

## SECTION 5 : THE WAY FORWARD

### Introduction

This section describes the existing and possible ways by which the Landscape Guidelines provided in this document could be implemented, and thereby influence the character of Northern Ryedale's landscape. This section is divided into the following parts:

- existing mechanisms;
- landscape issues outside the immediate realm of the guidelines;
- the way forward; and,
- Countryside Action Plan.

The **existing mechanisms** by which change can be facilitated are outlined and the extent of influence which landscape planners and countryside managers can exert is deduced.

Although a great deal of change and influence can be achieved through a range of existing mechanisms, it is evident that some activities with landscape impacts fall outside any direct or indirect influence of landscape planners. In identifying **landscape issues outside the immediate realm of the guidelines**, it is possible to identify the 'gaps', which presently lie beyond the influence of landscape planners and land managers.

Finally, a vision of a **way forward** is provided which outlines five areas in which landscape planners and countryside managers can use their influence to best ensure the effective implementation of the landscape guidelines. Importantly it outlines the structure of a **Countryside Action Plan** that could be prepared in order to provide a costed programme of land management targets and initiatives. It is through the implementation of an 'Action Plan' such as this that the objectives of the Landscape Assessment could be most effectively realised.

### Existing Mechanisms

The existing legislation allows landscape planners to influence decision-making in various ways, such as :-

#### Activities under direct control of Local Planning Authorities

Some activities fall substantially under the control of local planning policies and Planning Guidance. Such activities include the siting and detailed design of new housing, mineral workings etc. Here the landscape planner can exert significant influence on the pattern and design of planned development. Many aspects of this report deal with development issues and it is important that these are implemented in Local Plan policies and development control decisions.

#### Activities only partly within control of Local Planning Authorities

Some activities can be carried out with little reference to local or national planning guidance. These include activities such as farm diversification for leisure pursuits or day visits. Of particular concern is the construction of new agricultural buildings which, as 'permitted development', falls outwith normal development control, although some notification and consultation with the LPA is necessary.

#### Activities requiring Environmental Assessment

Some development proposals require an Environmental Assessment in accordance with EU Regulations. Landscape issues must be considered by the developer and there is scope for landscape planners to comment and suggest scheme modifications or alternatives where appropriate. In addition, where the activity also requires planning permission there is usually the opportunity for constructive liaison between

**Activities grant-aided subject to landscape conditions**

Some activities are grant-aided by Central Government but it is possible for landscape planners or countryside managers to comment or suggest modifications. Woodland planting under Woodland Grant Schemes and Farm Woodland Premium Schemes are an example of such opportunities.

**Activities for which general 'best-practice' guidelines are available**

There are a number of non-statutory and advisory 'best practice guidelines' available for various activities e.g. Forestry Commission guidelines, Countryside Agency and DoE guidance regarding quality of design of housing in the countryside. These are extremely useful reference documents and can assist landscape planners and countryside managers in assessing the quality of development or management proposals.

**Activities for which specific locally adopted landscape guidance is available**

It is also possible to prepare local or topic-specific design guidance, which can be adopted by the local planning authority to inform and enforce decisions taken within the planning arena. Such guidance might include this Landscape Character Assessment or at a more local level, Village Design Statements.

**Landscape Issues Outside the Influence of the Guidelines**

There are a number of activities that can have significant landscape impact and which fall largely outside the immediate influence of the planning or landscape profession. Despite this, it would be desirable that a landscape perspective influences such activities. The issues of most relevance are:

- a) Construction, siting and colour of large agricultural buildings (NB. Larger proposals still require planning permission and general proposals are required to be notified to the LPA, thereby providing opportunities for development control);
- b) Landscape enhancement on a 'whole farm' basis rather than just in 'set aside land' or in specific habitats;
- c) Farm diversification, which though not requiring planning permission could adversely affect the appearance or character of the rural landscape;
- d) Protect of important archaeological sites in northern Ryedale;
- e) Visual enhancement of existing flood defence earthworks and retention of associated items of local character e.g. sluices, barriers, guard rails etc;
- f) Management of rural roads in order to protect, enhance or add locally appropriate hedges, verges, fencing, signs, ditches etc.; and
- g) The need for locally adopted Village Design Statements for specific villages.

## The Way Forward

To ensure the active use and application of the landscape guidelines proposed for Northern Ryedale, and prior to the preparation of a countryside action plan described more fully later, five points of action should be addressed. Some relate to existing Local Authority functions, while others are natural extensions of these functions. In summary the points of action are:

1. Making the best use of existing statutory powers;
2. Making the best use of existing consultative roles;
3. Filling gaps in existing statutory or consultative roles;
4. Promoting and targeting existing or new funds, goodwill and resources towards landscape priority areas; and,
5. Raising awareness and forging co-operative links between major players in the rural environment.

### 1. Making the best use of existing statutory powers

Planning controls for new developments are reasonably comprehensive. In addition, recent years have seen an increasing emphasis on attention on quality of design. This trend has been reflected at Government level through the issue of PPG's that make attention to detailed 'design' a mandatory requirement of planning applications. Indeed, cases have been won at appeal on the basis of quality of design as a material consideration in assessing applications for planning permission.

Control exercised over the size, scale and form of development may be augmented by reference to design guides that form part of the LPA's adopted development control structure. It is generally recognised that greater legislative weight is attached to design guides that have been through procedures of consultation and therefore this should be a prerequisite to adoption alongside development plans. Design Guides can give guidance on appropriate scale, form and type of development, materials and colours for use in different areas. They can supplement the basic criteria of good design and give a clear indication to prospective applicants of the relevant standards, which could apply. For villages, the design guides could be in the form of Village Design Statements.

The design guides need not necessarily be conservative in their use, but rather seek to ensure that new development meets defined aspects of local distinctiveness and similar high standards of design. In Conservation Areas, where great restraint is required to maintain the distinctive historic patterns and features of development, use of Article 4 Directives can restrict the nature of development which can take place without planning permission and can help exercise greater control in areas particularly sensitive to change.

In rural areas, such as Northern Ryedale, the use of wider Countryside Design Summaries could offer broad guidance on the features of the area to which development should respond. These can assist guidance on form and scale of landscape elements such as, agricultural buildings. The preparation of Countryside Design Summaries could be tied in with the production of a Countryside Action Plan as outlined below in 'The Way Forward'.

## **2. Making the best use of existing consultative roles**

The role of the planning authority as a consultee to a wide range of agencies and initiatives can be a particular strength and opportunity to allow the implementation of landscape initiatives and guidelines. The views of planning authorities on applications for consents for a wide range of new utility or infrastructure projects, such as highways and power stations, are sought as a matter of course. Linking mitigation and planning gain to the development and sustaining of clearly stated and consistent overall landscape character objectives and targets should be a priority.

Targets for sustaining and reinforcing landscape character can form part of the objectives of habitat, wildlife and other strategies. Countryside management projects (including Woodland Grant Schemes, Countryside Stewardship), environmental enhancement schemes and other initiatives such as recreation strategies can have implications for landscape character and distinctiveness. These objectives should be linked to the landscape character and design guides to ensure that these are complementary rather than detrimental.

## **3. Filling gaps in existing statutory or consultative roles.**

Development of locally-specific best practice guides, together with a financial commitment to the implementation of these in pilot areas, may be the way forward in relation to agricultural buildings, flood defence management, rural road management and farm diversification. These will usually require the involvement of landowners and managers, perhaps in the form of working parties.

The complex question of the effective management of land drainage through the Vale of Pickering is particularly important as it has a potential to influence many aspects of landscape character. It requires the balancing of hydro-engineering, agricultural, ecological and visual issues in a sympathetic and functional manner and inevitably requires the co-operation of a range of diverse factions and interest parties.

## **4. Promotion and targeting of existing or new resources**

In the field of countryside management, there are a number of financial support measures, grant schemes and a range of bodies able and willing to give technical advice.

One problem has been, and continues to be, the effective co-ordination of the various grant schemes and sources of advice. However, through the production of a Countryside Action Plan, a phased and costed masterplan could be provided that allows the effective and co-ordinated implementation of land management area initiatives. The structure and objective of such an Action Plan are provided later.

## **5. Raising awareness and forging co-operative links**

Government statements have increasingly been promoting the cause of quality in landscape design and considering how such 'quality' should be tied into landscape character and local distinctiveness. The addition of the concept of 'landscape character assessment' to PPG7, the DoE's discussion paper on 'Quality in Town and Country' and supported by various statements in the Rural White Paper have all indicated that quality of landscape assessment and design is important. Indeed it is becoming and increasingly important consideration at all planning levels.

Environmental Assessment regulations are encouraging developers to take a more critical view of their own proposals and there are encouraging signs of an increasing attention to landscape issues.

## Countryside Action Plan

A logical output of this Landscape Assessment would be the preparation of a 'Countryside Action Plan'. The aim of this Plan would be to consolidate all existing landscape activity and understand the nature of all current agreements relating to the landscape, prior to the preparation of a detailed 'masterplan'. The 'Countryside Action Plan' would seek to mirror the role that 'Biodiversity Action Plans' are increasingly playing in developing the objectives of the UK's commitment to biodiversity at a local level.

The 'Action Plan' would only reflect what already occurs, and in itself, would not introduce any new controls. However, it would serve five notable purposes: -

1. It would 'draw a line in the sand'; i.e. it would underscore existing commitments to landscape quality, as expressed by Local Authorities, Government Agencies and private developers;
2. It would galvanise and encourage commitments to action from major players in the rural environment;
3. It would set an agenda for northern Ryedale's landscape for future monitoring;
4. It would maintain the awareness of landscape diversity that the Landscape Assessment process has generated; and,
5. It would provide a mechanism by which the often disparate land management activities through Northern Ryedale could be controlled and co-ordinated. In particular it would provide a landscape 'masterplan'. This masterplan would provide the blueprint for a visionary land management strategy based on the principals of landscape diversity and distinctiveness set out in this document.

The **Countryside Action Plan** would be comprehensive and all-inclusive, requiring commitment and investment from many agencies in both public and private sectors. Through the process of consultation and agreement, and through the presentation of a clearly stated aims, objectives and mechanisms; the production of a pragmatic and achievable 'Vision' would be more likely, and thereby the probability of securing the future of the landscape would be more realistic and achievable.

The exact format of the **Countryside Action Plan** would need agreement and would need to address and understand the nature of existing pressures on the landscape and present a 'vision for change' that would balance ambition with pragmatism. Possible section headings might be: -

### *Strategic Issues*

This section would prepare a detailed inventory of current land management initiatives currently in place through the study area. It would include a review of how the LPA currently consider the wider implications of land management in policy making and come to an understanding of the role of existing policy documents both at a local and national level.

### *Masterplan*

At a scale appropriate to the study area, a landscape management masterplan would be prepared. This plan would provide a vital link between the generalised objectives and guidelines of the Landscape Assessment and specific action on the ground. It would, in mapped form, provide a phased implementation agenda against which activities could be costed and programmed.

### Programme

Linked to the masterplan and the timetables of relevant grant aiding bodies would be prepared an implementation programme.

### Costings

The masterplan and its programme would provide the opportunity to prepare bills of quantities for the implementation of the land management projects and thereby ensure that the objectives of the Action Plan would remain prioritised.

### Appendices

Set out in the appendices would be advice and guidance in respect to the implementation of specific land management objectives. These would relate directly to the range of landscape guidelines set out in this Landscape Assessment and would probably include the following topics:

#### *Field Boundaries*

Address issues such as hedgerow and drystone wall repair and renewal through implementation of schemes such as, Local Heritage Initiatives and Countryside Stewardship Schemes. Protect field boundaries through robust implementation of the Hedgerow Regulations Act and ensure that protection policies form an integral part of any Countryside Design Summaries prepared through the district. In consultation with the Countryside Agency and English Heritage seek to evaluate more fully the role and historical importance of field boundaries, particularly in the Pickering and Fringe of the Moors area.

#### *Land Drainage*

Ensure that the objectives of the '*Vale of Pickering Wetlands Project*' and the '*Derwent LEAP*' are referenced and included in detailed management schemes designed for land drainage. Seek to liaise with both the Internal Drainage Boards, the Environment Agency and MAFF to highlight the important landscape role that land drainage practices play and investigate mechanisms by which the LPA may play an increasing role in the management of the Vale's hydrological environment. The preparation of a '*Water Level Management Plan*' could be an ideal mechanism for such policies and should be considered in conjunction with the preparation of the '*Countryside Management Action Plan*'. In preparing land drainage management policies, particular consideration should be played to the '*Water Fringe Habitat Scheme*', which aims to improve habitats along watercourses in the Vale of Pickering.

#### *Land Management*

Most land in the study area remains under agricultural productivity. Land management policies should investigate opportunities to return current areas of perhaps more marginal agricultural productivity to land uses designed to improve visual interest, visual distinctiveness, biodiversity and nature conservation value. For example land owners and managers could be encouraged to consider '*Arable Area Payments*' and the current regime of '*Set Aside Payments*' in order to provide areas of permanent pasture or woodlands. In addition, '*Countryside Stewardship Schemes*' remain a key land management initiative designed to offer a wide range of financial incentives.

**Woodlands**

Grant aiding for woodland planting remains perhaps the most understood and extensively utilised land management grant for nature conservation purposes. The Forestry Commission remains the primary paymaster of woodland establishment and management grants such as, better land supplements, community woodland supplements, annual management, woodland improvement and short rotation coppice. In addition there are financial incentives provided under the aegis of Challenge Funds and Set Aside (becoming less favourable) and Farm Woodland Premium Schemes.

**Settlement**

Much of the study areas character, and indeed attractiveness, relies on the part played by the many attractive villages and hamlets distributed through the district. The landscape guidelines highlight the need to retain architectural vernacular and local distinctiveness of these settlements. The development control role of the LPA is particularly important in this respect and all policy design guidance requirements and advice would be clearly stated to strengthen policy considerations. Whilst the financial commitment to guarantee good design in new development shall be the remit of the developer avenues of potential support finance to restoration projects would also be provided. For example, as the study area has been awarded Objective 5b Status by the former Rural Development Commission (now the Countryside Agency) there may be funding opportunities to undertake activities such as, redundant building restoration or farm diversification.