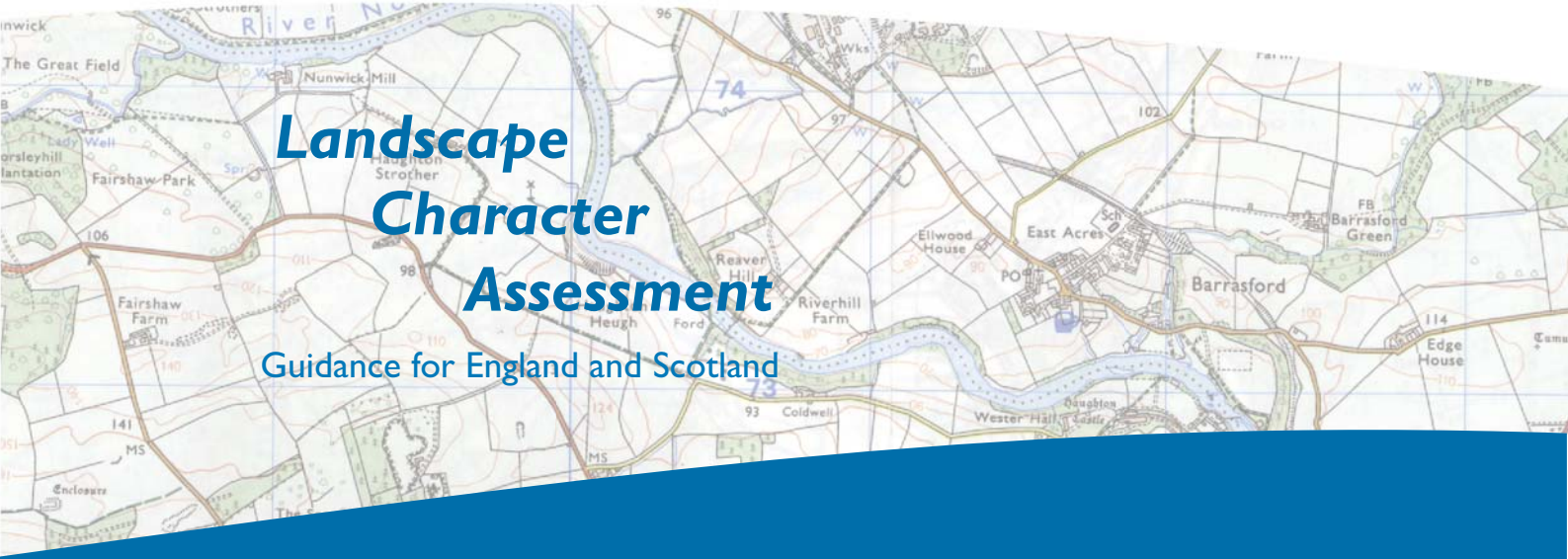
SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

The Countryside Agency



TOPIC PAPER 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character

A paper exploring the relationship between Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation/Historic Land-use Assessment

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

ENGLISH HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION

1. This Topic Paper emphasises the importance of having a sound understanding of the historic character of the landscape when carrying out Landscape Character Assessment. Historic landscape character comprises both the material remains of the past and the perceptions and interpretations that allow us to understand the present day landscape. Human activity over thousands of years has altered and helped define virtually every aspect of the British landscape, even those which are commonly perceived as natural. The remains of the past, and of past landscapes, are also highly significant to present day landscape character.

2. The paper also gives an overview of the aims, methodology and applications of the study of historic landscape character. This is practiced in England and Scotland through separate programmes which have much in common: Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in England and Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) in Scotland. They both have a main purpose of informing and managing change to the historic environment, primarily at landscape scale, they share common theories and approaches, and they can both be used as a context and framework for all other types of historic environment resources. For the purposes of this document they will be jointly referred to as HLC/HLA.

3. There is a close relationship between HLC/HLA and Landscape Character Assessment. The methods used in HLC/HLA are partly derived from those used in Landscape Character Assessment, which facilitates incorporating the results of HLC/HLA into Landscape Character Assessment. HLC/HLA, however, bring to the fore the effect of human activity on the landscape. It takes less account of geology, soils or topography except as a backdrop to human activity, looking instead at ways in which people have interacted with nature, from geology to landcover and leaving more environmentally determined perspectives to Landscape Character Assessment.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4. Human activity has altered and helped define virtually every aspect of the British landscape. This influence is not limited to the built environment and many landscape elements that are commonly perceived as natural have been strongly influenced by human activity. Understanding the importance of cultural factors in shaping our landscapes will inform the management of change in the landscape.

5. An example of the cultural influence on the landscape is the present day distribution of ancient and semi-natural woodland. Such woodland occurs only where it has been actively used by people, or where woodland clearance was too difficult or costly. Much of the ancient woodland in southern England, for instance, stands at parish boundaries or in steep-sided valleys, a distribution that is more strongly related to human activity than natural processes.

6. Few soils in Britain can be considered truly natural and in some cases soils are very strongly influenced by human activity. For example, the alluvial deposits along watercourses contain a large proportion of sediment washed from slopes where woodland clearance had resulted in less stable soils. Beneath these deposits lie the older, earlier gravels. The role of cultural influences in generating apparently natural elements in our long settled landscapes should never be underestimated [1].

7. Thus we can see that human actions in the past, and their evidence in the landscape, are highly significant to present day landscape character. The former Countryside Commission's *Views from the Past* [2] identified the need for attention to historical and archaeological perspectives. Subsequently, free standing programmes to characterise the historic and archaeological dimension of the present-day landscape were embarked upon by English Heritage and Historic Scotland (in conjunction with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland).

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION/HISTORIC LAND-USE ASSESSMENT

Overview

8. There are separate programmes of historic landscape work in England and Scotland. In England, the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Programme is carried out by English Heritage in partnership with local govern-

ment at county, unitary and National Park level. In Scotland, Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) is a joint project undertaken by Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Both programmes are based upon an understanding of the continuity and change that have brought us to the present day landscape. Although intended for independent use, for example in Sites and Monuments Records, in archaeological development control, or for historic landscape research, HLC/HLA can also be integrated with Landscape Character Assessment.

9. HLC/HLA methods were adapted from Landscape Character Assessment, and the two approaches have many similarities. In particular, spatial and map-based approaches were adopted, which almost from the first used Geographical Information System (GIS) technology. An important difference between HLC/HLA and Landscape Character Assessment, however, is that the former is based mainly on Types rather than on the discrete heterogenous areas that forms Landscape Character Assessment's main output. Historic landscape characterisation projects could easily produce their own Character Areas, but they normally refrain from doing so. There are several reasons for this, not least to avoid possible conflict between two sets of differently defined Character Areas, those of HLC and of Landscape Character Assessment. Ideally, Landscape Character Assessment Character Areas will be drawn up to incorporate HLC/HLA conclusions. If (as is often the case) there is an existing set of Character Areas for a given area, HLC/HLA can very straightforwardly be used to amplify their descriptions and recommendations, and to enrich their understanding, by describing their internal diversity, and explaining their history and measuring changes in the past as a guide to future management.

10. The assessment of historic landscape character follows several principles, embraced by the former Countryside Commission in *Views from the Past*. They are closely connected with the European Landscape Convention's definition of landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" [3]. These principles were adopted by the EU Culture 2000-funded network 'European Pathways to the Cultural Landscape' (www.pcl-eu.de) [4]. They can be summarised as follows:

- A concentration on present day landscape character, not on the past landscape, reading today's landscape as material culture: the main object of study and protection by HLC/HLA is the present-day landscape, as created by human action and perception;
- A focus on history not geography: the most important characteristic of landscape for the purposes of HLC/HLA is the way that earlier landscape and change can still be seen in the present-day landscape;
- Area not point data: HLC/HLA-based research and understanding is concerned with landscape not sites; it is not simply a process of mapping find-spots and monument distributions, or pointing at major buildings in the landscape;
- All areas and aspects of the landscape, no matter how modern or ordinary for example, are treated as part of historic landscape character; not just 'special' areas;
- All the environment is strongly influenced by human activity : semi-natural and living features (woodland, land cover, hedges etc.) are as much a part of historic landscape character as archaeological features; biodiversity is similarly strongly influenced by human activity;
- Landscape is different to environment: a characterisation of landscape is a matter of interpretation not record, perception not facts; "landscape" is an idea not a thing, constructed by our minds and emotions from the combination and inter-relationship of physical objects.

Time-Depth

11. HLC/HLA is most of all concerned to trace the imprint of the past on landscape. Known as 'time-depth' (see **Box 1**), this is one of the landscape's most important characteristics. It can be defined as "the long-term interaction between human activity and natural processes" [5]. It recognises that the long sequence of events and actions that have produced the present environment, and which is visible within the landscape, is the result of human activity as well as natural processes. A proper understanding of time-depth needs to recognise the various, and often complex, ways in which the landscape has been influenced by past human actions. HLC/HLA focuses on this human perspective and adds a fuller historical dimension to the basic Landscape Character Assessment process. Time-depth is reflected within HLC/HLA through readily identifiable components like field boundaries, and through less obvious remains of

settlement or communications and transport networks. It is also reflected through human influence on vegetation patterns, and in the "hidden", buried evidence of past environments which survives across the landscape in the form of palaeoenvironmental deposits, for instance, or as cropmarks in ploughed land. An important aspect of understanding time-depth is recognising that human influence has occurred, and can be traced, even where the landscape appears natural. It enhances our appreciation of how landscape components have changed through time, or survived through continuity.

Box 1. Case Study: Time-depth and Historic Land-use Assessment at Newcastleton, Liddesdale, Scottish Borders

This case study shows how the elements of an HLA fit together to provide a picture of the historical nature of current and past land-use in Liddesdale, an area of marginal agriculture in the Scottish Borders. It also illustrates how HLA highlights time-depth in the landscape.

The basic building blocks of the HLA are Historic Land-use Types. These characterise units of land-use by their form, function and period of origin. Map 1 depicts the Historic Land-use Types around the village of Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders, providing a detailed picture of the setting of the village. The map shows that the higher ground is predominantly moorland and rough pasture, **Drained Managed Moorland** and **Drained Rough Grazing**: this is generally managed for grazing or game. The lower ground is more intensively farmed and is characterised by **Rectilinear Fields**. Newcastleton itself is defined as a **Planned Village: Agricultural**, and is surrounded by a grid of **Allotments**. **Coniferous Plantation** is extensive on the eastern side of the valley, with smaller pockets around the village and within the moorland areas.

As 52 Historic Land-use Types have so far been identified across Scotland, the maps of Historic Land-use Types can become quite complex. Consequently, Types can be grouped into 14 Categories, providing a summary of the historic land-use pattern and enabling simplified maps to be presented. Map 2 shows the Historic Land-use Categories around Newcastleton, simplifying the detailed picture provided by the Historic Land-use Types and clarifying the broad historic land-use pattern around the village. This shows clearly a pattern of **Fields and Farming** (mainly to the north), **Woodland and Forestry** (mainly to the east), **Moorland and Rough Grazing** (mainly to the west), with **Crofting** immediately outside the **Planned Village** itself. The Historic Land-use Categories thus outline the broad framework of historic land-use in an area, while the Historic Land-use Types break this down into greater detail.

The HLA data is also given a period of currency, based on the present archaeological and historical understanding of each Historic Land-use Type. Historic Types earlier than the modern era are defined by historical age, such as Roman or Medieval, while those of a more recent date are defined by a century to century span (or part thereof), matching the currency of use as closely as possible. There can be Types with overlapping periods of currency, because of the diachronic historical processes involved. Map 3 shows that around Newcastleton, the historic land-use is predominantly **18th-19th Century (Planned Village, Allotments and Rectilinear Fields)**, while some is **19th -20th Century (Recreation Area)** or **20th Century (Coniferous Plantation)**. **Rough Grazing** is identified as **Prehistoric to Present** in date where there is no evidence of recent agricultural improvement, as such land has seen continuous use since the early prehistoric period. In attributing a date of origin or currency of use to the Types and Categories, the Period map provides the time-depth for the historic land-use of an area.

The HLA also depicts Relict Land-use, highlighting even greater time-depth in the landscape. These take two forms: Relict Historic Land-use Types and Relict Archaeological Types. Relict Historic Land-use Types are Historic Land-use Types, or parts of types, which are no longer used for their original purpose, but which have left a visible trace in the landscape: 20 have so far been identified across Scotland, for example, **18th-19th Century Reverse-S Shaped Fields**. Relict Archaeological Types are archaeological features no longer used for their

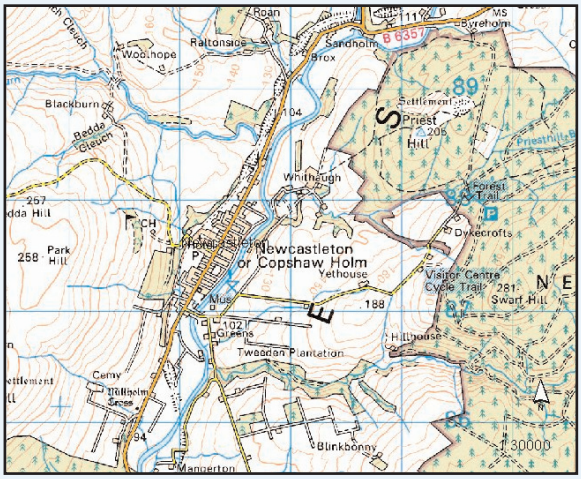
original function: there are currently 32 across Scotland, such as **Medieval Assart**. Like Historic Land-use Types, Relict Types are defined by their form, function and period of origin or currency (though extending further back in time into the Mesolithic period). Relict Types can also be grouped into Relict Categories, showing the general pattern of past land-use in an area. The complexity of past land-use means that, on occasion, there are up to three relict types in the same area.

Like all HLA data, Relict Types have to be sufficiently extensive (1 hectare or larger) to be mapped at the basic HLA scale (1:25000). This means that many archaeological sites are too limited in extent to be mapped in the HLA, even if they are visible on the ground. Such sites can, however, be viewed against the HLA data through sites and monuments records.

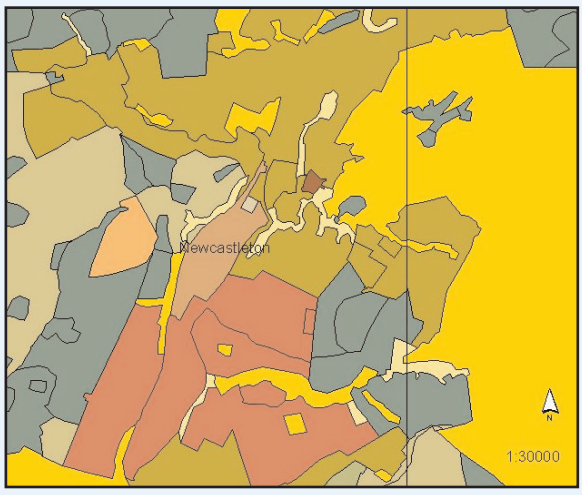
Maps 4-6 show the Relict Categories, Relict Types, and Relict Period around Newcastleton. By way of example, Map 4 (Categories) identifies a large area to the west of the village as **Settlement and Agriculture**, Map 5 (Types) shows that is predominantly **Assart**, while Map 6 indicates that this is **Medieval** in origin. Relict areas can be displayed over Historic Land-use Categories, Types and Periods so that the time-depth of the landscape can be clearly seen: Map 7 shows Historic Land-use Types around Newcastleton with Relict Types outlined in red.

Analysis of the HLA data can, therefore, be carried out by Type, Category or Period for both Historic Land-use and Relict Land-use. A glossary of terms which defines the range of Historic Land-use Types and Relict Land-use Types is available on the RCAHMS web-site (www.rcahms.gov.uk). The data allows detailed analysis of an area, showing its distinct characteristics, the origin, form and function of its historic land-use pattern and its development through time. The presentation of data in simplified form facilitates comparison between areas, enabling regional, and ultimately national, overviews to be achieved. This case study has shown how the data can be presented in different ways, with varying outputs from the GIS. However, the full potential of the system is most obvious when it is used in its digital interactive form, where it can be directly interrogated by the user for a particular purpose.

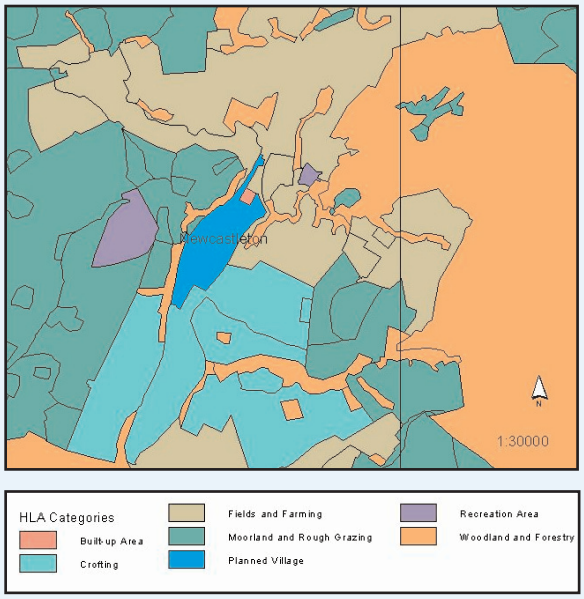
Case study: Time-depth and Historic Land-use Assessment at Newcastleton, Liddesdale, Scottish Borders.



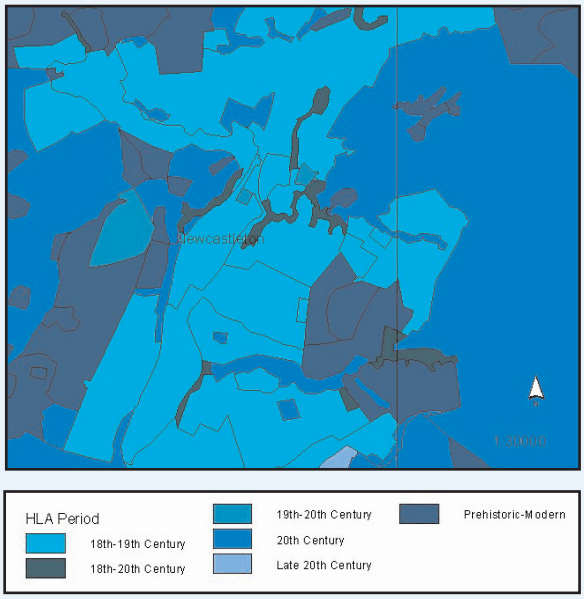
Topography of the Newcastleton area



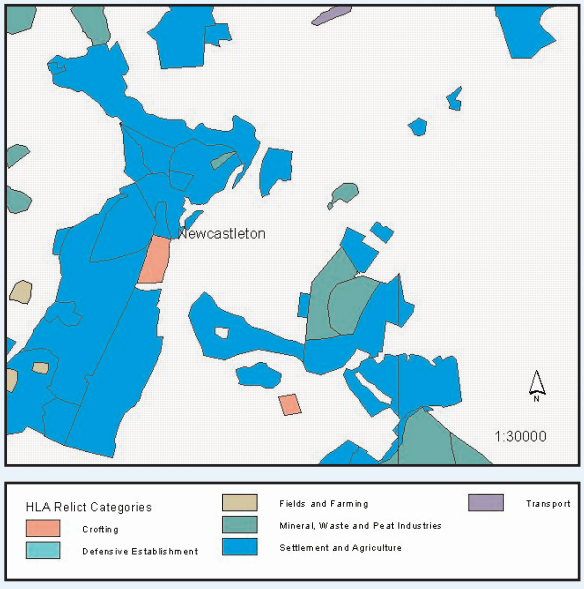
Map 1: Historic Land-use Types



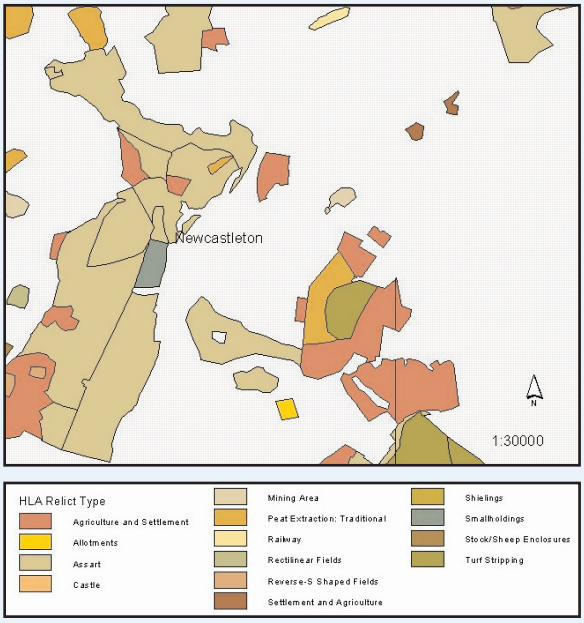
Map 2: Historic Land-use Categories



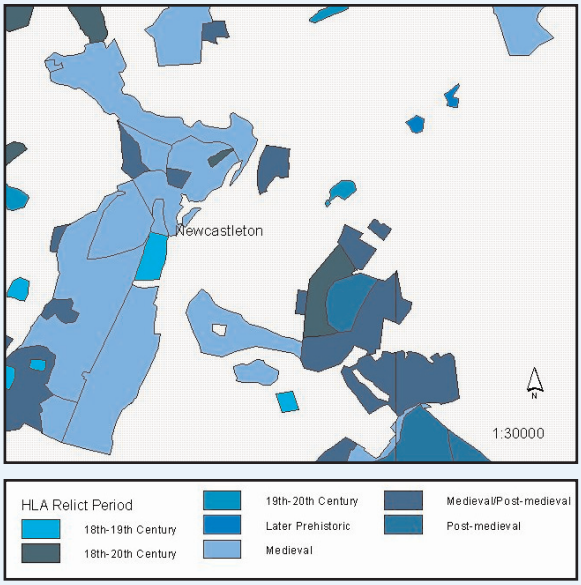
Map 3: Historic Land-use Period



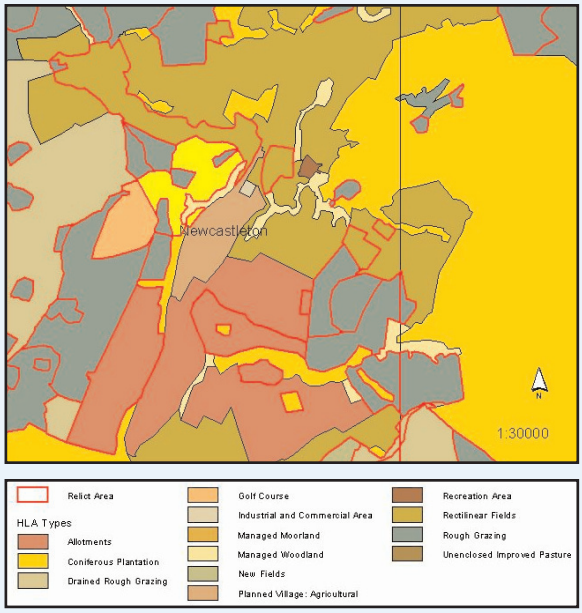
Map 4: Relict Categories



Map 5: Relict Types



Map 6: Relict Period



Map 7: Historic Land-use Types with Relict Types

General Principles of Methodology

12. The technique behind HLC/HLA is essentially simple, although it is capable of enormous sophistication and is extremely flexible. It works best at a large scale where broad patterns can be identified that rise above the detail of each place's unique differences. It is desk-based (or rather computer-based) with very little fieldwork beyond some early validation, because it mainly synthesises existing but unconnected information. HLC/HLA involves recording historic land-use, but it is not merely a data-collection exercise. Interpretation is an important part of the process, and the input of archaeologists with appropriate interpretative skills is an essential part of the approach. The method provides a rapid overview, which may be a starting point for more detailed analysis or research. HLC/HLA studies usually cover very large areas, often administrative areas like counties or National Parks.

13. HLC/HLA make extensive use of existing digital maps, particularly the modern Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 or 25,000 maps, which show field boundaries, land parcels and buildings. The latest wave of HLC projects already use OS Mastermap as the standard geographical base. These maps are supported by the most up-to-date vertical aerial photographs (digital and year-referenced where available) and other data-sets, usually digital, on habitats or woodland. HLC/HLA also use historic maps, especially as these are increasingly becoming available in digital form. These are always used as an adjunct, a subsidiary complement, to the current modern map, however, because unlike much archaeological work, HLC/HLA is most concerned with the historic depth of what still survives as part of today's landscape, instead of focussing on reconstructing or recording past environments.

14. To produce historic characterisation, all areas of the modern landscape, through maps and air photos, are attributed to a range of types (Historic Landscape Types in England and Historic Land-use Types in Scotland), whichever most comprehensively captures the character of the area. Usually this is done by recording the visible indicators that allow attribution of an area to one or more types. Such indicators might include the straightness or sinuosity of field boundaries, the size of fields, the existence of dog-legs indicative of removed boundaries, or the morphological signs of enclosed strip fields. For industrial land, indicators might include the presence of extractive or manufacturing industry.

15. Data may also be recorded on the likely earlier form of landscape character, so that change through time can

be studied. There is high degree of generalisation, so that the principal aspects of character for each area are defined rather than the detail of every distinct place. The main focus of HLC in England is on enclosed land; it is currently less detailed in areas of unenclosed land, such as moorland, that may nevertheless have great richness of prehistoric and medieval remains, abandoned field boundaries, settlements etc. In Scotland, with its much greater extent of upland landscapes where relict features tend to survive well, the HLA method gives added priority to mapping the distribution and broad extent of relict landscapes. Here, relict features and archaeological remains over 1 hectare in extent are incorporated into the HLA map, identified as Relict Land-use Types (1 hectare is the smallest unit that can be identified at the basic scale of HLA mapping. However, smaller areas and individual sites recorded within the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) or Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) can easily be viewed against HLA data). There can be up to three Relict Land-use Types in the same area, reflecting time-depth.

16. All these attributes are stored against areas of land and are recorded as polygons in a GIS. The size of polygons tends to follow the scale of the landscape because historic landscape character is not usually defined for every land parcel or field, but for groups of land parcels. Thus the resolution of the map reflects the landscape's own character. GIS polygons tend to be large in areas of great homogeneity (upland moorland for instance, unless sub-divided, for example by the presence/absence of visible medieval or prehistoric remains), but smaller in areas of greater diversity. More importantly, the use of GIS allows HLC/HLA databases to be used to produce a very wide range of maps, analysis, and thematic synthesis. Outputs are not restricted to the area-based maps that are usually seen as the main public image, and the outputs of an HLC/HLA are ideally suited for inclusion in a Landscape Character Assessment GIS [6].

17. Sites or areas of archaeology are not plotted as point data (though relict land-use over 1 hectare in extent is included within the HLA in Scotland). It is this that distinguishes HLC/HLA from other approaches to studying archaeological landscape - it does not aim to plot the components of the landscape but to map a generalised depiction of its overall historic landscape character. It is this that makes it most relevant to landscape assessment, because it employs a common language and, indeed, a methodology adapted from landscape assessment. Site-based point data exists in the NMRS and SMRs, and is useful for a variety of purposes. In terms of HLC/HLA it is best used for post-characterisation analysis against the base-map that HLC/HLA provides, whether as part of the HLC/HLA project, or during the HLC/HLA's ongoing use as:

- a landscape management;
- development control;
- educational or research tool;
- or as part of HLC/HLA's ongoing evolution and updating.

18. To summarise, HLC/HLA's distinctive contribution to landscape understanding lies in the following:

- a concern with successive layers in the land - "time depth";
- an interpretation of the whole modern landscape and its predominant historic character (not merely those aspects of the past landscape that are depicted on historical maps);
- a particular concern for defining and explaining landscape character everywhere in historic terms;
- the ability to identify (often sub-divided by age, origin etc.) the patterns and historic significance of major land use such as woodland, moorland, designed parks etc.;
- the ability to describe some of the character of previous episodes of landscape, and in other ways to define time-depth;
- the ability to measure more recent change in landscape character (or significant loss of its components) through comparison to earlier OS maps (generally available on GIS), and to do so from the perspective that change and modification are a natural and essential part of historic landscape character.

Progress Towards National Coverage

19. In Scotland, the work is carried out centrally by RCAHMS so the resultant data is consistent across the country; over a third of the country has already been completed (a map of areas covered is available on the RCAHMS web-site, www.rcahms.gov.uk). A glossary of terms defines the range of Historic Land-use Types and Relict Land-use Types, and is also available on the RCAHMS web-site. Both Historic and Relict Land-use Types can be

grouped into categories to provide a clearer, but simplified, overview of historic and relict patterns, which both provides a national picture and aids regional comparison (for basic methodology see Dixon et al 1999 [7]; for most recent summary see Dixon and Hingley 2002 [8]). Reports have been produced for specific landscape areas (such as National Parks [9] [10] and some National Scenic Areas [11] [12]), but the main output is the GIS database. This can be used in conjunction with the NMRS or local SMRs.

20. In England, HLC is carried out for English Heritage by county council historic environment services, as part of SMRs and has already covered more than half of England. During the 1990s, successive projects were deliberately experimental, in order to ensure the initial simple method evolved as fully as possible, not least in its use of GIS. A review of all these methods in 2002 [13] identified best practice for the remainder of the programme, and a template method for future projects has been written [14]. HLC output maps from different counties will often look different but outputs between counties can be standardised, and a comprehensive national classification of Historic Landscape Character types will emerge as detailed HLC work is carried out throughout the country (a preview of what this might look can be seen in *Region and Place: A Study of English Rural Settlement* by Roberts and Wrathmell, figures 6.5 a and b, pp158-9). Regional synthesis, overviews and summaries will be easy to produce as the programme expands to complete whole regions or groups of Character Areas. It will also in time be possible to create a national HLC map. All these will provide a ladder of mapping from local detailed follow-ups of county HLC, through district to county, to regional and national. As with Landscape Character Assessment, the scale of the units defined relates to the scale at which the study is being conducted.

Applications of HLC/HLA

21. HLC/HLA is a useful tool for aiding an understanding of the development and character of the modern landscape, and, like Landscape Character Assessment, its purpose is to influence decisions about its future development and management. It has potential application in areas such as spatial planning, land management, agri-environmental policy, landscape policy, local distinctiveness and community-based initiatives, research, education and communication [15].

22. In all of these areas of application, it is important to recognise that HLC/HLA projects do not by themselves offer definitive statements of importance. Every part of the landscape has some type of historic character, which will be affected by change, either positively or negatively. However, HLC/HLA is a tool for informing the decision-making process; it does not come with a set of prescriptions nor does it provide an indication of absolute value. The process of evaluating which Types are most significant and which can absorb change are best carried out in response to a clearly-defined threat, impact or opportunity. By clarifying the distinct historic character of an area (and how it differs from other areas), HLC/HLA aids evaluation, but English Heritage and Historic Scotland consider that this can most usefully be carried out close to the point at which change is being considered, as part of the broader planning and management process. One-off evaluations of importance (such as the scheduling of archaeological sites, or National Park designation) are useful in the context of the traditional protective (and selective) approach to heritage conservation. However, the HLC/HLA will be most sensitive to local character when applied in a local context, at an appropriate time. This approach is, moreover, likely to be better suited to the newer sustainability-based, Quality of Life Assessment-type approach of managing change across the whole of the environment.

23. HLC/HLA is used in relation to spatial planning, addressing both policy issues and development control. It aids understanding of the landscape by planners because it focuses on land-use and gives landscape context to the individual features recorded in sites and monuments records. HLC/HLA helps to define the historic characteristics of an area, and it could be used in the same way as Landscape Character Assessment as a material consideration in the planning process. It takes from planning policy guidance (PPG 15 and 16 in England; NPPG 5 and 18 in Scotland) a concern that the impact of change on all historic assets (not just designated ones) should be evaluated when proposals are being prepared. It is also useful in operating specific regulations, such as the hedgerow regulations.

24. HLC/HLA plays a role in land management, informing, for example, agri-environment and forestry grant schemes, both strategically and at the level of land-units. When achieving wider coverage, it will be able to provide national or regional overviews and help to define local characteristics as a basis for prioritising actions from national

to local level. HLC/HLA provides an overview of cultural sites and landscapes, and can combine with Landscape Character Assessment to define key landscape characteristics for protection, management and interpretation. It can assist in monitoring landscape change by providing baseline information against which change can be measured. Alongside Landscape Character Assessment, it can also facilitate an integrated approach to countryside management, relating land-use change to existing character in a way which is better informed about the origins of that character.

25. HLC/HLA is a useful tool for helping local communities understand the historical roots of their area, enhancing their sense of place. It helps highlight local distinctiveness and diversity, by clarifying what is particular to each area and how areas have developed differently. Because it relates to human use of the land, it helps inform and stimulate discussion about what local communities view as important within their local landscape. It gives an indication of how landscape has changed over time helping decision-making strike a balance between continuity and change.

26. HLC/HLA has considerable research value. As a broad-brush assessment, it can clarify rapidly what is known about a landscape, help identify gaps in knowledge and target priority areas for survey or further research. It helps predict what kind of historic information is likely to survive in different areas, based on the use of an area in the past and the impact of that use on the survival and visibility of physical evidence. It helps show patterns and connections within the landscape, and aids understanding of how the landscape and land-use have changed through time, particularly in relation to human influence. It raises issues for further research and offers a broader context for detailed research, and further layers of information can be added. It is a potentially powerful tool for predictive modelling.

27. Because HLC/HLAs are mostly GIS based, they can be linked relatively easily to other archaeological datasets, such as those for urban areas. They can be analysed in a variety of ways and against different sets of information, such as settlement types or vernacular buildings. They can also be linked to environmental records to allow analysis of, for example, the correlation between historical development and biodiversity.

28. HLC/HLA is a powerful and flexible GIS-based tool. It can be adapted to suit national, regional and local levels of need; and it can be integrated with, or reviewed against, a variety of datasets. It assists in communication, of both specialist data and landscape trends, because it highlights human impacts over time.

RELATIONSHIP WITH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

29. HLC/HLA character assessment is complementary to Landscape Character Assessment, not least because it uses a Landscape Character Assessment-type approach. However, it normally needs to be carried out separately, because it calls for different skills, operates at different scales and tends to have a longer duration. Its facility to inform a Landscape Character Assessment is only one of its purposes, because HLC/HLA has wider uses than landscape planning and management, notably underpinning all aspects of historic environment management, not just at landscape scale. It is important, however, that HLC/HLA is integrated with Landscape Character Assessment (as in the Lancashire case study [**Box 2**]) to produce more holistic far-reaching landscape understanding and appreciation [16] (see also Tyldesley et al 2001 for a consideration of the relationship between HLA and Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland). Ideally HLC/HLA should be carried out first, so that the results can be used to inform the Landscape Character Assessment. Nevertheless, if necessary, HLA/HLC can also be used retrospectively to enrich and deepen existing Landscape Character Assessments. It also has a wide range of uses in its own right when used separately from Landscape Character Assessment. It is, therefore, both integrative and freestanding.

30. The inclusion of HLC/HLA within the Landscape Character Assessment process improves understanding of how changes in the past have affected the modern environment and of the complex interaction between human actions and natural forces (ie its time depth). It enables Landscape Character Assessment to take better account of the varied ways in which the landscape has been influenced by past activity and the length of time over which this has occurred. This allows current issues to be seen within a longer-term perspective and contemporary management decisions to be taken with a fuller understanding of past management practices.

31. When conducting a Landscape Character Assessment, it is important to find out whether an area already has an HLC/HLA, or whether one is in progress. In England, HLC sits within the Sites and Monuments (or Historic

Environment) Records of county councils, maintained by the county archaeologist's department. These offices are listed on the ALGAO (Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers) website (www.algao.org.uk). In Scotland, HLA is held in the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) by RCAHMS, who can be contacted through their web-site (www.rcahms.gov.uk).

32. Integration between HLC/HLA and Landscape Character Assessment requires liaison and joint working between landscape professionals carrying out assessment and the archaeologists who create and use HLC/HLA. Archaeologists with appropriate landscape skills and local knowledge should normally form a part of Landscape Character Assessment project teams.

33. As previously described, a key output of HLC/HLA is spatial data, stored in a GIS dataset. HLC/HLA GIS datasets will be made available for use in Landscape Character Assessment. It is recommended that GIS is used throughout the Landscape Character Assessment process as this will maximise the benefits of using HLC/HLA data. The use of GIS will make it much easier to combine the HLC/HLA data with other datasets, for example geology or landform [17]. An integrated GIS database containing Landscape Character Assessment data together with HLC/HLA data will be a rich resource for understanding and managing change in the landscape.

34. Another factor that aids the assimilation of the two approaches is that HLC/HLA methods and outputs are Type-based. Because HLC/HLA operates at the level of Types and does not define its own character areas, there is no confusion of definition - HLC/HLA does not produce a separate set of character areas to conflict with those of Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape assessment can work at the level of Types as well as of character areas, into which HLC/HLA Types and analysis fit very easily. Lancashire's landscape assessment is an example of this (see **Box 2**), whilst its landscape strategy shows how Type descriptions can be a vehicle for delivering integrated management proposals.

35. HLC/HLA tends to work at a finer grain than Landscape Character Assessment. Their Types sit within these Landscape Character Areas. These Types can (for practical reasons of operational convenience, or for more strategic applications) be grouped together into higher level types, normally called Groups (HLC) or Categories (HLA). These groups or categories cover such things as 'Unenclosed Land', 'Woodland' (sometimes sub-divided into ancient and modern, for example), fieldscapes (or enclosed land), industrial landscape, ornamental landscape etc. They are close in scale to Landscape Character Assessment Types such as Uplands, or Fieldscape. Most Types identified by HLC/HLA, however, whether relating to current or former character, are of a finer grain than the areas identified by Landscape Character Assessment. HLC/HLA Types can therefore add detail to an existing Character Area, explaining the landscape it contains in terms of historic origins and time-depth. Put simply, Character Areas (like parishes or any other land unit) can be laid over the mosaic of an HLC/HLA and the time-depth read-through.

36. From this it will be seen that ideally HLC/HLA should be completed before Landscape Character Assessment is carried out, as the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance advises. Where this has been done, as the Lancashire case study shows, the resultant Landscape Character Assessment was informed from the first by HLC/HLA, both in terms of drawing the boundaries of character areas and in describing the landscape within them, and a full integration is possible. Ultimately, this early integration pays great dividends at the stage of identifying forces for change and drawing up landscape management policies. Sometimes, however, HLC/HLA will have to be carried out later. In such cases, integration will still be possible but it will be necessary for landscape managers to revisit the Landscape Character Assessment and amplify Character Areas descriptions and the list of key characteristics in the light of HLC/HLA. There will not normally be any need to redraw the boundaries of Character Areas; as explained above, HLC/HLA operates at the level of Types and it will not make Landscape Character Assessment's Character Areas obsolete, rather it will give them an added dimension and wider use.

37. An historical perspective is important to help understand the way in which a landscape has evolved over time to take on its present character, and how both natural forces and human intervention have contributed to its evolution. It can identify areas which have seen many successive phases of change (dynamic landscape), and those of relative continuity: such knowledge can help to inform the location of many types of landscape development. With

such understanding, decisions about future change can be placed in an historical context and ideas about, for example, restoration of some earlier historic character can be well-informed and based on a sound historical rationale.

Box 2. Case Study: Lancashire's Landscape Strategy[18] and Historic Landscape Characterisation [19]

Lancashire County Council's Landscape Strategy provides detailed strategies and recommendations to guide positive landscape change within the County. The strategy forms the basis of landscape policy and supplementary planning guidance within the Deposit Edition Joint Lancashire Structure Plan.

The strategies and recommendations are based upon a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment, which identified 21 Landscape Character Types. An important part of the assessment was the inclusion of information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation of Lancashire carried out by the County Archaeology Service between January 1999 and September 2000. The landscape assessment and strategy was developed between October 1999 and October 2000.

The overlapping timescale of the two studies was essential to establishing a strong link between the two, as the initial historic characterisation was well under way when the landscape assessment began. This allowed the historic character to inform the landscape assessment, both in terms of determining character type boundaries and informing descriptions of landscape character. The Landscape Character Assessment provided information to the historic characterisation project on physical and natural characteristics and a framework which links through to the *Character of England* [20] project. Thus both studies benefited from being run concurrently.

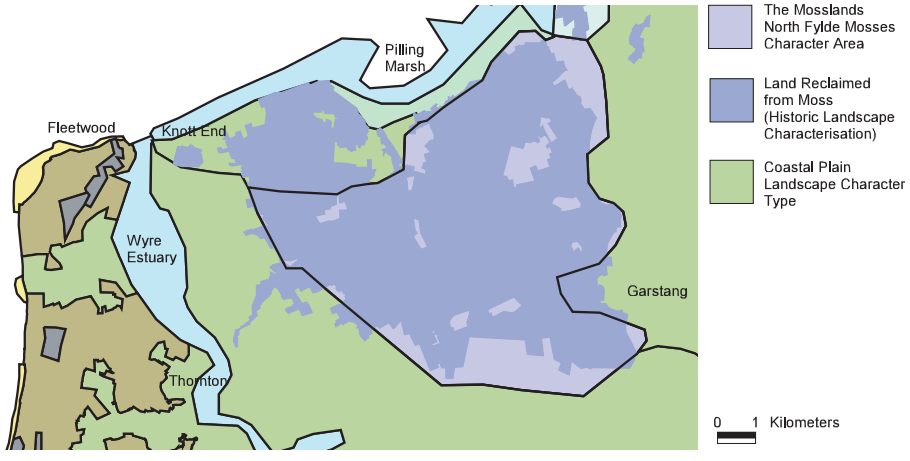
There were three ways in which the Historic Landscape Characterisation enhanced the Landscape Character Assessment and ultimately the strategies and recommendations:

1. An enhanced understanding of the historic landscape informed the descriptions of landscape character and identification of key environmental feature, e.g. in the **Enclosed Uplands** a key feature is the **Distinctive Pattern Of Settlement At High Altitude**, including clusters of dwellings and short 'urban' terraces which reflect the area's industrial past as miner-farmer small holdings and squatter settlements.

2. Defining the extent and boundaries of Landscape Character Types, e.g.

a) In the **Mosslands** landscape type the distinctive field patterns which preserve the historic patterns of mossland reclamation were used to help define the extent of the North Fylde Mosses Character Area.

The Mosslands Landscape Character Type showing relationship with Land Reclaimed from Moss in Historic Landscape Characterisation

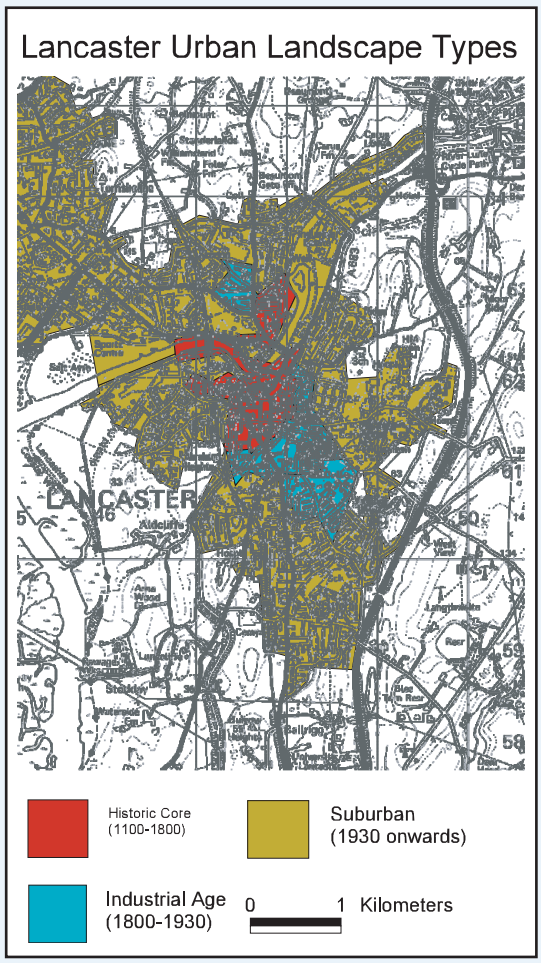


b) The boundary of the **Coastal Plain** and **Undulating Lowland Farmland** landscape types was adjusted to follow the line of historic communication routes which more accurately reflected the change in character, rather than the modern route (the M6 Motorway), which cut across landscape character.

3. Classification and mapping of the Urban Landscape Types was determined by the historic characterisation. Three Urban Landscape Types were identified:
Historic Core (1100-1800)
Industrial Age (1800-1930)
Suburban (1930 onwards)

A *Landscape Strategy for Lancashire* and the *Lancashire Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme* were both mapped onto the County Council's GIS system, which had advantages in the production of the layers of information, which fed into the Landscape Character Assessment and subsequently has become an extremely useful tool for examining the relationship between landscape character and the historic landscape.

Both the Landscape Strategy and the Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme can be viewed on the County Council's website (www.lancsenvironment.com).



FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

38. The immediate aim is to complete national coverage of both HLC and HLA, at which stage there will be a need for review and updating to accommodate significant landscape change. National coverage will provide an overview of the human impact on landscape over time in England and Scotland, and highlight key regional variations. Eventually, along with LANDMAP in Wales, it may be possible to provide an overview of the historical landscape of the British Isles as a whole. Along with Landscape Character Assessment, the national maps will be of great assistance in meeting the objectives of the European Landscape Convention, which emphasises a holistic approach to landscapes, embracing both natural and cultural diversity. This Convention, and other pan-European initiatives such as the Culture 2000 project European Pathways to the Cultural Landscape, may ultimately allow a truly international perspective of the historic landscape of Europe to be developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This topic paper has been authored by Graham Fairclough (English Heritage) and Lesley Macinnes (Historic Scotland) on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. The authors are grateful for the helpful comments and suggestions made by Jane Brann (ARIA), Dr. Piers Dixon (RCAHMS), Deb Munro (Scottish Natural Heritage), Steve Potter (Staffordshire County Council) and Robin Turner (The National Trust for Scotland). The authors would like to particularly thank Sarah Govan (Historic Scotland) for her helpful comments on the text and for supplying the illustrations that accompany the Scottish Borders case study, and Olwen Todd Jones (Lancashire County Council) for supplying the Lancashire Case Study. The Countryside Agency would like to thank Countryscape for co-ordinating the preparation of this topic paper.

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