

SEASCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT – an approach to inform decisions

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The sea and man (perceptions ?)



*Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean – roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin - his control
Stops with the shore.*

Lord Byron 'Child Harold's Pilgrimage' (1812-18)

*Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson 'Break, Break, Break' (1842)

The sea and man(perceptions ?)



The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-haunted sea.

James Elroy Flecker 'The Gates of Damascus' (1913)

They didn't think much to the Ocean:

The waves, they were fiddlin' and small,

There was no wrecks and nobody drowned,

Fact, nothing to laugh at at all.

Marriott Edgar 'The Lion and Albert' (1932)

... We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea – whether it is to sail or to watch it – we are going back from whence we came.

J F Kennedy Speech, Newport, Rhode Island, 14/9/62

In the beginning -



1. Much of our UK seascape work has been prompted by offshore dev. assoc. with the renewable energy industry
2. The basic seascape assessment methodol. developed in a joint Irish/Welsh project (2001) has to date been applied in offshore wind assessment - Hill, M., Briggs, J., Minto, P., Bagnall, D., Foley, K., and Williams, A. (2001). *Guide to Best Practice in Seascape Assessment*. Maritime Ireland / Wales INTERREG 1994 – 1999. *Guide to Best Practice in Seascape Assessment* Countryside Council for Wales, Brady Shipman Martin and University College Dublin, (2001), for CCW.
<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/pdf/Guide-to-best-practice-in-seascape-assessment.pdf> . It factors in the visual resource as a major determining characteristic – largely ignoring seascape character.

In the beginning .. Cont'd.



3. Limited attention has been paid to the character, and characteristics of seascape (including coastal areas)
4. SNH Commissioned Report 103 *An Assessment of the Sensitivity and Capacity of the Scottish Seascape in Relation to Windfarms*, (2005), – available at http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/F03AA06.pdf) identified that the existing methodology needed further research and appraisal.
5. The stakeholder exercise for the review and revision of the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (2002) acknowledged the importance of seascapes and indicated that the LCA methodology and the Principles associated with LCA should apply to seascape. The need for separate, but related, guidance on seascape character assessment was identified.

What is Seascape? More than just the View - Definitions



The dictionary definition of 'seascape' is, *"a view or picture of an area of sea"*.

DTI Guidance on the Assessment of the impact of Offshore Wind Farms: Seascape and Visual Impact Report, (2005)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file22852.pdf>

defines 'seascape' as:

"a discrete area within which there is shared inter-visibility between land and sea (a single visual envelope). Every seascape therefore has 3 defined components:

- an **area of sea** (the seaward component);*
- a **length of coastline** (the coastline component);*
- an **area of land** (the landward component)."*

What is Seascape – more than just the view



Using the European Landscape Convention as a guide, a more inclusive definition of seascape is :

*“an area of sea, coastline and land, as perceived by people, **whose character** results from the actions and interactions of land with sea, by natural and/or human factors”*

This definition is used by Natural England (originally set down in its Position on *All Landscapes Matter*

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/AllLM_position_tcm6-16605.pdf

The UK Marine Policy Statement definition – *“landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other”*(2011).

The following are all seascapes -







© Countryside Agency - Photographer Martin Page



Importance of Seascapes ... The need for Seascape Character Assessment



Several related factors contributed to raise the profile of Seascapes and the need for Seascape Character Assessment:

- Need to contribute to aims of the European Landscape Convention, the scope of which includes land, inland water and marine areas;
- Demand for a robust methodology that explicitly deals with seascape character, and its characteristics, as well as its' visual qualities (eg. 2001 guidance on seascape assessment pre-dates LCA Guidance 2002 and as a result does not pay appropriate regard to seascape character);
- Increasing awareness that connections between land and sea are achieving a higher profile (eg. because of increasing – often related - demands on both).
- Cont'd

Importance of Seascapes ... The need for Seascape Character Assessment .. Cont'd ...



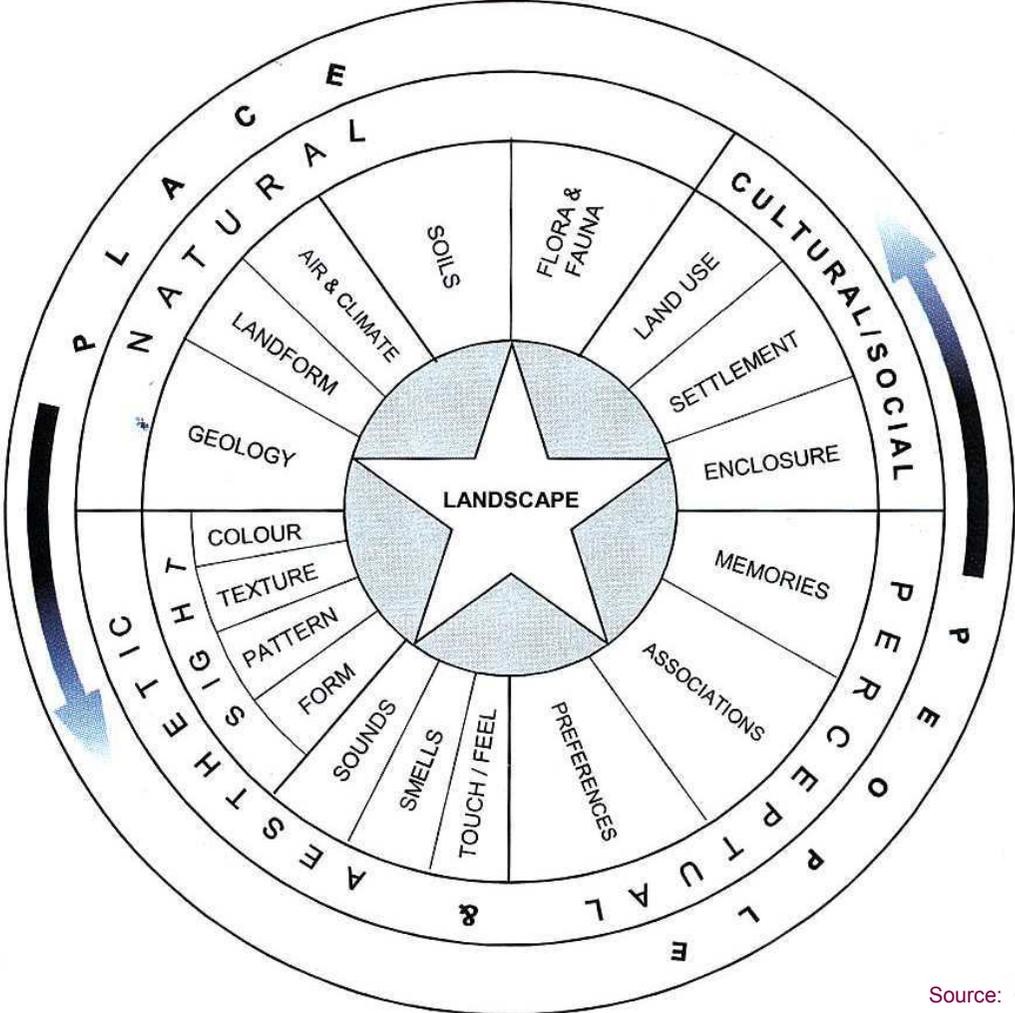
- Current development proposals, in both inshore and offshore waters, demand an understanding of seascape character;
- SCA offers a methodology for the description of seascapes that can be used in the production of Marine Plans around the coast – the Marine Spatial Planning System needs an understanding of, and a methodology for, Seascape Character Assessment ;
- A methodology was needed that integrates Landscape Character Assessment and Seascape Character Assessment so that the resultant product(s) can seamlessly inform the Landscape/Seascape and Visual Impact process.
- Stakeholder requirements (developers, local authorities, protected landscapes, landscape/ planning professionals) underlined the need for Seascape Character Assessment.

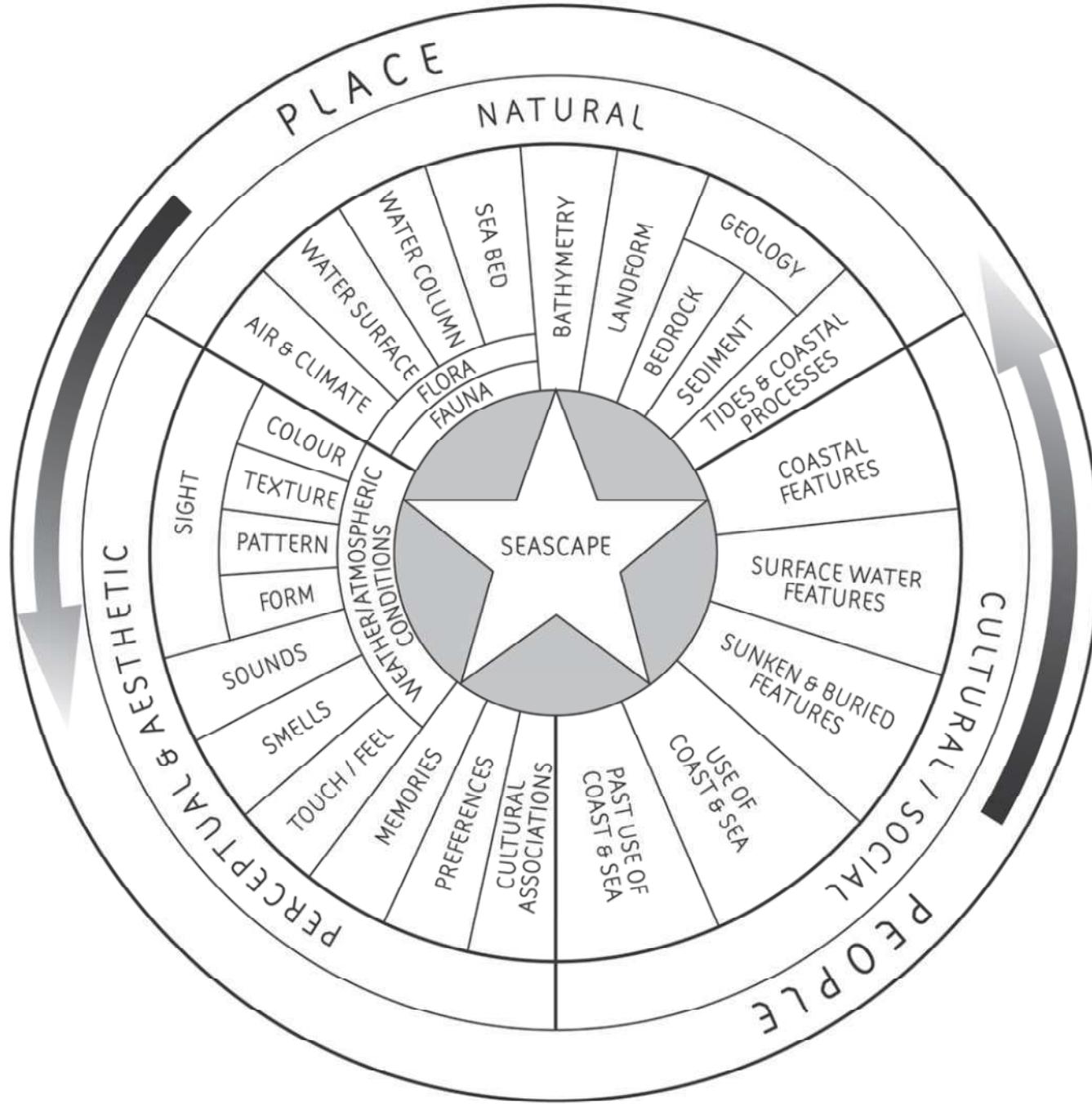
Seascape Character Assessment



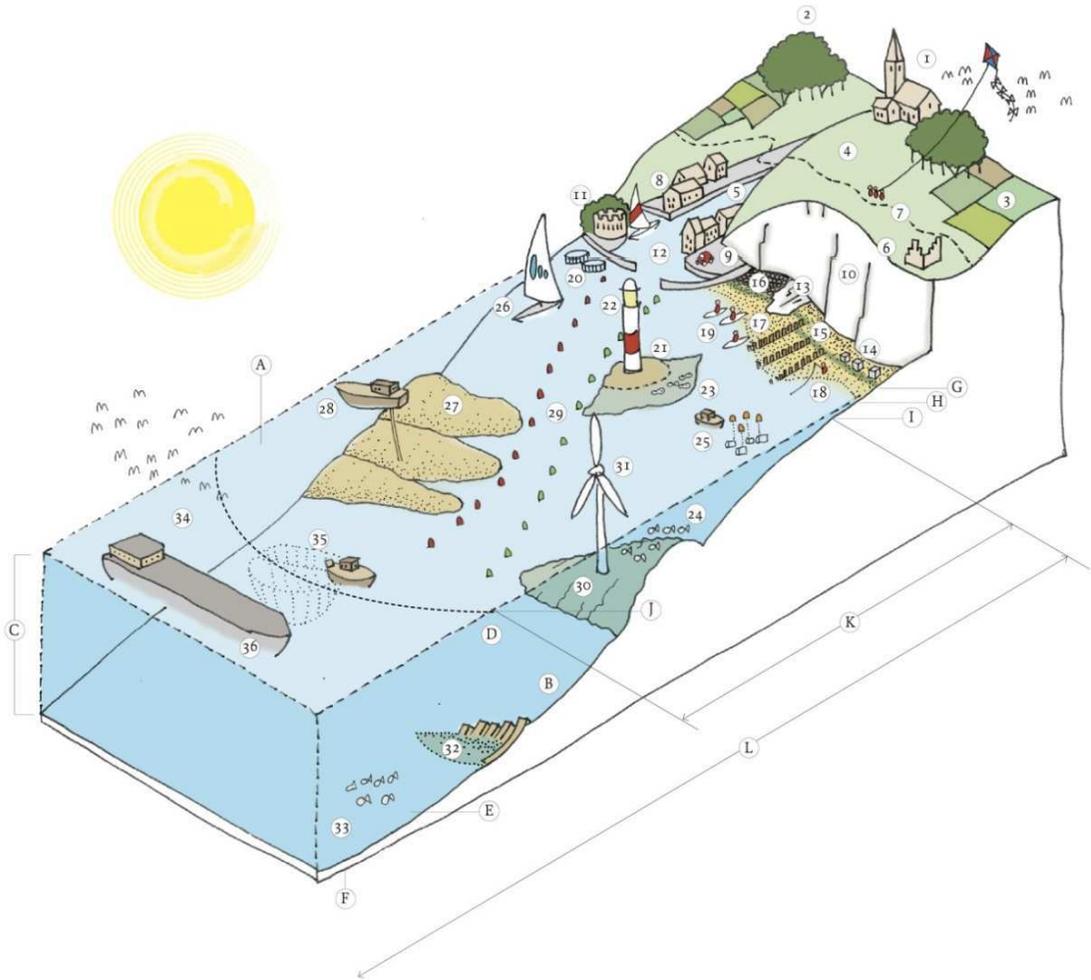
- An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment was published as a Natural England Commissioned Report in October 2012
- <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2729852>

What is Landscape? – The Landscape Wheel

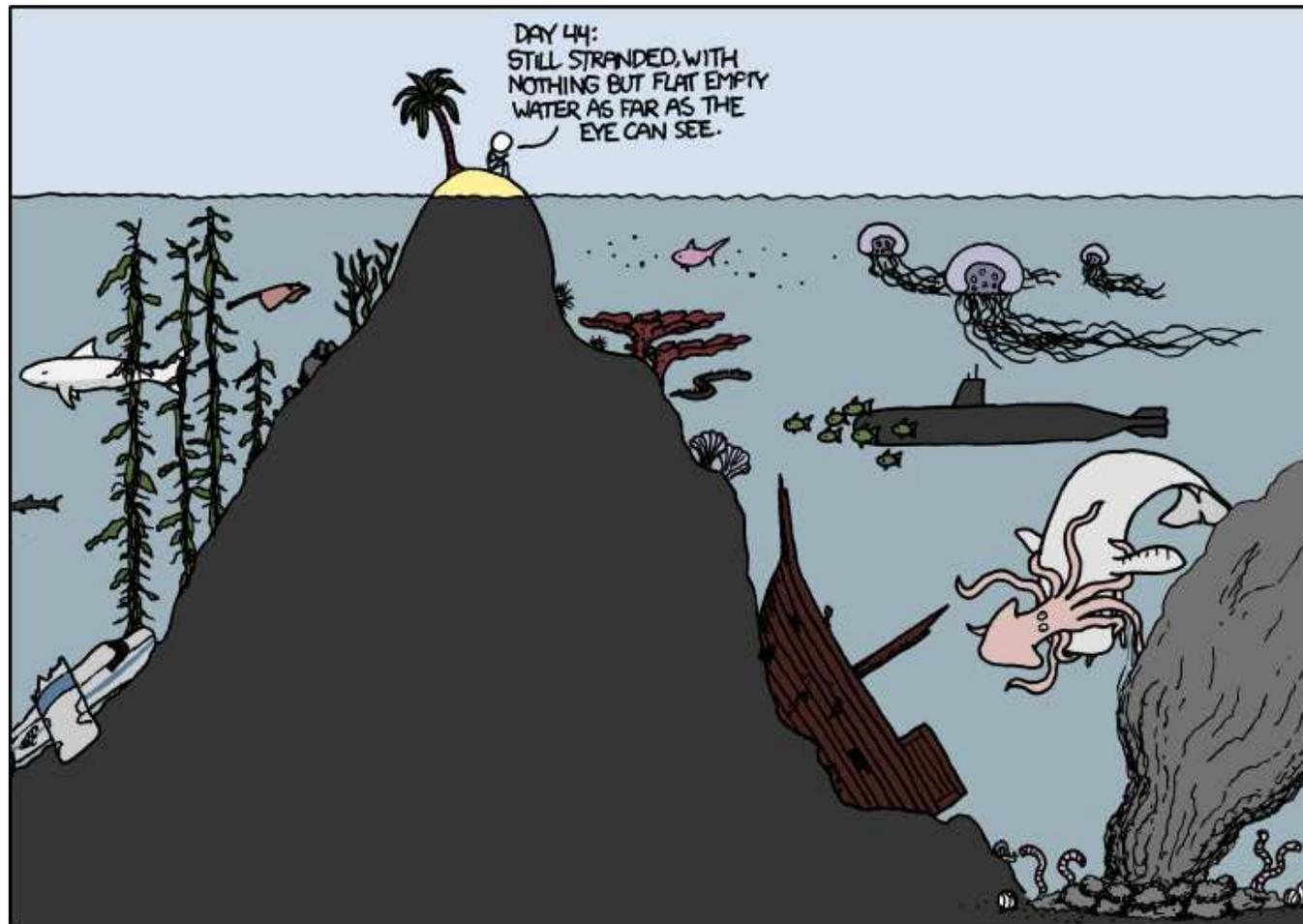




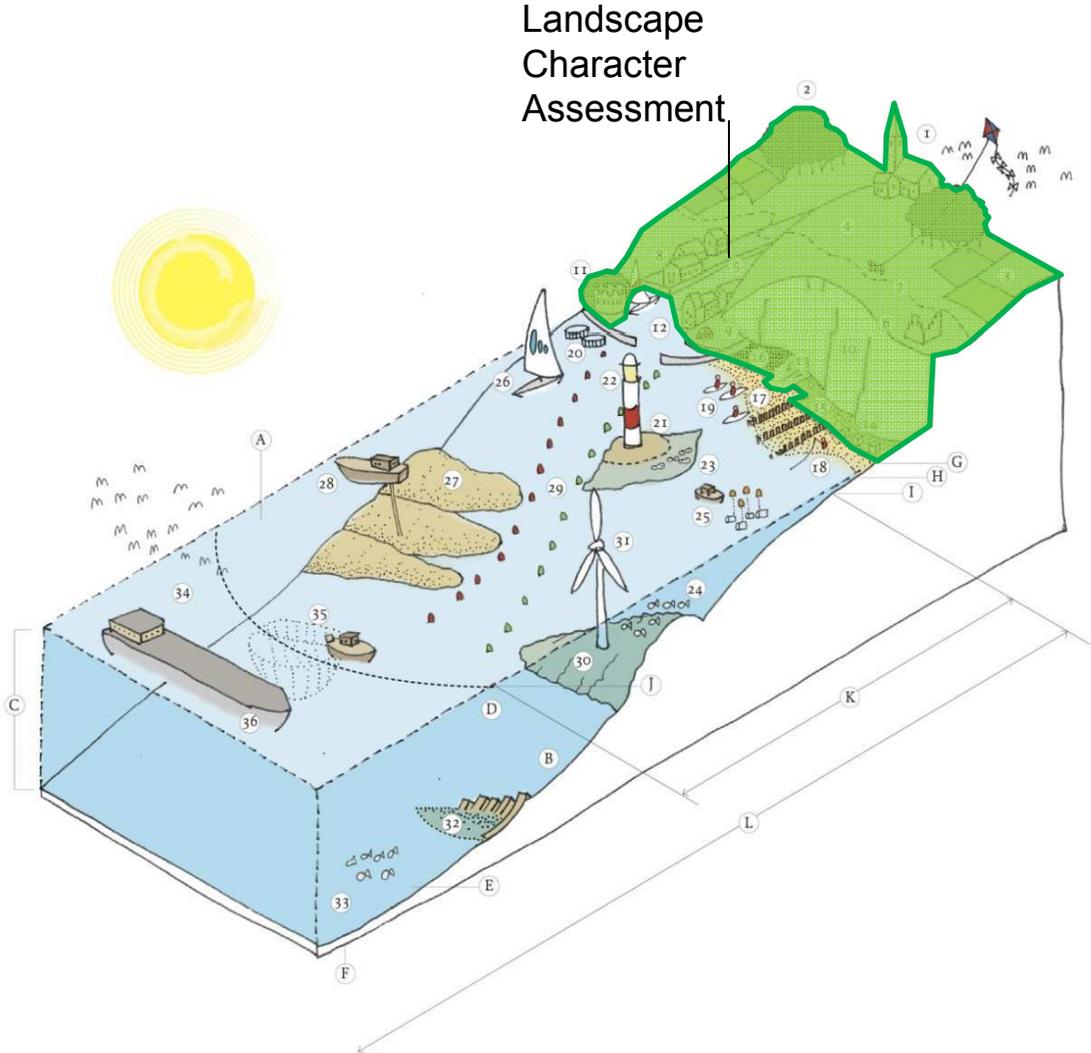
Seamless Approach to Land and Sea



<http://xkcd.com/731/> “Desert island”

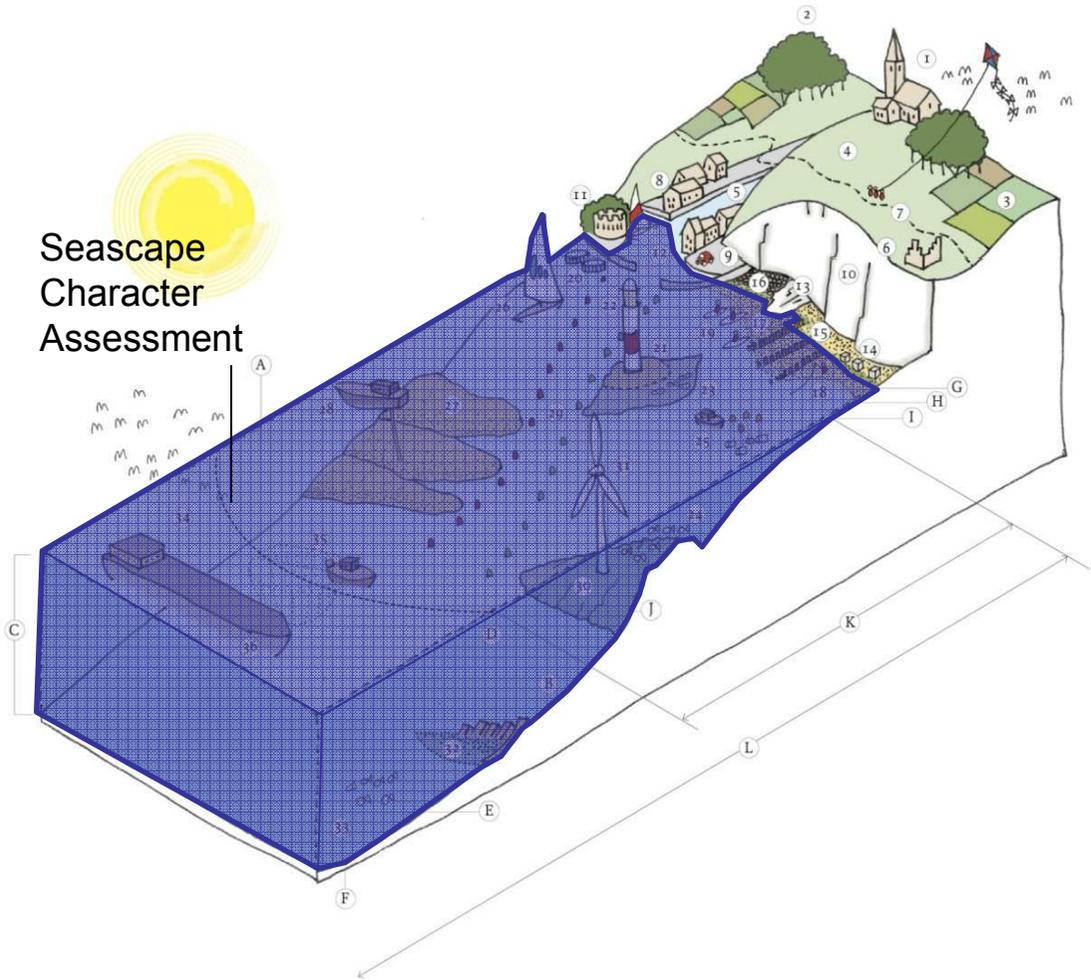


What Applies Where?

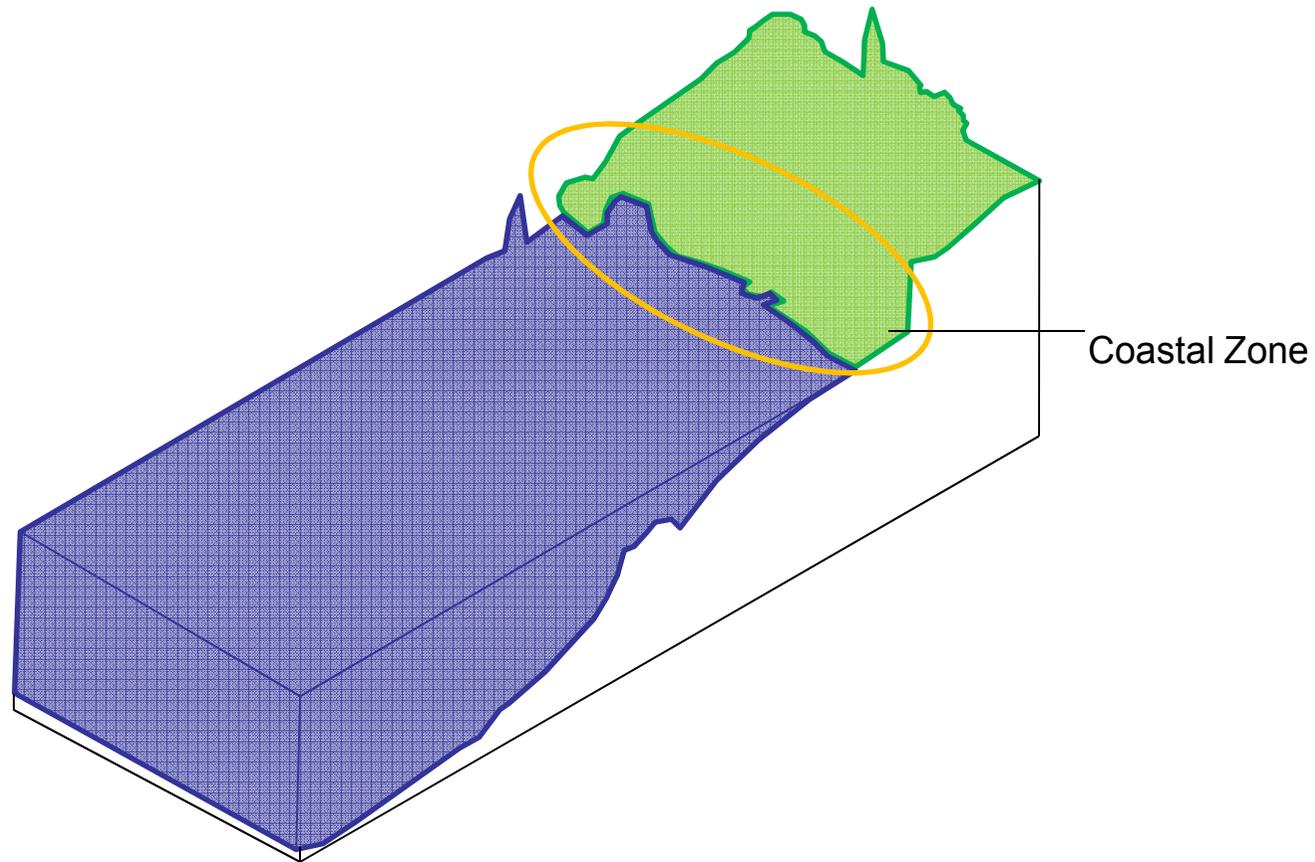


Source: LDA Design 2010

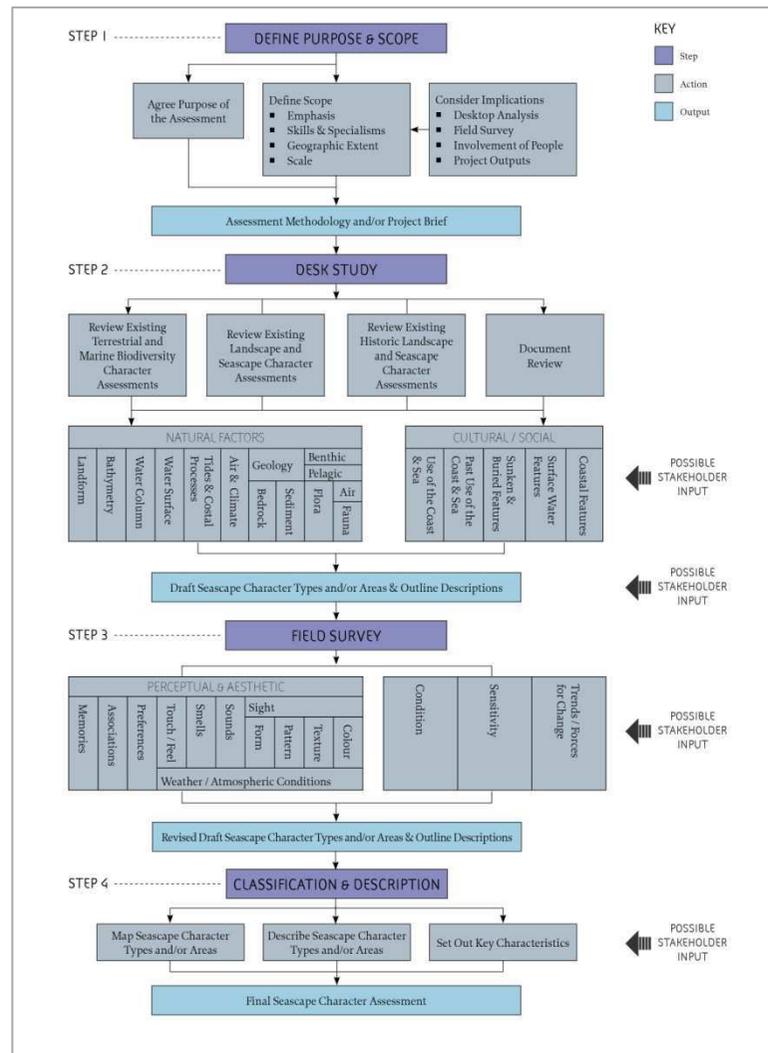
What Applies Where?



What Applies Where?

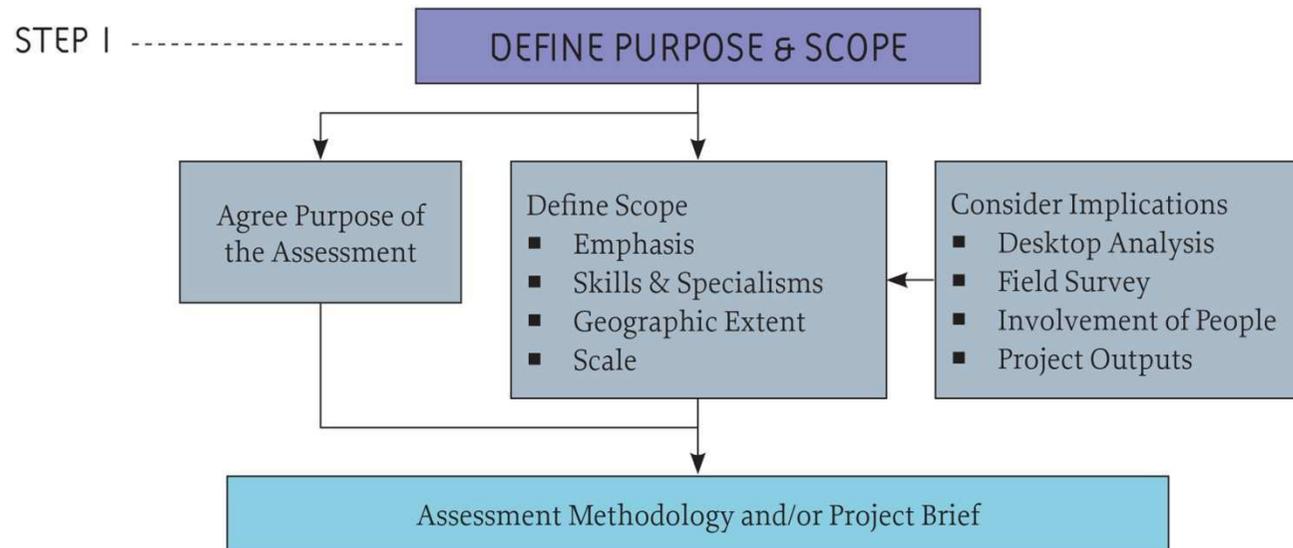


SCA follows LCA - A Staged Approach

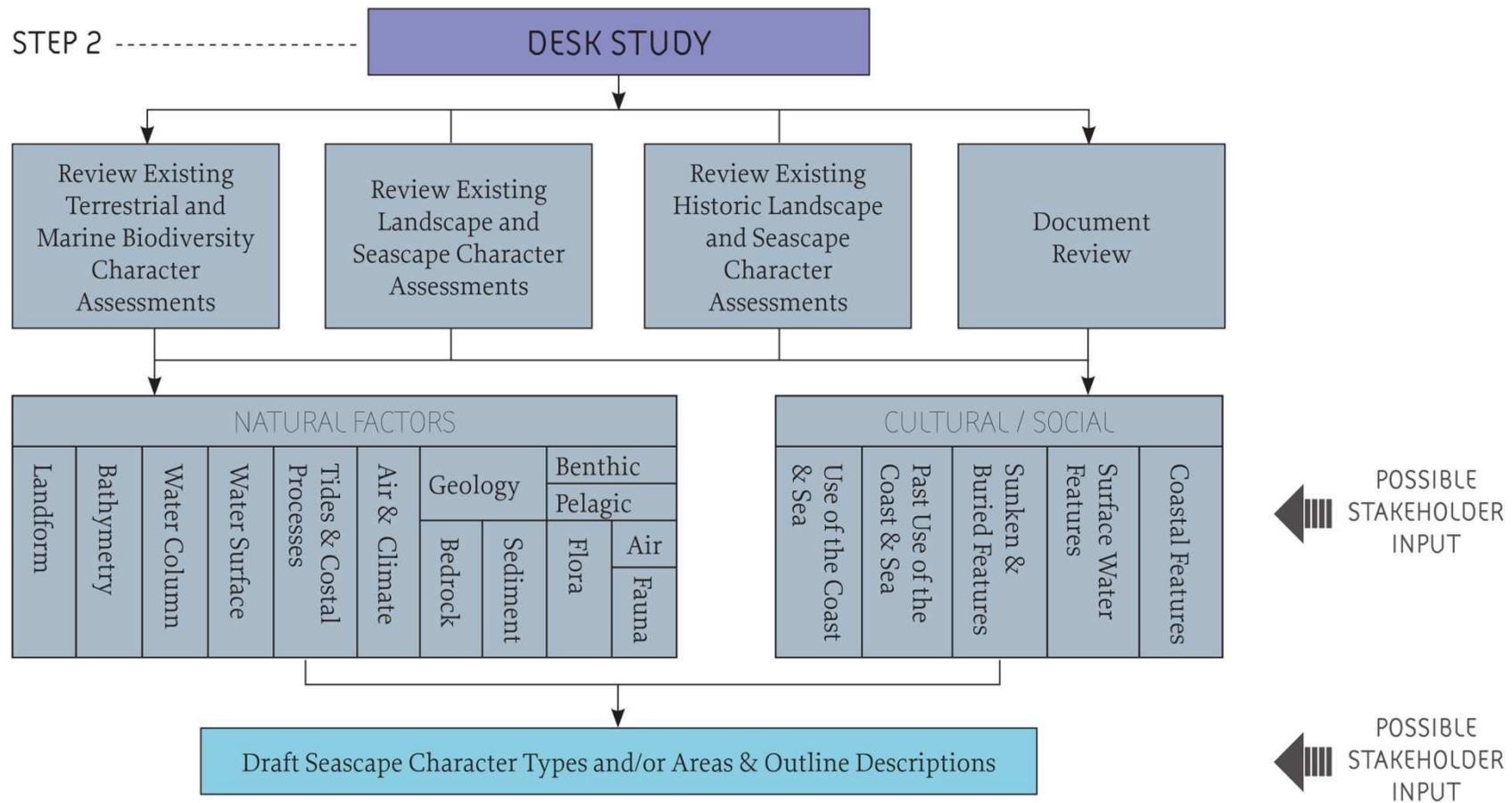


Source: Natural England 2011

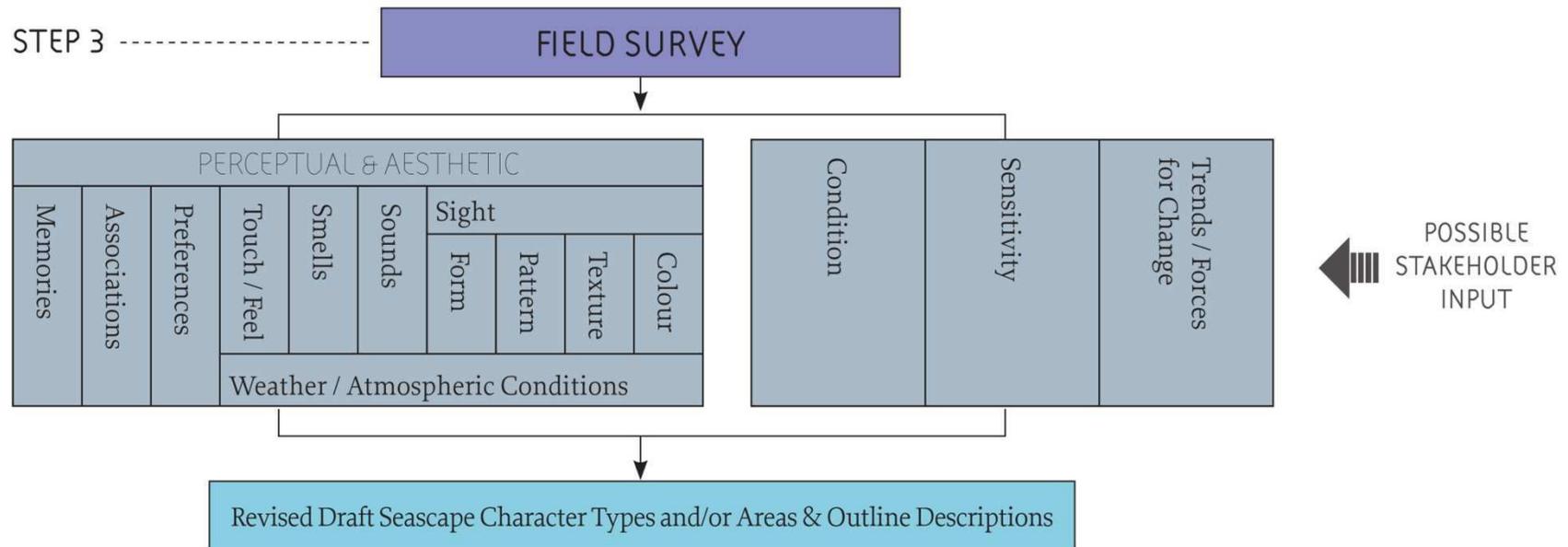
Step 1 – Define Purpose and Scope



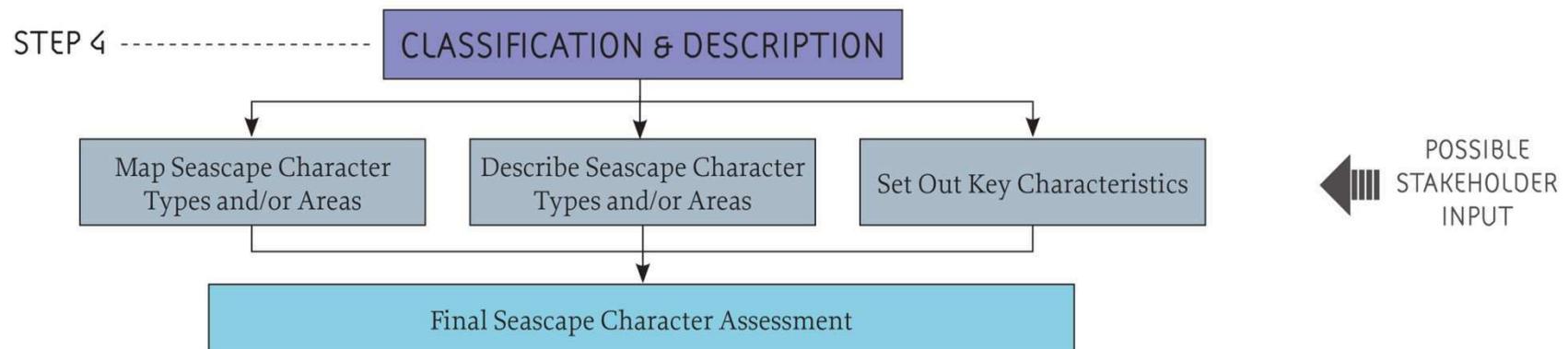
Step 2 – Desk Study



Step 3 – Field Survey - source LDA Design



Step 4 – Classification and Description - source LDA Design



A Seascape Character Area



A Seascape Character Area (identified via the Seascape Character Assessment process) will have a locally specific Title eg. Jurassic Coastal Waters

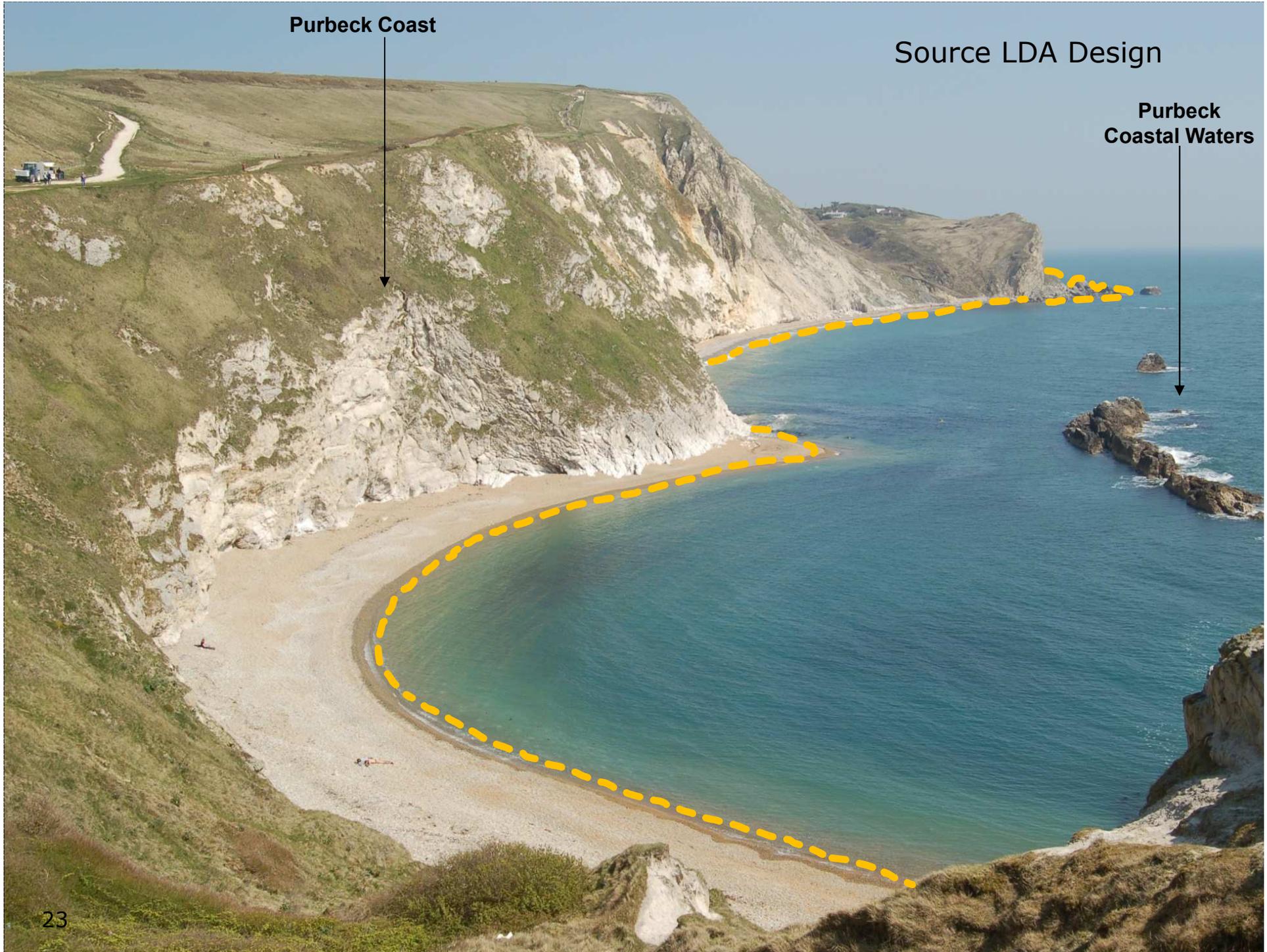
The Seascape Character Area description is likely to have the following sub-headings –

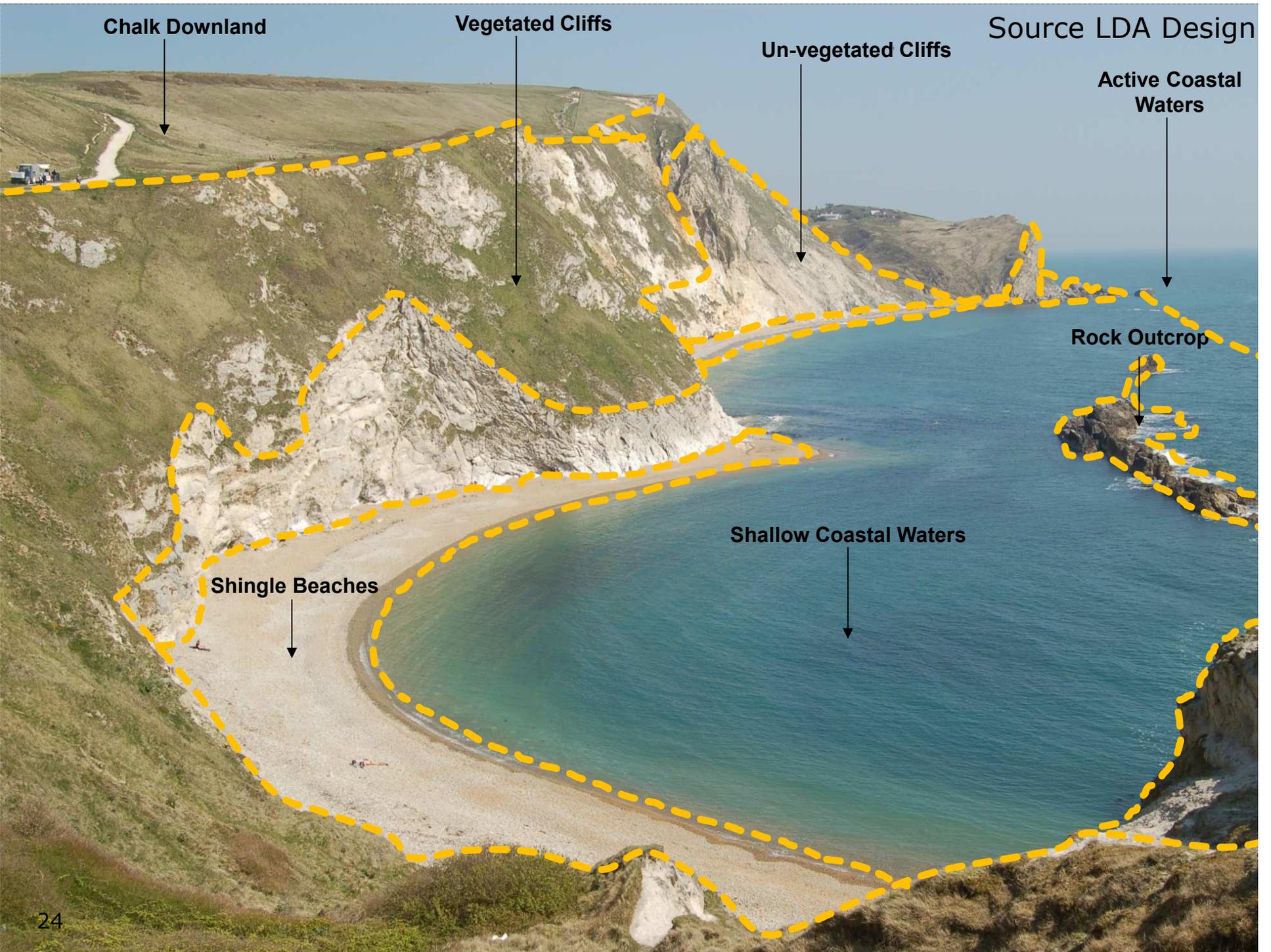
1. Key Characteristics
2. Physical Influences
3. Cultural Influences
4. Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities

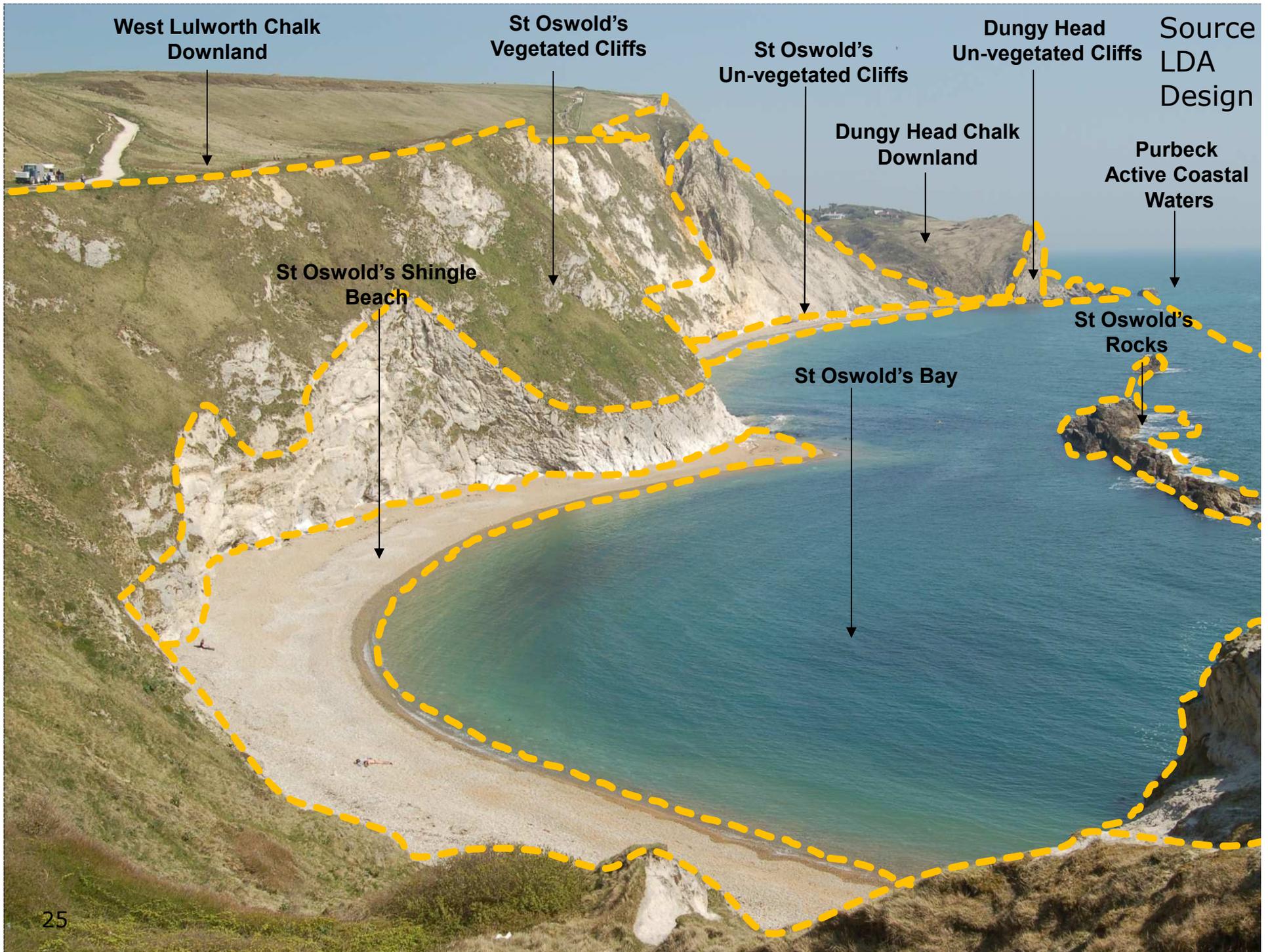
Purbeck Coast

Source LDA Design

Purbeck Coastal Waters







Potential Applications- source LDA Design



Local Authority Plans and Strategies

- Local and Strategic Development Plans
- Renewable Energy Strategies
- Minerals and Waste Strategies
- Recreation and Tourism Strategies
- Development Briefs

Planning and Management

- Development Control
- Protected Area Management Plans
- Marine Plans
- Shoreline Management Plans
- Coastal Defence and Management Plans
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plans

Other Plans and Processes

- Sustainability Appraisal
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The UK Marine Policy Statement



- Prepared and adopted for the purposes of sect. 44 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. It is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment.
- The vision for the UK marine area was set down in *Our Seas a Shared Resource* (Defra, April 2009). The UK high level marine objectives reflect the principles for sustainable development, and under objective 2 it is envisaged that, “ *People appreciate the diversity of the marine environment, its seascapes, its natural and cultural heritage and its resources and act responsibly*”.
- Chapter 2 sets out key considerations that marine plan authorities should take into account when preparing required assessments as part of the marine planning process, & these may apply in decision making (2.4.5). Seascape is one of the considerations listed, with marine ecology, biodiversity, & historic environment. Cont'd ..

The UK Marine Policy Statement – Cont'd



- Importance of a seamless continuum from land to sea is acknowledged at para. 2.5.7, “The marine plan authority, through integration of Marine Plans with terrestrial planning and engagement with local communities, should contribute to vibrant coastal communities, particularly in remote areas, which will include consideration of cultural heritage, seascape and local environmental quality.” **The common approach to character assessment from land to sea should facilitate integration of marine planning with terrestrial planning.**
- Re. development management, *“In considering the impact of an activity or development on seascape, the marine plan authority should take into account existing character and quality, how highly it is valued and its capacity to accommodate change specific to any development. LCA methodology may be an aid to this process.”*

Key Messages



- Seascape character assessment (like landscape character assessment) is about more than just the view.
- Like a landscape character assessment, a seascape character assessment is neither a new designation nor an additional level of bureaucracy, nor is it a restriction on land use or development, it is simply a document that includes maps and descriptions explaining and showing variations in seascape character across a given area.
- Seascape character assessment sits outside planning policy guidance It is technical guidance for specialists as well as for communities see NECR 105 and NECR 106
- SCA (as with LCA) can help deliver Gov's localism agenda.



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