

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### ***Background to this Report***

- 1.1 In April 2001, Estell Warren Landscape Architects were appointed by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNP) to undertake a landscape character assessment of the National Park and prepare a Quality of Life (QoL) Capital Assessment (formerly known as Environmental Capital Assessment) in relation to key elements of landscape character.

### ***The Yorkshire Dales National Park***

- 1.2 The Yorkshire Dales National Park was designated in 1954 and at 1773 square kilometres is Britain's third largest. It straddles the Pennine watershed and comprises high exposed moorland plateaux incised by long, deep dales carved by ice and water, upon which successive generations of hunters, herdsman, farmers, monks and miners have left their mark, creating distinct local variations in landscape character. It has a population of nearly 20,000 people and is visited by a further 8 million people every year. The traditional landscape of the Dales is highly valued by those who live and work in the Park and visitors alike.
- 1.3 The Park is administered by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority for the purposes of conserving and enhancing its natural and built environment, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public. The Authority also has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the Park area in pursuing its primary purposes. The Authority is the statutory planning authority for development control and other planning policy matters.
- 1.4 The Park has a sense of place that is unique; its special qualities result from a combination of the visual qualities of the landscape, the qualities of the natural environment in particular its plants and wildlife, and the cultural heritage of the Park giving the added dimension of a sense of time, depth and history, together with the more intangible qualities appreciated by residents and visitors to the Park such as peace, solitude, wildness, space, inspiration and the escape the Park offers from urban living.
- 1.5 This landscape assessment in combination with the Biodiversity Action Plan for the Dales published under the heading of Nature in the Dales in August 2000 and a forthcoming historic character assessment of the Dales will assist the greater understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the National Park and guide future decision making, policy and management.

### ***Context and Scope of this Study***

- 1.6 Landscape character assessment is an objective, value-free assessment of landscape concerned with character rather than quality or value, although following the process of characterisation judgements may be made about particular landscapes and values may be assigned to them to inform particular decisions.
- 1.7 Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Patterns of geology, landform, soils and vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement combine together to create character. At the broad scale character makes each part of Britain distinctive and gives each its sense of place; at the local scale there may be distinct character differences between different areas of a single valley or dale.

- 1.8 The purpose of this landscape character assessment project, as identified by the National Parks Authority, is:
- to promote an appreciation and wider understanding of landscape within the National Park;
  - to identify areas of similar type and character and provide a classification and description of these distinct areas to act as a baseline from which to draw information to guide and inform the development of policy for the forthcoming Local Plan Review and guide and inform Area Action Plans;
  - to guide and inform development control and landscape management decisions; and
  - to provide the basis from which to prepare a landscape strategy and guidelines for the National Park.
- 1.9 This landscape character assessment has the following objectives:
- to confirm the Countryside Agency's Draft Classification of Landscape Types as they apply to the Yorkshire Dales National Park;
  - to classify the landscape into distinct landscape character areas, identifying their key characteristics and, importantly, describing how the key elements interact to produce character;
  - to describe the influences that have led to the development of the character and character variations observed today (including physical, historic and cultural, settlements and buildings, landcover);
  - to be presented on a dale by dale basis;
  - to incorporate elements of the Quality of Life Capital approach into the assessment process (in particular to identify the elements of the landscape that it would be important to conserve and why, and to identify current trends and drivers for future change); and
  - to co-ordinate the assessment with other landscape character assessments that have been undertaken or are in the process of being undertaken on Park boundary areas.
- 1.10 Due to the short length of the project period and resource limitations, the project brief did not allow for stakeholder participation in the characterisation process, although officers of the National Park Authority contributed their expertise to inform the Quality of Life Capital Assessment.

### ***The Study Area***

- 1.11 The study area extends to the boundaries of the National Park, shown on Figure 1. The Park includes parts of the County of North Yorkshire (Richmondshire and Craven Districts), and part of Cumbria (South Lakeland District). On parts of its western boundary, the National Park abuts the County of Lancashire (Lancaster District); on the southern boundary a small section abuts Bradford Metropolitan District; on the eastern boundary it abuts Harrogate District, and on the northern boundary it abuts both the Eden District of Cumbria and the Teesdale District of County Durham.

- 1.12 The boundaries of the National Park coincide with the eastern edge of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the west, the southern boundary of the North Pennine AONB in the north and the western boundary of the Nidderdale AONB in the east.

***Relationship to Previous Studies***

- 1.13 This assessment has been undertaken against the background of a number of previous landscape assessment studies:

a) The National Park Plan First Review, June 1984, which, prior to the publication of detailed guidance on landscape assessment by the Countryside Commission in 1993, divided the National Park into a number of landscape zones as follows:

*Dales Heartland and Three Peaks;*

*Southern Fringe;*

*Eastern Moors;*

*Mid Wharfedale;*

*Central and Northern Watersheds;*

*Wensleydale;*

*Northern Dales;*

*Cumbrian Dales;*

*North Western Fells.*

The zones were defined on a schematic map and were accompanied by a brief description. The consultants have found these broad areas to be soundly based and have developed upon these in identifying the landscape character areas within the present study.

b) The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's report entitled 'The Pennine Dales Environmentally Sensitive Area Landscape Assessment 1995'. This landscape assessment was intended to act as a baseline document for the landscape monitoring of the ESA, within which certain areas of the National Park are included, and focuses on the rural landscape as created and influenced by agricultural land management. The landscape monitoring programme was designed to give an assessment of the effects of ESA designation on landscape quality.

The document sets out the description and key characteristics of the landscape in the Pennine Dales ESA before describing the landscape of each dale and how the combination of landscape types combine to create its particular individual character, on the premise that if the balance of elements change they will affect the character and quality of the landscape. Categories identified within the National Park included Dale Bottom, Dale Beck Side, Notched Dale Beck Side, Lower Dale Sides, Upper Dale Side, Irregular Bottom and Dale Sides, Wooded Dale Sides, Open Topland and Allotments, Lower Dale, Middle Dale and Upper Dale.

The document has been useful in informing the present study for the parts of the Park within the ESA.

c) The Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Initiative, Volume 2 North West and Volume 3 Yorkshire and the Humber. These documents define and

describe the regional landscape character areas of England, of which two, the Yorkshire Dales and the Howgill Fells, fall partly within the boundaries of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The relationship between these regional character areas and the National Park boundary is shown on Figure 2. The information provided within these documents has formed useful background for the present study and has formed the basis for the overall description of the Landscape of the National Park in Section 2.

The Countryside Agency's new Draft Landscape Typology for England, which subdivides the 159 regional character areas within England into their component landscape types, based on the three determinants of physiography, soils/surface cover and cultural patterns. Within the Yorkshire Dales National Park the types identified within each of the three regional character areas are as follows:

**Table 1: Relationship between Countryside Character Initiative's Regional Landscape Character Areas and Draft Landscape Typology Components**

<b><i>Countryside Character Initiative Character Area Number</i></b>	<b><i>Countryside Character Initiative Character Area Name</i></b>	<b><i>Draft Landscape Typology Components</i></b> <b><i>Definitive Attributes</i></b> (physiography, soils/surface cover, cultural pattern)
21	Yorkshire Dales	HDO (high hills, impoverished soils, unsettled/open land)  VLA (upland vales and valleys, shallow soils over limestone, wooded-ancient woods)  RCD (intermediate physiography, shallow soils over limestone, dispersed unwooded)  HLO (high hills, shallow soils over limestone, unsettled/open land)  UDW (low hills, impoverished soils, wetland/waste unwooded)  VPA (upland vales and valleys, gleyed soils over hard rock, wooded-ancient woods)  UPA (low hills, gleyed soils over hard rock, wooded-ancient woods)  RBD (intermediate physiography, brown soils, dispersed unwooded)  VPD (upland vales and valleys, gleyed soils over hard rock, dispersed unwooded)
18	Howgill Fells	HDO (high hills, impoverished soils, unsettled/open land)  VPA (upland vales and valleys, gleyed soils over hard rock, wooded-ancient woods)  VPD (upland vales and valleys, gleyed soils over hard rock, dispersed unwooded)

The present study is based on the landscape types identified by the Countryside Agency study although the boundaries identified have been further refined by the consultants during fieldwork. The types identified have also formed the basis of the subdivision of the Park into landscape character areas.

Cumbria County Council undertook an assessment of landscape types and sub types for the 1995 Cumbria Landscape Classification, which did not include the section of the Yorkshire Dales National Park falling within Cumbria. The subsequent landscape strategy (undated) however included a characterisation of the Cumbrian area of the Yorkshire Dales in the following categories:

**Table 2: Landscape Types within Cumbrian Area of National Park**

<b>Character Type</b>	<b>Sub Type</b>
8 Main Valleys	8b Broad Valleys  8d Dales
13 Fells and Scarps	13c Fells

These types within Cumbria coincide broadly with the draft typology prepared by the Countryside Agency, 13c Fells in Cumbria approximately coinciding with CA type HDO, 8b coinciding with CA type VPD and 8d coinciding with CA types VPD, VPA and VLA.

***Relationship to Studies Undertaken by Neighbouring Authorities***

- 1.14 All of the authorities situated on the National Park boundary, with the exception of Richmondshire, have undertaken landscape character assessments or are in the process of undertaking them. These character assessments, where available, have been taken into account in the confirmation of landscape types and identification of character areas within the Yorkshire Dales to ensure continuity across the Park boundary. The status of studies undertaken by neighbouring authorities is summarised in Table 3 below and illustrated on Figure 1:

**Table 3: Landscape Types and Landscape Character Areas on National Park Boundaries**

<b>Authority and Document Reference</b>	<b>Character Types bounding Yorkshire Dales National Park</b> (and sub type where relevant indicated in italics)	<b>Character Areas bounding Yorkshire Dales National Park</b>
<i>Cumbria County Council Cumbria Landscape Classification 1995 and Cumbria Landscape Strategy</i>	8 Main Valleys  <i>8b Broad Valleys</i>  8c Valley Corridors  8d Dales  <i>11 Upland Fringes</i>  11a Foothills  <i>13 Fells and Scarps</i>	<i>None identified as part of this study</i>

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YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

	13b Moorland, High Plateau 13c Fells	
<i>Lancashire County Council</i>  <i>A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire 2000</i>  <i>Landscape Character Assessment</i>  <i>Integrated assessment drawing together previous assessments including Forest of Bowland AONB study (Countryside Commission 1992)</i>	<i>4 Moorland Fringe</i>  <i>13 Drumlin Field</i>  <i>21 Limestone Fells</i>	<i>4h Leck Fell Fringe</i>  <i>13b Bentham-Clapham Drumlin Field</i>  <i>21a Leck Fell</i>
<i>Craven District Council, North Yorkshire</i>  <i>Assessment undertaken as part of the Lancashire County Council study</i>	<i>5 Undulating Lowland Farmland</i>  <i>11 Valley Floodplains</i>  <i>13 Drumlin Field</i>  <i>14 Rolling Upland Farmland</i>	<i>5f Lower Ribblesdale (Guisburn to Hellifield)</i>  <i>11b Long Preston Reaches</i> <i>11c Aire Valley</i>  <i>13a Gargrave Drumlin Field</i> <i>13b Bentham-Clapham Drumlin Field</i>  <i>14b Lothersdale and Cringles</i>
<i>Bradford Metropolitan District Council</i>  <i>Landscape Assessment 2000</i>	<i>Wharfedale</i>  <i>Enclosed Pasture</i>	<i>None identified as part of this study</i>
<i>Harrogate District Council, North Yorkshire</i>  <i>Landscape Appraisal for the Harrogate District 1993 (incorporating the findings of the Nidderdale AONB study (Countryside Commission 1991))</i>	<i>Moorland Plateau</i>  <i>Grassland Plateau</i>  <i>Upper Valley- Colsterdale</i>  <i>Wharfedaleside</i>  <i>Upland Fringes</i>	<i>None identified as part of this study</i>
<i>Richmondshire District Council, North Yorkshire</i>	<i>No study undertaken to date</i>	<i>No study undertaken to date</i>
<i>Durham County Council</i>  <i>Study in course of preparation</i>	<i>Moorland Plateau</i>  <i>Low Moors</i>  <i>High Moors</i>	<i>None identified as part of this study</i>

### ***Methodology***

- 1.15 The methodology used for this assessment has followed that recommended in the Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage by Land Use Consultants and the Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield, August 1999. Briefly, the process included:
- familiarisation with the area through information gathering, sieve analysis and desk study, culminating in the preparation of a map of draft landscape types and character areas compatible where possible with those identified across boundary areas;
  - site survey including completion of field survey forms, photography and other field recording to check draft character types and areas and refine as necessary; prepare final draft map indicating boundaries and consult with Park Authority;
  - consultation with key individuals to assist the team in understanding landscape character and in particular recent and future pressures for change and trends;
  - confirmation of key characteristics of each landscape type and identification of key characteristics of each character area;
  - research and prepare sections of text on landscape character of each character area and prepare descriptions of the influences that have led to the development of the character and character variations observed today (including physical, historic and cultural, settlements and buildings and landcover) for each geographic area;
  - preparation of Quality of Life Capital assessment for identified key features of each character area;
  - report text, illustrative sheet and map production and presentation and submission to Park Authority.

### ***Structure of this Report***

- 1.16 This report sets out the findings of the landscape character assessment and Quality of Life Capital Assessment in six sections:
- following this introductory section, Section 2 describes the landscape character of the Yorkshire Dales as a whole together with the physical, historic and cultural, settlements and buildings and landcover influences that have shaped the landscape;
  - Section 3 goes on to describe the distinct landscape character types within the Yorkshire Dales and summarises their key characteristics, setting the scene for the following section;
  - Section 4, the main body of the report, which breaks down the landscape types geographically into landscape character areas on a dale-by-dale basis (and including separately identified upland character areas), describes their key characteristics and landscape character and the forces that have shaped the landscape of each dale or geographic area. Each of these character areas is accompanied by an illustrative colour sheet, showing the boundaries of the area in relation to an OS

map and including photographs (and illustrative material) to convey the key visual qualities of the area. Section 4 completes the landscape characterisation section of the report which can act as a baseline from which to undertake further studies;

- Section 5 considers the background to landscape change, recent pressures for change on landscapes and key features and forces for, and direction of, future changes. The Quality of Life Capital Assessment starts by identifying environmental benefits and disbenefits of key elements of character before evaluating them in order to identify the appropriate management priority and prescription.