



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION GUIDANCE PART 1:

What does it mean for your organisation?



**GUIDELINES
FOR IMPLEMENTING THE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE
CONVENTION**

**PART I:
WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR
YOUR ORGANISATION?**

**Prepared for Natural England
by
Land Use Consultants**

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I.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ELC GUIDELINES

The guidelines are set out in three parts:

Part 1: The ELC – What does it mean for your organisation?

Part 2: Integrating the intent of the ELC into Plans, Policies and Strategies

Part 3: Preparing an ELC Action Plan

This is **Part 1** of the guidelines.

Purpose of the Guidelines

- I.1. The purpose of these guidelines is to explain and interpret the European Landscape Convention (ELC). They aim to make the ELC more meaningful and relevant to a wide range of organisations and describe the possible actions that individual organisations can take.
- I.2. They cover two specific aspects:

Integrating the intent of the ELC into plans, policies and strategies (PART 2 of the Guidelines);

Preparing an ELC Action Plan (PART 3 of the Guidelines).

Format of the Guidelines

- I.3. Part 2 and Part 3 presents broad generic guidance which interprets the measures of the ELC, and is applicable to a wide range of organisations that have potential to have a direct or indirect impact on landscape. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive; they are flexible and can be adapted to meet specific needs. Neither are they compulsory since the UK is considered to be broadly compliant with the ELC. These guidelines set out ways to strengthen and enhance consideration of landscape. This in turn can bring considerable benefits to organisations in meeting their own agendas against current economic, social and environmental drivers.

Why landscape?

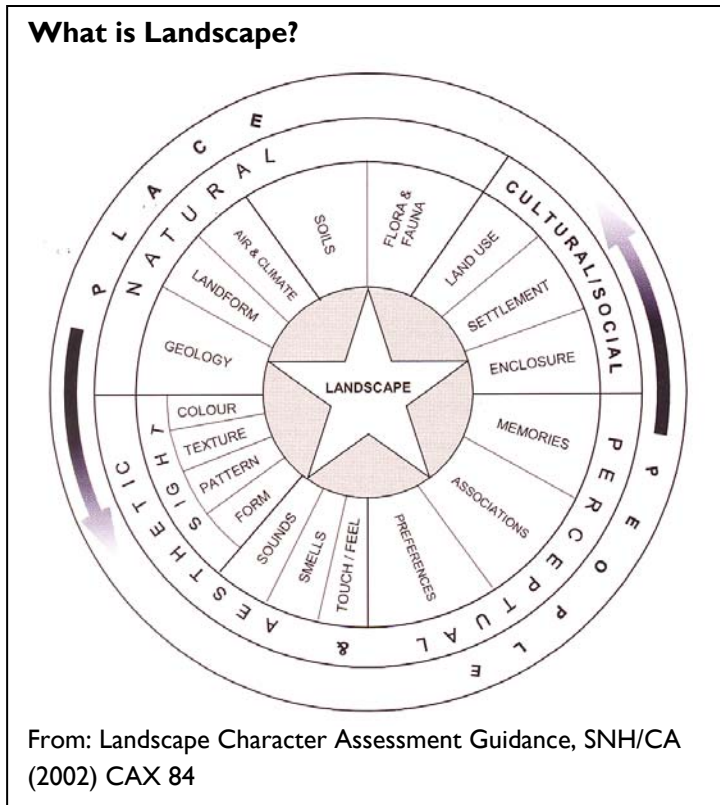
- I.4. At the outset is important to understand what we mean by 'landscape'.
- I.5. The guidelines flow from the broad definition of landscape set out in the Convention text:

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

- I.6. The approach in these guidelines is in line with Natural England’s overarching Landscape Policy (2008). It considers landscape as an integrating framework encompassing and embracing the interactions of natural, cultural and perceptual attributes (see diagram below). Landscape is the context for, and consequence of,

decision-making and provides the spatial framework through which we plan and manage change.

- 1.7. Throughout the guidelines the word landscape is used inclusively as defined by the ELC. Townscape and Seascape are encompassed within the definition and these terms are not used separately.

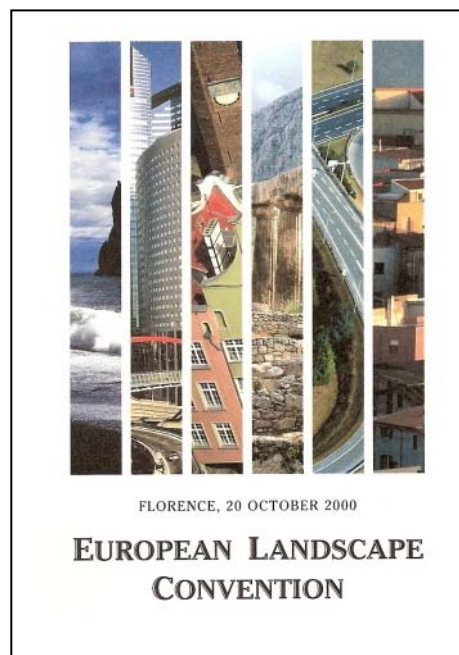


Part I

- 1.8. As an introduction to these guidelines **PART I** (this section) provides a briefing on:
- The European Landscape Convention – what it is and what it does;
 - The importance of landscape and why it should be considered by your organisation;
 - How these guidelines can help.

2.0 BACKGROUND ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

- 2.1. The ELC is the first international instrument to deal in an integrated manner with the whole landscape. It provides an international context for landscape, placing this important resource alongside biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- 2.2. The ELC is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe. It is a Treaty and not an EU Directive. The convention is binding on the states that sign it; it is drafted in a flexible manner allowing individual states to interpret it in their own way to achieve its overall aims. It therefore seeks to influence rather than direct.
- 2.3. The ELC was signed by the UK government in February 2006, ratified in November 2006 and came into effect in March 2007.



The ELC definition of landscape

- 2.4. The convention adopts a broad definition of landscape:
“landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”
- 2.5. This is a purposely non-scientific definition that should resonate widely.
 - Landscape is important, not as just scenery or a backdrop, but because it links culture with nature, and past with present.
 - Landscape has many values not all of them tangible; it matters to, and is valued by, people and provides a context for people’s lives.
 - It puts emphasis on the whole landscape not just the ‘best bits’ and applies to all landscapes everywhere and in any condition – land, inland water, inter-tidal, marine, natural, rural, urban and peri-urban, outstanding, ordinary and degraded.
 - The ELC is forward looking in its approach, and recognises the dynamic nature of landscape – with an emphasis on management of change and creating new landscapes as well as managing the landscapes that we inherit.

What does the convention do?

- 2.6. Implementation of the Convention is, mainly, through ELC Articles 5 and 6. In short, the Convention highlights the need to develop policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscape. Raising awareness of the landscape is an important thread running through all these areas. It also encourages the integration

of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.

2.7. Specific measures promoted by the Convention, include:

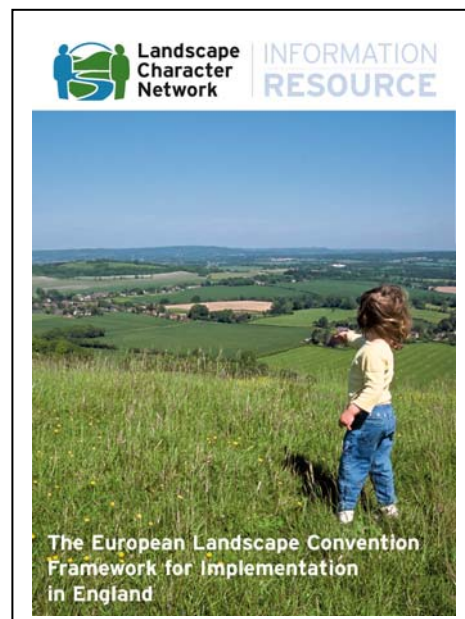
- the recognition of landscape in law;
- the identification and assessment of landscape, and analysis of landscape change, with the active participation of stakeholders;
- setting objectives for landscape quality, with the involvement of the public;
- the implementation of landscape policies, through the establishment of plans and practical programmes for the protection, management and planning of landscape;
- improved consideration of and integration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation;
- monitoring what is happening to the landscape;
- raising awareness of the value of landscape among all sectors of society, and of society's role in shaping it;
- promoting landscape training and education among landscape specialists, other related professions, and in school and university courses;
- European co-operation.

2.8. The guidelines in PART 1 and PART 2 of this report interpret the Articles of the ELC in simple plain language and seek to make them meaningful to individual organisations.

Implementation of the ELC in England – The Framework

2.9. The lead government department for the ELC is Defra. Defra has established a small England Project group (EPG) comprising Defra, Natural England and English Heritage to assist in delivering the broad outcomes of the ELC. An overall strategy – A Framework for Implementation in England has been drawn up (see <http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/elc>).

2.10. The ELC Framework for Implementation seeks to strengthen the protection, management and planning of landscapes in England by providing a structure for Action Plans of partners and stakeholders.



- 2.11. The main actions derived from the convention are:
- improving performance within the current legal and regulatory framework;
 - influencing future legislation, regulation, advice, including contributing to gap analysis;
 - improving the understanding of landscape character and dynamics, and the monitoring of change and trends;
 - engaging people through comprehensive and accessible awareness and understanding activities, as well as through promotion, education and training;
 - sharing experience and best practice.
- 2.12. In the words of the Framework, success will be demonstrated by the following outcome: *“all England’s diverse landscapes to be valued and well looked after, ... all landscapes will be more effectively planned, well-designed and sensitively managed with people in mind.”*
- 2.13. Action Plans, setting out how an organisation will engage with and deliver the objectives of the ELC have been produced by Natural England, English Heritage and the National Forest Company. The process of preparing these plans highlighted the need for some more specific guidance.

3.0 WHY IS LANDSCAPE IMPORTANT?

- 3.1. This section considers why landscape is important, why it should be considered and whose responsibility it is.
- 3.2. Landscape is of vital importance for many reasons:
- **Landscape is everywhere:** Landscape provides a setting to people's lives, both physically and through memories and associations.
 - **Landscape is the product of human history.** It is the meeting ground between natural and cultural influences. It is constantly changing in response to a myriad of different decisions.
 - **Landscape defines identity and sense of place:** It is central to defining, national, regional, local and personal identity. Differences in landscape character play on all our senses – sight, hearing, smell and taste – day and night and through the seasons.
 - **Landscape is imbued with personal values:** It inspires and can take on spiritual values. These values change and evolve.
 - **Landscape provides a sense of continuity:** Despite change it provides continuity in people's lives, linking the past with the present and the future.
 - **Landscape provides a wide range of benefits:** It provides goods and services essential for human survival and well-being.

Landscape and sustainable development

- 3.3. Landscape is an essential part of a sustainable future:

Social: Landscape is essential to place making; community cohesion; quality of life; and health and well-being.

Economic: Landscape provides the backdrop to economic activity including recreation and tourism. It is an economic asset and driver of the economy in its own right attracting inward investment and stimulating economic growth;

Environment: How landscape is managed fundamentally affects the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity; cultural heritage; and natural resource protection.

MANAGING LANDSCAPE CHANGE – A RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERYONE

Past landscape change

- 3.4. Landscape is a dynamic, complex system that has changed through history in response to physical processes and human intervention. The English landscape has undergone change both physically and in terms of how it is perceived.

Future landscape change

- 3.5. The rate of change in the future is likely to accelerate further driven by:
- **Climate change** – mitigation (reducing the causes of climate change) and adaptation (adapting to the effects of climate change both naturally and through planned interventions, seeking to minimise adverse effects).

- **Natural processes** – such as flooding, erosion and the changing patterns of disease, all of which are likely to become more extreme with climate change.
- **Technological advancement** – advances in technology in all aspects of life from communication and energy production to food growing.
- **Economic and market trends** – driven by booms / recessions, shifting economic power, globalisation / localisation.
- **Social and cultural trends** – such as demographic change including migration and life expectancy, health, human needs and wants, and changing patterns of living which in combination are likely to lead to increased development.
- **Changing values** - and increasing confidence in our ability to challenge undesired change.
- **Policy and regulatory responses** - International, national, regional and local policy and regulatory responses to all of the above.

3.6. Of course all of the above are strongly inter-related with most changes in the landscape attributable to more than one root cause.

A responsibility for us all

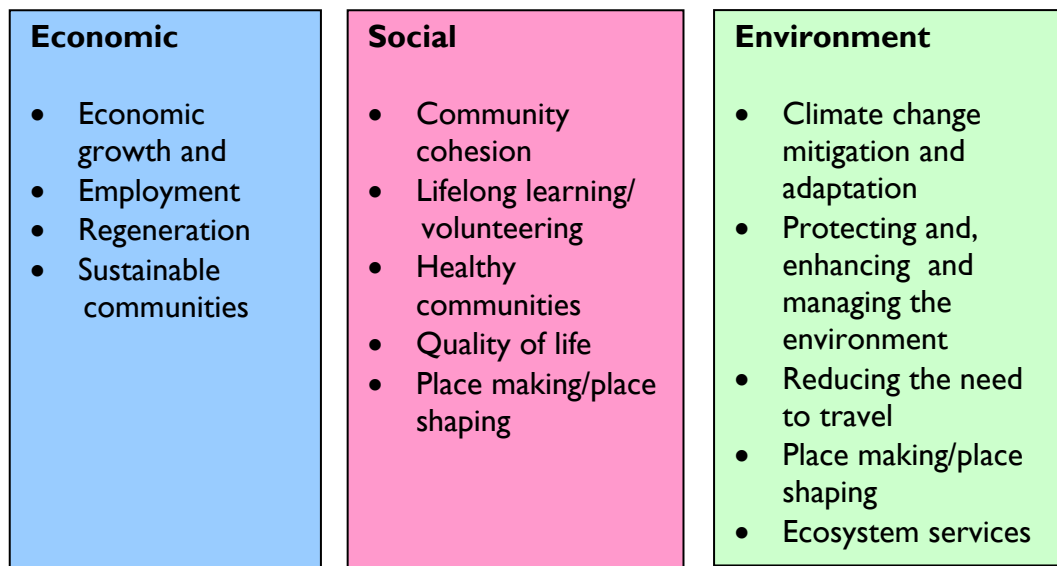
- 3.7. Everyone benefits from properly protected, managed and planned landscape – urban and rural. Landscape is the consequence of a myriad of decisions, both planned and unplanned. Landscape is experienced and enjoyed by most, affected by many but managed by only a few. Landscapes are assumed: often taken for granted: expected to absorb the hits.
- 3.8. But the ELC makes it clear that the protection, management and planning of all landscape in Europe is a task not just for governments but for all sectors of civil society, entailing ‘rights and responsibilities for everyone’. In other words we all share a responsibility for the landscapes we have.
- 3.9. Shaping the future therefore is a task for all. Compared to the past, we are now in a much better position to take an informed view about the impact of any changes on the landscape. The character of the landscape is now much better understood from the national to the local level. We are also beginning to understand the essential functions (or ecosystem services) performed by different components of the landscape in regulating the wider environment – such as in helping build new soils, assisting in flood control, preventing soil erosion, storing carbon, purifying water and so on.
- 3.10. Climate change and its consequences, combined with increased development and other changes, mean that we must take a pro-active role in protecting, managing and planning the landscape for the future, if it is to continue to contribute to quality of life and well-being and provide the goods and services ultimately essential for human survival.
- 3.11. This is the central challenge for the future – to identify how services necessary for long term sustainability can be delivered in ways that reflect public values that enhance local distinctiveness and sense of place.

- 3.12. The following chapter shows how engagement with the ELC can help organisations take a shared responsibility for landscape, and in so doing achieve their own sustainable development aims.

4.0 WHY IS LANDSCAPE RELEVANT TO YOUR ORGANISATION?

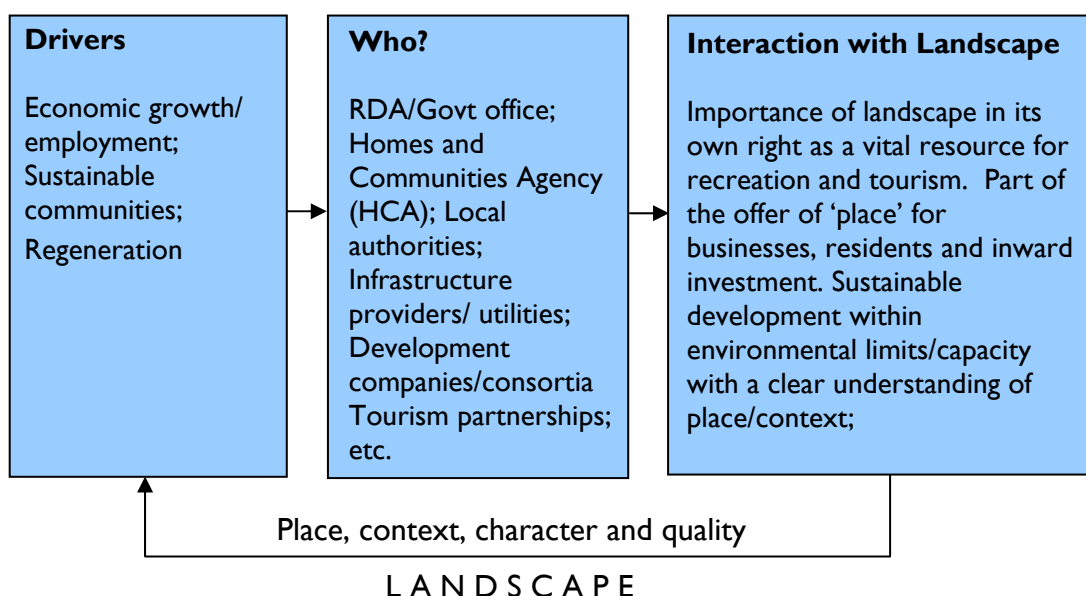
- 4.1. Landscape is a contributor and context to a wide range of agendas and is an essential part of a sustainable future.

Some of the national policy priorities and drivers are set out below:

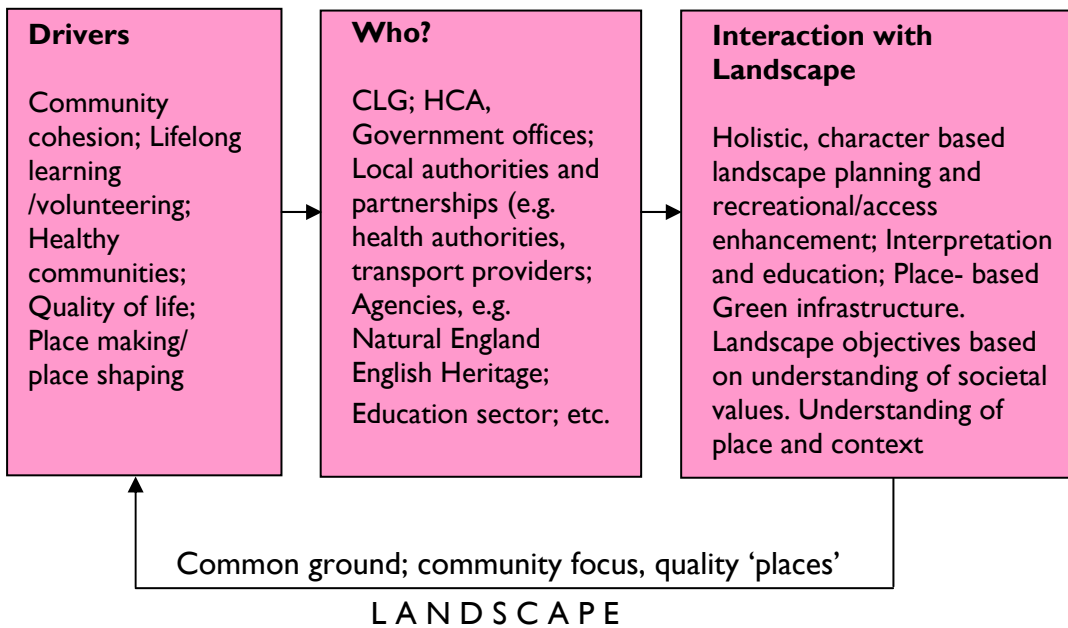


- 4.2. Early engagement with, and understanding of the landscape, can bring considerable benefits to organisations and help them achieve against their own drivers and agendas.
- 4.3. Some examples of the main drivers, the range of organisations they impact on and illustrations of how engagement with landscape can help are set out below.

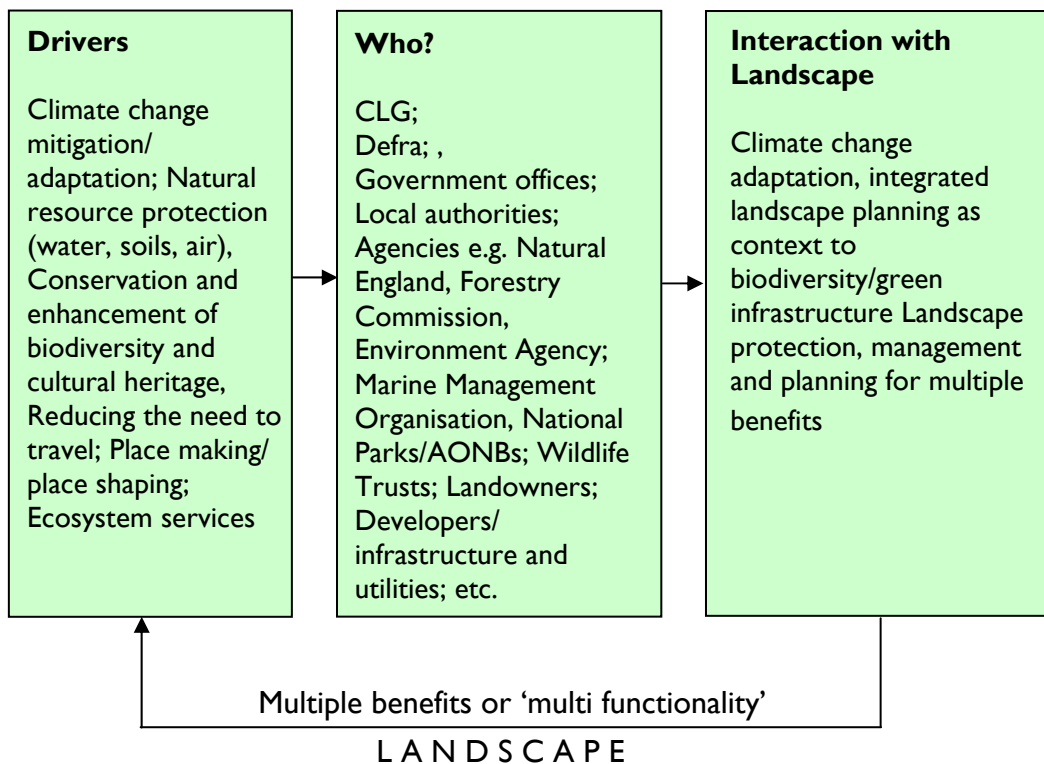
Economic



Social



Environment



Some examples of drivers for, and benefits of, engaging with landscape

- 4.4. In July 2007 the Government, through the Treasury, launched a review of sub-national economic development and regeneration (**SNR**). This introduced a requirement for new **Single Integrated Regional Strategies (SIRS)**. The SIRS will set out for each region a vision of how and where sustainable economic growth should be delivered and take an integrated approach to agreeing social, economic and environmental priorities for each region. There is an opportunity for landscape to move up the agenda as part of the evidence base at the regional scale and help shape the vision of how and where development should take place.
- 4.5. **The Sustainable Communities Plan (2003)** recognises the need for well planned and imaginatively designed green infrastructure and public space as an integral part of sustainable development. The **Growth Points Initiative (2005)** is based on the co-ordination of housing delivery with the planning of infrastructure including **green infrastructure**. These initiatives offer a more integrated way of thinking about landscape at the outset in planning for change.
- 4.6. **DCLG's Place Making agenda (2007)** puts place at the heart of decision-making. The concept of **place-making** is embedded in **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)**. PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) makes clear that *"the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, in both rural and urban areas"* and that planning policies are needed that will help to *"protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole"*. Throughout the text there is emphasis on the links between the quality and character of our surroundings and quality of life. The need to consider the impact of development on landscape quality as well as the need for high quality design which will add to the overall character and quality of an area is a strong theme. For local authorities a clear understanding of the landscape context can help move from the generic policies to create a spatial vision and strategy within the Core strategy which is rooted in the locality.
- 4.7. **PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas** stresses the need for continued protection and management of valued landscapes, especially those designated for their 'natural beauty'. It calls for respect, protection and enhancement of the wider countryside, for its intrinsic character and quality, including its character, local distinctiveness and diversity and recommends the use of criteria-based policies informed by tools such as landscape character assessment.
- 4.8. **Place shaping** is a new term (introduced by the Lyons Inquiry¹) "the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well being of a community and its citizens. It is about creating attractive prosperous, vibrant, safe and strong communities where people want to live and work and do business. While this is in part about public services, the 'surroundings' and 'sense of place' are clearly relevant.
- 4.9. **Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS)** are long term planning documents for improving quality of life and services in a local area. Their purpose is to set the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the economic, social and environmental well being of an area. They are described as telling the 'story of a place'. The landscape context is key to understanding place and there is potential for

¹ The Lyons Report on Local Government, 2007

this information to form part of the evidence base for a SCS. This information can then feed into and underpin the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Multi Area Agreements (MAA) and provide ‘common ground’ for making links between different stakeholders and services and contribute to overall quality of life objectives.

- 4.10. At the other end of the scale are the **Public Service Agreements (PSAs)**. The most relevant of these is ‘PSA 28 Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future’ (HM Government, 2007). This agreement is led by Defra and relevant to a wide range of other government departments, agencies, regional and local government and other sectors. It notes that the natural environment plays a vital role in supporting a strong economy and a fairer society. It is important not only for its intrinsic value but also for the wide range of benefits and services it provides for people. It wants to see “*a sustainable, living landscape with best features conserved*”.
- 4.11. The **ecosystem services approach** as a way of thinking about benefits and services is now becoming embedded in government policy. Defra sees the approach as playing an important part in securing a healthy natural environment through a more strategic and integrated approach to assist decision-making at all scales. Ecosystem services are the wide range of valuable benefits that a healthy natural environment provides for people, either directly or indirectly. The benefits range from the essentials for life, including clean air and water, food and fuel, to things that improve our quality of life and wellbeing, such as recreation and quality places and landscape. They also include natural processes, such as climate and flood regulation. Defra is now placing strong emphasis on multi-purpose land use and the integrated management of rural land as a means of delivering ecosystem services. There are very important opportunities to use the emphasis on ecosystem services to ensure the development of multi-functional land use and management that helps secure rich and diverse landscapes fit for the future – matching required functional needs with desired landscapes.
- 4.12. All of the above point to a new more ‘joined up’ way of thinking from the national down to the local and the potential role of landscape or ‘place’ to form the integrating framework.

How does this guidance fit?

- 4.13. The Framework for Implementation has an objective “to promote and co-ordinate actions within the ELC Implementation Framework to key audiences” and contains a specific action to promote the development of Action Plans by others.
- 4.14. The guidelines seek to persuade, encourage and influence others and are targeted at a wide audience. This includes organisations operating at all spatial scales from the international, national to the local. It is relevant to government departments, statutory agencies, national bodies, regional bodies, local authorities as well as non governmental organisations, project or area based initiatives, utility companies and major landowners.

How to use the document?

- 4.15. The guidelines highlight how engaging with the ELC can help your organisation deliver outcomes against current environmental, social and economic drivers.

- 4.16. They provide information on two specific aspects:
- The integration of the ELC approach into plans, policies and strategies (PART 2);
 - The development of an ELC Action Plan (PART 3).
- 4.17. It is expected that this process will help raise the profile of landscape within organisations and give more weight to decisions and actions involving landscape. For those organisations that are not currently intending to prepare an Action Plan it provides guidance on how existing plans, policies and strategies can be aligned more closely with the ELC.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

The full text of the European Landscape Convention and details of its current status and on going work across Europe can be found on the Council of Europe website at: www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/conventions/landscape

The Landscape Character Network provides a ELC resources section containing downloads, information and links relating to the Convention, including: the text of the convention and its explanatory report; the Council of Europe's Guidelines for Implementation of the ELC; the Framework for Implementation of the ELC in England, produced by Natural England with Defra and English Heritage, as well as examples of ELC Action Plans (www.landscapecharacter.org.uk).

Natural England has commissioned 'Research to support the Implementation of the ELC' (Roe, M, Jones, C and Mell, I, 2008). This research is available on the Landscape Character Network website; (<http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/files/pdfs/ELC-NE-Research-March2008.pdf>).

European Networks

Three European networks have been established to pursue the implementation of the ELC:

The **RECEP-ENELC** is an international association of territorial public authorities, under the aegis of the CoE's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (which developed the convention in the first place). It aims to support 'municipalities, counties, regions and any other interested decentralised authorities' in implementing the ELC, and co-operates with the competent international organisations, the EU institutions, the States, the universities, the NGOs and other bodies active in this field (<http://www.recep-enelc.net/>).

Civilscape is a platform for NGOs from all over Europe to work in support of the ELC (http://www.landschapsmanifest.nl/content_fr.php?pageCode=6).

UNISCAPE is the European Network of Universities for the implementation of the ELC. It will support and reinforce scientific interdisciplinary co-operation among European universities regarding landscape issues, especially in the areas of research and teaching (<http://www.uniscape.org/>).