

Submission of evidence by the Landscape Institute to the Commission of Inquiry: Hampshire 2050 - Vision for the Future.

The following evidence paper is submitted by the Landscape Institute. The Institute is the chartered body for the landscape profession. It is an educational charity that promotes the art and science of landscape practice. The Institute's aim, through the work of its members is to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit¹.

Signed by the UK government in 2006 and introduced in March 2007, the European Landscape Convention was the first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The convention covers land and water (inland and seas), and natural, rural, urban and peri-urban landscapes. It does not discriminate between those that might be considered every-day, degraded or outstanding.

Landscape is not just about physical properties and biological processes, but also about people. People change landscapes through development and management, but they also experience landscapes. Landscapes do not just occur in rural areas or national parks but everywhere that we live, work and visit. **The landscape is an important part of people's quality of life², a key element of individual and social well-being, a 'basic component' of natural and cultural heritage, and a resource 'favourable to economic activity'³.**

From its intricately indented coastline, iconic chalk downs, open heath and woodland, to its market towns and major cities, the Hampshire landscape has great diversity of character. With two National Parks, three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, numerous designated wildlife and archaeological sites, and a wealth of historic towns, villages and individual buildings, it is a highly valued landscape. However, Hampshire is also rich in features of natural and cultural significance outside of these protected landscapes.

The landscape of Hampshire has slowly evolved over thousands of years. It is the result of an ongoing interaction between the natural world and human activity. **Landscape change is necessary and inevitable, and it will continue.** However, with the intensification of agriculture, growth of urban areas, new infrastructure and other forms of development, the rate of change has accelerated during the last 50 years. This is set to continue up to, and beyond, 2050 with profound effect on the character of the Hampshire landscape, the diversity of wildlife habitats, and the health

¹ <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/about/about-the-landscape-institute/>

² <http://www.champspublihealth.com/writedir/9ee3FPH%20green%20space%20briefing.pdf>

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680080621>

and well-being of communities. **The most urgent of these challenges is climate change.**

Sea level rise is already 'locked-in'. Records show that sea level around the UK has already risen by 15.4 cm since 1900 and the 2009 UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) indicate that sea level is expected to rise by around 50cm, and potentially as much as 80cm, within the lifetimes of today's children (i.e. over the next 80 years).⁴ That will radically reshape Hampshire's landscape and the experience of coastal communities.

In 2016, government included surface water flooding on the national risk register for the first time. The expectation of more frequent and extreme flooding, caused by wetter winters and an increase in the number of intense rainfall events, will lead to flash flooding and overloading of the drainage network affecting homes, businesses and infrastructure. How we build in our towns and cities, and how we manage our rural landscape, will need to change.

Along with wetter winters, climate change models indicate that summers will become hotter and drier. By 2040, more than half of our summers are projected to exceed 2003 temperatures.⁵ That could mean water shortages, higher drought risk and depletion of groundwater resources with damaging impact on the aquifer that feeds some of Hampshire's most distinctive landscape features, its winterbournes, and chalk streams and rivers.

With extremes in temperature fluctuation, flourishing of pests and diseases, unpredictable rainfall and drought stress, **one of the most immediate and emotionally charged impacts of climate change will be on Hampshire's trees and woodlands.** Occupying approximately 20% of the land cover⁶, there are few features of our landscape, urban or rural, everyday or outstanding, that are so deeply resonant in our own minds, and local and national consciousness, as trees. At a time when we are beginning to realise that contact with nature is fundamental to health and well-being and is, in particular, beneficial to people suffering from mental health conditions, the accessibility of trees and woodlands has never been more important.

The oak, ash and beech are integral to the character of the Hampshire landscape, history and folklore and yet we are on the verge of losing one of these species completely, and seeing increasing threats to the other two.

Ash dieback is the new Dutch elm disease. It causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. It is usually fatal, either directly, or indirectly by weakening the tree's resilience to attacks by other pests or pathogens. The disease is

⁴ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Managing-the-coast-in-a-changing-climate-October-2018.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/speech-climate-change-too-true-to-be-good>

⁶ http://www3.hants.gov.uk/an_overview_of_the_hampshire_landscape-2.pdf

now well established in Hampshire and thousands of trees are destined to disappear from the landscape.

In August this year, new legislation came into force to protect oak trees against the imminent danger of introducing oak processionary moth (OPM) which can cause significant damage to oak trees. OPM is an established pest in London and surrounding areas but not in Hampshire. Acute Oak Decline (AOD) is a new disease mainly affecting native oak trees and is most prevalent in the Midlands and the South East.

Beech is one of Hampshire's most iconic trees, however, recent research suggests that the negative impacts of drought on the growth and productivity of beech are likely to become considerably more widespread as the climate warms.⁷

Trees and woodlands are essential components of Hampshire's landscape.

Where would Hampshire be without the Hangers and the New Forest, its urban parks, green spaces and tree-lined streets, and its hedgerow trees? Trees and woodlands are also essential components of a healthy and more resilient environment and in turn are good for us, our communities and our economy. The ecosystem benefits are now well understood but worth repeating:

Trees sequester carbon dioxide combatting climate change. They reduce the risk of flooding by intercepting rainfall, increasing infiltration rates, taking-up water and slowing run-off⁸. Trees improve soil condition and prevent soil erosion, and they reduce air pollution, and lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade and cooling through evapotranspiration. They provide biomass potential, important habitats and wildlife corridors. A source of timber and a place for recreation. A mix of trees provides genetic diversity increasing the resilience of the landscape to pests and diseases⁹.

Trees and woodlands are vital to the vision for the future of Hampshire in 2050. With rotation lengths for commercial stands typically reaching maturity in 35 - 45 years, there is the opportunity now to begin to invest in a new dynamic landscape scale approach – a **Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for Hampshire** - that will realise that vision.

The National Planning Policy Framework defines Green Infrastructure as 'A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide

⁷ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/gcb.13366>

⁸ <https://www.charteredforesters.org/2017/06/trees-can-reduce-floods/>

⁹ https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/why/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMII-Tyo_z23gIVB5ztCh0ZEwm0EAAYASAAEgKNUPD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds

range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.¹⁰ As well as river systems and coastal environments (sometimes referred to as Blue Infrastructure), Green infrastructure includes:

- Parks and Gardens – urban parks, Country and Regional Parks, formal gardens;
- Amenity Greenspace – informal recreation spaces, housing green spaces, domestic gardens, village greens, urban commons, other incidental space, green roofs;
- Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces - woodland and scrub, grassland (e.g. downland and meadow), heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and disturbed ground), bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs and quarries);
- Green corridors – rivers and canals including their banks, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, and rights of way;
- Other - allotments, community gardens, city farms, cemeteries and churchyards¹¹.

A **Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for Hampshire** will build on the work already completed by a wide range of agencies to develop local and sub-regional strategies including the Green Halo¹². It will bring a partnership of interests together to stitch a new 21st century patchwork landscape of multifunctional spaces. A linked network of places providing the widest range of ecosystem benefits. It will provide a way in which growth, change and all the challenges facing Hampshire up to 2050 and beyond, can work with the existing natural, cultural and social capital, protecting the fragmented and vulnerable by making it more resilient, and enhancing the valued. It will also be about creating new assets and leaving a lasting landscape legacy.

Across the county, blurring traditional boundaries and borders, and joining-up rural and urban landscapes, Hampshire 2050 will see the realisation of an ambitious and coordinated approach to green infrastructure that connects people, places and wildlife to one another. Next year is the Year of Green Action¹³. What better time to start?

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740506/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_print_version.pdf

¹¹ Natural England Green Infrastructure Guidance [file:///Q:/Documents/Downloads/NE176\[1\].pdf](file:///Q:/Documents/Downloads/NE176[1].pdf)

¹² <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/conservation/green-halo-partnership/>

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf