



## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE AWARD EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

*FOURTEEN COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING  
OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION*

*Council of Europe Landscape Award Forum  
of National Selections*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Session 2012-2013*

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**South Pennines Watershed Landscape Project, Pennine Prospects, United Kingdom**  
**Representative of the Project:** Mr Robin GRAY, CMLI, Pennine Prospects

1. Thank you. It is an honour it is to be here presenting amongst so many INSPIRING projects from across Europe.

My name is Robin Gray, I am a Landscape Architect managing the Watershed Landscape Project on behalf of Pennine Prospects.

Pennine Prospects is a small regeneration company based in the north of England.

Our landscape is the only 'upland' or high altitude area in England WITHOUT a landscape designation

2. It is this upland plateaux that we have called the Watershed Landscape.

3..... Why WATERSHED ? Well it is a landscape where water is important. It is managed for water supply. It is the 'watershed' between the North Sea and the Irish Sea. It marks the boundary between two historical regions- Yorkshire and Lancashire. Bitter historical rivals – especially in cricket!

4. We have 1 million people on our doorstep in the cities of Leeds and Manchester connected by road, rail even by canal. This motorway crosses the Pennines – a shop window for many onto our own bit of wilderness.

5. We are the landscape that has inspired many – sometimes by its ‘bleakness’ -the Bronte sisters . Emily Bronte wrote Wuthering Heights here in 1846. Contemporary writers are still inspired by our landscape.

6. Later this month we will see the Tour de France Grand Depart pass through our landscape.

7. I am going to cover the European Landscape Convention in the UK by telling you a little about our landscape and our project but also telling you about how the Convention has influenced thinking and practical policy initiatives within the UK. I also need to mention why this is relevant NOW within the wider agenda of ‘ecosystem services’.

8. Firstly, I need to credit the organisations that have made it possible for us to win the UK Landscape Award . Our government department DEFRA – the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, also the government agency responsible for the natural environment, Natural England. Last , but not least, our funders – part of the UK National Lottery – the Heritage Lottery Fund and the European Union LEADER Programme.

When we won the UK competition, the Government Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries recognised the achievements of our project by saying “It is a project with wide ranging impact, a powerful expression of local identity and sense of place and is testament to the hard work of the people who have played their part in the formation of this distinct landscape. All landscapes matter for the health, wealth and well-being of society, for our cultural identity and for the diverse habitats that exist as part of them.”

9. So to the European Landscape Convention. It was ratified in 2006 in the UK. This informed the Government’s Natural Environment White Paper in 2010, with commitments for diverse and living landscapes. The UK government made several commitments...

- We will work with local communities in a number of areas throughout England to support local engagement in landscape planning.
- We will work with civil society to update and improve the consistency of the national landscape character area profiles and integrate information on the ecosystem goods and services that they provide.....

10. National Character Area profiles in England are one very practical application of the European Landscape Convention integrating landscape into decision making.

National Character Area profiles help people & organisations make links, across a landscape with the same characteristics, leading to a more coherent approach to planning and managing land.

11.The National Character Area spatial framework includes 159 National Character Areas covering all England. These are broad areas of land with a cohesive and distinctive landscape and ecological character, shaped by natural, cultural and historical influences. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape, not administrative boundaries, which makes them a good decision making framework for the natural environment. Each profile contains a description of the landscape character, history, recent and anticipated landscape change, including climate change, ecosystem services delivered, culminating in a series of ‘environmental opportunities’ specific to that place

I shall point out some landscapes you may know [ and love!] – the Lake District.....the Peak District ...the Cotswolds.

This is the first time locally specific information on the suite of ecosystem services in a geographic area has been published. It also seeks to identify areas as they are perceived by their residents and visitors alike. The French word 'patrie' best sums up this feeling of IDENTITY. It is a learning process and one we expect to review as we refine our ecosystem approach.

12-15 This is just one practical application of how the National Character Area approach might work. Here using different scenarios to show how woodland might be encouraged. These scenarios have been used for public consultation.

16. If I turn to the Watershed Landscape...our moorland plateau, is set within the South Pennines National Character Area. It is at an altitude of approx 350-400 metres elevation. Below us are deeply wooded valleys and pasture, and 19<sup>th</sup> century towns that developed quickly around the textile industry – indeed this is a landscape that has been formed by the needs of our towns – by textiles, by sheep, by coal, by water power.

This is the landscape I ASPIRE To represent and to champion.

17 What makes this landscape special – here is my personal selection

- Of international importance for ground nesting bird populations
- [ Probably] the greatest concentration of reservoirs in the world [ 35 plus]
- [Possibly] the best place in the world to study archaeology from the mesolithic to the Bronze age – I know some may not agree with me!
- They have inspired artists and writers of international reputation [Brontes, Ted Hughes].
- The most southerly extent of peatland blanket bog in Europe.

18. I need to explain our approach. Landscape is made up of many layers. . These layers interact to give the landscape we see today. It is a statement which is very obvious to everyone here I know – but it is worth restating in the context of our project .

We have underlying physical conditions – geology, climate, soils – giving rise to biodiversity, influenced over time by human activity : for example, land management, use of resources and transport routes. Leading to current land uses and land cover, and then our PERCEPTION - how we respond to and experience landscapes, and therefore how we value and use landscapes

19 For example, this map seeks to portray tranquillity – it is a measure of intrusion of modern life into a wilderness, whether through street lighting, wind turbines or arterial roads.

Landscapes are dynamic, changing over time. All landscapes in England have been shaped by human activity throughout history (e.g. settlement, rituals & beliefs...). This 'historic environment' includes our cultural heritage. It is important to understand these past patterns, the extent to which they have survived & how different stages in history have contributed to the character of today's landscape.

20. Take this cup and ring stone from the Bronze Age. This is the idol stone on Ilkley Moor it is one of 400 plus inscribed stones on the moor from around 4,000 – 6,000 years ago. What rituals and beliefs guided their creation – we can only guess. However, it was a very different landscape at the time – a landscape dominated by trees, woodland and bog. What is significant about the South Pennines is the visible evidence of **all historic periods**, from

prehistory through the centuries, demonstrating how rural life changed over time, industrialisation from our textile industry to the present day.

Land use: The uses that people make of the landscape (eg settlement, farming & field enclosure, energy production & forestry). The character of our landscape is particularly influenced by the present-day pattern of these features & how people use them, as well as their historical legacy.

21. This gentleman worked in one of the highest altitude coal mines in the North of England – the pit head was one of the **HIGHEST** in the country – it was also one of the **DEEPEST** .

22. We have ice creams on our threatened landscape! [yes – it is occasionally hot enough...and not **ALWAYS** raining!].

We have arterial roads. We have high voltage cables. It is a **HARD** working landscape.

23. Biodiversity: The types & abundance of our plants & animals & the inter-relationships they form (biodiversity) help shape the character of each landscape. Much of our Watershed landscape is shaped by shooting for sport – a leisure pursuit that dates back a little over 150 years that has formed our landscape. You might consider these heather moors ‘iconic’ – indeed the UK has 70 % of the world’s heather moors!

24. Our moorland is acknowledged as being of international importance for species and habitats. Nearly 100 square miles of moorland in the South Pennines is designated as a Special Protection Area status because of its importance for breeding birds. It is home to Britain’s **fastest** bird of prey, the Peregrine falcon, and its **smallest** bird of prey, the merlin. The moorland edge is home to one of England’s **rarest** birds, the diminutive twite used to be widespread across 12 counties of England – it now only breeds in the South Pennines. Over the world as a whole, biodiversity (as described by the variety of species and habitats, their abundance and ranges) is experiencing a rapid decline and deterioration from the position in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and before.

25. Physical features: The shape of the land, or landform, is often the main influence on the character of the landscape, especially in upland areas (in terms of how it has been managed over time). Rivers & drainage systems also have an important part to play in shaping the landscape, while geology, soils & vegetation cover can determine the ‘usefulness’ of the land for agriculture.

26. This landscape also supplies over 70 % of our drinking water to our towns and cities through a network of 35 reservoirs. Every time we turn on the tap in Northern England we are more than likely to be running water sourced from our uplands.

27. Of course we are in the subject area of Ecosystem Services. Water supply is just one of the ecosystem services supplied by our upland environment. This is the web of services that we derive from our landscape. We are in an interesting time where we are seeking to change structures to reflect ‘ecosystem services’ and schemes, sometimes complex, to reflect these public goods and services. Take water , for example, from water supply through to flood alleviation – these are just two aspects of our water environment linked within our landscape with very different consequences and approaches required. .

28. We have blanket bog –built upon a foundation of sphagnum – a moss. The UK has 18% of the world’s blanket bog. The Watershed Landscape is the most southerly extent of blanket bog in Europe. Peat moorland is also the single biggest store of atmospheric carbon in the UK. If allowed to erode, the carbon is released into the air as carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas.

29. Our blanket bog is under threat.  
It is in poor condition.

30. The legacy of industrial pollution here from the mills of West Yorkshire and Lancashire is greater here than possibly anywhere else.

It is one of the causes of the extent of bare peat and erosion.

It is ONE – but only one ...other factors include over grazing...including wildfire.

The structure of peat bogs can be critically harmed.

This has an impact on water quality, on ground nesting birds

This has a cost, too, as water companies have had to invest in local water treatment plants to remove peat from drinking water.

31. What is the solution – here is an example of bare peat being restored on Black Hill- the name is very apt!.

Here is our site in 2003.....

32....and with vegetation in 2008. If you look into the background this feature marks the summit of Black Hill- on a plinth of stone. The height of the plinth [approximately 1.5 metres] represents the extent of erosion over a thirty year period.

33. The European Landscape Convention identified the need to work with PEOPLE. In the Watershed Landscape Project we have taken the story of our landscape down into the towns and cities . This is about REAL people supporting LANDSCAPE –scale work. I passionately believe that people DO care but sometimes YOU have to use novel ways to get our messages across.

34. We have organised events of course.

35. I mentioned how our landscape has inspired artists and writers inspired artists and writers from the Brontes to Ted Hughes. We have sought to continue this tradition with writers and artists in residence.

36-We have sought to put biodiversity at the very heart of our landscape. The twite was widespread across northern England but it is now confined to the last 100 breeding pairs within the South Pennines, due in part to intensification of pasture management.

37.We have sought to celebrate OUR bird – the twite or ‘Pennine Finch’. At celebrations, even in a local beer – ‘the Light Twite’. There is a serious point – we seek to put biodiversity not just on the LABEL ...but as our official EMBLEM to gain public support.

38. Where we have carried out practical work - we have worked with local people, local volunteers and young people. For example, where we have undertaken the restoration of degraded blanket bog we have worked with a community growing project and local schools to supply and plant 60,000 transplants onto the moor.

39. We appointed four trainees who qualified in Environmental Conservation and found employment. The two posts advertised in 2012 attracted 450 applications. I feel guilty that we have not achieved more for this generation

40.But also let us not forget that these natural landscapes have an innate value that is intangible. We have spent time in the South Pennines trying to understand the cultural services and their VALUE to our local communities which is all too often overlooked. I have sat in focus groups where individuals unprompted have told us how landscape has profoundly supported them through both the best and worst times in their lives.

Just by way of example here are some of the quotes from our study into cultural services.

I think that this is one of my favourite !

*‘ My wife asks me “what do you think about when you are up there?” , I say “nothing” that is the point. ‘*

41. Finally to funding. We have received funding through the pan European programme LEADER

42. ...and nationally. We are part of a family of Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnerships. They encompass every type of landscape ..... But there are some common features :They are DISTINCT areas – not just PROTECTED landscapes – sometimes what we might call a Cinderella landscapes...a landscape that never gets the true recognition that it deserves.

43. This is an old map with 50 plus schemes across the UK . The fund embraced the European Landscape Convention

It is one of the most successful programmes run by HLF .

In terms of value for money

In terms of outcomes.

...and as a result of this the Heritage Lottery Fund are investing £ 20 M EACH year over at least the next five years into Landscape Partnerships.

44. WHY NOW .

45. We have an evolving agenda. Climate change is here and it is now. And yet we are only now beginning to appreciate the very real value of our landscapes and the role it has to play ...whether it is supplying water to our towns and cities or preventing flooding. Payments for ecosystem services are being introduced. [In the South Pennines we have undertaken an ecosystem service assessment].

In a world dominated by fiscal agendas there needs to be an urgency in society to think natural environment, think landscape scale and think big!

I therefore commend the work of this network and this group!

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