

Landscape Protection – North Northumberland

Proposed Landscape Survey by the Northumberland & Newcastle Society ('the Society')

Most of our local, North Northumberland, landscapes, outside the National Park, were previously but are no longer 'protected'¹ as an 'Area of High Landscape Value' ('AHLV'). As the climate change debate intensifies, that lack of protection, combined with the approach of Northumberland County Council (which refuses to respond to local concerns)², makes those landscapes particularly vulnerable to inappropriate wind-turbine development. This appeal aims to fund a professional appraisal of relevant areas³, leading to their *local* re-designation as an AHLV.

While not guaranteeing the prevention of inappropriate development, that re-designation would provide the best available protection. Specifically, the report arising from the appraisal would be available for use as follows:

- Where a Parish Council proposes a Neighbourhood plan (as in Eglingham), it will be able to use the report to justify the AHLV designation as part of the 'development plan'⁴ – an advantage when resisting inappropriate development;
- Parish Councils choosing not to adopt a Neighbourhood plan will still be able to use the report in formally resolving to recognise the AHLV. In the context of inappropriate development within the Parish in question, the designation while not forming part of the 'development plan', would still represent a 'material consideration' in the context of a particular planning application;
- Even where such a resolution is not adopted, the report will be available to those resisting future applications for inappropriate development. Again, the report would represent a 'material consideration'.

While the proposed study and report will be definitive in terms of the area covered, it will also serve as a pilot for the application of the same approach to other areas of the County. The extent of even the initial study area will depend on the funds the Society⁵ can raise but the attached plan shows a core area, 'A', which, subject to this appeal, we believe to be 'fundable'⁶. Subject to funding, the study may be extended to either or both of areas 'B' and 'D' but it is currently unlikely that funds sufficient to cover Area C will initially be raised. To date, £17,000 has been raised leaving a current shortfall of about the same amount.

If you treasure our landscapes, please support his appeal. A member of the Society's Environmental Policy Group would be happy to meet or speak to you to more fully explain the project. Your support would be hugely appreciated.

¹ NCC abandoned the protection in 2010 and, anyway, since then applicable guidelines have changed.

² NCC intends to 'identify', *in principle*, some 66% of the County's gross area² (excluding the National Park and A.O.N.B.'s) as 'suitable for wind turbine development' - including the proposed study areas.

³ Alison Farmer Associates, experienced landscape consultants, have been retained.

⁴ Adopted policies in a Neighbourhood plan form part of the 'development plan' (as do those in NCC's Local Plan) in accordance with which central government expects planning decisions to be made unless 'material considerations indicate otherwise'.

⁵ The Society, as a registered charity, can accept donations from individuals, companies or charitable trusts.

⁶ The figures shown on the plan represent the estimated cost in pounds, excluding VAT, for appraising each area, but Gift Aid may offset VAT.