

5. Conclusion: Applications and future development.

Introduction

- 5.1 The methodology that was developed in Shropshire resulted in the definition of over 30,000 HLC polygons and 58 Current HLC Types covering the whole of the ceremonial county area (e.g. Shropshire County Council and the Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council areas) .
- 5.2 The methodology used as the basis of the Staffordshire HLC project (Robinson 2006, Wigley 2002) and with modifications in Warwickshire (Wallace). Worcestershire and Leicestershire HLC projects are also using a similar methodology and a simplified version of the Shropshire approach was also used after training by SCC in three counties of the Irish midlands as part of a Culture 2000 project.
- 5.3 Work is now progressing on the applications of the Shropshire HLC, both in its own right and through its integration with the LCA. The next section of this chapter will briefly describe the work that has been done to date in this area.
- 5.4 The final part of this chapter will outline possible areas for future development of the Shropshire HLC.

Applications

Introduction

- 5.5 Work on the applications of HLC formed an integral component of the Shropshire HLC Project from the outset. A number of opportunities have arisen, both during the life of the project and since the completion of data capture in 2004, to develop and explore the applications of HLC in a number of areas. These are briefly outlined below and are supported by the various reports included as separate appendices below.

Land Management Initiatives

- 5.6 One of the initial HLC pilot study areas was chosen to coincide with the Severn-Vyrnwy Land Management Initiative (hereafter SVLMI) project area. It formed one of the nine LMIs initiated by the Countryside Agency between 2001 and 2004, which aimed to force for change within farming industry in different types of landscape. The SVLMI explored the future of farming on the floodplain and placed particular emphasis on exploring the agri-environment schemes could be used to develop farm businesses.
- 5.7 The results of the pilot study provided an opportunity to explore the potential of HLC for targeting agri-environment funding. A suite of GIS layers were produced which highlighted the location of certain HLC types within the SVLMI project, together with a series of

recommendations as to what land management practices would help to maintain the historic character (see Appendix 4).

Wet Washlands

- 5.8 The Environment Agency (EA) are working on a number of initiatives aimed at mitigating flooding in the upper Severn valley. They have convened the Upper Severn Wet Washlands Group (USWWG), comprising representatives EA, RSPB, Natural England, Defra, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire County Council, to consider the feasibility of establishing wet washlands in the area. These would put in a place a control structure that would enable the water level to be raised on the floodplain at times of peak flow, enabling 'storage' of flood waters and protection of properties at risk in Shrewsbury and other downstream towns and villages.
- 5.9 In 2003 EA drew up a long list of potential washlands and asked the USWWG members for their views on what the likely environmental impact would be. As an example of the sort of information that Shropshire County Council could provide, HLC was used alongside other SMR to provide a response on the potential impact on the historic environment in one of the proposed washlands (see Appendix 5). This was included with similar statements on the possible impacts on biodiversity and landscape character.

West Midlands Woodland Opportunity Map

- 5.10 The West Midlands Woodland Opportunities Map represents a key output of the Regional Forestry Framework: an action plan which is intended to enhance the regions tree, woodland and forestry assets in order to achieve social, environment and economic benefits. The Woodland Opportunities Map is a strategic document which aims to: -
- Assist landowners in making decisions about how their proposals fit into the wider regional aspirations of the Regional Forestry Framework.
 - Help focus activity on areas of maximum public benefit in creating and managing woodlands in the region.
 - Assist the Forestry Commission (FC) and other funding bodies regionally in making decisions about proposals to create and manage woodlands (via regional scoring).

The initial version of the map was launched in March 2005, for which Shropshire County Council produced a contribution to the '*Woodland Opportunities Map: Landscape Classification based on information supplied and agreed by local authorities.*' Map. In autumn 2005 FC invited Local Authorities to review their existing maps, and to contribute additional maps in cases where they were unable to do for the first version of the map, for publication in early 2006.

- 5.11 Shropshire County Council produced an for the historic environment theme map, based HLC data, for Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin for the second version of the Woodland Opportunities Map. By adapting a methodology that was developed in Staffordshire, the sensitivity of each HLC Type to new planting was assessed. This information was then used to ‘score’ each LDU as to the likely sensitivity of the historic landscape character to new woodland planting in order produce the theme map (see Appendix 6 for a full description of the methodology and the resulting map).

Community Landscapes

- 5.12 The Down to Earth Community Landscapes initiatives form a component of The Blue Remembered Hills (BRH) Project: a five year project Heritage Lottery Fund funded which is managed by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. It focuses on nine aspects/features of the landscape, ranging from orchards and veteran trees to grazing regimes and riparian woodland management, and provides advice and grant aid to people within the AONB and the surrounding area to care for and celebrate their landscapes. Each Down to Earth project aims to enable communities to care for and improve the management of their local landscape.
- 5.13 The first Community Landscape initiative was established in 2003 in four parishes in the Upper Onny valley, in south western Shropshire. The HLC Officer was invited to sit on the project Steering Group, which provided an opportunity to make information about the historic landscape character of the parishes directly available to the local communities involved in the project. Data capture for the Shropshire HLC project was still ongoing at this time, so an advanced pilot study was undertaken to ensure that a HLC was available for the parishes. This provided the basis for a presentation on HLC to members of the communities involved at an initial public meeting and the production of a poster for display at the community events that were organised as part of the initiative (see Appendix 7 for the interpretation of the landscape history of the area).
- 5.14 HLC information was also provided for another Community Landscapes initiative in Newcastle, Bettws-y-crwyn and Mainstone parishes, in the south western Shropshire. This involved sitting on the project Steering Group, and providing a brief talk on the landscape character for a local history event and providing a ‘tour guide’ for a mini-bus tour of the landscape of the three parishes (see Appendix 8).

Future Developments

Introduction

- 5.15 Shropshire County Council would like to develop its work on Historic Landscape Characterisation in the following areas.

Spatial planning

- 5.16 The County Council is currently proposing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on landscape, which would be based upon the Shropshire Character Framework. The landscape SPD will form one of a suite of interrelated SPD which the County Council wishes to produced as part of its Local Development Framework on Sustainable Resource Management.

Sensitivity and capacity assessments

- 5.17 In relation to the wider spatial planning agenda, the County Council is currently using HLC data to input into the development of a Major Developments Framework, similar to Hampshire Strategic Landscape Sensitivity assessment (Hampshire County Council 2005). This will provide a strategic overview of the inherent sensitivity of the landscape of the county based upon assessments of historic landscape, biodiversity, visibility and tranquillity. It will also assess the capacity of the county's landscape to accommodate major developments such as renewable energy developments (principally wind turbines), waste infrastructure, industrial development etc.
- 5.18 In further development of this work would be to produce a HLC based historic environment assessment, along the lines of those which were undertaken in relation to the housing growth areas in the South East (Croft 2003, English Heritage & ALGAO 2003, Buckinghamshire County Council 2004), for the housing growth points which have been identified in the county (Shrewsbury and/or Telford). This would be a regional first outside the conurbations in the West Midlands and would provide an opportunity to develop the County Councils capacity on historic environment sensitivity and capacity work.

Parish planning

- 5.19 Over the course of 2006 Shropshire County Council worked with the Kinnerley Landscape Group to produce a parish scale landscape assessment in connection with their Parish Plan. The County Council developed a methodology which enables character areas to be identified on the basis of HLC and LCA information. Following initial training, the Group used the methodology to undertake a field survey of their Parish. The Group published their report in January 2007 and the County Council would like to build on this success by producing a guidance note on the methodology so that other parishes could conduct similar assessments.

Environmental Stewardship

- 5.20 The County Council currently provides interpretive statements on the historic landscape character of farm holdings as part of its standard response to Farm Environment Plan consultations. At present, however, these are not linked to the provision of management advice or recommendations concerning the various options available under the stewardship scheme. The County Council would like to develop a Historic Environment Countryside Advisor Service (HECAS) post to develop is service provision in relation to support the environmental stewardship scheme. This would also provide an opportunity to develop a set of generic recommendations linked to each HLC Type.

Farmstead Characterisation

- 5.21 Linked to the improvement of the its HLC advice for environmental stewardship, the County Council would also like to undertake a Historic Farmstead Characterisation assessment similar to that undertaken recently in Hampshire. This would provide important contextual information about traditional farm buildings for any future HECAS Officer, and enable the relationship between historic farmsteads and landscape character to be analysed.