

Annex 8 Perceived value of the AONB that is the Parish of Mevagissey

The distinctive character and natural beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) make them some of the most special and loved places in England. As such AONBs benefit from important protections set out in law and policy which state that “great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty and they have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.” Twenty-seven percent of Cornwall is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a further 24% as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). The Parish of Mevagissey occupies 1,381 acres and is completely contained within an AONB.

With over half of the county so defined, it is inevitable that development will take place within AONBs or AGLVs using exception sites in order to meet local housing demands. This should be under exceptional circumstances and where it can be shown to be in the public interest.

It is considered to be the responsibility of the Mevagissey Parish NDP steering group, to affirm the value in which the local community holds the AONB that surrounds the parish. Local communities and Parish/Town Councils are best placed to earmark the key areas which need protection and identify those plots which could be sensitively developed.

This Annex goes beyond a descriptive assessment of the landscape and focuses on the significant aspects of value and emotional perspective about how the community and visitors experience particular areas of the landscape, what they enjoy and what they wish to retain in terms of the essential character of the parish, whilst positively planning for future development.

Purpose

It is intended that this discussion will supplement and reinforce development plan policy and support and inform land management initiatives. The views of the local community are important as they are focused on the need to provide:

- sustainable development to meet their needs and
- protect and enhancing the local landscape designations and in particular the AONB that is the parish of Mevagissey.

Process

Part of the NDP process was ensuring that the value in which the AONB is perceived by the local community was represented and properly positioned within the policies.

A great deal of information was collected during the Local Landscape Character Assessment (see Associated document), and this is supplemented with an assessment of the way in which people experience and value the landscape and what they enjoy most. In order to achieve this a questionnaire survey was undertaken.

Method

A questionnaire was designed to identify how the Mevagissey community and its visitors valued the landscape, in particular asking what gave certain places their special quality, their recreational / leisure value, conservation interests and personal memories. An explanation of the exercise and the questionnaire together with a map of the parish were e-mailed widely across the community using group emails from various organisations to maximise coverage as well as personal contact lists. Notices were displayed in the village and the documents were placed on the village website. The questionnaire was made available for two weeks and e-mail and face-to-face encouragement was given to publicise the exercise as widely as possible.

Results

Completed questionnaires were received from 48 people including 6 visitors to the area. Since respondents were not limited in the number of places that they could include, 165 responses were received identifying individual places that were of special importance / value to the respondents. The youngest respondent was 23 and the oldest 82 with the following breakdown:-

<u>Age</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
21-30	3
31-40	4
41-50	13
51-60	4
61-70	12
71-80	11
80+	1

The individual sites / places were easily grouped into areas that were commonly described and can be found on the map at Attachment 3.

<u>Area / Site</u>	<u>No. of times area identified</u>	<u>% responders</u>
1	1	2
2	25	52
3	6	12
4	41	85
5	0	
6	9	19
7	15	31
8	34	71
9 (Harbour)	10	21
10 (Pentillie)	11	23
11 (Polkirt / Cliff Park)	13	27

The areas are shown on the map below but a descriptor of each area is as follows:-

Area 1 Finger of land to the NW of the parish including Peruppa Barns on the road to Heligan Gardens

Area 2 The Heligan Valley to the west of Valley Road from the Mevagissey Activity Centre to the south up to the boundary with Area 1 in the North, the parish boundary to the west and the Valley Road to the east.

Area 3 The Heligan Valley to the east of the Valley Road from the cemetery in the south to Tregiskey in the North.

Area 4 The undeveloped coastline and hinterland from Little Polstreath in the South to Portgiskey in the north and bordered by School Hill to the west.

Area 5 Agricultural land bounded by the Parish boundary to the west, Treleven farm to the North, Tregony Hill to the south and the settlement boundary to the east.

Area 6 Agricultural land bounded by the parish boundary to the west, Tregony Hill to the north and Lower Well Park to the east.

Area 7 Agricultural land and Nature Reserve bounded by the parish boundary to the south and west (Galowras Mill), Portmellon Cove to the east and Area 6 to the north.

Area 8 Long Point / Portmellon Cove to Chapel Point / Colona beach.

Area 9 Not marked on map but covering the inner and outer harbours and surrounding buildings.

Area 10 Not specified on map but covering Pentillie, already an Area of Protected Open Space.

Area 11 Not specified on map but covering the top of Polkirt Hill and Cliff Park, already identified as an Area of Protected Open Space.

Respondents used free text to describe how they valued specified areas and places but the following were common words and phrases to the majority. Unique, spectacular, tranquil, historic and rugged were very common descriptors.

Area 1 Great views through 360°.

Area 2 The walk to Heligan Gardens from Mevagissey; rolling countryside, ancient woodlands and hedgerows and medieval farming enclosures. Timeless, peaceful and excellent walking on historical track past old mill workings, ruined buildings with birdsong and running water.

Area 3 Uninterrupted views across the valley to Heligan; ancient Cornish hedges, woodland and rolling fields; special peaceful place full of local wildlife and flowers; prime agricultural land with views across open fields towards Gorran.

Area 4 Cliffs and rising land from Port Giskey to the edge of Mevagissey; spectacular views, ruins at Port Giskey, Cliff Edge quarry and Polstreath Beach; pastoral landscape, Cornish hedges, coastal path, inlets from the sea and wonderful coves; waves crashing on the beaches and seagulls over the coastline; essence of Cornish south coast; unspoilt by development and existing houses have minimal impact on surrounding natural beauty of the countryside as it sweeps to the sea; natural grazing farmland with wild flowers including small orchids; immeasurable pleasure in walking and enjoying views. On returning to the village, this view makes me feel I've come home.

Area 6 Views over the village and valley, valuable fruit and farming land with lovely walks to Portmellon; superb views from the harbour and the rest of the village.

Area 7 Quiet walking along valley edge with superb views; marshland and wild flowers, wild flora (stunning flag iris) and fauna and ancient woodland; historic Galowras Mill and boatbuilding at Portmellon; full of bird and wildlife, unusual plant and tree growth; close to habitation but feels remote; unspoilt flood plain and water meadows and woodlands.

Area 8 Coastal path from Portmellon to Chapel Point; timeless pastoral landscape with rugged coastline; unspoilt, undeveloped coastline and coastal path; flora and fauna typical of the rugged headland, granite outcrops, lichens, gorse and wild flowers; uninterrupted landscapes and seascapes, granite and slate cliffs with

varying colours and textures; rare beauty with panoramic views; unique glimpses of the local natural world and farmed countryside.

Area 9 Traditional Cornish fishing industry home port steeped in long history of seafaring; historic buildings, some using timbers from old ships; natural rugged and tidal cove; colourful boats and unique place to watch fishing and tourist boats, walk on the mud at low tide and play on Sandy Beach. Stunning and evocative buildings give a feeling of continuity – the Watch House, wooden boat building yard, lifeboat slipway, historic lighthouse pier and fishing off the harbour wall.

Area 10 The green at Pentillie – uninterrupted views across the harbour, bay and Chapel Point; unique, peaceful place to ‘get away from it all’

Area 11 Spectacular views over harbours and seascape to Fowey and beyond; great place for painting and photography; backdrop views especially in the twilight / dark; watching the sea birds, occasional dolphins and seals.

Conclusion

The whole of the parish of Mevagissey is classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and as such enjoys a level of protection equal to that of the National Parks. This exercise has enabled the community and some of its regular visitors to express how much they value the local landscape and how it makes them feel. While it is clear that there are very few areas on which the community does not place an extra special value, it is equally clear that the majority have identified that the most precious areas of the landscape within the AONB are the undeveloped coastline and hinterland from Pentillie to Port Giskey Area 4), Long Point to Chapel Point (Area 8) and the Heligan Valley (Area 2). The AONB is highly valued and is perceived to exhibit very high sensitivity and scenic quality.

The Landscape Character Assessment and the results of this assessment were subject to consultation with Cornwall Council (AONB and Landscape) and with the local community to confirm the value of the designation, the selection process and the results.

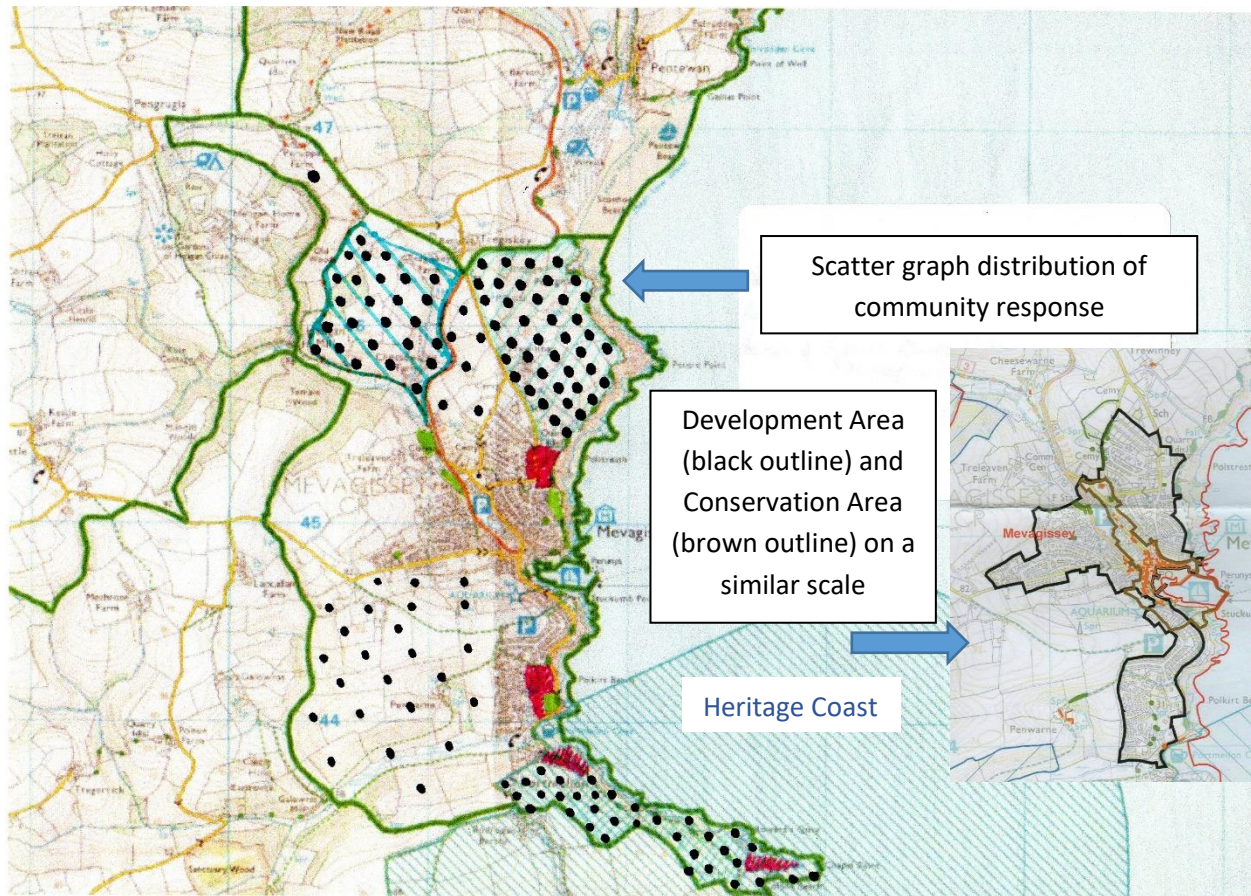


Figure 3.1 Map showing the distribution of community responses

Areas within the AONB generating the most response:

Coastline from Chapel Point Lane to Chapel Point, from Section 3.3.2

Predominantly sandy, shallow bays, separated by more steeply shelving rocky outcrops and the coastline is a Heritage Site.

Coastline from Pentillie to Portgisky, from Section 3.3.2

Many parts of the cliff edge and coastal path are exposed, rugged, windswept and have been sculpted by the elements over centuries. This gives a feeling of enduring, ancient history and culture together with a timelessness that inspires a deep appreciation of the present at the same time as evoking scenes of invasion, smuggling and toil from the distant past.

The Heligan Valley and Cheesewarne stream, from Sections 3.4.2 & 3.5.2

This is a medieval landscape of largely anciently enclosed land with fields of small to medium size and irregular shape bounded in most places by typical Cornish hedges.

Tranquility is the predominant feature of this character type, quiet and undisturbed apart from the occasional noise of tractors and agricultural machinery.

Sloping fields on the valley sides can be both sheltered or exposed depending on the prevailing wind direction, usually south west but can be subject to colder, drier winds from the east.

Peaceful and irresistible, the woodland slopes teem with the sights and sounds of the natural world and the experience of weather patterns and the seasonal changes in the landscape. The sensory perception of other landscape types in the parish are never far away but it is possible to become immersed in the environment and feel a tangible link between the past and the present.

Calm, undisturbed and mostly sheltered by trees. The area is rich in the sound of birds, the sounds of moving water and the wind in the trees.

Seasonal leaf cover and wild flowers produce a riot of colour and the sunlight filtering through the trees gives a dappled movement, especially in the late spring and summer.

The full dataset can be made available on application.

Visual assessment of proposed developments

These should be read in conjunction with and treated as additional to the Cornwall AONB Management Plan and in order to respect the views of the community should be applied to all development in the parish, not just 'major development'.

Factors to be considered when any development is proposed within the parish and therefore the AONB. These criteria will be used to assess the sensitivity of a potential development:

At a minimum, the following factors are considered when applying criteria to the development:

Distance from viewpoint. The contrast created by a development usually is less as viewing distance increases. Contrast refers to the degree of change which a development brings to the affected area; i.e., how does the resulting development contrast with what was there and what remains in the surrounding landscape (Oregon 2012).

Angle of Observation. The apparent size of a development is directly related to the angle between the viewer's line-of-sight and the slope or immediate natural landscape upon which the development is to take place.

Scope or extent of space through which the development is in view. If the viewer has only a brief glimpse of the development, the contrast may not be of great concern. If, however, the development is subject to view over some distance, as from an overlook, the contrast may be very significant. The impact may be mitigated by screening, e.g., tree planting, hedging, etc..

Relative Size or Scale. The contrast created by the development is directly related to its size and scale as compared to the surroundings in which it is placed. This should include consideration of size of the development (e.g. number of built features), size of the individual features and associated structures along with layout and spacing. For example, minimizing horizontal spread of the layout may reduce contrast (DTI, 2005).

Compatibility with surroundings. The nature of the existing built environment (where there is one) is taken into account in terms of size, design style, spacial properties, vernacular, materials used. The landscape character (field boundaries, established trees and shrubs, etc.) should be reflected in the planting and boundary schemes implemented in the development. Partial burying of the buildings through underground or 'bermed' (earth sheltered) construction should be considered to reduce the impact and contrast levels.

Season of Use. Contrast ratings should consider the physical conditions that exist during the heaviest or most critical visitor use season. This includes the likely traffic and possible congestion introduced by the development.

Light Conditions. The amount of contrast can be substantially affected by the light conditions. The direction and angle of lighting can affect color intensity, reflection, shadow, form, texture, and many other visual aspects of the observed scene. Light conditions during heavy use periods must be a consideration in contrast ratings.

Spatial Relationships. The spatial relationship within the landscape is a major factor in determining the degree of contrast, e.g. developments in areas that are the 'focus of key views' like a headland, ridge line or cliff top could have a higher contrast (DTI, 2005).

Motion, lights and colour. Movement and lighting draw attention to a development and vary depending on conditions and time of day and night and the season. Treatments to wall surfaces, building textures, pedestrian and vehicle traffic patterns and street and other lighting all affect the scene and create degrees of contrast with the environment.

Measurement

Measurement of the impact of the assessment above is as follows (BLM1986):

None: the development is not visible or perceived.

Weak: the development can be seen but does not attract attention.

Moderate: the development begins to attract attention and begins to dominate the characteristic landscape.

Strong: the development demands attention, and is dominant in the landscape.

Developments which score Moderate or Strong on any criteria above may not be approved.

Sources

This section was derived from the following document references:

- (1) Procedures based on Seascape and Visual Impact Report, DTI March 2005
- (2) Landscape analysis influenced by Draft Scenic Resource Evaluation and Visual Effects Analysis Criteria for OPAC consideration, published by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, April 2012

Further references include:

- (3) Bureau of Land Management, Manual 8431 - Visual Resource Contrast Rating, 1986
- (4) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition – consultation draft, EIA 2011
- (5) Devon Landscape Policy Group Advice Note No. 3: Principles of defining and maintaining the character of Devon's Undeveloped Coast Consultation draft 5 November 2013
- (6) Devon Landscape Policy Group Advice Note 4: Using Landscape Character Assessments in Neighbourhood Planning
- (7) Mevagissey Landscape Character Assessment.