this marsh if it didn't have a boardwalk. It was a nice touch just for that one place. I wouldn't like the whole lot done like that. Dark Peak*

*Wet heath, bogs and marshes – they're difficult to walk over but you need them for wildlife to sustain everything else." Dorset Heaths*

*I went to one a marsh which had duck boards all the way through. It was terrific. There were lizards and all sorts going on the path. Near Aberthwaite, Newby Bridge. I did know it was there. Lancashire Coal Measures*

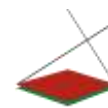
When rationalised and explained, the bogland areas and marshland areas were important and valued for flood prevention but the connection is not currently made widely and would need further communication.

#### Key Comparisons with Phase I

There is more information from the current phase about why bogs and marshes are negatively evaluated. The insight that wetlands are being marketed more, and that a few more people are aware of the importance of bogs for carbon storage, is important from a communications perspective.

## 6.10 Lowland, Fens, Heath

Flat land generally appears to have a low aesthetic value, except when other attributes of flatness are brought into the equation.



In the Fens, the overlaying of layers of trees (pollarded willows, poplar etc) gave the land a more distinctive quality. The overriding benefit here was to see into the distance... this cannot be done if a hill is in the way. Man's existence is put here into context by being able to see a long way, a similar effect to being on top of a hill. However, this does depend on having extremely flat land or, as someone put it, 'more than flat because you are elevated on a the road, you look down onto it!'

*Distance, there is distance, if you work in an office you're looking at walls, when you are out walking, certainly in this area, it is .. there is distance, you are looking at the distance, it is not all in on you. Fens*

*I'm used to the hills, but they say 'what do you like about the fens?' and it is a beautiful sky, there is something absolutely beautiful about the sky. I have been many places but sunsets and stuff.. the clouds and the light. Fens*

There were some negative views expressed about fenland (from people who lived there) relating to the emptiness and the lack of height, both inhibiting the element of discovery:

*Yes, well when I'm out working there's nothing, some of the areas we're in the middle of nowhere and it's just fields everywhere. Fens*

*So, I'm a walker, I mean, I'm like you I like to find new places to walk that you know, but you can't go over a hill and see what's over it. Fens*

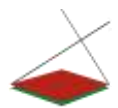
From people who don't live in the Fens, negative views were also expressed about the flatness of the area, apart from if visiting a nature reserve. Otherwise Norfolk is frequently mentioned as somewhere that is too flat and 'boring'. Positive perceptions about it come from the experience at the beaches and the villages (a slow rural feel).

*Well really for the bird life really. I had a friend who moved to Norfolk in the last couple of years. I'd never been there, it's flat, it doesn't cut it with me, but actually when I went there I discovered the wetlands and I really liked visiting those, there were some very pretty places. You can find some really pretty small villages and the architecture actually that changes as you go to different parts, that interests me, when you see older properties and actually how different the architectural style, features that are just typical. Arden*

*It doesn't seem the same without the hills I know it sounds ridiculous. You go down South and it is all flat then you get to a certain point and you get the hills. It just doesn't look right without hills to me and maybe that is because I haven't grown up with it. It is very flat and boring. Dark Peak*

*It is too bleak, you look around you and all you can see is flat and I don't like that. I don't like to think I'm getting nowhere. Dark Peak*

*That is one place where I did like a big open flat place to walk into was on the beach in Norfolk. I like to see that, like in Silverdale. You don't like it on the land but it seems alright on the coast somehow. Lancashire Coal Measures*



*I don't like the flat, I like a bit of a hill and a valley.* Lancashire Coal Measures

It appears there are degrees of flatness in people's minds, so the Claylands were considered flat but not flat enough to be able to see very far, and similarly with parts of Arden. Whilst the flat parts of Claylands were redeemed by larger stretches of water, Arden did not have this, although inside the central, ancient forest parts of Arden, interest is provided from the more rolling landform, tree cover and small field patterns.

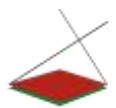
'Heath', was valued but not really regarded as 'flat' because it was often high up. Also, the wildlife benefits weigh in its favour. People also valued their amenity benefits eg for horseriding and walking. The beauty of heathland for colour was mentioned, such as heather and gorse (some people confuse heathland for moor). Of course, in the case of Dorset, heathland was an important component of the area's identity.

There is also a perception that heaths do not stretch for miles and miles, they are quite discrete and therefore not monotonous. This indicated that the 'scale' of the flat land is important to its level of interest and what it can provide.

*I love walking and riding on the Dorset heathlands – it's absolutely brilliant." "I like the height and seeing so far.* Dorset

*I love what they're doing up at Sandy; they're trying to bring the heath back for a special bird.* Claylands

*There's a heath up there and you come out of the woods unto it and you can see for miles; it's our only high bit really .I mean it is National Trust.* Arden



### Key Comparisons with Phase I

Phase I mainly tested the concept of 'lowland' with people, rather than looking at types of lowland. Because lowland was quite negatively evaluated there was no written section on this landscape type in the Phase I report.

Phase II has been able to differentiate between types of flatness and confirms that, in general, people are more interested in height and variation in height. Flatland can provide a sense of place (and can be regarded as distinctive) when it is the only local option locally. But, on the whole, the image of flat fenland amongst people outside such areas was quite negative. However, inspiration could be gained from non-landscape aspects such as the big skies that exist in these areas. And, in part, the land was redeemed by having good land cover (layers, patterns), by being productive, by being watery and by having good wildlife. Both phases showed that wildlife provided strong cultural services and often in cases where the landscape was not considered particularly 'pleasing'.

## 6.11 Villages

The nature of residential development can make a huge difference towards how an NCA is evaluated. People seemed to value those landscapes more which have a strong contrast between towns, villages and the rural landscape, rather than sprawling development. Where villages have their own identity within a landscape they seem to be better evaluated.

*As an Essex girl I've suffered from flatness but my husband is Yorkshire. I like the fact that the towns are towns there and not 'sprawl' like here merging into one.*  
Claylands

*I like little villages. Quaint little places like Hayfield. There are little tiny hamlets here. It's nice to have them dotted about instead of in rows.* Dark Peak

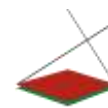
On an emotional level, the encounter with a proper village or hamlet seemed to feel like a discovery for people, like a secret place that makes them feel special.

*I mean you've got places like Stow on the Wold in the Cotswolds and I always remember driving through this little place, by accident I think once, called Bibury and fortunately with work I ended up going back to The Swan Hotel there which was very old, and it's just, its like someone has taken it out of a picture postcard, it's just almost like it can't be real, it's just so perfect and you've got the little row of cottages that were the Saville Row tailors that were there and then went to London, and the history is just incredible. And it is just, it's beautiful, it's really beautiful. I think we are so lucky that in a stone's throw you can be there.* Arden

*I love villages. We go to Wiltshire and stay in Calne to visit Lacock. That is where Harry Potter was filmed.* Lancashire Coal Measures

Respondents who lived in villages treasured the feeling of remoteness it gave and the ability to look out onto the (perceived to be) natural world:

*We chose to live in the middle of nowhere for exactly that reason, the quiet,*



*nobody comes down there, you do get dog walkers and people on horses, but it is not doing any harm. I think that has a lot to do with it, it's natural what you are looking at, it's not concrete, it is how it would be if it was untouched, yes quiet, green and all those sorts of natural things. Fens*

There was also a feeling of a lost, ancient way of life in villages that made people feel nostalgic and gave them a sense of history. Often an area would be judged by the vibrancy or 'realness' of its villages.

#### Key Comparisons with Phase I

This section confirms the findings from the previous phase that villages are important by giving a sense of identity and indicating generally that somewhere is rural. They add to a certain 'dream-like' quality that people seem to want as part of their escape to the open landscape, albeit a built one. Villages are an element of the overall landscape experience that gives structure to the more 'perceived-to-be-natural' elements of the landscape around them (such as mountain slopes or river valleys). The more historic the village the better and the more consistent/distinctive in terms of architecture/materials used. Also, the absence of villages made somewhere seem too remote for some people. The opposite of 'villages' was sprawl that was negatively evaluated.

### 6.12 Hedges and Walls

There was much talk about landscapes with hedges being pretty and hence their loss was frequently bemoaned. People tended to take pictures of hedges during their walks as something which defined the countryside. The state of the hedges was often used to measure how well somewhere was managed.

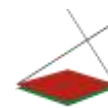
*The nice thing around here, the farmers do actually keep the hedgerows and they do sort of, when they cut them they actually cut them with regards to birds and nesting, and that isn't always the case in every area. Arden*

There were fewer landscapes with dry-stone walls in the study areas but they were still mentioned as being worthy of respect. This related the endeavour and achievement of man in taming the landscape. They were not mentioned as much in terms of local identity has they had been for example in the Eden Valley from Phase I.

*I don't think you appreciate the walls. We take them for granted here because there are so many of them. Dark Peak*

### 6.13 Industrial Features

The way that the landscape has been used in past times (especially Victorian) appears to still resonate with people now. They usually valued industrial architecture from that time and felt excited when coming across something overgrown and disused in an isolated or wild spot. Features relating to the building of the railways and the canals were particularly valued, as were woollen mills or old dockside buildings/warehousing. On a smaller scale, people liked to see old locks, mechanical turntables, lifts, or hydrants preserved or in





working order.

When the industrial feature is not a building, but more of an effect on the landform, people can regard it as a scar or as wasteland that needs 'sorting out'. There appears to be an expectation that this will be done to the benefit of the overall aesthetic appeal of the location.

*I think they need to do a bit more, sort of, like around where they've been doing all the gravel and earth works, sort of, like, down Bedford, through the bypass, there's all these old pits and stuff. They let them fill up with water, but they don't really seem...to Yes, but I'm just saying, it takes a long time. It's like over at Marston, yes, there are still loads of pits there, but it's just featureless really, isn't it?*  
Claylands

Disused industrial features are important for a sense of place if in abundance. So in the Lancashire Coal Measures the all- pervasiveness of old coal mines was important to people, but not in Arden. Also, whilst coal was an important identity in Lancashire Coal Measures it was also considered by some to be too much of a 'label' and so should not always be the key identifier for the area. Also, there weren't that many buildings to renovate:

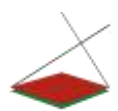
*Sometimes when you come across an old building it can be quite interesting. It might be a derelict old mine working building. When you go to Cornwall you come across loads and loads of the old tin mines and they are so interesting. Or Wales the old castles. You don't want see modern factory or anything. Round here unfortunately they're not building there are all just slag heaps.* Lancashire Coal Measures

In Dark Peak, the old mill sites and heritage buildings made people imagine how life used to be. People were proud of their heritage and of areas like the Tors, a Millennium walkway through the Mills with a suspended bridge above the river and weirs.

*They say the industrial revolution started places like this.* Dark Peak

Industrial features currently in use, such as factories, mines, or extraction sites, were not valued and were regarded as negative in the main. Each NCA would have an example of what people call a 'blot on the landscape'. Negative views could not be compensated by the knowledge that the feature might be producing something useful to mankind or society. Mostly respondents wanted them to be covered up with trees, landscaped or for the owners to make amends by building nature reserves (where this had happened more positive views were expressed).

The most negative sites would be those producing unpleasant smells or fumes perceived to be polluting the environment, ranging from a tarmacadam factory (Lancashire Coal Measures), a concrete factory (Dark Peak) to a chicken farm (Arden).



### Key Comparisons with Phase I

Generally speaking, industrial features are negatively evaluated and give people negative experiences. However, historical industrial features can be important towards generating feelings of heritage. So well-promoted sites of significance to an area can enhance the ability of an NCA to provide the cultural services of history, learning and sense of place.

Credit can be given by the public where the industrial feature is not regarded as romantically significant to an area (such as gravel pits), but where an effort has been made to reduce the negative impacts of its appearance. Where there is access for recreation, or opportunities to experience wildlife, then the landscape experience can be improved. There is also evidence that if an NCA is considered poor at providing opportunities for escape to 'greenery and wildlife' then there is an expectation that redundant sites should be left to 'go natural', albeit within a limited perception of what that means for people.

## 6.14 Historic Features

The setting in which a castle or stately home had been built was often mentioned in people's memories of beautiful places. The landscape around Tintern Abbey, for example, with a river and a gorge would be described as spectacular or the beauty of the feature trees planted in the grounds of an estate, such as cedars of Lebanon. Sometimes such things are valued more for their aesthetic qualities and the feat of craftsmanship/achievement more than for the fact they are historic.

*I admire the work that people have put into something, I put cathedrals, whether or not you are religious, just to see what passion they can create that, and even stately homes ... the mouldings and things, people put these little details in and they don't seem to anymore. Fens*

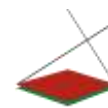
*In Chatsworth, in the 1700, it's got this water fountain and it is quite a feat of engineering right. It is more like a water cannon than a fountain. It's all like on eight levels. It's an achievement. Dark Peak*

People seem to be aware of whether their area has much history or not. They will say 'we don't have much history' here.

*Because this sort of area, I mean, I was just thinking, we don't, sort of, have many things like castles and things like that, do we? You go along to other counties and that, they've have castles and all sorts of... Claylands*

Mostly they are referring to whether or not there are heavily-marketed tourist attractions. But in part they are also referring to whether their area is and was regarded as 'important' ie whether William the Conqueror visited or whether there is an important Roman town or road. Such information can be imparted with a sense of pride.

*I prefer where you can make your own mind up about things rather than going round the rooms with all the furniture and the chairs there. Like Peverell Castle you can go around the Tors and there are all the old mill houses and it reminded me because you used to imagine how its used to be when everyone used to work*



*there. There was only one room with ten people working in there until there was only one person staying there. Dark Peak*

The pattern of settlement can contribute immensely towards whether people are aware of 'having history', so timber-framed housing in villages etc or having a Cathedral City can be important.

#### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

There was more mention in Phase II of 'hard' history (as referred to in the Phase I report) than to 'soft' history. The latter was talked of more by people in the first phase in terms of a recognition that the landscape geology itself was historic.

In Phase II, history in the landscape was considered to be less important than escape to green areas; in the more built-up NCAs there was marked desperation for such places. People seemed to know well where their famous historical places were if they were marketed by national bodies, but it was less obvious to them where the minor historical features were, unless they belong to a society or club. In common with Phase I, people seem to enjoy seeing old ruins and run-down stone cottages and so history doesn't always need to be 'epic' – but also about everyday life as it was in times gone by. For this reason the preservation of small features was considered important to the experiential quality of a place: stone stiles, cobbles, or bridges enable people to imagine how they were made.

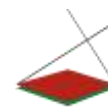
There was also an interest in knowing more about the history of the landscape (information about old mounds, formations in the fields, what previous stood there – as from Time Team investigations. Not enough is currently known about their local places. There were strong indications that there are opportunities to enhance people's experience of the landscape through improved communication (and that people are heavily influenced by TV programmes).

### **6.15 Lanes and Roads**

Lanes and roads can be distinctive of an area especially for the leisure and activities categories. The rural lanes around Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire were used for cycling and positively valued for their flatness, whilst those in the Peak District were valued by motorcyclists for being challenging.

Clearly 'roads' (being perceived as larger than lanes) were negatively evaluated, especially if causing traffic nuisance or a problem in accessing local green areas.

The 'lane' was an indicator of being somewhere rural and relatively remote, often tree-lined in someone's ideal picture – it symbolised a spirit of adventure, a pathway to somewhere unknown or new. It also meant that there was constant stimulation from the landscape around as it changes.





© Countryside Agency - Photographer Ann Seth

*You see interesting things going along lanes and roads. There is more stimulus, more eye candy. Lancashire Coal Measures*

In this vein, people were also extremely positive about footpaths, tracks, trails, towpaths and bridleways.



© Countryside Agency - Photographer Martin Jones

*Lanes and Roads and ways of getting to places. Footpaths and Bridleways, we have got a unique network in this country. That is absolutely marvellous. I take people out on the bridleways riding. They give be a sense of history because it is an old drovers road, they used to drive the cattle down here from Blandford to Wimbourne. They link communities. Dorset Heaths*

### **Key Comparisons with Phase I**

As with Phase I, the idea of being alone on a road/lane was felt to be relaxing compared with normal traffic-bound life. Phase II seemed to put more emphasis on lanes as a means of leisure and activity, perhaps because the sample included more areas with less accessible or attractive open countryside. Even in the Dark Peak the lanes were considered remarkable in their own right as a means of gaining height, as were the small lanes cutting through the countryside in Dorset Heaths. These were also important in Phase I in Devon Redlands and the Yorkshire Wolds as a way of experiencing the landscape.

Lanes have to be perceived to be ancient ways so the extent to which they are sunk into the landscape is important. If they are lined with mature trees, ancient walls or hedges this also contributes towards them having a positive experiential quality. Seeing lanes crossing upland passes provoked images of ancient peoples getting trade through, or ways to market.





## 7. NCA-Specific Findings

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the last of four chapters that report and discuss the key findings that arise from the programme of qualitative research – the focus groups and interviews – that was carried out across the six Phase II character areas.

This particular chapter takes the six character areas in turn and presents the findings of the research that arose in each, relating to:

- general attitudes towards the area
- perceptions of quality, 'condition' and threats
- cultural services.

The opportunity was taken though this research to examine the existing character-area descriptions and the extent to which people thought they were good at describing the area they knew. These findings are also presented here.

### 7.2 Arden

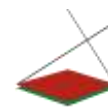
#### General Attitudes towards the Area

Respondents were a good mixture of people who had always lived in the area and those who had moved in many years ago. The main concentration of people was from where the groups were held (in Henley-in-Arden) so people came from there and the surrounding villages. We also interviewed people from other localities within the NCA (the edges of Birmingham, Redditch and Coventry).

Overall, the area was not seen as distinctive in terms of where the boundary falls but the actual 'Arden' part of it was felt to have some consistency and identity to it. Any idea of an overall distinctiveness is diluted by the urban fringes and the further reaches of the boundary.

People mainly valued it for being a comforting and gentle landscape, feeling obviously rural in part but also having great access to strong communities in the villages and towns. The landscape is regarded as quite neat with nothing too 'edgy' or dramatic.

*I think it is, although it is the countryside I still think it is quite, you know, a busy place, I don't think of it as being out in the middle of nowhere countryside. My dad lives in Devon and that's kind of, yes you're plonked somewhere in the middle of nowhere, if you go to Ireland that's four hours to drive to your nearest shop. Here you've got all the facilities, you've got two good sized towns either side of Stratford and got Birmingham only thirty minutes so I sort of see it as we've got some lovely landscape but actually it's not completely.*





*Because none of the hills are particularly harsh, it is all sort of undulation and not massive peaks, it is all quite gentle, you can look for quite a long distance without anything obscuring the view, whereas if you were somewhere more mountainous, you wouldn't be able to see very far.*

*It is everything feels like it is sort of hidden, stuck in a corner, nothing stands out like a sore thumb, everything seems to be .. but we are in a bit of a valley, not much of a valley but it is sort of nestled.*

## **Attitudes towards the Character Description**

Respondents related quite well to the description as it stands especially the following:

- a farmed landscape which is undulating
- winding lanes and isolated hamlets
- many small fields
- different shaped fields, former deer parks and estates
- old wood pasture and large old oak trees.

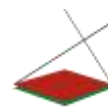
They did not feel there were many large areas of woodland and did not appear to talk about rivers or river valleys as much as they did canals. People made comments that there weren't large areas of water to access, eg lakes across the whole map, although Earlswood lakes were mentioned. Clearly very high ground was felt to be lacking, as was ruggedness, but respondents were used to living 'in the middle' and seemed to have a high propensity to travel to obtain the landscape they wanted (forests, lakes, coast and hills) – all landscapes they regarded as within easy reach. There were also felt to be plenty of vantage points in the general landscape.

The coal mining heritage did not come out as much as other more older types of heritage such as Norman. This more ancient history is quite keenly felt with old churches, estates and barns. Although there was not much real understanding of the 'original Forest of Arden' and perhaps this aspect of the description needs bringing out.

## **Perception of Quality, Condition and Threats**

Respondents felt that the Arden NCA was, on the whole, quite well managed with a strong 'vision' of what it should be like. This related mainly to the areas south of Birmingham. The farmland feel and the oak trees contributed to a varied and beautiful image of old England, with picturesque villages and distinctive architecture. This had also made it a honeypot for millionaires to settle, for film sets and tourists. Despite this, there did not appear to be concerns about population pressures in the countryside.

The northern part of the territory (toward Sutton Coldfield) was thought to be more amorphous, with fewer natural places to access and less character. The major conurbations were felt to be expanding and it was harder and harder to afford somewhere to live on the 'edge' – ie semi-rural.



The main concern was not necessarily the building of housing but, rather, the encroachment of traffic from roads and motorways (the town of Henley-in-Arden suffers badly as a cut-through). There are clearly still villages and hamlets that have a more isolated feel that is valued by residents.

There was also a concern expressed about not having access to woodlands and that, although there were many beautiful trees, there were not many larger woodlands left.

There was a feeling also that 'health and safety' had prevented some sites from being looked after (eg. old quarry sites or climbing rocks). This was felt to be ironic because such sites had become more dangerous as a result, or were now used by 'gangs of youths'.

## **Cultural Services**

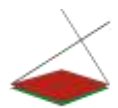
The character area was found to deliver quite strongly on many of the cultural services. It delivers well across the board but doesn't excel as much as an NCA with a more distinctive character.

The most dominant services were calm and relaxation coming from the pastoral scenes and the beauty of some of the villages. The green fields, hedges and mature trees gave an impression of 'typical England' which people found comforting. The gentle undulation of the land was also calming because of its 'prettiness' with lots of patterns (although some of the land towards the north was regarded as too flat and featureless). The location of the NCA being in between cities and large towns meant that the business of the roads was felt to be a detractor to the calmness and peacefulness

As sense of history was also given by old churches and architecture (although some of this came from other parts of Warwickshire eg. Stratford-upon-Avon). There was fairly good sense of place coming both from the wooded pasture and from the built features. Also, there appeared to be an impression of large estate lands with manor houses and well planned landscapes which gave people a sense of place.

The area is quite inspiring and can provide 'spiritual' experiences, but this is more in pockets around the territory rather than being main service. The Arden area was not considered dramatic enough in terms of height or huge views to be highly inspirational and people were accessing other landscape types for this within a catchment of a couple of hours. There were no huge valleys or wide open distant views to be had, the sound of rushing waterfalls, rocky crags or rugged features all which tend to have higher spiritual/inspirational capabilities.

Again, leisure and activities are also quite strong but people sought out other types of terrain for more strenuous or off-road experiences, such as Forestry Commission sites outside of the NCA. The absence of coast or large stretches of water detracted from the NCAs ability to deliver this in abundance and the lanes and roads were considered to have more traffic than was conducive towards a lot of cycling. This would relate mainly towards the leisure activities of younger people ie quite active. For children there was felt to be a few good woodland walks areas and more gentle activities to be had.



### 7.3 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands

#### General Attitudes towards the Area

The sample was drawn mainly from St Neots and from several of the villages around the town itself.

The NCA was not regarded as having a strong identity associated with the boundary as shown. There was a strong affinity with the rivers, lakes and the nature reserves, which act as a redeeming quality for the area which is otherwise regarded as uninspiring and monotonous. The large arable fields and lack of features formed this opinion, although there were villages and places of isolation that felt far away from the towns.

*When I said, like, features, that's what I meant, because there aren't any features, are there? There aren't big woods or trees, it's just open fields basically around this area. There are a few little hills, but mainly it's flat and it is featureless, apart from the river really. I do a cycling. I cycle around the areas, you know and there's not much woodland at all really. You've got Little Paxton woods, which is closed all year round, it's only open once a year, but mainly it's very featureless, but there's quite a lot of nature. There's quite a lot of deer...*

*It's a bit featureless. It needs some more large wooded areas, but the benefits are we have got some nice rivers and lakes.*

Some people thought the flatness of the land was depressing but they recognised the value of the agricultural fields for livelihoods and food production. Also on the positive side were the small country lanes that bordered fields because they were a source of activity as a result of the flatness of the area (eg cycling and rural driving as a form of escapism). Other strengths were considered to be the fishing opportunities and the high quality of the birdwatching sites. The main barrier towards a feeling of tranquillity came from the motorway corridors and the general encroachment of traffic.

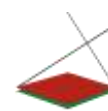
#### Attitudes toward the Character Description

Respondents thought the character description was not very positive, although they recognised many of the itemised points.

Certainly, the main points they related to were:

- the corridors of the Great River Ouse.
- arable land
- on the whole they thought the land was flatter than described and they were unaware of the archaeology of the area.

They would have wanted something in about the regenerated old gravel pit sites, such as Graffham Water and Paxton Pits, the nature/wildlife in the area and, possibly, the canals.



## Perceptions of Quality, Condition, Threats

The land was regarded as prime land for building as part of the expansion of commuter belts. It was felt this would continue to its detriment. People thought that the large scale arable fields were becoming more prevalent, rendering the look of the countryside more monotonous and less useful for people to experience themselves.

The lack of hedges and trees was felt to be an issue, making the countryside more unattractive. In general there was thought to be more that could be done to give the land definition where it does undulate.

*I don't think we have to go too far out of town really to find some nice places to walk, but my bee sting is the way agriculture has gone really. We've all got this ideal thing, haven't we, that we'd like to picture nice little fields and cows grazing and stuff like that, like it was when I was a kid, but I don't suppose it will ever come back. That's what I'd long for, I think*

*I would say the restoration of more hedgerows, we certainly need more trees and wooded areas in the area and with that comes nature and wildlife. If you provide a home and a habitat for them, they'll come and less houses being built and less roads being built.*

There was recognition that some excellent work had been conducted in bringing back quarries and old pits for nature and recreational use. The rivers and canals were also strongly relied upon and identified with locally. Here they were regarded as being in good condition for people to use and for wildlife to be encouraged.

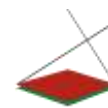
## Cultural Services

The area did not appear to provide all the cultural services strongly because it was not felt to contain enough variation of landscape and was predominantly flat with little landcover. Some of the land was considered to be a little unusable in the form of arable fields. However, being regarded as 'a bit of a backwater' was valued by some. There was a strong allegiance toward Cambridge, Norfolk and the coast there,

It seemed to perform quite well for leisure and activities although many people were travelling elsewhere in addition. The lakes, rivers and quite, flat lanes enabled people to cycle along towpaths and use nature reserves. These, many reclaimed sites, compensated for the lack of interest in the landscape itself.

There were areas (by lakes and rivers) to escape from the towns and the motorways so it did quite well here, and the farmland and bird life contributed to a calming element but the intrusion of the A1 was frequently mentioned as affecting tranquillity. Also, there were affordable villages to live in which enabled a feeling of escape and there we not large cities affecting the sense of ruralness.

There was a relatively low sense of history or sense of place. People rarely mentioned historical features or architecture of the 'vibes' created by spiritual or ancient places. The landscape did not tie in with the area in terms of a unique identity as such compared with surrounding areas. some of the NCA was regarded as very new, commuter belt territory



eg. Milton Keynes.

The area was undistinctive in its flatness. Some people, if interested, gained inspiration from birdwatching or fishing – but on a more widespread basis the landscape was not considered to engender inspiration because there were few opportunities to gain height. There was less affinity with the landscape generally than in other NCAs as reflected in the language used eg fewer descriptors, special places tended to be chosen outside of the NCAs, people finding difficult in links landscape to emotions etc.

## 7.4 Fens

### General Attitudes towards the Area

Respondents were mainly from in and around Wisbech (where the groups were held) and March. Interviews were held in the North (Spalding) and in the South (Ely) of the NCA.

The landscape was considered to be very rural and the rivers and watery dykes were valued. Respondents had conflicted attitudes toward the Fenland, verging on love-hate. Whilst there were real exponents of the landscape, there were people who saw many negatives and people who had hated it at first and then had been won over. It was therefore quite a challenging landscape and very distinctive in its flatness. Rather than being boringly flat, it was almost 'more than flat'. The flatness is punctuated and accentuated by planting, reedbeds and dykes. Although the fields aren't really useable, people felt 'elevated' from them as they looked down from the dykes and raised roads.

There was a great focus, therefore, on the skies and the 'value of nothingness!' This provoked inspiration almost in a philosophical, existential sense. Some respondents thought it made them focus on themselves and come to terms with 'self', whilst others found the absence of features difficult to cope with as it could make them feel 'lonely'.

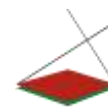
People found that escaping to the coast was important for them and links with the Norfolk coastline were part of the general consciousness. The few treasured woodlands were highly sought after.

It was not talked about as an exciting or iconic area but certainly tranquil and thought-provoking. Again, fishing and watery activities were prevalent and the areas around Ely were regarded as beautiful, though more for the town and its position as contrast in the landscape.

The various nature reserves were valued, although there a view expressed (Ely) that this brought too many people in from the towns, who didn't respect the countryside, left litter and had picnics!

The productivity of the land, with warehousing and vegetable companies, was considered to be a proud feature of the NCA.

On the whole, there was awareness that the landscape was entirely man-made and managed, although some people did not have knowledge about the land having been



drained originally. There was knowledge amongst a few about coastal erosion, land rewilding policies and fen-style recreation projects, but only amongst people who were more knowledgeable (eg. belonging to the WWT ).

It was thought that planting more trees and allowing some areas to be more natural would benefit the look of the land. However, they thought this conflicted with the productivity of the land and the need for Britain to be more self-sufficient in food. Their area was regarded being best placed to provide this.

There was not much talk of building and traffic though people seemed resigned to waiting for a long time on the long straight roads due to freight from the East Anglian ports. Apart from Ely, there was some criticism of the state of the towns, although the Georgian architecture was appreciated.

The landscape was considered to be very open to the elements and the seasons, making people quite affected by the weather and in tune with nature. The wind, in particular, was mentioned as a key characteristic of the landscape experience in the area.

### **Attitudes towards the Character Description**

Overall, the description was seen to be very good, although sometimes too technical for people to relate to. Although there was not a great deal of knowledge about the different types of Fen amongst younger people and the lower socio-economic groupings, the upper socio-economic groups were more informed about the issues surrounding land management of the Fens.

People related to and valued most strongly:

- large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive views to level horizons and huge skies
- watercourses from larger rivers and drains to smaller ditches are a strong influences on the landscape throughout the area
- large buildings are a strong influence on the area, ranging from historic cathedrals and churches, like Ely and Boston to large agricultural and industrial structures. Georgian brick houses
- archaeology
- agricultural 'clutter'
- wooded shelter belts including poplar and willow.

### **Perceptions of Quality, Condition, Threats**

The Fenland was thought to be very well protected and nurtured, therefore there was felt to be little to threaten it. People thought that they were well protected from flooding because the land was designed to take away water. They did not feel very threatened by the idea that the sea was encroaching.

Overall there was felt to be a bit of a conflict between the productivity of the land, which people valued, and the amount of accessible woodland or land.





*It would be nice if there was some woodlands though because this area's so flat, a lot of flat land.*

*Yes, there should be some, a certain amount let to go wild because it's just so much farmland around here it's just flat and farmland wherever you look.*

*I always feel that the Fens is essentially land that should be managed and be productive but I think there's room for (unclear) but it is basically arable land.*

The rivers and waterways were thought to be a key distinctive feature and there was some concern expressed about how they were being managed. Issues that were mentioned included water quality being affected by agricultural practices and whether there was enough for fish and other wildlife to flourish.

## **Cultural Services**

The area is perceived to be highly distinctive and delivers very strong calming and tranquillity benefits coming from the 'big skies'. It does not seem to be the landscape itself that delivers 'calm' for everybody (in the sense of being a comforting landscape) because it was regarded as unyielding and 'bleak' especially in winter.

There was also quite a strong sense of identity linked to the landscape, coming as much from the productive land as from natural Fen. Also contributing strongly towards the sense of identity was the architecture in distinctive towns, especially Ely and the Cathedrals elsewhere.

There is a certain ethereal quality that emerges from this landscape that taps into the contemplative side of human beings. This can result in a certain philosophical nature that may verge on the 'spiritual' cultural service.

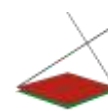
Its ability to deliver all the cultural services is hampered by its flatness and in some respects the 'absence of landscape features'. The agricultural land and waterways can render the landscape a little inaccessible and therefore man's interaction with it can be minimal. For this reason it could be seen as not so good for activities for families and young people all year round. More mature audiences were able to find pleasure from the wildlife and nature walks. The useability and aesthetic quality of the land is improved in spring and summer, whilst winter can make a huge difference on the character of the area.

## **7.5 The Dark Peak**

### **General Attitudes towards the Area**

The sample was well spread in terms of age, socio-economic grouping and length of time in the area. Most respondents were from New Mills, the main town in the Dark Peak.

The area had a very strong sense of identity, though this extended to much of the Peak



District. There was good awareness of the difference between Dark Peak and White Peak, but people were often referred to the 'Peak District' or 'Derbyshire'. There was a high level of affection for the surrounding landscape, which was valued and well used. Respondents were protective and proud of the landscape and thought it had deserved iconic status in England. In their view, it was the best landscape in England, 'end of story!'

The landscape satisfied most people because the valleys and villages were used by those who wanted a more sedate experience, whilst others (the more adventurous) could use the tops/peaks of the upland areas. If a person did not like (or felt threatened by) the peaks or being on the tops, they were still thrilled by looking at them from the valleys. There are also many trails and flatter reservoir walks to be used in winter. Overall, the landscape was a part of people and they were passionate about it.

*I appreciate living here. I love getting up in the morning opening the curtains and seeing the view down the valley and it is different every day it changes colour and you can see Kinder and you might see snow on top. It's fantastic.*

### **Attitudes towards the Character Descriptions**

Participants had most affinity, from the descriptions, with:

- vast high plateau sharply defined with dramatic character. Gritstone rock ridges and edges and long open views
- major valleys with coniferous woodland and reservoirs
- dispersed buildings and settlements with a solid and durable architectural style.

Respondents were less aware of the bogs and moorland stretches on the tops, but they loved rocky crags and the grandeur of the landscape, the wide-open views.

There was felt to be more that could be said about the industrial heritage, the pretty villages and the cave sites.

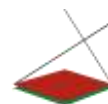
People also wanted iconic places mentioned, such as Kinder Scout, Mam Tor, Kirber Edge or the Pennine Way.

*I did a rally a few years ago along the Pennine Way and we went as far as Hadrian Wall. We start at Edale up Snake Pass. It is over three days. You are away from the crowds. It is brilliant. We get away from all the hassle.*

*Kirber Edge I absolutely love rocks and crags. The wind in your face. Forced fresh air. You always get that here.*

### **Perceptions of Quality, Condition, Threats**

Overall, people believed the landscape to be well managed by the National Park. And they felt it was well promoted.



*It is sometimes about the degree of management. A lot of people say the Lake District National Park is the best but personally I think a lot of the LD is too manicured. The Peak District and the Yorkshire Moors are better for me more wild and rugged. The Dark Peak especially has not been tamed and there is a wildness. I was an assessor for the Duke of Edinburgh and it lives in my mind. It is still planned probably as meticulously as another Park but it retains its ruggedness.*

They did consider there to be a threat from tourism and traffic, for example the numerous tourist buses and through traffic on the 'cut-through' roads between Sheffield and Manchester, the Woodhead Pass. The ability to access some beauty spots in high summer was limited and locals had adapted their behaviour to avoid this by seeking out other remoter places, or only going to certain spots in winter. Nevertheless, they were also very positive about the excellent funding for tourist attractions, railway walks and trails, caves and restored mills.

Encroachment of housing development was not considered to be a problem. The proximity of large conurbations was felt to be a source of pride (how lucky they are to have this on their doorstep).

## **Cultural Services**

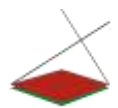
This area was perceived to be quite uniform and have a strong character, it performed well on many of the cultural services owing to its variation and well set up walkways, the ability to see beautiful views and the landscape having a strong impact on people. The lyricism of the language used to describe the NCA was evidently different and more prevalent than in other areas. Although there was a hardness which sometimes prevented them from admitting to 'feeling spiritual' for example

There was a strong sense of identity and history coming from the cliffs and crags and industrial past. The industrial sites are well marketed and used as tourist attractions. There are unique sites giving identity, such as the Blue John mines and then also very distinctive towns and villages. People felt their identity was key and linked to their location, which is a more northern trait but it was linked to the landscape especially with people rarely able to pick a special place outside of the NCA .

An inspirational landscape with some spirituality afforded by the drama of the horizon and individual rocks, pinnacles or crags. Also the river gorges and valley trails.

There were lots of opportunities for activity and leisure, "you can choose the tops or the valleys!" . This landscape can be experienced by sitting at home or being in the towns because it is so high, you are always aware of it. Therefore, 'usage' doesn't matter sometimes. It delivers benefits anyway without always needing to be accessible. Leisure and activities also afforded by man-made sites such as the reservoirs.

Although for some being out in the open, natural landscape was quite calming, for others, especially if considering the peaks, it was an awesome and brooding landscape. So it was



often not thought to be a calming landscape, partly because of the level of exposure to the elements given but also because it makes you pay attention to it, to sit up and listen; more stimulating than relaxing in itself.

The opportunities for escape were immense and people felt very in tune with the landscape around them, whether driving through it or walking on it. The ability to immediately felt 'away from it all' was remarkable and one of the first benefits mentioned about living in the area. The ability to be immediately 'out in the open' whilst so close to very large cities was thought to be amazing. And as a 'destination' spot mentioned in many other NCAs it is clearly highly visited for the same cultural service around the country. As a national park it should be well-known and this seems to contribute towards local pride.



## 7.6 Dorset Heaths

### General Attitudes towards the Area

The sample was well spread across the area. Most people were in the mid or latter stages of their working lives, or were retired but very active. Two people mentioned that they had young children. Over half the sample were actively involved in one or more activities such as walking, cycling, riding, sailing, farming, photography, or wildlife, and thus had direct experiences and insights relating to the topics discussed. Many of the participants were passionate about the landscape in general and the Dorset heaths area, and many explained how it was an integral part of their lives.

There was great passion and strong commitment to the area, its quality of experiences and the diversity it offered. Many people remarked on how much they appreciated it once they returned from elsewhere. The range of positive comments included:

*This area has probably got everything you'd want.*

*We're honoured to have such diverse seascapes, heathland, forest - everything on our doorstep. It's very valuable that we can all get out and be close to nature.*

*I'd be lost if I moved from the area – it's just so fantastic.*

*I just love heathland – before I came to Dorset I'd never experienced heathland*

*The openness – you can see the weather changing.*

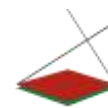
Mountains were the only one main characteristic widely felt to be missing from the area and that could only be experienced elsewhere, but people recognised that their local landscape couldn't have everything. Thus the majestic sense of high mountains was seen as something the area could not offer, although people felt they could still get a sense of elevation and of long views on some of the higher heathlands, where you could still feel "on top of the world".

People said "how lucky we are" and "keep it a secret".

### Attitudes towards the Character Description

While heathlands themselves are very apparent in the area, the geographical scope of the character area did not appear distinct to people. Some people also related to the New Forest ("The forest") as well, especially given that it is immediately adjacent and has similar expanses of heathland and pine woodland. In the south west of the character area the coast was also a blurred boundary to people.

Most people could relate strongly to specific stretches of heathland, either as places to experience directly, or as places to view upon, or as places to get views and vantage points from.



Although the location is termed 'Dorset heaths', the whole area contains much more than heathland, as reflected in the character descriptions. Thus naming an area with a dominant landscape and habitat type can result in a confusing label for some people.

The coast, perhaps because of its variety and its accessibility across the location, came across strongly as a valued and a well used feature, and a place that is seen as different from the heathland, although there is much heathland alongside large stretches of it.

Nobody challenged the specific character descriptions, although at least two people suggested that the wildlife value of the heathland should be made more specific.

There was a comment on how dry descriptions of an area in neutral-sounding text can be:

*The words [of the description] are fine, but the photos say it all.*

### **Perceptions of Quality, Condition, Threats**

The area was widely regarded as "unspoilt" and it was noted that Dorset is "the county without a motorway". However, residential development has been a major trend affecting the area of late, with much new suburban development in the past two decades especially, and some of this has been on and close to heathland and has been highly controversial. This was reflected in several people's comments, and people thought it was a spectre that could return with an economic revival.

The only other negative influence, and mentioned by two people, was the impact of quarrying, both for its immediate effect on the landscape and for its heavy-haulage traffic impacts.

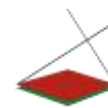
Striking the right balance for heathland management was seen as a challenge by several participants, and several of these people had different perspectives, depending on their particular interests and uses of heathland. Thus horse riders tended to want fewer restrictions and the type of grazing was important to them, while people with a wildlife interest were concerned about the best grazing regimes to manage the heath vegetation, and tighter controls on dogs to be on leads to avoid disturbance of sensitive wildlife. Comments on heathland management included:

*You need the mosaic of gorse and heather for wildlife – you need variation.*

There was a consensus that farming was changing in the area and that new farm enterprises, including leisure facilities, and hosting light industries, was essential to allow farms to stay viable.

There was wide recognition of the importance of villages as an integral part of the landscape and that they were, like the rest of the landscape, constantly changing, although mainly for the worse as they lost their services.

*Each village seems to have a character of its own and a life of its own.*





*They're not living villages like they should be in rural Dorset.*

## **Cultural Services**

A very full and wide range of cultural services was expressed by people throughout the comments and conversations. This impressive array of benefits from the landscape equated to the wide range of landscape types and experiences people felt the area offered, from the coast through to the inland heaths.

Thus inland, the lanes and roads, bridleways and footpaths were appreciated for their link between communities and their sense of history. Historic buildings and remains inland and at the coast, and iron-age features in the heaths were seen as offering a tantalising glimpse of history.

Spiritual benefits were not expressed very specifically but several comments implied the spiritual power from the sense of elevation on higher heaths, and the ancient artefacts and historic remains such as Bradbury Rings, Corfe Castle and Hengistbury Head.

People felt there were great opportunities to be active across the area, in various informal recreational pursuits such as riding, walking, cycling fishing and sailing, and the varied coastline, and Poole harbour, offered much in this way as well.

Learning from the land and its wildlife was something enjoyed by several people, who expressed interest in exploring things and subjects they encountered when out in the landscape.

'Tranquillity', 'Relaxing', 'Peaceful', 'Peace and solitude', and a 'sense of freedom' were all frequently and fully expressed by people.

*We are at peace with the area – it's a relaxing area.*

Much of the landscape, and especially the heathland areas, was regarded as inspirational in its appeal. The large stretches of undeveloped and unspoilt landscapes in the area also contributed to this and were remarked upon. Comments included:

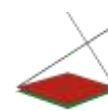
*I marvel at the open space and beauty.*

*I get a feeling of exhilaration from walking across heathland.*

Several people emphasised the ability to switch off and re-charge from the landscape, and it was seen as an important tonic to some people:

*I need 10 minutes every day to just stop and look at the view.*

*I spend at least two hours every day in the heathland and forest because I have to – I just have to. I contemplate. I can make clearer decisions, it helps me think.*



## 7.7 Lancashire Coal Measures

### General Attitudes towards the Area

Respondents were a mixture of 'born and bred' and people who had upgraded to the area from central Liverpool for a quieter life. Those who had chosen to live there were more positive than those who had lived there all their lives – these latter were quite negative.

There was not considered to be much countryside in the area but there were some green fields, regenerated pit sites and the 'flashes' (small lakes created from pit subsidence) that people valued. As a result, the quiet places were at a premium and well used by lots of different people and it was therefore hard to really get away from it all. People were using canal walks to escape traffic and get out of the towns.

Many of the treasured places were country parks or recreation areas and had well-known local names such as the Pit Bonk, Haigh Hall, the Three sisters, Keepers Lodge, Pennington Flash, Rivington Pike (respondents related to the latter as their closest high place but it is, in fact, just outside the area).

People thought they lived in a good location to access some really dramatic places, such as the Lakes, North Wales and the Pennines. This made them have quite a strong affinity for open landscape, though they weren't necessarily getting that from the NCA itself.

### Attitudes towards the Character Descriptions

The NCA description was criticised as being overly negative about the area, even given their own negative opinion. Some respondents thought it must have been 'written by a southerner in an office who's never been here'. Others said it made them more depressed than they already were about the look of the place. Partly the terminology wasn't helpful, such as 'degraded', 'derelict' and 'landfill land'. Some respondents became defensive and said there was a lot more to the area than was described. It was felt to be described as wasteland.

*It's not a very positive description is it, degraded land, doesn't make you want to be here*

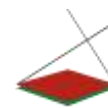
*Mind you coming home when you hit junction 17 going north you just think OH GOD are we nearly home?*

*Southern people still think there's not countryside here (in Lancashire) and we're still living in slag heaps, even now they think that. There is quite a lot of greenery around.*

*We do struggle for fresh countryside here though.*

There was therefore not much that they related to in the description.

### Perceptions of Quality, Condition, Threats



Respondents recognised that the landscape wasn't particularly beautiful but that a lot had been done and spent to improve areas of old mine workings – that there was less 'derelict' land and that nature had been carefully allowed to take over. There was also much mentioned of the good management of some sites, with footpath and signposts in parks and on canals and 'the flashes'. Although there was still a lot of negativity about the landscape, it was felt to have improved enormously in recent years compared to how it used to look over ten years ago.

Although there was support for commemorative plaques and the like (pit disaster memorial) some disputed the need to make a feature of all the old colliery sites in term of industrial heritage, saying that this was an old-stereotype and that they had moved on. In contrast, converting them for recreational use was considered important and vital to the success of the area. The use of old slag heaps gave much valued opportunities to gain height which was considered to be otherwise lacking. Similarly, the improvement of old pit sites by making them into nature reserves was regarded as positive (people imagined planting of reeds, trees and hedgerows). There were thought to be many more opportunities for this to continue so that the landscape would look even more green and 'natural' looking in years to come.

There was not thought to be much woodland and where there was an isolated 'copse' it was always 'in demand' and so could end up being used by 'gangs' for drinking etc. People therefore wanted more tree planting and felt that too many had been cut down in recent years. People referred to the need for more 'green' both inside and outside of the towns. Even the loss of small trees and grassy banks in residential areas could be criticised.

The threat of new housing development was mentioned quite strongly and also some 'conflicting practices' with regard to protecting local historic architecture (stories of listed buildings being flattened for the building of flats) It was felt that the minimal green spaces would soon disappear.

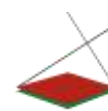
Younger people, however, thought differently about new housing saying, for example, that some rows of old pit workers cottages should be flattened because they held a stigma and were considered to encourage deprivation.

Overall there was a feeling that the area had been through difficult times and was definitely on the rise, so people were optimistic about how the open landscape could be improved. There was also much commentary on how the townscapes could be improved.

## **Cultural Services**

The NCA was not a strong performer in delivering cultural services which was largely due to the amount of population there and the pattern of urban development.

There were considered to be some places to escape out into the open but not many. Some people were lucky enough to live on the edge of a place and were able to walk down lanes through field but there were not many 'secret places' that people could mention or talk



about, such as woodlands or hills.

There were some rural areas eg mainly farmland/fields and hedges giving a sense of calm and the stretches of water (flashes) were also helpful in this respect, especially when they were nature reserves, eg Scotsman's flash. Also, despite there being many areas of population people thought it was relatively quiet outside of these places compared to Liverpool or Manchester. The traffic level weren't too bad on the back roads, so it could be more relaxing than the outskirts of cities relatively.

There were considered to be very few special, inspirational or spiritual places, largely due to the lack of dramatic topography and low aesthetic appeal. People were more drawn to nearby iconic places, such as the Peak District, Wales and the Lakes. Needless to say at the time of the fieldwork, everything looked spectacular in deep snow and people were keen to promote and talk about the few green spaces that they have, whilst recognising they aren't particularly beautiful

*Anything looks good in the snow!*

There were good opportunities for recreation and walking, for example along canals and in parks, but not much by way of places to visit in 'the countryside' with a feeling of wildness.

*We don't have much countryside.*

What was available was well-organised and signposted with good parking. These more organised green areas were considered valuable. It may also be that more promotion is required to encourage people to use and know about nature trails when they perceived the NCA to be over-crowded with building. We found that people focussed in even more at the micro-level so individual hedges and trees being important.

There was a fairly good sense of history being delivered by the mining past and some old halls, Wigan Pier, Haigh Hall etc and also a strong sense of identity. Some of this can be said to be being delivered by the features created by mining, now part of the landscape, such as old slag heaps (three sisters). Natural features were not driving this as much as a general sense of pride in the area and an expressed need for the landscape to improved in ways which have already begun to help. There was also a split in views about the mining heritage with some people wanting to project a different kind of image and feeling that the area had moved on from those days a long time ago and people who still felt defined by it. So for some people the historical side was not important.



## 8. Other Issues

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines briefly the other issues that the study team was asked the address during this phase of research. These issues are: the perception of cultural services in relation to other **ecosystem services** that landscapes provide; and the cultural services provided by different types of **coastal landscape**. It only touches the very surface of these issues and further focused research, particularly on the experiential qualities and perceptions related to landscape functions, would be required to gain a fuller understanding.

### 8.2 Landscape Function

Outwith the cultural services, the study team was asked to look briefly at people's perceptions of the provisioning and regulating aspects of eco-system services and how they might contribute to experiential qualities. There was very little time spent on this huge area and so the findings should only be regarded as a 'snapshot' of people's opinions.

These were found to be services that relate to the rational and therefore tended to rely on having knowledge – they rely on using a landscape. There was little cross over with cultural services that are delivered on an emotional level rather than delivering some sort of 'physical output'.

*Its function is in providing recreation and the conservation of wildlife as much for our own benefit as for the wildlife.*

### Provisioning Services

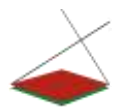
#### FOOD

Respondents related quite strongly to the production of food and had views about the loss of British products due to food being imported. On the whole, people wanted Britain to become more self-sufficient. The Fens and the Claylands NCAs were believed to be best placed to provide this for people, since their landscape had already been transformed to provide food. People could not stand to see fields not being productive, but they saw both grazing and arable as being important. Unfortunately, the look of arable land, with its large fields, provides fewer cultural services.

*We like the beauty of it but we also want food production so it's case of marrying the two.*

*We can't do without it!*

The upsurge in the local food movement, and the need to see the provenance of food, had raised awareness; seeing food crops growing can be valued. It was perceived to be part of



'going back to our roots' and an ancient way of life. There was also felt to be plenty of redundant land from set-aside and from farmers going out of business that could be brought back into use. The loss of productive land incensed many of the older generation.

*A lot of the things we buy now have the farmers name on it because of the farmers market.*

*A lot of the cattle is turning around now they've come back the old breeds because people have got a taste for it.*

## TIMBER

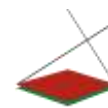
Productive woodland, often coniferous woodland, was sometimes considered to be ugly, although the fact that it was producing something (timber for jobs) was a mitigating factor. The management of mixed, natural woodland was liked – but not considered productive. There were a few comments about the importance of woodland now for the production of wood for people's home fires and wood-burning methods of heating.

*We were up Grisedale and they've just cut it and it looks awful. They can ruin it the Forestry Commission. I know it is a business but you'd think they could do it better than that. There's no oak trees you know like the old English. They're just pines aren't they?*

## FUEL/ENERGY

The use of biomass was not widely understood (although people mentioned rapeseed as being a crop used in fuel – the look of rapeseed was divisive, with some people thinking it was nice and others not). People would need to be educated about such issues, but generically they seem to be quite positive about 'self-sufficiency' and farmers diversifying to make a living.

A key function of the landscape was thought to be recreation and the various cultural services being discussed. On the whole, the services provided by land that were not 'directly' experienced required a more rational thought process than many were able to tap into. A working coal mine or a factory producing fuel would only be positively valued for the jobs created and not for the benefits of what it produced, because it could be seen to 'scar' the landscape. The emotional benefits being discussed in the context of cultural services did not allow for any other analysis from them. If anything, the more distinctive and beautiful landscapes that provide many cultural services were not the places to have this kind of production. They might say that an area that was not particularly pleasing, but was nevertheless productive, did have a redeeming quality. We did not have any areas with hydro-electric power.





## Regulating Services

### CLIMATE REGULATION

Woodland provided many cultural services, especially if considered to be mixed and natural. People mainly valued woodland for personal benefit, such as an increase in aesthetic appeal, variety, recreation, wildlife benefits etc.

Most people, when asked, were aware of a tree's role in regulating air quality from what they know about the rainforests in South America. They certainly did not agree with cutting trees down and generally want more planted (although with some provisos). However, their perception of these main benefits from woodland were not related to this country. People at the time of doing the research did not spontaneously associate British woodland with its help to the environment. So currently this function does not enhance their experiential benefits.

So, despite the fact that the principal of carbon storage in this country was not commonly talked about at the time of the research, it would not take much to help people make the connection. There would need to be some awareness-raising about the issues and then people would be able to value it. This issue would need a more in-depth exploration.

There was one respondent who felt that green spaces were helping to reduce our carbon footprint as a country:

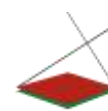
*It is partly producing climate control all that greenery is soaking up carbon dioxide and if it does that for us. If we do away with it we are going to make it worse.*

### FLOOD ALLEVIATION

On flood prevention, there was much anger at what is perceived to be a lack of strategic thinking in releasing land for building. Whilst most people aren't really aware of the role of bogs or wetlands, they just think all land (such as fields) performs that function and so can't relate to it being concreted over. It seems obvious to them that open countryside absorbs and drains water. The clearance of rivers to ensure safe passage of water was valued.

There was an emerging awareness about these issues at the time of the research and it would take little to promote wetlands and bogs as being important in this respect. In the Fens they were proud that the fens were not going to flood because they had been designed that way. But in the neighbouring Claylands they wanted the Fenland to be flooded again so that their own area would not be flooded.

On the whole there was little awareness of coastal flood alleviation and discussion of the subject can be alarming for some people without having more detailed information to hand.



## WATER QUALITY

We did not spontaneously get any comment about the landscape providing fresh water, apart from the joy expressed in being able to drink water directly from a spring in an upland or mountainous area.

### 8.3 Coast

In Phase II additional questions were asked about the cultural services in relation to coastal landscapes. A limited amount of time was spent on this subject and some basic findings can be provided here.

The sample NCAs in Phase II did not include those with much coast (5% in the Fens and 9% in Dorset Heaths, the others being land-locked). Yet people strongly related to the coast wherever they were – almost like a national 'sense of place' (only in the Dark Peak was this less evident).

Coast seems to be part of the national psyche and an important touchstone for people. It seems to embody many of the cultural services: escape, leisure, activities, and inspiration.

An NCA which performs poorly in terms of delivering cultural services in its hinterland can be immediately enhanced by having its own coastline. It can also benefit significantly from having one nearby. It is difficult for people to divorce their relationship with their immediate coastline from the NCA in question (especially in Dorset Heaths).

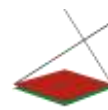
Any coast, if accessible, will contain the cultural services associated with water. It also seems to broadly follow the findings with regard to height, rockiness and greenery.

People tend to talk about beaches rather than the coastline a lot of the time. And then they talk about the experience of the sea, rather than of the coastal landscape. As soon as a piece of coastline doesn't have a beach it loses some of its ability to provide cultural services. Although if there isn't a beach, coast will provide cultural services if there is a coastal path or an accessible headland upon which to sit and survey the sea. The curve of the coastline is also important, as this increases the ability to view it and makes it relevant to people. The presence of cliffs or height was therefore positively evaluated. And rugged coast was highly valued too, whilst mudflats and salt marshes were not – unless they had a coastal path or a beach linked to them.

Man-made features were not always negatively valued, as the coastal towns can be a key attraction and improve accessibility – plus they evoke childhood memories. Fishing villages were also desirable and the element of discovery of finding oneself in a 'secret' cove was considered special.

Iconic places such as Cornwall, Pembrokeshire, the Jurassic Coast, the Great Orme were all mentioned. Other places mentioned were the Norfolk beaches, Holy Island, Skegness, Southport, the Anthony Gormley statues, Blackpool, and the White Cliffs of Dover.

The coast performs better at providing cultural services if it includes beaches, height,



**ruggedness, a coastal path; and less well if it includes mudflats and salt marshes alone.**



## 9. Discussion of Findings From Phase II

### 9.1 Introduction

Three final chapters draw together the findings from this Phase II study and from the earlier Phase I study:

- Chapter 9 explores and discusses the findings from this Phase II work and compares them with Phase I
- Chapter 10 considers the broader context within which these two phases of work have been undertaken, especially with the rising interest in cultural services more generally, stimulated by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the ongoing UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA). It goes on to compare and contrast the key findings from Phases I and II, drawing out key policy lessons
- Chapter 11 concludes this work by considering whether the findings from Phases I and II of this study can be used to attribute those cultural services likely to be provided by other National Character Areas (NCAs) or groupings of NCAs.

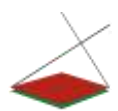
The six Phase II National Character Areas (NCAs) were specifically selected to supplement the Phase I NCAs to represent the 18 landscape types identified in the Fine-grained landscape typology developed in 2005 (see Figure 10.1 and Table 10.6 of the Phase I report). One NCA was selected to represent each landscape type, spread across the Phase I and Phase II studies (with the exception of rugged coast and estuary types that were covered by selecting some NCAs that also had a significant coastline or estuary).

As a consequence of this selection, the Phase II NCAs tended to be of two very different types: two had a strong semi-natural character – the Dark Peak (in the Peak District) and the Dorset Heaths; and four had a modified to highly modified character as a result of:

- major mineral extraction: the Lancashire Coal Measures and the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Lowlands;
- drainage and agriculture: the Fens;
- urban expansion: Arden (which lies to the South West of Birmingham).

Indeed, of these four NCAs, all have been significantly affected by urban pressures other than the Fens. The more 'mundane' character of these latter four NCAs (when compared to the Phase I NCAs) is reflected in the general perceptions of those interviewed during Phase II and will be picked up through the following summaries and discussions.

Given these differences it is perhaps surprising that there is such strong correlation between the Phase I and Phase II findings. Indeed Phase II has served to corroborate the conclusions of the Phase I report, providing further illustration and verification and local refinement.



## 9.2 Definitions

As in the Phase I study, the definition of landscape has been taken from the European Landscape Convention (ELC):

*“an area as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors.”*

Other definitions used in this Phase II study have been the same as those used in Phase I to ensure consistency. Further discussion of these definitions is provided in section 10.2 of the Phase I report and is picked up again at the beginning of the next chapter.

## 9.3 The Cultural Services Delivered by Landscape

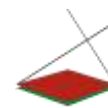
As already noted earlier in Chapter 5, Phase II of this study has explored the same cultural services used in the Phase I study:

- understanding of the past (cultural heritage values)
- identity / sense of place / feelings of 'being at home'
- inspiration
- escapism / 'getting away from it all'
- relaxation / tranquillity / peace and quiet
- spiritual values
- learning and education
- leisure and recreation.

In both the Phase I and Phase II studies, this list of cultural services has been used to provide a starting point, prompt and framework for the discussions with participants. It was certainly never seen as a definitive list and was based on a review of both the cultural services identified through the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and of the results of past studies in the UK into the services/benefits provided by England's landscapes.

Overall, as illustrated by **Table 9.1**, there is strong commonality in the findings of Phases I and II on the nature of cultural services provided by England's landscapes. As has been outlined in Chapter 4, these cultural services can potentially be grouped into three:

1. the 'nuts and bolts' services (such as leisure and activities, sense of place, sense of history and learning) that rely on quite structured organised landscapes, that are relatively easy to find and appeal to the more rational and physical aspects of people. They are well communicated, more easily delivered and more appealing to younger people and families
2. the more unstructured and slightly more self-generated services (such as 'escape' and 'calming') that deliver on a more emotional level and are extremely important for people's well-being
3. the more special and unusual experiences ('inspiration' and 'spirituality') that occur only seldom and in specific situations for many people.



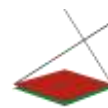
Looking at these three levels in a bit more detail, it is interesting that under the '**nuts and bolts' services**', a 'good' landscape experience was not seen as dependent on having experienced a sense of history<sup>5</sup> – a 'good' landscape is more associated with the natural 'green' elements of the landscape and with water. Yet the historic environment was seen as an essential part of providing other services, such as sense of place, learning and spiritual experiences – such as inspired by the sight of ancient monuments on the skyline. At the same time, a sense of history can be conveyed by semi-natural landscapes perceived to be pristine and untouched by people – a life not dependent on technology. Equally, while learning is initially associated with academic learning, stimulated by the historic environment and interpretation of the natural world, there was also a realisation that it included 'learning about self' which may be more about the landscape providing a mirror on one's character and lifestyle – a realisation that learning is about being provoked to think.

The '**self generated' services** of calm and escapism appear to be two of the most important services in a fast changing, instant, and stressful world, being the services that offer some of the greatest benefits. The 'peace and quiet' of the landscape was frequently mentioned – other words or phrases used were 'chill', 'empty your mind', 'forgetting' and 'tranquillity'. Calming places needed to be quiet, or quiet enough to hear the sounds of nature such as birdsong. The peacefulness of a place could be relative to where a respondent had originally lived. So the urban fringe was seen as busy by those who had lived there a long time (having become more busy over time), whereas for those people who had moved out from conurbations like Birmingham, Liverpool or London it was seen as relatively more tranquil, and so the same applied to feelings of relative escape – an escape from the increasing stresses of everyday life. For older people a key cause of stress was the pace of change. As for calm, an important component of escape was to escape from traffic noise and general congestion – flat topography made it more difficult to escape from the sound of major roads. Being enveloped in 'green' and focusing on nature was important for a sense of escape, so experiencing fields, hedges, trees and flowers was regarded as a first level of escape. An NCA can be particularly good at providing escape (e.g. the Dark Peak) but if it is very built up (e.g. Lancashire Coal Measures) then the green spaces that are available become almost more important, valued and praised for the easily accessible escape that they offer amongst their value as a green lung.

The **special and unusual** experiences tended to offer a much deeper level of 'service', provided by special landscape experiences. Thus feelings of inspiration and spirituality are not often experienced but are well remembered when they are. Respondents talked about feeling 'transported' by a high view or finding something special that felt secret or rare – being humbled by beauty. The concept of Nature as a force all of its own was seen as awe-inspiring by many. Often wild or remote places were associated with these cultural services. These feelings were often influenced by time, season and weather – a shaft of sunlight, a carpet of bluebell – ephemeral or 'special moments' in the landscape. They were also engendered by quite rare things not seen everyday – a waterfall or a high distant view. Often this was somewhere isolated that had taken some effort to get to. In this second phase of the work, only the Dark Peak and Dorset Heaths were seen as

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<sup>5</sup> All landscapes have history but people experience a 'sense of history' from specific physical remains, from connections to a significant event and from associations with people/families through time.

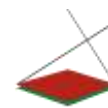




inspirational as whole landscapes, but this is not to suggest that the other landscapes were devoid of prospects for offering inspiration in some situations and places.

**Table 9.1: Cultural services provided by landscapes, as identified through this study**

Service	Commentary from Phase II
<p><b>Understanding of the past – cultural heritage values</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale built features such as styles</li> <li>• Historic buildings and stone walls</li> <li>• Large-scale structures, such as viaducts</li> <li>• Remote landscapes with few built features with a ‘pristine’ or untouched quality.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b> Phase I mentions hard and soft history, the latter being more the feeling that people have shaped a landscape in the past. In Phase II people focussed more on ‘hard’ (built) history, with historical features being more important in giving interest in the generally more bland landscapes being researched. There was also a cultural pride in history that was not particularly evident in Phase I. Both phases reveal how unaware people are that landscapes have been altered and affected by mankind unless the effects are obvious.</p>
<p><b>Sense of place – identity / home</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An unchanged landscape / views – offering continuity</li> <li>• Historical features engendering local pride e.g. stately homes and cathedrals</li> <li>• Iconic geological features and coastlines.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b> There is much similarity between Phases I and II about how people derive a sense of place from the landscape, with people highlighting local iconic places or monuments in the landscapes as places that anchor them to local identity. Particular special views were also used as a way of reminding oneself about a place and its permanence (counting the passage of time but with the place itself staying largely the same). The less distinctive landscapes in Phase II (eg Claylands) showed that some places could have a low ‘sense of place’ in landscape terms.</p>
<p><b>Inspiration</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special moments in the landscape – eg. caused by light or season</li> <li>• Rare things – a glimpsed waterfall, a carpet of snowdrops</li> <li>• The coast or seeing the sea</li> <li>• ‘breathtaking scenery’</li> <li>• The variety of landscapes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Escapism – getting away from it all</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being enveloped in green - fields, hedges, trees and flowers</li> <li>• Lack of intrusion from modern housing, roads and industrial developments</li> <li>• A ‘beautiful’ landscape – ‘<i>breathtaking scenery</i>’</li> <li>• Escaping from traffic noise</li> <li>• Rugged, mountainous or coastal</li> <li>• For those in suburban locations, local accessible greenspaces.</li> </ul>

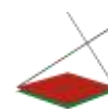


Service	Commentary from Phase II
	<p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b>                      Phase II found this service to be more important than in Phase I, with more discussion surrounding stressful lives and the effect of the recession. Escapism was more linked to wilder places than in Phase I (where people were accessing local places to escape – potentially reflecting the quality of easily accessible landscapes). This may be a function of the differences in the NCA samples between the two phases. The ability to easily escape is highly dependent upon the amount of rural space that is accessible within an NCA.</p>
<p><b>Calm (relaxation / tranquillity)</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing natural sounds, such as birdsong or running water</li> <li>• Ability to see a long way – seeing the sky and clouds</li> <li>• Leafy lanes and paths</li> <li>• Gentle pastoral landscapes.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b>                      Again very similar findings between the two phases in the emphasis that calmness comes from stillness and the smaller-scale sensory things, and experiences like birdsong. Phase II makes the point more strongly that such spaces are important to provide contrast to busy urban or suburban experiences.</p>
<p><b>Spiritual values</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding something special that feels secret or rare</li> <li>• An elevated or long view – feeling humbled by being in the ‘middle of nowhere’</li> <li>• Wild and remote places</li> <li>• Tors, stones and rocky places</li> <li>• Wind, clouds, sky, emptiness</li> <li>• Overwhelming beauty or scale</li> <li>• Woodlands (deciduous)</li> <li>• Isolated ruins and standing stones.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b>                      There is much similarity with the Phase I findings, although in Phase II more elaborate and potentially more revealing comments were made. There were still many people who didn't recognise this cultural service, certainly not as a regular experience. Phase II confirms that spiritual feelings are often linked to moments of extreme solitude or very dramatic landscapes that ‘take people out of themselves’ and therefore the landscape needs to be quite distinctive to generate this service. Iron age history, standing stones and stretches of water/waterfalls were mentioned in both phases as being associated with spiritual experiences.</p>
<p><b>Learning</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic features</li> <li>• Underlying geology</li> <li>• Wildlife</li> <li>• Food production</li> <li>• What are perceived as natural landscapes.</li> </ul>

Service	Commentary from Phase II
	<p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b></p> <p><i>Again findings are very similar to Phase I in that there is learning about oneself as well as formal learning, and discovery. There was more reference in Phase II to school activities (e.g. ‘pond-dipping’ and learning about wildlife on the curriculum).</i></p> <p>Both phases confirm that ‘learning’ isn’t a service that people generally and automatically seek out from the landscape, but it can be a benefit that comes in many different forms. There are also very clear signals in both phases that simple signposting and information points can enhance people’s learning experience and prompt them to be alert.</p> <p>Phase II further identified an interest in learning about rural ways of life and traditional ways of survival.</p>
<p><b>Leisure and recreation</b></p>	<p><b>Particularly provided by (Phase II):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal areas or areas of water in landlocked NCAs</li> <li>• Canals</li> <li>• Country lanes and the footpath network</li> <li>• Long established parks e.g. Sutton Park on the edge of Birmingham and Country Parks</li> <li>• Organised sites for recreation and tourism becoming all the more important for areas that have little opportunities for recreation</li> <li>• Expansive areas of moorland and heathland</li> <li>• Rugged and rocky landscapes</li> <li>• Woodlands and forests.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Comparison with Phase I Findings</b></p> <p>Both phases show that mainstream public opinion links recreation to more organised sites, or at least to sites that are accessible. The availability of forestry sites, National Trust sites, trails and marked routes, and other places of interest were generally more likely to supply the service of leisure and recreation. If an NCA had a coast then this was regarded as particularly strong in delivering this service.</p> <p>Beyond sites that are specifically geared towards leisure or tourism, both phases show that there is a smaller group of people who are more from an attitude type that prioritises being outdoors in the wild who would be looking for a more unstructured experience. In these cases, the favoured landscape types tended to be more rocky, had variation in height or had stretches of water (e.g. to canoe on).</p>

## 9.4 The Delivery of Cultural Services by Different Landscape Features

As identified in Phase I all landscapes will, to some extent, deliver all the cultural services identified – and the delivery of cultural services primarily reflects the character of the ‘whole landscape’. People see cultural services being delivered by a combination of features within an experience or view. It is these combinations of features that stimulate different thoughts. Nevertheless, when asked, participants were also able to distinguish the types of cultural service provided by different landscape features. This has been explored in Chapter 6. From this the importance of different landscape features is summarised in **Table 9.2** and the cultural services that they provide is further summarised in **Table 9.3**.



**Table 9.2: The importance of different features within the landscape (drawing on the Chapter 6 findings)**

Landscape features	Commentary from Phase II
<b>Waters, rivers, streams</b>	<p>Access to stretches of water is important for cultural services. Water is therapeutic – refreshing. The power of water provides links with the past. Activity on the water is interesting to watch. Deep-cut river valleys and gorges are special places, as are waterfalls, giving notable experiences.</p>
	<p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> Both phases show that access to water is important for cultural services, especially relaxation. An NCA can be weaker in what it provides culturally if it doesn’t have water – and is stronger if there is a variety of rivers, lakes and coastline. An NCA which is less distinctive (or that doesn’t provide cultural services from height or woodland) can make up for this by having large stretches of water. Water does not need to be natural to provide elements of escape, calm or recreation (canals and reservoirs, often with the opportunities and facilities linked with them, can both do this) but the more special experiences – inspiration, feeling uplifted, are more likely to be experienced from natural rivers or the sea.</p>
<b>Bogs and marshes</b>	<p>There is a difference in perception between bogs (generally regarded as brown and muddy) and marshes (generally regarded as green and watery) but both are valued for their wildlife. But these areas are generally little recognised.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> Phase II has highlighted the importance of communicating the importance of wetlands – and there is beginning to be a bit more understanding of the role of bogs in carbon storage and water holding.</p>
<b>Coast</b>	<p>The coast is an important place for escape. Everyone remembers a childhood experience at the sea. Preferred coastlines are rugged with sandy coves, although flat coastlines are enjoyed, especially where they have long or sandy beaches.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> The cultural services provided by coastline were considered to be many and, if people lived close to a coastline, they felt a great sense of enhanced well-being. People accessed their favourite coastline regardless of whether it was in their locality – some NCAs had traditional affinities with specific coastlines. Some coastlines were mentioned as being nationally important e.g. Pembrokeshire, Norfolk, Dorset, Cornwall.</p>
<b>Hills, mountains and upland areas</b>	<p>These are very important in the provision of cultural services. Undulations make an important contribution to what are perceived as beautiful landscapes. There is a general desire for ‘decent’ hills offering prospect. Even small hills can be important in a flatter landscape. Mountains can be seen as daunting in some situations. Landscapes such as the Peak District are viewed as both beautiful and threatening, reflecting their scale and bleakness.</p>

Landscape features	Commentary from Phase II
	<p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> The overall findings are the same for the two phases – generally, the ability to gain height is important for a more positive landscape experience (and certainly more for the services of spirituality and inspiration). Phase II has shown that the required height need not be very high, but just <i>different</i> to the surroundings. Variation in height is more important than the height itself, while very high mountains are inspiring there is a tailing off of the perceived benefits. Rolling or undulating is generally perceived as better than flat for the different cultural services, although flatter land can be positive if in an elevated position, whereas lowland flat land is generally perceived as poor in providing the cultural services (other than for cycling) unless it is adjoining the coast.</p>
<p><b>Moorland</b></p>	<p>This is not spontaneously favoured (especially by women who may see it as threatening). But its endless character was important for escape and isolation, as was its silence, and it was valued for its naturalness. It was likely to be more valued if forming smaller patches within a varied hilly landscape but it did conjure much negative imagery amongst participants.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> Phase II has revealed more about why moorland is perceived to deliver few cultural services (and to fewer people). Many people feel on edge from being in the middle of a ‘desolate’ place. Moorland is regarded as a more extreme type of experience and is more valued, therefore, by people who seek isolation for its own sake. Where moorland is on a smaller scale, and has rocky outcrops and crags, it is considered more beautiful and a landscape people feel more inclined to engage with. Phase II has confirmed that moorland can provide inspiration, but performs less well for services like ‘calmness’ because it provides a more challenging experience. It can also provide leisure and recreation, but not for the mainstream population unless it is particularly accessible. It should be stressed that this is about people’s experiences, not about whether they think that moorlands are important to protect.</p>
<p><b>Woodland and trees</b></p>	<p>The Phase II NCAs were generally felt to lack woodland, except for the Dorset Heaths. Woodlands often held special memories from childhood. Although other studies have pointed to the frightening character of woodlands, especially in the urban environment, within this study the ability to gain feelings of escape in woodland was felt important. Woodlands were generally sought out as places to go, and trees were considered vital in some NCAs to provide some kind of feature in otherwise featureless landscapes</p> <hr/> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> There was less discussion of woodland in Phase II as there were fewer woodlands in the sample NCAs. In Phase II, woods were regarded as special places that could add character to featureless landscapes. In both Phases many people felt that, over the centuries, woodlands had been removed and needed to be replaced – but not to the detriment of open spaces and opportunities to view distances. Woodlands therefore have a saturation point within a landscape. The relativities involved here are unknown, but there is certainly a strong emotional attachment to being inside woodland that comes from childhood experiences. Both Phases show that tree lines and woodland and forest edges are considered important to add pattern to the landscape – these can provide strong benefits in their own right (although disbenefits if the woodland lines and edges appear discordant) so it is not always huge tracts of woodland that people are wanting.</p>

Landscape features	Commentary from Phase II
<p><b>Field systems</b></p>	<p>Within Phase II there was often a harking back to the romantic countryside of TV programmes or children's books – a patchwork of small fields. This was often the mainstay image of younger people who didn't have much access to the countryside. The presence of fields can often be the main determinant of whether an area is perceived as rural or peri-urban.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> Both phases recognised the importance of fields as being key indicators of a non-urban environment. The primary interest is in the field pattern formed by hedgerows / walls; but the presence of livestock and farming are also important in providing cultural services (e.g. of escape, history and simple values). The field pattern needs to be seen in conjunction with other landscape features, such as a river or woodlands, to be valued as a landscape. Often it is driving, walking or riding past the fields that is important. The variations provided by field patterns appear culturally more important than a monotonous landscape.</p>
<p><b>Hedges (walls)</b></p>	<p>Landscapes with hedgerows are seen as 'pretty'. The condition of hedgerows is often used as a measure of how well the whole landscape is being managed. Stone walls too are seen in this light – people expressed a sense of wonder at the human endeavour that went into their construction.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> In both Phases hedgerows (and walls) were thought important to protect and comforting as part of a pastoral scene – they were seen to provide many cultural services forming part of the quintessential English countryside. The condition of walls and hedges may influence people's views (perhaps disproportionately given the degree of visibility of these boundaries) about the general condition and management of the associated landscape.</p>
<p><b>Historic features</b></p>	<p>In Phase II, in a number of the NCAs, there was a view that "<i>there's not much history here</i>" because of the lack of historic tourist attractions or associations with famous people. But the pattern of settlement was perceived as contributing greatly to whether people are aware of 'having history'. Equally the setting to historic properties was often mentioned in people's memories of beautiful places, although these were often valued more for their aesthetic qualities than for their historic interest.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> In Phase II the emphasis was on 'hard' (built) history rather than 'soft' history i.e. the history inherent in the landscape. In Phase II, history in the landscape was considered less important than the ability to escape to green areas – in the more built-up NCAs there was a marked demand for such places. People are well aware of famous historical places but tend to be unaware of minor historical features. In common with Phase I, people seem to enjoy seeing old ruins and understanding everyday life of past generations – so history doesn't need to be 'epic' to be appreciated. For this reason the preservation of small features in the landscape was considered important to the experiential quality of a place: for example stone stiles, cobbles, or bridges.</p>



Landscape features	Commentary from Phase II
<b>Villages</b>	<p>The nature of residential development can make a huge difference to how a landscape is evaluated by people. People place greater value on those landscapes that have a strong contrast between towns, villages and the rural landscape, rather than sprawling development. The encounter with a proper village or hamlet feels like a private discovery – a secret place, with a nostalgic hankering for the ancient ways of village life.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> Both Phases have identified that villages are important to sense of place and in confirming the rurality of an area. Villages add to a certain ‘dream-like’ quality that people want as part of their escape to the countryside. Villages are seen to give structure to the more natural elements of the landscape. The more historic and more consistent /distinctive in terms of architecture and materials used, the greater the importance of villages in delivering the cultural services. For some people, the absence of villages can make a landscape seem too remote, but at the other extreme, sprawl is regarded as a negative impact.</p>
<b>Lanes</b>	<p>Generally roads were negatively evaluated, especially if causing traffic nuisance – whereas the presence of lanes was taken as an indicator of a rural and relatively remote area. People were equally positive about footpaths, tracks, trails, towpaths and bridleways.</p> <p><b>Comparisons with Phase I Findings</b> As with Phase I, the idea of being in a lane was felt to be relaxing and an important component of leisure compared with normal traffic-bound life. Phase II seemed to put more emphasis on lanes as providers of leisure and activity, perhaps because the sample NCAs included more areas with less accessible or attractive open countryside. Lanes that are considered particularly attractive are those that are tree-lined, sunken or with wide flower-filled verges and a sense of continuity through history.</p>

Drawing on the information above, Table 9.3 overleaf summarises the cultural services by the features identified above. A similar grid was provided for the Phase I findings. The table gives a qualitative indication of how different features ‘perform’ in people’s experience of the landscape through the cultural services. The levels (high, medium, low) are an *assessment* by the researchers of the degree to which cultural services are delivered by different landscape features. Blank cells should not be taken as implying that the service is not relevant, just that it is being delivered at a lower level than that associated with other features.

**Table 9.3: The provision of cultural services by different landscape features**

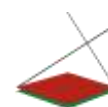
Feature	History	Place	Inspiration	Calm	Leisure/activities	Spiritual	Learning	Escape
Water, rivers streams	Low	Medium	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Bogs & Marshes	Low	Low* 1	Low	Low*2	Medium	*3	Medium	
Coast	Medium	High	High*4	High*5	High	High	High	High
Mountains & Hills	Medium	Medium*6	High	High*7	High	High	Medium*8	High
Moorland	Low	High	Medium*9	Low	Medium	High	Medium*10	High
Grassland								
Woodland & Trees	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium*11
Field Systems	High	High	Low*12	Medium*13	Low	Low	Low	High
Hedges, (walls)	High	High	Low	Medium*14	Low*15	Low*16	Medium*17	Medium
Villages	High	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	High	High*18
Lanes	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High			High

Again, the overall findings between the two Phases are very similar and, therefore, Table 9.3 also provides a short commentary where the scores differ between the phases. Blank cells should not be taken as implying that the service is not relevant, just that it is being delivered at a lower level than that associated with other features. It must be stressed that these 'scores' are based on qualitative social research and are simply reflecting broad orders of magnitude.

Comparing Table 9.3 with the equivalent Table in the Phase I report (Table 10.3) the results are very similar. Indeed the only cells that are different are those shown with an asterisk and number. These differences are considered briefly (numbers below refer to the numbers in Table 9.3):

**Waters, rivers and streams:** In both phases these were identified as very important in providing the cultural services. If anything this importance rose further in Phase II, in part perhaps reflecting the lack of other landscape features in some of the Phase II NCAs.

**Bogs and marshes: (1)** In Phase I there was little association between bogs and marshes and Sense of Place, even in the Lincolnshire Marshes, partly because the terms were not well understood. In Phase II, however, marshes and wetlands were seen as part of the character of the Fens as were the peat bogs of the Dark Peak – but were still not a highly valued characteristic. **(2)** In terms of calm, again this service was not associated with bogs and marshes in Phase I but in Phase II some people found the Fen marshland calming and also referred to the Norfolk Broads in



the same light. **(3)** On the other hand, the marshlands of the Lincolnshire Coast in Phase I were associated with a sense of spirituality but this was not picked up by the Phase II participants – this may have something to do with scale, with the reed fringed dykes of the Fens lacking the scale of the coastal salt marshes of the Lincolnshire Coast, with their strong associations with migrant bird species which arrive in the hundreds of thousands.

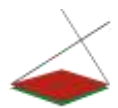
**Coast: (4) and (5)** In Phase II the coast scored more highly for both inspiration and calm than it did in Phase I. This reflects that more of the NCAs in the Phase II sample lacked more local places that offered inspiration. It also reflects that in many of the Phase II NCAs the coast was seen as a place of relaxation and 'time off' – most of the coasts visited were those with extensive sandy beaches rather than the rugged and rocky coasts more associated with the Phase I sample (that tend to be more associated with activity rather than relaxation).

**Mountains and Hills:** Elevation is an important contributor to the delivery of many of the cultural services and scored even more highly than in Phase I. **(6)** In Phase II, especially in the Dark Peak, mountains and hills were identified as an important contributor to sense of place, **(7)** and they were also identified as an important contributor to calm when viewed from a distance, although considered daunting to climb. **(8)** While in Phase I they were seen as too 'unstructured' to contribute to education, in Phase II they were seen as more unusual, offering an element of surprise and discovery that stimulated thought and questioning about people's surroundings. This in part reflects that the Phase II NCAs were generally flatter than those of Phase I.

**Moorland: (9)** In the Phase I sample people from the Yorkshire Wolds and Devon Redlands were inspired by the Yorkshire Moors and Dartmoor respectively, as were those from Exmoor by their surroundings. By comparison in Phase II there was more trepidation about the wildness of moors and the fear of isolation or getting lost, lowering the score for inspiration. **(10)** On the other hand, in Phase II moorland scored more highly for learning – these were seen as areas that needed to be taken seriously in terms of terrain and weather. There was therefore much to learn if these landscapes were to be negotiated.

**Grassland:** This was a term that was not well understood in Phase I or II as it was largely seen as synonymous with fields, any scoring is therefore best seen in this context.

**Woodlands and trees:** Woodland and trees are another important contributor to many of the cultural services. The scores between the two Phases for the delivery of different services are very similar **(11)** although in Phase II woodlands were identified as delivering less in the way of escape. This was simply because the Phase II NCAs had less woodland and therefore the opportunities were less. But there was a very clear demand for these opportunities from participants and a feeling that too much woodland had been lost in the past (the exception being the Dorset Heaths and Arden which were felt to have more woodland).



**Field systems: (12) and (13)** in Phase I people were both inspired and calmed by the rich mosaic of a varied field pattern of irregularly-shaped fields with interchanging pasture and arable, In Phase II these feelings of inspiration and calm were not so strongly felt – reflecting that in some of the Phase II NCAs, especially the Claylands and the Fens, the dominant character is of large regular arable fields – in part a product of the Parliamentary enclosures that dominate much of middle England. Nevertheless, there was a clear message that people longed for a small-scale field pattern.

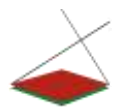
**Hedges (walls): (14) – (17)** The same factors as the above account for the general downplaying of the cultural services associated with hedgerows in Phase II. This suggests that as well as responding to hedges and boundaries themselves, the public may also be responding to the main differences between the Ancient Landscapes (largely of medieval origin) and the Planned Landscapes (of Parliamentary Enclosures) as defined by Oliver Rackham in his seminal book, *History of the Countryside*. Although there is a risk of simplification here, Chapter 10 notes that many people like landscapes that are distinct and contain a variety of features. Thus the irregular jigsaw countryside with thick hedgerows apparent in landscapes of medieval origin could be more appealing to people than the rectilinear field pattern with thin gappy hedgerows that now characterise much of the landscape subject to the Parliamentary Enclosure movement.

**Villages: (18)** Historic 'unspoilt' villages were seen as even more important in Phase II compared to Phase I as providing a means of escape – “*an encounter with a 'proper' village is like a private discovery*”. They were seen as a means of getting out of towns and being somewhere historically rural. In the same way in Phase II country lanes were seen as particularly important in conveying a sense of place, for recreation and in providing a feeling of escape.

Overall, while there are some differences in the overall 'scores' between the two phases, the slight differences in Phase II reflect nuances that had already been picked up in Phase I and potentially reflect:

- the greater dominance of more 'mundane' landscapes in the Phase II sample of NCAs
- the dominance of people living within a stronger urban influence.

While this analysis of the cultural services associated with individual features is helpful in understanding the association between landscapes and the cultural services, it should not be seen in isolation. Landscapes, as has been shown, generate cultural services through the spatial combination of a range of features – the total experience is more than a sum of the feature parts. It is how these component parts are put together in *a landscape* that has the greatest influence over the provision of individual cultural services.



## 9.5 The Cultural Services Associated with the Individual NCAs

Here, based on the descriptions in Chapter 7, as in the Phase I report, an attempt is made to summarise the cultural services offered by the six pilot NCAs used in this Phase II study. Again this is a qualitative assessment and reflects the attitudes of those who participated in the study.

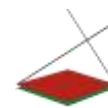
**Table 9.4: Summary assessment of the cultural services provided by individual NCAs**

Area	History	Place	Inspiration	Calm	Leisure/ Activities	Spiritual	Learning	Escape
D Peak	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
Dorset Heaths	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	High	High
Arden	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Claylands (1)	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
LCM (2)	Medium	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Fens	Low	High	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Notes: 1. Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Lowlands. 2. Lincolnshire Coal Measures

This analysis suggests that the NCAs divide into three broad bands:

- first, the highly distinctive and recognisable landscapes of the **Dark Peak** and the **Dorset Heaths**, delivering a wide range of services at a high level, with their strong and varied landscape and, in the case of the Dark Peak, its spectacular views. As noted in Chapter 7 the Dark Peak inspired a lyricism of language to describe its landscape that was evidently different and more prevalent than in other areas. Equally for the Dorset Heaths there was a view that its “*probably got everything you’d want.*” – the impressive array of benefits from the landscape equated to the wide range of landscape types and experiences people felt the area offered, from the main stretches of the Dorset coast (easily accessible but lying outside the NCA) through to the inland heaths.
- second, the differing landscapes of **Arden** and the **Fens** that provide a good range of services, albeit at a reduced level to the above. In the case of Arden, the landscape was seen as gentle and comforting and typically English but lacking the inspiring drama of the NCAs above – explaining the general lack of ‘high’ scores noted above. On the other hand, the Fens were appreciated as a highly distinctive landscape delivering very strong calming and tranquillity benefits coming from the ‘big skies’ and rurality of the area, but were perceived as lacking accessibility with little open space or woodland and the dominance of intensive agriculture. There was also a view that this simple landscape lacked a sense of history or time-depth - people simply relating to its current character.
- third, the more strongly urban-influenced landscapes of the **Claylands** and the **Lancashire Coal Measures** that score less highly on the cultural services in terms of the overall range and intensity of cultural services experienced but where the services that are provided are highly appreciated because of the large numbers of



people that they serve. The little that there is therefore provides a very high level of benefit. In the Claylands the flatness and lack of variation in the landscape (with the dominance of arable farming) limited the extent of the services provided and any strong sense of place. Furthermore, the A1 corridor and a busy road network were seen to limit a sense of tranquillity, although local escape was offered by the emerging lakes and nature reserves of the brickpits and river and canal sides. By contrast, the strong sense of place of the Lancashire Coalfields reflected the area's strong associations with its mining past and the strong local pride in the area as a new landscape emerges out of its industrial past.

## 9.6 Gross and Net Service Delivery

In this assessment it is important to distinguish between gross and net service delivery. **Table 9.4** (and the equivalent **Table 10.5** in the Phase I report) are based on a gross assessment i.e. the actual levels of service delivery offered by the different NCA disregarding the numbers of people they may benefit. It follows, however, that the lesser intensity of services provided by landscapes on the edge of urban areas will assume significantly more importance because of the very large numbers of people that benefit from them – net service delivery. Indeed, the very fact that they contrast with their urban surroundings further heightens their importance for those people that they serve. What potentially makes areas such as the Peak District so important is that they have the potential for very high gross cultural service delivery **and** are in locations where they can serve very large numbers of people – in this case the ring of major conurbations surrounding the Peak District including Sheffield and Manchester.

## 9.7 The Coast and Landscape Functions

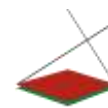
The Phase II study was also asked to look more specifically at two additional issues:

- the coast and the cultural services that it provides
- the degree to which people respond to the other functions provided by landscape in particular the provisioning and regulating services.

These findings have already been summarised in Chapter 8 but the key points emerging are:

### The Coast

- people readily relate to the coast because they tend to have much experience of it, including some powerful memories.
- younger participants in the study often referred to the coast and related to it strongly, wherever they were based, because it had a proportionately greater influence on their landscape experiences to date.
- the experience of the coast for people is markedly beyond the visual sense: other





senses often come into play in what people describe, and a range of deeper emotions are expressed.

- the coast tends to be high scoring for the cultural services, and inspiration and profound escapism and relaxation are amongst the range of emotions and experiences expressed.

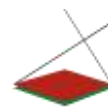
## Provisioning and regulating services

How people respond to the provisioning and regulating services is a very large topic in its own right and is worthy of significant further consideration, but some interesting pointers emerge from the limited time spent on this in the Phase II work. These are that amongst participants:

- there was a general desire to see greater self-sufficiency in food production but a realisation that intensive agriculture does not necessarily produce the diverse landscapes that people favour. There is therefore a desire to see a greater emphasis on multi-purpose land use *“we like the beauty of it but we also want food production so it's case of marrying the two”*
- there was an emerging awareness of the issues relating to the regulating services and there is a potential receptivity for the public to learn more about the important functional roles that different aspects of the landscape, including habitats, can perform
- it was realised that dealing with landscape functionality can inevitably challenge the wants and needs of different populations. As one example, the people of the Fens are proud that the landscape has been designed to take away flood waters, while in the neighbouring Claylands there is a desire to see the Fenlands flooded again if this will reduce flooding in their area
- a key function of the landscape was thought to be to provide recreation and the other cultural services. As a consequence, there was a view that more distinctive and beautiful landscapes that provide many cultural services are not the places for the large-scale development of energy crops and potentially other forms of renewable energy.

Overall, it is evident that provisioning and regulating services relate to the rational and therefore rely on having knowledge to understand them – they rely on *using* and *understanding* a landscape. As a consequence, there is little cross over with cultural services – the latter are an emotional rather than a rational response to the landscape and respond to personal perceptions rather than the physical / functional characteristics of the landscape.

Thus, whilst there are evident linkages between the provisioning and regulating functions of landscape, via the features and character of the landscape, to the cultural services that landscape delivers, the impact that provisioning and regulating functions have on people's experiences is neither well recognised nor understood by them. No doubt people could be



brought to the point of understanding through careful or prolonged education, but their present lack of understanding has implications for involving them in decision-making where an integrated approach (perhaps reconciling competing demands in a multi-functional context) is required.



## 10. Context & The Key Findings from the Two Study Phases

### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by setting a broader context to an understanding of the cultural services and then looks at the key points that emerge from this study based on a synthesis of the Phase I and II findings.

### 10.2 Cultural Services – their Context within the Framework of Ecosystem Services

In 2005 the United Nations Environment Programme published the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA). The MEA promoted the concept of ecosystem services, whereby the natural environment provides people with goods and services that are fundamental to human wellbeing. Thus the concept of ecosystem services is deliberately human-centred, viewing the natural environment in terms of what it provides for people's wellbeing, and recognising that the natural environment is an asset, and damage to it will result in loss or damage of the services it provides for human wellbeing.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment grouped ecosystem services into four broad categories:

**Supporting services:** such as nutrient cycling, oxygen production and soil formation. These underpin the provision of the other types of services.

**Provisioning services:** such as food, fibre, fuel and water. These provide basic human needs for sustenance, survival and comfort.

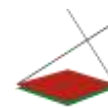
**Regulating services:** such as climate regulation, water purification and flood buffering. These are literally the forces in the natural world that act distinctly or in combination to regulate the natural environment.

**Cultural services:** such as education, recreation, and aesthetic experience. These are the non-material services that people obtain from the natural environment and have been the focus of this study.

#### Ecosystem Services within the National Ecosystem Assessment and other national policy frameworks

Defra, in collaboration with other government bodies and agencies, currently has a work programme to embed the concept of ecosystem services within a range of policy initiatives and policy guidance. In addition, the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA), currently being prepared by national bodies, and overseen by Defra, uses the above structure of ecosystem services as the main framework for its approach to gauging the state and value of the UK's natural environment.

This present study offers one of the few recent pieces of primary social research focusing on the provision of the cultural services and is therefore an important step forward in



building understanding in this area.

### **Cultural services within the framework of ecosystem services**

There is no definitive list or categorisation of cultural services – various examples are cited across the literature and amongst different initiatives where cultural services are relevant. The MEA’s examples of cultural services are designed to translate to an international audience and a wide scope of cultures, thus the examples used by the MEA must be seen in this light and are not a definitive set – these were described in the Phase I report (Table 10.1).

Chapter 10 of the Phase I report, and section 5.1 of this study, describe the range of cultural services used in this study and the reasons behind their selection. Whatever set of cultural services is used, there may be overlaps in definitions as well as some gaps in the collective whole and this will be as true of those selected for use in this study as any other.

### **Experience and experiential qualities**

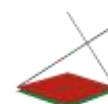
The visual sense will be the dominant one for many people when they relate to the landscape, and thus aesthetics (and in many cases, at the higher end of the aesthetic scale, what people express as beauty or beautiful) is how people experience landscape in the main, and perhaps most often drives people’s emotional response. However this work attempted to capture people’s view of their whole experience of landscape, across all their senses, and across their whole life experience, although people selected the experiences and memories that most influenced their responses. Consequently, the work relates most strongly to the ‘experiential qualities’ of the landscape, and indeed, this is also what the brief asked to be emphasised. However, other senses do play a part for people in their experience of landscape: many participants in this study (sometimes after being prompted) confirmed that some of their responses to the landscape were strongly connected to distinct smells or sounds (and less commonly tastes and textures).

### **From services to benefits**

The terms ‘services’ and ‘benefits’ are often used interchangeably, and this is even the case within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Strictly speaking, benefits are delivered to the consumer from a service, so a benefit is received by someone from a service. Thus if we look at cultural services (and consequent benefits) from the landscape, some simple and general examples might be as follows:

<b>Landscape feature or characteristic</b>	<b>Example of service provided</b>	<b>Example of benefit(s) from this service</b>
Wildlife-rich stretch of heathland	Ability to experience wildlife	Sense of wonder at nature; improved knowledge
Woodland trail	Active recreation	Health and fitness
Undeveloped tract of land	Tranquillity	Stress relief
Viewpoint in the landscape	Inspiration	Feeling in touch with ‘the elements’

Distinctions between services and benefits may not be clear cut, and in many situations it may not matter whether what people receive from the landscape (or other aspects of the environment) is termed a service or benefit. Perhaps the main necessity is to identify and



understand the services and benefits which people do obtain, and manage places accordingly to maintain (at the very least) this same level and range of services and benefits.

### 10.3 The National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) for the UK<sup>6</sup>

While the cultural services used through this study have used the MEA as a starting point and have also reflected other experiential qualities frequently associated with landscape, the NEA has reduced the cultural services to just two 'final' services: 'meaningful places' (which includes both 'green' and 'blue' space), and 'socially valued landscapes and waterscapes'. These are new services to the extent that they do not appear in other ecosystem service typologies and have been defined as follows:

**The definitions of the NEA Cultural Services** taken from Chapter 5 Cultural Ecosystem Services Zero Order Draft 8<sup>th</sup> January 2009

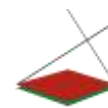
**Meaningful local places.** These are 'centres of meaning constructed through experience'. The most meaningful place of all is the home, the site within which the most intimate, personal and profound aspects of human life and social interaction occur. Homes are located within neighbourhoods, geographical territories which become symbolically meaningful through repeated, everyday interactions between people and the physical settings which provide the contexts for those interactions. As substantial work in environmental social sciences, built environment, allied health disciplines, and the humanities demonstrate, the kinds of relationships afforded by local spaces (parks, woods, rivers, street trees, etc) are vitally important in helping individuals achieve quality of life and well-being.

**Socially valued landscapes.** This recognizes that landscape is a cultural term, first coined in the C16th. Landscape is a way of seeing, a way of organizing visual experience by taking a perspective that encompasses and organizes a view. The European Landscape Convention describes landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." The experience and appreciation of landscapes is acquired, it reflects the historical depth of particular cultural interpretations. Until the early C18th, European sensibilities turned in horror from mountainous landscapes, finding them hideous to behold. By the end of that long century, a different set of shared meanings were in place as the distinction between the 'picturesque', well farmed and domestic landscapes of southern England and the 'sublime' awe-filled landscapes of Snowdonia, the Lake District and the Highlands of Western Scotland became sedimented into the Romantic sensibility.

In turn the NEA identifies the goods and benefits flowing from these final services. These include physical health, mental health, and ecological knowledge. In the NEA these will be assessed against all the final services being explored while spiritual/religious, cultural heritage and mediated natures, aesthetic/inspirational, security and freedom, neighbourhood development, enfranchisement and social and environmental citizenship will be assessed as part of the two cultural services noted above.

Natural England is an important contributor to the NEA and, through CQuEL (the Character and Quality of England's Landscapes), it will be monitoring the delivery of these cultural services at a finer grain compared to that proposed under the NEA.

<sup>6</sup> Note: Subsequent to the writing of this report in 2010, the UK National Ecosystem Assessment has been published (June 2011) and cultural services are now categorised and grouped under the main heading of 'Environmental Settings'.







## 10.4 The Key Findings from this Research

Turning back to the findings from the two stages of this research it is clear that the findings from Phase II have served to strengthen the findings from Phase I.

### Types of cultural service

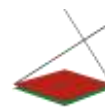
First, the two Phases of this study have confirmed that the cultural services produced by landscapes, broadly fall into three categories:

1. **The 'nuts and bolts' services** (such as leisure and activities, sense of place, sense of history and learning) that rely on quite structured organised landscapes, that are relatively easy to find and appeal to the more rational and physical aspects of people. They are well communicated, more easily delivered and more appealing to younger people and families
2. The more unstructured and slightly more **self-generated services** (escape and calming) that deliver on a more emotional level and are extremely important for people's well-being
3. The more **special and unusual experiences** (inspiration and spirituality) that occur only seldom and tend to be associated with dramatic and special landscapes.

### The delivery of cultural services by different landscape features

Second, there appears to be a rough hierarchy in the types of landscape feature and their importance to the cultural services. These features fall broadly into four groups:

1. First, the coast; which stands out as delivering strongly on nearly all the cultural services (covering all three categories noted above). Those coasts with potentially the strongest associations with all the cultural services are those elevated rugged coastlines with sandy coves, beaches and rock pools.
2. Second, mountains and hills; water, rivers and streams; woodlands; and villages are also very strong 'hitters' in the provision of the cultural services. All except villages provide the three categories of cultural service noted above. In the case of villages, with their feeling of safety and security, they tend not to be associated with the more unusual services of inspiration and spirituality.
3. Third, field systems; hedgerows and walls; and country lanes are very important to some of the cultural services. In the case of field systems, these are strongly associated with four of the cultural services but are significantly less important for other services. Comparing the results of Phases I and II it appears that the varied small-scale field structure, often with thick hedgerows, associated with 'Ancient Landscapes' have a stronger association with some of the cultural services than the large, regular field patterns often with very thin and gappy hedges more frequently associated with the grid of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Enclosure movement. The 'scores' in **Table 10.2** below reflect those of an ancient field pattern or indeed a



pattern of stone walls. These would be downgraded for Enclosure field patterns and their associated hedgerows.

4. Finally, bogs and marshes and moorland have less influence over the cultural services. These habitats are not well understood and in the case of large open moorland are often seen as daunting rather than stimulating positive emotions – these particularly reflect the views of those who do not live in or closed to such moorland areas.

The delivery of cultural services by different landscape features is summarised in Table 10.1. This provides an amalgamation of the findings from Phases I and II.

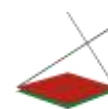
**Table 10.1: Provision of cultural services by different landscape features (combined Phases I and II)**

Feature	History	Place	Inspiration	Calm	Leisure/activities	Spiritual	Learning	Escape
Water, rivers streams	Low	Medium	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Bogs & Marshes	Low	Low <sup>(1)</sup>	Low	Low <sup>(2)</sup>	Medium		Medium	
Coast	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Mountains & Hills	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
Moorland	Low	High	Medium	Low	Medium	High	Low	High
Woodland & Trees	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Field Systems	High	High	Medium	High	Low	Low	Low	High
Hedges, (walls)	High	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Villages	High	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	High	High
Lanes	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High			High

(1) and (2) In both cases the score relates to Marshes only – bogs are not readily recognised

From this study it is also clear that:

- well managed landscapes with a strong sense of structure and longevity as in **estate lands** are also important for providing many of the cultural service and would potentially fall in the second or third category above, depending on extent
- a landscape supporting an abundance of **wildlife** or a particularly rare or iconic species (such as otters, red squirrel, and seals) is also valued per se and delivers well on many of the cultural services including, inspiration, learning, escape and even spirituality. Such a landscape may or may not be aesthetically appealing or particularly accessible. Opportunities to encounter wildlife seem to be judged primarily according to the presence of managed nature reserves
- a sense of history tends to be more strongly associated with built **historic features**



rather than the historic structure of the landscape itself, as the latter is not well understood. Historic features, while not considered critical to a 'good' landscape, are important for many of the cultural services – obviously, history but also inspiration, escape, spirituality, sense of place and learning

- characteristics such as openness remain important highlighting the value of having a vantage point, gaining height or having the opportunity to see distant views. Woodlands are also great providers of cultural service but it should not be to the detriment of the 'opportunities to view distance' within a landscape. This reinforces the need for people to have variation within a landscape. Hence the need for flat land to be 'lifted' or 'redeemed' by woodland or stretches of water. The need for patterns (non-uniform) and colour in the landscape is often mentioned, reflected in small fields being more valued than large fields
- landscapes which are perceived to deliver fewer services tend to be flatter and lack variation, with little opportunity to gain vantage. Added to this are various 'built' detractors such as 'sprawl' and motorway/road corridors that are both a source of noise and may make it difficult to access areas of green space.

### The cultural services associated with different landscapes

The results of the Phase I and II studies indicate that, from the sample NCAs examined, there is a broad hierarchy of landscapes in terms of the range and intensity of the cultural services that they deliver (although the exact range of cultural services provided will always depend on local circumstances).

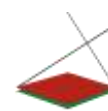
**Table 10.2: Hierarchy of landscapes in the delivery of cultural services**

Hierarchy of landscapes in the delivery of cultural services	Example NCAs from this study
<p><b>First: <i>Wide range and intensity of cultural services provided</i></b></p> <p><b>These NCAs generally have:</b> highly distinctive and recognisable character / identity; undulations, hills and mountains and /or a dramatic coastline; presence of water as rivers or lakes; long views or vantage points; strong sense of rurality and tranquillity – lack of major roads; a mosaic of different land uses and /or extensive areas of natural habitat still present in significant tracts; a pattern of small fields or estate lands (Yorkshire Wolds); woodlands framing views; traditional villages linked by rural lanes</p>	<p>Exmoor, Dark Peak, Dorset Heaths, Devon Redlands, Yorkshire Wolds, Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes</p>
<p><b>Second : <i>Still a wide range of cultural services provided but not to the same intensity</i></b></p> <p><b>These NCAs generally have:</b> The above characteristics but these will either be present in a more diluted form or some will be strongly present and others not. There is also likely to be (but not in all cases) a stronger urban influence with either major road networks and or urban expansion, either within the NCA or very close to the NCA boundary. A further factor may be that services are 'borrowed' from adjacent NCAs, such as the Eden Valley where many of the benefits came from the adjacent fells (lying outside the NCA)</p>	<p>Eden Valley; North Downs; Fens; Arden; Northern Thames Basin; Durham Magnesium Limestone Plateau.</p>

<b>Third: <i>Smaller range of services provided</i></b>	
<b>These NCAs generally have:</b> a much diluted character and / or significant urban intrusion	Lancashire Coal Measures and Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Lowlands

It has to be stressed that the above table includes significant generalisations and there are always exceptions to the rule. For example, in the first category, the Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes NCA does not obviously fit the mould in that it is a very flat landscape dominated by arable production, but it is hugely valued for its strongly rural and isolated character, lack of major roads, the strong village communities and feelings of safety and, of course, the character of the coastline with huge sweeping beaches and swathes of remaining marsh habitats. Equally, potentially surprising, is the North Downs, an Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, falling within the second category. This is a landscape with a highly distinctive chalk downland landscape and significant woodland cover. Here the primary issue is the 'narrowness' of the NCA meaning that it is much more susceptible to the influences of very significant development to the north (the urban edge of London) and to the south, (including Ashford and the Euro Terminal at Cheriton). This raises again the issue of gross and net service provision. In this NCA, the quality of cultural services in gross terms is perceived as less than, say, a more isolated NCA such as Exmoor, but the net importance of the services provided is huge, given the very easy accessibility of this very rural landscape to the population of South London and the South East more generally. Indeed, it is remarkable that a landscape so hemmed in by development has managed to maintain its unique identity and is still able to provide such high quality cultural services to such a large population.

What is also very clear is that landscapes of very different character can provide similar levels of cultural service, although this will clearly be in different combinations, reflecting the particular character of the landscape. This highlights that the provision of cultural services cannot be seen as the sum of different features. It is influenced as much by how these different features interact to create the unique character of each NCA. As noted above, the cultural services provided are also affected by external influences and how the NCA interrelates with other NCAs, for example, do immediately adjacent NCAs significantly increase the 'offer' to local people, as in an accessible coastline lying within an adjacent NCA? In short the balance sheet of cultural service provision could be summarised as follows:



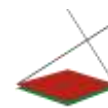
**Table 10.3: Landscape characteristics affecting the provision of cultural services (cf also Tables 9.1 & 9.3)**

Pluses (clearly some of these are mutually exclusive)	Minuses
+ Strong and recognisable identity / character + Mountains hills, undulations + Vantage points with long views (these need not be high)– views of the sky + River, streams, canals, water bodies + A well-wooded and/ or well-treed landscape, framing views + A rural character + Swathes of semi-natural habitat + Iconic species + Recognisable nature reserves welcoming people + Variety in land cover + A mosaic of relatively small fields with thick hedgerows or stone walls + Estate landscapes + large-scale historic features , such as stately homes and monuments + Small-scale historic features providing incident (stone styles, small buildings) + Historic parkland + Historic villages + Rural lanes with low traffic volumes + Accessible greenspace + Good footpath network and waymarked trails + Clear separation between towns and rural areas	- Flat low lying land - Extensive areas under arable production - Large fields - Monotone, lack of variation - Lack of views and open vistas - Urban intrusion of modern development - Main roads and traffic noise - Lack of accessible green space - Extensive dense woodland (especially coniferous)

### Other key points to emerge from Phases I and II

Finally, there are a number of common lessons that have emerged from the Phase I and II studies:

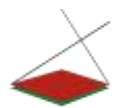
- All landscapes matter:** This study has confirmed that all landscapes matter, reflecting a central tenet of the European Landscape Convention. Phase I introduced the notion of the 'portfolio pyramid' (see section 4.3 of the Phase I report). This identified that people will, if they are able, seek out different landscapes for different purposes and to fulfil different needs. At the base of the pyramid are habitual landscapes that matter to people, even if they are not remarkable.
- Strong landscape structure and variety:** Notwithstanding the above, people desire landscapes with a strong and recognisable character that offers variety and is easily accessible (this is picked up further below).
- More than the sum of the parts:** It is not just different landscape features and the sum of the parts, but how these parts interact that create landscape character and ultimately influence the range and intensity of cultural services experienced. It is instructive to note that during the study, although many people could distinguish the component parts of the landscape (especially distinct features), many of these same people also commented that these different parts create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. It is this fusion of features in particular combinations that give



the area its identity and distinctive character.

- **Relationship with other NCAs:** The cultural services provided by individual NCAs may be affected by the character of adjacent NCAs – this is particularly the case for recreation, especially if adjacent NCAs offer a coast or upland areas which may be used in preference to more local opportunities. There is also the issue of visual 'borrowing' (see later).
- **Issue of scale:** There is also a scale factor, i.e. the extent of the same type of feature (such as woodland) can have diminishing returns. A small patch of distinctive flat land may well be valued within the context of height or coast but people tend not to like 'endless' tracts of the same land cover: "*But that's all there is: moorland going on and on and on*". Equally, features such as woodland are strongly favoured but generally as scattered woodlands across the landscape, framing views. Very large tracts of woodland can appear daunting. From this qualitative research the break point between too little and too much is difficult to identify and in any event is likely to be dependent on the interplay with other landscape characteristics.
- **Temporal factors:** It is also clear that the cultural services provided by the landscape that reflect emotional responses are strongly influenced by temporal factors such as weather and season. The nature of the sky and how it interacts with the landscape can be critical in the emotions that are conjured. Thus expansive views of the sky, as experienced in the uplands and in large-scale flat landscapes such as the Fens or in views out to sea, can be highly influential in stimulating certain emotional responses. In the Fens there is a certain ethereal quality that emerges from this landscape with its huge skies that taps into the contemplative side of human beings, resulting in a certain philosophical nature that may verge on the 'spiritual'.
- **Forces for change:** Through both phases of this study it is clear that the main forces for change acting on the landscape that are of most concern to people are urban sprawl, infrastructure developments (especially roads) and intensive agriculture, where this leads to the removal of valued landscape features. Many of these development pressures of sprawl, infrastructure and traffic intrusion related to development spreading across neighbouring rural land, hence landscapes were becoming more developed and consequently losing their character and their openness, and the associated cultural services they once offered.

During Phase II, there was, perhaps, more emphasis on calm and escape than in Phase I and even greater evidence that rural landscapes provide stress relief for people. The effect of the recession (that has had its greatest impact in the time between the two pieces of research) may have affected this and may be the cause of people wanting to get back to simplicity and more basic values.





## 10.5 Beauty in the Landscape – A Natural Human Response

“Much in life is of value simply because it is lovely, and we need words to express that simplicity. Being able to converse with meaning about beauty is the essence of civilisation...” Simon Jenkins ‘We all care about beauty’ *The Guardian* 8 April 2010

The feedback obtained from this study suggests that people did perceive beauty in the landscape. People regarded the more special elements of the landscape, as well as the sights and sounds of the natural world, and places of historic and cultural merit, as highly meaningful to their lives and an essential part of the quality of the environment.

Beauty came across as a natural human emotion when people considered both the finer and the more simple aspects of landscapes. It was evident that people can readily perceive beauty amongst what they see and experience.

People were able to be measured about the notion of beauty, recognising that there was a quality dimension to it, although they also suggested that many parts of the natural world and the landscape are intrinsically beautiful, and thus need sensitive care.

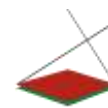
It should be stressed that in their response to the landscape in both Phases of this study, people gave personal and spontaneous views based on their experience, and were not asked to rank landscapes or to consider whether particular areas warranted designation such as National Park or AONB status. Natural beauty in the landscape is formally recognised in the designation of the protected landscapes of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These designated areas conform to official criteria for landscape character of the highest quality, including ‘natural beauty’, which give them this special status and more stringent protection. Nevertheless, as illustrated by the ‘Portfolio Pyramid’ set out in the Phase I report (Section 4.3), there were special landscapes at the apex of the pyramid, perhaps visited seldom, that often included landscapes that had National Park status.

## 10.6 Sensing Authenticity in the Landscape

The study findings suggest an honesty amongst people in relating to the landscape characteristics around them – people responded to their local area’s character and made the most of it, whatever it comprised and whatever level of services it offered.

People spoke up for their area, and would defend it, whatever its character, however distinct it was, and whatever level of services it offered. Where the landscape and its services were thought to be of special merit, e.g. Dark Peak, and Dorset Heaths, people were especially praiseworthy, and took great pride. People in such areas, with a good range of services and of high scoring services, were largely content to use that landscape for much of their leisure and escape, and travelled beyond it for these services less often than those in less well performing areas.

In the Fens, most people found it a challenge to connect strongly with the landscape, due



to its vast empty scale and general lack of features. They did however, appreciate that (or example) the fenland landscape was distinct and something to respect, in its appearance, its history, and function. It provoked inspiration almost in a philosophical, existential sense. In the 'middle ground' landscape of Arden, people mainly valued it for being a comforting and gentle landscape, feeling rural in part, quite well managed with a strong 'vision' of what it should be like. The landscapes of the Claylands and of the Lancashire Coal Measures had been subject to more development and more mineral extraction, meaning there was less open, rural landscape. Here, people appreciated where effort had been made to restore or create landscape features and create associated leisure and visitor facilities, especially to help the recovery of these once degraded landscapes.

### **Key messages about beauty and authenticity**

People respond positively to landscapes that are highly distinctive and have variety of character, and thus give a variety of experience. The key combination of preferences for people appears to be: **distinctiveness and variety**.

It was clear from the work that people recognise good landscapes, with these kinds of characteristics. They visit them if they do not live in them and they celebrate them where they do. People strive for the experience of good landscape and feel unfulfilled without such experience. In addition, people want to see their own local landscape's potential fulfilled.

In the case of Arden people recognise the character of Arden but feel it has been weakened and would like to see this character restored where it has been lost. Equally in the case of the Fens they recognise that the area is highly distinctive but that much of the local nuance of the landscape has been lost through both sudden and incremental changes, and they wish to see this variety replaced, so that more detail and interest is brought into the landscape, but still relevant to the area's function and its distinct character.

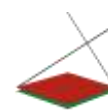
Finally, in the case of the Claylands and Lancashire Coal Measures, people will certainly make the best of what they have got but there is a sense that the landscape has lost structure because of the extent of development and its relatively recent mineral extraction. Here people would like structure and integrity reintroduced to the area, in a modern and relevant way. And they recognise the efforts that have been made in this regard, for instance with new water features and recreation opportunities associated with land reclamation. Rather than restoration of the former landscape, this activity is more about the creation of new landscapes.

Thus, this work has shown that people gain most from landscapes which are:

**Distinctive** – have a strong and coherent identity which people can perceive

**Varied** – have a range of characteristics and of features, so people have choices about how they can engage with and gain experiences from the landscape;

**Accessible** – have opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape, especially by



foot. This accessibility is likely to be in a formal sense, through routes, trails and rights of way, and sites such as parks and country parks, and also in an informal sense, from open access in some areas.

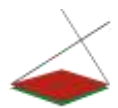
**Tranquil** - provide escape from noise and intrusion, within some locations in the landscape.

### **Fulfilling the potential of landscapes**

This study has shown that people value the above characteristics of the landscape very highly. They visit such places whether they are near or far, and they see these characteristics as worth defending from potentially threatening changes. Where development and change is occurring which put such characteristics at risk, there is justification in requiring development to be conditional on retaining these characteristics and bringing them back, in a directly equivalent form, if they are being lost.

A simple gradation to show how people see potential in the landscape, relating to the different starting points of quality in the landscape, could be expressed as:

- **conserve and protect** the higher quality landscapes, which have largely kept intact their distinction, variety and richness, but are still vulnerable to direct and insidious change
- **improve and restore** features and identity in middle ground landscapes, which have intrinsic qualities but are losing these from direct and incremental change of new development and intensive agriculture
- **create new landscape features and identity**; for landscapes where landscape structure and identity has been lost or significantly eroded.



## 11. Attributing Cultural Services to other NCAs

### 11.1 Introduction

Through primary social research, this study has identified the cultural services associated with 14 of the NCAs. But can these results be used to identify the cultural services associated with the remaining 145 NCAs?

As identified in the Phase I Report, the results of this work might potentially be used in one of two ways to suggest the cultural services associated with individual NCAs not directly the subject of fresh qualitative social research. These are:

- inferring cultural services from the features present in the landscape
- using the framework of a national landscape typology
  - this would place the 14 pilot NCAs within a framework of different landscape types to assess transferability of the pilot NCA results to other NCAs in the same type.

These two approaches have been explored further through Phase II of this study and some broad conclusions drawn on their applicability.

### 11.2 A features-led Approach

This study has identified the cultural services associated with different landscape features. Very many of these features are now mapped as national datasets which, using GIS, have the potential to be overlaid to identify the probability of different cultural services being provided in different areas.

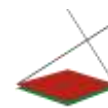
#### NEA features-led approach

As an initial attempt at examining the spatial distribution of cultural services across England, CEH at Lancaster University (part of the NEA Integrated Assessment contributing team) has, with the assistance of The Research Box, followed this feature-led approach<sup>7</sup>. The results of Phase I of this study have been applied to the Countryside Survey (CS) landclass data. For each landclass, a judgement was made by Research Box about the extent to which cultural services are delivered by each of the CS data variables of:

- area of broadleaved woodland
- area of BH standing open water and canals
- area of streams and rivers
- area of sea<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 6 of the NEA Integrated Assessment Report, "Using CS data to quantify the cultural services of English landscapes".

<sup>8</sup> England's coastline is very important in delivering cultural services. This 'sea' variable was included as a proxy for a proper coastline measure.

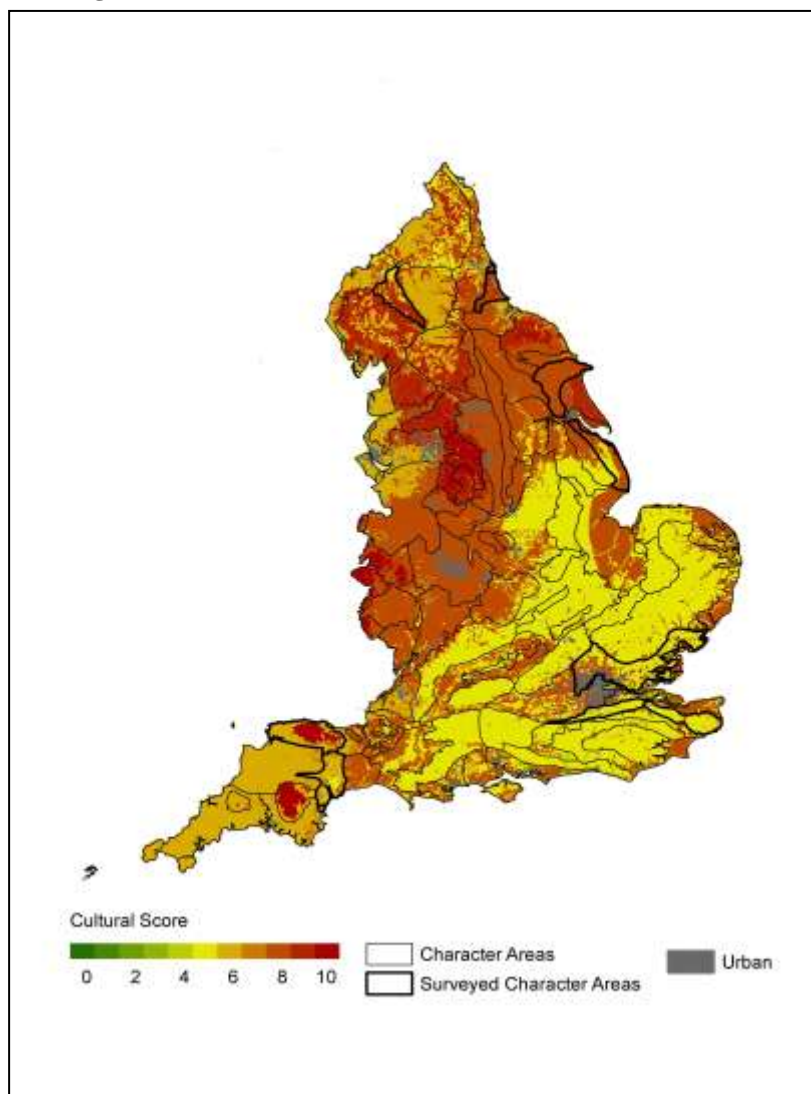


- mean altitude
- relief (difference between maximum and minimum altitude).

These were scored against the scale: none (0), low (1), medium (2), high (3). For most variables (features) the score was higher, the greater the probability of finding the feature in question within the landclass and the greater the extent of that feature (as % cover). The exception was broadleaved woodland where extensive cover is less highly valued than a mixture of woodland and open areas (e.g. fields).

The scores for each of the variables within each landclass were then summed to provide an overall score for the cultural services for that landclass. The resultant map for England is shown in **Figure 11.1**<sup>9</sup>. In this map all areas were expressed as a percentage of the 287 sample kilometre grid squares in the CS dataset for England<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 11.1: Cultural service 'scores' for charismatic landscapes (relating to woodland, water, altitude and coast) for CS landclasses (England only)**



<sup>9</sup> Urban areas have been excluded from the map. The Experiencing Landscapes study did not cover urban areas in the qualitative social research undertaken.

<sup>10</sup> Not all landclasses have sample grid square data. Cultural service scores have not been derived for classes 14e, 20e, 21e and 24e).

The map has been tested against what is known about the extent of cultural services delivery within the eight Phase I NCAs. Broadly speaking, the scores derived for each NCA, based on the landclass incidence within the NCAs, is supported by the research findings.

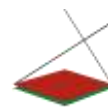
A feature of this Map is that all scores are contained within a narrow band and, hence, illustrate that cultural services are widely spread in their provision across England. This supports a key finding from this research that all landscapes (even those that are local and mundane) are important for delivering cultural services. However, it would appear that some 'pinnacle' landscapes (the Lake District and the South Downs for example) seem not to be scored as highly as might be expected – probably as a result of the limitations of the approach, not least that:

- no distinction was made between the eight separate cultural services examined in the research – the judgement 'score' derived for each 'feature' within each landclass relates to all services in combination
- the assessment was based on the presence of only a limited number of features – considerably less than those known to be influential in the delivery of cultural services. As a consequence, some cultural services and areas are likely to be considerably under-represented
- scores relate to local conditions, i.e. those that exist within the km square. Many cultural services relate to the landscape features that can be seen – not necessarily in the immediate vicinity (and sometimes at a considerable distance). This mapping takes no account of features that are visible but are not present in the grid square
- there was a considerable degree of variability with the CS data. For example, within landclass 1e (undulating country, varied agriculture, mainly grassland) the extent of woodland within the sample km squares ranged from 0.7% to 48.9% – the latter could be considered as woodland, the former probably not. In view of this variability, it was decided to calculate a 'probability' that each landclass contained the features in question.

### Using more fine-grained data sets

Building on the experience of this initial mapping there could be a case for using more fine-grained national datasets, as demonstrated, for example, by the Tranquillity Map 2006 developed for the Countryside Agency and CPRE by Northumbria University et al. As in this study the Tranquillity Map was based on primary social research that identified in different parts of England what features contributed to and detracted from people's sense of tranquillity. Based on the social research the methodology then involved:

- identifying the relative importance of these features in either contributing to tranquillity (e.g. natural areas, elevation, presence of water) or detracting from tranquillity (e.g. roads, urban areas), then converting these into a weighted score (+





or -) for each feature relative to the responses derived from the social research.

- identifying national datasets that gave spatial representation to the providers and detractors of tranquillity (the different features) identified in the social research and applying the weighted scores to each data layer. In total the map is made up of some 50 data layers representing either contributors to or detractors from tranquillity.

The result is a map of tranquillity across England, where tranquillity scores are identified at the scale of 1km<sup>2</sup> showing a gradation from areas of very high tranquillity (dark green) to those which are heavily intruded (dark red). See:

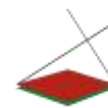
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/tranquillity/national-and-regional-tranquillity-maps>.

This has provided a more subtle spatial understanding of tranquillity across England than previous attempts but does come with certain limitations that have to be borne in mind:

- some of the weighted scores have proved controversial in that they have been felt to downplay the adverse effects of noise, especially traffic noise, and some other features that are considered highly intrusive
- the social research failed to identify certain intrusive elements that adversely affect tranquillity because they were not found in the areas where the social research was conducted –such as power stations. This has caused problems where the map has been used to support evidence at public inquiry and it has been found to be inaccurate
- where a highly intrusive element, such as a major road (major detractor from tranquillity), runs through a very natural area (major contributor to tranquillity) such as the New Forest, the result is a median score for tranquillity that does not reflect the strongly adverse affect that that road is having on surrounding areas
- as in this current study, there is the potential for confusion between gross and net values. The tranquillity map seeks to reflect gross tranquillity at a national level on a gradation of least to most tranquil. This inevitably downplays the value placed on the relative tranquillity of areas that lie close to centres of population, such as Cannock Chase, that are so highly valued locally but cannot claim to be as tranquil, in gross terms, as areas such as the Forest of Bowland.

The above points do not invalidate the tranquillity map: they just mean that it has to be interpreted with caution.

In the same way a composite map could be built up for each of the cultural services identified through the Experiencing Landscapes research, following a similar approach to the above, involving:



- confirmation of the score (High, Medium or Low) for each cultural service attached to each feature (see Table 10.1) and potentially developing scores for those important features that have not been included in this Table but are still important in delivering some or all of the cultural services, such as other habitats and iconic wildlife
- identifying national datasets that can give spatial expression to the presence or absence of the relevant features.

From the data that have been brought together to inform the updating of the NCA descriptions and that are being identified as part of CquEL, it is clear that separate data layers are available to cover many of the identified features. In addition, the tranquillity mapping (described above) holds a number of important datasets including elevation, view sheds, visibility of the sea, and visibility of intrusive elements that could be brought into the overall spatial assessment. However, there remain important gaps in national datasets that would constrain this approach, most notably:

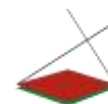
- a national dataset on the presence of still water as lakes and reservoirs
- a national dataset that identifies the nature of rivers i.e. whether they are in their upper reaches or meandering across their floodplain, although this may be inferred by gradient and the Environment Agency Flood Map that shows the notional floodplain of all rivers in England
- a national dataset on field patterns
- a national dataset on field boundary types
- a national dataset on the nature of country lanes
- a national dataset on the presence of traditional villages.<sup>11</sup>

This approach therefore would inevitably have many shortcomings, not least:

- the inability to consider the relative context of individual features and the synergistic effects between different features in the delivery of different cultural services
- the lack of national datasets that identify certain features important in the delivery of cultural services, as identified above
- the finding that landscapes can 'borrow' cultural services from features that lie outside the boundary under consideration but are within sight (a line of hills, for example)
- the inability to take account of the relative importance of different things in different NCAs. For example, if relying solely on GIS data it is probable that the Fens would have a low score for the majority of the cultural services because of its uniformity, lack of features and flatness. Yet as we have seen through this study, the Fens scored highly for some of the cultural services because of its very strong

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<sup>11</sup> A proxy may be those villages falling within the undisturbed areas identified in the CPRE Intrusion Mapping.



sense of identity (which may sometimes be difficult to infer from a range of datasets alone) and because of its overwhelming flatness, which was described by participants as '*more than flat*' and therefore became a positive stimulus for some of the cultural services

- the difficulty in combining the scores for features into a single 'score' for any cultural service – as yet, we do not know the relative importance of features within the overall mix (how would each score be weighted?).

In addition, the results of this qualitative social research can give no clear idea of the 'tipping points': when does the extent of a particular feature generate a low, medium or high score – or, in some cases, pass from being positive to negative in the provision of cultural services (extensive woodland is an example)? Indeed, these may be different in different situations yet, in following this approach, set rules would need to be agreed to enable the analysis of the national datasets.

All this underlines the inevitable problems of taking 'soft' qualitative research and using it in a 'hard' quantitative methodology – qualitative research does not easily lend itself to measurement and is very difficult to map onto sets of data.

Despite these limitations, like the Tranquillity Map, the process described above does provide one way forward, although its limitations would need to be fully understood in its interpretation, as would an understanding that it was providing a gross rather than a net assessment of the individual cultural services (see also the Conclusions in Section 11.5).

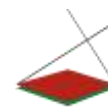
### 11.3 Using the Framework of a Landscape Typology

As an alternative to the features-led approach, we have (during Phase II) also explored a 'whole landscape' approach based on a national landscape typology.

Over the years a number of national landscape typologies have been developed that place the NCAs into groupings of like NCAs of broadly similar character. The Phase I report introduced two of these typologies:

- the Agricultural Landscape Typology
  - which identifies six national Landscape Types
- the Fine-grained Landscape Typology
  - that identifies 18 national Landscape Types other than the major conurbations.

At the outset of Phase II it was agreed that the Agricultural Typology was too coarse-grained to be considered further, but that the Fine-grained Landscape Typology might be used as a framework to assess transferability of the pilot NCA results to other NCAs. As a consequence, the Phase II NCAs were selected to fill gaps such that the full 14 NCAs explored through the two Phases of this study would provide a 'benchmark' for each of the national Landscape Types of the Fine-grained Landscape Typology (**Figure 11.2** on the next page) with the coastal and estuarine types covered by the sample NCAs that also



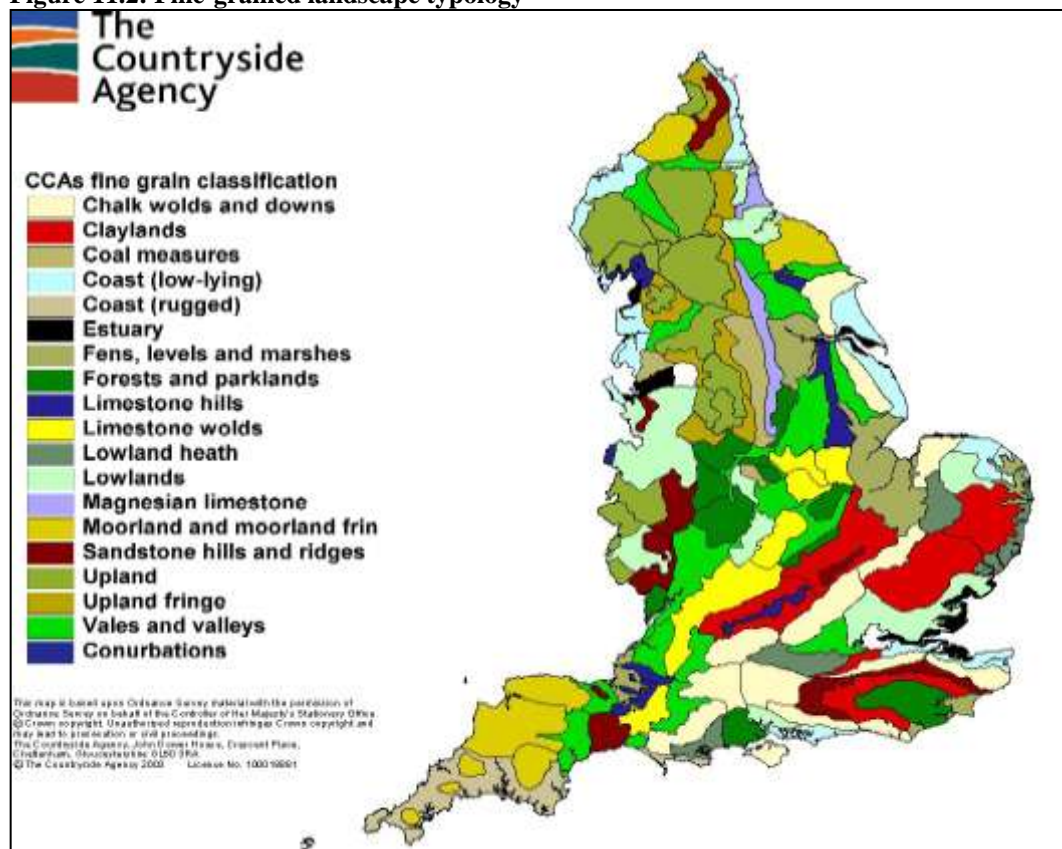
had a coast.

As a result, at the end of Phase II, there was a ‘benchmark’ NCA for each of the main national Landscape Types. However, it readily became apparent that the cultural services associated with the ‘benchmark’ NCAs could not be readily transferred to the other NCAs within the same type because:

- within some Types there was very considerable variation in the character of the NCAs within that Type, with the ‘benchmark’ NCA having little in common with some of the NCAs within the same Type. The variation in level of consistency in landscape character within individual Landscape Types is summarised in **Table 11.1.** on the next page
- the extent and nature of individual features varies considerably across the NCAs within an individual Landscape Type.

This approach therefore needed significant modification if it was to have value.

**Figure 11.2: Fine-grained landscape typology**



**Table 11.1: Consistency in landscape character of the NCAs within individual Landscape Types (based on the Fine-grained Landscape Typology)**

Type & number of NCAs in Type	Consistency <<More Less>>	Some consistency <<More Less>>	Little consistency <<More Less>>
Chalk Wolds & Downs 12	•		
Claylands 6			•
Coal Measures 3	•		
Coast – low lying 13			•
Coast – rugged 9			•
Estuary 4	•		
Fens, Levels & Marshes 6		•	
Forest & Parklands 11			•
Limestone Hills 8			•
Limestone Wolds 6		•	
Lowland Heaths 4	•		
Lowlands 9		•	
Magnesium Limestone 2			•
Moorland & moorland fringe 8			•
Sandstone Hills & Ridges 11		•	
Upland 15	•		
Upland Fringe 9	•		
Vales & Valleys 19			•

#### 11.4 Holistic Judgement Approach

Reflecting the shortcomings of the first two approaches, a third has been trialed that reflects the qualitative nature of the social research that underpins it. This uses the expert judgement of social researchers familiar with the results of this social research and takes account of the whole landscape of an NCA and the individual features within it (and their potential interactions).

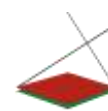
The approach essentially makes use of the findings arising from both phases of the Experiencing Landscapes study, recognising that at least one NCA was researched from each of the Fine-grained Landscape typologies. This “benchmark” NCA, and the cultural services provided by the “benchmark”, serves as a starting point for a comparison with other NCAs within the same landscape type (referred to later as the “test” NCAs). The comparison makes use of various sources of information (see **Box 11.1** overleaf), described in more detail below, including:

- that prepared to support the updating of the NCA descriptions (which will be ongoing over the next two years)
- that emerging from both phases of this present Experiencing Landscapes study.

#### Holistic Judgement Approach - process

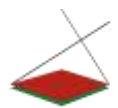
Using the above data the process involves:

1. *Preparing a summary table of the eight cultural services provided in the ‘benchmark’*



NCA and the landscape features and characteristics that singly and in combination are responsible for the delivery of each of the cultural services in that NCA – based on the finding from this study (see **Table 11.2**)

2. *Drawing together the relevant information for the 'benchmark' and 'test' NCAs (Box 11.1)*. From the trials the most useful information included the descriptive text and some of the NCA statistics drawn from the compendium of statistical information for each NCA (see **Box 11.2** overleaf for an assessment of the usefulness of these various information sources). This statistical information needs to be used selectively. (It should be noted that a personal experience/understanding of both NCAs is very helpful in the later stages of the process)
3. *Summarising the information on the 'test' NCA*, in terms of ways in which the landscape (whole landscape and landscape features) are thought to deliver each of the eight cultural services (the second column in **Table 11.3**). This was very heavily influenced by the combined findings of Phases I and II
4. *Comparing the information on the 'test' NCA with the 'benchmark' NCA* in the same typology and highlighting the differences between the two:
  - how do the written descriptions compare, what are the commonalities and differences?
  - is the 'test' NCA higher and with more hills, for example?; does it have more or less water (rivers and canals)?; is it as wooded?; were there more or fewer historical places of importance?; and so on.





**Holistic Judgement Approach – Information sources available**

**Box 11.1**

***The benchmark NCA***

- *A summary table of the eight cultural services* provided in the 'benchmark' NCA and the landscape features and characteristics that singly or in combination are responsible for the delivery of each of the cultural services (based on the finding from this study that can be prepared at the outset of the assessment).

***Descriptive material on the 'benchmark' NCA and the 'test' NCA***

- *The NCA description* including its location, physical and functional relationship with other NCAs, and its key characteristics (all of this information will be made available in the updated NCA descriptions). Indeed, all is already available in the current descriptions and on the CQC website, other than the physical and functional relationship with the other NCAs (1). The photographs that support the descriptive material are also very helpful in creating a mental picture of the NCA as are the relevant OS base maps. Google Earth can also be helpful in building a visual picture of the area.

***The published map for the 'benchmark' NCA and the 'test' NCA***

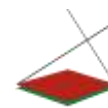
- *GIS mapped information.* As part of the supporting materials being prepared for the updating of the NCAs, there is a published map for each region covering all NCAs in that region with all the individual NCAs identified. This 'published map' is made up of over 30 digital data layers that can be switched on and off to show the spatial distribution of the following under the main headings:
  - **Landscape** (including national landscape designations);
  - **Landform and Geodiversity** (including a map of topography);
  - **Drainage Patterns** (this is a relatively simple data layer and does not include all water courses – a fully comprehensive data layer has been obtained from the Environment Agency and is available separately. But none of these data layers include standing water (lakes and reservoirs);
  - **Trees and Woodland** (including separate data layers on all woodland cover over 2ha. and ancient woodland);
  - **Key Habitats** (including data layers on the distribution of all BAP Priority Habitats; all internationally and nationally designated sites; and SSSI condition);
  - **Historic Environment** (covering the location of all internationally and nationally designated sites including World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields);
  - **Recreation and Access** (covering registered Common Land and Open Country and the route of National Trails);
  - **Experiential Qualities** (with maps of Intrusion, including the extent of all urban areas and other major intrusions; the 2006 Tranquillity Map, and Map of Dark Night Skies).

***The compendium of data for the 'benchmark' NCA and the 'test' NCA***

*The compendium of data for each NCA.* In support of the published map there is a compendium of statistical information for each NCA drawn from a national database derived from an analysis of the published map. This compendium of information is ordered as above and for each data layer provides a breakdown of sites (named) their area and percentage cover of the NCA as a whole. These are also summed for each data layer, for example, giving the total area and percentage cover for the main woodland types.

- This compendium of data also includes analysis of data not included on the published map. Most notably this includes:
  - **Recreation and Access:** The density of rights of way per NCA expressed as mean km length/ km<sup>2</sup>
  - **Experiential Qualities:** A breakdown of the actual and % losses / gains in urban area, disturbed land and undisturbed areas in each NCA.

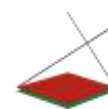
(1). This information is now available as part of the Interim Objectives drawn up for each NCA (March 2010)



5. Finally, scoring the ‘test’ NCA for each of the eight cultural services (high, medium, low) by using the comparative information (see **Table 11.3**).

**Table 11.2: Example: Cultural services provided by the ‘benchmark’ NCA  
(148 Devon Redlands in the Vales and Valleys Landscape Type)**

<b>Cultural service &amp; overall scoring</b>	<b>How provided</b>
<b>Sense of place</b> <b>High</b>	Provided by:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overriding spontaneous affinity with farmland,</li> <li>• rolling fields and hedges, and a ‘rural’ look</li> <li>• dense network of sunken winding lanes with high flower covered banks</li> <li>• fields of different shapes and sizes surrounded by hedgebanks</li> <li>• rural buildings with thatched roofs, some with compacted soil (cob) walls, and some with red buildings stone</li> <li>• villages and a rural way of life</li> <li>• the coast and estuaries</li> <li>• strong associations with the County</li> </ul>
<b>Tranquillity / calm</b> <b>Medium</b>	Although the landscape is perceived to have a strongly rural character, it is not seen as particularly tranquil- a perception that is borne out by the CPRE Intrusion Map 2007 identifies 6% of the NCA as urban, 58% as disturbed and 36% as undisturbed. the highest scores for tranquillity are found in the rural areas,
<b>Inspiration</b> <b>High</b>	Linked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A landscape where the aesthetic quality of the undulating hills, lanes and hedgebanks and a pervading sense of nature offer strong inspiration with local poets and painters</li> </ul>
<b>Feeling spiritual</b> <b>High</b>	Linked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leylines and more distant views to nearby uplands and iconic hills</li> <li>• the coast (experiencing weather)</li> </ul>
<b>Leisure &amp; Activity</b> <b>High</b>	Strong associations with recreation, leisure and touring, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good access to facilities, and villages that offer pubs and tea shops.</li> <li>• active recreation associated with the coast, estuaries and their shallow water moorings</li> <li>• coastal path,</li> <li>• recreational opportunities lying immediately outside the NCA – borrowed recreation opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Escapism</b> <b>Medium</b>	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the coast</li> <li>• ‘borrowed’ sense of wildness’ instilled by adjacent moorlands</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of History</b> <b>Medium</b>	Associated with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strongly medieval landscape</li> <li>• Its historic villages</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b> <b>High</b>	Strong associations with learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a University city</li> <li>• well established field centres</li> <li>• strong association with leisure and recreation</li> </ul>



**Table 11.3: Example: Cultural services provided by the 'test' NCA  
 (117 Avon Vales in the Vales and Valleys Landscape Type)**

Cultural service & overall scoring	How provided
<p><b>Sense of place</b>                      High/Medium/Low</p>	<p>Provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong historical associations</li> <li>• Strong towns</li> <li>• Kennet and Avon Canal</li> <li>• White horses (borrowed)</li> <li>• Woodland cover</li> <li>• Hedgerows, largely an Enclosure landscape</li> </ul> <p>However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> <li>• Fewer hills within the NCA</li> <li>• Difficult to judge 'affinity' with farming – description doesn't mention 'farmsteads'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tranquillity / calm</b>                      High/Medium/Low</p>	<p>Associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rivers</li> <li>• K&amp;A Canal</li> <li>• Woodland cover</li> </ul> <p>However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> <li>• Fewer high places within the NCA</li> <li>• Less water</li> <li>• A lower tranquillity score of benchmark (busier roads, many industrial sites)</li> <li>• More towns, fewer villages?</li> <li>• Less pasture land?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inspiration</b>                      High/Medium/Low</p>	<p>Linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of the Chalk Downs to the east</li> <li>• Views from the Downs over the NCA</li> <li>• Woodland cover</li> </ul> <p>However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No cliffs, crags, coast</li> <li>• Lower land and less hilly</li> <li>• Gentle rivers and Kennet and Avon Canal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feeling spiritual</b>                      High/Medium/Low</p>	<p>Linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rivers and canal</li> <li>• Woodland</li> <li>• Distant views of 'ancient hills' and white horses on the scarp face of the Chalk Downs overlooking the Vale</li> </ul> <p>However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> <li>• No high land</li> <li>• No moorland</li> </ul>

Cultural service & overall scoring	How provided
<b>Leisure &amp; Activity</b> <b>High/Medium/Low</b>	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kennet and Avon Canal</li> <li>• Parks and gardens (Longleat)</li> <li>• Ancient towns and villages</li> <li>• Woodland (especially good access)</li> <li>• Borrowing from nearby Downs?</li> </ul> However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> <li>• Fewer hills</li> <li>• Fewer ancient monuments</li> </ul>
<b>Escapism</b> <b>High/Medium/Low</b>	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rivers and Kennet and Avon Canal</li> <li>• Borrowed from surrounding hills</li> <li>• Many footpaths</li> <li>• Field systems</li> </ul> However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> <li>• No nearby moorland</li> <li>• Fewer nature reserves and woodlands</li> <li>• Difficult to 'get away from it all' as a reflection of tranquillity levels</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of History</b> <b>High/Medium/Low</b>	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic houses</li> <li>• Medieval buildings, market towns</li> <li>• Kennet and Avon Canal</li> <li>• Barrows</li> <li>• Ancient hills (borrowed)</li> <li>• White horses (borrowed)</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b> <b>High/Medium/Low</b>	Associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Forest</li> <li>• Towns/villages</li> <li>• History of the area</li> <li>• Kennet and Avon Canal</li> </ul> However compared to the 'benchmark' NCA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No coast</li> </ul>

**Box 11.2**

**Usefulness of the compendium of statistical data and other information for each NCA in the identification of cultural services**

**Landscape designations:** Statistical information very useful in helping to understand the 'special' nature of the NCA – as well as for making comparisons between NCAs in the same Landscape Type.

**Geology:** Best understood from the NCA description. Really only relevant in the extent to which it influences elevation.

**Topography:** Best information is provided by the NCA description and mapping of topography which will be available in the published map. This will also allow overlaying of other data layers over the topography helping inform likely visibility of different features. Personal experience of the area helps if available.

**Coast:** Best information provided by the NCA description – acknowledged that the coast was often sold short in the original descriptions – the aim is that this will be addressed in the updated NCA descriptions with more provided on the character of the coastline.

**Rivers:** Statistical information on length of water courses in the NCA is useful although the most thorough information is provided by the Environment Agency Map of all Water Courses – to be added to the published map. But information is needed on the nature of the rivers concerned. There's a world of a difference between the young, rushing river and the mature river that meanders through water meadows. Information on waterfalls or rapids would also be very useful. This information is not necessarily covered in the current NCA descriptions but should be covered in the updated descriptions.

**Lakes and reservoirs:** No national data layers or statistical information is currently available. Nor are these currently covered consistently in the NCA descriptions - the aim is to address this in the updated descriptions.

**Woodland:** Statistical information on the type and % cover of woodland within the NCA is very useful. This needs to be compared with the relative woodland cover in other NCAs, especially within the same Landscape Type. Also need to consider the location and visibility of the woodland – informed by the published map and the written NCA descriptions.

**Agriculture:** In the first eight pilot NCAs this information has been provided in detail from an analysis of the June Agricultural Survey but it will be some time before this information is available across all NCAs (potentially through CQuEL). In the meantime a datalayer is being sought to identify % cover of arable and pasture in each NCA – this will be very valuable in defining the cultural services.

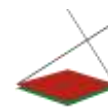
**Field pattern and field boundaries:** There is no mapped or statistical information by NCA on these important characteristics for the cultural services. Information is best taken from the NCA descriptions although this will be qualitative rather than quantitative.

**Key habitats:** Very useful statistical information is available for each NCA especially as the data specifically relates to habitats of national importance (BAP Priority Habitats and sites of national (SSSIs) and international importance (the Natura 2000 sites)). This information is especially valuable in a comparative sense between NCAs.

**Villages:** The character of villages is best identified from the written descriptions.

**Historic environment:** The statistical information on the number of nationally designated sites is very useful (all the sites listed in the statistical data are of national or international importance). The names of the sites listed helps identify those of iconic status and those that are readily recognised by a lay audience.

**Country Lanes:** The character of the country lanes is best taken from the written descriptions.



**Box 11.2**

**cont/**

**Access/Rights of Way:** The statistical information is very useful, especially that on the density of the rights of way network, particularly when comparing one NCA with another.

**Tranquility and Intrusion:** The published map on tranquility and intrusion, and supporting statistical data, is very useful in a comparative sense, particularly that relating to the relative levels of disturbance (identified through the Intrusion Map). The statistics from the Intrusion Map are also very helpful in identifying the urban area within each NCA and how this has changed in percentage terms since the 1960s.

Overall, it is clear that the most useful statistical information is that which allows comparison between NCAs i.e. where the data is expressed as % landcover within each NCA. For comparative purposes it is also useful that the statistical information for biodiversity and historic features relates specifically to areas and sites of national importance.

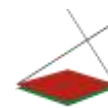
**Borrowed services:** The collective NCA information may not always help in fully understanding the 'borrowed' services (the services provided by neighbouring landscapes that are visible from the NCA but not within it). The updated NCA descriptions will provide a brief summary of the surrounding NCAs. Currently this is available in draft form in the text that supports the Interim NCA Objectives under the heading 'Physical and Functional Links with other NCAs'. Nevertheless, these descriptions may not always capture the intervisibility between NCAs and here personal experience and local knowledge are likely to be

### Issues arising when considering the scoring

Clearly, the qualitative understanding of the cultural services provided through this social research does not provide easy metrics that can be applied when it comes to identifying the score that should be attached to each cultural service in each NCA. Particular issues are:

**Tipping points:** When 'scoring' the 'test' NCA there is the difficult issue of deciding at what point a cultural service (which may, for example, be 'high' in the 'benchmark' NCA) is delivered at a different level (i.e. becomes 'medium' or low'). In other words, what are the tipping points? One way of achieving consistency and rigour for this is addressed in 11.5 below.

**Combining features into a single score:** There are also issues of weighting the different features to arrive at a single 'cultural service' score. How do you combine features into a single score for a particular cultural service? Again, this challenge is discussed through section 11.5 below.





**A note on scoring the cultural services**

**Box 11.3**

The categories of High, Medium and Low used to describe the cultural services through this research reflect how strongly people felt about landscape types/features or about a place. The scale describes how well the landscape type/feature or NCA 'performs' in delivering each cultural service as people perceive it. It is qualitative and so there is no 'cut-off point' as such - it is a tool for the researchers to analyse the findings across the sample, and for other parties to get a feel for the range and position of the findings.

**High:** High has been used where there is a strong consensus, with strong feelings expressed spontaneously about something or dramatic language used, making it relatively straightforward for researchers to come to a conclusion about the connection between the feature/NCA and the cultural service.

**Medium:** With a medium score there is usually a more mixed picture with opposing views expressed or perhaps people being fairly non-descript in the way they talked, or saying they were relatively happy about something but not overly excited.

**Low:** A low score is often where something has failed to register very much or is not talked about spontaneously.

**None:** No score is where people can't see a link even when probed or where a feature or landscape is seen as having a negative effect on the provision of a particular service.

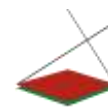
It should be noted that 'Medium-high', and 'medium-low' are also used, making it a six-category scale.

## 11.5 Thoughts and Conclusions

The outcome of the trial of the **Holistic Judgement Approach** that compared the Devon Redlands (benchmark) and Avon Vales (test) in the Vales and Valleys Landscape Type; and the Dark Peak (benchmark) and Bowland Fells (test) in the Uplands Landscape Type – further confirms that we cannot simply assume that one NCA in any given landscape type is equivalent to another in terms of the cultural services that each delivers. This supports the research findings from the Yorkshire Wolds and North Downs examined during Phase I (that both fall within the same landscape type, yet deliver different levels of services).

Having a benchmark to work from, however, does help significantly – we believe it would have been very difficult to develop an understanding of cultural service delivery on the basis of NCA-specific information alone for the 'un-researched' (test) NCAs. The benchmark provides a frame of reference, and a basis for scoring the cultural services – it is not done 'in a vacuum'. However, there remains the question of how representative the benchmark NCA is of that particular Landscape Type (for example, the coastal element of the Devon Redlands was important for many high-scoring cultural services in that NCA). The absence of coast in the Avon Vales made some comparisons difficult, therefore.

The approach has been applied at the level of the National Character Area, but could equally be applied to **landscapes at different scales**, particularly in a local context. It would obviously require the landscape in question to be a coherent entity – and for there to exist the requisite information for the area and at the scale in question (datasets of features, maps and photographs).



**Scoring and recognising the tipping points:** Since the key output of this exercise is a score for each cultural service within each NCA, the 'tipping-point' issue is a crucial one. We believe that the decisions here would become easier and more obvious with greater experience of carrying out the process, which might imply that there would be benefits from examining many NCAs within the same Landscape Type at a similar time – it may, in fact, be an iterative process. Having more and better information would no doubt help too.

**A quantitative approach:** As has already been discussed earlier in this Chapter, there is the issue of whether the identification of services by NCA could be automated in some way using quantitative data on landscape features alone. We would judge that this approach would have significant limitations. Not only are there the various information/data problems set out earlier, but the importance of the ('qualitative') written descriptions – and personal experience – suggests that an expert judgement may be the only appropriate way forward.

### **Expert Judgement – the Conditions Required**

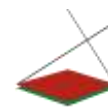
Key issues that need to be considered in using an 'expert-judgement' approach include the following:

1. *ensuring a robustness of outcome* when the appraisal process is a wholly qualitative one (albeit fed with quantitative data)
2. *ensuring that all the relevant information has been made available*, used and interpreted correctly
3. *ensuring that the 'correct' decisions have been made*. Might a form of moderation be necessary? Would a different expert have arrived at the same outcome?
4. *ensuring a nationally comparable assessment* if the experts are solely from the local area or the region. It is important to rule out bias (especially to favour the area) and to ensure they are able to consider the area in a full national context
5. *ensuring that it is a nationally comparable gross assessment of the services* that is not influenced by the populations served.

**The number of people making the judgements:** These become particularly pertinent questions the more 'expert judges' there are. Clearly more than one person is needed to ensure rigour and to minimise any bias in approach or outlook. A larger team could be unwieldy and also give rise to the above issues coming into play, thus an experienced tight-knit team may be the best compromise and offer the most pragmatic approach.

Taking into account the experience of this process to test the approach, we conclude that the expert judgement approach is a valid way forward, which could offer a robust and pragmatic approach. The process would require:

- a small experienced team;
- knowledge of the areas in question amongst the collective team, but not a bias



towards any particular area;

- familiarity with the national context.

Nevertheless, the outcome of this 'expert judgement' process suggests that it would be possible to derive a cultural service score, and the determinants of that score, for each of the cultural services within England's National Character Areas.



## The Holistic Judgement Approach – a way forward

Bearing in mind the current programme for updating the NCAs, there could be a case for a three-step approach:

1. Based on the findings of Phases 1 and II of this research, preparation of:
  - a Master Table or checklist of the landscape features and characteristics that are most associated with the provision of each of the eight cultural services
  - a Table of the cultural services provided by each of the 14 'benchmark' NCAs considered through the two phases of this research (as illustrated in **Table 11.2**).
2. During the NCA updating process (under the description of the potential cultural services) identification of those landscape characteristics and features within each NCA that are likely to contribute to the provision of each cultural service. Separate guidance would be required building on the Master Table noted above on those features and characteristics that are most associated with each cultural service. This would take the form of a checklist of potential features and characteristics for each cultural service.
3. Application of the Holistic Judgement Approach as recommended above involving:
  - checking and refinement of the evidence provided under (2) above.
  - followed by scoring of each cultural service within each NCA.

The one issue is that under the current programme for the NCA updating, priority NCAs will be selected for updating first in each region, meaning that the idea of tackling Landscape Types in turn in the identification of cultural services could not be achieved unless the final assessment of cultural service delivery was left until the end of the updating process.

