

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991
(RMA or the Act)

BETWEEN

**CN Top Ltd, Lexus Trustees 11 Ltd and
Rajasingham Family Trust.**

AND

Taupō District Council

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF REBECCA KEREN RYDER
ON BEHALF OF TAUPŌ DISTRICT COUNCIL**

3RD OCTOBER 2021

(LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS)

Contents

INTRODUCTION3

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE3

MY ROLE.....4

CODE OF CONDUCT.....4

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE.....5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY5

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT.....6

STATUTORY CONTEXT.....7

**TECHNICAL REVIEW OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS
ASSESSMENT.....9**

VISUAL EFFECTS.....11

SUBMISSIONS13

CONCLUSION16

ANNEXURES

**Annexure A –Te Tangi at Te Manu | Aotearoa New Zealand
Landscape Assessment Guidelines - Draft**

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is **Rebecca Ryder**.
2. My evidence is given on behalf of the Taupō District Council (TDC) in a review capacity in relation to an application filed by the proprietors of CN Top Ltd, Lexus Trustees 11 Ltd and Rajasingham Family Trust (the Applicant) seeking a private plan change (**PPC37**) pursuant to Section 73(2) of the RMA 1991 (the Application). My evidence relates to landscape and visual effects of the Proposal.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

3. I am a Landscape Architect and Director, of the firm Boffa Miskell Limited (**BML**), a multi-disciplinary company with expertise in planning, design, ecology, landscape planning, cultural heritage, graphics and mapping.
4. I have been with Boffa Miskell Limited since 2001. I am experienced in the areas of landscape architecture and landscape and visual assessment. I have given expert witness evidence in this area of expertise before numerous district and regional councils and the Environment Court.
5. I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours) from Lincoln University and am affiliated to the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects as a Registered Landscape Architect. I am also a member of the Resource Management Law Association of New Zealand.
6. I have considerable experience assisting Council's in the peer review of applications. I have undertaken a number of district and regional wide natural character and landscape studies and equally numerous assessments for both plan change and resource consent applications. I have extensive experience in structure planning, concept planning and landscape detailed design and CPTED¹ assessment. I have undertaken

¹ CPTED = Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

numerous CPTED assessments for projects and local authorities including Taupo District Council for the CBD area.

MY ROLE

7. I have been asked by Council to carry out a review of the proposed plan change (PPC) application from an landscape and visual effects perspective. In order to do this, I reviewed the proposed development structure plan and supporting technical documentation, including *Appendix G: Nukuhau Private Plan Change Landscape and Visual Assessment & Urban Design Assessment*, (LVA Report) which covers Landscape, Visual Effects and Urban Design matters relating to the application.
8. I have also reviewed the Proposed Plan Change 37 wording, submissions and further submissions received relating to the PPC, as provided by Council.

CODE OF CONDUCT

9. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note (2014) and I agree to comply with it. I can confirm that the issues addressed in this statement are within my area of expertise and that in preparing my evidence I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.
10. As a Registered Landscape Architect, I am also bound by the NZILA²'s code of ethics.

² New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE.

11. This statement of evidence covers the following:
 - (a) [A summary of my evidence \(Executive Summary\)](#);
 - (b) [Statutory Context](#);
 - (c) [Technical Review](#) of the application, in particular comments on the landscape and visual effects assessment of the Application contained in my report (Assessment of Application);
 - (d) [Submissions, and](#);
 - (e) [Conclusion](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

12. I was engaged, by Taupō District Council, to review the landscape and visual effects of the Application following the completion of further information requests. The review forms the basis of this statement of evidence.
13. In order to undertake the peer review I have observed the site from its periphery, but acknowledge have not been on the site itself. I rely on the photography supplied as part of the LVA Report in order to understand the site itself. I will visit the site in full prior to the hearing and if I consider any further amendments as a consequence, I will advise the hearings panel.
14. The key matters raised in this evidence comprise:
 - Method of Assessment;
 - Review of application of the statutory context;
 - Landscape Effects Assessment
 - Visual Effects Assessment;
 - Mitigation Measures, and;

- Design Measures.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

15. The role of myself as peer reviewer is to consider whether the Landscape and Visual Assessment has provided a clearly stated approach that can be suitably relied upon by Council. The LVA Report details a seven point assessment scale which is consistent with best practice.
16. In May 2021, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, adopted a new draft landscape assessment guideline; Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (Refer Annexure A). This document remains a draft guidance document and it reflects the professions approach to undertaking landscape assessments. I acknowledge that at the time of preparing the assessment the profession's guidance available was the NZILA Best Practice Note: Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1.
17. In reviewing the assessment method, outlined in Section 4.2 of the LVA report and in Appendix C, the method focuses mostly to the visual amenity effects assessment and provides a seven-point scale for the description of effects. The method statement provides no understanding of how the effects are assessed particularly relating to landscape effects.
18. Acknowledging the missing detail on landscape effects assessment method, the LVA Report itself does however address landscape effects by describing the landscape character of the area, the sensitivity or vulnerability to landscape change and the degree of change. This approach then considers the overall landscape effect on the character and landscape values. Inherently the method is visible in the assessment working however is not detailed in the method statement. When considering landscape change from rural to urban land use understanding the method of assessment for landscape effects is, in my opinion, a foundation for any assessment.

STATUTORY CONTEXT

19. The following policy documents are of relevance to the proposed plan change site:
- The Taupō District Plan (2018);
 - Taupō Urban Structure Plan (2004);
 - Landscape Types and Units of the Taupō District (2000); and
 - Outstanding and Amenity Landscapes of the Taupō District (Isthmus, 2009).
20. These policy documents provide a rule framework and guidance to the outcomes sought by Council for the development of the existing rural and residential environment in Taupō District. They are intended to guide appropriate development of valuable land resources in the region and provide guidance of the appropriateness of development, in particular the preservation of the landscape, natural character and visual amenity values of the landscape is of importance.
21. Appendix B of the LVA Report details the Statutory and Non-Statutory documents relevant to the application. With regard to the Taupō District Plan the objectives set out³ address the rural environment and management of the rural character and amenity. The LVA Report lists the provisions but does not specifically address these provisions in the landscape assessment as a separate analysis. Rather it is included in the main body of the landscape and visual effects assessments within the LVA Report. The provisions listed in Appendix B address the Rural Environment (Section 3b) and Land development (Section 3e). Not relevant to the proposed plan change area is Section 3h, Landscape Values, as they relate to identified landscape overlays, not included within the area.

³ In Appendix B of the LVA Report

22. It is also relevant to land use change from rural to urban that the Taupo Growth Strategy 2050 identified this site for future urban growth. This was undertaken with the knowledge of the landscape values of the site and surrounding landscape, however without specific assessment of these values. The landscape assessment that may have informed the strategy is the Taupo District Landscape Study⁴, which provides characterisation of the landscape and identification of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes and Amenity Landscape Areas.

Notably missing from the analysis is the consideration of Section 3a of the Taupo District Plan, which whilst not currently zoned, the proposals outcome is to become residential. Provisions relevant to landscape and visual effects which address character and amenity of the residential environment. These comprise: Objective 3a.2.1, Policies i, iii, v, vii, ix and x.

23. Whilst this latter analysis is not considered it is evident in the assessment of effects and urban design assessment with regard to urban character and amenity. I am comfortable that the correct provisions, as they relate to the current zoning, have been identified. Whilst a separate statutory assessment has not been provided, it is my view the LVA Report addresses these inherently to some degree through the landscape and visual effects sections of the LVA report.

⁴ *The Outstanding and Amenity Landscapes of the Taupo District, Isthmus, October 2009*

TECHNICAL REVIEW OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

24. The assessment of effects should be comprehensive enough to identify the capacity of the landscape to accommodate the change, identify and protect sensitive areas where development is inappropriate, and / or identify management and mitigation regimes to reduce or mitigate these effects. This is undertaken by a number of steps within landscape, natural character and visual assessments. Considering the landscape sensitivity including its processes, patterns and elements is fundamental to addressing the appropriateness of land use change. Important to this is the application of an appropriate scale and characterisation of that scale in the context of the site and its surrounds.
25. Changing a land use from rural to urban requires the careful consideration of whether the change in the rural landscape is an appropriate one. The Taupo Growth Strategy 2050 considered the site to be suitable for urban growth at a broader level. The landscape effects assessment for this plan change, is also necessary to consider the capability of the site's characteristics to integrate the change responding to the surrounding landscape and the site's specific landscape values. Section 32 report, and appropriate merits-based assessment under the requirements of the Resource Management Act are required to support rezoning. Therefore, consideration of appropriateness of the site and its' surrounds, with regard to landscape capacity is to be addressed as part of the landscape assessment.
26. The LVA report focuses primarily to what are known as direct landscape effects, those effects on the immediate elements of the landscape, being landform and land cover. The assessment identifies the sensitivity / vulnerability of the landform as not being highly vulnerable to change from large scale earthworks and relies on the stages of a number of years for the management of the landform change. This assessment appears to be focused on the visual / sensory components of the landscape and less to

the landform patterns and processes that occur within the rural landscape and the connectivity to this.

27. The change in land cover is assessed as being less sensitive to change and that the rural vegetation is of low quality due to the degree of modification. Land use is separately addressed⁵ and speaks to the compatibility with the surrounding landscape patterns. I am in agreement with this assessment and it is here where the LVA Report brings together the landscape components to address the overall effects on the landscape character. However much of the description of the composition of the site and surrounding landscape resides within the visual effects section of the assessment. This information informs the context and character of the site, but oddly does not appear in the landscape character assessment section of the report.
28. It is important to note that landscape character includes consideration of landscape values, which have been, in the LVA Report, derived from the wider landscape study that characterises the area. Also informing landscape values are the tangata whenua associations with the landscape and I note that tangata whenua values are not addressed in the LVA report.
29. Understanding landscape values considers a three dimensional approach of the physical, sensory and associative dimensions of landscape. Acknowledging the wider Taupo Growth Strategy 2050 for future urban land use in the area, and the design response the structure plan has to the landform I broadly am in agreement that the proposal is appropriate in the context of the biophysical and sensory dimensions of this landscape.
30. The Maori cultural relationship with the site also informs landscape values of the site and surrounds. Engagement with tangata whenua has occurred but does not express itself in the assessment within the associative, or cultural values attributed to this landscape. The associative values

⁵ Refer Section 6.1.3 of the LVA Report

attributed to this landscape are in turn missing and whilst I concur that the site's biophysical factors and sensory values can accommodate the land use change, the associative values of this landscape are not addressed. In my view this analysis would better inform the location and design response to the land use change that is in keeping with best practice assessments.

31. I understand and concur with the LVA Report, based on the material presented, that the degree of landscape effect, of which I assume they mean to be adverse landscape effects, will be moderate-low, as they relate to the biophysical and sensory dimensions of landscape. However, it is my recommendation that the associative values, in particular tangata whenua values of the whenua, are assessed.

VISUAL EFFECTS

32. The visual assessment, within the LVA report, considers appropriately the visual catchment and identifies the method of selection of the representative viewpoints for assessing. I concur with the method and approach to the selection and acknowledge it is recognised that representative viewpoints are a suitable method of addressing public and private views where private views are not able to be accessed.
33. I concur with the findings of the visual effects assessment as it relates to the sensitivities of the viewing audience, magnitude of visual change and the degrees of visual effect. The highest degrees of sensitivity to visual change will be those residential dwellings immediately adjoining the proposed plan change area. In my view these properties have a high degree of sensitivity and the assessment has carefully considered the sensitivities of this interface and methods to retain distant views and provide treatments.
34. For the immediate adjoining residents, the assessment concludes that the visual effect (assuming adverse visual effect) will be moderate. Methods to integrate retention of distant views, screen planting and boundary treatments, are positive measures to minimise the degree of adverse visual effect on the viewing audience. I concur, that whilst a change occurs, the

visual amenity values are considered appropriately and the degree of adverse visual effect for the immediate adjoining viewing audience will range from moderate to moderate-low.

35. Further afield viewing audience's are assessed as ranging from Very Low to Moderate Low, applying to Rangatira Park, Huka Heights, Wairakei Drive, Huka Falls Road, Lowell Place and Poihipi Road. I concur with these findings and consider the design and mitigation measures proposed will contribute over time to the reduction of visual effects.

DEGREE OF EFFECT

36. As stated above the recent adoption of the *Te Tangi a Te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines* provides further detail for practitioners on landscape assessments. Within this guidance document discussion on interpretation of the degree of effect with regard to the RMA1991 terms of less than minor, minor and more than minor resides.
37. The interpretation relies upon the assessor providing an understanding of the context of the degrees of effect and an understanding of where the threshold between the RMA terms reside. At the moment, when applying the current spectrum against the degrees of effect, the moderate low degree of adverse landscape and visual effect proposal would result in a minor adverse effect on the landscape. It is helpful to note that the site is identified for future urban growth and part of the overall degree of effect is considered in terms of the statutory and non-statutory guidance documents.
38. It is my view that based on Boffa Miskell's guidance on 'where minor sits' and *Te Tangi a te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines* the landscape and visual effects of moderate-low aligns with a minor adverse effect. Further to this mitigation measures are sought to integrate the land use change into the wider urban and rural landscape.

SUBMISSIONS

39. Submissions received addressing landscape matters are primarily related to 'on site' amenity and recreation values. These have been addressed Mr Hugo in his evidence in chief.

MITIGATION MEASURES

40. There is a number of cross overs between urban design outcomes that also provide a role in mitigating visual effects, particularly in regard to visual amenity effects. The key outcome that should be sought, should, in my opinion be less about 'mitigation' and more about improvement to the visual amenity and interface with the rural landscape. I leave my colleague, Morné Hugo, to address the urban design matters, and I focus to those that address visual amenity and the rural interface.
41. The methods of integrating a landscape strip between the road corridor and the use of a reserve corridor between properties is positive. There is opportunity for these corridors to reflect the natural patterns of the landscape and reinforce the integration between the rural landscape and the urban.
42. In my opinion there could be opportunity to integrate a larger scale of tree size in specific areas to create opportunity for a connection to the broader rural character. It is recommended that placement of larger trees in a non-regimented pattern will further assist in the integration of the development into the wider rural landscape. This is a 'mitigation' measure that, in my view, could integrate the urban and rural patterns further.
43. I support the interface treatments proposed as a method of providing integration. I also support the recommended buffer strip planting as agreed with Contact Energy for managing visual effects between future residential and electricity generation land use.

44. With regard Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) matters, in which I also provide advice on, I do not agree with the proposed nominal widths depicted in Section 2a⁶ from a CPTED perspective. The narrow nature of the reserve should be balanced in my view by some areas of pocket park or additional street connection to reduce 'entrapment' and predictive movement patterns through a reserve. Whilst I agree the proposed provides a positive amenity interface between properties consideration of the users requires CPTED assessment of the subdivision design to address these.

45. The measures I have identified should be considered be integrated into the recommended plan provisions (additions underlined) as:

4a.7.2 Any subdivision within the Nukuhau Structure Plan that complies with Rule 4a.7.1 and is in accordance with the Structure Plan in Appendix 9 is a controlled activity.

For the purposes of Rule 4a.7.2 the matters over which the Council reserves control for the purpose of assessment are:

*a. The design and layout of the subdivision to ensure safe and efficient access onto existing and/or proposed roads, suitable building platforms to accommodate future complying buildings, **application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles specifically in terms of open space provision,** and adequate management of stormwater.*

And

d. Any actual or potential effects on areas or features of cultural, ecological, historic, landscape or natural value

⁶ Refer page 24 of LVA Report.

including specific provision for large framework tree planting and retention.

DESIGN MEASURES

46. Design measures and outcomes addressed in the LVA Report seek to integrate the following apparent measures critical to the management of landscape and visual effects:
- (a) Landscape buffer treatments between the rural and urban edge;
 - (b) View protection toward key features in the surrounding rural landscape, including Tauhara and Lake Taupo.
 - (c) Use of stormwater reserves to provide recreation corridors with framework tree planting and access.
 - (d) Landscape planting strips.
47. It is noted that some of the treatments, in particular Cross Section 9 in the LVA Report, is not depicted in the Structure Plan. This is a critical treatment proposal that I support and should be captured spatially in the Structure Plan. Additional to this is the inclusion of protection of critical view corridors through to landscape features for the surrounding viewing audience, as addressed in the LVA Report. It is recommended that viewshaft management through managing building heights and vegetation patterns is clearly articulated in the Structure Plan.

CONCLUSION

48. In conclusion, my peer review of the LVA Report, captured in this evidence, is that I consider the LVA Report to be relatively robust on which the information can be relied upon. The two areas of concerns remain the method statement and the lack of capturing the associative values attributed to the landscape. This includes interpreting tangata whenua and community values attributed to this landscape and surrounding area.
49. I support the findings overall within the assessment, notwithstanding the need to further assess the associative tangata whenua values and effects upon these.
50. Taupo Growth Strategy 2050 identifies the integration between existing and future urban land use. The landscape values of the rural landscape will change as a result and the design and assessment have focused on achieving a positive interface with the surrounding rural landscape, the landscape patterns of the site and the sensory experiences of the site. Inclusion of some key design measures and CPTED assessment at subdivision design stage will in my view integrate the land use change and address urban amenity and CPTED within.

Rebecca Keren Ryder

3rd October 2021



Annexure A

NZILA Te Tangi a te Manu | Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines- Draft

TE TANGI A TE MANU

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT IN A STATUTORY PLANNING CONTEXT
INCLUDING
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VALUES
LANDSCAPE EFFECTS
OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES
NATURAL CHARACTER

[FINAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO EDITING, GRAPHIC DESIGN, ILLUSTRATIONS – APRIL 2021]

This Final Draft was approved by the following motion at the 5 May 2021 NZILA AGM:

“THAT ‘Te Tangi a te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Guidelines’, Final Draft April 2021, be approved as a practice support document (technical document) to replace the NZILA approved ‘Best Practice Note 10.1, Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management (2010), and that the Final Draft be subject to final editing, graphic design, and illustrations.”

Such final editing, design, and illustrations are in progress. We hope to publish the final document later this year. In the meantime, the Final Draft on the Tuia Pito Ora / NZILA website may be used and referred to as:

‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’, [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021]

KUPU WHAKATAKI

*Whakarongo ake au ki te tangi a te manu nei, a te mā-tui;
Tui, tui, tui, tuia.*

*Tuia i runga, tuia i raro;
Tuia i roto, tuia i waho.
Tuia te here tangata;
Ka rongō te ao, ka rongō te pō.*

*Tuia te muka tangata i takea mai i Hawaiki-nui, i Hawaiki-roa, i Hawaiki pāmāmao.
Te hono i wairua;
Ki te whai ao, ki te ao marama.*

Tihei Mauri Ora!

*I listen to the cry of the mā-tui;
Binding and uniting.*

*Binding that is from above, with that below;
Binding that is from within, with that outwards;
Binding together the threads of people;
Through the peace of day, through the peace of night.*

*Binding the threads of humankind, from the great homeland, from the far homeland, from the
remote homeland
Connecting with the spirit;
From the world of light, and the world of consciousness.*

Behold the sneeze of life!

This tauparapara reflects the call-and-reply of the mā-tui (bush wren) which expresses the intention that these Guidelines promote a Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā partnership approach to landscape, binding together the layers of people and land across time and place: past, present, and future.

Whilst previous assessment approaches have been built on the physical, associative, and perceptual realms of landscape, these Guidelines go further to promote integration of Te Ao Māori – our unique indigenous worldview – as a keystone of Aotearoa practice. In doing so, we have sought to ensure that both tāngata whenua and tāngata tiriti values and perspectives are captured and equally shared and understood.

The distinct nature of Aotearoa landscapes influences the ways in which we identify and connect to self and place and is a vital expression of who we are and where we stand. As we continue to evolve our unique practice, we must appreciate and respect the qualities of landscapes, including our understanding of the rich intricate threads that bind landscape and people together – the ideology of whakapapa.

The principles of partnership, participation, and protection¹ embodied in Te Tiriti² –are a foundation of practice towards assessing and recognising whenua and landscape. As a profession, we have a responsibility to understand and perceive landscapes appropriately, maintaining the mauri of people, place, and this whenua.

Rangitahi Kawe

William Hatton

¹ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/principles-of-the-treaty-of-waitangi-nga-matapono-o-te-tiriti/page-1>

² Te Tiriti-o-Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi

TUIA PITO ORA FOREWORD

TBC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed to these Guidelines.

They update and replace the 2010 Best Practice Note authored by Frank Boffa and Simon Swaffield, and which drew on practitioner workshops held in 2009.

The current Guidelines originated with a tender to write a 'Landscape Assessment Methodology' issued by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) in 2016 – a contract that Shannon Bray initiated with the Ministry and which was awarded to a joint Isthmus Group – Boffa Miskell proposal.

When funding was withdrawn for the MfE project prior to its commencement, Rachel de Lambert and Gavin Lister, proceeded to produce Guidelines on a voluntary basis.

We sought to draw on the profession's collective wisdom, including:

- A review of the findings of Landscape Assessment Methodology workshops held in November 2017. Those workshops were organised by Shannon Bray, facilitated by David Serjeant and the late Judge Gordon Whiting, and the results were collated and summarised by Lizzie Burn.
- A review of other guidelines in New Zealand and overseas, summarised in a background document.
- A review of 'case law', which revealed a remarkably coherent set of landscape principles largely drawn from professional evidence. (This review has been produced as a separate document that we recommend be maintained and regularly updated as an online resource in the public sections of the Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA website).

Draft Guidelines were crafted with Te Tau-a-Nuku, a collective of Māori landscape architects and whānau kaupapa who support kaupapa Māori approaches to recognition, evaluation, design, and management of Aotearoa's landscapes.³ Te Tau a Nuku and the authors share an ambition that the Guidelines provide a framework that accommodates both Te Ao Māori (a Māori worldview and consciousness) landscape perspectives and those derived from Te Ao Pākehā perspectives. Alan Titchener (Ngāi Tahu, *Kāhui Whetū* Ngā Aho) has worked closely with the authors to ensure that Te Ao Māori values and perspectives have been integrated meaningfully.

The draft was reviewed with a small practitioner peer review group comprising Stephen Brown, Di Lucas, Alan Titchener, and Bridget Gilbert. They were also separately reviewed with Simon Swaffield (from both an academic perspective and as one of the authors of the 2010 Best Practice Guide⁴), and with David Serjeant (from a planning perspective and as external facilitator of the 2017 LAM workshops). Members of the Executive of Ngā Aho provided tātari matua (peer review) of the draft's kaupapa Māori content.

Written feedback on the draft was then provided by Institute members (and others) following nine branch workshops held in February 2021 in Christchurch, Queenstown, Auckland, New Plymouth, Nelson, Wellington, Tauranga, Napier, and Whangarei. Those who participated in the workshops and/or provided written feedback and personal comments include Melean Absolum,

³ Te Tau-a-Nuku is a technical group within Ngā Aho, the national collective of Māori design professionals. Ngā Aho and Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015 as a basis for a relationship between the two bodies. Te Tau-a-Nuku act as mangai (spokespeople) and kaimanaaki (relationship holders) for Ngā Aho in this respect.

⁴ Best Practice Note 10.1, 'Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management', 2010, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.

Rachael Annan, Amanda Anthony, Clive Anstey, Rose Armstrong, Megan Ash, Jade Au Morris, Meg Back, Richard Bain, Monica Bainbridge, Geraldine Bayly, Sara Bell, Chris Bentley, James Bentley, Richard Blakely, Frank Boffa, Sam Bourne, Matthew Bradbury, Shannon Bray, Natalie Buhler, Simon Button, Lynn Cadenhead, Melanie Cameron, Chris Campbell, Naomi Campbell, Tom Carter, Dave Charnley, Blair Cinch, Simon Cocker, David Compton-Moen, Brad Coombs, Benoit Coppens, Andrew Craig, Naomi Crawford, Rebecca Cray, Chris Davidson, Andrew Davis, Melissa Davis, Renee Davis, Shannon Davis, Georgia Dean, Richard Denny, Graham Densem, Leona Deridder, Jo Dey, Martha Dravitzki, Emily-Rose Dunn, Grant Edge, Lawrence Elliot, Ben Espie, Boyden Evans, Mike Farrow, Bron Faulkner, Erin Fitzpatrick, Mark Fletcher, Hugh Forsyth, James French, Liz Gavin, Bridget Gilbert, Rhys Girvan, Kim Goodfellow, John Goodwin, Alan Gray, Richard Greenwood, Erin Griffith, William Gumbley, Catherine Hamilton, Richard Hart, William Hatton, Christine Hawthorn, Jeremy Head, Jason Hogan, Kathryn Holyoake, Gabrielle Howdle, John Hudson, Josh Hunt, Ashleigh Hunter, Rudolf Iseli, Rebecca Jerram, Ralph Johns, Matt Jones, Chris Judd, Rangitahi Kawe, Peter Kensington, Chelsea Kershaw, Caitlin Lambert, Tim Lander, Rory Langbridge, Bridget Law, Gill Lawson, Matt Lester, Mark Lewis, Tom Lines, Melanie Lovell, Di Lucas, Rebecca Lucas, Kris MacPherson, Angela McArthur, Shona McCahon, David McDermott, Daniel McEwan, David McKenzie, Jessica McKenzie, Kylie McLaughlin-Brown, James McLean, Dave Mansergh, Helen Mellsop, Mathilde Menard, Alan Mestrom, Mike Moore, Tracey Moore, Tom Morrison, Leicester Murray, Angie Nelson, Christine Niblock, Gerard O'Connell, Justin Oleary, Georgina Olsen, Craig Pauling, Matt Peacocke, Sally Peake, Yvonne Pflugger, Luke Porter, John Potter, Helen Preston Jones, Stephen Quin, Paul Quinlan, Nick Rae, Robin Rawson, Alistair Ray, Nicola Rees, Richard Reid, Alayna Renata, Ant Rewcastle, Jill Rice, Tim Richardson, Lisa Rimmer, Hilary Riordan, Mike Rogan, Peter Rough, Rebecca Ryder, Bryan Sanson, Nick Scarles, Andrea Schmid, Dennis Scott, Kara Scott, Robin Simpson, Rebecca Skidmore, Christine Skipworth, Nikki Smethen, Paul Smith, Wendy Smith, Michelle Snodgrass, Jo Soanes, Kiran Stephenson, Emma Stiven, Topsy Steele, Mike Steven, Kirstie Thorpe, Nada Toueir, Ainsley Verstraeten, Tim Walton, Tom Watts, Yvonne Weeber, Chantal Whitby, Julia Wick, Phil Wihongi, Julia Williams, Anne Wilkins, Hannah Wilson, Jan Woodhouse.⁵

Shona McCahon edited and polished the Guidelines.

We thank everyone mentioned above – and others not mentioned – on whose shoulders we stand. Such acknowledgement is not to be misinterpreted, though, as indicating necessarily support for the entire content of the Guidelines. While we sought the highest common ground from our colleagues, we recognise that differences not only exist within the profession but are desirable for the profession's development. We therefore wrote principle-based Guidelines to accommodate such differences and promote flexibility for practice to continue to evolve. Rather than prescriptive methods, the emphasis instead is on transparency and reason.

Rachel de Lambert
Gavin Lister
April 2021

⁵ This is our best attempt based on records. **Please let us know names that have been inadvertently missed** – they may not be entered on the RSVPs lists. Let us know also if you do not wish your name to appear in the acknowledgements.

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	13
	<i>Purpose and scope</i>	13
	<i>International context</i>	14
	<i>How to use these guidelines</i>	14
2	PROFESSIONAL ROLE	17
	Role and responsibilities	17
	<i>Impartiality</i>	18
	<i>Clarity and succinctness</i>	18
	<i>Provide reasons</i>	19
	<i>Relevance</i>	19
	<i>Explain in the context of other’s assessments</i>	19
	Field of Expertise	20
	<i>Remaining within field of expertise</i>	20
	<i>Te Ao Māori</i>	20
	<i>Role of landscape assessor with respect to community</i>	21
	<i>Statutory provisions (and ‘other matters’)</i>	21
	<i>‘Case law’</i>	22
	Appropriate methodology	23
	<i>Tailor method to purpose, setting, provisions, and issues</i>	23
	<i>Explain methodology and method</i>	24
3	TE AO MĀORI PERSPECTIVES	27
	<i>Te Reo Māori</i>	27
	<i>Whenua</i>	27
	<i>Te Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirini</i>	28
	<i>The Treaty of Waitangi</i>	28
	<i>Māori</i>	28
	<i>Te Ao Māori</i>	29
	<i>Tāngata whenua</i>	29
	<i>Pūkenga</i>	30
4	WHAT IS LANDSCAPE?	31
	The word ‘landscape’	31
	Landscape in an Aotearoa New Zealand context	32
	<i>Landscape in relation to whenua and tāngata whenua</i>	32
	Definitions of ‘landscape’ by professional organisations	33
	Meaning of ‘landscape’ as revealed through professional practice	34

	<i>Landscape is an integrating concept</i>	34
	<i>Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions</i>	34
	<i>Landscapes are perceived through cultural lenses</i>	35
	<i>Landscape is the interaction of its dimensions</i>	36
	<i>Typical factors</i>	37
	<i>Temporal aspects (time and place)</i>	39
	<i>Transient aspects</i>	39
	<i>Double counting</i>	39
	<i>Landscapes have generic and specific character</i>	40
	<i>Cultural landscapes</i>	40
	<i>Tangata whenua cultural landscapes</i>	41
	<i>Built environment landscapes (urban landscapes)</i>	41
	<i>Coastal environment landscapes</i>	42
	<i>Other landscape types</i>	44
5	ASSESSING LANDSCAPES	47
	Landscape character and value	47
	<i>Character</i>	47
	<i>Values</i>	48
	<i>All landscapes have values</i>	48
	<i>Existing and potential values</i>	48
	<i>Values are ascribed</i>	48
	Assessment process and presentation	49
	<i>Identify the relevant landscape (its extent and context)</i>	49
	<i>Describe and analyse the attributes (characteristics and qualities)</i>	50
	<i>Interpret landscape character</i>	51
	<i>Evaluate landscape values (and valued attributes)</i>	51
	<i>Presentation</i>	52
	<i>Assessment types</i>	53
	Engagement with tāngata whenua when assessing landscapes	53
	Side Notes	56
	<i>Analytical and integrative approaches (reduction and synthesis)</i>	56
	<i>Generic attributes (sensitivity and capacity)</i>	56
	<i>Landscape, landscape character area, landscape type, feature</i>	57
	<i>Dimension, characteristic, quality, factor, criteria, value, values</i>	58
	<i>‘Quality of the environment’ and ‘amenity values’</i>	58
6	LANDSCAPE EFFECTS	61
	What is a landscape effect?	61

	<i>What is a visual effect?</i>	61
	When is an assessment of landscape effects required?	62
	Assessing landscape effects	62
	<i>What are effects assessed against?</i>	62
	<i>Describing nature and degree of effect</i>	63
	<i>Visual effects</i>	65
	Side Notes	66
	<i>Potential pitfalls</i>	66
	<i>Expert and community perceptions of landscape and visual effects</i>	66
	<i>Existing environment and ‘permitted baseline’</i>	66
	<i>Differences between types of assessments of effects</i>	67
	<i>Activity status</i>	67
	<i>‘Minor’, ‘less than minor’, ‘no more than minor’, ‘significant’</i>	68
	<i>‘Sensitivity’ and ‘magnitude’</i>	69
	<i>Cultural Impact Assessments</i>	69
	<i>Cumulative effects</i>	69
	<i>Calibration studies</i>	70
	<i>Tandem ‘blind’ assessments</i>	70
	<i>Photo simulations (Visual simulations)</i>	70
	<i>Potential Visibility Diagrams</i>	70
	<i>Peer Reviews</i>	71
	Box X. Sample Structure for Proposal-Based Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects	74
	Box X2. Sample Structure for Area-Based Landscape Assessment	80
7	MANAGING LANDSCAPE VALUES	85
	<i>Integrate landscape assessment and design</i>	85
	<i>Co-design</i>	85
	<i>Maintaining impartiality</i>	86
	<i>Explain the design process and measures taken</i>	86
	<i>Design Frameworks</i>	86
	<i>Conditions and Management Plans</i>	87
	<i>Avoid vs remedy vs mitigate</i>	87
8	OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES	89
	What is an outstanding natural feature or landscape?	89
	<i>Meaning of ‘outstanding’</i>	89
	<i>Meaning of ‘natural’</i>	90
	<i>Meaning of ‘inappropriate’</i>	90
	<i>Geoheritage and landscape values</i>	90

	Identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes	91
	<i>Identify candidate natural features and landscapes</i>	<i>91</i>
	<i>Assess the character and values of candidates</i>	<i>91</i>
	<i>Is it outstanding?</i>	<i>92</i>
	<i>Delineate the ONF/ONL</i>	<i>92</i>
	Assessing effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes	92
9	NATURAL CHARACTER	95
	What is natural character?.....	95
	Assessing natural character	96
	<i>Statement of methodology.....</i>	<i>97</i>
	<i>Identify the relevant area</i>	<i>97</i>
	<i>Assess natural characteristics and qualities</i>	<i>99</i>
	<i>Interpret how the natural characteristics and qualities come together as natural character</i>	<i>100</i>
	<i>Evaluate and determine natural character.....</i>	<i>100</i>
	<i>Outstanding natural character</i>	<i>100</i>
	<i>Managing natural character</i>	<i>101</i>
	Assessing effects on natural character	101
	Side Notes	102
	<i>History of ‘natural’ and ‘natural character’</i>	<i>102</i>
	<i>Natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes, or amenity values.....</i>	<i>104</i>
	<i>Reserve the term ‘natural character’ to its applications under the RMA</i>	<i>105</i>
	<i>Bodies of water are central to ‘natural character’ considerations under the RMA</i>	<i>105</i>
	<i>Complementary jurisdictions</i>	<i>105</i>
10	KUPUTAKA	107
11	GLOSSARY	109
12	REFERENCES	111

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Landscapes are important to us all. They are what we value in our surroundings: their physical quality, how we live in them, and the pleasure and meaning we take from them. Landscapes are part of who we are. It is no surprise, then, that landscapes are often central to statutory planning matters.

Purpose and scope

1.2 The Guidelines are intended to improve landscape assessment within a statutory planning context. Landscape assessment has wider applications, but these Guidelines deliberately focus on the statutory planning context to better achieve their purpose. While the ultimate purpose of landscape assessment is to manage landscapes – to improve landscape values – the more precise purpose in a statutory planning context is to assist decision makers towards those ends.

1.3 The Guidelines promote an approach **appropriate to Aotearoa New Zealand**. They seek alignment between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā streams of landscape assessment. They recognise mātauranga Māori and the importance of tāngata whenua values alongside concepts and values inherited from western and other cultural traditions.⁶ The connections – bindings - between such perspectives is key to understanding and appreciating our landscapes.

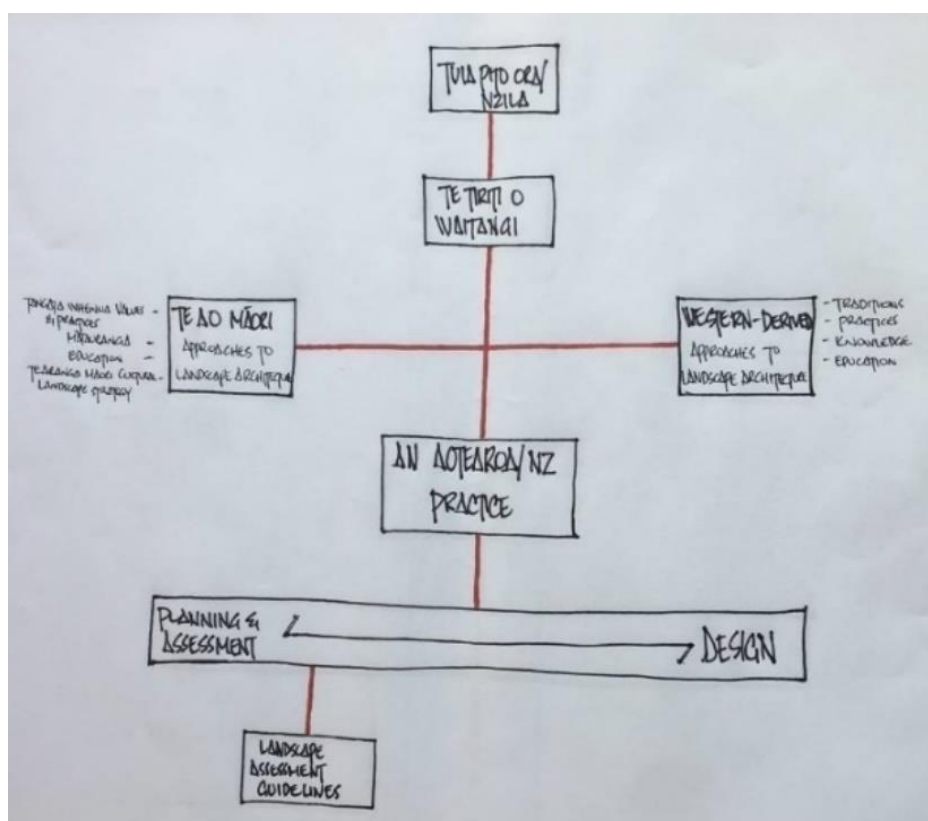


Figure x: The Guidelines sit within a broader framework of an evolving Aotearoa New Zealand practice drawing on both Te Ao Māori and western derived Te Ao Pākehā approaches, giving effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

⁶ Te Ao Pākehā incorporates all non-Māori traditions. Pākehā culture is distinctive to Aotearoa. While it draws strongly on western traditions, it is diverse and incorporates other non-western cultures.

- 1.4 The Guidelines adopt a **principles-based methodology** that promotes tailoring of assessment methods to each situation, giving the flexibility necessary for practice to continue to evolve. The Guidelines emphasise transparency and reason, rather than adherence to prescriptive methods. Such formulaic methods are unsuitable for integrating the different types of information (objective and subjective) inherent in landscapes, and the different types of reasons for which landscapes are valued.
- 1.5 The Guidelines also seek **alignment between design and assessment**. Designing and managing Aotearoa’s landscapes will be most effective where landscape assessment and design operate in tandem. Both exercises share attention to context, close analysis and integration, creative interpretation/insight, application to the physical environment, and a desire for more sustainable and meaningful places.

International context

- 1.6 International landscape assessment practice has been moving in directions outlined in these Guidelines. It has been moving towards (i) an **‘holistic’ landscape concept** that goes beyond physical character and scenery to the **tangible and intangible relationships between people and place**, (ii) attention to the distinct character – and **specific attributes** – of each place rather than generic parameters, (iii) a reasoned approach to assessment – based on **transparency and explanation** – rather than adherence to rigid methodology, and (iv) use of the landscape concept to integrate a range of environmental resources.
- 1.7 Aotearoa⁷ has found itself at the forefront of this emerging practice because:
- Te Ao Māori perspectives helped highlight the extent to which cultural perspectives are central to landscape, not only for tāngata whenua, but for everyone.
 - Change is often easier in a small community – advances in practice have been influenced by a small number of people at key moments – whom the authors acknowledge and thank.
 - The RMA provides for landscape and Environment Court decisions have played a key role in bedding in concepts and principles as they have emerged.

How to use these guidelines

- 1.8 The Guidelines are to be read as a whole:
- The **overarching principles** outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 inform the whole Guidelines.
 - The **core assessment process** outlined in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 apply across all types of landscape assessment. The process links the landscape concepts in Chapter 4, the assessment of landscape character and values in Chapter 5, the assessment of effects on landscape values in Chapter 6, and the management of landscape values in Chapter 7.
 - The same concepts, principles, and approaches also apply to the **special topics** (‘outstanding natural features and landscapes’, and ‘natural character’) outlined in Chapters 8 and 9.

⁷ We have adopted the style of using **Aotearoa** and **New Zealand** interchangeably throughout the Guidelines as short for **Aotearoa New Zealand**

- 1.9 Do not take parts of the Guidelines out of context. Especially, the recommendations against rigid and prescriptive methods are not to be misconstrued as free licence. On the contrary, the approach recommended demands that practitioners understand what they are doing, and why, and explain it in a transparent and reasoned way.
- 1.10 These Guidelines represent our understanding at the time of their writing. They will require replacing as practice continues to evolve.

2 PROFESSIONAL ROLE

Role and responsibilities

- 2.1 The ultimate reason for assessing landscapes is to manage their landscape values: by identifying landscape values (and the attributes which those values depend), assessing effects on such values, and designing measures to maintain and improve the values. More precisely, in a statutory planning context, a landscape assessor's role is to assist decision-makers to those ends. It is to assist decision makers (and by extension others) impartially on relevant landscape matters. To fulfil this role, an assessor needs to:
- Be **impartial**.
 - Be **clear and succinct**.
 - Remain **informed and skilled** on landscape matters.
 - Use an **appropriate methodology**.
 - Focus on **relevant** matters.
- 2.2 Such an approach is consistent with the Environment Court 'Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses'⁸ which states that witnesses have an "*overriding duty to assist the Court impartially on relevant matters within the expert's field of expertise*". While that Code is for the Environment Court, extending its principles to all landscape assessors at all phases of an assessment process will improve assessment for other decision makers⁹ and everyone else involved in statutory planning processes.
- 2.3 Landscape assessors have a role as 'experts' within such processes. While opinion – which is an essential part of landscape assessment – is generally inadmissible as evidence, the Evidence Act provides an exception for expert opinion. It is a privileged role that we should cherish and safeguard.
- 2.4 The term 'expert' in this context refers to a **role** and **responsibilities** rather than a claim to exclusive knowledge.¹⁰ For instance, independent professional experts have a **different and complementary role** to that of submitters¹¹ and lay experts.¹² Each role is essential to the statutory planning process. These guidelines, though, focus on that of the independent professional 'expert'.
- 2.5 Pūkenga are **experts** on tāngata whenua mātauranga (knowledge, wisdom). Tāngata whenua perspectives of landscape are typically held and expressed collectively by iwi/hapū/whānau rather than individually and are based on relationships, values (both tangible and intangible), and wisdom accumulated over generations through being in and with a place. It is normal for such mātauranga to be vested in pūkenga (experts/learned individuals). These people are tāngata whenua experts in matters relating to whenua.

⁸ Expert Witnesses, Code of Conduct, Environment Court Practice Note, 2014

⁹ Such as Council Commissioners and officers with delegated authority

¹⁰ Residents, for example, are likely to have the most intimate understanding of the amenity values they enjoy.

¹¹ Landscape architects and pūkenga do sometimes become involved in projects where they have an interest in the outcome and are therefore not impartial. That is normal, but in those instances make clear that you are in the role of a party to the proceedings (applicant or submitter) rather than that of an independent 'expert.'

¹² Lay experts can provide opinion on what they personally experience and observe. Independent professional experts have wider scope to draw findings and expert opinion based on their specialised knowledge and experience.

2.6 The standing of experts (including landscape architects and pūkenga) rests on:

- Training, study, and knowledge.
- Experience.
- Impartiality.

Impartiality

2.7 The following conduct helps maintain impartiality:

- Be **measured** – avoid exaggeration.
- Be **open** and **balanced** – acknowledge points that may not support your client’s interests – explain the pros and cons considered in reaching your professional opinion.
- Be **consistent**.
- Be as objective as possible, given that landscape necessarily entails subjectivity. That is, be **unbiased** (not an advocate¹³) and **rational**. Acknowledge matters that might influence your subjective interpretation. Ensure that your interpretation is consistent with those aspects of the environment that do lend themselves to objective analysis (such as current scientific knowledge and attributes that can be measured).

2.8 The overriding duty to decision makers does not replace duties we also have to our clients¹⁴ and ‘the landscape’ through our professional ethics – for instance, as set out in the Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA Code of Conduct¹⁵ and draft Landscape Charter¹⁶. It does not replace duties of pūkenga to iwi/hapū/whānau or to Te Ao Māori values such as whakapapa and tikanga. Those things remain a foundation of practice. But, in this professional role, we have an **additional** overriding duty to assist decision makers in an impartial manner.

Clarity and succinctness

2.9 Landscape assessments should be clear:

- Be succinct and **to the point**.
- Use **straightforward** language – avoid needless jargon.
- Be **precise** with key terms – define them where it helps clarity.

2.10 Every sentence in an assessment should be relevant, just as every line in a design-drawing has a purpose.

¹³ While submitters and lawyers may advocate for or against a proposal, impartiality is a key foundation of an independent ‘expert’.

¹⁴ It is important to also be transparent with clients so that they understand your professional opinions and the reasons behind them. For example, it requires making an early decision on your professional support (or not) for proposal-driven projects, and explaining your reasons, the likely findings of the assessment you are to carry out, and any mitigation or changes to design necessary to ensure your support.

¹⁵ New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Tuia Pito Ora, Articles of Constitution, July 2020, page 28

¹⁶ The Aotearoa-New Zealand Landscape Charter (draft), New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, updated version for AGM, March 2010

Provide reasons

- 2.11 Explain your assessment in a reasoned way. It is the reasons that give a professional opinion weight. The nature of landscape means that assessors need to explain how they have integrated and interpreted many tangible and intangible factors in a way specific to context.
- 2.12 It is useful to remember that decisions in a statutory planning context are written and reasoned. Assessments that use clear language and provide reasons are more likely to contribute effectively to such decision-making.

Relevance

- 2.13 Focus landscape assessments on matters that are **relevant** to the decision-maker.¹⁷ Such matters arise from the:
- The **purpose** of the assessment.
 - The resource management **issues**.¹⁸
 - The landscape **context**.¹⁹
- 2.14 By way of further explanation, Section 25 of the Evidence Act (referred to above at paragraph 2.4) says that expert opinion evidence can be admissible “*if the fact-finder is likely to obtain **substantial help** from the opinion in understanding other evidence...*” (emphasis added). Evidence that does not offer substantial help is not only undesirable but is in fact inadmissible. Likewise, the ‘Code of Conduct’ states that expert witnesses “*have an overriding duty to assist the Court impartially on **relevant matters** within the expert’s field of expertise*” (emphasis added). It may be more straightforward to judge what is relevant with project-driven assessments, where the issues and scope are defined, than with area-based assessments where the ultimate use of the information is more open-ended. But in both instances, a pro-active attitude is needed to sift what is and is not relevant.
- 2.15 There may be a perceived tension between relevance and thoroughness. While an assessment process should be thorough, a report (or evidence) should present information selected and organised to be relevant. Be succinct and to the point. Put background and detail into appendices.
- 2.16 Specifically, a ‘proposal-driven’ effects assessment should be proportionate to the proposal’s scale and potential effects: consistent with the principle set out in RMA Schedule 4 (2)(3)(c). An assessment for a small project with incidental effects should be brief, whereas that for a large project with potentially significant effects should be comprehensive.

Explain in the context of other’s assessments

- 2.17 Where assessments are carried out by different landscape assessors (e.g., complex resource consent applications) it is important to explain why you agree with, or differ from, others. The Courts have previously expressed frustration with attempting to compare and contrast different

¹⁷ For preparation of landscape evidence for complex cases, the lawyer coordinating the evidence may explain their ‘theory of the case’ which will identify the matters they see as relevant. This helps ensure that evidence is coherent and tailored to the issues.

¹⁸ Issues typically arise from potential landscape effects (including the nature of any proposal), and the statutory provisions and other matters.

¹⁹ The nature of the setting and its landscape character and values – including tāngata whenua values, perspectives and associations.

landscape assessments. Explaining your assessment in comparison to others will help decision-makers evaluate different perspectives.

- Align the structure of your assessment with that of others where it might better assist decision makers to understand the substance of the respective assessments. For example, adopt common formats, terminology, scales, viewpoints etc., where this might help. Explain why if you consider it necessary to differ.
- Highlight points of agreement and difference with other assessments. Explain the reasons for the differences. Such differences may arise, for instance, through such things as different methods, different interpretation of the area’s character and values, and different interpretations of the extent of the relevant context. There may also be a need to explain how an assessment from a Te Ao Māori perspective (for example) agrees with and differs from assessments carried out from a western perspective.
- Be constructive in discussions with others (including ‘conferencing’) to narrow the points of difference and to clarify the reasons for any remaining differences. Do not labour trivial differences that are unlikely to assist decision-makers.
- Focus on the substance. Avoid criticising others personally.

Field of Expertise

2.18 Assisting others within our ‘field of expertise’ means:

- Being **informed** and **skilled** in landscape matters, and
- **Not straying** beyond landscape expertise.

Remaining within field of expertise

2.19 Landscape expertise includes assessing a landscape’s physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions as an integrated whole. It includes drawing information from other disciplines (such as geomorphology, ecology, cultural information, history etc) and weaving such information into a landscape perspective. A landscape assessor’s expertise is not in the disciplines on which it draws, but in the **integration** of different types of information. The requirement to stay within your field of expertise does not mean you need to restrict your sources of knowledge. Rather, reference your sources and explain how the integration of such information enhances **understanding and appreciation of the landscape** – the bindings that bring the landscape to life.

2.20 Providing an assessment of ecological effects, for example, is outside the expertise of a landscape assessor.²⁰ It would also be pointless to simply repeat the findings of an ecology report, and inappropriate to transfer the ecological findings to a landscape assessment in an arithmetic manner. But drawing on referenced ecological information to help build an understanding of the landscape, especially where connections are made between ecology and other aspects of the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions, **is** within our expertise and is expected of us (See also paragraphs 4.21)

Te Ao Māori

2.21 Within Aotearoa, being informed and skilled includes awareness of Te Ao Māori and having regard to relevant tāngata whenua matters. Such matters are integral to Aotearoa’s landscapes.

²⁰ Unless you are also qualified and experienced in ecology

Having regard to such matters involves a commitment that arises from being part of a nation with a bi-cultural foundation through The Treaty of Waitangi.

2.22 Principles of The Treaty of Waitangi relevant in a landscape context include:

- Iwi/hapū/whānau self-autonomy (mana motuhake).
- Partnership.
- Meaningful engagement and participation.
- Active protection.

Role of landscape assessor with respect to community

2.23 Landscapes are not the sole preserve of landscape assessors: everyone experiences and holds views (often heart-felt) about landscapes. People and communities make their input to the management of landscapes through (i) statutory and non-statutory provisions,²¹ and (ii) submissions on applications. Decision makers have regard to such views, alongside expert evidence, and the relevant statutory provisions (and ‘other matters’). It may be useful to imagine this as a form of triangulation.²² The professional landscape assessor’s role in this context is to:

- Provide an unbiased and independent benchmark against which the range of community views might be gauged.
- Provide an assessment in the context of the relevant provisions.
- Analyse, interpret, and explain landscape matters that others may lack the training to articulate.

2.24 The role of an independent landscape assessor is therefore **different** from, but **complementary** to, that of communities. A landscape assessor should remain aware of the range of community perceptions of landscape matters and draw on available sources of information. The purpose for such knowledge is not to speak on behalf of others, but to help with the balance and insight of an impartial professional assessment.

2.25 To fulfil the role in a complementary way, a landscape assessment should **enable comparison** between the expert assessment and other’s views. Use straightforward language, a transparent method, and explain findings with clear reasons.

Statutory provisions (and ‘other matters’)

2.26 Landscape assessors should be familiar with the statutory provisions relevant to each landscape assessment.

2.27 Much (not all) landscape assessment work will be carried out under the RMA²³. The principles and purpose set out in Part 2 of the RMA are the top of a hierarchy of statutory provisions which

²¹ See paragraphs 2.26 ff

²² [‘Dominion Valley Road \[2020\] NZEnvC 024, paragraph 90-91; ‘Port Gore’ \[2012\] NZEnvC 072 paragraph 214, ‘Schofield’ \(2012\) NZEnvC 68, paragraphs 51-54](#)

²³ The Ministry for the Environment publishes an everyday guide to the RMA. <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/processes-and-how-get-involved/everyday-guide-rma>. Briefly, the sections to which landscape assessors will most commonly refer include Part 2 (sections 5-8) which sets out the purpose and principles of the Act, matters of national importance, other matters, and Treaty of Waitangi; section 104 which sets out the matters decision makers are to have regard to when considering resource consent applications; and Schedule 4 (6) & (7) which sets out the information required in an Assessment of Environmental Effects and matters to be considered. Other sections address variations to conditions of a consent (section 127) and designations for such things as network infrastructure (sections 166-176). Section 2 defines terms including ‘environment’ and ‘amenity values’. Section 3 lists generic types of effect.

include National Policy Statements²⁴, Regional Policy Statements, Regional Plans, and District Plans (or Unitary Plans when the latter are combined). The lower order documents give effect to the higher order documents. Lower order documents, such as the District Plan, are typically therefore the first point of reference in framing an assessment.

2.28 The principles of landscape assessment set out in these Guidelines also apply to landscape assessments carried out under other statutes. Those that contain provisions relating to landscape include:

- Conservation Act.
- Reserves Act.
- Crown Pastoral Land Act.
- Queen Elizabeth the Second National Trust Act.
- Biosecurity Act.
- National Parks Act.²⁵

2.29 **‘Other matters’** – as provided for by RMA s104(1)(c) – are those that a decision maker considers relevant and reasonably necessary to determine an application. They may include non-statutory documents that express the community’s vision and direction for the environment such as Long-Term Council Community Plans, Iwi and hapū Resource Management Plans, catchment management plans, and ‘sense of place’ studies.

‘Case law’

2.30 Landscape assessors should also remain informed on aspects of landscape assessment (such as concepts, principles, and terms) that have gained authority through decisions of the Courts and Boards of Inquiry (colloquially referred to as ‘case law’).²⁶ A review of relevant decisions, with extracts and commentary, has been prepared as a separate background document.²⁷

2.31 Findings on landscape matters often originate from professional evidence. ‘Case law’ on such matters will continue to evolve. It is our profession’s responsibility to continue to refine and develop concepts and principles that fall within our expertise. Likewise, Court hearings will continue to provide a valuable forum in which to test such matters, and gain guidance that may accrue from decisions.²⁸ Be open to evolving the way you work in response to such decisions.

²⁴ National Policy Statements (NPS) currently comprise: New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), NPS on Urban Development, NPS for Freshwater Management, NPS for Renewable Energy Generation, NPS on Electricity Transmission. There are also National Environmental Standards (NES) for Air Quality, Sources of Drinking Water, Telecommunication Facilities, Electricity Transmission Activities, Plantation Forestry, Freshwater, Marine Aquaculture, and Assessing and Managing Contaminants to Soil to Protect Human Health

²⁵ The National Parks Act does not refer explicitly to ‘landscape’ but does refer to “areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems, or natural features so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important...”

²⁶ Use ‘case law’ only as a colloquial term. Previous decisions in most instances do not in fact establish law. While the Environment Court is bound by decisions of higher Courts on points of law, it is not required to follow determinations of previous Environment Court decisions. However, previous decisions do provide guidance to the Courts’ thinking on certain landscape concepts and principles derived from the Courts’ findings on landscape evidence. Frame your assessments with an awareness of such matters but, if you need to refer to ‘case law’ in evidence, refer to it along such lines as “an approach supported in previous decisions”. Leave legal discussion on such matters to lawyers.

²⁷ ‘Case Law’ Review Background Research Document 1, Aotearoa Landscape Guidelines. The review is drawn largely from the Environment Court but includes some relevant Boards of Inquiry and High Court decisions. The review is tabulated with excerpts from the decisions and a synopsis of the relevant landscape principles. Each entry is tagged to topics that correspond to the structure of the Guidelines. It is recommended that the data base continue to be maintained and the Guidelines regularly updated with relevant references.

Appropriate methodology

Tailor method to purpose, setting, provisions, and issues

2.32 The first task of a landscape assessment is to confirm a **methodology** and design (or tailor) a **method**²⁹ in response to the:

- **Purpose** of the assessment.
- **Context landscape** (its character and values).
- **Landscape issues**³⁰

2.33 **Methodology** is the high-level system that includes concepts, philosophies, principles, terminology, and general investigative approaches. By that definition, these Guidelines represent a methodology.

2.34 **Methods**, on the other hand, are procedures for specific purposes, projects, and contexts. Designing an appropriate **method** can be visualised as follows:³¹

- **State the purpose** – the matters to be assessed. **Identify** the **concepts, principles, terminology,** and **general approaches** associated with the matters to be assessed.
- **Consider the factors, metrics, descriptors, criteria** that may be relevant to the matters being assessed (for instance, the factors and metrics that might influence rural character).
- **Select (or tailor) the appropriate method for the assessment.** This is likely to entail both desk-top research and field work to investigate and interpret the things listed above.
- **Revise the method** in an iterative way if other factors, metrics, criteria etc., that warrant assessment emerge while carrying out the assessment.
- **Structure the report** to best explain the findings in terms of the purpose of the assessment.

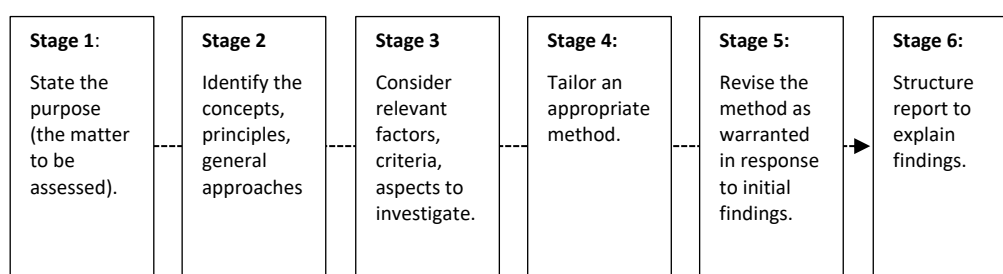


Figure x: Generalised flow chart for design of a method for landscape assessments. Adapted from Dr Mike Steven, 2021

2.35 Designing a method involves a logical sequence in which each stage is a direct response to the preceding stages. For example, the landscape aspects or criteria identified for consideration at

²⁹ Some organisations provide guidelines for certain types of project. Waka Kotahi (NZ Transport Agency) and Auckland Council, for example, publish guidelines. Be sure to maintain a critical awareness though. Do not just accept a guideline as a template. Tailor an appropriate method for each situation as described below.

³⁰ Which typically arise from the nature of the landscape, the potential **effects** (including the nature of any proposal), and the relevant statutory **planning provisions** and any relevant non-statutory documents. The latter include Iwi/Hapū Environmental Management Plans, heritage charters, design guidelines.

³¹ Adapted from notes on investigation design logic, Dr Mike Steven, [2021]

stage 3 should be consistent with how landscape is defined at stage 2, and relevant to the purpose of the assessment set out at stage 1. The project-specific method at stage 4 will be tailored in response to the first three stages, with critical awareness maintained so that the method can be refined in response to initial findings at stage 5. The report structure at stage 6 will then reflect the preceding stages. The integrity of the whole method goes to the validity of the assessment.

- 2.36 Landscapes do not lend themselves to rigid and prescriptive methods of assessment. Assessing landscapes requires integration of different types of objective and subjective information relating to both the land and people. Landscapes also have different contexts, are valued for a wide range of different reasons. Landscape values arise from the interaction of a landscape's dimensions rather than the sum of them. Assessments are also carried out for different purposes in the context of different statutory planning provisions. The relevant factors, their weight, and how they integrate, varies with context and situation. Professional judgement and interpretation are necessary.³² While methodology and method are important, **prescriptive methods** (such as rigid criteria, factor lists, and fixed techniques) are therefore inadequate.

“...it is important to avoid settling upon a mere formulaic framework that could simply be ‘fed through’ in a computerised fashion. Ultimately each case must be considered in the light of dependable and recognised pointers or guiding criteria to assist the making of an overall appraisal and judgement, without the risk of professional landscape architects failing to see the wood for the trees.”
(Unison Networks, NZEnvC C11 2009, paragraph 96)

- 2.37 These Guidelines, therefore, emphasise a reasoned approach – based on transparency and explanation – rather than prescriptive or standardised methods.

Explain methodology and method

- 2.38 Include a **methodology statement** as part of landscape assessments. Such statements might reference these Guidelines with respect to the overall system (i.e., the ‘methodology’) and outline the specific method tailored to the situation. Such methodology statements will assist decision makers interpret the assessment.³³ A brief statement (one or two paragraphs) may be enough for a simple project – more detail is warranted for complex projects.
- 2.39 As discussed at paragraph 1.9, avoiding prescriptive methods places greater onus on landscape assessors to understand their methodology and explain it clearly.
- 2.40 Maintain critical oversight while carrying out an assessment and challenge your own findings. Do not be so bound to a method as to overlook the obvious. Test findings for **credibility** and **plausibility**. Methods are tools – not the subject of the assessment. Methods are not the landscape.

³² The approach outlined in these Guidelines is in keeping with trends in international practice (See ‘Review of Other Guidelines, 8 December 2020, paragraph 4.1ff). The main historical approaches are (i) visual approaches, focusing on generic visual parameters and formulaic methods, and (ii) landscape character (place-based) approaches, focusing on specific character and values. Internationally, practice has moved towards the latter approach illustrated, for example, by the European Landscape Convention. Aotearoa practice has similarly evolved towards the latter approach in keeping with leading international practice, and with a specific flavour reflecting our own natural and cultural context. Such approaches that entail both objective and subjective perspectives (drawing on the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities) depend on explanation and reasons rather than following prescriptive formulae.

³³ For instance, it may help decision makers weigh competing evidence.

Summary Box

The ultimate reason for assessing landscape is to manage their values. More precisely, in a statutory planning context the purpose is to assist decision makers (and by extension others) to those ends. A landscape assessor should therefore:

- Be impartial and balanced.
- Be clear and succinct.
- Be informed and skilled on landscape matters.
- Use an appropriate methodology and methods.
- Focus on relevant matters.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, being informed on landscape matters includes awareness of Te Ao Māori and having regard to tāngata whenua matters. Such matters are integral to Aotearoa's landscapes.

The methodology and method for each assessment should be carefully configured to:

- Its purpose.
- The landscape context.
- The issues (e.g., the nature of potential effects in the context of the relevant statutory planning provisions).

Landscapes do not readily fit rigid prescribed methods. Rather, these Guidelines promote transparency and reasoned explanation.

3 TE AO MĀORI PERSPECTIVES

- 3.1 While the statutory planning focus of these Guidelines is appropriate to their purpose, , there are many other motivations and applications for assessing landscapes from Te Ao Māori perspectives, as indeed there are for Pākehā.
- 3.2 The Guideline's promote using the method most appropriate for the context (both natural and cultural) and the matter under consideration. This approach works equally well from a Te Ao Māori perspective as from a 'western'-derived Te Ao Pākehā perspective. Such an approach provides for new methodologies and methods to emerge.³⁴ This is important because truly bi-cultural approaches to landscape assessment (together with design, planning, and management) continue to evolve as our maturity in this area of practice grows. Tāngata whenua landscape approaches and frameworks are a rapidly developing area of landscape architecture which can sit comfortably amongst other Te Ao Māori and kaupapa Māori tools and approaches to whenua, taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down from the ancestors), wāhi tupuna (a place with ancestral connection), wāhi tawhito (a place holding historical importance), wāhi tūturu (a place holding deep or particular meaning) and ngā wawata a mua (future aspirations), among others.
- 3.3 The following concepts are important foundations with respect to Te Ao Māori and landscape.

Te Reo Māori

- 3.4 Te Reo Māori is the first human language of Aotearoa; one of our three recognised national languages. It is a taonga tuku iho nā ngā tupuna Māori – a treasure handed down by the ancestors.
- 3.5 Te Reo Māori is the key to accessing Te Ao Māori: its values, concepts, and constructs only gain full relevance and meaning within that language. English terms may not necessarily have direct translation to Te Reo Māori, and vice versa.
- 3.6 These Guidelines promote the use of Te Reo Māori within landscape assessment. A useful convention to follow is for the English translation to be provided in brackets after the first use of a Te Reo Māori term, after which the Te Reo Māori term should be used alone. Where both languages are used, Te Reo Māori should come first in recognition of precedence.

Whenua

- 3.7 Whenua encompasses all of Aotearoa. All whenua carries association(s) with tāngata whenua. Whenua precedes the concept of landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand and expresses physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions within a Te Ao Māori cultural framework. In Aotearoa New Zealand, therefore, landscapes sit within whenua in space and time.
- 3.8 There is continuity and connection between land and sea: whenua extends beneath moana. Mana whenua includes mana moana of relevant parts of the sea.
- 3.9 Whenua is a word with layered meaning that refers to the land and the relationship between people and land. But those relationships have a specific cultural context and perspectives.

³⁴ Such as the recent kaupapa Māori approach proposed by Hatton, Paul, Menzies et al for Ihumātāo

- 3.10 Whenua is central to tāngata whenua – physically and conceptually. Tāngata whenua whakapapa (trace descent) through tūpuna to the whenua and the natural world. The concept of mana whenua (and mana moana) includes identity, belonging, and rights and responsibilities with respect to place. Whenua gains its highest potency through association with iwi (tribe)/hapū (sub-tribe)/whānau (extended family) over time.
- 3.11 For tāngata whenua, associations with whenua are confirmed through whakapapa (genealogical links/connection), ahi kā (occupation) and belonging.
- 3.12 Tāngata whenua associations with areas across Aotearoa have changed repeatedly over time. However, all occupation leaves imprints (tangible and intangible) that maintain validity and carry meaning within Te Ao Māori.

Te Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirini

- 3.13 Te Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirini (Declaration of Independence of Nui Tirini 1835) established the sovereignty of the Chiefs and tribes of Aotearoa/Nui Tirini over all whenua within these islands.

The Treaty of Waitangi

- 3.14 The Treaty of Waitangi is the English wording of the foundational document that established the rights of the indigenous people of Aotearoa and equally those who settled here. The document contains complex terms and concepts that had no precedent or relevance to an indigenous consciousness and context – cultural, philosophical, or political.
- 3.15 Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the Te Reo Māori wording of the foundational document that established the rights of the indigenous people and equally of those who settled here. These eight separate hand-written documents that were taken around Niu Tirenī attempted to translate complex terms and concepts that had no precedent or relevance to a British consciousness and context – cultural, philosophical, or political.
- 3.16 The Treaty of Waitangi is generally taken as the document which provides the foundation of a bi-cultural nation and is an expression of the potentials and promise of reciprocal benefit seen by both cultures through kōrero at the time of signing.
- 3.17 The Treaty of Waitangi is an evolving document that has, and will, continue to develop in response to the challenges and opportunities of the past, present and future.
- 3.18 The Treaty of Waitangi has deep relevance to matters relating to whenua, tāngata whenua, and landscape.

Māori

- 3.19 The term Māori is a cultural construct arising out of contact with western European culture. As an accepted term for collective identity enshrined in the Te Reo Māori version of The Treaty of Waitangi, Māori culture is unique to Aotearoa.
- 3.20 As first peoples, Māori are tāngata whenua of Aotearoa. Tāngata whenua are people who hold mana whenua over an area.

- 3.21 The natural primary grouping for Māori is the hapū. However, in a contemporary sense, the term tāngata whenua can be applied at iwi, hapū and/or whānau level.
- 3.22 Expressions and understandings of ‘culture in place’ become clearer, stronger, and more specific from Māori to iwi to hapū to whānau. These Guidelines, therefore, advocate that matters relating to landscape take place at the **most local appropriate level** (hapū ahead of iwi where the matters are most relevant to a hapū).

Te Ao Māori

- 3.23 Te Ao Māori is a term for an indigenous world view within Aotearoa. Te Ao Māori comprises Te Reo Māori, tikanga Māori, values, beliefs, and histories, collectively framing a world view by which tāngata whenua in Aotearoa can engage with, and make sense of, the world.
- 3.24 Te Ao Māori is not static or definitive. Rather it is constantly being renewed and reaffirmed through fresh challenges and opportunities that occur within **Te Ao Hurihuri** – the evolving world.

Tāngata whenua

- 3.25 A range of responsibilities is associated with the term tāngata whenua, such responsibilities extending to the area (and all who live in it) over which tāngata whenua hold mana whenua.
- 3.26 Mana motuhake is the term whereby tāngata whenua maintain the right to express their mana and to make decisions on matters relating to or affecting them and their rohe.
- 3.27 Tāngata whenua are the definitive holders of mātauranga and kōrero relating to their rohe – including matters relating to landscape. The mātauranga and tikanga of each tāngata whenua group informs contemporary tāngata whenua resource management in each landscape setting. Mātauranga varies from group to group and is specific to that group and whenua. Access to this knowledge can only be achieved through appropriate and meaningful engagement with, and at the discretion of, tāngata whenua. (Refer also to ‘Engaging with tāngata whenua when assessing landscapes’, paragraph 5.37 ff).
- 3.28 Areas of tāngata whenua jurisdiction may overlap with those of different iwi, hapū, and whānau – particularly where such groups have different historical associations with the whenua.
- 3.29 Subtleties and distinctions of tāngata whenua can be added through such concepts as hau kāinga (the ‘home people’ at a marae) and ahi kā (those who occupy that area and keep the home fires burning).
- 3.30 Tāngata whenua is the appropriate term rather than Māori in matters relating to landscape.
- 3.31 The relationship between tāngata whenua and whenua is unique to Aotearoa. It binds the primary relationships between people and the connections developed across time between people and whenua. Explaining such perspectives is the prerogative of tāngata whenua which may be iwi, hapū, or whānau (or a combination) depending on context.
- 3.32 Whakapapa instils tāngata whenua with a duty – kaitiakitanga – to protect and enhance the well-being of ngā taonga katoa (all resources) in accordance with the mātauranga, tikanga (customary values and practices) and kawa (protocols) of that group. Kaitiakitanga aligns with many of the fundamental beliefs and norms of behaviour of Te Ao Māori including mana, whakapapa, whanaungatanga (kinship/relationships), mauri (life force/essence) and kotahitanga (collective

sense of unity), among others. The nearest equivalent meaning to kaitiakitanga is stewardship or guardianship although the terms are not strictly synonymous.³⁵

Pūkenga

- 3.33 There are many locations for knowledge posited within Te Ao Māori and amongst tāngata whenua. Very often, the groups and individuals who hold knowledge and expertise specific to their group have not gained this through mainstream education. This knowledge and those genuine knowledge holders are highly valuable and are valued by their respective groups.
- 3.34 Such knowledge is at least as valid as knowledge held in western knowledge systems. Indeed, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate that knowledge held by pūkenga and consequent consideration of effects is afforded primacy over that held according to western knowledge systems.
- 3.35 Access to pūkenga and their knowledge may require the seeker to show some commitment and demonstrate the context and purpose for which the information is sought. Pūkenga expertise should be resourced in a way and at a level that is commensurate with those of a western knowledge system expert.

Summary Box

The Treaty of Waitangi is the foundation of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a bi-cultural nation. It is deeply relevant to tāngata whenua, whenua, and landscape. It represents both challenges and opportunities.

The full relevance and meaning of Te Ao Māori concepts are best explained in Te Reo Māori.

Whenua is central (physically, socially, and conceptually) to tāngata whenua. All whenua carries associations with tāngata whenua. Tāngata whenua whakapapa (trace descent) through tupuna to the natural world.

Tāngata whenua are the definitive holders of mātauranga, tikanga, kawa, and kōrero relating to their rohe. Culture in place becomes clearer, stronger, and more specific from iwi to hapū to whanau.

Pūkenga hold knowledge and expertise relating to an iwi, hapū or whanau, including landscape matters. Commitment, relationships, and resourcing are important to accessing such information. Pūkenga may undertake the role of an expert in terms of the Code of Practice.

Bi-cultural approaches to landscape assessment will continue to evolve. The emphasis on transparency and reasoned explanation will help ensure that such evolving practice is not hindered by prescribed methods.

³⁵ It is suggested that these two paragraphs be highlighted by call-out box or similar in the final document.

4 WHAT IS LANDSCAPE?

- 4.1 Our concepts of ‘landscape’ are the foundation, explicitly or implicitly, of any landscape assessment we carry out.
- 4.2 This Chapter seeks to define ‘landscape’ in Aotearoa New Zealand in the context of the bi-cultural partnership founded on the Treaty of Waitangi. The Chapter approaches ‘landscape’ from four directions. It looks at the origins and meaning of the word ‘landscape’ in English, at how its meaning is evolving in Aotearoa, at how it is defined by professional landscape organisations, and how its meaning is revealed through practice.

The word ‘landscape’

- 4.3 English language meanings of ‘landscape’ have two strands that are relevant to landscape practice: one relating to the character of a territory, the other a view of an area (an overview).

‘a tract of land with its distinguishing characteristics and features, esp. considered as a product of modifying or shaping processes and agents (usually natural)’

‘a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view; a piece of country scenery’ (both from the Oxford English Dictionary)

- 4.4 The phrase ‘landscape and visual’ often used in the RMA context is seemingly an attempt to cover both meanings, although they are intertwined. The concept of the ‘character of an area’ and ‘an overview’ is demonstrated in the way the word is often co-opted to describe other fields (political landscape, intellectual landscape, mediascape, mindscape) and to a broad integrated approach (landscape ecology, heritage landscape).³⁶
- 4.5 The historical roots of the word ‘landscape’ are explored in Kenneth Olwig’s scholarship.³⁷ Olwig points out that earlier North European forms such as ‘landschaft’ (and related forms such as the Old English ‘landscipe’) meant **a region and its people** – a community associated with a specific place with its accompanying physical environment, customs, customary law and responsibilities, ways of life, and identity. The suffix ‘scape’ has common origins with ‘shape’ and ‘ship’ and in this context conveys an area shaped by people, and the standing and belonging of people with an area (as in citizenship). Olwig argues that landscape is not restricted to either ‘territory’ or ‘scenery’ but carries what he refers to as its “substantive meaning” of a ‘nexus’ between community and place.³⁸ He refers to the definition of landscape in the European Landscape Convention to demonstrate the older meaning is still alive.³⁹
- 4.6 Such pre-modern or foundational meanings are perhaps closer to that of ‘whenua’ than those that focus on either ‘territory’ (e.g., physical landscape character) or ‘scenery’ (visual aspects).⁴⁰

³⁶ David Gold’s 2002 paper, ‘English Nouns and Verbs Ending in *-scape*’ explores some 130 examples of words that have borrowed the suffix ‘scape’ to apply to different fields.

³⁷ For example, ‘The Meanings of Landscape’, K. Olwig, 2019, a collection of essays including the seminal ‘Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape’, Kenneth Olwig, 1996, originally published in ‘Annals of the Association of American Geographers.’ 86(4): 630–653.

³⁸ Olwig, *ibid* page 22.

³⁹ Olwig, *ibid* page 6. Olwig also notes the Swedish use of *landskap* to refer to their home region.

⁴⁰ Simon Swaffield pers com

Landscape in an Aotearoa New Zealand context

- 4.7 'Landscape' is a western concept brought to New Zealand. It has evolved as a concept, and will continue to evolve, in an Aotearoa context.

Landscape in relation to whenua and tāngata whenua

- 4.8 There is no term for 'landscape' within Te Reo Māori. Whenua is the nearest term, although the words are not directly interchangeable because whenua derives specifically from Te Ao Māori perspectives and tikanga. Within Te Ao Māori, landscape is a non-Māori cultural construct that sits within the broader concept of whenua.
- 4.9 'Whenua' means the land but also contains layers of meaning relating to peoples' relationship with the land. 'Tāngata whenua' indicates people with a deep connection with a territory, with rights and obligations.
- 4.10 The current professional practice of conceptualising landscape as three overlapping dimensions provides a bridge between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā meanings: **(Figure x (a) below)**
- Physical (the physical environment – its collective natural and built components and processes); and
 - Associative (the meanings and values we associate with places); and
 - Perceptual (how we perceive and experience places).

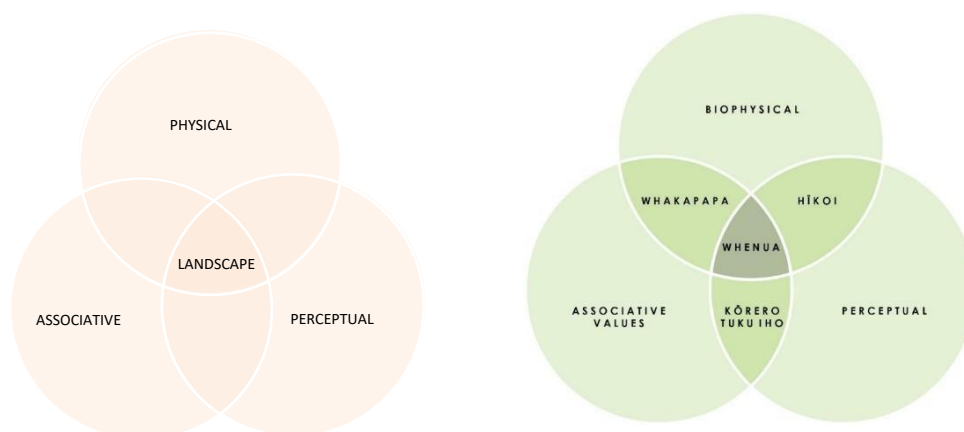


Figure x (a) [Left] **Landscape** conceptualised as intersection of three overlapping dimensions, and **Figure x (b)** [Right] **Whenua** conceptualised as intersection of three overlapping dimensions and an overlay that integrates mātauranga. William Hatton & Jacqueline Paul In Hill, C (Ed) (2021) *Kia Whakanuia te Whenua, People Place Landscape*. Auckland: Mary Egan Publishing, p196

- 4.11 A bi-culturally inclusive landscape concept can be envisaged as the three overlapping dimensions and an overlay integrating mātauranga **(Figure x (b) above)** such as:
- **Whakapapa:** the genealogy and layers of landscape and people (reflective of an overlap between biophysical and associative dimensions).
 - **Hiko:** walking and talking with landscape and people - experiencing and perceiving the land in all its entirety (reflective of an overlap of the biophysical and perceptual dimensions).
 - **Kōrero tuku iho:** ancestral knowledge passed down through generations

interconnected through time, place, and people - pūrākau (reflective of overlap of perceptual and associative dimensions).

- 4.12 Such a concept accommodates both tāngata whenua and western landscape approaches and allows for mutual influence of ideas and thinking. Whenua and landscape both emerge in the overlap between the dimensions. Mātauranga approaches are different from, but can resonate with, Pākehā approaches. The two concepts enrich each other.
- 4.13 Tāngata whenua perspectives have primacy in those landscape assessments carried out in a Te Ao Māori framework (such as ‘Cultural Landscape Assessments’ undertaken by a hapū or iwi).
- 4.14 However, while ‘landscape’ has western origins, it is now a **shared concept**. Professional landscape assessment⁴¹ should therefore **also** pay attention to tāngata whenua matters which enrich understanding and appreciation of the landscape. Such matters may include:
- Tāngata whenua pūrākau, tikanga, and whakapapa associated with a landscape (including creation and origin narratives).
 - The significance and meaning of place names and landscape features.
 - Metaphysical concepts such as wairua and mauri.
 - Landscape stewardship concepts such as kaitiakitanga and mātauranga.
 - Customary activities associated with places.
 - Legal recognition of certain features as having the legal status of a person (Whanganui River, Te Urewera, Taranaki maunga).
- 4.15 Remember that tāngata whenua have a holistic relationship with whenua that integrates physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions. A potential pitfall is to limit consideration of tāngata whenua landscape values to the associative dimension only. To do so would not only be conceptually wrong, but also contrary to the Treaty of Waitangi because:
- It would relegate tāngata whenua to a party with specialist interests rather than a true treaty partner.
 - It would render tāngata whenua relationships with place as one dimensional.
 - It would deprive us all of the experience and knowledge accumulated by tāngata whenua with respect to place in Aotearoa.

Definitions of ‘landscape’ by professional organisations

- 4.16 Professional definitions of ‘landscape’ typically include both a physical area⁴² (including the people belonging to an area and their relationship with it), and perceptions of the area – consistent with etymological threads of ‘landscape’ discussed above.
- 4.17 The European Convention on Landscape (ELC) defines ‘landscape’ as:

“...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”⁴³

⁴¹ That is, landscape assessment within a professional western-derived framework.

⁴² Including land, air, and water.

⁴³ Grammatically, it should be ‘an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of etc...’

- 4.18 The International Federation of Landscape Architects Asia Pacific Region Charter (of which the NZILA is a signatory) adopts that ELC definition and adds the following further description:

“...landscapes are the result of unique combinations of biophysical, cultural and social processes, evolving over time and interwoven with memory, perception and tradition”

- 4.19 The 2010 NZILA ‘Best Practice Guide’⁴⁴ defines landscape as:

...the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area,⁴⁵ including human perceptions and associations (NZILA)

- 4.20 NZILA Landscape Assessment Methodology workshops (November 2017) recommended fine-tuning this definition to put perceptions and associative dimensions at the heart of the definition rather than as an after-thought. The following are suggested:

Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place: It is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.⁴⁶

An area as perceived by people, including how the area is experienced, understood, interpreted, and regarded.⁴⁷

Meaning of ‘landscape’ as revealed through professional practice

Landscape is an integrating concept

- 4.21 While landscape **draws strands from diverse sources** (natural sciences, humanities, cultural perspectives), it is perceived and experienced as a unified phenomenon. It is an integrated whole. It is more than a summary of data – the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions

- 4.22 The current professional practice of conceptualising ‘landscape’ as the overlap of its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions⁴⁸ is reflected in ‘case law’ including the following recent decision⁴⁹:

“Landscape means the natural and physical attributes of land together with air and water which change over time and which is made known by people’s evolving perceptions and associations.”

⁴⁴ Best Practice Note 10.1, ‘Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management’, 2010, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, page 5.

⁴⁵ The draft NZILA Aotearoa/New Zealand Landscape Charter adopts the first part, defining landscape as “the cumulative expression of natural and cultural elements, patterns and processes in a geographical area”.

⁴⁶ This definition focuses on the relationship between people and place (one of the two strands of meaning of ‘landscape’) and describing the three dimensions (physical, associative, and perceptual) in ordinary terms.

⁴⁷ This definition focuses on perception of an area (the other of the two strands of meaning of ‘landscape’) and describing perception in its broadest terms.

⁴⁸ That is, for the purpose of shared understanding and analysis we think of people’s relationships with landscapes as having three frames of reference – physical, associative, and perceptual.

⁴⁹ [2011] NZEnvC 384, Mainpower NZ Limited v Hurunui District Council, (‘**Mount Cass Wind Farm**’), paragraph 300-301

“In keeping with the Act such a definition enables the development of landscape assessment which takes account of:

- *natural and physical environment: and*
- *perceptual; and*
- *associative aspects (beliefs, uses, values and relationships)*

which may change over time”

4.23 To elaborate on these dimensions:

- **‘Physical’** means both the natural and human-derived features, and the interaction of natural and human **processes** over time. Other terms sometimes used for this dimension include **‘natural and physical resources’** (which echoes RMA phraseology), **natural and built environment** (which echoes the Randerson Report phraseology), **‘physical environment’**, **‘biophysical’** (which is potentially problematic if it is taken to mean only the natural aspects of landscape rather than both natural and human features)⁵⁰, and **‘geographical’**.
- **Associative** means the intangible things that influence how places are perceived – such as history, identity, customs, laws, narratives, creation stories, and activities specifically associated with a landscape. Such associations typically arise over time out of the relationship between people and place. Tāngata whenua associations are therefore especially relevant because of primacy and duration. Pūrākau, tikanga, whakapapa, and mātauranga are key considerations of the associative dimension from a Te Ao Māori perspective, particularly important when considering matters such as mauri and wairua. Other terms sometimes used for this dimension include **‘intangible’**, **‘meanings’**, **‘place-related’** (sense of place).
- **‘Perceptual’** means both sensory experience and interpretation. Sensory appreciation typically occurs simultaneously with interpretation, knowledge, and memory. What we **know, remember, and imagine** influences how we perceive a place.⁵¹ While sight is the sense most typically applied to landscape assessment, sensory perception importantly includes all the senses such as sound, smell, touch, and taste (the smell of the forest floor, sounds of a city, feel of the wind, sense of movement in the tides and waterways, tastes of an area’s foods, or of salt on the wind). Other terms sometimes used for the perceptual dimension include **‘sensory’** (which suggests only raw senses and does not capture the cognitive or interpretative aspect that is implied in the term ‘perceptual’), **‘aesthetic’** (which suggests a focus on beauty rather than wider appreciation), and **‘experiential’** which perhaps better conveys movement and active engagement.⁵²

Landscapes are perceived through cultural lenses

4.24 Landscape is unavoidably cultural, including Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā perspectives – both worldviews being unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads”*.⁵³ Each of the dimensions is

⁵⁰ Some argue that people are part of the biophysical because the natural/human distinction is an artificial construct.

⁵¹ While sound and smell are integral to landscape experience, do not confuse that with specialist expertise in acoustics, odour, and air quality.

⁵² The Guidelines have settled on the terms ‘physical, associative, perceptual’ while recognising that they are not perfect or definitive. This partly reflects the fact that the model is an abstraction that attempts to capture variety and complexity of relationships between people and place.

⁵³ Donald Meinig, *‘The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene’* in *‘The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays, 1979*, edited by D. W. Meinig and John Brinckerhoff Jackson. Meinig’s ten versions comprised landscape as

understood through cultural concepts and values. Both Māori and Pākehā approaches bring powerful ideas to landscape assessment. Interweaving has the potential to increase the depth of understanding and appreciation of landscapes.

- 4.25 To put it another way, cultural ideas influence how we see and feel about a landscape. Even wilderness is a cultural concept: it has an objective physical reality that can be powerfully interpreted through scientific understanding, but also derives its aesthetic qualities and metaphysical meanings from other cultural ideas.
- 4.26 Landscape involves **understanding** and **appreciation**. It entails an **experiential** response: what we ‘see’ (smell, feel, sound, taste, etc) and how we feel about it (including such feelings as reverence, attachment, identity, etc). But this immediate response is informed deeply by **knowledge** (what we see is what we know), **memory** (what we see is influenced by what we remember and the **values** we associate with a place – including pūrākau, whakapapa, tikanga, and mauri).

Landscape is the interaction of its dimensions

- 4.27 The physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are not discrete categories. On the contrary, it is the interaction of these dimensions (the overlaps in the diagram at paragraph 4.10) that is key to a landscape’s character and values. It is the *tuinga*, or binding, of the dimensions. Landscapes are the interaction of their parts, not the sum of them. It is a key reason why landscapes do not yield to rigid methods but instead require interpretation and reasoned explanation. It would be inappropriate, for instance, to assign a rating to each dimension to arrive at an overall ‘score’ for a landscape in the manner of a formula.
- 4.28 There is also no hierarchy or stipulated order to the dimensions.⁵⁴ Practitioners often analyse landscapes from different **starting points** that reflect their own perspectives and interests.⁵⁵ Many begin with the physical dimension which, in one sense, anchors the others. However, understanding a physical area as landscape requires simultaneous understanding of associations and perceptions.⁵⁶ As depicted on the diagram at paragraph 4.10, the dimensions are **complementary, overlapping, and non-hierarchical**:
- Landscapes emerge in the overlap. The interaction is key, not the dimensions by themselves.
 - Although it can be described in a linear way, assessment in practice is typically non-linear: it seeks connections and patterns in an iterative manner.
 - There is no necessary order to the process of describing and analysing the dimensions.
 - The weight given to matters depends entirely on context.
 - As with all interpretation, the essence is in the explanation.

nature, habitat, artefact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, place, aesthetic.

⁵⁴ The preference given to certain landscape values, however, is often contested. The purpose of landscape assessment is often to assist decision makers decide between competing landscape values, or to weigh landscape values in the context of other values. See paragraph 5.5.

⁵⁵ There is also evidence of considerable variation in practice in the weight given to each of the three dimensions (Renata, 2018).

⁵⁶ Some practitioners conceptualise the associative dimension as values deriving from the physical and perceptual attributes of a landscape. Some *tāngata whenua*, on the other hand, conceptualise the associative dimension as informing the perceptual aspects. As noted, the Guidelines adopt the stance that the dimensions are complementary, that there is no hierarchy or necessary order.

Typical factors

4.29 The following illustrates typical factors often considered under the three dimensions.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Physical | <p>(natural and human):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geology and geomorphology. • Topography and hydrology (including drainage patterns). • Climate and weather patterns.⁵⁷ • Soil patterns. • Vegetation patterns. • Ecological (flora and fauna) and dynamic components. • Settlements and occupation. • Roads and circulation. • Land use – cadastral pattern. • Buildings. • Archaeology and heritage features. • Tāngata whenua features. |
| Associative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tāngata whenua creation and origin traditions manifest in landscape features.⁵⁸ • Tāngata whenua associations and experience – (historic, contemporary, and future)⁵⁹ including pūrākau, whakapapa, tikanga, and mātauranga. • Tāngata whenua metaphysical aspects such as wairua and mauri. • Legal personification of landscape features. • Shared and recognised values of a landscape derived from community life including the community’s livelihood, its history and reason for being in that place, places of social life and gathering, places associated with metaphysical meanings such as retreat, contemplation, and commemoration. • Landscape values associated with identity such as attributes that are emblematic for an area, places that are central to a community (main street, wharf, park), features that are anthropomorphised. Landscapes that are engaged through activities such traditional food and resource gathering, recreational use, food and wine that reflect a locale, tourism based on landscape experience or appreciation of a landscape’s qualities. |
| Perceptual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geomorphic legibility (how obviously a landscape expresses the geomorphic processes). • Wayfinding and mental maps (legibility or visual clarity of landmarks, routes, nodes, edges, and areas of different character). • Memorability. • Coherence (the extent to which patterns reinforce each other, coherence between human patterns and underlying natural landscape). • Aesthetic qualities. • Naturalness. • Views. |

⁵⁷ Factors are intertwined. For example, high rainfall on the West Coast results in lush vegetation and very active erosion compared to the dry regimes east of the Southern Alps. Much of the topography of the Southern Alps is influenced by glaciation which is also strongly influenced by climate. Characteristic weather patterns are also part of a landscape’s character, such as the Waikato’s river mists, Hauturu-o-Toi’s cloud puff, Canterbury’s Nor-west arch, and Greymouth’s ‘The Barber’ wind.

⁵⁸ Such traditions often explain the appearance of features, whakapapa connections between them and between features and tangata whenua, and patterns of occupation and use. Creation and origin traditions are associated with many landscape features – particularly notable examples include Aoraki, Mauao, Taranaki maunga, and Te Mata-o-Rongokako.

⁵⁹ Tāngata whenua have a holistic relationship with landscape in all its dimensions. The highlighting of certain factors in this list is not to be interpreted as restricting tāngata whenua landscape values to such factors. See paragraph 4.15.

Note that physical, associative, and perceptual factors are sometimes **transient**: they may be present occasionally or seasonally or in different weather conditions. An assessor should be awake to such **transient attributes** that may not be immediately apparent.

- 4.30 Visual matters are **integral to landscape** rather than a separate category or factor. Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are each experienced visually (as well as through other senses).⁶⁰

“We all have a ‘watchful eye’ that scans the view and takes in the bigger picture. What we ‘see’ depends on our needs and expectations, our intuition and experience. The view is a summary expression of infinitely complex relationships. We can be intimately embedded in such relationships or we can be detached observers. What a landscape or a place means to us and how we value it depends on our relationship with it and with those who live in it.” (Clive Anstey)

- 4.31 To reiterate, while such lists are useful reminders, they are not a formula:

- Factors straddle dimensions (e.g., ‘naturalness’ is a function of physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions) – it is the interplay between dimensions that is often key.
- Not every factor is relevant everywhere, and factors that are not listed may be relevant.
- The relative weight given to a factor depends on context and issues.
- Assessment and interpretation of such factors (and the conclusions and recommendations that flow from them) is a matter of professional judgement. As with all matters of professional judgement, explanation and reasons are key.

- 4.32 The three overlapping dimensions (physical, associative, perceptual) embrace earlier factor lists such as the ‘Pigeon Bay criteria’⁶¹ and ‘Lammermoor list’. Those provide useful guidance on the range of things to consider. It is also important to understand them from an historical perspective. They are included in some statutory plans and policy statements.⁶² For completeness, the Pigeon Bay criteria⁶³ are:

- (a) *the natural science factors - the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape;*
- (b) *its aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness,*
- (c) *its expressiveness (legibility): how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it;*
- (d) *transient values: occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year;*
- (e) *whether the values are shared and recognised;*
- (f) *its value to tāngata whenua;*

⁶⁰ While assessments sometimes refer to the ‘existing visual environment’, this does not relate to landscape character and value but rather is an aspect of visual effects.

⁶¹ Sometimes referred to as the **WESI factors** after the case ‘Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated v Queenstown-Lakes District Council, [1999], Decision No. C180/99.

⁶² For instance, the Pigeon Bay criteria are the basis of the assessment factors listed in Policy 15(c) of the NZCPS, and for outstanding natural features and landscape in the Auckland Unitary Plan and Horizons One Plan.

⁶³ The factors were originally developed in the Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, Boffa Miskell Limited and Lucas Associates, 1993. They were formalised in the ‘Pigeon Bay’ Decision No. C32/99, and slightly revised in the WESI Decision C180/99.

(g) its historical associations.

- 4.33 The benefit of re-packing such factors as three overlapping dimensions (physical, associative, perceptual,) include:
- Accommodating both tāngata whenua and western world views in a holistic manner.
 - Linking the dimensions more directly with the definition of ‘landscape’.
 - Providing flexibility to include other relevant factors and criteria depending on context.⁶⁴
 - Discouraging use of such checklists as a default formula.
- 4.34 Landscape assessors will nevertheless need to work with lists of factors and criteria in different situations. Competent assessors will be aware that they are merely tools and will not treat them as formulas.

Temporal aspects (time and place)

- 4.35 Landscapes evolve. Each landscape contains its history – where it has come from and where it is going. For example, a town will reflect its origins (why it is where it is), and the patterns of its earlier development. It will also have a ‘trajectory’ – whether it is growing or declining). Similarly, people’s relationships with places change. The town’s culture and what is valued about it will evolve over time. History is more than a landscape’s ‘heritage’ features – it is the past/present/future story that helps to understand and interpret the landscape.

Transient aspects

- 4.36 Landscapes also vary with daily, seasonal, and annual patterns and weather. ‘**Transient values**’ arise from such variations. Each of a landscape’s dimensions contains transient aspects. Transient physical attributes include such things as tides, whitebait runs, wading bird migrations. Transient associative attributes include place-based festivals and commemorations such as Matariki events, Anzac traditions, harvest festivals. Transient perceptual attributes include sunrise on the hills, bush in the rain, a starry clear winter’s night. The value is not transience per se, but the attributes at different times and in different conditions.

Double counting

- 4.37 Landscape assessments are sometimes criticised for ‘**double counting**’ information from other disciplines, such as tāngata whenua perspectives, ecology, and historical heritage. That criticism **could** be valid **if** such input was merely collated – as a catalogue of information. But it is not ‘double-counting’ if the input is woven into landscape as part of an integrated whole.⁶⁵ For example, cultural narratives, geomorphology, ecology, and aesthetics are typically experienced together as landscape. Landscapes are a whole. The parts typically resonate with each other. Integrating different types of information is central to landscape architecture expertise.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The Pigeon Bay criteria do not address matters relevant to urban landscape for example.

⁶⁵ See Wakatipu Environment Society Incorporated v Queenstown-Lakes District Council, Decision C180/99, paragraph 77 ff.

⁶⁶ As discussed, sensory experience such as sound and smell are integral to landscape. However, do not confuse such sensory experience that is integral to landscape with specialist disciplines such as acoustics, odour, and air quality.

- 4.38 ‘Landscape’ is often adopted by other disciplines as a term because of its spatial scale and integrating nature. For example, ‘landscape ecology’, ‘heritage landscape’, and ‘cultural landscape’.

Landscapes have generic and specific character

- 4.39 Each landscape has a **unique character** comprising a **particular combination of attributes**. But they also have **generic similarities** with some other landscapes. Banks Peninsula has landscape character distinct from that of the Canterbury Plains, for example. Within the Banks Peninsula, Lyttelton Harbour has specific character distinct from that of Akaroa Harbour, although both harbours are generically the same. Likewise, landscapes fall within generic character types (such as ‘rural’ or ‘urban’) depending on certain generic attributes.
- 4.40 Be clear whether you are referring to generic or specific character and understand which is relevant. Specific character conveys more information than generic character. It is likely that specific character will be more relevant to managing that landscape’s values than generic character. A pitfall is to focus on generic parameters (such as ruralness or naturalness) and overlook the **specific character** and **context**.

Cultural landscapes

- 4.41 ‘Cultural landscape’ has different meanings:
- ‘Cultural construct’ is the idea that landscapes are seen through cultural lenses so that all landscapes, even wilderness, are ‘cultural landscapes’ as discussed above at paragraph 4.24 ff.⁶⁷
 - ‘Cultural landscape’ in international landscape ‘parlance’ means landscapes resulting from human processes, as reflected in the 1973 NZILA Statement of Philosophy: *“the landscape reflects the cumulative effects of natural and cultural processes”*.⁶⁸
 - In Aotearoa, ‘cultural landscape’ often means landscapes valued specifically by tāngata whenua for Te Ao Māori cultural reasons – including natural landscapes that are valued because of traditions, ancient stories, and historical associations. *“A defined area or place with strong significance for mana whenua arising from cultural or historical associations and includes connected natural, physical or metaphysical markers or features.”*⁶⁹ Specific methods have been developed for such ‘cultural landscape assessment’. Spatially, they may comprise a network of connected places that are understood as part of a whole.
 - The term ‘cultural landscape’ is also considered the most appropriate term for landscapes valued for cultural reasons by Pākehā and other communities, for which similar principles would apply.

⁶⁷ Landscape values are ascribed by people. The term ‘intrinsic values’ means those values deemed to exist independently of human values, such as a landscape’s inherent natural characteristics, or those values attributed to features deemed to have the legal status of a person (e.g., Whanganui River, Taranaki maunga). Without taking anything away from such important concepts, the ascribed values are necessarily attributed as ‘cultural constructs’.

⁶⁸ This is also how landscape is defined in the draft Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Charter. It is also consistent with the influential cultural geographer Carl Sauer’s definition of cultural landscape: *“The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result”*.

⁶⁹ Randerson Report, page 99. The report goes on to note that “Recognition of interconnections and that a cultural landscape can be ‘more than the sum of its parts’ will enable the multi-faceted relationships that mana whenua have with land and water to be adequately protected and restored.

4.42 For information, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, identifies three types of ‘cultural landscape’:

- A landscape designed and created intentionally by man (sic).
- An organically evolved landscape.
- An associative cultural landscape - (a landscape valued because of the religious, artistic, spiritual, historic, or cultural associations of the natural element.⁷⁰)

Tangata whenua cultural landscapes

4.43 Cultural landscapes important to tangata whenua warrant recognition both for landscape assessment in general and specifically as a matter of national importance under s6(e).

“the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral landscape, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga.”

4.44 Such cultural landscapes can comprise relatively small areas and features but are often landscapes comprising a network of places and connections in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They comprise tangible and intangible aspects. They can comprise urban, coastal, rural, and natural landscapes. They can be conceived of in terms of the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions applied to landscape in general.⁷¹

4.45 When considering ‘cultural landscapes’:

- Explain the precise meaning in which you use the term.
- Recognise that all cultures attach value to landscapes (natural and built) and see landscapes through cultural lenses.
- Acknowledge precedence to tāngata whenua cultural landscapes in Aotearoa.
- Recognise that cultural values change over time.
- As with all professional assessment, be transparent and provide reasons. Explain the specific values rather than relying on generic parameters.

Built environment landscapes (urban landscapes)

4.46 ‘Urban landscapes’ are a type of landscape which fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes. While ‘landscape’ is often associated with countryside, towns and cities are just as much a landscape type. ‘**Townscape**’ is an alternative term for ‘urban landscape’. For the avoidance of doubt, ‘urban landscapes’ do not just mean the natural or green parts of cities. Rather, urban landscapes comprise the physical urban environment (its topography, streets, buildings, open spaces, and their related processes and activities), how people perceive it (its legibility, memorability, aesthetics), and what it means to them (its identity, history, sense of place).

⁷⁰ Tongariro National Park, for example, is classified as a World Heritage Area for both its natural and cultural values. This could be called a landscape approach.

⁷¹ The Randerson Report includes specific reference to ‘cultural landscapes’ as part of a recommended new Section 7 (page 483). It defines cultural landscape as “a defined area or place with strong significance for mana whenua arising from cultural or historical associations and includes connected natural physical or metaphysical markers or features”. The Report comments that “Recognition of interconnections and that a cultural landscape can be ‘more than the sum of its parts’ will enable the multi-faceted relationships that mana whenua have with land and water to be adequately protected and restored” (page 99). This is a positive provision that is consistent with the Guidelines. However, as discussed above, the Guidelines also promote the idea that landscapes are significant to all culture and communities and that the term cultural landscape is capable of broad meaning depending on context.

4.47 The following list⁷² illustrates typical factors (amongst many others) that contribute to urban landscape character:⁷³

- **Context** or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape.
- **Topography** and response of urban form to topography.
- **Grain** of the built form and its relationship to historic patterns.
- Layout and scale of **built form**, **density** of development and **building types**, including **architectural characteristics**, period, and materials.
- Patterns of **activities** (land use) past and present.
- Contribution of **natural features** such as coastlines, rivers, watercourses, maunga, hills and high points, harbours.
- Nature and location of **vegetation**, including the different types of green space and tree cover and their relationships to buildings and streets and topography.
- Types of **open space** and character and qualities of the public realm [public domain].
- Access and **connectivity**, including streets [street networks and patterns, pedestrian circulation].
- Places and values of significance to **tāngata whenua**, such as whakapapa, kōrero tuku iho, and mana, and the observable mauri of a place.
- **Sense of place** including historical associations, identity.

4.48 Many of the detail factors for urban landscapes fall under ‘urban design’. Urban design is sometimes conceived of as a specialist area of practice and sometimes as the overlap between different disciplines (architecture, landscape, planning). Landscape assessors working in urban environments should be knowledgeable and informed on matters relating to such environments – as for all other landscape types. But do not be overly concerned with distinctions between landscape and urban design. The urban environment does not belong to a profession. The point is to assist decision makers (and others) within your expertise on matters relating to the urban landscape. It is the environment that is the focus – not the profession.⁷⁴

Coastal environment landscapes

4.49 The coastal environment has special relevance because it has its own national policy statement, the ‘New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement’ (**NZCPS**). It is relevant to the requirement to protect the natural character of the coastal environment which is covered under Chapter 9 (Natural Character). This section addresses **landscapes** within the coastal environment.

4.50 The coastal environment includes both land and sea. It is described in Policy 1 of the NZCPS as (amongst other things) “*areas where coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant...*” and as including the “*coastal marine area*” which comprises the extent of territorial waters (generally 12 nautical miles from the mainland or islands). Landscapes in the coastal

⁷² Adapted and expanded from ‘townscape’ factors listed in the UK Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (**GLVIA**), the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Third Edition, section 5.5 Townscape Character Assessment

⁷³ It has been observed that the list in the following paragraph could also be applied to rural landscapes which reinforces the point that different types of landscape fall within the same physical, associative, and perceptual framework.

⁷⁴ For instance, it was reported in feedback that landscape architects and urban designers often arrive at different findings with respect to visual effects. Some of this was explained in terms of different spatial perspectives – urban designers tending to focus on an immediate context and landscape architects on a wider context. However, visual effects are agnostic as to discipline.

environment have the same spatial extent as the coastal environment – extending to the extent of territorial waters.⁷⁵ The land and the sea are interconnected in such landscapes.

4.51 Landscapes in the coastal environment continue below the water – they do not stop at the shoreline or sea’s surface.

- Underwater landscapes are connected **physically** and through **processes** with terrestrial landscapes – moana with whenua.
- The connections can be **seen** in such instances as tidal harbours, or in surface expressions of underwater features, and can be **perceived** remotely through charts and other data. Underwater features can be expressed on the surface, such as fish habitat associated with a reef, which attract sea birds and boats fishing the reef. The fluctuation of shorelines and tidal harbours also challenge delineation of such landscapes based on visibility.
- Communities can have **associations** with underwater features, for example Pania Reef at Napier, and well-known river bars that have associated histories and folklore. From a Te Ao Māori perspective Te Tai Tangaroa is indivisible– the visible surface is integral with the underwater zone which is unseen but evident in other ways.
- The RMA defines land as including land covered by water (RMA section 2).
- Underwater ‘Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes’ have been formerly identified.⁷⁶

4.52 There are, however, **qualitative differences** between underwater and terrestrial landscapes that should be recognised where relevant.

4.53 Factors specific to landscapes in the coastal environment include, for example:

- Coastal and marine **landforms** (headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, reefs, spits, bays, seabed, underwater topography, sediments...).
- Coastal and marine **biota and ecosystems** (pōhutukawa, kelp, seabirds, fish, dune ecosystems, reef ecosystems...).
- Coastal **processes** (tides, waves, weather, erosion, deposition...).
- Coastal **human features** (quays, wharves, pontoons, lighthouses, ports, shipwrecks, shipping channels, infrastructure).
- **Landuse patterns** oriented to the sea (the location and form of coastal towns and settlements, orientation of transport...).
- Coastal **activities** (shipping, boating swimming, surfing, fishing, kai moana gathering, beach combing, star gazing...).
- Coastal weather patterns (sea mist, on and offshore winds, wave patterns).
- **Views** to and from the sea.
- Other **experiential aspects** (the sound and smell of the sea, lap of the tides, reflected light on the sky, the taste of kai moana...).

⁷⁵ ‘Seascape’ has currency because it is referred to in NZCPS Policy 15. From the context it appears that seascape is a sub-set of landscapes in the coastal environment, perhaps such landscapes in which the sea is the dominant element. It seems an unnecessary term that is more likely to confuse than clarify. It is noted that the GLVIA, on the other hand, defines ‘seascape’ as “landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and adjacent marine environments with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other”

⁷⁶ Bay of Plenty Regional Coastal Environment Plan which includes several ONFLs containing underwater areas such as ONFL44 which includes Astrolabe Reef and Okaparu Reef and Brewis Shoal.

- 4.54 While there are such specific factors and issues to consider, landscapes in the coastal environment nevertheless fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes.

Other landscape types

- 4.55 The suffix ‘scape’ often indicates a landscape type (townscape, seascape) or typical elements (streetscape, nightscape, skyscape). For example:
- ‘**Riverscape**’ has been coined to refer to the character and values of rivers. Rivers are **central features** of landscapes, their catchment boundaries often **define the extent** of a landscape, and they often **connect** a sequence of landscapes. Awa are key elements in terms of Māori cultural association, as evidence for example in Te Awa Tupua Act (2017) that recognises the Whanganui River as a legal entity.
 - ‘**Skyscape**’ draws attention to an often-overlooked aspect of landscapes. For example, the sky has different hues toward the coast, greater presence in open ‘big-sky’ landscapes, and much of a landscape’s transient qualities are due to changing sky conditions. *“There are no two more different landscapes than the same under altered skies”*.⁷⁷
 - The darkness of the night sky (‘**nightscape**’) is a landscape value formally recognised in dark sky reserves and sanctuaries. It is listed in the NZCPS as an aspect of a coastal environment’s natural character. Some organisations, such as Waka Kotahi and Territorial Authorities, are taking steps to reduce the effects of street lighting on the night sky.
 - Matters in urban areas are sometimes localised to ‘**streetscape**’. The term covers the character of the street and the properties defining the street. It includes the physical patterns, aesthetic qualities and activities.
- 4.56 Remember that the different landscape types fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes. While focusing on landscape types is a handy shorthand, it can unnecessarily distract from (i) the **specific** landscape, (ii) the **whole** landscape, and (iii) the **overarching concepts and principles** that apply to all landscapes. In a Te Ao Māori approach, all such types are inter-connected.

⁷⁷ Oxford English Dictionary entry for ‘landscape’, excerpt from J.B. Mozley sermon.

Summary Box

Landscape is a western concept that is evolving a distinctive flavour in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place: it includes the physical character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.

Whenua is the nearest Te Reo term for landscape, although the terms are not directly interchangeable. Whenua contains layers of meaning concerning people's relationship with the land.

Professional practice conceives of landscape as comprising three dimensions: the physical environment, peoples' perceptions of it, and the meanings and values associated with it. This concept, integrated with mātauranga, provides a potential bridge between whenua and landscape.

Landscapes:

- Are experienced as a whole – the interaction of their dimensions.
- Integrate many factors and information from diverse sources.
- Are seen through cultural lenses.
- Change with time: and in how they are understood, perceived, and in what they mean.
- Each have their own distinctive character.
- Are natural, rural, and urban.

5 ASSESSING LANDSCAPES

Landscape character and value

- 5.1 To assess a landscape is to assess its **character** and **values**.
- 5.2 While landscape assessment methods differ, they are all based on the links between **landscape character** and **values**: Character is an expression of the landscape's collective attributes. Values are the reasons a landscape is valued but are embodied in attributes. Effects are consequences for a landscape's values of changes to the attributes on which the values depend. Landscape's values are managed through management of such attributes.
- 5.3 There are **coherent links**, therefore, between the definition of landscape (Chapter 4), how landscape character and values are assessed (Chapter 5), how effects on landscape values are analysed (Chapter 6), and how a landscape's values are managed (Chapter 7).⁷⁸

Character

- 5.4 Landscape character is each landscape's distinct combination of physical, associative, and perceptual attributes. It entails:

- Both **tangible and intangible** attributes;⁷⁹ and
- The attributes in **combination** (as a whole); and
- Especially the combination that makes a place **distinct** or individual⁸⁰

Character (all emphasis added)

*The distinctive **nature** of something*

*The quality of being **individual** in an interesting or unusual way⁸¹*

*The particular **combination** of qualities in a ...place that makes (it) different from others⁸²*

*...all the qualities that make...a place...**distinct** from other ...places*

*If something has a particular character, it has a particular **quality**⁸³*

⁷⁸ These Guidelines take a different approach to that taken in some overseas guidelines that limit character to physical characteristics and make a sharp distinction between character and value. To clarify the difference, those other guidelines conceptualise character as the tangible physical aspects and values as the associative attributes (the intangible aspects). By contrast, these Guidelines conceptualise character as the combination of tangible and intangible characteristics, and values as the reasons the landscape is valued.

⁷⁹ i.e., the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions (and their constituent factors) discussed in Chapter 4 of the Guidelines. For comparison, the GLVIA Guidelines also recognise that character includes both tangible and intangible characteristics. *“Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of the landscape that make different places distinctive.”* Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Third Edition, section 2.19.

⁸⁰ Generic landscape character or ‘character type’ are abstractions of each landscape’s specific character.

⁸¹ Online Oxford Languages.

⁸² Cambridge online dictionary.

⁸³ Collins online dictionary.

- 5.5 Landscape **character** is more than physical elements alone. It encompasses everything about a landscape – its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions. As used in these Guidelines, ‘attributes’ means the same as ‘characteristics and qualities’.⁸⁴

Values

- 5.6 Landscape **values** are the reasons a landscape is valued – the aspects that are important or special or meaningful. Values may relate to each of landscape’s dimensions – or, more typically, the interaction between the dimensions. They could relate to the physical condition of the landscape, the meanings associated with certain attributes, and their aesthetic qualities. Importantly, values are embodied in certain physical attributes (values are not attributes, but they depend on attributes) (see paragraph 5.25 ff).

Value

*The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something*⁸⁵

*The importance or worth of something for someone*⁸⁶

*The value of something such as a quality...is its importance or usefulness. If you place a particular value on something, that is the importance or usefulness you think it has*⁸⁷

All landscapes have values

- 5.7 Landscape values are not limited to just special landscapes. **Everyday landscapes** have values relevant to those who live in them and which collectively go to the quality of New Zealand. Landscape management⁸⁸ requires managing the values of **all landscapes**.

Existing and potential values

- 5.8 Landscape values include **potential values**. Landscape management is not limited to the status quo (existing values) but includes realisation of **potential values** and restoration of the values of degraded landscapes.

Values are ascribed

- 5.9 Values are **ascribed by people**.⁸⁹ Even natural values, which may be referred to as ‘intrinsic’, are values ascribed by people.
- 5.10 Contested landscape values are often at the heart of landscape issues. Differences in how landscape values are perceived can reflect different interests and perspectives. As discussed at paragraph 2.23, the role of landscape assessors is to provide an impartial assessment of landscape character and values (and effects on values) to assist decision makers (and others).

⁸⁴ Some documents, such as the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, refer to ‘characteristics and qualities’. As used in these Guidelines, ‘attributes covers ‘characteristics and qualities’ – i.e. the physical characteristics and the intangible qualities.

⁸⁵ Online Oxford Languages.

⁸⁶ Cambridge online dictionary.

⁸⁷ Collins online dictionary.

⁸⁸ The sustainable management of the landscape resource.

⁸⁹ Values are assigned by people and typically reflect different interests and perspectives. Even natural values, which may be referred to as ‘intrinsic’, are values ascribed by people.

Decision makers will use that information in conjunction with submissions and the relevant statutory provisions.

Assessment process and presentation

- 5.11 The **presentation of information** in a report differs from the assessment process.
- While the assessment **process** can be described as a sequence of steps, in practice it is commonly iterative and typically canvasses more information than is selected for the report.
 - **Presentation**, on the other hand, entails organising **selected information** in a **logical structure**.
- 5.12 Assessing landscape character and values entails both reductive and synthesising tasks:
- Analyse the landscape to better understand its parts (reduction).
 - Interpret how the parts come together – are integrated – as character and value (synthesis).
- 5.13 The process can be described as the following steps (although, as discussed above, in practice it is often non-linear):
- Identify the **relevant landscape** (its extent and context).
 - Describe and analyse the **attributes**.
 - Interpret how the attributes **come together** as the landscape’s **character**.
 - Evaluate and explain the landscape’s **values** and the attributes on which the values depend.
- 5.14 The following paragraphs elaborated on these steps:
- Identify the relevant landscape (its extent and context)***
- 5.15 Identify the extent of the relevant landscape. This is a key matter that has implications what is deemed to be an area’s character and values. Differences between the findings of different landscape assessors are sometimes down to the extent of landscape considered relevant.
- 5.16 Small landscapes nest within larger landscapes. As a guide to selecting the relevant scale:
- Take a practical approach having regard to the **purpose** of the assessment.
 - Identify the scale **most relevant** to the purpose of the assessment – but also outline that landscape’s place in the wider context.
 - Consider each landscape **as a whole**: do not overly ‘dice and slice’.⁹⁰
 - Be mindful that landscapes can overlap and have blurred boundaries. Often it is the **general extent** that is relevant rather than the precise delineation.
 - Determine the extent from each landscape’s **own character and attributes** – the sense that you are in a particular landscape as opposed to another (it may be a hydrological catchment, a visual catchment, a neighbourhood – depending on the purpose of the assessment)

⁹⁰ See Port Gore decision, [2012] NZEnvC 072.

- 5.17 As with all matters of judgement, explain the reasons for the identified relevant landscape. This need not be complicated. It is generally obvious and straightforward.

Describe and analyse the attributes (characteristics and qualities)

- 5.18 Describe and analyse the attributes paying attention to each of the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions and the range of typical factors described in Chapter 4.

- 5.19 Practitioners often conceptualise this task as a series of landscape **layers**, although there are thematic and other approaches. It may help to refer to factor lists such as those outlined at paragraph 4.29. But treat such lists as ‘aides de memoir’ and not a way to structure your assessment.

- 5.20 Analysis entails site survey and desk-top research. It is a reductive phase to better understand the landscape components.

- Draw on information from a variety of sources such as other environmental disciplines, local histories, iwi documents, ecological databases, community pages, landscape research...etc. Reference the sources. Note any gaps you think may be relevant.
- Take an historical perspective. Analyse how the attributes reflect the landscape’s history and trajectory over time (as discussed in paragraph 4.35).

- 5.21 Sources of information that may be useful include:

- Geological maps (Q Series) and incidental publications.
- Geopreservation inventory - <http://www.geomarine.org.nz/NZGI/>
- Significant Natural Area (SNA) reports.
- Soil maps.
- Ecological District maps and reports.
- Land Use Capability database and maps.
- Iwi and hapū management plans, GIS/Mapping databases, and atlases (e.g., www.kahurumanu.co.nz)
- Archaeological studies and NZ Archaeological Association database.
- Waitangi Tribunal Reports (e.g., Treaty settlement reports).
- Māori land online.
- Local histories.
- Tourist information (how an area presents its ‘sense of place’, what it considers its key features).
- Previous landscape studies.
- Background information in statutory and non-statutory documents such as Regional Policy Statements and District Plans, Reserve and Conservation Management Plans, DOC Conservation Strategies and National Park Plans....
- Specialist reports from other disciplines (such as geomorphology, ecology, historic heritage, cultural values assessment, etc).

- 5.22 Visual matters are integral to landscape rather than a separate category. Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are each experienced visually (as well as through other senses).⁹¹

⁹¹ For example, assessing the ‘physical landscape’ and the ‘visual environment’ as separate things is an unintegrated approach and less straightforward.

Interpret landscape character

- 5.23 The essential step is to interpret each landscape's character – how the parts come together as character.⁹² This step will **synthesise** the dimensions and explain how the attributes combine to create the landscape's character. It requires both **insight** and **clarity** to see the landscape as an entity, as well as its pertinent attributes, and the role the attributes play in the landscape's character. It cannot be done mechanistically but requires intelligent, creative, and critical interpretation.
- 5.24 It is essential that the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are synthesised (integrated). While teased apart for the sake of analysis, it is only when bound together that the dimensions make sense **as landscape** – that the landscape comes to life.

Evaluate landscape values (and valued attributes)

- 5.25 Character and value are different but **interdependent**. All landscapes have character and value.⁹³ Identifying each landscape's values is fundamental to its management. While evaluation can be conceived of as a subsequent step to characterisation,⁹⁴ values typically become apparent through the process of interpreting a landscape's character. Interpretation of a landscape's character will point to its values, and evaluation of a landscape's values will point to the attributes on which those values depend. Interpreting character and values is therefore typically an iterative process.
- 5.26 The **purpose** of identifying landscape values is to maintain and improve such values.⁹⁵ But landscape values **depend on physical attributes**.⁹⁶ It is important that values are explained in terms of such physical attributes that can be managed.⁹⁷ For example, the rural values of pastoral landscape may depend on avoidance of building on skyline ridges, and the relative density of buildings to open space. The natural values of a landscape with bush clad valleys, on the other hand, may depend on avoiding development in the valleys and locating buildings within well treed ridgelines. The biophysical values of the bush may depend on its being contiguous and its indigenous species composition.

⁹² There may be differences of character within a landscape that, if relevant, could be described, for example, by identifying 'landscape units'. However, such differences would typically be interpreted in the context of the whole landscape being more than the sum of the parts. If that were not the case, it might raise questions whether the right landscape context has been selected.

⁹³ Even degraded landscapes where the values may need restoration as discussed at paragraph 5.8.

⁹⁴ UK practice promotes evaluation as a separate step following a description of character. Canadian heritage landscape practice promotes the opposite approach: first identifying value and then describing the attributes that support value (Refer to Background Document 3 'Review of Other Guidelines'). The reversibility highlights that character and value are interdependent and open to iterative analysis.

⁹⁵ As discussed above at paragraph 5.10, contested values are often at the heart of landscape issues. Decisions may turn on **whose values** are to hold sway, or the relative weight given to **competing types of value** – for example wind farms may involve resolving tensions between aesthetic value and the value of renewable energy. Competing values are often expressed at hearings by parties with different interests. As discussed at paragraph 2.23 ff, the role of a landscape assessor is to provide an **impartial** and **integrated** professional assessment to assist the decision makers consider different perspectives. Competing values may also be resolved through design (see Chapter 7).

⁹⁶ The natural and physical resources in terms of the RMA's purpose of sustainable management of natural and physical resources. RMA Schedule 4 refers to 'physical effects on a locality including any landscape and visual effects' as matters to be addressed by an assessment of environmental effects.

⁹⁷ As discussed at paragraph 5.7 ff, the values of **all** landscapes are important. Protecting only certain special landscapes (such as outstanding natural features and landscapes) would not achieve the purpose of sustainable management.

- 5.27 Consider **potential values** as well as existing values. Such potential may entail enhancement of landscape values, or restoration of areas that have been degraded. A design approach is a means to realise potential values (See Chapter 7).
- 5.28 Criteria are sometimes used to evaluate landscapes. If used, such criteria should be consistent with the concept of 'landscape' as defined in Chapter 4. That is, the criteria should recognise landscape's physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions and reflect the fact that character and value arise from the interaction between the dimensions.⁹⁸
- 5.29 Values are **specific** to each landscape **in its context**. While desired outcomes are sometimes framed as generic attributes (such as 'naturalness' or 'rural character'), such generalisations rest on each landscape's specific character. Do not let a focus on generic parameters lead you to overlook each landscape's specific character and values in its unique context. For example, District Plans often have policies relating to maintaining rural character. However, there is a variety of such rural character ranging from sheep-and-beef hill country, to orchards, cropping, dairying, and lifestyle landscapes. The specific attributes of rural character, therefore, vary considerably. Context is everything.
- 5.30 Be cautious with rating ('scoring') attributes to quantitatively evaluate landscapes for the following reasons:
- Conceptually, landscape is the interplay of dimensions – not the sum of their parts.
 - Value is embodied in specific character and attributes, not the generic criteria/factors that typically make up a scoring framework.
 - The relative significance of any criterion/factor depends on context.
 - While in practice a high 'score' for one dimension is often repeated by high scores in the other dimensions (given that the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions typically resonate with each other), such self-reinforcing tendencies do not always hold true and should not be misconstrued. It is possible for a landscape to have a single over-riding reason for its value.
 - Some criteria/factors, particularly in more detailed schema, may be in opposition (for example rarity vs representativeness, historic features vs naturalness).
- 5.31 It is more credible to treat landscape criteria as **pointers** than part of a mathematical formula. Ultimately, reasons and explanation in support of professional judgement are more important than prescribed criteria.

Presentation

- 5.32 While the assessment process should be thorough, the report presentation⁹⁹ should be to the point and cover only what is relevant.¹⁰⁰ Tailor the format and limit the content to best address the following:
- The purpose of the assessment.

⁹⁸ A range of criteria already existing in statutory plans. As noted above, a competent landscape assessor will be able to contextualise such criteria and work with the tools placed before them.

⁹⁹ Presentation may comprise, for instance, an area-based landscape assessment, a technical report for an AEE, or evidence to a hearing. In addition to tailoring the presentation to the subject matter, there are also particular presentation requirements for situations such as Environment Court evidence where are set out in the Court's Practice Note 2014 (<http://environmentcourt.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/2014-ENVC-practice-notes.pdf>), and for AEEs that are set out in the RMA Schedule 4.

¹⁰⁰ As discussed at paragraph 5.11.

- The landscape character, values, and context.
 - The resource management issues.
- 5.33 An assessment will canvass more information than is included in the report. It will never be possible to record everything there is to know about a landscape. Nor would it be helpful at all. Rather, **relevance** is key. It requires skilful **selection** and **organisation** of information. In making such selections, bear in mind that the purpose is to assist decision makers. Their decisions (as far as landscape matters are concerned) are likely to turn on landscape **values, attributes**, and the **means to manage them**.
- 5.34 Be wary of templates and standard headings. They are likely to hinder the skilful selection and organisation of information to suit the **specific landscape** and the **relevant issues**.

Assessment types

- 5.35 Different types of assessment have different methods and report structures:
- A **‘proposal-driven’** assessment, for example, will have a specific purpose of assessing the effects of a proposal. It will likely focus on the ‘receiving environment’ and on the values (and attributes on which the values depend) that might be potentially affected. It will have regard to the values and attributes the District Plan identifies as pertinent through objectives and policies (for example). In other words, it will focus on the issues.
 - An **‘area-based’** assessment, on the other hand, (such as a baseline assessment of a region/district for Plan/Policy Statement) will range more broadly and comprehensively. Such an assessment is likely to map the landscape resource of the whole region/district and identify the character and values of different features and areas. It is likely to include such purposes as identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes, and/or areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character. But, as with other types of assessment, the essence will be landscape character, values, the attributes on which the values depend, and measures to manage those attributes.
 - An **‘issue-based’** assessment is likely to be commissioned by a territorial authority to address a specific matter, such as the capacity of a rural landscape to accommodate residential development while retaining rural character (say). A method for such a study might entail identifying the specific rural character and values of the landscapes, the attributes that contribute to their rural character, the capacity for change before the values are compromise, and design measures to accommodate develop while maintaining rural character.
- 5.36 Each of these reports will look quite different but each will follow the same concepts and principles for assessing landscapes.

Engagement with tāngata whenua when assessing landscapes

- 5.37 Effective engagement between landscape architect and tāngata whenua when describing and evaluating an area’s landscapes can be a complex and sensitive process which depends, among other things, upon:
- Establishing effective working relationships with tāngata whenua based on acknowledgement, respect, and understanding.
 - Maintaining long-term and on-going relationships with tāngata whenua. Consistency

will engender confidence and increase the strength of such relationships. While such relationships typically rest with territorial authorities and public agencies in the first instance, it is desirable for landscape architects to also establish channels of communication with tāngata whenua in areas where they work.

- Appropriately providing for active participation in decision-making and management, (for example through such mechanisms as co-design and co-management) is in keeping with the provisions of The Treaty of Waitangi.
- Listening well.
- Sufficient awareness to appreciate key landscape character components from a Te Ao Māori perspective.
- Ensuring that tāngata whenua are appropriately resourced to respond effectively to engagement processes.
- Undertaking background work (doing the homework) before engaging. For example, reviewing relevant iwi management plans and other information that is in the public domain.

5.38 A landscape architect would not normally speak for tāngata whenua unless delegated to do so (they may have whakapapa and be granted the authority by tāngata whenua with respect to that whenua). However, while it is the prerogative of tāngata whenua to interpret their relationship to landscape, landscape assessors should acknowledge tāngata whenua perspectives and endeavour to integrate such information into a landscape assessment. There are several ways of finding out relevant information and weaving it into an assessment, including:

- Direct engagement with tāngata whenua.¹⁰¹
- Cultural Impact Assessments (CIA) or Cultural Landscape Assessments (CLA).
- Iwi Management Plans.
- Reports of the Waitangi Tribunal.¹⁰²
- Statutory Acknowledgements made as part of Waitangi Tribunal Settlements.¹⁰³
- District Plans.
- General publications.
- Internet searches including marae websites which often contain hapū background.

5.39 Landscape architects should alert clients where they should engage with tāngata whenua to properly address landscape matters. A proper process should be followed in establishing such dialogue. For instance, territorial authorities and Crown entities have established relationships with tāngata whenua groups that often provide a channel to establish dialogue between an applicant and tāngata whenua. A landscape architect would generally establish dialogue through the client and territorial authority – unless they already have established relationships.

5.40 Some landscape architects lack the skills and experience to engage effectively with tāngata whenua or may consider it outside their area of expertise. Clients and local authorities may also conceive of tāngata whenua perspectives as separate from landscape matters. In such situations, the best compromise may be to draw on such CIA or other published documents. However, such ‘siloed’ approaches can lead to tāngata whenua landscape perspectives being limited to the ‘associative’ dimension, overlooking the integration of physical, associative, and

¹⁰¹ A potential pitfall is to rely on documentary research at the expense of engagement with tangata whenua. Engagement is equally important.

¹⁰² <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/publications-and-resources/waitangi-tribunal-reports/>

¹⁰³ Sometimes recorded in District Plans.

perceptual dimensions in a holistic manner (paragraph 4.15). It can lead to erosion of trust between tāngata whenua and others involved in resource management. An integrated approach and on-going relations are good practice that help build trust.

5.41 By way of further explanation:

- A cultural landscape assessment (i.e., in a CIA or separate CLA) and a professional (general) landscape assessment are separate but complementary.
- Information derived from a CIA/CLA and other sources can be incorporated in a professional landscape assessment to the extent that it contributes to understanding and appreciation of a landscape in a general sense.
- The absence of a CIA/CLA does not mean tāngata whenua aspects should be ignored when relevant to a landscape assessment. There are other means of finding information discussed above. You (or your client) could also engage a pūkenga endorsed by tāngata whenua to contribute to a landscape assessment.

5.42 While it is for tāngata whenua to describe the cultural values, perspectives, and associations of the whenua to them, a landscape architect should weave such matters – as far as they are known – into a broad understanding and appreciation of a landscape. Identify gaps where information cannot be obtained. As a guide it is useful to remember that a landscape architect’s role in this context is to assist decision-makers within your landscape expertise, not as an expert in tāngata whenua matters (unless you are).

5.43 Tāngata whenua landscape perspectives are not limited to the associative dimension but entail the interplay of physical, associative and perceptual dimensions in an holistic manner (see paragraph 4.15), and in the context of mātauranga and Te Ao Māori concepts relevant to landscape discussed earlier (e.g. whakapapa, kaitiakitanga, wairua and mauri).

Side Notes

5.44 The following side notes elaborate on certain aspects of landscape assessment.

Analytical and integrative approaches (reduction and synthesis)

5.45 The importance of combining analytical and integrative approaches was described in a recent Environment Court decision.¹⁰⁴

*“[112] “In reviewing the relevant case law on the interpretation and application of s 6(b) RMA, one may discern some tension between **two apparent approaches**: a relatively **schematic approach** of using the list of Pigeon Bay/Wakatipu [WESI] or Maniototo [Lammermoor] factors as quasi-criteria; and a more generalised approach of seeing those factors in the round and then **standing back to form an overall judgment** on the evidence.*

*[113] “We think that the tension may be reduced, if not fully resolved, by observing that **both approaches are part of the whole exercise** required by s6(b). Even in the cases which are based squarely on a list of factors, there is ample guidance to bring the overall context back to the forefront of the decision-making process. This is assisted by identifying a **conceptual framework** common to the more recent cases (although sometimes expressed in slightly different terms) which gathers the list of factors into the broad areas of:*

*(a) The **natural and physical resources** of the landscape (including the scientific understanding of those resources);*

*(b) How the **attributes** of those resources **and their values** can be **perceived** (including aesthetic assessment of those attributes and values); and*

*(c) The **associations** that people and communities make with and among the resources and their attributes and values (including those associations based on their social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions).”*

*[114] “This grouping might be described as the **dimensions** of the assessment of features and landscapes. It may help both the analyst and the decision-maker always to remain aware that by describing these groupings as dimensions it is **necessary to regard them all** as essential to a **full understanding of landscape**. Analysis of a thing which is limited to fewer than the full set of dimensions of that thing will lead to the cognitive errors or biases that have been warned of since at least Plato's allegory of the cave.”*

Generic attributes (sensitivity and capacity)

5.46 ‘Sensitivity’ and ‘capacity’ are widely used generic attributes. Such generic attributes can be useful where future proposals are not yet known (e.g., for issue-based assessments). In those

¹⁰⁴ NZEnvC 147 (Matakana Island) – Western Bay of Plenty District Council v Bay of Plenty Regional Council (2017) paragraphs 112-114.

circumstances, ‘sensitivity’ means the susceptibility of a landscape’s **values** to the **potential effects** of certain kinds of activity – for example, the susceptibility of an area’s rural character to life-style development in general. ‘Capacity’ is an estimate of how much of that activity could be accommodated while still retaining the specified values. ‘Vulnerability’ and ‘resilience’ are related attributes. The following caveats apply to the use of such generic attributes:

- Sensitivity and capacity (and other such generic attributes) derive from a landscape’s specific attributes (the generic depends on the specific) and relate to a certain type of activity (a landscape is sensitive **to** something – it is meaningless to simply state that a landscape has a certain degree of sensitivity).
- The **reasons** are key when assessing such attributes. For example, a landscape may be sensitive **to** lifestyle development (say) **because** it has certain wildlife values, or because it is the backdrop to a scenic location, or because it is adjacent to an historical place or wāhi tapu that warrants a contemplative setting. It is essential to provide the reasons.
- Generic attributes such as ‘sensitivity’ and ‘capacity’ are necessarily **imprecise** because they **estimate an unknown future**. They can be useful and necessary in area-based’ or ‘issues-based’ assessments, or in comparing alternative routes/locations, but they become redundant once there is a specific proposal and the actual effects can be assessed directly. Using ‘sensitivity’ and ‘magnitude’ to assess the significance of effects is not recommended (see paragraphs 6.41 - 6.42).

Landscape, landscape character area, landscape type, feature

5.47 A ‘landscape’ is the **primary unit** (single and complete) for landscape assessment. Small landscapes nest within larger landscapes. Identify the landscape of the scale most appropriate to the purpose of the assessment.¹⁰⁵ The following terms are also useful:

- ‘**Landscape character area**’¹⁰⁶ is used to describe either smaller areas within a landscape (e.g., a rural village), or larger areas of contiguous landscapes with a common character (e.g., the ‘South Island High Country’ contains different landscapes with generically similar character).¹⁰⁷
- A **landscape type** is a kind (class) of landscape sharing certain generic characteristics. A type may be a contiguous area (e.g., South Island High Country has a generic character, and each individual landscape has specific character¹⁰⁸) or non-contiguous (e.g., karst landscapes, rural landscapes, cultural landscapes). A typical part of a landscape (e.g., river terraces, streetscapes) may also be considered a type.

5.48 **Land typing**, on the other hand, is a specific approach to assessing areas based on underlying biophysical elements and processes.¹⁰⁹ The approach includes assessment of the interaction between land systems and their component landforms, bioclimatic zones, ecological districts as

¹⁰⁵ See paragraph 5.10-5.12 with respect to scale.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Landscape characterisation’ can mean describing a landscape’s character or identifying ‘landscape character areas’.

¹⁰⁷ ‘**Landscape unit**’ appears to be synonymous with ‘landscape character area’. It has also been used to variously mean parts of a landscape, or areas of contiguous landscapes, or simply a ‘landscape’. Define its meaning if using this term.

¹⁰⁸ Regional landscape character assessments sometimes adopt a ‘genus-species’ model with specific ‘**landscape character areas**’ nesting within generic ‘**landscape character types**’.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, ‘A land systems approach: Bay of Plenty’, Simon Swaffield and Di Lucas, *Landscape Review* 1999:5 (1) Pages 38-41.

indicated by historical indigenous vegetation, and ecological units. It includes an assessment of current land use and condition, and identification of management issues/recommendations.

- 5.49 A **feature** is a discrete and distinct element (hill, river, island, rock, headland, wharf, building, park, street). While normally part of a landscape, a feature may be sufficiently large (a large island for example) to encompass several landscapes or to traverse different landscapes (e.g. a river, highway). The essence of a feature is not so much size, as singularity and distinctness.

Dimension, characteristic, quality, factor, criteria, value, values

- 5.50 For clarity, the following compares terms used in these Guidelines to describe landscapes.
- **Dimension** describes the three main types of attribute (i.e., physical, associative, and perceptual) that comprise landscape character.
 - **Attributes** refers to both a landscape’s tangible characteristics and its intangible qualities.
 - **Characteristic** is a tangible attribute of a landscape that contributes to its distinct character.¹¹⁰
 - **Qualities** are intangible attributes (e.g., bleakness, intimacy). The phrase ‘characteristics and qualities’ as used in such documents as the NZCPS, therefore, can be interpreted to mean ‘attributes’ (‘tangible and intangible’).
 - **Factor** is a type of attribute used in assessing (describing and evaluating) a landscape. Factors are sometimes listed as checklists. Each factor may have a criterion against which it can be evaluated.
 - **Criteria** are principles or standards against which attributes or factors can be evaluated.
 - **Values**¹¹¹ means the reasons a landscape is valued, embodied in certain attributes.

‘Quality of the environment’ and ‘amenity values’

- 5.51 Section 7(f) of the RMA requires decision makers to have regard to “*the maintenance and enhancement of the **quality of the environment***”. Section 2 of the Act defines environment¹¹² to include:

- (a) ***ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and***
- (b) ***all natural and physical resources; and***
- (c) ***amenity values; and***
- (d) ***the social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) or which are affected by those matters (all emphasis added)***

¹¹⁰ We have adopted the term ‘attribute’, rather than the more elegant characteristic, to describe the things making up character because characteristic is often taken to mean only the tangible aspects of a landscape. Character, as defined in these Guidelines, includes both tangible and intangible aspects. The phrase ‘characteristics and qualities’ is sometimes used, for example in the NZCPS, to refer to tangible and intangible aspects. ‘Qualities’ is sometimes conflated with ‘values’. We consider a quality is an intangible aspect, for example bleakness or intimacy, whereas a value is a reason a landscape is valued.

¹¹¹ Not to be anthropomorphised or conflated with people’s moral values.

¹¹² Some overseas guidelines refer to landscape as a function of environment and people (‘people turn environment into landscape’). The holistic RMA definition above means that in an RMA context landscape can be conceptualised as a subset of ‘environment’. Item (d) of the RMA definition is almost a definition for landscape. However, the Randerson Report recommends deleting items (c) and (d) from the definition.

5.52 Section 7(c) of the RMA requires decision makers to have regard to “*the maintenance and enhancement of **amenity values***”. Amenity values are defined in Section 2 of the Act as:

*“those natural or **physical qualities and characteristics of an area** that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.” (all emphasis added).*

5.53 These two sections of the RMA, and their elaboration in the lower order statutory documents, provide the framework for most day-to-day landscape assessment: Landscape is relevant to **both** the ‘quality of the environment’ and ‘amenity values’.¹¹³ The interplay of physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions in the concept of landscape is similar to the form taken in the definitions of ‘environment’ and ‘amenity values’.

5.54 Sections 7(c) and 7(f) refer to maintenance **and enhancement**. The RMA provides for **positive effects** and environmental enhancement (including restoration) which can be overlooked in focusing on avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects.

5.55 Hybrid terms such as ‘visual amenity’, ‘rural amenity’, and ‘natural amenity’, are shorthand for ‘*landscape values that contribute to amenity values*’. While such shorthand is widely understood (and appears in some statutory Plans), a pitfall of such terms is the potential to overlook the **whole landscape** by jumping straight to certain aspects. It is recommended to identify **landscape values** (including visual aspects) in an integrated way first, and then explain how such landscape values **contribute to** (or detract from) ‘**amenity values**’ and the ‘**quality of the environment**’ (remembering that ‘quality of the environment’ is the more integrated concept that can be overlooked by focusing on amenity values).¹¹⁴

¹¹³ As noted earlier, the Randerson Report recommends removing amenity values and items (c) and (d) from the definition of ‘environment’ from the proposed Natural and Built Environment Act.

¹¹⁴ Similarly, the term ‘Special Amenity Landscapes’ is sometimes coined for landscapes that are not considered ‘Outstanding Natural Landscapes’ (because they are not outstanding or not natural landscapes) but have some special landscape values. The simpler terms ‘Special Landscapes’ or ‘Significant Landscapes’ provides scope for broader landscape values than those limited to ‘amenity values’.

Summary Box

To assess a landscape is to describe its **character** and **values**.

Landscape character includes:

- The tangible and intangible attributes;³¹ and
- The attributes in combination (as a whole); and
- Especially the combination that makes an area or place distinct

Interpreting landscape character involves analysing the attributes and interpreting how they come together as overall character.

Values are the **reasons** a landscape is valued (why it is special, or meaningful, or healthy). Values are embodied in **physical attributes**: it is those attributes that are managed.

Assessing character and values is iterative. Interpreting a landscape's character will point to its values and evaluating the landscape's values will point to the attributes on which those values depend.

Tangata whenua perspectives are integral to Aotearoa's landscapes. Accessing such perspectives depends on active and effective engagement.

The assessment process should be thorough and canvass information widely. The presentation of information in a report, on the other hand, should be to the point: it should comprise skilfully selected and organised material relevant to the purpose, context, and issues.

All landscapes have values. They include **potential values**. Even degraded landscapes can have potential for their values to be restored.

6 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

What is a landscape effect?

- 6.1 A landscape effect is a consequence of changes in a landscape's physical attributes on that landscape's values. Change is not an effect: landscapes change constantly. It is the implications of change on landscape values that is relevant.¹¹⁵
- 6.2 To assess effects, it is therefore necessary to first identify the landscape's 'values' – and the attributes on which such values depend. There is a direct link between assessing landscape character and values (Chapter 5), assessing landscape effects (Chapter 6), and managing such effects (Chapter 7).
- 6.3 Effects include positive effects. While there is a tendency to focus on adverse effects, it is important to also describe positive effects, along with cumulative and temporary effects.¹¹⁶
- 6.4 While an effect arises from changes to physical attributes, the consequences on landscape values relate to all a landscape's physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions.
- 6.5 Effects on landscape values are to be assessed against the existing environment, and the outcomes sought in the relevant statutory provisions (including the RMA and lower order Policy Statements and Plans). Such provisions often anticipate change – the RMA is not predicated on the status quo – and on achieving certain landscape values. Whether effects on landscape values are appropriate will therefore depend **both** on the nature and magnitude of effect on the existing landscape values **and** what is anticipated by the provisions.
- 6.6 Assessing effects entails professional judgement based on expertise and experience. As with all professional judgement, provide reasons and explanation.

What is a visual effect?

- 6.7 Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects. They are consequences of change on landscape values as experienced in views. They are one technique to understand landscape effects.
- 6.8 These Guidelines take a different approach from that taken in some other guidelines which treat landscape and visual effects as separate.¹¹⁷ Some guidelines, for instance, confine landscape effects to the physical landscape character (landform, streams, vegetation, buildings etc) and visual effects to visibility and amenity of views. Such approaches treat each of the landscape and visual matters in a narrow way. These Guidelines promote an integrated approach for the following reasons:
- Landscape values arise from the combination of physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions: To restrict consideration of effects to just the physical dimension would

¹¹⁵ The purpose for identifying effects is to manage values. As noted previously, competing or contested values are often at the centre of resource management issues. The role of the professional landscape assessor is to provide an impartial and integrated assessment that decision makers can use when considering a range of perspectives.

¹¹⁶ Section 3 of the RMA lists types of effect as follows: (a) Any positive or adverse effect; and (b) any temporary or permanent effect; and (c) any past, present, or future effect; and (d) any cumulative effect which arises over time or in combination with other effects—regardless of the scale, intensity, duration, or frequency of the effect, and also includes— (e) any potential effect of high probability; and (f) any potential effect of low probability which has a high potential impact.

¹¹⁷ The reason landscape and visual effects are often treated separately is that NZ inherited hybrid techniques that combined those focusing on physical character derived from the UK Landscape Character Assessment approach, and those focusing separately on visual parameters derived from the USA visual resource management approach.

be inconsistent with the definition of ‘landscape’. Rather, effects on landscape values should consider not only the physical environment, but also its associated meanings, and how it is perceived through all the senses.

- Landscape values are integral to views. Landscapes are experienced visually. It is not the change to a view that is an effect, but what such changes are in terms of landscape values. The changes may relate (say) to an expression of the landscape’s biophysical well-being, or a meaning associated with it, or its aesthetic qualities. A pitfall is to treat visual matters superficially when they can be deeply informed.
- Separating landscape and visual effects mean each is treated narrowly, and things fall through the gap between. Associative matters, for example, can be overlooked as not part of either physical or visual effects.

When is an assessment of landscape effects required?

- 6.9 An assessment of **landscape effects** is commonly associated with **proposal-based** applications, such as part of an AEE. Landscape and visual effects are a matter to be **considered** for every proposal (even if only briefly). An assessment should be **included** with an AEE where there are likely to be any landscape and visual effects.¹¹⁸ But such an assessment should be in a form that corresponds with the scale and significance of such effects.¹¹⁹ The assessment could be a simple memo if the effects are of no significance.
- 6.10 Assessing **potential landscape effects** are also implicit in **area-based** or **issue-based** assessments. While the assessment is more abstract in those situations (estimating the effects of possible types of activity), and the report format different, the principles are the same.

Assessing landscape effects

What are effects assessed against?

- 6.11 Landscape effects are assessed against:
- The landscape **values**.
 - The **relevant provisions** (what the objectives and policies say with respect to landscape values, what type and magnitude of development is anticipated).¹²⁰
- 6.12 It can help clarity – for both assessor and reader – to list the **issues** ahead of the assessment of effects. The issues are the **likely potential effects** with respect to the **landscape values** and **relevant provisions**: it is common to refine the issues in an iterative way as you carry out the assessment.
- 6.13 An assessment of the **existing landscape character and values** (see Chapter 5) is therefore an **essential part** of an assessment of landscape effects. It is important, though, that such assessment of the existing landscape is **tailored to purpose**: that it focuses on the landscape

¹¹⁸ Such an approach is consistent with the RMA Schedule 4, 7(1)(b) which requires AEEs to address ‘any physical effect on the locality, including any landscape and visual effects.’ It would be best practice for an AEE to say if there are likely to be no landscape and visual effects. Any effects that are likely to be ‘de minimus’ (‘less than minor’, negligible) can be ignored – but all other effects (minor or above) are to be considered.

¹¹⁹ This is consistent with RMA Schedule 4 (2)(3)(c).

¹²⁰ The matters decision makers must consider when deciding resource consent applications are listed in s104 of the RMA and comprise the effects (including positive effects to offset/compensate for adverse effects), relevant provisions, and any other relevant matters – all subject to Part 2 of the Act. The matters for Notices of Requirement are set out in s171.

values/attributes relevant to the issues. For example, the sub-headings of the ‘existing landscape’ section should reflect **the issues** and the **pertinent landscape values** and not follow standard sub-headings from a template. For this reason, the ‘existing landscape’ section may be revised as the effects are assessed. While the description of the landscape will require a brief overview to provide context, it should not labour irrelevant details. The test is whether the information will assist decision makers (and others by extension).

- 6.14 Effects are to be measured against the relevant landscape **context** and **spatial scale** (see paragraphs 5.15 ff). Beware of understatement by diluting effects across an unreasonably wide area or overstatement by concentrating on an unreasonably narrow context. You may, though, measure different types of effect at different scales. For example, a high-rise building may have a broad effect on the city skyline, while its streetscape effect may be limited to a block or two.
- 6.15 Effects are also to be assessed in the context of the **relevant statutory provisions** and any ‘**other matters**’. Review the provisions before starting an assessment. The purpose for reviewing the provisions is to **frame the landscape assessment** in a way that best assists the decision maker (and others) – not to carry out a planning assessment. For instance, if a policy is to maintain rural character, the landscape assessor should reach a finding on whether the application **achieves that outcome** rather than whether it **satisfies the policy**. (*See also Box X, Sample structure for proposal-based assessment of landscape and visual effects*).

Describing nature and degree of effect

- 6.16 Describe **both** the nature **and** degree of effect.
- 6.17 Describe the **nature of effect** in terms of specific values and attributes. For example:
- Reduction in rural character values because of development that is out-of-keeping with characteristic activity type, ratio of open space to buildings, coherence with natural topography etc.
 - Maintenance of the rural character intended in the Plan through placement of house sites, alignment of property boundaries, etc.
 - Enhancement of natural values because of revegetation of stream banks, connecting areas of natural vegetation, fencing and pest control.
 - Reduction in an area’s natural wilderness values because of intrusion of human activity and structures.
 - Maintenance of an urban area’s amenity values because of coherent building height, bulk, grain, appearance, typology etc
 - Enhancement of a cultural landscape values because of protection of physical access and sightlines between related sites.
- 6.18 Values often arise from the interplay of physical, associative, and perceptual attributes. Effects should therefore be interpreted in the same way. Sub-headings under this section should reflect the landscape values and issues.
- 6.19 Rate the degree (level, magnitude) of effect against the 7-point scale discussed below in paragraph 6.19. Such a rating qualifies the nature of the effects and should be supported by reasons. For example, ‘*a moderate reduction in the quality of the streetscape because ...*’ or ‘*a low effect on the integrity of natural processes for the following reasons...*’

6.20 The degree of effect is not a stand-alone measure. While there is a temptation to ‘home in’ on degree because it is quantifiable, the degree of effect on its own is meaningless. The degree is not the effect. Rather, explain the **nature** of the effect, its **degree**, and the **reasons**.

6.21 Use the following 7-point scale to rate qualitative assessments. It is recommended as a ‘universal’ scale for the following reasons:¹²¹

- It is symmetrical around ‘moderate’.
- It has even gradations.
- It uses neutral terms so does not confuse rating and qualitative aspects.
- The scale is therefore suitable for both positive and adverse effects, and for other purposes such as aspects of landscape value and natural character. It can be used in a ‘universal’ manner.
- The seven points provide for nuance of ranking, while being near the practical limit at which such distinctions can be made reliably. For those who struggle with seven points, the scale can be envisaged as three simpler categories (low, moderate, high) with finer steps above, below, and in-between.¹²²

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
low		moderate			high	

6.22 As with all professional judgements, the reasons should be explained when describing both the nature and degree of effect. The practical application of the 7-point scale, with caveats against placing too much weight on such rating in isolation, and the importance of the substantive assessment, is summarised in the following decision:

*“We think that [people] are likely to be able to understand qualitative assessment of low, medium and high, and combinations or qualifications of those terms without the need for explanation. We do not consider rating of that kind to constitute a fully systematic evaluation system in a field as complex as landscape: in this context, the system **depends far more on the substantive content of the assessment**, especially the identification of **attributes and values**, than on the fairly basic relativities of low-medium-high...”* (*‘Matakana Island’ [2019] NZEnvC 110, paragraph 25*) (emphasis added)

6.23 Descriptors or indicators are sometimes used to calibrate or explain the scale gradations. While in theory they promise to be of assistance, in practice they have the following pitfalls:

- The descriptors are typically either **too specific** to respond to the complexity of landscape factors in a variety of situations or are **too general** so as to become circular (e.g., a ‘moderate effect is of middle magnitude’).
- The descriptors can become **de facto criteria** that distract from, or replace, the assessment of specific effects. The descriptors can become the effect.
- The effects can be reduced to the **degree** of effect rather than the **nature and degree**.

¹²¹ The 7-point scale suggested is similar to that in the current NZILA Guidelines. However the current NZILA scale is (i) weighted to either end of the spectrum which limits its usefulness (i.e. the same number of gradations are assigned to negligible/very low/low as for low/moderate/high), and (ii) the term ‘severe’ is qualitative rather than quantitative – it implies an adverse effect and therefore limits the use of the scale for positive effects.

¹²² Swanwick and ors in fact recommend “ideally three or four, but a maximum of five categories.” They suggest, for instance, ‘low, moderate, high’. As discussed, the 7-point scale can be thought of as those three categories in the first instance, with finer steps above, below, and in-between.

Most people can understand a simple rating scale if combined with a description of the actual nature of effects.¹²³

- 6.24 In any event, such descriptors do not replace the need for you to describe the specific nature of effect, and rate its magnitude, and explain the reasons for your assessment.

Visual effects

- 6.25 Visual effects are effects on landscape values as experienced in views. They are a technique to help understand landscape effects. They are a subset of landscape effects.

- 6.26 The common technique is to:

- Identify the 'visual catchment' (where the proposal will be seen from).
- Identify the 'audiences' (who will see it).
- Describe the effects on landscape values from certain viewpoints (e.g., affected properties or representative public views).

- 6.27 The **nature** and **degree** of effect is then assessed from each viewpoint in the same manner as other landscape effects. Such effects will be a function of the effect on **landscape values** and **view parameters**.

- A proposal that is in keeping with the **landscape values**, for example, may have no adverse visual effects even if the proposal is a notable change to the view. Conversely, a proposal that is completely out of place with landscape values may have adverse effects even if only occupying a portion of the view.
- **View parameters** include distance, orientation of the view with respect to the proposal, extent of view occupied, screening, backdrop, perspective depth (layers in the intervening area), and nature of the view.

¹²³ To put it another way, rather than attempting to match specific effects to generic descriptors, it is more accurate to describe the actual effects together with a rating of magnitude against a straightforward scale.

Side Notes

Potential pitfalls

6.28 Pitfalls when assessing landscape effects include:

- Assessing **change** rather than effect on landscape values (and the attributes which embody those values).
- Limiting assessment to effects on **physical character** rather than landscape values derived from all its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions.
- Stating a **degree of effect** rather than describing both the **nature and degree**.
- Assessing **generic ‘type’** of effect (e.g., on amenity values or ‘landscape amenity’) rather than explaining the **specific effect** on a landscape’s values.
- Focusing on **visual effects** as a surrogate for landscape effects.
- Assessing **change to views** or **visibility** of something as an adverse visual effect.
- Stating an opinion or a degree of effect **without providing reasons**.

Expert and community perceptions of landscape and visual effects

6.29 As discussed at paragraph 2.23 ff, decision makers have regard to people’s perceptions of landscape and visual effects which are normally expressed through submissions and lay evidence. Residents, for instance, will be the most familiar with the amenity values they enjoy and best placed to describe such values (and their interpretation of effects on those values) from an ‘insider’ perspective. An ‘expert’ landscape assessor, on the other hand, is typically an outsider. The role is to provide an independent assessment that decision makers can use to help gauge and interpret community input to the process.¹²⁴ To fulfil this role in a balanced manner a landscape assessor should be aware of – and acknowledge – the range of views likely to be held within a community.¹²⁵ The role, though, is not to represent the views of others but to provide an independent professional opinion – it is a different and complementary role to that of submitters and lay witnesses. By way of further explanation, decision makers may make findings on (say) amenity values having regard to:¹²⁶

- The lay witnesses (affected parties); and
- The amenity values anticipated by the Plan provisions; and
- The independent professional evidence.¹²⁷

Existing environment and ‘permitted baseline’

6.30 Landscape effects are measured against the landscape values of the **existing environment**. The ‘existing environment’ includes unimplemented resource consents that are likely to be implemented.

¹²⁴ And in the context of the relevant provisions which are a scheme of what the community values and considers appropriate and that has gone through a statutory community process.

¹²⁵ The range of views may be informed by professional experience, research (e.g., surveys), meetings with stakeholders, and the submissions on the proposal which are often referenced in an assessment.

¹²⁶ See for instance Schofield decision [2012] NZEnvC 68/12, paragraph 215.

¹²⁷ This may involve expert evidence from other disciplines such as noise, air quality, ecology, etc., in addition to landscape evidence.

- 6.31 Decision makers may also have regard to the ‘**permitted baseline**’ – the effects that could occur from permitted activities that comply with development standards. When referring to the permitted baseline:
- Be clear on the difference between effects on the **existing landscape** and the ‘**permitted baseline**’; and
 - Take a **non-fanciful approach** as to what might reasonably be anticipated – a decision maker is not obliged to have regard to the permitted baseline.
- 6.32 Landscape effects are also interpreted against the outcomes sought in the relevant statutory provisions. Such provisions can comprise generic outcomes as stated in objectives and policies. Policies and criteria can also specifically require consideration of the **planned future form** of an area.¹²⁸
- 6.33 Confirm planning matters such as the permitted baseline and planned future form with a planner or lawyer.

Differences between types of assessments of effects

- 6.34 Slightly different approaches will be required in assessing effects for:
- **Resource consent** applications (matters decision makers consider when deciding resource consent applications for different types of activity status are set out in RMA s104).
 - **Notices of requirement** (matters decision makers consider when deciding NoR are set out in RMA s171. For a landscape and visual assessment, the main differences from a resource consent application are requirement to consider the effects of **alternative locations and methods** and that development standards do not apply within a designation).
 - **Issue or capacity-driven assessments** (typically District Plan preparation, or Plan Changes and Variations), where the focus will be on anticipating **potential effects** on landscape values and devising objectives, policies, and methods (e.g., standards, activity status, assessment criteria) to manage such potential effects.

Activity status

- 6.35 For resource consent applications, be aware of the **activity status** of the application, and any specific **assessment criteria**.
- Tailor an assessment to address **criteria** where relevant (there are often criteria for controlled and restricted discretionary activities for example).
 - For a **controlled or restricted discretionary activity**, focus on the matters to which control or discretion has been confined.
 - For a **discretionary activity**, address all landscape and visual effects.
 - For a **non-complying activity**, the planners may in addition have specific questions about the extent to which the proposal is consistent with objectives and policies (those relevant to landscape matters), or whether the adverse landscape and visual effects are

¹²⁸ For instance, the Auckland Unitary Plan, in attempting to address change and intensification, includes policies and criteria for effects to be considered against the planned urban form of certain areas.

more than minor (see cautions under topic below regarding ‘less than minor, more than minor, significant).

‘Minor’, ‘less than minor’, ‘no more than minor’, ‘significant’

- 6.36 The terms ‘minor’, ‘less than minor’, and ‘no more than minor’ apply to particular RMA situations, namely the ‘gateway’ tests for non-complying activities under s104D, and tests for determining affected party status and public notification under s95.¹²⁹ Such terms are often over-used. In the interests of precision, only use them in those situations where they are relevant. It may be helpful to check whether such tests are relevant with a planner/lawyer.¹³⁰
- 6.37 **‘Minor adverse effects’** means some real effect, but of less than moderate magnitude and significance.¹³¹ It means the lesser part of the scale ‘minor-moderate-major’.¹³² ‘Minor’ can be characterised as ‘low’ and ‘mod-low’ on the 7-point scale. ‘Less than minor’ means negligible (de-minimis) and can be characterised as ‘very low’. ‘More than minor’ can be characterised as ‘moderate’ or above.¹³³

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
less than minor	minor		more than minor		significant	

- 6.38 However, caution is urged against an overly mechanical approach. Assessments of whether effects are minor is a reasoned judgement on significance, whereas the 7-point scale is a simple rating scale of degree. It is recommended that the nature and degree of individual effects be assessed first as would normally be undertaken. Following that, an overall professional judgement be made on whether the adverse effects are ‘minor’ (or less or more than) in terms of the significance of the effects in the context of the relevant test. Like all professional judgements, explain with reasons.
- 6.39 Likewise, the term **‘significant adverse effects’** applies to particular RMA situations, namely as a threshold for the requirement to consider alternative sites, routes, and methods for Notices of Requirement under RMA s171(1)(b), the requirements to consider alternatives in AEEs under s6(1)(a) of the 4th Schedule. It may also be relevant to tests under other statutory documents such as for considering effects on natural character of the coastal environment under the NZ Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) Policy 13 (1)(b) and 15(b).
- 6.40 Significant adverse effects’ means those of major magnitude **and importance**.¹³⁴ They can be characterised as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ on the 7-point scale – the upper part of the minor-moderate-major scale. But as above, it is recommended that individual effects first be assessed

¹²⁹ These tests would become a thing of the past if the Randerson Report recommendations are enacted to remove non-complying activities as an activity class, and to change the notification provisions to remove tests based around ‘minor adverse effects’.

¹³⁰ Opinions on whether effects are minor or significant are usually down to planners who have access to all effects. It is suggested that landscape assessors stick to the 7-point scale unless asked to provide an opinion on whether effects are ‘minor’ or ‘significant’.

¹³¹ While decision makers may disregard negligible (de minimus) adverse effects, they do consider minor adverse effects in coming to decisions. That adverse effects may be minor does not mean they are irrelevant. (Mahinerangi Wind Farm, [2008], NZEnvC C85 para 93-94).

¹³² Temporary adverse effects should be considered when making an assessment on affected parties. Their limited duration or subsequent mitigation is not relevant in those situations. (Trilane [2020] NZHC 1647 para 59-62).

¹³³ Statements such as ‘moderate is equivalent to minor in RMA terms’ are incorrect (Okura [2018] NZEnvC 78, para 557).

¹³⁴ Significant has alternative meanings which mean noticeable or worthy of attention – e.g., statistically significant. However, that is not what is typically meant by ‘significant’ in landscape assessment.

in terms of both their nature and magnitude, and that a subsequent overall professional assessment then be made on whether the adverse effects are significant in **magnitude and importance** in context of the relevant test. Explain with reasons.

'Sensitivity' and 'magnitude'

- 6.41 Using matrices to measure the significance of effect as a function of 'sensitivity' and 'magnitude', as used in some overseas guidelines,¹³⁵ is not recommended for the following reasons:
- The complex and varied values of landscapes do not lend themselves to reduction to a single generic attribute such as 'sensitivity', neither does 'magnitude' adequately address both the nature and degree of effects on landscape values.
 - Such matrices falsely imply that landscape effects can be practically measured as a type of mathematical function. At most they illustrate a concept. They suggest an objectivity that is not warranted.
 - Such matrices are an abstraction (an additional step) that introduces an additional chance of error.
- 6.42 Instead, it is more **direct** and **transparent** to describe the **actual** nature and degree of effect on the landscape's **specific values** (and attributes) and explain with **reasons**.

Cultural Impact Assessments

- 6.43 An assessment of landscape effects should integrate information on effects contained in a 'Cultural Impact Assessment' (or similar reports such as a 'Cultural Landscape Effects Assessment'). As with other sources, best practice is not to merely repeat or catalogue the findings of such a report – which decision makers will have regard to in its own right – but to interpret the information to help inform an independent professional assessment of landscape effects.

Cumulative effects

- 6.44 **Cumulative effects** are the effects of a proposal in conjunction with those of previous developments. This might relate to such things as expansion of a facility (e.g., shopping mall), intensification of an element of infrastructure (e.g., four-laning a two-lane highway), or additional projects of a certain type in an area (e.g., rural subdivision, wind farms, marine farms).
- 6.45 Cumulative effects should be considered carefully because in one sense all effects are cumulative. Previous lawfully established activities are part of the existing environment against which the effects of a new activity are assessed. Most effects are simply the effects of a proposal on the existing environment. Likewise, a proposal's different types of effect (for instance noise + visual effects) are simply the proposal's combined effects rather than what is meant by cumulative effects.
- 6.46 Cumulative effects come into play in circumstances where an additional effect takes a landscape beyond a 'tipping point' – which would normally require a benchmark against which the effects are to be measured. Such benchmarks might include the character envisaged in the District Plan, or the 'capacity' of a landscape to accommodate development before compromising its

¹³⁵ For example, that is the standard UK approach set out in the GLVIA 3rd edition. However, those guidelines also highlight the problems with that approach and point out that the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment promote the replacement of 'sensitivity' and 'magnitude' with the 'nature' of (the landscape) and 'nature' of effect' (box 3.1, page 37).

landscape values (its valued attributes). This is a matter of context and judgement. As with all matters of professional judgement, the key is the reasons justifying the assessment.

Calibration studies

- 6.47 A useful tool is a **calibration study** which entails assessing existing activities similar to those proposed to help pinpoint and calibrate the influence of factors on effects. Examples include studies to calibrate the prominence of features (such as wind turbines, power pylons, marine farms) at certain distances – and the extent of influence of other factors (e.g., sun angle, elevation).
- 6.48 However, tools such as calibration studies (and matrices discussed above) are an aid. Do not surrender professional judgement to them.

Tandem ‘blind’ assessments

- 6.49 A second person independently assigning ratings (the degree of effects, say) can be a useful technique to provide a check of such quantitative findings. However, such checks are for the benefit of the primary assessor who still takes responsibility for their findings.¹³⁶

Photo simulations (Visual simulations)

- 6.50 Photo simulations are useful tools for pictorially depicting proposed developments – so long as they are properly prepared, and their limitations are understood.
- 6.51 Guidelines to preparing simulations are set out in NZILA Best Practice Guide 10.2, ‘Visual Simulations’ (2010). Key parameters for presenting visual simulations are:
- Field-of-view (wide enough to depict perspective and context); and
 - Image scale (to depict correct size at a practical reading distance); and
 - Resolution.
- 6.52 Limitations to bear in mind are that photos are static, have a limited field of view, and tend to flatten perspective. People typically experience landscapes as they move around, and in a range of conditions – somewhat differently from photos that are taken in one set of conditions, from fixed viewpoints, and that do not depict context. Photo simulations can also focus attention to visual matters rather than overall landscape values. The ‘before and after’ format similarly can focus attention on change rather than effects on landscape values. Understanding such limitations is not to discourage the use of photos, but to ensure they are presented and interpreted in the most useful way.

Potential Visibility Diagrams

- 6.53 Potential visibility diagrams have several names including ‘Zone of Theoretical Visibility’ (ZTV), ‘visual catchment’, ‘viewshed’. Such diagrams can be a useful tool to indicate potential visibility. They can assist in selecting representative viewpoints for example. However, visibility diagrams should not be used as an indicator of effects. They have the following limitations and pitfalls.
- **Seeing something is not itself an adverse effect** – a potential pitfall is to interpret

¹³⁶ Although it could be recorded as a Quality Assurance method in the methodology statement

visibility diagrams as such.

- Visibility diagrams **do not indicate the nature of effect** such as the extent to which a proposal affects landscape values (i.e., whether it is out of place or not). They focus on visibility which is only one aspect of landscape effects.
- They also do not indicate the **degree of effect**. They do not indicate how much of the subject is visible, or such parameters as distance, orientation, backdrop, and perspective depth. They can overly direct attention to the margins of visibility where the degree of effect is typically also marginal (effects are typically mostly experienced from closer places where visibility is not in question).
- Visibility diagrams also have shortcomings in predicting actual visibility. They typically depict **potential** visibility based on topography alone, whereas **actual** visibility is often influenced by vegetation or buildings (this shortcoming can be addressed only if buildings and trees are modelled using (say) LIDAR survey data).

6.54 Accompany visibility diagrams with a commentary on how they have been used in an assessment and explaining their potential limits.

Peer Reviews

6.55 A peer review is an evaluation of an assessment by someone with similar competencies.¹³⁷ Its weight relies upon the reviewer being **impartial** and having sufficient **expertise and experience** for the subject matter of the assessment.

6.56 A peer review is a **focused appraisal** of the principal assessment, **not a parallel assessment**.

6.57 Peer reviews should be consistent with the professional role described in Chapter 2: The **purpose is to assist decision makers** (and others) by confirming (or otherwise) an assessment's method and findings. No two landscape assessors are likely to carry out an assessment in exactly the same way. It is not helpful for peer reviewers to demonstrate how they might have carried out the assessment differently or to stand on unimportant details. Peer reviews should:

- Be succinct and to the point.
- Focus on the principal assessment.
- Provide reasons to support the review.

6.58 The exception is if additional assessment of part (or all) of the principal assessment is truly necessary because the reviewer considers the assessment method is not sound, the assessment does not follow the method, the findings are implausible, or there are gaps that are germane to findings. Make clear where that is the case, provide reasons in support of the need for additional assessment, and ensure that the additional assessment is reasoned and transparent. The differences in findings between the peer reviewer and principal assessment in such situations should be clear and reasoned.

6.59 A peer reviewer will typically review the assessment report, make a site visit, and write a short report confirming (or not) that the assessment:

- Follows a sound **methodology** for the purpose.
- Considers the relevant **statutory provisions** and any 'other matters'.
- Accurately describes, interprets, and evaluates the **relevant** landscape **character** and

¹³⁷ Perhaps the most common examples are peer reviews prepared on behalf of Council for the reporting planner (i.e., for the s42A report).

values.

- Analyses the **effects** on landscape values (for proposal-driven assessments) in a balanced and reasoned way.
- Reaches **credible findings supported by reasons.**
- Makes **appropriate recommendations** with respect to findings (depending on the type of assessment).

6.60 Landscape assessors should **anticipate peer review** by ensuring that the matters above have been addressed and justified by reasons.

6.61 The following is an example of how a peer review might be structured:

- **Introduction:** Introduce the project to be reviewed. Outline who has engaged you, the documents reviewed, site visits undertaken, and any other relevant background.
- **Purpose and method of review:** Explain that the purpose of the peer review is an appraisal of the assessment (not a parallel assessment). You might say that review follows principles set out in these Guidelines and go on to outline the matters to be reviewed.

Content of review:

- **Appropriate methodology:** Confirm that the reviewed assessment contains a methodology statement (or not). State whether the assessment is consistent with the Guidelines' concepts and principles, and whether the method is appropriate. Considerations as to whether the method is appropriate include the purpose of the assessment, the nature of the landscape, the statutory planning provisions, the potential landscape issues, and the scale of the proposal and its potential effects.¹³⁸ State also whether the assessment has been carried out consistent with the method.
- **Existing landscape:** Confirm that the **relevant landscape** is identified, and that the **attributes** and **values** pertinent to the assessment are described. Confirm that existing consents are considered in the description of the existing landscape, and that the permitted baseline or planned environment has been considered where relevant. The latter may be especially important, for example, where there is policy direction to achieve a different form than the existing landscape such as in growing urban environments.
- **Proposal:** Confirm that the proposal is described clearly enough to understand potential landscape effects.
- **Statutory planning provisions:** Confirm that the assessment identifies and is framed in response to the relevant provisions. Check that the assessment considers, for example, such things as the relevant objectives and policies of the District Plan, and ONFLs, and (if near the coast) the coastal environment and NZCPS.
- **Landscape (including visual) effects:** Confirm that the assessment identifies the **issues** as a function of the potential effects on landscape values in the context of the relevant statutory provisions. Confirm that the assessment then explains (with reasons) both the **nature** and **magnitude** of such **effects**. Confirm that the assessment identifies both adverse and positive landscape effects. Confirm that any photosimulations and plans etc., are accurate and presented in a fair way (refer paragraph 6.50).
- **Design response:** Confirm that the design measures taken to avoid potential adverse effects, or to remedy or mitigate such effects, will be effective. Confirm that such

¹³⁸Consistent with RMA Schedule 4 (2)(3)(c)

measures are underpinned by effective recommended conditions.

- **Conclusions:** Confirm that the assessment's findings and overall conclusions are credible (plausible) and consistent with the analysis.

Summary Box

Landscape effects are consequences for landscape values of changes to landscape attributes. Change itself is not an effect. Landscapes are always changing.

Landscape effects can be both adverse and positive.

Effects are considered against the existing and potential landscape values, and the outcomes sought in the statutory provisions.

It is important to assess both the nature and degree of effect. The degree only makes sense qualifying the nature of effect. The degree is not the effect.

As with all matters of interpretation and appraisal, explain and justify assessments of effects with reasons.

Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects. They are effects on landscape values as experienced in views.

A typical 'proposal-driven' assessment of landscape and visual effects includes:

- Identification of landscape values.
- Review of the relevant provisions.
- Identification of the issues.
- Assessment of the nature and degree of effects – with reasons.
- Design of measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects.

Box X. Sample Structure for Proposal-Based Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

The following is an example of a report structure for an assessment of the landscape + visual effects to accompany an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE).

This example is not a template. The first task in any project is to tailor an appropriate method and structure in response to the specific **purpose, setting, and issues** as outlined in Chapter 2. Uncritical use of templates is a major cause of poor landscape assessment. Rely on a transparent and reasoned approach rather than adherence to repeat use of a template or formula.

Assessment formats

An assessment of landscape effects for a ‘proposal-driven’ project might comprise the following structure. Such a format echoes typical formats for Assessments of Environmental Effects (AEE). (Refer to Schedule 4 of the RMA)¹³⁹.

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Proposal
- Statutory provisions
- Existing landscape
- Issues (the relevant matters having regard to the context, statutory provisions, and nature of the proposal)
- Landscape effects (including visual effects)
- Mitigation
- Conclusion (overall landscape effects).

Introduction

Introduce the situation and purpose of the report. A typical introduction might comprise:

- A brief outline of the **situation** (for example, an application for a **resource consent** for a certain **activity** at a specified **location**)
- The **client** who engaged you, your role, and the project team and collaborators.
- The **purpose** of the assessment (for example, to assess the landscape and visual effects, with reference to any special matter such as effects on natural character of the coastal environment)

Methodology

Outline the methodology. Your statement may say that it follows the concepts and principles outlined in the Guidelines, and go on to outline of the assessment method (see paragraph 2.32 ff relating to methodology and method).

For a simple project, the outline may be limited to a couple of paragraphs. The first would

¹³⁹ An assessment of landscape effects should be proportionate to the scale and significance of the effects that the proposal may have on the landscape consistent with the principle set out in RMA Schedule 4 (2)(3)(c).

explain consistency with the Guidelines, the second might bullet point the tasks such as:

- Desk-top research and site-surveys,
- A review of the provisions (i.e., list the plans and policy statements)
- An assessment of certain matters (i.e., list the key matters)
- Use of certain techniques or tools (e.g., photosimulations, inventories),
- Consideration of measures to avoid, remedy, and mitigate potential adverse effects, and to promote positive effects.

A more detailed methodology is warranted for complex projects. In those situations, it will assist succinctness to append the methodology statement and include a succinct summary in the body of the report.

Proposal

Outline the proposal, highlighting those aspects pertinent to understanding potential landscape effects.

The clearest and most succinct approach may be to (i) provide a brief outline of the proposal, (ii) refer readers to the detail in the 'official' Project Description in the AEE, and (iii) then summarise the components pertinent to landscape. The Project Description in the AEE should be the authoritative version. The purpose of the project description in a landscape assessment, on the other hand, is to help decision makers (and others) understand the **landscape matters**.

Include in the description of the proposal an outline of design measures intended to avoid potential adverse effects or enhance positive effects that are integral to the proposal (as opposed to mitigation measures – see below).

Relevant Statutory Provisions

Review and summarise the provisions relevant to landscape matters. Such provisions may comprise:

- Objectives and policies pertaining to landscape matters.
- Development standards that the proposal may breach (and those relevant standards complied with).
- Matters to which discretion has been reserved (in the case of restricted discretionary activities).
- Criteria that are listed against which to assess effects.

The purpose for reviewing the provisions is to frame the landscape assessment in a way that best assists the decision maker (and others). Include a statement along the lines that *'the purpose of reviewing the provisions is to help frame the landscape assessment. It is not to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the provisions or a planning assessment of the proposal against the provisions.'*

For succinctness, set out the relevant provisions in an Appendix, and summarise those provisions most pertinent to the landscape matters in the body of the report. Check the review with the planner or lawyer involved with the project.

Check the list of statutory provisions and ‘other matters’ at paragraph 2.26 ff. In many instances the lower order documents (such as the District Plan) will be key because they give effect to the higher order documents. However, the higher order documents will also be relevant in many instances, including National Policy Statements on certain topics such as urban development, freshwater management, indigenous biodiversity, renewable energy generation, and electricity transmission. Check if an area is within the coastal environment in which case the provisions of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) will be essential. Include ‘other matters’ (see paragraph 2.26) where it is relevant to help frame the assessment.

Existing Landscape

Identify the relevant landscape (its extent and context) in line with the principles at paragraph 5.15 ff. Relevance means the landscape that enables the effects of the proposal to be best understood. It is not about precise delineation, but about the appropriate scale and context against which to assess effects. This exercise is also iterative. It is normal to revise your assessment – including what constitutes the relevant landscape – as you refine your thoughts and understanding in carrying out the work.

Describe and interpret the character and values in line with principles in Chapter 5. Focus on the pertinent area and outline its place in the wider context. Focus on pertinent values and attributes. It is never possible to record everything there is to know about a place. Professional skill is in selecting and interpreting those attributes and values pertinent to understanding potential effects. Such description will of course include information for context. But the purpose is to understand effects. Do not labour irrelevant matters. Ask yourself if the description of the existing landscape will assist the decision makers (and others) to understand and interpret the effects of the proposal.

Sub-headings in this section of the assessment should reflect both the context and the resource management issues. Do not use standard sub-headings or a checklist of factors which would likely indicate that (i) you are following a formula rather than focusing on the relevant matters, and (ii) you are not interpreting the landscape in an integrated way.

Issues

List the issues to frame the assessment of effects. The issues are a function of the landscape values, the relevant provisions, and the potential effects of the proposal on landscape values. Issues might be, for example, the effect of the proposal on:

- The area’s rural character and amenity values.
- Streetscape.
- Natural character of the coastal environment.

Landscape effects (including visual effects)

Describe the **nature and magnitude** of effects in keeping with the principles in Chapter 6. Effects are consequences **on landscape values** and are embodied in certain attributes. For example:

- **Reduction** in rural character values because development is out-of-keeping with characteristic activity type, ratio of open space to buildings, coherence with natural topography etc.,

- **Maintenance** of the rural character intended in the Plan through placement of house sites, alignment of property boundaries, etc.,
- **Enhancement** of natural values because of revegetation of stream banks, connecting areas of natural vegetation, fencing and pest control.
- **Maintenance** of an urban area's amenity values because of coherent building height, bulk, grain, appearance, typology etc
- **Enhancement** of a cultural landscape values because of protection of physical access and sightlines between related sites.
- **Compromising** of an area's natural wilderness values because of inappropriate structures and activities.

Tailor the **sub-headings** under this section (as in other parts of the assessment) to the situation, for example to the issues outlined above (or perhaps the relevant landscape values).

Describe **both** the nature **and** magnitude of effect. Use the 7-point scale at paragraph 6.21 to describe magnitude. Remember that magnitude is but one descriptor to help explain the effect. Magnitude is not the effect. The effect is the **qualitative** consequence on landscape values, an attribute of which is its magnitude. Consider the nature of effect and magnitude together. Describe the effect and provide reasons to explain magnitude.

Be aware of the following pitfalls:

- **Over compartmentalising.** Landscape values often arise from the interplay of physical, associative, and perceptual attributes. Interpret effects in the same way.
- Not identifying the **relevant landscape** – the relevant **context** and **scale**. Such a pitfall can lead to effects diluted across too broad an area or concentrated on an unreasonably narrow area. Note that different effects can occur at different scales.
- **Conflating change with effects.** Landscape management is not based on maintaining the status quo except in some situations. Focus on effects on landscape values.
- Overlooking **potential values** and **positive landscape effects**.
- Overlooking specific **statutory context** – for example, not checking if the site is in the coastal environment and therefore covered by the NZCPS.
- Overlooking the anticipated outcomes and other relevant provisions in the **statutory documents**. Plans often envisage substantial change, especially in urban areas where Plans may seek intensification and a different urban form than what exists.

Visual effects

Undertake an assessment of visual effects – the effects on landscape values as experienced in views. The common technique is to:

- Identify the '**visual catchment**' (where the proposal will be seen from).
- Identify typical '**audiences**' (who will see the proposal).
- Describe the nature and degree effects on landscape values in views from certain viewpoints (e.g., affected properties, '**representative public viewpoints**')

Describe or map the **visual catchment**. ZTV diagrams may be useful for significant projects. The point of such analysis, though, is to help identify where visual effects might be experienced rather than to decipher the margins of visibility (visual effects are least likely at the margins). Determining actual visibility will require field work to ground-truth desk-top analysis (refer

Potential Visibility Diagrams paragraph 6.53).

Describe the groups of people associated with the area from where the proposal will be seen (the ‘audiences’ or **potentially affected people**). For instance, people living on properties in the area, passers-by on roads, users of a beach. While it was previously common to assign a ‘sensitivity rating’ to audience types (e.g., residents as more sensitive than industrial workers or ‘transitory’ passers-by), it is better to simply describe the audience. Residents, for example, are likely to cover a range of sensitivities to certain activities and they are better placed to describe that themselves. Likewise, ‘sensitivity’ depends on the relationship between the person and the proposal (a passer-by may have different sensitivity to effects on an town centre with heritage values than a retail strip, for example).

Select **viewpoints** to represent places the proposal will typically be seen from.

- Private views are normally represented by view from houses – although it is worth acknowledging that people may enjoy views from other parts of their properties. A common technique is to tabulate an assessment of effects from properties (or groups of properties).
- Public views will typically be from roads/footpaths, key intersections, and other public places such as parks, walkways, town squares. Selection of viewpoints requires judgement, remembering that the purpose is to describe the visual effects spatially. For substantial applications it is helpful to agree a common set of representative viewpoints with other landscape assessors assessing a project (such as a Council peer reviewer). Remember that representative viewpoints are just that. On the one hand, views and effects are not limited to those locations. On the other hand, such viewpoints are often selected to illustrate where the greatest effects will be experienced. It is necessary to use judgement and provide reasons when interpreting representative viewpoints and coming to a finding on the visual effects. Do not use averaged ‘scores’ from such viewpoints as an overall measure of effect. Such an approach is misleading because the ‘scores’ are a function of viewpoint selection rather than effect.

Describe the nature and degree of effect from each viewpoint. Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects – one way of understanding landscape effects. It may be helpful to conceptualise this exercise as a function of (i) the extent to which something contributes to or detracts from landscape value, and (ii) the visual dominance and prominence.

- For example, a development that is in keeping with the landscape character may have no adverse effects on landscape values even if it is highly visible and a noticeable change to the view. Conversely, a development that is completely out of place with the values of an important landscape may have a significant adverse effect even though it may occupy only a relatively small portion of a view.
- Parameters influencing dominance and prominence¹⁴⁰ include (but are not limited to) distance, orientation to viewpoint, extent of view occupied, backdrop, perspective depth (complexity of the intervening landscape) and nature of the viewpoint.

As with landscape effects, visual effects are a measure of the consequence of visual change on landscape values, not a measure of visual change or visibility.

¹⁴⁰ **Dominance** is a measure of **scale** – the extent to which a landscape is subsumed by something, while **prominence** is a measure of its **contrast** with the surroundings.

Design

Explain (if you are part of the application team) the design aspects incorporated into the project to avoid potential adverse effects and to achieve positive effects. This may include selection of a favourable site, route, or specific design elements.

Explain also, the mitigation measures proposed to reduce residual adverse effects. Set out such 'after the fact' mitigation after the assessment of effects, and explain their effectiveness (i.e., what the effects would be with mitigation).

List the conditions recommended to ensure adverse effects are avoided, remedied, and mitigated – and that positive effects are achieved. Explain the reasons for the conditions.

Conclusion

Reach an overall professional view on the landscape effects. Weigh the individual effects together in the context of the landscape values and statutory provisions. Make a professional judgement on the extent to which they are acceptable in terms of landscape values – including those landscape values anticipated by the provisions. As with all professional opinions, explain with reasons.

Executive Summary

Finally, write the executive summary which is added to the front of reports. Such summaries are warranted on all but brief reports and memos. The difference between the executive summary and the conclusion is:

- The conclusion is a short¹⁴¹ overall finding with the principal reasons.
- The executive summary is the key points of each section of the assessment (i.e., the key points of the (i) existing landscape values, (ii) the issues, (iii) the landscape and visual effects, (iv) the design measures, and (v) the conclusion.

¹⁴¹ Typically, one page or less

Box X2. Sample Structure for Area-Based Landscape Assessment

The following is an example of a report structure and process for an assessment of the landscape character and value. Principles relating to assessing landscape character and values are outlined in Chapter 5, and considerations for ONFLs are outlined in Chapter 8.

Such assessments are typically carried out at a district or regional scale to identify the landscape resource for resource management purposes. Often the driver is the requirement to identify and provide for outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL), although that task should be undertaken as part of a broader landscape assessment.

This example is not a template. The first task in any project is to tailor an appropriate method and structure in response to the specific **purpose, setting, and issues** as outlined in Chapter 2. Uncritical use of templates is a major cause of poor landscape assessment. Rely on a transparent and reasoned approach rather than adherence to repeat use of a template or formula.

Assessment formats

A regional or district landscape assessment might comprise the following structure which correspond to process steps.

- Introduction.
- Methodology.
- Regional (or district) landscape character.
- Evaluation of regional (or district) landscapes including outstanding natural features and landscapes, and other significant landscapes.
- Managing the landscape resource.

Introduction

A typical introduction might comprise:

- The **purpose** for carrying out a regional or district-wide review (e.g., to understand and document the landscape resource – and to identify ONFLs and other significant landscapes).
- Explanation of the **concept** of ‘landscape’, and what is considered when assessing a landscape’s **character and values**.
- The Plan or Policy Statement preparation **process** – especially public input to the process – and **sections of the RMA** most relevant to landscape.¹⁴²

An area-based assessment is likely to have a wider audience and input than proposal-based assessments and require explanation of ‘landscape’ in language accessible to lay people (while also being defensible in the statutory planning process).

¹⁴² Such as s7(c) and s7(f) – the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment including amenity values, s6(b) – the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development, and s5 – the promotion of sustainable management of natural and physical resources – and meaning of sustainable management set out in s5(2).

Methodology

To improve readability and flow of area-based landscape studies (given their audience), it is recommended that the technical methodology statement be appended, with only a succinct and plain language summary in the body of the report.

The methodology statement could state that it is consistent with the landscape concepts and principles set out in the Te Tangi a te Manu guidelines and explain the method particular to the region or district. The method might list such matters as:

- Collaboration with **tangata whenua**.
- Consultation with the **community and stakeholders**.
- The method and matters covered in the desk-top **research and field work**.

Collaboration with tangata whenua is necessary for the assessment to capture the landscape of a region or district. Such assessment may be carried out parallel to (and cross referenced with) separate assessments undertaken by tangata whenua with respect to such provisions as s6(e) – the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga.¹⁴³

Consultation with the community is also essential but there are different ways in which it might be undertaken. Such methods may include, for example, the use of stakeholder workshops, community charettes, co-design, on-line tools, public meetings, and formal submissions. Community may be engaged in preparing the assessment or, alternatively, a draft assessment may be carried out first as a tool for engagement.

Assessment of landscape character

Analyse, describe, and interpret landscape character¹⁴⁴ in line with the concepts and principles outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 of the Guidelines. Typical methods include (i) explaining the story of the region or district's whole landscape, (ii) analysing the components, and (iii) mapping the region/district into distinct landscape character areas.

- **Analyse and describe** the whole regional or district landscape. This exercise may be done as layers (reflecting the dimensions and typical factors listed in paragraph 4.29 for example), or as themes, or through other approaches (the methodology statement should explain the method used).
- **Interpret** how the landscape components come together as **character** – the particular combination of landscape attributes (characteristics and qualities) that makes the region/district distinct. Provide an historical explanation of the landscape's nature, and the relationship of people with it.
- **Map** the region/district into distinct landscapes or landscape character areas. A model may be used where the region/district is divided into high-level '**landscape character types**', each of which contains different '**landscape character areas**' and '**landscapes**'.

¹⁴³ This is reframed under the Randerson Report recommendations as(j) 'protection and restoration of the relationship of iwi, hapū and whanau and their tikanga and traditions with their ancestral landscapes, cultural landscapes, water and sites, and (k) protection of wāhi tapu and protection and restoration of other taonga, and (l) recognition of protected customary rights.

¹⁴⁴ Sometimes referred to as 'landscape **characterisation**'.

Evaluation of landscape values

Evaluate the **landscape values** for each **landscape character area** or **landscape** (the reasons the area is valued, including potential value) and the attributes on which such values depend (the attributes that embody the values). In practice, this will typically be done in an iterative way in conjunction with assessing the character and attributes of an area, as described at paragraph 5.25: interpretation of a landscape's character will point to its values, and evaluation of a landscape's values will point to the attributes on which those values depend.

The purpose of identifying the values and attributes of the whole region/district is to (i) provide the context for evaluating outstanding natural features and landscapes, and (ii) inform the management of the whole landscape resource rather than just a few special places.

Evaluation of outstanding natural features and landscapes

Identify and evaluate potential **outstanding natural features and landscapes** as outlined in Chapter 8. Such evaluation is typically carried out as a separate step after assessing the character and values of the whole landscape resource.

- Identify potential 'candidates'. Such natural features and landscapes will emerge from the regional and district character assessment. Identify a sufficiently broad selection of candidates to ensure all potential ONFLs are captured (this will likely mean some candidates will not ultimately be considered 'outstanding').
- Describe the character and values of each candidate natural feature and landscape, drawing on the character and values of the context.
- Map the extent of each candidate outstanding natural feature or outstanding natural landscape ensuring legible boundaries coherent with the landscape (See paragraphs **Error! Reference source not found.**-8.24).
- Confirm that the candidate is sufficiently natural to qualify as a natural feature or natural landscape.
- Evaluate whether the candidate is 'outstanding' (see paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.**). Provide reasons with reference to landscape character and values. Confirm its spatial extent.

Evaluate other **special** or **significant** landscapes. These includes landscapes that are significant but not 'outstanding', and landscapes that are not sufficiently natural to be considered natural landscapes. They may include urban precincts, special rural landscapes, and cultural landscapes made up of a network of elements within a broader landscape.

Management of the landscape resource

Recommend management approaches for each of the (i) outstanding natural features and landscapes, (ii) special or significant landscapes, and (iii) landscape character areas. Management recommendations should relate to the values and attributes identified and to the context.

S6(b) requires protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes. Measures should therefore identify the values, and measures to protect the physical attributes on which such values depend.

Other landscapes (e.g., ‘significant’ or ‘special’ landscapes, and ‘ordinary’ landscape character areas) are managed under different policy provisions typically contained in Regional and District Plans/Policy Statements to give effect to s7(c) and s7(f) – i.e., to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment including amenity values. Landscape is a potentially effective management tool because it is an integrating concept. To be useful, though, recommendations need to be tuned to such integration – to recognise that landscapes change in response to a variety of environmental, social, cultural, and economic needs. Recommendations designed to maintain the status quo, or that do not understand the processes and activities behind the landscape, are unlikely to be effective in improving landscape values.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ This is reframed as **enhancement of features and characteristics** that contribute to the **quality** of the **natural and built environments** under the recommendations of the Randerson Report.

7 MANAGING LANDSCAPE VALUES

7.1 The ultimate purpose of landscape assessment is to manage landscape values.

7.2 While assessment may previously have tended toward maintaining existing values, or mitigating the degree of adverse effect, these Guidelines aspire towards improvement.¹⁴⁶ Hence the highlighting of effects as outcomes for landscape values rather than a measure of change. The Guidelines look beyond avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects to the greater imperative of positive effects.

Integrate landscape assessment and design

7.3 Such improvements are best realised where **assessment and design work in tandem**. Such tandem working has the benefit that avoiding adverse effects and creation of positive effects is ‘designed-in’¹⁴⁷ to the project.

7.4 Assessment and design share common foundations that are the basis of working in conjunction:

- Attention to context.
- Integration of many different factors and types of information.
- Creative interpretation and insight.
- Desire for healthier, more aesthetically pleasing, and more meaningful places (i.e., for actual outcomes)

7.5 Best outcomes are achieved when assessment and design are carried out together from start to finish – landscape planning with a design perspective, and landscape design with a planning perspective. This is sometimes referred to as using ‘design-thinking’ to resolve environmental issues. While there are some differences in aptitude and competencies between landscape assessors and designers, the former effectively articulate and help direct outcomes in an RMA context and the latter effectively realise outcomes. Combining those competencies is key to enhanced landscape values.¹⁴⁸

Co-design

7.6 A co-design partnership approach is a way to integrate tāngata whenua and/or community involvement in projects – a further expression of the principle of integrating assessment, design, and outcomes. Co-design is typically a joint process to develop a project. It is based on the following principles:

- Power sharing.
- Prioritising and building relationships.
- Ensuring active participation.
- Building capacity for further participation.

¹⁴⁶ This approach is consistent with that of the Randerson Report which recommends that the purpose of the new Natural and Built Environment Act is to **enhance** the quality of the environment...etc. The purpose is to be achieved by (amongst other things) identifying and promoting **positive outcomes** for the environment. The proposed new Section 7 provides for the **enhancement of** features and characteristics that contribute to the **quality of the natural and built environment**.

¹⁴⁷ The term ‘baked in’ is used to distinguish those aspects that are integral to the project design from those that are ‘sprinkled on’ as after-the-fact mitigation,

¹⁴⁸ The separation of landscape architecture into two sub-disciplines is artificial and not helpful in this regard.

- 7.7 The co-design process can be as important as the outcomes. It is an approach that is likely to build trust, strengthen relationships, and improve outcomes.

Maintaining impartiality

- 7.8 Landscape assessors working in such situations should be sufficiently self-aware to maintain an impartial approach consistent with the code of conduct discussed in Chapter 2. A potential pitfall of integrating assessment and design is that individuals may become personally invested in a project to the point of losing impartiality. Notwithstanding this risk, positive environmental outcomes are most likely achieved through a practical exercise of integrating assessment and design. The risk can be reduced by (i) acknowledging it, and (ii) taking a professional approach to a fair and balanced explanation of the design and assessment of effects.

Explain the design process and measures taken

- 7.9 In addition to achieving better outcomes, integrating assessment and design helps with the statutory planning processes by describing the design processes by which potential adverse effects were avoided, remedied, and mitigated, and the quality of the environment enhanced. Such explanations are most credible where the assessment and design process can be explained. For example, such assessment and design might include:

- Input to the strategic planning and conceptualisation of a project.
- Input to **site selection** or **route alignment**
- Input to consideration of **alternatives** (alternative concepts, locations, routes)
- **Input to the design** such as:
 - Design decisions taken to avoid and remedy potential adverse landscape effects where practicable.
 - Design opportunities taken to incorporate positive landscape effects.
 - Collaborative design (Co-Design) undertaken to give effect to tāngata whenua and/or community perspectives.
 - Alternative design options considered and the reasons for the preferred option.
 - Measures taken to mitigate the residual adverse landscape effects; and
- A **description of the design** including:
 - How the concept responds to its landscape context.
 - How the concept is resolved at different scales, and for each element of the project to collectively reduce adverse effects; and
- **Integration of landscape with other disciplines** and any cross-over benefits.
- **Implementation methods** to provide confidence the design and proposed mitigation measures will be successful (see Conditions below).

Design Frameworks

- 7.10 One means of integrating assessment and design is through the 'design frameworks' often employed for complex projects (e.g., highways or large urban developments). These set out the principles that guide the project through successive phases (inception, planning, design, consenting, and construction)¹⁴⁹ at increasing levels of detail. They will typically include:

¹⁴⁹ A common framework in the 'Business Case' model used in Government Departments is Preliminary Business Case, Indicative Business Case, Detailed Business Case. Design Frameworks are useful in ensuring continuity through these phases.

- Project objectives and statutory planning provisions
- A landscape analysis of the area - its relevant characteristic and values
- The guiding design concept and ideas
- The design principles – often expressed as outcomes; and
- The design (at increasing levels of detail) giving effect to the concept and principles (outcomes)

7.11 Such frameworks can provide a direct and transparent link between assessment of the landscape context, design, outcomes (effects), and statutory requirements.

Conditions and Management Plans

7.12 To be given any weight, proposed design measures need to be given effect to by way of conditions. Conditions are often an afterthought for landscape assessors and designers. It is important that they are **carefully crafted**.

7.13 The purpose of conditions is to manage effects on landscape values – which are embodied in certain physical attributes. State the **reason for the condition** (the value to be managed), the **intended outcome** (management of certain attribute), and **likely effectiveness** (confidence that the outcomes be achieved). A condition should be:

- Between the consent holder and the consent authority (a condition cannot be imposed on someone who is not party to the consent).
- For a resource management purpose and relevant to the application (for instance, to address an effect).
- Fair, reasonable, and practical.
- Written in an unambiguous way, with outcomes that can be certifiable and enforceable.

7.14 Conditions should be clear as to the intended outcomes so as not to (illegally) delegate decision-making. The conditions must anticipate a **certifier** (not another decision maker). A certifier can only **certify** that outcomes specified in conditions are met, **not shape the outcomes**. Therefore, it is best if conditions are quantifiable or measurable against a benchmark – they should not be vague, or leave matters up for interpretation.

7.15 In some instances, conditions will make use of other tools such as a ‘Landscape Management Plan’ (LMP). For instance, conditions may require that an LMP be prepared to control implementation of the landscape design. The conditions should outline the contents of such an LMP and include sufficient information on the design principles, standards, and techniques to be incorporated in the LMP to provide **sufficient certainty** to the decision makers of the eventual outcome. They must be written in a way that they can be certified.

Avoid vs remedy vs mitigate

7.16 It is commonplace for landscape assessments to include a section on ‘mitigation’ of adverse effects. However, the first preference in **avoid, remedy and mitigate** (as set out in the RMA’s purpose and principles in section 5) is to avoid adverse effects (i.e., through such things as site selection and design). Mitigation should be a ‘last resort’. Section 7(c) and 7(f) of the Act also require particular regard be had to the maintenance and **enhancement of amenity values** and the **quality of the environment** respectively. **Policy Statements** and **Plans** interpret these provisions with greater specificity to different places or matters.

- 7.17 In addition, consideration of **alternatives** is required in certain circumstances:
- Section 6(1)(a) of the 4th Schedule, which lists the information required in assessments of environmental effects, requires a description of any possible **alternative locations or methods** if it is likely the activity will result in any significant adverse effect on the environment.
 - Section 171(1)(b) similarly requires a territorial authority to consider whether adequate consideration has been given to **alternative sites, routes or methods** if the work will have a significant adverse effect on the environment, or the requiring authority does not have an interest in the required land.
- 7.18 The RMA, therefore, has provisions that support the greater imperative to actively avoid adverse effects and to enhance landscapes.¹⁵⁰ As discussed, the best opportunity to avoid adverse effects and to achieve positive effects is for assessment and design to work in tandem.

Summary Box

Managing landscapes is not limited to the status quo: to avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects. Rather, there are greater aspirations and imperatives to enhance and restore landscape values.

Managing landscape values is best realised where **design** and **assessment** work in tandem. Design and assessment share common foundations:

- Attention to **context**.
- **Integration** of diverse factors and types of information.
- Creative **insight** and **interpretation**.
- Actual **outcomes**: healthier, more efficient, aesthetically rewarding, meaningful places.

Landscape assessments (including assessments of effects) should explain design thinking that is incorporated ('designed-in') in a project. It is important, though, that assessors retain impartiality.

Conditions are important to managing effects on landscape values. The purpose (intended outcome) of each condition should be clear. They should be enforceable to achieve the desired outcome.

Co-design is a way to integrate community and tāngata whenua involvement in projects. **Design frameworks** are a tool to integrate design and assessment through the successive phases (planning, design, consenting, construction) of complex projects.

¹⁵⁰ These imperatives are made more strongly in the recommended changes to resource management legislation outlined in the Randerson Report, with a philosophy of continual improvement.

8 OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES

8.1 Section 6(b) of the RMA requires as a matter of national importance:

‘the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.’

8.2 An assessment may be required to either identify ‘outstanding natural features and landscapes’ (ONF/ONL) or to consider the effects on such ONFs and ONLs. Similar principles and processes as those outlined in preceding Chapters for assessing landscape character, values, and effects, also apply to ONFs and ONLs. The main differences are:

- When identifying ONFs and ONLs, there is an additional step: considering whether a natural feature or landscape is ‘**outstanding**’; and
- When assessing effects, there is a specific consideration as to whether something is ‘**inappropriate**’.

8.3 These Guidelines refer primarily to ONFs identified for **landscape values**. ONFs may also be identified and classified separately for **geoheritage values** by methods tailored to such values (see paragraph 8.12 below).

What is an outstanding natural feature or landscape?

8.4 ‘Outstanding natural features and landscapes’ mean ‘outstanding natural features’ and ‘outstanding natural landscapes.’¹⁵¹

Meaning of ‘outstanding’

8.5 ‘Outstanding’ encapsulates both quality and relativity: “*conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence*” and “*remarkable in*”. It is a matter of reasoned judgement. An ONF or ONL will often be obvious. The value of a professional assessment in such circumstances is therefore to explain the **reasons** (justification) that an ONF or ONL is outstanding and describe the **values** (and the **attributes** on which the values depend).

8.6 While ‘outstanding’ is a high threshold, it does not mean ‘the best’ or ‘uniquely superior’.¹⁵² ONF/ONLs are not regulated by quota. A district may comprise a high proportion of natural landscapes of such quality as to be ONLs (for instance Queenstown-Lakes). Conversely, it does not mean ‘the best of a poor choice’: A district may contain few or no ONF/ONLs.

8.7 A natural feature or landscape might be considered outstanding for **many different reasons** – it may have outstanding values that derive from its physical and/or perceptual and/or associative dimensions (although often the values arise from the interplay between all three dimensions).

¹⁵¹ See Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated v Queenstown-Lakes District Council, [1999] Decision No. C180, paragraph 81. NZCPS Policy 15 adopts this interpretation by referring to “outstanding natural features and outstanding natural landscapes” as does the recommendations of the Randerson Report. Nevertheless, some practitioners maintain the meaning intended by the drafters of the RMA was ‘outstanding natural features’ and ‘outstanding landscapes’ and that it would have been preferable if such an interpretation had held sway because it would have accommodated all landscape types such as ‘outstanding cultural landscapes’.

¹⁵² See Port Gore decision, [2012] NZEnvC 072.

It is important that such values (and the attributes that embody the values) are identified precisely because they are what is to be protected.

- 8.8 An ONF or ONL is considered outstanding in the **context of a region or district**.¹⁵³ ONFs and ONLs do not have to be outstanding in a national context. (Rather, it is a matter of **national importance** to protect such regional or district ONFs and ONLs).

Meaning of 'natural'

- 8.9 "Outstanding natural features and landscapes" does not mean features and landscapes that are 'outstandingly natural'. It means natural features and natural landscapes that are outstanding.
- 8.10 'Natural' means characterised by natural elements (such as landforms, vegetation, rocks, water bodies) as opposed to built elements (such as buildings and infrastructure). The essence is not the degree of naturalness, but that it is sufficiently natural to be considered a natural feature or natural landscape. 'Natural' covers a broad scope. Some ONFs and ONLs contain managed rural landscapes such as pasture and pine plantations. Some geoheritage ONFs may include human-made exposures of natural rock features.

Meaning of 'inappropriate'

- 8.11 Whether a subdivision, use or development is 'inappropriate' will be answered with reference to the **landscape values** that make the ONF or ONL outstanding (what it is that is sought to be protected). An essential task, therefore, is to precisely identify such values and the attributes on which they depend.

Geoheritage and landscape values

- 8.12 Outstanding natural features can be classified on geo-heritage grounds alongside those classified on landscape grounds. The relevant matter in such situations is the values for which the feature is considered outstanding. If an ONF is classified for its geoheritage values (for instance the type-location for a certain rock, or an exposure of important fossils), it is the geoheritage values that are to be protected. If an ONF is classified on landscape grounds, it is the landscape values that are to be protected.
- 8.13 Geoheritage values (geological exposures, caves, landforms) are identified by methods tailored to such values.¹⁵⁴ Geoheritage and landscape ONFs can be identified and classified separately,¹⁵⁵ or as part of an interdisciplinary approach that harnesses both landscape and geoscience expertise. While ONFs identified from landscape and geoheritage perspectives do not always coincide, it is not uncommon for landform ONFs to have both landscape and geoheritage significance. Combining such matters means such values may be protected in an integrated way.

¹⁵³ At the context and scale of the relevant authority.

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Geoscience Society of New Zealand, 2019, Best practice guide: Outstanding natural features. What are they and how should they be identified? How their significance might be assessed and documented. *Geoscience Society of New Zealand Miscellaneous Publication 154*. <https://www.gsnz.org.nz/publications-and-webstore/product/127>.

¹⁵⁵ If classified separately, it should be clear whether it is for geoheritage or landscape reasons.

Identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes

- 8.14 The process can be summarised as follows:
- Identify ‘**candidate**’ natural features and natural landscapes.
 - Assess the **character** and **values** of each ‘candidate’.
 - Evaluate whether each feature and landscape is ‘**outstanding**’.
 - **Delineate** the ONF or ONL.

Identify candidate natural features and landscapes

- 8.15 ONFs and ONLs are best assessed as part of a region or district-wide landscape assessment.¹⁵⁶ Good practice for such exercises is to analysis the landscape **character** and **values** of the whole region/district paying attention to each area’s physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions within a historical frame (as outlined in Chapter 5). Candidate natural features and landscapes will emerge naturally from such an assessment. The assessment will in turn provide the context from which to assess the character and values of each ONF and ONL.
- 8.16 There are situations, though, in which landscape assessors are required to assess whether a single natural feature or landscape has the qualities of an ONF or ONL. It is open to decision makers to make a finding as to whether such a feature or landscape is an ONF or ONL, notwithstanding Plan provisions (i.e., to decide a natural landscape is an ONL even though not identified as such in the Plan, or to decide an identified ONL is not in fact an ONL).¹⁵⁷ In such instances, decision makers rely on landscape evidence. It is not necessary to assess all landscapes in a district to arrive at a professional opinion. Whether a natural feature or landscape is ‘outstanding’ is a matter of reasoned judgement rather than exhaustive comparison. ‘Outstandingness’ should generally be obvious – especially once the reasons have been articulated.
- 8.17 Confirm that the candidate feature or landscape is **sufficiently natural** to be a natural feature or natural landscape. It is a matter for reasoned assessment in context. ‘Cultured-nature’ landscapes may be sufficiently natural to be considered as an outstanding natural landscape.¹⁵⁸ It was suggested in two Environment Court decisions that the naturalness threshold might be between ‘moderate-high’ and ‘high’ (on the 7-point scale),¹⁵⁹ although a subsequent decision states that there is no arbitrary threshold.

Assess the character and values of candidates

- 8.18 Assess the **character** and **values** of the natural feature or landscape in terms of its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions following the process outlined in Chapter 5 of the Guidelines.

¹⁵⁶ The Randerson Report recommends that ONFs and ONLs are assessed regionally as part of combined regional and district plans, and also at a national level for those ONFs and ONLs that are nationally significant.

¹⁵⁷ See for example Unison Networks [2007] W24/07 and Stephenson Island [2014] NZEnvC 92.

¹⁵⁸ See Long Bay decision [2008] NZEnvC 78 paragraph 135.

¹⁵⁹ See Denniston Plateau decision [2013] NZEnvC 047 paragraph 47. However, see also the Hawthenden Farms decision [2019] NZEnvC 160, paragraph 61 which says, “There is **no arbitrary threshold** (e.g., ‘moderate-high’) of **sufficient naturalness** for a feature or landscape to qualify as an ONF/ONL”.

Is it outstanding?

- 8.19 In effect, there is one criterion (that it is outstanding) and one pre-condition (that it is a sufficiently natural feature or landscape).
- 8.20 The reasons ONFs and ONLs are outstanding are varied. An ONF or ONL may be outstanding, for example, for natural science values, and/or because of important traditions, ancient stories, whakapapa, and/or because it is aesthetically distinctive in a strategic location. While an ONF or ONL may be outstanding for a single reason, it is more likely to be outstanding for a combination of reasons. The physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions typically reinforce each other.
- 8.21 Whether a natural feature or landscape is outstanding derives in part from context. That means the role and meaning it has **in the context of that area**, and its value **for that area**. What might be unremarkable in one location can be outstanding in another context.
- 8.22 Evaluating whether a feature or landscape is ‘outstanding’ is a matter of reasoned judgement. As with other matters of professional opinion, the reasons given in justification are key.

Delineate the ONF/ONL

- 8.23 The general extent of a natural feature or landscape will be apparent when assessing its character and value. Precisely delineating the boundary typically follows on after an assessment of whether it is outstanding or not. The extent and boundary should derive from the values and attributes of the natural feature or landscape.
- 8.24 However, landscape assessors should treat boundaries in a reasoned way. Natural boundaries may be blurred rather than sharp. Boundaries identified in a Plan may have been mapped at a Regional scale without precise ground-truthing. Landscape values and attributes can spill across boundaries (in both directions). Likewise, delineation of the boundary does not necessarily determine whether an activity/development is appropriate or not: a development outside a boundary may have inappropriate effects on the values of a mapped ONL, while a development inside the boundary may not (see paragraph 8.28). It is important, therefore, that assessors look beyond lines on maps to the actual landscape.

Assessing effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes

- 8.25 Identify the ONF or ONL’s **values** and the **attributes** on which the values depend. Such values should be identified in the Regional or District Policy Statement/Plan, but a landscape assessor may need to undertake their own assessment if they have not been identified (or have been inadequately identified).
- 8.26 Identify **potential effects** of subdivision, use or development with reference to:
- Consequences of changes to physical attributes on the values to be protected; and
 - The provisions of the relevant Plan or Policy Statement.
- 8.27 **Analyse the nature and degree of effects** on the ONF/ONL’s values (on the attributes on which the values depend in the same way as outlined in Chapter 6). **Make an overall assessment** of the effects on the values of the ONF or ONL, including whether the proposal is ‘inappropriate’,
- An adverse effect is one that detracts from the **values** for which the natural feature or

landscape is considered outstanding.

- Whether a subdivision, use or development is ‘inappropriate’ will be answered with reference to the **landscape values** (what it is that is sought to be protected) and the statutory provisions. For example, Policy 15 (a) of the NZCPS is to avoid adverse effects on ONF/ONLs in the coastal environment.

8.28 It does not follow that activities/development **within an ONL** will necessarily lead to adverse effects on the **values** for which the ONL is protected. Conversely, activities/development **outside the boundaries of an ONL** can lead to adverse effects on such values.¹⁶⁰ Treat boundaries in a reasoned way (refer paragraph 8.24).

8.29 For the avoidance of doubt, an adverse effect on an ONF/ONL should be measured against the values rather than the ‘outstanding’ threshold: whether the landscape in question would remain outstanding is not determinative of whether there is an adverse effect or not.

Summary Box

Natural features or **natural landscapes** are characterised by their predominance of natural components (landform, vegetation, water bodies) rather than built components (buildings and infrastructure).

‘**Outstanding**’ is a measure of quality and relativity in the context of a region or district. It is a high standard but is not limited to only ‘the best’ or ‘uniquely superior’.

ONFs or ONLs might be considered outstanding for many different reasons. The **values** for which they are considered outstanding might derive from their physical and/or perceptual and/or associative dimensions: often it is interplay between all three dimensions.

It is the **values** for which the ONF or ONL is considered outstanding **that are to be protected** (through the attributes in which the values are embodied).

The **process** for identifying and evaluating ONFs and ONLs can be summarised as:

- Identify ‘candidates’ (normally part of a district or regional landscape assessment).
- Assess the character and values of each candidate.
- Evaluate whether the candidate is outstanding and (sufficiently) natural.
- Delineate the ONF or ONL.

Effects on ONFs and ONLs are considered in terms of such landscape values. Whether subdivision, use and development is **inappropriate** or not will be answered with reference to such values.

ONFs can be classified on both **geoheritage** and **landscape** grounds. The pertinent matter in each situation is the values for which the ONF or ONL is considered outstanding – which determines what is to be protected.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Central Wind’ [2010] NZEnvC 14 (paragraph 94) and ‘Unison Networks’ [2006], NZEnvC W58 (paragraph 42). The same principle was established for effects on natural character of the coastal environment in ‘West Wind’ [2007] W31/07 para 405.

9 NATURAL CHARACTER

9.1 ‘Natural character’¹⁶¹ has specific application in Aotearoa New Zealand because Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991 provides, as a matter of national importance, for:

‘the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development’.

What is natural character?

9.2 Natural character has been interpreted as:

- The naturalness¹⁶² or degree of modification of an area.
- An area’s distinct combination of natural characteristics and qualities.

9.3 The former is a **quantitative condition**, the latter a type of **qualitative character**. The former condition is **generic**,¹⁶³ the latter character is **specific**.

9.4 The Guidelines adopt the interpretation that natural character is a type of character – the distinct combination of an area’s **natural** characteristics and qualities,¹⁶⁴ and that naturalness is an attribute of that natural character.

‘Natural character is the distinct combination of an area’s natural characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness.’

9.5 The reasons for this interpretation are:

- It recognises that s6(a) uses the term ‘natural **character**’ rather than ‘naturalness’.
- It is consistent with Objective 2 of the NZCPS which is (amongst other things) to recognise the **characteristics and qualities** that contribute to natural character, and with the matters listed in Policy 13(2) – of which the **range** of natural character between pristine and modified (i.e., naturalness) is only one matter.¹⁶⁵
- It lends itself to assessment of each area’s **specific** natural character (compared to the generic attribute of naturalness) and therefore a more nuanced approach to protecting natural character from inappropriate activity. It provides for a more nuanced approach to all parts of the coastal environment rather than focusing on areas of ‘outstanding’ natural character.
- It is consistent with the evolution of concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘natural character’ (see ‘Side Notes’ at paragraph 9.34ff).
- It aligns with a consistent use of such words as ‘natural’, ‘character’, and ‘outstanding’, as they are interpreted elsewhere in the Guidelines.

¹⁶¹ This Chapter focuses exclusively on s6(a) matters – not the natural character of landscapes in general.

¹⁶² Naturalness in this context is defined as the extent to which natural processes, elements, and patterns occur and the relative absence of human elements such as structures and roads.

¹⁶³ Albeit, determined from an area’s specific characteristics and qualities.

¹⁶⁴ Natural character is an attribute of **places** – it does not exist of itself. See for example the Port Gore decision, [2012] NZEnvC 072, paragraph 132.

¹⁶⁵ It is interesting to compare with the superseded NZCPS 1994 which stated at Policy 1.1.3 that ‘it is a national priority to protect the following features, which in themselves or in combination, are essential or important elements of the natural character of the coastal environment (a) landscapes, seascapes and landforms, including: (iii) the **collective characteristics which give the coastal environment its natural character** [...] (emphasis added).

- It potentially resolves the different interpretations by incorporating ‘naturalness’ as an attribute of ‘natural character’.

9.6 In lieu of a definition, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS) lists examples of matters that contribute to natural character of the coastal environment). The list comprises the natural physical environment and how they are perceived and experienced in context.¹⁶⁶

Recognise that natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes or amenity values and may include matters such as:

- *natural elements, processes and patterns;*
- *biophysical, ecological, geological and geomorphological aspects;*
- *natural landforms such as headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, wetlands, reefs, freshwater springs and surf breaks;*
- *the natural movement of water and sediment;*
- *the natural darkness of the night sky;*
- *places or areas that are wild or scenic;*
- *a range of natural character from pristine to modified; and*
- *experiential attributes, including the sounds and smell of the sea; and their context or setting. [Policy 13 (2):]*

9.7 The focus on the ‘**degree**’ of natural character (or ‘naturalness’ as defined in these Guidelines) arises in part because of Policies 13(1)(a), (b), and (c) of the NZCPS:

- Policy 13(1)(a) is to avoid adverse effects of activities on natural character in areas of the coastal environment with **outstanding natural character**.
- Policy 13(1)(b) is to avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on natural character in **all other areas** of the coastal environment.

9.8 Policy 13(1)(c) of the NZCPS is to achieve these outcomes by assessing the natural character of the coastal environment of the region or district, by mapping or otherwise identifying at least areas of **high natural character**. However, while a principal objective of some regional and district assessments, therefore, is identifying and mapping areas of ‘high’ and ‘outstanding’ natural character, Objective 2 and Policy 13(2) establish that ‘characteristics and qualities’ are a foundation of assessments of natural character.

9.9 It is recognised that the interpretation offered by these Guidelines is not universal. It is important, therefore, to explain the interpretation of natural character and method used in any assessment.

Assessing natural character

9.10 The same principles and approaches apply to assessing ‘natural character’ as apply to assessing other types of landscape character but with the focus on **natural** characteristics and qualities.

9.11 Natural character assessments may be included as sections within other landscape assessments or standalone reports – and for such purposes as:

¹⁶⁶ As noted above, such a list recognises the characteristics and qualities that contribute to natural character of the coastal environment consistent with Objective 2 of the NZCPS.

- **Proposal-based** assessments – for instance one of the relevant matters of a landscape assessment may be the effects of proposal on the natural character of an area of the coastal environment, or a water body and its margins.
- **Area-based** assessments – for instance, an assessment of a region to identify and map areas of high and outstanding natural character.
- **Issue-based** assessments – for instance, an assessment of the resilience of natural character to inform policies relating to certain activities such as rural-residential development or forestry.

9.12 While each is different, they are likely to share common elements.

- Design and explain **methodology**.
- Identify the **relevant area**.
- Assess the **natural characteristics and qualities** of the area.
- Interpret how the characteristics and qualities come together to create the area's **natural** character.
- **Evaluate** and **determine the natural character** with respect to context and purpose of the assessment, which may include:
 - The significance of the area's natural character
 - The key characteristics and qualities – including degree of naturalness – that embody such significance.

9.13 The following paragraphs elaborate on each of these elements.

Statement of methodology

9.14 **Define 'natural character'**. Explain your interpretation of natural character to be used in the assessment (refer to paragraph 9.2ff) – which is important given the different interpretations of natural character. Such an explanation will help decision makers (and others) understand your assessment (it is transparent). Explain your interpretation in terms of consistency with RMA s6(a) and (where applicable) the intent, principles, and language of the NZCPS.

9.15 **Tailor the method** for assessing natural character to each project's purpose and context (see Chapter 2).

9.16 **Explain the method**. A methodology statement might say that the assessment follows the concepts and principles of these Guidelines (or otherwise if that is the case) and then outline the method tailored to the project.

Identify the relevant area

9.17 Identify the extent of the relevant area using reasoned judgement as to scale and context.

- Natural character is an aspect **of an area**.
- The areas to which natural character applies occur at different scales. The **appropriate scale** will be a function of the landscape itself and the purpose of the assessment. For instance, a regional area-based assessment will typically identify and map areas with consistent natural character, while a proposal-driven assessment will focus on an area sufficient to understand the proposal's effects.
- Include **both water and land**. Each of the areas to which natural character applies under RMA s6(a) is centred on bodies of water. Focussing on the land alone can lead

to errors of scale and to overlooking key natural character elements. (Integration across jurisdictional boundaries is discussed further at paragraph 9.61)

- Focus on the relevant area but also place it in its **broader context**.
- Provide reasons to support the area identified.

9.18 The seaward extent of the **coastal environment** is defined as the limit of territorial waters (in general terms 12 nautical miles from the mainland and islands). It includes the seabed and marine environment.

9.19 The following pointers are relevant to identifying the **inland extent of the coastal environment**.

- The coastal environment is the area in which coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant. Significant means major – more than a modest influence or view.
- Identify the inland boundary with respect to the physical landscape. The coastal environment is an environment rather than a zone. Topographic features or obvious changes in the influence of coastal processes often provide a marker to the inland extent of the coastal environment (e.g., cliffs, ridge, inland extent of coastal vegetation, changes in land use caused by exposure to the coast, tidal influence). The leading ridgeline behind the coast has been used as a rule-of-thumb for the inland extent of the coastal environment. This may be sensible where there is an immediate relationship of ridge to coast but may not be relevant if the leading ridge is too far inland to define an environment in which coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant. In other places the inland boundary can be blurred, or indistinct, as coastal influence diminishes. Assessing the inland boundary is a matter of judgement taking all factors together. As with all matters of judgement, justify with reasons. (Refer also to paragraph 8.24 on a reasoned approach to boundaries).
- The extent should derive from the environment rather than potential effects.
- Consider the land and sea together when deciding on the inland boundary.
- The extent will vary from place to place. It has been said that the extent of the coastal environment is “...one of those theoretically difficult questions which will usually yield to the facts and a liberal dose of common sense.”¹⁶⁷

9.20 The following pointers are relevant when delineating the extent of the margins of **lakes and rivers**.¹⁶⁸

- The word ‘margin’ suggests a relatively narrow area compared to ‘environment’.
- While the Queen’s Chain (20m) is sometimes referred to as a starting point, especially for streams, the Environment Court in High Country Rosehip Orchards said that “*margins are likely to be areas beyond the wave action of a lake or extending away from the banks of a river for, depending on topography and other factors, at least 20-50 metres and sometimes more.*”¹⁶⁹
- The margins should be determined with reference to the attributes of the lakes and rivers themselves, and their context.
- The extent is likely to be influenced by the size of the feature – Lake Taupō’s margins are likely to be wider than those of a small lake, the margins of river wider than those of a stream.

¹⁶⁷ Kaupokonui Beach Society Inc. and ors v South Taranaki District Council, Decision No. W30/2008, paragraph 37

¹⁶⁸ It would be logically consistent for margins to also apply to wetlands (given wetlands and lakes are part of a continuum), however the s6(a) punctuation means margins apply only to lakes and rivers. The recommended wording in the Randerson Report would fix this apparent anomaly.

¹⁶⁹ [2011] NZEnvC 387, High Country Rosehip Orchards Limited and Others v Mackenzie District Council, paragraph 140.

- The margins are also likely to be influenced by topography (for instance the sides of a gorge) and land use (for instance where cultivation abuts natural vegetation).

Assess natural characteristics and qualities

9.21 Assess the characteristics and qualities that contribute to natural character. NZCPS Policy 13(2) lists some examples. In summary, they include:

- **Physical natural elements and processes** including abiotic aspects (e.g., landform and water, hydrological processes, geomorphology, climate) and biota aspects (flora and fauna, ecology).
- How they are **perceived and experienced** including how natural the area appears (how apparent or dominant the human structures or activities are), and how the area's natural aspects are experienced and appreciated (e.g., exposure to the sound of water, feel of coastal wind, smell of the sea, its aesthetic qualities such as areas that are wild and scenic).

9.22 Assessment will require both **desk-top research** and **field work**.

- **Desk-top research** includes information¹⁷⁰ sourced from and/or supplied by¹⁷¹ other disciplines such as ecology (marine, freshwater, terrestrial), geomorphology, and coastal and freshwater processes. It includes remote means (such as charts and reports on the marine environment) to understand the continuity between terrestrial and underwater landscapes. Interpret and integrate such information into an overall assessment of natural character in a similar way to how information is integrated into an assessment of landscape character.
- **Field work** includes assessing perceptions of natural character and analysis of the natural characteristics and qualities. Such perceptions should be intelligent and informed by knowledge, not limited to superficial impression. For instance, the mere presence of vegetation or water and absence of structures is not a sufficient indication. What might appear superficially natural might comprise modified **natural elements** (e.g., weed vegetation or pests), and **natural processes** (e.g., by drainage and land management).
- One characteristic of natural character is **naturalness**: the **extent** to which natural elements, patterns, and processes occur and the **relative absence** of buildings, infrastructure, and other human elements.¹⁷² Assess naturalness against the 7-point scale, explaining the rating with reasons.

9.23 'Trajectory' is a relevant characteristic: for instance, whether the area is **regenerating** former farmland in which case its natural character may be increasing.

¹⁷⁰ Such information may relate to the water itself, underwater topography, coastal or margin flora and fauna, in-water flora and fauna, and coastal or freshwater processes.

¹⁷¹ Some natural character assessments may be undertaken by a team that includes specialists from other disciplines.

¹⁷² Note that naturalness in the context of natural character is not a measure of the extent to which an area has been modified from a pre-human state. It relates to how an area's natural characteristics and qualities are perceived (including how they are understood and experienced).

Interpret how the natural characteristics and qualities come together as natural character

- 9.24 Interpret how the natural characteristics and qualities come together as each area's distinct natural character. Natural character is the **composite character** of the area's **natural** characteristics and qualities. It is a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.
- 9.25 The process of analysing the **natural characteristics and qualities** and interpreting how they come together as **natural character** is similar to the process used to assess landscape character, the difference being that natural character is concerned with the **natural** characteristics and qualities.
- 9.26 Natural character is an outcome of physical environment and perception. Perception is influenced by what we **know** of an area's natural characteristics and qualities (including input from natural sciences) and how we **experience** them.
- 9.27 Integrate information from different disciplines to interpret overall natural character.

Evaluate and determine natural character

- 9.28 Evaluate the significance of the area's natural character, and determine the key natural characteristics and qualities, including the degree of naturalness. Have regard to **context**, relevant statutory planning **provisions**, and the assessment's purpose in undertaking such evaluation. As with all matters of judgement, explain the reasons.
- 9.29 Evaluate whether the area has outstanding natural character where relevant (see paragraph 9.32).
- 9.30 Identifying the significance of an area's natural character and its key natural characteristics and qualities (what might be termed its 'natural character values'), are important to **managing natural character**: For instance, to findings on effects and on what is appropriate subdivision, use and development.
- 9.31 The significance of an area's natural character is influenced by **setting** and **context**.

Outstanding natural character

- 9.32 Identifying areas of 'outstanding natural character' is relevant to satisfying NZCPS Policy 13(1)(a) to **avoid** adverse effects of activities on natural character in areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character.
- 9.33 '**Outstanding**' is assumed to mean the same with respect to natural character as it does to natural features and landscapes. That is, it encapsulates both quality and relativity. It is a matter of reasoned judgement. 'Outstanding' is a high threshold but does not mean 'the best' or 'uniquely superior'.
- It is not limited by quota. There are extensive lengths of coast in some parts of the country with outstanding natural character (for instance Fiordland).
 - On the other hand, it does not mean 'best of a poor choice'. It may be that there are no areas of outstanding natural character in a district.
 - Outstanding natural character should be reasonably obvious and compelling, particularly when the reasons are explained.

- 9.34 Under the interpretation of natural character at paragraph 9.4, ‘outstanding natural character’ means areas where the combined natural characteristics and qualities have outstanding significance or value. That is, it is a qualitative rather than quantitative measure. It is a matter of reasoned judgement. It does not mean ‘outstanding naturalness’ – although a high degree of naturalness may very well be a key characteristic that contributes to an area’s outstanding natural character.

Managing natural character

- 9.35 It is worth remembering that the purpose for assessing natural character is to inform its management. That is, to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment, and of wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins, and protect the natural character of those places from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- 9.36 That purpose applies to **all such areas**, not just those with high degrees of naturalness.¹⁷³ An area’s remnant natural character may be important even though it is highly modified.
- 9.37 Preserving and protecting natural character does not necessarily mean maintaining the status quo or avoiding subdivision, activities, and development. For instance, NZCPS Policy 14 promotes restoration or rehabilitation of natural character.

Assessing effects on natural character

- 9.38 Assess the nature and degree of effect on the area’s natural character – as in the key characteristics and qualities. Effects on natural character are assessed in a similar way as landscape effects in general, the key differences being the focus is on:
- **Natural** characteristics and qualities
 - **Appropriateness** – i.e., appropriateness in terms of what is to be protected which arises from the **specific natural character** of an area, and the relevant **statutory provisions** (such as NZCPS Policy 13(1)(a) and (b), and Regional and District Policy Statements/Plans).
- 9.39 Describe the **nature of effect** on the key natural characteristics and qualities, including the degree of naturalness. Rate the **degree** of such effects using the 7-point scale.¹⁷⁴ Provide reasons to justify the assessment.
- 9.40 Effects on natural character may be positive or adverse. NZCPS Policy 14, for instance, promotes restoration and rehabilitation of the natural character of the coastal environment.

¹⁷³ The Randerson Report would restrict protection to ‘nationally or regionally significant features of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, lakes, rivers and their margins (page 79).

¹⁷⁴ As with landscape effects in general, such ratings qualify the nature of the effect. The rating is not the effect itself. The nature and degree of effect are to be considered together.

Side Notes

History of ‘natural’ and ‘natural character’

- 9.42 Natural character originates from western-derived concepts of nature and culture. It is a ‘cultural construct’.
- 9.43 Concepts of ‘natural character’ in Aotearoa have evolved over the years and will likely continue to evolve. Matters debated during this time include:
- The legitimacy of exotic vs indigenous nature.
 - Evolution from concepts based on superficial impression to those based on perception informed by deeper understanding of natural elements and processes and how they are experienced.
 - The relative role of scientific vs perceptual approaches.
 - Whether ‘natural character’ means the degree of ‘naturalness’ or an area’s distinct combination of ‘natural characteristics and qualities’.

The following paragraphs summarise these ideas.

‘Naturalness’

- 9.44 ‘Natural character’ has often been conflated with ‘naturalness’. Discussions of ‘naturalness’ often quote the ‘Harrison’ decision:

‘The word “natural” does not necessarily equate with the word “pristine” except in so far as landscape in a pristine state is probably rarer and of more value than landscape in a natural state. The word “natural” is a word indicating a product of nature and can include such things as pasture, exotic tree species (pine), wildlife ... and many other things of that ilk as opposed to manmade structures, roads, machinery.’

- 9.45 This approach relies on **impression** and a simple distinction between natural and human elements: farm pasture is natural, but farm buildings are not.
- 9.46 Criteria for assessing ‘naturalness’ based on impression have been widely used to assess natural character. Such criteria were set out in the WESI decision with respect to **outstanding natural landscapes**, and a slightly modified version used with respect of the **natural character** of coastal environment in the Long Bay decision:
- *relatively unmodified and legible physical landform and relief;*
 - *the landscape being uncluttered by structures and/or obvious human influence;*
 - *the presence of water (lake, river, sea);*
 - *the presence of vegetation (especially native vegetation) and other ecological patterns.*
- 9.47 The ‘West Wind’ decision adopted the same criteria but added a further criterion relating to context: *“the wider **natural landscape context** and the site’s relationship to this context”* (emphasis added).

Indigenous vs exotic nature

- 9.48 Such interpretations were supported by research by Fairweather and Swaffield into New Zealanders' perceptions of naturalness.¹⁷⁵ They identified two paradigms that they termed 'wild nature' and 'cultured nature'. While the former (i.e., indigenous wilderness) is regarded as 'more natural', the latter – which aligns with the 'Harrison' definition – is still regarded as 'natural'.¹⁷⁶ Such 'cultured nature' landscapes have been deemed 'sufficiently natural' to be considered as ONLs. The research also identified that plantation forests were perceived as relatively unnatural despite the trees being 'products of nature.'

NZCPS 1994

- 9.49 The NZCPS 1994 did not define natural character but contained policies indicating that the concept entails a **combination of characteristics**. Specifically, Policy 1.1.3 (iii) referred to '*the collective characteristics which give the coastal environment its natural character including wild and scenic areas*'.

Degree of natural character (degree of modification)

- 9.50 On the other hand, the focus on **degree of natural character** as a generic parameter reflecting the **degree of modification** is highlighted in the definition agreed by practitioners at workshops under the auspices of the Ministry for the Environment in 2002:

*Natural character is the term used to describe the natural elements of all coastal environments. The **degree or level of natural character** within an environment depends on:*

- *The **extent** to which the natural elements, patterns and processes occur;*
 - *The nature and **extent** of modification to the ecosystems and landscape/seascape;*
 - *The **degree** of natural character is highest where there is least modification;*
 - *The effect of different types of modification upon natural character varies with context and may be perceived differently by different parts of the community.*
- 9.51 This definition also indicates greater attention on natural processes compared with the Harrison reliance on impressions alone. Rather than the absence of obvious human presence, this approach defines natural character as the extent of modification from an implied pristine condition (i.e., a pre-human benchmark).
- 9.52 QINCCE (Quantitative Index for measuring the Natural Character of the Coastal Environment) is an example of a method derived from such concepts. It seeks to objectively quantify natural character by aggregating scores from various inputs, with most emphasis on natural sciences.

¹⁷⁵ Reported in 'Public perceptions of Natural Character in New Zealand: Wild Nature Versus Cultured Nature', Bronwyn Newton, John Fairweather and Simon Swaffield, *New Zealand Geographer*, 58 (2) 2002.

¹⁷⁶ See [2008] NZEnvC 78 Long Bay-Okura Great Park Society Inc vs North Shore City Council, ('Long Bay'), paragraph 134.

NZCPS 2010

- 9.53 The NZCPS 2010 reinforced the importance of natural science aspects but at the same time highlighted that natural character has a perceptual and experiential dimension. At workshops organised by the Department of Conservation in 2012 the following was added to the 2002 natural character definition quoted above:

“Policy 13(2) makes it clear that natural character includes all natural aspects of the land and sea, including the underlying ecological, hydrological and geomorphological processes that shape landforms (including underwater features) and the natural movements of water and sediment. Natural character also includes aspects of the environment that affect human experience including the natural darkness of the night sky, the sounds and smell of the coast, and the context and setting of natural places.”

- 9.54 Environment Court decisions have noted that ‘natural character is not an ‘objective attribute’ – that ‘naturalness’ and ‘character’ are **‘perceived values’**.¹⁷⁷
- 9.55 The NZILA Best Practice Guide 2010 definition of natural character uses the term ‘expression’ which implies that natural character is perceived and that such perceptions flow from the natural elements, patterns, and processes.

‘Natural character is the expression of natural elements, patterns and processes in a landscape’

Characteristics and qualities

- 9.56 Objective 2 of the NZCPS 2010 is explicit: to **recognise the ‘characteristics and qualities that contribute to natural character’**. Similarly, the description (in lieu of a definition) in Policy 13(2) lists a range of characteristics and qualities that contribute to natural character including both physical and experiential attributes. The degree of modification (“a range of natural character from pristine to modified”)¹⁷⁸ is just one item in the list. Nevertheless, the degree of modification (or ‘naturalness’) remains a key attribute – particularly relevant because of the requirements of Policies 13(1)(a) and 13(1)(c).

Current best practice

- 9.57 Current best practice is to integrate natural science and experiential aspects. The context and purpose of the assessment influences whether the focus is on naturalness (**degree of natural character**) informed by attention to natural characteristics and qualities or on the **specific characteristics and qualities** themselves.

Natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes, or amenity values

- 9.58 NZCPS Policy 13(2) states that ‘natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes or amenity values’ but, somewhat cryptically, does not explain the differences. To address this gap, the terms are compared as follows:

¹⁷⁷ Matakana Island, [2019] NZEnvC 110, paragraph 50; Clearwater Mussels [2018] NZEnvC 88 , paragraphs 120, 154.

¹⁷⁸ Note that it says there is a range of natural character from pristine to modified, not that natural character is the degree of modification.

- Natural character describes **characteristics and qualities** of places, while natural features and landscapes are places.
- Natural character describes ‘**characteristics and qualities**’ and amenity values are ‘**values**’ which are embodied in certain characteristics and qualities. Natural character also has a **narrower focus** (an area’s **natural** characteristics and qualities) while amenity values¹⁷⁹ may derive from both **natural and built** characteristics and qualities.
- Natural character is also (as far as s6(a) of the RMA is concerned) focused on only **certain parts of the landscape** (i.e., the coastal environment, wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins).

Reserve the term ‘natural character’ to its applications under the RMA

9.59 While any landscape could be described in terms of its natural character, it assists clarity if the term is reserved for its specific RMA s6(a) application – the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins. There are straightforward alternatives that avoid unnecessary confusions.

Bodies of water are central to ‘natural character’ considerations under the RMA

9.60 Each of the places in which natural character applies under s6(a) of the RMA relates to water bodies or the sea, and the framing land. The central feature is the water body or sea. A potential pitfall is to limit attention to the land only (or the land and water surface). The ‘landscape’ in these places includes the water body or sea and the land beneath the water (for example, the underwater topography, aquatic/marine biota, natural hydrological and marine processes).

Complementary jurisdictions

9.61 The coastal environment (and therefore the natural character of the coastal environment) straddles the overlapping jurisdictions between regional and local authorities. Regional councils have jurisdiction for the coastal marine area (CMA) below Mean High Water Springs (MHWS), while the jurisdiction for local authorities is landward of MWHS. Assessments for both regional or local authorities should consider natural character holistically (i.e., the adjacent land and sea together), although management responsibility and focus will differ between authorities. NZCPS Policy 4 provides for integrated management in the coastal environment (and activities that affect the coastal environment) including across administrative boundaries.

¹⁷⁹“Amenity values means those natural or physical **qualities and characteristics** of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its **pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes**” (RMA section 2 – emphasis added)

Summary Box

Natural character has been interpreted as:

- An area's naturalness or degree of modification (a condition).
- An area's distinct combination of natural characteristics and qualities (a character).

The Guidelines adopt the interpretation that natural character is the distinct combination of an area's natural characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness.

It is acknowledged that there is no certainty or universal agreement as to the correct interpretation. Assessors should therefore be clear in explaining the interpretation and method on which their assessment is based.

Methods for assessing natural character vary depending on purpose, context, and issues but in general include the following:

- Design and explain **methodology**.
- Identify the **relevant area**.
- Assess the **natural characteristics and qualities** of the area.
- Interpret how the characteristics and qualities come together to create the area's **natural** character.
- **Evaluate** and **determine the natural character** with respect to context and purpose of, which may include:
 - The significance of the area's natural character
 - The key characteristics and qualities – including degree of naturalness – that embody such significance.

Land and water bodies should be considered together when assessing natural character in terms of s6(a) of the RMA.

Effects are assessed on the key characteristics and qualities that contribute to the area's natural character.

10 KUPUTAKA

Ahi kā	Occupation, title to land through occupation generally over a long period of time. The burning fires of occupation.
Ahi kātanga	The practices and values of tāngata whenua in place.
Hapū	Sub-tribal grouping (collection of whānau)
Hīkoi	To walk
Iwi	Tribal group (collection of hapū)
Kaitiakitanga	The exercise of guardianship by the tāngata whenua of an area in accordance with tikanga Māori in relation to natural and physical resources; and includes the ethic of stewardship
Kōrero tuku iho	Intergenerational knowledge passed down
Kotahitanga	Collective sense of unity
Mana	Authority, prestige, standing
Mana motuhake	Authority, self-determination
Mana whenua	Authority exercised by tāngata whenua over an area,
Mātauranga Māori	Māori traditional knowledge and knowledge systems
Mauri	Life force, essence
Ngā wawata a mua	Future aspirations
Pūkenga	Expert in tāngata whenua matters.
Pūrakau	Legend, origin stories, ancient narratives
Rohe	An area, particularly the area over which tāngata whenua exercise mana whenua
Tāngata whenua	Māori who hold mana over and occupy and area of whenua
Te Ao Hurihuri	The emerging world
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview and consciousness
Te Ao Pākehā	A western worldview and consciousness
Taonga tuku iho	Treasures handed down from the ancestors
Wāhi tūpuna	Place with ancestral connection
Wāhi tawhito	Place holding historical importance
Wāhi tūturu	Place holding deep or particular meaning
Wairua	Spirituality, spiritual dimension
Whakapapa	Genealogical links and connections
Whānau	Extended family unit

Whanaungatanga	Kinship, relations
Whānau kaupapa	Non-Māori with proven commitment and expertise in kaupapa Māori landscape architecture
Whenua	Land and its tangible and intangible associations

11 GLOSSARY

The following glossary is restricted to key terms to promote the use of plain language for landscape assessment.

Landscape	Embodies the relationships between people and places: It is an area's collective physical attributes, how they are perceived, and what they mean for people.
Landscape character	Each landscape's distinctive combination of physical, associative, and perceptual attributes
Landscape attributes	Tangible and intangible characteristics and qualities that contribute collectively to landscape character.
Landscape values	The reasons a landscape is valued. Values are embodied in certain attributes
Landscape character area	A group of contiguous landscapes sharing similar specific character. For example, the Canterbury plains
Landscape character type	A kind or class of landscape – not necessarily contiguous – sharing similar generic characteristics.
Natural	Those elements that of natural origin (landform, vegetation, water bodies) rather than human origin (buildings, infrastructure). Natural landscapes are those characterised more by natural than built elements.
Naturalness	The extent to which natural elements, patterns, and processes occur. The extent to which an area is unmodified.
Natural character	An area's distinct combination of natural characteristics and qualities – including degree of naturalness.
Outstanding natural features and landscapes	Natural features and natural landscapes that are of outstanding value derived from their physical, associative and/or perceptual dimensions in the context of their district or region.

12 REFERENCES

- Auckland Council, 'Information requirements for the assessment of landscape and visual effects', 2017.
- Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, Boffa Miskell Ltd and Lucas Associates, 1993.
- Landscape Institute (UK) in collaboration with the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)', April 2013.
- Lisa Rimmer, 'Visual Assessment Best Practice Methodologies', LASC698 Research Report, 2007.
- New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, 'Best Practice Note 10.1, Landscape assessment and sustainable management', 2010.
- New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, 'Project LAM Workshops, Summary of Workshop Answer Sheets', December 2017.
- New Zealand Transport Agency, 'Landscape and visual assessment guidelines' published in 'NZTA Landscape Guidelines, Final draft September 2014.
- New Zealand Transport Agency, 'Urban design assessment guideline' published in 'NZTA Bridging the Gap', October 2013.
- Quality Planning⁵⁶ 'Landscape Topic' (2013), <http://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/index.php/planning-tools/land/landscape>, retrieved January 2018.
- 'Routledge Handbook of Landscape Character Assessment: Current Approaches to Characterisation and Assessment', Editors Graham Fairclough, Ingrid Sarlov Herlin, Carys Swanwick, May 2018.
- Simon Swaffield and Di Lucas, 'A land systems approach: Bay of Plenty', (1999) Landscape Review, 1999:5 (1), pages 38 - 41.
- Simon Swaffield, 'A framework for landscape assessment', (1999) Landscape Review, 1999:5 (1), pages 45-51.
- Simon Swaffield, Neil Challenger and Shannon Davis, 'He tangata, he tangata, he tangata: Landscape characterisation in Aotearoa - New Zealand', in Routledge Handbook of Landscape Character Assessment op cit.

ILLUSTRATIONS, WHAKATAUKĪ, QUOTES

The final draft is put up for potential endorsement by the Institute. It would then be subject to editing, graphic design, and illustrations.

We seek a cross-section of photos, graphics, whakataukī, whakatauākī, pepeha, aphorisms, and quotes to illustrate the Guidelines. These can be emailed to sophie.fisher@isthmus.co.nz. The following selection of quotes is a starter.

“The language of landscape is our native language. Landscape was the original dwelling; humans evolved among plants and animals, under the sky, upon the earth, near water. Everyone carries that legacy in body and mind.”— Anne Whiston Spirn

“If we opened people up, we’d find landscapes.” – Agnes Varda

“A book, like a landscape, is a state of consciousness varying with readers” – Ernest Dimnet

“Appreciation of what we see is enhanced by a capacity to look beyond the postcard beauty of the scene, and to piece together how it all evolved: to reconstruct its history and discern how and why it developed. ...to ‘read’ the landscape so that awareness and appreciation of what lies behind the scene can be enhanced...” – Paul Williams, ‘New Zealand Landscape – Behind the Scene’, 2017

“Landscape is a space on the surface of the earth; intuitively we know that it is a space with a degree of permanence, with its own distinct character, either topographical or cultural, and above all a space shared by a group of people; and when we go beyond the dictionary definition of landscape and examine the word itself we find that our intuition is correct.” – J B Jackson, ‘The Word Itself’

“The landscape you grow up in speaks to you in a way that nowhere else does” – Molly Parker

“The landscape of my childhood was one of fierce occupation by trees. ... I carry the landscape inside me like an ache. The story of who I am cannot be severed from the story of the flatwoods.” – Janisse Ray

“When we enter the landscape to learn something, we are obligated, I think, to pay attention rather than constantly to pose questions. To approach the land as we would a person, by opening an intelligent conversation”...“And to stay in one place, to make of that one long observation a fully dilated experience. We will always be rewarded if we give the land credit for more than we imagine, and if we imagine it as being more complex even than language. In these ways we begin, I think, to find a home, to sense how to fit a place.” – Barry Lopez

“I read the landscape to help me through, to know what’s come before me there, to find my footing in time.” – Deborah Tall

“It is no coincidence that the Western attraction to sublime landscapes developed at precisely the moment when traditional beliefs in God began to wane.” – Alain de Botton

“The beauty of the landscape – where sand, water, reeds, birds, buildings, and people all somehow flowed together – has never left me.” – Zaha Hadid

“The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd

consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it. A new thought often seems like a feature of the landscape that was there all along, as though thinking were traveling rather than making.” – Rebecca Solnit

“It had come to me not in a sudden epiphany but with a gradual sureness, a sense of meaning like a sense of place. When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities. Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains.” – Rebecca Solnit

“Sense of place is the sixth sense, an internal compass and map made by memory and spatial perception together.” – Rebecca Solnit

“I’m interested in the ways our minds and our moods and our imaginations and our identities are influenced by the textures and weathers and the forms and slopes and the curves and the creatures, remembered and actual, of the places we inhabit. I’m interested in the way in which the feel of the world influences our feeling for the world ...in this fugitive subject, the intense relationship, unmistakable to experience, very difficult to articulate, between the landscape and the human heart” – Robert McFarlane, ‘Landscape and the Human Heart’

“one of the ecosystem services the environment gives us is metaphor – landscape gives us ways of figuring ourselves to ourselves ...everyone thinks to some degree in landscape and with landscape...all have been shaped by places, by phenomena experienced and recollected... paths connect real locations but also lead inward to the self...our verb ‘to learn’ has a root meaning to follow a path...” – Robert McFarlane, ‘Landscape and the Human Heart’

‘...the structure of a landscape is taken to exhibit the very nature of language, and thus of thought and experience as well’. Human experience may itself be properly understood to be a dwelling in a landscape sculptured by language. (Kleist and Butterfield 1994 xiii-xiv)”

‘Everything changes, everything is connected, pay attention’ – Jane Hirschfield quoted by Richard Hansen as a principle for assessing a landscape

"There is a way of looking where, if you're not paying attention, you won't see anything at all" - Nadine Anne Hura (in ‘The ever-shining star of Nuhaka’)

“This text-that-was-not-my-own didn’t work when it was overlaid on this place. It demanded a different story be made, one that included dog’s brains and a taniwha and a buried lagoon, an earthquake, shards of ceramic and the complicated life of a family. I write about this place as a way of reclaiming it, not as possession or appropriation, but – quite literally – as a text for which it’s possible for me to be the author, since this is a place that exists only for me, as me.” (‘Underwater Reach’, Cherie Lacey, in Extraordinary Anywhere, Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand, 2016)

‘The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.’ Gabriel Garcia Marquez – A hundred years of solitude

“All landscapes incorporate one aspect which is so pervasive as to be easily overlooked: the powerful fact that life must be lived amidst that which was made before” Meinig, 1979, p44

“The aesthetic character of landscapes conceives of the appreciation that underlines character descriptions as contextual and relational, with a robust integration of subjective and objective components of experience.

“Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock,” the historian Simon Schama argues in his book, Landscape and Memory (Schama, 1995: 61). I don’t disagree, but landscape is more than a question of culture, imagination, and natural materials. It is also the substantive legal, political, and material practices through which politics shape urban and rural places within regions and countries. And the meanings of landscape are also a question of language, as expressed in word and image, as it evolves through history and from place to place.” Kenneth Olwig, The Meanings of Landscape’, 2019

“But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents, of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.” Simon Schama, Landscape and Memory, 1995, p.61

“Place...has more substance than the word location suggests: it is a special entity, a ‘special ensemble’ ...that has a history and meaning. Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning.” Yi Fu Tuan, ‘Space and place: Humanistic perspectives’, 1974, 213, quoted in Olwig p. 7