



## Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit

Cumbria County Council, in partnership with the Cumbrian Local Planning Authorities, is developing a county wide Landscape Character project to help conserve, manage and enhance the varied landscapes of Cumbria.

### WHAT WILL THIS INVOLVE?

The project will produce a 'Toolkit' of advice and documents. It will bring together existing and new information on landscape character to help people understand the nature and importance of the county's distinctive landscape character. As part of this we will also be updating some of the existing information to take into account changes in land management and landscape character that have taken place in recent years. It will look at landscape character for the whole county, both inside and outside our nationally designated landscapes, and highlight why all landscapes matter.

The toolkit is planned to be the start of a process that would develop more detailed information on our landscapes over the next few years, and provide a framework for developing more detailed Landscape Character Assessments and guidance to support the local planning frameworks.

### WHAT HAS HAPPENED RECENTLY?

In 2009 we've already sought views on landscape issues through an online survey in February and March, workshops held in June/July 2009 and an online consultation in August/September. These have helped confirm the key issues effected our landscapes, in many cases confirmed that the existing landscape character assessment is still relevant, and helped us gather lots of information to help update our existing Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines to reflect changes that have taken place and to help manage future change. Key issues we need to address include the effects of climate change and how we adapt and mitigate against these in the future. Finally, views will be sought on a draft toolkit before it is published and circulated to the local planning authorities and major landowners/managers across the county. This is expected to take place in January 2010.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER?

Landscapes are everywhere and their characteristics arise from the interaction of natural and cultural influences. Natural influences include geology, landform, soils, climate and biodiversity. Cultural influences include historical and current land uses, settlement patterns and human activities. But this isn't all that defines a landscape's character. People's perceptions are inherent to every landscape as they provide the physical setting for everyday life, habitats for nature and wildlife and influence our well being and quality of life.

### WHY IS THE TOOLKIT NEEDED?

The Toolkit is needed to help a wide range of organisations, land owners and land managers to better understand what makes our landscapes special and help them make decisions in the future to retain and enhance these special characteristics.





One area in particular the Toolkit will support is the local planning framework. It will provide guidance to help people develop proposals that are sympathetic to, and retain distinctive local landscape characteristics, and to help local authorities develop landscape policy and make good decisions on planning applications that might affect landscape character. The toolkit will be useful when considering new development or change in the open countryside and at the edges of towns, villages and hamlets. It will also help guide other land management decisions that could affect landscape character.

The Toolkit will also help make sure that the landscape character of all our landscapes outside the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are understood and that their special characteristics are retained and enhanced. Cumbria has large areas of high quality landscapes that are not recognised nationally for their beauty. However they are recognised at a county level. The Toolkit will provide guidance on what this means for these and other landscapes that aren't nationally recognised.

**WHAT WILL A TOOLKIT INCLUDE?**

The Toolkit will include the following areas:

- Advice on why understanding and assessing landscape character is important.
- Advice on why all landscapes matter and the future role of Landscapes of County Importance.
- Advice on carrying out local level landscape character assessments.
- Existing Landscape Character Assessments for Cumbria, its National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Updated guidelines for managing the landscape building on the Cumbria Landscape Strategy 1997.
- Links to the Cumbria Historic Landscape Character work which will be completed in Spring 2009, and the Cumbria Biodiversity Evidence Base that was produced in September 2008.

**WHO WILL IT HELP?**

It will help planners, environmental organisations, land managers and owners, developers and other interested groups and individuals to understand and manage our landscape resources. It will help local planning authorities develop policy and make decisions based on a sound landscape character information to help manage, conserve and enhance landscape character in the future.

**HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?**

If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact Jenny Wain, Principal Planning Officer - Landscape and Countryside [Jenny.wain@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.wain@cumbriacc.gov.uk) 01539 713427.

If you would like to find out more about the project visit [www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/planning-environment/countryside/countryside-landscape/land/CA.asp](http://www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/planning-environment/countryside/countryside-landscape/land/CA.asp)

