

Broad Issues

Climate Change

Biodiversity

Geodiversity

Cultural heritage

Green Infrastructure



Climate Change

Climate has a fundamental influence on landscape character. Much of the variety in the Durham landscape comes from the differences in climate between the colder wetter uplands of the west and the warmer, drier lowlands of the east. These differences affect both the natural vegetation and the way the land is managed and farmed. There is increasing evidence that the climate is changing due to a combination of natural forces and human activities, and particularly the production of 'greenhouse' gasses like carbon dioxide. Even with concerted action at a global scale it is likely that the climate will continue to change and this will bring new challenges to the landscape.

Climate change in the North East

The potential extent of climate change in the north east has been modelled by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP), based on projections of likely greenhouse gas emissions under different global development scenarios. Some of their findings have been published by SustainE in their publication [And The Weather Today Is: Climate Change in the North East](#). The predictions for 2080 – the range varies from a best-case scenario of concerted global action to a worst-case scenario of no action - include:

- an increase in annual mean temperatures of between 1.5°C and 4.0°C
- an increase in winter mean temperatures of between 1.0°C and 3.0°C
- an increase in summer mean temperatures of between 1.5°C and 4.5°C
- an increase in winter precipitation of between 10% and 28%
- a decrease in summer precipitation of between –18% and –45%
- a decrease in winter snowfall of between 40% and 100%
- a rise in sea level of between 6cm and 66cm
- an increase in the thermal growing season of between 40 and 100 days.

These changes would bring milder, wetter winters with fewer frosts and little snow, hotter, drier summers, an increase in extreme events like flooding, and increased coastal erosion. It is impossible to predict with any certainty how these changes will affect the landscape. Some of the more likely impacts are discussed below.

Changes in habitats

The changing climate is likely to affect the flora and fauna of semi-natural habitats that are characteristic of individual landscapes. This may include the shrinking or drying of wetlands like blanket bog and lowland raised mire, ponds, seasonal watercourses and wet woodlands, and a decline in the extent of wet grasslands. Fragile habitats on the edge of their range like the relic arctic-alpine heath of upper Teesdale are likely to be particularly vulnerable. There may be damage to, or changes in the species composition of, a wide range of other habitats from heathlands and grasslands to native woodlands.

We may expect to see the localised extinction of some species and the arrival of new plants and animals both native and exotic. Increased coastal erosion from rising sea levels may threaten coastal habitats like dune

systems and cliff top grasslands. There may be an increase in the incidence of forest, moor and heathland fires. The ability of habitats, and the species within them, to cope with the pressures of rapid change is already compromised in some cases by their poor condition or by their fragmentation and isolation. Improving the way they are managed and restoring connectivity at a landscape scale may increase their robustness and the ability of species to move in response to changing conditions.

Changes in agriculture.

Agriculture is likely to be affected by increases in the length of the growing season and changing patterns of rainfall. This may lead to an increase in arable cultivation in the uplands and upland fringes as they become warmer, and a decrease in cultivation, or increased use of irrigation, in the lowlands as they become drier. It is also likely to lead to the introduction of new crops or crop varieties, changes in sowing and harvesting times, changes in the management of livestock and the arrival of new pests and diseases. There may be an increase in soil erosion from extremes of winter flooding and summer drought and from changing patterns of cultivation.

Conserving landscape character and local distinctiveness in the face of significant changes in agricultural land use or management is always difficult. Strategies and guidelines for the landscape must remain flexible to allow for both changing physical conditions and changes in the global economy affected by climate change that will change the markets for agricultural produce.

Flooding and erosion.

As winters get wetter, and a greater proportion of precipitation occurs in intense events, river flows could become more variable leading to increased erosion and flooding. The risk of flooding in some areas is already exacerbated by the presence of development on floodplains or the way watercourses are engineered to prevent flooding of agricultural land. The impacts of extreme events can be reduced by restoring more natural hydrological conditions to river and wetland systems, and particularly by increasing natural flood storage on flood plains and water retention in the extensive blanket bogs of the uplands. Erosion can also be reduced by restoring bank side vegetation, and particularly riverside woodland.

Vulnerable landscape features.

Some landscape features may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Mature trees in particular are vulnerable to drought, and lower summer rainfall may affect hedgerow, parkland and urban trees. The combination of more frequent winter gales and waterlogged ground arising from increased rainfall may cause damage to trees and woods. Subsidence caused by drought may cause damage to the fabric of historic buildings. Veteran trees are often already subject to stress from factors like cultivation or compaction. Improving their management may make them more robust and more able to cope with extreme events

Liveability

Increased summer temperatures may lead to less healthy and less 'liveable' environments and particularly in urban areas. Historically public open space in England has not been designed to provide shade or cooling as it has been in many hotter countries. The effects of warming could be offset in some degree by the provision of higher quality urban green space, and the planting and retention of street trees

Responses to climate change.

New technologies developing in response to climate change – such as renewable energy developments from wind farms to hydroelectric schemes and energy crops – are already bringing changes to some landscapes. Other responses to climate change will range from new flood protection schemes to 'carbon trading' schemes which may provide resources for woodland expansion or peatland conservation to store carbon, or new proposals

for multi-user routes to encourage walking and cycling. These will bring both new challenges and new opportunities for enhancement to the landscape.

Objectives

- To encourage monitoring of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable species, habitats, landscape features and agricultural systems.
- To promote enhanced management and restoration of vulnerable habitats and landscape features to make them more robust.
- To promote habitat restoration at a landscape scale to improve the quality of ecosystems and restore connectivity.
- To support and encourage integrated approaches to water management and flood protection including river and floodplain restoration, and the restoration of blanket bog.
- To encourage the provision and high quality design of urban green space to make urban environments more 'liveable'.
- To ensure that new renewable energy development respects the character of the landscape.
- To encourage the integration of action on climate change with wider environmental, economic and social goals.



Biodiversity

Biodiversity means the biological diversity of life. It includes a wide range of living things from flowering plants to mammals, birds, insects and bacteria. It includes common species, those that are under threat, and the habitats that humans, plants and animals depend on. The character and biodiversity of the landscape are closely linked. Many of the features that contribute most to our appreciation of the landscape - trees and hedges, ancient woodlands, the flowers of old meadows, pastures and heaths - are an essential part of its biodiversity.

Biodiversity in decline

The biodiversity of the English landscape as a whole has been in decline for many decades. Development and changing land management practices have led to the widespread loss of landscape features and wildlife habitats. This has left many important habitats much reduced in their extent and fragmented or isolated. The rate of habitat loss has slowed in recent years due to the improved protection of important sites, the introduction of agri-environmental schemes and the conservation work of public and voluntary sector bodies. Despite this the legacy of fragmentation and isolation poses a threat to the survival of some species, a problem made more acute by the pressures of climate change, and many formerly common species continue to decline.

Conserving and restoring biodiversity

Conserving and restoring biodiversity requires a combination of statutory protection for nationally important sites and species, the protection of both non-statutory sites and biodiversity in general from the impacts of development, the positive management of existing sites and habitats for wildlife, and the restoration of habitat quality and connectivity at a landscape scale.

The county's most important sites have statutory protection as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Some of these are also designated as National Nature Reserves or as Special Areas for Conservation or Special Protection Areas under European legislation. The county also contains a large number of non-statutory Local Sites (formerly known as County Wildlife Sites). Policies for the protection of these sites are contained in local plans and emerging local development frameworks. The Durham Wildlife Trust owns or manages a number of nature reserves in the county and there are several Local Nature Reserves managed by local authorities. The Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP) builds on the UK National Biodiversity Action Plan and contains action plans for a wide range of species and habitats, delivered through the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.

A landscape-scale approach

While the protection and management of important sites and species is an essential task, it is also important to improve the quality of habitats in the wider landscape. This needs to involve both enlarging and linking important habitats that are fragmented or isolated, restoring those which are damaged or degraded, and improving the quality of the surrounding environment to sustain the wildlife outside. Existing initiatives including agri-environmental schemes like Environmental Stewardship and grants like the England Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) will have an important role to play in this process. If they are to be effective they need to be part of a landscape scale approach to biodiversity, one that is integrated with wider social, economic and environmental objectives, and one that involves a wide range of partners. Further work is needed to identify needs and

opportunities for habitat creation and restoration work across the county to ensure that the spatial issues affecting biodiversity are better understood.

Integrating action on biodiversity and landscape

The objectives and strategies proposed in the County Durham Landscape Strategy have been strongly influenced by biodiversity issues and particularly by the DBAP and by Natural England's Natural Area Profiles. Natural Areas are closely related to Countryside Character Areas and together they provide a common structure for dealing with landscape and biodiversity issues. The potential of new landscape-scale partnerships based on Natural Areas is currently (2080) being investigated in the region.

Biodiversity, design and development

New development can have both positive and negative effects on biodiversity. If it is to be truly sustainable the net effect must be positive and much can be achieved through careful site selection and design and the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures. Building in Sustainability, a guide to sustainable development and construction in the north-east, gives guidance on biodiversity and development. Landscaping proposals that form part of new development can contribute to biodiversity by establishing new habitats of wildlife value, and particularly through the use of locally native species, and by establishing appropriate plant communities and management regimes.

Objectives

- To support and encourage the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the delivery of the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.
- To promote and develop a landscape-scale approach to biodiversity in County Durham.
- To promote an integrated approach to action on landscape and biodiversity, and particularly through the use of Natural Area Partnerships
- To secure a 'positive audit' for biodiversity in new development.
- To promote biodiversity in landscape design



Geodiversity

Geodiversity - the variety of rocks and minerals, landforms, soils and geological process - is a key component of our natural heritage. It is fundamental to the character and diversity of our landscapes, influencing both their physical form and their natural vegetation, which in turn have influenced patterns of farming and settlement. The exploitation of minerals has had a profound effect on many of the county's landscapes and the variety of materials won are an essential part of the local distinctiveness of its buildings and townscapes.

Unlike biodiversity, which is now firmly established as an essential concept in dealing with environmental issues, geodiversity as an idea is only now gaining recognition. Many geological and geomorphological features have been seen in the past as being sufficiently robust not to require protection or management. They are, however, vulnerable in many ways.

- New development can damage natural topography or geological exposures.
- The infilling of quarries can destroy exposures of scientific or educational interest.
- Natural weathering, the encroachment of vegetation, or poaching by livestock, may damage or obscure geological features.
- Engineering works to rivers and streams, or coastal defences, may interfere with natural processes and damage natural features.

Geodiversity as a concept also has a cultural dimension – it encompasses the way minerals have been used, understood, collected recorded and interpreted. Since the 14th century when Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, first used the term 'geologia' to describe the 'earthly science' the county has played an important role in the development of the geological sciences. The North Pennines AONB has recently been designated as a European Geopark, the first on the UK mainland.

Conserving Geodiversity

Conserving geodiversity requires a combination of statutory protection for nationally important sites, the protection of both non-statutory sites and geodiversity interests in general from the impacts of development, and active management of sites and features of importance to geodiversity.

The county's most important sites have statutory protection as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Some were notified specifically for their geological interest, and many of those notified for other reasons contain features of geological significance. The county also contains a number of non-statutory sites: Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) and Durham County Geological and Geomorphological Sites (DCGS). Policies for the protection of these sites are contained in local plans. The County Durham Geological Conservation Strategy 1994, the first such strategy produced by a local authority, contains additional policies for identifying, creating and interpreting geological sites.

A Geodiversity Audit has recently been prepared by the British Geological Survey (BGS) in collaboration with Durham County Council, with funding from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability fund (ALSF) administered by the Minerals Industry Research Organisation (MIRO). A countywide Geodiversity Action Plan is currently being planned. A similar Geodiversity Audit and Action Plan has been prepared for the North Pennines Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and European Geopark. The action plan contain a broad range of tasks for conserving geodiversity.

Interpreting Geodiversity

Increasing public awareness, understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity is central to its conservation. It also presents opportunities to increase understanding of the landscape as a whole and the physical factors that underpin local distinctiveness and biodiversity.

The North Pennines GAP and any future County Durham GAP will provide a framework and detailed action points for interpreting earth science. In the North Pennines AONB a considerable amount of work has already been done to promote the geodiversity of the Geopark and secure funding to support the implementation of the GAP.

Objectives

- To support and facilitate the conservation of geodiversity in County Durham
- To promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity.
- To support the production of a Geodiversity Action Plan for County Durham
- To encourage and support the implementation of the North Pennines AONB Geodiversity Action Plans.
- To support the work of the North Pennines AONB Partnership in promoting and interpreting the geodiversity of the Geopark.



Cultural Heritage

The landscape we see today has been shaped over thousands of years by the activities of people. Many of the things they made, like hedges and walls, buildings, roads and paths, are still in use today. Others, like barrows and stone circles or abandoned mines and quarries, survive as relics in the modern countryside or lie buried beneath its surface.

Less obvious legacies of our past are the plant communities of habitats like old meadows and pastures, moors, heaths and ancient woodlands that have evolved over centuries of interaction between people and their environment.

The landscape is a cultural artefact, a living record of the activities of our ancestors. It provides evidence of, and insight into, our past. This 'time-depth' is for many people an important point of connection with the landscape and yet it is not always well understood.

Most landscapes in the county contain features surviving from many periods of their history but some are strongly influenced by features developed in particular development phases. The difference in character between the planned enclosure landscapes of the upland fringes with their regular grids of fields and straight roads, and the irregular enclosures of the lowlands with their winding lanes and old villages is directly related to their history. The character of the landscape is affected by both these landscape scale patterns of interrelated elements and by the smaller idiosyncratic features that contribute so much to local character and 'sense of place'.

All landscapes contain an historic dimension and all are evolving in some degree as we adapt them to meet our changing needs. Historic landscape features and archaeological features are continuously threatened by forces ranging from development to neglect, natural decay or changes in management. The challenge is to understand the historic features that surround us and to conserve what we value most while allowing the landscape to continue to evolve.

Understanding the historic landscape

A considerable amount of information already exists about the archaeology and built heritage of the county. The County Durham Sites and Monuments Record contains thousands of records ranging from flint scatters to industrial buildings. It can now be accessed online through the County Council website or, with the added facility of internet mapping, through the Keys to the Past website.

The County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) is currently being carried out with the support of English Heritage. This will map, analyse and identify the origins of man made features, and particularly field systems, across the county. It will provide a very detailed account of the history of the Durham landscape and a basis for future programmes of conservation and interpretation. It is anticipated that the HLCA will be completed in 2008

Conserving the historic environment

Conserving the historic environment requires a combination of statutory protection for nationally important sites and buildings, the protection of historic landscapes and significant archaeological or landscape features from the impacts of development, and the positive management of valued sites and features.

The county's most important sites have statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) or as Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas. Listed buildings include many landscape features like old mine entrances, sheepfolds and boundary posts. Conservation Areas often include parts of the landscape setting of important townscapes as well as historic landscapes like designed parklands. Durham Castle and Cathedral are designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Historic field boundaries are protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. The County Durham Structure Plan and District Wide Local Plans contain policies for the protection of features of importance to our cultural heritage from the impacts of development. A number of historic parklands are identified on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of National Importance. Other locally important parklands are identified in local plans. Some of these are the subject of local planning policies or have Conservation Area status.

There are a number of existing initiatives aimed at conserving or restoring historic landscapes or landscape features. The Historic Grant Scheme provides funding for conservation works to buildings in Conservation Areas and a Repairs Grant is available in some circumstances for works to listed buildings. The County Durham Hedgerow Partnership Field Boundary Restoration Grant is available for the restoration of historic hedges. Some of the existing agri-environment schemes and their successor Environmental Stewardship give financial support for conserving archaeological and historic landscape features.

There have been a wide range of local authority initiatives to conserve or restore historic landscapes or buildings, including the current Hardwick Park Restoration Project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The North Pennines AONB Management Plan contains a broad range of proposals for conserving and interpreting the historic environment. Voluntary sector organisations such as the North Pennines Heritage Trust are also very active in this field.

Despite these initiatives many historic landscape features remain vulnerable to damage from development, or to the less obvious processes of neglect and decay. This is particularly the case for many widespread features like old hedges, walls and sheepfolds, old lanes and tracks, earthworks like lynchets and rig and furrow, relic features like coal and lead mining remains and designed parklands.

Interpreting the historic environment

While there may be some merit in conserving historic landscape features for their own sake, their real value lies in their meaning to us as part of our cultural heritage.

Raising public awareness of the historic landscape, and making sites and landscapes accessible and intelligible to people is therefore a key element in their conservation.

Objectives

- To promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the historic dimension of landscape character in County Durham.
- To support the development of the County Durham Historic Landscape Character Assessment.
- To promote the conservation of historic landscapes and landscape features.



Tranquillity

Tranquillity is one of the less easily defined attributes of the countryside but also one of the most important to the communities who live there and the people who visit it for recreation and relaxation.

A Government survey in 2001 found that tranquillity was the positive feature people mentioned most in describing why they visited the countryside. The North East has some of the most tranquil landscapes in the country and these are a major asset to the tourism economy.

The tranquillity of the countryside has been progressively eroding for decades under the impact of urban sprawl, increased traffic levels, the development of new roads and infrastructure, increases in air traffic and increasing levels of light pollution. In 1995 the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) carried out a study to map changes in tranquillity in the English countryside. They found that England had lost 21% of its Tranquil Areas (19,000km²) since the 1960s, equivalent to an area almost the size of Wales. Responding to CPRE's work on tranquillity, the Government's Rural White Paper in 2000 included a commitment to promote tranquillity and to produce a National Ambient Noise Strategy.

Mapping tranquillity

A recent study on tranquillity was carried out by the CPRE in the North East Region (Mapping Tranquillity CPRE 2005) to investigate ways of mapping tranquillity at a more detailed level in two pilot areas - the Northumberland National Park and the Durham Coalfield. The study provides the basis of a methodology which could be extended to map levels of tranquillity for County Durham as a whole

Conserving and restoring tranquillity

Conserving and, where possible, restoring tranquillity will require concerted action by a large number of organisations and individuals. Further work is needed to provide guidance on issues like noise and light pollution and to ensure that the impacts of new development on tranquillity are taken into account in the environmental impact assessment and planning processes. .

Objectives

- To support and encourage the mapping of tranquillity in County Durham.
- To support the production of guidance on tranquillity issues in Supplementary Planning Documents.



Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is an emerging concept which refers to the network of multi-functional green spaces – woodlands, nature reserves, river corridors, cycleways and public open space – that contribute to the appearance, accessibility, biodiversity and ‘liveability’ of urban areas and the countryside around and between them.

The countryside around towns, or the ‘rural urban fringe’ is the part of the rural landscape most familiar to people who live in cities, towns and villages. It is also the part of the landscape most subject to pressures for development, access and recreation. In County Durham the industrial settlement pattern of the coalfield gives a ‘semi-rural’ or urban fringe character to large areas of countryside in the centre and east of the county.

The complex of problems and opportunities in the rural urban fringe requires an integrated approach to land management and planning. Progress towards that has been made in the region’s Community Forests with the development of Forest Plans and local strategies like those for Local Management Zones in the Great North Forest. This has been geographically limited in its extent and necessarily independent of the planning system. The development of Green Infrastructure Strategies offers the potential of dealing with landscape, biodiversity, access and regeneration issues in the countryside around towns in a systematic way, and one that has a greater degree of integration with spatial planning at a regional and local level.

Sustainable development

The rural urban fringe is inevitably the part of the countryside where pressure for new development – whether for new housing, industry, transport infrastructure, mineral working or waste disposal - is greatest. Often it is appropriate for such development to take place near to the main transport network and near to the population centres that create the demand. At the same time it is necessary to conserve the often fragile rural character of these landscapes and to contain urban sprawl. Development can contribute towards improving the appearance, biodiversity or accessibility of the countryside. Such improvements are more likely to be delivered in a systematic way where there are Green Infrastructure Strategies in place that are reflected in Local Development Frameworks.

Access to the Countryside

Access to the countryside around towns is of great importance to the quality of life of urban communities. It offers opportunities for healthy outdoor activity, provides safe car-free routes within and between urban areas, and acts as a gateway to the wider countryside. A great deal of work has been done by local authorities and other agencies like Sustrans in the county, and particularly in the Great North Forest, to improve access to the countryside – including creating Country Parks, multi-user routes, and improving public rights of way. There is considerable potential in the semi-rural landscapes of the county to develop a more coherent network of green spaces, quiet lanes and greenways (see also Transport).

Access to nature

The countryside around towns is also an important point of contact with the natural world. Natural England recommends minimum standards for the provision of natural green-space close to where people live in towns and cities including:

- accessible green-space of at least 2ha in size should be available within 300m (straight line) of all urban homes
- accessible 20ha site within 2km
- accessible 100 ha site within 5km
- accessible 500ha site within 10km
- 1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population

In recent years local authorities have created a number of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) close to urban centres, and new community woodlands have been developed in the Great North Forest and elsewhere on the coalfield. The County Council's Woodlands and Wildlife Project has established a number of new community woodlands and wildlife areas as part of the Mineral Valleys Project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Creating new LNRs and community woodlands, and managing existing urban green-space to enhance its biodiversity, can help meet a wide range of social and environmental goals in the urban fringe.

Regeneration

The quality of the environment both within and around urban areas affects both the quality of life of local communities and the perception of the area by visitors and potential investors. A major programme of investment in the county's towns and villages is currently being implemented in the Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative. A considerable amount of work has already been done in the county to rid the landscape of the legacy of dereliction left by the decline of traditional industries through the reclamation programme. At a more local level there has been continuous process of environmental improvement undertaken by local authorities, by the Great North Forest team, and by the Groundwork East Durham and West Durham Groundwork Trust.

Sustainable land management

Farming in the urban fringe is subject to many pressures including trespass, vandalism and fly tipping. It is also an area where local farmers and landowners can take particular advantage of the urban demand for food, leisure and environmental services (see also Agriculture). Changes in land management in the rural urban fringe – for example the growing of bio-fuel crops like short rotation coppice – can make a positive contribution to the landscape's Green Infrastructure.

Urban Green Space

Green spaces are important to the quality of life of communities living in cities, towns and villages. Their ownership and management is complex, with responsibilities often falling between different bodies. Most areas are owned or managed by local authorities, town or parish council's, or non-governmental organisations such as Durham Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust. The Government - in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17 – encourages local authorities to undertake an assessment of the needs of communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities, and to develop strategies for their provision and management. CABE Space, part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, gives guidance on the production of Green Space Strategies. It describes their benefits as including:

- Maintaining and increasing the attractiveness of a locality to create a sense of civic pride;
- Raising property values and aiding urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal;
- Boosting the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities;
- Securing external funding and focusing capital and revenue expenditure cost-effectively;
- Providing a wide variety of cultural, social and community facilities;
- Protecting the historical, cultural and archaeological heritage;

- Illustrating the contribution to health agendas, e.g., reducing stress levels, by providing formal and informal recreational facilities;
- Providing popular outdoor educational facilities for schools and academic institutions;
- Improving physical and social inclusion, particularly for young, disabled and older people;
- Offering alternative routes for circulation, including networks for walking and cycling;
- Protecting and enhancing levels of biodiversity and ecological habitats;
- Providing environmental infrastructure to improve water quality and flood control.

Some local authorities in the county have carried out Open Space Assessments, and a number of Open Space or Green Space Strategies are currently being prepared. The complex and fragmented nature of the settlement pattern in the more populated areas of the county, with large numbers of small and medium sized settlements and a small number of larger settlements, is such that a combination of Green Space and Green Infrastructure Strategies is required.

Objectives

- To promote the development of integrated Green Space and Green Infrastructure Strategies, and particularly for the semi-rural landscapes of the former coalfield areas.
- To ensure that development in the rural urban fringe is sustainable and where appropriate delivers wider environmental and social benefits.
- To promote the development of a coherent network of footpaths, green spaces, quiet lanes and greenways in the countryside around towns.
- To support and encourage the creation of natural green-space and community woodlands close to settlements.
- To support and encourage environmental improvement works in and around the county's towns and villages.
- To support sustainable land management initiatives in the rural urban fringe.