

APPENDIX C

EXTRACTS FROM COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER APPRAISAL



JERSEY ISLAND PLAN REVIEW

COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER APPRAISAL

STATES OF JERSEY PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 1999



1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND AIMS

- 1.1 The Planning and Environment Department of the States of Jersey is currently engaged in a review of the Jersey Island Plan. As part of this process Land Use Consultants have been appointed to undertake a 'Countryside Character Appraisal' of the Island. This *'is regarded as an essential pre-requisite for future development planning and policy formulation on the Island, to help ensure that the distinctive and varied character of the Island's countryside is recognised, respected, protected and enhanced. Added impetus for the work also stems from the potential pressures to develop open land over the next ten years or so.'* (Project Brief Ref: 8/8. 1997)
- 1.2. The specific **purposes** of the study as identified in the Brief are:
- to provide a more sophisticated assessment/definition of the diverse and distinctive character areas which comprise the Island's countryside following a similar approach to that used by the Countryside Commission and English Nature in producing the Joint Map of England;
 - to assist in ensuring that the planning policies formulated for the revised Island Plan are appropriate for the future protection and enhancement of the Island's countryside;
 - to inform development control decisions;
 - to avoid the countryside being detrimentally affected by poorly located development;
 - to help ensure that any necessary new development respects or enhances the distinctive character of the countryside;
 - to determine those areas which require enhancement and how this might best be achieved;
 - to assist in providing a basis/benchmark against which change in the various identified character areas can be monitored.

SCOPE

- 1.3. Building on current best practice the Brief stressed the need to:
- define countryside character areas based on their landscape and habitat qualities and their historic cultural heritage;
 - identify the main forces for change affecting the various character areas;
 - determine the relative levels of protection and enhancement required for the various identified character areas;

- establish the relative capacity of the various character areas to accept new development without undue detrimental impact on their character;
- review the countryside protection policy zones as defined on the Island Map, as approved by the States of Jersey on 3 November 1987 (e.g. Green Zone, Agricultural Priority Zone) and make recommendations.

COVERAGE

- 1.4. The study covers the whole of the Island's terrestrial area, which is the 117 sq km which lies above high watermark. The seascape is one of the Island's major assets. Jersey has a very large tidal range and an extensive area of reefs and flats are exposed at low tide, almost doubling the area of the Bailiwick. These areas have recently been given special planning protection as a Marine Protection Zone (1995). The Bailiwick of Jersey also includes within its jurisdiction the offshore reefs and islets of the Ecréhous, the Paternosters and Les Minquiers. These islets are not only important for their rich natural and cultural assets but are also extremely important in the 'horizon' view from the coast of Jersey. The characterisation has been specifically extended to include the intertidal areas and the offshore reefs and islets.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.5. The report divides into three main parts:

PART A: The Evolution of the Island Character

The first part of the report describes the special and unique qualities of Jersey and the main natural and cultural factors that have been responsible for shaping its present character.

PART B: Character Types and Character Areas

This main part of the report takes each of the character types and their constituent character areas in turn. The text is written to a standard format, and each can be read as a stand-alone reference. It includes a description, evaluation, summary of threats, management priorities and assessment of capacity for change.

PART C: Island-Wide Policies and Priorities

A separate technical report summarises the detailed information emerging in Part B and presents the Island-wide policies and priorities for action which it is recommended are required to protect, conserve and enhance Jersey's unique countryside character.

2. METHOD

- 2.1 A fundamental aspect of this Brief is to develop an **integrated** and **holistic** understanding of the Island's rural character. To achieve this, the study has been based on an **integrated characterisation of the Island** with an evaluation of the key features of the character areas identified based on a new and still emerging approach to **Environmental Capital** (What matters and why, environmental capital: a new approach, Countryside Commission, 1997).

INTEGRATED CHARACTERISATION

- 2.2. In the past, landscape, nature conservation and cultural history have tended to be seen as discrete topics. Integrated characterisation recognises that the character of the countryside is the product not just of the visual landscape, but of the interactions between physical features (topography, geology, climate etc.), the plants and animals which they support, and the cultural influences of human occupation and management of land over the centuries. In this way, integrated characterisation gives equal weight to landscape character, nature conservation concerns and the historical and cultural evolution of an area, and sees these in terms of their interactions with one another to create discrete areas of unique character.
- 2.3. In Jersey we have identified five broad Terrestrial Character Types and two Marine-Intertidal Character Types. There is in addition, one broad character type covering Jersey's offshore reefs and islands.

Terrestrial Character Types

Cliffs and Headlands

Coastal Plain Bays

Escarpment

Enclosed Valleys

Interior Agricultural Land

Marine-Intertidal Character Types

Cliff Edge with Deep Sea

Bays with Intertidal Flats and Reefs

Offshore Reefs and Islands

- 2.4 Each type has common, coherent characteristics in terms of its physical features, biodiversity and cultural history. Each of these broad types is further broken down into discrete Character Areas. Twenty-three terrestrial character areas and six marine character areas, plus two offshore reef and island character areas have been identified. These are clearly defined geographic areas each of which has its own distinct local identity.

DEFINING AND EVALUATING ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL

- 2.5 Building on an integrated approach to characterisation, this study has sought to evaluate the features of each character area using an emerging approach to Environmental Capital

The term environmental capital is a metaphor. The basic idea, borrowed from finance, is that the environment is a collection of assets which can provide a stream of benefits so long as they (the assets) are not depleted. For example, a woodland provides a stream of benefits/services in terms of biodiversity, sense of place, historical continuity, local cultural identity, recreation, and as an energy/timber crop, in just the same way as a savings account provides a steady stream of interest – provided the 'capital' is kept intact.

- 2.6. The three important steps in this new and emerging approach to Environmental Capital are that it:
- builds on integrated characterisation and identifies those features which are important in defining the character of an area;
 - rather than evaluating the importance of the features which have been identified, it considers the attributes or the environmental services that the features provide (such as the example given for woodland above). This may equally be described as the flow of environmental benefits provided by individual features.
 - it applies the same evaluation framework to all aspects of the environment.
- 2.7. This approach to Environmental Capital is considered in more detail below, outlining the three steps which have been followed in this study.
- 2.8. **Identification of features:** This is an Island-wide study. In consequence, at this level of investigation, most features identified as characterising an area are generic in nature (e.g. woodlands or cliffs) rather than the naming of specific features as would occur at a more detailed level of characterisation. They may be landscape features, cultural features, physical features – anything that is important to the character of a particular part of the Island. They may be isolated features such as a church spire or an area-wide characteristic such as the pattern of small fields. They may equally be perceptual characteristics such as tranquillity or sense of wilderness rather than actual physical features, recognising that such characteristics can be every bit as important as a physical feature in giving an area its particular character.
- 2.9. **Services/attributes:** By looking at the range of **important** environmental ‘services’ that the different features provide, a **better** and more **integrated** understanding is reached as to **WHY** different aspects of the environment matter. Taking the example of woodland again: woodlands may be important for recreation, as local landmarks, as an integral part of a certain stage in history, for their bird life, and for their wild flowers. In this way the environmental capital process recognises all the different kind of environmental interests that individual features or areas have. It provides consistency across different environmental domains and integration between different environmental interests.
- 2.10. **Evaluation framework:** The evaluation framework, which can be applied to all aspects of the environment, assesses the value of each benefit provided by asking three separate questions:
- first, at what **scale** is the service or benefit identified important e.g. Island-wide, UK or perhaps international, as in the case of certain rare species;
 - second, do we have **enough** of it in terms of quantity and quality? I.e. this looks at recent trends and asks if we still have enough of the service or environmental benefit under consideration. This recognises that common but valued aspects of the environment can be very important in defining environmental character and that with their loss this character is significantly eroded. In some cases clear steps may need to be taken to stop these features or characteristics becoming scarce and/or reduced in quality. In Jersey an

example might be the landscape and biological value of hedgerows and field boundaries generally.

- third, is it **substitutable** or recreatable? This recognises that some benefits or services provided by a particular feature may be recreatable while others are not. To take a specific example: heath vegetation is a particular feature of the coastal heaths of Jersey. In terms of landscape benefit this coastal heath could be recreated within 100 years, in other words its landscape benefits are recreatable. On the other hand, the biodiversity benefits of the heathland, with its full species diversity and richness, and associated heathland fauna, would take many hundreds of years to re-establish and so is defined as non recreatable (although there would still be considerable benefits to biodiversity in extending this habitat type albeit in a much simplified form).

2.11. **Limitations of the data:** In Jersey, as in many other areas, there is currently only very limited information on environmental trends. This is not, however, a reason for ignoring the Environmental Capital approach. Asking the question whether we have enough of different aspects of the environment becomes increasingly important as the once common become rare. It is also an essential pre-requisite to the setting of environmental targets which are seen as an essential element of environmental planning. Where there is a lack of environmental trend data much can be inferred from the current threats facing different aspects of the environment.

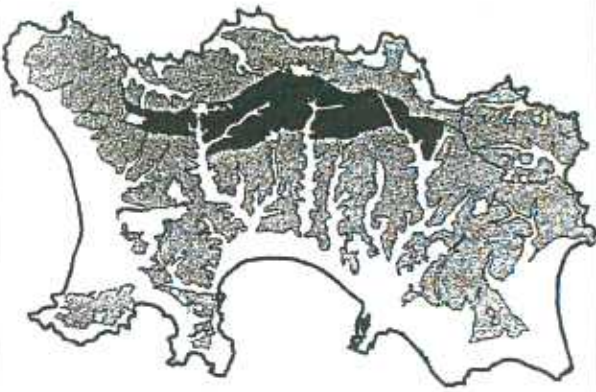
2.12. **Management implications:** In this study only those environmental features and attributes/services considered important at an Island-wide scale or greater (e.g. European-wide) are considered. In terms of the implications for the future management of these features, the answers to the evaluation questions automatically suggest the kinds of approaches needed to secure the environmental benefits or services for the future. So, for example:

- those features which should receive the very highest level of protection and where management for enhancement will be of the very highest priority are those which have attributes (benefits or services) which are internationally important, rapidly declining (becoming or are rare) and are non- recreatable. In Jersey an example would be the coastal heathlands and sand dune systems.
- at the same time clear policies need to be developed for features which are vital to the character of Jersey, are now rapidly declining, although they may be substitutable. An example might be the hedgerows and field boundaries, where the character of Jersey is dependant on these features remaining in quantity. If they become rare they will no longer be a major contributor to the character of Jersey.

EVALUATION OF THE CHARACTERS

- 2.13. In this report the landscape character areas defined have been evaluated in three ways.
- 2.14. First an assessment has been made of the area's **integrity of character**. In other words, does the area still have a very strong character derived from the interplay of a range of largely intact features, or has its general character been weakened or eroded in some way? Such erosion may be through development or changes in agriculture which have resulted in a decline in the extent and or quality of certain features and in the overall quality of the local environment.
- 2.15. Second, the **key environmental capital** of the area has been identified. This is not the total environmental capital of the area (which in combination is central to the integrity of character described above). Rather, it comprises those features which are of particular importance in that area. These may be sites which are already recognised in as deserving special protection under planning policy, or other features whose individual importance has largely been ignored but where some form of collective recognition is long overdue.
- 2.16 Third, the **threats** now facing the area are defined. The nature of these threats is an important consideration in the development of policies appropriate to each area.

CHARACTER AREA E6: CENTRAL PLATEAU- VALLEY HEADS

<p>LOCATION</p> 	<p>This character area forms the northern part of the interior plateau. The northern boundary is formed by the main north coast road. To the south, are the ridges between the valleys. The boundary between the valley heads and ridges is difficult to define on the ground as it occurs at the point where the valleys become shallower and the ridges open out to form a wider plateau. It is roughly defined by the change in geology from the softer shales to the harder igneous rocks.</p>
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NATURAL INFLUENCES

Geology and Soils: Hard granites and rhyolites underlie the area and these are blanketed by thick deposits of loess creating rich soils for agriculture. There are no Geological SSI.

Landform: The land is relatively high forming the watershed which drains down long, gentle slopes to the south. One of the principal defining features of this character area is the landform which is gently undulating and open, lacking the topographic variation of the deep valleys and ridges which lie to the south. The area is intersected by the upper branches and tributaries of the valleys, which appear as shallow, rush-filled, depressions. The open landform allows long views across the interior.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Archaeology and Past Land Use: Most evidence of early land use and occupation has been obliterated by later intensive farming systems, although there are two important archaeological sites which are proposed Ancient Monument SSI. La Hougue Boete is a megalithic cist with a surviving round mound. It is the only known megalithic cist in the Channel Islands and may be culturally linked to early Neolithic cists in south Brittany. The site is also of interest as the location of a seignorial court. Les Cateaux is the site of a Medieval refuge possibly dating to the thirteenth century.

Patterns of Enclosure: This landscape of this area is the product of enclosure during the seventeenth century to provide shelter for the apple orchards which virtually covered the entire area. The pattern of small fields enclosed by mixed hedges of elm scrub, hazel, field maple, oak, blackthorn and hawthorn remain with willow and alder also common around the valleys. A particular feature is the lines of tightly flailed and pollarded trees which are very visible in the long views which can be obtained in this area.

Settlement and Building Character: This character area has been historically one of the most attractive places for settlement on the Island. By the start of the Dark Ages the woodland of the Island interior had been cleared. The interior plateau offered some degree of shelter as the gently undulating topography provides protection from the winds which affect the exposed north and north-west of the

Island. This area also offered good access to the bulk of the arable land which lay across the northern plateau in the Medieval period and was also situated close to sources of water at the heads of the valleys. Settlement was aided by the abundance of springs and the house name "Fontaines" is very common in this area. The settlements of St. Ouen, St. John, Trinity and St. Mary which are clustered around their respective parish churches and manors all occupy positions at the heads of valleys. Settlement has continued to concentrate in these village centres, although the area has also seen scattered modern developments. These have tended to be in small groups as opposed to large blocks of new development.

Current Land Use and Management: The area remains in very mixed agricultural use, with an intimate 'patchwork' mix of arable and pasture. There has been substantial 'improvement' of the farmland involving drainage of the wet grassland which would, traditionally, have characterised much of the area. Wet grassland is now largely confined to the valley bottoms. As part of the move towards agricultural intensification a large number of farm irrigation reservoirs have been constructed in the upper catchment.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

- the highest part of the Island's main south draining watershed, forming the northern part of the interior plateau;
- underlain by hard granites and rhyolites, blanketed by thick deposits of loess creating rich soils for agriculture;
- the gently undulating, open landform intersected by the springs and shallow upper tributaries of the main valleys, is one of the principle defining features of the area;
- an intact, productive agricultural landscape with a characteristic 'patchwork' of arable and pasture fields enclosed by mixed hedgerows. Lines of tightly flailed and pollarded trees are very visible feature in views across the area;
- historically one of the most attractive places on the Island for settlement providing a degree of shelter, an abundant water supply and access to the bulk of arable land which lay across the northern plateau in the Medieval period. Contains the four village centres at St. Ouen, St. John, Trinity and St. Mary;
- a particularly distinctive feature of the area are the long views across the interior, often encompassing the church spires and steeples of the main settlements.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

CHARACTER TYPE

E: Interior Agricultural Land

Variety of field boundaries

CHARACTER AREA

E6: Central Plateau - Valley Heads

Mixed hedges are characteristic; the tall lines of flailed and pollarded trees are a distinctive feature.

Patchwork of small fields

The intricate mix of pasture and arable is a feature of this area.

Narrow, winding lanes

Not particularly characteristic of this area. Most east-west movement occurs via the main north coast road which runs between the main settlements.

Vernacular buildings

Characteristic.

Parish churches and settlements

Historically one of the most attractive places for settlement on the Island, including four village centres and parish churches.

Parkland

Not a visible feature in the area.

EVALUATION

Integrity of Character: This forms part of the rural heartland of Jersey. It is, on the whole, an intact, productive agricultural landscape with a characteristic 'patchwork' mix of arable land and pasture. A distinctive feature of the area are the very long views that can be obtained, across the interior and a consequent sense of 'openness' which differentiates this area from the more enclosed ridges to the south. The area is also distinctive for the clusters of settlement that it contains at the four village centres. The church spires and steeples create very prominent landmarks in the long views. Overall, the area retains a positive character, although with some evidence of degradation. The general strategy is for conservation with restoration and management of specific features.

Key Environmental Capital

- The two proposed Ancient Monument SSI at La Hougue Boete (which is the only known megalithic cist in the Channel Islands) and the Medieval refuge at Les Catieaux, are of great importance.
- Vernacular architecture. These historic buildings are important in defining Jersey's local character.
- The hedgerow network has potential as key environmental capital.

Threats to Local Character

- Improvement and drainage of agricultural land and loss of remaining areas of wet grassland.
- The creation of a large number of small farm reservoirs within this area which are poorly designed, both in terms of local landscape 'fit' and potential value as habitats.
- The character of many of the traditional, vernacular farm buildings has been destroyed by inappropriate conversion, extensions etc.

- Further loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees or the amalgamation of fields, which, in this area has the potential to open up very long views, often encompassing development and roads.
- Damage to roadside walls, verges and banques along the narrow lanes, by both inappropriate management and traffic.

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

This section should be read in conjunction with the general management guidelines identified for the Character Type: Interior Agricultural Land. The following apply specifically to the Valley Heads:

- **Recreation of wet grassland habitat:** The wet rushy grassland in the valleys are a distinctive feature of valley heads. In some areas there maybe an opportunity to extend these areas of wet grassland in the intervening areas across the watershed. This will require further study of hydrology.
- **Guidance on design of farm reservoirs** to achieve better landscape fit and enhance their habitat value.
- **Restoration of the hedgerow network** is a priority. Replanting should supplement existing thin/gappy hedges or reinstate old field boundaries discernible from historic maps or air photos.
- **Sympathetic hedgerow management** is required and some hedgerow trees should be allowed \all lines of flailed and pollarded hedgerow trees are a characteristic feature of the Jersey landscape particularly in this open area, and some should be retained.

LEVELS OF PROTECTION AND CAPACITY TO ACCEPT CHANGE

Capacity: There is limited capacity to accept any new development and it is recommended that this area should have high levels of protection. Any development can have a very high impact in the long views that can be obtained within this area. New development should be limited to the existing village areas at Trinity, St. John, St. Mary and St. Ouen.

Guidance:

- A detailed appraisal of the village boundaries will be required to determine the location and scale of any further development.
- Further linear infill development should not occur along the north coast road which links the main settlements. Individual villages must retain their compactness and unity.

Where developments are permitted, opportunities should be taken to achieve the environmental enhancements and management measures outlined above.