

## 6. DEVELOPMENTS IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT & INDICATORS

- 6.1 A consideration of how cultural landscape indicators could be developed for the Lake District was required as part of this study (see Brief, **Appendix VIII**). This has been considered in general terms, looking at work being done in this field elsewhere in the country, and by examining the scope for applying the findings of the assessment for this purpose.
- 6.2 In general the development of indicators for the historic environment is less advanced than for other areas of environmental management. This is clearly illustrated in this assessment where 'vulnerable aspects' are generally well-defined and specific for the natural environment, in terms of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (see Appendix IX), but much less so for other aspects of the historic environment. The lack of development work in this area was illustrated in the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK (1999) where there was only one indicator that related specifically to the historic aspects of local environmental quality: the number of grade I and II\* listed building on the Buildings at Risk register (DETR 1999).
- 6.3 To improve this situation, English Heritage will shortly be publishing its *State of the Historic Environment Report (SHER)*. The *SHER* will provide some useful new indicators with which to work but inevitably these are likely to be fairly high level datasets drawn, as headline indicators, from information available on a national scale. Hopefully the *SHER* will also provide a framework within which local indicators can be developed to manage change at a local scale, as the Countryside Agency's *State of the Countryside* already does for other aspects of landscape.
- 6.4 The Countryside Agency's *State of the Countryside* (CA 2002) reports provide headline information for changes in countryside character, the state of natural resources, biodiversity, sustainable land management and how people use the countryside. In tandem with this, new guidance on landscape character has been developed to help analyse land use and habitat change at the landscape scale. It is strongly recommended by the Countryside Agency that all new landscape assessment, whether for managing change in cultural aspects or for any other purpose, should be designed to fit within the framework provided by the national landscape character programmes. For cultural landscapes, the national landscape assessment framework is complemented at county and local authority scale by English Heritage's Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) programme.
- 6.5 The HLC project for the Lake District, as part of the programme for Cumbria as a whole, will begin in November 2002. This offers a timely opportunity to look at ways in which this work can be used, in conjunction with the Lake District National Park's Sites and Monuments Record, to develop indicators for some new aspects of the cultural landscape.

- 6.6** A prerequisite for the use of indicators in monitoring change is a baseline 'situation' report or assessment of the state of the resource against which changes can be monitored. This aids the selection of appropriate indicators and can also be used to set benchmarks for desirable minima, maxima or other targets. In general terms there are three main requirements in selecting and developing indicators. First, they should reflect aspects that are critical to the condition of the resource. Secondly they should be sensitive to changes in the resource and the benefits that flow from it. Thirdly, it should be practical to collect this information repeatedly with a reasonable degree of accuracy at regular intervals. For this reason many indicators are based on datasets that are routinely gathered for other purposes.
- 6.7** The themes of this assessment could be developed as basis for a selection of indicators, for example, to monitor change in vulnerable cultural attributes. For example, for vernacular buildings, the numbers of agricultural and farm buildings at risk, numbers of buildings recently repaired and numbers converted or extended would provide an index of change in the built element of the cultural landscape. Moving beyond this to larger scale enclosure patterns and features of historic land use (e.g. bank barns, sheep folds, hogg houses, charcoal pitsteads and shielings) may require more intensive field survey of the type that the National Trust has already begun in its valley surveys (Maxwell 1993, 2002; Lund 2000, 2001). Using a shared GIS system or data layers for joint working between the Trust and the National Park would maximise the potential for a pilot study.
- 6.8** Methods for mapping further layers of less tangible cultural association, manifested in oral tradition, dialect, farming practice, and local seasonal events, would require a different approach. The European Pathways to the Cultural Landscape project, being piloted in the Forest Bowland and Lune Valley, is investigating the use of HLC 'as a tool for identifying and expressing intangible cultural attributes (such as local perceptions, folklore, attitudes and associations) (Lancashire County Council 2001). Exchange of experience with this local pilot project and its European partners would be a fruitful area to explore.
- 6.9** Another approach has been adopted in Wales, where the Countryside Council for Wales has developed a model methodology for assessing cultural aspect as part of its LANDMAP programme. This is a hierarchical classification system that links mapped units of landscape to narrative description according to a classification of cultural influences and associations at different levels. Its implementation in Monmouthshire is a helpful illustration of its use in practice and the development work that has been invested in this programme will justify a more detailed appraisal than has been feasible in this assessment. David Gwyn's ongoing work on landscapes of cultural association in Wales is also of relevance (Gwyn 2000).

- 6.10** A detailed pilot project to test and develop indicators using the experience of these other approaches lies beyond the scope of this limited initial study. The definition of 'limits of change' and identification of cultural landscape elements that are 'non-negotiable' (see project brief, **Appendix VIII**, 5.1d) would form part of such a further study. The most promising potential for developing cultural landscape indicators lies in the work of the HLC programme for the National Park in conjunction with the National Trust Region's programme of historic landscape valley surveys. In tandem with this, progress towards agreement on limits of change and negotiable / non-negotiable assets could begin, for example, through a working group representing the range of natural and cultural interests.

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