

Countryside Character
Volume 4:
East Midlands

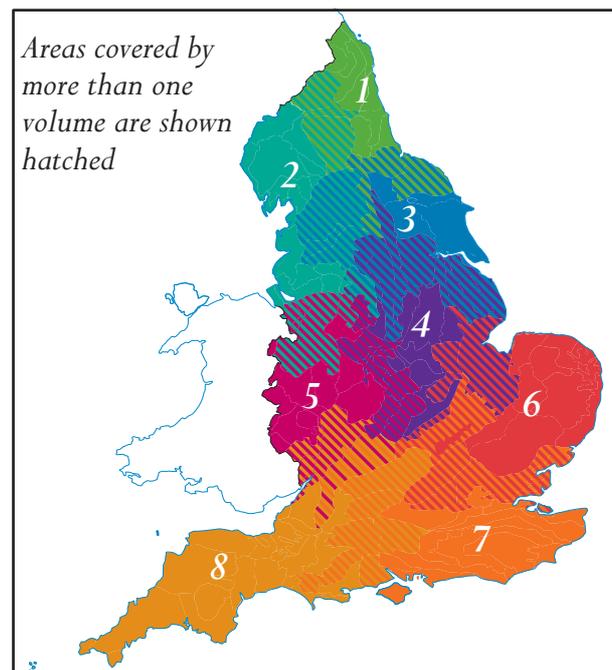
The character of
England's natural and
man-made landscape

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Acknowledgements

The Countryside Agency acknowledges the contribution to this publication of a great many individuals, partners and organisations without which it would not have been possible. We also wish to thank Chris Blandford Associates, the lead consultants on this project.

A riverside scene: the river Trent is fringed with trees and the cooling towers of a power station.



ROB COUSINS/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Foreword

As soon as I saw the Character Map of England I realised that it should have been one of the front pages of my school atlas. Not only does it reflect influences such as geology and landform, but it also records the effect of thousands of years of human activity within an ever-evolving natural world. Thus it, and the supporting descriptive documents, are not merely a celebration of the diversity of our country but they are also an important educational and planning tool – for today and tomorrow.

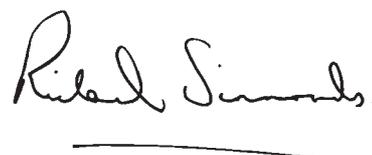
For unless we recognise and understand the special and local nature of the variety of character within England, we can never hope to protect it, conserve it or even put right some of the damage we have done to it.

A better understanding of what we have now is at the heart of achieving sustainable development in the future.

The landscape descriptions and maps presented here, set out the qualities of today's countryside. They do not ascribe values to particular aspects of the countryside. That is for

others to do in a way which is appropriate to the particular purpose for which they want the information. The Countryside Agency will use it to inspire its work.

We have a unique legacy to bequeath to our children – a legacy not just of biodiversity; not just about landscape or history. It is the juxtaposition of town, country and coast; of land form and land use; of history and modern progress; it is, in two words, England's Character; and this book, along with its companion volumes, will tell you what that means.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Simmonds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Richard Simmonds
Chairman, Countryside Commission, 1996-1999

Introduction

The character of England

Think of England and the chances are that you will conjure up an image of the countryside.

That image might be of a willow lined river, quietly meandering through pastures, where cows graze. It might be of a windswept fell, cloaked in purple heather and bounded by crumbling grey stone walls. It might equally be

of pylons marching across fields of yellow rape set against a steel grey sky. Or perhaps of dark sunken lanes cutting through chalk ridges crowned with beech and ash woodland. Your image, whatever it is, will grow in your mind as you begin to add in other things you associate with it - a distant church spire, the song of skylarks, the angular horizon of slag heaps, the sudden view across open downland to a hidden vale below.

→ p8

Two examples which show how the key characteristics of the East Midlands combine to create character areas.

Central Lincolnshire Vale

The Central Lincolnshire Vale is a quiet low lying vale running between the Lincolnshire Wolds and the Lincolnshire Edge. It is divided in two by a central ridge. To the north, the Vale drains into the Humber through the river Ancholme. To the south the river Witham feeds into the Fens and ultimately into the Wash.

The central core of the Vale, between Brigg and Wragby, comprises an open agricultural landscape characterised by medium sized fields with low hedges and dominated by open skies and cloudscapes. Arable crops predominate but are interspersed with pasture on the heavier soils. Hedgerows are typically single species hawthorn to roadsides, being more mixed between fields with few individual field trees. The area is rich in ridge and furrow and deserted medieval villages.

Settlement is dispersed and sparse, with views punctuated by occasional individual farmhouses. Villages have remained small while a few small towns have grown, including Brigg, Market Rasen and Horncastle. Local clay provides the major building material with most traditional buildings constructed of brick and pantile. The dominance of brick is most distinctively portrayed in Tattershall castle.

There are three main subdivisions within the area. Firstly the artificially drained carrs north and south of Brigg, where most of the land is only a metre or so above sea level. Secondly, around Wragby and Bardney the arable landscape is broken up by a significant number of medium sized woodlands, known locally as the Lincolnshire Limewoods or Bardney Forest. The third part is situated on the lighter wind-blown and fluvial sands soils which occur around Elsham, Market Rasen and Woodhall Spa.

Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire & Yorkshire Coalfield

This is a large area embracing the major industrial towns, cities and a substantial slice of the countryside and villages of the Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire coalfield. It is generally defined by shallow coal measures within the underlying bedrock and is bounded by the Peak foothills, the Southern Magnesian Limestone ridge and the Trent Valley.

The topography is variable with low and undramatic hills, escarpments and broad valleys. It is however dominated everywhere by extensive urban and industrial influences. There has been constant change and development since the era of the industrial revolution, with rapid expansion of housing, transport networks and industry of many types. There is a complex intermingling of rural, urban industrial and modern commercial areas, the whole creating a mosaic of disparate land uses and land cover.

The land form is characterised by generally north-south ridges formed from the alternate banding of wet shales and dry sandstones. This defines the drainage pattern, with the rivers Erewash and Rother draining south and north respectively.

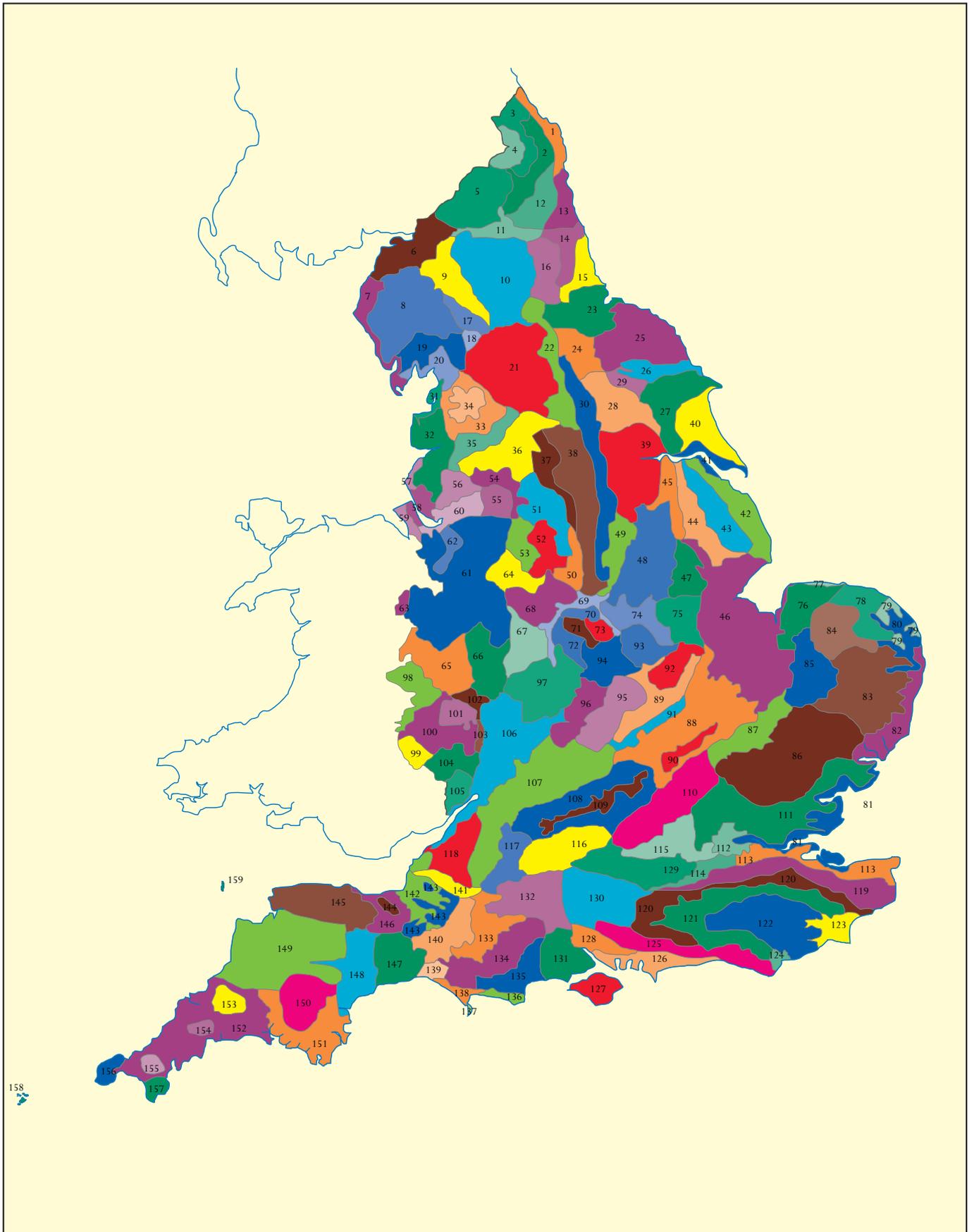
The coalfield's distinct cultural history and identity is a strong link between the communities, their landscapes and their past. Its present and future importance derives from the continuing need to foster economic activity at such a level that it supports the relatively high settlement density and the important north/south transport links, running through the area. Interspersed between developments are small fragmented remains of pre-industrial landscape and semi-natural vegetation, including many areas of woodland and river valleys as well as subsidence flashes and other relict features.

The agricultural systems of the area are diverse, though arable enterprises predominate, with livestock and dairy enterprises becoming more significant in the southern part of the area. The landscape is rich in industrial archaeology, including features such as bell-pits, mills, tips, old railways, tramways and canals.

Older villages are built of local stone, mainly sandstones and millstone grit. The majority of settlements were subject to rapid industrial expansion in the 19th century and complete new mining villages were also built. Brick and slate, often transported by rail, quickly replaced stone as the local building material, and many of the brick-built mining villages and towns of that period still survive today. Expansion has continued and these settlements, with the remains of the mining industry, dominate the landscape over wide areas.

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17	Orton Fells	96	Dunsmore and Feldon
18	Howgill Fells	97	Arden
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20	Morecambe Bay Limestones	99	Black Mountains and Golden Valley
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54	Manchester Pennine Fringe	133	Blackmoor Vale and Vale of Wardour
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59	Wirral	138	Weymouth Lowlands
60	Mersey Valley	139	Marshwood and Powerstock Vales
61	Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	140	Yeovil Scarplands
62	Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	141	Mendip Hills
63	Oswestry Uplands	142	Somerset Levels and Moors
64	Potteries and Churnet Valley	143	Mid Somerset Hills
65	Shropshire Hills	144	Quantock Hills
66	Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	145	Exmoor
67	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	146	Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes
68	Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands	147	Blackdowns
69	Trent Valley Washlands	148	Devon Redlands
70	Melbourne Parklands	149	The Culm
71	Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield	150	Dartmoor
72	Mease/Sence Lowlands	151	South Devon
73	Charnwood	152	Cornish Killas
74	Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds	153	Bodmin Moor
75	Kesteven Uplands	154	Hensbarrow
76	North West Norfolk	155	Carmenellis
77	North Norfolk Coast	156	West Penwith
78	Central North Norfolk	157	The Lizard
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The Character of England: landscape, wildlife & natural features



This is the character of England's countryside. This and much more. We may each have our own particular image, a personal response to our own backgrounds and experiences - together these images reflect the rich and diverse character of England's countryside as a whole. Many different elements combine to create this character. Because of this there is tremendous variety in that character. To recognise the variation in countryside character is to understand how the many influences upon it combine to give a sense of place, to set a tract of countryside apart from adjacent areas. That is what this publication does.

Everywhere has character. As a society, we already place a higher value upon some areas of countryside than the rest. We do this with legislation by, for example, designating National Parks; by spending public money to help look after areas - through schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas; and through our own behaviour, by going to certain places on holiday, for instance. Countryside character is present in all these areas and in the rest of the countryside. Recognising and understanding countryside character is equally important across the whole of England. How we choose to respond to that understanding is the next step, which is not undertaken in this publication.

Most of us have a strong sense of local pride. As we move rapidly towards a global society, we increasingly value the 'anchor' that our local identity gives us. We have pride in both our immediate surroundings, whether it be town or country, and also in feeling that we are part of something that is different, that has a unique sense of place. The character of the countryside is an important part of what many of us take pride in. It may be that we live in the countryside, or that it provides our workplace. It may be that we visit it often, or travel through it. It may even be that we have only experienced it through other media - literature, art, television. But for one or all of these reasons, we identify and take pride in the character of England's countryside.

The irony is that as we increasingly begin to appreciate our local distinctiveness, we are also beginning to realise how vulnerable that distinctiveness can be. In an age of mass production, standardisation, economies of scale and international markets, those elements of our countryside that have traditionally been driven by local influences are being quickly eroded. The materials and style of new buildings, the breed of cattle in the field, the shape of the hedgerows, the village sign, the farm gates and buildings are just a few examples. In all of these there is a trend towards uniformity: it is becoming ever more difficult to identify from your surroundings which part of the countryside you are in. It is, therefore, more important than ever that we understand what contributes to the character of England's countryside. Then, we can recognise the impact on this character of the decisions we take, both as individuals and as a society.

The Countryside Agency is concerned with the whole of England's countryside.

The English countryside is a priceless national asset. It is fundamental to our national identity as well as a rich source for our local identity. This is reflected in popular public opinion (*Public Attitudes to the Countryside*, Countryside Commission, CCP 481, 1997, £4). The most remarkable aspect of England's countryside is its diversity. The Countryside Agency believes that it is in the national interest to protect and strengthen this diversity. Our work to identify and describe the character of England, which we are publishing here, is intended to:

- raise awareness of the diversity of countryside character we enjoy;
- increase understanding of what contributes to that character and what may influence it in the future; and
- encourage everyone to respect the character of the countryside and take account of it in everything that they do.

The Countryside Agency's predecessor, the Countryside Commission, had a long association with areas of the countryside that are designated as being of national importance (such as the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). It was active for many years in trying to encourage greater understanding and more active management of the wider countryside. Through this work, it became apparent that we lacked a consistent and comprehensive understanding of what gave the countryside of England its character. This is an essential starting point for guiding our own policies and decisions and for encouraging others to take account of the impact of their own decisions on the countryside.

The Countryside Commission worked with other bodies to develop the technique of landscape assessment (*Landscape assessment guidance*, Countryside Commission, 1993, CCP 423). This identifies those things that are having an influence on a tract of countryside and describes how the landscape reflects this. It has been applied at a wide range of scales, for a variety of purposes. Even so, much of England's countryside had never had such an assessment carried out which made it impossible to build up a national picture using landscape assessments.

The Countryside Commission identified the need for a new approach, which looked at the whole of England's countryside. This would use a consistent approach nationally. It would need to be at a broad enough scale to give national coverage, whilst ensuring that significant variation in the character of the countryside was picked up. It would provide a consistent national framework within which more detailed local landscape assessments would sit. This approach, which the Countryside Agency has fully adopted, is described in more detail below.

How we have defined the character of England's countryside

Our approach to mapping and describing the character of England's countryside can best be described as a combination of computer based statistical analysis and the consistent application of structured landscape assessment techniques. We initially piloted the approach in the south west of England (*The New Map of England: A Celebration of the South Western Landscape*, Countryside Commission, CCP 444, 1994, £20) from which a successful methodology was developed that was suitable for extending to the national scale. The south west pilot study produced a map of cohesive landscape character areas.

As part of the study, we asked a cross section of the public if they identified with the character areas produced - they did. On the strength of the pilot study, the Commission decided to develop the methodology for use nationally.

The National Mapping Project

The character of the countryside is the result of many different factors or variables. It is the way in which these combine that gives broad areas of the countryside a cohesive and distinctive character. The National Mapping project looked at how these variables combined across England as a basis for the mapping of distinctive character areas. The approach involved:

- identifying the variables that needed to be included;
- obtaining information on each variable for every 1 kilometre square of England; these are called the national data sets;
- combining all the national data sets through a computer based statistical analysis technique, known as TWINSPAN;
- using the results of the TWINSPAN analysis to inform the mapping of cohesive character areas.

The **variables** – these included physical influences (geological, topographical and soils based) and cultural and historical influences (human activity). They were selected by an inter-agency group which the Countryside Commission set up to oversee the countryside character work, following a lot of background research on availability of data and the feasibility of national coverage. In particular, the involvement of English Nature and English Heritage was essential in this process, ensuring that both the ecological and historical dimensions were properly reflected.

The **national data sets** – 12 national data sets were used. These are described in the box opposite. They were put together in a variety of different ways. Some simply had to be extracted from existing source material (eg altitude), others required interpretation of existing information (eg surface geology and ecological character). Some had to be specially created through empirical research (eg field pattern and density and industrial history).

The National Datasets

Altitude: 10 altitudinal attributes, based on Ordnance Survey Digital Terrain Model

Landform: 10 landform classification attributes, based on original interpretation of existing altitude and slope data

Ecological characteristics: 12 ecological character attributes, using drainage and base status as determinants; provided by Soil Survey and Land Research Centre

Land capability: 7 inherent agricultural land capability attributes, based on soil type and drainage characteristics; provided by Soil Survey and Land Research Centre

Surface geology: 27 surface geology attributes, derived from existing data on solid and drift geology; provided by British Geological Survey

Farm types: 17 categories of farm type, based on Standard Man Day data recorded through MAFF agricultural census; provided by Resource Planning Team, ADAS

Settlement patterns: 7 settlement pattern attributes, based on categorisation of Royal Mail Delivery Point Data; provided by Birkbeck College, University of London

Woodland cover: 8 attributes for woodland type and categories of percentage cover, derived from interpretation of Bartholomew's 1:100000 map series; based on Ordnance Survey

Field density & pattern: 16 categories of field pattern and field density, based on original interpretation of map data by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, on behalf of Countryside Commission and English Heritage

Visible Archaeology: 12 attributes combining visibility and period, based on interpretation of original data on monuments and linear features provided by the National Monuments Record Centre of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England

Industrial History: 16 categories of dominant industrial history, based on original interpretation of map and documentary sources by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, on behalf of Countryside Commission and English Heritage

Designed parkland: 7 extant parkland density attributes, derived from comparison of 1918 Ordnance Survey series with current 1:50000 Ordnance Survey

Examples from the Countryside Character Programme National Mapping Project related to the East Midlands region



Figure 1
FARM TYPES

Reproduced and adapted from an original provided by FRCA.



Figure 2
ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER

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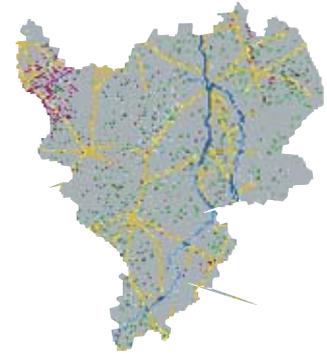


Figure 3
VISIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY

Based on information supplied by kind permission of RCHME.

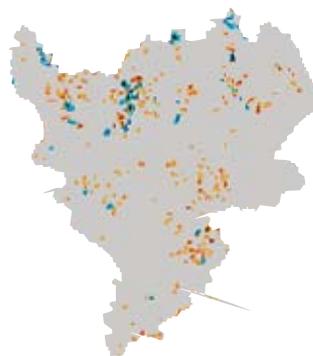


Figure 4
WOODLAND COVER

Based on the Ordnance Survey Map © Crown Copyright 1998
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Figure 5
SURFACE GEOLOGY

Geological map © NERC. All rights reserved. Topographical map
© Crown Copyright reserved.

For all the above figures, colour visual representations derived from IDRISI image for information purposes only. Coastline is an approximation.

Each data set has a number of attributes. The number of attributes varied between data sets. For example, the settlement pattern data set has only seven attributes, relating to the extent to which settlement is dispersed or clustered together. By contrast, the surface geology data set has 27 attributes reflecting the variety of solid and drift deposits occurring. For each data set, every kilometre square of England was assigned an attribute; hence, each kilometre square has 12 attributes. Full information on the attributes is contained in a Technical Report (*Countryside Character Initiative National Mapping Project, technical report of the computer phase, June 1997, Chris Blandford Associates - unpublished*). A map of each of the national data sets was produced, illustrating the distribution of all attributes across the country. Some examples of these as they relate to the East Midlands region are shown in Figures 1 – 5 on page 10.

TWINSpan analysis - the details of this process are set out in the Technical Report. The basic principle is that all the kilometre squares in the sample (the whole of England) can be divided up into a number of groups on the basis of the presence or absence of a particular attribute. This subdivision continues until an appropriate number of end groups are reached, each of which will contain kilometre squares with similar attributes. The map which resulted from this then informed the definition of character areas.

Map images were derived from the TWINSpan analysis using all the national data sets and four selected physiographical data sets, respectively. They illustrate how physical factors, such as landform and geology, strongly influence character at the regional and national scale and how historical and cultural factors are significant in providing the more local variation on these broader patterns.

Informing the character mapping – the process outlined above was then used to help inform the definition of character areas, broad tracts of countryside exhibiting a cohesive character. This was also based upon a more conventional landscape assessment approach, which drew upon the knowledge and experience of a wide range of people involved in countryside planning and management, a considerable body of existing landscape assessment work and some limited additional fieldwork. The results of the TWINSpan process were used to validate this more subjective view of countryside character and ensure that the character areas were defined in a consistent way across the whole of England.

The Character of England map: a joint approach

English Nature and English Heritage have both been closely associated with the development of the countryside character approach. English Heritage, as the government agency responsible for the historic dimension of the

countryside, worked closely with the Countryside Commission in developing and sourcing the cultural and historical data sets, and advising on the broader process of characterisation. English Nature similarly worked with the Countryside Commission in respect of the soils derived data sets (ecological character and land capability) but their involvement in the mapping process has been more fundamental.

English Nature developed a similar approach to identifying and mapping the countryside according to the distribution of habitats and natural features, which they refer to as natural areas. This work was brought into the definition of character areas with a view to a single joint map of landscape, wildlife and natural features being produced. This was achieved, and the map is shown on page 7. Both English Nature and the Countryside Agency now work from the basis of this joint framework. Both recognise all the character areas identified on it. However, because physical influences are of primary importance in determining ecological variations, English Nature often aggregate the joint character areas into their larger natural areas.

Describing the character of England

Having identified and mapped the character of England, we have gone on to describe each of the character areas shown on the map. It is the descriptions for the character areas in the East Midlands that are contained in this publication.

The descriptions have been developed through the wide ranging consultation process referred to above, which also informed the character mapping. Views from interested parties have been sought and material drawn from a great variety of sources. Nationally, over 800 people have contributed, through meetings, seminars and written comment.

For each area, the description seeks to evoke what sets it apart from any other. It aims to put our mental image of that area into words. Each description also provides an explanation of how that character has arisen and how it is changing, and gives some pointers to future management issues. The descriptions are not intended to prescribe any particular course of action as a response to that; only to inform the decision making process.

The character of England: shaping the future

The material contained in this publication describes the character of England's countryside at the end of the 20th century. This character has evolved over thousands of years, as a result of a complex interaction between nature and human activity. The pace of change over that time has ebbed and flowed and will continue to do so. The character of England is dynamic.

The identification and description of the character of England's countryside does not mean that we are seeking to 'freeze' that character at this moment in time. The purpose of the work is to ensure that we understand - from a widely accepted common reference point - the character of England's countryside. Only in this way can we all take proper account of that in all the decisions we make which will have a bearing on it. Greater awareness and understanding will engender greater respect and local pride. This will inform and shape change to make a positive contribution to strengthening countryside character.

We envisage this happening in a number of ways; for example by:

- **focusing national policies** – decisions and activities that have a major bearing on the character of the countryside are often driven by national and international policies, such as land use planning or the Common Agricultural Policy. There is increasing recognition that such policies need to be developed and applied more flexibly at a regional scale to improve their effectiveness and make them more responsive to local needs and priorities. The character of England provides a framework which can be used to provide a regional resolution for such policies, so that they take more account of the needs and opportunities within each region.

- **giving national meaning to local action** – encouraging local pride lies at the heart of ensuring that the character of England continues in all its diversity into the future. Local people have the greatest potential of all to recognise and strengthen local distinctiveness. The character of England provides a national context for local action, strengthening the link between local and national heritage, and providing a source of information and ideas to feed into local decision making.

Countryside Character is being published in 8 volumes, following the boundaries of the administrative areas of the Government Offices for the Regions:

North East

North West

Yorkshire & the Humber

East Midlands

West Midlands

East of England

South East & London

South West

(Merseyside is included in the North West volume).