



meath landscape character assessment



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council



This page: Newgrange passage tomb, Bru na Boinne
Front cover: Graveyard near Dromane, southwest Meath

meath landscape character assessment

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supplementary g.i.s. information

appendix 1

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Graveyard near Dromane, southwest Meath

- what is landscape?
- what is landscape character assessment?
- why carry out a landscape character assessment of county meath?



Church at Slane Hill

WHAT IS LANDSCAPE?

Landscape is defined in many different ways but in current guidance there is broad agreement that it is a combination of our physical and perceived surroundings. Whether we are aware of it or not this plays an important part in our everyday lives and the landscape is a special and unique resource.

European Landscape Convention 2000:

“an area as perceived by people, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and / or cultural (that is human) factors...landscapes evolve through time as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings”

“As a key element of individual and social well being and quality of life, landscape plays an important part in human fulfilment and in reinforcement of (European) identity. It has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activities, particularly tourism”

Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoEHLG)

defines landscape as “all that is visible when looking across areas of land.”

The Countryside Agency, England:

“Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. Landscape can mean a small patch of urban wasteland or as much as a mountain range...It results from the way that different components of our environment – both natural and cultural – interact together and are perceived by us.”

WHAT IS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT?

Landscape Character Assessment is a process which describes, maps and classifies landscapes objectively. It can be a tool to aid decision-making and management or simply to promote particular attractions. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be divorced from its physical and visual characteristics so all these elements are considered.

WHY CARRY OUT A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY MEATH?

It's a legal requirement:

- The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000 (Part II, S10 (e) and 1st Schedule, Part IV (7) requires every planning authority to include objectives in their Development Plan for the “preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that...the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest”
- Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention in 2002 and must adopt national measures to promote landscape planning, protection and management.

1. introduction

Box 1

Influencing Factors on the Meath Landscape Character Assessment

- European Landscape Convention 2000
- *'Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (June 2000) DoEHLG
- National Spatial Strategy (2002): Aims to improve quality of life, environmental improvement and sustainable economic future. Incorporates requirements to identify hierarchy of settlements and improved public transport and improved public transport and strategic green belts.
- Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) requires Meath County Council to identify objectives for housing targets, transportation and infrastructure strategies.
- Meath County Council are developing strategies for Green Belts and rural housing issues, including the need to balance housing and the rural economy.
- DoEHLG has produced guidelines for protection of architectural heritage, including Conservation Areas and Setting of Protected Structures.
- Strategic Issues Paper (March 2005) sets out planned revisions to County Development Plan 2007-2013.
- Of the seven counties bordering Meath three have completed landscape character assessments: Kildare, Louth and Westmeath. Monaghan's landscape character assessment is currently underway.
- New Local Plans will be prepared after the County Development Plan – these will go into more detail and will be informed by countywide policies.

Meath County Council are currently reviewing their County Development Plan which will include policies for landscape protection and conservation. This Landscape Character Assessment will form supplementary guidance providing a detailed understanding of the landscapes in Co. Meath during the period of the Development Plan 2007 - 2013.

The Landscape Character Assessment and the Development Plan will be informed by existing national, regional and local planning documents and policies. The Landscape Character Assessment adheres broadly to the draft landscape assessment guidelines published by the DoEHLG and has regard to Landscape Character Assessment's that have already been produced for adjacent counties (see Box 1).

Box 2

Key Objectives of the Landscape Character Assessment:

1. To improve the understanding of Co Meath's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.
2. To predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties which will ensure that change is complimentary to landscape character. Sensitivity and capacity should be given due consideration in all aspects of decision-making.
3. To assist in the achievement of sustainable development, the underlying principle of all current planning practice and legislation, by promoting a unified approach to landscape planning and management which links policies and recommendations for landscape character to existing planning policies.

- how has the landscape character assessment been carried out?
- stages of the assessment process
- assessment criteria
- consultation

HOW HAS THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT BEEN CARRIED OUT?

This Landscape Character Assessment describes the landscape and seascape of Co. Meath including:

- Physical elements - landform, land cover, geology, vegetation cover, hydrology and ecology.
- Visual characteristics - type and extent of views, enclosure and patterns formed by physical elements.
- Less tangible aspects such as historical and cultural associations, archaeology, tranquillity and aesthetic quality.

The Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared in three stages, each of which is informed by the previous stage. These stages are described below.

Stage 1: Description

This initial stage simply describes what the landscape is like at the moment and what factors influence its character. The County is divided into 5 **Landscape Character Types** (LCT's) representing generic areas of distinctive character such as uplands or river corridors. These LCT's are sub-divided into 20 **Landscape Character Areas** (LCA's) which are geographically specific. Information has been gathered through extensive research and site survey work. It is presented in the form of a written summary of the LCT's and detailed descriptions of LCA's including descriptions of key characteristics and settlements. The Landscape Character Assessment is also accompanied by a series of maps showing data including the boundaries of LCA's, statutory designations, land uses, soil types, historic features and transportation routes.

The boundaries of the LCA's are determined by desktop research which is then refined by extensive site survey. The final boundaries that are presented in this Landscape Character Assessment reflect both physical and aesthetic characteristics including types of land uses and vegetation, topography, extent and nature of views, hydrology and landscape condition. Generally, no single landscape element is overriding in its importance and individual elements, for example topography, may be similar across adjoining LCA's whilst the overall character varies.

Stage 2: Evaluation

The baseline information on landscape character that is described in Stage 1 is now analysed.

The **value** of each LCA refers to the contribution the area makes to the inherent character of County Meath. Value takes account of scenic quality, tranquillity, remoteness, rarity, cultural associations, history, conservation, recreational interests and broader social, economic and environmental aspects. It is evaluated using criteria ranging from 'Exceptional' to 'Low' (see Box 3). A judgement is also made of the importance of each landscape character area in an international, national, regional or local context. This does not always relate directly to its value or sensitivity - locally important area can make as much of a contribution to strong landscape character. However, an internationally important area may require greater consideration in terms of statutory protection and management (e.g. if it is a major tourist attraction).

Box 3

Criteria for Defining Value

Exceptional Value: Areas which are of outstanding value by nature of their dramatic scenic quality, unspoilt beauty, conservation interests, historic, cultural or other associations that influence landscape value. These areas may be of national or international importance.

Very High Value: Areas which have particularly high value by nature of their dramatic scenic quality, unspoilt beauty, conservation interests, historic, cultural or other associations that influence landscape value. These areas may be of national or regional importance.

High Value: Areas which are considered to be of value by virtue of their positive characteristics, sense of place or local associations. These areas may be of regional or local importance.

Moderate Value: Areas which retain a positive character and a sense of place, or are of local interest or importance.

Low Value: Areas in fair to poor condition or which have undergone change to the extent that they do not have a distinctive local character or particular aesthetic quality.

Very Low Value: Areas that are degraded or in poor condition and where the distinctive character and aesthetic quality has been seriously damaged or destroyed.

The **sensitivity** of a LCA is defined as its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recuperate from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria (see Box 4) ranging from 'High' to 'Low' and is based on the interaction of individual components such as landform, amount of evident historical features (time depth) and distribution of viewers. Sensitivity also depends on the condition of the LCA (i.e. what state of repair a LCA is in). A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and/ or tolerant of change.

Box 4

Criteria for Defining Sensitivity

High Sensitivity: A vulnerable landscape likely to be fragile and susceptible to change. Frequency and sensitivity of users is likely to be high. The introduction of a change is likely to significantly alter the character to the extent that it would be difficult or impossible to restore.

Medium Sensitivity: A landscape that can accommodate a certain amount of change without affecting the overall character. There are unlikely to be large numbers of people using or viewing this landscape.

Low Sensitivity: A resilient landscape that is robust and/ or tolerant of change. It is likely to be easily restored and the frequency and sensitivity of users is likely to be low.

The quality of a landscape can be a subjective judgement but in Ireland an objective means to determine “value to society” is by reference to landscape policies and designations. Landscapes can be designated by statute and included in policies within Developments Plans, usually following a consultation process which seeks to reach a consensus opinion (thereby reducing the subjective element). It is the intention of designations to protect landscapes on society’s behalf, from any significantly detrimental development.

Landscapes can be designated at national, regional or local level, in decreasing levels of ‘value to society’. Statutory designations tend to identify landscapes of outstanding or highest quality. Nevertheless, all landscapes are different and important, particularly to those people who live, work and visit them for leisure purposes.

Landscape designations are one of the criteria that are considered when assessing the quality and sensitivity of Landscape Character Areas.

Box 5

Criteria for Defining Landscape Importance

International Importance: The landscape is afforded importance by an internationally recognised element or elements within it. For example these may relate to history, culture, geology or other associations. These landscapes are usually internationally known and may attract visitors from all over the world.

National Importance: The landscape is afforded importance by a nationally recognised element or elements within it. For example these may relate to history, culture, geology or other associations which are known nationally. They may often form important tourist attractions but not to the same extent as those which are internationally recognised.

Regional Importance: The landscape is afforded importance by a regionally recognised element or elements within it. These may relate to history, culture, geology or other associations. Such elements may be designated within the County Development Plan or may comprise smaller elements which are not designated but together form an important characteristic of an area, which is recognisable or distinct within the County or Province.

Local Importance: The landscape is afforded importance by a locally recognised element or elements within it. These may relate to history, culture, geology or other associations. These elements are unlikely to be designated but will individually or collectively form an important characteristic of a area, which is locally recognisable.

Finally, the **potential capacity** of each LCA is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. Capacity is the ability that the landscape has to absorb specific types of development. It is a more advanced analysis of sensitivity which takes into account the design of likely development. It would, therefore, only be possible to define **actual capacity** on a case-by-case basis because it will vary according to the type and form of development, its location in relation to the landscape character area in question and its visibility from it (see Box 5).

Box 6

Criteria for Defining Capacity

Low Potential Capacity: The landscape has high sensitivity to the type of development proposed which could have a detrimental effect on landscape character or value.

Medium Potential Capacity: The landscape has medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed. Any change caused by the proposed development would be unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on landscape character or value that could not be mitigated against.

High Potential Capacity: The landscape will have low sensitivity to this type of development and few constraints imposed by landscape elements. Development of the type proposed is very unlikely to have an adverse effect on landscape character or value.

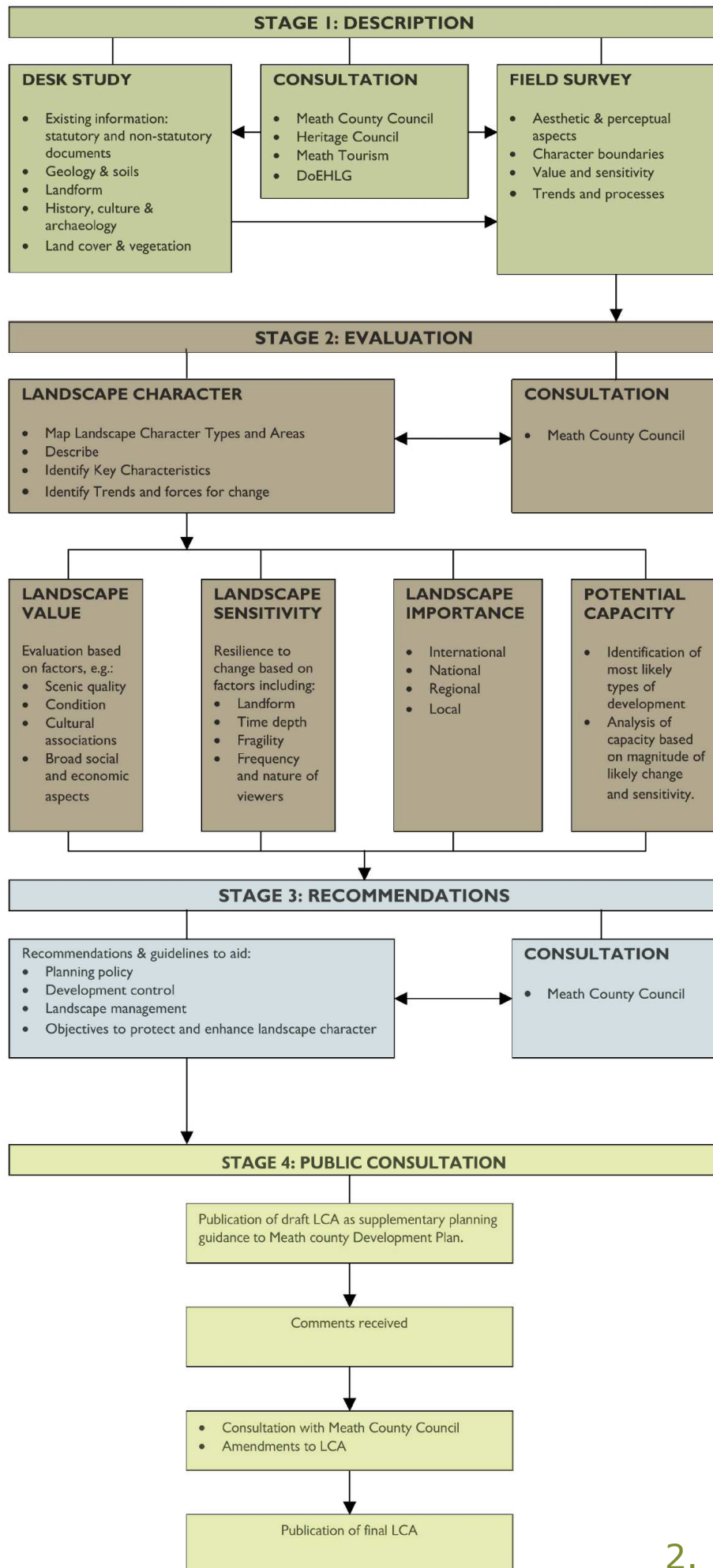
Stage 3: Policies and Recommendations

Policies and recommendations have been formulated to assist the development of related planning policies, promotion of strategies and development control within the county. They are intended to protect and enhance landscape character, and facilitate and guide sensitively designed development. Policies are general in nature and are concerned with broad principles of good practice. Recommendations are a development of these policies and relate more specifically to LCT’s and LCA’s. The aim of both policies and recommendations is to enhance and maintain landscape character within the broader goal of accommodating development in a sustainable manner.

Consultation

This Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out on behalf of, and in consultation with Meath County Council and informed by consultation with the DoEHLG and Heritage Council. Public consultation has taken place alongside statutory consultation for the draft County Development Plan. The Landscape Character Assessment has been amended to take account of relevant comments made during this period.

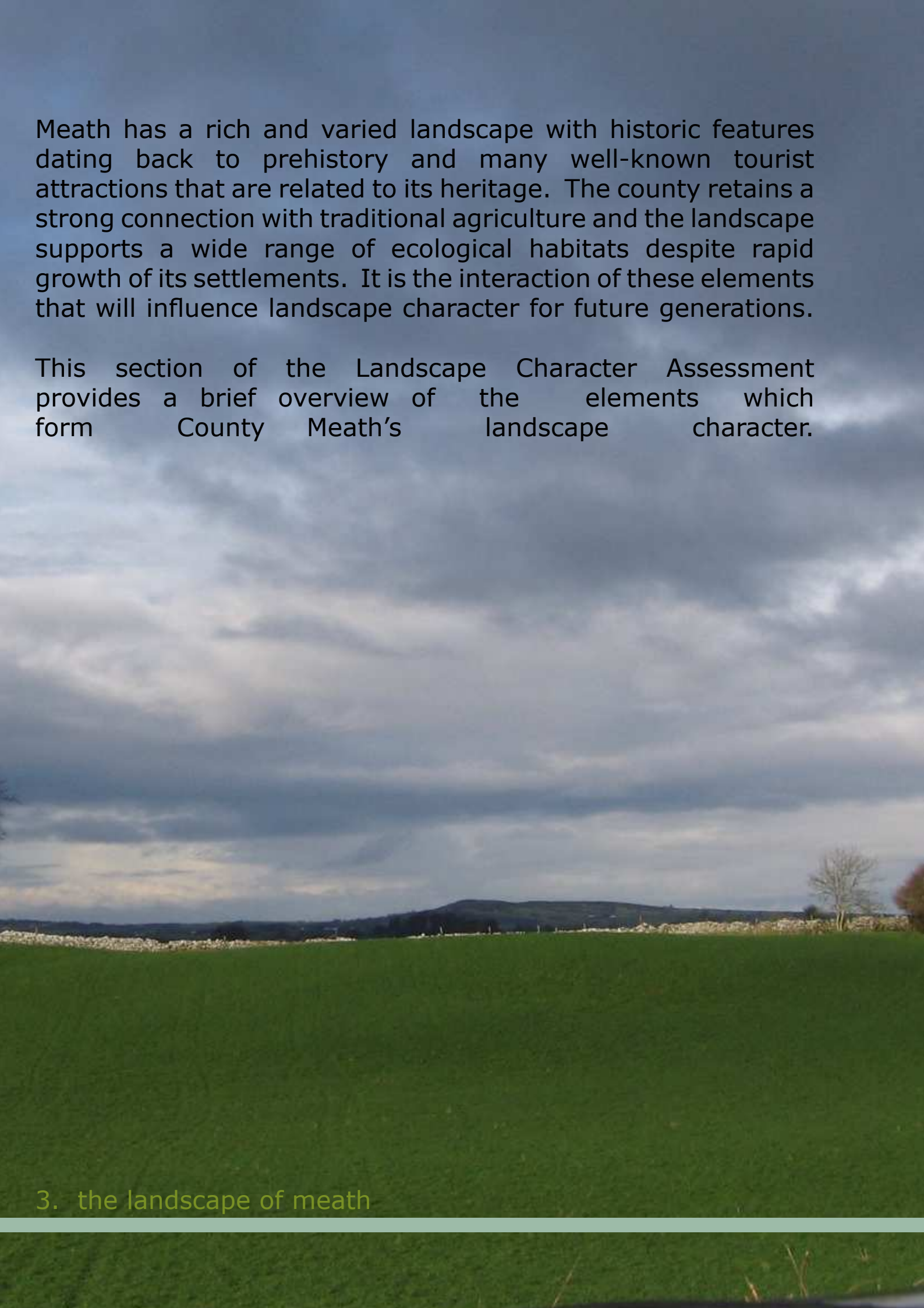
2. methodology



Meath has a rich and varied landscape with historic features dating back to prehistory and many well-known tourist attractions that are related to its heritage. The county retains a strong connection with traditional agriculture and the landscape supports a wide range of ecological habitats despite rapid growth of its settlements. It is the interaction of these elements that will influence landscape character for future generations.

This section of the Landscape Character Assessment provides a brief overview of the elements which form County Meath's landscape character.

3. the landscape of meath



HISTORY AND CULTURE

County Meath, located in the centre of Ireland (Meath means 'middle'), is known as the 'Royal County' because The Hill of Tara, south of Navan was the home of the High Kings of Ireland for many centuries. This meant that Meath was Ireland's political and social centre during this time. It was one of the five original provinces of Ireland and has an incredibly rich cultural heritage that has arisen from its social dominance and central location. The ancient roads system, with Meath at the hub, spread the domination of the High Kings to all parts of Ireland. Its relatively accessible landform together with its network of navigable river corridors, encouraged successive waves of visitors to settle here over time. Meath is now part of Leinster and shares borders with Counties Fingal, Louth, Dublin, Kildare, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath and Offaly. Because of its proximity to Dublin, southern and eastern parts of Meath have experienced massive population growth over the last few decades. This is less the case in northern and western parts which were traditionally less well explored and are still experiencing less development pressure. Navan is the county town. Trim and Kells were historically the two secondary urban centres in Meath but today Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Kilcock and the edges of Drogheda have developed as major new settlement areas. Many smaller towns and villages have also experienced unprecedented recent growth. The population of Meath has almost doubled between 1971 and 2002.



Slane Castle



Historic Map of Meath.

In 1887 Meath was described in John Bartholomew's 'Gazetteer of the British Isles' 1887: "The Coast is low and sandy, and is broken only by the estuary of the Boyne on the border of Louth. The surface is level or slightly undulating; the soil, varying from deep rich loam to the lightest sandy soil is generally fertile. Limestone and clay slate are the prevailing sub-strata. The county is beautifully diversified by numerous fine seats and luxuriant demesnes, while the ruins of old abbeys, castles and other objects of antiquarian interest frequently occur. The principle river is the Boyne, dividing the County into two nearly equal portions; its chief tributary is the Blackwater. Agriculture is the industry of first importance..."

"The writer Francis Ledwidge, on service in France in the First World War, wrote to Katherine Tynan, "you are in Meath now I suppose...If you go to Tara, go to Rath-na-Ri and look all around you from the hills of Drumconrath, in the north to the plains of Enfield in the south where Allen Bog begins, and remember me to every hill and wood and ruin, for my heart is there. If it is a clear day, you will see Slane blue and distant. Say I will come back again surely and maybe you will hear the pipes in the grass or a fairy horn and the hounds of Finn – I have heard them often from Tara". There is evidence of human occupation in Meath extending back 9,000 years to the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period. In particular the higher ground around Oldcastle and Slieve Breagh near Lobinstown and the valley of the Boyne are valued today for their high concentration of archaeological features. Meath is the county of the Pale, the area which surrounded Dublin from the Wicklow Hills in the south, through Kildare and the western area of Meath until it curved round to the sea again at Drogheda and enclosed the prosperous lands of the protestant ruling classes from the Anglo-Norman invasion onwards. The line of the pale moved through the years due to incursions and retreats but generally included the greater part of Meath.

Meath County Council will, over the life of the County Development Plan, move towards the preparation of a Local Area Plan for the important heritage landscape of Bru na Boinne and the Landscape Conservation Area designation for the Tara-Skryne area, which will protect them and their settings. The Council will also explore the possible designation of other valuable heritage landscapes as Landscape Conservation Areas.

3. the landscape of meath

Today's landscape, while recently accommodating a significant increase in building, has a largely managed agricultural character stemming from the 18th Century estate system of field bounded by hedgerows with individual farm holdings and small towns and villages. Meath's long history in farming is reflected in numerous country houses and farmhouses, outbuilding and stables scattered across the landscape. The south of the county is as well known for stud farming as adjacent County Kildare and there are many well managed and established stud farms which give the area a strong sense of identity.

GEOLOGY, SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY

The lowlands of Meath are underlain by a continuous layer of carboniferous limestone at a depth of 60 – 120m. It is this limestone which is evident in most of the traditional buildings in Co. Meath. These central lowlands are encircled by hills in the north west and, to a lesser extent in the south east, which have a more upland character but which generally also consist of carboniferous rock (with the exception of a few small areas of granite and old red sandstone). In lowland areas limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers and shaped into a largely flat plain. Overlying soils are generally classified as grey-brown podzolics which are fertile and versatile soils capable of use for arable farming and livestock as well as forestry. The Boyne valley has been successfully farmed since the 4th Century. Wetter areas of peat and peaty gleys in the west of the county lend themselves better to forestry and rough grazing. On upland areas the soils are slightly less fertile and the topography more varied so these areas are better suited to the rearing of livestock on small-scale farms.

The movement of ice has also created the topography that is visible today. The central lowland area has a varied flat-to-undulating form determined by the nature of the overlying rocks and soils. In the north west there is a conspicuous belt of drumlins which form a smaller scale, intimate landscape interspersed with small lakes and boggy areas.

Geology and soils is described in considerable detail in the '*Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*'.



Loughcrew Hills



Pastoral landscape, north west Meath

LAND USE

Meath is largely an inland county but has a short (16km) stretch of coastline in the east. This coastline is characterised by wide sandy beaches and river estuaries. Agriculture, particularly pasture, is the predominant land use spread evenly throughout lowland areas of central Meath. A mixture of large-scale commercial farms and stud farms adjacent or linked to historic demesne landscapes are particularly evident in the south and east of the county, with smaller-scale, mixed-use farmland in upland areas and the rolling drumlin landscape of the north and west.

There are several large plantations in west Meath but commercial forestry is not widespread. The majority are in lowland areas thus limiting adverse visual impacts on the skyline. Broadleaf woodland and copses are widespread and mature trees encircle many historic features such as raths and historic graveyards, forming prominent and attractive landscape elements. Old estate woods are still very large and valuable. There are numerous ornamental plantations throughout the country, except the west, and a large number of timber trees remaining in hedgerows. In general the county is well furnished with trees. Oak is scarce, but beech, elm, ash, poplar, sycamore and alder are all still in abundance.

Landscape management in rural areas varies. It is generally most intensive around working stud farms which have a manicured appearance, but becomes less intensive in farmland in the north west and very poor around the fringes of expanding urban areas where farming is becoming a less viable industry. The rural landscape contains lots of trees growing often as mature stands or shelterbelts and within hedgerows. Hedgerow trees across the entire county are becoming over-mature and are usually covered with ivy which, whilst giving the hedgerows a unique character, is not good for the health of the trees and will be the likely cause of a significant decrease in tree cover across Meath in the future.

3. the landscape of meath

Hedgerows vary in terms of style, form and species content but are generally well managed (i.e. well clipped) along road corridors becoming less well maintained in between fields. In many areas hedgerows have been lost and replaced with post and wire fences, giving the countryside a much more open character and contributing to decline in landscape condition.

Deep drainage ditches are a distinguishing feature along many rural roads. Stonewalls, cylindrical stone gateposts and iron gates are also common boundary treatments.

Mineral extraction is a significant industry and demand for aggregates is certain to continue with increased development of the Dublin metropolitan area. There are already a large number of quarries and pits in Meath and large areas identified as having high aggregate potential, particularly around Kells in the north west. Any such future development must be carefully planned to avoid unnecessary adverse landscape impacts.

The Rivers Boyne and Blackwater are the county's most significant tributaries draining much of Meath, Westmeath and Cavan. They significantly affect land use in and adjacent to their respective corridors, which are designated for their ecological value. The River Boyne and the Boyne Valley are also nationally significant in terms of archaeology and the history of Man's development in this part of Ireland. The Rivers Nanny and Delvin are smaller tributaries which join the sea at Laytown and Gormanstown. Lough Sheelin is the largest inland water body in the county situated on the Cavan – Meath border. Most of the water bodies are popular for recreational sports such as fishing.



Good quality arable land

ECOLOGY AND HABITAT

County Meath has a rich natural heritage that includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows, loughs and coastal habitats all of which are influenced by land use and management. Proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's) were derived from the older Areas of Scientific Interest (ASI's) and include the best remaining areas of Ireland's natural and semi-natural habitats. Sites may have been selected by virtue of having special scientific significance for one or more species, communities, habitats, landforms, or geological or geomorphological features, or for a diversity of natural attributes. There are currently 22 PNHA's in Meath.

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (CSAC's) are designated under the European Community Habitats Directive to maintain biodiversity and restore the conservation status of certain species of flora and fauna. Areas in Meath that support rare, endangered or vulnerable species that require special protection and positive habitat management have been identified as Candidate SAC's. Special Protection Areas (SPA's) are areas designated under the European Community Birds Directive for the protection of birds and their habitats. There is only one SPA in Meath: the Boyne Estuary and an associated area along the river corridor.

SETTLEMENT & BUILT STRUCTURES

Meath's wealth of built heritage makes it unique in Ireland. Of the three historic towns, Navan, has a relatively intact core, Kells and Trim are both designated Heritage Towns and Trim has the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe. There are many other towns and villages across the County that are significant in terms of built heritage and cultural associations including the demesne village of Slane and Clonard which was the site of an abbey founded by St Finian in the 6th Century.

Meath has a large number of small settlements that have grown up around crossroads known as Graigs. Many graigs are under particular pressure from modern development and have expanded well beyond their original size. Others remain relatively remote clusters of vernacular buildings in the countryside.

The historic structure of Meath's urban settlements is under threat from unprecedented population growth. Urban areas are rapidly growing, particularly in southern and eastern areas due to proximity to the Dublin metropolitan area and the Dublin – Belfast transport corridor. Many settlements have grown in size at such a rate that the historic centres have become detached from the majority of their populations and the relationship between urban area and landscape setting has been, or is in the process of being, lost.

In the south of the county the rapid growth of Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, Enfield and Kinnegad has started to seriously erode the character of these towns. Generally the volume of large housing developments within these towns is not in keeping with their character and scale, and has created a series of autonomous developments, which have no reference to their rural setting. Further development of towns, small villages and graigs must be carefully planned to avoid creating linear extensions of large scale housing on approaches to towns and villages. Collectively this type of development has the potential to threaten the rural character of the whole county.

One-off houses (i.e. sporadically located single dwellings) in rural areas is also an increasing trend and is more prevalent in the west and north west of the county in recent years. Appropriate planning is necessary to avoid houses being built that are out of character within the rural context. The RPG has identified a hierarchy of settlements in order to accommodate development in the best way

3. the landscape of meath



Typical modern built development

possible. The Council's interpretation of the RPG through planning policy will seek to promote the retention and enhancement of the identity of individual settlements including landscape setting and avoiding further loss of character. Dunboyne and Ashbourne in particular have been identified as areas for future growth.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Development pressure from the Dublin Metropolitan Area and recent road improvements have led to significant growth along the Belfast – Dublin transport corridor and has accentuated commuting from Meath into Dublin. This has placed greater pressure on county roads that link primary road corridors. Current planning policy is to create an integrated public transport system and reduce the need and demand for travel, particularly by private car. Improvements to public transport networks will be carried out alongside road improvements to facilitate more sustainable and efficient commuting whilst also improving local employment opportunities to reduce the need to commute in the long term.

The M3 is the most significant planned road infrastructure, superseding the existing N3 as the primary road between Dublin and northwest Meath. At present the road network is unable to cope with the volume of commuters and this leads to severe congestion at peak times. The planned reopening of the Navan – Dublin railway will help to alleviate this. The new motorway will also be of a larger scale than the existing N3. Detailed design of such new roads should reflect the landscape character to ensure that landscape elements such as trees and hedgerows are replaced and the visual impact of the road is minimised.

A rail service for Navan is planned on a phased basis beginning with a spur from the Maynooth line at Clonsilla to serve Dunboyne / Pace Interchange in 2009 and a continuation to Navan by 2015. This improvement to rail infrastructure will alleviate some pressure on rural roads in the locality. The opportunity for further rail networks elsewhere in the County would increase sustainable transport provision but it will be crucial that all new and reopened rail lines

are designed to reflect landscape character and minimise the loss of existing landscape character elements, such as vegetation and archaeology, as mentioned above.

Rapid urban expansion has also put existing water and wastewater services under pressure. In many places the capacity of these is limiting further development. Improvements to this element of infrastructure is part of the new Development Plan.

The continued growth of Meath is putting current energy generation under significant strain and there are a number of planned improvements to electrical infrastructure over the life of the new County Development Plan. These include new lines and upgrading of substations around Navan, Gorman – Meath Hill and potentially Ashbourne and Gormanstown.

Currently there is little renewable energy provision in Meath but such provision is a priority at local, regional and national level for local, regional and national policy reasons. Initial assessment of Meath's energy provision, carried out in 2002 by Meath Energy Management Agency (MEMA) concluded that the county has strong potential to increase its provision of renewable energy including the following options:

- Bio-energy using agricultural crops and forestry
- Biomass: energy generated from landfill sites.
- Geothermal power sourced from underground reservoirs and aquifers
- Hydro energy and wave power
- Solar power
- On and offshore wind farms and turbines.

Wind and hydro energy are likely to become two of the most viable forms of renewable energy in the county because of the wealth of wind and water resources. This Landscape Character Assessment will include an assessment of the potential capacity of the landscape to accommodate renewable energy developments



M4 corridor under construction.

3. the landscape of meath

Telecommunications masts do exist in parts of Meath but they are not a significant element within the landscape yet. They are likely to become a more significant element in the future with the need to improve economic competitiveness and social inclusion. It is Council policy that siting of masts should avoid areas of high visual value or archaeological importance.

TOURISM

Meath has potentially great appeal for tourists due to the wealth of heritage sites in the county. Bru na Boinne is the only World Heritage Site (WHS) in Ireland (although the Giant's Causeway WHS is in Northern Ireland). Newgrange is one of three large of passage tombs in the area, (Dowth and Knowth being the other two) and, at over 5,000 years old is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. The landscape settings for Newgrange, Hill of Tara and the Boyne Valley are all crucial to their appreciation and importance, and as such it is important that the character of these settings is preserved.

Improved transport infrastructure, particularly links to Belfast and Dublin, mean that Meath is a very accessible and attractive destination for short breaks for visitors in Ireland or as part of a longer stay by visitors from abroad. Meath's primary appeal is its wealth of archaeology and built heritage that is inextricably linked with the character of the landscape so retaining the character of the area is crucial for the sustainable development of the tourist industry.



View of Newgrange; part of the Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site and a primary visitor attraction.

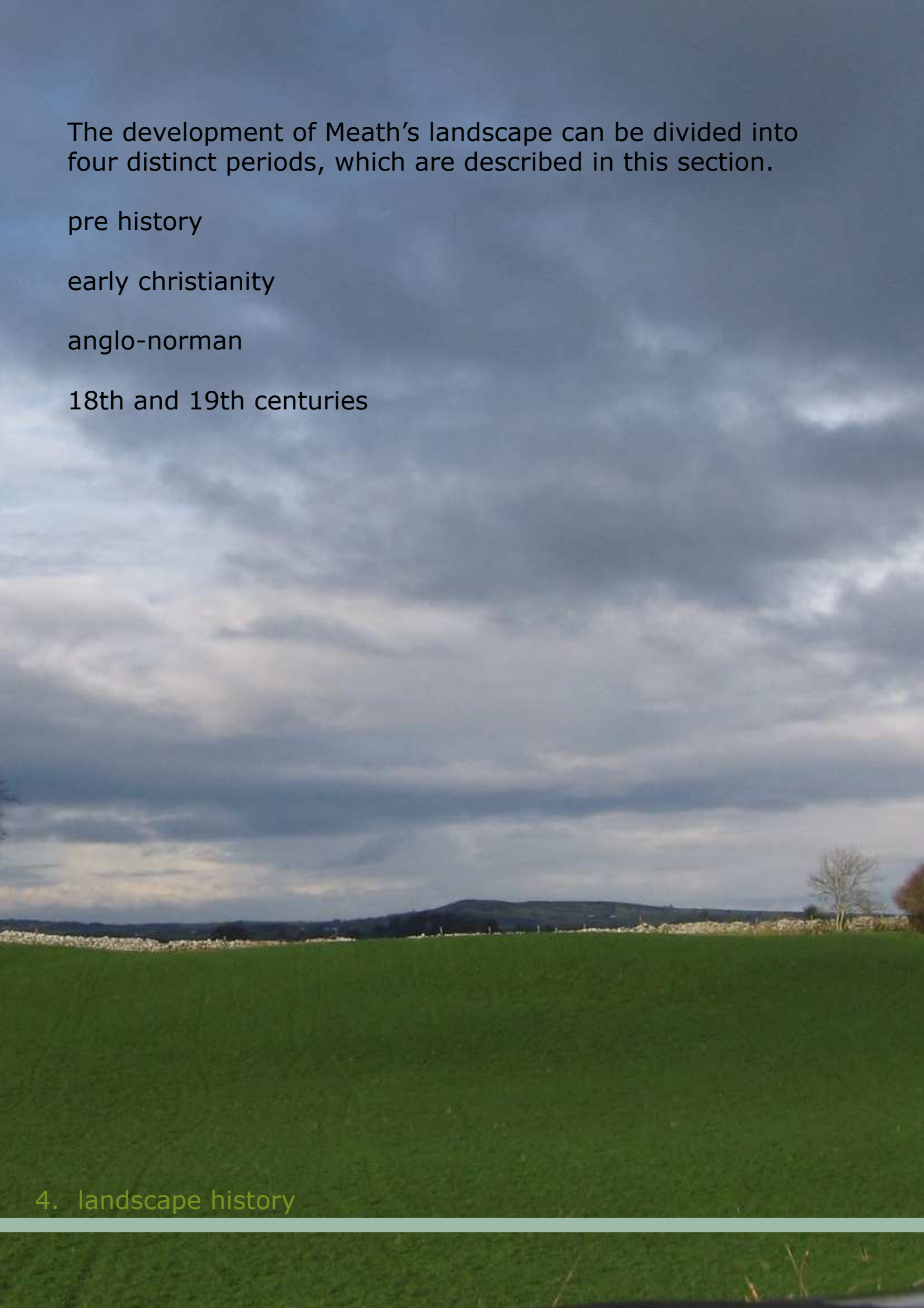
The development of Meath's landscape can be divided into four distinct periods, which are described in this section.

pre history

early christianity

anglo-norman

18th and 19th centuries



PRE HISTORY

The earliest people for whom archaeological evidence has been found are the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period approx 7,000 BC. Their impact on the landscape was minimal and the limited amount of evidence found includes the remains of timber houses and primitive stone tools. Rivers generally (in Meath, the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater) were the most important means of travel and settlements, were concentrated on their banks.

The farmers of the Neolithic period (around 4,000 BC) however had become more settled and begun to clear the forest in order to plant crops and graze stock. These communities are responsible for the vast communal burial grounds such as the famous passage graves to be found at the Bend of the Boyne and the 30 cairns scattered over two hills at Slieve na Calliagh dating from circa 3500 BC.

During the Bronze Age the population increased and was responsible for a further phase of communal building works, the numerous circular earthworks, many of which can be seen in the area of the passage tombs of Bru-na Boinne, which were used for worship and assembly rather than burial.

The international importance of the Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth sites has resulted in the area being designated a World Heritage Site.

Tara, the home of the High Kings of Ireland, lies a few miles to the south and consists of several large earthworks located in a commanding position and overlooking the fertile farmland of the plain below. The oldest visible monument on the hill of Tara is the Mound of the Hostages dating from around 2,500BC, the name deriving from the custom of over-kings like those at Tara retaining important hostages from subject kingdoms to ensure their submission. Niall of the Nine Hostages retained hostages, one each from the five provinces of Ireland and four from Britain. Niall is the founding ancestor of the O'Neill dynasty that had 28 Kings rule in the name of Tara between 400 and 1022AD. Tara is responsible for Meath's position as the centre of power in Ireland and its title, The Royal County.

The early farmers had initially preferred the lighter soils and upland margins where the woodland cover was thinner. As the technologies of the Bronze and Iron ages progressed, the deep rich soils of the lowland plains began to be cleared and settled. By the early Christian period most of the central plain had been deforested and inhabited. To a certain extent the previous use of the upland areas declined but the forest never became fully re-established in any area due to continuing sporadic grazing and the need for timber.

The number and importance of prehistoric structures in Meath is considered to exceed that in any other part of Ireland. Although it is likely that much of the county was inhabited in prehistoric times, high quality remains are most in evidence in the Boyne Valley, Hill of Tara and Loughcrew Hills. Thus, special measures to protect the settings of these areas are demanded. Meath County Council will, over the life of the County Development Plan, move towards the preparation of Local Area Plans for the Bru na Boinne and Tara-Skryne area which will protect these heritage landscapes and their settings.



Due to the popularity of Newgrange visitors are picked on a first - come - first - served basis from the Bru na Boinne Visitors Centre and driven to Newgrange.



Hill of Tara.



Patterns engraved into the stone at Knowth.

Elsewhere many smaller, and less widely known sites exist and care for their settings must be taken into account during any consideration of future landscape change.

An existing example of good practice in protection of archaeological features from visitor pressure can be seen at Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne where the facilities required for visitors and the method of interpretation were arranged at a distance from the structures and within a designed landscape setting that is in keeping with the landscape character, thus reducing its conspicuousness.



View of the lowlands surrounding the Hill of Tara.



The woodland surrounding the Hill of Tara church is a landmark in the Tara - Skryne area.

EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD

Prior to the arrival of St Patrick many features of the landscape had significance as places of assembly in pagan rites and traditions. The Hill of Ward and Teltown, for example, were “celebrated for their royal palaces, their solemn conventions, their pagan games and their druidic ceremonies, and in Christian times were sanctified by the labours of St Patrick and St Brigid”(online edition of ‘The Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. X’ (1911) Robert Appleton Company).

The new religious culture brought unity to a decentralised population. The ring forts and associated field patterns of the early Christian period indicate a life largely based on grazing.

Many sites in Meath are said to have specific association with St. Patrick. In particular the Hill of Slane was the site of the lighting of the first Paschal Fire by St Patrick in 432 AD, in defiance of King Leoghaire and pagan tradition, “thus symbolising the “lamp of faith which has never since been extinguished”“(online edition of ‘The Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. X’ (1911) Robert Appleton Company). Although remaining true to his traditional beliefs himself, King Leoghaire was impressed by St Patrick and allowed him permission to make converts throughout his realm. The first Christian King in Ireland was Cormac MacArt.

A number of St. Patrick’s followers established churches and monasteries throughout Meath such as that founded by St Erc founded at Slane and that at Trim by St Loman. St Patrick placed St Cianan over the first Church in Duleek in the 5th Century and prior to his death in 489AD he was credited with building the first stone church in Ireland. The first monastery said to have been founded by St Patrick himself was that at Donaghmore. The Round Tower visible today however is probably 10th Century while the nearby church was built in the 15th Century replacing an earlier Romanesque church.

It is thought that the famous religious house at Kells was founded in 804 by monks from St Columille’s foundation at Iona seeking a safer location during the Viking invasions. Reliquaries of the Saint were transferred to there in 877 and although the monastery suffered successive sackings and burnings, the Book of Kells, now in Trinity Library, was preserved.

Apart from the Churches and Round Towers, the other important visible remnants from this period are the numerous High Crosses such as those at Kells, Duleek and Castlekeeran near Carnaross.

In the 9th Century Meath suffered from invasions by the Danes - Turgesius sailed up the Boyne in 838 and after a period of savage destruction, often directed at the clergy, set up his seat of government near Tara. Although he was assassinated by Melaghlin, King of Meath, the Danes continued their attacks until 980 when they were defeated at Tara and survivors became absorbed into the native population.

During their period of power the Viking invaders promoted a more commercial and urbanised lifestyle and this founding of towns and villages grew apace after the Norman invasion. Settlements formed initially around monasteries and churches and then around the castles whose walls offered protection to the surrounding villagers.



St. Patrick's Statue, Slane Hill



Clonard Priory, north west Meath



Duleek

4. history: early christianity

The practice of Kings and major landowners to found religious houses continued and one of the best known, Bective Abbey, was founded by the King of Meath for the Cistercians in 1150, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

In the reign of Henry VIII, the extensive church property in the county 'fell into the hands of the king on the dissolution of the monasteries' and was distributed among his supporters. Several of the abbeys were adapted for use as 'big houses' and the hold over the countryside fell even more firmly into the hands of the landowning class.

The visible remains of this period are spread throughout the county and consist of structures ranging from the ruins of ancient friaries and churches to the remnants of round towers and high crosses. Many artefacts have been incorporated as parts of later structures or rebuilt in later times. In preserving the setting of these buildings it is important not to diminish the importance of the use of these buildings to the community served. Church steeples and round towers were built to be seen and have become a defining element in the Irish landscape. Proposed development should take account of the specific contribution these buildings make to the particular character of a town or village.



Bective Abbey



4. history: early christianity

ANGLO- NORMAN

Approximately 100 years after 1066 and the Norman invasion of England the Normans turned to the invasion of Ireland. Invited by Dermot McMurrough to assist in his struggle with Tiernan O'Rourke by August 1170 a Welsh-Norman force under The Earl of Pembroke defeated the native Irish and their Viking allies in Waterford. Pembroke, also known as Strongbow, married McMurrough's daughter Aiofe and on her father's death took over as King of Leinster. Continuing to defeat Irish and Norse armies, he was joined in 1172 by Henry II when a new phase of the conquest began. Henry granted lands to his knights and barons who built castles in order to impose control. The seat of government was established at Dublin where parliaments with regional representatives were held. However, resistance to the conquest could never be eliminated and the history of the following centuries is set against a background of continual competition for land and power.

The county of Meath was granted to Hugh de Lacy, one of the most powerful Anglo-Norman Lords in Ireland by Henry II, to hold by the service of 50 Knights. In order to settle the county and exercise his rights of sovereignty, de Lacy divided much of his land between his principle followers, the divisions being Baronies and the primary grantees becoming Barons. Thus the territory of Morgallion was granted to Gilbert Nangle, that of Navan, Ardracran and their dependancies to Jocelyn Nangle, the district and Manor of Skryne to Adam Pheipo, the lands of Lune to Robert Misset and Kells to Gilbert Fitz-Thomas

In 1172 de Lacy erected a motte and timber tower at Trim in order to begin the conquest of the surrounding land. The following year, while it was being held for de Lacy by Hugh Tyrell, Roderick O'Connor, King of Ireland, laid siege to the village and Tyrell destroyed the castle by fire rather than let it be taken (although it was rebuilt shortly afterwards). The present tower at Trim Castle was completed by William Peppard in 1220, combined with the massive curtain walls, gates and associated buildings to make it the largest castle in Ireland. Trim Castle is also known as King John's castle following a visit he made there in 1210. More modest than Trim were the baronial castles of Dardistown, Kileen and Dunsany.

Under the Normans the system of landownership was a manorial one with towns and villages established around castles. The quality of the land for tillage was a factor in the areas of greatest Norman settlement thus the fertile plains of Meath were defended and the native population virtually eliminated from ownership. The town of Trim was the centre of Norman power at its peak. Kells was also prominent as a Norman fortification although most of the remains of this period have vanished.

In 1429, Henry VI, forced into action by the frequent incursions of the Gaelic Lords, promised a grant of ten pounds to "every liege man" who built a castle 20' x 16' x 40' high, within the Pale, before 1439 in Meath, Louth, Kildare and Dublin. It is likely that Donore castle is one of these.



Trim town walls



Trim Castle



Castle Jordan

4. history: anglo-norman

During the 16th and 17th centuries the 'Plantations' increased the non-native populations throughout Ireland. These were responsible for the increase in the number of towns and villages as well as the increase in the value of the land to the landlords because competent men were willing to travel to fertile areas in Ireland from England, Scotland and Flanders to pay rent for this farmland.

The need to fortify dwellings appears to have become less important and substantial numbers of isolated farm and estate houses were built in these periods. However, battles between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists /Old English, and the fact that the Irish population used the period of dissension to seek to regain control, resulted in a large number of these early castles and manor houses being destroyed. An example of this being Athlumney Castle which was started in 15th Century and extended around 1600. The Maguire's, who held the castle in 1649, set it on fire rather than let it be destroyed by Cromwell.

The most important battle of wars during the Plantation periods was the battle of the Boyne, the site of which further adds to the historical interest in the Boyne Valley.



The Boyne Vally viewed from Slane Hill

4. history: anglo-norman

18th/19th CENTURIES

Following the invasions and the wars of the previous centuries the rich lands of Meath were now largely in the hands of protestant landowners and the shift from defensive dwellings to freestanding houses gathered pace during a period of relative peace. New landowners built large mansions and demesnes in their estates, favouring riverside locations.

One of the finest examples of this type of building was Bellinter House (in the civil parish of Assey in the Barony of Lower Deece.) Built on the banks of the Boyne, Bellinter was a medium sized country house designed in a country villa style by Richard Castle. Up-river were Bective House, Balsoon House, and Rathnally while downstream were Dowdstown and Ardsallagh. Once home to the Preston Family for two centuries, Bellinter has now been restored by the Sisters of Sion. Other major, early 18th Century houses included Stackallan, c1710, built in the English restoration style, Arch Hall, 1720 (ruined), Summerhill (demolished) and Ardbraccan. The latter two were large country seats in the neo-Palladian style built circa 1730.

Associated with these houses were all the supporting structures and buildings with practical or ornamental purposes. Farmhouses and barns, stables and byres were often built to reflect an estate 'style'. Other buildings such as pigeon houses, were practical and ornamental. Purely ornamental buildings were built as follies to enhance the picturesque style of the time. Good examples of follies include one at Larchhill near Kilcock and the octagonal gazebo at Herbertstown c 1760.

The business of farming, however, was the *raison d'être* of most estates and in 1731 fourteen men met in Trinity College and agreed to form a society to be called the 'Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and Other Useful Arts' (The Royal prefix was adopted in 1820 when George IV became patron of the society). Schemes to develop and promote commercial and cultural activities were grant aided in addition to the work of researching improved methods of agriculture.

In 1766 the society launched its 'Afforestation Initiative' and land improvement and woodland planting projects saw over 55 million trees planted throughout Ireland from 1766 – 1806. Premiums for planting were not confined to commercial varieties, but included parkland, ornamental and fruit trees. This had a visual effect on the tree mix of the large number of demesnes in Meath. Outside the demesne walls the 'improved' farming methods resulted in a reorganised pattern of field and roads in the more prosperous agricultural regions.

In 1837 the banks of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater were mostly in pasture or demesne whereas away from the riverbanks much of the land was under tillage. Although ground was considered too valuable for use as woodland, the plantations around noblemen's and gentlemen's estates were very extensive. The old woods around Bective, Lismullen and Ardbraccan are still very large and valuable, there are numerous ornamental plantations throughout every part of the country except the west and a large number of timber trees remaining in hedgerows.



Estate house, north west Meath.



Imposing avenue of Lime trees at Rathaldron near Navan



Estate landscape, North of Kells.

4. history: 18th/19th Centuries

In addition to improvements in agricultural practises, landlords planned towns and villages as complete architectural entities, in order to house their workers and enhance their landholding. Examples include Slane and Moynalty. They were also involved in the construction of mills and other commercial enterprises plus improvements to the transport systems in order carry both people and goods. The Royal Canal, constructed along on the southern county boundary at the end of the 18th Century and the start of the 19th Century, increased the use of this valley corridor. Roads were improved and re-routed in places to avoid dividing estates.

The immense power of the landlords began to be successfully challenged by government policies and legislation from the 1880's when estates systems like Bellinter were purchased by the Land Commission and broken into farms of 50 acres or less.

Visible structures from this period are found throughout Meath, including large Georgian and neo-gothic Victorian houses within their demesnes, farmhouses, outbuildings, cottages, dovecotes, and planned towns and villages. Bridges, stretches of canal and monuments, are seen in conjunction with estate walls, gateways, mills and churches all combining with the lesser number of earlier structures to establish the base character of the county upon which recent and new development is proposed.

The Wellington Column in Trim was erected to commemorate the Duke of Wellington who was educated in Trim, stood for parliament for the area and later became Prime Minister in 1828. Dunsany Castle was rebuilt and restored through time with particularly fine work done in the late 18th Century. Within the large demesne is the abbey, the Church of St Nicholas, begun in 1440 which is known for its particularly fine medieval carving. Gormanstown Castle, built in 1768 on the site of an earlier castle dating from 1372 by Sir Jellico Preston, is now a school.



Period houses in the estate village of Summerhill.



Old Mill in Slane.



Royal Canal

4. history: 18th/19th Centuries

Landscape trends have been identified to predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives which will assist in ensuring that change is complimentary to landscape character. The main forces for change, which are causing changes to the overall appearance, function and condition of the landscape are categorised under the following headings: settlements and built structures, infrastructure and industry, tourism, rivers and canals, agriculture and tree cover.

The most likely forms of future development are derived from these landscape trends. A detailed assessment of each LCA's capacity to accomodate these forms of development is made in section 8.



Unsympathetic housing development on the urban fringe of Athboy.

INTRODUCTION

The landscapes in County Meath are constantly evolving in response to natural forces and human activity. Glacial movement shaped the topography into its present form and man's activities have been largely responsible for land cover since farming began around the 4th Century. There have been several phases of history which have left their marks on the landscape and which are evident today as a patchwork of elements including passage tombs and pre Christian earthworks, early Christian ecclesiastical buildings, Norman castles and walled settlements, 17th – 18th Century demesnes and field patterns and 18th – 19th Century buildings and structures.

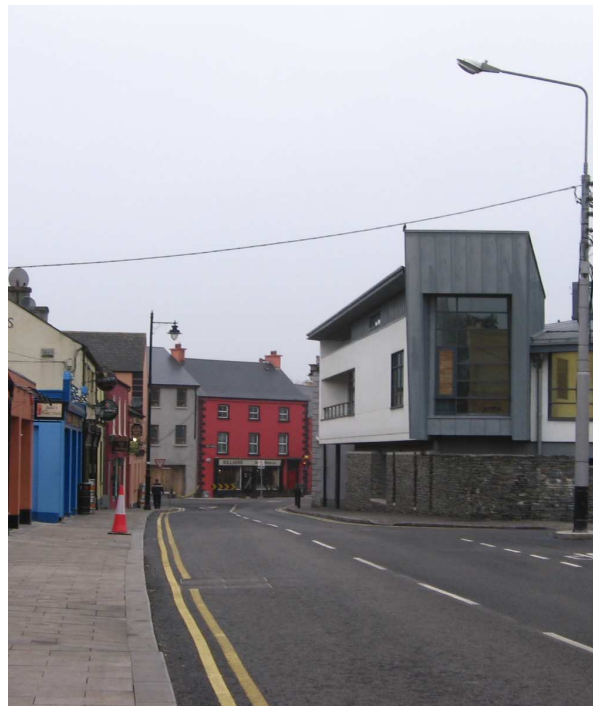
Today the pressures of change continue apace. Whilst many changes are a result of economic necessity, crucial to the development of the County, the impacts on landscape character are potentially very damaging. This Landscape Character Assessment seeks to recognise what is valuable and what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced. It also aims to predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives which will assist in ensuring that change is complementary to landscape character.

The main forces for change, which are causing changes to the overall appearance, function and condition of the landscape can be categorised as follows:

- Settlements and Built Structures
- Infrastructure and Industry
- Tourism
- Rivers and Canals
- Agriculture
- Tree Cover

SETTLEMENTS AND BUILT STRUCTURES

- The growth of urban areas and built development is the strongest trend that has, is and will continue to influence landscape character in County Meath. The strength of this trend will also have a knock-on effect on all other factors that influence landscape character: infrastructure and industry, tourism, water bodies, agriculture and vegetation.
- Most settlements in the County, and particularly those in the south and east, have undergone rapid expansion of modern residential development. This trend is set to continue and has the potential to permanently alter landscape character in and adjacent to urban fringe areas.
- The historic character which is highly evident in most settlements, large and small, is being diluted by new development which adheres less to the local vernacular and is more homogenous in appearance and layout.
- Sporadic one-off houses in rural areas are becoming more common and are also causing some dilution of rural character where it has been located insensitively. However, the desire of people to live in remoter areas could potentially give rise to opportunities to reverse the dereliction of traditional buildings by finding new uses for them.



Trim courthouse - a good example of how modern development can be successfully integrated into the urban fabric of a heritage town.

5. landscape trends



Disused quarry near the village of Ross near Lough Sheelin.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY

- Large scale infrastructure development such as incinerators, power plants, land fill sites and waste water treatment works, all resulting directly from population growth in the County, will have major effects on landscape and visual character which will be difficult to mitigate against because of the scale of such development. Sensitive choice of location is likely to be the most important factor that will limit negative impacts on the wider landscape. Design of boundaries may also aid integration at a very local level.
- Ongoing planned extension to infrastructure networks (electricity, water and sewage, communications, transport, etc) is associated with population growth and the demand for greater service capacities. These are causing often small-scale loss of features and character which, when seen together have a potentially significant cumulative effect on landscape character.
- Transport interchanges are currently planned at Navan, Kells, Stamullen, and Gormanstown. These will have the same impacts as those described above but they may also pose longer term threats to landscape character by providing opportunities for new growth areas which are completely detached from existing settlements.
- To date there is little renewable energy provision but it is a priority policy at all levels of government and is being promoted to meet part of the County's increased energy requirements. Wind and hydro energy are likely to be particularly viable because of the County's water and wind resources but other forms of renewable energy, such as bio-energy and biomass are also potential developments.
- Bio-energy has the potential to assist diversification and enhancement of the rural economy but has potential effect of reducing biodiversity through the planting of large-scale single species plantations. These would have a similar landscape effect to commercial forestry.

- Biomass is most likely to be associated with existing landfill sites where landscape character may already be compromised. It is also likely to be a scale that will be visually prominent so care should be taken in design of it's location, layout and setting.
- Wind energy may be developed on or offshore. It is also a visually prominent form of development and should be located away from highly sensitive landscapes and those of exceptional value.
- Hydro energy will be related to water bodies so care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on national and European designated ecological sites and other existing uses that are complimentary to the maintenance of attractive and valuable river corridors.
- The demand for aggregates is certain to continue with increased development of the Dublin metropolitan area. It is likely that quarries and mines may be extended or new areas for mineral extraction created to meet demand.



Bru na Boinne Visitors Centre is located away from the main heritage sites to minimise its impact. Sensitive car park design aids integration with the landscape.

TOURISM

- Promotion of tourism in the County is a current Council policy. There are potential opportunities to raise awareness of the wealth of visitor attractions that exist in the County in addition to the key sites, such as Newgrange, Loughcrew, Trim and Hill of Tara.
- Improved visitor facilities will be required to enhance visitor experiences. These may include additional parking areas, picnic sites, signage etc that should be sensitively designed to avoid visual clutter in scenic landscapes.
- Historic buildings, such as 18th Century estate houses in the countryside are being converted to new uses and this trend is likely to continue. It provides a good opportunity to restore landscape character to previously degraded sites and introduce new sustainable uses which will maintain this character in the long term. However, it should be done sensitively and with respect paid to vernacular features, materials, scale and landscape setting.

RIVERS AND CANALS

- Historically rivers were the focus of human settlement and many towns have grown up around river corridors. Today most have some form of ecological designation as well as significant associated cultural features and, as such are particularly sensitive to change.
- Increased run-off from urban areas, and increased demand for abstraction and waste water facilities will continue to be direct consequences of rapid population growth in the County. All are likely to adversely affect water quality and the ecological and amenity value of water bodies.
- River corridors could come under pressure from recreational activities, as tourism in Meath is further promoted. Well known sites, such as the Bru Na Boinne World Heritage Site and Trim Castle, where rivers are an integral part of the visitor experience, should be developed sensitively to avoid adverse impacts resulting from heavy use.
- Other visitor attractions and facilities could also be adversely affected if visitors are not managed. The development of river corridors for activities such as fishing, sailing, picnicking and walking could all potentially contribute to such impacts as erosion of riverbanks, water pollution, disturbance to wildlife and designated habitats, and loss of visual amenity.



New development adjacent to the river in Ashbourne.

AGRICULTURE

- A general decline in the sustainability of agriculture, particularly small-scale farms and farming on land at the edge of expanding settlements and the associated decline in management of farmland. This has caused hedgerows to become overgrown, traditional dry stonewalls and banks to fall into disrepair and rushes to infest extensive grazing land.
- The decline in management of boundaries has also caused the loss of hedgerows and trees as they become over mature. Lines of ivy-covered trees create distinctive landscape features which have a certain attraction but the ivy is also restricting the tree's growth and contributing to a decline in their health.
- Stud farming remains a strong rural-based economy in the south and east of the County. It creates an attractive and tight pattern of small fields divided by trees, manicured hedgerows and timber fences. However, stud farming is coming into conflict with built development at the edge of settlements, particularly on the southern county border where urban fringe expansion is adversely affecting the tranquility of the countryside.

- Where small farms are becoming less viable they are being amalgamated into larger ones. The associated enlargement of fields and the removal of traditional boundary features, such as hedgerows, trees, walls and earth banks, is having an adverse impact on the appearance of the landscape and on its biodiversity. Strong hedgerows create a network of green corridors that provide habitats and allow wildlife to travel through the landscape easily.

TREE COVER

- Meath is a well-treed county. Many of the trees date back to the Plantation periods when demesne landscapes were planted with broadleaved species along entrance avenues with estate parkland and areas of mixed woodland often used for hunting.
- Most hedgerows are also well treed but less intensive management has caused the loss of some and others have become over mature (see Agriculture section above).
- There are several areas of commercial forestry but it is not currently a widespread land use. There are already some young plantations in parts of the County which are a likely result of farm diversification. Coniferous plantations are significant and long-term landscape features which should be located sensitively. If located in prominent or highly visible locations they will change the traditional farmed appearance of the landscape and may attract attention from long distances. They have the potential to adversely affect scenic value, biodiversity and archaeological features.
- In some places deforestation of plantations has occurred. This has allowed heathland and pioneer species, such as birch to regenerate. This is also changing the appearance of the landscape - from an intensively managed, 'man-made' landscape to a more natural and rougher textured landscape. It has also increased biodiversity by forming a type of habitat that is otherwise rare in the County.



Farmland surrounded by hedgerows and woodland.

5. landscape trends

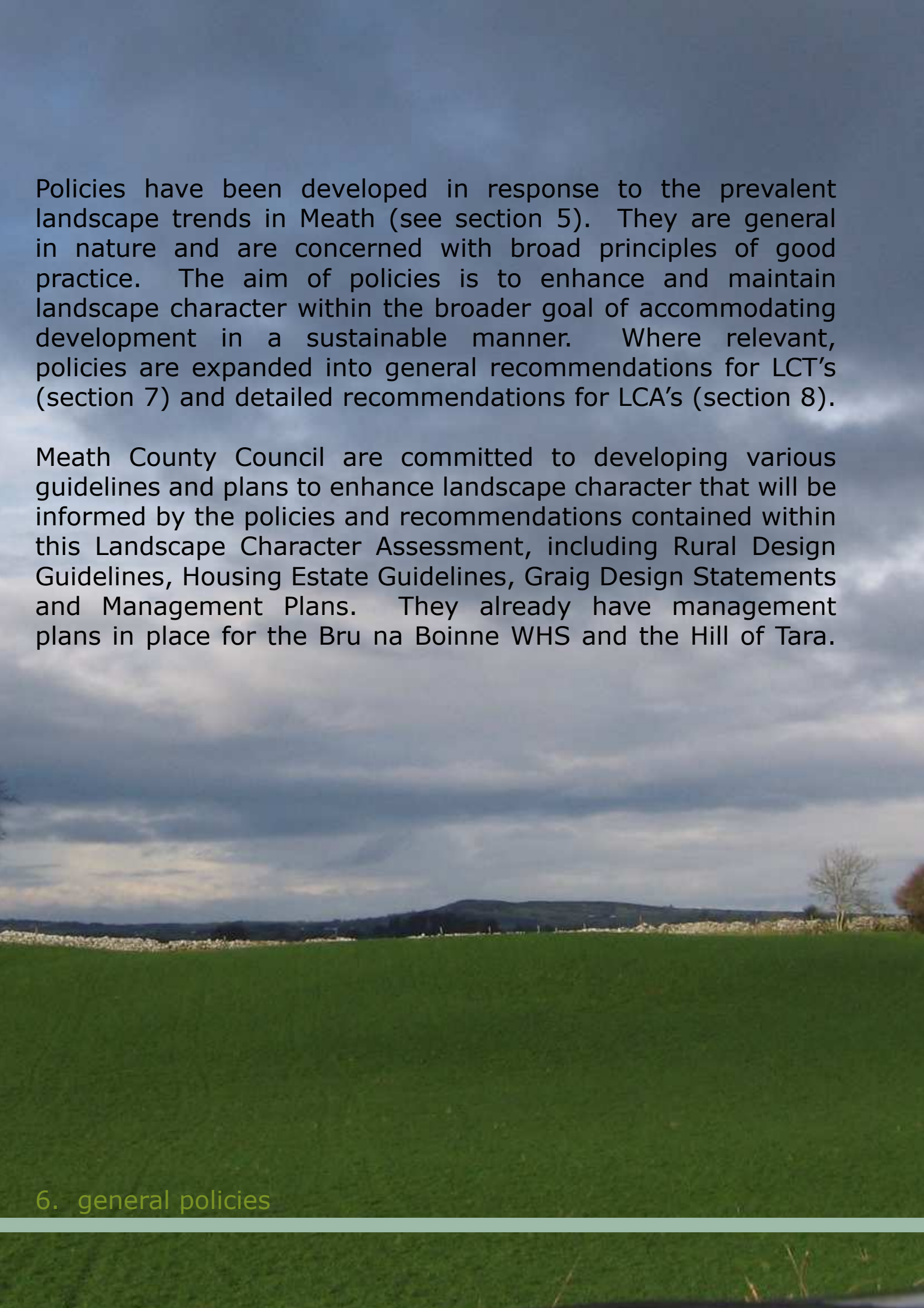
CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE CHANGE

The forms of development most likely to occur in Co. Meath are identified based on an assessment of the current and planned landscape trends described above. The potential capacity of each LCA to accommodate these types of development is assessed in detail in section 8 (actual capacity should be determined on a case-by-case basis). The likely characteristics of each form of development is described below including the features that are likely to cause adverse impacts on landscape character.

LIKELY FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT

1. *Large modern farm buildings* likely to be constructed using modern materials and colours. Massing and location are particularly likely to detract from visual quality.
2. *Visitor facilities* may comprise low key or more prominent elements. Likely to include hotels, visitor centres, toilet blocks, parking areas, signage and interpretation boards, picnic tables, footpaths, cycle and driving routes. Potential impacts on landscape character may be caused by the creation of litter, visual clutter, location within the landscape, materials, design and layout.
3. *Multi-house residential developments* which are likely to be constructed using modern building materials, styles, scales and layouts. They may be large or small in size and are most likely to be located in and around existing settlements or primary transport routes. The current trend in housing development around urban fringes is adversely affecting the viability of adjacent farmland.
4. *One off houses* built both at the edge of existing settlements and in open countryside, generally by owner-occupiers. These dwellings are likely to vary in scale, design and layout but will generally be of a substantial size. Their impact on landscape character will be determined by their design, materials, scale, location, treatment of garden space and boundaries and cumulative impact if many such houses are built in close proximity to each other.
5. *Conversion of existing buildings* that are currently empty or in disrepair provides opportunities to allow development in rural areas whilst conserving landscape character. Many conversions are likely to be residential but other uses should also be considered, particularly where opportunities for better management may enhance existing landscape condition and value. The nature of the proposed use, and its suitability for the location should be considered as well as the method of restoration, which should respect historic materials and styles.

6. *Overhead cables, substations and communications masts* are generally large and prominent features. Their impact on landscape character will be determined by their visual prominence and size as well as their location in sensitive landscapes such as archaeologically rich landscapes or areas within scenic views. The convergence of a number of overheads cables or the massing of a large substation or number of masts will adversely affect landscape character to some extent, depending on the sensitivity of the landscape in question.
7. *Transport corridors, i.e. roads and railways*, may be improved or created. The most likely impacts of this type of development are noise and visual intrusion, which are often exacerbated by the loss of existing boundary hedgerows, walls and trees associated with this type of development. Other potential impacts on archaeology and drainage are also likely.
8. *Installation of new underground services* such as gas and water pipes. The most likely impacts of this type of development are loss of existing boundary hedgerows, walls and trees and disturbance of archaeological features, habitats and drainage systems.
9. *Wind turbines*, installed as single turbines or wind farms. There are currently no wind farms in Meath but increasing renewable energy provision is part of central and local government policy. Key impacts on landscape character will include visual impact on long and short-range views, sensitive historic landscapes and cumulative impacts on other wind farms, including those in neighbouring counties. Physical impacts on sensitive landscape features such as habitats, historic artefacts and areas, vegetation and land use will also need to be considered and mitigated against.
10. *Biomass and forestry* is likely to comprise areas of single-species plantations which will be a long-term feature of the landscape. Evergreen conifer plantations do exist in many parts of the County already but there are currently no biomass plantations, which are more likely to be fast growing deciduous species such as willow. Potential impacts of new plantations may include loss of biodiversity and visual intrusion. Location away from visually prominent areas will be very important. Such areas may provide opportunities for recreation and agricultural diversification, particularly where traditional farming is in decline.

A landscape photograph showing a vast green field in the foreground, a line of trees and shrubs in the middle ground, and distant hills under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

Policies have been developed in response to the prevalent landscape trends in Meath (see section 5). They are general in nature and are concerned with broad principles of good practice. The aim of policies is to enhance and maintain landscape character within the broader goal of accommodating development in a sustainable manner. Where relevant, policies are expanded into general recommendations for LCT's (section 7) and detailed recommendations for LCA's (section 8).

Meath County Council are committed to developing various guidelines and plans to enhance landscape character that will be informed by the policies and recommendations contained within this Landscape Character Assessment, including Rural Design Guidelines, Housing Estate Guidelines, Graig Design Statements and Management Plans. They already have management plans in place for the Bru na Boinne WHS and the Hill of Tara.

6. general policies



View of landmark church on Hill of Tara



Newgrange passage tomb, Boyne Valley

PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

1. To recognise, protect and enhance the unique sense of place provided by every landscape character area and to promote appreciation of landscape character through local design initiatives such as advertising and publication of information in the public (e.g. this Landscape Character Assessment).
2. To commission further supplementary guidance to assist the achievement of objective 1. For example; enhancement strategies where landscape character areas are not in optimum condition, Village Design Statements for villages and towns that are inextricably linked to their landscape setting, design guides for new development such as tourism, housing, infrastructure corridors and one-off houses, and management plans for sensitive and popular sites.
3. Every objective and policy should have regard to the need to maintain distinctiveness and variety as the primary asset of all LCA's.
4. To respect historic patterns of land use to ensure that development and change is appropriate to its setting. Design guidelines should define the character of individual settlements and make recommendations regarding suitable building materials, styles, layouts, scales, etc. The objective of design guidelines may be to encourage local involvement and comment, ensure consistency in development control decisions and allow designs to be developed in response to local context.
5. To ensure that development, particularly in sensitive landscapes, adheres to tailored design guidelines. Sensitive landscapes include demesne villages and LCA's identified as being sensitive (see section 9).
6. To establish methods for improving existing landscape character and condition and incentives for landowners and managers to do this, e.g. through the availability of grants, guidelines and promotion of the economic benefits of high value landscapes.
7. To ensure maximum use of landscape character guidelines they must be fully coordinated with other statutory documents and statutory bodies should be consulted.
8. To conserve landscapes of significant scenic, geological, ecological, cultural and historic value that contribute to Meath's uniqueness.
9. Recognise, enhance and maintain the rich mosaic of wildlife habitats including those which are not statutorily protected but which are still highly valuable, including roadside verges, hedgerows and mature trees, canal and minor river corridors, lowland heath areas etc.

VISUAL CHARACTER

10. To review existing designations for areas of visual quality and to ensure adequate protection of views and vistas that contribute to the appreciation of landscape character.
11. To maintain scenic vistas and panoramic views from key vantage points and towards key landmarks and features within the landscape.
12. To maintain the visual integrity of sensitive and exceptional - high value areas.
13. To increase the visual integrity of sensitive and moderate - low value areas.



Approach to Ashbourne



Slane crossroads

AGRICULTURE

16. To retain and create robust habitats through good agricultural practice, such as maintenance and replanting of hedgerows and woodland.
17. To sustain a viable working rural landscape by maintaining and facilitating agricultural practices that positively contribute to landscape character, value and condition.
18. Where the decline in traditional agricultural practices is causing a decline in landscape value and condition, encourage sensitive diversification of the rural economy. Alternative economic activities may include light technology, crafts, green tourism and associated supporting services for such enterprises. Reuse of redundant traditional buildings should form a key part of economic diversification in rural areas, as this will make a positive contribution to landscape character.

BUILT DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENTS

19. To maintain a hierarchy of settlement types as a critical part of landscape character in Meath and to preserve the essential characteristics of individual settlements within their settings by developing robust design guidance (see Objective 1).
20. To accommodate development where it is best suited by respecting the sensitivity and capacity of landscape character areas whilst also recognising the longer term aims of reducing out-of-County commuting and strengthening the economy.
21. To recognise the contribution that commonplace elements of traditional built development make to local character as well as designated/ special features.
22. To encourage restoration of, and sustainable and suitable uses for, historic buildings as part of the essential character of all settlements in County Meath.
23. To encourage the development of compact urban forms by consolidating existing development boundaries and utilising brownfield sites in preference to expanding urban areas into the countryside and adjoining settlements.
24. To promote the creation of sustainable residential developments that are built in a style and scale that is appropriate to the landscape setting.

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

14. To accurately assess and define objectives and policies for conservation and preservation of all important historic landscapes and landscape settings in Co Meath to ensure their adequate protection alongside the need to allow public enjoyment of them.
15. To preserve the integrity of the landscape setting of key historic landscape features for the purposes of maintaining unique and unspoilt areas of landscape character, visual amenity and attractiveness to visitors.

6. general policies



Restoration of historic buildings, Trim



Athboy

25. To have regard to the traditional Green Belt concept of ensuring residents of urban areas have adequate access to high quality green open space that provides recreational opportunities, retains attractive landscapes near population centres, improves degraded land and secures nature conservation. Attractive and well-managed landscapes should be used to soften the edges of new developments in these locations through appropriate landscape treatment.
26. To prevent the coalescence of settlements by identification of appropriate areas of landscape as settings and buffer zones in tandem with the traditional Green Belt concept. Open space on urban fringe areas play an important role in reducing the need to travel for recreation and improves air quality and biodiversity in urban area.
27. To respect scale, pattern, materials and vernacular style when permitting new development whilst recognising the need to maintain a viable and sustainable economy.
28. To require building materials to be locally sourced and traditional building skills (e.g. thatching) to be used in new and restored buildings where possible.
29. To encourage the reuse of historic buildings and recognise the contribution that these can make to economic development, tourism, education and the aesthetic qualities of landscapes and settlements.

GRAIGS

30. To identify and categorise graigs according to their current status and sensitivity to further development.
31. To create mixed-use amenity space that acts as a landscape buffer between new development and the rural hinterland surrounding graigs.
32. To consolidate infill sites within graigs creating compact urban forms that create strong communities within rural areas.
33. To retain the character of the built environment of graigs by developing in an urban form that relates to the local vernacular in both scale and architectural style, avoiding repetition, which is out of character with these small settlements.
34. Develop sustainable graigs focusing on agriculture/rural activities to create vibrant localised economies, which relate directly to their rural landscape setting.



New M4 south of Kinnegad



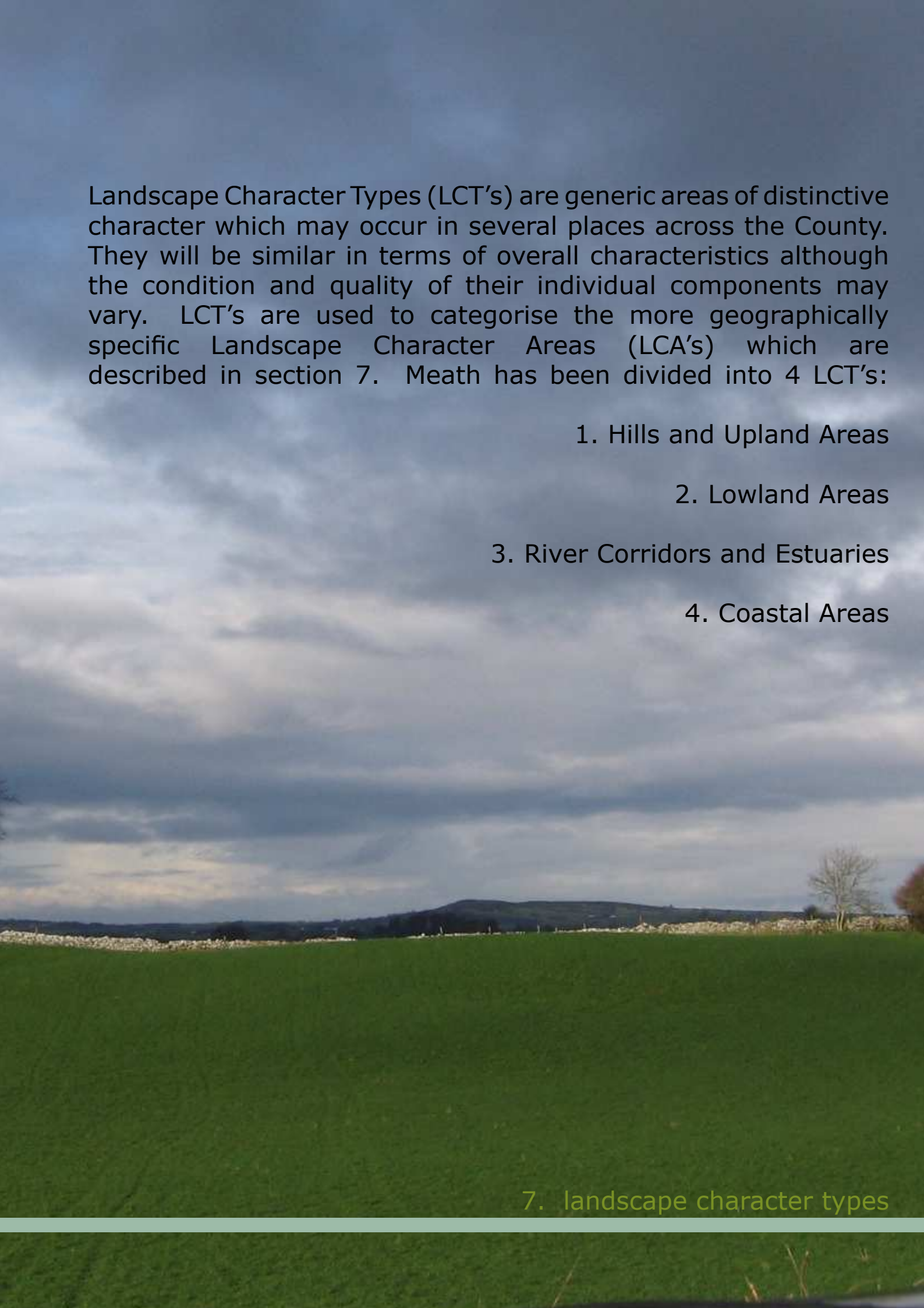
River Nanny estuary and Laytown railway bridge

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

35. To develop design guidelines related to planned public transport routes including rail and road corridors, bus stops in rural areas and tourist routes.
36. To have regard to the potential environmental impacts of new infrastructure development, such as noise and air pollution, impinging on views, tranquillity and character and the consequences that such development may have for the evolution of settlements, e.g. encouragement of out-of-town development. Measures such as integrated transport systems and reducing the overall need to travel will assist in achievement of this objective.

TOURISM

37. To maximise the potential tourist value of Meath's diverse range of landscape assets and attractions and identify a hierarchy of sites by interpreting and communicating the landscape character of Meath in a range of accessible media.
38. To maximise the value of the landscape as an educational resource by providing opportunities for students at all levels of the education system to access landscapes and information on landscapes.
39. To ensure that the provision of new or enhanced visitor facilities does not detract from landscape character and are designed to the highest standards.
40. To promote sustainable and integrated transport routes as a means of accessing visitor attractions.
41. To provide advice and incentives to landowners and land managers to conserve historic landscapes and features through appropriate management techniques.



Landscape Character Types (LCT's) are generic areas of distinctive character which may occur in several places across the County. They will be similar in terms of overall characteristics although the condition and quality of their individual components may vary. LCT's are used to categorise the more geographically specific Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) which are described in section 7. Meath has been divided into 4 LCT's:

1. Hills and Upland Areas

2. Lowland Areas

3. River Corridors and Estuaries

4. Coastal Areas

TYPE 1: HILLS AND UPLAND AREAS

Although Meath is not blessed with dramatic peaks, hills and uplands are a prominent feature of the County, particularly in the north west. From the tops of these hills panoramic views of the lowland landscapes of Meath and adjacent counties are gained. The hills also act as orientating features. The Tara, Skryne and Slane hills are prominent by virtue of landmarks at their summits as well as their topography: Churches mark the locations of the Hill of Tara and Skryne and a ruined abbey on the hill of Slane also acts as a prominent local landmark.

The hills and uplands form important historic features with an abundance of archaeological features. The Loughcrew and Tara Hills are particularly rich in pre-history and overall Meath's uplands contain evidence of human settlement extending back 9,000 years.

Due to their historic and cultural value and the views afforded from them, these hills and uplands are a valuable resource in terms of tourism. However, at present they are somewhat isolated as separate entities. Linking the most important sites by way-marked trails would be a valuable addition allowing further appreciation of the landscape in a sensitive manner. Some upland areas, particularly the Loughcrew Hills, would be highly sensitive to new development due to their remote nature and intrinsic landscape features, such as dry stonewalls. Any development must be carefully sited to minimise negative impacts.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To preserve and enhance the rich heritage assets of these LCT's which provide visible evidence of all four key phases of the County's history (see section 4).
2. To have due regard to the positive contribution that views across adjacent lowland areas and landmarks within the landscape make to the overall landscape character.
3. To respect the remote character and existing low-density development in these LCTs.
4. To implement improvements to the visitor attractions, primarily Loughcrew and the Hill of Tara.
5. To explore the potential to create way marked walking trails that facilitate interpretation and appreciation of historic landscape features.
6. To continue and encourage the improved management of field boundaries such as hedgerows and stone walls and hunting copses/ wooded copses.
7. To maximise the potential amenity value of water bodies with this LCT.
8. Facilitate the development of sustainable rural industries that encourage interaction between urban and rural landscapes and dwellers, e.g. farmer's markets.



Loughcrew Hills

7. landscape character types

TYPE 2: LOWLAND AREAS

The Lowland LCT covers the largest proportion of Meath and, due to the high quality of the land, is primarily agricultural. In the south of the County there is an abundance of 18th Century demesnes with extensive areas of mixed woodland and parkland bounded by original stonewalls, creating an attractive landscape setting for the numerous estate houses.

The Lowland LCT have been developed more extensively than other LCT's, particularly in the south east where there is development pressure from the Dublin metropolitan area. This will inevitably lead to significant changes to the landscape character and it is crucial that future development of this LCT is carried out sensitively and with particular reference to the rural nature of the landscape.

The significant growth of towns and villages within the southeast has led to myriad of architectural styles that are not in keeping with the historic built vernacular. It is equally important that future development relates to the existing structure of towns and villages and reflects characteristic building scales and materials.

Much of the lowlands have an enclosed character with well-treed road corridors, dense hedgerows, parkland and areas of woodland. Views of landmarks within the landscape and of the surrounding upland areas are a characteristic of this area and must be retained because the interaction between the lowlands and hills/uplands is an important feature of this LCT. Particular features in this LCT, to which views should be retained, include the hills of Loughcrew, Tara and Skryne, as well as mottes, raths and wooded hilltops.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote good agricultural practices to create a sustainable rural economy e.g. stud farms.
2. Provide incentives for smaller rural/family farms to manage their land to avoid loss of hedgerows and field patterns.
3. Maintain and enhance the 18th century estate landscapes and associated parkland & woodland to develop them as a tourism resource.
4. Diversify the urban fringe by developing mixed-use amenity areas, which will create a landscape buffer creating a transition between urban and rural areas.
5. Define the urban fringe with planting of native species and mixed woodland to tie into existing rural landscape.
6. Reflect the 18th century field pattern in the scale of new development.
7. Restoration of historic boundaries; walls to original standard with coursing and materials to match existing. Hedges; timing and thinning of hedges.
8. Preserve views of upland areas that contain the lowlands e.g. Loughcrew, Tara and Skryne.



Parkland near Bective Abbey

TYPE 3: RIVER CORRIDORS AND ESTUARIES

The lowlands of Meath are divided by a number of key river corridors. This LCT contains a wealth of historic features providing longstanding evidence of human influence on the landscape including internationally important passage tombs (Bru na Boinne), Norman fortifications, castles, demesnes and industrial artefacts such as mills and bridges.

The River Boyne is the largest and most prominent of the river corridors. The river runs from the southwest corner of Meath through Trim, Navan (where it merges with the River Blackwater), Slane and Drogheda. It is enclosed and well wooded along much of its length. Excellent views of the river are afforded from around Slane where the river can be seen cutting through a large flat-bottomed valley and to the east of Drogheda where the estuary is particularly attractive. The Boyne estuary is the only SPA designated in Meath and the river corridor near Slane (Bru na Boinne area) is a World Heritage Site.

The River Blackwater runs between Kells and Navan where it merges with the Boyne. The entire river has a European designation as an CSAC and a number of smaller parts designated as PNHA's. The River's Nanny and Delvin have largely undeveloped corridors and as such have high ecological value. Their associated wetlands, sand bars, mudflats and coastal areas are diverse habitats. Both estuaries are densely wooded, but particularly the Nanny, and as such, have remained relatively undisturbed and are very sensitive. The estuaries of the Boyne and Nanny are important habitats for birds and are designated as PNHA's. The Boyne estuary forms the border between Meath and Louth and the Delvin defines the Meath-Fingal border near the coast.

The Royal Canal runs near the southern border of Meath and is primarily a product of 19th Century industry. There are several towns along its banks that have grown because of the industries that the canal supported. All the rivers and the canal are tourist resources providing a range of recreation opportunities including walking, cycling, water sports and fishing.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To recognise the importance of river corridors for scenic value, recreation, ecology, history and culture.
2. To preserve historic features and their landscape settings.
3. To conserve valuable habitats focused on and around river corridors and estuaries including European SAC designations and national ASI and NHA designations.
4. To maintain current agricultural practices that are responsible for the current strong landscape character in these LCAs.
5. To maintain attractive and unspoilt open views particularly along estuaries where the interface between river corridors and the coast creates very attractive landscapes.
6. To continue and encourage the improved management of field boundaries such as hedgerows and stonewalls and hunting copses/ wooded copses.
7. To reinforce the appearance of urban fringe areas adjacent to river corridors.
8. To further define popular tourist routes such as the Bru Na Boinne drive and create links with new routes to additional areas of interest. Vehicular and pedestrian routes should be developed in tandem.

9. To recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats.
10. To reflect existing vegetation species and patterns in new planting schemes in these LCAs.
11. To avoid unsustainable exploitation of watercourses, e.g. for abstraction and dilution of effluent, to the point that these water courses lose their ecological and amenity value.



Bridge over River Boyne near Bective Abbey



Boyne estuary near Drogheda

7. landscape character types

TYPE 4: COASTAL PLAIN

The Meath coastline is a short section of extensive sandy beaches separated by the estuaries of the Rivers Boyne and Nanny. The coast has a remote character with the exception of concentrations of development at Bettystown, Laytown and Morningstown, known collectively as the 'Gold Coast'. The coastal area is a prime summer tourist destination. Bettystown in particular includes a range of seaside attractions such as amusement arcades, caravan parks and hotels which are often at odds with the overall scenic value of the coast. The landscape and seascape of the Coastal Area is complex with diverse habitats linked by well-wooded river corridors. River estuaries, wide sandy beaches and dunes form important junctures between the land and the sea.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To recognise that coastal landscapes are complex systems shaped and influenced by natural forces but which are also increasingly under pressure from many types of development.
2. To recognise the importance of retaining undeveloped areas of coastline, estuaries and dunes for their scenic and ecological value.
3. To protect views along the coast and along the Boyne estuary.
4. To ensure that new development, including contemporary architecture, compliments the local vernacular in terms of scale and character and compliments the landscape setting. New development should be designed to ensure sensitive transitions between urban and rural coastal areas.
5. To compliment the rail network on the east coast with adequate parking provision to encourage further use of this sustainable resource.
6. To develop the coast as a nature/tourist resource by creating a way marked trail/drive along the coastline, providing clear links with the main tributaries and adequate parking and visitor facilities.
7. To promote fishing and recreation on River Boyne, Nanny and Devlin.
8. To avoid unsustainable exploitation of estuaries and coastal waters, e.g. for abstraction and dilution of effluent, to the point that these water courses lose their ecological and amenity value.



Laytown beach



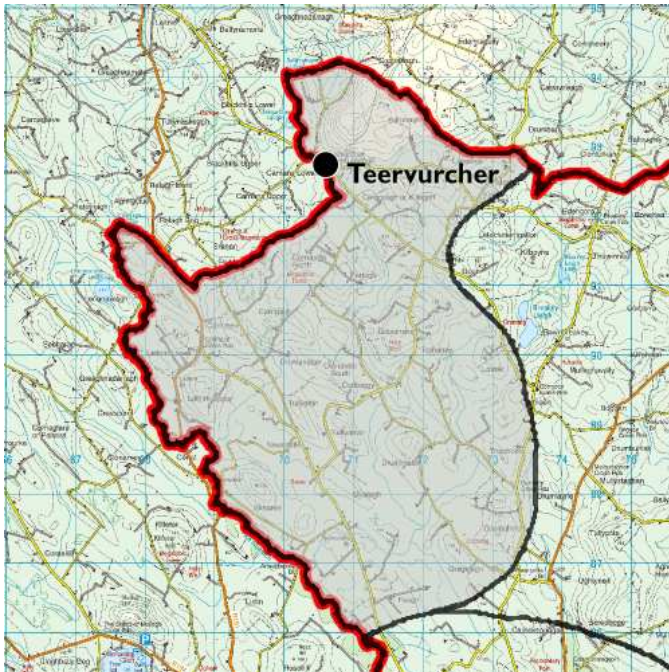
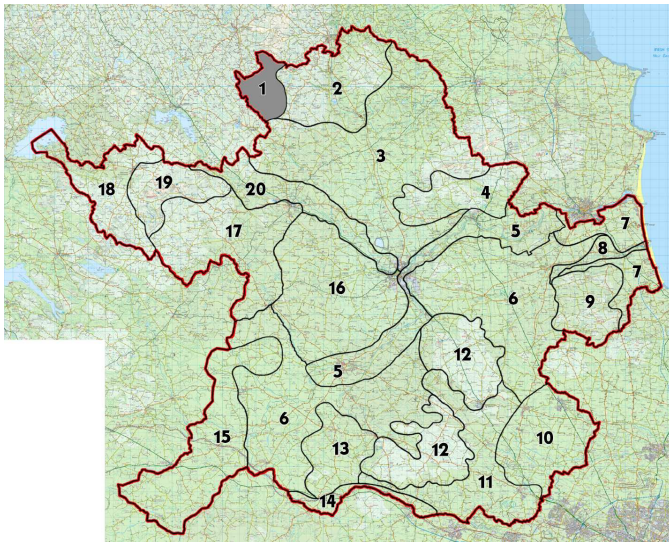
Caravan park at Bettystown



River Boyne navigation channel near Drogheda environs

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| 2. North Meath Lakelands | p.34 |
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Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Local

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

This is a complex drumlin landscape located in the north west of the County. It has a remote upland character rather than a pastoral character. There are few water bodies but the land is still very wet - birch and willow carr and rush infested grazing land is common. Pine trees are also more common here than in most other parts of the County.

There is only one regional road that crosses this area – the R191 linking Baileborough and Mullagh - two small towns beyond Meath's county boundary. All other roads are minor county roads. Built development in this LCA comprises small clusters of houses around road junctions and some individual dwellings and small farms in the countryside.

Teervurcher is the largest graig located on the north western edge of this LCA on the county boundary. Drystone walls are a common feature but vernacular buildings are less common beyond settlement clusters. Individual houses tend to be modern in style.

The landscape character around settlements tends to be a patchwork of small fields used for grazing divided by bushy hedgerows, which are not intensively managed. In some places hedgerows are beginning to be replaced by post and wire fences, an indication of a decline in landscape condition. All farmland is small scale with square or rectangular fields divided by hedgerows and a series of small rather than large farms.

Views within this area are generally limited by the complex topography except at the tops of drumlins where panoramic views, framed by hills in Cavan are a defining feature of the landscape character.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Area of high granular potential due to presence of greywacke, a granular sandstone.
- Disused quarry present in north western corner.
- A mixture of shallow and deep, well drained mineral soils created from acidic parent material of greywacke and clean sandstones.
- Areas of poorly drained lowland suiting moisture loving trees such as hazel, ash, birch and willow.

Land Use

- Small-scale farmland managed unintensively.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designated ecological site.
- Upland area – very few of these types of areas in the County
- Range of wetland habitats: willow and birch carr and wet grazing land.

History & Culture

- Buried archaeology: megalithic tombs
- Early Christian artefacts: holy wells
- Long established small scale farmland with small to medium-sized vernacular farmhouses

Tourism

- No designated tourist attractions, but this area little built development and relatively unspoilt character.
- Streams and numerous small lakes are attractive, potential recreational features.

8. LCA 1 - teervurcher uplands

Settlements and Built Structures

- No large settlements
- Small clusters of houses around road junctions.
- Individual houses and small farms in open countryside.

Key Settlements

- *Teervurcher*: small graig unspoilt by modern development, comprises coherent group of C18th buildings that are plastered and painted.

Forces for Change

- Replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Have regard to the contribution of buried archaeology and early Christian artefacts by maintaining their settings within the landscape.
2. Promote historic features to visitors and residents, e.g. by development of sensitive, low key signage, interpretation leaflets, inclusion of most visible or intact features as part of way marked trails and driving routes.
3. Recognise the important interrelationship of views between these hills and upland areas in southern Co. Cavan when considering the siting of development.
4. Recognise the local ecological importance of wet woodland habitats by identifying their locations and developing appropriate management agreements.
5. Develop design guidelines for the creation, restoration and maintenance of boundaries, use of vernacular materials, styles and scales.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium to low potential capacity to accommodate large scale farm buildings, as the small-scale nature of farming in this area would be significantly altered.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities as there are currently limited facilities for tourists and visitors.
3. Low potential capacity for multi-house residential development. This would be out of character with the existing small-scale nature of settlement. Reference to local vernacular in terms of scale and character would be important in any new development.
4. Low potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses as there is already a large number of such houses in this LCA relative to its size. More would erode the rural character of the area. Reference to local vernacular in terms of scale and character would be important any new residential development.
5. High potential capacity to convert existing buildings into new uses if this is carried out in a sensitive manner and with reference to local vernacular styles and materials.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate development like overhead cables, substations and communications masts due to the wooded nature of the area provided the positioning is sensitive to existing views and landscape constraints.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new transport infrastructure although the existing landscape structure would need to be strengthened and due regard paid to buried archaeology and artefacts.



Birch and Willow carr.



Rolling hills covered with rough pasture land.

8. LCA 1 - teervurcher uplands

POTENTIAL CAPACITY CONT.

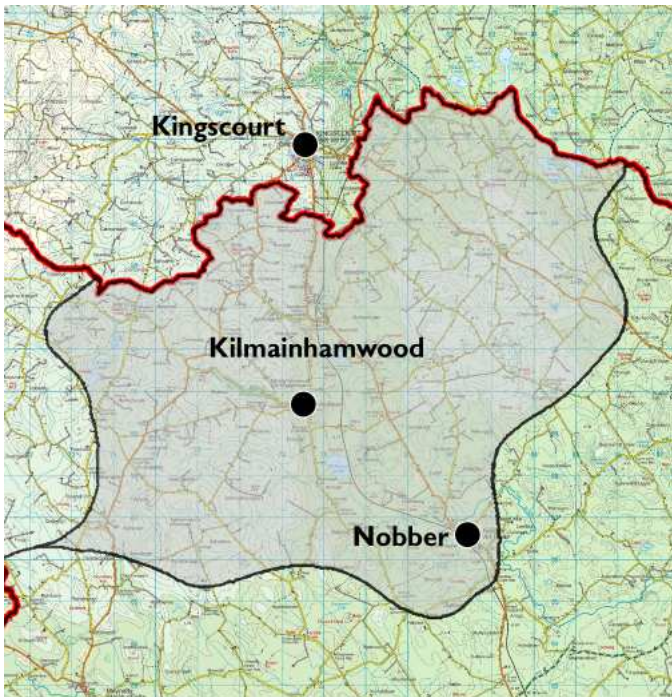
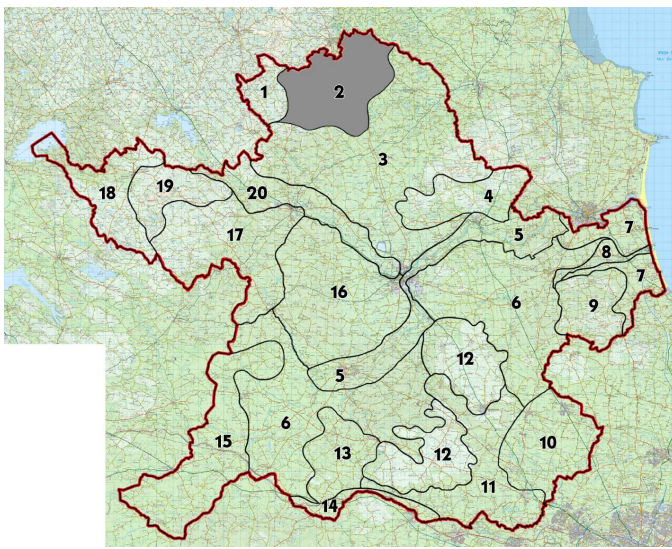
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new underground services although the existing landscape structure would need to be strengthened and due regard paid to buried archaeology and artefacts.
9. Medium potential capacity to accommodate wind turbines due to complex landform. There is currently permission for a small (5 turbine) wind farm in Teervurcher. However, particular attention would need to be paid to views from hilltops and to Co. Cavan. Such development would need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry on agricultural land that is wet and rush infested although the importance of upland and wetland habitats needs to be considered as does visibility from Co. Cavan.



Enclosed and well managed road corridor.



Rolling landscape with small regular field pattern.



Landscape Value: Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity: Low

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

This complex drumlin landscape is wetter and more wooded than the rest of Meath and has significantly less built development. There are small lakes and stream corridors between the drumlins and road corridors are often raised above adjacent fields with drainage ditches at either side. There are 3 main transport routes (regional roads) linking Kingscourt, Co. Cavan to Navan, Kells and Ardee. Ribbon development is only a key feature between the primary towns. Elsewhere built development is scattered and consists of relatively modern but attractive detached dwellings. The central area between Nobber and Kilmainhamwood is particularly attractive because it has more visible historic references, such as stonewalls and vernacular buildings.

The landscape character around settlements tends to be a well-managed patchwork of small pastoral fields, dense hedgerows and small areas of broadleaved woodland. In more remote areas, farmland becomes less well managed with overgrown hedgerows and less woodland. In some places hedgerows are beginning to be replaced by post and wire fences, an indication of a decline in landscape condition. The agricultural landscape comprises a series of small farms with square – rectangular fields divided by hedgerows which are usually clipped to eye-level adjacent to road corridors but are less well managed away from roads.

There are several steep-sided, narrow river corridors in the centre of this area, which have a unique character. These open out into a hilly pastoral landscape divided by mature hedgerows with lots of trees. Hazel is common on steep sided river corridors.

The landscape near Drumconrath in the east is less wet and wooded although it has a concentration of young mixed species plantations.

Views within this area are generally limited by the complex topography and mature vegetation except at the tops of drumlins where panoramic views, framed by hills in Cavan and farther northeast. Short-range views are channelled along narrow valleys between drumlins often along road or river corridors. The key 'landmark' in the area is the gypsum factory outside Kingscourt whose billowing white smoke can be seen from some distance.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Greywacke (dark sandstone) in the west and muddy shale limestones in the east creating deep well draining mineral soils formed from acidic parent material.
- A large area of granite is present between two areas of upland to the south of Kingscourt forming steep sided localised valleys.
- Both pits and quarries are present due to variety of aggregates however they are not visually intrusive due to the rolling topography and vegetation.

Land Use

- Predominantly small-scale pastoral fields
- Areas of young mixed species plantations in eastern section
- Small scale, well managed farmland.

Ecology & Habitat

- 2 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's); Breakey Loughs - 7km south west of Kingscourt is an acidic peaty lough in contrast to other loughs in Meath and bones of the Irish Giant Deer have been found nearby.

8. LCA 2 - north meath lakelands

Ecology and Habitat cont.

- *Ballyhoe Lough* - On the Meath/Cavan border comprises two small loughs with wetland and grassland and a wide variety of species associated with these habitats.
- *Ardagh Area* – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Strong network of hedgerows in most parts.
- Some replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fences in western section.
- Range of mature broadleaf woodland and wetland habitats: lakes, streams and some wet pasture.

History & Culture

- Long established small scale farmland with small to medium vernacular farmhouses
- Buried archaeology.
- Stone built road bridges
- Railway architecture
- Early C19th stone townhouses in Nobber
- Whitewood House
- Cast Iron pumps

Tourism

- Rathe House equestrian centre outside Kilmainhamwood provides the opportunity to ride in over 500 acres of estate farmland.

Settlements and Built Structures

- No major towns
- Settlement type predominantly small villages with several medium to large villages
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings but rarely visually detractive.

Key Settlements

- *Nobber*: Quiet but reasonably attractive large village/ small town. Very little new development, attractive setting in patchwork of small fields, mature woodland and dense hedgerows.
- *Kilmainhamwood*: Medium to large village, attractive vernacular buildings, located at the edge of a narrow, steep sided river corridor covered in hazel woodland. One new housing development on southern approach to village creates an abrupt edge to the countryside.

Forces for Change

- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing loss of hedgerows and replacement with post and wire fencing.
- Young mixed species plantations will mature and increase wooded character of landscape.
- Viability of livestock farming may decline alongside increase in use of land for forestry.
- Possible abandonment of wet grazing land if small farms become less viable leading to re-establishment of willow and birch carr.
- Proposed upgrading of regional road between Kells and Kingscourt will cause loss of boundary features along road corridor and permanent noise source.
- Potential to adapt existing freight line between Navan and Kingscourt to accommodate passengers would increase the attractiveness of this area for commuters and associated built development.



Mainstreet, Nobber.



Landscape to west of Nobber.



View of landscape and housing above Kilmainhamwood and road corridors within steep



8. LCA 2 - north meath lakelands

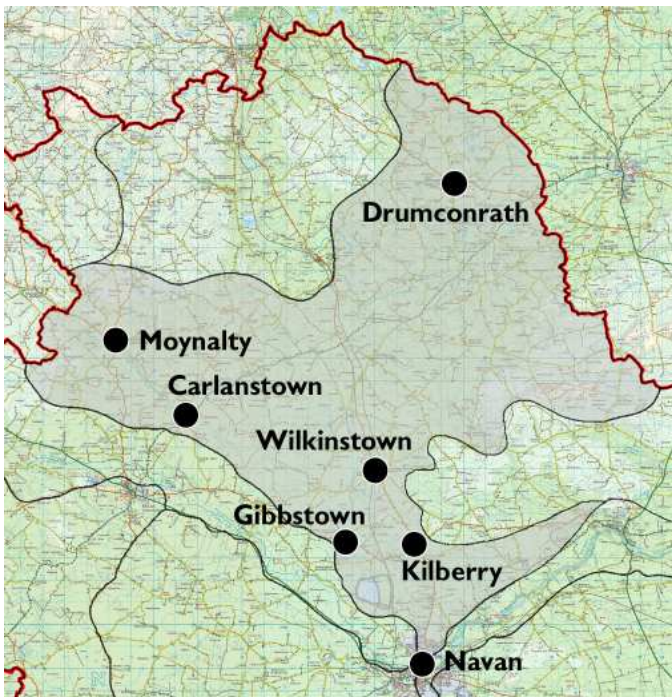
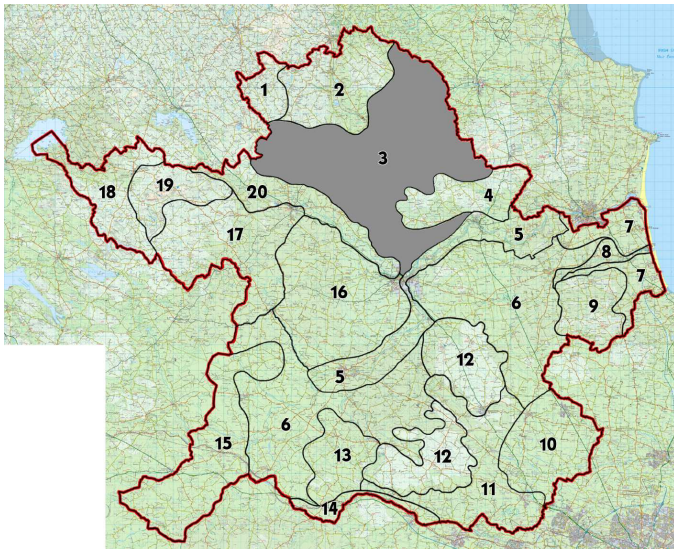
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop incentives to encourage landowners to maintain the integrity of historic field patterns and manage field boundaries and woodland.
2. Maintain the visual quality of the landscape by avoiding development that would alter the drumlin landform or that would adversely affect short-range views within valleys or long-range views from the tops of drumlins.
3. Recognise the importance of the visual interrelationship between these hills and upland areas in southern Co. Cavan when considering the siting of development.
4. Nobber and Kilmainhamwood are attractive settlements with features that have the potential to be interpreted and developed as visitor attractions. These include wooded settings, rivers and loughs and proximity to Kingscourt, Co. Cavan, which is a lively town.
5. The two main settlements in this LCA could also be developed as a focus for rural enterprises such as farmers markets which would allow for rural diversification and provide for stronger links between settlements and their rural surroundings.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. This LCA predominantly features small scale farms so large agricultural buildings would be a change of character. However, the complex topography and low sensitivity means the potential capacity to accommodate such development overall is medium.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities. This area has no major attractions so any such development is likely to be small-scale e.g. woodland walks. Avoid siting visitor facilities in prominent locations e.g. tops of drumlins.
3. Medium potential capacity to accommodate small multi-house residential developments in larger villages - Nobber and Kilmainhamwood - where woodland setting could screen them. These villages have a largely intact historic character so any new development should be closely referenced to the local vernacular. However, outside defined urban areas the potential capacity to accommodate such development would be low because such development would be difficult to screen/ integrate.
4. High potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses which are part of the character of this LCA but must be of modern small scale to suit local vernacular. Also be aware of cumulative impact of too many houses and avoid the extension of ribbon development as seen in large towns surrounding this LCA.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate conversion of existing buildings such as estate houses and barns to a different use or as part of a restoration provided that they are carefully planned in terms of location, scale and materials. Regard should also be had to the potential for the change of use causing a more significant impact.

6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables or masts because drumlin tops are highly visible and panoramic views to wider landscape are an important characteristic that would be adversely affected by such development. Medium potential capacity to accommodate small sub-stations at the base of drumlins provided they are visually concealed. Potential conflicts with buried archaeology will be a major constraint.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new transport routes because there are good opportunities for screening such development within this complex topography. However, there could be potentially significant adverse impacts on buried archaeology and the small-scale pattern of the landscape which would need to be mitigated against.
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new underground service routes because there are good opportunities for screening such development within this complex topography. However, there could be potentially significant adverse impacts on buried archaeology and the small-scale pattern of the landscape which would need to be mitigated against.
9. Medium potential capacity to accommodate wind farms and single turbines because of the remote and hilly nature of the landscape and locally complex topography which provided potential screening. There are also a limited number of formal recreation facilities or viewpoints. However, constraints that must be considered in any mitigation proposals include long-range views to Co. Cavan and buried archaeology.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate some biomass and forestry development because this is a sensitive and diverse landscape with mix of habitats. However, prominent areas such as hillsides and or valleys where views are channelled should be avoided.



Landscape Value: Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

A large area of agricultural land to the north of Navan contained in the east and west by the Rivers Blackwater and Boyne respectively and to the north by a more complex hilly landscape along the north Meath border (LCA 1). Overall this landscape character area is in a degraded condition. It comprises of a mixture of pasture and arable fields that have been enlarged by loss or removal of traditional boundaries, now often consist of post and wire or timber fences and drainage ditches along road corridors.

The landscape around the fringes of Navan is flat - an extension of the river plains to the east and west. It has a mix of land uses including ribbon housing development, retail units, a large quarry and a racecourse which are not well integrated into the landscape and which have caused the loss of traditional field boundaries, trees and vernacular field and road boundaries. The racecourse in particular has a visually detractive corrugated fence along the road corridor as has the Tara Mines Development. There are good views across this plain towards more undulating and well-treed farmland in the north and north east.

Further from Navan the landscape becomes more attractive although condition of field boundaries is often poor. The topography is more undulating and the occurrence of trees is more common. In the centre the farmland is reasonably well managed and characterised by horse paddocks. To the north east the landscape becomes slightly wetter; much more undulating and has a closer physical relationship with LCA 1 (although better managed). There is a sub-area to the west of Wilkinstown that is covered by coniferous plantations, regenerating birch and peaty heathland with wet birch and ash woodland on its fringes. It has a very remote character and habitat value that is rare within Meath. However, it is in poor condition in some places with boundary fences and gateposts in a state of disrepair. The western part of this LCA, around Moynalty, has a better network of hedgerows and woodland.

Moynalty is an estate village with ribbons of houses along its approach roads. It is a quiet and attractive with little through traffic and several shops, pubs and a church. The village and its environs are rich in archaeological and historic structures such as stone boundary walls, traditional buildings and mottes. The Boyne river corridor, which bounds this character area, is an historic landscape. Other settlements include the northern fringes of Navan, Kilberry, Carlanstown, Wilkinstown and Gibbstown which are expanded graigs.

This area is well served by transport routes and infrastructure because of its proximity to Navan and Kells: the N52 and several regional roads all traverse this character area. Road corridors often have quite an open character but hedgerows are usually well maintained. The tertiary roads around Gibbstown in the southern part of this area are more enclosed by trees and the road corridors around Drumconrath in the northeast are more enclosed by drumlin topography, trees and hedgerows. A railway also crosses through the centre of this area from north to south and provides potential connections between Drogheda, Navan and Kingscourt. The railway line is not a very prominent part of the landscape character but it does form a well-wooded spine through the centre of this area and is most visible at level crossings with the road network. There are a number of pylon lines, which converge at the edge of Navan and are visually detractive.

8. LCA 3 - north navan lowlands

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Complex geology of limestone, sandstone, shale and volcanic rock creating diverse landscape.
- Poorly drained peaty soils in the north west derived from shaly limestone have created a wet habitat which is scrappy in parts.
- For the most part well drained mineral soils formed from limestone and sandstone have been developed for agriculture.
- Due to the variety of geological parent material there are several quarries and pits in the area.
- The Tara Mine north west of Navan was one of the largest lead-zinc mines in Europe.

Land Use

- Predominantly large agricultural fields, mix of pasture and arable crops.
- Field boundaries in degraded condition.
- Significant 'sub-area' of coniferous plantation, wet birch woodland and heath in the centre of this LCA
- Small areas of mixed and broadleaf woodland in western section with more attractive character.
- Urban fringe landscape around Navan with mix of uses, degraded condition and visually detractive developments.

Ecology & Habitat

- *Corstown Lough and Mentrim Lough*, 2 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's): these lakes comprise a variety of habitats associated with the lakes including wetland and cut away bogs.
- *Grangegeeth Quarries* – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI).
- Mixture of pasture and arable fields.
- Some replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fences in western section.
- Large area of regenerating birch woodland and peaty heathland to west of Wilkinstown.

History & Culture

- Moynalty and Navan: historic settlements.
- Evidence of original line of the Pale indicated by presence of Norman mottes and Woodstown lower pale ditch
- Ruined churches, round towers and castles throughout the area.
- Protected churches include those at Rathkenny and Castletown plus Syddan, Newton and Fletchertown.
- Estate landscapes evident around edge of Navan and in the west.
- Protected Structures include Stackallen country house (circa 1716) plus numerous other country houses, farmhouses and buildings

Tourism

- Navan is a good base for exploring the County because it has a wide choice of accommodation and a tourist information point.
- Navan Racecourse attracts large numbers of spectators throughout the year with an extensive fixture list.
- Navan Golf course which is situated at the racecourse welcomes visitors and societies.
- No other specific attractions in this area, although historic features would be of interest if they were interpreted.

Settlements and Built Structures

- A number of grails have grown due to new development over the past few decades.
- Mixed use development on urban fringe of Navan: commercial and light industrial, residential, quarrying and

leisure (racecourse).

- Small quiet villages with little new development within the last 5 years.
- Moynalty has an intact historic structure but Drumconrath is more modern.

Key Settlements

- *Navan*: A historic town located at the meeting of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater. Good historic structure in centre and significant archaeological value in surrounding landscape. Northern fringes of town which fall within this LCA are within flat plain surrounding river valley. A chaotic mix of uses including large quarry, racecourse, suburban housing and ribbon development. The railway line degrades landscape character here.
- *Drumconrath*: small quiet village with mostly modern houses but little new development within the past five years and little through traffic. Occupies an elevated position in eastern part of this landscape character area with good views to north east, framed by hills around Carlingford.
- *Moynalty*: large estate village with ribbons of houses along its approach roads. It is quiet but attractive with a wealth of vernacular stone buildings and historic features such as stone boundary walls
- *Kilberry*: a small grail on the busy R162 between Navan and Kingscourt that has expanded into an incoherent collection of buildings – a number of agri-industrial/ commercial units, a large palette yard, church, thatched pub and a few houses. There is little of the original character left and almost continuous residential ribbon development between it and Navan.
- *Carlanstown*: Small village located on the N52 road junction. Ribbon of modern development built over former deer park. Remains of Norman motte to the north of the village may indicate early line of the Pale.
- *Wilkinstown*: Small village centred on busy road junction. Village centre is small and comprises of pub, shop, petrol station and some warehouse units. Some modern one-off houses around the edges but only a few remaining vernacular buildings. Traditional stone boundary walls alongside road corridor are still largely intact. Surrounded by relatively degraded farmland and large areas of coniferous plantations.
- *Gibbstown*: A medium to large village within 5km of Navan comprised of a long ribbon of buildings along the road corridor. Gibbstown is part of a Gaeltacht and flanks LCA's 3 & 5. The village centre is not well defined but is a mix of small vernacular cottages and large one-off bungalows and houses with a mixture of styles and materials. Potentially attractive but slightly degraded wooded setting. Vernacular character could potentially be lost



Large pasture fields with well-managed hedgerows.

8. LCA 3 - north navan lowlands

Forces for Change

- Continued extension of graigs and other settlements.
- Continued degradation of urban fringe and river plain around Navan.
- Likely future realignment of the N52 road.

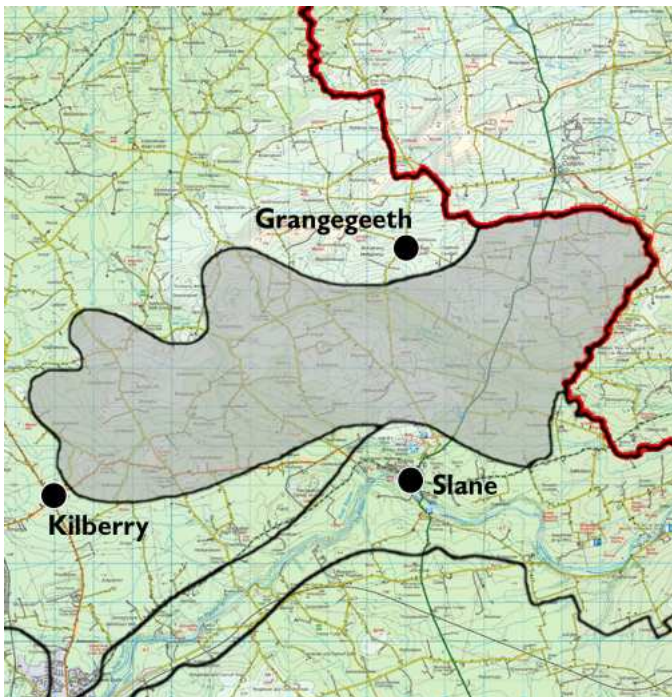
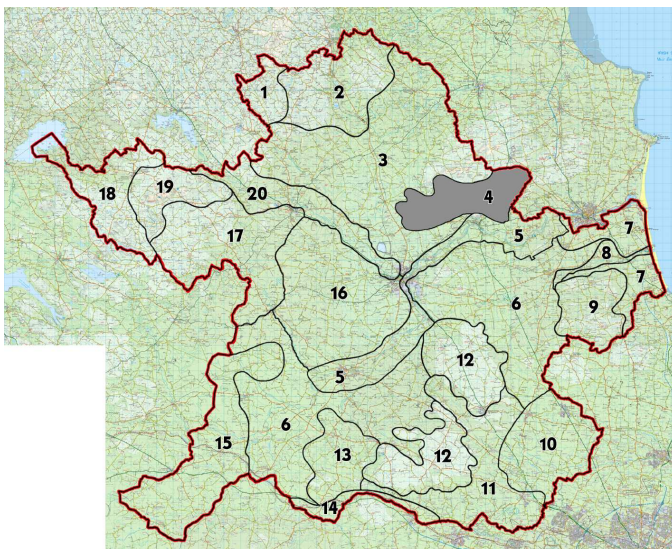
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
2. Recognise the importance of stud farming to the upkeep of the landscape in the centre of the North Navan farmland and maintain the viability of this industry by sensitive siting of development that may adversely affect it.
3. Maintain the integrity of 18th Century farming landscape by encouraging the management of estate parkland, avenues of mature trees, boundary walls and clipped hedges.
4. Protect and enhance the area of regenerating birch woodland to west of Wilkinstown for its value as a rare habitat within the county, including production of a management plan for surrounding coniferous woodland.
5. Consolidate northern urban fringes of Navan. Favour location of development on infill sites rather than ribbon development extending along approaches to town. Use appropriate landscape treatment along edges of development to soften urban fringe.
6. Compliment landscape enhancement of urban fringe with opportunities to increase amenity value of urban fringe of Navan for public access and recreation.
7. Consider the potential to increase public transport infrastructure by upgrading existing rail line linking Navan with Drogheda and Kingscourt. Any upgrading should happen within the context of comprehensive landscape design guidelines.
8. Recognise the potential of Nobber and Kilmainhamwood as attractive settlements with features that could be interpreted and developed as visitor attractions. These include wooded settings, rivers and loughs and proximity to Kingscourt, Co. Cavan, which is a lively town.
9. Promote historic features to visitors and residents, e.g. by development of sensitive, low key signage, interpretation leaflets, inclusion of most visible or intact features as part of way marked trails and driving routes.
10. Continued promotion of Navan as hub/base for visitors to explore the county. Improve availability of tourist info, connection with key attractions e.g. the town may be developed as the start/end of way marked trails, driving routes etc.
11. Continue to promote the Gaeltacht around Gibbstown as a cultural resource and promote links between other Gaeltachts including Rathcairn.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large farm buildings although setting and location would need to be considered to avoid degrading the condition of farmland. If buildings are necessary to increase viability of farmland, good management will be necessary.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities particularly if these would provide opportunities to improve the currently poor condition of the landscape. Care should be taken not to add visual clutter and opportunities taken to improve links for visitors between the rural landscape and the key towns of Navan and Moynalty.
3. Medium potential capacity for multi-house residential development if it consolidates existing disparate development around the edge of Navan. However, the capacity of Drumconrath to accommodate such development would be low because of its elevated position. Multi-house development in Moynalty would need to relate to the small scale and historic nature of the village.
4. Low potential capacity for one off houses, as they are already very common in this LCA. Residential development should focus on consolidating urban edges and improving landscape condition.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate development of new visitor facilities around existing features which are not currently interpreted, such as archaeological and historic artefacts, demesnes and demesne villages. Such development could be used to facilitate improvements to and maintenance of existing landscape patterns.
6. High to medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, masts and substations around urban fringe where built development is more common. Low potential capacity in rural areas and around smaller settlements, where landscape character is of higher value.
7. High potential capacity to accommodate new transport infrastructure with potential associated opportunities to improve the condition of degraded field boundaries and enhance passenger rail network by utilising disused lines.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate new underground service routes in parts of this LCA which are rich in historic features. However, in areas which are in a degraded condition potential capacity would be medium to high because of the potential associated opportunities to improve landscape condition.
9. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the development of wind farms and individual turbines because there are few long range views except to the adjacent LCA. The number of viewers of such development would be relatively high but their proximity to several large urban areas is likely to lower their sensitivity. The presence of buried archaeology and upstanding historic features is a potential constraint on the location of wind turbines.
10. High potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry development except in the central sub-area of this LCA where large scale plantations are already an established feature of the landscape. Adverse effects on local habitats would need to be assessed and mitigated against.

8. LCA 3 - north navan lowlands



Landscape Value: Very High

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

This is a small area of rolling hills, which wrap around the north of Slane. It is predominantly a smooth textured agricultural landscape with large fields attached to estate farms. Fields are mostly pastoral but there are some arable fields. Built development consists of loose groups of detached dwellings along road corridors and large estate houses set within walled grounds or at the ends of avenues. Slane is located beyond the southern boundary of this LCA and is a very attractive and historically rich settlement with strong visual links to this LCA.

Estate walls, gateposts, avenues (usually Beech) and areas of parkland around estate houses are valuable parts of the landscape character. Walls and gateposts are often in reasonably good condition but in some instances repairs have not been carried out to accurately match the appearance and construction techniques used to build the original structures.

Fields are generally divided by ash hedgerows of varying quality. In many places these hedgerows have become degraded, gappy, overgrown or over mature so that only the lines of ivy-covered hedgerow trees remain without the hedgerow to connect them. In other instances, gorse has been allowed to grow in hedgerows, changing the appearance of managed estate farmland.

Tree cover is a strong element of landscape character in this area and consists of lines of ivy-covered hedgerow trees dividing large fields and copses of beech and mixed species woodland on the tops or side slopes of hills, planted during the 18th Century as hunting woodlands. They provide a sense of enclosure and texture to the otherwise fairly smooth open landscape. There are some small coniferous plantations and an area of scrubby woodland along the western boundary, which separate this landscape character area from the adjacent one (LCA 3) and which is a slight variation in the overall landscape character of this area.

There are two main transport routes – the N2 connecting Slane and Ardee and the R163 connecting Slane and Kells. All other roads are tertiary 'yellow' roads. There are several designated picnic and parking areas along the N2 and a group of self-catering cottages and hostel accommodation near Slane but no other designated tourist attractions in this area. The only significant visual detractors in this area are a large overhead pylon line which crosses the centre of the area from east to west and a quarry to the west of Slane adjacent to the main road. However, the quarry is located on the side of a hill and actually contributes more to the adjoining Landscape Character Areas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Comprised primarily of shale limestone and greywacke with large areas of basalt and volcanic rock.
- The soil type is a mixture of shallow and deep and well drained soil derived from the acidic limestones and sandstones that have been developed for agriculture and broadleaf woodland.

Land Use

- Large agricultural fields
- Areas of broadleaf and mixed species woodland – remnants of 18th Century hunting landscapes.

8. LCA 4 - rathkenny hills

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations
- Mature woodland habitat
- Decline in green wildlife corridors due to decline in hedgerow connectivity
- Valuable mature parkland associated with estate houses.

History & Culture

- 18th Century estate and farm landscape
- Mature hunting woodlands with mix of broadleaf and pine species.
- Protected Houses: Tankardstown House, late Georgian, and Mullaghfin, 1770

Tourism

- Picnic areas along the N2
- No other designated attractions.

Settlements and Built Structures

- No settlements.
- Slane, large demesne village, is located in the adjacent landscape character area
- Individual dwellings arranged in loose groups along road corridors
- Estate houses within walled grounds and at ends of avenues

Forces for Change

- Degradation and over maturing of hedgerows
- One quarry in southern part

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conservation of 17th and 18th Century hunting woodlands as an aesthetic, ecological and amenity resource.
2. Maintain the integrity of 18th Century farming landscape by encouraging the management of estate parkland, avenues of mature trees, boundary walls and clipped hedges.
3. Build on existing low-key visitor amenities by providing incentives to landowners to increase public access to, and enjoyment of the designed rural landscape, e.g. the development of a footpath network, creation of designated viewpoint areas, etc.
4. Maintain the visual quality of the hill slopes as the critical setting for the Boyne River Valley (LCA 5) by appropriate siting of new development in visually unobtrusive sites, at low densities and with boundary treatments that are specific to this LCA, e.g. small mixed copses, well-clipped hedgerows and stands of pine.
5. Develop design guidelines for the creation, restoration and maintenance of boundaries, use of vernacular materials, styles and scales.



River Boyne and setting of the north of Slane



Slane Hill and Boyne valley.



Quarry overburden

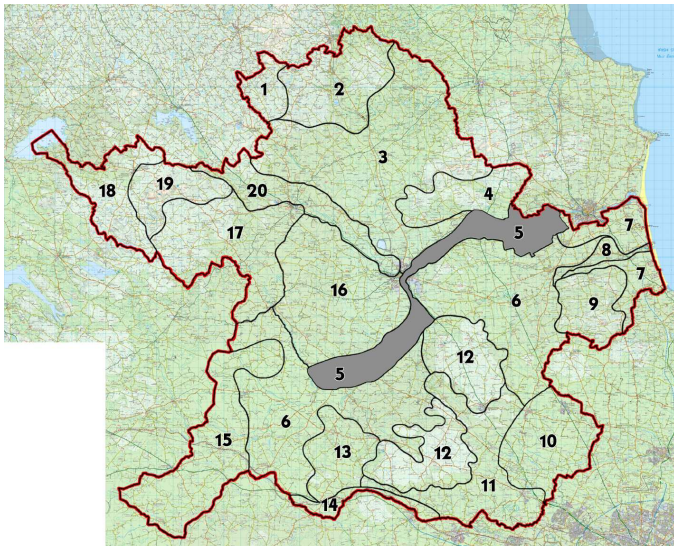


Large arable fields with loss of hedgerows.

8. LCA 4 - rathkenny hills

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

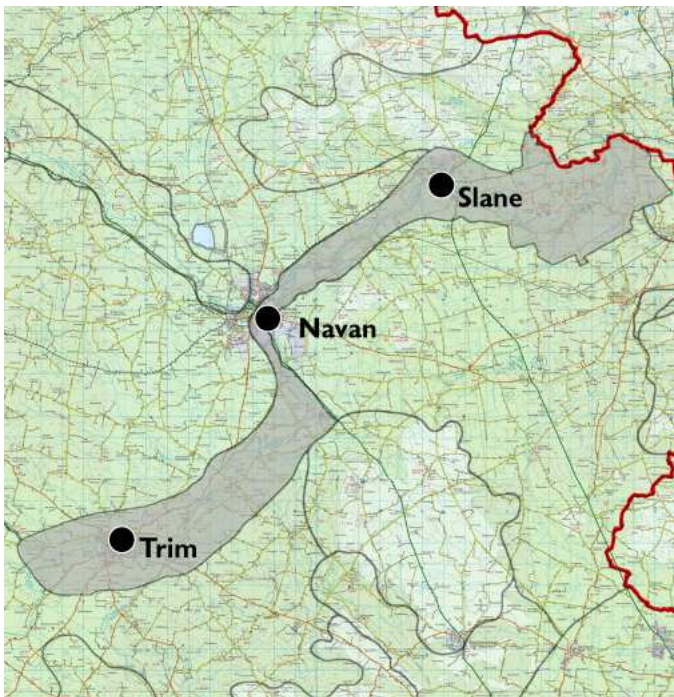
1. This LCA already includes large farms but has a smooth texture and open character that would be interrupted by large agricultural buildings. Therefore its potential capacity would be medium provided such features were adequately located and screened, e.g. at the base of hills.
2. High potential capacity for low-key visitor facilities that would provide links to Slane village and Newgrange in the adjacent LCA.
3. Low to no potential capacity to accommodate new multi-house development because existing residential development in this area is highly visible, particularly from the south. If such development were to be sited in this LCA careful siting at base of hills with good screening would be necessary to mitigate adverse impacts.
4. Medium potential capacity to accommodate a small number of one off houses. Prominent locations should be avoided and building design must be referenced to local vernacular styles.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate conversion of existing buildings in a manner that would be sensitive to the landscape character of this area.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate new overhead cables, masts or substations because a major existing pylon line runs from east to west through the centre of this LCA and is a prominent and visually detractive feature. It would be difficult to accommodate and mitigate against the adverse effects of further development of this type.
7. This LCA is reasonably tranquil with limited built development and high intervisibility with landscapes to the south. It's potential capacity to accommodate new transport routes would be medium provided the new transport corridors were designed to accommodate and strengthen existing landscape boundaries.
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services provided any lost features were restored and the characteristic smooth texture of this LCA was maintained.
9. Low – Medium potential capacity to accommodate wind turbines depending on the location. The setting of Slane is very important so sensitive views of wind turbines from this part of the LCA should be avoided.
10. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass or forestry. Mixed species hunting woodland associated with estate landscapes and set within a smooth textured agricultural landscape is a critical characteristic of this LCA. In the western part of this LCA an area of coniferous forestry is already at odds with the overall landscape character. Expansion of this could erode the character of the whole LCA.



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The landscape in the Boyne Valley is characterised by a steep river valley with areas of rolling lowland adjacent to the River Boyne. It runs from Carbury, Co.Kildare, northeastwards, winding it's way through the landscape to the sea at Drogheda. It is arguably the most significant and highly valued landscapes in the county because it contains the Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site. This LCA also includes the heritage towns of Trim and Slane.

Trim is a large historic town and one of Meath's primary historic settlements. Trim Castle and Talbot Castle dominate the skyline, with the River Boyne and floodplain providing public open space and a picturesque setting for the town. The town centre is attractive with modern development successfully integrated into the historic built environment, particularly Trim Courthouse. There is currently a trend for developing housing in the Trim environs rather than in the town centre, the setting of Trim and Trim Castle within the landscape is extremely important, and residential development needs to be carefully planned to avoid eroding the character of the area.



Slane is a medium sized historic town, which was originally a demesne village. The overall historic built fabric of Slane remains intact. The town is centred around four large 3-storey detached houses facing a central crossroads. The local vernacular style dates from the 18th Century, with simple square cut stone buildings, with less brick detailing than is common elsewhere in the county. Residential development in the town centre is limited apart from some 1950's – 70's housing on the western approach. However there is a concentration of new development to the north of the town on higher ground. Further development of this type should be avoided due to it's size, within the context of the town and its prominence in the landscape. Slane is a popular tourist attraction due to its location and heritage. Slane Castle is situated to the west of the town with Bru na Boinne WHS to the east.

The lowlands have an undulating landform with areas of wetland associated with the River Boyne, particularly surrounding the flat river plain in the narrow valley adjacent to Slane. The valley is steeply sided with large rolling hills providing good vantage points and views across the valley. Pasture farmland is predominant in the rolling lowland with areas of poorly drained marshland adjacent to the River Boyne.

There is a quarry to the south west of Slane, which is reasonably well hidden from Slane but further mineral extraction in the area needs to be carefully sited due to extensive views of the uplands that are available on higher ground and within the Boyne Valley.

The other visual detractors in the area are large housing developments situated above Slane village. Their scale is totally out of character with the local vernacular and due to its siting it is clearly visible for some distance to the south.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Shaly limestone encloses the calp limestone that underlies the fertile plains of the River Boyne creating deep well drained soil
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, larch and willow associated with the River Boyne.

Land Use

- This LCA contains one of the largest urban areas in the county, Navan.
- Mix of medium - large pasture/arable fields.

Landscape Value: Exceptional

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: International

8. LCA 5 - boyne valley

Land Use cont.

- Mix of Sycamore, Yew, Alder and Beech associated with estate landscape
- Gorse in places on upland slopes and ornamental conifers related to ribbon development.
- Large quarry to southwest of Slane.

Ecology & Habitat

- 4 proposed National Heritage Area (PNHA)
Boyne Woods - Comprising a stretch of the River Boyne and adjacent woodland 5km south west of Slane.
Rosnaree Riverbank – Small field and island home to rare rush species.
Slane Riverbank – Home to rare rush species.
Trim – Wetland located 5km east of Trim, which is periodically flooded creating a habitat for marshland and dry grassland.
- 1 Candidate Special Area of Conservation (CSAC), *Boyne River Islands* formed of Alluvial sand in a slow moving section of the river west of Drogheda.
- 1 Special Protection Area (SPA), *Boyne River Estuary* designated due to its importance as a habitat for birds.
- Boyne Valley has a diverse range of attractive and important habitats associated with the River Boyne. It is a well - wooded river corridor.
- Strong network of hedgerows in most parts.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Inhabited for 9,000 years,
- River Boyne used as major transport route providing access from the shore to interior of County Meath
- Buried and excavated archaeology including the passage tombs of Newgrange, Dowth and Knowth which have resulted in the area being designated a World Heritage Site
- Bective Abbey started in 1147 as a daughter church to Mellifont, conformed to C12th Cistercian conventions transformed into 'fine country house' after the dissolution
- Trim Castle constructed late C12th by Hugh De Lacy, granted Lordship of Meath by Henry II.
- Mediaeval town of Trim well fortified, C16th, 'full of very faire castles and stone houses'. Trim functioned as the county town of Meath in the C18th (superseded by Navan in the C19th)
- Estate landscapes on the banks of the Boyne include Boyne Lodge, Higginsbrook, Newhaggard, Fostertown, Rathnally House and Mill, Newtown Park, Bective, Bellinter, Ardsallagh and Boyne Hill upstream of Navan and Athlumney, Blackcastle House, Ardmulchan House, , Beauparc, Slane, Oldbridge, and Dowth Hall
- Formal estate village at Slane, important river crossing point, mediaeval bridge, upstream of the Battle of the Boyne
- Canal remains at Oldbridge

Tourism

- Wealth of tourist attractions related to the heritage of Meath.
- Newgrange is an ancient passage tomb and designated as a World Heritage Site.
- Bru na Boinne Visitor Centre.
- Hill of Slane where St. Patrick lit his Paschal Fire.
- Slane Castle is a popular location for outdoor concerts.
- Bective Abbey founded in 1147 is a substantial ruin in an attractive landscape setting and was featured in the film 'Braveheart'.
- Trim Castle built in 1173 by Hugh de Lacy is the largest Anglo Norman castle in Europe.
- The Yellow Steeple, Trim.
- Royal Meath Agricultural Show in Trim demonstrates clear links to the rural landscape of Meath.
- The development of two hotels in Trim is an important development for tourism in the town.
- River Boyne is a popular for angling and canoeing.



Weir on the River Boyne with Slane Castle in the background.



Well wooded hedgerows on the northern slopes of the Boyne Valley, Slane Hill in the background.



Newgrange from the River Boyne.



8. LCA 5 - boyne valley

Settlements and Built Structures

- Trim and Navan are the two main towns in the Boyne Valley with Slane being a secondary settlement.
- Settlements have a high proportion of vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern built development adjacent to towns and in the form of ribbon development.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Trim*: Large town, the centre is attractive with modern development successfully integrated into the urban fabric. Residential development on the outskirts.
- *Slane*: Is a large village with a distinctive landscape setting. Development pressure to the north of the village.
- *Southern edge of Navan*: Mix of residential and industrial units. Large mineral production plant.
- Urban fabric is encroaching on rural landscape to the south.

Forces for Change

- Significant development in and around Slane would be unsympathetic to the landscape setting of the village.
- Potential abstraction plant and extension to Navan water treatment works

RECOMMENDATIONS

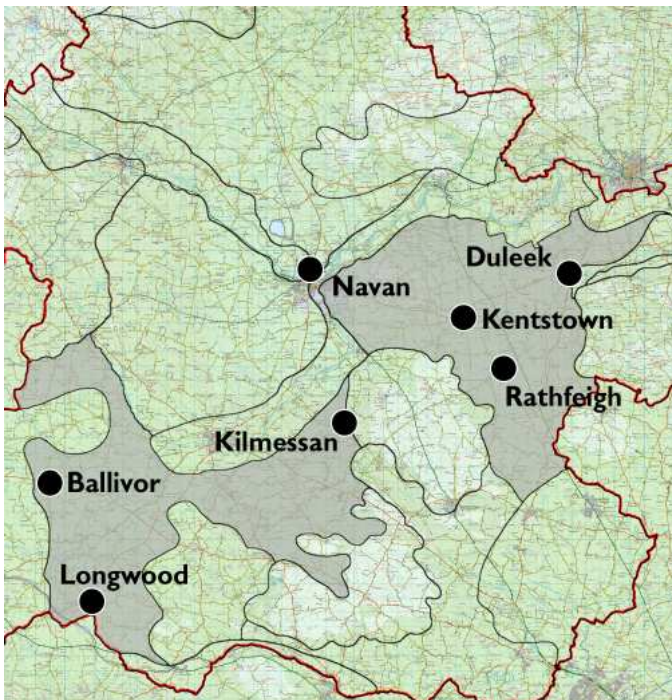
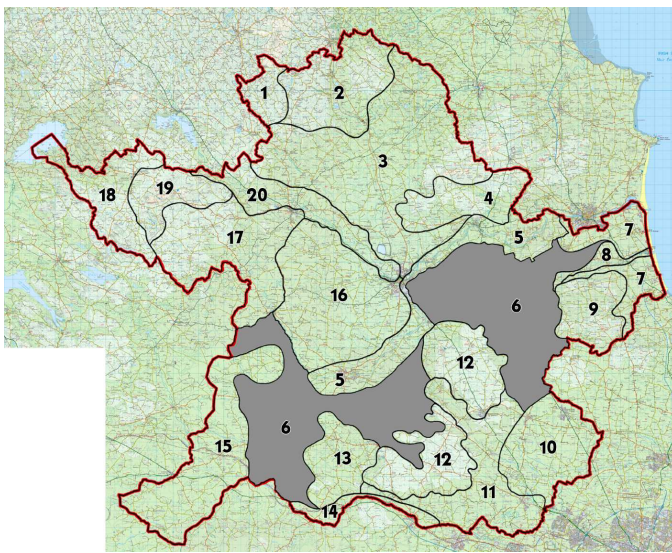
1. Preserve the Boyne Valley as a unique landscape setting for Trim, Slane, Navan and Newgrange, some of the most valuable historic assets in the County.
2. Maintain the viability of small scale farming which is complimentary to the landscape character and critical to maintaining the condition of features such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands.
3. Produce design guidelines to provide information on suitable land uses and types of development including scales, layouts, locations, materials.
4. Produce design guidelines to aid the development of new visitor facilities and the enhancement of existing ones including parking areas, signage/ interpretation methods, methods of interpretation, toilets and picnic areas.
5. Improve public access to the river and historic features in a sensitive manner through the creation of way marked trails and driving routes. Interpret and communicate the full range of attractions in this area to relieve visitor pressures on key sites during peak periods.
6. Enhance the appearance of urban fringe areas through planting of trees and hedgerows and maximise the potential for amenity areas adjacent to population centres to provide buffer zones between urban and rural areas.
7. Respect the unique scale and character of historic settlements which are still very much intact in terms of historic character. The production of guidelines that are unique to each settlement would ensure that development is properly integrated.
8. Have regard to the fact that the entire River corridor is designated as an SAC and the stretch between Navan and Drogheda is also an NHA. Development should not conflict with the reasons for which these designations have been made.
9. When siting development have regard to the nature of views within this area: the river valley is narrow and high sided so views

along its length and across to either side are clear and often uninterrupted. Development on the skyline should be avoided unless it is demonstrated to have no adverse visual impacts that cannot be mitigated against.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity to accommodate large farm buildings due to the high sensitivity of the landscape and the enclosed nature of this LCA. Any such development would require careful planning considering location, appearance and landscape treatment.
2. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new visitor facilities. This LCA is rich in visitor attractions but also in existing visitor facilities so care should be taken to avoid negative cumulative impacts on landscape and visual character than may be caused by further development. Key visitor attractions are located at Trim, Slane and Newgrange (Bru na Boinne Visitors Centre).
3. Due to the exceptional landscape value and high sensitivity of the Boyne Valley, this LCA has low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house residential developments. It provides the setting for historic features of international importance (Bru na Boinne WHS).
4. Low potential capacity to accommodate one off houses. Any such development should be carefully planned in terms of location, scale and materials with particular regard had to the cumulative effects of one off houses concentrated in a particular area and the sensitivities of the Bru na Boinne WHS.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings, estate houses, barns etc to a different use provided the types of uses are suitable for the character of the buildings and surrounding landscapes. They should be carefully planned in terms of location, scale and materials.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to their visual prominence within the valley and in relation to the setting of the river corridor.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate new transport routes due to the exceptional landscape value and high sensitivity of this LCA. The future upgrading of existing roads would also need to be carefully planned to avoid the loss of landscape features that screen existing road and rail corridors.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services that would be detrimental to the integrity of existing landscape features due to the high sensitivity of the area.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind turbines due to the significant visual impact of such development within the valley or adjacent to the river corridor and its setting.
10. Low potential capacity for biomass and commercial forestry, which would alter the natural character of the area which is of high landscape value and is of an intimate scale.

8. LCA 5 - boyne valley



Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Large lowland landscape area composed of rolling drumlins interspersed with numerous large estates and associated parkland. Thick wooded hedgerows, with some conifer plantations, and shelterbelts of ash and larch, separate medium to large fields. Deep roadside drainage ditches and banked hedgerows are a common feature of the landscape in the enclosed rural road corridors. The main transport routes are those radiating from Trim including the R154 to Athboy – Dunboyne, R156 Ballivor - Dunboyne and the R160 to Longwood.

This area of western lowland is less populated and the built fabric consists of scattered dwellings, with concentrations of residential dwellings present adjacent to arterial routes within the vicinity of larger villages such as Longwood and Ballivor, which have expanded significantly and inappropriately due to development pressure.

The landscape character around settlements tends to be a well-managed patchwork of small pastoral fields, dense hedgerows and small areas of broadleaved woodland particularly in the Kildalkey environs where there are estate landscapes with large mature parkland trees. The landscape is predominantly rolling pastureland, although the landscape surrounding Castlerickard has greater diversity than elsewhere in the lowlands with estate landscape, large conifer plantations, and birch woodland around the Boyne river corridor.

In more remote areas, away from settlements, single-track roads wind through less well-managed farmland with rough pasture, overgrown hedgerows and less woodland. Farmland is a variety of scales with square – rectangular fields divided by hedgerows, which are usually clipped to eye-level adjacent to road corridors but are less well managed away from roads. The agricultural landscape comprises a series of small farms rather than few large ones.

Views within this area are generally limited by the complex topography and mature vegetation except at the tops of drumlins where panoramic views are available particularly of the Hill of Tara uplands and Skryne Church. Donore village is critical to the setting of Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site and as such any development in Donore would need to be considered carefully. There is a small cement works outside Kildalkey but the rolling topography limits its visual impact. Short-range views are channelled along narrow valleys between drumlins and often along road or river corridors.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- The central lowlands have a diverse geological make up with the north east comprising of shaly limestone and sandstone and micaceous and pebbly sandstone. The rest of the lowlands formed from calp limestone.
- In the north east of the central lowlands deep and shallow well-drained soils have been developed for agriculture with estate landscapes more prevalent. In the south west a mixture of well drained soils and peaty soil have created a more diverse landscape with areas of fertile agricultural land interspersed with conifer plantations and birch woodland.

8. LCA 6 - central lowlands

- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime with wetter species such as alder, birch, and willow present adjacent to the Royal Canal.

Land Use

- Mix of small - medium rough pasture fields.
- Beech stands and rows of beech and pine.
- Sand & gravel quarries southwest of Hill of Down and near Kilmessan.

Ecology & Habitat

- 3 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's)
Duleek Commons – Is a level drained marsh north west of Duleek.
Thomastown Bog – 3km west of Duleek this raised bog surrounded by wet woodland and grassland.
Balrath Woods – Narrow strips of woodland adjacent to N2 and L125.
- *Cromwells Bush Fen* – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- *Painstown Quarry* - Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- *Cruiceth Quarry* - Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Strong network of well-wooded hedgerows in most parts.
- Range of mature broadleaf copses and rows of pines. Some wetland habitat and wet pasture adjacent to Royal Canal.
- Boyne River Corridor and Stoneyford River are important due to the variety of habitats associated with the rivers.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Royal Canal
- Estate landscapes.
- Buried archaeology but few upstanding historical features.
- Duleek has an historic core with several buildings and artefacts.

Tourism

- Royal Canal is a popular recreational boating route from Dublin to Mullingar.
- Designated walks which branch off the existing Royal Canal Way and provide links to other tourist attractions/heritage towns would be a valuable addition.
- Summerville Demesne at Kentstown has some tourist facilities and potential to develop further attractions.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Longwood is the main settlement. Settlement type predominantly small villages with several medium to large villages.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings. Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern built development adjacent to Clonard.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Longwood*: Large village with small-scale attractive centre, although through traffic is considerable. No new development in centre but large housing developments on the outskirts.
- *Duleek*: Small town with attractive village green. Mix of new development on the urban fringe is unsympathetic to the attractive location.
- *Kildalkey*: Small village that has developed significantly in recent years. No real hub to the village, however surrounding landscape is attractive.
- *Castlerikard*: Small attractive village with castle ruins and church overlooking river. Relatively unspoilt in terms of built environment.



Quarry outside Kildalkey.



Kildalkey main street: there is a lack of services in proportion to the size of the settlement.



Urban fringe, Longwood



Main street, Longwood: attractive and wide street.

8. LCA 6 - central lowlands

RECOMMENDATIONS

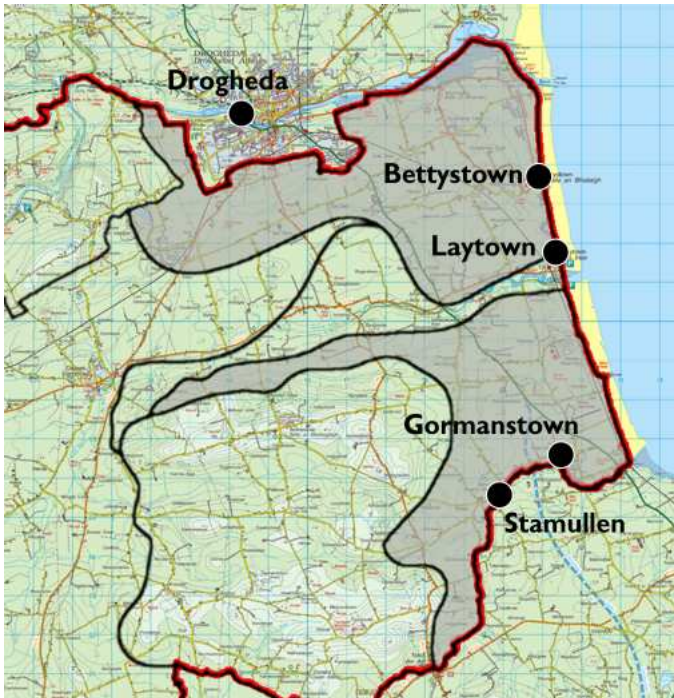
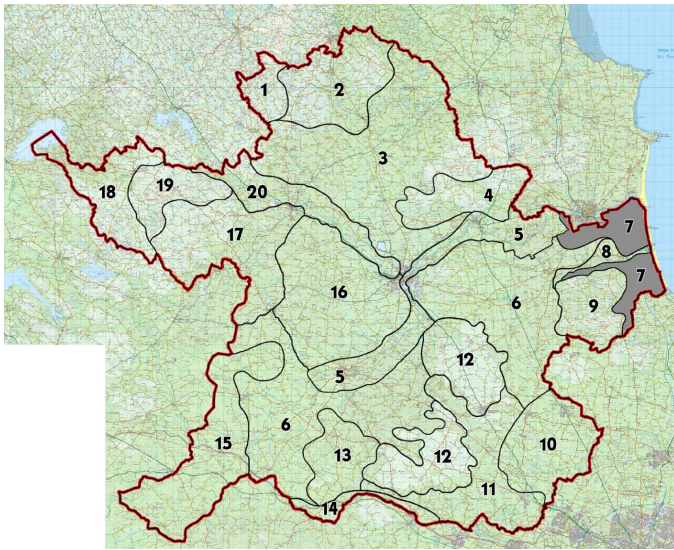
1. This LCA is in good condition so the existing methods of managing the rural landscape should be maintained.
2. The settlements of Longwood, Kildalkey and Kinnegad have potential to be developed as venues for events such as regular farmers markets to increase links between urban and rural areas and sustain a viable rural economy.
3. Future expansion of settlements should take place in accordance with design guidelines to inform layout, scale, detailing, use of materials and location. Also to ensure that the existing strong interfaces between urban and rural areas are maintained.
4. Promote links to the Royal Canal in adjacent area (LCA 14) and interpretation of historic nature of this LCA including 18th Century estate landscapes, buried archaeology and historic towns.
5. Maintain the visual quality of the landscape by avoiding development that would adversely affect short range views between drumlins.
6. Have particular regard to the retention of high quality landscapes on the tops of drumlins which are intervisible with the Hills of Tara and Skryne in LCA 12.
7. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites along the Westmeath border.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. This LCA is characterised by medium-scale farms so large agricultural buildings would be a change of character. This LCA is also of medium sensitivity and high landscape value. Overall the potential capacity to accommodate such development is medium.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities although there are no major attractions in this LCA so any such development would be likely to be small scale, e.g. way-marked trails, scenic drives etc. The strong network of trees and hedgerows would have high screening potential.
3. Medium potential capacity to accommodate multi-house residential developments because they are already a feature on the outskirts of towns and the strong landscape structure of small fields with well-defined boundaries and woodland are capable of accommodating carefully planned developments.
4. Medium potential capacity - One off houses are part of the character of the landscape although future development needs to be carefully planned in terms of the design, location, scale and materials with reference to the cumulative effects of a number of one off houses in a particular area.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate conversion of existing buildings, estate houses, barns, etc to different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning would be important in terms of location, scale and materials.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to the complexity of the area, which has a variety of land uses and a robust landscape structure.

7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate road infrastructure and upgrades to existing roads as the small-scale wooded nature of the landscape has the potential to screen such developments and there are few archaeological features present.
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services as the small scale farmland and variety of land use is not as sensitive to change and is not as archaeologically rich as other areas although the loss of landscape features such as hedgerows would need to be avoided to minimise negative impacts.
9. This LCA would have low potential capacity to accommodate wind farms due to the high number of receptors but medium potential capacity to accommodate single turbines because extensive views could be more easily limited by vegetation and through careful location.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry due to the variety of land uses and strong landscape structure. Commercial forestry is already a feature of the landscape although overprovision for such development needs to be avoided as it will erode the structure of the landscape.

8. LCA 6 - central lowlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The coastal plain is a large area of east coast lowland divided by the River Nanny estuary. It is known as the 'Gold Coast.' The area is characterised by scrubby rolling lowland near the coast interspersed with stands of pine. The River Nanny estuary is a steep sided river plain bound by attractive mixed woodland. The main transport routes are the M1 from Balbriggan to Drogheda, which crosses the River Nanny at Julianstown. Built development is concentrated along the coast with a variety of mixed use retail units, hotels and restaurants. The majority of residential development is in the form of ribbon development with concentrations of modern developments adjacent to the main settlements of Bettystown, Laytown, Morningstown and Julianstown.

Bettystown is located half way between the River Nanny & Boyne estuary. It is the largest settlement on the coast, primarily focused on tourism. There is a concentration of large mixed use facilities, and a large hotel and apartments which are currently being built to the south of the town. The majority of built development is large and out of context with this relatively remote coastal town. The surrounding landscape is degraded particularly on the urban fringe.

Laytown is located at the mouth of the River Nanny estuary, which is an attractive feature of the coastal landscape. Laytown is less commercially developed than Bettystown and has a less distinct hub. There are some attractive period terraces and semi detached houses on the coast, but many of those on the main street are in a state of disrepair. There is also an unattractive housing estate from the 1950's, which fronts on to the coast. The landscape setting is similar to Bettystown with a degraded urban fringe.

Long distance views are available along the coastline, however due to the flat topography of the landscape and overgrown nature of many hedgerows, views inland from the coast are not readily available.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

Shale limestone in the north forms deep poorly drained soils with peaty topsoil adjacent to the mouth of the Boyne estuary creating scrubby lowland with stands of pine.

Shales with interbedded limestone and sandstone and greywacke form a mixture of peaty topsoil at the coast creating wet scrubby lowland giving way to deep mineral soils developed for pasture farmland on the periphery of the Bellewstown uplands.

Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime with wetter species such as alder, birch, and willow present adjacent to the river Nanny estuary.

Land Use

- Mix of small - medium rough pasture fields. Stands of pine and mixed woodland adjacent to estuaries. River Boyne estuary is a shipping route to Drogheda.

Ecology & Habitat

- 1 proposed Special Protection Area (SPA)
Boyne Estuary – Is designated due to the value of this habitat for migrating birds.
- Overgrown scrappy hedgerows.
- Range of mature broadleaf woodland adjacent to estuaries and pine stands at coast.
- Large stretch of continuous coastline providing a valuable habitat for seabirds.
- Some wetland habitat adjacent to River Nanny.

Landscape Value: Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

8. LCA 7 - coastal plain

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- River Boyne
- Estate landscapes.

Tourism

- Boyne estuary is an attractive area sustaining a variety of habitats.
- The coastline of Meath is continuous providing a large area for recreational activities, the most prominent event being the horse racing on the strand at Laytown.
- Bettystown Golf Club.
- The River Nanny and Devlin are popular for angling.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Bettystown, Laytown and Drogheda environs are the largest settlements.
- Settlement type predominantly small towns including Stamullen and Gormanstown.
- Settlements have the most vernacular buildings.
- Built development consists of a mix of commercial developments on the coast, with residential development predominantly in the form of ribbon development along the coast.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Bettystown*: Small town on the east coast. Significant commercial development catering for tourism. Lack of vernacular buildings.
- *Laytown*: Small town at mouth of River Nanny. Unattractive 1950's housing estate detracts from quality of coastal location. No distinct hub to the town.

Forces for Change

- Significant amount of land zoned for future housing, transport corridors and heavy industrial uses.
- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing degraded wooded hedgerows and some loss of hedgerows.
- Extensive development of coastline particularly at Bettystown is out of context with the setting of the town.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Protect and conserve the National Heritage Areas associated with the estuaries and the long-range views afforded from these areas of the River Boyne and Nanny whilst utilising them as a tourism and educational resource.
2. Develop design guidelines for development adjacent to the Boyne and Nanny estuaries as they have a remote detached character, which is rare in this coastal location and as such should be protected.
Consolidate the urban fringes of coastal towns such as Laytown, Bettystown and Morningtown creating a transition between the distinctly urban centres and the rural setting through the creation of shelterbelts and amenity spaces.
3. Develop the east coast rail line as a valuable tourist resource creating ease of access from North and South to a variety of attractions and recreational activities associated with the coastline.
4. Develop design guidelines to allow towns such as Gormanstown and Stamullen to develop in a coherent fashion in terms of scale and architectural style whilst respecting the landscape setting through the provision of native planting to create a textured urban fringe.



Large scale development in Bettystown.



1960's housing development in Laytown.



The beach at Laytown.

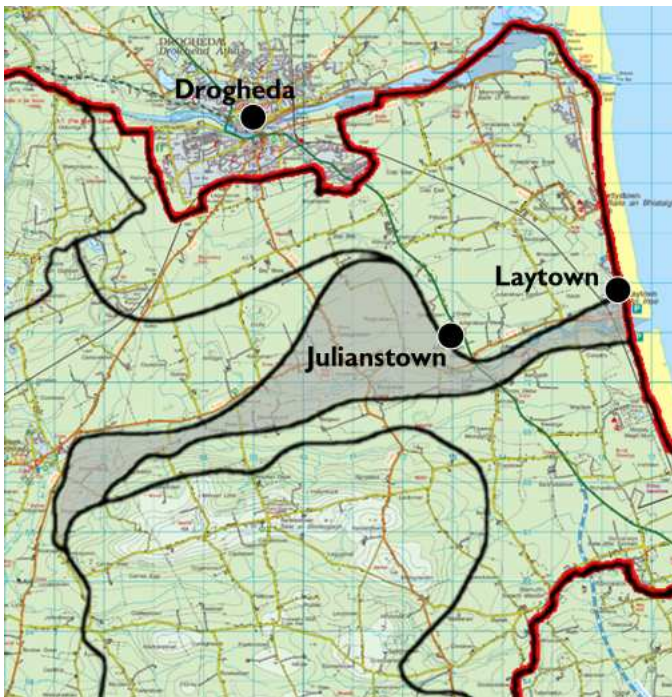
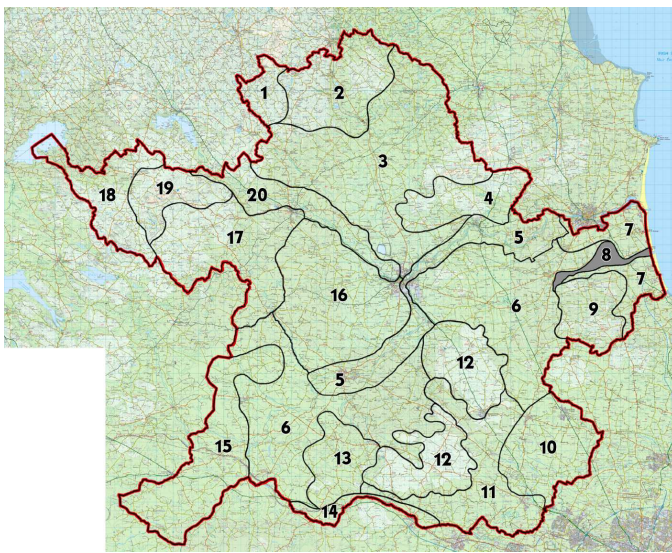


Attractive period houses overlooking the beach at Laytown.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity to accommodate large-scale agricultural buildings as these would be out of character with the local vernacular. The high sensitivity of this area makes it vulnerable to change.
2. Low potential capacity to accommodate large-scale visitor facilities such as hotels and mixed-use complexes due to the relative sensitivity of this LCA and the existing presence of a large number of such facilities.
3. Medium potential capacity to incorporate small-scale facilities such as way marked trails which would create opportunities to improve the landscape condition.
4. Medium potential capacity to incorporate multi-house residential developments as they are part of the existing character. However, particular attention must be paid to design, location, scale and materials so as to avoid adverse cumulative effects.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses which are already part of the landscape character. However, future development must be carefully planned in terms of the design, location, scale and materials so as to avoid adverse cumulative effects.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to different uses or as part of a restoration. Careful planning is important in terms of location, scale and materials.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to the long distance views afforded along the coastline.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate new road infrastructure due to the sensitivity of the landscape. Medium potential capacity to accommodate road upgrades due to the wooded nature of many road corridors.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services as the landscape is highly sensitive and as such would be susceptible to change, e.g. further loss of hedgerows and degradation of farmland.
10. Medium- low potential capacity to accommodate wind farms and single turbines due to extensive views afforded of the coastline from within Meath and neighbouring counties.
11. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass due to the variety of land uses and strong landscape structure. Also medium potential capacity for commercial forestry as it is already a feature of the landscape. However, overprovision should be avoided, as it will erode the structure of the landscape.

8. LCA 7 - coastal plain



Landscape Value: Very High

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Enclosed well-wooded river corridor extending from the east coast of Meath at Laytown to Duleek. The main transport routes are the R132 from Balbriggan to Drogheda, which crosses the River Nanny at Julianstown and the R152 to Drogheda, which bypasses Duleek. Built development is limited due to enclosed river corridor. The main settlement is the small village of Julianstown adjacent the river Nanny.

Julianstown is centred around the Old Mill Hotel, a converted mill on the edge of the river, and the Julianstown Inn public house. The village lacks a hub although, for a village of this size there it has a wealth of period buildings. Both the Julianstown Inn and The Old Mill date from the C19th and there is an attractive row of period terraces on one side of the main thoroughfare. There is a large modern housing development on the outskirts of the village, the scale and style of which, complete with copper cladding is an unsympathetic addition to the urban/rural fringe.

The River Nanny corridor is very enclosed with mixed woodland and an extensive stonewall from Julianstown to the R154 and R152 junction. At Duleek the river forms an attractive plain of wetland and grassland, moving east it becomes more enclosed with woodland opening out into a wide estuary complete with sand bars and steep wooded banks. The estuary passes underneath the old railway bridge at Laytown, which services the east coast line. The landscape of the River Nanny is attractive with extensive mixed woodland and grassland forming a variety of habitats.

Geology & Soils

Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers and shaped into a largely flat lowland plain. Shaly limestone, basalt and granite form poorly drained mineral soils and peaty topsoils underlies the River Nanny estuary. Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime with wetter species such as alder, birch, and willow present adjacent to the River Nanny estuary.

Land Use

- Mix of small - medium rough pasture fields.
- Stands of pine and mixed woodland adjacent to estuaries.
- River Boyne is a shipping route to Drogheda.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations
- *Nanny Estuary* is an important site for bird wildlife.
- Overgrown scrappy hedgerows.
- Range of mixed broadleaf woodland within river corridor.
- Some wetland habitat adjacent to River Nanny.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- River Nanny

Tourism

- River Nanny is a valuable wildlife resource particularly the estuary adjacent to the town of Laytown.
- River Nanny is popular for angling.
- Sensitively planned riverside walk would be a valuable addition allowing people to appreciate this unique landscape.
- Sonairte, the National Ecology Centre near Laytown.

8. LCA 8 - nanny valley

Settlements and Built Structures

- Julianstown, a small village, is the largest settlement
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development consists of a mix of vernacular buildings and modern residential developments.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Julianstown*: Small village centred on the pub and hotel with attractive period cottages. Large modern housing development on outskirts with styling uncharacteristic of surrounding built context.

Forces for Change

- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing degraded wooded hedgerows and some loss of hedgerows.
- Potential extensive residential development of at Julianstown would be out of context with the setting of the village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain the integrity of the farming landscape where 18th Century historic influences are most evident. Incentives should be provided to encourage landowners to maintain estate parkland, avenues of mature parkland trees, boundary walls and clipped hedgerows.
2. Have regard to the preservation of historic built elements, such as estate houses and other vernacular buildings and structures which make an important and positive contribution to landscape character. Adaptation or modernisation of built elements should be carried out with respect to original detailing.
3. Retain the current mix of land uses in this LCA – wetland, rough grassland, farmland, woodland and scrub – but encourage enhanced maintenance to prevent decline in condition of hedgerows, trees and boundary walls through financial incentives to landowners.
4. Maintain high quality views of the undeveloped river corridor, particularly at the river mouth where both banks are well wooded and where the meeting of the sea and the river creates a particularly attractive landscape.
5. Have regard to the ecological value of the river and associated wetland, sand bars and mudflats, woodland and coastal area. Much of this is designated as an NHA and is of national importance for wildlife. These elements should be conserved, enhanced where necessary and well managed.
6. Promote new development that is in keeping with the overall landscape character and that consolidates rather than expands existing settlements such as Julianstown. Design guidelines providing information on local vernacular styles would assist this objective.
7. Maximise the opportunities to attract visitors to this area by improving public transport routes between the railway station and key attractions in the area.



Julianstown Inn adjacent to the R152.



Attractive period houses in Julianstown.



River Nanny estuary.

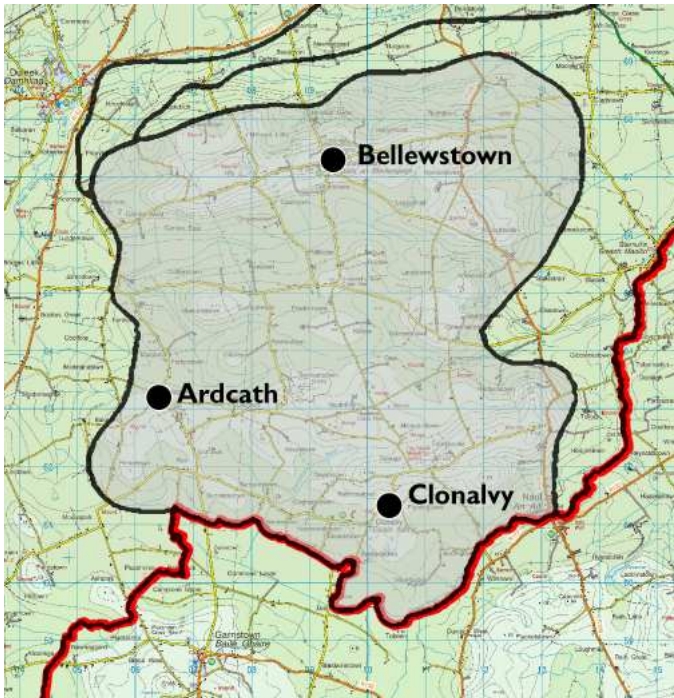
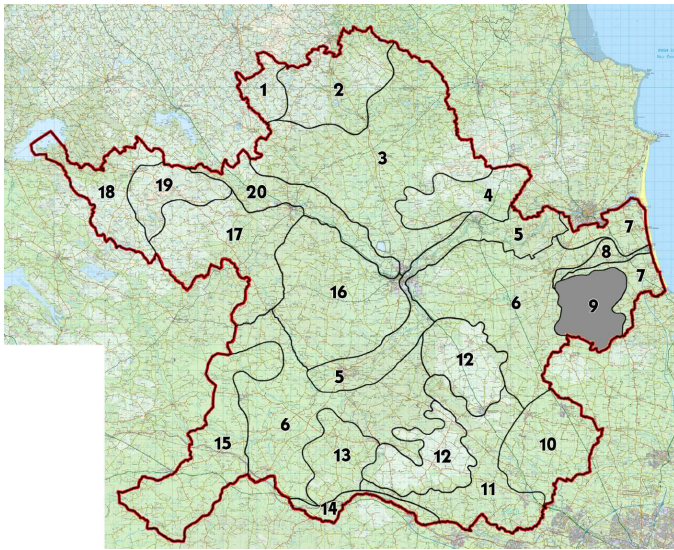


Railway bridge over the Nanny estuary near Laytown

8. LCA 8 - nanny valley

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity for large modern farm buildings due to the small-scale nature of the river and surrounding field pattern.
2. Low potential capacity to accommodate any built structures associated with tourism but medium potential capacity to accommodate small-scale additions such as way-marked trails, picnic areas, etc.
3. Low potential capacity for multi-house residential development because such development would be out of scale with the small-scale nature of the river corridor.
4. Low potential capacity for one off houses due to the sensitive nature of the river and its setting.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate restoration of existing buildings but conversion of uses must be suitable to the small-scale nature and overall sensitivity of this LCA.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, as they would significantly alter the natural character of the river and its setting.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate new road development and existing road upgrades, as they would significantly alter the natural character of the river and its setting. Any development of the NI road corridor would have potentially adverse impacts on the riverside setting of Julianstown.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate such underground services, as the area is highly sensitive and susceptible to change which would alter its small-scale character.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate turbines as a group or individually due to the small scale nature of this LCA and potential visual impacts on the river and its setting.
10. Low potential capacity for biomass and commercial forestry as they would be at odds with the existing character of mixed woodland and rough pasture.



Landscape Value: Very High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The Bellewstown Hills consist of a large remote area of steeply rolling hills to the south east of Duleek, which is intensively managed with well wooded hedgerows. The rolling landscape creates an enclosed environment. Built development consists of scattered detached dwellings in the countryside and ribbon development along rural roads, there is a concentration of dwellings in Bellewstown.

This LCA is a prominent feature of the landscape from the lowlands in the east Meath farmland and provide excellent views over the lowlands and the coastline. The main feature of Bellewstown village is the racecourse and some ribbon development adjacent to the racecourse.

The landscape in the uplands is open and well managed with extensive clipped hedgerows and large pasture and arable fields. In the lowlands and the foot of the upland areas, field patterns are smaller and the hedgerows are more wooded. The landscape is generally in good condition.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Greywacke and shale with imbedded limestone and sandstone form the Bellewstown Hills and create a mixture of deep and shallow well draining mineral soils that have been developed for agriculture.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime.

Land Use

- Mix of medium - large pasture and arable fields.
- Well-managed hedgerows
- A number of large quarries

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations
- *Bellewstown Uplands* is a former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Well-managed hedgerows and gorse in uplands.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Bellewstown Uplands

Tourism

- Bellewstown Racecourse has a variety of race meetings throughout the season.
- Bellewstown Golf Club.
- Bellewstown uplands provide panoramic views over the lowlands and the Meath coastline.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Bellewstown, a small village, is the largest settlement.
- Settlement type predominantly small villages/ gaiahs including Ardath and Clonalvy.
- Settlements have many vernacular buildings.
- Built development consists vernacular buildings and in attractive landscape setting.

Description of Key Settlements.

- *Bellewstown*: Is a small village comprising ribbon development with panoramic views over the lowland.

8. LCA 9 - bellewstown hills

Forces for Change

- Any built development could alter the remote character of the area.
- Development in bordering County Fingal

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain the integrity of 18th Century farming landscape by encouraging the management of estate parkland, avenues of mature trees, boundary walls and clipped hedges.
2. Preserve the integrity of Bellewstown as a landmark in the wider area and consider long-range views from Bellewstown when siting development in adjacent lowland areas.
3. Maintain the ecological value of designated sites within a network of habitats formed by farmland trees and hedgerows.
4. Promotion of new development that is in keeping with the overall landscape character and consolidates existing settlements rather than ribbon development extending along road corridors.
5. Continue existing management practices to sustain well-managed farmland in this LCA.
6. Continue to promote Bellewstown racecourse as the primary visitor attraction in this LCA.
7. Implement a strategy to protect border areas of the county from potential development in the adjacent County Fingal.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large-scale agricultural buildings as farming in this area is generally large scale. However, many locations are likely to be visually prominent so careful siting of such development away from prominent ridges and hillsides will be important to avoid significant visual impact.
2. Medium potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities. The main attraction in this LCA is the racecourse at Bellewstown, which may benefit from additional or enhanced facilities. Any development of the racecourse would need to take into account high visibility of the racecourse from surrounding lowlands.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house residential developments as they would be out of character with the existing character of built development in this LCA. Currently there are no major settlements in this area that could accommodate such development.
4. Medium potential capacity to accommodate one off houses, as they are part of the existing character of the area. However ribbon development should be avoided, as it would erode the rural character of the area.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning is important in terms of location, scale and materials.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, as they would be visually prominent particularly in the uplands of Bellewstown.



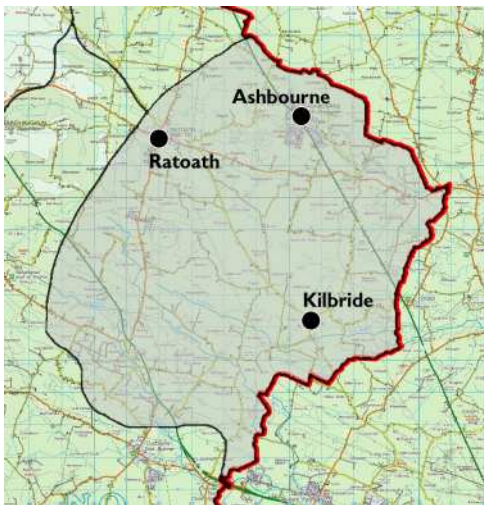
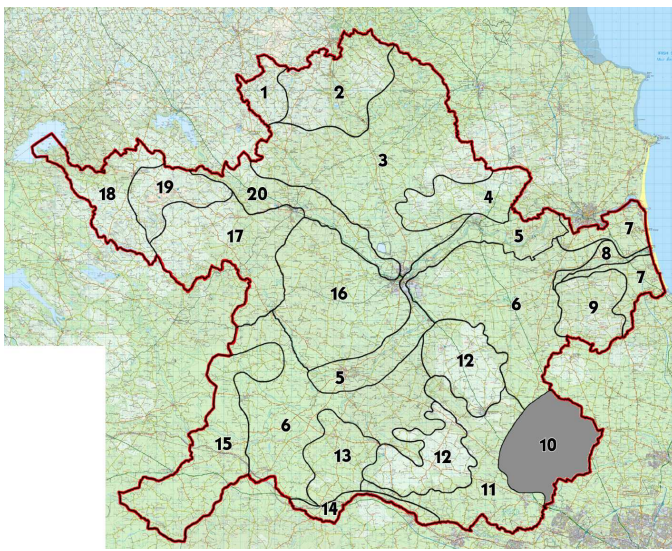
View from Bellewstown Uplands.



Vernacular stone walls as field boundaries

7. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services as the landscape is highly sensitive and as such would be susceptible to change e.g. further loss of hedgerows and degradation of farmland.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind farms due to visual prominence of upland areas however single turbines could be accommodated in lowland areas to the south east and west of this character area. Overall potential capacity is low- medium.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry as it would be out of character with the existing pastoral character of this LCA.

8. LCA 9 - bellewstown hills



Landscape Value: Low

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The Ward Lowlands are a large area of pasture and arable farmland in the south east of Meath, which contain the towns of Ratoath and Ashbourne and extend to the Meath – Fingal border. As such this LCA is under significant development pressure due to the proximity of the Dublin metropolitan area. The main transport routes are the N2 from Dublin – Drogheda, the N3 from Mulhuddart – Navan, and the R125 from Swords – Ratoath. Built development in the area has been significant in recent years due to improved road infrastructure in Meath and Dublin itself. There is significant development in the Ratoath and Ashbourne environs and extensive ribbon development adjacent to main arterial routes.

Ashbourne is a large town off the N2 national primary route. Due to improved road infrastructure and population growth in the county it has developed rapidly in recent years. There is a significant volume of new development in the form of commercial warehouses, retail units and large-scale residential schemes that have developed with no coherent structure. The town centre is a mix of vernacular buildings and large scale shopping complexes that are out of character with the scale of the town and poorly integrated with each other. Older housing estates to the southwest of the town are more attractive. The surrounding landscape is degraded with the edge of the town creating a distinct urban fringe that is out of character with the rural setting.

Ratoath is a medium sized town in between the N2 and N3. The R125 provides a link between Dunshaughlin and the N2. There is a significant volume of new development in the form of retail units and large-scale residential schemes in Ratoath although however the town centre has a coherent structure and character. Development is prominent on the edge of the town creating a distinct urban fringe.

The landscape has a degraded quality due to the lack of management, loss of hedgerows and larger fields adjacent to the continually expanding urban fringe. The development of these towns threatens to erode the rural character of the area.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers and shaped into a largely flat lowland plain.
- Calp limestone has formed deep well drained mineral soils that have been developed for agriculture.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime.

Land Use

- Mix of medium – large pasture and arable fields.
- Commercial development.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations
- Overgrown scrappy hedgerows.
- Urban fringe is in poor condition.

8. LCA 10 - the ward lowlands

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.

Tourism

- Broadmeadow Country House and Equestrian Centre provide tranquil surroundings for active recreation.
- Fairyhouse Racecourse has a variety of meetings on throughout the season.
- Ashbourne Golf Club
- Recently opened and proposed hotels in Ashbourne

Settlements and Built Structures

- Ashbourne & Ratoath are the main settlements.
- Settlement type, predominantly large towns.
- Some small villages including Kilbride
- Settlements have a lack of vernacular buildings.
- Built development of commercial, industrial and residential developments on the urban fringe.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Ashbourne*: Moderate growth town undergoing significant growth. Landscape setting is poor due to poor management and ever-increasing urban fringe.
- *Ratoath*: Small town with pleasant character in the town centre. Residential developments have significantly increased the scale of the town. Landscape setting is poor due to poor management and ever-increasing urban fringe.

Forces for Change

- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing degraded wooded hedgerows and loss of hedgerows.
- Extensive commercial and residential development that is out of context with the setting of the towns.
- Ashbourne's re-designation in the County Development Plan as a medium growth town
- Development along the M2 and M3 motorway corridors

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Design guidelines will be a critical measure required on adoption of the county Development Plan to enhance the appearance and function of landscapes around road corridors and settlements.
2. The condition of these is currently declining and causing erosion of the character of adjacent rural landscape.
3. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
4. Consolidate urban fringes particularly Ratoath and Ashbourne, including appropriate landscape treatment to soften urban edges and provide opportunities for public access and recreation in proximity to population centres.
5. The two main settlements in this LCA could also be developed as a focus for rural enterprises such as farmers markets which would allow for rural diversification and provide for stronger links between settlements and their rural surroundings.



Poorly integrated mixed use development in Ashbourne.



Urban fringe, Ashbourne.

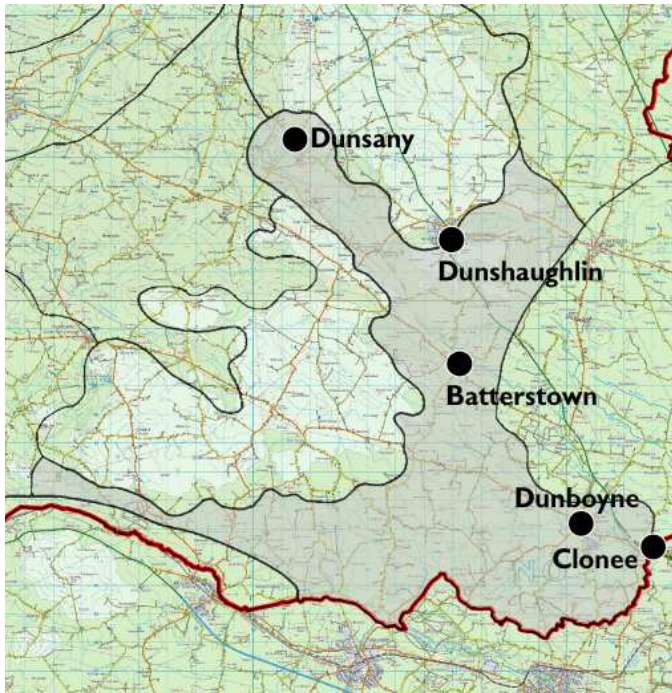
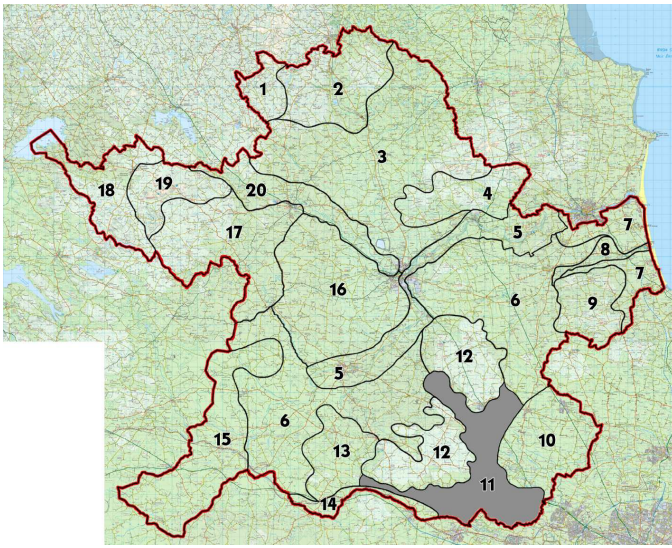


Main street in Ashbourne.

8. LCA 10 - the ward lowlands

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large farm buildings. The existing character of farmland in this LCA is large in scale but careful planning would be necessary to avoid such development encroaching on the degraded urban fringe and further reducing its condition.
2. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new visitor facilities. Currently there are no major attractions in this area so such development is likely to be small scale.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house developments due to the significant growth of this type of development in recent years. Such development should be limited to the existing urban areas, which have been designated to accommodate such growth, and in these locations they should be very carefully planned in terms of location, scale and design to mitigate against potential adverse impacts, particularly cumulative impacts.
4. One off houses are part of the character in the more rural parts of this LCA. Medium potential capacity to accommodate such development although it must be carefully planned in terms of the design, location, scale and materials with particular regard paid to the cumulative effects of a number of one off houses in a particular area.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning is important in terms of location, scale and materials.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, as they would be a visually prominent feature due to the topography of the landscape and the degraded character of urban fringes, which they would exacerbate.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new road development because busy transport corridors are part of the existing character. However, the design of transport corridors (both new and upgrading of existing roads) should be carefully planned to minimise and mitigate against adverse impacts on the landscape and avoid further loss of landscape structure. Where possible, road corridors should be replanted to minimise their impacts in the long term and increase their value and green corridors through this LCA.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services as the landscape is highly sensitive and as such would be susceptible to change such as further loss of hedgerows and degradation of farmland.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind farm development in groups or as single turbines due to the high visibility and number of viewers in this area.
10. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass and commercial forestry as both are out of character with the area. An increase in number of well-managed hedgerows would be more appropriate to this LCA.



Landscape Value: Very High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The South East Lowlands encompass the area between the Hill of Tara to the southern border and the Dunboyne environs. The landscape is predominantly rolling lowland with large areas dominated by attractive estate landscapes with associated parkland, particularly surrounding Dunsany, Dunboyne and the north of Dunshaughlin. This parkland has a mix of smaller estates and stud farms that create a distinctive character. The 2 main transport routes are the R154 from Batterstown to Trim and the R156 Dunboyne to Ballivor.

Dunsany is a small village to the north of Dunshaughlin which has remained relatively untouched by modern development. The local vernacular is of detached stone houses with brick detailing although there are some more modern bungalows in the form of ribbon development on the northern approach. The village is enclosed by the estate landscapes of Kileen Castle and Dunsany Castle. The latter has particularly attractive stonewalls and grand entrances. Dunsany has a distinctive character due to the intimate scale of the village and its attractive landscape setting.

Dunboyne is a large town with an attractive historic centre, particularly the village green surrounded by mature lime trees. The town is an important traffic node linking north Dublin with Navan to the north and Kinnegad to the west. There is extensive modern housing on the periphery and ribbon development adjacent to the main arterial routes. The interface between the edge of town and the surrounding countryside is in poor condition.

The land is extensively used for pasture in the north, with arable land more prominent further south particularly in the Ratoath environs. The landscape condition gradually deteriorates to the south of Dunshaughlin where development pressure from the Dublin metropolitan area becomes more evident (particularly around Ratoath and Dunboyne.)

The landscape is relatively enclosed due to the topography and wooded hedgerows although longer views are afforded at the top of many drumlins. Many of the views in the lowlands are restricted to those along the road corridors and the immediate hinterland.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement. Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers.
- Calp limestone gives way to shaly limestone and shales with interbedded with limestone or sandstone forming deep well drained soils with localised areas of peaty topsoil and lowland which are apparent surrounding Dunshaughlin.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime.

Land Use

- Mix of small pasture fields with some large arable fields in the south.
- Small copses of beech and birch woodland.
- Extensive estate landscapes.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations.
- Strong network of wooded hedgerows.

8. LCA 11 - south east lowlands

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Estate landscapes.
- Dunsany Castle, based of one of Hugh de Lacy's tower houses, extended and improved at least four times since the 18th Century
- St Nicholas Church, 15thC ruins and a twin church of that at Killeen which was also built by a member of the Plunkett Family
- 18th Century houses proliferate to south of this character area.
- Railway Architecture 1940-1960
- Water Tower, mid C20th design

Tourism

- Dunshaughlin Golf Club
- Hammond House and Gardens
- Dunsany and Killeen Castles
- Historic features in centre of Dunboyne

Settlements and Built Structures

- Main settlement is Dunboyne (see description of key settlements).
- Settlement type is small villages and towns.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern development adjacent to the main towns of Dunshaughlin and Dunboyne.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Dunboyne*: Large growth town with attractive historic centre and village green. Large modern housing developments on outskirts. Degraded landscape setting.
- *Dunsany*: Small attractive village surrounded by extensive estate landscape. Minimal modern development. Large mixed-use development being constructed on outskirts.
- *Dunshaughlin*: Small town that has grown fairly rapidly due to its close proximity to Dublin Metropolitan Area and M3 motorway. Lack of vernacular buildings in town centre.

Forces for Change

- The proposed M3 motorway will dramatically change the scale of road infrastructure
- Motorway interchanges are likely to encourage further development around them.
- Significant residential development in Dunboyne is likely to be exacerbated by improved road infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
2. Recognise the importance of stud farming to the upkeep of the landscape in the centre of the Dunboyne farmland and maintain the viability of this industry by sensitive siting of development that may adversely affect it.
3. Consolidate urban fringes of settlements and favour location of development on infill sites rather than ribbon development extending along approaches to settlements. Use appropriate landscape treatment along edges of development to soften urban fringe. Promote and enhance urban fringes to provide increased opportunities for amenity and recreation use. Landscape enhancements to include; rebuilding of dry stonewalls and replanting of hedges where they have been lost or are in poor condition.



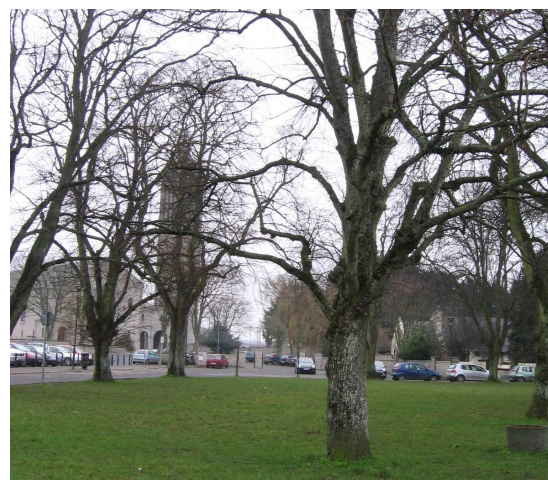
Hedgerows being lost due to enlargement of fields outside Dunshaughlin.



Large scale housing development in Dunshaughlin.



Urban fringe, Dunboyne.



Town green, centre of Dunboyne

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

4. Develop design guidelines for the restoration and enhancement of landscape condition surrounding road corridors.
5. Provide incentives for landowners to improve management and sustain the viability of agriculture and other rural industries.
6. Develop design guidelines for the conservation and restoration of historic features and areas such as stonewalls, disused buildings and estate villages.
7. The settlements of Dunshaughlin and Dunboyne have the potential to be developed as a focus for rural enterprises such as farmers markets which would allow for rural diversification and provide for stronger links between settlements and their rural surroundings.
8. Conservation of 17th and 18th Century hunting woodlands as an aesthetic, ecological and amenity resource.
9. Maintain the integrity of 18th Century farming landscape by encouraging the management of estate parkland, avenues of mature trees, boundary walls and clipped hedges.
10. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites along the Westmeath border.

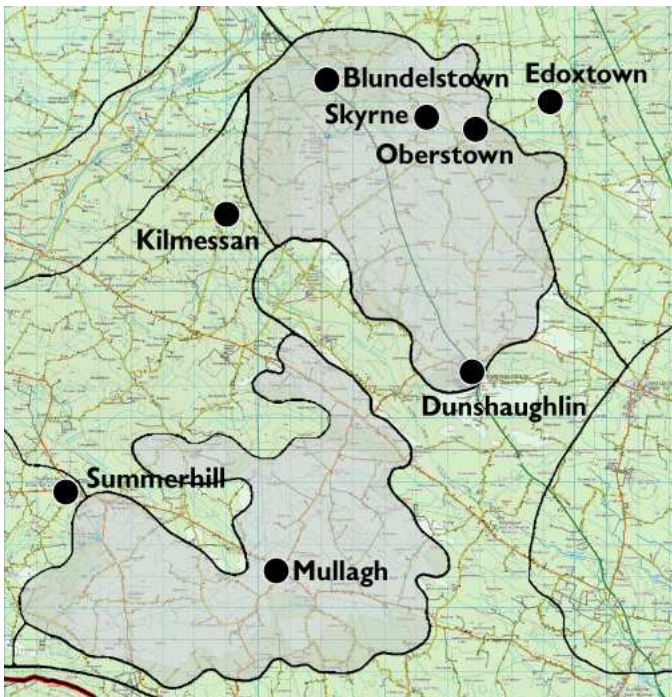
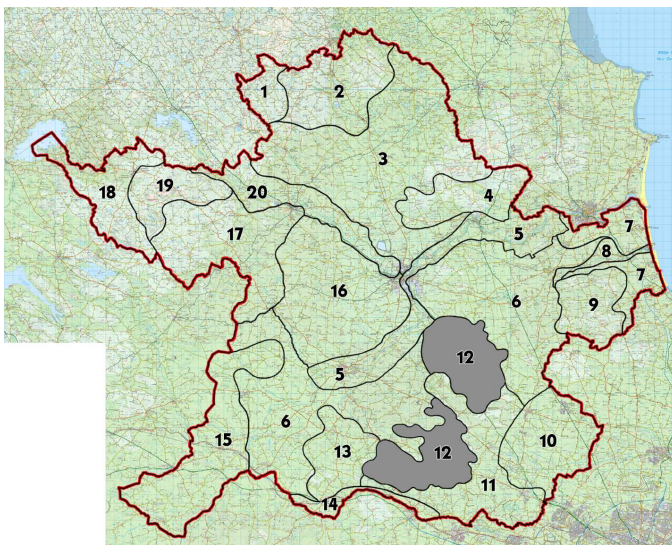
POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large-scale agricultural buildings although careful planning, considering location, appearance and landscape treatment will be necessary to avoid negative impacts.
2. Medium potential capacity to accommodate tourist facilities that at present are limited, although the construction of a large mixed-use resort in Dunsany will be a significant addition. Future development needs to be carefully designed with particular reference to landscape setting, scale and vernacular style.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house developments due to the significant growth of this type of development in recent years. Such development should be limited to the existing urban areas, which have been designated to accommodate such growth, and in these locations they should be very carefully planned in terms of location, scale and design to mitigate against potential adverse impacts, particularly cumulative impacts.
4. Medium potential capacity to accommodate one off houses with careful planning in terms of the local vernacular, design, scale and materials and regard to the potential cumulative effects of locating a number of one off houses in a particular area.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning in terms of location, scale and materials with regard to the potential impacts of the changes of use on landscape character.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to the enclosed nature of the drumlin landscape which offers good opportunities to screen such development or reduce its prominence.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate new transport

routes. Main transport corridors are already a feature of the area but the upgrading of existing roads must be carefully planned to avoid the loss of landscape features that screen existing road and rail corridors.

8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services as this LCA is not as archaeologically rich as other areas although the loss of landscape features such as hedgerows would need to be restored to reduce negative impacts.
9. Low potential capacity for wind farms but medium potential capacity for single turbines if appropriately sited to reduce impacts. Views are limited due to topography and wooded hedgerows but there would be a high number of viewers and long-range views from the tops of drumlins, which would need to be taken into account when planning location and layout.
10. Due to extensive growth the landscape character is in a degraded condition. The addition of biomass or commercial forestry would lead to a further loss of landscape features and as such this area has a low potential capacity for such development.

8. LCA 11 - south east lowlands



Landscape Value: Exceptional

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: National / International

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The Hill of Tara is an area of raised upland to the south of Navan. It is immediately adjacent to the N3 national primary route, which links Navan to Dunshaughlin to the east of the Hill of Tara. The landscape comprises broad rolling hills, separated by a mixture of well-managed small and large fields, which are enclosed by thick thorn hedgerows and mature trees (ash, beech and oak.)

The upland aspect of the Hill of Tara provides panoramic views over the landscape, where the wealth of heritage within this part of Meath can be clearly seen. Skyrne Church is a prominent landmark to the east. There are also a large number of raths located throughout the rolling drumlin landscape. The upland landscape is open in the character but the lowlands are well-wooded and enclosed. This is particularly the case for rural road corridors and the existing N3 road, which has minimal visual impact on the Hill of Tara.

Overall this LCA is well managed and has high scenic value, although it is in poorer condition in the Kilmessan environs and to the north of Dunshaughlin.

Kilmessan is a large heritage village to the north east of the Hill of Tara within close proximity of the N3. The built fabric of the village is disjointed in both style and scale: both new residential and office units have been developed rapidly in recent years and are at odds with the scale and architectural character of the village. Pressure for further development will be significant, due to the towns proximity to the N3 and proposed M3. Therefore it is vital that careful consideration is given to all future development to avoid expansion of the village in an unsympathetic manner.

Dunshaughlin is a large town located to the south of the Hill of Tara. The N3 national primary route runs through the town and continuing pressure from the Dublin metropolitan area has led to Dunshaughlin developing as a commuter town. The main street of Dunshaughlin has few buildings of merit considering the size of the town and much of the built environment has developed over the last 30 years. There are many large housing developments on the edge of town. Some have been successfully integrated into the fabric of the town, although in general the scale and style has created a monotony of residential developments.

Land use is predominantly pasture with small concentrations of arable land in both the uplands and lowlands. There are some small copses within the area but commercial forestry is not present. The rich archaeological heritage of this area, has to some extent constrained development apart from the recent updating of transport infrastructure.

The proposed M3 motorway is the singular most important transport infrastructure development to be built in Meath in recent years and it will dramatically change the volume of car traffic and travel times throughout the county. The impact it will have on the landscape will be considerable, as the new road will be significantly larger than the existing N3 national primary road.

This LCA is of National / International Importance. At present it does not meet the full criteria for International Importance (page 4) but it does have sufficient landscape heritage merit to warrant its promotion as an international attraction and an application for a international designation by UNESCO.

8. LCA 12 - tara skyrne hills

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers.
- Comprised of shales with interbedded limestone, conglomeratic limestone and calp limestone forming deep and shallow free draining acidic soils.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime.

Land Use

- Mix of small – medium pasture fields.
- Well-wooded hedgerows with mature trees.
- N3 National primary route from Navan - Dunshaughlin.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations.
- Strong network of hedgerows.
- Many mature trees and broadleaf copses.
- Well-managed agricultural farmland.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Estate landscapes.
- Hill of Tara, site of the home of the ancient High Kings of Ireland and giving the title 'Royal County' to Meath.
- St Columba's Church ruins, with visual link to Tara, is the site of the place chosen for safekeeping the Saint's shrine during the C11th, Augustinian abbey was founded later although the ruins are those of the parish Church built in the C15th.
- Skryne Hill and church is a mediaeval tower ('the lands of Skryne were granted by Hugh de Lacy to Adam de Fergo who in 1172 held a motte and castle here')
- Railway architecture / bridges
- Lismullen, Corbalton Hall
- Kileen Castle, started 1180 by Hugh de Lacy now in ruins.

Tourism

- Hill of Tara is one of the main heritage tourist attractions in County Meath and Ireland and provides panoramic views over the lowlands.
- The Hill of Tara is linked to the Tain Trail heritage trail.
- Skryne Church is important landmark and provides panoramic views towards the Hill of Tara.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Kilmessan (see description of key settlements).
- Settlement type is predominantly small villages/ graigs including Edoxtown, Oberstown and Skryne which are all relatively intact and unspoilt.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with a large concentration of modern development adjacent to Kilmessan.



New housing development in Kilmessan is out of scale and character within the context of the village.



Main street Kilmessan.



Kilmessan quarry to the north of the village.



Kilmessan railway bridge

8. LCA 12 - tara skryne hills

Description of Key Settlements

- *Dunshaughlin*: Medium sized town that has developed rapidly in recent years due to close proximity to Dublin Metropolitan Area and M3. Lack of vernacular buildings in town. Modern development throughout town particularly on edges.
- *Kilmessan*: Small town which has developed rapidly in recent years. Lack of local vernacular. Modern development throughout town with concentrations on outskirts.

Forces for Change

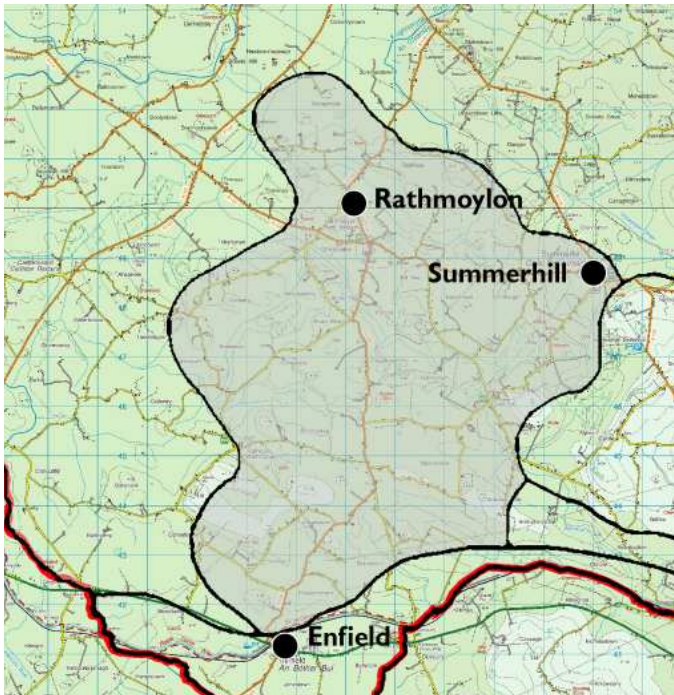
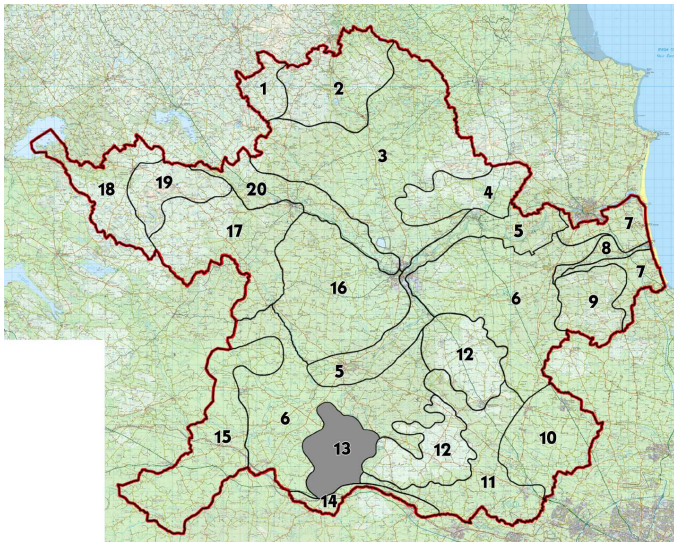
- The proposed M3 motorway will dramatically change the scale of road infrastructure and the interchange at Dunshaughlin may have knock-on effects for development in this LCA.
- Significant residential development in Kilmessan has significantly increased the scale and eroded the character of the village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Submit an application to UNESCO for an International Designation. Once this has been lodged, there is a strong case for treating the site as a 'Potential Site of International Importance' and putting in place policies that will afford it protection in keeping with this status. In our opinion the Hill of Tara is worthy of an application on the basis of its rarity, scale, age and undoubted importance in Irish history. The Hill of Tara already attracts a significant number of international visitors.
2. Preserve the landscape around the Hills of Tara and Skryne as part of a nationally/internationally culturally important landscape including conservation of the setting of both hills due to their prominence within the wider landscape and panoramic nature of views afforded from them.
3. Protect and maintain the wooded character at the base of both hills as a buffer to development in adjacent lowland areas and as an integral part of the character of the hilltops.
4. Develop design guidance for landscape treatment and architectural design of new development with particular reference to transport routes and existing settlements of Summerhill, Kilmessan and Dunshaughlin.
5. Preserve Skryne church as a landmark within the wider lowland landscape.
6. Seek to consolidate existing settlements by locating new development within urban areas rather than as one-off developments within rural areas.
7. Improve directional signage for the Hill of Tara from the N3 and other secondary transport routes.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity for large-scale agricultural buildings due to the high sensitivity and exceptional value of this LCA and the views afforded from the hills, particularly the Hill of Tara.
2. The Hill of Tara is of national/international importance although development in terms of tourism is limited to car parking facilities and signage. Medium potential capacity to accommodate further small-scale visitor facilities such as way marked trails and low-key signage.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multiple house developments due to their high impact on views afforded from the hills and of the hills from the lowlands.
4. The landscape would have a medium potential capacity to accommodate one off houses with careful planning in terms of the local vernacular, design, location, scale and materials and cumulative effects.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning in terms of location, scale and materials with reference to the change of use, causing a more significant impact.
6. This area has low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to their visual prominence and the high sensitivity of this LCA.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate new transport routes and the upgrading of existing roads would also need to be carefully planned to avoid the loss of landscape features that screen existing road and rail corridors.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services that would be detrimental to the integrity of existing landscape features due to the high sensitivity of the area and large numbers of archaeological artefacts.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind turbine development due to the panoramic views afforded from the hills and the historical importance of this LCA.
10. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass and commercial forestry due to high sensitivity and landscape value. Such development would significantly alter the existing pastoral character of the landscape.



Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: National

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The Rathmoylan Lowlands are found to the south of Trim and the Boyne Valley. The landscape is predominantly rolling hills and lowland with a mix of pastoral and arable farms. Estate landscapes are prominent around Summerhill with extensive beech avenues and stonewalls, further west the landscape becomes very wooded, particularly at Rathmoylan, which has a very distinctive enclosed small scale rolling drumlin landscape interspersed with copses. The main transport route is the R156 from Dunboyne – Ballivor. Built development is concentrated around Rathmoylan and Summerhill with detached dwellings scattered throughout the rural hinterland.

Rathmoylan is a small village to the south of Trim, that has developed around the junction between the R156 and R159. The village is a local centre in the Trim development area, providing services to the rural hinterland. The village has a large walled church and a rectory on opposite sides of the crossroads with a walled estate behind. There is a mix of shops and houses in small terraces with modern houses and bungalows at either end of the village. The surrounding rolling drumlin landscape and small fields create an intimate enclosed character; future development needs to be designed in a sympathetic manner to maintain the character of the village.

Summerhill is a small village centred on a village green, and based on a classical layout associated with Summerhill House. The village has some attractive stone buildings and its location close to the Dublin Metropolitan Area provides opportunities for development and consolidation of development within the village. Large-scale development would be unsympathetic to the setting of the village. There are modern housing developments on the edge of the village composed of detached houses in cul de sac arrangements, which are out of character with the rural vernacular.

Pasture is predominant in the north due to the rolling drumlin topography. There are less estate landscapes, further south with the enclosed wooded character giving way to large arable fields that are distinguishable by their poor condition and loss of hedgerows. The main visual detractor is the sand & gravel quarry to the south of Rathmoylan and although it is not situated in an upland area, the nature of the works add a degraded quality to the landscape. Appropriate siting of further such development will be important.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers
- Comprised of calp limestone forming a mixture of deep well-drained soils interspersed with peaty topsoil.
- Peaty topsoil create wetter ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in wet soil such as birch, larch and willow.

Land Use

- Mix of small – medium pasture fields with some arable farming in the south.
- Small copses of beech and birch woodland.
- Sand & gravel quarry to south of Rathmoylan.

8. LCA 13 - rathmoylan lowlands

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations
- *Ballinrig* – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- *Rathmoylan Esker* – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Strong network of hedgerows.
- Many copses and tall wooded hedgerows

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- 'Great Mansion' at Summerhill, built 1730s, burned in the C19th and C20th, now entirely demolished.
- Estate village, gothic mausoleum and gates remain
- Rahinstown House

Tourism

- Royal Canal is a popular recreational boating route from Dublin to Mullingar.
- Designated walks which branch off the existing Royal Canal Way and provide links to other tourist attractions/heritage towns would be a valuable addition.
- Moy Stud farm outside Summerhill specialises in teaching children to horse ride in the countryside.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Rathmoylan (see description of key settlements).
- Settlement type is predominantly small villages.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern development adjacent to the main villages of Rathmoylan and Summerhill.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Rathmoylan* is a small village, the centre of which is attractive with a walled church and rectory. Modern residential development on the outskirts.
- *Summerhill*: Is a small demesne village with an attractive village green. Modern housing is located on the edge of the village.

Forces for Change

- Modern housing development in Summerhill has significantly increased the scale of the village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The main settlements in this LCA could be developed as a focus for rural enterprises such as farmers markets which would allow for rural diversification and provide for stronger links between settlements and their rural surroundings.
2. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
3. Maintain and enhance integrity of 18th century estate farming landscape by encouraging management of parkland, avenues, walls and clipped hedges.
4. Build on existing low-key visitor amenities by providing incentives to landowners to increase public access to, and enjoyment of the designed rural landscape, e.g. the development of a footpath network, creation of designated viewpoint areas, etc.
5. Design guidelines to protect historic character of Rathmoylan and Summerhill from modern development of style, scale and materials that visually detract from their landscape setting.



Village green in the estate village of Summerhill.



Attractive period houses in Summerhill.



Thatched cottage in Rathmoylan.



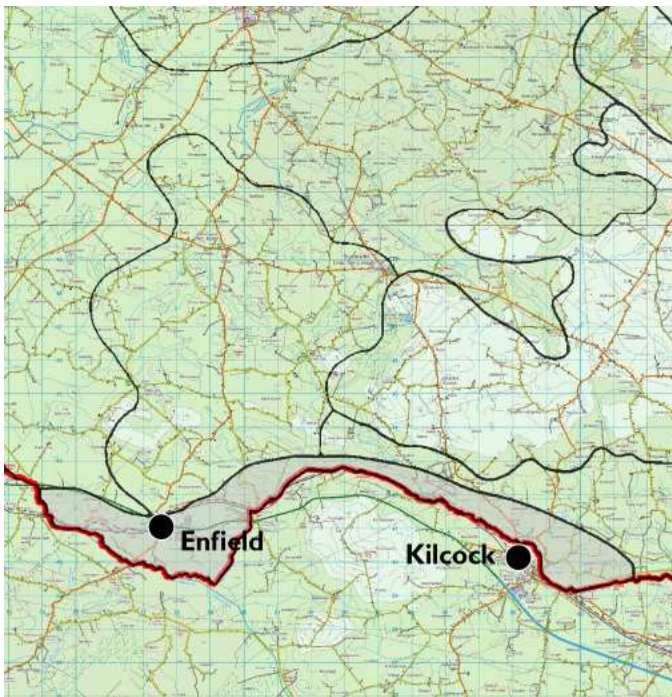
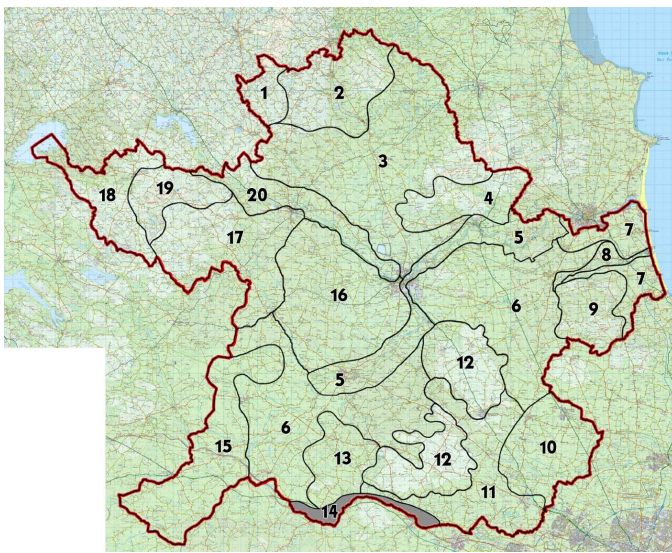
Attractive parkland outside Rathmoylan.

8. LCA 13 - rathmoylan lowlands

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Due to the high sensitivity of this LCA it has low potential capacity to accommodate large farm buildings. Any such development would require careful planning considering location, appearance and landscape treatment.
2. Medium potential capacity to incorporate visitor facilities due to the enclosed well wooded nature of this LCA. The Royal Canal is the main tourist attraction and although the landscape is more open in this area, any development is likely to be small scale e.g. way marked trails, upgrading of tow path, signage etc.
3. The landscape has a low potential capacity for multiple house developments due to the high sensitivity. Such development would also be at odds with the rural nature of this LCA where clusters of dwellings are not common. Such development would need to be carefully planned with reference to the local vernacular in terms of design, scale, layout, and materials.
4. The landscape would have medium potential capacity to accommodate one off houses with careful planning in terms of the local vernacular, design, location, scale and materials and having particular regard to the potential cumulative effects of several one off houses in a particular area.
5. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning in terms of location, scale and materials with particular regard to the potential impact of the change of use.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to their visual prominence and the high sensitivity of this LCA.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate new transport routes because of the generally small scale and enclosed nature of this LCA, which would be altered by such development. The upgrading of existing roads would also need to be carefully planned to avoid the loss of landscape features that screen existing road and rail corridors.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services due to the high sensitivity of the area and the potential adverse impacts on the integrity of existing features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland and long established field patterns around estates.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind turbine development due to the potential visual impact of such development on a highly sensitive and high value LCA.
10. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass and commercial forestry in general due to high sensitivity. However, an area to the south of Rathmoylan is dominated by a sand and gravel quarry, so is less sensitive and would be better placed to accommodate such development.

8. LCA 13 - rathmoylan lowlands



Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The landscape adjacent to the Royal Canal is rolling lowland, which is more open due to larger arable field patterns and in general this area is less densely vegetated. The main transport routes are the N4 from Maynooth to Kinnegad and the Royal Canal (a tourist route.) Built development is rapidly increasing on the southern border of the county as pressure from the Dublin metropolitan area continues. The landscape is attractive although adjacent to the canal much of the landscape is in poor condition with scrappy farmland and a clear loss of hedgerows. Enfield is a small town with few attractive buildings. Its built fabric is generally disjointed and accentuated by the N4, which cuts through the town.

Enfield's proximity to the Dublin metropolitan area coupled with good transport links provided by the N4 and the Dublin/Sligo rail line suggest that growth in the town could be considerable. Large housing developments are currently being constructed on the northern approach to Enfield. Any future development should consolidate existing space within the town as large scale development would significantly increase the scale of the town and be unsympathetic to its setting. Enfield is located adjacent to the Royal Canal so future development should aid the development of the tourist industry.

Kilcock environs is a medium sized settlement area to the east of Enfield on the M4, which bypasses the town to the north. Its proximity to the Dublin metropolitan area, coupled with good transport links provided by the M4 and the Dublin/Sligo rail line, suggest that growth in this area will continue. There is a diverse mix of retail, commercial and residential development on the outskirts of Kilcock.

The landscape adjacent to the Royal Canal is very flat, but overgrown scrappy hedgerows and farmland restrict views. Views along the Royal Canal are available at the various stone bridges crossing the canal into Kildare, these provide good vantage points and views across the lowland.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers and shaped into a largely flat lowland plain.
- Comprised of calp limestone forming a mixture of deep well-drained soils interspersed with peaty topsoil.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime with wetter species such as alder, birch, and willow present adjacent to the Royal Canal.

Land Use

- Predominantly arable farmland with areas of scrubby pasture.

Ecology & Habitat

- I proposed National Heritage Area (NHA), *Royal Canal* designated due to the wealth of habitats associated with the canal such as hedgerows, herbs, calcareous grassland and a wealth of different grass species adjacent to the towpath.
- Wooded hedgerows and rough pasture.

8. LCA 14 - Royal Canal

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Royal Canal.

Tourism

- Royal Canal is a popular recreational boating route from Dublin to Mullingar.
- Designated walks which branch off the existing Royal Canal Way and provide links to other tourist attractions/heritage towns would be a valuable addition.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Main settlement is Kilcock environs (see description of key settlements).
- Settlement type is small towns and ribbon development.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern development adjacent to the main settlement of Enfield.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Kilcock environs*: designated as a moderate growth town
- *Enfield*: Small town adjacent to Royal Canal. Lack of local vernacular. Large housing developments on outskirts.

Forces for Change

- Pressure from Dublin metropolitan area will significantly effect settlements like Enfield and Kilcock.
- Potential rail improvements between Dublin and Sligo will improve public transport provision in this area and may increase commuting pressure.
- This area is located on the proposed M4 motorway Economic Dynamic Corridor

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retain and enhance historic features related to the Royal Canal including bridges, locks and associated buildings for their positive contribution to landscape character. Enhance the historic character of settlements adjacent to the canal, such as Enfield and Kilcock, to reinforce links between the canal and industrial heritage.
2. Encourage and promote the use of vernacular architectural styles in new development to counteract the current lack of local vernacular buildings within Enfield and the urban edges of Kilcock.
3. Counteract current decline in landscape condition and visual quality by providing incentives to landowners to enhance and maintain farmland in this LCA. Provide opportunities for sensitive diversification of the rural economy where agricultural practices are becoming less sustainable.
4. Improve visitor amenities and encourage appreciation of this LCA. Amenities should be developed sensitively in accordance with design guidelines and should include such things as parking areas/ lay-bys, information and signage, and enhancement of existing way marked routes.
5. Consolidate the existing urban footprint of Enfield by developing infill and brownfield sites in favour of edge of town sites to minimise adverse physical and visual impacts on the surrounding landscape.



Canal bridge over Royal Canal outside Enfield.



Landscape adjacent to Royal Canal.



Approach to Enfield.



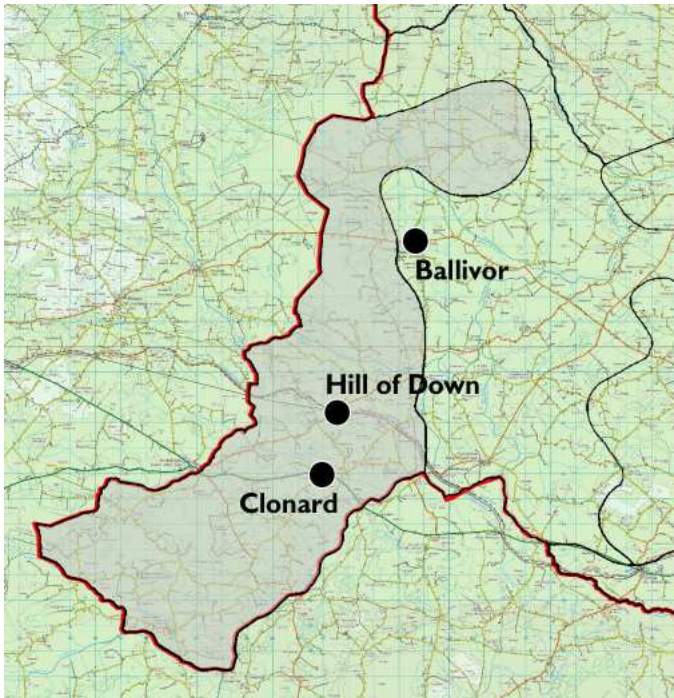
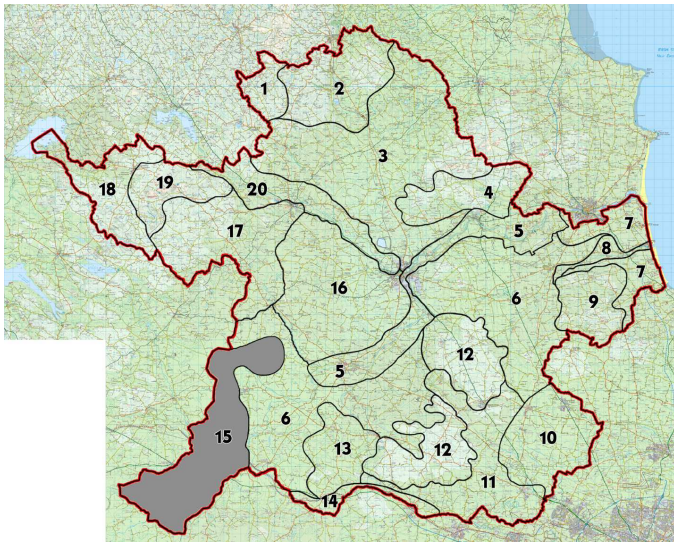
8. LCA 14 - Royal Canal

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

6. Implement physical improvements to banks of the Royal Canal including creation of public amenity landscape where agricultural land uses have declined. Enhanced maintenance of these areas will be key to their ongoing visual quality and attractiveness to visitors.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity to accommodate large-scale farm buildings that would be out of character with the small-scale rough pastureland adjacent to the canal.
2. Medium potential capacity to incorporate visitor facilities. This LCA is well wooded and has the potential to screen built developments. The Royal Canal, the main tourist attraction, is more open so built development would be less suitable. Low-key facilities such as way marked trails, upgrading of towpath, signage etc would be more suitable.
3. Low potential capacity for multi-house residential developments as these would be out of character with the predominant style of built development in this LCA. Such development would need to be carefully planned with reference to the local vernacular in terms of design, scale, layout, and materials.
4. Medium potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses because they are an existing landscape character element. However, future development must be carefully planned in terms of the design, location, scale and materials with particular regard to the cumulative potential adverse effects of multiple one-off houses being built in any one area.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings/estate houses/ barns etc to a different use or as part of a restoration. Careful planning will be important in terms of location, scale and materials.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts due to the wooded nature and rolling topography, which has the potential to afford some screening to limit long range views of this type of development.
8. Low potential capacity for further new roads as this is a narrow LCA where the existing M4 road corridor is already a significant feature. Further such development would alter the character of this LCA beyond repair. However, the LCA would have medium potential capacity to accommodate the upgrading of roads and railways due to the potential opportunities to screen such development with existing vegetation.
9. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services as the farmland adjacent to the Canal is primarily rough pasture and is not as archaeologically rich as other areas. However, the loss of landscape features such as hedgerows would need to be mitigated against to minimise negative impacts.
10. Views within this LCA views are limited by topography and wooded hedgerows although due to the small size of this LCA the impact of wind farms and turbines could be potentially significant. Such development would need to be carefully planned in terms of location and layout to minimise adverse impacts on views, viewers and landscape character elements. Overall this LCA would have low potential capacity to accommodate wind farms or single turbines.
11. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry because such development would be out of character within this LCA.



Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The area is characterised by rolling hills interspersed with beech copses and well-wooded hedgerows dividing rough pasture. The main transport routes are the N4 from Enfield to Kinnegad and the Royal Canal (a tourist route). This is one of the more remote areas of Meath with only the village of Clonard servicing a large area. Pasture farmland is dominant although there is rough pasture in the upland areas interspersed with a mix of woodland plantations, small copses and scrubby woodland more prevalent in the south west. Fields are small to medium sized and enclosed with well-wooded hedgerows.

Kinnegad is a large town situated on the Meath – Westmeath border. The Kinnegad environs is an area in transition as the new M4 motorway is currently being built. The landscape in this area is comprised of large arable fields and rough pasture. This, coupled with the current road works gives the area a degraded character.

Clonard is a small village adjacent to the busy N4. The town has limited amenities with The Monastery Inn and St. Finians church forming the hub of the town. There is a housing development on the Kinnegad side of Clonard, which is quite substantial given the lack of amenities in the town. Further development in the town would need careful planning to avoid the character of the town being lost to residential developments but has the potential to consolidate and enhance its appearance.

Hill of Down is a small attractive village on the Royal Canal. The village is centred on the canal both in aspect and in terms of business as the tourist industry is important to the village. The landscape comprises rolling lowland dissected by the canal and areas of reeds and wetland. This LCA is well vegetated with wooded hedgerows and mature trees. Rough pasture gives way to parkland adjacent to the Royal Canal and estates are more prevalent around the Hill of Down and Clonard.

Views within this area are generally limited by the complex topography and mature vegetation except at the tops of drumlins and from bridges crossing the Royal Canal where panoramic views are available. Short-range views are channelled along narrow valleys between drumlins often along roads and the lowland adjacent to the Royal Canal.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Limestone underlies the fertile plains of the River Boyne
- Comprised of calp limestone and shale conglomeratic limestone forming a mixture of deep free draining acidic soils interspersed with peat topsoil giving way to a large area of lowland on the Meath/Westmeath border.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, ash and larch associated with the River Boyne.

Land Use

- Mix of small, medium and large scale pastoral fields
- Areas of young mixed species plantations particularly in the Kildalkey environs.
- Mixed scale, well-managed farmland and estate landscape.

8. LCA 15 - south west lowlands

Ecology & Habitat

- 2 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's)
Molerick Bog – This lowland cutaway bog is designated due to areas of Carr woodland with willow, ash, hawthorn and alder.
Mount Hervey Bog is an active raised bog, which is now rare in central Ireland.
- Strong network of hedgerows in most parts. Some loss of hedgerows surrounding Kildalkey.
- Range of mature broadleaf woodland and plantations of pioneer species.
- Some wetland habitat and wet pasture adjacent to River Boyne.

History & Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Site of Clonard Abbey founded by St Finian in C6th and until early C13th one of the premier bishopries of Meath.
- Estate landscapes.
- Castlejordan, site of former extensive military stronghold, a place of strategic importance to the Pale throughout the medieval period.
- Castlejordan Bridge 1840-1880 flanked by remains of mediaeval bridge
- C12th Tower House at Moyrath Castle with a C19th addition
- Buried archaeology.
- Few upstanding historical features

Tourism

- Clonard was the site of the first university in Ireland, founded in the 6th Century by St Finian.
- Hill of Down is a popular tourist attraction due to its rich archaeological heritage and it's location adjacent to the Royal Canal however any development of the tourist industry would need to be sensitively planned.
- Royal Canal is a popular recreational boating route from Dublin to Mullingar. Designated walks along towpath and areas adjacent to the canal would be a valuable addition.

Forces for Change

- Development along the new M4 motorway corridor
- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing degraded wooded hedgerows and some loss of hedgerows.
- Young mixed species plantations will mature and increase wooded character of landscape
- Viability of livestock farming may decline alongside increase in use of land for forestry.
- Possible abandonment of wet grazing land if small farms become less viable leading to re-establishment of willow and birch carr.
- Significant development in Clonard would erode the character of this remote area.

Settlements and Built Structures

- No major towns.
- Settlement type predominantly small villages with several medium to large villages.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern built development adjacent to towns.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Clonard*: Small village that has no hub and very little character. Attractive church and historically important due to the foundation of Clonard Monastery by St. Finian.
- *Hill of Down*: Small attractive village adjacent to Royal Canal. Unspoilt nature needs to be protected



Hill of Down.



Motte near Hill of Down.



Quarry outside Kinegad.



New M4 road corridor

8. LCA 15 - south west lowlands

RECOMMENDATIONS

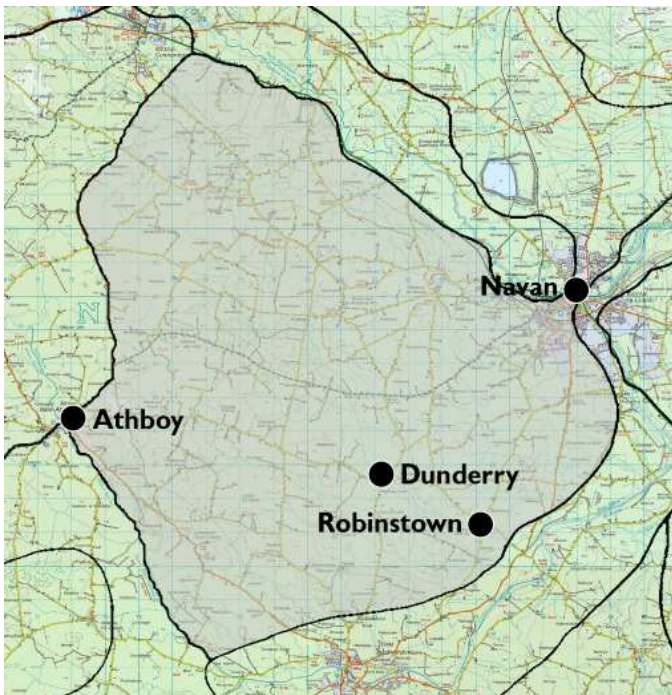
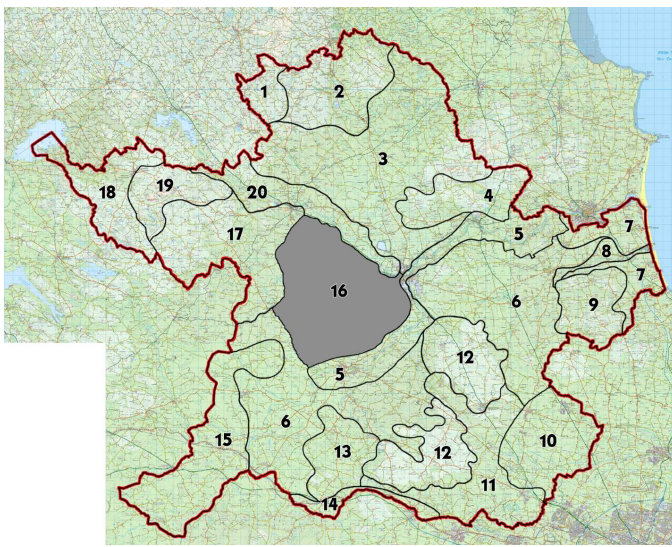
1. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites in this LCA.
2. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
3. Maximise awareness of Clonard as important historic settlement and cultural asset by increasing interpretation of its attractions within the town and providing links with other attractions in this part of Meath, e.g. Royal Canal, Hill of Down.
4. Protect the existing rural nature of this LCA by integrating new development within existing settlements providing design guidelines on the styles, scales and materials that suit the local vernacular.
5. Pursue opportunities to restore the landscape surrounding the new M4 motorway corridor, which is presently in poor condition.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large-scale farm buildings because the complex topography and mature vegetation provides good opportunities for screening.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate visitor facilities. Such development would be potentially beneficial in increasing links between the various attractions in this LCA – the Royal Canal, Clonard – and creating new uses for the rural landscape. Such development may also assist in maintenance and enhancement of landscape condition.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house residential developments because there are few settlements in this location. Clonard and Hill of Down are too small to accommodate residential development on any scale. However, residential development in this area is characteristically arranged in small ribbons of development along main roads so there would be some opportunities to create similar developments provided they were of suitable design and location.
4. Low potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses depending on location and design because they are not a characteristic of this LCA but may be incorporated as part of existing areas of residential development provided the overall increase in ribbon development is minimal.
5. High potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings because this would potentially have no impact on the amount of built development in this LCA but would increase the range of sustainable building uses in this LCA.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts because views within this LCA are generally short range and limited by topography and vegetation so there are opportunities for choosing locations where visual impacts are minimal.
7. Medium to low potential capacity for new transport infrastructure development because views within this LCA are generally short range and limited by topography and vegetation so there are opportunities for choosing locations where visual impacts are minimal. However, such development could cause the loss or degradation of hedgerows and trees and archaeology

8. Medium to low potential capacity to accommodate underground services provided such development is located to avoid adverse visual impacts and important archaeological features.
9. Medium potential capacity to accommodate wind farms or single turbines because views within this LCA are generally short range and limited by topography and vegetation so there are opportunities for choosing locations where visual impacts are minimal. However, such development could cause the loss or degradation of hedgerows and trees and archaeology so location will be a critical consideration.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry. Such development is not a current feature of this LCA but small – medium sized areas could potentially be integrated into the rich mix of land uses evident in this LCA.

8. LCA 15 - south west lowlands



Landscape Value: Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Local

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

This is a flat lowland farmland landscape interspersed with many large estate landscapes with associated parkland, which extends from the west of Navan to Athboy. There are 2 main transport routes – the N51 from Navan to Devlin, Co. Westmeath and the R154 from Trim to Athboy. Built development consists of scattered groups of detached dwellings and large estate houses in the hinterland with extensive ribbon development on the outskirts of Athboy and Dunderry.

Athboy is the largest settlement in the area located in the west of Meath between Kells and Trim. It is a medieval town with a distinctive character. The south of the town, adjacent to the St. James Church of Ireland, is particularly historic with narrow lanes enclosed by stonewalls. The River Athboy dissects the town and is a very attractive feature, although unfortunately it is often hidden by development. Athboy forms an important transport node with roads radiating from the centre. Unfortunately there is extensive ribbon development adjacent to these arterial routes.

Dunderry is a small – medium sized village, the centre of which has retained much of its character although there are some terraces from the 80's. There is minimal modern development in the centre of the village. At the edges of the town there is extensive ribbon development of larger modern detached dwellings.

The landscape has a scrappy degraded character to the south west of Navan with poorly managed but well wooded field boundaries around Robinstown progressing to manicured estate landscape and parkland adjacent to Dunderry. Further west the landscape becomes more complex, with mixed woodland and coniferous plantations, surrounding Athboy and Rathcairn (Gaeltacht). The landscape here is more remote with estate landscape giving way to rougher mixed pasture and areas of scrappy woodland. The field patterns are medium sized with the exception of some larger arable fields. They are enclosed, divided by well-wooded hedgerows and traversed by enclosed rural roads with deep drainage ditches.

Although the topography of this area is relatively flat, the wooded nature of the landscape restricts views, which are limited to those along enclosed rural road corridors. Significant visual detractors include the large steel engineering factory and mobile phone mast at Cortown.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology & Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Calp limestone forms deep free draining acidic soils interspersed with small areas of peaty topsoil and lacustrine alluvium creating wetter habitats
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, ash, and willow associated with the River Boyne.

Land Use

- Mix of small, medium and large scale pastoral fields.
- Areas of young mixed species plantations and birch woodland in Athboy environs.
- Small – Medium sized rectangular fields, well-managed farmland and estate landscape.

8. LCA 16 - west navan lowlands

Ecology & Habitat

- 1 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA), *Jamestown Bog* – Area of raised bog, with species such as bog moss and bog cotton.
- Strong network of hedgerows in most parts.
- Some loss of hedgerows surrounding Athboy.
- Range of mature broadleaf woodland and plantations of pioneer species. Some wetland habitat and wet pasture adjacent to River Stoneyford.

History & Culture

- Long established medium sized farmland.
- Gaeltacht to east of Athboy in Rathcairn
- Estate landscapes.
- Buried archaeology.
- Farmhouses and cottages.
- Bellewstown Chapel 1838
- Collierstown House c1775
- Beaumont

Tourism

- Ballinlough Castle outside Athboy hosts the Midlands musical festival, which attracts high profile stars for the two-day event in the castle grounds.
- Rathcairn Gaeltacht

Settlements and Built Structures

- Athboy is a small town.
- Settlement type predominantly small villages and medium sized villages.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of ribbon development adjacent to arterial roads.

Description of Key Settlements

- *Athboy*: is a small town with a medieval history and culturally significant hinterland. Extensive ribbon development along arterial roads.
- *Dunderry*: Small – medium sized village. At the edges of the town there is extensive ribbon development comprised of larger modern detached dwellings.
- *Robinstown*: Small village developed around a central crossroads, there are a lot of detached houses on one side, which are out of character with the local vernacular. The built environment is very disjointed. The general appearance of the village is degraded with a loss/dereliction of boundary walls and railings.

Forces for Change

- Lack of hedgerow management leading to continuing degraded wooded hedgerows and some loss of hedgerows.
- Young mixed species plantations will mature and increase wooded character of landscape.
- Viability of livestock farming may decline alongside increase in use of land for forestry.
- Significant development of Athboy, Trim and Navan could significantly affect the rural nature of the smaller villages within the area.



Attractive landscape setting of the River Athboy.



Degraded hedgerows enclosing pasture farmland in Athboy.



Well managed hedgerows, Dunderry



Large arable fields outside Dunderry.

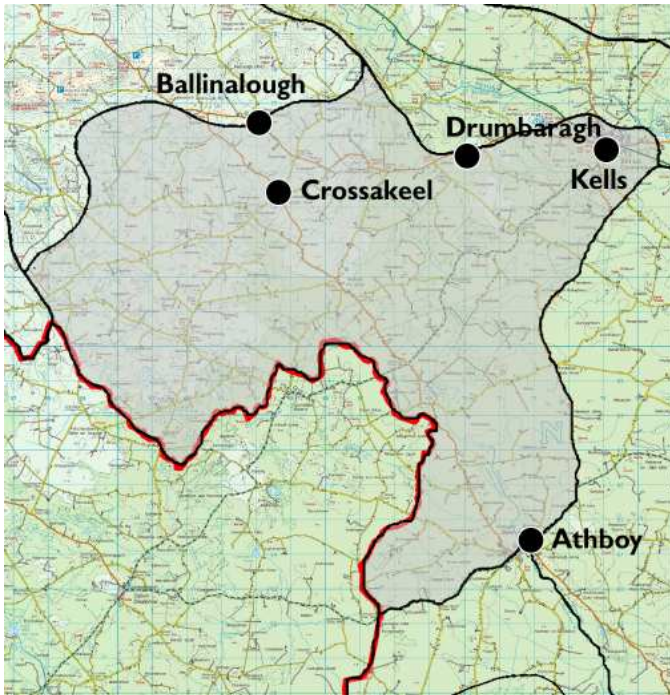
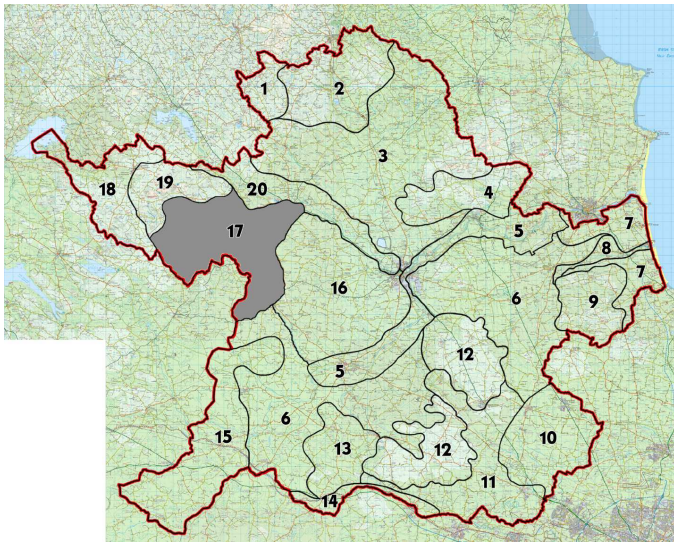
8. LCA 16 - west navan lowlands

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Restore through appropriate land management incentives, the diverse land cover in agricultural areas that is still present in western parts of the Athboy Farmland but that is in decline in the east, including pasture, hedges and mixed woodland.
2. Explore the potential to increase access to the Athboy River in the centre of the town including links to existing riverside walk adjacent to the church of Ireland.
3. Athboy could be developed as a focus for rural enterprises such as farmers markets which would allow for rural diversification and provide for stronger links between settlements and their rural surroundings.
4. Consolidate northern urban fringes of Athboy. Favour location of development on infill sites rather than ribbon development extending along approaches to town. Use appropriate landscape treatment along edges of development to soften urban fringe.
5. Future location of large-scale development, infrastructure, such as industrial units and mobile phone masts, to be sensitively located so as to avoid adverse visual impacts.
6. Continue to promote the Gaeltacht around Rathcairn as a cultural resource and promote links between other Gaeltachts e.g. Gibbstown.
7. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites in this LCA.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large-scale farm buildings. Although this is not a major characteristic of this LCA potential opportunities exist to locate such development, so that it is well screened and does not detract from the overall scale of the agricultural landscape.
2. There are no major attractions in this area but the agricultural landscape structured around demesnes is worthy of more interpretation. There is also a Gaeltacht area near Athboy, which is likely to attract visitors interested in Irish culture. This LCA therefore has high potential capacity to incorporate visitor facilities provided they are designed to fit within the existing landscape character.
3. High potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings because this would potentially have no impact on the amount of built development in this LCA but would increase the range of sustainable building uses in this LCA.
4. In parts of this LCA that have a strong landscape structure the potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts would be medium provided such development was not located in visually prominent areas. Elsewhere, particularly in the degraded area around Navan, such development would have a detrimental impact on a landscape that is already in poor condition.
5. Medium to low potential capacity to accommodate new transport infrastructure. In parts of this LCA that have a strong landscape structure such development could be located in visually non-prominent areas. Elsewhere, particularly in the degraded area around Navan, such development would have a detrimental impact on a landscape that is already in poor condition.
6. Medium to low potential capacity to accommodate underground services depending on the potential loss to existing field boundaries and other landscape elements. In parts of this LCA where landscape condition is currently degraded, such development could provide opportunities to enhance field boundaries.
7. Medium capacity to accommodate wind farms or single turbines because views are often restricted and potential opportunities exist to locate such development in non-visually prominent locations.
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry where this will provide opportunities to improve landscape condition and management in non-visually prominent locations.



Landscape Value: Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Local

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

A large rural area characterised by rolling lowland farmland with remnants of parkland landscapes. This LCA forms the setting for the southern side of the Loughcrew Hills and is quite unspoilt by modern development. There are no major settlements in this LCA with the exception of Kells on the eastern edge and Athboy on the southern edge. There are a number of graigs including Ballinalough, Crossakeel, Kilskeer and Drumbaragh, which are all small and largely unspoilt. Kells is set on a hillside with the western edge at the top of the hill. From here high quality views can be obtained eastwards across the River Blackwater corridor towards Navan and Slane. People's Park at the edge of Kells provides an elevated viewpoint and landmark (lighthouse) that is visible from the surrounding area. This edge of Kells has some new development on its fringes, which is beginning to encroach into the countryside and affect the quality and condition of adjacent farmland. Such development has the potential to cause serious damage to landscape character if it continues unchecked.

Moving westwards the countryside is attractive but not in optimum condition and is characterised by low undulating fields that have been enlarged through loss of traditional boundaries. In many places hedgerows and drystone stone walls have been replaced by post on wire fences on earth banks. Remaining boundary features are often poorly managed or in disrepair. There are a number of large estate farms in this area and remnants of estate houses which have been lost, e.g. parkland/ avenue trees and ornate entrance gates along the road corridor

In the centre of this LCA is a small hill on which is located a small graig, Crossakeel. It is an attractive graig with a coherent mix of 18th and 19th Century buildings plus a few modern dwellings tucked well in between them. There is a small industrial/ commercial development here that is not attractive but neither is it a prominent visual detractor. From this location panoramic views of the Loughcrew Hills and countryside to the west and south can be obtained.

The drumlin landform becomes more pronounced, as one travels along the R163 road corridor towards Ballinalough and the landscape gradually takes on more of a parkland feel with more trees and hedgerows in better condition. There is less linear built development in the western part of this LCA, only small, low-density groups of dwellings scattered throughout the countryside.

In the north the LCA adjoins the Loughcrew Hills and has a more pronounced upland character. The overall decline in the condition of farmland in the east is applicable in this area too. The southern part of this LCA is similar to the western part with areas of parkland but more coniferous plantations.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, ash, and willow associated with the River Boyne.
- Geology comprised of calp limestone in the west, greywacke in the east and a central belt of conglomeratic limestone breaking down to form primarily deep free draining acidic soils interspersed with shallow free draining soils and areas of peaty topsoil.

8. LCA 17 - south west kells lowlands

Land Use

- Open farmland, predominantly pastoral.
- Coniferous plantations in the southern section.
- Areas of estate woodland in the western section.

Ecology & Habitat

- 2 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's);
Girley Bog – One of the most easterly raised bogs in Ireland with species such as deer grass, bog rosemary and white beak sedge. The bog is in poor condition.
Lough Shesk – Variety of physical and biotic features have created a myriad of habitats. Loss of trees and hedgerows as field boundaries reduces the habitat diversity of the area.
- Range of mature broadleaf woodland and plantations of pioneer species. Some wetland habitat and wet pasture adjacent to River Blackwater.

History & Culture

- Setting for southern side of Loughcrew Hills
- Remnants of 18th Century demesnes and estate farms
- C18th and C19th farmhouses.
- Balrath House built 1671 and Drewstown c 1745 with lake and rockwork bridge.
- Several neo-gothic buildings.

Tourism

- Kells is an Irish heritage town and home of the 'Book of Kells'.
- Kells heritage centre provides information on the history of Kells and the surrounding area.
- Peoples Park complete with Spire of Lloyd erected by the first earl of Bective provides panoramic views over the surrounding landscape.
- Grove Gardens outside Kells has a rich variety of flowering hybrids and exotic wild birds.
- Kells Golf Course
- River Blackwater is popular for angling.
- Kells equestrian centre.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Main settlement is Kells
- No other major settlements
- Small villages and graigs include Crossakeel, Ballinalough, Kilskeer and Drumbaragh.

Key Settlements

- *Kells*: A very attractive large town, designated as a Heritage Town and famous for being the home of the Book of Kells. Western edge is located at the top of the hill on which the town is located. Ribbons of development, both residential and industrial/ commercial, built over the last 50 years affects the rural-urban transition and new residential development is under construction.
People's Park is a public open space located on a hill above the town and has a lighthouse which is a landmark within the wider area. Panoramic views in all directions across Counties Meath, Cavan and Westmeath can be obtained from here.
- *Ballinalough*: A small graig situated near the base of the Loughcrew Hills with a church and hall, local shop and a few houses of varying styles and ages. The mix of development styles does not make it unattractive because it is still small. On it's southern edge there is an estate house with a mature boundary of trees forming an attractive roadside feature.
- *Crossakeel*: A small and attractive graig with a coherent mix of 18th and 19th Century buildings plus a few modern dwellings tucked well in between them. Small industrial/ commercial development here which is not a prominent visual detractor. Panoramic views of the Loughcrew Hills and countryside to the

west and south can be obtained.

- *Drumbaragh*: a small graig near Kells comprising a small collection of houses of varying styles and ages and a petrol station/ local shop. This graig has not yet been affected by new multi-house developments.



Attractive period houses in Kells.



Cottages and with Kells Round Tower in the background.



View of Kells from People's Park.

Forces for Change

- Primarily decline in condition and loss of traditional field boundaries (hedgerows, hedgerow trees and drystone walls) and replacement with post and wire fences creating a landscape that has a much more open character.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of 18th century farming landscape and viability of farming landscape in this area, to counteract loss of field boundaries (hedges, walls and banks) associated with enlarged fields.
2. Maintain the integrity of 18th Century farming landscape by encouraging the management of estate parkland, avenues of mature trees, boundary walls and clipped hedges.
3. Build on existing low-key visitor amenities by providing incentives to landowners to increase public access to, and enjoyment of the designed rural landscape, e.g. the development of a footpath network, creation of designated viewpoint areas, etc.
4. Promote and enhance urban fringes of Athboy and Kells to provide increased opportunities. Landscape enhancements to include; rebuilding of dry stonewalls and replanting of hedges where they have been lost or are in poor condition.
5. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites in this LCA.
6. Develop design guidelines to ensure restoration of historic feature such as stonewalls and buildings to appropriate standards.
7. Preserve landscape setting of Kells, with particular consideration given to development that could adversely impact upon the expansive views available from People's Park and adjacent areas.
8. Maintain the compact historic character of the large no. of small settlements/grais in West Kells Farmland. New development to be focused within larger settlements with one off dwellings to be of a scale that ensures they sit comfortably within the countryside and do not create conspicuous elements.

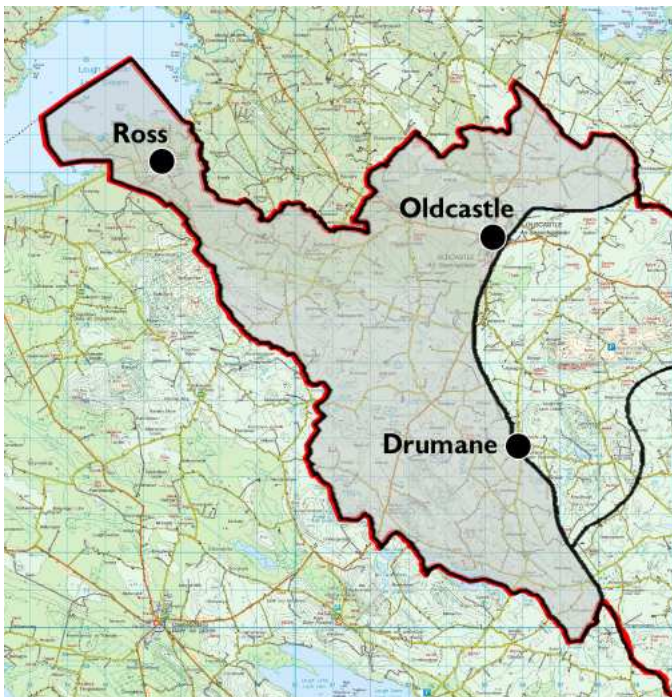
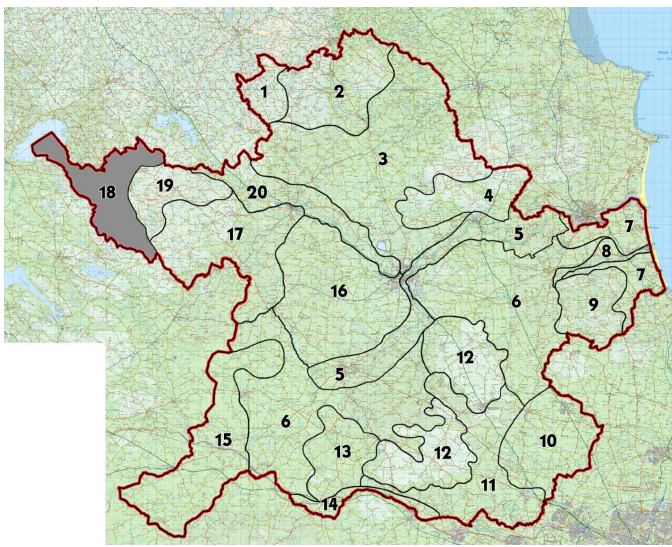
POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large-scale farm buildings which are not a current feature of this LCA but may be necessary to increase sustainable management of the landscape.
2. Location and design will be key considerations – such buildings should be located to take advantage of screening opportunities afforded by the low undulating drumlins and planting around them should be of a similar style to that which surrounds estate houses in the vicinity.
3. These buildings should not be developed en masse because this would be at odds with the characteristic pattern of built development in this LCA.
4. High potential capacity to incorporate visitor facilities provided they are designed sensitively and will not have adverse impacts particularly on long range views and archaeology.

This LCA is located adjacent to major attractions – the Loughcrew Hills and Kells town – and the agricultural landscape is an attractive area for visitors to explore.

5. Medium potential capacity for small multi-house residential developments on the fringes of Athboy and Kells provided that these do not extend the urban area and reflect vernacular materials, styles and scales. Elsewhere this LCA has low potential capacity to accommodate such development. Small clusters of buildings are a characteristic of the western part of this LCA but they should not be increased in size or number because this will detract from the overall remote character of this LCA. This LCA forms the setting for the southern side of the Loughcrew Hills (LCA 19) and views are often extensive, making it particularly sensitive to change.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate one-off houses on a small scale within this LCA provided it reflects the historic development of estate houses set within wooded parkland often located away from road corridors and sheltered by low drumlins. Views within this LCA are often extensive and additional built development in prominent locations would be particularly detrimental to landscape character and the setting of the Loughcrew Hills (LCA 19).
7. High potential capacity to accommodate the conversion of existing buildings where the use of these will enhance currently poor condition and management of farmland without introducing new buildings into the landscape.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communication masts because views within this LCA, and from the adjacent LCA 19 (the Loughcrew Hills) are often extensive and such development is likely to be highly prominent. Viewers looking to and from the Loughcrew Hills will be particularly sensitive to modern additions because of the historic significance of this landscape.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate new or upgraded transport infrastructure because such development would be likely to have a detrimental impact on this LCA's remote rural character, archaeology and function as a setting for the Loughcrew Hills.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services where opportunities to replace lost stonewalls and hedgerows will accompany such development. However, the presence of archaeological features is likely to be a major constraint on location.
11. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind farms or single turbines because views within this LCA, and from the Loughcrew Hills LCA, are often extensive and such development is likely to be highly prominent. Viewers looking to and from the Loughcrew Hills will be particularly sensitive to modern additions to the view because of the historic significance of this landscape.
12. Medium potential capacity to accommodate biomass and forestry on a small scale. Coniferous plantations are currently a minor characteristic of this LCA so additional areas may be accommodated. However such development should not become a major or defining characteristic of this LCA and it should not be located in areas which are highly visible, or of ecological or significant archaeological value.

8. LCA 17 - south west kells lowlands



Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Although remote and detached from major settlements, this LCA is rich with visible historic evidence of longstanding use and settlement. Perhaps most importantly this LCA forms the setting for the Loughcrew Hills on which there are a range of passage tombs dating from around 3000BC. There are other prehistoric and pre-Christian sites in the area as well as Anglo-Norman castles and 18th Century estate farms.

The area has a mix of rural land uses including small pastoral fields and paddocks, outdoor recreational facilities, loughs, clusters of dwellings and forestry. It is well treed - field boundaries comprise of well managed clipped hedgerows with lots of hedgerow trees and there are numerous areas of broadleaved woodland, wet birch and willow carr in low lying areas, areas of coniferous forestry and regenerating heathland. Farmland is generally well-managed pasture enclosed by hedgerows with trees or stonewalls which form very distinctive patterns in the landscape, particularly around Ross in the north west.

Lough Sheelin is the largest water body in this LCA. A small area of open water and wooded shoreline is located in the western corner of the County at the boundary with Cavan. The woodland around its shore is managed by the forestry service, Coillte. Views across the Lough to low undulating hills covered by well wooded farmland and parkland are very attractive and, from Ross Castle (now a hotel) located on the hill overlooking Lough Sheelin panoramic views across Co Cavan can be obtained. Lough Bane is the second largest lough in the LCA, on the border with Westmeath, but there are number of smaller loughs throughout this LCA which are all areas of particular tranquillity and scenic beauty.

The weathering of the hills and past and present quarrying of the underlying limestone has created a complex landform of hills, lakes and enclosed valleys that restrict long range views in many instances. Along the western boundary this LCA is contained by Mullaghnoon Hill in Westmeath which is a wildlife sanctuary covered in conifer and birch woodland.

There is also a large flat area of coniferous plantation and regenerating birch carr and heath adjacent to the Lough Sheelin woodland. There is a small quarry in Ross and a much larger one near Toonahammer in the southern part of this LCA. Around the quarry, land cover comprises Gorse scrub, Larch plantations, rushes and reeds.

Built development is distributed evenly across the whole LCA at a low density. Oldcastle is the only major settlement in this area. It is a medium-sized historic town located in a lowland area at the base of the Loughcrew Hills surrounded by marshy farmland and forestry. Generally the town retains a reasonably good interface with the surrounding landscape and would generally be sensitive to development around its fringes because it forms a critical part of the setting to the Loughcrew Hills.

The church in the centre of Oldcastle is a landmark when approaching the town and there are views to surrounding hills covered with broadleaved woodland to the north and west of the town. There are some villages and graigs which generally form small clusters of houses with a mix of buildings ranging from very modern to 20th Century to vernacular cottages and large farmhouses. Transport infrastructure consists of local 'yellow' roads. Road corridors are generally attractive and characterised by trees, hedgerows and drystone walls.

8. LCA 18 - lough sheelin uplands

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Weathering and quarrying has created an interesting topography.
- Shallow overlying soils make this area good for grazing but less suitable for arable farming.
- Comprised of calp limestone with bands of chert with thin siltstones on the Meath/Westmeath border and shaly limestone on the Meath/Cavan border forming a diverse mix of soil types. Peaty topsoils interspersed with deep free draining acidic soils in the west and centre with shaly limestone on the Cavan/Meath border.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, ash, and willow associated with areas of peaty topsoil.

Land Use

- Mix of rural uses: small scale farmland, forestry and broadleaved woodland.
- Wet area with large and small loughs throughout the area.
- Past and present quarry sites

Ecology & Habitat

- 2 proposed Special Areas of Conservation (CSAC), *White Loughs, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo*, areas of wet woodland with willow fringe and freshwater marshes. *Lough Banel/Glass* – Site on Meath/Westmeath Border.
- 2 proposed National Heritage Area (PNHA), *Lough Sheelin*, large lough fringed with lowland raised bogs. Important site for migrating birds. *Lough Nanagh* – Series of small lakes and associated wetland, transitional fen developing into bog.

History & Culture

- Evidence of longstanding inhabitation of this area: pre-history and pre-Christian archaeology and artefacts, Anglo Norman buildings and 18th Century estates and farms.
- Important interrelationship between this LCA and Loughcrew Hills LCA.
- Railway Architecture
- Protected buildings include Ross House and Castlecore Glebe House

Tourism

- Loughcrew in adjacent area is a well-known tourist attraction.
- Oldcastle is an attractive town with visitor accommodation and facilities.
- Lough Sheelin is the largest water body in the county and is popular for a variety of recreational pursuits including angling.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Villages including Ross and Ballinacree.
- Most dwellings scattered across the area at a very low density

Key Settlements

- *Oldcastle*: a medium sized, substantially Georgian market town with an attractive compact urban form and a good interface with the countryside. It is centred on a crossroads where there are 19th and early 20th Century buildings in a variety of styles. There is a noticeable lack of modern development in Oldcastle – only a small new housing development on the eastern approach and expansion of a small industrial area in the north which

form an abrupt line with the countryside. The two church spires in the centre are landmarks in the wider landscape. The name is thought to refer to the Norman Motte to the south of the town.

- *Ross*: small village with a distinctive linear layout and occupying an elevated position on the hill above Lough Sheelin. All the buildings are small two storey cottages set within a patchwork of very small fields/ paddocks divided by distinctive drystone walls. Good views obtained south towards Loughcrew and north over Co. Cavan.

Forces for Change

- Maintenance and repair of drystone walls is essential part of maintaining landscape character.
- Deforestation of coniferous plantations and allowance of areas to regenerate as heath and birch woodland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Have regard to the importance of this LCA as the setting for the Loughcrew Hills (LCA 19) by conservation of the diverse rural landscape and sensitive location and design of new development.
2. Compliment sensitive location of any new development with the preservation of the rich patchwork of historic features that demonstrate longstanding human use of this LCA.
3. New development in the countryside should be of a low density and small scale and use vernacular materials and styles to fit with the landscape character.



Rolling topography south of Oldcastle.



Lough Sheelin.

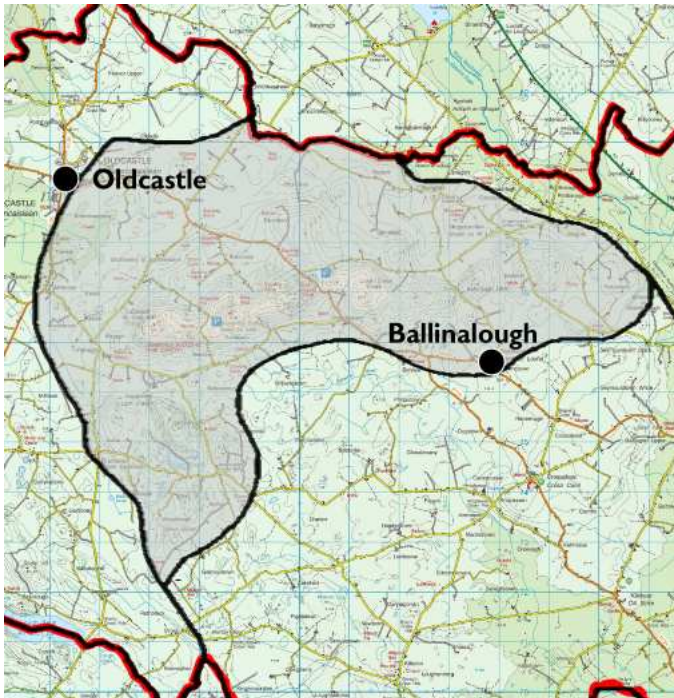
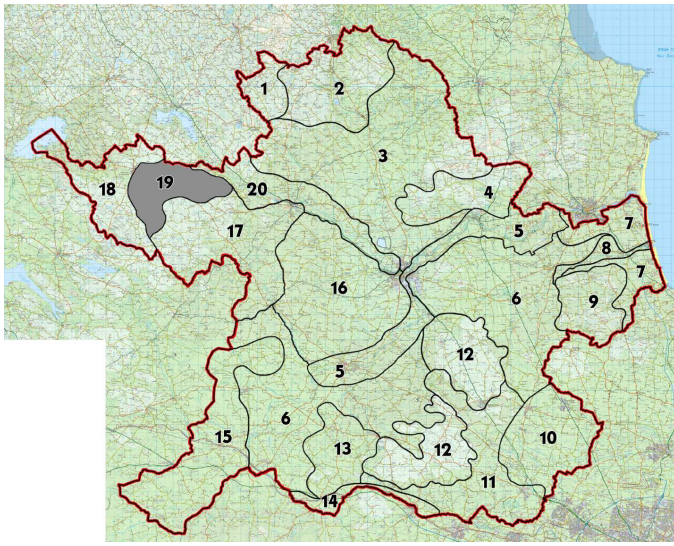
8. LCA 18 - lough sheelin uplands

4. Have regard to the presence of national and European designated ecological sites along the Westmeath border. Continue to develop the historic town of Oldcastle as a visitor attraction and base from which to explore north west Meath.
5. Recognise the importance of the visual interrelationship between these hills and upland areas in southern Co. Cavan when considering the siting of development.
6. Develop design guidelines to aid the siting and design of new development and provide incentives to counteract decline in condition of landscape features such as stonewalls, hedges and areas of woodland, particularly on northern slopes of hills and the approaches to Oldcastle.
9. Low potential capacity to accommodate wind farm development primarily because of intervisibility with the Loughcrew Hills and the archaeological significance of the area but also the overall high sensitivity and value of this LCA.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate forestry and biomass planting because coniferous plantations are already a landscape character element. However this type of development should not become a dominant element because

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Medium potential capacity to accommodate large farm buildings although they are not typical in this LCA because there is potential to screen them by planting areas of woodland which are a characteristic part of the landscape character.
2. High to medium potential capacity for improved and new visitor facilities. There are a number of attractions in this LCA which could potentially be linked to each other by such development. Particular regard should be paid to maintaining, enhancing and replicating the pattern of small patchwork fields and distinctive stone boundary walls in such development.
3. Low potential capacity for multi-house residential developments where they may be visible from Loughcrew (LCA 19) but medium potential capacity for such development on a small scale in Oldcastle where they can be integrated with the existing built fabric of the town. Such development must reflect local vernacular materials, styles and layouts.
4. Medium to low potential capacity for one off houses depending on the location, scale and design. Visibility of such developments from the Loughcrew Hills (LCA 19) would be a key consideration for any such development as well as reflection of local vernacular materials, styles and layouts.
5. High potential capacity to restore existing historic buildings where such development would provide opportunities to reinforce the historic settlement form and enhance landscape management through agricultural diversification.
6. Low potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, substations and communications masts primarily because of the archaeological significance of the area but also the overall high sensitivity of this LCA.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate new transport infrastructure primarily because of the archaeological significance of the area but also the high sensitivity and relative remoteness of this LCA.
8. Low potential capacity to accommodate underground services because of the high potential for significant disturbance of archaeological features in this LCA.

8. LCA 18 - lough sheelin uplands



Landscape Value: Exceptional

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: National / International

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Loughcrew is a small range of hills that forms a landmark in the north west of Meath. It is significant for a series of passage tombs at the top of the hills dating from around 3000BC. The hills have an interesting profile that has been shaped partly by glacial movement and partly by human influence during the pre-history era. Parts of the hills are covered by conifer plantations and birch whilst other parts are covered by grazing land and large swathes of gorse.

The eastern setting of Loughcrew is characterised by remote open farmland in relatively poor condition. Stone and earth banks along the roads are derelict or in poor condition and hedgerows are becoming overgrown. There is a lot of mature tree cover, mainly beech and sycamore growing on banks along roads and between fields. Built development is predominantly vernacular – small farmhouses and cottages.

The rolling lowlands to the south of Loughcrew are an attractive patchwork of regular shaped, medium-sized fields divided by hedgerows and trees. To the north there are small areas of broadleaved woodland and rough scrub but few hedgerows. Fields are generally larger/ enlarged by loss of some field boundaries. Towards Oldcastle distinctive drystone walls, thick and pale in colour from the local limestone, become a key feature. The land slopes down from Loughcrew to Oldcastle so the appearance of this town is an important part of the setting of Loughcrew. There is an abrupt urban edge on the east where new development has been built at the edge of the town but elsewhere the town nestles well within the landscape. Its two church spires form a local landmark and in clear weather it is seen from Loughcrew against a backdrop of hills in Co. Cavan.

The landscape to the west of Loughcrew has a demesne character with lots of parkland trees, demesne walls fringing roads, beech avenues and woodland copses. A number of large estate houses are nestled amongst the drumlins. There are some modern houses on the southern approach to Oldcastle which are at odds with the towns otherwise contained form and which frequently have ornamental conifers planted around their boundaries. The landscape here is becoming less well managed and the condition of field boundaries – hedgerows and trees – is in decline.

Oldcastle was the birthplace of St Oliver Plunkett, a heroic archbishop who was hanged for resisting anti-Catholic laws in the 17th Century. He is commemorated in the Loughcrew Hill and in Oldcastle

This LCA is of National / International Importance. At present it does not meet the full criteria for International Importance (page 4) but it does have sufficient landscape heritage merit to warrant its promotion as an international attraction and an application for a international designation by UNESCO.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- The Loughcrew Hills are primarily built up with greywacke with calp limestone in the south of the area, creating a mixture of shallow free draining soils on the highest hills and deeper free draining acidic soils on the sides of the hills and lowlands.
- Shallow overlying soils make this area good for grazing but less suitable for arable farming.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime.

8. LCA 19 - loughcrew and slieve na calliagh hills

Land Use

- Pastoral fields and rough grazing land
- Coniferous plantations and lots of areas of mixed and broadleaf woodland
- Landscape has a smoothed appearance.

Ecology & Habitat

- No designations.
- Strong network of hedgerows and dry stonewalls.
- Gorse is prominent and widespread.
- Rough pasture.

History & Culture

- Loughcrew passage tombs.
- Other standing stones
- Oldcastle, 18th Century market town and birthplace of Oliver Plunkett
- Loughcrew House, stable buildings, orangery and restored gardens with mount. Entrance pillars to the demolished Loughcrew House erected as a folly.
- Protected structures include Newtown Belview House and Ballinlough Church.
- Ballinlough Gardens and lakeside walk

Tourism

- The Loughcrew Cairns is a popular tourist attraction as the cairns date from 3000BC pre dating the pyramids by 700 years.
- The landscape setting of Loughcrew and the hills themselves are attractive and are a popular walking destination.
- Loughcrew historic gardens near Oldcastle complete with attractive water gardens. Operas are held in the gardens.

Settlements and Built Structures

- No major towns.
- Oldcastle is a large town located in adjacent LCA 6
- Ballinalough: small gaug

Key Settlements

- Oldcastle in adjacent area

Forces for Change

- Decline in condition of drystone walls and hedgerows

POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Submit an application to UNESCO for an International Designation. Once this has been lodged, there is a strong case for treating the site as a 'Potential Site of International Importance' and putting in place policies that will afford it protection in keeping with this status. In our opinion the Loughcrew Hills are worthy of an application on the basis of their rarity, scale, age and undoubted importance in Irish history.
2. Preserve this area as a nationally/internationally important archaeological site comprising passage tombs and cultural landscape relating to Oliver Plunkett through the preservation of the unspoilt landscape setting.
3. Favour the use of native plant species around existing and new developments. Characteristic planting includes areas of native mixed and broadleaved woodland and controlled swathes of gorse.
4. Develop design guidelines to aid the siting and design of new development and provide incentives to counteract decline in condition of landscape features such as stonewalls, hedges and areas of woodland, particularly on northern slopes of hills and the approaches to Oldcastle.



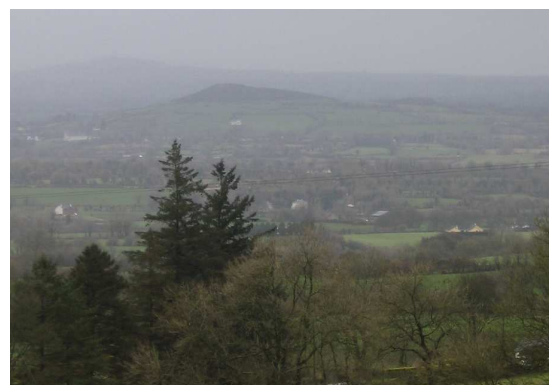
Rolling landscape at Loughcrew.



Loughcrew.



Dry stone walls are an attractive feature and specific to Loughcrew/Oldcastle area.



Diverse topography in the Loughcrew environs.

8. LCA 19 - loughcrew and slieve na calliagh hills

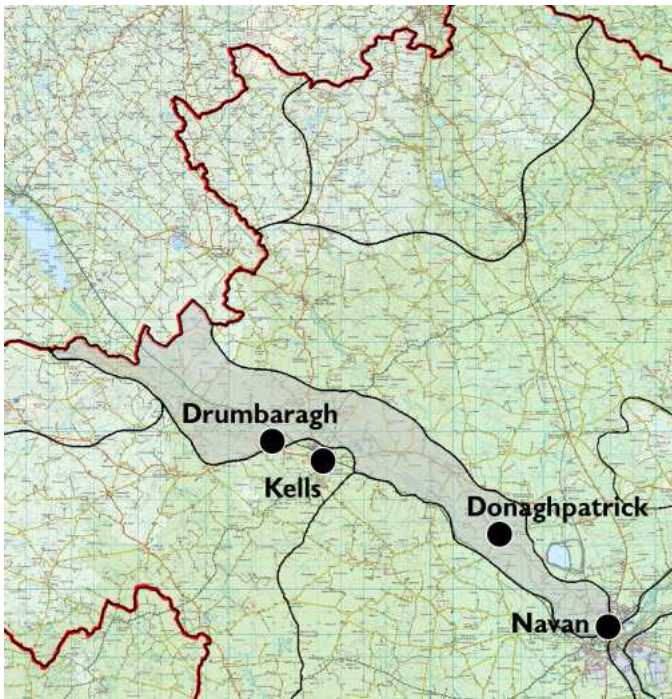
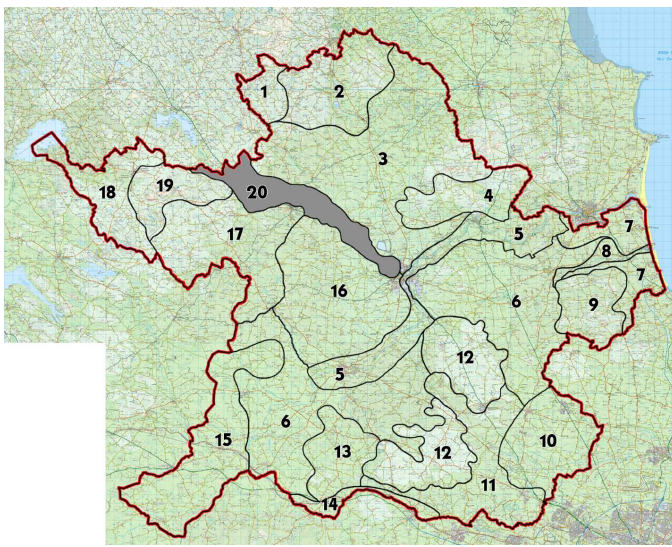
POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS cont..

5. Improve the appearance and function of visitor facilities adjacent to key historic sites, e.g. signage, parking areas, adequate surfacing of footpaths, etc.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity to accommodate large agricultural buildings. This LCA is highly sensitive and generally in a degraded condition so a large agricultural buildings would add another element that is out of character.
2. Medium potential capacity for new visitor facilities or enhancement of existing facilities providing they are designed in a sensitive, low-key manner that reflects local vernacular. Such development may provide opportunities to enhance landscape management by assisting agricultural diversification.
3. No potential capacity to accommodate multi-house developments due to the historical significance and rural nature of the area where such development is not part of the landscape character.
4. Low to medium potential capacity for one off houses. These are currently a minor character element so appropriate location, scale and design will be vitally important to ensure the rural character of this LCA is maintained.
5. High potential capacity to restore existing historic buildings where such development would provide opportunities to consolidate historic settlement form and increase the quality of landscape management.
6. No potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, masts or substations due to historic significance and unspoilt nature of this LCA, particularly its hilltops.
7. Low potential capacity to accommodate only minor upgrades to existing transport infrastructure due to historical significance and unspoilt nature of this LCA.
8. No potential capacity to accommodate underground services because of the high potential for significant disturbance of archaeological features in this LCA.
9. No potential capacity for wind turbines due to the historic significance, relative remoteness and unspoilt nature of this LCA, particularly its hilltops.
10. Medium potential capacity to accommodate forestry and biomass planting because coniferous plantations are already a landscape character element. However this type of development should not become a dominant element because it will alter the overall character of this LCA.

8. LCA 19 - loughcrew and slieve na calliagh hills



Landscape Value: Very High

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: Regional

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The River Blackwater is one of the two main rivers in Meath, the other being the Boyne. It flows from Navan to the west of the County through a pastoral landscape. The topography of the river corridor changes from being relatively flat around Navan to low undulating drumlins beyond Kells.

This is an attractive landscape character area, rich in visible historic features including demesne landscapes, castles, churches, earthworks and vernacular features such as stone bridges. The open farmland is characterised by a loss of internal field boundaries. Hedgerows that remain comprise of clipped thorn, ash and gorse on earth banks but most are gappy and have few trees. The predominant species of the few remaining trees is sycamore. The condition of traditional stonewalls around dwellings, along roads and between fields are also in decline. Many have been lost and replaced by fences, left in disrepair or repaired inappropriately with different materials, such as concrete blocks.

The N3 road between Navan and Kells runs along part of the southern edge of this landscape character area and the R163 and R164 dissect parts of it. There are short ribbons of low-density residential development along roads throughout this area and a number of small villages and graigs. With the exception of some large farmsteads and estate houses there are few vernacular residential buildings in this area. The urban fringe of Navan is characterised by some warehouse development, which has encroached into the edge of the flat river plain. The urban fringe of Kells is more attractive. There is some new residential development that creates a rather abrupt edge with the countryside but this is somewhat mitigated by a large area of adjacent parkland. Donaghpatrick is a small and particularly attractive, well-preserved village overlooking the banks of the river near Navan. It is part of one of the two Gaeltachts in Meath and has a wealth of 18th and 19th Century buildings, a Norman motte and a stone bridge over the river.

The eastern section of this LCA, between Navan and Kells, has a more refined character than the western section with large pastoral fields on either side of the river corridor and interspersed with stands of Pine, Beech and mixed estate woodland. In Rathaldron at the edge of Navan there is an 18th Century castle with an impressive avenue of mature lime trees, and at the edge of Kells, a multi-span stone bridge over the river.

In the western section, beyond Kells, the character of the farmland becomes rougher and more open. There are the same problems of decline in the condition of hedgerows and walls as in the rest of the LCA.

The primary areas of visual quality are the topography and undulating field pattern in the western section, extensive views across open countryside to the north and south, which are not significantly interrupted by built development, and the richness of visible historic features across the whole area. The key visual detractor near Navan is the large Tara Mines site in the adjacent LCA.

8. LCA 20 - blackwater valley

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Geology

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Comprised primarily of greywacke with shaly limestone, calp limestone and isolated area of granite.
- Soil is deep free draining acidic soils with shallower soils in upland areas.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak and lime with birch, ash, and willow associated with the River Boyne.

Land Use

- Overall pleasant and balanced pastoral landscape
- Simple and complimentary mix of land uses: agricultural land, river corridor, small areas of settlement and woodland.
- Decline in condition and loss of vernacular features such as boundary hedges and walls.

Ecology & Habitat

- River Blackwater has a diverse range of habitats and is designated as a CSAC.
- One of only two major river corridors in the county.
- Significant amounts of mixed woodland.

History & Culture

- Significant number of visible historic features focused around river corridor.
- Large number of C18th demesnes including Williamstown, Headfort and Bloomsbury House
- Norman mottes and prehistoric mounds
- Donaghpatrick, C19th church and medieval tower

Tourism

- Donaghpatrick is part of the Gaeltacht and is an attractive village. Attractive scenery has the potential to be a tourist attraction in its own right.
- Due to its location between Navan and Kells it has the opportunity to act as a gateway to both these towns.
- Attractive river setting needs to be more accessible for walking and cycling.
- River Blackwater is popular for angling.

Settlements and Built Structures

- Two urban fringe areas of Navan and Kells characterised by new residential and warehouse development encroaching into this character area
- Several graigs and small villages described below in 'Key Settlements'
- Ribbons of modern development along rural roads and urban fringes interrupt unified pastoral character.
- Ornamental conifer belts are common around modern houses and detract locally from character of pastoral landscape.

Key Settlements

- Urban fringes of *Navan* and *Kells*. These towns are described in more detail in LCA's 3 and 8 respectively.
- *Drumbaragh*: a small graig near Kells comprising a small collection of houses of varying styles and ages and a petrol station/ local shop. This graig has not yet been affected by new multi-house developments.

The current church is built of stone and occupies a prominent hilltop location with its graveyard on the slopes above the river corridor. There is a Norman motte covered with a copse of oak trees on the approach to the village. The village was also the site of a 5th Century church built for St Patrick and near the church are the remains of an ancient rath.

Gibbstown: A medium to large village within 5km of Navan comprised of a long ribbon of buildings along the road corridor. Gibbstown flanks LCA's 3 & 5. The village centre is not well defined but is a mix of small vernacular cottages and large one-off bungalows and houses with a mixture of styles and materials. Potentially attractive but slightly degraded wooded setting. Vernacular character could potentially be lost altogether if modern building styles become dominant.



View of Church on approach to Donaghpatrick.



View of Church from stone bridge crossing the River Blackwater.



8. LCA 20 - blackwater valley

Key Settlements cont.

- *Donaghpatrick*: Part of the Gaeltacht, this is a very attractive small and well preserved village. It occupies an elevated position on a hill above the river and there are good views from the back of the village onto the river corridor. However, views from within the village are enclosed by mature trees along the road corridors and the village is almost hidden by vegetation. Buildings are almost entirely late C18th -19th detached brick houses.
- *Orisstown*: A small gaug focused around a crossroads and including a school, some agri-commercial units and houses plus extensive ribbon development along its approach roads, mostly built in the 20th and 21st Centuries.
- *Carnaross*: Small gaug village around busy crossroads on N3 near Kells. Core consists of 1-2 storey vernacular stone buildings that have been plastered and painted. There is more modern development on its edges and a school and church on one approach. St Kieran's Well near the village is likely to have been a place of worship in pagan times and is now the venue for the celebration of the patron saint's day.

Forces for Change

- Decline in condition and loss of hedgerows and stonewalls.
- Future extensions to Kells and Navan
- Development of the M3 motorway

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conserve the wealth of historic features along the river corridor within an attractive landscape setting. Provide incentives to landowners to improve the condition of landscape features such as stonewalls, clipped hedgerows, earth banks and mature trees through improved management and replacement of lost features where necessary.
2. Have regard to the European designation as a CSAC of the entire River Blackwater and national designations of PNHA's elsewhere in this LCA.
3. Maintain and enhance views to and from areas of visual value including extensive uninterrupted views across open countryside in the north and south and views of historic features.
4. Soften the urban fringe of Navan by implementing landscape improvements which will assist in screening existing industrial development from views within this LCA.
5. Ensure future development of urban fringe areas is well integrated with the rural setting through screening with locally occurring plant species and groupings. Development should not encroach into the flood plain where this would have a detrimental effect on landscape value or ecological function.
6. Promote the scenic value of this LCA as an attractive visitor attraction and provide sensitively designed and located facilities such as parking, picnic areas, way marked trails, driving routes and signage in accordance with Design Guidelines.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

1. Low potential capacity to accommodate large agricultural buildings due to the high sensitivity and scenic quality of this LCA. Although they are an existing feature of the landscape further development would detract from the overall quality of the LCA and decrease landscape value.
2. High potential capacity to accommodate interpretive visitor facilities associated with historic features, particularly where these would provide opportunities for enhanced landscape management and use. Such development must be sensitively designed to avoid creating visual clutter.
3. Low potential capacity to accommodate multi-house residential developments because landscape value around both main towns, Navan and Kells, has already been decreased by modern development which forms abrupt edges with the countryside. Further such development is likely to add to decline in landscape value and condition.
4. Low potential capacity for one off houses as there is already considerable ribbon development adjacent to arterial routes into Navan and Kells which has decreased landscape value and condition.
5. High potential capacity to restore existing historic buildings where new uses will not introduce potentially damaging activities into this LCA and where such development may strengthen historic settlement form and enhance landscape management.
6. Medium potential capacity to accommodate overhead cables, masts and substations provided that the potential loss of boundary walls and planting and damage to historic features and their settings is mitigated against.
7. Medium potential capacity to accommodate road and rail infrastructure development provided that the potential loss of boundary walls, planting and damage to historic features and their settings is mitigated against.
8. Medium potential capacity to accommodate underground services provided that the potential loss of landscape features such as boundary walls and hedgerows and historic features is mitigated against.
9. Medium to low potential capacity to accommodate wind turbines because there are frequent extensive views across open countryside in this LCA which are generally unspoiled by built development.
10. Low potential capacity to accommodate biomass or forestry plantations because such development would be highly visible



9. summary of landscape character areas

Summary of Landscape Character Areas

| Landscape Character Type | Landscape Character Area | Value: Exceptional, Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low | Importance: International National Regional Local | Sensitivity: High, Medium, Low |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| River Corridors and Estuaries | 5. Boyne Valley | Exceptional | International | High |
| | 8. Nanny Valley | Very High | Regional | High |
| | 14. Royal Canal | High | Regional | Medium |
| | 20. Blackwater Valley | Very High | Regional | High |
| | | | | |
| Lowland Landscapes | 3. North Navan Lowlands | Moderate | Regional | Medium |
| | 6. Central Lowlands | High | Regional | Medium |
| | 10. The Ward Lowlands | Low | Regional | High |
| | 11. South East Lowlands | Very High | Regional | Medium |
| | 13. Rathmoylon Lowlands | High | National | High |
| | 15. South West Lowlands | High | Regional | Medium |
| | 16. West Navan Lowlands | Moderate | Local | Medium |
| | 17. South West Kells Lowlands | Moderate | Local | Medium |
| | | | | |
| Hills and Uplands Areas | 1. Teervurcher Uplands | High | Local | Medium |
| | 2. North Meath Lakelands | Moderate | Regional | Low |
| | 4. Rathkenny Hills | Very High | Regional | High |
| | 9. Bellewstown Hills | Very High | Regional | Medium |
| | 12. Tara-Skryne Hills | Exceptional | National / International | High |
| | 18. Lough Sheelin Uplands | High | Regional | High |
| | 19. Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills | Exceptional | National / International | High |
| | | | | |
| Coastal Landscape | 7. Coastal Plains | Moderate | Regional | High |

Summary of Landscape Capacity

| Landscape Character Area | Potential Capacity to accommodate development: <i>Low, Medium, High</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | 1. Large-scale farm buildings | 2. Visitor facilities | 3. Multi-house residential | 4. One-off houses | 5. Conversion existing buildings | 6. Overhead cables, masts, substations | 7. Roads and railways | 8. Underground services | 9. Wind turbines | 10. Biomass and forestry | 11. Quarrying, mineral extraction and landfill |
| 1. Teervurcher Uplands | Med-low | High | Low | Low | High | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | |
| 2. North Meath Lakelands | Medium | High | Medium | High | High | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | |
| 3. North Navan Lowlands | Medium | High | Medium | Low | High | High-med. | High | Medium | Medium | High | |
| 4. Rathkenny Hills | Medium | High | Low-no | Medium | High | Low | Medium | Medium | Low-med. | Low | |
| 5. Boyne Valley | Low | Medium | Low | Low | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | |
| 6. Central Lowlands | Medium | High | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Low-med. | Medium | |
| 7. Coastal Plains | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Med.-low | Medium | |
| 8. Nanny Valley | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | |
| 9. Bellewstown Hills | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | Low | Low | | Low | |
| 10. The Ward Lowlands | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium | Low | Low | Low | |
| 11. South East Lowlands | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Low-med. | Low | |
| 12. Tara Skryne Hills | Low | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | |
| 13. Rathmoylon Lowlands | High | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | |
| 14. Royal Canal | Low | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | |
| 15. South West Lowlands | Medium | High | Low | Low | High | Medium | Med-Low | Med-Low | Medium | Medium | |
| 16. West Navan Lowlands | Medium | High | Medium | Med-high | High | Med-Low | Med-Low | Med-Low | Medium | Medium | |
| 17. South West Kells Lowlands | Medium | High | Low | Medium | High | Low | Low | Medium | Low | Medium | |
| 18. Lough Sheelin Uplands | Medium | High | Low | Med-low | High | Low | Low | Low | Low | Medium | |
| 19. Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills | Low | Medium | No | Low-med. | High | No | No | No | No | Medium | |
| 20. Blackwater Valley | Low | High | Low | Low | High | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Low | |

9. summary of landscape character areas

Summary of Graig Characteristics and Recommendations

| Graig | Location (LCA) | Objectives* |
|---|----------------|---|
| 1. Graigs in remote rural areas experiencing a decline in landscape value and/ or condition. | | |
| Ballinabrackey | LCA | Regenerate |
| Ballinalough Bective Boardsmill Carnaross Dromone Drumbarragh Dunderry Newcastle Kilbeg Kilbride Mullaghea Killalon Kilskeer Killyon Rathkenny Robinstown Teervurcher | LCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide incentives to landowners to enhance management of landscape elements such as field boundaries. To encourage diversification of rural enterprise To facilitate planned growth and provision of local services and infrastructure. |
| 2. Graigs in rural areas with a robust landscape character and moderate development pressure | | |
| Castletown | LCA | Strengthen |
| Cortown Fordstown Grangegeeth Lobinstown Meath Hill Oristown | LCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To accommodate limited growth in a sensitive manner |
| 3. Graigs in rural areas in close proximity to urban settlements and/ or under intense pressure from development | | |
| Ardcath | LCA | Consolidate |
| Batterstown Beauparc Bellewstown Bohermeen Clonalvy Coole Culmullin Curragha Drumree Edoxtown Grennanstown Kilberry Kilbride Kilcloon Kiltale Lismullin Moynalvy Oberstown Rathcore Rathfeigh Skryne Wilkinstown Yellow Furze | LCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To limit further expansion in size of settlements and consolidate existing form To enhance the quality of the edge of these settlements to ensure that landscape character and condition is maintained. |
| 4. Demesne villages and villages/ graigs with a unique historic character | | |
| Dunsany | LCA | Conserve |
| Kentstown Slane Summerhill | LCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the unique historic layout, form and scale of the existing settlement. To ensure that development is in keeping with the historic character of the settlement |
| | | <i>*Also refer to Section 6: General Policies on 'Built Development and Settlements' and 'Graigs'.</i> |

9. summary of landscape character areas



GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------|---|
| ASI | <p><i>Areas of Scientific Interest</i></p> <p>These have been largely superseded by NHA's and have no statutory basis although, former ASI's are still valuable areas of ecological or geological interest.</p> |
| CSAC | <p><i>Candidate Special Area of Conservation</i></p> <p>Designated under the European Community Habitats Directive to maintain biodiversity and restore the conservation status of certain species of flora and fauna. Areas in Meath that support rare, endangered or vulnerable species that require special protection and positive habitat management have been identified as CSAC's</p> |
| DOEHLG | <p><i>Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government</i></p> |
| GIS | <p><i>Geographical Information System</i></p> |
| PNHA | <p><i>Proposed National Heritage Area</i></p> <p>Derived from the ASI's, these include the best remaining areas of Irelands natural and semi-natural habitats selected by virtue of having special scientific significance for one or more species, communities, habitats, landforms, or geological or geomorphological features, or for a diversity of natural attributes.</p> |
| RPG | <p><i>Regional Planning Guidance</i></p> |
| SPA | <p><i>Special Protection Area</i></p> <p>Special Protection Areas (SPA's) are areas designated under the European Community Birds Directive for the protection of birds and their habitats.</p> |
| UNESCO | <p><i>United Nations Education, Scientific & Cultural Organisation</i></p> |
| WHS | <p><i>World Heritage Site</i></p> <p>UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) designates areas as World Heritage Sites (WHS) if they are deemed to be of outstanding universal value under the provisions contained within the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage. Designation affords no additional statutory planning controls but planning policies should place great weight on the need to protect them for future generations.</p> |

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A landscape photograph showing a vibrant green field in the foreground, partially enclosed by a low, rustic stone wall. In the middle ground, there are several trees and a tall utility pole. The background features rolling hills under a sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

| | |
|--------|--|
| map 1 | landscape character types |
| map 2 | landscape character areas |
| map 3 | landscape sensitivity |
| map 4 | landscape capacity |
| map 5 | visual amenity |
| map 6 | landmarks |
| map 7 | pre history landscape |
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