

England's Historic Seascapes




Taking Historic Landscape Characterisation out to Sea

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a methodology designed to provide a landscape-scale understanding of the historic dimension of our environment. It complements other forms of landscape character assessment and natural environment mapping to raise awareness and inform the management of change. Using computerised mapping and linked texts, HLC expresses the character of past and present human activities that have produced and are embodied within the present landscape. Since it was pioneered in Cornwall in 1994, HLC has been developed and extended to cover most of England's land area.

As the coast and seabed of England comes under increasing development pressure, central government has expressed the need to develop marine spatial planning to ensure sustainable development. As map-based source of information, HLC is especially fitted to such spatial planning systems, providing easily assimilated data to those needing an understanding of the intertidal and marine zone's historic environment to assist in the development of management priorities.

England's Historic Seascapes is a programme to extend the principles of historic landscape characterisation into England's intertidal and marine zones. The programme's initial pilot project has focussed on Liverpool Bay stretching from the Dee Estuary in the south to Rossall Point in the north, and seaward to the limit of territorial waters at 12 nautical miles. The area includes submerged prehistoric landscapes overlain with later Holocene deposits, and over 2400 documented shipwrecks.



-  2km buffer above high water
-  Intertidal and inland waters
-  Marine to 12 nautical miles

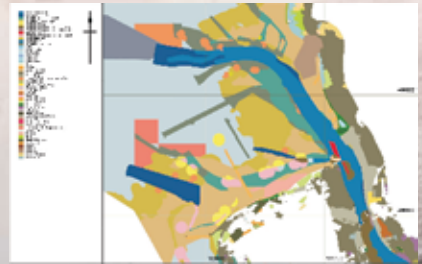
England's Historic Seascapes

The challenge of mapping human interaction with the sea

Although similar in principle, the practical differences between terrestrial and marine characterisation are many. For example, there are far fewer boundaries marked on the main source of offshore mapping (Admiralty charts). To meet that problem, Wessex Archaeology (WA) has used the computerised database to analyse and seek consistent patterning within the variety of different sources, including historic maps and charts, sites and monuments records, geological and environmental data.

The patterning produced has been analysed to find areas with similar attributes (Character Areas). To provide a more publicly accessible format, a series of HTML pages has also been generated containing descriptive text, bibliographies and multi-media resources such as digital photographs, historic images and video footage.

As expected, the Liverpool Bay project has raised methodological questions and issues which are to be explored further. Four additional pilot projects are now proposed, three for areas along England's East Coast and one for the Solent and waters off the Isle of Wight.



For more information click:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation

www.wessexarch.co.uk