



PART 2

# Landscape character assessment

Landscape is an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity.

## 2.1 What is landscape character?

Landscape is about the relationship between people and the land, a combination of distinctive and valued natural and cultural elements, which extend to seascapes and the built environment.

Character is a distinct, valuable, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Our quality of life is improved by the preservation and enhancement of landscape character.

Local distinctiveness contributes to the special character and sense of place of a community.

Individual elements make up the landscape, such as field and woodland pattern, settlement pattern, and historic features, and it is the combination of these elements which contribute to distinctive character. Character is further detailed by prominent or eye-catching features including church towers, tors, harbours, engine houses, or stands of trees on the skyline.

**Figure 3**

Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002, 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance For England and Scotland'





Bodmin Moor



River Kennall

## 2.2 What is landscape character assessment?

Landscape character assessment provides a framework to help us to understand landscapes, mapping and describing them in a systematic way without placing a value on them. From this process a reasoned and informed judgement can be made to help guide future changes in Cornwall. It brings together information relating to the physical, natural and historic environment enabling a more integrated approach to be taken towards decisions. On this basis, judgements can then be made on how local distinctiveness and local character can be safeguarded, improved and enhanced, through the development process.

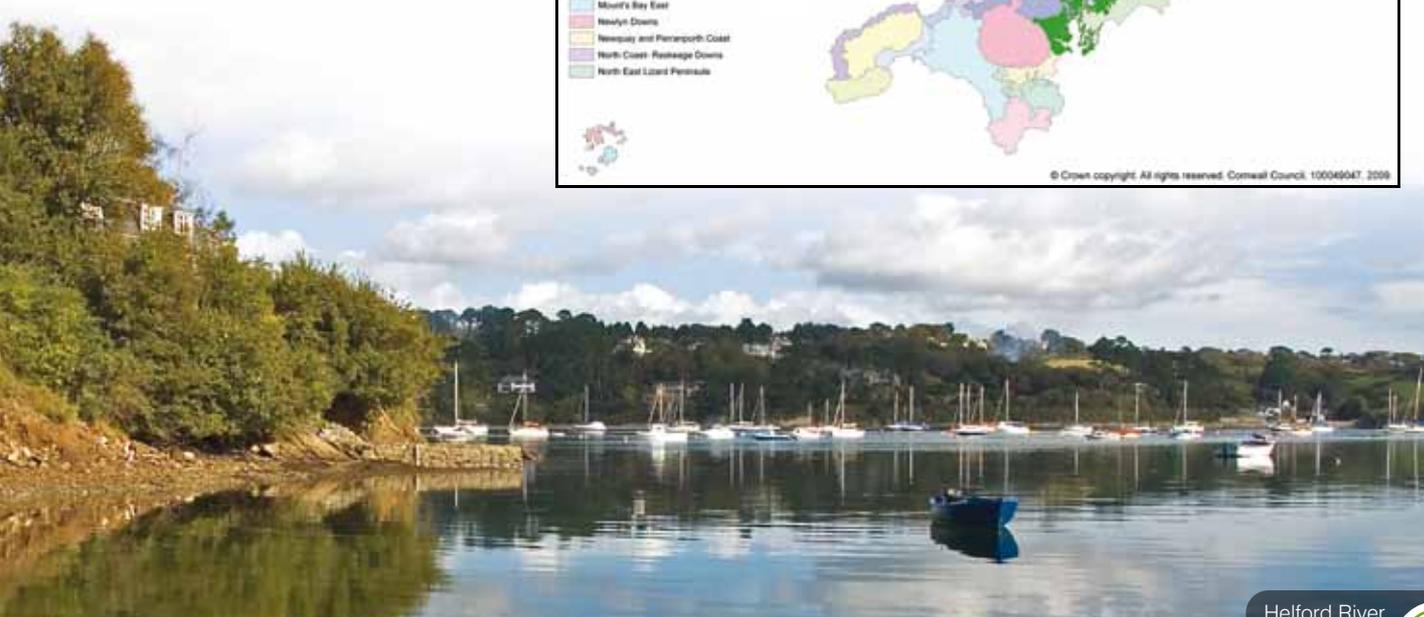
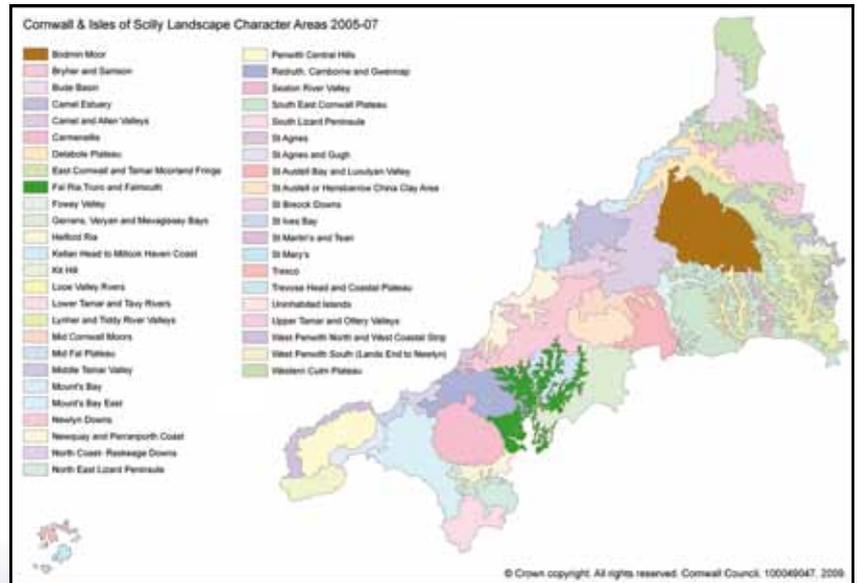
Landscape character assessment can help in processes which:

- i identify what environmental and cultural features are present in a locality
- ii monitor change in the environment
- iii seek to understand a location's sensitivity to development and change allowing designs to grow from the landscape's own sense of place
- iv inform the conditions for any development change

## 2.3 Landscape character assessment for Cornwall

2.3.1 The Landscape Character Areas of the 2005-2007 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study fit within a hierarchy of National Joint Character Areas developed at the national level (see 2.3.2). They take forward the National Character Areas, expanding this information at a local level, making it a valuable additional resource for planners, developers, Government Agencies, and members of the public.

**Figure 4**  
Map of Landscape Character Areas of Cornwall  
A larger scale map can be found in **Appendix A**



Helford River

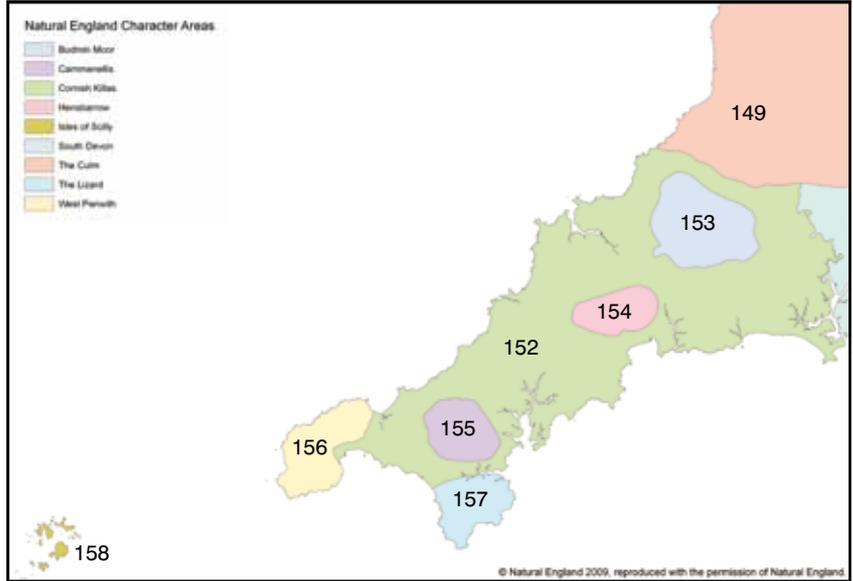
2.3.2 Natural England National Joint Character Areas

Developed by the then Countryside Agency and English Nature, now Natural England, the National Character map provides an assessment of the landscape of England and divides it into 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs). There are seven JCAs in Cornwall and one covering the Isles of Scilly (Figure 5). These Areas work as a framework for establishing and delivering national and regional priorities for landscape character and informing delivery grants including the DEFRA Environmental Stewardship Scheme.



Cornish Lane

**Figure 5**  
South West National Joint Character Areas



**Natural England's character areas in Cornwall**

149 - The Culm	152 - Cornish Killas	153 - Bodmin Moor	154 - Hensbarrow
155 - Carmmenellis	156 - West Penwith	157 - The Lizard	158 - Isles of Scilly

Further information and websites:

English Nature, Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland 2002 and related Topic Papers  
(The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage)

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Landscape Character Network

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



View from Trencom

## 2.4 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study 2005–2007

The diversity of the Cornish landscape is underpinned by its geology, the resulting topography and the influence of the sea, water, and man. Cornwall's geology has created many distinct landscapes, has affected man's use of it, and forged a unique economic and social history. The exploitation of the mineral-rich tin and copper seams created an early industrial landscape, with isolated features remaining today. The winning of kaolinite has shaped the China Clay district and created a very different unique, dramatic landscape. The igneous granite landscapes of Bodmin, Carnmenelis and West Penwith are very different again and appreciated for their rugged, unspoilt, windswept beauty. Important features within the landscape will be afforded greater protection through designations including Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty and World Heritage Site status. The Landscape Character Study links to these designations and makes recommendations for conservation and control of development in protected areas.

### 2.4.1 The development of the study

This study takes forward the Natural England Joint Character Areas and interprets these at the local level across the county. It has drawn on the previous landscape assessments of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Cornwall Landscape Assessment 1994, and the Isles of Scilly Assessment 2002) to provide:

- i easily accessible up-to-date, evidence-based landscape character areas
- ii detailed landscape context information for planning and decision making
- iii a basis for future landscape strategies
- iv new information at a local landscape scale than ever before bringing together information relating to the natural and historic environments
- v online updateable data
- vi an examination of the pressures for change and their potential effects, something not previously covered in the 1994 document

Full technical details of the Study and methodology can be found on the website at:

[www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall\\_landscape](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall_landscape)

### 2.4.2 Use of the study

The local authority will be using the Landscape Character Study to provide support and guidance to deliver good quality sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the landscape. Specific additional guidance is currently being developed to help planners to use the Landscape Character Study to gain greater understanding of the landscape in which the development is proposed. Part 3 of this Guidance gives an outline of the Landscape Character Study and how it can be used as a resource to inform development and other decisions involving change in the landscape.

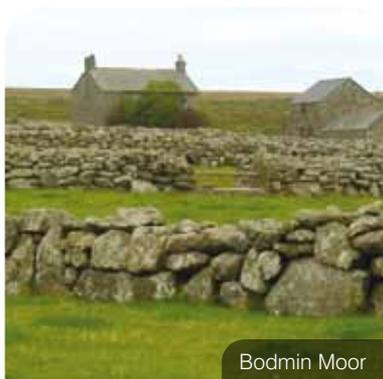
The Study brings together an assessment of Landscape Character at two levels; Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), and the more detailed Landscape Description Units (LDUs). Together, these reflect the county's diversity, giving clear and accessible information relating to key existing characteristics, condition, pressures and guidelines for future planning and land management. The study identified 40 Landscape Character Areas and 420 Landscape Description Units, of which 335 are non-urban LDUs.



Land to the north of Penryn River



Rame Head



Bodmin Moor

### 2.4.3 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in Cornwall

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are geographically discrete areas which have a 'sense of place'. They are identified from the constituent smaller Landscape Description Units (further described under 2.4.4) which together form a physical and cultural relationship and visual association. Each Landscape Character Area has a recognisable and consistent pattern of landscape elements and features.

The 40 Landscape Character Areas overlay the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and World Heritage Site (WHS) designations and Appendix A5 and A6 illustrate within which Landscape Character Areas these designations sit.

Part 3 of this Best Practice Guidance seeks to explain how each attribute can be interpreted for the benefit of Landscape Character enhancement, improvement, conservation and or preservation.

### 2.4.4 Landscape Description Units (LDUs) in Cornwall

Landscape Description Units (LDUs) are the 'building blocks' of the landscape mapped at a 1:50,000 scale, and are defined on the basis of the mapped national and local data. Landscape Description Units are distinct and relatively homogenous units of land, each defined by a series of definitive attributes relating to their Physiography, Ground Type, Land Cover and Cultural Pattern. The full methodology for deriving LDUs is set out in the Method Report contained in the Overview and Technical Report in the Resources section of the website.

Together, the Landscape Description Units make up the larger Landscape Character Areas. The number of Landscape Description Units in each Landscape Character Area varies considerably depending on the complexity or consistency of the landscape. The average is around 10. They are derived from mapping of national data, and further refined by local data sources, although their boundaries are not so easily identified on the ground, with different landscapes grading into one another. Land sitting on, or close to, a boundary will exhibit characteristics of both adjacent units.

A range of information has been collected both through desk study and field survey relating to the Landscape Description Units. The Schedule of Landscape Description Unit Attributes and Definitions provides a detailed list of the separate descriptions for each defining attribute and these are provided on the website and in Appendix A7 of this document.

(Refer to Appendix A2 for a step-by-step guide to access landscape character information from the website.)



Bodmin Moor conifer plantations



Wild flowers in a Cornish hedge



Helford River

**Table 1 Cornwall Landscape Character Area (LCA) descriptions**

This table lists the headings from the sheet descriptions for each Landscape Character Area, and indicates the information which will be described.

Attribute Name	Content Information
<b>CONTEXT</b>	
<b>Location</b>	A written description outlining the approximate land area the Landscape Character Area covers.
<b>Designations</b>	A listing of the number and type of designations which apply to the Landscape Character Area and the corresponding Landscape Description Units in which they are located.
<b>Description</b>	A summary of the character of the area giving its landscape context.
<b>Key Characteristics</b>	An abbreviated bullet point list of the area's character to give an overview of the key landscape elements.
<b>ATTRIBUTES</b>	
<b>Geology and Soils</b>	Detail of the underlying geology and soil.
<b>Topography and Drainage</b>	Description of the landform and drainage pattern created by the underlying geology.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	Description of the key vegetation cover, wildlife and natural habitats to be found in the area. Highlights key Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats.
<b>Land Cover and Land Use</b>	Detail of the general existing land cover and land use.
<b>Field and Woodland Pattern</b>	Detail of the size and character of fields, their boundaries, and existing woodland areas.
<b>Settlement Pattern</b>	Detail of height, scale, massing and distribution of existing rural dwellings and farmsteads.
<b>Transport Pattern</b>	Detail of size and class of highways, the character of the route, verge and boundary details, including public rights of way.
<b>Historic Features</b>	Features which enrich the landscape, and/or cover areas of the landscape including World Heritage Sites which should be respected and protected.
<b>Condition</b>	An indication of current land management practices and what impact these have had on the existing character of the landscape, its health in terms of nature conservation and its capacity to accept development.
<b>Pressure for Change and Sensitivity</b>	Highlights the main known forces for change in the area.
<b>Aesthetic and Sensory</b>	Detail of how the landscape is experienced, including descriptions of special qualities such as tranquility, exposure, intimacy.
<b>Distinctive Features</b>	Draws attention to the features which contribute to the distinct character of the local area.
<b>GUIDANCE</b>	
<b>Visions and Objectives</b>	This section sets out an overall vision for the Landscape Character Area in order to conserve and enhance its distinctive character.
<b>Planning and Management Guidelines</b>	This lists specific guidelines to help implement the 'Visions and Objectives' for the Landscape Character Areas.

Landscape Character Area information from website is available from the Landscape pages of the Council's website at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall\\_landscape](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall_landscape).

(Refer to Appendix A2 for a "Step-by-Step Guide" to access Landscape Character Information from the website.)

**Table 2 Cornwall Landscape Description Unit (LDU) Profiles**

Profile Name	Content Information
<b>DEFINING ATTRIBUTES</b>	
<b>Physiography</b>	10 separate descriptions express the shape and structure of the land surface as influenced both by the nature of the underlying geology and the effect of subsequent geomorphological processes. Geological structure and landform help define the Landscape Description Unit boundary
<b>Ground Type</b>	23 descriptions of the soil-forming environment and its influence in determining the surface pattern of vegetation and land use.
<b>Land Cover</b>	12 land cover descriptions express the type of vegetation (natural and man-made) covering the land surface. Two definitive attributes are used, one describing the predominant land use/type of farming, the other reflecting the contribution that trees and woodlands make to the character of the landscape.
<b>Settlement Pattern</b>	9 descriptions express the structural component of the cultural landscape as reflected in the historic pattern of enclosure and rural settlement.
<b>LOCAL DATA</b>	
<b>Designations</b>	13 designations indicate the significance of the LDUs in the landscape context.
<b>Historic Landscape Classification Types (HLC)</b>	15 Historic Landscape Classification Types.
<b>Land Cover 95</b>	8 Land Cover descriptions.
<b>Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Types</b>	20 Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats.

More detailed explanations of these defining attributes can be found in Appendix A7 of this Guidance

Landscape Description Unit information from website is available from the Landscape pages of the Council's website at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall\\_landscape](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwall_landscape).

(Refer to Appendix A2 for a "Step-by-Step Guide" to access Landscape Character information from the website.)

### Further information and websites:

English Nature, Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) and Topic Papers 6  
(The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage)

English Nature, The Living Landscapes Project: Landscape character and biodiversity: Final Report (2002/3) English Nature research reports: Report No 475  
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