

# National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015 - 2025

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why do we need it?**

Ireland has signed and ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) which came into effect on 1 March 2004. The Convention has been ratified by thirty-eight countries. It obliges Ireland to implement policy changes and objectives concerning the management, protection and planning of the landscape.

The National Landscape Strategy will be used to ensure compliance with the ELC and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change. It will provide a high level policy framework to achieve balance between the management, planning and protection of the landscape by way of supporting actions.

### **2. What is meant by landscape?**

The traditional view of landscape related to places, generally rural, of scenic beauty. The definition of landscape in the ELC introduced the concept of landscape as a dynamic system, the result of the action and interaction between natural and human factors. It is not confined to the countryside; it covers urban, peri-urban and rural areas, encompassing land, inland waters, coastal and marine areas. It deals with everyday and degraded landscapes, as well as those that are considered to be exceptional. It recognises the importance of all landscapes, not just exceptional landscapes, as having a crucial bearing on our quality of life and as deserving attention in landscape policy.

The ELC also refers to trans-frontier cooperation in relation to landscape issues. This will involve future collaboration between authorities, north and south of the border.

### **3. How was the Strategy prepared?**

A project steering group was established by the Department with representatives from government departments, state agencies, NGOs and educational institutes, with an involvement or interest in landscape. Arising from their discussions A *Strategy Issues Paper* was issued for public consultation in September 2011. Seventy-seven submissions were received. A *Draft NLS* was prepared on the basis of these submissions. A further public consultation was required as part of the screening process for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. Ninety-five submissions were received.

The Strategy reflects the many useful contributions and suggestions made during the two public consultation processes. As the strategy is a high-level policy, many useful comments were not included in the final document; however they will be of significant help in designing the actions to be implemented over the lifetime of the Strategy.

#### **4. What exactly is it and what are its core objectives?**

The core objective of the Strategy is to allow for the sustainable management of “change”. It is not about the “freezing” of the landscape at a particular point in its continuing evolution. The Strategy has six core objectives and nineteen associated actions derived from the European Landscape Convention.

The core objectives are to:

- recognise landscapes in law
- develop a National Landscape Character Assessment
- develop landscape policies
- increase landscape awareness
- identify education and training needs
- strengthen public participation

The associated actions consist of one on implementation, four relating to planning, five dealing with public awareness, and the remaining on education, training and research. *Landscape Character Assessment* will be an important tool to provide the data and objective information required to evaluate its current state and underpin effective spatial planning and landscape-centred decision-making.

#### **5. How does it deal with planning and infrastructural objectives?**

The primary role of planning authorities and the consultative roles of other bodies and persons in decision-making relating to landscape issues will continue to be governed by the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended. However, one of the objectives of the National Landscape Strategy will be to assist in the achievement of greater consistency in decision making when dealing with issues of landscape via the landscape character assessment process at local government level.