



JERSEY ISLAND PLAN REVIEW

COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER APPRAISAL

STATES OF JERSEY PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 1999



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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.