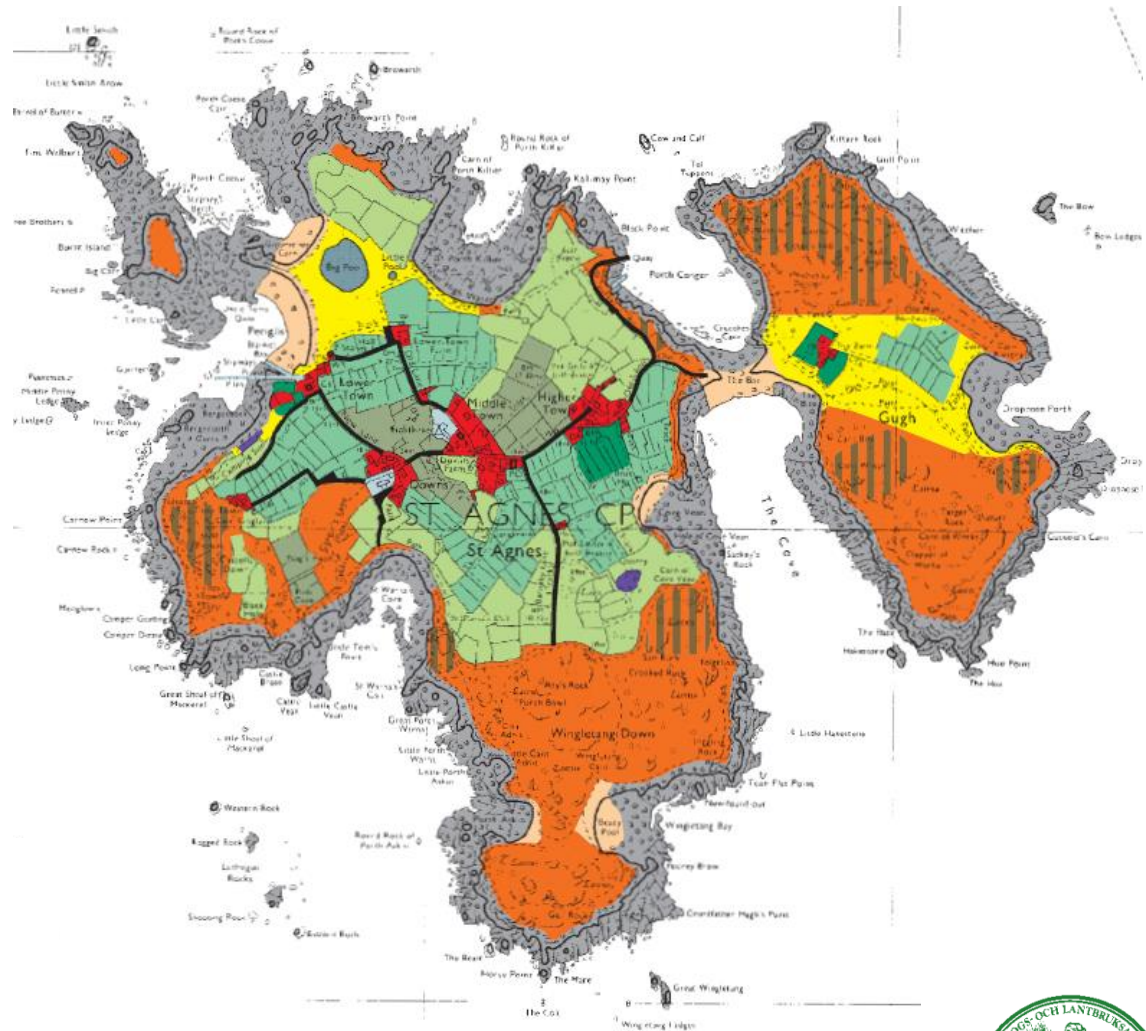


# Historic Landscape Characterisation and the Future of the Past

Pete Herring  
Assessment Team  
English Heritage



## *The future of landscape characterisation and the future character of landscape*

## Seminar, March 3-4, 2014

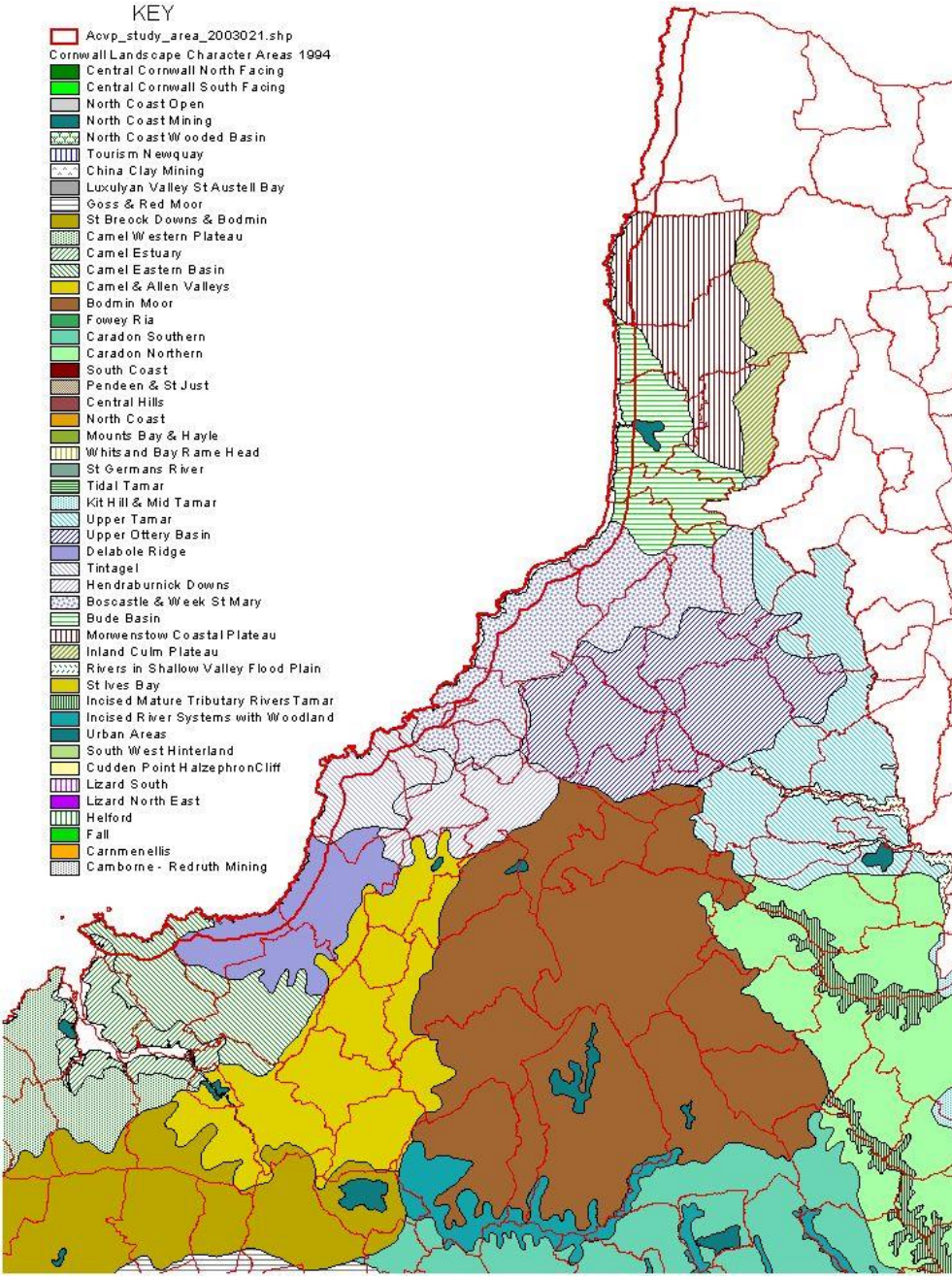
*Kungl. Skogs- och  
Lantbruksakademien,  
Drottninggatan 95 B,  
Stockholm, Sweden*



# 1994 Cornwall Landscape Character Areas

## KEY

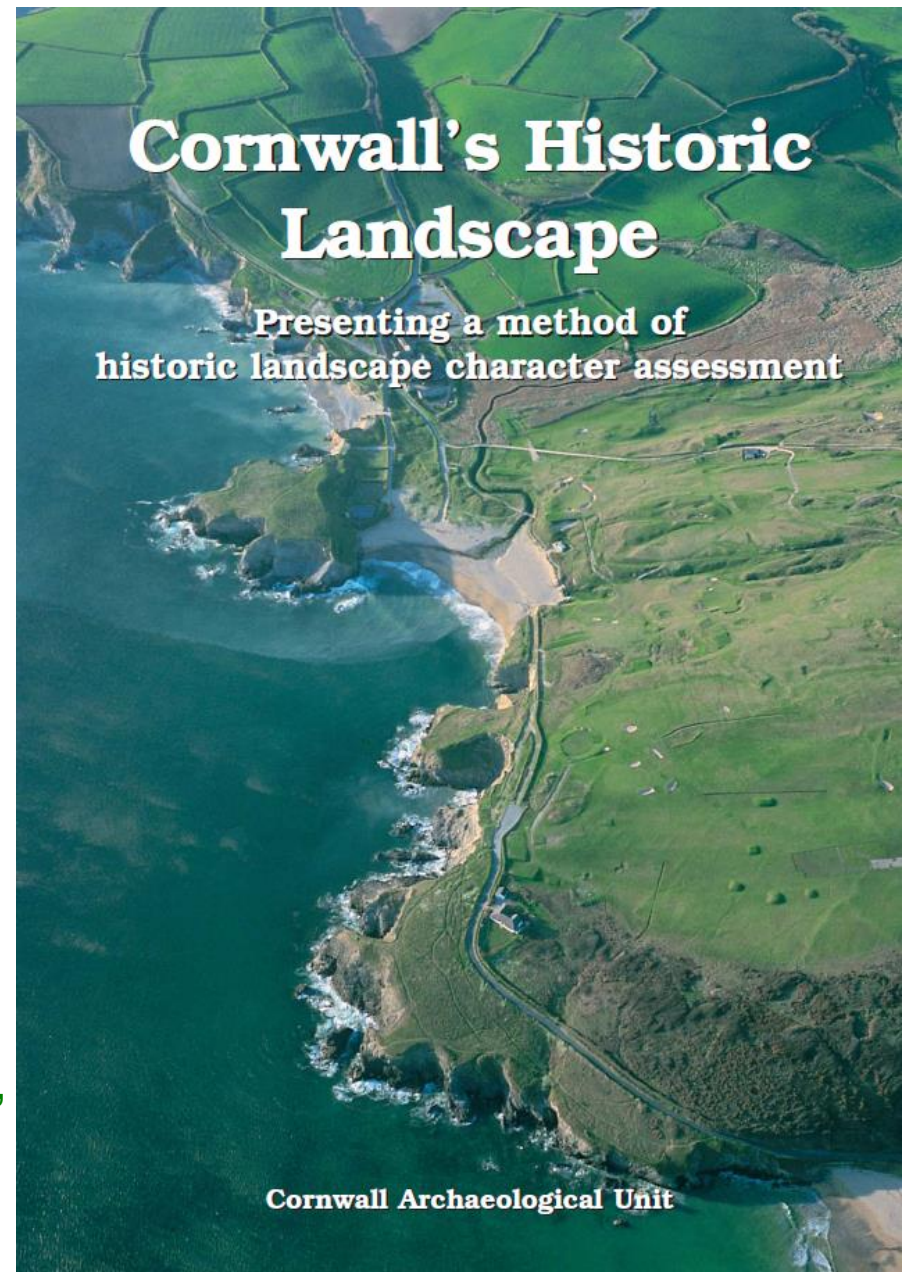
- Aovp\_study\_area\_2003021.shp  
Cornwall Landscape Character Areas 1994
- Central Cornwall North Facing
  - Central Cornwall South Facing
  - North Coast Open
  - North Coast Mining
  - North Coast Wooded Basin
  - Tourism Newquay
  - China Clay Mining
  - Luxulyan Valley St Austell Bay
  - Goss & Red Moor
  - St Breock Downs & Bodmin
  - Camel Western Plateau
  - Camel Estuary
  - Camel Eastern Basin
  - Camel & Allen Valleys
  - Bodmin Moor
  - Fowey Ria
  - Caradon Southern
  - Caradon Northern
  - South Coast
  - Pendeen & St Just
  - Central Hills
  - North Coast
  - Mounts Bay & Hayle
  - Whits and Bay Rame Head
  - St Germans River
  - Tidal Tamar
  - Kit Hill & Mid Tamar
  - Upper Tamar
  - Upper Ottery Basin
  - Delabole Ridge
  - Tintagel
  - Hendraburnick Downs
  - Bosccastle & Week St Mary
  - Bude Basin
  - Monwenstow Coastal Plateau
  - Inland Culm Plateau
  - Rivers in Shallow Valley Flood Plain
  - St Ives Bay
  - Incised Mature Tributary Rivers Tamar
  - Incised River Systems with Woodland
  - Urban Areas
  - South West Hinterland
  - Cudden Point Halzepron Cliff
  - Lizard South
  - Lizard North East
  - Helford
  - Fall
  - Carmenellis
  - Camborne - Redruth Mining



# What did Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) aim to do in the UK?

‘Characterisation... raises awareness that the whole landscape is historic... all has historic value and all should be involved when considering a sustainable future.’

‘All those with an interest in the future of the landscape, urban as well as rural, will be concerned that its historic character, and the components that help determine it, are included in decision making processes....’



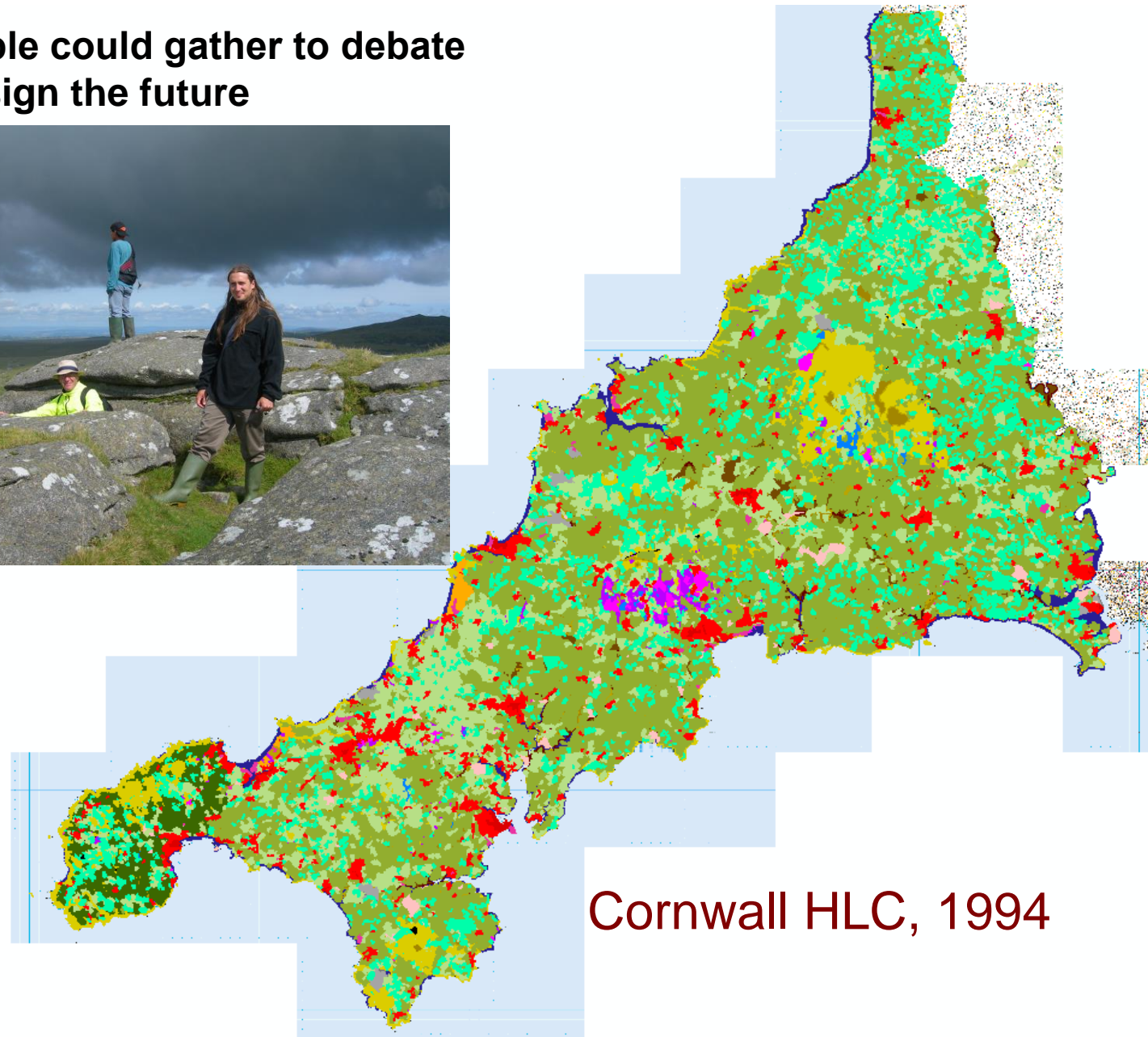
The first HLC; Cornwall 1994

**A spatial framework of historical understanding  
that can aid decision-making**

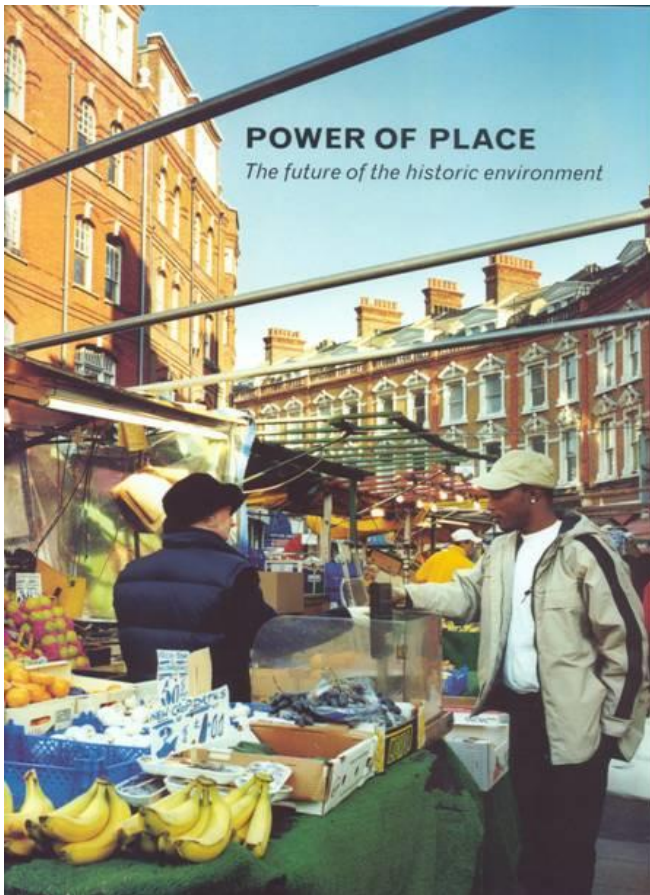
**A 'thing', where people could gather to debate  
the past and and design the future**



- Upland Rough Ground
- Coastal Rough Ground
- Dunes
- Ancient Woodland
- Plantation and Scrub
- Farmland: Prehistoric
- Farmland: Medieval
- Farmland: Post-medieval
- Farmland: C20
- Settlement: older core (pre-1907)
- Settlement: C20
- Communications
- Military
- Industrial: Working
- Industrial: Disused
- Water: Natural
- Water: Reservoirs
- Ornamental
- Recreational
- Rough Ground/Industrial



**Cornwall HLC, 1994**

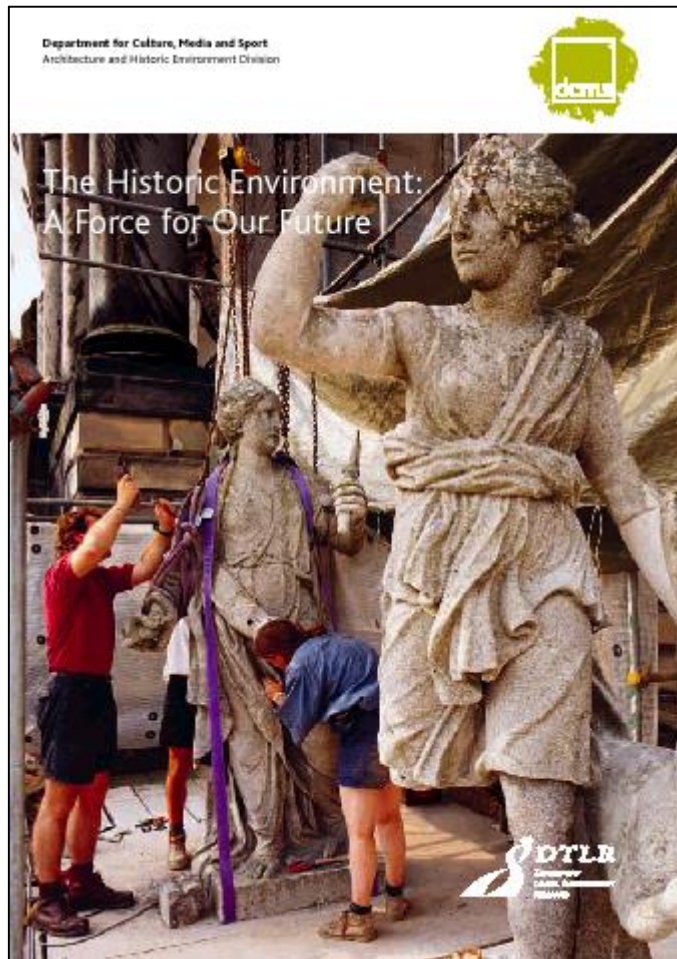


***Power of Place. The future of the historic environment (2000)***

- Everyone has a part to play in caring for the historic environment.
- Because people care about their environment, they want to be involved in decisions affecting it. And, in a multi-cultural society, everybody's heritage needs to be recognised.
- The historic environment is seen by most people as a totality. They value places, not just a series of individual sites and buildings. What people care about is the whole of their environment. This has implications for the way we identify and evaluate significance.

Pursued further in the UK Government's response to *Power of Place*:

*The Historic Environment, a force for our future, DCMS 2001*



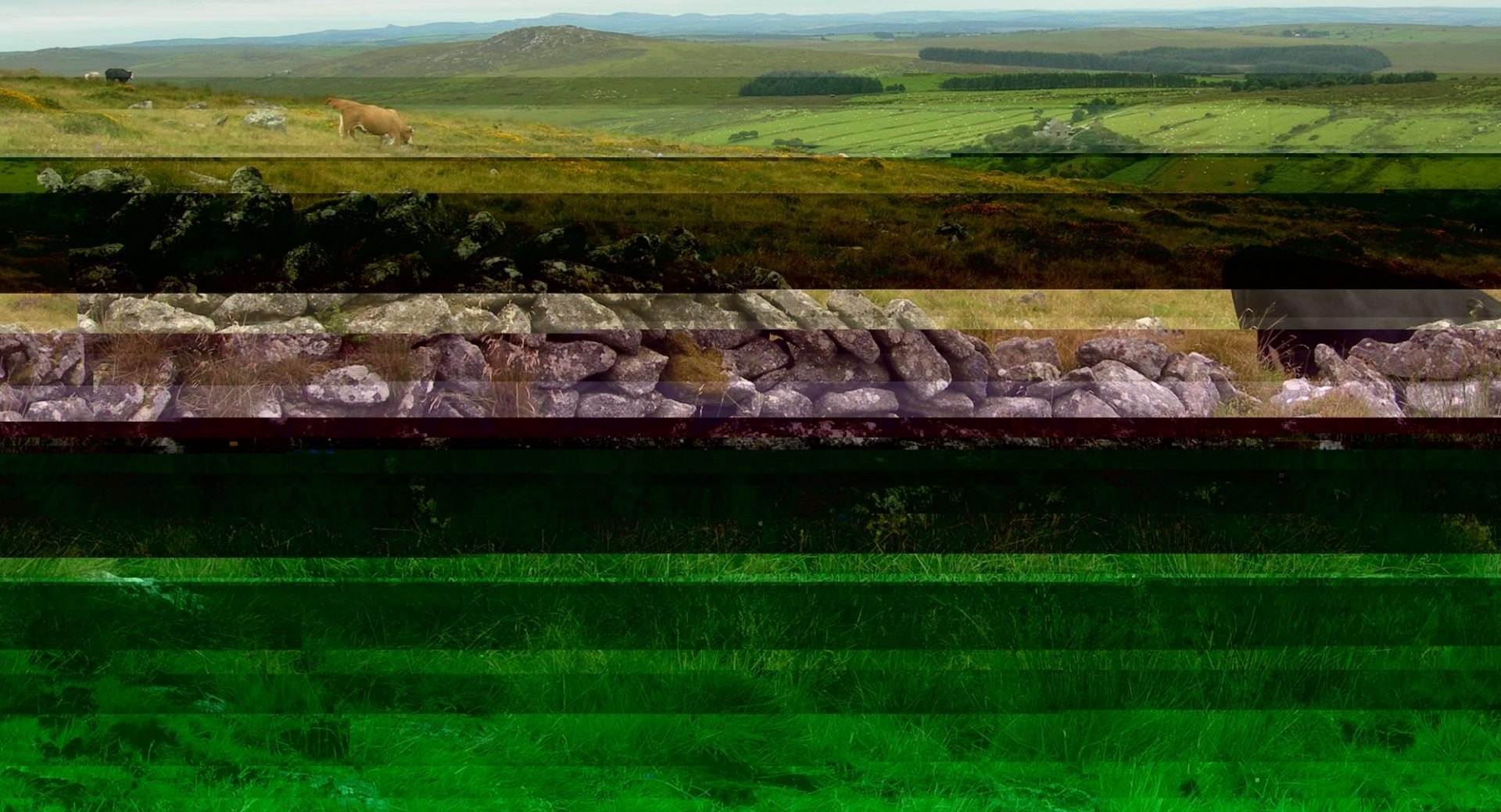
3.17 The developing concept of character assessment is relevant in this context. Sophisticated techniques for assessing the character of particular areas are already evolving. These include the Historic Landscape Characterisation programme developed by English Heritage

It identifies management implications and opportunities for change and development, using the historic landscape character to enrich the future landscape.

**‘These assessments can play an important role in informing decisions on future sustainable uses.’**

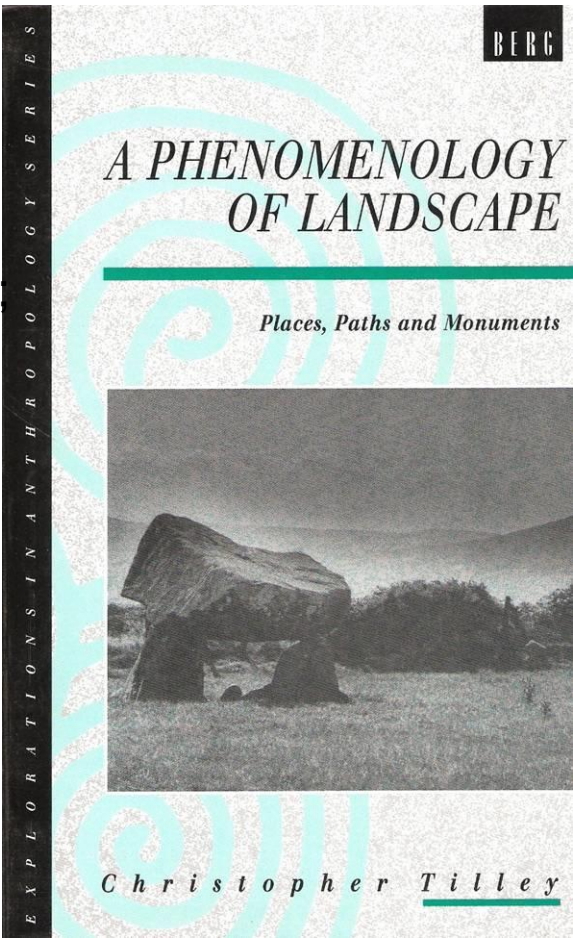
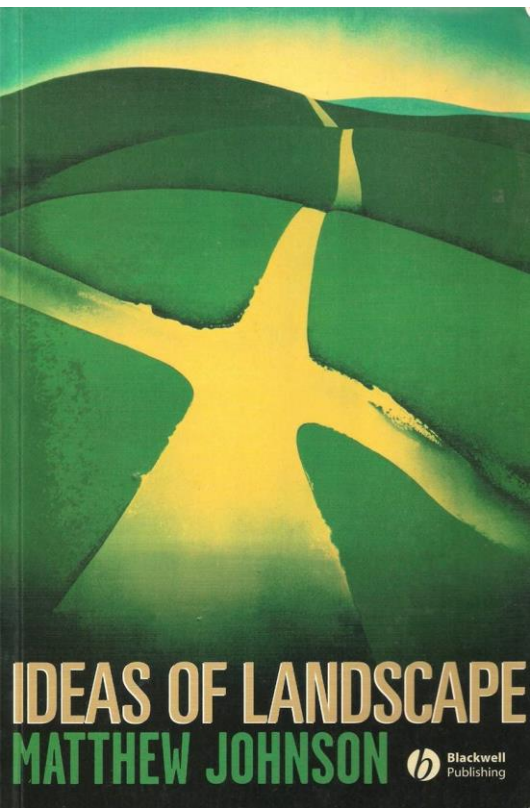
# **HLC developed alongside changes in historical and cultural geography:**

- new approaches to and definitions of landscape**
- more critical, fluid, subjective, inclusive and plural**



Medievalist Matthew Johnson:

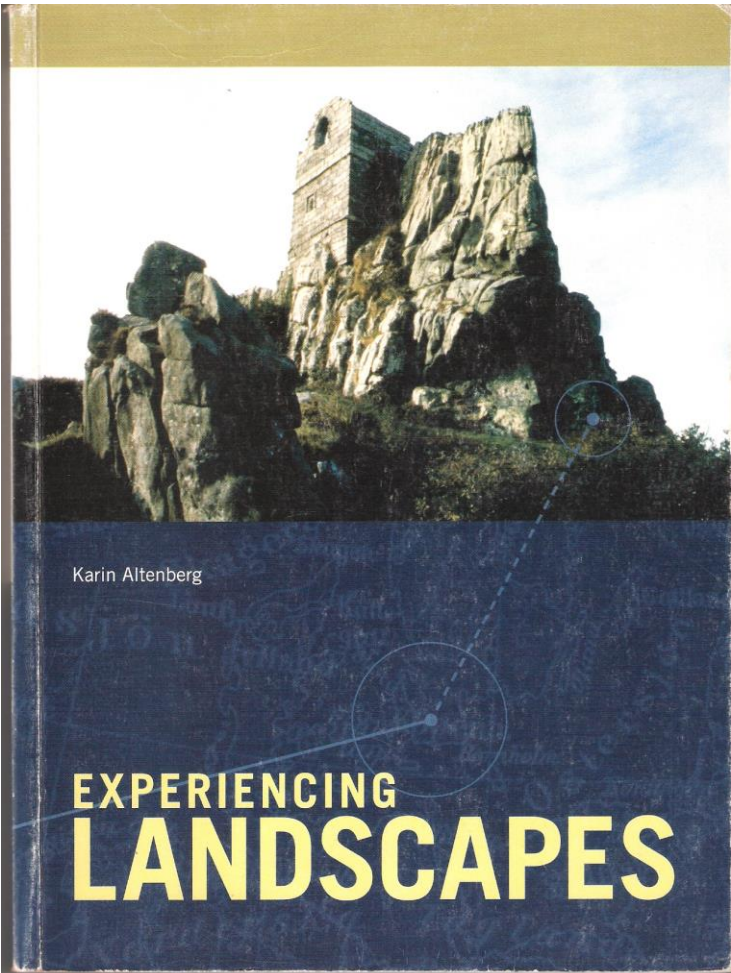
Challenging established romantic narratives of English landscape history encouraging alternatives



Prehistorian Chris Tilley:

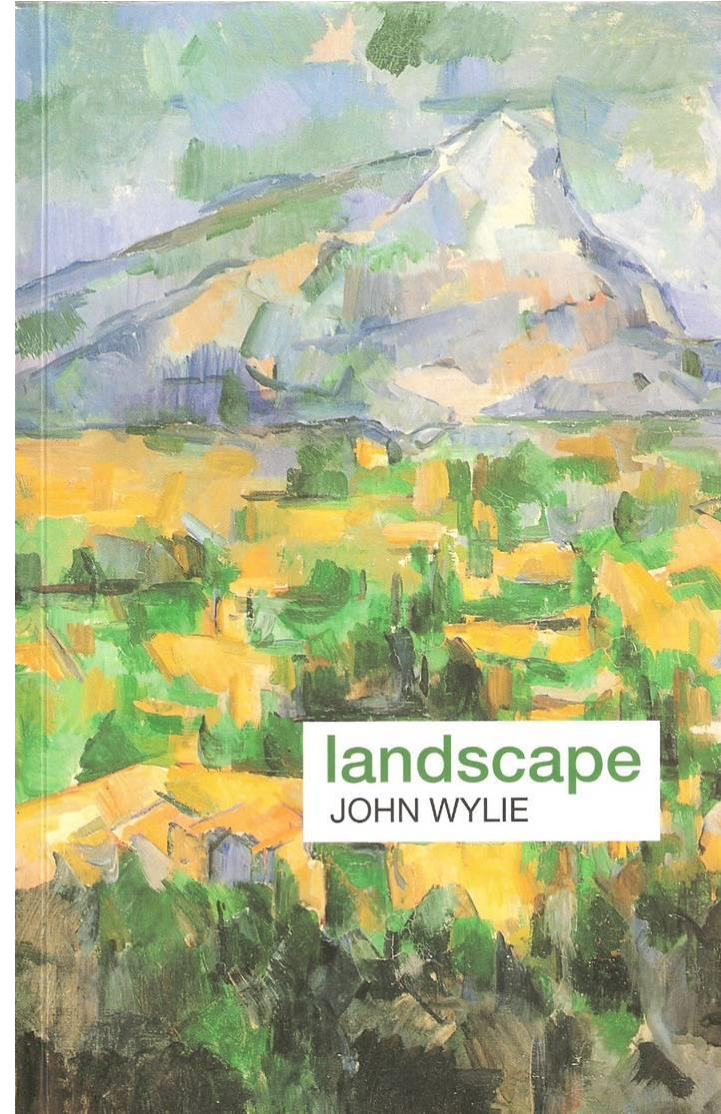
Using phenomenology to turn objectivised past worlds into something more subjective, fluid, uncertain and thus richer

Swedish writer Karin Altenberg encouraging us to re-imagine how medieval people in Cornwall and Sweden moved through and considered their worlds, thus re-empowering people of the past





**Landscape as ‘a constantly emergent perceptual and material milieu’ (2007)**



## **Landscape**

**European Landscape Convention's definition:**

‘An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.’ (2000)

# A landscape historian's Boscastle

Mixed farming with scattered farmsteads and hamlets

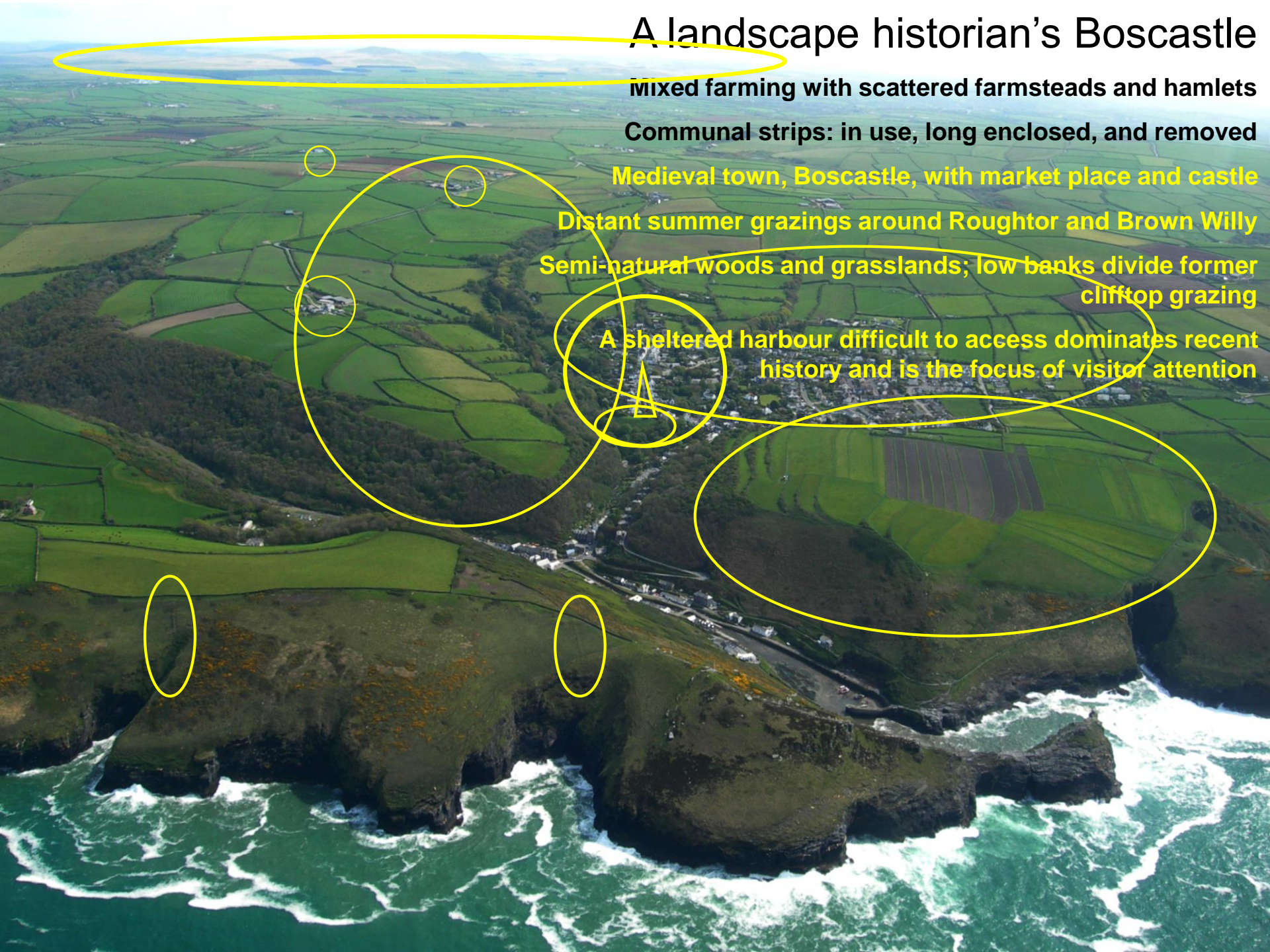
Communal strips: in use, long enclosed, and removed

Medieval town, Boscastle, with market place and castle

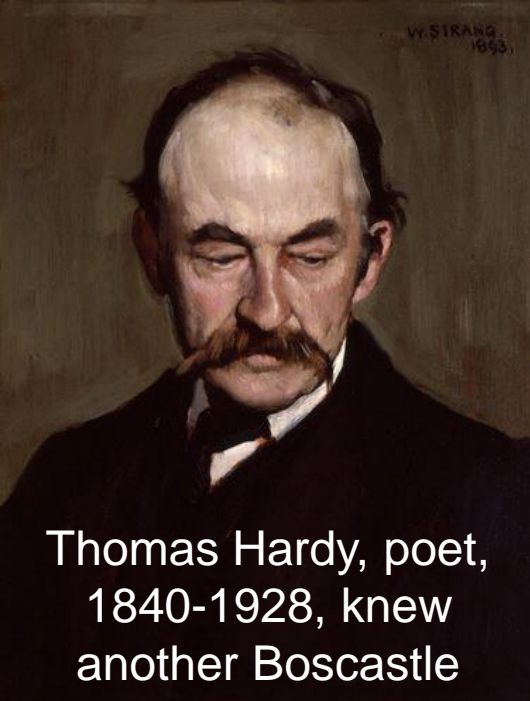
Distant summer grazings around Roughtor and Brown Willy

Semi-natural woods and grasslands; low banks divide former clifftop grazing

A sheltered harbour difficult to access dominates recent history and is the focus of visitor attention







Thomas Hardy, poet,  
1840-1928, knew  
another Boscastle

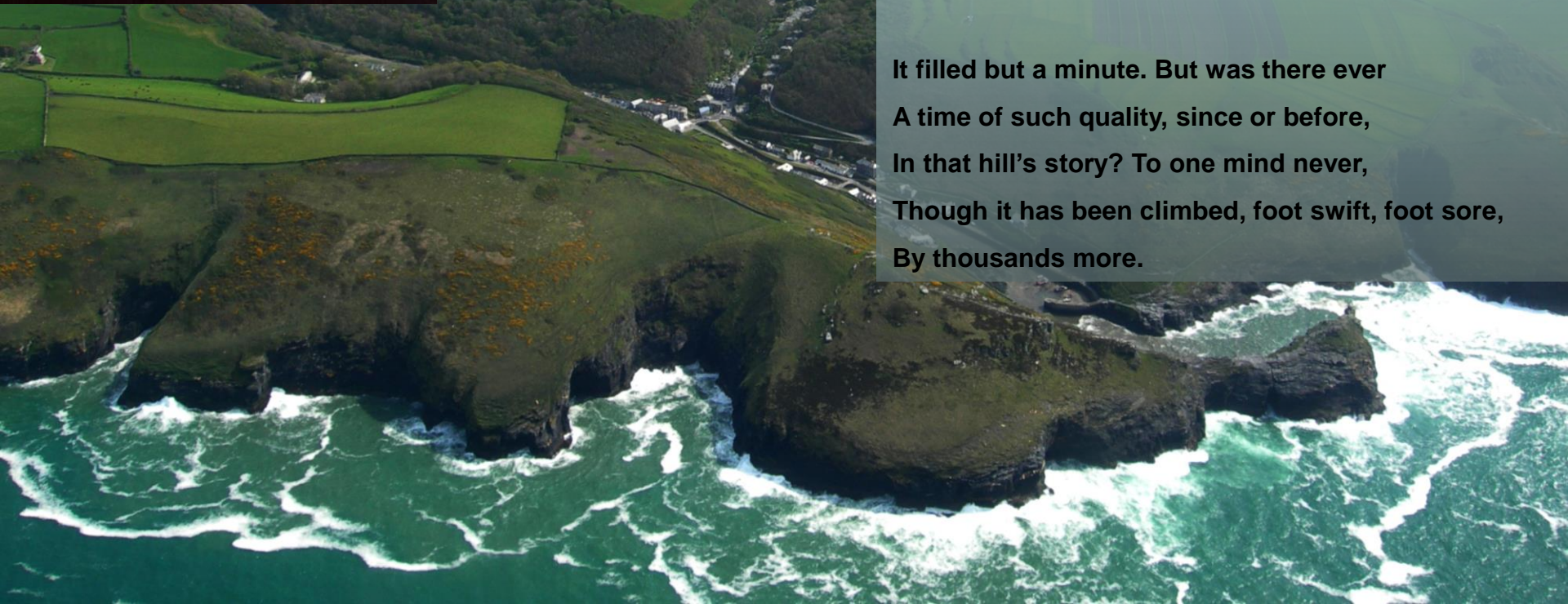


### ***At Castle Boterel [Boscastle]***

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,  
And drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,  
I look behind at the fading byway,  
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted  
In dry March weather. We climb the road  
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted  
To ease the sturdy pony's load  
When he sighed and slowed....

It filled but a minute. But was there ever  
A time of such quality, since or before,  
In that hill's story? To one mind never,  
Though it has been climbed, foot swift, foot sore,  
By thousands more.





Landscape is a cultural product

But it is also culturally and individually perceived

Perception as much as fact

Though knowledge and reflection change perception

**Landscape is fundamentally transitory, physically, and in how it is understood, perceived and valued**

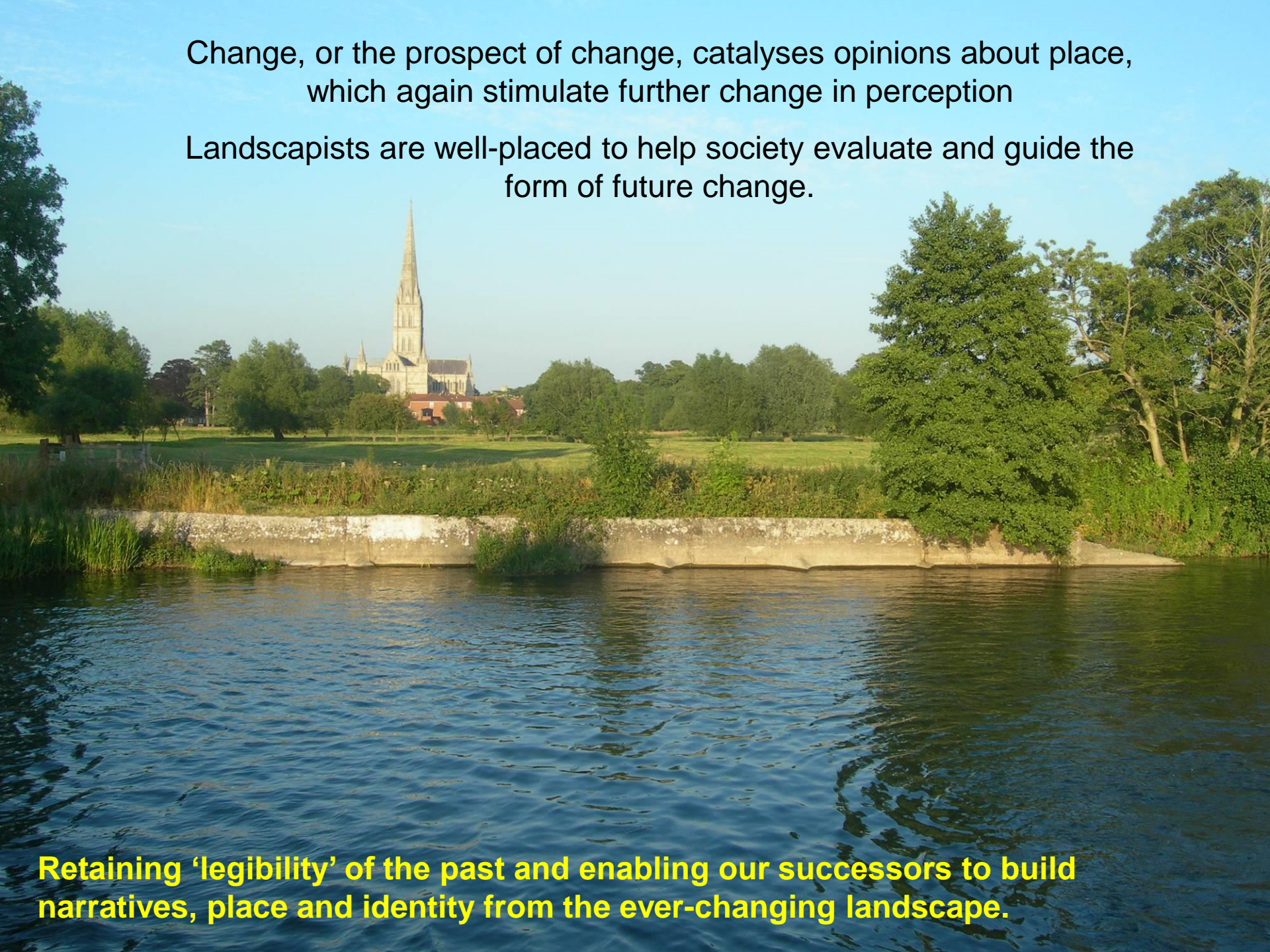
**Never an authentic, or traditional form of any landscape**

**Never finished or complete**



Change, or the prospect of change, catalyses opinions about place,  
which again stimulate further change in perception

Landscapists are well-placed to help society evaluate and guide the  
form of future change.



**Retaining 'legibility' of the past and enabling our successors to build  
narratives, place and identity from the ever-changing landscape.**

**Historic:**

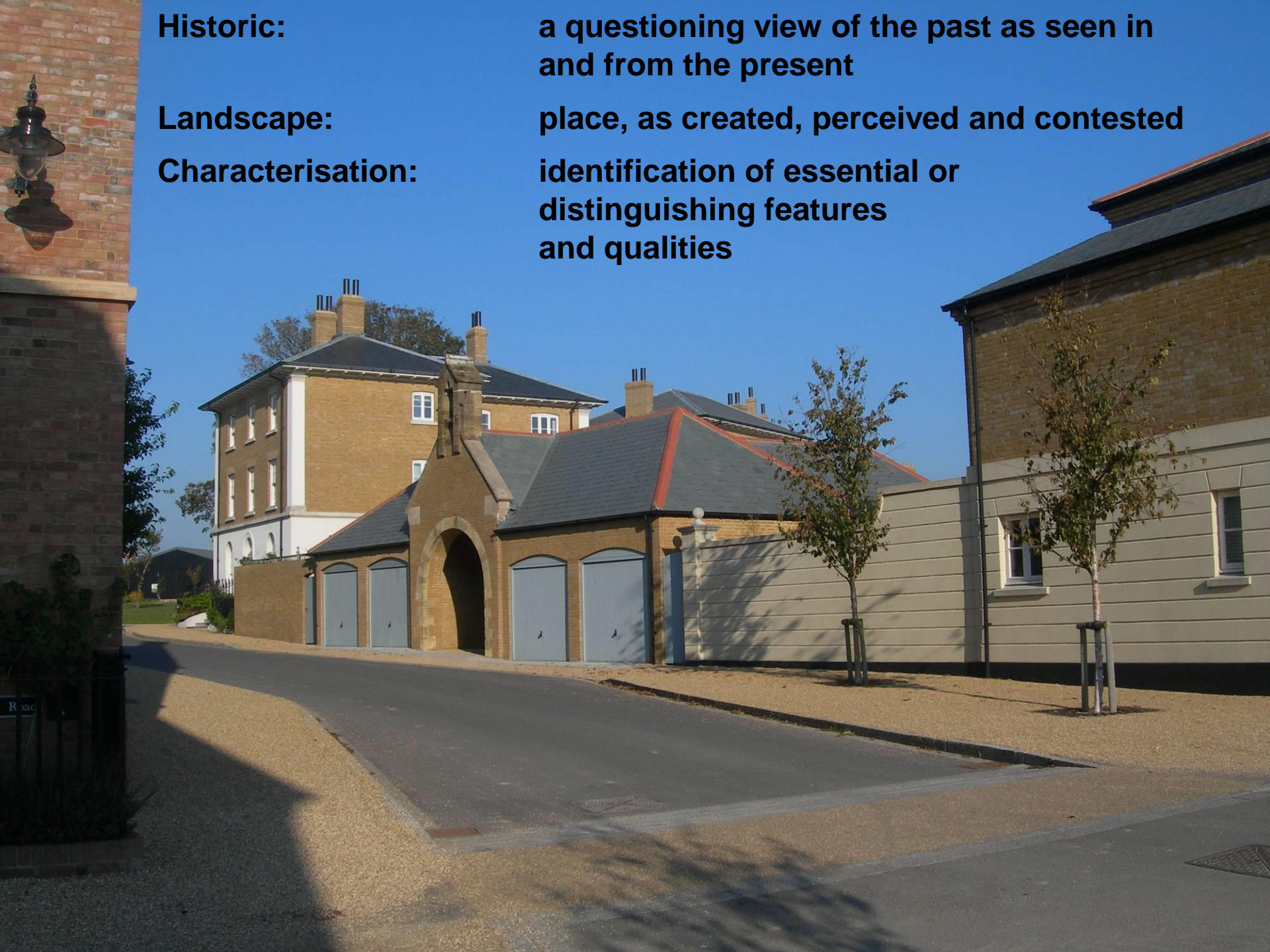
**a questioning view of the past as seen in  
and from the present**

**Landscape:**

**place, as created, perceived and contested**

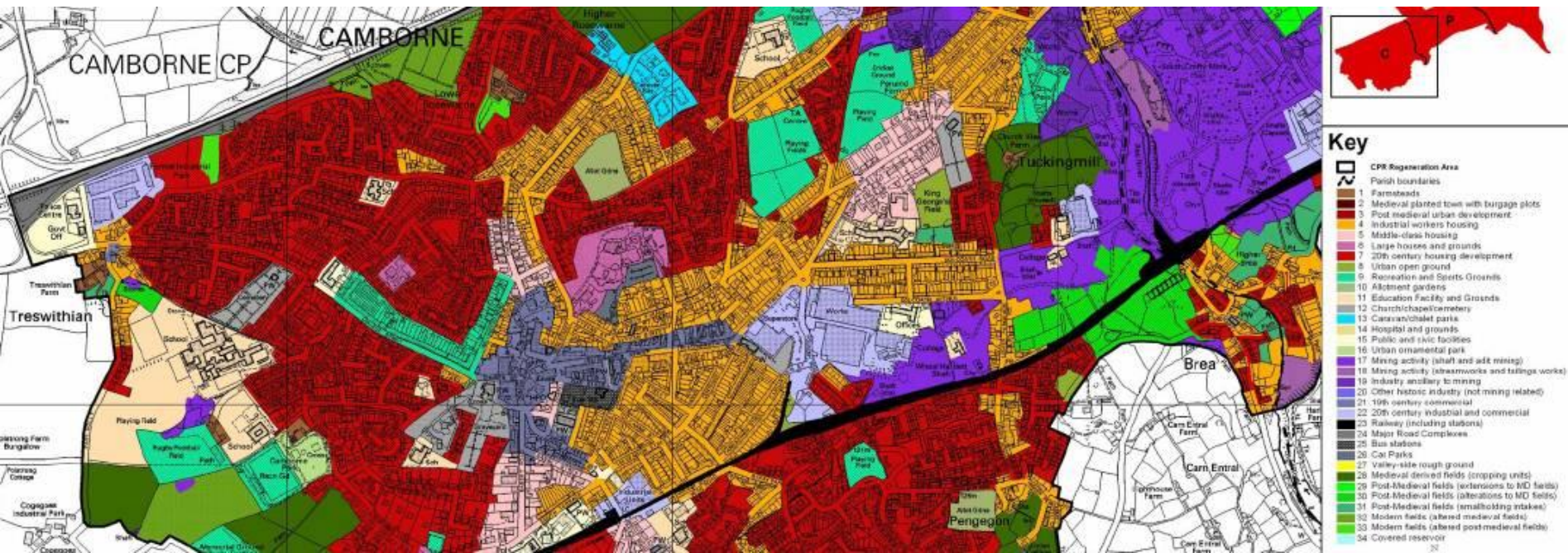
**Characterisation:**

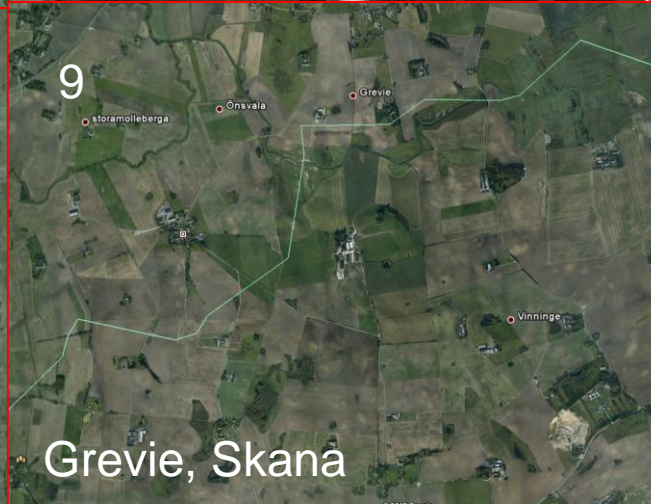
**identification of essential or  
distinguishing features  
and qualities**



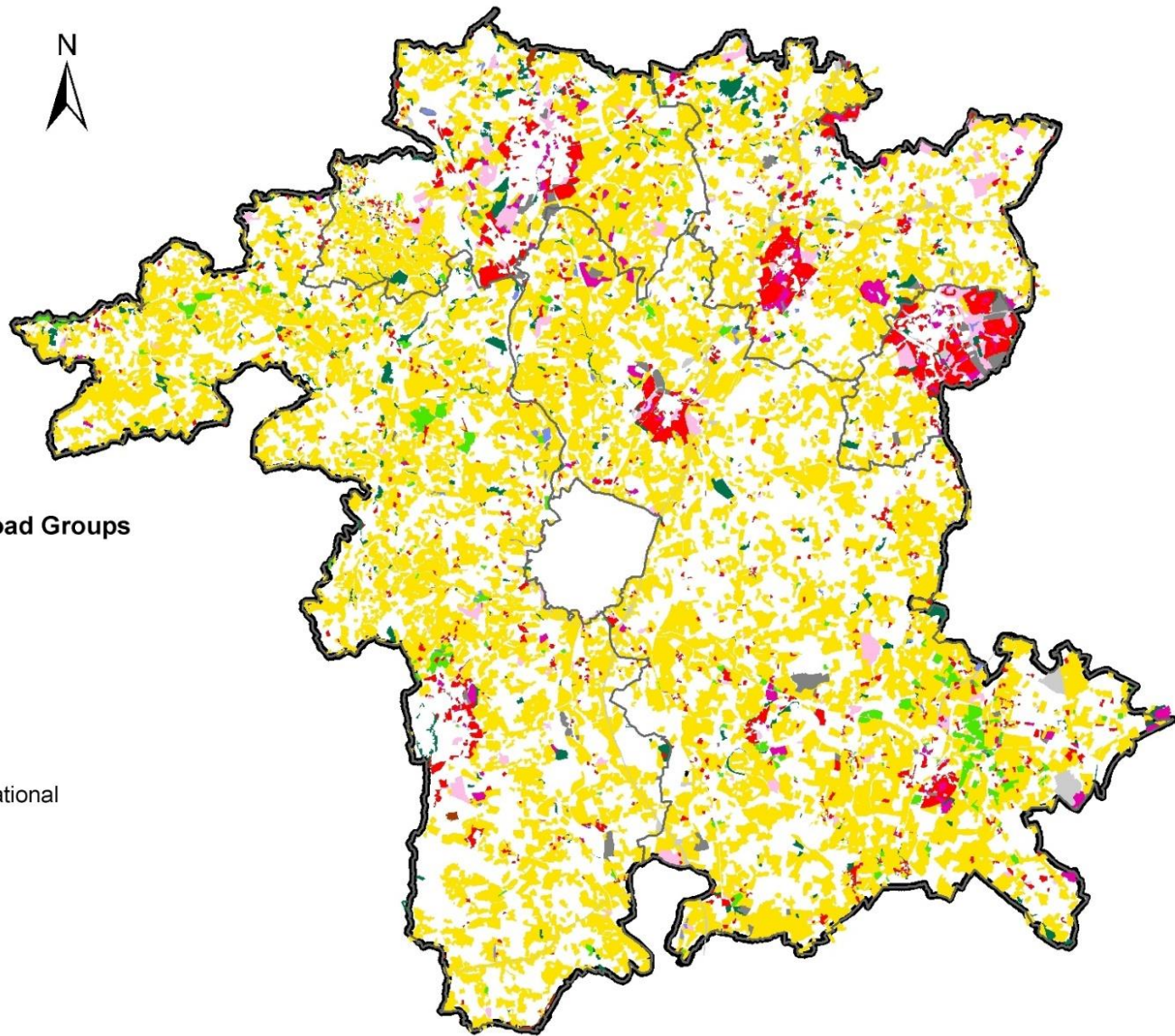
# Historic Landscape Characterisation Projects

- Map-based, but also with textual outputs
- Use Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- Main sources are digitised modern and historic mapping
- Variable scale and 'resolution' – fit for purpose
- Databases record various attributes of selected polygons
  - Allows variable querying, searching, display





# Areas of Worcestershire in some way altered since 1945

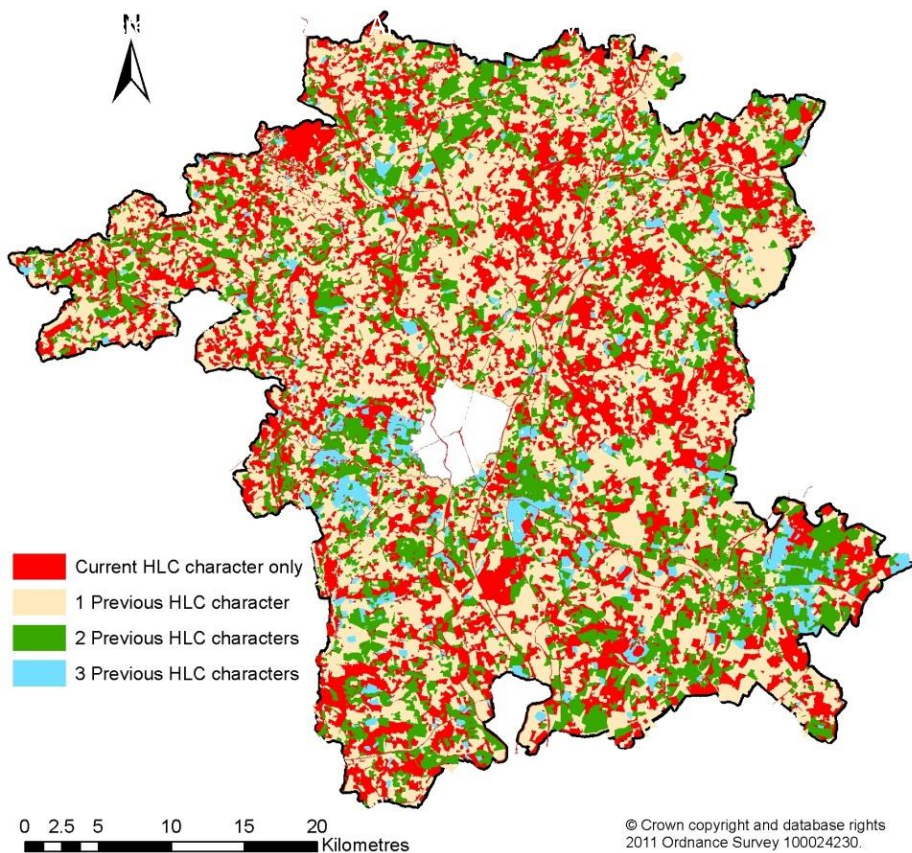


## Historic Landscape Character Type Broad Groups

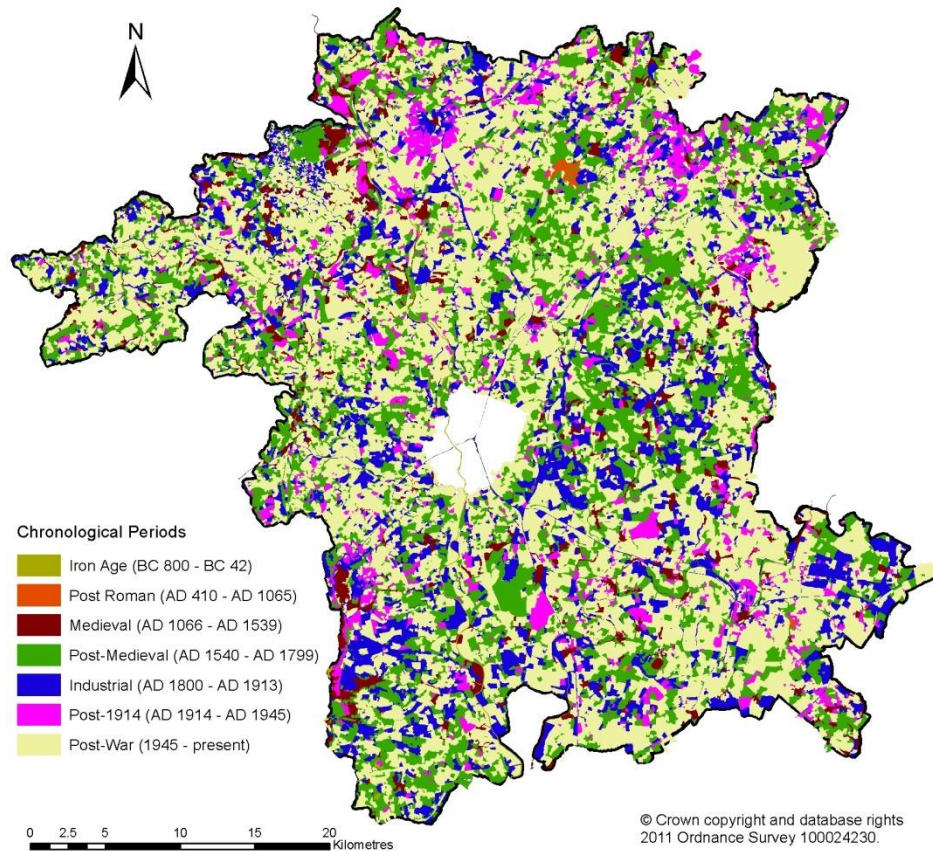
-  Civic & Commercial
-  Communications
-  Fields & Enclosed Land
-  Industrial and Extractive
-  Orchard/Horticulture
-  Ornamental, Parkland & Recreational
-  Settlement
-  Unenclosed Land
-  Water and Valley Floor
-  Woodland

0 2.5 5 10 15 20  
Kilometres

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2011 Ordnance Survey 100024230.



## Surviving time-depth in present landscape

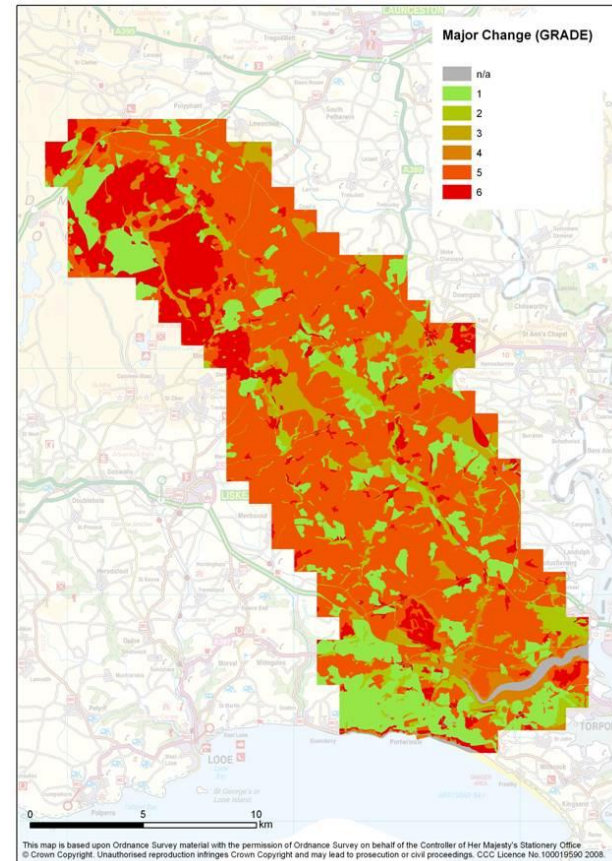
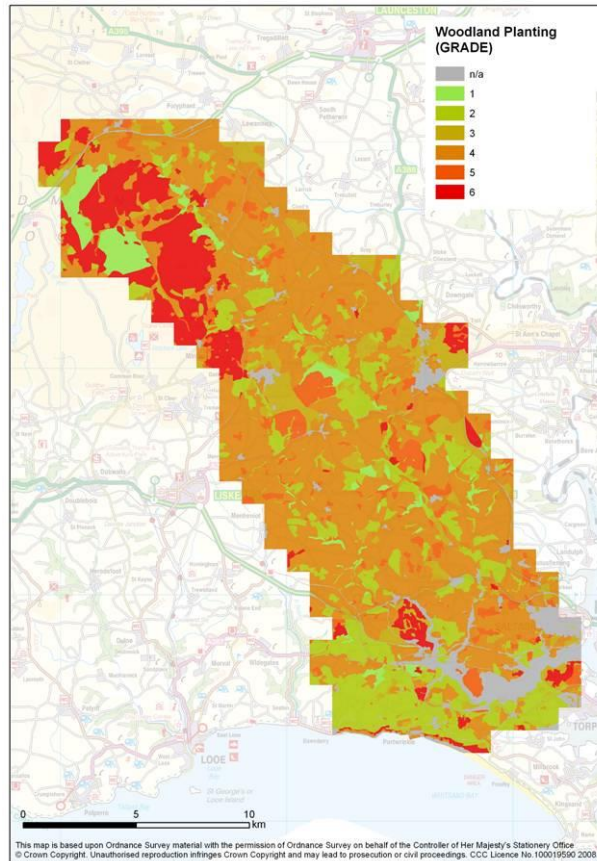
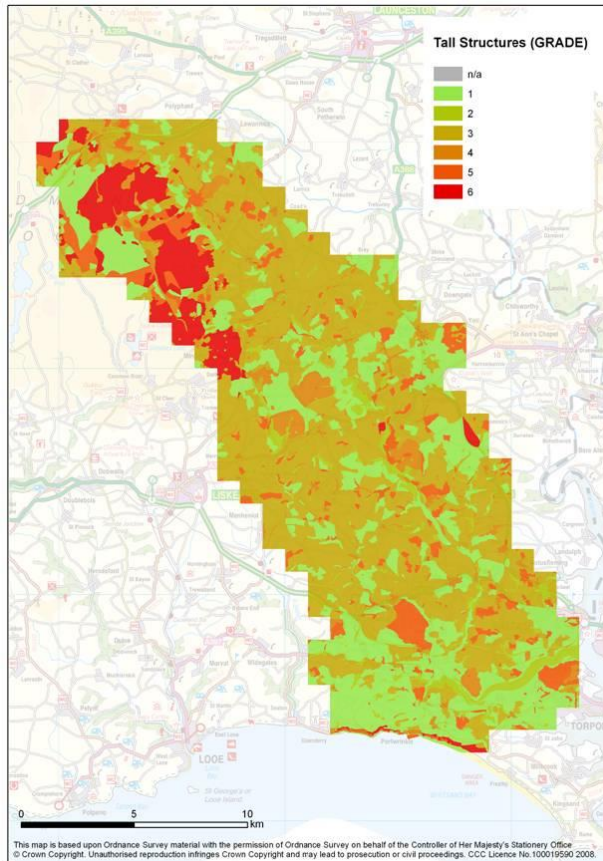


## Dynamic and Conservative Change

# HLC recognises multiple ways of valuing

- many points of view; expert, community, outsider
  - vary according to issue / scenario
  - values change through time





Hence two separate stages in the application of HLC:

- 1 Identify, map, describe and interpret
- 2 Apply different judgements about value or practical priorities in relation to different change scenarios and so feed more intelligently into different strategies and Action Plans



# An introduction to the HEAP

*The Isle of Wight  
Historic Environment  
Action Plan*



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

B1

Background

Area

Theme

Supplementary

Method



## Historic Environment Action Plans

Background 1: Introducing the  
Cranborne Chase and West  
Wiltshire Downs AONB  
Historic Environment Action Plans

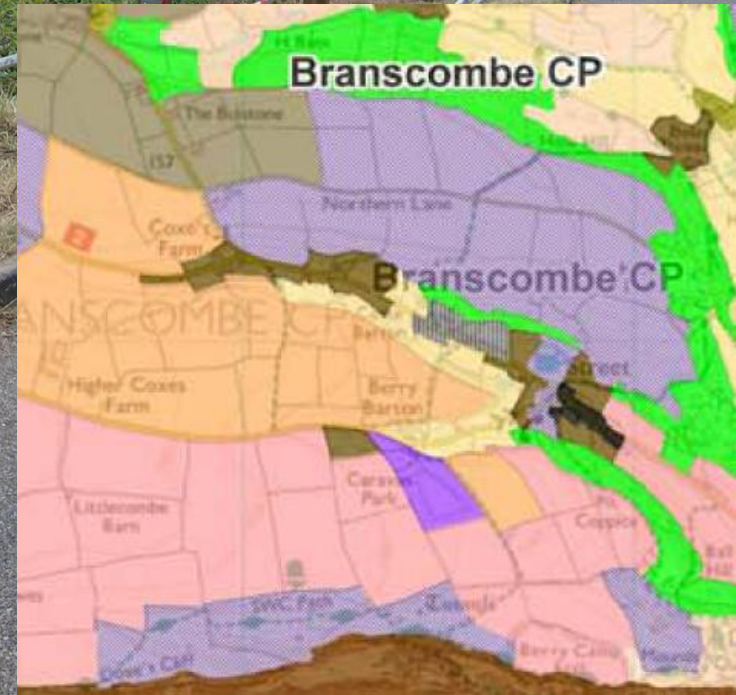
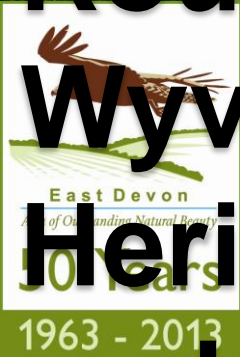




# East Devon AONB Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP)

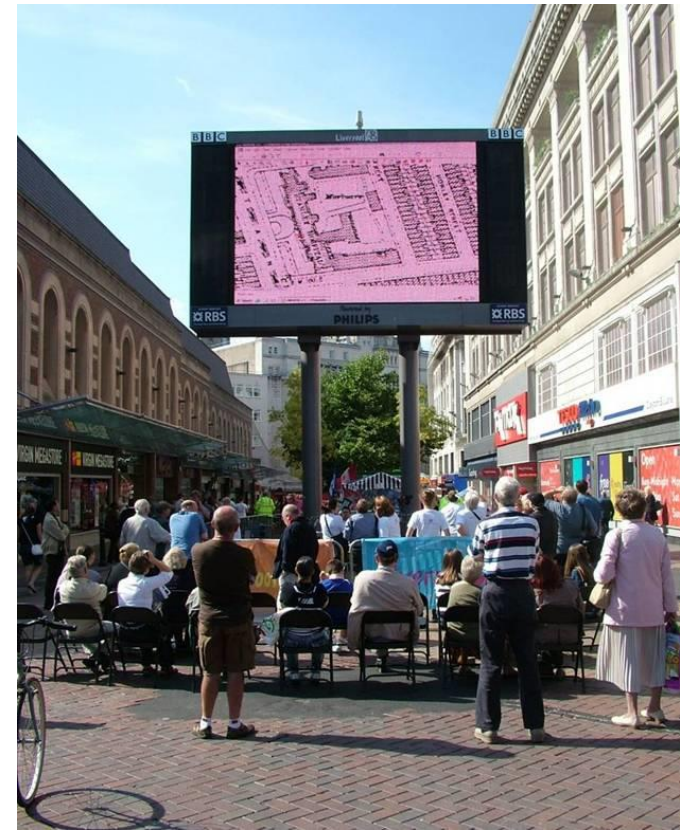
Community led critique of 'official' HLC in development of a HEAP

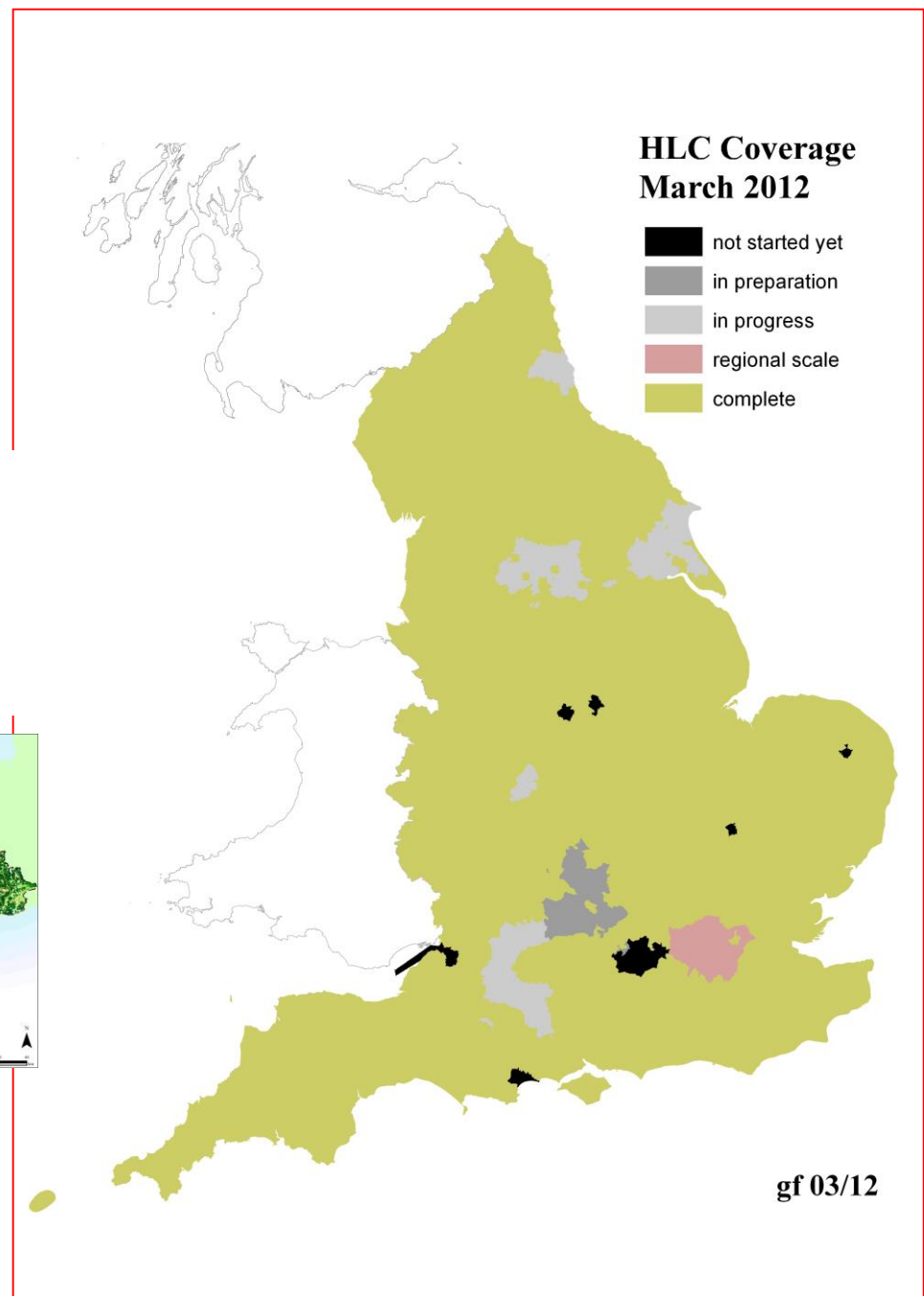
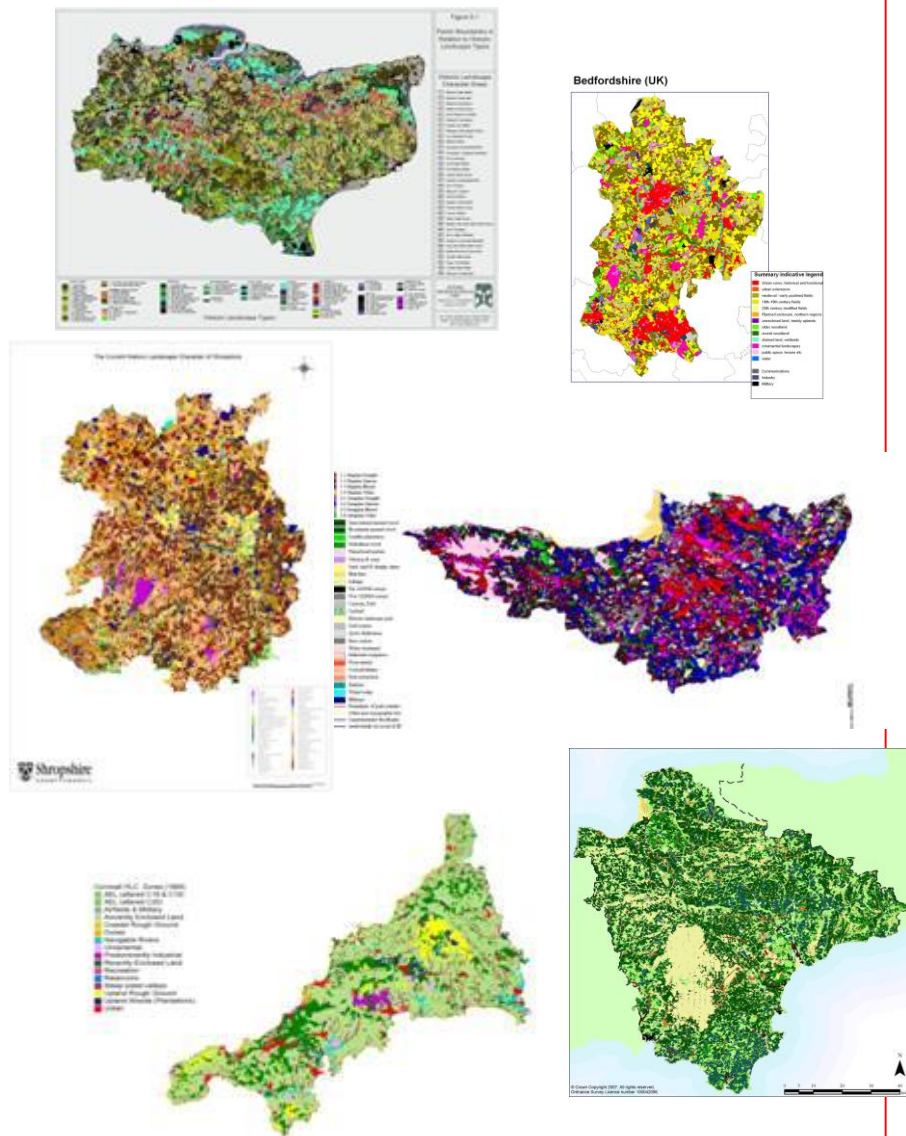
Emma  
Rouse  
Wyvern  
Heritage  
and  
Landscape  
emma@  
wyvernheritage  
co.uk



# Historic Landscape Characterisation – some uses

- Informing Landscape Character Assessments
- Upstream planning (assessing sensitivity; informing decisions, strategies, policies, master-planning, etc)
- Contextualising and stimulating more detailed character studies and research
- Public engagement and participation
- Land management
- Historic Environment Countryside Advice
- Partnership building
- Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs)





**National, but local.**  
**Now covers over 95% of England**



# Sources of further information

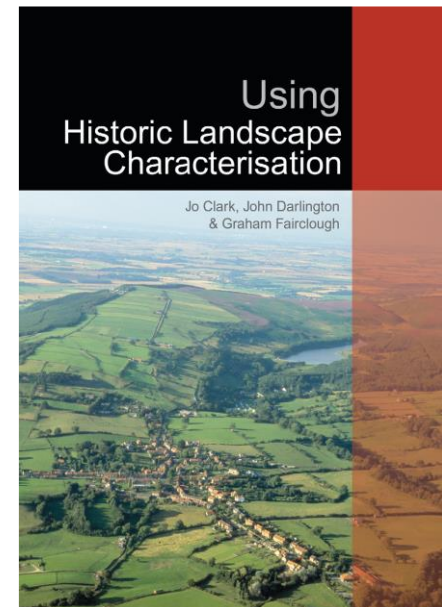
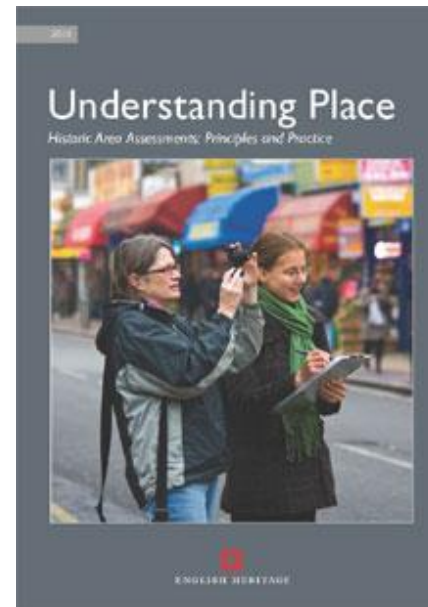
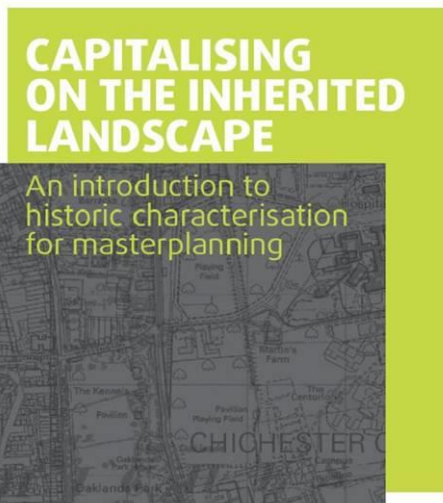
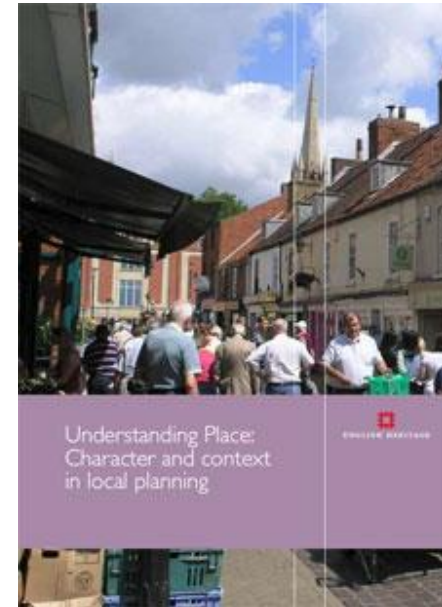
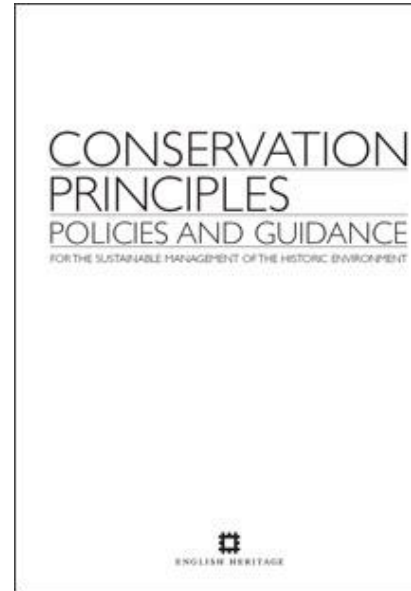
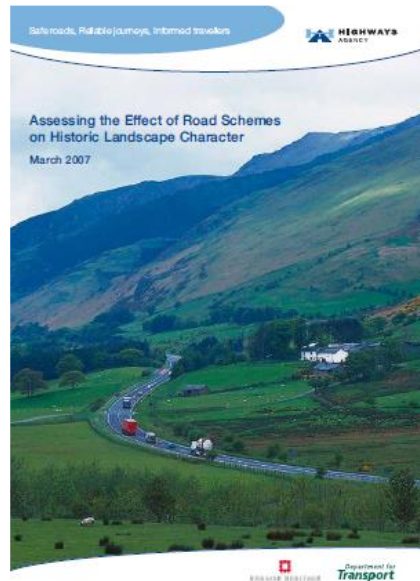
## HLC on the Web

A review for English Heritage of current provision for online access to the results of Historic Landscape Characterisation  
July 2011



English Heritage Project 6088

Report by Paul Quigley



# **Historic Landscape Characterisation – what has it done for us?**

**Can't assess against established historic environment sector aims**

**Characterisation has itself redirected those aims**

**Contextualised 'assets'**

**Changed emphases of heritage management – encouraged care for all heritage**

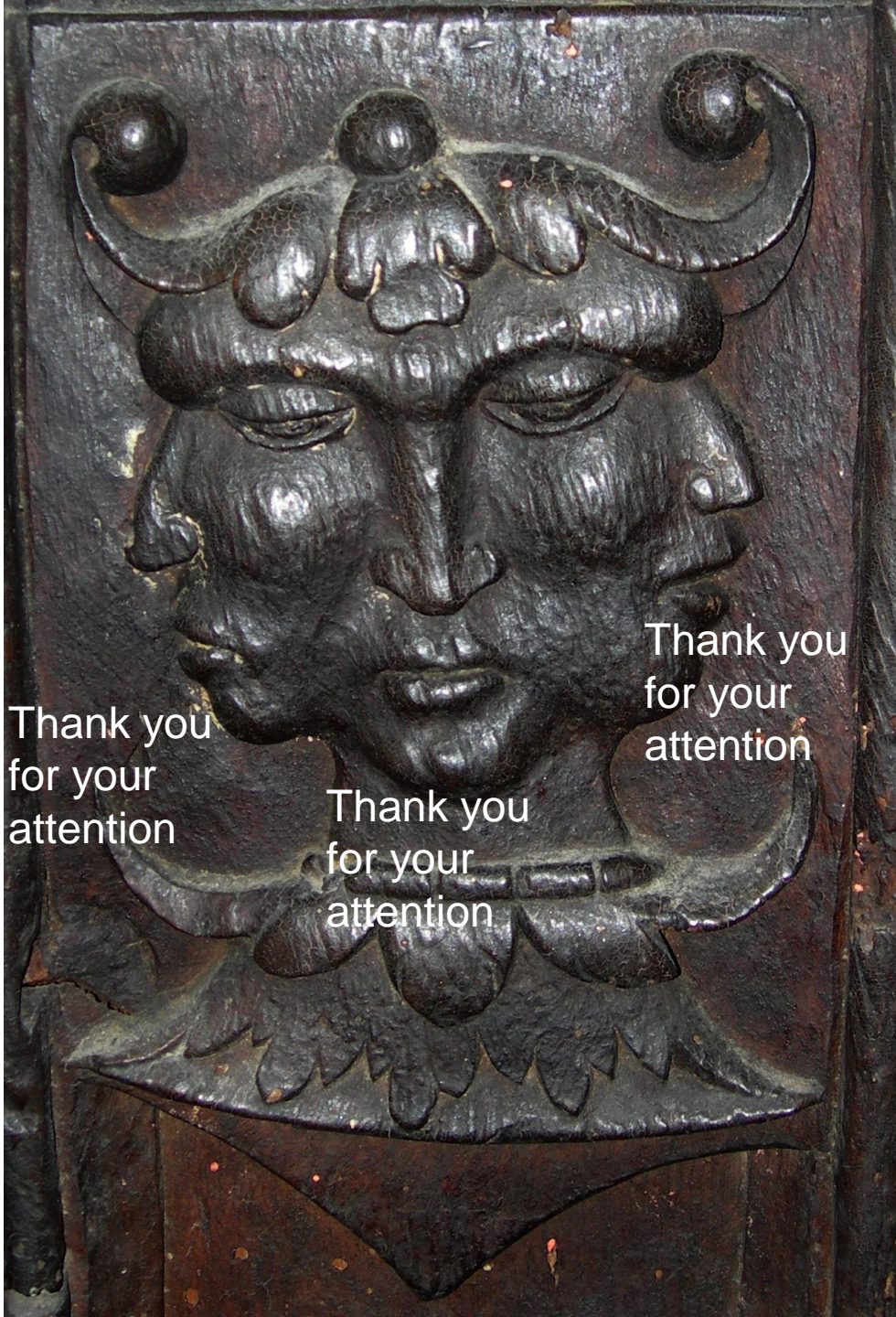
**Its provisional interpretation of landscape made HLC a spatially organised research framework.**

- Has stimulated investigation and extended identification and understanding**

**Has helped change attitudes to change – now less defensive in the face of it**

**Provides a spatial and conceptual framework for action planning, eg HEAPs**

**Maps and reports understanding at a scale and in a language enabling closer working with key partners – like communities, planners, agriculturalists, foresters and environmentalists.**



Thank you  
for your  
attention

Thank you  
for your  
attention

Thank you  
for your  
attention

**Triciput – a symbol for  
landscapists**

**Of the present,  
but using the past,  
to inform the future**