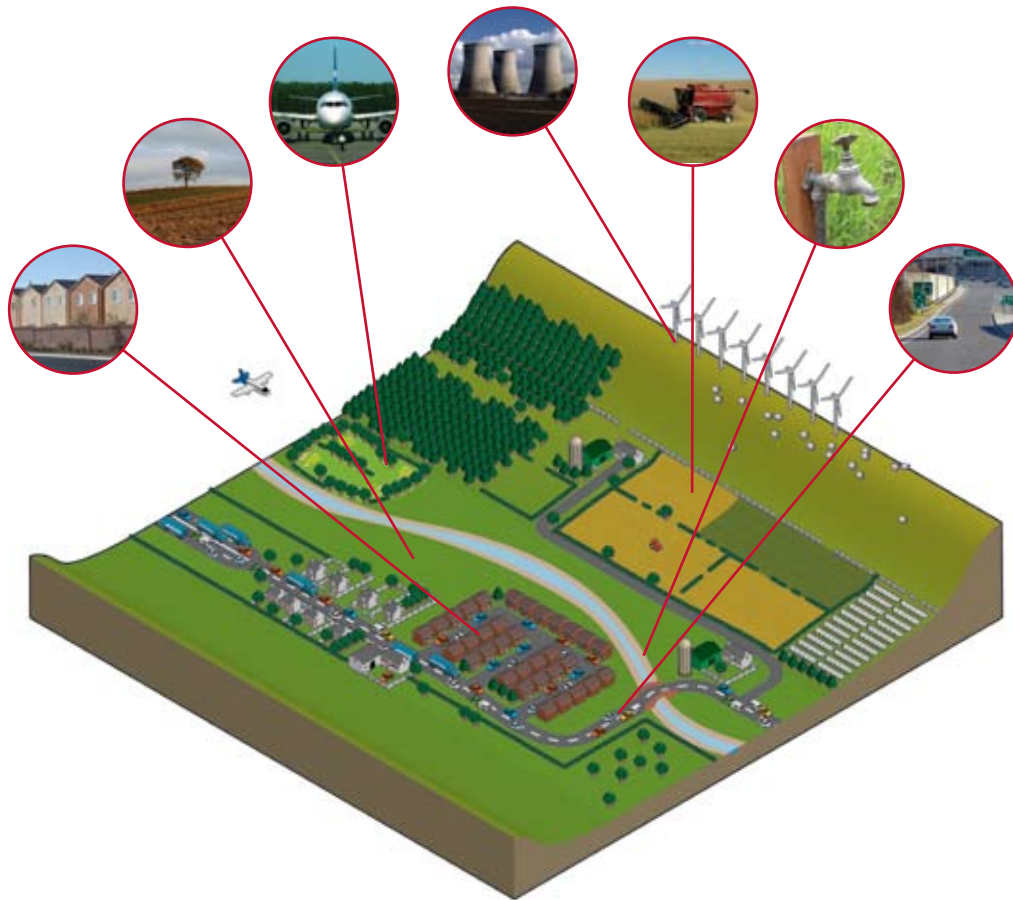


A Less Sustainable Future?

In a less sustainable future, the ability to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment is challenged by changing social demands, strong market forces, and natural forces such as climate change. Whilst a more extreme scenario, this illustration shows a landscape whose character is being transformed, biodiversity declining and water courses affected.



Development

Increased number of houses that do not reflect local building form, design or character. Increase in isolated development, such as residential conversion.



Biodiversity

Intensive farming provides fewer habitats for wildlife leading to a decline in biodiversity.



Leisure

Increased affluence and demand for leisure and holidays leads to an increase in air travel and recreational land.



Energy

High energy demands create a need for industrial-scale wind turbine developments and more power stations, which are poorly located in the landscape.



Agriculture

More dominant arable farming on a larger scale with enlarged fields. Hedges are fragmented; stone wall boundaries derelict; forestry contains little broadleaf.



Water

Increased water demand for housing and industrial farming leads to a reduction in river flow and ground water levels.



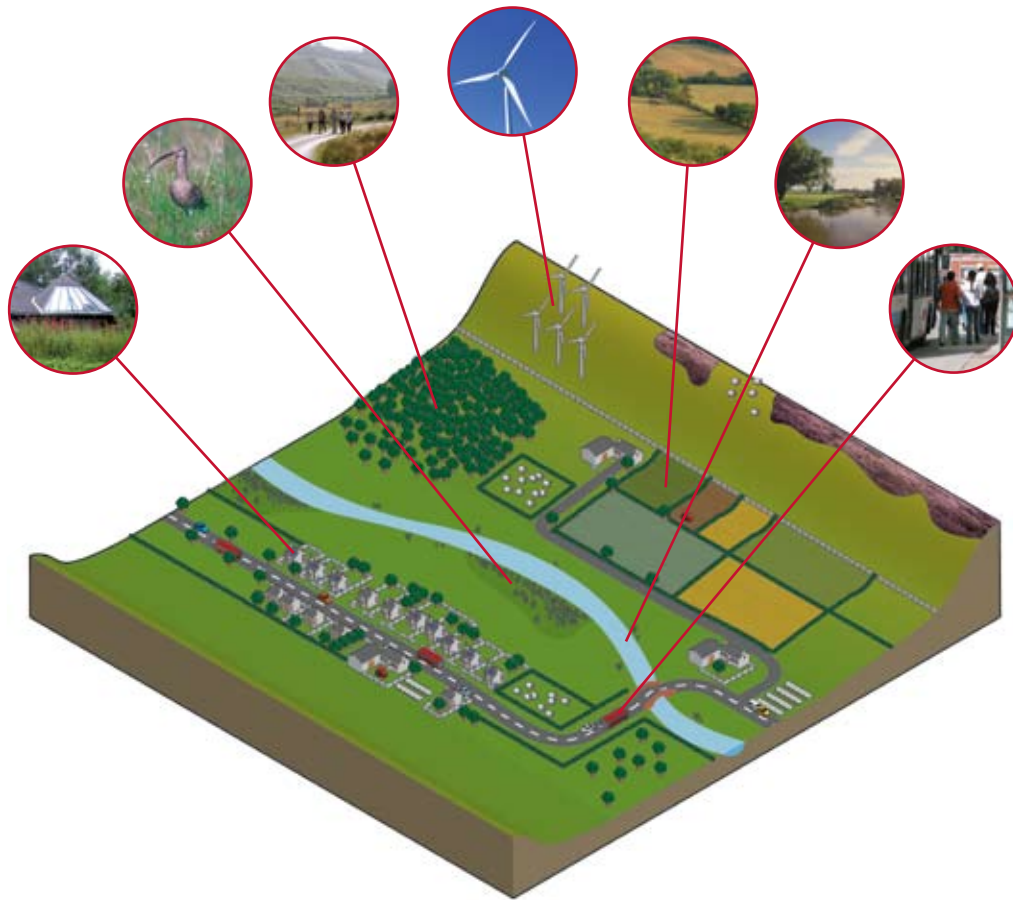
Transport

Increasing car ownership and miles travelled, leading to a demand for road building and a decline in tranquillity.



A More Sustainable Future?

In a more sustainable future, the conservation, adaptation and enhancement of the natural and built environment is better integrated and managed to meet society's needs and respond to forces for change, but within environmental limits. Whilst a more ideal scenario, this illustration shows a landscape where a sense of place is being enhanced, biodiversity is increasing and a healthy local economy is supported.



Development

Development creates a new vernacular style, blending locally distinctive elements with innovative technology, such as turbines and solar cells.



Biodiversity

Environmental farming practices help to create and maintain a wealth of habitats for wildlife, leading to an increase in biodiversity.



Leisure

Better education and information leads to an increase in sustainable tourism, which reduces the desire for air travel and land dedicated solely to recreation.



Energy

Society moderates its energy use and there is an increase in sustainable power sources, such as sensitively located wind-farms and micro-generation.



Agriculture

Farming with an emphasis on stewardship of the environment, delivering a wide range of produce for local markets.



Water

Good water management and sustainable drainage systems help to mitigate extreme events of flood and drought.



Transport

Better provision of public transport, leading to decreased road traffic and less pollution.



Visions of the Future



Opportunities and Challenges

We all have a role in helping to shape our future landscapes and what they provide. The directions we take and the choices we make create both opportunities and challenges.

Future needs may mean that some landscapes might be different from the character of rural and urban that we experience today; new landscapes may also be created to meet or adapt to the new challenges that lie ahead. Other landscapes may be conserved, restored or enhanced to unlock previous functions and strengthen their character and biodiversity.

Some important questions to consider ...

- What should our landscapes provide in the future?
- How should we get involved with and guide their development?
- Where do we need to protect, conserve, enhance or even create new landscapes?
- Should we have clearer objectives, targets or visions for our landscapes to aim for?
- How can we balance the needs and wants of 21st century society, so as to create distinctive, ecologically rich and sustainable landscapes that can be enjoyed by everybody, now and in the future?

Our landscapes will continue to evolve and change over time in response to natural forces and human needs. However, we have the opportunity to help steer change positively and influence the shape and function of our landscapes. We need to plan, create and manage landscapes that help to sustain our natural environment, as well as provide wider public benefit and enjoyment.

To do this we need:

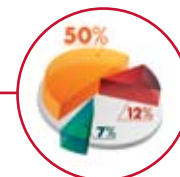
Evidence for Today

Understand the existing characteristics, functions, qualities and condition of different landscapes and habitats, and how these are valued by society.



Evidence for Tomorrow

Monitor and understand current trends and the future drivers of change.



Foresight

Think about what functions and resources will be required in the future for both people and nature.



Innovation

Envisioning and exploring different future scenarios for landscapes that can better adapt and respond to changing needs and circumstances, as well as provide a sense of place.



Action and Advice

Influence others, raise awareness, provide advice and work directly with stakeholders to establish sustainable approaches to conserving, managing and enhancing our future landscapes.



Natural England

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Bill received Royal Assent on the 30th March 2006. The resulting NERC Act has led to the creation two new organisations charged with conserving and enhancing England's natural environment, and giving a stronger voice to rural communities.

Natural England will be an integrated agency with responsibility for the natural environment, uniting English Nature, most of the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency Landscape, Access and Recreation division in a single organisation. Natural England will work for people, places and nature, with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity and landscapes in rural, urban and coastal areas, and for promoting access and recreation. Its aim is to provide an integrated approach to sustainable land management, enhancement and the use of the natural environment.

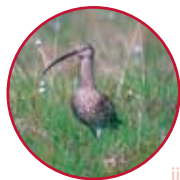
Among other measures, the act will also formally established the Commission for Rural Communities, formerly an operating division of the Countryside Agency, as a rural advisor, advocate and watchdog charged with tackling rural disadvantage.

Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities will be formally established in October 2006. English Nature and the Countryside Agency will cease to exist on the same date.

We may be changing, but our skills, knowledge and enthusiasm will continue to benefit people in rural England.



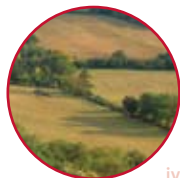
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Further Information

For more information about landscape and landscape character, visit the Landscape Character Network (LCN) website at www.landscapecharacter.org.uk

For further copies of this booklet telephone 0870 120 6466 or email countryside@twoten.press.net

