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# **Beyond landscape designation: innovative funding, delivery and governance and the UK protected area system.**

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## **Abstract**

In Europe, as in other developed regions of the world, statutory protected areas are islands of conservation endeavour within a wider landscape of intensive farming, towns, industry and transport links. They have generally failed to halt biodiversity decline within their boundaries, let alone in the wider landscape. Wider understanding of ecological processes has led to an awareness that protected areas need to be ‘more, bigger, better and joined’ and part of a wider landscape of integrated rural management. This implies the need for innovative funding and delivery mechanisms and for new forms of rural governance involving partnership working and community engagement.

In the UK the move to integrated landscape-scale conservation has been led by the third sector. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds ‘Futurescapes’ and the Wildlife Trusts ‘Living Landscapes’ are examples of a ‘reterritorialisation’ of conservation by non-governmental voluntary organisations. Recently these approaches have been supplemented by the government’s Nature Improvement Area programme. In parallel, the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Landscape Partnership programme contributes significantly to landscape-scale working across the public/private interface, linking heritage and people inside and outside protected areas.

A strength of the Landscape Partnership approach is that it is ‘bottom up’ and in some ways opportunistic. The key criterion for funding – and success – is not the ‘quality’ of the landscape but, rather, the degree of engagement, commitment and initiative of local residents and businesses, NGOs and statutory bodies, working in partnership to deliver conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, emphasising public access, education, training and community involvement.

These schemes have their contradictions – not least that they fit a neo-liberal agenda in which non-market activities (many previously seen as the responsibility of the state) are relegated to the ‘third sector’, dependant ultimately on voluntary input. However within the existing economic and political structures of the European Union they represent individually imaginative and in aggregate vital adjuncts to areas protected by formal (statutory) designation.

## **Keywords:**

**Protected areas, Landscape partnerships, NGOs, Community participation, Governance, Neoliberalism**

## 1. Introduction

In Europe, as in other developed regions of the world, statutory protected areas (PA) are, almost by definition, conservation islands within a wider landscape of intensive farming, towns, industry and transport links. Their nature, like that of the wider environment within which they exist is at least part artefact; part of a palimpsest of historical accretions, living as well as built. Biological diversity in much of that wider environment is in decline (as it is within many PAs) and semi-natural surrogates for the 'wild' are compressed into smaller and smaller areas by development and agro-industrial impacts. For many city-dwellers, enjoyment of and engagement with the outdoors are uncommon, a reflection of the alienation of humans from nature.

At the same time climate change has challenged conventional thinking not just about the *methods* of conservation but also its *aims*. An understanding of ecosystem processes and metapopulation dynamics has resulted in an awareness that wildlife management needs to take place on a landscape scale, linking PAs to a wider network of conservation sites. And concern with the *preservation* of 'native' biotopes and populations is increasingly embedded within a wider definition of conservation, including: reversing biodiversity declines in our agricultural landscapes and cities; linking natural and cultural heritage protection; facilitating physical and intellectual access, developing skills, and above all, engaging local communities, and securing public understanding and commitment.

This paper focuses on the UK Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Landscape Partnership (LP) programme - arguably the UK's most innovative 'landscape-scale' funding initiative and its most significant vehicle for delivering its obligations under the European Landscape Convention (ELC) both within and beyond PAs.

The paper falls into four sections. The next section sketches the current European context for landscape-scale approaches to conservation, including debates around the 'IUCN Categories', the growing importance of protected landscapes (PL) and of landscape-scale approaches to conservation and the implications of ELC.

This is followed by a summary review of some major non-governmental landscape-scale initiatives within the UK, which exist alongside the statutory designations of the UK PA system. All these initiatives have been led by 'third sector' organisations and all attempt to combine a landscape-scale approach to ecological management with partnership working and public participation.

The paper then describes the development, principal features and achievements of the national HLF LP programme. The key criterion for funding – and success – is not the 'quality' of the landscape but, rather, the degree of engagement, commitment and initiative of local communities in partnership with local NGOs and public bodies, to deliver conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, emphasising access, education and training and community engagement.

A final section discusses some issues relating to the 'reterritorialisation' of conservation in the context of neoliberal 'institutional blending'. The paper concludes that within the present economic and political structures of the European Union these new

landscape initiatives represent individually imaginative and in aggregate vital adjuncts to areas protected by formal (statutory) designation.

## 2. The policy context

A number of recent changes in approaches to PAs (see e.g. Phillips 2003) form the background to this paper. The first is the 'coming of age' of landscape – a term conceived differently by different people but today generally understood as much more than mere scenery. Ecologists have developed the concept as an indicator of scale of analysis and action, including habitat connectivity and ecosystem dynamics (Wiens *et al.* 2007). In archaeology, landscape has provided a framework for understanding and managing assemblages of monuments in space and time (Aston 1997). In the context of the initiatives described in this paper, 'landscape' is the totality of an area – its landform and topography, its habitats and biota, its past and present land use, the 'built' and archaeological remains and, most importantly, its people - those who live and work in the area and those who visit it, to all of whom landscape provides vital benefits such as food, water, an economic livelihood, a living and recreational space and other 'cultural 'services', tangible and intangible.

The new, multidisciplinary, multifunctional concept of landscape is encapsulated in the European Landscape Convention (ELC), adopted by the Council of Europe in 2000 and applicable to the UK since March 2007. It promotes a definition of landscape which usefully underpins the landscape partnership philosophy: '*An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*' (CoE 2000), a rich concept that encompasses but goes beyond sectoral (geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, historical or aesthetic) approaches. ELC makes it clear that people are at the heart of all landscapes (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the eminent) each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it.

The ELC places obligations on signatory states to recognise landscape 'as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity' (CoE/ LCN 2008). Obligations include a requirement to identify the diversity and range of landscapes, the important features of each, and to engage with local communities, private bodies and public authorities in their planning and management. This includes raising awareness and understanding of the character, value and functions of landscape and the way these are changing. There is also a requirement to provide training in landscape-related skills. Partly as a result of the ELC landscape has become a principal (though variable) focus of public policy throughout Europe (Roberts *et al.* 2007). The Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK lead body for ELC implementation. Several country agencies, for example Natural England (2008) and English Heritage (2009) as well as other bodies such as the National Forest Company (2009) have produced ELC action plans.

Together with the 'rise of landscape' has come a growing awareness of the problematic history of PAs (Brockington *et al.* 2008). 'Western' conservation practice has been located variously in the establishment of game reserves and in colonial estate management including soil conservation and watershed management (Grove 1995, MacKenzie 1990). The creation of Yellowstone National Park (1872, widely held to be the forerunner of modern PAs) involved the subjugation and expulsion of its 'native' inhabitants. So too has that of many more recent PAs, not least the continuing exclusion of the native

inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago (evicted by the UK in 1971 to make way for a US military base in Diego Garcia) from their islands which in 2010 the UK Cabinet declared a marine reserve, the world’s largest. Many European PAs have been established on depopulated areas, often on border zones, for example along the ‘Green Belt’ separating former Cold War states. In the UK the terrain for PLs was created to a large degree by nineteenth-century enclosure or clearance; the (significantly named) 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (which created the legal framework for nature conservation as well as PLs) represented a partial reclamation of countryside as a public good.

Issues such as the above have contributed to a debate around the significance and nature of PAs themselves. The principal PA categories recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) are shown in fig i. (left hand column). Whereas Category I and II protected areas restrict human activity and influence, Category V PLs are defined by IUCN as areas ‘where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value’ (Dudley 2008: 20); they are inhabited, their resources are exploited and much of their land is privately owned and farmed. They are particularly characteristic of Europe although they constitute a minority of designated areas worldwide (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2013).

Six management categories	Four governance categories
<p><b>Ia Strict nature reserve:</b> Strictly protected for natural features; restricted human visitation &amp; use.</p> <p><b>Ib Wilderness area:</b> Large unmodified areas without permanent/ significant human habitation, protected and managed to preserve their natural condition.</p> <p><b>II National park:</b> Large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems.</p> <p><b>III Natural monument or feature:</b> such as landform, sea mount, cave, ancient grove or organism of major significance.</p> <p><b>IV Habitat/species management area:</b> To protect particular species or habitats often requiring active management.</p> <p><b>V Protected landscape or seascape:</b> With distinct character arising from the interaction of people and nature over time safeguarded to protect its significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value</p> <p><b>VI Protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources:</b> where low-level non-industrial natural resource use compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims.</p>	<p><b>Governance by government:</b> Federal or national/ sub-national ministry/agency in charge; government-delegated management (e.g. to NGO)</p> <p><b>Shared governance:</b> Collaborative or joint management (various levels including transboundary management)</p> <p><b>Private governance:</b> By non-profit organisations (NGOs, universities, cooperatives), commercial corporations or individuals.</p> <p><b>Governance by indigenous peoples and local communities:</b> Indigenous peoples’ conserved areas and territories; community conserved areas – declared and run by local communities.</p>

**Figure i. IUCN Protected Area management and governance categories, modified from Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2013, Stolton et al. 2013**

The principal statutory UK PLs (IUCN Category V) are National Parks (NP) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Together they cover some 24% of the total land area of the UK (fig ii.a).<sup>1</sup> NPs cover just over 9% of England, nearly 20% of Wales and just over

<sup>1</sup> (English and Welsh) Heritage Coasts are not considered here although many Heritage Coasts are managed under plans prepared for their contiguous AONBs. UK conservation sites are presently recorded on the UNEP

7% of Scotland – an average of just under 10% of Britain (there are no NPs in Northern Ireland). AONBs cover 15% of the land in England, some 14% in Northern Ireland and 5% in Wales. There are no AONBs in Scotland - their nearest equivalent are National Scenic Areas (NSA) which cover some 13% of the land surface.<sup>2</sup> NPs and (English and Welsh) AONBs are considered equivalent in landscape quality and are distinguished from the wider countryside by stricter controls on development and by governance arrangements that seek to protect the landscape heritage (and in the case of NPs, secure public access) through an agreed management plan. The bulk of the land in UK PLs categories is privately owned and managed so implementation of management policies is mainly by proxy. This means that partnership working and consent are keys to success. Management plans are subject to extensive consultation and AONB plans in particular are both produced and implemented through a participative process engaging landowners, NGOs and local communities as well as statutory agencies (Clarke and Mount 2001).<sup>3</sup>

Category V PLs are no longer seen as the ‘poor relations’ of the IUCN PA ‘family’ (Phillips 2002). They are the focus of much conservation activity within a wider movement for integrated countryside management. UK PLs are recognised as having pioneered ‘people-centred’ approaches to landscape protection and have been seen for some time as ‘greenprints’; places where innovative approaches to rural governance and to sustainable landscape management can be pioneered and later extended to the wider countryside (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987).

In parallel with the ‘rise of landscape’ and the move to more people-centred PA management is the recognition of a diversity of PA governance models. Key amongst these (amongst nations subscribing to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)) are Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) - defined as ‘natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means’ (Beltran 2000, Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2013). Though generally perceived as of doubtful relevance to ‘developed’ nations (where in Europe at least the term ‘indigenous’ is problematic and has been appropriated by the political right) it would seem that the qualification ‘and local’ renders the application of CCA (dropping the ‘I’) in principle at least, potentially applicable to Europe. No formal PA designation in the UK presently corresponds to the category of (I)CCAs but Newing (2012) in an important review identifies many areas that could qualify. These include traditional common lands together with areas more recently set aside by local communities such as many town or village greens, community nature reserves, woodlands and orchards. More English sites could arise in the future as a consequence of the Localism Act (2011) and the National Planning Policy

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World Conservation Monitoring Centre’s World Database on Protected Areas as IUCN Categories IV and V; there are no other categories currently assigned to UK PAs though this is under review.

<sup>2</sup> NSAs and Northern Irish AONBs are essentially planning designations within which stricter development control is applied than within the wider countryside but for which (in contrast to English and Welsh AONBs) there are typically no special management or governance arrangements.

<sup>3</sup> One difference between NPs and AONBs is that whilst the former have autonomous statutory management authorities (representing local as well as national interests) which are also responsible for spatial planning, AONB management remains the responsibility of the constituent local authorities, who generally in practice delegate this responsibility to a (variously constituted) partnership committee (except for two statutory AONB Conservation Boards for the Cotswolds and the Chilterns). The result is that some AONBs have had an incentive to be innovative both in governance and management.

Framework (2012) which stand to change fundamentally the role of local communities in land management, for example of locally valued green spaces. In Scotland the Isle of Eigg in the Inner Hebrides is one of several areas managed sustainably by local residents and the Land Reform Act (2003) now gives local communities preferential rights to purchase land including conservation sites. An ongoing project of the UK IUCN National Committee aims to assign one of the six IUCN protected area management categories and one of the four protected area governance types (including CCA) to all places in the UK that meet the IUCN PA criteria (NCUK 2012).

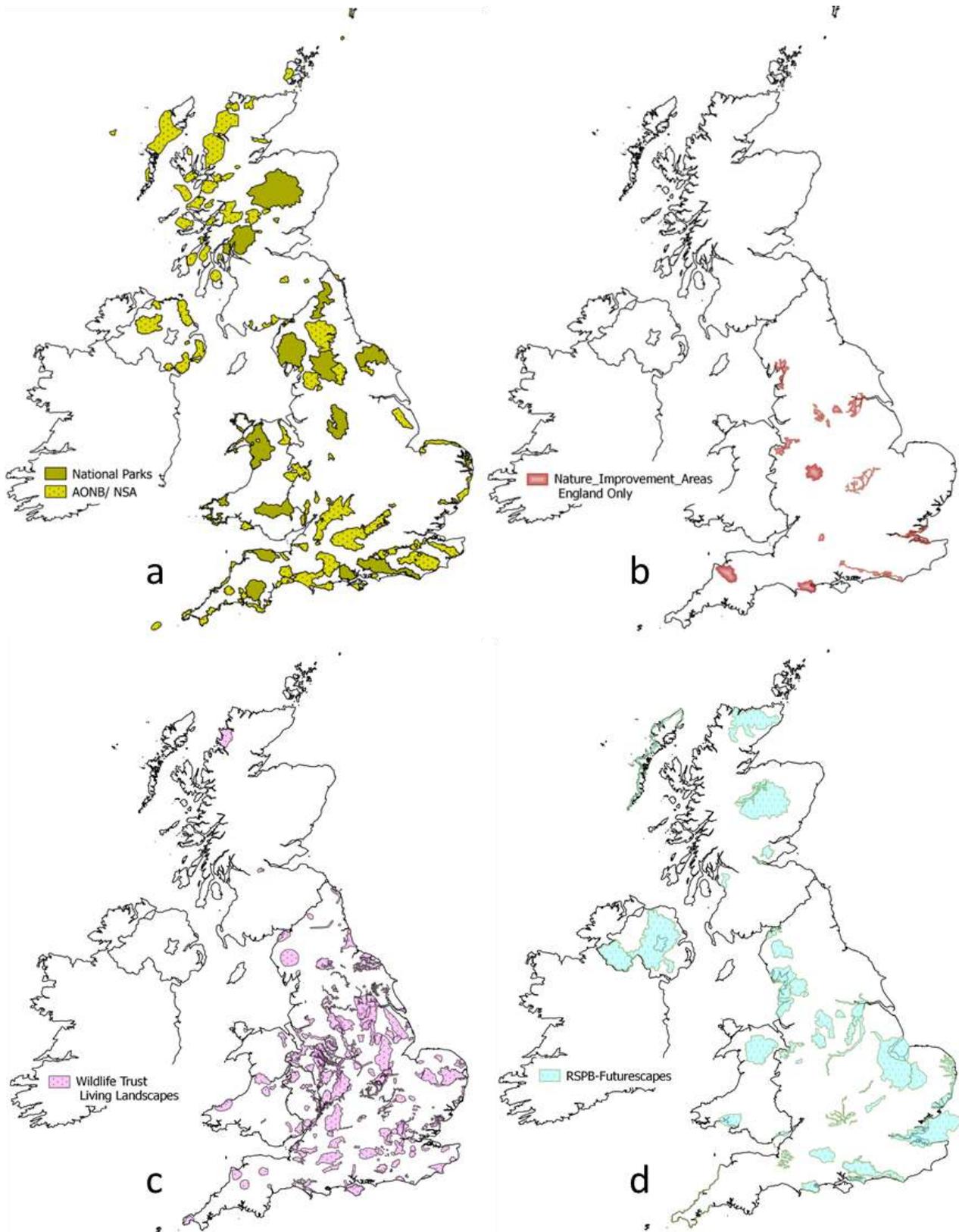
Underlying much of the above is a wider understanding of sustainability as a social as well as an ecological issue. The UK government's advisor on nature conservation has accepted a report calling for innovative thinking on how conservation sites can be complemented by other measures to halt biodiversity loss (Battersby *et al.* 2014). Janssen and Knippenberg (2012) go further, challenging the traditional approach to PA designation, characterised as 'drawing lines round areas valued by experts' as outmoded. Citing British NPs (as areas where innovations in rural management and governance can be pioneered), French *Parcs Naturels Régionaux* (combining protection of the natural and cultural patrimony with regional rural development) and German *Naturparke* (as a particular manifestation of the problematic *Heimatschutz*) and borrowing from Phillips (2003, 2010) they declare:

*'Whereas protected areas were once planned against people, now it is recognised that they need to be planned with local people, and often for and by them as well. Instead of setting landscapes aside by 'designation', nature and landscape conservationists now look to develop linkages between strictly protected core areas and the areas around: economic links which benefit local people, and physical links, for instance via ecological corridors, to provide more space for species and natural processes.'* (Janssen and Knippenberg 2012: 241)

An implicit adjunct to this shift is a challenge to the notion that PAs need always be permanent or spatially fixed. This is recognised in most countries primarily in the marine environment through temporary or seasonal restrictions on taking fish or game. More recently and less happily the monetisation of nature (reflected in the concept of biodiversity offsetting and payments for 'ecosystem services') is manifest in spatial development policies whereby the destruction of natural areas for profit may be 'mitigated' by the creation of areas of supposedly equivalent value elsewhere.

### **3. UK landscape-scale conservation guardianship and governance**

UK landscape-scale conservation (as with action on climate change and indeed on environmental issues in general) has been led not by government but by non-governmental membership organisations (NGO) which in addition to campaigning on policy issues, manage land for conservation on a not-for-profit basis, generally with the additional objective of providing public goods (including access and education). A 2011 estimate suggests there are some 200 such initiatives in the UK, covering around 8.5mha equivalent to about one third of the total UK land area before allowing for overlap (Hodge and Adams 2012a). The majority of these schemes are led by two organisations, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT, more usually known as the Wildlife Trusts Partnership).



**Figure ii.** a) UK statutory protected landscapes - National Parks and AONB/NSA; b) Government funded Nature Improvement Areas (England Only); c) Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes; d) RSPB Futurescapes.

The RSPB is Europe's largest national nature conservation NGO with over 1 million members including a claimed 200,000 youth members and some 18,000 volunteers working through a local network of 175 local groups. It has a significant educational role and a major impact on public awareness. The RSPB also has an important influence on public policy, both domestic and international and has led on much European legislation, notably the 1979 EU Birds and 1992 Habitats Directives 2009/147/EC and 92/43/EEC. In the UK it owns or manages 200 nature reserves, covering a total of 150,000 ha. Its Futurescapes programme was developed in the mid-1990s and launched in 2001. There are now some 40 UK 'Futurescapes' (fig ii.d), from the Flow Country in the far north of Scotland to the Wiltshire Chalk in southwest England, covering over 1mha. Promoted as 'large-scale habitat restoration for wildlife and people' (RSPB 2001, 2010) each 'Futurescape' is more than merely a target area within which the RSPB focuses its land acquisition and management programme; there is a significant emphasis on partnership working with environmental groups, local communities, and the private sector to enable a focused approach expanding the area of land under conservation management and reducing habitat fragmentation.

The RSWT's Living Landscapes project, established in 2006 and aimed at extending conservation management beyond habitat fragments, depends even more critically on local community engagement. The RSWT is the umbrella body for 47 local wildlife trusts covering the whole of the UK (45 in England and Wales with single trusts for Scotland and Ireland) with a combined membership of over 800,000 and a land holding of 2,300 nature reserves totalling 94,000ha. Management work is done to a large extent by volunteers and most trusts have significant educational programmes. To date 112 Living Landscape schemes are underway (fig ii.c) covering a project area of more than 1.5mha (RSWT 2007, 2009). Each Living Landscape is based on a naturally functioning landscape unit (such as a river catchment) generally including several existing Wildlife Trust reserves and other important wildlife areas. Each includes a multi-project nature recovery scheme including habitat creation and restoration, with advice and support to other landowners, aimed at enriching and expanding existing wildlife areas, creating buffer zones and corridors between them, and making the wider landscape more permeable to wildlife, in partnership with other organisations and delivering 'people' benefits such as access and recreational opportunities, skills training and green tourism.

Inevitably these schemes are aspirational and have to do with institutional promotion and public relations as well as practical land management on the ground. Achievements to date are variable and there has been no systematic evaluation. However two examples demonstrate the range of activities underway. One of the potentially most significant RSWT initiatives is Great Fen, a 50-year project to create a huge wetland area of 3,700ha around two of the last remaining fragments of wild fen – Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves (NNR) and amongst the largest restoration projects of its type in Europe. In contrast to Oostvaardersplassen (probably Europe's best known rewilding project, which is managed by the Netherlands State Forestry Service) the Great Fen depends critically on the engagement of local residents and landowners. In addition to new opportunities for public access and recreation, the scheme includes a schools' education and community service and regeneration projects.

The Thames Estuary Futurescape covers over 1,000km<sup>2</sup> from Tower Bridge to open sea, this includes eight Ramsar sites, ten Special Protection Areas, (SPAs, designated under the 1979 EU Birds Directive), four (cultural) World Heritage Sites (WHS), four NNRs and 21 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). One or more of these designations applies to each

of the 11 major RSPB nature reserves which include internationally significant marshland and intertidal mudflats. The estuary is home to 70 wharves, terminals and port facilities, 29 Yacht Clubs and is the setting for the Thames Gateway, a national regeneration initiative including offshore wind farms and developments associated with the London 2012 Olympics. Working with Port of London Authority, local government and regeneration partnerships, Government Departments, the Environment Agency, Natural England, other NGOs and businesses the RSPB has sought to enhance the wildlife value of the area, including 'managed realignment' (marine flooding) of Wallasea Island using spoil from Crossrail (underground rail) tunnels to manage land levels.

The landscape-scale conservation initiatives described above are by no means exclusive to the UK although they are manifest perhaps more strongly within the UK than elsewhere in Europe. And within the UK itself other examples could be cited. The most significant is The National Trust (NT). Often seen as a conservative body, the NT has in past decades been prominent in developing a more inclusive and people-centred vision of heritage - natural, as well as cultural (Clarke 1997). Founded in 1895 'for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty' the NT's land holdings total more than 2,500km<sup>2</sup>, covering around 1.5% of the total land surface of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (there is a separate National Trust for Scotland). In 1907 the National Trust Act made provision for declaring the land holdings 'inalienable' – giving them protection against development arguably stronger than in statutory PAs. The Trust owns or manages around 25% of the Lake District, some 12% of the Peak District NP and around 1,126km of coast. With a current membership approaching 4million the NT is potentially a powerful influence on public perceptions of and engagement with heritage.

Some NT landholdings are whole landscapes in their own right. The Holnicote estate comprises 4,856ha of Exmoor NP and includes 7km of coastline, 4 villages (Selworthy, Allerford, Bossington, Luccombe) and 14 tenanted farms. The NT's new landscape initiatives include 'Fen Vision' – a plan to expand Wicken Fen, one of the UK's first (1899) nature reserves, to an area of some 53km<sup>2</sup> through buying and flooding surrounding farmland (NT 2009). Together with the Wildlife Trust's Great Fen and the RSPB's Ouse Washes, Fen Vision will create three very significant landscape-scale projects in a relatively small area between Cambridge and Peterborough, all with significant 'people' as well as wildlife objectives.

In parallel with their own land management and area-based activities, third-sector organisations have been vocal in their pressure on government to respond to the challenge of climate change and to acknowledge the failure of the statutory system of protected areas to halt biodiversity decline. A response of the (then Labour) government was the commissioning in September 2009 of a review of wildlife sites and their conservation effectiveness, chaired by Sir John Lawton. This concluded that England's wildlife sites were too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England's characteristic species. It contained 24 recommendations for action to benefit wildlife and people, based on sites that were 'more, bigger, better and joined' and called for:

a step-change in collaboration between local authorities, local communities, statutory agencies, the voluntary and private sectors, farmers, landowners and other land-managers and individual citizens. It will require education, explanation, and empowerment. It will also require resources, both money and people. It cannot be 'top down' and imposed. Nor can it be entirely laissez-faire. (Lawton *et al.* 2010: 3).

This was followed by a Natural Environment White Paper (H M Government 2011). One outcome has been the establishment of Local Nature Partnerships (LNP), each intended to consist of 'a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment' (Defra 2012). Some 50 LNPs now cover virtually the whole of England. In parallel the government allocated a 'one-off' fund of c. €9.3million to assist the establishment of twelve pilot Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs, fig ii.b, selected from 76 applications) covering around 64,000ha (under 0.5% of the land surface) where partnership working would improve ecosystem quality and connectivity. Beyond these pilot areas, any subsequent NIAs will be locally determined and funded by LNPs. Whilst welcoming the White Paper's support for the Lawton recommendations and participating in the establishment of the new LNPs and NIAs, NGOs have also been critical of the government's response as unambitious and inadequately resourced.

#### **4. The UK HLF Landscape Partnership programme**

Arguably the UK's most significant development in landscape-scale working, alongside statutory protected areas is the HLF LP programme. The UK National Lottery was introduced in November 1994 as a state-franchised enterprise independent of government. It now comprises a number of different games including 'Euromillions', a European Lottery introduced in 2004. Of all money spent on UK National Lottery games, 50% is allocated for prizes and 28% awarded by trustees to 'good causes'. In the first four years of its existence the Lottery Distributing Bodies (LDBs) awarded €450million for 429 countryside conservation projects. This equates roughly to the combined grant-in-aid to the government conservation agencies for this period and represents an average of nearly €19 per ha of land or just over €7.4 per person for the whole of the UK (Bishop *et al.* 2000). One of the most important LDBs is HLF, established 'to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK'. Much of HLF's annual grant spend – currently some €470million per annum – is allocated to single projects. All the initiatives described above have benefitted to some degree from HLF funding. For example in 2013 HLF increased its grant to the Great Fen project to €11.4million over five years for habitat restoration plus heritage and local history projects.

At an early stage HLF perceived a need to introduce funding for multi-project schemes distributed over a wider geographical area. An 'Area Schemes' programme was launched in 1998 (when ELC was still in draft) under HLF's first (1999-2004) Strategic Plan to fund: 'Integrated area-based projects of countryside or nature conservation enhancement put forward by public or not-for-profit organisations, which can involve expenditure on property in both public and private ownership. Such schemes will focus on one area or region and should include reference to cultural, historic, wildlife and scenic value, archaeology, buildings and public access.' (HLF 2001) Area Schemes were replaced in January 2004 with LPs. The LP programme offers grants upwards from €125,000 to a maximum of €3.75million. To mid-2014, over €190million has been invested in 91 different schemes throughout the UK, covering around 12% of the land surface – an area greater than the total of all UK NPs (fig iii).

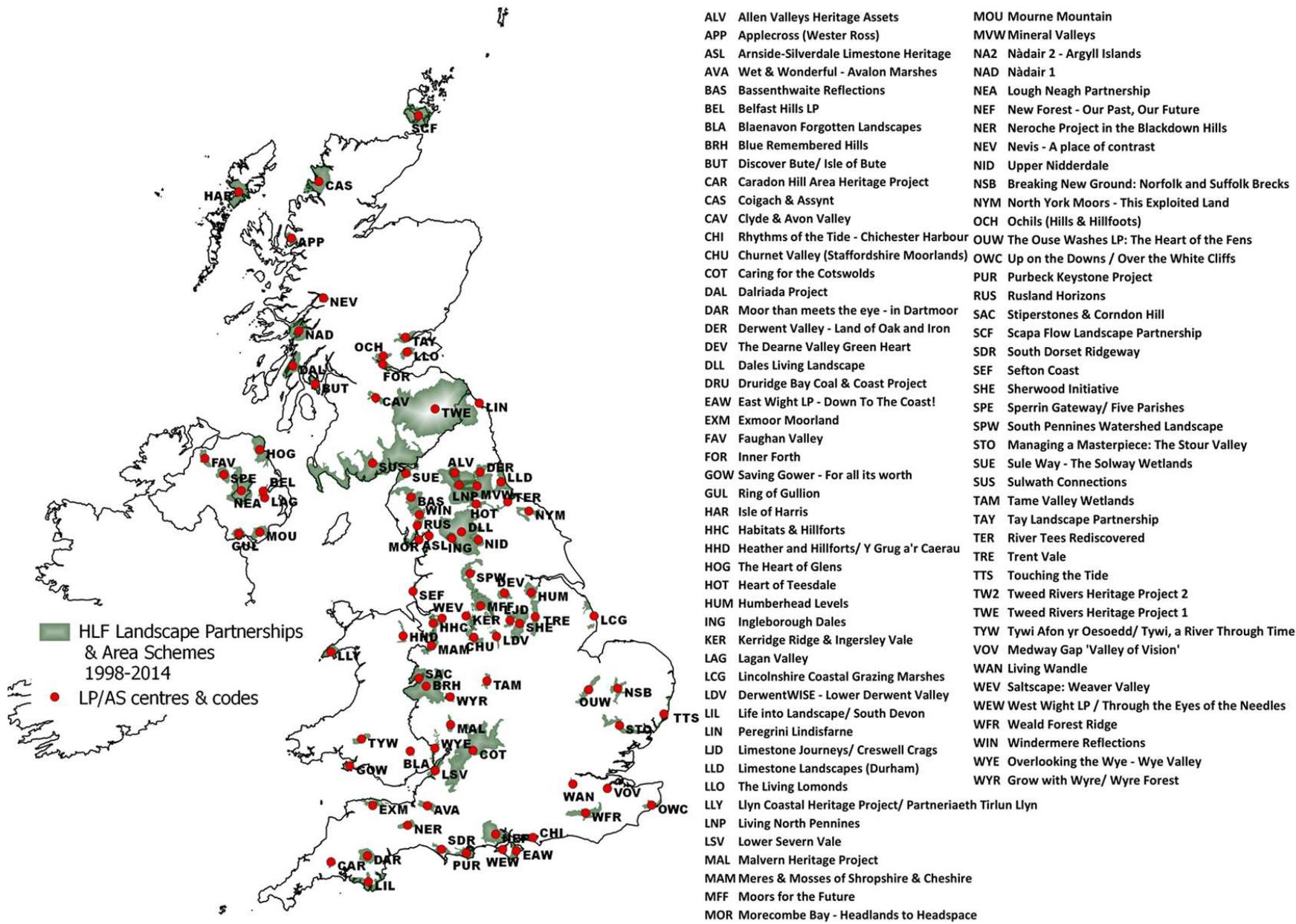


Figure iii. Location of the UK HLF Landscape Partnerships and predecessor Area Schemes 1998-2014.

LPs seek to 'create an holistic and balanced approach to the management of landscape heritage at a landscape-scale' to conserve natural and cultural heritage and at the same time to deliver 'people' benefits within and beyond the areas they cover, particular in relation to the way people understand, perceive and relate to the landscapes they live or work in, or visit. Echoing ELC each scheme focuses on a defined area with 'distinctive landscape character, recognised and valued by local people' (HLF 2013b) and requires a local landscape character assessment which need not necessarily correspond to 'official' assessments such as Natural England's National Character Areas.<sup>4</sup> The partnership approach is critical in a number of ways, bringing together a number of discrete projects, each of which aims to deliver multiple benefits. The partnerships typically comprise a mix of statutory agencies, local authorities, NGOs and community organisations. The lead partner - which enters into the formal agreement with HLF - is most often either a locally constituted trust or limited company, or else a public body. Programme priorities encompass conservation and restoration (of both the natural and built heritage), community participation, access and learning, training in local heritage skills and reduction of environmental impacts. The intention is that the whole is of significantly greater value than the sum of its parts and that working at a landscape-scale will deliver benefits beyond those that would result from funding a series of separate projects.

With experience changes have been made in the detailed criteria and procedures for HLF LP funding. Typical HLF intervention rates were initially 55% for the early area schemes; by 2008 this was increased to 90% in order to accommodate the financial difficulties of many public sector and voluntary organisations. Match funding can include professional labour and volunteer time (costed respectively at €437 and €63 per day). At the same time the recommended maximum area for any landscape partnership was reduced to 200km<sup>2</sup>, with greater emphasis on the area's distinctive (though not necessarily 'eminent') character and the duration of schemes extended to five years. Changes have also been made to the grant approval process. LP awards are made in two stages, an initial 'development phase' (Stage 1, up to €250,000 for 12 – 18 months to allow for detailed planning) followed by a 'delivery phase' (Stage 2, typically of 3 – 4 years) during which the individual projects comprising the LP scheme are implemented. Initially both stages depended on competitive application. In 2008 the competitive element to Stage 2 was removed, and progress from development to delivery was made dependant on production of a satisfactory 'Landscape Conservation Action Plan' (LCAP). This removes much uncertainty during the development phase as to whether delivery will actually take place and encourages partner organisations – and individuals – to invest time and resources in building consensus around the broad aims of an LP scheme and planning how these should be achieved.

The LCAP is a document which effectively extends some of the partnership approaches and practices pioneered in UK Category V PLs, particularly in AONBs. HLF requires the LCAP to include both a strategy plan and a detailed action plan. The Strategy Plan develops an agreed vision and aims for the partnership, based usually on detailed studies of landscape, biodiversity, archaeology and built heritage, community needs, visitor profiles &c, relating to the generic aims of the LP programme (fig iv). The Action Plan specifies how, when and by whom these aims will be achieved and what resources will be

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/>

needed to do this. It generally consists of a detailed list of anything between twenty to more than a hundred individual projects. Importantly the LCAP is not simply a bidding document to HLF. It is seen as a guide to (and ‘owned’ by) the whole Partnership, both during the duration of HLF funding and hopefully beyond.

Other approaches within LPs which reflect initiatives pioneered within UK PLs include setting aside limited amounts of HLF grant as a flexible fund for small scale community initiatives. A Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) was launched in English and Welsh NPs in 2000. Government grant to NP authorities was ‘top sliced’ to provide a fund, administered by independent panels who would consider applications from local organisations for sums of between €60 to €6,000 for virtually any project providing public benefit and enhancing sustainability. The success of the experiment (Clarke *et al.* 2004) resulted in the fund being extended to AONBs in 2005. The variety of projects undertaken is generally accepted to have made a significant contribution to community engagement and sustainability within protected areas (ENPAA 2012, LUC 2009, 2010). More recently a number of LPs have used part of their HLF grant to establish similar flexible funding mechanisms typically under the title of Community Funds. Examples of the kind of projects funded include school field trips and study packs, the purchase of a stock of children’s wet-weather jackets for use with ranger-led outdoor school visits, training in tree pruning and a cider press for an orchard group seeking to ‘rescue’ traditional apple varieties and photographic equipment for a local history society to scan and archive historic documents.

Thematic priorities and programme areas of the HLF Landscape Partnership programme 2004-2018		
SP2: 2004-2008	SP3: 2008-2013	SF4: 2013-2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘To conserve or restore the built and natural features that create the historic character of the landscape.</i></li> <li>• <i>To conserve and celebrate the cultural associations and activities of the landscape area.</i></li> <li>• <i>To encourage more people to access, learn about, become involved in and make decisions on their landscape heritage.</i></li> <li>• <i>To improve understanding of local craft and other skills by providing training opportunities.’</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘To conserve or restore the built and natural features that create the historic landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>To increase community participation in local heritage.</i></li> <li>• <i>To increase access to and learning about the landscape area and its heritage.</i></li> <li>• <i>To increase training opportunities in local heritage skills.’</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural and cultural heritage will be: <i>‘better managed, in better condition, identified/recorded.’</i></li> <li>• People will have: <i>‘developed skills, learnt about heritage, volunteered time.’</i></li> <li>• Communities will benefit through: reduced environmental impacts, more and a wider range of people engaged with heritage, the local area/ community will be <i>‘a better place to live, work or visit.’</i></li> </ul>

**Figure iv. Thematic priorities and programme areas of the HLF Landscape Partnership programme under its second (SP2) and third (SP3) Strategic Plan and its current Strategic Framework (SF4). There are nine SF4 priorities for LPs, condensed here for comparison with the four of SP2 and SP3.**

Overall the HLF LP programme has been a significant learning process - for individual LP partners, project leads and participants, for LP teams and for HLF itself. An example is an apparently small but significant change made in the programme criteria in 2008 when the aim 'conserve and celebrate the cultural associations' of the area was changed to read 'increase community participation in local heritage' (fig iv). This was in part to remove the incentive for LPs to stage events (often 'importing' external cultural facilitators) in order to 'tick the box' but also to recognise the problematic and sometimes contested nature of heritage – including the value attached to landscape - which is culturally relative, and is bound by class, gender and ethnicity (Waterton 2010). This applies especially to significant cultural items (for example many British 'stately homes' are built on the proceeds of slavery) but also to landscapes, the values of which are increasingly recognised not merely as a matter of expert judgement but also of 'public expertise' (Clark 2006b). For example social class and ethnicity have been shown to be critical factors shaping both visitor perceptions and the management priorities in the Peak District NP resulting in the exclusion of under-represented groups (Suckall *et al.* 2009). These cultural biases in perception and need are often ignored in 'objective' descriptions of landscape (Warnock and Griffiths 2014). They are not automatically solved by the 'bottom-up' approach of LPs, where dominant or vocal groups may be the arbiters of what is valued and of the objectives of management, however experience to date indicates that LPs are conscious of the need for social inclusion and schemes often include projects designed to engage 'non-traditional' groups.

The significance of HLF as a funding agency and of the LP programme in landscape conservation has led to an increased emphasis on evaluation, on identifying and sharing best practice, and on trying to ensure that the benefits of LP working endure beyond the end of HLF funding. Evaluation of the LP programme nationally is complicated by the large number of schemes and the diversity of their landscape and social contexts. Evaluation of individual schemes has to accommodate the fact that they comprise multiple individual projects (addressing the geological, wildlife and historical heritage, present land use as well as access, education and training), delivered by multiple partners and yielding less tangible as well as measurable outcomes. A scoping study carried out for HLF in 2010 concluded that evaluation both within individual LPs and of the LP programme overall, has to be participative (Clarke *et al.* 2010). A national evaluation of the LP programme conducted in 2011 drew heavily on output data and case studies supplied by LPs themselves as well as on individual evaluations conducted by external consultants (Clarke *et al.* 2011). Whereas earlier practice was for individual scheme evaluations to be commissioned towards the end of funding, HLF now recommends that LPs should build evaluation in from the start, wherever possible integrating this with the delivery of individual projects so that their outcomes are enhanced (HLF 2013a). Evaluation is seen as a learning process – about 'improving' as well as 'proving'.

The most significant feature of LPs in contrast to PLs is that funding is fixed and time limited. Once a Stage 1 bid is successful, monies are earmarked and go automatically to the partnership on production of a satisfactory LCAP, whose implementation is regularly monitored. This has the attraction to funders that they are not committed to any open-ended financial obligation. This has strengths and weaknesses in relation to PLs. In some cases lead partners have seen HLF grant opportunistically as 'just another funding stream' (with the consequence that once funding ends little more is heard of the partnership). But it has also meant that, particularly outside PLs where strong partnerships have been established and

the impacts of LP activity have been most apparent, there is often strong local determination to sustain and build on them.

Landscape scale working	Partnership working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Focus:</b> Implementing multiple activities within an area of coherent landscape character affirms and integrates its distinctive qualities.</li> <li>• <b>Scale:</b> Addressing conservation and access priorities on a larger scale results in (for example) greater habitat connectivity, placing ancient monuments in their historic setting, and ‘joined up’ visitor trails and interpretive material.</li> <li>• <b>Integration:</b> Encourages different landscape features and the benefits they provide to be linked both practically and perceptually.</li> <li>• <b>Coherence:</b> Broader landscape features (such as floodplain water levels, habitats requiring restoration, archaeological sites) can be dealt with as a whole.</li> <li>• <b>Facilitation:</b> Stimulates projects that might not have been conceived except as part of a larger scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Perception:</b> Encourages the landscape to be understood, valued and engaged with as a whole, including its disparate elements.</li> <li>• <b>Engagement:</b> Inspires local and stakeholder participation and commitment.</li> <li>• <b>Risk:</b> Permits the inclusion of innovative or speculative projects (some of which might ‘fail’) within the umbrella of a larger scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a <b>single point of contact and representation</b>.</li> <li>• Supplies a <b>reservoir of expertise and resources</b> across partner organisations.</li> <li>• Permits <b>co-ordinated project planning and delivery</b>, increasing efficiency and reducing risk.</li> <li>• Facilitates <b>mutual support</b> – for example, in cases of difficulty other partners may be able to step in and help, or <b>funding can be vired</b> to / from other projects within the scheme.</li> <li>• Encourages <b>horizontal and vertical links between administrative</b> areas at county, district or parish level.</li> <li>• <b>Creates dialogue</b> between landowners, local communities, visitors and interest and user groups.</li> <li>• Unites <b>diverse stakeholders and conflicting interests</b>; resolves common problems through joint working.</li> <li>• Can <b>engage whole communities</b> as well as individuals and <b>whole commercial sectors</b> as well as individual businesses.</li> <li>• Improves opportunities for all people to <b>access, enjoy and understand the whole area and its heritage</b>.</li> <li>• Permits <b>dissemination of results</b> to a wider audience.</li> <li>• Potential to <b>lever in additional resources</b> as LP areas profile raised and partnership ‘track record’ established.</li> </ul>

**Figure v. Potential benefits of working at a landscape scale in partnership, modified from Clarke et al. 2011.**

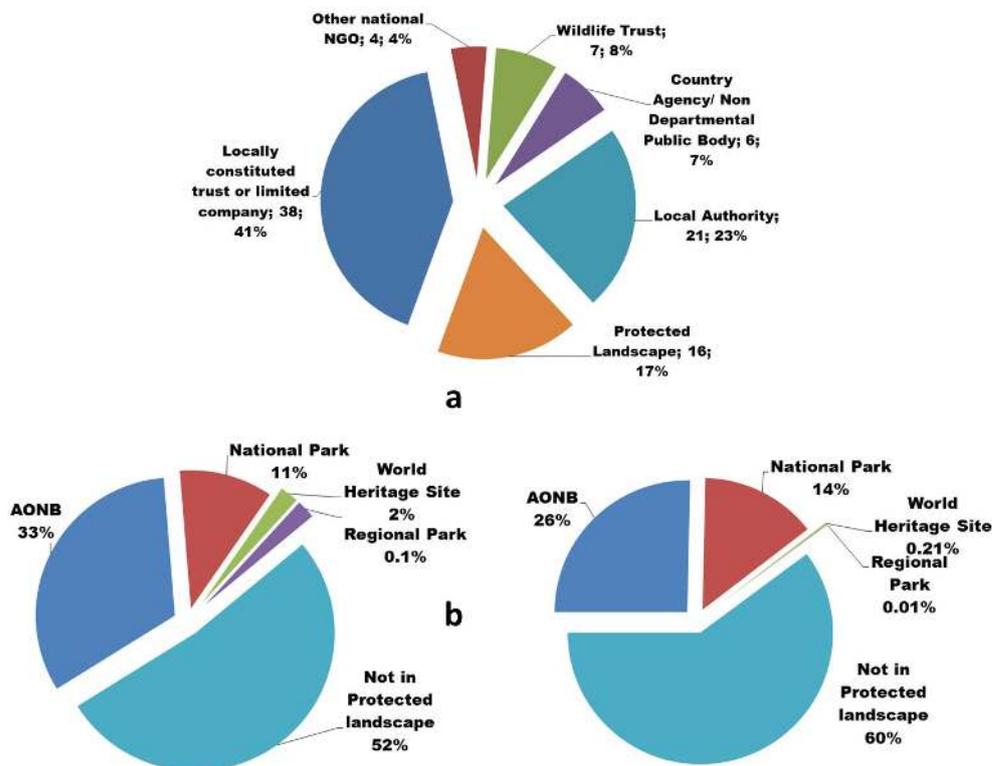
In parallel with the increased emphasis on evaluation, the finite nature of HLF funding has been accompanied by an increasing focus on the need to ensure legacy (see e.g. Mount 2013). The enduring benefits of physical works such as habitat restoration or archaeological stabilisation can be secured in part at least through management agreements with landowners. The less tangible benefits however are often equally important and can include changes in perception, attitudes and engagement on the part of local communities and

benefits to human and social capital. Evaluation of intangibles and ensuring legacy represents work in progress for HLF and for individual LPs.

## 5. Issues and debates

The opportunities of partnership working at a landscape scale are summarised in fig v. These are manifest in different ways in different schemes but collectively they challenge traditional approaches to conservation based on formally designated PAs protected by legislation and/or under the management of the state.

Futurescapes, Living Landscapes (and other third-sector conservation trust initiatives) overlap with each other and with UK PLs (fig ii.). Some LP areas are coterminous with existing PLs (as with the Cotswold AONB or New Forest NP), others situated within them (as with Bassenthwaite and Windermere LPs in the Lake District NP) and some enclose them as with the Caradon Hill Area Heritage Project which surrounds part of the Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site. Here, as with the Blaenavon ‘Forgotten Landscapes’ scheme, the LP has served to create a link between the WHS and the surrounding landscape and community. In all cases the potential for enhancing the quality and resilience of wildlife habitat (24% by area of English NPs and 12% of AONBs is currently designated as SSSI) is considerable (Lawton *et al.* 2010). Importantly however, over 50% of LP schemes by number and over 60% of their total area are outside PLs (fig vi.b), and thus have the potential to contribute significantly to conservation in the wider countryside.



**Figure vi.** The distribution of Landscape Partnerships (a) by lead bodies and (b) by numbers (left) and area covered (right) in relation to protected landscapes. July 2014 data.

In terms of governance LPs are also innovative. Just 17% of all schemes have a PL administration as their lead (i.e. financially responsible) body (fig vi.a). All LPs are encouraged to have a specially constituted committee to oversee delivery. Often, where the lead body is local authority or PL this committee has, technically, an advisory function but in over 40% of all LPs the committee (constituted as a charitable trust or a limited company) is also itself the lead body (fig vi.a). In some cases LPs have been established as 'outreach' by an existing PL as with the 'Valley of Visions' Scheme in the Medway Gap on the Thames Estuary, an area of industrial dereliction omitted from the Kent Downs AONB on its original designation and where the scheme has benefitted from the AONB's expertise, leadership and administrative structures. Another example is the Dedham Vale AONB which combined with local communities and NGOs to create an LP (titled 'Managing a Masterpiece' after the English landscape painter Constable) to extend landscape-scale working over the whole of the Stour Valley catchment. Other LPs lie between existing PLs, serving to link them, but many are completely separate as with Tywi Afon yr Oesoedd in Wales, the Dalriada Project in Scotland, or the Belfast Hills LP in Northern Ireland.

The initiatives described in this paper amount to a spatial and conceptual shift - a 'reterritorialisation' (Adams *et al.* 2014, Hodge and Adams 2012a) of conservation beyond PAs. The formation of local partnerships between public and private institutions to promote landscape-scale conservation activities described in this paper is one form of reterritorialisation. Other 'partnership' activities include aggregate companies dedicating worked-out mineral quarries to nature conservation under the management of local wildlife trusts, and private water companies and the Forestry Commission (a government agency) planting woodland as a wildlife and recreational resource at the same time securing an increase in upland water-holding capacity and a reduction in the requirements for downstream water purification by privatised water companies. Another form of reterritorialisation is the expansion of private landholdings over what would otherwise have become state-owned and managed PAs. Abernethy (Scotland) and Orford Ness (East England) are two examples of large NNRs established during the prime ministership (1979-1990) of Margaret Thatcher who was determined that there would be no extension of state landholding and provided government funds to private conservation trusts (the RSPB and to the National Trust respectively) to purchase them. A related phenomenon is the widespread 'outsourcing' of publicly owned conservation land management to local Wildlife Trusts. 'Reterritorialisation' is by no means limited to the UK. The funding of the Chagos marine reserve by the Ernesto Bertarelli foundation<sup>5</sup> is but one example amongst many.

At an institutional level the changes have been particularly significant. Papers in a recent issue of *Geoforum* (Vol 43, 2012) demonstrate both the pervasive advance of neoliberal and market-based interventions in conservation compared with earlier forms of 'control and command' conservation and also their 'messiness' and their dependency on the particularities of place - 'how neither neoliberal nor market-based interventions in conservation are uniform in character, impact and outcome' (Roth and Dressler 2012). In 2000 a survey of rural Lottery funding concluded that it had established a new policy and practice framework for countryside conservation. In particular, conservation agencies – including local authorities – are 'no longer just grant givers but also grant bidders' in competition with other partners in particular NGOs. Lottery funding has also increased the status of NGOs and 'encouraged partnerships and a cooperative style of working' (Bishop *et*

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bertarelli-foundation.org/marine/>

*al.* 2000). One consequence of the success of partnership working in general is that perceptions by public sector authorities of the 'troublesomeness' (Chapman *et al.* 2010) of third sector organisations have been transformed. To some degree these (and other third-sector partnership) initiatives have led to a renewal of local participative democracy at the very time that public sector spending cuts have reduced the capacity of national conservation agencies, local government and other public bodies to intervene. The result has been a blurring of the boundary between public and private, a process described by Hodge and Adams (2012b) as 'institutional blending'. These changes in governance, funding and delivery in (statutory and *de facto*) PAs are manifest in different ways in different places, breaking what Heatherington (2012) has termed (in the context of Sardinia) the 'fortress' of environmental conservation.

Reterritorialisation and institutional blending both exemplify the way that neoliberalism has opened up a much wider range of mechanisms that can be used in support of public policy objectives. The RSPB and local Wildlife Trusts are complex organisations that are subject to internal influences associated with membership and fundraising but also significant external pressures, especially from the government, that seek to direct their activities towards public policy objectives. At the same time the NGOs themselves have in their own publicity material called on the government to respond to the challenge of landscape-scale conservation. Whether what Hodge and Adams (2012b) term 'neoliberalisation' serves to promote market forces and private ownership or to push back the market and support collectivisation remains an open question.

Not all the elements of the new 'landscape paradigm' are universally seen as positive. One concern is that the forms of partnership working pioneered by UK PLs and taken forward by initiatives like HLF LPs will dilute the focus on nature conservation. Locke and Dearden (2005) caution against throwing out the baby with the bathwater, complaining that 'under the new categories and supported by the 'new paradigm', PAs are being recast as tools for social planning and income generation.' They continue: 'The vision of humanized PAs presented by the new paradigm will lead to a biologically impoverished planet' and argue that 'Only IUCN categories I–IV should be recognized as protected areas. The new categories, namely culturally modified landscapes (V) and managed resource areas (VI), should be reclassified as sustainable development areas.' (pp 1, 9)

Irrespective of governance, there are strong arguments to support the contention that IUCN categories should be reserved for areas receiving permanent protection where nature conservation objectives are primary – after all the promotion of nature conservation is the primary aim of IUCN. However it is important to recognise that the areas within each IUCN category are not mutually exclusive and that they often overlap. Thus just as with UK NPs and AONBs, virtually all of the non-statutory landscape initiatives addressed in this paper (including HLF LPs) include one or more managed nature reserves falling within IUCN Category IV (there are no Cat I or II PAs within the UK). And to the extent that these new initiatives are able to create buffer zones around and linkages between them, develop public awareness and secure local community support, the nature conservation endeavour can only be strengthened. There are however doubts about effectiveness. Selman (2004) in a study of community participation in the planning and management of cultural landscapes concludes that 'community-based initiatives are unlikely to substitute for formal management of extensive protected areas, but that participatory approaches can be effective in more targeted situations.' (p 365)

A related concern has to do with co-option of NGOs, with overlap and duplication of effort, and with the use of HLF funding to further public policy objectives. The RSPB is involved in nine (and is leading two) of the twelve NIAs. The RSWT is a major partner in eleven NIAs, nine of which are also Living Landscapes. All twelve NIAs have received significant Lottery funding and eleven of them have LPs either recently completed, currently in place or in application. State lotteries funding (sometimes predicated) public expenditure is commonplace and long-standing in many European countries but UK HLF funding is based on the premise of 'additionality' – that it will produce public benefits that would not otherwise occur, and not be used to substitute for (or compensate for cuts in) state or local government funding. Yet concerns are sometimes expressed<sup>6</sup> that HLF funding is sometimes effectively 'siphoned off' to compensate for the effects of public spending cuts or to support official policy initiatives (such as NIAs) rather than to respond to 'bottom up' community initiatives in non-flagship areas.

A further concern has to do with social equity. The National Lottery is sometimes described as a hidden 'tax on the poor'. People on low incomes – particularly manual workers and the unemployed - spend (voluntarily) a greater proportion of their household income on the National Lottery (Bickley 2009). 12% of the lottery stake – a total of €8.5 billion per annum – goes in tax to the state. The benefits of Lottery funded schemes are arguably enjoyed disproportionately by those who have the time, money or education which enables them to do so – however this could equally be said of much expenditure on the 'public good' and indeed on civic engagement in general. A number of Lottery funded programmes are aimed specifically at increasing social inclusion and this is an implicit (though not a formal) aim of LPs; most LPs include projects aimed at extending access, education or training related to natural and cultural heritage to 'non-traditional' groups.

A final concern is that to the degree to which the initiatives rehearsed in this paper focus on biodiversity enhancement on privately-owned land, they are dependent (as are those within UK PLs) on the uncertain (and widely regarded as flawed) agri-environment funding available through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Clark 2006a). Hodge and Adams argue that this is unsustainable in the long term and argue for 'a new post-neoliberal approach that is more interventionist, implementing more formal legal agreements and land purchase to secure conservation land management against serious but uncertain threats.' (Hodge and Adams 2012a: 1) Brockington *et al* (2008) go further, seeing the initiatives rehearsed in this paper only as the more acceptable face of the marketization of conservation.

## 6. Conclusions

Collectively, the initiatives described in this paper illustrate the way that innovative approaches to landscape management and governance are being delivered both within UK IUCN Category V protected areas and in the wider countryside. The areas covered by these initiatives could not in themselves qualify for inclusion as PLs because they lack essential characteristics of the IUCN system (Crofts and Phillips 2013, Dudley 2008). Conservation is not a primary aim for the landscape as a whole – it is merely an objective pursued by one or

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<sup>6</sup> Apparently without recognising the irony of his position (now Sir) John Major, (Margaret Thatcher's successor as Prime Minister from 1990 to 1997 during which time he continued Thatcher's programme of shrinking the public realm) accused the National Lottery of 'larceny', of diverting Lottery funds into areas that should be funded by the Exchequer (in Lea 1996).

more of the landscape's stakeholders. Additionally in the case of HLF LPs the protection afforded to the landscape is uncertain in the long-term; it depends on the continued enthusiasm and commitment of local residents and NGOs beyond the end of project funding.

However it is precisely for these reasons that they deserve consideration as examples of a range of relatively new initiatives – by no means confined to the UK – which require our understanding of landscape protection to be situated within a broader frame of governance in which natural and cultural heritage conservation are linked to physical and intellectual access, training opportunities and skills enhancement, community participation and the engagement of local residents and visitors. The effectiveness of these initiatives, in relation to both their nature conservation and their societal objectives is difficult to assess; the variety and dispersed nature of funded projects, delivered by multiple partners, together with 'noise' from other policy and funding initiatives makes evaluation methodologically problematic (and potentially costly). But UK Lottery funding is now a very significant contribution to countryside and landscape conservation. LPs in particular are not without risk – indeed the most potentially innovative and valuable schemes are sometimes the most uncertain because degraded or threatened landscapes often lack established delivery agencies and may have no tradition of community participation or volunteering. However (partly for this reason) LPs are arguably the UK's single most significant contribution to its obligations under ELC.

Landscape partnerships – both those promoted by NGOs, and those supported by HLF LP funding - demonstrate strengths and weaknesses. Their weaknesses (at least as compared with statutorily designated areas) include the fact that in themselves they have no long-term statutory protection, and (in the case of LPs) their achievements depend on the engagement and enthusiasm of local residents and the establishment of a partnership committed to achieving the goals set out in the LCAP. Moreover they are also part of an institutional restructuring of conservation in which the third sector is co-opted in the delivery of what were previously seen as functions of the state. But these same features are also strengths because protection of nature can never be secured solely within protected areas or by the state alone; it requires partnership working at a local and regional level, engaging local people to achieve common goals. These schemes fit a neo-liberal agenda in which non-market activities are relegated to the 'third sector', dependant ultimately on the voluntary input of individuals. However within the present economic and political structures of the European Union they represent individually imaginative and in aggregate, significant adjuncts to formally designated PAs.

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