

ELC Workshops London and York: Summary

1. Natural England has commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to produce guidelines on what the European Landscape Convention (ELC) means in practice. This involved two open participatory workshops held in London and York in January 2009.
2. The workshops attracted nearly 70 people from a wide variety of organisations including government agencies, regional government, local authorities, private practice, universities, national park and AONB organisations.
3. The purpose of the workshops was to raise awareness of the ELC and show how individual organisations can take action to implement the Convention (in line with the England Implementation Plan); and to test the draft ELC guidance.
4. The workshops showed considerable goodwill and support for the approach and organisations welcome guidance on incorporating the ELC into plans, policies and strategies. Many organisations expressed an interest in producing an ELC Action Plan.
5. The discussion and comments are recorded in the separate workshop notes.

In summary:

- Guidelines must be simple, plain English interpretation of the ELC but must not lose the flexibility, wide scope and 'inspiration' of the Convention;
 - The guidelines must connect with organisations at their own level – by highlighting the benefits to organisations of engaging with the ELC and identifying key relevant drivers;
 - There are considerable benefits of having simple, generic guidance at the outset although this could in due course be targeted to individual organisations;
 - Flexibility and adaptability is a key requirement allowing organisations to tailor the guidance to their own needs; it should not be overly rigid or prescriptive;
 - The guidance needs to be developed and 'packaged' as a suite of information (rather than a single report) with initial engaging/awareness raising on the ELC followed by more detailed applications;
 - NE has an important role in awareness raising/communication in relation to landscape generally and the ELC in particular;
 - There is a need to engage the less usual suspects (i.e. not landscape professionals) for example regional government, health authorities, homes and communities agency/housebuilders in the ELC.
6. The workshop presentations are available to download from: (www.landscapecharacter.org.uk).