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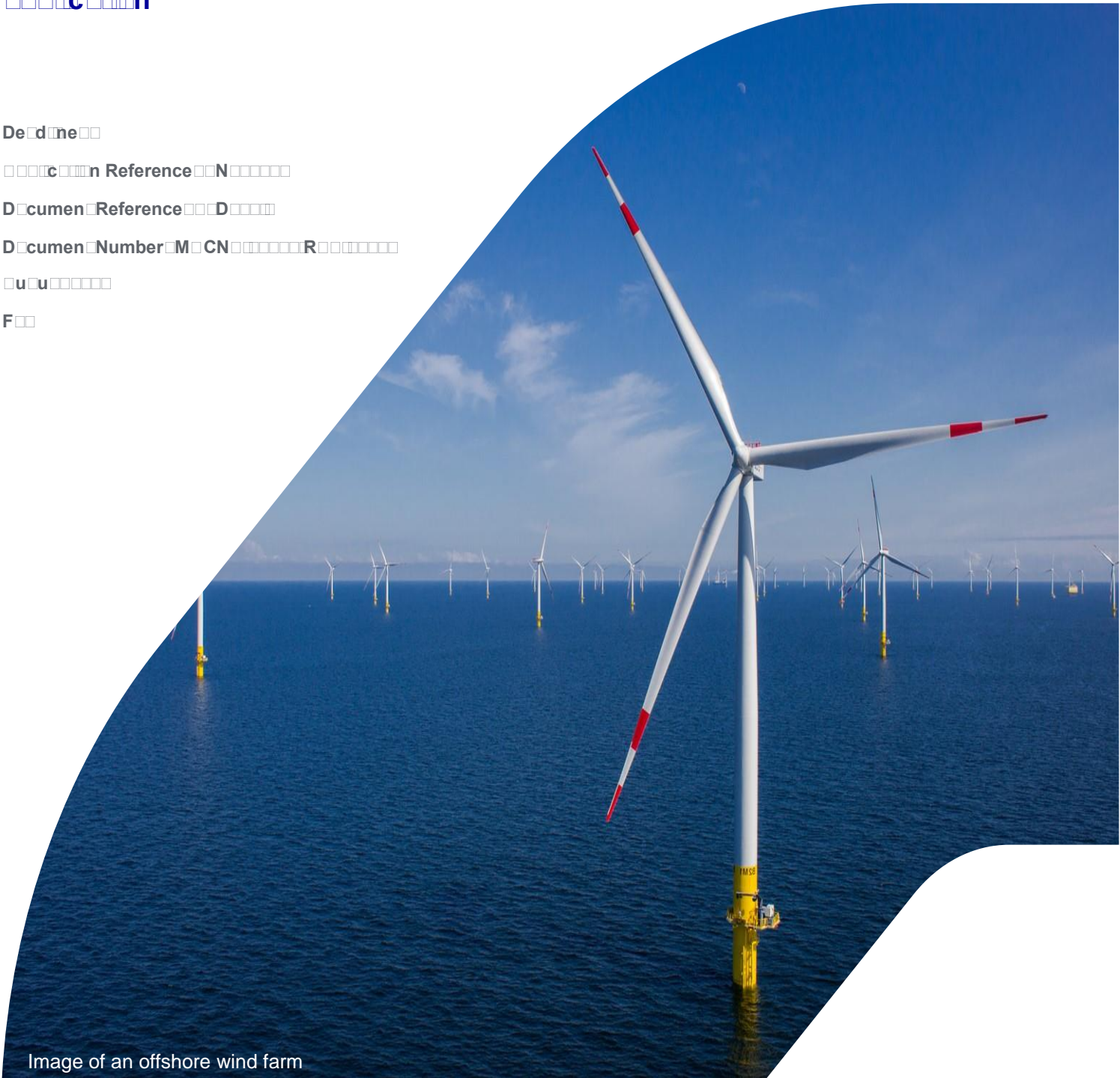


Image of an offshore wind farm

Mona Offshore Wind RDC

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# Environmental Colour Assessment: benefits, process and application



The highly varied geology, topography, landcover, semi-natural habitats and varied cultural traditions of Wales present diverse indigenous colour palettes. Recognising and understanding these variations is fundamental to identifying and valuing local landscape distinctiveness.

Environmental colour assessment (ECA) is the identification of inherent colours associated with a site or locality through survey and analysis leading to the production of colour charts which guide colour and material selection for new developments or changes within that area.

The Landscape Institute Technical Information Note (2018) on Environmental Colour Assessment is available from <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/environmental-colour-assessment/>

## Benefits of Environmental Colour Assessment

Understanding the role that colour plays in contributing to local identity and place making is fundamental to the successful management of change and the integration of new built form into the landscape.

ECA considered as baseline analysis guarantees early consideration of colour and materials and can support local planning policies and management plan actions.

ECA provides vital visual information about the context within which a development will sit and against which it will be viewed. This assists decision-making by making clear the degree to which a proposed development will integrate with its setting in terms of its palette of materials and colour.

ECA could be recommended at pre-application /application where colour may be of concern e.g. a large new building within, or highly visible from, a Designated Landscape or highly sensitive landscape.

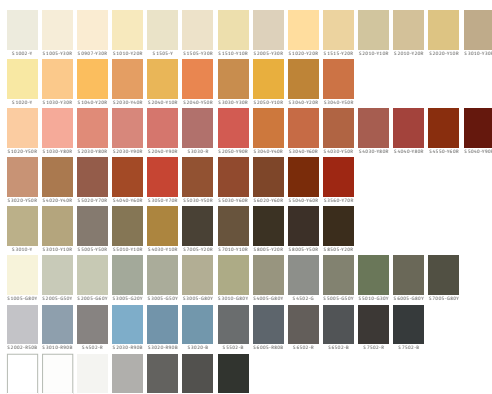


# The process of Environmental Colour Assessment

Survey involves defining the boundaries and extent of the site to be considered and collecting existing colours represented to establish the dominant tonality and colour range of the elements which make up the site. Colours are identified with reference to the Natural Colour System (NCS) fan deck [www.ncscolour.co.uk](http://www.ncscolour.co.uk).

Assessment involves the synthesis of collected site colours into a representative palette, reflecting the dominant features of the site. These include habitats and land cover, the underlying colours of geology and soil, colours of common traditional building materials and finishes and any colours of cultural, historical or social significance.

Determining colour options involves the creation of a colour chart (the developed palette) specifying ranges of colours based upon the synthesis of key site colours. The ranges can offer options for integration and camouflage, harmonisation, contrast and accent.



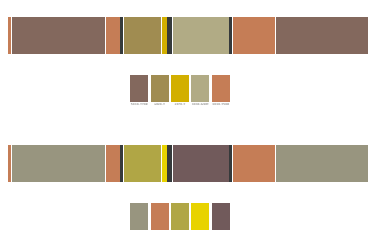
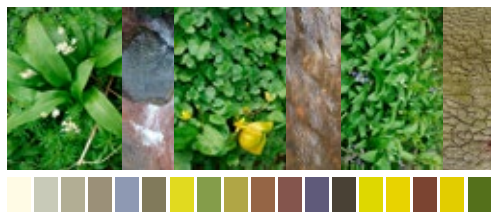
NCS colour specification is fundamental to creating the developed palette, placing all colours within a three-dimensional model, allowing precise colour communication and selection. More information can be found at [www.ncscolour.co.uk](http://www.ncscolour.co.uk).

Applicants for development should provide evidence of having followed the colour guidance with a palette of sample materials laid out in relation to the developed palette. If the NCS fan deck is not available to the developer then the principles should be followed as closely as possible using available brochures of paints and materials.

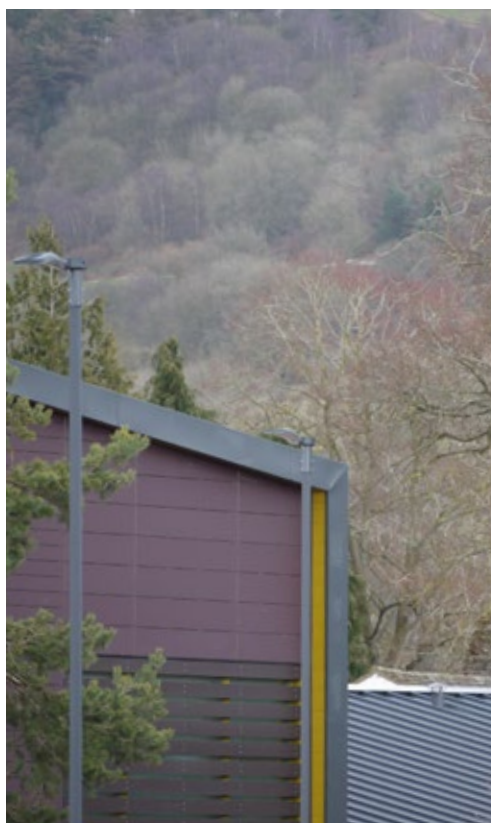
## Case study: Colwall School

This new school in the village of Colwall, within the Malvern Hills AONB, sits at the foot of the ridgeline which contains the remains of an Iron Age hill fort – the British Camp. Though not overtly visible from the school, the Camp and the experience of walking along the ridgeline was a common experience for the pupils and thus it became integral to the colour design for the school.

Through a process of LVIA and ECA immediate site colours were recorded and in addition colours from the ridgeline and stream which descended to the site were assessed. These formed a palette of significant memory colours, not directly attributable to the site but within the context and certainly the memory of the children who played on them. Through a number of colourways the developed palette was applied to the architect's elevations, to arrive at preferred options.



Colours drawn from the hills reinforced the connections between the massing of the buildings with the landscape setting, whilst strong accent colours applied to the entrances ways and window openings helped with building legibility. Key colours from the exterior palette were transferred to the interior, ensuring a fluid and highly site specific response of this new build to its setting.



# Principles of environmental colour design

Key points for consideration include:

- What are the key view points from which the development will be seen? This will focus the site context and provide information about the contiguous colours seen in association with the development
- From what distance will the development be seen? Colour changes with distance (yellow and green tend towards blue) but tonal contrast between built form and landscape remains largely unchanged. To make buildings recede in a landscape the tonality of the built form must match that of the landscape. The reverse applies if the intention is to create a landmark.
- Manipulation of tone can alter perceptions of depth and scale of façades offering design options to increase interest and emphasis of built form.
- Quality of finish from matt and highly textural through to flat and highly reflective can be very significant in terms of the site context. Reflective roofing materials will always appear light in the landscape.
- Finished façades will always appear brighter and lighter than supplied small-scaled samples of the same material. Applicants should supply all samples set out as a palette, ideally to be viewed on site and at a meaningful size. The developed palette derived through ECA will compensate for this phenomenon to a large extent but checks should always be made on site.
- The same colour can look different when viewed against different backgrounds, a phenomenon known as simultaneous contrast. This can be an issue on detailed façade design and will require site sampling to gauge the effect.
- Accent colours can aid with the legibility of a built form and this principle can also be applied to the scale of townscape for gateways and other points of emphasis.
- How will colours and materials weather over time? Depending upon detailing, most new untreated timber for example will change over six seasons or so into a silver grey, quite different to the appearance in construction.



Good: new build with traditional materials and construction.



Good: contemporary response to agricultural form for new buildings.



Bad: generic housing infill unrelated to local character and colour palette



Bad: poor building made worse with form and colour of fencing