

The logo features a stylized graphic of two overlapping, curved shapes in shades of blue and teal, resembling a wave or a ribbon, positioned to the right of the text.

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Awards for Planning Excellence Case Study

**The Jersey Integrated landscape and Seascape
Character Assessment**

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Overview

Jersey faces tremendous challenges in the face of global forces of climate change, biodiversity loss and development pressure. The Jersey Integrated Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (ILSCA) was commissioned, as part of the evidence base for the new Island Plan, to address these challenges through the promotion of sustainable development.

The ILSCA - which covers all terrestrial, intertidal and marine areas within the Bailiwick of Jersey – analyses, celebrates and informs a rich understanding of how the island’s landscape and seascape character contributes to its unique sense of place which is critical for the planning and management of development and change.

Award criteria

1. Background

Planning in Jersey

Jersey is a self-governing parliamentary democracy and Crown Dependency, with its own financial, legal and judicial systems and the power of self-determination.

It has a statutory plan-led planning system, which must provide for the sustainable development of an expanding island community – of 108,000 people in an area of 45 square miles - by encouraging positive growth and thriving communities, whilst protecting the environment and its most vulnerable and visible landscapes and seascapes.

Planning jurisdiction in Jersey extends to its territorial limits, and the spatial extent of the Island Plan – Jersey’s spatial development plan - embraces the Bailiwick of Jersey comprising the island of Jersey as well as its coastal waters and offshore reefs.

The Island Plan is one of the most important documents shaping the future of the Bailiwick and is a key element of Jersey’s long-term strategic policy framework.

Island Plan Review

The current Island Plan was approved in June 2011, with an interim review of parts of the plan in July 2014: it is proposed to be reviewed before the end of the current governmental term in May 2022.

The Jersey Integrated Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (ILSCA) was commissioned by the Government of Jersey (GoJ) in June 2019 and was undertaken by Fiona Fyfe Associates between July 2019 and May 2020, as a fundamental element of the evidence base for the Island Plan Review (IPR). Its overall aim is to understand how the island’s landscape and seascape framework contributes to its unique sense of place, including the role it plays as a setting for development, to help inform the development of planning policy and as tool for decision-makers in the management of change and to enable the sustainable development of the island.

Land Use Consultants produced the Jersey Countryside Character Appraisal (CCA) in 1999, which provided an integrated and holistic understanding of the island’s rural character, and which has been fundamental in the development and maintenance of the island’s planning policies for over two decades. The ILSCA is a review and update of the 1999 Countryside Character Appraisal, reflecting changes which have occurred in the past 20 years, as well as the forces for change which are affecting Jersey’s landscapes and seascapes now, and are likely to affect them into the future.

The ILSCA extends the scope of coverage to include seascapes as well as landscapes, and embraces all terrestrial, intertidal and marine areas within the Bailiwick of Jersey (see figure 1). It also reflects the most up-to-date understanding of Jersey’s landscapes and seascapes and includes the findings of research undertaken over the past 20 years. In addition, the ILSCA is in accordance with current best practice for landscape and seascape character assessment, which has evolved since the 1999 CCA was undertaken.

For all these reasons the ILSCA will form a robust part of the evidence base for the Island Plan Review to inform the preparation of the draft Island Plan during 2020/2021, to enable Jersey's sustainable development: it was published in July 2020.

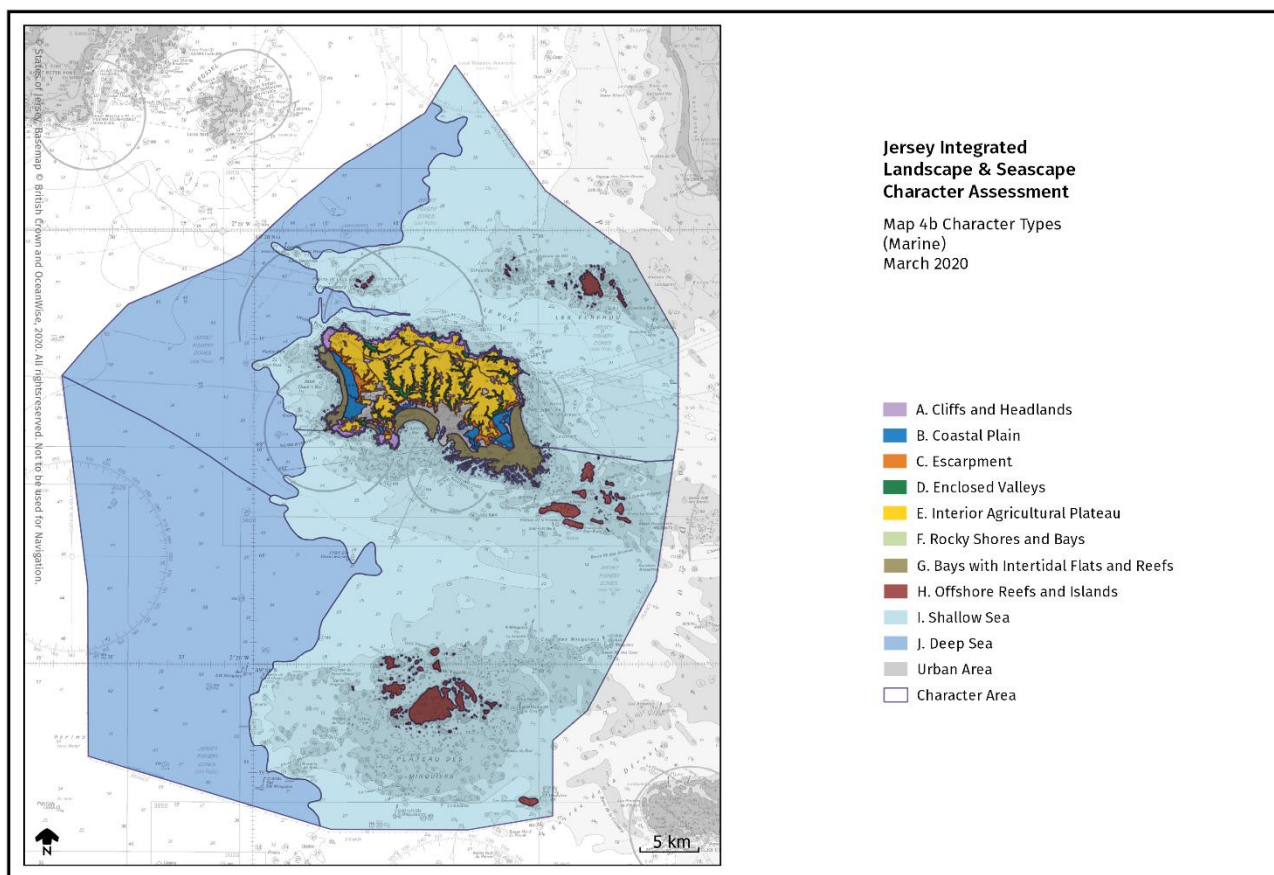


Figure 1: Extent of ILSCA coverage: the Bailiwick of Jersey

2. Outcomes

Positive community impacts

Jersey's coast and countryside is a precious asset treasured by islanders and recognised as an intrinsic part of Jersey's history, culture, way of life and distinct identity. Understanding what makes the island's environment so special is crucial to ensuring that it is appropriately protected, and that change is properly managed.

The ILSCA provides a deep understanding of the characteristics and distinctiveness of the entirety of Jersey's environment; and the relationships between the island's landscapes and seascapes, which is a critical aspect of the essence and character of a small island.

This will inform local decision-making and judgements about how appropriate protection might be afforded to environmental character through the development of planning policy in the Island Plan; and in the determination of individual planning applications to enable Jersey's sustainable development.

The ILSCA also includes strong and practical recommendations for the enhancement and management of Jersey's environment by identifying opportunities for sustainable access to promote the health and wellbeing of islanders.

Positive economic impacts

Jersey's tourism offer is based on experience of the island's rich and distinct culture that is integrally bound to the character of its landscape and seascapes. The ILSCA captures and distills the essence of the island's environmental character and seeks to promote positive planning, management and enhancement of it to attract visitors to the island and their economic contribution.

Much of the land and sea embraced by the ILSCA is in productive agricultural use or is of value to the island's fishing industry. The ILSCA identifies opportunities and offers recommendations for making rural regeneration a positive factor in the landscape, for example through guidance for the location and design of new agricultural buildings; and the creation of appropriate countryside access facilities and land management practices to enhance character. It also provides a spatially-based marine framework which recognises the differing activities, character, ecology and socio-economic importance of individual marine zones to inform the development of a richer planning policy and management regime for the island's marine environment to support a sustainable blue economy.



Figure 2: St Aubin

Positive environmental impacts

Seeking to deliver benefit for the natural environment is a critical element of ILSCA where evidence-based recommendations relating to climate change, ecosystem services, biodiversity and geodiversity are set out to inform the development of planning and land management policy and practice.

Jersey contains an incredibly diverse range of habitats which, because of the small scale of the island, are often pressured. The ILSCA promotes opportunities to protect marine and terrestrial habitats, and enhance ecological connectivity, for consideration in the development of planning policy, land management and associated guidance, by:

- identifying significant opportunities for improving habitats and connectivity in non-designated sites, such as farmland, hedgerows and rural lanes;
- protecting and extending existing designated habitats such as coastal heath, sand dunes, woodland and wet meadow, including opportunities to expand habitats through restoration when existing land uses come to an end.
- proposing the protection of the most fragile intertidal areas from marine developments;
- referencing good practice in woodland management to promote age and species diversity.



Figure 3: South-east coast intertidal zone (low tide)

3. Planning contribution

Effective leadership and vision

The 1999 Jersey Countryside Character Appraisal (CCA) provided an integrated and holistic understanding of the island's rural character. In reviewing the 2011 Island Plan, it was recognised that a more integrated and comprehensive approach to character assessment, which responded to the increased development pressure not only in the island's countryside but around its sensitive coastline and across its coastal waters, was required.

The need to secure a character assessment which provided a deeper analysis and understanding of how the island component landscape and seascape character types relate to one another and fit together - to provide a tool for planning policy-makers and decision-takers that helps better understand the wider context within which development might occur - was identified and specified. By working with the consultant team, planners - from policy and development control perspectives - have sought to lead the development of a critical tool which responds to Jersey's particular planning challenges and which can be used to support the development of new planning policy and supplementary planning guidance; and help to deliver sustainable development in Jersey.

The development of a spatially based marine framework, which recognises the different character of individual marine zones, provides a significant contribution to help realise the objective of richer marine planning policy framework.

Partnership

Partnership working has been critical to the methodology of the study; to ensure that it met the key planning requirements of the project brief; to ensure that it helped to support the delivery of wider GoJ objectives; and also secured the buy-in and engagement of islanders.

A project steering group was established to manage the process throughout and to liaise and engage with the consultant team. This included representatives from planning policy; development control; natural environment; and marine resources sections of GoJ.

In a unique place - and one that is distinct from the UK - the steering group worked with the consultant team to provide access to local specialists for fieldwork to maximise local knowledge and input to ensure accuracy and local relevance; identify key concerns; and increase buy-in and recognition of the value of the output. GoJ Marine Resources Team were also able to arrange for the consultant team to join the crew of *FPV Norman Le Brocq* for the marine fieldwork to experience views of Jersey from the sea, and safely visit the offshore reefs and islands.

The consultant team were also required to collaborate with other consultants working on parallel IPR workstreams, to ensure consistency and integration.

This collaborative working has ensured comprehensive input to the strategies and 'protect, manage, plan' sections for each character type, as well as the coastal units and landscape design guidance; to ensure that the output is of principal value to planning but also serves to support other GoJ objectives.

Managing implementation and delivery

The implementation and delivery of the project was managed throughout by the Project Steering Group, led by the Island Plan Review Team, to ensure integration with the ongoing IPR.

4. Sustainable development

Public benefit

The 1999 Countryside Character Appraisal has helped to inform planning policy in Jersey's countryside over the last 20 years: the ILSCA has similar potential as a tool to help shape and influence the management of Jersey's seascapes and landscapes. The new Island Plan is scheduled for adoption in 2022, and the output from ILSCA will be used to inform the development of planning policy and associated supplementary planning guidance that will have effect in the short-term when the new Island Plan takes effect.

The robustness and comprehensiveness of this work has the potential to help inform policy development over the medium- to long-term, beyond the current IPR, particularly in the face of increasing population growth and development pressure in a small island environment.

The ILSCA has also formed the basis to commission additional work, to inform the evidence base of this current Island Plan Review, including a Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal of Jersey's urban fringes; and a review of the boundaries of Jersey's Coastal National Park.

Sustainable development

Environmental sustainability is at the heart of the ILSCA: it is a key component of landscape/ seascape analysis and fundamental to its recommendations. In this respect, the ILSCA contributes to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing
By informing the protection of the natural environment and identifying opportunities for sustainable access to the coast and countryside, to promote the health and wellbeing of islanders.
- Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities
By informing the protection of the island's cultural heritage and identifying opportunities for sustainable travel to open spaces and nature.
- Goal 13: Climate action
(see below)
- Goal 14: Life below water
By helping to promote the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts
- Goal 15: Life on land
By helping to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems

Climate change

The ILSCA will help meet sustainability goals, which includes achieving carbon neutrality, and mitigation and adaptation to climate change through the following:

- identifying climate change impacts for the whole island, and for individual landscape/ seascape character types;
- describing the ecosystem services associated with each character type, and opportunities to improve and enhance them in the future.
- identifying habitats which are particularly important for mitigating climate change, such as woodland, coastal heath and undersea seagrass beds;

- recommending appropriate locations for new tree planting, and expanding/ connecting habitats to increase their resilience;
- recommending alternative transport solutions, such as footpaths and cycle routes to connect urban and rural areas, and reduce car usage;
- recommending how future sea defences could be designed to fit into the landscape, and maximise coastal habitats;
- contributing to finding the best sites for offshore renewable energy, and associated infrastructure.

This work can help to inform both the Island Plan Review and other emergent workstreams, such as the island's Carbon Neutral Strategy and the Sustainable Transport Policy; and help to ensure that planners contribute to these critical areas of policy development.

5. Community benefit

Positive and constructive engagement

Given the significance and relevance of the Island Plan to life in Jersey, it was essential to ensure that the development of the ILSCA maximised local knowledge and input: to ensure accuracy and local relevance; to ensure that all relevant concerns were identified and, where appropriate and possible at this stage, addressed; and to increase ownership, transparency and recognition of the value of the output.

As already stated, the project steering group facilitated terrestrial and marine fieldwork access for the consultant team to local specialists including representatives from Jersey Heritage, and the Natural Environment, Marine Resources, Planning Policy and Development Control Teams.

Stakeholder consultation sessions were also arranged by the project steering group, facilitated by the consultant team, with representatives of local organisations such as La Société Jersiaise, the National Trust for Jersey, the Coastal National Park, residents' groups, Parish representatives, reef residents' associations, fishing and farming representatives, together with local architects, utility providers, and representatives of the development industry. At the workshops, people were asked to comment on the Character Type and Area boundaries, describe what makes each special, raise concerns about issues, and make suggestions for future management to address these issues. The workshops were extremely productive, with all attendees engaging positively.

Quality of life

The value of Jersey's natural environment and its contribution to the wellbeing of islanders is consistently recognised and acknowledged in any test of public opinion in the island, which is why its protection, enhancement and management is a matter of considerable public interest. The ILSCA provides an accessible and critical tool to help and enable the community to decide how best to manage change and to respond to the island's needs – through the preparation of the Island Plan; and subsequent determination of planning applications – whilst seeking to safeguard this aspect of islanders' wellbeing.

Access to the island's coast, countryside and marine environment should be a universal benefit to all islanders but is particularly important for the island's more disadvantaged communities who might live in an urban setting or in accommodation with limited private access to open space. The ILSCA sets out to determine how such access might be protected and enhanced, identifying opportunities to promote and provide sustainable access to Jersey's natural environment.

6. Leading practice

Creative and innovative practice

The project was challenging in demanding comparable character assessment across the entire Bailiwick of Jersey, including all its terrestrial, intertidal and marine areas. This character assessment is considered innovative for its coverage of an island with such a long length of coastline, large area of sea, and extensive intertidal areas, all under the same planning jurisdiction.

The introduction of the concept of coastal units in the ILSCA expands the conventional methodology for character assessment and is a creative and innovative response to the planning challenges of the most complex and sensitive areas of the island's environment where many different character types and character areas meet and/ or are inter-visible: around Jersey's extensive and varied coastline, the composition of a place might be influenced by the interaction and relationship of many landscape and seascape character types and areas.

The coastal units provide a clear and accessible framework to describe how the terrestrial, intertidal and marine character types are visually, physically, culturally and functionally related to each other: this concept cements the project as a truly integrated Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment.

The impact of and pressure for development along Jersey's sensitive coastline, and the need to better understand how best to manage its impact on coastal character, was one of the key drivers for the project. The ILSCA has provided a new planning tool for Jersey through the introduction of comprehensive and detailed visibility mapping, in order to better understand the potential implications of development on key views and landmarks and the character of the coast when experienced from both land and sea. This work will inform planning policy development and decision-making where the intervisibility of a development along the coastline – relative to the sea, intertidal areas, other Channel Islands and the French coast, as well as from and within the island itself – will be more material to local policy and decision-making.

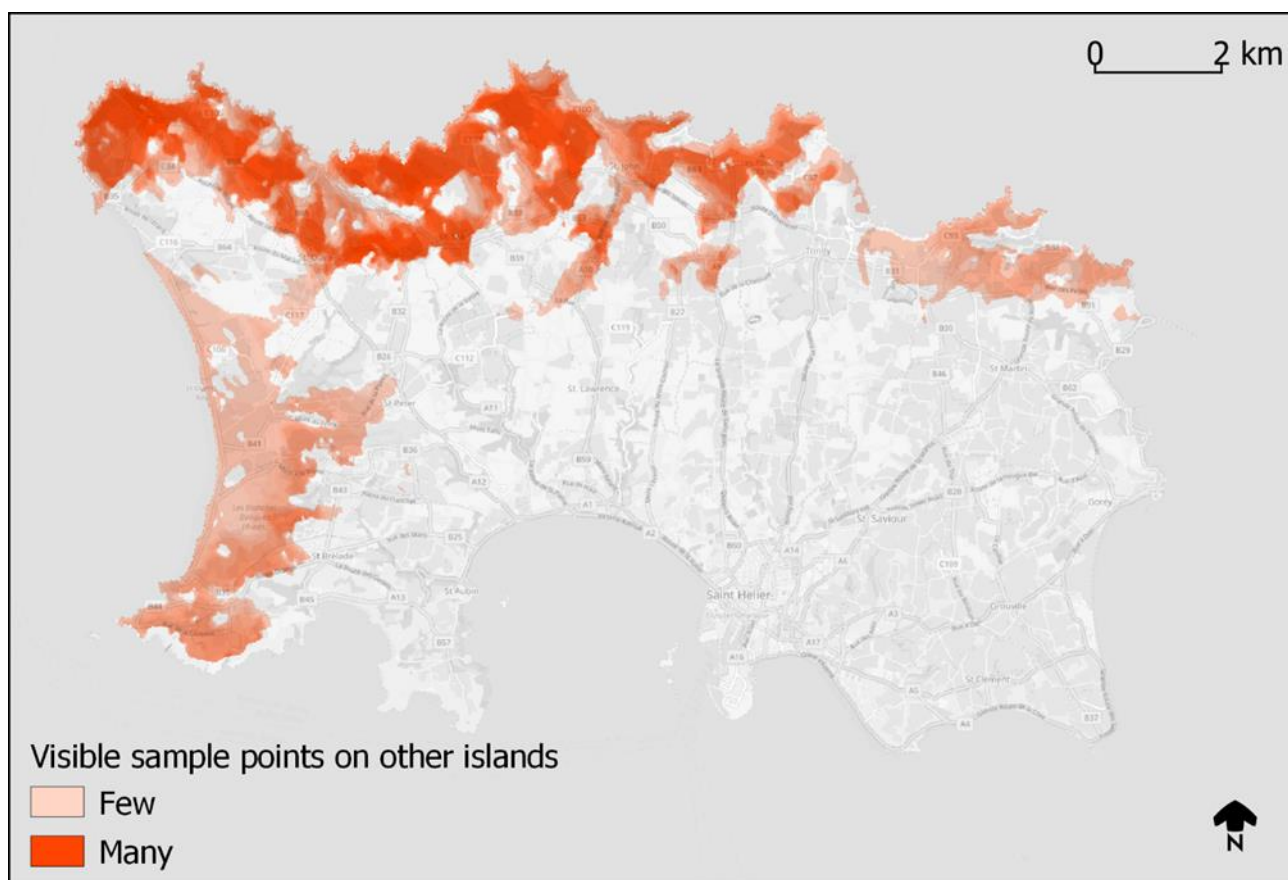


Figure 4: Intervisibility mapping: views of other Channel Islands

Exemplar

The introduction of the concept of Coastal Units to the conventional methodology of character assessment is an extremely useful and beneficial tool, helping to provide a richer understanding of the concept of place, and the inter-relationship of key elements that contribute to local character. This is of value to the development of planning policy and the assessment of development proposals which would have application to other islands and coastal areas and could become best practise.

The ILSCA provides a comprehensive, robust, and consistent analysis of an entire planning jurisdiction, embracing all terrestrial, intertidal and marine environments. The project methodology adopted for the ILSCA project is in line with the current Best Practice Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) and Seascape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2012), and is in accord with the European Landscape Convention, in terms of definitions, methodology and recommendations, and introduces the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services. This work will provide a sound and rigorous evidence base to enable the development of an appropriate planning policy framework for the management of change in Jersey's unique landscapes and seascapes.



Figure 5: Bonne Nuit Coastal Unit from La Tête de Frémont