



COUNTRYSIDE PLANNING



Edited by KEVIN BISHOP
and ADRIAN PHILLIPS

Countryside Planning

Countryside Planning

New Approaches to Management and Conservation

Edited by
Kevin Bishop and Adrian Phillips

earthscan
from Routledge

First published by Earthscan in the UK and USA in 2003

For a full list of publications please contact:

Earthscan

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-85383-849-1 paperback

ISBN: 978-1-84407-059-6 hardback

Typesetting by MapSet Ltd, Gateshead, UK

Cover design by Danny Gillespie

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Countryside planning : new approaches to management and conservation / edited by Kevin Bishop and Adrian Phillips.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-84407-059-X (hc) – ISBN 1-85383-849-7 (pb)

1. Regional planning. 2. Regional planning—Environmental aspects. I. Bishop, Kevin, 1966- II. Phillips, Adrian.

HT391.C68 2003

307.1'2—dc21

2003012568

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRE	Action with Communities in Rural England
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASSI	Areas of Special Scientific Interest
BAP	biodiversity action plan
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBD	(United Nations) Convention on Biological Diversity
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
CDP	Community Development Projects
CDS	Countryside Design Summaries
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CLCA	County Landscape Character Assessment (Ireland)
CLRAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
COE	Council of Europe
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England (formerly the Council for the Protection of Rural England)
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme
DAHGI	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DOE&LG	Department of the Environment and Local Government (Ireland)
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EECONET	European Ecological Network
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
ELC	European Landscape Convention
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FIPS	Forestry Inventory Planning System (Ireland)
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GDO	General Development Order
GIS	Geographical Information System
GM	genetically modified
HLA	Historic Land Use Assessment
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterization
HS	Historic Scotland

ICPL	International Centre for Protected Landscapes
IFS	Indicative Forestry Strategy
IUCN	World Conservation Union
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plans
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LEAP	Local Environment Agency Plans
LGA	Local Government Association
LGMB	Local Government Management Board
LPA	local planning authority
MAFF	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MRTPI	Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NEST	NVCO Environment Support Team
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHZ	Natural Heritage Zone
NVC	National Vegetation Community
NVCO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
PEBLDS	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
QoL	Quality of Life
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
RCC	rural community council
RDC	Rural Development Commission
RCEP	Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SAC	Special Area for Conservation
SCAN	Sustainable Communities Action Network
SDU	Sustainable Development Unit
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SMRs	sites and monuments records
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
SPNR	Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TAIMS	Traffic Appraisal and Impact Monitoring System
UKBAP	UK Biodiversity Action Plan
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNCHE	UN Conference on the Human Environment
VDS	Village Design Statements

UNEP WCMC	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WLPG	Wales Landscape Partnership Group
WRI	World Resources Institute
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

Preface

The origins of this book lie in an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) sponsored seminar series exploring the linkages between society, sustainability and planning and, in particular, in a well-attended seminar held in Cardiff in May 2000 on the theme of new approaches to countryside planning and management. Many of the chapters derive from contributions made at that seminar, though others were added for the sake of completeness.

The result is a volume of essays which explores the new frameworks for planning and managing the countryside and its natural values, reviews the new tools being developed to guide the identification, protection and management of land with environmental value in the countryside, and assesses the value of these new approaches through several case studies. We did not realize when we began writing and editing this book how topical its subject matter would become; but at no time in recent history has the future of the countryside been the subject of such profound uncertainty and anguished debate. It is now clear that we are at a watershed: the future of the countryside is bound to be very different from its recent past. Many groups and professions are now engaged in a discussion about shaping the future direction of countryside policy and practice. We hope that this volume will contribute to their endeavours.

We believe that the strength of this book lies in the diversity of the contributions and their individual subject expertise. However, as with many edited volumes, such diversity presents the challenge of how to bring together a large number of disparate contributions so that they cohere into a publication that hangs together. As editors, we trust that this has been achieved. The collective experience and expertise of the individual contributors far outweighs the thoughts and analysis that we as editors can bring to this topic. Our aim has been to ensure that the individual contributions are clear in their description and analysis; and that the story told in this volume as a whole adds up to more than the sum of its many individual parts.

Our first note of thanks must be to the ESRC for their financial assistance for the seminar that gave birth to the book. However, our greatest debt of gratitude is to the individual contributors for their chapters, sometimes written under considerable pressure whilst they attempted to balance this extra task with their full-time responsibilities in key roles within public, private and voluntary bodies. We would also like to thank the colleagues, friends, partners and families of our contributors for their patience and support.

The staff at Earthscan, notably Pascale Mettam who commissioned the book and Tamsin Langrishe who inherited the project, have been both supportive and patient. Our thanks also to Janice Edwards and Alex Farr in the

Department of City and Regional Planning for their assistance with the illustrations. Our final thanks must be to our respective families for their tolerance whilst we worked on this project. Also an apology to James and particularly Thomas who thought that their Dad was working on a Bob the Builder style blockbuster. We will never again underestimate the effort involved in editing a book!

Chapter 1

Then and Now: Planning for Countryside Conservation

Kevin Bishop and Adrian Phillips

INTRODUCTION

Not since the Corn Law debates of the 19th century has the countryside been such a focus of political and public attention. Fundamental attitudes and assumptions that have underpinned policy in this field for more than half a century have been challenged. In recent years, a watershed has arrived: we can be sure that the future for the countryside will not be a continuation of past trends.

New tools are therefore needed to help us plan and manage the countryside at a time of unprecedented change. This is what this book is about, and in particular about the various approaches being developed to promote environmental concerns. Its main aim, therefore, is to review experience within the UK and Ireland in shaping what the Performance and Innovation Unit of the Cabinet Office has called a 'a new national framework for protecting land of environmental value in the countryside' (1999, p78).

The book's more detailed aims are to:

- examine the impact of new international and European frameworks for planning and managing the countryside and its natural values;
- review the range of new tools for the identification, protection and management of land with environmental value in the countryside;
- assess the value of these new approaches through a range of case studies; and
- draw conclusions on a new approach to countryside planning.

To set the scene, this introductory chapter outlines what we mean by the terms 'countryside conservation' and 'planning', looks back at how the countryside has been planned and managed over the last 50 years, compares this with the situation now and then identifies the key themes addressed in this book.



Figure 1.1 *The countryside planner's bookshelf*

DEFINING COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION AND PLANNING

In reality, there is no single system of ‘countryside planning’ in the UK but rather a number of separate systems and initiatives which represent an ad hoc policy response to different issues that have arisen over time. Despite the introduction of a ‘comprehensive’ system of town and country planning in 1947, planners (in a statutory sense) have played a limited role in rural land use – often being mere bystanders to the changes in landscape and loss of ecological resources that have occurred. Whilst relatively minor built development has been subject to the full rigour of planning control, major agents of landscape change, such as afforestation schemes and agricultural improvements, have been allowed to proceed outside the planning system. In reality, economic forces driving land management have shaped the countryside far more than has town and country planning.

That is why our definition of countryside conservation and planning is not focused only on the statutory system of town and country planning – and the term ‘planner’ means more here than those professionals entitled to use the initials ‘MRTPI’ (Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute). Rather, we are concerned with how society plans and manages the natural and cultural heritage of the countryside in its widest sense. Thus defined, there has been a profusion of countryside plans and strategies aimed at conserving the countryside. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the countryside planner’s bookshelf is now sagging under the weight of such documents. Moreover, a veritable toolkit of countryside planning processes has been devised to help identify, conserve and manage the natural and cultural heritage to help the planner in his or her work (see Figure 1.2).

The focus of this book is on these new frameworks and processes for countryside conservation and planning. In particular, these include:

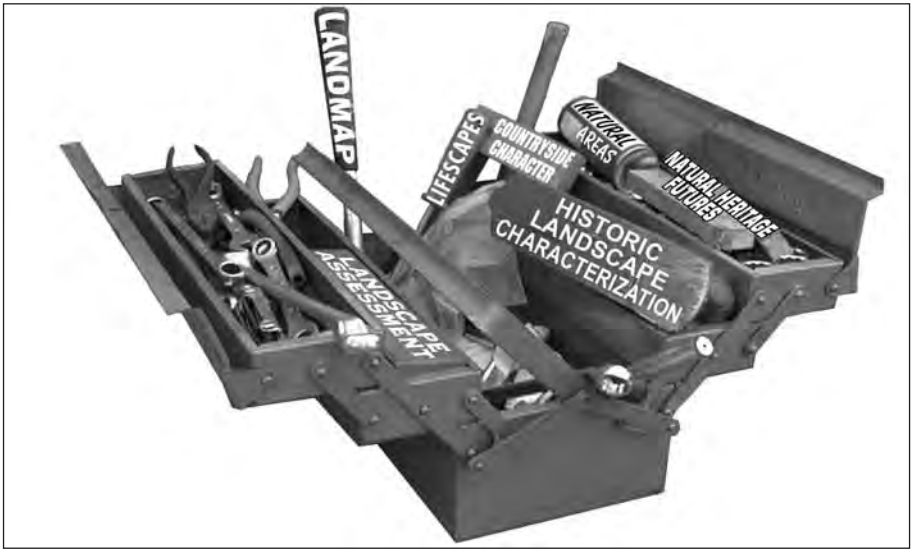


Figure 1.2 *The countryside planner's toolkit*

- methodologies to describe landscape character and natural qualities;
- historic landscape assessments;
- a national to local system of biodiversity action plans; and
- ways of involving local communities in the protection and enhancement of their own environments.

But despite these innovations, the current framework for rural policy still bears the imprint, in part, of the thinking of the 1940s. Therefore, before discussing the key themes addressed in the book in further detail, we briefly recall the origins of countryside planning and management, and how attitudes and policy have changed over the past 50 years.

THEN: A LASTING LEGACY

The prevailing view of the 1940s was clearly captured in the Scott Committee (1942) *Report on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas*. This held that a healthy farming industry was a sine qua non for national food policy, landscape protection and the revival of the rural economy (Cherry and Rogers, 1996). For half a century, this assumption dominated countryside planning and management. The approach that it gave rise to was characterized by the following themes, each of which is explored below:

- agricultural fundamentalism;
- containment planning;
- site specific conservation;
- functional divergence;

- domestic drivers;
- community consultation.

Agricultural Fundamentalism

In the early years after World War II, there was a clear view of what the countryside was for and what should be done to realize this vision. There was a general determination amongst politicians and policy-makers to develop further the 'Dig for Victory' approach to agriculture which had served Britain so well during wartime. Agriculture was seen as the primary function of rural areas and the role of farmers was to ensure food security. The role of government was to support agriculture and provide a policy framework that encouraged food production and provided a favourable environment for farmers to achieve this. Successive governments intervened in the agriculture sector in order to foster and promote domestic food production through price support, production subsidies, scientific research and special treatment for farmers within the land use planning and taxation systems. Though it took a different form after the UK joined the Common Market (now the European Union – EU), production-focused support continued, and was indeed reinforced, under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This philosophy of what the late Gerald Wibberley called 'agricultural fundamentalism' only began to be seriously challenged in the 1980s, perhaps most dramatically with the arrival of milk quotas in 1984. But, despite more than ten years of continual reform to the CAP and national agricultural policy, some of the framework developed immediately after World War II remains intact (Performance and Innovation Unit, 1999; Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002).

Containment Planning

During the inter-war years, Britain took tentative steps towards establishing a town and country planning system, but in reality progress was slow and piecemeal. The major impetus for a national land use planning system came from a trilogy of wartime reports – Barlow (1940), Scott (1942) and Uthwatt (1942). All three reports took the view that a land use planning system should have as one of its primary duties the protection of agricultural land. The seminal influence of the Scott Committee has already been noted. It considered that planning should be about protecting farmland, and farming should have a prior claim to land use unless competing uses could prove otherwise. Such thinking was embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, which was largely designed to protect the countryside and agricultural land from urban encroachment. The planning system not only sought to contain urban development in order to safeguard agricultural land, it also imposed minimal controls on agricultural and forestry enterprises. The use of land and buildings for agriculture and forestry was (and remains) excluded from the definition of development contained in the 1947 and all subsequent planning acts; hence there is no need to obtain planning permission for agriculture or forestry operations. Also, most building or engineering operations carried out for agriculture or forestry purposes are classified as permitted development under

the General Development Order (GDO) Schedule 2. Though some limited erosion of this freedom has taken place over the years, successive governments have resisted pressure from amenity and conservation interests to extend planning controls over a variety of farming and forestry activities. Indeed, strong protection of agricultural land has been the bedrock of national planning policy in the UK for over 50 years (Green Balance, 2000). In so far as the planning system has protected the rural heritage, it has been primarily achieved incidentally, through the protection of the best, most versatile agricultural land from urban development. Since the formal planning system has played such a limited role in protecting the landscape, nature and the historic heritage within the farmed and forested countryside, a range of alternative non-statutory and often innovative approaches have evolved.

Site Specific Conservation

Conservation was an important part of the post-war vision of building a 'Better Britain'. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 marked the culmination of decades of argument and lobbying about the need for conservation of the countryside. Under the Act, conservation efforts were to be focused on the designation and notification of protected areas – special places identified as such because of their scientific or amenity value. For example, the newly established Nature Conservancy was charged with notifying owners and appropriate authorities of the value of 'any area of land of special interest by reason of its flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features' and from this the SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) 'system' was established. Similarly, the National Parks Commission was charged with designating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The distinction between protected and unprotected places has been fundamental to policy-making and much of the thinking about conservation in the UK over the last 50 years (Bishop et al, 1995; Adams, 2003). For many years, most people probably thought that conservation was something that took place only within protected areas.

Functional Divergence

The network of nature conservation bodies, environmental groups and countryside lobbies that developed in Britain during the first part of the 20th century was united in its concern about unregulated urban encroachment and the need for protected areas. However, these groups held different views on the purpose and function of such areas. For example, the arguments of bodies such as the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (now Campaign to Protect Rural England) was reflected in the Huxley and Hobhouse Committees' reports of 1947 on nature conservation and National Parks respectively (Hobhouse Committee, 1947; Huxley Committee, 1947). Whilst the two committees struggled for a short while to develop a unified approach, it was not long before the Huxley Committee opted to follow its own separate route. So, when Hobhouse argued aesthetics, Huxley argued science; where Hobhouse had access and public benefit in mind,

Huxley had study and learning; where Hobhouse saw local authorities, working through the town and country planning system, as the chief deliverers of countryside protection and enjoyment, Huxley wanted hands-on ownership and the management of nature reserves by scientists (Phillips, 1995). The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 incorporated these differences into legislation. By the end of 1949, the ‘great divide’ that would last for 40 years or so was in place, with National Parks and countryside work separated institutionally from that on the conservation of nature – and both quite separate from historic heritage protection. Henceforth, landscape, nature and historic heritage were to be pursued as separate policy areas (Gay and Phillips, 2000).

Domestic Drivers

Whilst those lobbying for the establishment of National Parks drew some inspiration from the experience of countries such as the US, in general the values, beliefs and approaches upon which post-war policy was based were largely domestic. There was very little influence from beyond these shores and certainly no significant international drivers to ‘push’ or ‘pull’ domestic policy until the 1980s (the first nature conservation treaty to affect the UK significantly, the Berne Convention, was adopted in 1979, which was also the year in which the Birds Directive took effect).

On the other hand the context used in post-war legislation, and subsequently, was not particularly sensitive to national differences within Great Britain. Thus the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 provided for a common system of nature conservation for Great Britain and a common system of landscape protection for England and Wales. Whilst Northern Ireland developed its own legislative frameworks, these mirrored the approach across the Irish Sea.

Community Consultation

Concepts of community engagement, enablement and participation were conspicuously absent from the thinking behind the post-war policy framework that shaped the UK’s approach to countryside conservation and planning. The model developed was one of top-down, paternalistic delivery with community involvement often restricted to a limited form of consultation under the formal planning system.

NOW: A NEW ERA?

A comparison of the legacy of the 1940s with the current context suggests that a critical point has been arrived at in terms of how we plan and manage the countryside. The consensus that characterized the approach of successive UK governments to the countryside has broken down.

First, and perhaps foremost, the predominance of agriculture has been challenged and notions of ‘agricultural fundamentalism’ potentially consigned to history – though as some anguished comments from farmers’ interests during

the recent epidemic of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) show, it retains a near-mythical following in some quarters. The evidence of damage to landscape, wildlife and historic heritage brought about by modern agricultural practices challenged the thinking of the 1940s; it suggested that the price paid by society for farming's privileged position was too high. However, history will probably confirm that domestic food scares (such as BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) and the FMD epidemic of 2001 were the key national events in bringing about insistent calls for changes in agricultural policy. Meanwhile, at the European level the cost of the CAP, and especially of the planned EU expansion, are driving the search for CAP reform; while globally the move for change comes from pressures to liberalize trade in agricultural products. The discussion is now about how to ensure that farmers are rewarded for positive management of the countryside in an environmentally responsible way rather than being subsidized to produce food (Policy Commission on the Future of Food and Farming, 2002). The minority view expressed by Professor Dennison in an appendix to the Scott Committee report (1942) has achieved respectability at last. Furthermore, the debate is not just about what we should be conserving in the countryside but also about what to restore and enhance. Thus there is now a need for planning processes that can identify the character of different areas and guide how that character could be enhanced.

The purposes of town and country planning have had to absorb some important new influences in recent years, perhaps the most relevant to our account being the concept of sustainable development. The focus on urban containment remains, but the sustainable development agenda highlights the importance of comprehensive and environmentally informed planning systems (Owens and Cowell, 2001). More particularly, there is a desire to replace the old orthodoxy of protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land with a new set of environmental values that better reflects the character of the countryside. The new approaches to countryside conservation and planning reviewed in this book help to identify such values. They should provide the basis for environment-based rather than agriculture-led planning of the countryside.

Although there is still a practical focus on site-based nature conservation, it is now widely understood that conservation needs to move beyond protected areas to embrace the whole landscape. Protected areas do not exist in a vacuum: their ecology, and thus their integrity, are influenced not just by internal management but also by wider processes beyond their boundaries. The practice of nature conservation has been evolving in the following ways (Bishop et al, 1995):

- from the protection of species towards the protection of their habitats;
- from the protection of species and habitats towards placing their conservation within the protection of the natural processes upon which they depend;
- from self-contained nature conservation towards its integration into the planning and management of the terrestrial and marine environment as a whole, and into each economic sector;

- from isolated local and national initiatives towards contributions to international programmes, guided by internationally agreed criteria; and
- from a concern with scientific and aesthetic qualities towards a recognition of the importance of biodiversity (ie ecosystems, species and the variety within species) as a component of sustainable development.

Similar trends in thinking can also be detected in the sphere of landscape conservation (Bishop et al, 1995):

- from an almost exclusive concern with the protection of the 'best' towards an interest in (a) the diversity of the entire landscape, and (b) local distinctiveness;
- from a concern with 'protection' towards more interest in creative conservation, both to restore lost features and to create new ones; and
- from an essentially aesthetic approach towards a deeper appreciation of the ecological, historical and cultural values of landscape and the ways in which these are interwoven.

Many of the new countryside planning processes are based on the concept of landscape ecology and the need to develop a landscape-scale perspective to the conservation of the natural heritage (Adams, 2003). They provide the potential for innovative thinking about how to connect protected areas and link them to the wider countryside, rather than viewing them as 'islands' of conservation.

There have also been important developments in the integration of the previously separate components of conservation: joining together landscape, nature and historic dimensions of the countryside and breaking down the functional divisions that have characterized British conservation since the 1940s. The 'great divide' between landscape and nature conservation agencies was, in structural terms, ended in Wales and Scotland with the establishment of new integrated agencies – the Countryside Council for Wales in 1991 and Scottish Natural Heritage in 1992. The appreciation of the historic dimensions of the countryside has also matured: in particular, archaeologists and historians now lay much more emphasis on the links between heritage and nature conservation, promoting archaeology as a 'green' topic which contributes 'time-depth' to understanding the environment (Macinnes and Wickham-Jones, 1992).

Conservation is no longer only about nature, landscapes or history – it is also increasingly about people. If conservation is to be effective and sustainable in the long-term, then it must re-connect with people and the local economy. As is now widely understood (though not always acted on in practice), planners have to do more than merely consult people on pre-determined plans; they need to involve them in the formulation and implementation of plans and projects. It is becoming much more common for policy initiatives related to countryside conservation or planning to involve some form of community participation. Indeed, involving local people in decision-making and delivery is often seen as key to strategies for enhancing and sustaining the rural environment.

Another important factor has been devolution. The changes that followed the abolition of the former Nature Conservancy Council in 1991, and in

particular the establishment of separate conservation agencies in Scotland and Wales, were reinforced by the devolution agenda of the Labour government elected in 1997. This led to the setting up of separate legislatures in both countries and in Northern Ireland. The significance of this development is very apparent in those chapters of this book that show how each country is now adopting its own approach to planning and managing its countryside. Devolution has led to divergence and diversity. It is in this context that it seems particularly appropriate to also include the experience of Ireland, which is probably now only marginally more distinctive from the English approach than that of the 'peripheral' countries of the UK.

Finally, globalization has also affected the practice of countryside conservation just as it has the face of retailing or manufacturing (Marsden et al, 1993). Despite the protection still afforded by the CAP, global markets increasingly affect rural land use in the UK as trade liberalization is promoted by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The environmental movement has itself been 'globalized': there are now global pressures for environmental protection and international frameworks (such as conventions) to secure this. In countryside protection, as in everything else, the UK no longer exists in 'splendid isolation'. More and more, countryside, environmental and conservation policy is made not only in the UK but also in Brussels and globally – and the flow of ideas is now as international in the conservation sector as it is in many others. The result is a very creative period in countryside conservation and planning which we hope this book helps to reveal and record.

AN OUTLINE

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 looks at the wider context for countryside planning and discusses some of the key drivers behind the new approaches. By reference to experience in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Part 2 examines in detail a range of the new approaches to countryside planning, the thinking behind these, their proposed and actual uses and their effectiveness. Part 3 explores, through the use of several case studies, the practical use of these new approaches.

Whilst the tendency may be to look at international policy drivers as part of a top-down process, this simplifies what is often a complex policy network. In Chapter 2, Kevin Bishop and Richard Cowell focus on the impact on the UK of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and, in particular, the development of biodiversity action planning. The analysis presented demonstrates the key role of certain environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in influencing the UK's position on the drafting of the CBD and its subsequent implementation. Unlike most other international conventions and agreements relating to biodiversity, the CBD does not introduce its own category of protected area; it is focused on 'process' rather than 'product'. The authors trace the way in which environmental groups, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), used this opportunity to develop a new system of biodiversity action planning in the UK. This in turn

has helped such groups acquire resources and increase their political influence. It is a complex story of policy networks – of who promoted biodiversity action plans (BAPs), to whom, in what areas and with what results – and of policy learning, rather than simply a tale of policy implementation.

In contrast to the framework approach of the CBD, the focus of the 1992 EU Birds and Habitats Directives is clearly on product. The Habitats Directive provides for the designation of ‘Special Areas for Conservation’ (SACs) which are to form part of a trans-European network of sites called ‘Natura 2000’. Special Protection Areas (SPAs), declared under the earlier Birds Directive, will also be part of this network. In Chapter 3, Dave Burges explores the impact of these directives on the British planning system and wider countryside policy frameworks. He notes that, to date, their effect has often been to reinforce site-based nature conservation and that the thinking about how such sites can be connected and, in turn, linked to the wider countryside has been secondary. The analysis presented in Chapter 3 highlights the way in which nature conservation has been ‘Europeanized’ with decision-making for SACs and SPAs centralized in Brussels in cases of ‘overriding public interest’.

Chapter 4, by Adrian Phillips and Roger Clarke, is concerned with a new development: the harnessing of landscape as an international policy instrument, and the impact of this on conservation and land use policy and practice in the UK. It considers two significant, parallel and related developments: how landscape has become a source of international attention, notably through the World Heritage and European Landscape Conventions; and how landscape has emerged both as a precious resource in its own right and as a means of achieving sustainable development. The central argument is that landscape policy is now becoming an international driver, shaping environmental and rural policy within the UK. This influence may become even more pronounced if the UK signs the European Landscape Convention (ELC).

Countryside conservation can never succeed without the active engagement of people. This is the central tenet of Diane Warburton in Chapter 5, who reviews the European and global drivers for community involvement in countryside planning, such as Agenda 21, and analyses the UK response. Community involvement should not be a box in a flow chart for a countryside planning process, but rather it is a profound challenge for policy-makers. The need is to ensure local participation, and the key words to guide a community-based approach are: listening, honesty and partnership.

As Chapters 2 to 5 illustrate, there is a diversity of approach from the rigid requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives to the looser framework of the ELC. These evolving frameworks have offered a new language to conservation circles (witness the business-derived terminology of biodiversity action planning) and new concepts, such as ecological corridors. They also introduce the concept of accountability to higher levels (eg through the formal decision-making procedures of the Habitats Directive or the national reporting requirements of the CBD). Yet these international agreements, conventions and European directives have grown in an ad hoc way. As a result, it is often left to the national or even sub-national level to achieve integration between them.

Part 2 contains a set of chapters that explore in detail some of the new approaches to countryside and nature conservation that have been developed in the countries of the UK and in Ireland, the thinking behind these policy initiatives, their proposed and actual uses and their effectiveness.

In 1992, English Nature began to look for a rational framework that would bring together species and habitat targets at a landscape scale. The result was a biogeographic framework termed 'Natural Areas'. Keith Porter in Chapter 6 provides an analysis of why Natural Areas were developed, how this was done and how English Nature and others have used the framework. He reports on how a nature conservation agency is recognizing that biodiversity targets cannot be achieved through a narrow focus on species, habitats and natural features and site-based conservation alone. The Natural Areas framework, and the associated 'Lifescapes' initiative, are an attempt to link the various aspects of heritage – natural and cultural – and communicate these to the partners that English Nature needs to work with to deliver its own objectives in relation to nature conservation.

In the last five years, the concept of 'countryside character' has become central to a wide range of activities in landscape and environmental planning and management in England. It is largely, but not completely, synonymous with the term 'landscape character'. Both focus on the use of character as a framework for decision-making on environmental issues. There are two main differences: countryside character is a broader, integrating concept that draws together landscape, wildlife and archaeological and historical aspects of the countryside, and focuses largely on the rural environment; landscape character is concerned with all types of landscape, in both town and country. In Chapter 7, Carys Swanwick provides an overview of approaches to the assessment of countryside and landscape character in England. She explores the evolution of thinking about countryside and landscape character from its origins in earlier work on landscape evaluation and landscape assessment, and examines the way that methods for assessing character have developed and been applied in a wide range of practical situations. She also considers the links that exist between this approach and other emerging tools that have been developed to assist with planning for sustainable development (such as Village Design Statements and Quality of Life Capital). Carys Swanwick concludes by calling for research into the value of this approach in the decision-making arena.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the development of landscape characterization and assessment methodologies in Ireland. Michael Starrett in Chapter 8 describes the work of the Heritage Council which, unlike similar advisory bodies in the UK, has a remit that embraces most aspects of Ireland's natural and cultural heritage. There is no separation of responsibility for the built and natural heritage, as there is, for example, between the duties of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and of Historic Scotland (although Chapter 11 shows how SNH is working to overcome this separation), or between those of English Heritage and English Nature. Only the Heritage Lottery Fund in the UK has a comparably broad remit. The European Landscape Convention and the EUROPARC network were important 'pull factors' in the approach developed by the Heritage Council. Concerns that planning authorities and development

agencies might act in an ad hoc and ill-informed way without standardized landscape character were important 'push factors'. Building upon work undertaken in England, the Heritage Council has pioneered an integrated approach to landscape characterization that it is now hoping will be adopted throughout Ireland.

In parallel with the work of the Heritage Council, the Irish Forest Service and Department of the Environment and Local Government have funded research to develop a landscape assessment methodology, described by Art McCormack and Tomás O'Leary in Chapter 9. They detail the approach adopted in developing the Irish Landscape Assessment Guidelines and evaluate their application through case studies concerned with afforestation and wind farm developments.

Standard approaches to Landscape Character Assessment (such as those reviewed in Chapter 7) tend to understate the complex ways in which humans impact on the appearance of the landscape and the length of time over which this influence has occurred. By focusing on the more recent past and highly visible historic features, the more subtle connections between vegetation cover, land use and human history may be under-played in the landscape characterization process. A desire to ensure that historical influences are properly reflected in such processes has led to the development of different techniques for historic landscape characterization. Lesley Macinnes reports in Chapter 10 on the evolution of historic landscape characterization in Great Britain and beyond, and provides a preliminary evaluation of its application.

Chapters 11 and 12 detail the new approaches to countryside conservation and planning being developed in Scotland and Wales respectively. In Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) started work in the mid-1990s on what was then called the 'Natural Heritage Zonal Programme' with the aim of developing an integrated approach to wildlife, landform and landscape protection and management. As made clear by Roger Crofts in Chapter 11, the objectives of this initiative derived in part from international thinking about the need to take a holistic approach to environmental protection, but also from a practical wish to demonstrate that SNH was delivering on its new integrated remit. Although he makes the point that it is still too early fully to evaluate the impact of the programme (now called 'Natural Heritage Futures'), Roger Crofts shows that the initiative has played an important part in developing the culture of a new organization.

In contrast to the initiatives in England, Scotland and Ireland, the *LANDMAP* approach developed in Wales is based on collaboration rather than an exclusively agency-led programme, and is described in Chapter 12 by Rob Owen and David Eager. Thus, whilst the Countryside Council for Wales has played an important role in developing the *LANDMAP* methodology, it has done so through the Wales Landscape Partnership which involves the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Development Agency and local authorities. The methodology is also very different from that used in other countries in that it attempts to combine natural, cultural and historical information and has been implemented at a local authority level rather than through a national initiative.