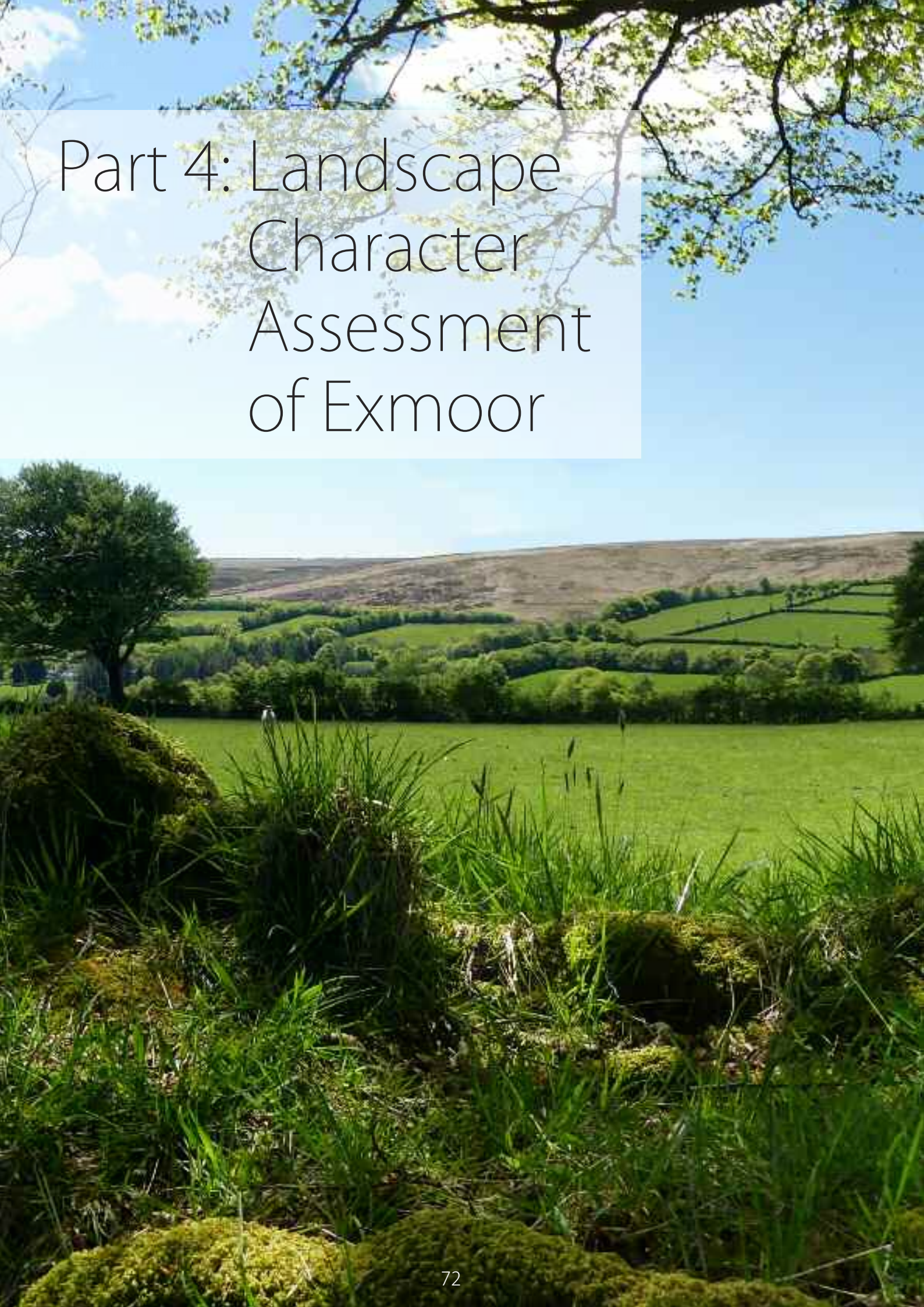
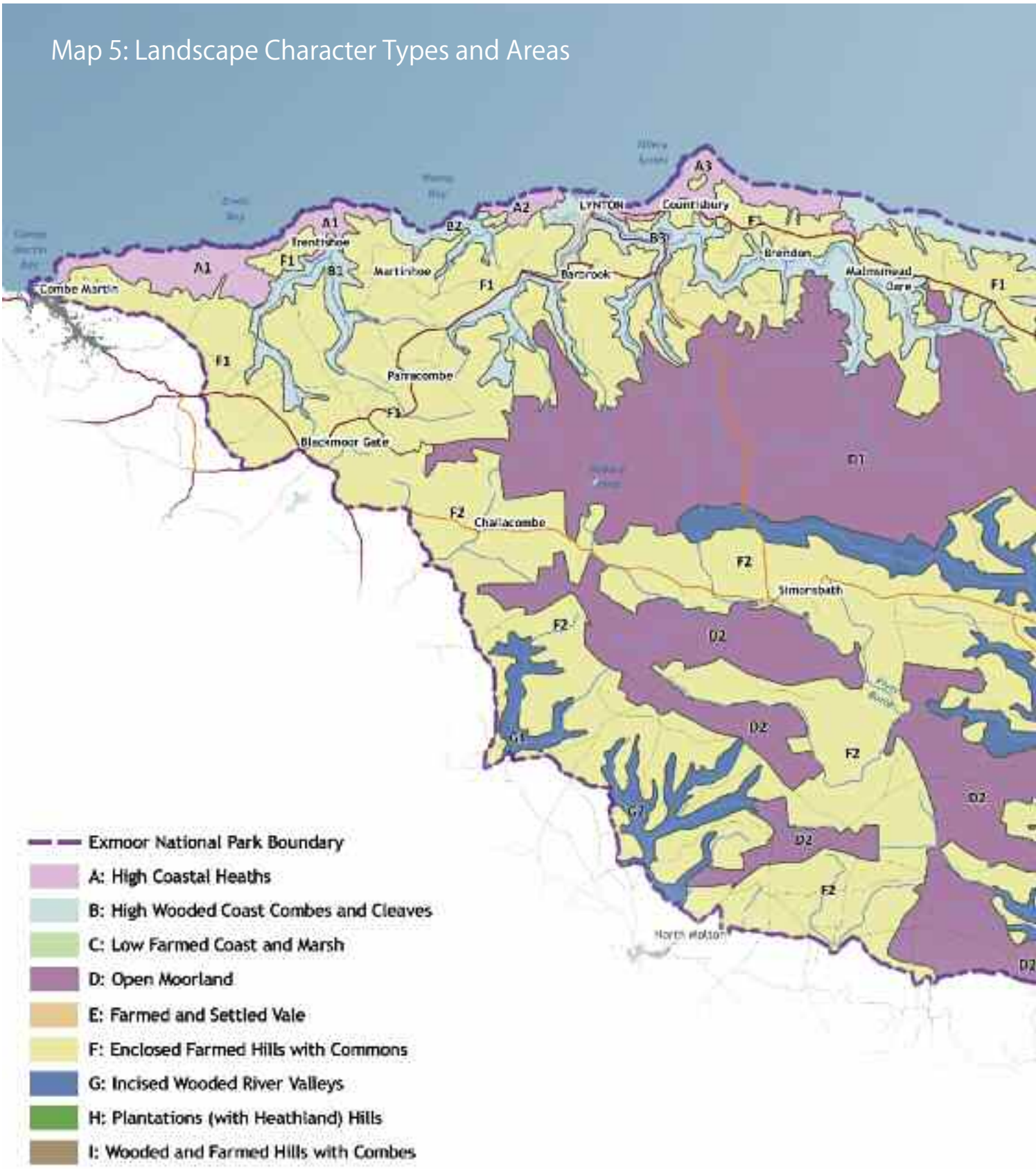
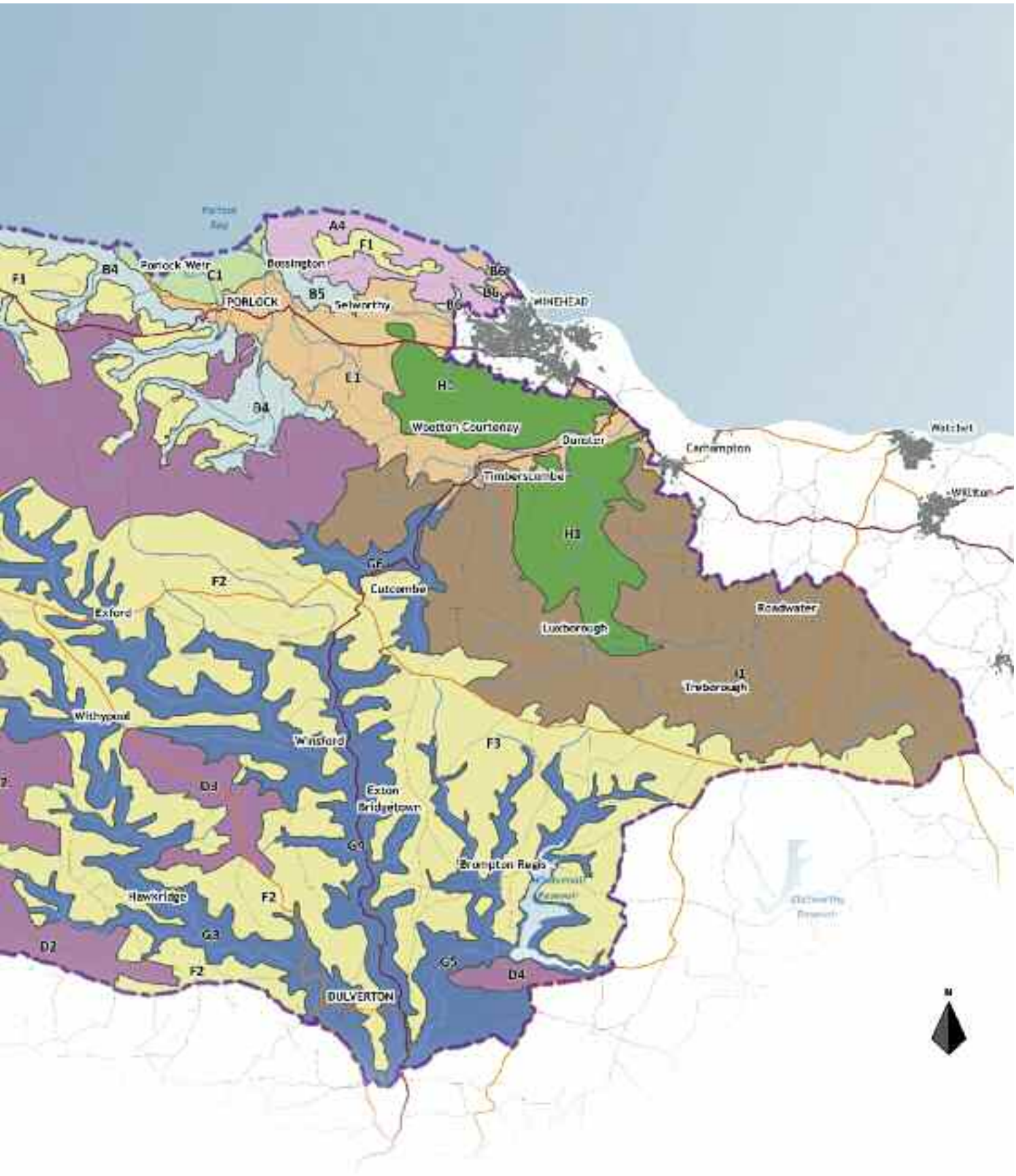
Part 4: Landscape Character Assessment of Exmoor



View from Kitridge Lane
towards Withypool Common

Map 5: Landscape Character Types and Areas




A4
F1
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Ponlock Weir
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WINEHEAD
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H2
D4
Wootton Courtenay
Dunster
Carhampton
Watchet
Timberscombe
H3
F2
Cutcombe
Exford
Roadwater
Luxborough
Treborough
Withypool
Winsford
F3
D3
Exton
Bridgetown
Brompton Regis
Hawkridge
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D4
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Landscape Character Assessment

4.1 Exmoor's Landscape Character Types and Areas

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Landscape Character Area (LCA)
A: High Coastal Heaths	**A1:** Holdstone Down, Trentishoe & Heddon's Mouth
	A2: Valley of Rocks
	A3: The Foreland
	A4: North Hill
B: High Wooded Coast Combes and Cleaves	**B1:** Heddon Valley
	B2: Woody Bay
	B3: Lyn
	B4: Culbone - Horner
	B5: Bossington
	B6: Culver Cliff
C: Low Farmed Coast and Marsh	**C1:** Porlock
D: Open Moorland	**D1:** Northern
	D2: Southern
	D3: Winsford Hill
	D4: Haddon Hill
E: Farmed and Settled Vale	**E1:** Porlock - Dunster - Minehead
F: Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons	**F1:** Northern
	F2: Southern
	F3: Eastern
G: Incised Wooded River Valleys	**G1:** Bray
	G2: Mole
	G3: Barle
	G4: Exe
	G5: Haddeo
	G6: Avill
H: Plantation (with Heathland) Hills	**H1:** Croydon and Grabbist
I: Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes	**I1:** The Brendons

Landscape Character Types

> **Landscape Character Types** are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas...but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern[1].

4.1.1 As shown in Map 5 and the accompanying table, Exmoor contains an intricate and unique mix of distinctive landscape types including moorland, farmland and woodland. The 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment identified, mapped and described nine distinctive Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within Exmoor National Park.

4.1.2 The remainder of Part 4 contains a series of profiles which describe each of the Landscape Character Types in detail, including descriptions of the Landscape Character Areas within them. Each of the nine Landscape Character Type profiles contains the following sections:

- Summary description
- Location map
- Key characteristics
- Natural landscape features
- Historic landscape features and the built environment
- Landscape perceptions and cultural associations
- Natural Assets and ecosystem services
- Landscape Character Areas within the Landscape Character Type
- Seascape Character Areas associated with the Landscape Character Type
- Strength of landscape character and landscape condition
- Forces for change and landscape sensitivities
- Landscape management recommendations
- Specific planning guidelines

Landscape Character Areas

> **Landscape Character Areas** are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each area has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type[2].

4.1.3 The nine LCTs were subdivided into unique Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each with a distinctive sense of place. These divisions have worked well in practice and therefore are being retained in this update. The only boundary change resulting from this update was the splitting of LCT F into three LCAs when it was formerly two very large ones, creating twenty-seven LCAs in total, as shown on Map 5, and in the accompanying table.

[1] *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Natural England, 2014) p.54.
[2] *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Natural England, 2014) p.54.

Landscape Character Type A: **High Coastal Heaths**

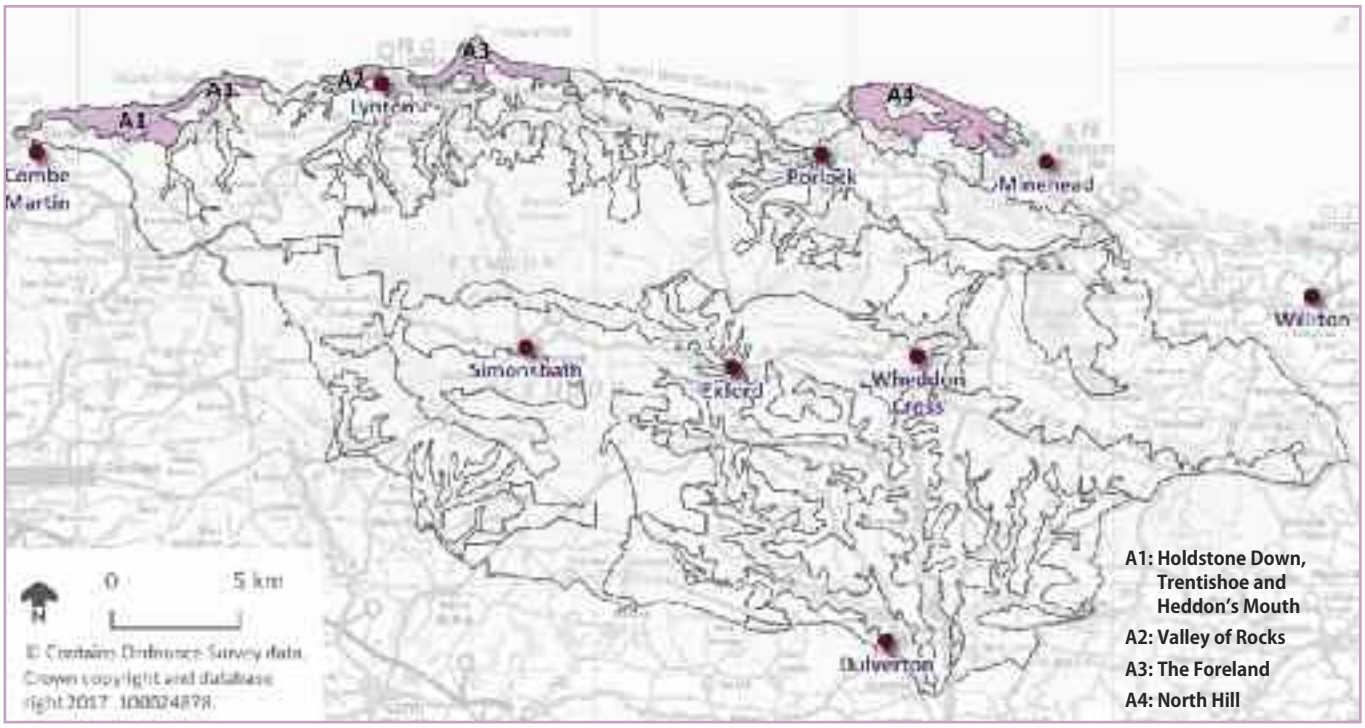
Holdstone Down and Elwill Bay coast, looking towards Heddon's Mouth from Great Hangman

Summary Description

This relatively small Landscape Character Type (LCT) is located along the northern coast of Exmoor. Although it is not continuous, it extends from the western edge of the National Park at Wild Pear Beach to the eastern end above Minehead. It comprises high, rocky cliffs (some of the highest in England) capped with coastal heath and grassland. It is interspersed along the coast by the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, and Low Farmed Coast and Marsh LCT, and is backed inland by the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT and the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT. Settlement is limited to occasional houses on Trentishoe Down, and there are few other buildings, although the archaeology is rich and varied.

This strikingly beautiful landscape is one of the few places in England where heather moorland meets the sea, and therefore has a very strong sense of place. The purple of the heather and yellow of the gorse gives way to the rugged coastline of high, steep, rocky cliffs. This is a dramatic, open and expansive landscape with big skies, creating a sense of exhilaration. There are long views along the coast and out to sea across the Bristol Channel to South Wales. The sweeping views inland are dominated by patchwork fields with wooded valleys and a backdrop of smooth moors.

There are four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, each representing a separate area of coastal heath. This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is also within six Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) identified in the Seascape Character Assessment.



Key Characteristics of the High Coastal Heaths

- Underlying geology of purple, grey, green and reddish-brown Devonian sandstones and mudstones, visible in the colourful cliffs.
- A distinctive landform of undulating plateaux, rounded moorland hills and high, steep and rugged coastal cliffs.
- A largely inaccessible rocky coastline with hogs-back cliffs, small rocky bays, wave-cut platforms, coastal waterfalls, scree slopes and rocky outcrops.
- Primary land cover of coastal heath, containing a mosaic of heather moor, gorse, coastal grassland and scrub habitats.
- An open landscape with few trees.
- Occasional stone walls or fences, but generally this is an unenclosed landscape.
- A rich historic landscape with extensive archaeological sites from prehistoric, Roman, and medieval periods, as well as WW2 archaeology, and the Victorian cricket pitch in the Valley of the Rocks.
- An open elevated landscape –the few scattered dwellings alongside the road at Trentishoe Down are the only settlement.
- Stunning views from the LCT out to sea and inland. The LCT is visible in many views from the northern part of the National Park and forms the setting for the North Devon Coast AONB. Coastal features (such as Hurlstone Point) are important landmarks, as are distinctive landforms such as Castle Rock.
- A strong sense of elevation and exposure to the elements due to the steep cliffs fronting the sea. The inaccessible nature of the cliffs creates a sense of solitude.
- Vivid and striking colours, particularly in spring and summer when the heather and gorse are in flower.
- The South West Coast Path provides footpath access to the slopes and cliffs, and offers far-reaching coastal views.
- Cultural associations with the Romantic Poets.

Natural Landscape Features

Ranging in elevation from 0-442m AOD, this landscape type has a strong and dramatic landform comprising steep and rugged hogs-back coastal cliffs (with coves and combes) that give rise to inland areas of gently undulating moorland plateau and smooth, rounded hills. There are also craggy rock outcrops, particularly around the Valley of Rocks.

The coastal cliffs create an impressive coastline, with the scalloped cliff faces revealing the varied colours of the landscape's underlying geology, ranging from red, to purple, to brown to grey. Exposures of Devonian, Carboniferous and Quaternary rocks revealed in the cliffs can be viewed from the coast path. At the foot of the cliffs are wave-cut platforms, sea caves and rocky bays with hidden, often inaccessible, beaches. There are impressive scree slopes in the Combes around the Foreland. At the Valley of Rocks, some of the oldest and most fossil-rich Devonian rocks in North Devon are visible. The dry valley with its flat stony floor and towering rocks above is thought to exhibit the results of peri-glacial processes such as frost shattering, but its origins are not fully understood.

Rich semi-natural heather moorland comprises the majority of land cover within the LCT, interspersed with gorse and bracken (bracken being dominant on the coastal slopes). Parts of the coastal cliffs have only been recently accessed by climbers, so some areas remain unrecorded. The extensive areas of heathland designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation reflect the ecological value of the landscape type and the range of flowers, lichens, butterflies, insects and birds which it supports. There are larger animals present in the landscape, including sheep, ponies and a herd of feral goats at the Valley of Rocks.

Coastal rock formations and scree slopes, Valley of Rocks

Coastal heath and grassland, North Hill with South Wales on the horizon.

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor Heaths (A1,A3,A4)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (A1,A2); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (A3,A4)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Wind Hill (A3); Bratton Ball South, Moor Wood, Upper Grey Combe (A4)

Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (Transition zone) (A1)
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ (A1, A2, A3)
Heritage Coast	Exmoor Heritage Coast (A1, A2, A3, A4)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Hurlestone Point (A4) Combeshead Quarry (A4)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

Although this LCT covers a relatively small area, it contains many Scheduled Monuments, and extensive areas are designated Principal Archaeological Landscapes. Because the Coastal Heaths have not been enclosed or farmed recently, many prehistoric monuments have survived within their landscape context. These include numerous Bronze-Age barrows, often sited on hill summits and ridges of higher land so they are visible on the horizon. Other prehistoric features include field systems, cairns and house platforms within the Valley of Rocks, which are largely hidden under bracken. This is one of the best examples of a prehistoric field system on Exmoor - largely because the field walls were constructed of stone, which has endured, despite disturbance and removal in the early nineteenth century. There is also a possible Neolithic Tor Enclosure on Little Hangman Hill. Tor Enclosures occur in other parts of the South West, but this is possibly the only example on Exmoor, and is important because of the lack of other Neolithic monuments in the area.

Larger-scale earthworks visible within the landscape include the Iron-Age sites of Furzebury Brake and Countisbury Castle promontory fort. Of the two known Roman sites within Exmoor - both coastal fortlets/ signal stations - one (Martinhoe Castle) is within this LCT.

Medieval sites include deserted farms, field systems and Burgundy Chapel on North Hill. The vast majority of the LCT is unenclosed pasture, a pattern which has been in place since at least early Medieval times, although there are occasional small pockets of later enclosure (e.g. on Holdstone Down). Iron mining took place near the coast in the far west of the LCT.

North Hill was used extensively in World War Two (WWII) as a military training area. The ranges included access tracks, numerous buildings, triangular tank training circuits, target railways and a renovated radar station. These features survive in varying levels of completeness within today's landscape, and North Hill is designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

Earthworks of Countisbury Castle Iron-Age promontory fort.
©Devon County Council (image by Frances Griffith)

This is an area of wide open landscape; the few houses within the LCT are scattered along the road crossing Trentishoe Down. Along with the other smaller structures within the LCT they appear as incongruous features within an otherwise open and remote landscape.

Martinhoe Castle Roman Fortlet © Historic England Archive

Former military road on North Hill

Cliff-top communications mast and building on Butter Hill (A3)

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Trentishoe Barrows (A1); Martinhoe Castle Roman Signal Station (A1); Countisbury Castle Earthworks (A3); Bossington Hill Cairn (A4); Selworthy Beacon Cairns (A4); Purzebury Brake Iron Age Settlement (A4); Bramble Combe Deserted Medieval Farm (A4)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Holdstone Down and Little Hangman (A1); Valley of The Rocks (A2); Countisbury and Lyn Gorge (A3); Selworthy WWII Complex (A4); North Hill Medieval Farming System (A4)
Listed Buildings	Boundary Stones (A1); Duty Point Tower (A2); Foreland Point Lighthouse (A3)

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

The physical and visual connection with the sea is fundamental to the character of this landscape. Its height and lack of enclosure creates a strong sense of openness and elevation which is enhanced by the height of the cliffs. The expansiveness of the views, the steepness of the cliffs and the sense of being 'on the edge' combine to create a sense of exhilaration and danger. Changing weather and sea conditions have a strong influence on the mood of the landscape - storms, fog and sunshine give the landscape and seascape very different qualities. The Valley of Rocks, with its unusual rock formations, has a strongly sculptural quality and also a sense of mystery, particularly when shrouded in mist.

This is a landscape of extraordinarily contrasting colours, which change with the seasons. In summer, there are vibrant purples and yellows in the heather and gorse, bright greens in the bracken and adjacent fields, and blue in the sea. In the autumn, the colours of the heather fade, and the golden brown of the bracken dominates. Colours become more muted, but the autumn colours of the adjacent woodlands are spectacular.

Sounds and smells are important to perceptions of this landscape. Seabirds call on the cliffs and overhead, and in the stillness it is possible to hear the insects in the heather. There are unusual sounds too, such as the booming sound of the compressed air and water in the Gun Chamber Caverns below The Foreland. The coconut -like scent of gorse mixes with the tang of the sea air.

Although some roads pass through the LCT, much of it is inaccessible. The South West Coast Path runs at the top of the cliffs for much of its route, but the height of the cliffs and lack of access at sea level means that some parts of the cliffs and foreshore are inaccessible without climbing equipment. These remote cliffs and coast have become known as the 'hidden edge of Exmoor'. Away from the roads, car parks and hilltop paths, the landscape evokes a strong sense of remoteness, isolation and tranquillity. However, in more accessible and frequently-visited areas, the presence of cars, lots of people, signage, and seating can give it more of a 'country park' feel, especially in summer.

The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' captured people's responses to this landscape, with descriptions including *breathtaking, stunning, dramatic, magnificent, peaceful, panoramic, open, high, glorious on a fine day, expansive, exceptional, spectacular* and *beautiful coastline*. Emotional responses included relaxed, happy to be here, exhilarated, uplifted, elated and observant.

Recent research by the CPRE shows that there are no sources of light pollution within the LCT. Nevertheless, the darkness of its night skies are affected by light pollution from nearby Minehead, Porlock, Lynton, Combe Martin, Ilfracombe and the South Wales coast. The beam of Nash Point lighthouse (near St Donat's) sweeping across the sea is a night-time feature.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The High Coastal Heaths LCT contains many spectacular and rare views, and these are extremely popular with the public. A wide range of users enjoy these views, whether by car from the A39 or the old military track from Minehead to Bossington Hill; on foot from the South West Coast Path or other paths; or dangling from a rope scaling an otherwise inaccessible cliff. North Hill is a particularly popular destination because of its ease of access, stunning views and proximity to Minehead. There is also an all-terrain mobility service to the coast at Heddon Valley.

The elevation and lack of enclosure or built features within this LCT means that there are long, expansive views. To the north there are panoramic views along the coast and across the Bristol Channel towards the developed coast of South Wales. Lundy is visible on the western horizon from the western part of the LCT. To the south there are views inland over patchwork fields and wooded valleys, with smooth moorland horizons forming the skyline.

The steep cliffs and colourful, rugged coastline are also dramatic when viewed from the sea, with Burgundy Chapel, Hurlstone Point, Foreland Point lighthouse, Valley of Rocks rock formations and the outlines of the Hangman Hills particular landmarks. The Coastal Heaths also feature in views from inland, from where they appear as rounded knolls of purple or brown with the sea behind.

The western part of the LCA plays an important role as the landscape backdrop to the North Devon Coast AONB. From here, the distinctive profiles of the western coastal heaths (LCA A1) form a smooth, open skyline.

Patchwork of fields as seen from Holdstone Down heather moorland

Popular coastal viewpoint at Bossington Hill

Cultural Associations

The rugged Exmoor coastline was popular with the Romantic Poets, including Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. The evocative landscape of the Valley of Rocks is particularly well known, and has been used as a backdrop for TV shows such as Top Gear, and a Paul McCartney music video. This part of Exmoor, particularly its 'hidden edge' remains popular with artists and photographers.

> *From Linton an easy and little descent led me to the Valley of Stones. The range of hills here next the sea are completely stripped of their soil, the bones only of the earth remain: in the vale, stone upon stone is scattered, and the fern grows among them. Its origin I could not conjecture...On the summit of the highest point of the hill, two large stones inclining against each other form a portal; here I laid myself at length - a level platform of turf spread before me about two yards long, and then the eye fell immediately on the sea - a giddy depth. After closing my eyes a minute, it was deeply impressive to open them on the magnificent dreariness, and the precipice, and the sea.*
>
> Extract from Southey's
> *Journal of his Exmoor holiday*, August 1799

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The coastal heath habitats within this LCT support a wide variety of birds, plants and insects. Historically they would have a range of uses, but many have declined in recent decades. For example bracken was used for animal bedding, and peat for domestic fuel. Today, there is some livestock grazing and biomass production within the LCT so it does make a small contribution to food and fibre production. However, the coastal heaths remain an important Natural Capital Asset and provide a number of Ecosystem Services. These include the sequestration (holding) of carbon in peat soils and the regulation of flooding by absorbing, then slowly releasing water, thus slowing run-off as well as filtering some pollutants. Both of these roles are important in mitigating, and adapting to, climate change impacts.

The LCT is a rich historic landscape, and is also a popular location for visitors, who enjoy the spectacular coastal scenery and the beauty of the landscape. It is particularly well-appreciated from the South West Coast Path. The LCT therefore enables people to obtain non-material benefits such as recreation, reflection, aesthetic experiences and spiritual enrichment.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

Within Landscape Character Type A - High Coastal Heaths, there are four distinctive Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each representing a discrete area of Coastal Heath. Their different landscape characteristics create a distinctive 'sense of place' which are described in the following descriptions. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.

Selworthy Sands by contemporary Exmoor artist Kester Webb. Image © Estate of Kester Webb

LCA A1: Holdstone Down, Trentishoe and Heddon's Mouth

Holdstone Down from Trentishoe Down

Description

This LCA forms the north-western coastal stretch of the National Park, extending from Great Burland Rocks in the east to Lester Cliff at the western boundary of Exmoor. This area of the High Coastal Heaths includes a significant stretch of Exmoor's coastline containing a series of deep cut cleaves, combes, waterfalls and scree slopes, as well as the lower reaches and mouth of the River Heddon valley. Inland, the landscape is dominated by the smooth rounded heather moorland hills at Holdstone Down (394m AOD), Trentishoe Down (324m AOD) and Girt Down (318m AOD) – their large-scale landforms loom over the moorland foothills and also form the backdrop to the North Devon Coast AONB. The height of the cliffs means that the sea can feel relatively far away.

A secondary road runs between Holdstone and Trentishoe Downs and is dotted with occasional small and informal car parks, as well as some residential properties of varied age and style. The buildings and road are strong points of human reference in an otherwise open and elevated landscape. The lack of other roads mean that much of the landscape is inaccessible by car, and a sense of isolation and solitude can be experienced, especially on the coastal slopes. From this LCA there are clear views to Lundy, and the surrounding farmed landscapes, including coastal farmland of sheep-grazed pastures delineated by stone walls and stone-faced banks.

LCA A2: Valley of Rocks

Valley of Rocks, showing the cricket pitch surrounded by rock formations

Description

The much-visited Valley of Rocks occurs immediately west of the coastal holiday towns of Lynton and Lynmouth. Although exhibiting the characteristics of the High Coastal Heath LCT, the Valley of Rocks also has a number of features that are unique to this area, such as its dry valley landform, dramatic rock formations and feral goats. It also contains the relatively well-preserved remains of prehistoric occupation including house platforms and a field system.

Once believed to form an exit route to the sea for the river Lyn, the Valley of Rocks is now dry, and exhibits examples of landform process which occur in peri-glacial conditions. This is a landscape of spectacular views – the coast; the prominent rocks (Castle Rock for example forming a striking landmark as you look down the valley); the steep heathy valley sides and scree slopes. This also appears to be a landscape of two halves: the rugged, wilder, steep-sided slopes and cliffs contrast sharply with the flatter, lower valley floor that has seen much human influence and change. Its cricket pitch, pavilion, car park and visitor facilities give it a much more 'tamed' character, although much work has been done recently to reduce the visual impact of the car park and associated buildings. The sense of gentle, organised recreation in the sheltered valley floor contrasts with the challenging, rugged, windswept and exposed character of the surrounding rocks and coast.

LCA A3: The Foreland

Sillery Sands and Foreland Point

Description

The Foreland is centrally located along Exmoor's northern coastal edge. Extending immediately east from the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves landscape of Lynton and Lynmouth, this LCA offers some of the National Park's most dramatic scenery. Here, the rugged, concave coastline sweeps from east and west, culminating at Foreland Point, the most northerly point on Exmoor to abut the Bristol Channel - indicated by its lighthouse.

Inland views are no less inspiring- a panoramic scene of deeply incised wooded combes, the patchwork landscape of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT and the contrasting open and wild landscape of the Open Moorland LCT.

With the coast road cutting through the area, running between the towns of Porlock and Lynton, human influence in the landscape is apparent. Road noise, road signs, car parking areas and views of the towns combine to create a landscape which is influenced by humans. However, away from the main road, much of the landscape has retained a sense of tranquillity, becoming increasingly remote towards the coastal cliffs.

LCA A4: North Hill

Selworthy Beacon from North Hill

Description

This is the most easterly LCA of the High Coastal Heaths LCT, occurring between the two High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves landscapes that surround the small village of Bossington in the west and the holiday town of Minehead in the east. It includes Bossington Hill, Selworthy Beacon, North Hill and Bratton Ball. The majority of land cover is characterised by heather moorland, with significant tracts of bracken, gorse and grassland. Grazing Exmoor ponies are often in view. Gorse encroachment is particularly evident along the roadside at the eastern end of the LCA. To the north of Selworthy Beacon is a pocket of Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT, with large fields of improved pasture divided by post and wire fencing.

There is one road (Hill Road) providing vehicular access into this landscape- a no through road (formerly a military track) from the Higher Town area of Minehead, which terminates at a car park. From the road and the informal car parks along its length, there are excellent panoramic views to the sea and the surrounding Landscape Character Areas. Previously used as a military training ground, this LCA is now a much-visited recreation resource, in part due to its proximity and easy access from Minehead.

Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT A

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove

SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay

SCA 6: Valley of Rocks

SCA 8: Woody Bay to Little Hangman

SCA 10: Combe Martin and Ilfracombe Bays

Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT A

This LCT has a **strong** and distinctive character: In addition to the striking coastal landforms, the colour of the heather in summer is one of the defining features of the landscape, with the purple hills forming features in views from a considerable distance. The cultural landscape features within this LCT are often relatively subtle (although no less important) such as the faint earthworks of prehistoric features on Little Hangman Hill.

The condition of the landscape is **generally good**, but there are variations in landscape condition within it, and places where work is needed to improve condition. Since the 2007 edition of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment was written, a lot of work has been done to enhance the landscape at Valley of Rocks (A2), and reduce and rationalise the visual impact of services . Moorland vegetation management work has also been carried out, including on North Hill (A4). Nevertheless, much work still needs to be done to manage heather moorland and to address encroachment of gorse on North Hill (A4), as it continues to block views and reduce the sense of openness. Some decline in the traditional management of field walls in adjacent farmland continues to be a problem, particularly around Trentishoe (A1), and on Countisbury Hill (A3). The popularity of these areas with visitors results in them being particularly susceptible to damage through erosion and littering.

SSSIs within the **High Coastal Heaths** are mostly considered to be in an 'unfavourable recovering' condition. A small proportion is in 'favourable' condition, and a small area to the east of Countisbury Common (Dogsworthy Combe and Wingate Combe) is considered to be in 'unfavourable declining' condition.

There is one site where heritage is considered to be 'At Risk', namely a boundary stone on Holdstone Down (A1).

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT A

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly being affected by a variety of issues and forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure, and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main issues and forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that landscape issues and 'forces for change' acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes to traditional moorland management	Decline in traditional management practices of grazing, swaling and cutting is resulting in encroachment by bracken, gorse and scrub vegetation, and a loss of the moorland mosaic and open purple heather moor. This can have a big impact on views and wildlife, and may be detrimental to peat soils. Older stands of purple heather are more prone to attack by heather beetle, resulting in loss of vegetation. Changing agricultural grant schemes and production of biofuels have affected the amount of grazing. Traditional stone-faced banks and stone walls are poorly maintained in some locations (e.g. Countisbury Hill (A3) and above Combe Martin (A1)).	All
Gorse encroachment along roadsides	Significant increase in the extent and density of gorse cover has resulted in loss of views from some car-parks, and a channelling of views along the road rather than over surrounding landscapes.	A4
Rhododendron encroachment	Recent efforts have reduced the threat from rhododendron encroachment from adjacent woodlands, but it remains a problem, particularly in steep and coastal locations which are difficult to access.	All
Loss/ damage to archaeology	Buried and surface archaeology is particularly vulnerable to damage by encroaching vegetation. Roots of scrub and bracken physically damage buried archaeology, whilst bracken also attacks it chemically. Hidden archaeology is harder to see, and may be unintentionally damaged. Visitors may also cause erosion of archaeological sites, and some sites are also vulnerable to coastal erosion.	All
Main roads	The A39 is the main coastal route and used by heavy volumes of traffic, especially in summer. As well as noise impacts, the road is a prominent visual feature in the landscape because of its associated parking areas and signage.	A3

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Poorly designed or sited visitor facilities	Concentrations of car parks and associated signposts, interpretation boards, and benches can create visual 'clutter' in the landscape, and cause a more managed 'Country Park' character in popular areas such as North Hill. Informal enlargement of car parking areas can threaten the vegetation and character of adjacent heathland. Erosion is a problem on popular paths.	A2, A4
Masts and turbines	The smooth outlines of this LCT mean that any vertical structures such as masts and turbines are likely to be very visually prominent in views from land and sea, and to interrupt the smooth moorland skylines. This can be seen at the communications mast on Butter Hill, near Countisbury.	A3, but potentially all
Residential development	The existing occasional isolated dwellings on Trentishoe Down are prominent features in an otherwise undeveloped landscape. Not only are the buildings visible, but the surrounding enclosure and domestication of the curtilage has a significant impact on the surrounding landscape character. Extensions and/ or new outbuildings associated with existing buildings would further increase their presence in the otherwise undeveloped landscape.	A1
Development outside the National Park	The long range of views from this LCT means that they may be particularly affected by developments outside the National Park boundary, with South Wales is particularly visible at night.	All
Renewable Energy	Potential future tidal or wind energy schemes in the Bristol Channel could affect views out to sea. On clear days it is possible to see wind turbines and solar farms on the Welsh skyline, and in North Devon.	All
Coastal erosion	Coastal heritage features such as the limekilns at Heddon's Mouth are vulnerable to damage from storms and high tides.	All

Gorse growth blocking view from carpark, North Hill

Path erosion, exacerbated by use of 4x4 vehicles, Selworthy Beacon

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT A

Landscape Strategy

The Coastal Heaths remain an exhilarating and exciting place to be, with a sense of exposure and vulnerability. The rugged, wild and open character of the area is conserved and enhanced, and its tranquillity is retained. There are continuous tracts of healthy open heath without significant areas of scrub, and the moorland appears natural in character. Archaeological sites are well managed. The open quality of the landscape is retained, with long views possible from roads and footpaths, and the South West Coast Path is a sustainable focus for public access. Damaging development (both within and outside the National Park) which may have incremental impacts on views or the undeveloped character of the area is restricted.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT A

Protect

- Protect existing moorland to enhance wildlife habitats and manage to promote large areas of healthy heather moor.
- Protect views from roads and footpaths, and prioritise clearance of visually intrusive gorse scrub which blocks views (particularly on North Hill, LCA 4).
- Protect the expansive views out of the LCT over both land and sea which contribute to its unique character and sense of place. Pay particular regard to the potential impacts of new development, renewable energy projects and light pollution within the setting of the LCT.
- Protect archaeological sites, ensuring that buried and surface archaeology is not threatened by damaging vegetation, and raise awareness of heritage assets, particularly at North Hill and Bossington Hill.
- Protect stone walls and banks, repairing in traditional styles were necessary.
- Protect the open, undeveloped character of the landscape, resisting new dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings or other buildings.
- Resist siting of vertical structures where they will be detrimental to skylines and views.
- Protect peat soils to encourage sequestration of carbon and flood regulation.

Manage

- Control encroaching vegetation, including maintenance of dynamic habitat edges between woodland and moorland, and continue to eradicate rhododendron.
- When burning is to take place, minimise its visual impacts, for example by clearing burnt stumps.
- Identify opportunities to improve habitat connectivity and reduce fragmentation of habitats.
- Manage erosion by visitors, particularly around archaeological and 'honeypot' sites. Remove unnecessary visual clutter such as non-essential signage.

Plan

- Support funding for conservation grazing and other moorland management initiatives.
- Ensure site-based management plans are in place for coastal heathland areas, identifying areas to be kept as moorland, areas to look after as woodland, and areas of active moorland-woodland edge management to allow dynamic habitat edges.
- Develop a strategy for increasing and managing car parking across the LCT to reduce the impacts of concentrated parking.
- Work with the Highways Authorities to minimise urbanising influences from signage along the main road corridors, and ensure consultation and joint working when considering changes to highways, including signage. (LCA 3).
- Work with neighbouring planning authorities (including Welsh planning authorities) to ensure that landscape and visual impacts (including night-time impacts) of proposed developments outside Exmoor National Park are appropriately assessed.

NOTE- See also detailed assessments and management recommendations in the following documents:

- *Exmoor's Moorland: Where Next?* (The Exmoor Society, April 2016)
- *Exmoor Moorland Units* (ENPA, 2011 with subsequent reviews)
- *Principal Archaeological Landscapes on Moorland in Exmoor National Park: Assessment and Condition Survey* (ENPA, January 2015)
- SAC and SSSI Management Plans

Specific Planning Guidelines for High Coastal Heaths

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the High Coastal Heaths Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

View from near the National Park boundary, Great Hangman, looking west to the North Devon Coast AONB

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Sense of isolation and openness (All).	Buildings or structures which cluster together or where frequency increases to undermine sense of isolation or openness.	New development should generally be avoided in this LCT unless it is essential to help conserve or enhance the special qualities of the landscape. Where individual structures are required the cumulative and sequential effects of introducing individual built elements should be considered.
Key views and smooth rounded landform/skylines (All).	Interruption of rounded landform and skyline by vertical features (even relatively low) be they communication masts, turbines, buildings or curtilage planting/fencing.	If integrating buildings sit them into the folds of the landscape and avoid curtilage planting or fencing. Use materials which are sympathetic to the landscape, and avoid use of brightly coloured roofs or large expanses of glass which can draw the eye. Vertical features should be avoided in this LCT. This is a landscape which has been identified as an unsuitable area for small scale wind turbines and free-standing solar arrays.
Surrounding settlements and developments are perceived as beyond and below this area, such that there is a strong sense of separation from development (All).	Encroachment of ad hoc recreational development which blurs the distinction between this type and adjacent more settled landscape types. Development (including large scale turbines) in adjacent coastal landscapes.	Development which appears to bring human influences closer should be avoided e.g. the gradual proliferation of recreational development and/ or larger buildings at the junction between this LCT and surrounding LCTs.
Dark night skies and sense of relative wilderness and isolation, away from development and human activity (All).	Intrusive new development in views from this landscape (particularly where development is located beyond the National Park) which may have adverse impacts by day and by night in terms of light pollution.	Development proposals beyond the National Park boundary, which are likely to be visible from this landscape, should demonstrate that any lighting proposals mitigate sky glow and light intrusions. This is in line with the duties of relevant authorities (see section 2.2)

Landscape Character Type B:
High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves

Worthy Wood and Culbone Wood as seen from Bossington Wood

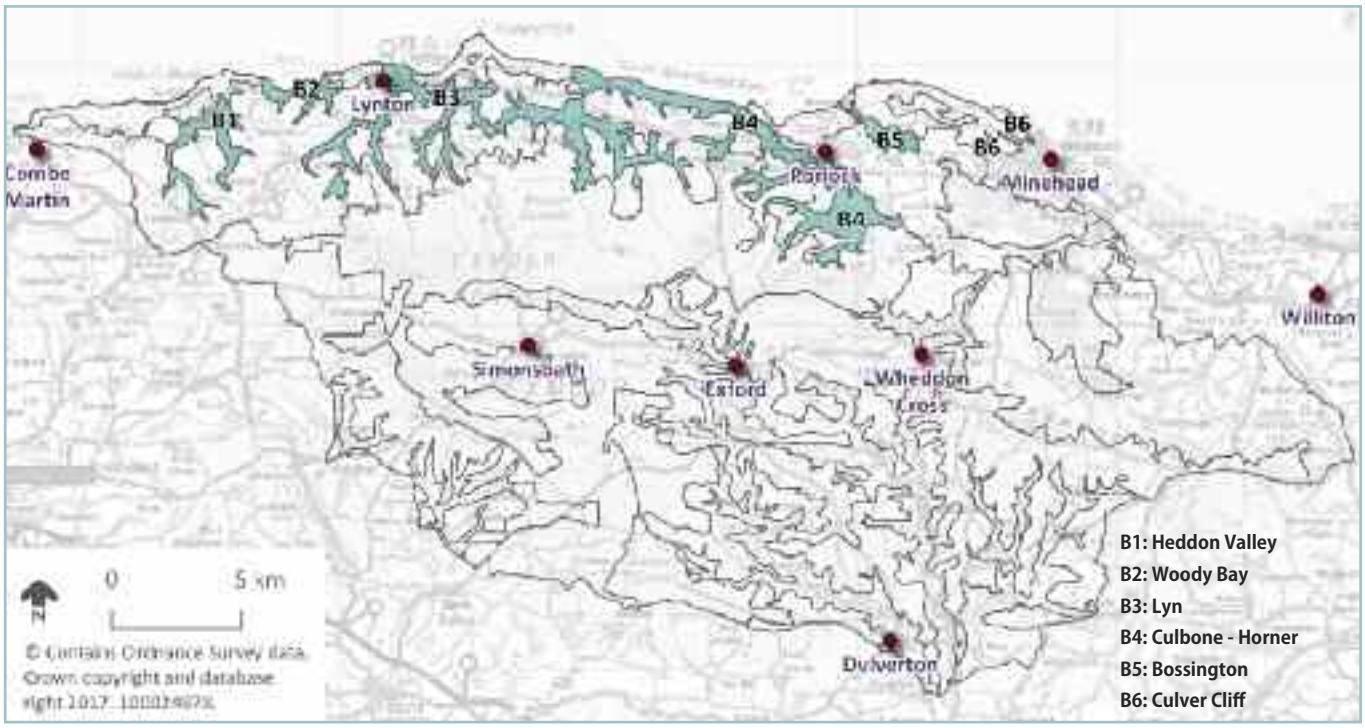
Summary Description

This LCT is located in the northern part of the National Park. It comprises wooded coastal valleys and wooded cliffs, and extends for almost the full east-west length of the Exmoor coast. It is closely associated, both physically and visually, with the adjacent LCTs, comprising High Coastal Heaths, Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons, Low Farmed Coast and Marsh, Open Moorland and Farmed and Settled Vale.

The largest settlements within the LCT are Lynton and Lynmouth, both near the mouth of the Lyn Valley. There are several small hamlets further inland, and scattered farms and hotels. The wooded hillsides of the LCT form the setting to several towns and villages, including Minehead and Porlock.

This is a striking and dramatic landscape of steeply incised wooded valleys and cliffs. Trees cloak the valley sides, and the dense and predominantly deciduous woodland changes colour with the seasons. The LCT includes the full length of the combe valleys, from springs rising near the moor, turning to rushing streams, often with waterfalls, and finally meeting the sea as rivers flowing into rocky bays. Where the watercourses meet the sea, the wooded valley sides give way to steep wooded slopes that extend along the coast forming densely wooded cliffs, cleaves and bays.

There are six Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, each representing a different catchment. The LCT is also within 5 Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) identified in the Seascape Character Assessment.



Key Characteristics of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves

- Underlain by Lynton Formation geology, (grey or dark grey silty slates or siltstones and grey sandstones) with deposits of alluvium in valleys.
- A dramatic landform of steep, convoluted coastal slopes and deeply-incised narrow valleys and combes, generally between 0 - 300m AOD.
- A series of steeply descending, fast-flowing rocky streams and rivers flow towards the coast, each with an individual character.
- Dominated by tree cover with continuous tracts of predominantly deciduous woodland (much of which is ancient) clothing the steeply sloping valleys and coast. Small pockets of pastoral farmland and settlement on valley floors and lower slopes.
- Small-scale field pattern, interspersing the woodland, reflecting medieval enclosure of the landscape (although some boundaries have been modified from the seventeenth century onwards).
- Generally sparsely settled, but with a varied settlement pattern and character from linear hamlets to seaside towns.
- Historic landscape features include bridges, churches, estate buildings and ornamental woodland planting.
- Primary and secondary roads follow some watercourses, but much of the LCT is inaccessible by road.
- Views of wooded combes and cliffs are one of Exmoor's most striking features. Seasonal colour changes are particularly dramatic.
- Away from the coastal settlements and major roads, the landscape has a tranquil character, and in many places feels remote.
- Strong cultural associations with artists, writers and poets, and a strong social memory of the Lynmouth Flood of 1952.
- A landscape popular with visitors containing a number of 'honeypot' sites

Natural Landscape Features

The underlying geology of Lynton Formation slates has been incised by a series of watercourses, creating numerous steep-sided V-shaped valleys which get deeper towards the coast. The cliffs and valley sides contain rocky outcrops, often hidden within woodland, and there are dramatic scree slopes in the steep, unwooded gorge near Watersmeet. Soils are typically freely-draining slightly acid loamy soils.

Many (but not all) of the streams within the valleys are included within designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The streams are generally rocky and fast-flowing with occasional waterfalls and pools, including the well-known waterfalls at Watersmeet. This is a popular spot for visitors to enjoy the rocky rivers in their wooded gorge setting. The East Lyn River, which in spate can transform from a rocky stream to a raging torrent, is an important habitat for migratory fish species, salmon and sea trout - which spawn throughout its length - and for the iconic otter. The sides of the valleys are often covered in dense deciduous woodland (much of it ancient) and the deep, wooded, sinuous corridors form dark, dramatic patterns in the landscape and create breathtaking scenery.

This LCT contains the longest continuous stretch of Atlantic oak woodland on the western coast of Britain, and forms a significant proportion of South-west England's total remaining Atlantic oak woodland. The ancient coastal sessile oak woodland with associated lichens and ferns is of international importance for its conservation value, and most (but not all) is designated accordingly (as SSSI and as part of the Exmoor and Quantocks Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation). As well as sessile oaks, parts (e.g. Culbone Wood and Woody Bay) contain endemic whitebeams, and others (e.g. North Hill and Ashley Combe) contain exotic species planted within ornamental schemes. Ancient yew trees also grow within the woodland. Small areas of the Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation also fall within this LCT.

Coastal features include steep, hog's back cliffs, coastal combes and waterfalls. There are coastal caves at Yenworthy, and a natural arch at Sir Robert's Chair, known as 'The Giant's Rib'. Much of the foreshore is inaccessible except at a few locations, including Lee Bay and Woody Bay.

The River Heddon

Twisted oaks above Woody Bay

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods (B1, B2, B3, B4); Exmoor Heaths (B3, B4, B5, B6)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (B1, B2); Watersmeet (B3); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (B3, B5, B6); North Exmoor (B3, B4), Glenthorne (B4)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous woodland and grassland sites throughout LCT
Local Geological Site (LGS)	East Lyn Group (B3); Ashton Cleave Scree and Weir Water Reserve (B3); Yellowstone Cliff and Culbone Rocks (B4); Porlock Weir to Bossington Beach (B5); Culver Cliffs (B6)
Ancient Woodland	Extensive areas in B1, B2, B3, B4, B6
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Hawkcombe Woods (B4); Dunkery and Horner Woods (B4)
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ (B2, B3)
Heritage Coast	Exmoor Heritage Coast (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6)
Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (transition zone) (B1, B2, B3)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

The Iron-Age sites at Bury Castle (B5) and the Lyn Gorge (B3) are among the oldest recorded sites, both occupying prominent positions above river valleys. There are numerous medieval sites within this LCT, including the twelfth century Culbone church (said to be the smallest 'complete' church in England), and other churches, lanes, walls, bridges, tracks, fords, farms, hamlets, fields, mills, lime kilns, harbours and manors. Many of these are still integral parts of the landscape today, and remain in use for their original purposes, with some designated as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments. They generally occur in the more accessible river valleys, although Culbone church is located in a wooded cliff top position.

Churches and bridges are of stone construction, but domestic buildings exhibit a wide range of styles and building materials. The use of stone varies across the LCT, generally with more reddish sandstone used in the east, and greyer slate in the west. Other buildings are rendered or painted, and hung slates are sometimes seen on north-facing walls. Roofing materials also vary, including thatch, tile and slate. Farms and hamlets are often located at the crossing-points of rivers (bridges or fords) or at the base of the steep valley-side slopes. With the exception of some hotels, buildings are small in scale.

The nineteenth century saw parts of the LCT appreciated and developed as a fashionable picturesque landscape. Examples of this are the remnants of the ornamental woodland planted on North Hill by the Luttrell family of Dunster Castle (B6) and the ruined Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe (B4) where remaining landscape features include ornamental plantings, towers, terraces, tunnels and viewpoints. Other estate buildings also survive, including the toll house for Worthy Toll Road (B4), and the area is a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

The northern part of Selworthy (including the distinctive whitewashed church) is located within this LCT (B5). Selworthy is an estate village within the Holnicote Estate (National Trust), overlooking the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT.

Culbone Church

Historic harbour, Lynmouth (rebuilt after Lynmouth Flood of 1952)

As the area developed as a tourist destination, new infrastructure and towns began to appear, particularly in the coastal parts of the LCT. These include the seaside towns of Lynton and Lynmouth (both Conservation Areas), which exhibit mid-Victorian seaside architecture (e.g. sash windows and pointed gables) as well as more traditional buildings. There are several large nineteenth century hotels and houses (such as the Woody Bay Hotel, Lee Abbey, Martinhoe Manor and Glenthorne House) which occupy prominent positions on valley sides or overlooking the cliffs.

The cliff railway between Lynton and Lynmouth is still in use, as is the network of steep roads and carriage drives. Monterey and other pines planted on prominent positions above Lynmouth harbour form distinctive features of its 'Little Switzerland' character. Work was started (but not completed) on a resort at Woody Bay, and the remains of the pier, tidal swimming pool and landing posts may still be seen on the shoreline.

Woodland paths and tunnels, Ashley Combe

Toll House, Worthy

Cliff railway between Lynton and Lynmouth

Hunter's Inn Hotel

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Myrtleberry North Camp Promontory Fort (B3); Leat from hydro-electric station (B3); Malmsmead and Oare bridges (B3); Sweetworthy Deserted Medieval Village (B4); Bury Castle (B5)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Countisbury and Lyn Gorge (B3);Ashley Combe and Culbone (B4); Ley Hill (B4); Horner Wood (B4); Sweetworthy and Bagley (B4); Bury Castle, Selworthy (B5)

Conservation Areas	Lynton (B3) Lynmouth (B3) Selworthy (B5)
Listed Buildings	Numerous cottages, farms, mills, toll houses, limekilns, churches, (throughout, with concentrations in Lynton (B3) Lynmouth (B3), and Selworthy (B5))

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

Within this LCT there are great contrasts in the perceptual qualities of the landscape. For example, the towns of Lynton and Lynmouth have a bustling, seaside quality, particularly in summer. Similarly, popular 'honeypot' sites such as Watersmeet and Lorna Doone Farm can also feel busy and touristy, with concentrations of people and traffic. However, one does not have to walk far to experience a profound sense of tranquillity and remoteness, qualities which are enhanced by the dense tree cover.

The sounds of water and birdsong are particularly noticeable away from main roads, towns and parking places, and the smells of woodland, damp soil and water are distinctive. The dampness of the woodlands, and the presence of lichens and ferns give it a 'temperate rainforest' feel. Running water is a key characteristic of this landscape, including rocky streams, rushing rivers and waterfalls. The extensive deciduous woodland creates a landscape of strong textures, which change with the seasons. Colours too are constantly changing, with autumn particularly dramatic. In storm conditions, the coastline is buffeted by winds and seas sweeping up the Bristol Channel, giving a very different feel to the landscape and seascape.

The character and feel of this landscape is also strongly influenced by its sense of history, which often appears to be hidden in the woodland, and puts visitors in mind of people who have gone before. For example, walks through the LCT reveal the tunnels of Ashley Combe, carriage drives along from Woody Bay, abandoned lime kilns, and ancient tracks to the coast.

Adjectives used to describe this specific LCT in the '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' include *river valley, rocky, water rushing, fairytale*, and *dramatic*. Emotional responses unique to wooded valley landscapes included *protected, delighted, mesmerized, reflective* and *ethereal*.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The A39 runs through parts of this LCT, and is a popular tourist route. However, much of this LCT is only accessible using steep minor roads, or footpaths/ bridlepaths. The South West Coast Path runs east-west through the LCT and is an important route through the landscape, providing access to the coastal woodlands.

Within the LCT there is an overriding sense of enclosure due to enveloping valley sides and the density of tree cover. In summer, the woodland can be so dense that it is not possible to see the sea from the Coastal Path. Where long views do occur, they are often sudden and dramatic, framed by woodland or topography. The cliffs and foreshore are some of the most inaccessible parts of the National Park, forming part of the 'hidden coast' of Exmoor. However, they are visible from the sea, with the wooded cliffs rising up out of the water and contrasting with the farmland and moorland visible above and behind.

Above: Lynmouth and the River Lyn c.1820, by William Payne. This view is particularly interesting as it shows Lynmouth before its development as a coastal resort. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Devon Archives and Local Studies Service

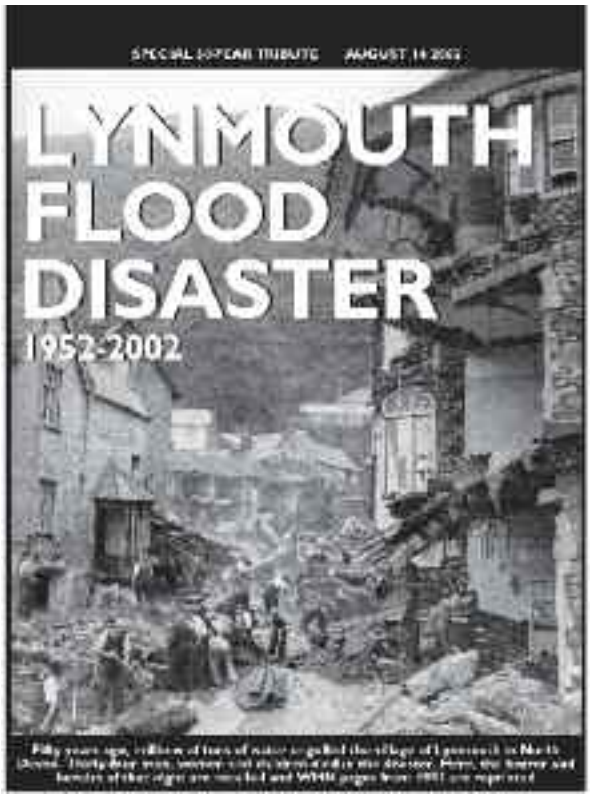
Right: Winton Waterfall by Peter De Wint
© Birmingham Museums Trust. Reproduced with permission

Cultural Associations

This LCT has many cultural associations. It inspired the Romantic poets Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, and R.D. Blackmore set his novel Lorna Doone in the Oare/ Badgworthy valley. Ada Lovelace (mathematician daughter of Lord Byron) had a family home at Ashley Combe, the Italianate grounds of which are still partially visible today. Artists including Turner and Samuel Palmer have been inspired by the coastal woodland landscapes.

The hanging woods, that touched by Autumn seem'd
As they were blossoming hues of fire and gold,
The hanging woods most lovely in decay,
The many clouds, the sea, the rock, the sands,
Lay in the silent moonshine – and the owl,
(Strange, very strange!) the Scritch-owl only wak'd,
Sole voice, sole eye of all that world of beauty!

From *Osorio*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
written following a visit to Culbone



On a more sombre note, the devastating floods of 1952 in the Lyn Valley remain strong in social memory.

(Right) Newspaper supplement commemorating 50 years since the Lynmouth Flood. Reproduced with kind permission of the Western Morning News.

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The majority of the LCT is deciduous woodland, a rich and diverse habitat supporting numerous species of plants, animals, insects and birds. Woodland is a vitally important Natural Capital Asset, and provides a number of other Ecosystem Services, including the regulation of water quality and flood risk by filtering of surface water and slowing its flow, improving air quality through the sequestration of carbon and the production of oxygen (through photosynthesis), soil formation (through decomposition of leaf litter) and the provision of timber for fuel. Many of these ecosystem services play an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and are likely to become increasingly important in the future. The rivers are also a key asset, providing a range of services including fresh water supplies, habitats, energy and recreation. They have a traditional association, celebrated in literature, with game fishing. The rivers and woodlands provide natural noise masking and contribute to the sense of tranquillity.

The LCT provides a number of cultural ecosystem services; it plays an important role in recreation and enjoyment of the National Park, and there are a number of 'honeypot' sites within this LCT, including Watersmeet, Lynmouth and Doone Farm (all B3). Its footpaths (including long stretches of the South-west Coast Path), viewpoints and visitor facilities provide people with opportunities to exercise, learn and enjoy the spectacular scenery. This contributes to people's spiritual enrichment and physical and mental wellbeing. The LCT contains many cultural heritage sites, including historic buildings and ornamental woodlands, which contribute to people's sense of history and sense of place: they also provide opportunities to learn about local history including cultural and social development.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

Within the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, there are six distinctive LCAs, each representing a different river catchment. Their landscape characteristics create a distinctive 'sense of place' which are included in the descriptions below. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.

LCA B1: Heddon Valley

Hunter's Inn

Description

The most westerly LCA within this LCT, it comprises two watercourses – a tributary of the River Heddon, and the River Heddon itself, plus the springs and streams which feed them. Unlike the other LCAs within this LCT, this landscape does not extend to the coast. Instead, at Heddons Mouth Cleave, woodland merges into the heathland of the Holdstone Down and Trentishoe High Coastal Heaths (LCA A1) which extend to the coast at Heddon's Mouth Beach.

The watercourses converge at Heddon's Mouth Wood, which has become a focal point for visitor activity with the Hunter's Inn, and National Trust visitors' centre and car park. Away from Hunter's Inn, settlement is limited to occasional farms and cottages. Although Hunter's Inn is served by an exceptionally steep minor road, much of the LCA is only accessible on foot.

The sloping valley sides of the River Heddon are densely covered with deciduous woodland. The tributary valley has a more mixed land use of woodland and farmland (predominantly pasture in small, irregular fields). Much of the area is owned and managed by the National Trust as part of its Heddon Valley estate. Much of the woodland is ancient, and forms part of the West Exmoor Coast and Woods SSSI. The northern part of the woodland is also designated SAC.

LCA B2: Woody Bay

Lee Bay and Woody Bay from Lee Abbey

Description

The heavily-wooded LCA of Woody Bay extends from West Woody Bay Wood to Cuddy Cleave and Six Acre Woods. The LCA includes the wooded coastal cliffs, and also three small stream valleys that run towards (and merge before meeting) the coast, with a spectacular coastal waterfall at Woody Bay. The valleys open out into two scallop-shaped bays - Woody Bay and Lee Bay - of which there are breathtaking views from the steep, narrow and winding coastal road. Woody Bay cove contains the remains of a jetty and tidal swimming pool constructed in the nineteenth century as part of an unsuccessful speculative tourist resort development.

The South West Coast Path runs east-west across the full length of the LCA, and there are a number of other footpaths and bridleways in the combes which provide wonderful opportunities for woodland walks. Settlement is limited and includes isolated farms and dwellings. However, the large buildings of Lee Abbey (located within an adjacent LCT), Woody Bay Hotel and Martinhoe Manor are prominent features in the landscape, visible from both land and sea.

The vast majority of the LCA is designated SSSI for its coastal woodland habitats, and the western part is within the Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods SAC. It contains a range of lichens and ferns, spectacular twisted oak trees and endemic Whitebeams.

LCA B3: Lyn

Lynmouth, looking up the Lyn Valley

Description

One of the largest LCAs of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, the Lyn LCA is centred around the East Lyn and West Lyn rivers, and their convergence at the deep and densely wooded gorge where the towns of Lynton and Lynmouth lie. The LCA also includes a number of tributary valleys, ranging from the remote wooded combe surrounding Hoaroak Water, to the more open landscape of the Doone Valley. At Watersmeet, where the waters of Hoaroak meet the East Lyn River, there are dramatic waterfalls. This has long been a popular area with visitors, who use the car park, footpaths and refreshment facilities.

The Doone Valley (along the course of the Oare and Badgworthy waters) is both wooded and farmed, and the nearby moorland also influences its character. It has strong associations with R.D. Blackmore's novel Lorna Doone and is much visited, giving parts of the valley a strong tourist value and function; the concentration of visitor facilities creating a more 'touristy' character in places.

The valleys of the East Lyn and West Lyn rivers are very densely wooded. The A39 and B3234 follow the watercourses and ascend and descend over very steep gradients. They are often busy, particularly in summer, as visitors converge on the dramatically-sited coastal towns of Lynton and Lynmouth, which were nicknamed 'Little Switzerland' by the Victorians. Lynton (with strong Victorian architectural influences) sits above the more traditional harbour and seaside town of Lynmouth, and the two are connected by a steep road and a cliff railway.

Several valleys contain small-scale dispersed settlements. Hamlets or farms typically have a linear form as they line watercourses (e.g. Brendon, Rockford and Barbrook). Grey sandstone, white painted stone and slate are the principal building materials of traditional cottages farms & farm buildings.

LCA B4: Culbone - Horner

Horner Wood from Webber's Post viewpoint

Description

This is the largest of the six LCAs within the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, and stretches from Glenthorne Plantation in the west to Horner Plantation in the east. It includes both wooded coastal cliffs and extensive areas of inland woodland. As with other LCAs, it includes numerous tributary valleys.

The coastal woodlands of Culbone Wood, Yearnor Wood, Worthy Wood and The Parks join to form the longest continuous tract of coastal woodland in the country. It forms the backdrop to the adjacent settlements of Porlock and Porlock Weir. These woodlands cover the cliffs and contain a number of historic features, including Glenthorne House, Culbone church and the remains of the Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe. Settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses, often accessed via tracks. A toll road winds its way through the woodland, offering a peaceful route alongside tumbling streams and fern-clad wooded banks.

Further south, the wooded Hawkcombe valley comprises a series of smaller combes, each with spring-fed streams running off the open moorland. Hawkcombe is a National Nature Reserve with good footpath provision, but no through roads. Horner Wood, in the southern part of the LCA, adjoins the Open Moorland LCT at Dunkery Hill, and forms part of the Dunkery and Horner Wood National Nature Reserve. It is an exceptionally large area of ancient woodland, containing more than 1000 ancient trees. Hawkcombe & Horner Woods are designated SSSI and SAC.

LCA B5: Bossington

Bossington Wood from Dunkery Hill

Description

One of the smallest LCAs, Bossington comprises woodland (predominantly deciduous, but with some coniferous planting) covering the interconnected combes of Church Combe, Lynch Combe, Allerford Combe, Holnicote Combe and Selworthy Combe. Some of the combes are dry whilst others are fed from water running off the High Coastal Heaths. The woodland extends off the steeper slopes to form a woodland strip following the stream that runs through Bossington and on through the Low Farmed Coast and Marsh to the sea.

At the base of the woodland in the east is the village of Selworthy, with its prominent, limewashed church which stands out against its wooded backdrop. The northern part of Selworthy village is within this LCT, and comprises a mixture of small stone and rendered cottages nestled below the woodland. The wooded combes are served by a number of well-used footpaths which enable access to Bossington Hill and Bury Castle - a well-preserved Iron Age enclosure situated within the woodland.

Selworthy church

LCA B6: Culver Cliff

The wooded setting to Minehead

Description

This is the most easterly and the smallest of the LCAs belonging to the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, and actually comprises three small sub-areas separated by small patches of enclosed farmland. It characterises the coastal slopes which extend north-west from the Higher Town area of Minehead, and provides a strong wooded context and setting to the town.

The area falling within the National Park boundary forms part of a larger wooded coastal landscape that offers a striking backdrop to Minehead harbour and promenade. This LCA also includes the inland areas of Moor Wood and Bratton Wood that surround Wood Combe and Bratton Ball respectively. Wood Combe is designated SSSI and SAC. The woodlands contain a variety of species, including some early nineteenth century ornamental planting.

This LCA is largely unsettled, and is difficult to access by road. Nevertheless it contains a dense network of footpaths and bridleways, especially on Culver Cliff, which have dramatic views of the coast and across the Bristol Channel to Wales.

Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT B

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

SCA 2: Porlock Bay

SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove

SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay

SCA 7: Lee and Woody Bays

Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT B

The steep valleys, rivers and extensive woodlands remain dominant features in the landscape and contribute to its **strong** and distinctive character. In general, their condition is **good**, although there are risks that this may change in the future, particularly as a result of tree disease.

Not all the woodlands within this LCT are designated SSSI. Of the sites which are designated SSSI, the majority are considered to be in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. Some are in 'favourable' condition, including the environs of Lee Bay, the lower stretch of the River Lyn and the upper reaches of the Horner Valley. SSSIs in unfavourable declining condition have been identified at Croscombe Wood (B2) and the Oare Valley south of Yenworthy Common (B3). This was due to undergrazing, lack of scrub control and the presence of rhododendron.

Within much of this LCT, the dominant landscape features are natural (e.g. coastal features, rivers, woodlands) rather than built. Nevertheless, where concentrations of historic and built features occur (particularly B3) they make a significant contribution to the strong character of the landscape and its distinctive sense of place. Built elements of the landscape are generally in good condition, although some sites (for example the ruined Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe, B4) are neglected and other archaeological sites are threatened by scrub and bracken growth. A headstone at Lynton Church is on the buildings at risk register, and the unoccupied School House in Lynton is identified as being of relatively high risk. Conservation Area Appraisals identify minor issues with inappropriate signage and advertisements, and replacement PVCu windows and doors, resulting in a loss of historic character, but overall the condition is fair and there are no major causes for concern.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT B

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly being affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure, and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Encroachment by invasive species and lack of woodland management	Loss of woodland ground cover and natural ecosystems where invasive exotic species such as rhododendron spread into natural woodland. Parts of the oak woodlands also incur the spread of species such as beech and sycamore. Spread of invasive ornamental Cherry Laurel remains a problem in B6.	B2,B4, B6
Visitor pressure	Concentrations of tourist facilities (e.g. car parks, advertisements) changing the National Park character to a more managed 'Country Park' feel, and adding clutter into the landscape. Erosion of popular paths and viewing areas, and conflicts over access to the river (canoeing).	B1,B3,B5
Development pressure	Risk of settlements expanding out of their traditional landscape setting, for example expanding up hillsides (examples of this may be seen at Lynton, where white bungalows are prominent within the trees above the town). Large single developments (often tourism-related) in open countryside. Urban fringe land uses and development extending up to the National Park boundary in Minehead impact on Exmoor's landscape and seascape setting.	B3
Loss of coastal views	Decline in traditional woodland management (e.g. coppicing) resulting in dense tree cover obscuring views from paths and viewpoints. This is a general issue, but particularly acute in this LCT due to the quantity of woodland cover.	All
Loss of historic features	Bracken, scrub and trees pose a threat to buried and surface archaeology (e.g. Bury Castle, B5)). Ornamental gardens (B4) are in a poor state of repair, with paths and structures neglected, and trees reaching over-maturity.	B4, B5
Urbanisation of road corridors	There is a risk of eroding rural character due to signage, parking areas and other urbanising influences along the A39.	B3, B4
Light pollution	Loss of dark skies and star visibility. Recent mapping by the CPRE shows that Lynton, Lynmouth and Minehead are particular sources of light pollution, although part-night lighting helps. Lighting is also visible across the Bristol channel.	B3, B6
Renewable Energy	Exploitation of tidal energy in the Bristol Channel would result in offshore structures and coastal landfall sites. Hydropower schemes may also introduce new structures and features into the landscape.	B2, B3, B4, B6

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Tree diseases	Oak is vulnerable to a variety of diseases and pathogens, including phytophthora. Ash dieback is also a threat. Given the international importance of Exmoor's coastal woodlands, tree disease is a major concern in this LCA.	All
Coastal erosion	Loss of coastal features and heritage sites as a result of coastal erosion, which will be exacerbated by sea level rise. Coastal squeeze may result in loss of beaches, rocky foreshore habitats and coastal woodland, and damage to coastal archaeological sites.	B2,B3,B4, B5,B6
Climate change, flooding and sea level rise	Coastal sites and settlements are more vulnerable to flooding, particularly during high tides. Increased frequency of high-intensity storms also increases the risk of flooding from rivers.	B5

Rhododendrons in Culbone Wood

Lynton from Countisbury Hill showing visibility of buildings on valley sides above Lynton

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT B

Landscape Strategy

The extent, condition and variety of woodland are conserved and enhanced, along with historic landscape features (including remnants of former designed landscapes). The water quality of rivers and streams is good and their corridors are ecologically rich. Woodlands are responsive to climate change impacts, free of invasive species, and plantations on ancient woodland sites are sensitively restored. Visitors have opportunities to visit and explore the landscape, enjoy a variety of dramatic views, and savour its remoteness, with visitor facilities designed sensitively and discreetly. Settlements retain their traditional character and form, and are enhanced by strong landscape settings. The perception of wildness and sense of place are retained throughout the LCT.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT B

Protect

- Protect archaeological sites, (for example Bury Castle above Selworthy), ensuring that they do not suffer damage from bracken or scrub encroachment. Earthwork sites within woodland are particularly vulnerable to damage by the roots of encroaching trees. Raise awareness of accessible coastal historic sites, such as those associated with the failed Victorian seaside development at Woody Bay.
- Protect the wooded landscape settings of settlements and historic sites.

Manage

- Retain the sense of remoteness which can still be experienced in parts of the LCT through avoidance of intrusive new development, and minimising visual impacts of roads and paths.
- Continue to manage levels of encroachment by rhododendron and other non-native species, particularly where coastal oak woodlands are threatened.
- Manage ornamental plantings, including replanting with non-invasive exotic species where appropriate (e.g. Monterey Pine around Lynmouth).
- Actively manage woodland sites to improve provision of ecosystem services and to encourage sensitive restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites.
- Work with riparian owners and permitted recreational groups to ensure positive management of rivers and minimal damage to banks and ecology through recreational uses. For example, minimising disturbance of bankside vegetation to minimise washing-downstream and further spread of invasive species (LCT B3).

Plan

- Explore the potential to enhance historic designed landscapes (for example Ashley Combe) including restoring important viewpoints and retaining, or possibly restocking ornamental species to conserve character.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing the quality and variety of viewing opportunities, whilst minimising the negative impact of viewpoints (e.g. parked cars) on the landscape.
- Ensure that renewable energy schemes and associated infrastructure are sensitive to their location, conserve the scenic quality of the area, and do not adversely impact on the rich ecology of the rivers and streams.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following documents:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Silvanus for the Exmoor Society, August 2013)
- SAC and SSSI Management Plans

Specific Planning Guidelines for High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3. Please note that the village of Selworthy is also covered within LCT E.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Visual and physical dominance of undeveloped wooded slopes which act as a dramatic backdrop to all settlement types. (All)	Growth of towns and hamlets up valley slopes Development of larger scale buildings (agricultural or tourism-related) seeking locations with elevated views.	Ensure new development does not extend onto most sensitive slopes, particularly upper slopes and unfettered skylines. Ensure landscape backdrop remains dominant in views.
Strong Victorian architectural styles which provide unity and cohesiveness of character to coastal resort towns. (B3)	Peripheral and infill development which relates poorly to existing vernacular.	Ensure new development visually and physically integrates with existing character in terms of mass, density, and height.
Glimpsed views down onto complex roofscape which builds anticipation and defines approach to low-lying settlements. (B3)	Introduction of new development which appears visually discordant due to scale and choice of materials.	Ensure roofing materials and roof design protects the local character of the roofscape and its complex visual composition.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Loose structure of dwellings within river valley hamlets where landscape permeates the settlement and open space provides sense of place. (B1, B2, B3, B4). The clustered yet predominately linear form of hamlets reflects the close relationship of built form to valley form, rivers and roads. (B1, B2, B3, B4)	New development which comprises an uncharacteristic density of dwellings; replaces open space which forms part of the fabric and form of the hamlet; peripheral or infill development which affects the scale or form of the settlement or lessens its relationship to surrounding linear features.	Ensure a density of new dwellings which reflect the typical arrangement of the settlement. Protect open areas which perform a valued role in providing local distinctiveness. They layout, siting and scale of development in small rural communities should be consistent with their small scale traditional form.
Dwellings constructed of stone and white washed render, with slate, thatch or tiled roofs and wooden windows and doors. Plots defined by low stone walls. These elements form a typical rural vernacular. (All)	Introduction of new built form which detracts from the traditional vernacular either as a result of materials, form, mass or roof pitch.	Ensure new development considers the local vernacular style in the locality and develops a positive visual dialogue with existing built form and the landscape character.
Dispersed isolated pattern of rural dwellings which primarily cluster around river crossing points within the river valleys. (All)	Proliferation of isolated development which relates poorly to landscape context either visually or functionally resulting in a loss of the legibility of settlement pattern.	Ensure new development is of an appropriate scale and relates to existing settlement patterns and boundary features. Development should reinforce perceptions of natural and unsettled character.
Incidental historic built features (bridges, fords, churches) often in uncluttered natural settings which aid orientation and local distinctiveness. (All)	Introduction of new development in the setting of these valued features including new signage and alteration to road and lane character.	Protect the setting of important historic features and avoid development which will visually intrude or adversely affect their significance.
Dark night skies and sense of relative wilderness and isolation, away from development and human activity. (All)	Intrusive new development in views from this landscape (particularly where development is located beyond the National Park) which may have adverse impacts by day and by night in terms of light pollution.	Development proposals beyond the National Park which are likely to be visible from this landscape should demonstrate that any lighting proposals mitigate sky glow and light intrusions. This is in line with the duties of relevant authorities (see section 2.2)

Traditional valley-side farm, nested into a fold of the landform above Woody Bay

Vernacular valley floor cottages, near Hunter's Inn, constructed of rendered/whitewashed stone with slate roofs

Thatched cottages in terraces constructed parallel to the river, Lynmouth

New Lynmouth Pavilion building, blending with surrounding buildings in terms of its scale, materials and design.

Street scene, Lynton, showing relatively dense Victorian terrace housing, with sash windows, pointed gables and direct frontage onto the street

Lynton Town Hall (built 1900) is a civic building of relatively large scale. It is a mixture of manorial, Gothic and Tudor styles.

Woody Bay from near Martinhoe

Landscape Character Type C: **Low Farmed Coast and Marsh**

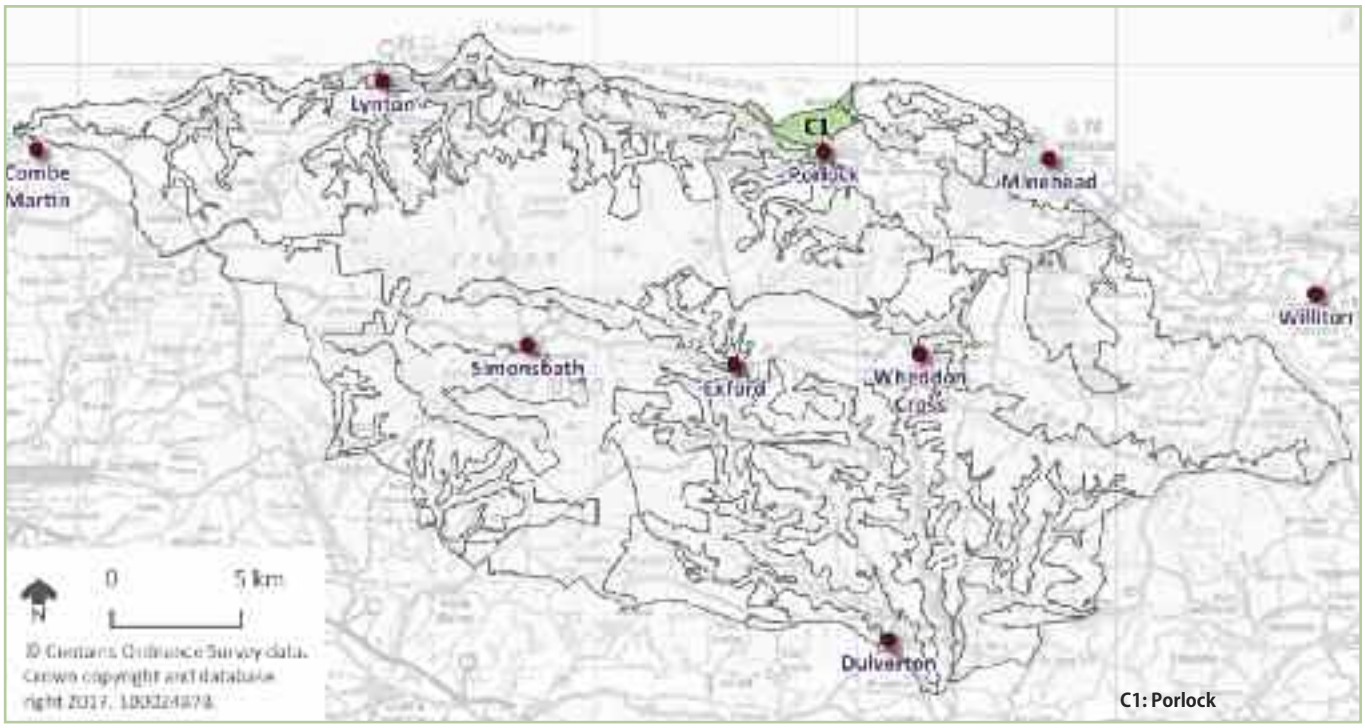
Porlock Marsh and beach as seen from Whitstone Post

Summary Description

This LCT is located in the north-east of the National Park. It comprises the shingle beach and ridge fronting Porlock Bay, and the low-lying marsh and agricultural land inland. It is located at the northern end of the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT, and is framed on either side by wooded hills forming the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT. To the east, Hurlestone Point (within the High Coastal Heaths LCT) is a dominant feature and closes the view eastwards. Gore Point and Porlock Weir are features on the western boundary of the LCT, and there are stunning views westwards along the coast. The villages of Bossington and Porlock Weir are within the LCT, and the larger village of Porlock is adjacent to it.

This is a striking landscape, unique within Exmoor, and with an exceptionally strong physical and cultural association with the sea. It forms a low arc of flat coastal land which contrasts markedly with the surrounding woods and valleys. It is also a landscape which is undergoing rapid and dramatic change following sudden breaching of the shingle ridge by storms driven by Hurricane Lili in 1996. Since the breach, daily inundation by the tide is a significant feature of the landscape and dramatically changes the character of the marsh, with salt marsh visible at low tide. The process of salinization has caused trees to die, leaving their trunks as evocative and sculptural features within the landscape. The muted colours and sinuous forms of the saltmarsh contrast sharply with the brighter colours of the farmland.

There is only one Landscape Character Area (LCA) within this LCT. It is also within the Porlock Bay Seascape Character Area (SCA) identified in the Seascape Character Assessment.



Key Characteristics of the Low Farmed Coast and Marsh

- Surface geology of drift river deposits, salt marsh deposits (mainly clay) and a mixture of silt, sand, clay and rock fragments. The beach and ridge are formed of large, rounded cobbles.
- The landform is strikingly flat (from 5-15m AOD) and contrasts with the enclosing landforms of the surrounding cliffs, hills and vale.
- Porlock Ridge forms a dynamic natural shingle ridge between the shingle beach and the marshland behind. The ridge has been breached, resulting in a change from freshwater to saltmarsh behind.
- Simple land cover of open salt marshes giving way further inland to enclosed farmland of improved pastures and some cereal cropping.
- Semi-natural habitats include herb-rich vegetated shingle and salt marsh.
- Relatively few trees, but dead trees within the salt marsh have a sculptural quality.
- Farmland defined by small, regular fields divided by pebble-faced hedgebanks.
- Settlement generally on higher ground at the edges of the LCT. It is concentrated around the historic harbour of Porlock Weir, and the picturesque estate village Bossington.
- Historic landscape features associated with its coastal location, including the harbour at Porlock Weir, limekilns, duck decoy barn and pond, and WWII defences.
- Strong influence of the sea, with large tidal range exposing swathes of rock. From the beach there are views across the Bristol Channel, and along the coast.
- Views are contained by high landform surrounding the LCT.
- A dynamic landscape of contrasting colours and textures, and a sense of tranquillity (and occasionally desolation) particularly within the saltmarsh areas.
- Cultural associations with the Romantic poets.

Natural Landscape Features

The landscape within the LCT is of relatively recent origin, with the shingle ridge thought to have developed in the Holocene period, about 8000 years ago. Since then it has been in a dynamic state of constant movement, reflecting changing coastal processes and sea levels. A fossil forest of tree stumps and peat dating from c.5000 years ago may be seen off the coast at low tide, and the bones of an Aurochs (a mammoth ox) dating from 1500BC were found on the beach following a storm in 1996.

The shingle ridge was breached by the sea in 1996, flooding the low-lying marsh behind. This is the only documented example in the UK of a nationally-important coastal system which has undergone catastrophic failure and subsequent evolution without artificial replenishment. A decision was made not to repair the breach but to adopt a policy of 'no active intervention'. It is predicted that the shingle will continue to roll back, but no one is entirely sure how the ridge, beach and marsh will evolve in the future. The inundation by seawater has resulted in salinization of the marshland behind the ridge, which has affected the land use and habitats. Prior to 1996, the coastal marsh contained freshwater reedbeds and grazing marsh. Now it contains a mosaic of saltmarsh, shingle and farmland as well as seashore habitats and boulder beach. Much of the area has been designated SSSI for its geomorphological and biological interest and provides habitat for overwintering birds. As the habitats change, the species present also change. For example, there are now fewer breeding birds, but more waders.

Rivers and streams cross the Marsh towards the sea. The Horner (technically within LCA B5) flows through Bossington and out to sea through the ridge. Usually it seeps through the shingle, but occasionally bursts a hole in the ridge which then gradually refills. The Hawkcombe River is very dynamic, and empties into the middle of the Marsh, with associated flood risk concerns for Porlock. The lower stretches of the stream are artificially raised on a shingle fan (probably post-glacial in origin) and flow higher than the adjoining fields.

Changes to the form of the coastline have also affected access into the LCT. The breach in the shingle ridge is not safe to cross even at low tide and made it necessary to re-route the South West Coast Path around the inland edge of the salt marsh.

Petrified forest at low tide ©Rob Wilson-North

Porlock Ridge looking east

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Porlock Ridge and Saltmarsh
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Hawk Combe copse
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Porlock Weir to Bossington Beach (an extensive LGS, covering the shingle spit)
Heritage Coast	Exmoor Heritage Coast

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

There is a very long history of human habitation within this LCT, and Porlock Beach and Marsh are designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape. The earliest archaeological finds are flint flakes from tool-making by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, which have been found below the peat layer associated with the fossil forest described above. As the shingle ridge rolls back it reveals buried land surfaces dating from the Bronze Age to Victorian times.

Many of the historic landscape features visible within this LCT are directly related to its position by the sea. These include tidal fish weirs, the harbour and settlement at Porlock Weir, and post-medieval limekilns behind the shingle ridge (lime for burning was brought in by boat rather than overland). A 1710 map shows a large freshwater pill (fish pond) on Porlock Marsh. Later maps show a duck decoy in this location with an outlet to the sea. Duck decoys were ponds with narrowing 'arms' of water extending out of them. Ducks would land on the pond, and dogs were used to drive them into the net-covered arms, where they were trapped. In the early 20th Century, a golf course and club house were built, but only lasted one season before being destroyed by storms. The open coast was vulnerable to invasion, and WWII pillboxes (constructed of cobbles) survive on the beach, along with a memorial to the crew of an American bomber which crashed on the Marsh.

Other landscape features relate to the long farming tradition within the LCT, including the Linhay Barn (a Listed Building), and the network of fields and footpaths. To the east of Bossington, the regular sinuous pattern of fields is thought to be early medieval in date. The relatively small-scale field patterns seen in much of the LCT date from the medieval period. In the west, there are areas of larger and more regular fields with straight boundaries which are later in date.

The landscape has a long history of settlement on higher ground at the edges of the Marsh, and Bossington and Porlock are both Saxon place names (the settlements of Porlock and West Porlock are outside this LCT). Estates have had a strong influence on the development of this landscape, and much of the area is within the Acland family's Holnicote estate, now owned by the National Trust. This includes the distinctive 'chocolate box' estate village of Bossington (Designated a Conservation Area) with its stone and rendered historic cottages, with thatched roofs, lining the main street. The shouldered chimneys with round stacks are a particular feature as they are found on the front of the buildings.

On the opposite side of the LCT, the village of Porlock Weir (also a Conservation Area and part of the Porlock Manor Estate) is focussed on the harbour. It contains rows of thatched cottages (also with front chimneys) running parallel to the contours. The presence of the harbour has led to a stronger trade – and more recently tourist – influence, and contributes to the character and sense of place of the settlement. Stones from the beach form a locally-distinctive building material throughout the LCT. They can be seen in walls (including use as coping stones) and as facing in hedgebanks.

Duck decoy pond ©Rob Wilson-North

Pillbox and Lime Kiln, Porlock Beach

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Porlock Beach and Marsh
Conservation Areas	Extensive Conservation Area at Porlock Weir Part of Bossington and West Lynch Conservation Area
Listed Buildings	Cluster in Bossington (cottages and Linhay); Cottages in Porlock Weir; Worthy Manor and outbuildings

Examples of vernacular buildings within the LCT:

Harbour at Porlock Weir

Linhay, Bossington

Holnicote Estate cottages in Bossington

Rendered Holnicote estate cottages, Bossington

Harbour- master's office and entrance to dry dock, Porlock

Vernacular cottages in terraces parallel to the shore, Porlock Weir.
Note the lack of property boundaries

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

The low-lying and flat nature of this landscape, combined with its dramatic and ongoing changes creates a unique experience within Exmoor National Park. Parts of the LCT (particularly away from the settlements) have a tranquil quality and sense of isolation. This can be accentuated by the sculptural dead trees, shingle-buried signposts and palpable sense of change within the landscape. The recently-constructed boardwalk has improved access to the beach, but some people also feel that it has introduced a more 'country park' character into the area.

Horizontal lines (such as the shingle ridge, and hedgerows) dominate in this flat landscape. Occasional vertical features such as fence posts and telegraph poles can therefore appear prominent. The textures and colours of the landscape exhibit a marked sense of contrast: the colours of the salt marsh areas and beach are relatively muted, but the colours of the farmed areas are much brighter, including the green of improved grass and occasional yellow fields of oil seed rape. The prevailing tidal and weather conditions can also create huge changes in the perceptual qualities of the landscape. Porlock beach in a storm, with waves crashing over the shingle, is very different from its serenity on a calm day in summer. Porlock Weir has a large car park and range of visitor facilities creating a busier feel, and there is also a more informal car park at Bossington. Both villages are popular with tourists. There is little light pollution within the LCT itself, but there is some light pollution from Porlock, and also from the South Wales coast which is likely to impact on the darkness of the night skies.

The recent changes to this landscape mean that there is a difference between people's memories of how the coastal parts of the Marsh used to be (grazing marsh, fields and reedbeds) and how they are now (shingle, salt marsh and dead trees). Consequently, people's perceptions of, and reactions to, the landscape are very mixed. This was demonstrated in the '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study* - words used to describe Porlock Marsh included *desolate, strange, interesting, struggling, mysterious, dramatic, derelict, striking, evocative, calm, unusual, lovely, horrible, fascinating, contrasting* and *barren*. It also evoked a variety of emotional responses, including *calm, with wildlife, exhilarated, thoughtful, de-stressed, eerie, like the darkness* and *with nature.*

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

Coastal views are dominated by the shingle ridge and beach in the foreground, and the cliffs which close the views to east and west. There are views across the Bristol Channel to the Welsh coast, and on clear days it is possible to make out individual buildings. The twinkling lights of the South Wales coast make it particularly prominent at night. Looking inland, the views up the Avill Valley (LCT E) are more pastoral, and contained by the wooded slopes of Bossington Wood and Worthy Wood (LCT B). Bossington Hill and Dunkery can be seen in the distance, and the Marsh is a striking feature in views from surrounding hills.

Left- Porlock Marsh scene in spring. The dead tree and abandoned farm machinery both have sculptural qualities, whilst contributing to the sense of dereliction.

Right- The curved form of the new boardwalk providing access to the beach also has a sculptural quality within the landscape. Autumn fog creates a very different light and mood.

Cultural Associations

Porlock Marsh was visited by the Romantic poets, including Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Today it is a particularly popular spot for photographers and artists trying to capture the striking and changing landscape, and the unusual sources of beauty within it.

View of Porlock Bay, 4th October 1785 by Francis Towne

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

Much of the LCT is used as farmland (mainly pasture, with some arable crops) and has some of the most fertile soils within the National Park. These are important Natural Capital Assets, providing a number of ecosystem services, particularly the production of food (including the recent successful re-establishing of the oyster farming industry) and fibre. The coastal habitats, including shingle and saltmarsh, provide habitats for a range of plants, animals and birds, and also function as water storage areas, helping to mitigate the impacts of coastal floods on nearby communities. Such habitats are under threat nationally from development and coastal squeeze, and therefore play a vital role as habitats and feeding grounds for birds and other coastal species.

The Marsh is a popular place to visit, and is well-used and valued, particularly by local people. It therefore offers a number of cultural ecosystem services (the non-material benefits which people obtain from ecosystems) such as recreation, reflection, aesthetic experiences and spiritual enrichment. The long human history of the area provides opportunities for learning, experiencing and researching human habitation, social development and culture.

As a rare example of unmanaged coast following a shingle breach, the landscape and habitats are being carefully monitored and studied to further understanding of coastal processes. They are therefore also important for research and education in this respect.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

LCA C1: Porlock

There is only one LCA within the Low Farmed Coast and Marsh Landscape Character Type, as the landscape character and sense of place are considered to be consistent across it.

Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT C

SCA 2: Porlock Bay
Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT C

The landscape is unusually dynamic, particularly since the breach of Porlock Ridge, and the current shoreline management policy of no active intervention. Nevertheless, the shingle ridge and beach remain prominent features within the landscape, and the combination of the shingle ridge, flat topography and salt marsh habitats create a strong and unique landscape character. In parts of the LCT (particularly close to settlements) the distinctive built form makes a strong contribution to landscape character. Elsewhere, historic landscape features such as pillboxes and field patterns contribute to the sense of place.

Overall, the landscape is considered to be in good condition, reflecting recent landscape enhancement projects. The majority of the SSSI within this LCT is considered to be in 'favourable' condition, with the western part of Porlock Ridge in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. The condition of the cultural heritage features is quite variable. For example, the estate cottages at Bossington are in good condition and considered at low risk, but the coastal pillboxes and lime kilns (which are not designated) are vulnerable to coastal change and erosion. However, the changing morphology of the coast also allows previously hidden land surfaces to be revealed and therefore also contributes to our understanding of the archaeological record. Current Conservation Area Appraisals show buildings generally to be in good condition, especially in Bossington, where redundant outbuildings are the only issue. Distracting temporary signage is a minor problem in Porlock Weir, along with replacement doors and windows in non-listed buildings. There is also room for improvement in the appearance of the carpark.

The 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment highlighted the poor condition of parts of this landscape, for example due to old fencing, poles and small-scale littering. In the intervening years, work has been undertaken to enhance the landscape of this LCT, removing redundant man-made features such as fencing and poles for overhead wires. In addition power lines have been put underground and new hedgerows planted. The construction of the boardwalk has enabled low-tide access to the beach. This improved management takes place against a backdrop of major landscape change as farmland becomes saltmarsh

An Evolving Landscape

The photographs on the following page show Porlock Marsh prior to the breach of the shingle ridge in 1996. The marsh included managed reedbeds, and meadows, and supported a range of freshwater mammals and birds. All photos provided by Exmoor National Park Authority.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT C

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

The Local Plan has designated a Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA) at Porlock Weir, due to the threat of coastal change (sea level rise and increased storm intensity, leading to flooding and coastal erosion). This ensures that development is managed within the CCMA and policies provide for the replacement of assets/buildings lost to coastal change within other areas of the settlement or within settlements close by.

Investigations are ongoing to see whether it is possible to create a more natural alignment for the river into the marsh to improve habitats and potentially reduce flood risk to Porlock upstream

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Movement of shingle ridge	The breach of the shingle ridge in 1996, and the subsequent decision to 'allow nature to take its course' along this stretch of coast is resulting in rapid and dynamic changes within the landscape. It is predicted that these changes will continue as the ridge rolls inland.
Invasive species	Invasive species (buddleia) along the beach (particularly near Porlock Weir) and Himalayan Balsam along watercourses.
Difficulties of access	Some paths are now inundated by tides, and become slippery or muddy. These include the South-West Coast Path, which has been diverted around the inner edge of the saltmarsh. The recently-constructed boardwalk provides low-tide access to the beach from Porlock.
Climate change and sea level rise	This low-lying stretch of coast becomes increasingly vulnerable to coastal flooding as sea levels rise. Saltmarsh can dissipate wave action and reduce the power of waves, but coastal sites and settlements remain vulnerable, particularly during high tides. Increased frequency of high-intensity storms also increases the risk of flooding from rivers. Bossington is particularly vulnerable to flooding from the Horner Water.
Re-establishment of oyster beds	Since 2013, following a successful trial, commercial oyster farming is now taking place at Porlock Weir. The trestles where the oysters are stored are visible in the sea at low tide, and are new features within the coastal landscape. Oyster farming also creates a different feeling of activity on the beach as the oysters are checked, harvested and replenished. There is concern over expansion of the trestles which are currently in the same location as the submerged forest. Deeper water trials are therefore taking place

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Loss of archaeological sites and landscape features	Coastal sites (e.g. lime kilns, pillboxes) are at risk of loss or gradual erosion due to the changing physical environment and rising sea levels. Changing agricultural practices mean that other features (such as the Linhay Barn) no longer have a function, and are at risk of neglect and dereliction. The barn is also flooded at particularly high tides.
Small-scale littering, including beach litter along tide lines.	Reduces the visual quality of the landscape, particularly along the beach.
Changes to agricultural grant schemes	The Marsh is currently covered by Higher Level Stewardship agreements which focus on allowing natural processes to develop.

WWII pillbox being undermined by coastal erosion

Buried signpost following movement of shingle

Oyster trestles in Porlock Bay. Image ©BBC website, May 2016.

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT C

Landscape Strategy

(Taken from the vision in 'Porlock Marsh is changing- take a new look')[1]

Porlock Marsh is a tranquil and beautiful place where people come to experience the valued landscapes of open coast and saltmarsh, enclosed farmland and surrounding woodland, cliffs and moors. The Marsh is more accessible and enjoyed by more people and a greater diversity of visitors. It is a place of study and exploration, developing a greater understanding of the changes taking place now, and in the past. The dynamic coast continues to change and evolve, creating a unique mosaic of habitats and supporting a rich diversity of wildlife. The history, archaeology and cultural heritage of the Marsh are better understood and conserved. It is a living landscape, retaining the tradition of farming. The implications of climate change and sea level rise are better understood and inform future management of the Marsh. The Marsh is an asset for local communities and businesses, and forms part of a broad package of attractions, features and activities for visitors and locals alike.

Specific Management Guidelines for LCT C

Protect

- Protect the South West Coast Path, improving its resilience against flooding, and ensure it continues to be accessible following sea level rise whilst keeping it as close to the coast as possible. Salt marsh is likely to be excluded from open access as it is too hazardous to walk over.

Manage

- Respond to the natural processes taking place on the Marsh, taking into account the implications of climate change and sea level rise, and the need to adapt to the changes which are occurring.
- Manage wildlife habitats in accordance with the SSSI Management Plan, including management of invasive species. Consider opportunities for habitat enhancement .
- Continue to manage hedgerows and hedgebanks to improve their condition.
- Monitor, survey and record heritage sites, particularly those which are most vulnerable e.g. through a rapid coastal assessment scheme.
- Continue to remove redundant telegraph poles, old fences etc. to reduce the visual clutter within the landscape.
- Manage footpaths, whilst minimising conflicts between people (and dogs) and wildlife.
- Enhance viewpoints for visitors to appreciate views within the Marsh, and on routes to it.
- Enhance the appearance of the carpark in Porlock Weir, e.g. through reducing informal signage.

[1] *Porlock Marsh is changing - Take a New Look.* Prepared by Porlock Parish Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, the National Trust, Porlock Manor Estate and Natural England.

- Raise public awareness and understanding of the Marsh. However, design and management of visitors and visitor facilities (e.g. bird hides) should remain sensitive to the special qualities of the Marsh, and should have minimal visual intrusion.
- Encourage litter clearance (particularly along the beach), e.g. through volunteer work parties.

Plan

- An underlying philosophy is for minimal intervention, with a focus on conservation, to let the Marsh develop naturally.
- Continue to inform local people of the changes taking place on the Marsh and why they are happening.
- Work with oyster farmers to consider visual impacts of infrastructure on the seascape, including the impacts of vehicles on archaeology, and the visual impacts of tyre tracks at low tide.

Specific Planning Guidelines for Low Farmed Coast and Marsh

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Low Farmed Coast and Marsh Landscape Character Type. Please also see the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
The distinctive setting of Porlock Weir.	Within the Coastal Change Management Area, buildings lost to coastal change will be replaced in less vulnerable locations within the village or on the hill above.	New buildings should fit as closely as possible with the existing form of the village. They should be located below the current edge of the woodland in order to protect the wooded backdrop of the village.
Visual unity of built form - strong estate influence and local vernacular including slate and thatch roofs, chimneys and dormer windows, rendered building and use of local stone and rounded cobble beach stones.	Introduction of new materials and styles adjacent to historic buildings, undermining visual unity	Ensure use of traditional building materials, colours and styles in areas of historic settlement. There are also opportunities for a new reinterpretation of building design that reflect and reinforce landscape and settlement character.
Overall, a loose clustered settlement character.	Linear development undermining clustered character and backland/infill development eroding traditional low density.	Locate built form and layout to retain loose nucleated character; high density 'housing estate' character will not complement the character, scale or form of the settlements.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Close relationship of rural dwellings to landscape as a result of little to no curtilage. Where walls occur, they are often locally distinctive with beach cobbles as coping stones.	High density development with well-defined gardens which may undermine relationship of settlement to the wider setting.	Ensure new dwellings carefully consider the curtilage to reinforce the relationship between buildings and the wider landscape. Ensure landscape continues to penetrate built up areas through appropriate planting schemes and incorporating other landscape features/ elements.
Undeveloped and open inland horizons.	Linear development (particularly along ridge between Porlock and Bossington) appearing on the horizon and creating a more urbanised character.	Integrate new development within (or well-related to) the existing built form of the settlement, avoiding elevated locations prominent in views from lower land.
Simple uncluttered curve of the bay and gently shelving accessible inter tidal waters popular for recreation.	Development of oyster farms and introduction of geometric patterns of trestles visible at low tide and associated usage of machinery along beach. Also impacts on the submerged forest and archaeology/	Ensure new oyster farms consider cumulative effects with existing farms. Ensure layout reflects shape of bay and headlands and ensure expanse of open undeveloped foreshore remains dominant. Aim to avoid areas popular for access to the sea.
On shore and shore line development.	Introduction of new buildings and access tracks on the foreshore which add visual clutter and visually disrupt the simple lines of the coast.	Reuse existing buildings wherever possible. New buildings should reflect the scale, form, materials and colour of traditional buildings. Storage areas should be carefully sited to avoid being visually obvious and cluttered

Above: View inland from Porlock Beach. Some linear development between Porlock and Bossington is visible on the horizon. Development can appear intrusive and affects the open and undeveloped character of the marsh in the foreground

Below: A typical Holnicote Estate cottage in Bossington, now owned by the National Trust. Note the beach cobbles used as coping stones on the wall, the round chimney and curved bread oven on the front of the building, and the use of local stone and thatch in construction. The creamy-yellow paint is currently used across the Holnicote estate, and creates a locally-distinctive character.

Remnant trees on Porlock Marsh

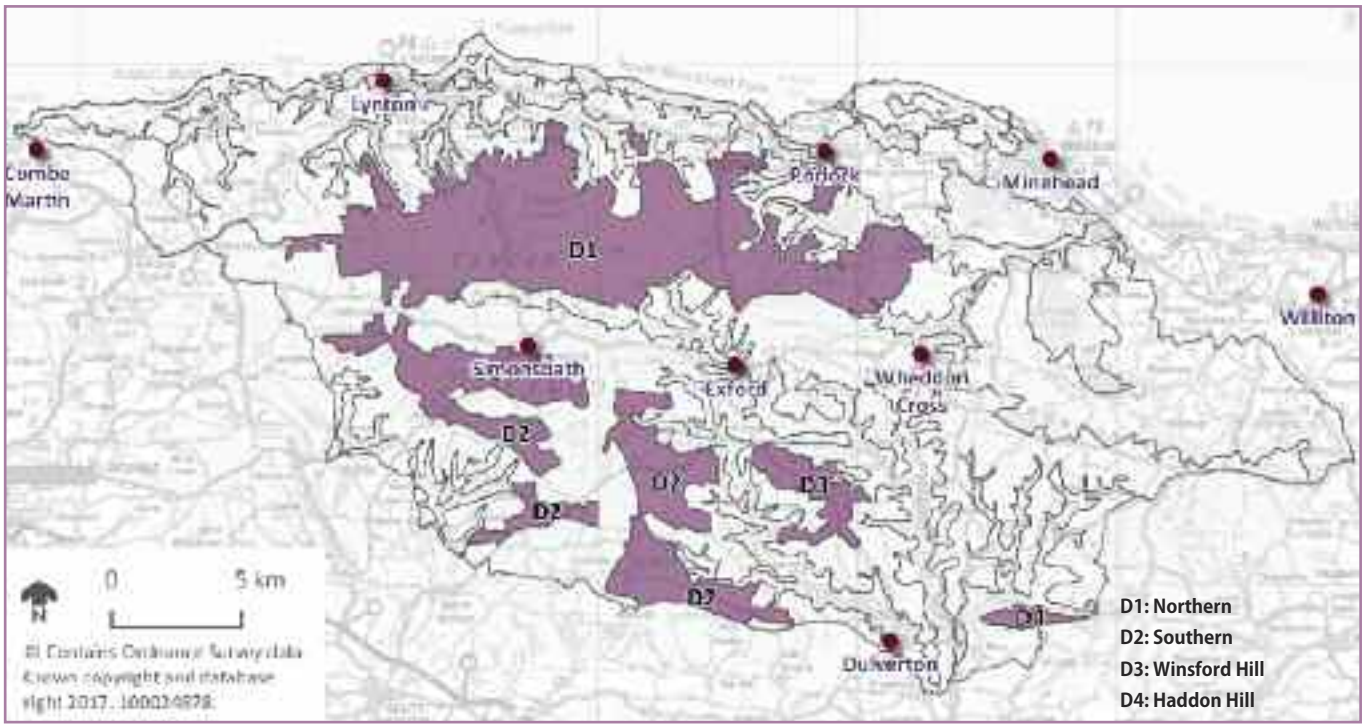
Landscape Character Type D: **Open Moorland**

Brendon Common from Two Gates

Summary Description

This Landscape Character Type (LCT) comprises the open, exposed landscape of Exmoor's inland heather and grass moorland, and is predominantly located in the central part of the National Park. An uninterrupted sweep of moorland extends from the foothills of Dunkery Beacon in the east to Challacombe Common in the west. To the south, there are several areas of more fragmented moorland between Shoulsbarrow Common and East Anstey Common. There are also two smaller outlying Open Moorland areas to the east at Winsford Hill and Haddon Hill. In total there are four distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the LCT. The Open Moorland is bordered by a number of different landscapes, but is for the most part met by the vast sweep of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT. Settlement within the Open Moorland LCT is limited to very occasional scattered farms. Although it is crossed by some roads, much of the LCT is inaccessible by vehicle.

Mostly a former royal hunting forest, the Open Moorland is a powerful, inspiring landscape - of large scale, expanse, elevation and exposure - which is recognised by locals and visitors alike as integral to Exmoor's character. Its distinctive, smooth skylines form the backdrop to views throughout the National Park. Views within the Open Moorland are panoramic with simple level horizons and big expansive skies. The land cover of heather and grassland cover provide variations in colour, texture and movement. This is also a landscape of great antiquity, containing a rich and perceivable tapestry of history from early prehistoric times to the present day.



Key Characteristics of the Open Moorland

- Underlying geology comprising broad east-west bands of sandstones, slates and siltstones, with some higher areas capped with peat.
- A large-scale landform of broad, gently undulating plateaux and rounded hills that loom over the adjacent, lower-lying landscapes.
- Cut by distinctive, deeply-carved moorland valleys (both wet and dry), with gently meandering streams of varied character issuing from a large number of moorland springs.
- Land cover of heather and grass moor, used as rough grazing by Exmoor ponies, sheep and cattle.
- A rich ecological resource comprising a mosaic of semi-natural moorland habitats, including blanket bog, heath and grassland, as well as patches of bracken, gorse and scrub.
- Trees limited to lines of beech, isolated streamside trees, occasional stands of conifers and tree clumps in the combes.
- An absence of settlement, with a few isolated farms on the peripheries.
- A predominantly open landscape, with occasional stone walls, overgrown beech hedges or post and wire fences. Relict features of past activities include drains, canals and sheep stells.
- A rich diversity of prehistoric sites, including stone settings which appear to be unique to Exmoor.
- A landscape with a long association with hunting and grazing from its origins as a royal forest, which continues today.
- Outstanding panoramic views over the open moorland and beyond. The distinctive smooth horizons of the open moorland also form backdrops to views throughout the National Park.
- Distinctive seasonal colour and texture e.g. purple heather and golden molinia.
- An exposed, expansive, windswept landscape which offers a high degree of tranquillity and remoteness, and an extremely strong sense of place.
- Cultural associations with artists and writers, including Alfred Munnings and R. D. Blackmore.

Natural Landscape Features

This LCT occupies the highest land within the National Park, with Dunkery Beacon the highest point. The broad east-west ridge, which runs between Dunkery Beacon in the east and The Chains in the west, forms the watershed which divides the land draining north to the Bristol Channel from the land draining south into the Exe and Taw. The landform is relatively simple, and comprises a series of rolling plateaux and ridges, cut by occasional steep-sided valleys. The ridges form the distinctive smooth, convex, gently rolling skyline which is so characteristic of Exmoor. The Open Moorland also contains a number of Exmoor's distinctive geomorphological features, including The Punchbowl on Winsford Hill and peri-glacial formations such as Alse Barrow, Flexbarrow, Kingsland Goyle, Long Chains Combe and Woodbarrow Hangings.

Many springs rise on the Open Moorland, feeding streams which gently meander through steep-sided valleys. From medieval times until the 1960s, the natural drainage processes on the moor were modified to improve the land for agriculture. This process is now being reversed through the 'Exmoor Mires Project' which facilitates the blocking of moorland drains in an attempt to recreate wet peat habitats and improve the Open Moorland's water storage capacity.

The Open Moorland contains extensive areas of habitats which are nationally and internationally designated, and which support a very wide variety of species of plants, insects, birds and butterflies. These habitats include heather moorland (for example Dunkery Beacon) and grass moor (for example The Chains). There are also smaller areas of blanket bog and valley mire habitats. Due to changes in grazing patterns and moorland management practices, there are some areas of Open Moorland where bracken and scrub is encroaching on heath and grassland habitats. Tree cover is relatively sparse. It includes occasional lines of distinctive wind-sculpted beech trees along banks, as well as stands of hawthorn such as at Farley Water. Other mixed native species occur in ribbons such as at Dunkery, or clothe the slopes as at Badgworthy Water. There are occasional clumps of willow and alder alongside streams and in the combes. There are also occasional copses and shelter belts of non-native conifers planted in the twentieth century.

Larger animals living on the moors include sheep, cattle, iconic Exmoor ponies and red deer. There are about 3000 red deer on Exmoor, living in moorland and farmland, and using woodlands for cover. Field sports remain a popular pastime and are an important element of local culture and economy.

Flexbarrow, in the upper Barle valley

Sphagnum moss vegetation, The Chains

Ponies grazing on heather moor, Brendan Common

Grass moor and wind-sculpted beech tree, The Chains

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor Heaths (D1, D2, D3, D4)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	North Exmoor (D1, D2); River Lyn (D1); South Exmoor (D2, D3, D4)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous sites in all LCAs, often located on fringes of LCT, including farmland, grassland and wetland sites

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Dunkery and Horner Wood (D1)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Pinkworthy (D1); Upper Willingford Gully (D2); River Barle at Sherdon (D2); Wheal Eliza Mine (D2); Cow Castle (D2); Cornham Ford (D2); Roman Lode Gully (D2)
Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve Transition Zone (D1, D2)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

The moderate level of agricultural improvement within this landscape has enabled the survival of a wealth of archaeological sites covering several thousand years. There are concentrations of Scheduled Monuments within this LCT, and also several Principal Archaeological Landscapes. The vast majority of the Open Moorland is rough grazing land, with the current enclosure pattern (or lack thereof) dating from the early medieval period or earlier. A network of tracks cross the moor, some of which may be very ancient in origin. Several such tracks meet at Alderman's Barrow.

This LCT contains the greatest assemblage of prehistoric landscapes within the National Park. One of the earliest known sites (thought to be Mesolithic) is at Hawkcombe Head, where over 10,000 pieces of flint flakes from tool-making have been discovered. There are numerous sites thought to date to the late Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age within the Open Moorland, including a stone circle on Porlock Allotment, standing stones, stone rows, cairns (both funerary and resulting from field clearance), stone settings in various formations, clusters of barrows and remnants of field systems. There is also a possible Neolithic enclosure at Chapman Barrows.

By the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, a large part of Exmoor was a royal hunting forest, uninhabited and subject to Forest law. The area covered by the Forest gradually reduced in size, until by 1400 it was equivalent to today's parish of Exmoor. The boundary of the royal forest often

followed earlier features, such as barrows, but otherwise has left few traces in the landscape. However, there are visible remains of some medieval farmsteads and their surrounding field systems which were subsequently abandoned, such as Badgworthy. Following their purchase of the Forest between 1818-1820, the Knight family and their tenants continued to graze livestock on the open moor, and some features from this era are still visible, such as their estate wall, and sheepfolds. Their attempts to make the open moor into productive farmland also had a big impact on the landscape, particularly the extensive drainage schemes, which have left their visible mark as networks of shallow ditches and gullies. There are very few buildings within the Open Moorland, although there are some farms (including Knight farms) on the peripheries, located within adjoining LCTs. The ruins of Larkbarrow Farm are within the Open Moorland.

Surrounding the Royal Forest were the common lands of the parishes which frame the moor. Commoners from these parishes had a complicated system of rights to use the common land, which included grazing animals, cutting peat for domestic fuel, and cutting vegetation for use as animal fodder and bedding. Commons were often marked by straight, stone-faced hedgebanks which can still be seen, often now patched with post-and-wire fencing, and topped with gnarled and wind-sculpted beech trees. There are extensive ridge and furrow earthworks, particularly on the southern commons (D2) and Winsford Hill (D3), suggesting that they were ploughed for crops in medieval times.

Traces survive of industrial processes on the Open Moorland, including shafts and spoil tips from post-medieval copper and iron mines, and earthworks of the unfinished Simonsbath-Porlock railway. World War Two saw damage to some archaeology, as large parts of the area were used for training purposes. Protected sites were marked with metal 'antiquity stars' on poles. Other sites such as Larkbarrow Farm were used as targets and almost completely destroyed.

Alderman's Barrow, with antiquity star

Stone circle, Porlock Allotment

Hoaroak deserted medieval farm and field system © Historic England Archive

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Numerous, including prehistoric barrows and cairns (D1, D2, D3); stone settings and rows (D1, D2); stone circles (D1, D2); Iron-Age sites (D1, D2); inscribed stone (D2); deserted medieval farms and field systems (D1, D2); mining sites (D2)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	*Relict Prehistoric Landscapes*: Lanacombe (D1); Furzehill (D1); Chapman Barrows & Woodbarrow Complex (D1); Badgworthy Hill (D1); Trout Hill & Pinford (D1); Great Hill & Honeycombe Hill (D1); Porlock Allotment (D1); Hawkcombe Head (D1); Alderman's Barrow & Madacombe (D1); Codsend & Dunkery (D1); Robin & Joaney How (D1); Mansley Combe (D1); Larkbarrow & Tom's Hill (D1); Brockwell Pits (D1); Kitnor Heath (D1);Shoulsbury (D2); Setta Barrow, Five Barrows & Two Barrows (D2); Cow Castle (D2). *Medieval Farming systems*: Radworthy (D1); Badgworthy (D1); Mansley Combe (D1); Pickedstones (D2); Molland Moor (D2); Winsford Hill (D3); *Parliamentary enclosure/ reclamation/ mining*: Larkbarrow & Tom's Hill (D1); Burcombe (D2); Wheal Eliza (D2). *Military Training*: Brendon Common (D1). *Palaeo-environmental:* Trout Hill & Pinford (D1); Great Hill & Honeycombe Hill (D1); Alderman's Barrow & Madacombe (D1); Larkbarrow & Tom's Hill (D1); Setta Barrow, Five Barrows & Two Barrows (D2); Molland Moor (D2)

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

Exmoor's Open Moorlands have an extraordinarily large scale and openness, and (away from roads) have levels of tranquillity, remoteness and wildness which are rarely experienced in southern England. The sounds of insects and skylarks are part of the character of the moors, and add to the rich experience, which touches all senses and creates a feeling of spiritual enrichment.

This is an expansive, elevated, windswept landscape which can exhilarate and inspire, as well as creating a rare sense of unrestrained freedom. It also has an almost seamless character, with few obvious interruptions. There are some old hedge banks in places, but these are subtle and often only apparent in close proximity. Some overgrown beech hedge banks are visible on the skylines. This landscape is very popular with walkers, and a number of footpaths, bridleways and long-distance routes, including the Macmillan Way West, Tarka Trail and Two Moors Way cross the Open Moorland. The roads which cross the moor are also popular for recreational drives and contain numerous informal parking areas where motorists can pause and enjoy the views.

Parts of the moor, particularly where there are traces of former habitation such as at Badgworthy, Larkbarrow and Hoaroak, have an evocative feel, as homes gradually revert to moorland. There is also a strong connection with the prehistoric landscape features, which can be appreciated in a wider context, and with few distractions.

Weather conditions have a profound effect on the qualities of the landscape. When cloud is low the Open Moorland can feel hostile and threatening, with a heightened sense of challenge and danger. Seasonal changes are also profound, with the summer colours of the purple heather and yellow gorse particularly vivid, and the winter colours a breathtaking array of coppers and golds. The varying land cover of heather, grass, bracken, gorse and scrub also creates different patterns, textures and sounds in the landscape, with Molinia appearing to 'ripple' and to sigh in the wind. The area has exceptionally dark night skies with little light pollution, and is now an international dark sky reserve with outstanding opportunities for star-gazing.

The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' identified a wide range of descriptions of the Open Moorland, including *beautiful, colourful, spacious, wild, sense of space, rolling, remote, purple hues, picturesque, unpolluted, mindblowing, exhilarating, tranquil, clear, calm, vast* and *awe-inspiring*. Emotional responses to the landscape included *relaxed, free, uplifted, inspired, glad, invigorated, awed, close to the sky, expectant, motivated* and *connected to the earth*.

Heather in flower on Dunkery Beacon

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The smooth, uncluttered, rolling horizons are fundamental to views of the Open Moorland creating gently level unbroken horizons that emphasise the scale of the landscape. They form a backdrop to many views within the National Park, and are a key part of Exmoor's character. For example, the distinctive silhouette of Dunkery Beacon and its cairn are a feature in views from a large area, and as a landmark contribute to both orientation and sense of place. Similarly, the rounded form of Haddon Hill is a prominent feature in the south-east of the National Park. The Open Moorland of Molland Common and East and Anstey Common forms the northern horizon in views from outside the National Park boundary, where its openness and simplicity contrasts with the small-scale enclosed landscape below.

The panoramic views from the Open Moorland typically take in a number of surrounding landscape types, including farmland, woodland and coast. Often these are long views which extend beyond the National Park boundary. However, there are some areas where the only view is one of moorland expanse, stretching as far as the eye can see. These areas often have the greatest sense of remoteness and solitude.

Dunkery Beacon from Bratton Ball

View south-west out of the National Park from Anstey Common. Dartmoor is on the horizon.

Cultural Associations

Exmoor's Open Moorland has inspired writers and artists for centuries, although it is interesting to note that this has not always been the case. In his book A Tour through the *Whole Islands of Great Britain* (1660), Daniel Defoe wrote:

> *Leaving the coast, we came, in our going southward, to the great river Exe or Isca, which rises in the hills on this north side of the county; the country it rises in, is called Exmore, Camden calls it a filthy, barren ground, and, indeed so it is...*

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw an increasing appreciation of wild landscapes, and in Lorna Doone, R.D. Blackmore did a great deal to raise public awareness and appreciation of Exmoor and its unique landscapes. The remarkably well-preserved medieval settlement at Badgworthy Water inspired Doone Village.

> *For she stood at the head of a deep green valley, carved from out the mountains in a perfect oval, with a fence of sheer rock standing round it, eighty feet or a hundred high; from whose brink black wooded hills swept up to the sky-line. By her side a little river glided out from underground with a soft dark babble, unawares of daylight; then growing brighter, lapsed away, and fell into the valley. There, as it ran down the meadow, alders*

stood on either marge, and grass was blading out upon it, and yellow tufts of rushes gathered, looking at the hurry. But further down, on either bank, were covered houses, built of stone, square and roughly cornered, set as if the brook were meant to be the street between them...

From *Lorna Doone*, Chapter 4 by R.D. Blackmore

The Novel 'Tarka the Otter' by Henry Williamson (1927) also contains evocative descriptions of Exmoor's Open Moorlands:

When the bees' feet shake the bells of the heather, and the ruddy strings of the sap-stealing dodder are twined about the green spikes of the furze, it is summertime on the commons. Exmoor is the high country of the winds...

From *Tarka the Otter,* Ch. 14, by Henry Williamson.

Numerous artists have attempted to capture the landscape and atmosphere of the Open Moorland, including Alfred Munnings, Cecil Aldin and Frederick Widgery. Many artists have also portrayed the hunting and riding scenes for which Exmoor is so well-known.

Lady Munnings riding a Grey Hunter, side saddle, with her dogs on Exmoor, 1924. Alfred Munnings

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The extensive areas of peat found within the Open Moorland LCT are a significant Natural Capital Asset both within and beyond Exmoor, and the LCT is an important provider of public goods. Healthy peat provides a number of important ecosystem services, including sequestration (storage) of carbon thereby preventing its release into the atmosphere and helping to reduce rates of climate change. The peat also stores water and regulates water flow; rainwater is soaked up by the peat, which acts like a giant sponge. This slows down the rate that water runs into streams and rivers, helping to ameliorate flooding downstream. Re-wetting projects are currently underway that involve the blocking of historic artificial drains on the moor, and aim to facilitate water storage. The small reservoir at Pinkery Pond also has a water storage function. Water storage and regulation of water flows is an important tool in mitigating the effects of climate change, particularly if rainfall and storm events increase. Healthy peat is important for biodiversity, supporting a wide variety of plant, insect, animal and bird species.

This LCT plays an important role in delivering a number of cultural ecosystem services. The extensive areas of access land within this LCT, along with the network of paths, roads and long distance routes, provide an important recreational resource and many health benefits. They enable people to visit and enjoy this spectacular landscape, and to benefit from levels of tranquillity, remoteness and dark night skies which are rarely experienced in southern England. The distinctive landscapes of this LCT are important for people's sense of place and its rich archaeology provides a sense of history and opportunities for learning.

Historically, the Open Moorland has provided additional ecosystem services through the traditional commoners' rights, as described above. Common land would have provided peat for fuel, heather and gorse for animal fodder, and bracken for animal bedding. Gorse was also traditionally used as fuel for cooking, because it burns at high temperatures.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT

Within the Open Moorland LCT, there are four distinctive LCAs, each with a unique 'sense of place'. Some also have distinctive landscape characteristics, which are included in the following descriptions. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.

Left: Sunrise, Ridge Road by Pauline Pearce. The scene is on Molland Common, close to the southern boundary of the National Park
Image © Pauline Pearce.

LCA D1: Northern Moorland

Looking East above Madacombe

Description

Forming the largest area of moorland on Exmoor, this LCA extends from the foothills of Dunkery Beacon in the east to Homer Common in the west. It is a continuous tract of moorland, uninterrupted by landscapes of different character. Fundamental to its character are a number of deeply-incised moorland valleys, cut where the spring line streams run off hills to meet with the rivers of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT.

Defining the east of the Character Area, the heather-covered Dunkery Beacon forms the highest point on Exmoor - the summit of the National Park - and acts as a prominent landform and point of reference. With a secondary road running over Dunkery Hill, Dunkery Beacon is a much-visited viewpoint, offering extensive (and varied) coastal and inland views across Dunkery and Horner Wood to Porlock Bay and across the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills to Dunster. The western part of the area is known as The Chains, and is an extensive area of grass moor, with little access other than on foot. It offers an exceptional sense of remoteness, and from here there are long views west over patchworks of fields. Between Dunkery and The Chains, the Middle Moor forms the central part of the moorland spine. This is another extensive and remote area of moorland, and encompasses the headwaters of several valleys including Hoaroak Water and Badgworthy Water- part of the culturally-significant landscape associated with 'Lorna Doone'.

The LCA is exceptional archaeologically, containing 19 Principal Archaeological Landscapes. Most of these are relict prehistoric landscapes, but there are also examples of medieval farming systems (Radworthy, Badgworthy and Mansley Combe) and a former military training site (Brendon Common).

Extensive areas of this LCA have been target areas for re-wetting the moor through the Exmoor Mires Project. The restoration of mires aims to reduce water runoff to improve the condition of the peat. It can result in changes to the landscape (e.g. altering species composition) and the wetter ground may also potentially affect accessibility.

LCA D2: Southern Moorland

Cornham Brake and the upper reaches of the River Barle, near Simonsbath

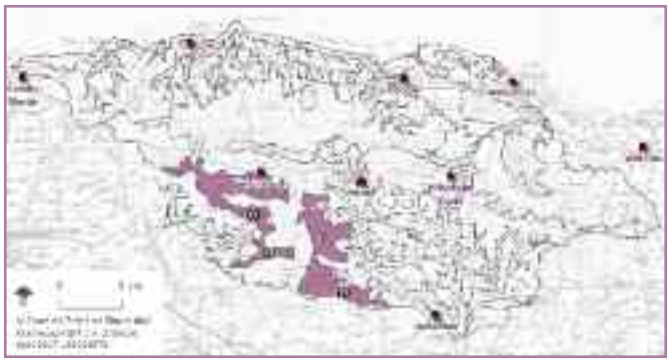
Description

The Southern Open Moorland is the second largest LCA within the Open Moorland LCT. Occurring within the southern half of the National Park, this LCA has a greater sense of fragmentation than the Northern . This is due to improvement of moorland to form an enclosed farmed landscape, which breaks up the continuity of the moor.

The landscape comprises a series of rounded summits or hills (e.g. Withypool and Brightworthy Barrows), ridges (e.g. Molland to East and West Anstey) and combes (e.g. Squallacombe, Long Holcombe). The combes are significant in number, branching off the river valleys that cut through the moorland, the largest of which is the River Barle, defining much of the area's northern boundary.

The Southern Open Moorland LCA is uninhabited, but the village of Withypool (within the adjacent LCT:G Incised Wooded River Valleys) has a marked influence on the character of the moorland with housing development extending up onto the foothills of Withypool Hill. There are a number of secondary roads which provide access to the Southern Moorland. For example, the Ridge Road that cuts across Molland, West Anstey and East Anstey Commons provides clear views into the contrasting, enclosed pattern of farmland to the south (beyond the National Park boundary). This LCA is also a focus for peat restoration through the Exmoor Mires Project, with an extensive area to the south of Simonsbath.

Seven Principal Archaeological Landscapes occur within the Southern Open Moorland LCA Three (including the Iron-Age earthwork at Cow Castle) are prehistoric sites; two are medieval farming systems (Pickedstones/ Bradimoor and Molland Moor), and two are industrial. Wheal Eliza contains the remains of a copper and iron mine (in production until the early 1900s) and Burcombe has evidence of exploitation for minerals from the Bronze Age to the early twentieth century.



LCA D3: Winsford Hill

A typical scene on Winsford Hill near Spire Cross

Description

Winsford Hill is one of the smaller areas of Open Moorland and comprises a series of hills along a ridge – Winsford Hill, Draydon Knapp, South Hill and Varle Hill. Although lying relatively close to the much larger Southern Moorland block, it sits as a detached moorland area, immediately surrounded by LCT:G Incised Wooded River Valleys (River Barle and River Exe) and LCT:F Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons.

The B3223 cuts north-west to south-east through the landscape, forming a clear line across the moor's ridge with the land falling away on either side. Cattle grids at Comer's Gate and Mounsey Hill Gate define entrances to the moorland on the B3223 and create a clear sense of arrival. The location and elevation of the road provides views into the contrasting farmed and wooded valley landscapes. Long views are also possible of other areas of Open Moorland (views to Withypool Hill in the west, and to Dunkery to the north, for example). So although this area of moorland is physically detached, there is nonetheless a connection with the wider Open Moorland landscape. Views from along the road makes it a popular stopping point for motorists. Close to the highest point on the moor (Winsford Hill) there is a large car parking area.

Although these views from the road are a key feature, they are inhibited in places by scrub encroachment on the roadside. The moorland is grazed (by Exmoor ponies, cattle and sheep) but scrub encroachment is notable with bracken, gorse and young hawthorn and blackthorn trees covering a considerable area.

The majority of Winsford Hill is designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape. It contains prehistoric round barrows (notably the Wambarrows), and a significant relict medieval field system, including ridge and furrow, field banks and a system of routeways. The inscribed Caractacus stone is located near Spire Cross, adjacent to a former track running northwards out of the Exe Valley, and is thought to date from the early medieval period.

LCA D4: Haddon Hill

View east from Haddon Hill towards Hadborough Plantation

Description

Haddon Hill is by far the smallest area of Open Moorland. Located a few miles east of Dulverton, the LCA sits towards the southernmost point of the National Park. This small pocket of heather moorland occurs immediately south of both the River Haddeo and Wimbleball Lake and offers elevated views in all directions. Although it is a distinct moorland landscape, its character is strongly influenced by the surrounding farmed landscapes and woodlands - the patterns of enclosure and bright greens of improved pasture contrast with the more muted hues and open feel of the moor. Haddon Hill's rounded form and smooth profile creates a distinctive backdrop in views from the south-east part of the National Park.

Haddon is a popular area of moorland, especially with dog walkers. The adjacent car park (with toilets and interpretation boards) is well used, and perhaps because of its smaller size and ease of access, Haddon can feel noticeably busier than the other areas of Open Moorland. As well as the popularity of the moor, the views across to settlements, to Wimbleball Lake (popular for sailing, fishing and windsurfing) and to a number of farms and houses increases the awareness of people- their presence and human activity in and around the landscape. As a consequence, this moorland area does not share the same sense of remoteness found in some parts of the larger moorland tracts. Exmoor ponies graze freely on the hill and are recognised as an intrinsic feature of this area of moorland.

The Hadborough Plantation (part of which was cleared approximately 10 years ago for heathland restoration) borders Haddon Hill. This area of coniferous plantation forms a solid boundary to the south and east, and adds a sense of containment and shelter.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT D

This is a landscape of **strong** character, the Open Moorland being a very recognisable and distinctive landscape which is synonymous with Exmoor. The large scale landform, the smooth skylines, the vastness of view, the sense of tranquillity and (in places) remoteness, and the simplicity of the heather and grass moor landcover combine to create an inspiring and challenging landscape. Grazing cattle, sheep, Exmoor ponies and deer play a key role in defining the Open Moorland and are an intrinsic part of the landscape. The presence of historic features within the landscape- the barrows on hill summits, beech hedge banks and abandoned farmsteads- combine to create a strong sense of time-depth which adds to the strength of character.

The condition of the landscape is **variable** across the LCT. Some areas of moorland are in positive management, whilst others are affected by (for example) footpath erosion or changes in vegetation patterns. Even within individual LCAs, the picture is very mixed, so detailed reports should be consulted (see list on following page). SSSI Condition surveys show that the majority of the Open Moorland is in 'unfavourable recovering' condition, with some areas (e.g. Dunkery Beacon (D1), Porlock Common (D1) and Mill Hill (D1)) in 'favourable' condition. Ilkerton Ridge (D1) was assessed as 'unfavourable- no change' and the upper reaches of the River Barle as being in 'unfavourable declining' condition due to the presence of invasive Montbretia, and modifications to the natural river channel.

Despite various moorland management initiatives, the issues of concern described in the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment remain issues today. Many are related to the effects of changing grazing patterns and agricultural practices on moorland vegetation, including the declining condition of the moorland fringes; significant loss of the distinctive open purple heather covered hills due to encroachment by bracken, grass and scrub; secondary woodland regeneration of moorland valleys, and encroachment of gorse along roads restricting views. Additionally, incremental changes such as fencing increase the perception of human influence on the moors, and informal car parking affects levels of tranquillity. There are still localised views of poorly-managed adjacent farmland, and views outside the national park now include the windfarms at Batsworthy and Fullabrook. Damage to fragile vegetation due to footpath erosion remains a problem on popular routes. Initiatives involving re-wetting of the mires are also actively changing drainage processes on the moorland as well as creating new features in the landscape (albeit of a temporary nature) such as small scale dams and monitoring stations. This should improve the condition of the peat soils, and improve their ability to store carbon and water. However, the condition of vegetation, archaeology, access routes and grazing land may also be affected.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT D

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure, and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

A number of detailed studies of Exmoor's moorlands have been carried out recently, and these should also be referenced. See:

- *Exmoor's Moorland: Where Next?* (The Exmoor Society, April 2016)
- *Exmoor Moorland Units* (ENPA, 2011 with subsequent reviews)
- *Principal Archaeological Landscapes on Moorland in Exmoor National Park: Assessment and Condition Survey* (ENPA, January 2015)

Encroaching bracken, scrub and trees, Haddon Hill

Invasive Montbretia alongside the river Barle

Mire Restoration notice, Exe Head

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Decline in management and encroachment of vegetation	Reduction in grazing pressure and less swaling leading to increases in bracken, gorse and scrub in areas of previously open moorland. This is resulting in dramatic loss of simple, open, purple expanses of heather associated with Exmoor. Also damage to buried and surface archaeology from roots and bracken.	All
Changes to land management grants and loss of local understanding	Uncertainty over future land management funding, potentially resulting in fewer grants for moorland management. There is a risk of loss of understanding of traditional moorland management techniques as the older generation of farmers retire, and family farms are sold rather than taken over by the younger generation	All
Loss of views	Roadside gorse affecting visibility from roadsides. This affects views, including intervisibility between moorland areas.	D1, D2, D3
Re-wetting of the mires	Introduction of artificial dams which introduce engineered elements into a relatively wild landscape. Changes in vegetation and species composition resulting from wetter peat e.g. increase in sphagnum moss. Access becomes more difficult for people and grazing animals. However, downstream flood damage should be reduced, so beneficial landscape effects are felt elsewhere.	D1, D2
Loss of wild moorland character	Threat to tranquillity, remoteness and wild character due to presence of fences, benches, signage, car parks etc. D1 is particularly sensitive as it contains the most remote areas (e.g. evocative landscape around Hoaroak). D4 has a more managed 'country park' character already.	D1, D4
Poor management of hedge banks and new fencing	Traditional stone-faced banks abandoned or repaired with post and wire. Lack of maintenance of beech hedges mean that they grow out and are no longer stock proof.	All
Roads and parking areas	Erosion of verges and establishment of informal car parks damaging vegetation and open moorland character. Road signs can also be intrusive in this relatively wild landscape. Speeding traffic threatens ponies and livestock, which acts as a disincentive for moorland grazing. Traffic also impacts on perceptions of	D1, D2, D3
Path erosion	Wide tracks through heather on popular routes due to use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Problems are exacerbated when gullies form on slopes and water erosion increases damage.	All, but particularly D1 (Dunkery) and D4

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Damage to archaeological sites	Prehistoric stone sites prone to damage as stones are very small, and easily damaged by animals, or intentionally or unintentionally moved. Some sites are also damaged by livestock (e.g. barrows) or off-road vehicles (e.g. Cow Castle)	All
Buildings on the edge of the moorland	Setting of open moorland affected by development on the edge of villages e.g. Withypool, and by occasional isolated, agricultural buildings.	D2
Vertical structures	Localised impacts of poles and overhead lines along roads, which affect smooth open skylines and add visual clutter into the landscape. Smooth horizontal skylines would be potentially hugely impacted by vertical features such as telecommunication masts or wind turbines.	All
Development outside the National Park	From this LCT there are long views across surrounding areas (within and outside the National Park). Windfarms at Fullbrook and Batsworthy are already dynamic features in views and as such immediately noticeable. Built development, energy and transport schemes will all be potentially visible in views and affect the setting of the National Park. This LCT is particularly sensitive to such developments because of its inherent qualities and lack of development, and the fact that people visit this LCT to appreciate its sense of remoteness, wildness and tranquillity.	D2, D4
Pests, diseases and invasive species	Heather beetle has been a particular problem in the past, and remains an issue. Work has been carried out to control rhododendron in moorland valleys, but it remains an ongoing issue, along with other invasive species such as montbretia in the upper Barle Valley (D2).	All
Climate change	Warmer temperatures can lead to increased plant growth rates (and spread of vegetation), exacerbated by increased concentrations of carbon dioxide which acts as an air-borne fertilizer. This is a particular issue on moorlands, as the impact of atmospheric nitrogen is thought to be helping Molinia to outcompete heather, with consequences on landscape character. Hotter summers will result in an increased risk of drought (affecting moorland vegetation) and increasing the risk of uncontrolled moorland fires. Mature beech trees (including hedgebanks) are likely to be affected by wind damage associated with increased frequency and intensity of storm events.	All

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT D

Landscape Strategy

The open and simple character of the open moorland is conserved and enhanced, and there is no overall loss of moorland area. There is a mosaic of moorland habitats, including extensive areas of heather moorland growing on healthy peat. Skylines remain uninterrupted and free from prominent or vertical features. The openness and quality of views from the Open Moorland are retained and enhanced, and visual connectivity with other moorland areas is restored. People are able to access and enjoy the moorland and the spiritual refreshment which it offers, but the visual impacts of roads and parking areas are minimised. Tranquillity and remoteness are retained, and the clutter in the landscape such as fencing and signage is minimal.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT D

Protect

- Protect the open, smooth horizons of the Open Moorland, avoiding any development which would break skylines.
- Protect archaeological sites from damage by vegetation encroachment (particularly bracken and scrub) and erosion by people and animals.
- Protect views from moorland, both within the National Park and over its wider setting. Clear and control vegetation (particularly gorse) which restricts views from popular viewpoints. Ensure that the impacts of proposals which may affect views from open moorland are adequately assessed.
- Protect the sense of wildness, remoteness and tranquillity associated with much of the Open Moorland. Minimise the visual impacts of roads by reducing signage and markings as much as possible.
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution within and surrounding the Open Moorland.

Manage

- Manage moorland using appropriate combinations of grazing and swaling to retain the distinctive moorland vegetation which contributes to Exmoor's landscape character and sense of place. Retain the openness and expansiveness of high moorland, particularly where it forms a backdrop to views.
- Aim to achieve a diversity of moorland vegetation types which reflect the variations in moorland character, and which contribute to landscape character through their distinctive colour and texture. For example, Dunkery is associated with extensive swathes of purple heather moorland, whereas The Chains are dominated by golden grass moor (Molinia) which 'ripples' in the wind, with some areas of blanket bog.

- Create habitat links between distinct types of vegetation to encourage movement of species (e.g. insects and butterflies) and to counter habitat loss associated with climate change. This is particularly important in areas where moorland has been fragmented by farming/ forestry.
- Tackle the issue of bracken and scrub taking over moorland vegetation, particularly around archaeological sites, and in combes.
- Continue programmes to remove rhododendron and other invasive species, particularly in combes and around watercourses.
- Manage hedgerows and stone-faced banks, repairing using traditional techniques where possible and minimising use of post and wire.

Plan

- Aim to maintain the distinction between enclosed farmland and open moorland. The boundaries between woodland and moorland are often more transitional, but still need to be manged in order to avoid loss of open moorland.
- Consider undergrounding overhead wires which break skylines and draw attention to the presence of roads (for example on Withypool Hill (D2).
- Campaign at a national level for adequate funding for locally-appropriate moorland management.

NOTE - See also detailed recommendations in the following documents:

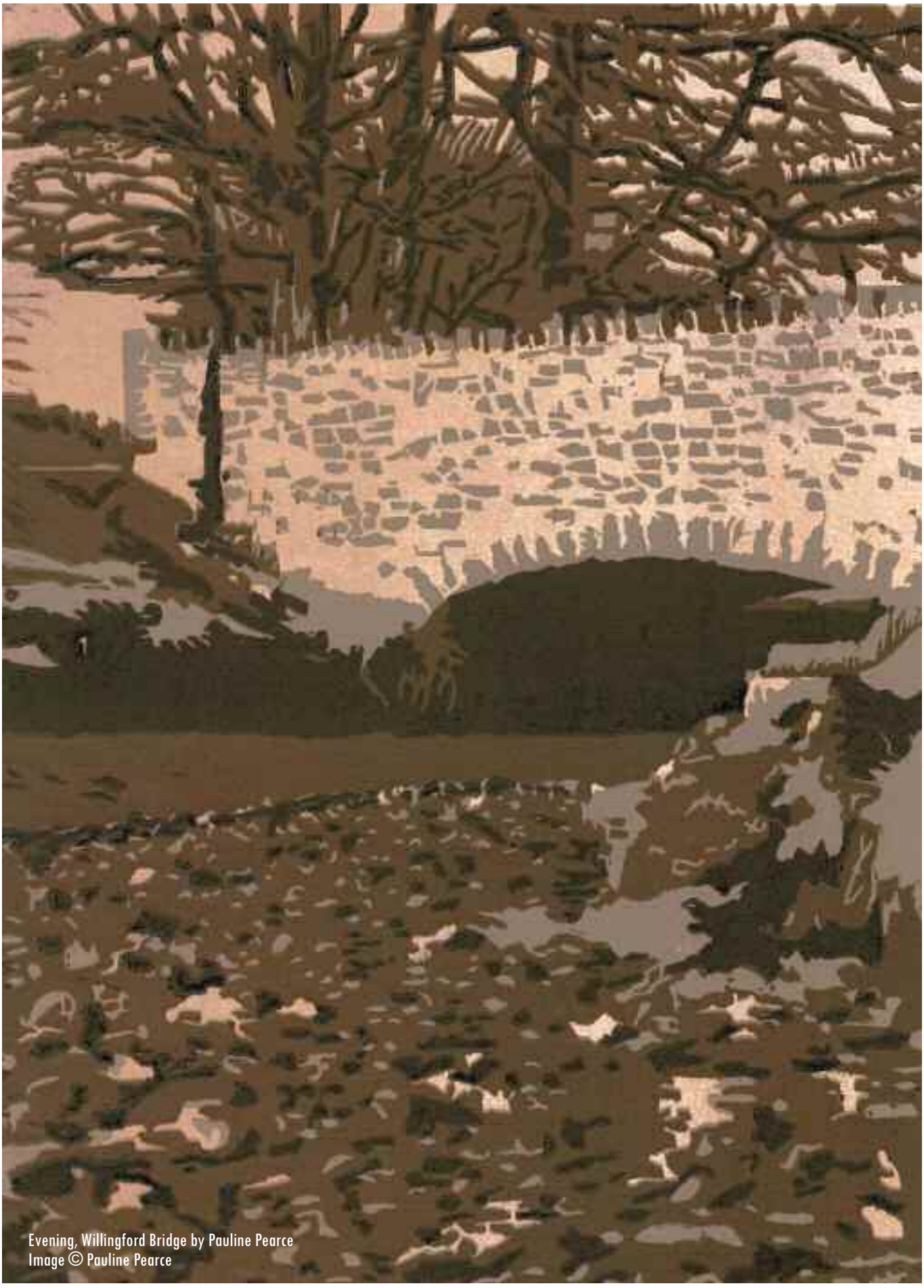
- *Exmoor's Moorland: Where Next?* (The Exmoor Society, April 2016)
- *Exmoor Moorland Units* (ENPA, 2011 with subsequent reviews)
- *Principal Archaeological Landscapes on Moorland in Exmoor National Park: Assessment and Condition Survey* (ENPA, January 2015)
- SAC and SSSI Management Plans

Specific Planning Guidelines for for LCT D Open Moorland

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Open Moorland Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
An open, undeveloped landscape, with a sense of relative wilderness and isolation, away from development and human activity (All).	Introduction of new built form or other changes which undermine the sense of isolation or are poorly located. Light pollution affecting dark night skies.	New development should generally be avoided within this LCT unless it is essential to help conserve or enhance its special qualities. When considering new development associated with farms close to the Open Moorland, ensure that it is located carefully on the fringes of the moorland, preferably in association with existing farm buildings, and is set into the landform. Also ensure that the colour and texture of materials will help to conserve landscape character, and that there is no light spill.
Open, rounded, simple, unfettered skylines (All).	Avoid development which breaks the skyline.	Development of buildings, wind turbines, telecommunication masts and overhead wires should be avoided due to impacts on the open, uncluttered character of this LCT and on skylines. This is a landscape that is identified as an unsuitable area for small scale wind turbines and free-standing solar arrays.



Evening, Willingford Bridge by Pauline Pearce
Image © Pauline Pearce

Landscape Character Type E: **Farmed and Settled Vale**

A typical view from within the Vale. Selworthy Church is visible on the valley side, in its wooded setting

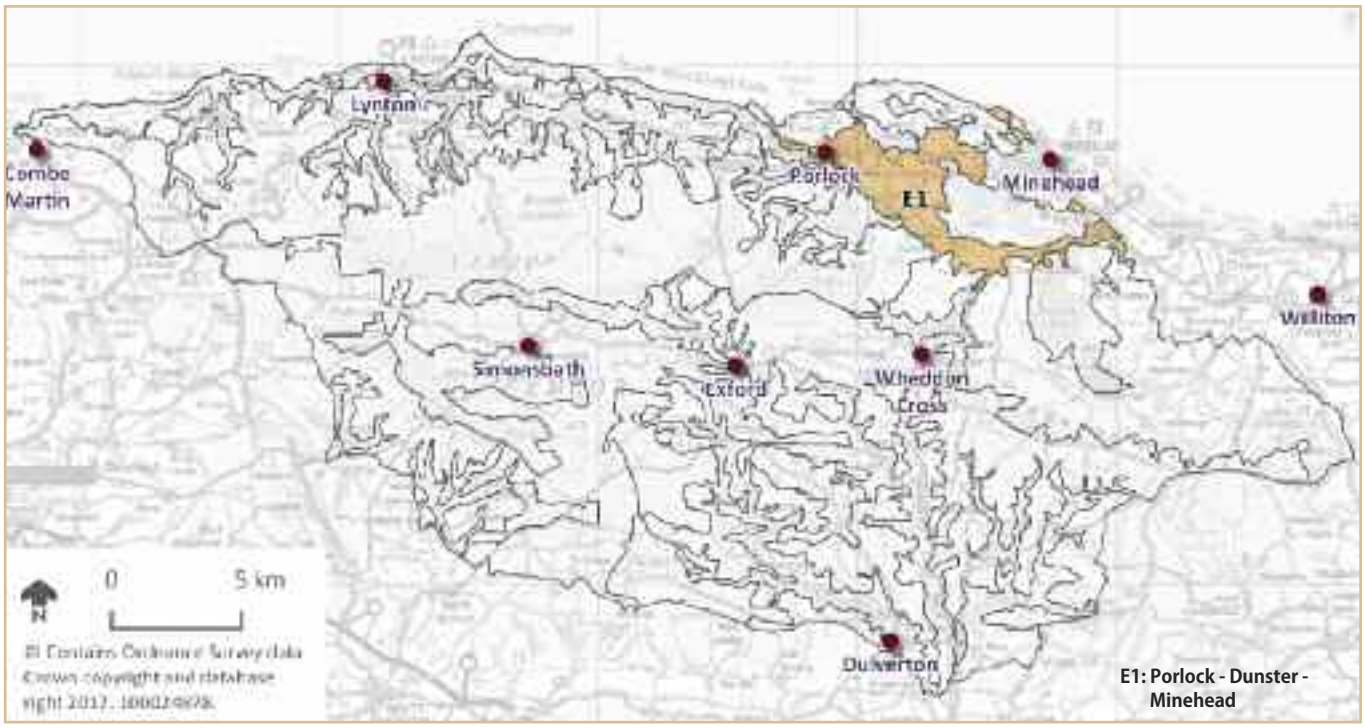
Summary Description

This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is located in the north-eastern part of the National Park, and comprises the valley floors and lower sides of the valleys of the Rivers Avill and Horner Water. From Porlock it stretches south-east, branching to the north and south of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills. To the east of Selworthy, the vale extends from Combeshead into Bratton, and then north-east to Minehead (moving beyond the National Park boundary). To the south of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills, the Vale stretches east of Wootton Courtenay, encompassing and terminating at the ancient wool town of Dunster. Here, the vale landscape merges and changes into the distinctly open, flat and low coastal landscape that flanks Blue Anchor Bay.

The largest settlements within the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT are Porlock and Dunster. Smaller settlements include Timberscombe, Allerford, Selworthy (partly within LCA B5), Wootton Courtenay, West Porlock and Luccombe, as well as several hamlets and scattered farms.

The Farmed and Settled Vale is a gentle, enclosed and settled landscape, with an irregular patchwork of hedged fields, woodlands and villages nestling in the sheltered valley below the high moors and enclosing woodlands. It is a rich historic landscape, with medieval farms, bridges, churches, lanes and paths still in daily use. Historic estates (particularly Holnicote and Dunster) continue to have a strong influence on the landscape through their distinctive buildings, landscaped parkland and woodland. Dunster Castle and Selworthy Church (within the adjoining LCT) are prominent landmarks.

There is only one Landscape Character Area (LCA) within this LCT.



Key Characteristics of the Farmed and Settled Vale

- Varied underlying geology, of mainly Triassic mudstones, overlain by river deposits in the valley floor.
- A variable landform from flat floodplain to undulating high vale, with occasional small hills or hummocks.
- Drained by a network of small streams forming tributaries of the larger rivers Avill and Horner Water.
- Agriculture is the predominant land use, mostly pasture but with fodder crops and some arable.
- Semi-natural habitats include small woodlands, copses, mature hedgerows and streamside vegetation, which combine to create a well-treed landscape. There are also meadow and grassland habitats.
- A distinctive pattern of small, irregular fields bounded by hedgebanks (predominantly field maple and wych elm) and hedgerow trees, which create a strong sense of enclosure.
- Main settlements are Porlock and Dunster, plus smaller nucleated villages (including distinctive estate villages), hamlets and farms.
- Numerous historic features, e.g. farms, houses, bridges, churches and lanes creating a strong sense of time-depth.
- Estates continue to have a strong influence on buildings and land management.
- Selworthy church (technically within LCT B) and Dunster Castle are prominent landmarks from within the vale.
- A strong visual connection and contrast with the surrounding landscapes that enclose the vale, particularly moorland and woodland.
- A gentle, pastoral quality to the landscape, which feels settled and sheltered.
- Cultural associations with the Romantic poets, and local gentry families, such as the Luttrells of Dunster Castle

Natural Landscape Features

The LCT occurs between 20m-250m AOD. The relatively low-lying landscape has been carved out by rivers and streams, and is contained by an interconnected series of surrounding hills. The vale can be broken down into three distinct parts- the 'floodplain', the 'low vale' and the 'high vale'. Its underlying geology is relatively recent compared to other parts of the National Park, including post-glacial deposits on valley floors.

The floodplain comprises the flattest and lowest-lying parts of the vale - the areas which flank the main streams and rivers flowing through the landscape, e.g. the River Avill and Horner Water. There are extensive deposits of alluvium (material deposited by rivers) which creates fertile soils. The lowest areas occur around the town of Dunster and between Porlock and Bossington, where the fresh water rivers and streams are nearing the sea and the vale is making its transition to the adjacent, lower-lying coastal landscapes. The 'low vale' occurs above the floodplain and is a transitional area which is neither as flat nor as undulating as the land on either side. It is mostly underlain by river-terrace gravels, which help to create well-drained soils. The 'high vale' occurs at the edges of the vale and forms the foothills to the more elevated surrounding landscapes. Around Luccombe and Huntscott there is a locally-distinctive geology of breccia (an ancient gravel made up of small pieces of sandstone and slate). This hard rock has created a localised landform character of interconnected knolls. Around Selworthy there is an area of Blue Lias Formation (grey mudstone and shale with fine limestones).

This is a well-treed landscape, including mature trees in woodland blocks (including ancient woodland), parklands, alongside roads and in hedgerows. Traditionally walnut trees were grown here, for use in gunstocks. The hedgebanks are locally distinctive, containing field maple and wych elm, but with relatively little beech. The fertile reddish soils support mixed agricultural land uses, including pasture for sheep and cattle, cultivation of cereal and root crops, and horse paddocks.

For much of the time, this landscape appears relatively benign. However, it is also prone to flooding, and following heavy rainfall, small streams rapidly become torrents, damaging roads and threatening to flood properties. Natural Flood Management (NFM) is one solution, and there are a number of local NFM initiatives. One example is the From Source to Sea project, where the National Trust (owners of the extensive Holnicote Estate) have been working to actively manage the land throughout the Horner and Avill water catchments to control physical processes and reduce the severity of flooding. Interventions take place within this LCT and within the adjacent LCTs, and include blocking moorland drainage channels; managing woodland alongside streams to slow water flows; creating water storage areas on the valley floor, and managing land to reduce soil erosion (for example converting arable land to pasture). The large size of the National Trust estate means that any future changes to National Trust aims or funding are likely to have consequences on the landscape of this LCT. Other local examples of NFM are described in LCT I.

Hummocky breccia topography near Luccombe

Tributary stream and parkland trees near Holnicote House

Lane with mature oaks and wych elm hedgebank

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Exmoor Coastal Heaths; North Exmoor (E1)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous farmland, woodland and wetland sites, including Holnicote Estate; Horner Water; Wootton Knowle; Knowle Brake; Wydon Allotment; Greenaleigh Plantation; River Avill (E1)
Ancient Woodland	Great Wood, Selworthy (E1)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Greenaleigh Point and Smuggler's Cove; Luccombe Boulder Bed; Gillham's Quarry; Huntscott Grange Quarry (E1)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

This is a rich historic landscape, containing a particularly large number of surviving features from the medieval period. Many of the features which make up the historic landscape are still in use for their original purposes, such as houses, farms, bridges, lanes, tracks and churches. Others such as mills have only gone out of use in recent decades, and still remain an integral part of the landscape. This relatively sheltered area was also known for its orchards, although few of these survive.

The distinctive pattern of small, irregular fields is predominantly medieval in date, although there are pockets of post-medieval and modern fields which are often larger and more regular in shape. Fields are often smaller where the vale narrows, for example between Wootton Courtenay and Dunster. Where the floodplain is wider, the field size tends to be larger.

The large number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within the Farmed and Settled Vale reflects the settled nature of the landscape, and the concentration of historic buildings within it. Conservation Areas include the larger villages, but also several historic farmsteads. The grounds of Dunster Castle are a Registered Historic Park and Garden. Following the Norman Conquest, the strategic defensive site of Dunster Castle was granted to William de Mohun, who built a motte and bailey castle from where he administered a large estate. He also founded a Benedictine abbey adjacent to the castle, which partially survives in the fabric of the existing parish church, and in buildings surrounding it. In 1404 the estate was sold to the Luttrell family, who owned it for the next 500 years and continued to modify the house and grounds. A new deer park was laid out in the eighteenth century, and the house was embellished to its

present neo-gothic 'fairytale' appearance by the architect Salvin in the nineteenth century. The long plots and narrow frontages of Dunster High Street indicate its medieval origins, although many of the buildings have later Georgian facades. In the fourteenth century Dunster was a port, but the location of the harbour is not known. It developed as a wealthy wool town where woollen cloth was manufactured, and the Yarn Market survives.

Porlock developed as a coastal village, and was closely associated with the harbour at nearby Porlock Weir. Porlock's Conservation Area contains a mixture of vernacular houses from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mixed with more substantial late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses, shops and hotels reflecting the village's expansion as a tourist destination. Many of these later buildings are in an 'arts and crafts' style. More modern houses occur on the edges of the village, with some linear growth along surrounding roads. The shingled spire of the thirteenth century St Dubricus' Church is a focal point within the village, and Porlock's strong sense of place is enhanced by its proximity to Porlock Marsh (LCT C) which dominates views from the northern edge of the village.

The Farmed and Settled Vale is one of the few areas of Exmoor where there is a clear local vernacular style. Irregular-shaped red stone, prominent chimneys, small windows, dormers, thatched or tiled roofs and rendered walls are seen throughout the LCT in houses, farm buildings and mills. Most houses are constructed of local red sandstone, and beach boulders from Porlock Bay are sometimes seen in walls and as coping stones. The creamy-yellow render of houses within the National Trust Holnicote estate (for example as seen in Selworthy, Allerford and Luccombe) is also very distinctive. In addition to their distinctive built forms, the landscape settings of the settlements also contribute to their strong sense of place. Estates (particularly the Acland Estate at Holnicote and the Luttrell Estate at Dunster) had strong influence over the development of the landscape and buildings within this LCT for several hundred years. There are particularly good examples of domestic architecture for estate workers at Selworthy Green, where vernacular meets 'estate-gothic'. The estates were designed and managed both for agriculture and sport (hunting and shooting) and this estate influence on landscape and building management continues today.

Dunster Castle and main street

Medieval packhorse bridge, and Holnicote estate buildings, Allerford

Luccombe in its landscape setting. The settlement is approached along a narrow winding lane, with Dunkery Hill forming a distinctive backdrop and skyline.

Thatched farm buildings, Luccombe

Typical Holnicote Estate buildings, Luccombe

Whitewashed houses in valley-side village of Wootton Courtenay

Porlock village centre showing Victorian 'seaside' architecture

Red sandstone houses in Timberscombe Village

Linhay at Ranscombe Farm (Conservation Area).

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Numerous, generally medieval and later, including Dunster Castle motte and bailey; Dunster Yarn Market, Butter Cross and pottery kiln; Bridges at Horner, Gallox Bridge, West Luccombe, Allerford; Dovecote at Little Blackford; St Andrew's Chapel; Churchyard crosses at Luccombe and Selworthy

Listed Buildings	Numerous, with clusters in settlements, and along roads.
Conservation Areas	Porlock; Dunster; West Lynch; Allerford; Selworthy; Luccombe; Wootton Courtenay; Ranscombe Farm
Registered Historic Park / Garden	Dunster Castle

Beach boulders used as coping stones on a boundary wall

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

The perceptions of this area as a gentle, settled, small-scale landscape are enhanced by the contrast with the surrounding moorlands and forests. It feels enclosed, cosy and homely. The irregular patterns of fields, the hedgerows and small woodlands create a landscape of strong patterns and textures which contrast with the open moorland backdrop. The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' identified the serenity of the Farmed and Settled Vale landscape, with people describing it as *gentle, wide open, colourful, man-made* and *restful*. Emotional responses to the landscape included *peaceful, rested, serene, at ease with nature, at rest,* and both *happy* and *sad*.

This is a landscape with an extremely strong sense of time-depth, and – in many parts – of changelessness. The quiet lanes are narrow and winding, creating a sense of disorientation, particularly where views are enclosed by hedgebanks. Away from the main roads and larger settlements there are areas of tranquillity. However, much of the LCT is difficult to access on foot as there are few footpaths and little access land. Whilst this a landscape of great scenic beauty, the consistency of building materials, particularly the use of creamy-yellow render throughout the Holnicote Estate reflects the character of the Estate. There is some light pollution from Porlock and Dunster, and from street-lighting along the A396 at Timberscombe. However, but much of the central part of the LCT (especially away from the A39 and A396) has exceptionally dark skies.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

Although it has a distinct and recognisable character in its own right, the Farmed and Settled Vale is nonetheless greatly influenced by the character of the surrounding landscapes, which emphasise the overall sense of place, and provide dramatic context. To the south-west, Dunkery Hill and Beacon (Open Moorland LCT) form a simple, smooth but very strong and distinctive moorland backdrop which contrasts with the intertwining green fields of the vale below. To the east and west, the wooded hills of the High Wooded Coastal Cliffs Combes and Cleaves also form dramatic backdrops which change with the seasons.

Views within the vale are varied and interesting. There are impressive long distance internal views, and beyond to the Bristol Channel and surrounding landscapes. The presence of, and views to, landmark buildings also make a significant contribution to character. For example, Dunster Castle makes a prominent gateway into the vale, and the white limewashed church at Selworthy (on the edge of the LCT), stands out against its wooded backdrop. The red stone and creamy-yellow render of many of the buildings also adds to the strong sense of place and identity.

The vale plays a very important role in views from several adjacent landscapes, from where there are elevated views across the fields of the vale to the moorlands, woodlands and coast beyond. These views, with their compositions of distinctive components, are some of the best-loved within the National Park.

View across the Farmed and Settled Vale from Selworthy Church

Cultural Associations

Porlock was a regular destination for several of the Romantic poets, including Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge. Southey composed his sonnet 'To Porlock' in the Ship Inn in Porlock Weir:

Porlock thy verdant vale so fair to sight

Thy lofty hills which fern and furze embrown

Thy waters that roll musically down

Thy woody glens, the traveller with delight

Recalls to memory, and the channel grey

Circling its surges in thy level bay.

Porlock, I shall forget thee not,

Here by the summer rain confined;

But often shall hereafter call to mind

How here, a patient prisoner `twas my lot

To wear the lonely, lingering close of day,

Making my sonnet by the ale house fire,

Whilst Idleness and Solitude inspire

Dull rhymes to pass the duller hours away

Four Views from Dunster Castle: The Village of Dunster, looking west up the Avill Valley. Attributed to Robert Griffier 1688-1760. © National Trust Images/ John Hammond. Note the lack of plantations on the surrounding hills.

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The soils, water supplies, woodlands and vegetation found within the Farmed and Settled Vale are all important Natural Capital Assets. They enable a wide range of ecosystem services, including the production of food, fibre, fuel and fresh water. Compared to other LCTs within Exmoor, the Farmed and Settled Vale is particularly productive farmland, supporting a range of arable crops, pasture and (traditionally) orchards and walnut trees. Traditionally, wood from cut hedgerows has been used as fuel in woodburners, and this remains an opportunity to support traditional hedgerow management. The Natural Capital Assets also support other ecosystem services through (for example) water cycling, nutrient cycling and photosynthesis.

The Farmed and Settled Vale provides a variety of regulatory ecosystem services, including regulation of water and soil erosion. The From Source to Sea Natural Flood Management Project on the Holnicote Estate is an excellent example of how these regulatory services can be positively manipulated to enhance their effectiveness. For example, small projects to slow river flows (e.g. moorland drain blocking, planting of riverside trees and installing 'leaky sluices' in river channels) can reduce the speed at which water reaches the lower sections of the river system. This is achieved by slowing the water and giving it more time to soak into the ground before it runs off via watercourses. Creation of bunded water storage areas on the valley floor enhance its function in storage of flood water and to help ameliorate the risk of flooding in villages.

This attractive and historic landscape provides a range of cultural ecosystem services (non-material benefits which people obtain from ecosystems) including aesthetic experiences, spiritual enrichment and education. The National Trust villages (such as Selworthy) are popular visitor destinations.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within LCT E

LCA E1: Porlock-Dunster-Minehead

There is only one LCA within the Farmed and Settled Vale Landscape Character Type, as the landscape character and sense of place are considered to be broadly consistent across it.

Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT E

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT E

When viewed individually, the landscape elements making up the Farmed and Settled Vale appear relatively subtle in character. However, when viewed in combination, the interplay of these elements give the landscape a strong sense of place, and a recognisable and strong character overall. For example, the strong hedgerow network and repeated field patterns, small woods, streams, picturesque villages and the dramatic moorland and woodland backdrop, combine to create a distinct landscape scene. The fact that houses are painted in similar colours contributes to the strong and cohesive character of the LCT. It is also a clear indication that this is an estate landscape. The strength of character of the vale is perhaps best appreciated from beyond its own boundaries, in views offered from adjacent elevated landscapes.

This is a working agricultural landscape, with land within Porlock Vale largely owned by the National Trust, and the landscape and buildings are well-managed and maintained. However, continued management is vulnerable to changes in agricultural grant schemes. The condition of the Farmed and Settled Vale is generally good, although in places hedgerows are poorly managed, with gaps filled by post and wire fences. There is a risk that this will lead to loss of the integrity and intactness of the landscape pattern, which would weaken the character of the landscape as a whole. Only very small fragments of SSSIs are within this LCT, and these have been assessed as being in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. Most listed buildings are occupied and are in good condition. However, Frackford Bridge has been identified as a building at risk. The Conservation Area Appraisals show that their condition are generally very good, with localised issues of replacement PVCu windows and doors on unlisted buildings, and occasional street clutter and signage. Overhead lines are noted as a detracting influence in Wootton Courtenay.

Issues raised in the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment remain very localised. For example, the variable condition of boundary treatments. The From Source to Sea Natural Flood Management Project is having a beneficial effect through enhancement of the landscape character of the LCT, for example through planting of wet woodland, and protecting buildings and bridges from flood damage. This is likely to become increasingly important as climate change causes flood events to become more frequent and intense.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT E

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly been affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Uncertainty over changing agricultural and woodland grants	Potential loss of funding for maintaining the appearance of the landscape and managing it for the well-being of the environment rather than purely to maximise agricultural production. This could lead to loss of traditional features e.g. woodlands, hedgerows and field patterns.
Loss of trees, including traditional orchards, elms, and parkland trees	Past and potential future loss of trees (including distinctive walnut trees, orchards, and elm hedgebanks) within the landscape. This leads to a more open character and the loss of traditional landscape features. Mature/ veteran trees have limited statutory protection, and many are now reaching maturity. Woodlands, hedgerow trees and parklands could be affected by diseases such as ash dieback and phytophthora.
Flooding	Following heavy rainfall (particularly when the ground is already saturated), flooding can lead to scouring of river banks, soil erosion, damage to historic buildings and structures including bridges, mills and properties. New flood amelioration schemes may help to reduce the severity of flooding in the future.
Urbanisation along road corridors	The A39 cuts through the north-eastern part of this LCT, with associated traffic, noise and impacts on tranquillity. Signage, lighting, road markings and urbanising influences such as kerbs affect the traditional rural appearance of the Vale, for example on the A396 around Timberscombe. Some surviving traditional signposts (e.g. at Timberscombe) are in poor condition.
Damage to walls and banks alongside roads	A number of factors (often in combination) lead to damage to walls and banks alongside roads. Unless they are carefully repaired using traditional techniques, the character of rural lanes can be lost. Problems include water damage (following flooding), damage from wide vehicles and destabilisation from tree roots.
Needs for new agricultural buildings	Modern agriculture requires larger buildings than have been traditionally used. If they are poorly designed and/ or sited, they can appear as incongruous features in the landscape.
Development pressure	There is a need for new housing, particularly in and around existing settlements. New housing development should be well designed and sited, in order to integrate into the landscape and minimise impacts on the area's undeveloped character.
New fencing, particularly in valley floor areas.	There are localised impacts from temporary fencing (for example dividing horse paddocks or alongside riverbanks) which can reduce the open quality of the pastures and add visual 'clutter' into the landscape. Lack of management of hedgerows can result in the need to patch them with post and wire fences.
Climate change	Increases in the frequency and intensity of storm events are likely to result in increased flood risk from rivers and coastal flooding, which would be exacerbated by sea level rise. Drier summers may lead to drought, with particular impacts on orchard trees and crops grown. Warmer temperatures are likely to provide suitable conditions for new pests and diseases, including tree diseases.

Damaged stone-faced bank alongside road.

Log jam on Horner Water. Photo ©Exmoor National Park Authority

Landscape Management Recommendations

Landscape Strategy

The area's distinctive gentle, enclosed, settled and historic character, and its visual unity, are safeguarded though the conservation of its landscape features. The landscape is managed in a holistic way, with understanding of the connections between different landscape features and the functions which they perform. Hedgerows are managed to ensure continuity of the area's distinctive field patterns. Trees (including woodland, parkland trees, hedgerow trees and orchards) are managed and replanted to enable continuity of the locally-distinctive treescape in the future. Land is managed in a way which is compatible with the area's historic landscape, with historic buildings/ structures and their settings protected and enhanced. Floodplains are kept open and free from clutter where possible. The quality of the views is maintained, both within the area, and from the elevated high land which surrounds it. Access into the area is improved, with new paths and circular routes along the valley floor.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT E

Protect

- Protect historic buildings and structures and ensure that they (and their settings) are not negatively affected by poor-quality, new development, insensitive highways measures, or other detracting features.
- Protect the distinctive built form of the area, for example through the use of traditional materials such as local stone, cob, thatch and pantiles in building.
- Protect views within and across this LCT, ensuring that the visual impacts of any development proposals are adequately assessed.
- Protect the character of rural lanes, resisting urbanising influences such as unnecessary signage, and investigate opportunities to repair and strengthen banks alongside lanes.
- Restore traditional road signs where required.
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution.

Manage

- Manage trees and woodland, replanting parkland and field trees where necessary to ensure their continued presence in the landscape. Consider planting some specific species for example walnut trees, traditionally associated with this area. Woodlands should have a range of age and native species diversity, to make them as resilient as possible to climate change and tree disease.
- Enhance connectivity of woodlands within the Vale, for example by connecting them with hedgerow corridors.
- Support remaining traditional orchards, and promote sustainable markets for products. Encourage new orchard planting.
- Manage farmland, retaining the mixed farmland pattern, with diversity of crops and pasture.
- Manage hedgerows and hedgebanks, managing and replanting hedgerows where necessary to retain the characteristic enclosure patterns within the landscape. When filling gaps, or re-instating hedgerows, chose plants which are locally-distinctive (e.g. field maple, wych elm) and match existing species within the hedgerow.
- Manage river banks, achieving a locally-appropriate balance between fencing to prevent livestock accessing the river, and enabling people to enjoy uninterrupted views of the water from public rights of way.

Plan

- Work with landowners to promote good practice in land management and establish a positive working relationship with the National Park.
- Enhance the footpath network within the Vale, enabling better access for pedestrians and cyclists to access and enjoy the landscape, e.g. circular routes from locations with parking and/or public transport connections, such as Selworthy, Allerford, Porlock and Horner.

Specific Planning Guidelines for LCT E

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Farmed and Settled Vale Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Strong estate vernacular and colours.	Introduction of buildings styles and details which fragment the unity otherwise apparent in estate villages.	Ensure new development reflects distinctive detailing in this LCT, in particular round chimney stacks often on front walls of buildings, dormer windows and beach boulder coping stones on boundary walls.
Settlement edges often have soft interface with surrounding woods and fields such that the settlement is part of the countryside. The wider landscape often forms a high quality historic landscape setting which reinforces settlement evolution.	New development which creates an abrupt urban edge and undermines the historic relationship between settlement and wider setting including relationship to burgage plots, open marsh or hillside.	Carefully site new buildings on the edge of a settlement so that the fringe is soft and visually broken. Land uses should avoid creating visual clutter which disrupts historic connections between settlement and setting.
Incidental low key character of settlement in this landscape coupled with inter-visibility and distinctive views into and across the area from adjoining landscape types.	Development which undermines the predominately rural character of this type particularly where it breaks the skyline in views from lower land and/or appears prominent on higher slopes in elevated views.	In sensitively locating development in this landscape ensure that views into and across the area are given careful consideration. Utilise the gentle undulations and folds in the landscape to successfully site development. Break up the scale and mass of large farm buildings through use of subdivided roof and wall structures and muted, recessive colours.

New housing in Porlock, reflecting local materials, style and scale.

Landscape Character Type F
Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons

A typical view of fields, farms and common land horizons, looking towards Challacombe from near Barton Town

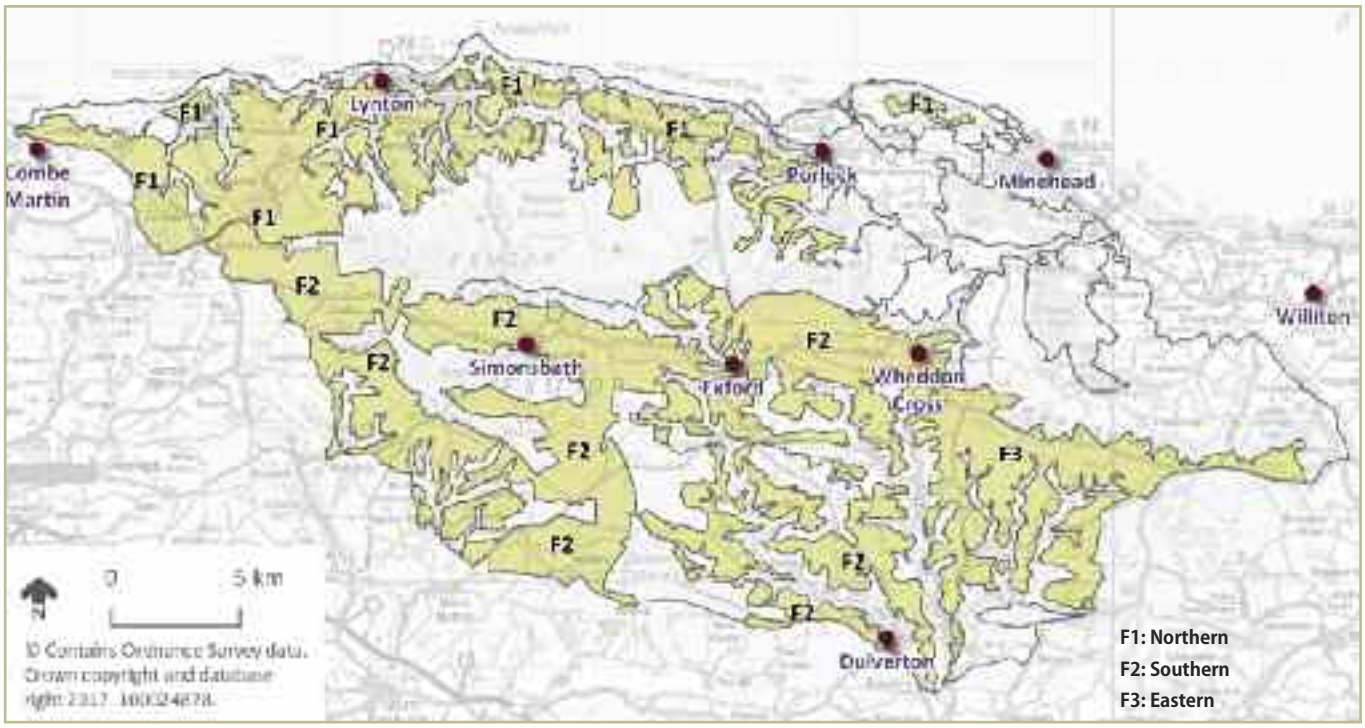
Summary Description

This is the largest of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs), and extends across the National Park from north to south and from east to west. Despite its extensive area, it is often fragmented by other landscape types, including Open Moorland (LCT D), the wooded valleys of the High Wooded Coasts, Combes and Cleaves (LCT B), and the Incised Wooded River Valleys (LCT G). To the north it is bounded by the High Coastal Heaths (LCT A). There are numerous farms within this LCT, but only a few settlements, including Parracombe, Simonsbath, Wheddon Cross, Martinhoe, Trentishoe and Twitchen.

The landscape comprises a patchwork of green fields, peppered with grazing sheep and cattle. On lower slopes, lush hedges create an irregular and smaller-scale field pattern, whilst on higher land, where farm land and commons have been 'carved out' of the surrounding moorland, the fields are more geometrically-shaped, and bounded by beech hedgebanks or fences. The beech hedgebanks, and the contrast between the fields and the moorland, are defining features of Exmoor.

Long views, often encompassing adjacent landscape types, are a key feature of this LCT. The fields of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are often seen in the context of contrasting open moorland, woodland, incised valleys or open water (Wimbleball).

There are three Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, reflecting the variations in landscape character which give each a unique sense of place.



Key Characteristics of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons

- Varied underlying geology comprising broad east-west bands of mudstones, sandstones and slates.
- A broad, rolling terrain of hills and ridges, varying in elevation from 250m to 450m AOD.
- Agricultural land use defined by pasture. Sheep are prevalent, but cattle and horses are also present. Occasional small areas of arable land on lower slopes although aerial photos indicate this has declined in recent years.
- Semi-natural habitats include a range of grasslands, copses and streams.
- Land cover defined by permanent pasture enclosed by beech hedge banks. Areas of open commons also occur, with fields demarcated by post and wire fencing.
- Regular pattern of late enclosure fields on higher land, with older enclosures in valleys exhibiting a more irregular pattern.
- Numerous medieval and post-medieval farms, and scattered hamlets and villages, usually in sheltered positions on valley sides
- Narrow rural lanes and tracks flanked by tall beech hedges create a strong sense of enclosure, restricting views and contrasting markedly with the adjacent areas of unenclosed moorland.
- Strong influence of adjacent landscapes, including open moorland, wooded valleys, plantation hills, coastal heaths and Wimbleball Lake.
- Long views of patchwork fields, and beyond into adjacent landscapes.
- The landscape feels managed, but is not densely settled, giving it a peaceful and tranquil feel.

Natural Landscape Features

With an elevation ranging between 250-450m AOD, the landscape occurs over a series of broad, rounded hills and ridges that form an area of transition between the lower-lying Incised Wooded River Valleys and the combes of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves, and the upland areas of Open Moorland and High Coastal Heaths.

Often the transition between these landscapes and the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons is gradual, and therefore there are a number of areas of Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons which are included within habitat designations focused on neighbouring LCTs. Examples of such habitat designations include a small part of the Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation, and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The varied geology within the LCT is revealed in a series of Local Geological Sites, many of which occur in former quarries.

Within this landscape are a number of streams which form the upper tributaries of larger rivers. These tributaries often run in steep-sided valleys with narrow, flat valley floors.

Soil quality varies markedly within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons. Generally, the better-quality agricultural land occurs on lower slopes and in river valleys, where the soil is relatively fertile and free-draining. On higher land, particularly where the underlying rocks are impermeable, the acid soils are thinner and more waterlogged, and much more marginal for agriculture. Within the farmland there are a number of sites locally-designated for their biodiversity value, including small woodlands, moorland, rivers and various different types of grasslands, such as meadows, moorland and unimproved grassland. These landscape-scale habitats support a range of wildlife, including bats and dormice.

Farmed landscape on rounded ridge landform with moorland behind

Valley floor farmland (rough grazing) in the Barle Valley near Simonsbath

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor Heaths (small area) (F1, F2)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (F1); River Lyn (F1); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (F1); North Exmoor (F1, F2); River Barle (F2); South Exmoor (F2);
Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (Transition zone) (F1, F2)

County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous throughout, including commons, meadows, moors, woods, unimproved grassland, rivers and wetland sites.
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Balls Cross (F2); Pinkery Head Section (F2); Shortcombe Rocks (F2); Luckwell Bridge Mill (F2); Wheddon Cross Car Park (F2); Newland Quarry (F2); Thornemead Seepages (F2); Birchcleave Quarry (F2) Cophold Farm Quarry (F3)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

This landscape contains evidence of human occupation spanning several millennia, but is dominated by the moorland enclosures of the nineteenth century. It is primarily a farmed landscape, with relatively few recent influences from development or tourism.

Centuries of farming has limited the survival of prehistoric landscape features (particularly stone monuments), but nevertheless there are numerous Bronze Age barrows, often located on hill summits and ridge tops. The stone row at Culbone appears to be a prehistoric stone row later inscribed with crosses, and forms part of the medieval parish boundary. The only excavated Bronze Age enclosed settlement on Exmoor (with radio-carbon dated evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation) is at Holworthy, within LCA F1. A further prehistoric settlement site survives at Bagley, with deserted

medieval settlements nearby. There are also several prehistoric enclosures known as 'hillslope enclosures' visible as earthworks within this LCT. Iron-Age sites are also well-represented within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons. Often known as 'castles', these sites have survived as substantial earthworks. Their precise function is unknown, but they are mostly situated in commanding positions overlooking river valleys, and are likely to have been defended settlements. Holwell Castle near Parracombe is a medieval motte and bailey castle, sited to control the Heddon Valley. Many of the sites described above are Scheduled Monuments, and Bagley is a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

Many of the settlements and lower-lying farms were recorded in the Domesday Survey in 1086. Parts of this landscape are therefore very ancient, with farms, roads, churches and bridges contributing to the Exmoor landscape for centuries. Small villages and hamlets lie in sheltered, valley bottom locations (e.g. Parracombe, Twitchen and Challacombe), although others (such as Martinhoe) are more exposed. Farms are often tucked into sheltered locations part-way up valley sides, or in folds at the edges of intersecting valleys. There is a particularly fine example of a medieval farmstead at West Challacombe Farm (National Trust owned) near Combe Martin. The main hall has been dated to 1470, with other parts of the complex even older.

Many valley settlements are surrounded by irregular, hedged fields of medieval origin. Some field systems (such as those around Parracombe and Codsend Moor) are Principal Archaeological Landscapes, and Parracombe's four historic hamlets (each with distinct origins and character) are a Conservation Area. Characteristic features of farms are complex gutter systems such as the 'catch meadows', used to flush spring grass with relatively warm water to encourage early growth to sustain livestock. Today the remains of these systems are visible as narrow banks on the hillside, running parallel to the contours in fields close to farms. Although arable land is rare on Exmoor today, historically there was much more cultivation, as evidenced through the linear earthworks of ridge and furrow, created through ploughing. Other archaeological evidence for historic farming within this LCT includes rectangular 'pillow mounds' where rabbits were reared, and the remains of medieval strip field systems.

In the west of the LCT, on Knap Down above Combe Martin, are a unique series of strip fields reclaimed from moorland dating from the nineteenth century. Local tradition states that they were laid out and allocated to ensure villagers got an equal share of good and bad land.

Extensive areas of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are formed of more recently-enclosed fields. Regular in shape and generally found on areas of higher ground, these fields reflect a period of enclosure dated to the 1800s. At this time, the Knight family bought a large proportion of the remaining Royal Forest, and set about taming and reclaiming the land for agriculture. They drained and limed the acidic peaty soils, burnt rough grass, and planted miles of beech hedges to act as wind breaks. Model farms comprising modern houses and farm buildings (often including water-powered or horse-powered machinery) were built high on the moors, close to the new fields. Through this process of enclosure and improvement the Knights and other landowners converted the moorland into improved grasslands, and defined much of the land cover pattern visible today, which often appears to be carved out of the surrounding moorland. The Knights also constructed or upgraded many of the roads through the area, including the B3223 through Simonsbath. These roads are often lined with high beech hedges.

This LCT also contains extensive areas of common land. These areas for animal grazing were allocated to the various parishes which surround the moorland. Their enclosure and parcelling-up into fields was a process which took place over many centuries. Some common land is likely to have been enclosed during the medieval period, but the majority took place during the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Under this process, parish commons were divided into fields which were distributed (or 'apportioned') to landowners within the parish. Outer common boundaries were usually demarcated by beech hedgebanks, with the fields within separated by fences. Throughout Exmoor there are narrow, hedge-banked lanes used for the movement of animals to/from the commons.

In the west of the National Park, the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway line remains a visible marker in the landscape between Blackmoor Gate and Woody Bay station at Moorlands. Mining and quarrying took place within this LCT, and its legacy is particularly apparent in the eastern part, which contains the only surviving engine house and chimney on Exmoor, and the bed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway (a Principal Archaeological Landscape) which was used to transport extracted iron ore. Silver and lead mining took place in the west of the LCT, between West Challacombe and Parracombe.

Buildings within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are generally small in scale. They exhibit a wide range of materials, including local stone (generally redder towards the east and greyer towards the west), render, whitewash, and hung slates, with roofs of slate, tile and occasionally thatch. Ridge heights and eaves heights are generally low. Traditional Exmoor farmsteads are constructed of locally-available materials, and contain the range of buildings required for traditional mixed upland farming. Many farmyards used water power to run machinery (for example for processing fodder crops), and integrated water management into their layout. Later Knight Estate farms are often symmetrical in appearance. The Knight family lived in Simonsbath House (now a hotel), which is the largest house in this LCT. Throughout the LCT there are a range of old and modern farm buildings, and associated structures such as small wind turbines.

Simonsbath House, in the centre of the former Royal Forest, was the home of the Knight Family, and is now a hotel and outdoor education centre.

Knight Farm and surrounding shelterbelt at Warren Farm including more modern farm buildings that have been incorporated into the complex.

Cutting and track bed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Numerous prehistoric barrows, often in hilltop/ ridge top locations (F1, F2, F3) including the henge or disc barrow on the Woolhanger Estate; Iron-Age sites at Bagley (F1); Countisbury Castle (F1); Stock Castle (F1); Roborough Castle (F1); Beacon Castle (F1); Oldberry Castle (F2); Bagley deserted medieval farm (F1); Culbone Hill inscribed stone (F1) motte and bailey at Holwell Castle (F1)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Parracombe Medieval field system (F1); South Common (F1); Culbone Hill (F1); Sweetworthy and Bagley (F1); Challacombe Field System (F2); Simonsbath (F2); Codsend and Dunkery (F2); Kitnor Heath (F2); West Somerset Mineral Railway (F3); Withiel Florey medieval settlement (F3)
Conservation Areas	Parracombe (F1); Lower East Lyn Farm Complex (F1)
Listed Buildings	Scattered throughout, with a cluster around Simonsbath (F2). Listed buildings include farmhouses, farm buildings, churches, AA box, phone box, bridges

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

This is an enclosed, 'tamed' landscape, and as such does not share the same wild and remote qualities of the adjacent Open Moorland. However, because of the dispersed pattern of settlement and the limited intrusion from main roads, much of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons has a peaceful, tranquil character.

The commons tend to have a more open, textured and simpler landscape character. Some unmanaged beech hedge banks remain, and these form distinctive gappy tree-lines that are eye-catching features. Late enclosed land often has a more regular field pattern, and a sense of having been 'carved out' of the surrounding moorland with reclaimed fields appearing to march up the hillsides. Again, the beech hedgebanks are often prominent features in the landscape, even though they are often in poor condition. In contrast, the areas of older enclosure often have irregular, small-scale field patterns which form striking mosaic patterns in views. Their mixed hedgerows and small areas of woodland add to the varied colour and texture of the landscape.

Parts of the area have the feel of a settled and productive agricultural landscape, whilst others (often the highest areas) have a more evocative feel, representing the struggle to enclose and improve moorland which remains marginal in terms of farmland. Features such as the ruined engine house at Burrow farm and dilapidated hedgebanks add to this localised sense of abandonment, as does the increase of secondary woodland and encroachment of gorse onto common land. Historic landscape features such as field gutter systems evoke admiration for previous generations who toiled so hard to carve a living from the land, and who worked so closely with it.

Sources of light pollution are minimal within this LCT, and with the localised exceptions of Lynton and Combe Martin, it is generally well removed from large settlements which emit light pollution. As a result, skies are exceptionally dark, and star visibility excellent.

The relatively settled, sheltered character of the Enclosed Hills with Commons is apparent in the '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*'. Descriptive words unique to this landscape type include *pastoral, rural, straight, livestock, farmland, jaggedy hedgerows* and *sloping hills*. Emotional responses to the farmed landscape include *at rest, thankful, quiet, calm* and *peaceful*.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

Intervisibility with surrounding LCTs means that the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons is an important element in the views from and towards surrounding landscapes, including many of Exmoor's most well-known viewpoints. The distinctive field patterns, smaller scale and green colours of this LCT provide a contrasting (and complementary) setting to the open moorland and woodland.

There are many long views from within this LCT, particularly from higher ground. However, despite

the extensive area covered by the LCT, there are few views which encompass only this LCT. Instead, views include elements of the surrounding LCTs, such as the smooth horizons of the Open Moorlands, the textured horizons of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills, or the wooded valley sides of the Incised Wooded River Valleys. From many northern areas there are views across the High Coastal Heaths or High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves towards the sea.

Often views from roads crossing the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are limited by the high hedgebanks, which can create a tunnel-like effect and restrict views into the surrounding landscapes. There are relatively few paths within this LCT, and there are also few areas of access land. It is therefore relatively difficult to explore on foot. Visitor attractions and car parks are also very limited (Woody Bay Station is an exception) so there are relatively few opportunities for people to explore this landscape. However, there are small campsites (for example Wimbleball and Halse Farm) and several farms offer Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

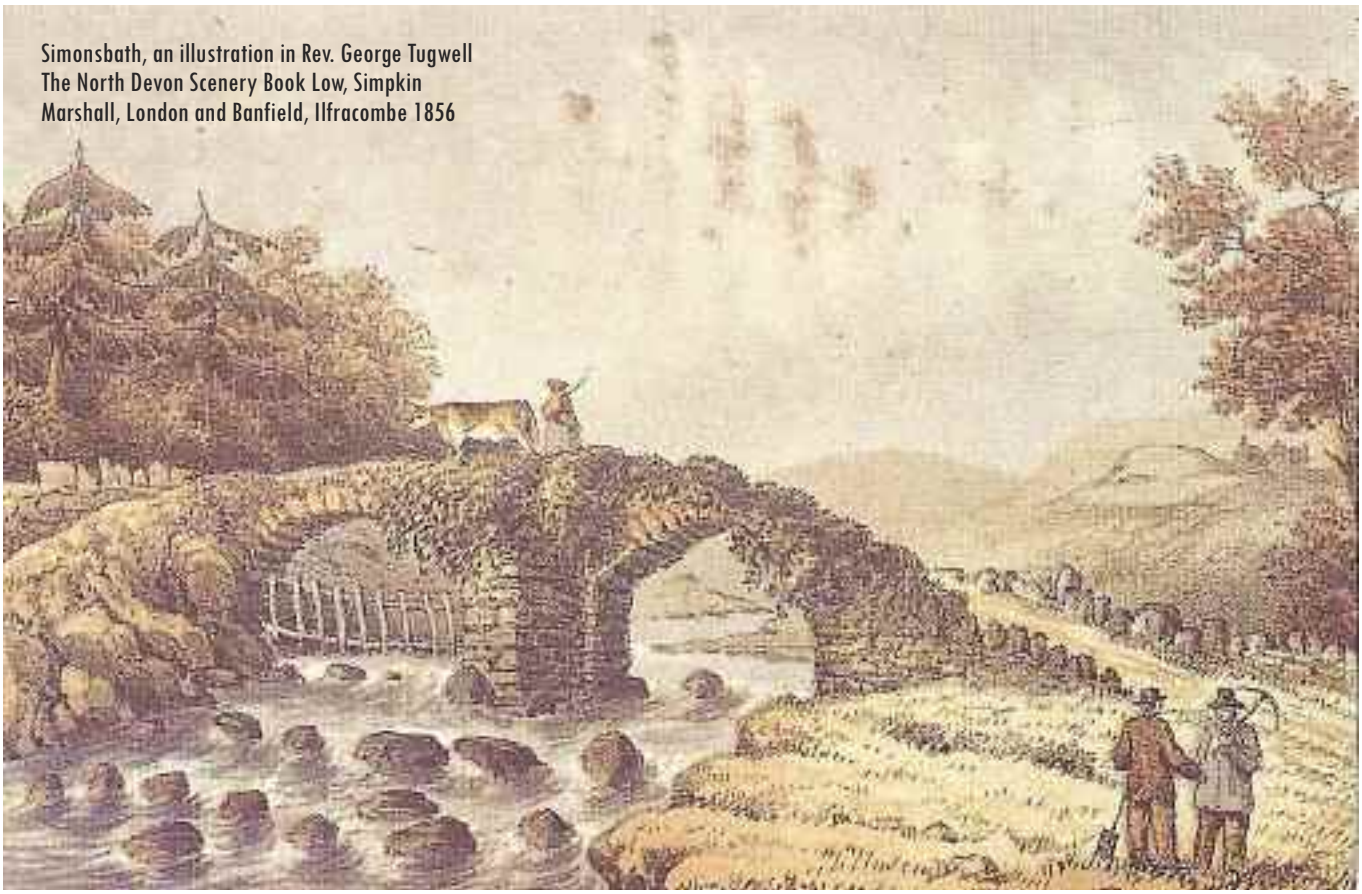
Ancient field patterns in enclosed farmland around Twitchen

Beech-lined roads are distinctive features of the landscape.

Cultural Associations

It is interesting to note that there are relatively few poems, paintings or writings celebrating Exmoor's farmland, compared to its moorland, woodland or coast. Nevertheless, the farmland provides an important foil for the landscapes which surround it.

Within the farmed landscape are a wealth of names (of fields, lanes, crossroads and gates) which tell the story of its enclosure over the centuries, and are a cultural resource in their own right. Also associated with this landscape is a rich oral history of traditional farming methods, often handed down through generations, and complemented by an intimate understanding of the landscape, its microclimates and how to utilise natural processes to make the land productive.



Simonsbath, an illustration in Rev. George Tugwell The North Devon Scenery Book Low, Simpkin Marshall, London and Banfield, Ilfracombe 1856

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The farmland soils, water supplies and trees within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are all Natural Capital Assets, which enable the functioning of a number of ecosystem services. Within this LCT, the primary ecosystem services relate to provisioning - i.e. supplying food, fibre and fuel. The network of streams, and the small reservoirs such as Nutscale and Bray also provide fresh water. Traditionally, wood from cut hedgerows has been used as fuel in woodburners, and this remains an opportunity to support traditional hedgerow management.

The Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons help to regulate water flows and water quality by absorbing rainwater and slowing run-off into rivers; regulate climate through storing carbon and improve air quality by removing pollutants from the atmosphere. This LCT is also important for pollination, biodiversity and geodiversity.

Although this LCT is not as well-visited as other parts of the National Park, it nevertheless contributes to a number of cultural ecosystem services (the non-material benefits which people obtain from ecosystems) such as a sense of history, recreation, and positive aesthetic experiences. This is particularly true where the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons play a role in views from other landscape types, such as the Open Moorland and High Coastal Heaths.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT

Within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT, there are three distinctive LCAs, each with a unique 'sense of place' as described in the descriptions below. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile. The LCAs within this LCT were reviewed during the process of updating the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, as it was felt that the former 'Southern' LCA covered a very large area with exceptional variations in character. As a result, the former 'Southern' LCA was split into two smaller LCAs, now named 'Southern' and 'Eastern'.

LCA F1: Northern

View from Easter Lane above Leeford, looking north-west towards the coast.

Description

The northern LCA extends from Porlock Hill in the east to the National Park boundary at Combe Martin in the west. Its character and views are strongly influenced by the surrounding LCTs, and it also plays an important role in their visual settings. Its northern boundary is met by the various LCAs of the High Coastal Heaths and High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves landscape type. The wooded combes extend south into the landscape, breaking up the hills, and the densely wooded steep valley sides provide dramatic and unexpected views. The southern boundary of the area is almost entirely met by the Northern Open Moorland, and the smooth moorland skyline dominates the southern horizon. One of the key things distinguishing the Northern LCA is the proximity to Exmoor's northern coastline, and the views along the coast and out to sea.

Although the vast majority of field boundaries are defined by beech hedge banks, there are some localised areas of stone wall boundaries that add localised character variation, e.g. at Trentishoe and Countisbury Common. Farms nestle in sheltered valleys, and the ancient settlements of Martinhoe, Parracombe and Trentishoe cluster around their square-towered churches.

Most of the roads are steep, narrow lanes running between the patchwork of fields, but the A39 passes through this landscape from Porlock to Blackmoor Gate and has a localised influence on noise levels and tranquillity. This LCA also contains the line of the former narrow gauge railway that connected Barnstaple to Lynton.

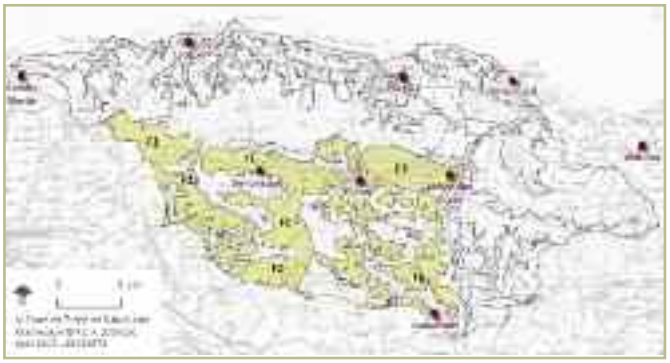
LCA F2: Southern

View from open moorland just west of Simonsbath, looking north towards Duredon Farm

Description

The Southern Area covers a large area of land, stretching from just east of Wheddon Cross in the east, to the A39 at Blackmoor Gate in the west. Isolated farms dot the valley sides below the ridges, and there are scattered historic settlements clustering in valley bottoms (e.g. Challacombe and Simonsbath) and on valley sides (e.g. Hawkridge, Twitchen and Wheddon Cross). Along with a number of Incised Wooded River Valleys, this LCA defines much of Exmoor's southern boundary. The Open Moorland LCT has a strong influence on its character, as its northern edge abuts the Northern Open Moorland, and it also borders the moorland blocks of Southern Open Moorland and Winsford Hill. It is in these areas, close to the open moorland, where there is the strongest sense of the farmland being reclaimed from moorland. This farmland also provides the immediate setting and context to the open moorland.

This LCA contains the farms enclosed by the Knight family, and the symmetrical farmhouses, often whitewashed, standing high on the open hillsides surrounded by shelterbelts and regular-shaped fields, are distinctive features. Elsewhere (particularly around villages and hamlets on lower land) field patterns are more irregular and their ancient patchwork of hedgerows contrasts markedly with the simplicity of the nearby commons and open moors. These areas are often influenced by sudden views down into the Incised Wooded River Valleys.



LCA F3: Eastern

View looking south from Burrow Farm Engine House

Description

The Eastern Area extends from near Wheddon Cross to the eastern boundary of the National Park. It includes the ridge followed by the B3224 (relatively busy in terms of traffic), and the 'fingers' of land which extend to the south, and are separated by the tributary valleys of the Haddeo and Exe.

There are a number of landscape features which make this LCA distinctive. Its location in the east of the National Park means that it is less closely related (both physically and visually) with the Open Moorland LCT, and instead has stronger connections with the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes and the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills, which form a wooded horizon to the north. Conifers are seen more frequently in views - as large-scale plantations, shelterbelts, and roadside hedges. From high land, such as Treborough Common there are views north towards the sea. Views east encompass the rolling farmland beyond the National Park, and there are also distinctive views into the Haddeo Valley and across the popular recreation site at Wimbleball Lake. Settlement is limited to scattered farms which tend to nestle in sheltered locations on valley sides, often near the sources of streams.

The ridges are generally free of buildings.

Fields are often relatively small and less regular in shape, and a greater proportion of land is in arable cultivation. Farming is relatively intense compared to other parts of Exmoor, and there are some large and occasionally untidy farmyards and storage areas. There are more mixed-species hedges, although beech hedgebanks are still seen, particularly on higher ground. The industrial heritage of the area is relatively prominent within the landscape, with surviving features including Burrow Farm engine house, abandoned buildings at Gupworthy, and the top part of the incline, cutting and trackbed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway. There are also a number of remains of water management schemes, including water meadows and mills. The lattice tower of Kennisham Hill Wireless Station is a prominent feature on the horizon.

Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT F

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point
SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove
SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay
SCA 7: Lee and Woody Bays
SCA 8: Woody Bay to Little Hangman
SCA 10: Combe Martin and Ilfracombe Bays

Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT F

A key distinguishing feature of this landscape is its banked beech hedgerows. Whilst these are present over much of the LCT, their condition is declining in many places, and they have either been allowed to deteriorate, or been patched with post and wire fencing. As a result the landscape patterns are gradually declining, which is affecting the strength of landscape character. This is assessed as being **moderate- good** overall.

The condition of the landscape is quite **varied**, with some areas better managed than others. Overall, however, the condition is **moderate-strong**. The majority of SSSIs within this LCT have been assessed as being in 'unfavourable recovering' condition, with some in 'favourable' condition. A small area of SSSI at Yenworthy Common is within this LCT, and assessed as being in 'unfavourable declining' condition due to undergrazing, lack of scrub control and the presence of rhododendron. A small number of farmhouses, and churchyard monuments at Kentisbury, are listed buildings recorded as being in relatively poor condition. The Conservation Area appraisal for Parracombe notes that most buildings are in a good condition, but that there are localised issues with PVCu windows and doors (particularly on unlisted buildings); insensitive property boundary treatments (e.g. close-boarded fencing) and visually-intrusive overhead wires and poles.

The relative lack of access into this LCT (due to the relatively sparse footpath network and lack of open access land) means that landscape change may not always be visible.

Some problems raised in the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment have increased, including the presence of masts and other visually-prominent features within and outside the National Park, and the construction of large agricultural sheds due to changes in farming practices and disease control (although generally, efforts have been made to ensure these are designed and sited as sensitively as possible). The intensification of farming methods such as raising cattle/ sheep in barns for significant parts of the year requires agricultural buildings and ancillary services of a scale and mass that is increasingly difficult to accommodate sensitively into the surrounding landscape pattern and field boundaries. These buildings are increasingly being sited on more elevated ground, and are therefore more visible over wider distance, and with a greater visual impact. The weakening of the landscape pattern due to the declining condition of walls, hedgerows and hedgebanks remains an ongoing issue. Litter (for example old silage bags) remains a very localised issue. Use of plastic sheeting as a crop cover creates a temporary change.

Crop cover within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons landscape (LCA F3)

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT F

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes in farming practices	Recent decades have seen changes to farm management, including an increase in farm diversification (e.g. Bed and Breakfast, holiday cottages, campsites, haulage, and commercial shooting). Some smaller family farms have been sold, and children are not always taking over farms from their parents. This results in amalgamation or fragmentation of farm holdings, and potentially a loss of local knowledge of traditional land management. All of these can have major impacts on the fabric and appearance of the landscape.	All
New agricultural buildings	Changing agricultural practices require larger and more modern farm buildings. Even when carefully designed and sited, the scale and mass of new buildings have a considerable impact on the landscape. Recent examples of new agricultural buildings include sheds for overwintering herds of 300+ and intensive poultry production. Light spill from roof lights can also be an issue unless buildings are designed to avoid this.	All
Loss/poor maintenance of banks and hedgebanks	Loss of distinctive landscape features results in decline of strong landscape pattern. An associated issue is the loss of traditional rural skills such as walling and hedge laying.	All
Encroachment of gorse and scrub into pastures	Reduction in livestock numbers and changes to management means that some areas (particularly on high land/ steep slopes) are becoming increasingly vegetated with encroaching scrub, bracken and trees. This changes the visual appearance of the landscape, and may also be damaging to archaeological sites.	All
Changing agricultural cropping practices	Plastic sheeting, fleece crop covers and plastic silage bags can change the appearance of the landscape, and are particularly obvious in direct sunlight. Plastic sheeting can potentially contribute to increased surface water run off.	F3
Pressure for new housing	Pressure for new agricultural dwellings in isolated locations without previous residential use can be visually intrusive and impact on the undeveloped character of the area.	All

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes to agricultural funding schemes	Loss of grants to maintain historic landscape features (e.g. hedgebanks) or to manage wildlife habitats could result in deterioration of their condition. The future of land management grant schemes are uncertain.	All
The presence of vertical features within the landscape	Poles, pylons, telecommunication masts and wind turbines are particularly prominent within this LCT where they occur in isolated locations, or are visible against the skyline. Their presence creates a sense of visual 'clutter' and is detrimental to the character of the landscape. In some locations, communications masts have been 'hidden' within copses of evergreens. However, these trees are now reaching over-maturity, and alternative solutions will need to be found in coming years. Such structures are often sited within this LCT in preference to open moorland sites. Overhead wires and poles are particularly noticeable alongside roads, and in settlements (e.g. Parracombe).	All
Loss of character of rural lanes	Increasing signage, kerbs and road markings affecting the rural character of lanes, particularly around settlements. Traditional road signs are sometimes in poor condition.	All
Storage and littering	Localised examples of prominent machinery and scrap storage areas create an uncared-for appearance. Smaller-scale dumping and littering also occasionally occurs, particularly in laybys. Increased use of silage requires storage of plastic-wrapped bales, which are often sited near roads for convenience, but become prominent in views, for example along the A39.	All
Changes outside the National Park impacting on views.	Many areas of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons have views over surrounding areas. Development in these areas (e.g. building construction, renewable energy schemes, road schemes and changes in land management (such as use of extensive plastic sheeting on crops) can all impact on views from the National Park. Examples of existing features in views include Batsworthy and Fullabrook windfarms, and masts at Roborough.	
Climate change	Increased temperatures and changes to precipitation patterns are likely to lead to affect growing seasons and crop/ livestock choices. This in turn will affect the pattern and appearance of the landscape. Natural Flood Management projects may have minor effects on this LCT, but will provide important benefits downstream, and in other LCTs.	All
Renewable energy	Farm-scale renewable energy schemes include small-scale wind turbines, and solar panels. Wind turbines can appear particularly prominent in views due to their vertical form, and movement which catches the eye. Solar panels can appear intrusive, particularly if viewed from above, or if they are not sympathetic to the building on which they are mounted.	All

Spread of scrub up steep former pasture, near Barton Town (Challacombe)

Degradation of earth bank as trees die, and tree roots are no longer able to hold the bank together

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT F

Landscape Strategy

The condition of the landscape is enhanced, particularly through traditional management of hedgerows, banks and hedgebanks, and appropriate levels of grazing on common land. The distinctive patterns of fields within the landscape are retained. Farm businesses are successful, with any new buildings well-designed and integrated into the landscape. Vertical features (such as poles, masts and wind turbines) are not intrusive within the landscape, and skylines are clear and uncluttered. Any new development is carefully integrated, with minimal impacts on views. Historic landscape features and archaeological sites are in good condition, and awareness of the area's history (particularly its industrial heritage) is raised. The Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons provides an attractive setting for the surrounding moorland, woodland, coast and open water, and views are kept free of incongruous features, particularly on horizons or close to the boundaries with other LCTs.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT F

Protect

- Protect historic farm buildings and houses, ensuring that any conversion of redundant buildings to new uses is sensitive to their appearance and location.
- Protect archaeological sites, particularly those vulnerable to damage by animals or erosion, or which are threatened by encroaching scrub and bracken.
- Protect the relationships between buildings and the surrounding landscape. Where new buildings are required, try to maintain this relationship through careful design, siting and mitigation planting (see guidance below).
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution within this LCT, and in surrounding LCTs.

Manage

- Manage hedgerows, hedgebanks and banks, using traditional management methods where possible, and using species in keeping with those in existing hedgerows.

- Manage and repair stone walls where they occur (e.g. around Martinhoe).
- Manage commercial shoots to minimise impacts on the landscape and wildlife (for example through naturalistic game crop planting, careful siting of feeders and pens, and appropriate intensity of stocking. See LCT G and National Park guidance for more information).
- Consider dynamic management of the boundaries between farmland and moorland, identifying opportunities to restore grazed moorland.
- Follow management plans for SSSIs and other designated sites.

Plan

- Survey Principal Archaeological Landscapes outside moorland areas to better understand their condition and management requirements.
- Enhance recreational access into this landscape, enabling it to be more widely appreciated as a destination in its own right (for example through protecting the line of the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway to provide a future opportunity for access).
- Ensure that the LCA continues to function as an attractive setting for adjacent moorland, woodland and coastal landscapes, and Wimbleball Lake.
- Ensure that new development proposals (including those outside the National Park boundaries) are appropriately assessed, and that suitable development management policies are in place.
- Promote oral history projects with the older generation of farmers to gather knowledge of traditional Exmoor farming practices.

Specific Planning Guidelines for Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Loose organic arrangement of buildings in small scale settlements set in sheltered locations.	New development which introduces an uncharacteristic suburban form, layout or density of dwellings or extends settlement into more exposed locations. Proliferation of new development away from existing settlements.	Ensure new development is small scale, emphasises the settlement form and incorporates a range of building types which reflect the settlement origins.
Legible historic field boundaries associated with villages and hamlets, and forming an important setting and context for settlements.	Development which does not relate and respond to settlement character and urban fringe land uses that undermine the relationship between settlement and setting.	Ensure land use patterns and features (i.e. stone walls, field boundaries) associated with built form/settlement are conserved particularly where they form a historically or perceptually valued setting.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Isolated pattern of farmsteads on middle valley slopes, tucked into landform (e.g. below break of slope, or nestled within combes) and associated with shelter planting.	Farm expansion (including ancillary activity e.g. storage, as well as new built form, associated agricultural dwellings, surfaced tracks and widened gateways) onto more exposed slopes.	Use of appropriate colours and materials (e.g. matt roofs and timber boarding on walls) to allow new large scale agricultural buildings to visually recede. New farm buildings should sit in folds of the landscape and be associated with mitigation planting comprising native species. Buildings should emphasise landform where feasible, for example by stepping roofs. Consideration should be given to elevated views from surrounding areas.
Pattern of traditional farm buildings providing strong connections to the landscape and sense of history.	Poor condition and dereliction of farm building placing some traditional and listed structures at risk and poor conversion of buildings resulting in a loss of traditional features and character.	Ensure that conversions maintain the style and character of the original building in terms of form, scale, materials and detailing. Ensure consideration is given to curtilage treatment and avoid suburbanisation of the setting of the building.
Diversity of building materials but still recognisable local palette.	New development or unsympathetic updating of buildings which do not reflect aspects of local vernacular.	Ensure use of traditional materials, colours and textures are used to inspire new design and reflect the traditional building palette of Exmoor.
Domestic buildings fit the landform with stepped roof lines, low eaves and dormer windows, and chimneys.	New development which does not contain traditional vernacular features and is disconnected from the landscape context such that it appears suburban in character.	Ensure that new development relates to the topography of the landscape in terms of stepped roofs and terracing and visually fits its historic context. Particular care should be taken with landscaping to reflect traditional curtilage treatments.
Open rounded skylines and expansive landscape without overt forms of development.	Proliferation of vertical features which break skylines and undermine sense of tranquillity and traditional rurality.	Isolated vertical structures to be associated with existing farmsteads, settlements or native planting. Ensure structures are seen predominately with a backdrop of land, buildings or vegetation, rather than against the sky.
Dark night skies.	Lightspill from roof lights in agricultural buildings.	Provide cowling on lights within sheds to minimise light spill from roof lights at night.

Traditional stone and tiled barns stepped down the slope, Cloutsham

Traditional farmhouse and outbuildings with three different building materials: slate, thatch and tin, Twitchen

Modern barn at Riscombe, using timber boarding to blend in to the wooded backdrop, and tucked into a fold in the landscape near to existing farm buildings.

The prominence of large buildings can be mitigated by associated planting and attention to detailed siting where appropriate.

This skyline copse of conifers within farmland is quite conspicuous within the landscape, and will soon be reaching over-maturity. However, it hides a mobile phone mast.

Structures can appear less visible when viewed against a backdrop of trees.

Landscape Character Type G: **Incised Wooded River Valleys**

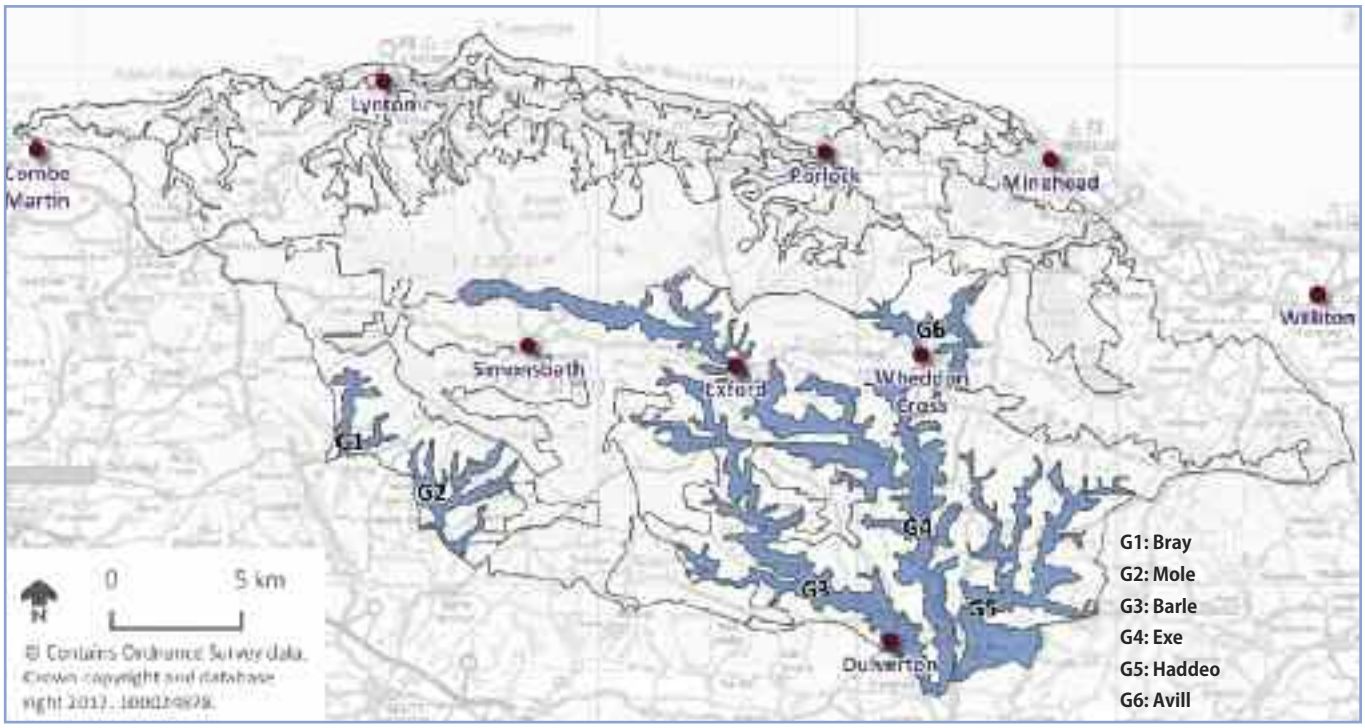
The River Barle looking south from Tarr Steps

Summary Description

This LCT is largely located within the southern part of the National Park. It encompasses the tributaries and main courses of a number of rivers- the Bray, Mole, Barle, Exe, Haddeo and Avill, cutting through the surrounding areas of Enclosed Farmland with Commons and Open Moorland. There are a number of villages within this LCT, including Exford, Withypool, and Brompton Regis, along with numerous hamlets and scattered farms, and the town of Dulverton.

The landscape comprises steep-sided, often densely-wooded valleys. They form distinctive dark green fingers that push through the surrounding areas of farmland and moorland. Fast flowing rocky streams tumble along valley floors, often with dramatic descents in levels. Roads often follow the courses of the rivers, and settlements are clustered around bridges and fords. Together with the scattered farms, these give many of the valleys a settled character. However, there are also long stretches of valley floor which are only accessible on foot and therefore feel more remote and tranquil. The character of the rivers is very changeable, becoming particularly dramatic when they are in spate following heavy rain. The Incised Wooded River Valleys is a rich historic landscape, containing many fine bridges including Tarr Steps and Landacre Bridge, which are popular visitor destinations. There are notable Iron-Age defensive sites overlooking the valleys, and many medieval landscape features. The reservoir at Wimbleball is another popular site, and a much more recent addition to the landscape.

There are six distinctive Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the LCT, each representing a different river catchment.



Key Characteristics of the Incised Wooded River Valleys

- The underlying geology is varied, including slate, sandstone and siltstone with drift deposits of alluvium along the courses of the rivers.
- Dramatic valley landform, with steep-sloping sides and relatively narrow but open valley floors.
- Fast-flowing and steeply-descending rivers with large deposited boulders. Wimbleball reservoir is a substantial area of open water.
- Primarily woodland and agricultural land cover, with a strong pastoral character in valley floors.
- Semi-natural habitats include woodland, grassland and lush riparian (river bank) habitats. Ferns are also common.
- Valley sides cloaked in woodland- mixed, deciduous and coniferous. There is considerable coverage of ancient woodland, including bluebell woods.
- Field patterns often ancient/ medieval in origin, forming an irregular mosaic. Fields are usually enclosed by hedges, hedgebanks and trees.
- Settlement is small-scale and picturesque. Settlements are typically nucleated and nestled in the shelter of the valley bottoms. Many are centred around fords or bridges.
- Numerous historic buildings and structures, including bridges, mills, churches, houses and farms.
- Traditional activities include field sports, with woodlands providing shelter to raise game.
- Woodland cover and enveloping sides of the valleys creates a dark and enclosing landscape character, which feels sheltered, and which varies with the changing seasons.
- Tranquillity is variable, depending on proximity to the valley roads.

Natural Landscape Features

With a general elevation range of between 150m and 350m AOD, this is a highly distinctive landscape of steep-sided valleys with narrow, flat valley floors. Long Barrow in the upper Exe Valley is a periglacial feature. The twisting form of the valleys reflects the meandering streams and rivers which created them. The clear, boulder-strewn waters are important habitats for fish, birds and mammals, including salmon, eels, kingfishers, dippers and otters, and the River Barle (G3) (which is in an exceptionally natural state) is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. These rivers have been described as the 'blood supply' of much of Exmoor's ecology. Wimbleball Lake reservoir (G5) is the largest expanse of water within the National Park, and is a valued resource for water storage and recreation.

Woodland defines much of the landcover, predominantly deciduous woodland interspersed with mixed and coniferous areas.

There is a considerable amount of ancient woodland, and the Barle Valley (G3) is also within the Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation. Tarr Steps Woodland is a National Nature Reserve, with routes taking in the river, woodland and nearby moorland on Winsford Hill. Many of the deciduous woodlands have lush understoreys, and are rich in ferns, rare mosses, liverworts and lichens. In spring there are carpets of bluebells, and in autumn rich shades of golden leaves. Tree cover is predominantly sessile oak, but holly, ash, hazel and honeysuckle are also present, with many veteran trees. The glades of heath and small fields within the woodland support populations of butterflies (including rare fritillaries), and there are also colonies of bats roosting in the woodland. Woodland also provides cover for red and roe deer and other native mammals such as foxes and stoats.

Fern-lined bank in the Mole Valley

Bluebell wood in spring, Barle Valley

Autumn colours in the Haddeo Valley

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods (G3); Exmoor Heaths (G4)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Barle Valley (G3); River Barle (G3); North Exmoor (G4, G6); South Exmoor (G5)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Extensive throughout, including woodland, grassland, copses, historic parkland (Pixton Park), moorland and commons
Ancient Woodland	Occurs throughout all areas, extensive in G2, G3, G4, G5, G6
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Tarr Steps Woodland (G3)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Pennycombe Crags and Knolls (G3); Tarr Steps Face and Quarry (G3); Marsh Bridge Quarry (G3); Upper Exe Warren Group (G4); The Punchbowl (G4); Brockhole Quarry and Weir Rock (G4); Oaktrow Quarries (G6)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

Rivers (and specifically their crossing points) have long been a focus for human influences, and there are many examples within the Incised Wooded River Valleys. The popular clapper bridge at Tarr Steps was built in Medieval times, although the structure has been rebuilt following floods on a number of occasions. It is the longest bridge of this type in Britain. The River Barle is also overlooked by a series of Iron-Age defended sites (known as 'castles') which are located on high ground above the river and near to iron ore deposits. These have long views along the river valley. Their location away from modern roads adds to their sense of isolation and detachment from the contemporary world.

Ford and footbridge at Bury, Haddeo Valley

Oldberry Iron-Age Hillfort, near Dulverton (G3)
©Historic England Archive

There are a number of other notable bridges within the LCT, including Landacre Bridge and Withypool Bridge (both on the Barle). Landacre Bridge was the meeting place of the Forest Court, which dealt with crimes against the Royal Forest, such as entering with a gun, bow or dog. There are also numerous fords, often with an ancient stone pedestrian bridge alongside. Many settlements have developed around bridges and fords, and the Incised Wooded River Valleys contain many historic buildings, including churches, houses, pubs and a priory. The local emphasis on the 'ford' element of the placename is perhaps not a coincidence. These are recognised through Scheduled Monuments, Principal Archaeological Landscapes, Listed Building and Conservation Area designations. The river-based origins of the settlements are apparent in their place-names, including Exford, Withypool,

Exton, Winsford and Bridgetown. Building styles are varied within the LCT, and within individual settlements. For example, Exford contains thatched cottages with coloured render, and stone buildings with slate roofs. Most village buildings are small in scale, but there are some larger hotels, many of which still cater for visitors coming to view or take part in traditional country sports such as hunting, shooting and fishing. Several of the villages are popular destinations for visitors, who appreciate the historic bridges, fords, churches, and picturesque cottages clustered around village greens. The landscape setting of these villages adds to their character and charm.

Landacre Bridge

Withypool bridge

The town of Dulverton is a local service centre and sits at the southern end of the Barle Valley. Often referred to as the southern gateway to Exmoor, Dulverton sits adjacent to the Barle floodplain, and is characterised by small-scale shops, pubs and tearooms surrounding the town hall with its distinctive external steps, first-floor porch and arched windows. The square-towered church also forms a focal point in views. The oldest houses are generally found in the town centre – some have medieval origins behind later facades. Most of the houses are stone (some rendered) with slate roofs. Housing gradually becomes more recent along the roads leading out of the town, with some Victorian buildings, examples of Arts and Crafts architecture, and post-war housing towards the outskirts. The Georgian country residence of Pixton Park is set in wooded parkland to the south of the town, and Hollam House lies to the north.

Dulverton town centre (Barle Valley)

Winsford village centre, with thatched cottages and bridge (Exe Valley)

Exford Village (Exe Valley)

Heasley Mill (Mole Valley)

Holewell Cross (Bray Valley)

The long use of the land for agriculture is apparent within today's landscape. The mosaic of field patterns represents stages of enclosure from early medieval times to the present day, and as a result is a complex and varied pattern. In general, the smallest, most irregular and oldest enclosure patterns are found around the settlements. Farms are scattered throughout the LCT, often located on the valley sides, and tucked into the sheltered combes of tributary streams. There are some excellent surviving examples of gutter systems and catch meadows, where fields were artificially irrigated to encourage early grass growth to support early spring lambs.

As well as a long history of agriculture, the Incised Wooded River Valleys have a rich industrial history, although it is less apparent in today's landscape. There are a number of sites associated with iron ore extraction and/ or processing, including (for example) Sherracombe Ford in the Bray Valley, where slag heaps have been radio-carbon dated to the late Iron-Age/Romano-British period. Mining landscapes at Bampfylde and New Florence mines in the Mole Valley are a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

Charcoal production was also often associated with mineral extraction, as charcoal provides the necessary hot temperatures for furnaces. There are charcoal production sites throughout the Incised Wooded River Valleys, dating from the Iron Age through to the post-medieval period. For centuries, the valley woodlands would have been managed for charcoal production, using a rotation coppice system. These traditional management techniques for charcoal production and firewood have been in important influence on forming the character of the woodlands and landscape which we see today. There is also a long history of use of water power, and a series of mills, leats and ponds may be found alongside the rivers.

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Landacre Bridge (G3); Barle Bridge (G3); Tarr Steps (G3); Brewer's Castle (G3); Mounsley Castle (G3); Oldbury Castle (G3); Barlynch Priory (G4); Road Castle (G4); Staddon Hill enclosure (G4); Winsford Bridge (G4); Brompton Regis lock –up (G5); Earthworks west of Bury (G5);
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Bampfylde & New Florence Mines (G2); Barlynch Priory (G4); Warren Farm (G4); Withiel Florey medieval settlement (G5); Mansley Combe (G6); West Harford & North Hawkwell gutter system (G6)
Conservation Areas	Dulverton (G3);
Listed Buildings	Scattered farm and domestic buildings throughout. Clusters in settlements e.g. Withypool, Dulverton include churches, bridges, public buildings, also milestones, well head

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

The perceptual qualities of the Incised Wooded River Valleys vary greatly. Where there are concentrations of visitors (for example Tarr Steps, Landacre Bridge or Wimbleball Lake) there is bustling, holiday atmosphere, particularly in summer, but a short walk away along a footpath will take the visitor away from the traffic, people and ice-cream vans to a different world of tranquillity and seclusion.

The presence, sound and energy of water has a strong influence on the landscape and contributes to people's perceptions. It can be a soothing presence, babbling in the background, but when in spate becomes a destructive and intimidating force. The rivers also form a link with the outside world, flowing on beyond the National Park boundary. The combination of woodland and steeply incised topography creates a marked sense of enclosure, and a shaded, sheltered, and verdant landscape character within woodlands. In contrast, the farmed areas, and the upper parts of valleys, are more open and lighter. The high proportion of woodland within the Incised Wooded River Valleys mean that seasonal influences are very strong, particularly the bluebell carpets and trees bursting into leaf in the spring, and the rich colours and crispy leaves of autumn.

The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' also picked up people's appreciation of seasonal changes, with a number of respondents within this LCT noting the autumn colours, and the busier, happy feel on a sunny summer's day at Tarr Steps. Descriptive words which were used to describe this landscape included *idyllic, noisy, inviting, historically interesting* and *sublime*. Visitors to the LCT also exhibited a wide range of positive emotions, including *relaxed, happy, inspired, comfortable, optimistic* and *touched*.

There is a small amount of light pollution from Dulverton, but elsewhere there are few sources of light pollution. The landform helps to block sky-glow (thereby improving star visibility), but also restricts the extent of sky which can be seen from within the valleys.

Tarr Steps Bridge on the River Barle

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

Views within the Incised Wooded River Valleys are often restricted by the landform, and channelled along the valleys. Bridges, 'castles' and settlements can act as focal points, but are often not seen in long views.

The roads within the valleys offer viewing opportunities, with compositions constantly changing. A typical view from a road could be through the valley-side woodland, across the floodplain and down into the fast-flowing river. The A396 follows the Exe and Avill valleys, and is likely to be an ancient route to the north coast. Today, it is a popular tourist route as it twists and turns along the valley floor, with woodlands rising up on both sides. However, other valleys contain few roads (or even paths) and access is therefore limited.

Horizons are generally wooded, although from higher up on valley sides there are views into the surrounding farmland and moorland. These views emphasise the contrast in scale, colour and texture between the wooded valleys and the more open land which surrounds them.

The large expanse of water at Wimbleball Lake is unique within the National Park, and forms a focal point in views from surrounding higher land, particularly the popular viewpoint of Haddon Hill.

The Barle near Brightworthy, 1942, by Alfred Munnings

Cultural Associations

This landscape has been popular with visitors for many years. Pixton Park, overlooking the Barle Valley south of Dulverton, was the seat of the Herbert Family. Laura Herbert married the novelist Evelyn Waugh, who started work on *Brideshead Revisited* and *Scoop* whilst staying at Pixton Park.

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The Incised Wooded River Valleys contain a rich diversity of Natural Capital Assets, which enable the functioning of many ecosystem services. Many of the ecosystem services provided in this LCT are likely to become even more important due to their role in reducing/ mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Woodlands are a key Natural Capital Asset, forming habitats for numerous species of trees, plants, insects, birds and mammals, and rare species of lichens, liverworts and mosses. Trees enhance air quality, and sequester carbon. Decaying leaf litter contributes to the formation of nutrient-rich soils, and woodlands also help to retain and filter water, which regulates water flows into the rivers (reducing flooding downstream), and improves water quality. Woodlands provide food, fuel (including charcoal) and building materials, and were managed for these roles for many centuries.

The many rivers within this LCT are important habitats and supplies of fresh water. The River Barle is particularly valuable for biodiversity and water quality as it is in such a natural state. Wimbleball Lake Reservoir contributes many ecosystem services in addition to its primary role of storing fresh water. The ecosystem services provided by the Wimbleball catchment are described in detail in the 'Wimbleball Catchment Ecosystem Services Project', under the themes of: food production; water supply and quality; biodiversity; services from woodland; climate regulation; landscape and historic environment, and tourism, recreation and access.

Farmland within the Incised Wooded River Valleys is primarily pastoral, but the woodland is also used for commercial game shooting. Farmland and woodland therefore contributes to food and fibre production, and to biodiversity by providing a variation in habitat and food sources.

The Incised Wooded River Valleys contribute many cultural ecosystem services such as recreation, spiritual enrichment, aesthetic experiences, sense of history and education. They contain many famous and less well-known recreation sites. Tarr Steps, Landacre Bridge and various villages are popular, picturesque beauty spots which receive large numbers of visitors, particularly in summer. Wimbleball is popular for a wide variety of recreation, including sailing, canoeing, walking, cycling, camping and glamping. There are campsites within the Exe Valley at Westermill and Bridgetown, and numerous hotels and guest houses, particularly within the Exe and Barle Valleys. There is a network of footpaths, often connecting archaeological sites, which provide opportunities for quiet recreation and appreciation of the historical features, and some rivers are also popular with canoeists and kayakers. The Two Moors Way, Exe Valley Way and the Macmillan Way West run through the Exe Valley (G4), and the Coleridge Way passes through the Avill Valley (G6). Woodlands in this LCT contain numerous archaeological sites of great cultural value, contributing to people's sense of history and providing opportunities for learning. The rivers and woodlands provide natural noise masking and contribute to the sense of tranquillity.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT

Within the Incised Wooded River Valleys LCT, there are six distinctive LCAs, each with a unique 'sense of place'. Some also have distinctive landscape characteristics, which are included in the descriptions below. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.

LCA G1: Bray

View south from Whitefield, showing valley floor meadows below woodland

Description

The smallest of the Incised Wooded River Valleys, this valley forms part of the much bigger valley system of the River Bray that occurs just outside the National Park boundary. The landscape is heavily wooded, with significant tracts of deciduous woodland (e.g. East Down Wood) and coniferous woodland (e.g. Sherracombe Wood). There are areas of small-scale farmland, and grassland on the valley floors, but these are secondary to the wooded character of the landscape.

There are also important archaeological sites, such as the early iron extraction and processing site at Sherracombe Ford. With the exception of two rural roads (Muxworthy Lane and Whitefield Lane), there are no other vehicular routes through the landscape, which gives this LCA a particularly isolated, changeless and remote feel. The Macmillan Way West long-distance route crosses the valley between Whitefield and Holewater. Settlement is limited to riverside cottages at Holewater Cross, and farms at Whitefield and Muxworthy, both of which are located on the upper valley sides, and accessed via steep and winding lanes with narrow stone bridges over streams.

LCA G2: Mole

View of the Mole Tributary Valleys from near Champion's Irish Bridge. North Molton Ridge forms the horizon

Description

Centred on the River Mole, this is another small LCA belonging to the Incised Wooded River Valleys LCT. Unlike the tributary valley of the River Bray (G1) this area has a greater mix of woodland and farmland. Extensive areas of tree felling are currently taking place in this LCA, particularly at South Wood. The woodland is predominantly coniferous plantations, including Buttery Wood and Long Wood. The farmland is characterised by small, irregular field units used for pasture. Some of the upper reaches of the combes have a more scrubby character, creating a gradual transition between woodland and farmland.

The hamlet of Heasley Mill occurs just inside the National Park boundary, close to a bridge over the River Mole. It comprises a cluster of stone and white painted/ rendered properties with slate roofs. Surrounding the hamlet are a number of disused mines and shafts, including the Bampfylde and New Florence Mines Principal Archaeological Landscape. This area contains features associated with both extraction and processing of copper and iron ore, including remains of shafts, spoil dumps, wheel pits and leats, the mine office, and the well-preserved crusher/ winder house.

LCA G3: Barle

The Barle Valley above Winsford

Description

One of the largest LCAs within this LCT, the Barle Incised Wooded River Valley stretches from Landacre Bridge and the upper reaches of Pennycombe Water (both north-west of the village of Withypool) to Pixton Park (south of Dulverton). During its course it therefore changes in character, starting as a shallow, steep combe, and gradually turning into a deeper, wider, wooded, settled valley.

The river Barle has an exceptionally natural character, having seen little impact from water abstraction, pollution or engineering. It therefore has a high nature conservation value and supports a wide range of species, including important spawning grounds for migratory salmon and trout. The woodland is relatively continuous north of Dulverton, but becomes less dense further upstream, where it is broken by farmland. This is especially true of the small combes around the tributary streams. The farmland comprises small scale, irregular fields (often grazed by sheep and cattle). The bulk of the woodland comprises deciduous, native species (including much ancient woodland) but there are also some areas of coniferous woodland.

This valley has many visible historic and archaeological landscape features, including the Iron Age enclosures of Mounsey Castle and Brewer's Castle overlooking the river valley, and old bridges at Tarr Steps and Landacre. These are much-visited beauty spots, but the Barle Valley as a whole is popular with visitors, being well-served by facilities and public rights of way, including the Two Moors Way. However, there is limited vehicular access within the valley, and there is no continuous stretch of road following the river.

Dulverton is located at the southern end of the valley, and Withypool near the confluence of the River Barle and Pennycombe Water. Farm buildings are scattered throughout the LCA, often located on the upper valley sides, sheltered in the combes of tributary streams.

LCA G4: Exe

The Exe Valley at Hele Bridge. The A396 runs within the trees in the centre of the photograph

Description

The Exe is the largest of the Incised Wooded River Valleys and exhibits variation in character along its course. It starts as spring-fed streams and waters running off the adjacent Open Moorland in Exe Cleave, and continues in a south-easterly direction, winding its way through the picturesque villages of Exford and Winsford, converging with the River Quarme and continuing south, through Exton and Bridgetown before meeting the River Barle, south-east of Dulverton. The four small settlements within the Exe Valley all take their names from the river or its crossing places: Exford, Exton, Winsford and Bridgetown. The busy A396 follows the River Exe as far as Exton, and then the River Quarme. Steep side roads descend the valley sides to meet the main road.

Like the Barle Valley, the Exe is more wooded in the south, where there are larger and more continuous tracts of tree cover. These are mostly deciduous, with some areas of conifer plantation. However, the floodplain is generally open, and often used for pasture. Towards the north of the valley, closer to the higher ground of the Open Moorland, there is less woodland and a greater proportion of land given over to pastoral farming, contained within high-banked fields.

The upper stretch of the valley contains a diversity of past and present land uses, from the former rabbit warren at Warren Farm (Exe Cleave) to the popular valley-bottom campsite at Westermill.

LCA G5: Haddeo

Wimbleball Lake from Haddon Hill

The river Haddeo near Hartford

Description

The River Haddeo Incised Wooded River Valley is unique within the National Park in that it contains a large open water body, namely Wimbleball Lake, an artificial reservoir. The lake is a much-used recreational resource for sailing, fishing, camping, bird watching and walking. Around the lake, the presence of the water and the recreational land uses, with associated car parks, visitor facilities and campsites have a localised impact on the character of the National Park. As the largest expanse of open water within the National Park, it is a distinctive feature in views from within this LCT, and from surrounding LCTs.

The LCA comprises three tributary valleys extending down from the surrounding Enclosed Farmland with Commons to merge with the River Haddeo in the south. The tributary valleys include the River Pulham, which passes the village of Brompton Regis before joining the Haddeo at Hartford. Brompton Regis is the largest village within the LCA. Other settlements include the hamlets of Bury and Hartford (both clustered around fords) and several farmsteads which are generally located on the valley sides. Settlements and farms are connected by a network of dark and winding lanes, often lined with fern-clad banks. There are extensive areas of woodland in the central part of the LCA, but public access into the woodland is very limited.

Within the more secluded parts of this LCA there are relatively-intensive game-rearing areas in woodland, and also a fish farm. The woodland contains numerous tracks, some of which appear eroded due to overuse by vehicles.

LCA G6: Avill

The Avill Valley at North Hawkwell

Description

The River Avill is the only example of this landscape type to run towards the north of the National Park. It is separated from the Exe river system by the central watershed, and instead feeds into the Avill, which reaches the sea east of Minehead. The LCA is small, with two watercourses and valley systems merging before entering the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT.

The western Avill valley starts at Dunkery Gate, adjacent to the Open Moorland at Dunkery Hill. The southern side of the valley is covered with deciduous woodland and the A396 cuts along the valley side at Cutcombe Hill. On the northern side of the valley, much of the land is in pastoral use, and the well-preserved catch-meadow system at West Harford and North Hawkwell is a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

The southern valley is mainly covered by coniferous plantations. The watercourse extends northwards until it meets the River Avill at Steart. From Steart the floodplain widens; the western side is open and farmed, whilst the eastern side is characterised by deciduous woodland. Both the A396 and a minor road follow the course of the River Avill before the valley widens to merge with the more open and less wooded Farmed and Settled Vale.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT G

This is a landscape of **strong** landscape character. The river valleys contain dramatic landforms, picturesque floodplains, attractive settlements, historic bridges, dense woodland and fast-flowing scenic rivers which combine to create a definite sense of place, and a landscape character which contrasts with the surrounding farmland and moorland.

The condition of the landscape is generally **moderate-good.** Most woodland and farmland is well managed, and buildings are well-maintained. However, there are some localised issues (described in 'forces for change' below) which affect landscape condition. Condition of SSSIs within the **Incised Wooded River Valleys** is variable. The River Barle itself has been assessed as being in 'unfavourable declining' condition due to the presence of invasive species (montbretia and Japanese knotweed) and the presence of habitat modifications (walled banks and check weirs). Himalayan Balsam is increasingly growing alongside the River Barle, and spreading from the south towards Dulverton. Riverside SSSIs have been assessed as a mixture of 'favourable', 'unfavourable recovering', 'unfavourable no change' and 'unfavourable declining'. Most of the woodland SSSIs have been assessed as 'unfavourable recovering'.

Listed buildings are generally in good condition, and most are occupied. Milestones in the Avill Valley (G6) have been identified as buildings at risk, and milestones along the A396 (G5) and Withial Florey church (G5) have been assessed as being in relatively poor condition. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Dulverton notes that most historic buildings (listed and unlisted) are well maintained, and there is evidence of the public sector and the local community restoring and maintaining buildings for visitor use. It also notes concerns about the use of PVCu windows and doors; suburban fencing; rooflights (particularly on front elevations which stand proud of the roof) and the presence of overhead powerlines and poles within parts of the town centre and along approach roads.

Much work has been done since 2007 to remove rhododendron, montbretia and other invasive species, but more remains to be done, and constant management is required to prevent re-growth. It is a particular challenge in areas such as the Barle Valley with organic certification where conventional herbicides cannot be used. Incremental changes causing urbanisation of road corridors remain a concern, and fencing along stream banks is a localised issue. From fieldwork undertaken in 2016, commercial game shoots continue to be a landscape issue and there appears to be an intensification of associated land use with this. Shooting management guidelines have encouraged the re-siting of feeders and pens away from roads and footpaths on some sites, however, issues remain on other sites.

Parts of this LCT have limited road and footpath networks, and therefore it is not always easy to see landscape change, particularly when it takes place on private land or in woodland.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT G

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly been affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Recreation, including campsites and honeypot sites	Concentrations of visitor facilities and popular sites can potentially impact on views; lead to increased traffic (particularly where there are bottlenecks on narrow lanes); change the character of the landscape to one dominated by recreation, and lead to loss of tranquillity. Small-scale effects such as litter and dog mess can have cumulative impacts. These are likely to be greatest where the landscape appears most natural, or where it is particularly open (e.g. around Wimbleball).	G3,G4,G5
Loss of historic features	Damage to buried archaeology and earthworks through scrub/ bracken/ tree encroachment. Woodland sites are particularly vulnerable (e.g. Iron-Age 'castles' along the Barle Valley). Loss of historic features around farms (e.g. catch meadow gutters) because they are no longer used, and understanding of them has been lost.	All
Game shooting	Cumulative impacts of game pens, feeders, tracks and birds in views from roads and footpaths, and pheasants in roads at some times of year. Game crops can create regular shapes or stripes in views which may be visible over a wide area and do not sit comfortably in the surrounding landscape. Vehicles can damage paths and ground surfaces, and consequently affect river water quality. It is important to note that shooting generally takes place on private land away from roads and public rights of way, and therefore the landscape impacts are not readily apparent. However, there can be effects on tranquillity as a result of noise from shooting (including guns and clients' helicopters). Sales of traditional farms to shoots may affect farming practices and the appearance of the landscape (e.g. lack of maintenance of hedgerows; reduction in grazing; increase in game crop planting). Game from nearby shoots can also affect native woodland.	All
Abandonment or change of use of valley floor pastures	Reduction in extent of valley floor pastures managed as grazing land, with pastures becoming overgrown. Potentially leads to loss of ecologically-rich wet meadows and hay meadows with resulting loss of biodiversity. Equestrian uses in some locations results in additional fencing and leads to changing composition of grassland.	All
Changes to field boundaries	Poor maintenance of traditional banks and hedges results in loss of landscape pattern, which can be particularly apparent in small-scale landscapes around settlements. Fencing alongside river banks can create a loss of physical and visual connectivity between rivers, banks and valley floor meadows, particularly where it occurs alongside footpaths.	All

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes in woodland management	Loss of traditional methods of woodland management resulting in reduced age and species diversity within woodlands. Large scale tree felling (either as part of planned forestry works, or in response to tree disease) has major potential impacts on the appearance of the landscape. Forestry tracks become eroded through use by vehicles, and although most are hidden within woodland, they can appear as linear scars when surrounding woodland is felled. Erosion of tracks is also linked to increased run-off and flooding. Conifer plantation on ancient woodland sites remains an ongoing issue, because the pace of generating interest in restoration practice remains low.	All
Changes to forestry and farming grants	Future changes to woodland and forestry grants will have a potentially large impact on the woodland character of this LCT.	All
Urbanisation of road corridors	Increased signage (e.g. successive speed limit signs), kerbing, road markings and other clutter along roads can create urban influences along road corridors, particularly around settlements and along main roads. Traditional signposts, milestones, phone boxes etc. become vulnerable to neglect.	G3, G4, G6
Development pressure	Housing extending out from traditional settlement forms, e.g. linear development along roads. This can occur in valleys (e.g. the outskirts of Dulverton) and also where villages have expanded up onto surrounding higher moorland/ farmland areas (e.g. Withypool and Brompton Regis).	G3, G4, G5
Flooding	Following heavy rainfall (particularly when the ground is already saturated), flooding can lead to scouring of river banks, soil erosion, damage to historic buildings and structures including bridges, mills and properties. New flood amelioration schemes may help to reduce the severity of flooding in the future.	All
Invasive species	Although much work has been done in clearing invasive species such as rhododendron, montbretia and Japanese knotweed, they remain an ongoing concern. Rhododendron is still an issue in the Haddeo Valley woodlands. The river Barle is adversely affected in some areas by invasive non-native plant species. Alien American signal crayfish are endemic in the river Barle, though recently subject to control measures.	All

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Pests and diseases	Woodlands are vulnerable to tree diseases such as phytophthora and ash dieback. Preventative felling to prevent spread of disease would also affect the landscape character and biodiversity.	All
Climate change	Woodlands are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts. They are likely to see an increased risk of pests and diseases which thrive in warmer conditions. These, combined with increased risk of drought, may result in a change of species composition in woodlands (for example beech replacing oak). Increased frequency and intensity of storms is also likely to lead to loss of trees, and a greater flood risk, with consequences on bank erosion, damage to paths and historic structures.	All

Rhododendron in woodland and pheasant pens cut into the valley side just above the river bank in the Haddeo Valley

Felled woodland in the Mole Valley

Housing in Withypool extending out of the village centre and up the valley side

Recreation facilities and non-native planting at Wimbleball Lake

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT G

Landscape Strategy

The landscape character created by intimate, sheltered wooded valleys, pasture and natural river systems is conserved. A mosaic of linked habitats support thriving populations of fish, birds, plants, insects and mammals, with invasive species controlled. Woodland and farmland is well-managed, and the cumulative impacts of game shoots on the landscape are minimised. Ancient woodland is protected and the proportion of broadleaf woodland increased. Settlements are thriving, and the historic built environment is conserved and celebrated. The landscape is enjoyed by visitors, using facilities which do not detract from the scenic quality of the area. Roads and settlements retain their rural character and scale, and archaeological sites are undamaged by erosion or vegetation.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT G

Protect

- Protect watercourses from silt pollution and retain the River Barle in its natural state as much as possible. Deal promptly with outbreaks of invasive water-borne vegetation such as Japanese Knotweed. Monitor pollution levels and species present.
- Protect archaeology, particularly wooded sites vulnerable to damage by trees, scrub and bracken.
- Protect historic structures such as mileposts, restoring them where appropriate to contribute to the historic character of roads.
- Protect ancient woodland from further conifer planting, and sensitively restore plantations on ancient woodland sites. Investigate opportunities to buffer/ extend ancient woodland to compensate for loss through tree disease. Protect veteran trees, and raise awareness of their presence.
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution.

Manage

- Manage game shoots to minimise their impacts on the landscape (for example planting game crops to appear naturalistic, rather than in geometric shapes). Where possible, site game feeders, pens and crops aware from public rights of way and roads in order to minimise the cumulative visual impacts of game shooting. Manage shoots to minimise detrimental impacts on native biodiversity.
- Manage woodlands, retaining the valuable mixture of woodlands and glades, and continuing with the removal of invasive species such as rhododendron. Respond to outbreaks of tree disease in accordance with best-practice guidance. Consider traditional management techniques such as coppicing in some locations.
- Manage riverside environments, encouraging appropriate grazing of riverside meadows and associated habitats to enhance their biodiversity. Minimise riverside fencing in areas with public access.
- Manage farmland, including maintenance of hedgerows and hedge banks to retain the small-scale pattern of the landscape.
- Manage recreation sites, ensuring that people can visit and enjoy the area, but that facilities do not detract from its character. This is particularly important around Wimbleball, where there are elevated views of the lake from Haddon Hill, and where there are opportunities to improve the landscaping around the visitor facilities (for example replacing non-native planting with native species). Ensure that any cumulative impacts from small-scale incidents such as littering are minimised.
- Manage valley-side areas which were formerly grazed but are now being encroached upon by scrub and bracken. In some areas, it may be preferable to re-introduce grazing to maintain a grassland/ heath environment. In others, management to allow natural reversion to woodland may be more appropriate.
- Manage sites in accordance with SSSI and SAC Management Plans.

Plan

- Ensure that conversion of redundant agricultural buildings is done sensitively.
- Work with Highways Authorities to ensure that road signage and traffic calming measures are minimised and are as discreet as possible to reduce urbanisation of road corridors, particularly where A-roads pass through G4 and G6. This is also a potential issue around settlement edges.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following documents:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Sylvanus for The Exmoor Society, August 2013)
- *The Exmoor Guidelines for the Management of Game Birds in the National Park*, Exmoor National Park Authority. Available on the Exmoor National Park Authority website.

Specific Planning Guidelines for Incised Wooded River Valleys in LCT G

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Incised Wooded River Valleys Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Strong historic association of towns/villages/hamlets with rivers both physically, at crossing points and in place names, such that they are often hidden in views from the wider landscape.	Expansion of settlements away from the rivers and onto higher valley slopes such that traditional association of settlement with watercourses is undermined and settlement becomes more visually obvious in wider landscape.	Ensure new development relates closely to existing nucleated form and association with the river on the lower valley floor and slopes, and is parallel to contours.
Distinct landscape context of settlements – wooded backdrop of steep valley sides and open spaces within the settlement form including small greens along watercourses.	Loss of open spaces within the settlement or blocking of key views from public spaces to valley side setting.	Protect key views to the wider landscape setting of the settlement which affords strong sense of place. Protect open spaces within settlements which form an important setting to listed buildings and reinforce the association of the settlement with the watercourse.
Dispersed pattern of farms on upper valley slopes set within folds of landscape associated with tributary streams.	New farm buildings which break the skyline or are reflective.	Ensure new farm buildings are set within the folds of the landscape. Locate new farm buildings such that they physically relate to existing farms, and do not appear as isolated structures in the landscape. Ensure that buildings respond to landform (for example through stepped rooflines), and that roofs and walls visually recede through use of suitable colour, materials that weather and that are non-reflective.
Pattern of traditional farm buildings providing strong connections to the landscape and sense of history.	Potential loss of farm buildings which are no longer needed for their original purposes. Poor quality conversion of buildings resulting in a loss of traditional features and character.	Ensure that conversions maintain the style and character of the original building in terms of form, scale, materials and detailing. Ensure consideration is given to curtilage treatment and avoid suburbanisation of the setting of the building.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Rural qualities of lanes which connect to settlements.	Widening of lanes, introduction of concrete kerbs, signage and road markings, linear expansion of settlements along lanes. Increase in cars and car parking.	Development should reinforce the settlement character and form to avoid linear development along lanes, and associated suburbanisation of these historic routes.
Dark night skies	Increased street lighting, and lightspill from buildings (including agricultural buildings)	Resist increasing in street lighting, and work with Highways Authorities to develop an acceptable lighting policy. Provide cowling on lights within agricultural sheds to minimise light spill from roof lights at night.

Dulverton in its wooded landscape setting on the side of the Barle Valley

Farmstead on valley side, with natural landform and existing planting providing mitigation to an extended farm building complex.

New agricultural building designed and sited to respect the landscape setting.

Example of naturalistic game cover planting (gorse on the right of the image) Photo: Hugh Thomas

Sensitive extension to accommodate tourist facilities, Tarr Farm

Traditional road signs still in use, Dulverton

Re-use of historic building. Dulverton Workhouse is now the Exmoor National Park Authority offices.

Landscape Character Type H:
Plantation (with Heathland) Hills

View from Vinegar Hill

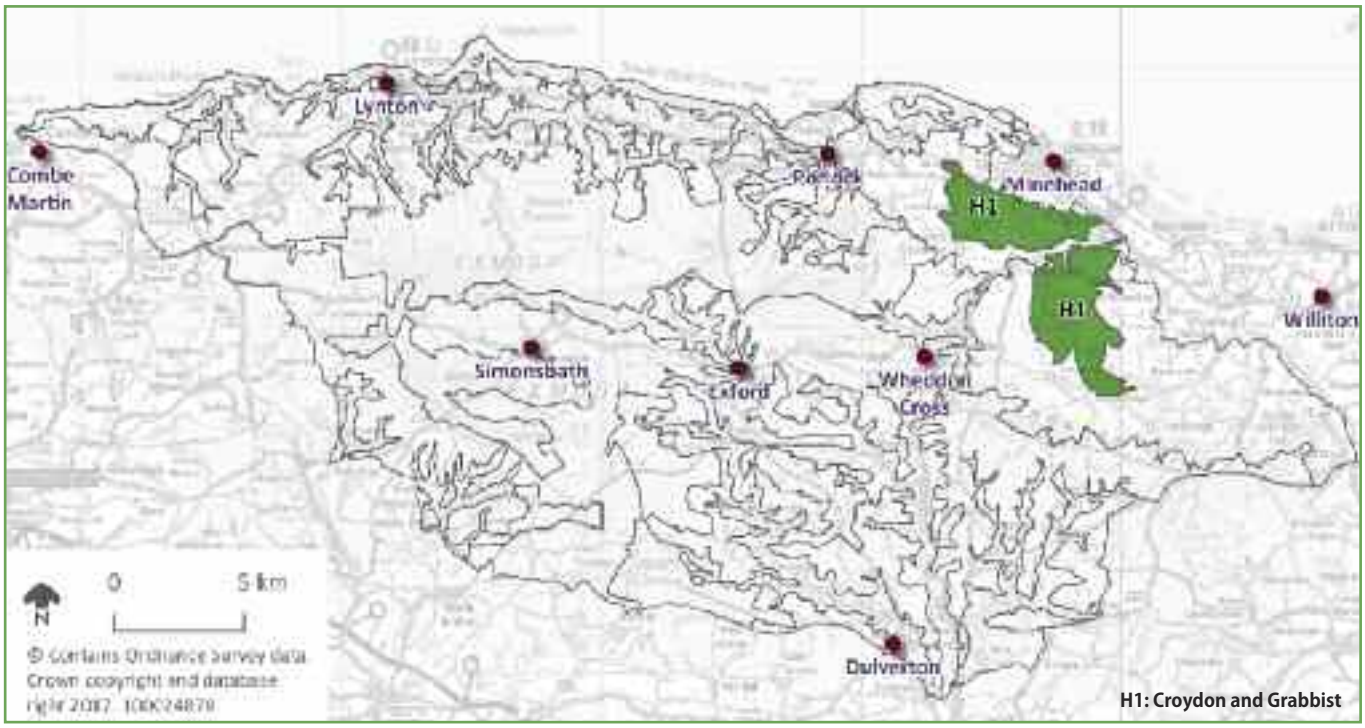
Summary Description

The Plantations (with Heathland) Hills LCT is located in the north-east of the National Park. It comprises the relatively high and predominantly wooded hills to the north and south of Dunster, which forms the setting of the village. The wooded hills form two ridges which are bisected by the Avill Valley. The northern ridge (comprising Periton Hill, Knowle Hill and Grabbist Hill) forms the National Park boundary to the south of Minehead; its remaining boundaries are with the Farmed and Settled Vale (LCT E). The southern ridge (comprising Gallox Hill, Croydon Hill, Black Hill and Monkham Hill) has the Avill Valley (Farmed and Settled Vale LCT) to the north, and the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes LCT to the east, south and west. However, the wooded hills feature in views from several other LCTs.

This LCT includes the northern part of the village of Wootton Courtenay, but otherwise settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses on lower slopes.

Both ridges are former heathlands which were planted with extensive conifer plantations in the early twentieth century. The dense, dark green forest forms a strong contrast with surrounding areas in terms of colour, texture and landscape pattern. Pockets of heath and broadleaved woodland remain, along with the historic deer park of Dunster Castle. The hill summits are rich in Iron-Age archaeology, from where there are splendid views to the sea and surrounding landscapes.

There is only one Landscape Character Area (LCA) within this LCT (Croydon Hill- Wootton Ridge) as the character of the landscape is fairly consistent across the LCT.



Key Characteristics of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills

- Underlain by relatively hard Devonian sandstone of the Hangman Sandstone formation.
- A series of interconnected hills (balls) and ridges which rise above the surrounding valleys.
- Covered by dense, managed coniferous plantations and some mixed woodland. Includes the tallest Douglas fir tree and magnolia in England in Dunster Forest, and veteran trees in Dunster Park.
- Some surviving pockets of heathland (although under pressure from encroachment) and some areas of newly-restored heathland.
- Occasional small pastoral fields on the peripheries of the LCT, and in tributary valleys. Stone walls of former fields can be seen within the plantations.
- A landscape which has undergone significant change in the twentieth century following extensive conifer planting.
- Very little settlement- part of Wootton Courtenay village and scattered farms.
- A rich archaeological landscape, including several hill-top Iron-Age sites. Dunster Park (deer park) is a Registered Historic Park. Former estate character identifiable in details such as stone-faced banks, rides and veteran trees.
- Views within the LCT often restricted by dense tree cover, although open areas offer both inland and coastal views.
- Wooded hills form the backdrop to views from many surrounding LCTs.
- Conifer plantations create a dark, strongly-textured landscape contrasting with surrounding farmland and moorland.
- A tranquil landscape character over much of the LCT, remote in places, although human influence is evident in way-marked paths and timber management tracks.

Natural Landscape Features

The underlying geology of Devonian Old Red Sandstone (the Hangman Sandstone formation) is a relatively hard rock, and has eroded more slowly that the relatively soft rocks which surround it. As a result, the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills landscape sits at a moderately high altitude within Exmoor. With an elevation range of between 150-380m AOD, this is a visually striking landscape of dramatic convex hills which sit proud and pronounced from the adjacent landscape of the Farmed and Settled Vale. The landform comprises two ridges (Grabbist Hill and Gallox Hill), separated by the valley of the River Avill. The 'Giant's Seat' on Grabbist hill is an ancient (probably peri-glacial) soil slip, which is accentuated by pre-historic earthworks constructed around it. The underlying Hangman Grits geology gives rise to nutrient-poor, stony, acid soils, but the lower part of Dunster Park is underlain by later marl rocks, creating clay-rich soils with higher nutrient status.

Formerly an area of heather moor, the hills (balls) and ridges, cut by a number of combes, are now cloaked in a series of managed coniferous plantations (mostly Douglas fir), and some mixed woodland. There are also some important areas of broadleaved woodland, for example Withycombe Scruffets to Hats Wood, Halse Wood and Whits Wood, which are thought to be ancient semi-natural woodland. The LCT contains a number of notable trees, including veteran parkland trees in Dunster Park, and the tallest tree in England (a Douglas fir) in Dunster Forest. This grove of splendid forest trees are celebrated in the Tall Trees Trail (accessed from Nutcombe Bottom) which also boasts the tallest magnolia in England. The warm climate, fertile soils, plentiful rainfall and sheltered site combine to create ideal conditions for tree growth.

Some areas of lowland heath survive (for example at Black Hill) and there have been ongoing programmes of heathland restoration. Heather can often be seen alongside the verges of the few roads that cut through the trees, as well as at plantation edges. However, although there are areas of heath, there is also a sense of a battle to compete with the plantations, with added threats of encroachment from bracken, gorse and self-seeding deciduous trees. Without adequate grazing, heath is managed by cutting which creates an unnatural appearance.

Much of the LCT is covered by the Dunster Park and Heathland Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated for its lowland dry heath (supporting the nationally-rare heath fritillary butterfly), dry lowland acid grassland, wood pasture with veteran trees (supporting a nationally-significant assemblage of beetles) and ancient semi-natural oak woodland habitats which support many species of ferns, mosses, insects, birds and mammals, including deer.

Veteran oak trees, Dunster Park

Entrance to the Dunster Forest Tall Trees Trail

Deer on Gallox Hill. Conygar Hill can be seen in the background, and South Wales on the horizon

Managed heath, Gallox Hill

Mixed woodland, Vinegar Hill. Species include holly, yew, Douglas fir, oak, ash, beech and sweet chestnut

Detail of lichen-covered twig, Dunster Park woods

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Dunster Park and Heathlands
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous sites, including plantations, coppice and combe sites. Most are treed.

Ancient Woodland	Grabbist Hill and Conygar Wood near Dunster; more extensive areas in the centre of the southern ridge, including Monkham Wood, Druid's Combe Wood, Withycombe Scruffets, Whit's Wood, Hur Wood and King's Hedge Coppice.
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Kingsbridge New Mill Quarry; Conygar Quarry

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

There are several prehistoric sites hidden in clearings within the plantations, the earliest of which are likely to be the barrows on Withycombe Common (a Scheduled Monument). Neolithic/ Bronze Age worked flints have also been found on the Grabbist Hill ridge. The concentration of Iron Age sites, including hillforts, hill-slope enclosures and associated field systems, is unique on Exmoor. Four earthwork enclosures may be found on elevated sites at Gallox Hill, Bat's Castle, Long Wood and Grabbist Hill. All but the Long Wood site occupy defensive hilltop positions with excellent views over the surrounding area, which may suggest control over an important routeway along the Avill Valley/ Porlock Vale. Gallox Hill and Bat's Castle(both Scheduled Monuments) are also designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape, along with the extensive field system of banks, lynchets and clearance cairns which continues to the south and is likely to be of a similar date.

Dunster Park contains elements of recreational landscapes from the medieval period and the 18th Century. It is listed Grade II* on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Following the Norman Conquest, the Dunster estate was granted to William de Mohun, and it is likely that this early estate would have included a deer park for hunting. Wood pasture, in which animals (including deer) are free to graze under trees is still present, along with many veteran trees. In the mid-eighteenth century, a new deer park was laid out to the south of the existing park. Conygar Tower was built at the same time, as part of Luttrell's embellishments of Dunster Castle and its grounds. Luttrell's aim was to recreate the medieval ambience of the estate, and Conygar Tower was built as both an eye-catcher to be seen from the castle, and a place to be visited. The name Conygar Hill implies that it was used as a rabbit warren in medieval times. Recent restoration of Dunster Park has included installation of new deer-proof post and wire fencing and gates.

The landscape of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills has seen great changes in the past 100 years, largely due to the planting of extensive conifer plantations for timber production. The 1909 Ordnance Survey map shows plantations at Great Headon (near Tivington) and Staunton Common, but the majority of the plantations were established in the 1920s. Within the plantations are the remnants of the earlier landscapes of heathy hill tops, such as stone walls and ditches. Because of the extensive coniferous plantations, much of the landscape is modern, but there are areas of medieval origin associated with Dunster Park and on some of the lower slopes, where there is surviving ancient woodland and small fields.

Settlement is very limited within this LCT. It includes the northern part of Wootton Courtenay village (including the listed church and manor house within a Conservation Area), but otherwise settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses on the lower slopes and in the combes. Settlement is particularly sparse within the southern part of the LCT.

Dunster Park. The castle is on the right of the picture, seen above the new deer fencing

Gallox Hill Iron Age enclosure
©Historic England Archive

Former field wall within plantation

Designated Cultural and Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Barrows on Withycombe Common; Late Prehistoric defended enclosure, Long Wood; Hillfort on Grabbist Hill; Late prehistoric defended settlement at Black Ball Camp (Gallox Hill); Bat's Castle Iron-Age Hillfort and outwork; St Leonards Well.
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Bat's Castle and Gallox Hill

Conservation Areas	Dunster, Wootton Courtenay
Registered Park/ Garden	Dunster Castle (Deer Park)
Listed Buildings	Cluster including church and manor house in Wootton Courtenay; Conygar Tower; New Mill, Luxborough; Wellhead, St Leonard's Well; Boundary stone, Druid's Combe Wood.

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

This is a conspicuous landscape, with the dense, dark green forest forming a strong contrast with surrounding areas in terms of colour, texture and landscape pattern. The contrasts between the deciduous and coniferous trees are strongest in the winter and autumn. The size of plantation blocks creates a large-scale landscape which contrasts with the smaller fields around its periphery, and the remaining patches of open heath and parkland. Within the trees there is a very strong sense of enclosure, which is heightened by suddenly emerging into patches of heathland. The lack of roads and settlement within the landscape makes for a sense of tranquillity over much of the LCT. Some parts of the landscape feel remote, although this is reduced by recreational features such as waymarked paths, and also by forestry management tracks which create an awareness of human activity in the hills and give it a sense of being a working landscape. It is from these routes and tracks that the scale of the plantations can be appreciated. There is also a sense of a changing landscape, with the old field walls, neglected and hidden within the trees, providing clues to its former use and appearance. There are very few sources of light pollution within this LCT, although it is affected by light pollution from Minehead and other coastal settlements.

The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' recorded visitors' perceptions of the forest landscape at Nutcombe Bottom. Adjectives used to

describe this landscape included *peaceful, wooded, awesome, well-managed, stunning, spectacular trees, boardwalks, glorious* and *with paths*. Emotional responses to this landscape included *relaxed, calm, peaceful, protected* and *enriched*, but there can also be a sense of claustrophobia within the dense trees.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The majority of the LCT has restricted views due to the density of tree cover. However, in patches of open heath, and where conifers have been felled, there are wider views, which can appear suddenly as the viewer emerges from the trees. From Black Hill and Wootton Ridge there are views across to Dunkery Hill, and it is easy to imagine the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills covered by heather moorland, and forming part of a much larger northern moorland block. As well as views to Dunkery, the open tracts provide views along the vale to Dunster, across to Minehead and the Bristol Channel, east towards the Quantocks AONB, and south over the Brendon Hills.

View north from Bat's Castle rampart towards Grabbist Hill and Dunster

The Plantation (with Heathland) Hills forms an important wooded skyline and backdrop in views from the adjacent Farmed and Settled Vale, and contributes to its character and sense of place. Wootton Hill also forms the immediate setting to Wootton Courtenay Village, and Grabbist and Gallox Hills form the setting of Dunster. The Plantation (with Heathland) Hills also form distinctive features in views from other surrounding landscape character areas, including North Hill High Coastal Heaths, Northern Open Moorland, Eastern Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons, and Brendon Hills Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes.

View south towards the Wootton Ridge from North Hill (High Coastal Heath LCT).
The forested slopes of the Wootton Ridge contrast with the open moorland on Dunkery Hill (right)

Dunster Castle and Park by William Tomkins (c.1732-1792) © National Trust Images/ John Hammond.
Conygar Tower is prominent toward the right of the picture. Grabbist Hill (un-treed) rises behind the castle.

Cultural Associations

The Plantation (with Heathland) Hills have a long association with the De Mohun and Luttrell families of Dunster Castle, and continue to form the setting of the Castle.

This LCT also has an association with the hymn 'All things Bright and Beautiful' which was reputedly written on Grabbist Hill, and captures the view across the surrounding valleys, woodlands, heaths and buildings:

The purple headed mountain,

The river running by,

The sunset and the morning,

That brightens up the sky.

The tall trees in the greenwood,

The meadows where we play,

The rushes by the water,

We gather every day.

The rich man in his castle,

The poor man at his gate...

Mrs Cecil Francis Alexander 1818-1895

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The forests within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills were originally planted to provide high-quality timber for a range of uses, including construction, paper-making, fuel and pit props. In addition to these provisioning services, the woodland within this LCT contributes to regulation of air quality, assists with carbon sequestration (storage) and provides oxygen through photosynthesis. Water is regulated through filtration which improves water quality, and slows run-off, reducing the risk of downstream flooding. Although the biodiversity value of coniferous forests is relatively limited, there are areas of greater biodiversity value within the LCT, including the heathland areas (which support fritillary butterflies), deciduous woodlands (habitat for a range of moss, lichen, ferns, trees, insects, animals and birds) and wood pasture/ parkland with veteran trees (which support nationally-significant insect populations, as well as birds and animals).

Parts of the LCT (such as the Tall Trees Trail at Nutcombe Bottom) are important recreational resources, providing opportunities for people to explore and engage with the forest landscape, and improve their health and well-being. These are important cultural services (the non-material benefits which people receive from ecosystems) along with the cultural heritage and archaeological sites within this landscape (e.g. Iron-Age hillforts and Dunster Deer Park. These sites contribute towards the sense of history and sense of place, whilst providing opportunities to learn about social and cultural development in the local area.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within LCT H

LCA H1: Croydon Hill- Wootton Ridge

There is only one LCA within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills LCT as the landscape character comprising a mosaic of forested and open hills is considered to be fairly consistent across it. The extent of tree cover, and the occasional long views, contribute to its sense of place.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT H

The strength of landscape character is considered to be **moderate-strong** overall. The prominent, wooded hills create a distinctive landscape character, with a strong sense of place. This is also the case in the deer park, with its more open feel and impressive veteran trees. Recently-installed deer fencing and gates are new elements within the landscape which can appear visually intrusive. Plantations form the backdrop and setting for the parkland landscape and therefore also influence its character. In places, the strength of landscape character is reduced by the blurring of character between woodland and heath. Where heathland is being encroached by bracken, scrub and trees, it can be difficult to know where woodland ends and heathland begins. This affects the condition of the landscape, and also introduces uncertainty about its character- is it woodland, heath, or both? Further uncertainty is introduced where trees have reached maturity and are being felled. Will these areas be replanted, or restored as heathland? The plantations also form the backdrop and setting for the parkland landscape

The condition of the landscape within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills is **variable**. Some parts, such as Dunster Park and Nutcombe Bottom are in good condition, with recent investment in management. Other parts are in poor condition, particularly areas of heathland where encroachment by bracken, scrub and trees is damaging archaeology, as well as reducing views and affecting the open heathland character. It is inevitable that areas of recently-felled plantation appear to be in poor condition, but this may change following long-term restoration. As well as archaeological earthworks being vulnerable to vegetation encroachment, other historic landscape features such as field walls are also often neglected,

as they are no longer required for their original purpose. Most SSSIs within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills have been assessed as being in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. However, Black Hill and Dunster Castle Woodlands have been assessed as being in 'favourable' condition, and there are small areas on the peripheries of Alcombe Common which have been assessed as 'unfavourable, no change'. There are no listed buildings assessed as at risk or in poor condition within this LCT. A small part of the Wootton Courtenay Conservation Area is within this LCT. The Conservation Area appraisal notes minor issues with PVCu windows and doors, solar panels, and overhead wires/ poles, but overall the condition is good.

Several issues noted in the 2007 Landscape Character Assessment remain problems, particularly loss of heathland, damage to archaeology and blocking of views as a result of encroachment of bracken and trees into open or cleared areas. Lack of grazing in streamside pastures is a localised issue. Dunster Deer Park has recently seen some restoration, but there is still some loss of historic features such as former field walls which are no longer needed or maintained. Replacement of the pale fence to the deer park with a modern post and wire fence is not sympathetic to the historic character of the area.

Bracken filling Gallox Hill Iron Age enclosure

Eroding earthworks, Bat's Castle Iron-Age hillfort

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT H

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly been affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Damage to archaeology	Earthworks and buried archaeology are very vulnerable to damage by encroaching bracken, scrub and trees. Archaeology is damaged by roots and also (in the case of bracken) by chemicals emitted by the plant. This LCT contains several important archaeological sites in woodland clearings, which are threatened by vegetation, and erosion by animals and visitors. Other historic features (such as stone walls) are suffering from neglect as they are no longer required for their original purpose.
Limited views	The presence of trees limits visual connections with surrounding landscapes, and also makes it difficult to perceive historic landscapes (such as Bat's Castle earthworks and field system) as a single entity. The situation is made worse by scrub encroachment in heathland areas, which blocks views from paths.
Encroachment of gorse and young trees in heathland areas	Encroachment of woodland and scrub into areas of heathland results in a loss of landscape character as the contrast in colour, texture and pattern between forest and heath is lost. It also reduces the extent of heathland habitat, which affects biodiversity. Rhododendron remains a problem in some woodland areas.
Forestry Management	Changes in forestry management (for example felling, re-planting, heathland restoration) all affect the appearance of the landscape - its pattern, colour, texture and also its accessibility and sense of place. The infrastructure required for forestry management, such as tracks, can also impact on the landscape, particularly if tracks are wide or become eroded through overuse or heavy rain. Often they are hidden within woodland and cannot be seen from outside, but if the woodland is felled then they can become visible from a wide area as linear scars on hillsides. Erosion of tracks is also linked to increased run-off and flooding.
Changes in land ownership and forestry grants	There is currently uncertainty over the future of forestry grants, and this is likely to particularly affect the character of this LCT. For example, the landscape will be altered depending on whether it will be more profitable to re-plant with broadleaved or coniferous species. There are currently no grants for restocking. Heathland restoration is also reliant to suitable grants.
Decline in traditional management of commons	Reduction in traditional grazing of pastures and commons (e.g. Alcombe Common), resulting in encroachment of trees and bracken and loss of openness. This affects landscape character and reduces the contrast between farmland and woodland.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Landscape restoration schemes	Some areas (e.g. parts of Grabbist Hill ridge) are being restored as heathland following felling of plantation trees. Dunster Deer Park has recently seen some restoration, with new visually-prominent deer-proof fencing and gates.
Development pressure	Whilst there is currently little pressure for building in this LCT, it is possible that proposals for large-scale agricultural buildings may come forward. The elevation of this LCT means that it is also likely to be under pressure to accommodate telecommunications masts. Unless they are carefully sited, such masts would appear as prominent features over a wide area.
Recreation Pressure	Over use of paths (particularly by bikes and vehicles) can lead to erosion and rutting of the path surface. This is particularly true when large-scale events take place. The introduction of car parks, paths and other visitor facilities can affect landscape character if it is not done sensitively.
Climate change	The extensive areas of mature conifers within this LCT are particularly vulnerable to damage by storms and high winds, especially if they are growing on shallow soils. Areas of recent tree felling, with exposed soil, are at risk of erosion following heavy rain. Land management, including clear felling, within this LCT has the potential to affect the flood risk in surrounding LCTs. Broadleaved trees may also be affected by changing climatic conditions leading to a change in the character of woodlands.
Tree pests and diseases	Risk of various species (e.g. larch and oak) from pathogens including phytopthora. Clear-felling to combat these diseases can have significant adverse impacts on landscape character.

Encroachment of bracken and silver birch onto formerly open heath at Alcombe Common

Forestry felling on Croydon Hill

New deer-proof fencing and gates on Black Ball, part of Dunster Forest

Nutcombe Bottom car park.
Popular trails give the landscape a more recreational character.

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT H

Landscape Strategy

Open habitats which contain archaeological sites are kept clear of bracken and encroaching scrub and trees. Key views are retained and enhanced through vegetation control, particularly on popular routes, which enable connectivity with surrounding landscapes. The deer park remains in positive management, and historic features are retained within the landscape. The landscape is popular with visitors, who use the well-managed recreation facilities and path network, and enjoy a range of quiet recreation opportunities within the forest.

A management plan for this LCT is in place which considers the future of the landscape as coniferous trees reach maturity, and defines areas to be managed as heath, forest or woodland. Heathland areas are kept open, possibly through the introduction of suitable grazing regimes.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT H

Protect

- Protect historic features, prioritising archaeological sites which are being damaged by bracken and scrub encroachment.
- Protect views from loss through growing vegetation, particularly key viewpoints from paths and summits. Aim to retain visual connections between viewpoints within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills and surrounding moorland areas (e.g. North Hill; Dunkery Beacon).
- Protect the undeveloped appearance of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills in views from surrounding areas.
- Protect the settings of historic assets.

Manage

- Manage broadleaf woodland areas to retain their age/ species diversity and increase resilience against climate change.
- Aim to restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to broadleaved woodland where possible, and to soften the edges of conifer plantations with broadleaved planting.
- Encourage and support greater uptake of continuous cover forestry practices to provide structurally, visually and biologically diverse ecosystems which deliver multiple benefits to people and nature.
- Work with the Forestry Commission and other landowners to minimise the landscape impacts of forestry tracks, for example through keeping widths as narrow as possible, reducing water run-off along tracks, and minimising rutting by wheeled vehicles.
- Continue to control rhododendron within the woodland understorey and where it is establishing on heathland areas.
- Recognise the importance of this LCT as a location for growing high-quality timber.
- Manage recreation facilities such as paths, waymarkers and car parks, in order to encourage visitors to explore, enjoy and value the area, but without damaging its character or physical fabric. Work with the organisers of large-scale events to ensure that they understand the potential impacts on the landscape, biodiversity and historic features, and to keep these impacts to a minimum.
- Further restoration of the deer park (recognising its medieval origins and mid-eighteenth century development into formal parkland) including appropriate boundary treatments and planting.
- Manage SSSIs in accordance with SSSI Management Plans.

Plan

- Work with landowners to develop a long-term and holistic plan for the area, which takes account of archaeology, biodiversity and recreation opportunities, as well as forestry requirements. Identify areas for different management (e.g. as forest, woodland, heath and farmland) and introduce positive management accordingly.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following document:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Silvanus for The Exmoor Society, August 2013)

Grabbist Hill forms a treed setting to Dunster Castle

Specific Planning Guidelines for the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Unsettled and remote character yet strong inter-visibility between this LCT and surrounding lower lying areas and elevated key viewpoints including North Hill and Dunkery Hill.	Development on the upper slopes which may break the skyline or form an intrusive feature undermining the perceptions of remoteness and isolation on these upland ridges.	Where new development is required set it below skylines and mitigate with native planting reflecting local patterns of vegetation. Dispersed patterns of development, on lower slopes, interspersed with open space and vegetation are preferable to high density linear development along roads adjoining settlements.
Distinctive landscape backdrop to settlements, often comprising former heath/common. Settlements evolved from rural farmsteads and hamlets and draw distinctiveness and sense of place from the landscape context.	Linear development and urban fringe land uses on land above existing settlements which alters loose nucleated village form and undermines the historic link between settlement and heathland/common.	Consider the historic evolution of settlement form and its functional relationship with the wider landscape in order to retain and enhance areas where meaningful relationships remain. Settlement expansion in the form of detached cottages and farmstead arrangements reflect the historic evolution of Wootton Courtenay.
Small scale and rural character of isolated farms on lower slopes and fringes.	Expansion of existing farms altering the small scale remote character of rural settlement.	Mitigate the scale of new farm buildings through breaking up the form and massing of the building through use of subdivided roof and wall structures, muted recessive colours and native planting. Ensure new buildings cluster closely around existing buildings and remain on lower slopes.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Sense of seclusion and lack of built development.	New/ expanded recreation facilities with associated increase in visitor numbers and cars.	Locate facilities and develop trails in such a way that they encourage visitors to disperse within the landscape rather than be concentrated at single points. Ensure new facilities, access roads and parking areas are well-designed to maximise screening from tree cover, and to minimise loss of mature native trees. Promote high-quality design of buildings which reflect the surrounding landscape (e.g. through use of timber cladding).

Farmland, forest and heath form the backdrop to Wootton Courtenay Village

Landscape Character Type I: **Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes**

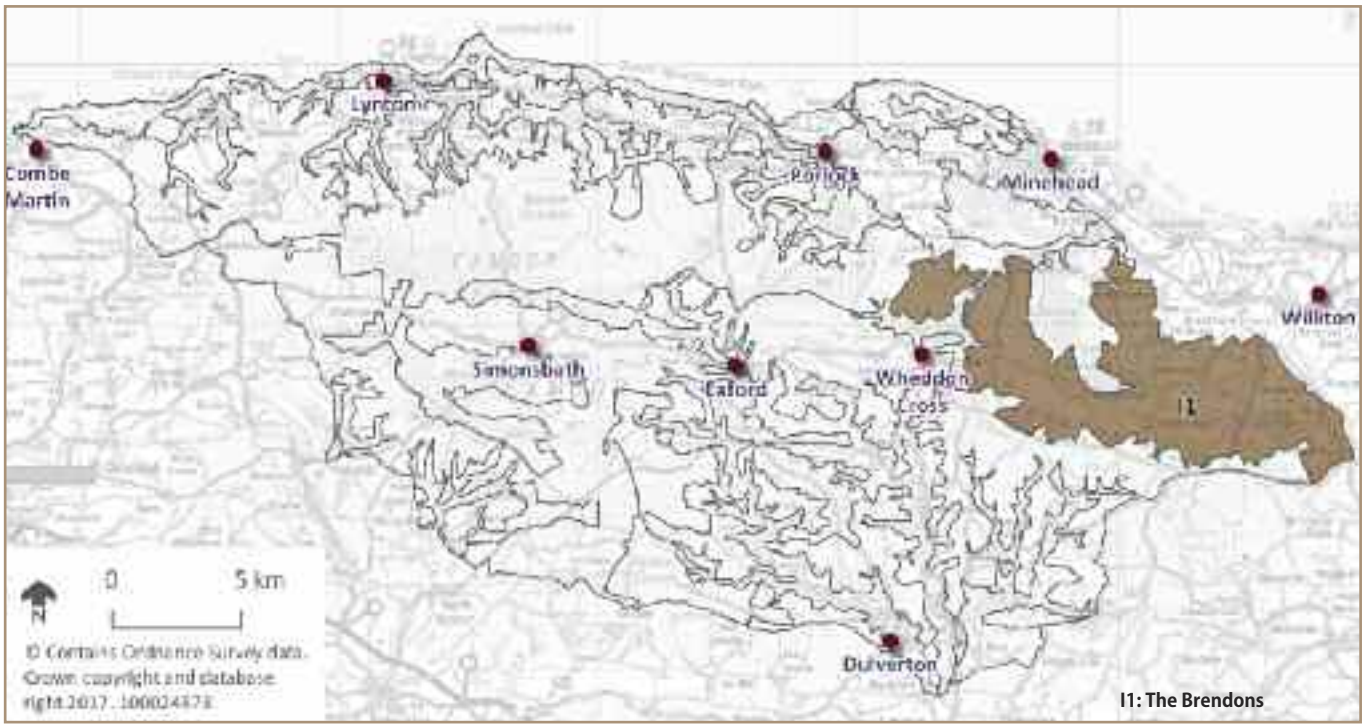
A typical view in the Brendon Hills, looking east from Churchtown. The village of Kingsbridge is nestled out of sight in the bottom of the valley.

Summary Description

This LCT is located in the eastern side of the National Park and is associated with the Brendon Hills. It stretches from the eastern slopes of Dunkery Hill to the National Park's eastern boundary. To the north are the Farmed and Settled Vale and Plantation (with Heathland) Hills. To the west are Open Moorland and Incised Wooded River Valleys and to the south are Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons. Views out of the Brendon Hills are strongly influenced by these surrounding Landscape Character Types, as well as by views out of the National Park towards the coast and across to the Quantock Hills.

There are many hamlets and small villages within this LCT, mostly located in river valleys. They include Churchtown, Kingsbridge and Pooltown (collectively forming Luxborough), Treborough, Roadwater, Monksilver, Elworthy, Nettlecombe and Rodhuish. Often the central settlement is very small, and parishes are comprised of several hamlets and isolated farms.

The landscape comprises a series of interconnected rounded hills (often draped with woodland), separated by narrow combes containing fast-flowing rivers and streams. It is a peaceful and intimate landscape, with winding lanes providing constantly changing and unexpected views over fields, farms and woodland.



Key Characteristics of the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes

- Underlying geology primarily of Devonian sandstone and Morte slates (with limestone outcropping in river valleys) giving rise to red soils, particularly in the east.
- Low-lying, narrow valley floors meet steep valley sides that give rise to a series of interconnected rounded hills.
- Numerous fast-flowing streams and rivers, often fed by springs.
- The landscape has significant woodland cover- deciduous, coniferous and mixed- ranging from geometric plantations to sinuous swathes.
- Other semi-natural habitats include grassland and streams.
- Parkland character in the eastern part of the LCT, around the large estates of Nettlecombe and Combe Sydenham.
- Medium-sized fields on valley sides, delineated by banked, mixed hedges.
- Winding lanes connect the linear hamlets and small villages that nestle alongside streams in valley bottoms.
- A landscape containing a range of historic landscape features, particularly associated with mining and industrial land uses.
- Open hilltops offer extensive coastal and inland panoramas.
- Red soils, green pastures, arable crops and dark green plantations create a colourful and strongly textured landscape.
- Cultural associations with Sir Francis Drake, who lived at Combe Sydenham.

Natural Landscape Features

The landform is one of the most striking features of this LCT, with elevation ranging from 100m to almost 400m AOD, low-lying narrow combe valley floors, steep valley sides and interconnected rounded hills. The underlying geology is varied and complex, and is revealed in the many Local Geological Sites (often located in quarries) within this LCT. Much of the area is underlain by slate, siltstones and sandstones, but there are localised areas of limestone in the river valleys, and there are some surviving lime kilns, which were used for burning limestone to create lime for improving acidic soils. The Devonian sandstone gives rise to distinctive red, fertile, well-drained soils, and as a result there is some arable agriculture, particularly in the eastern part of the LCT.

There are numerous springs emerging on high ground, which feed a network of fast-flowing and flashy rivers and streams. Most are tributaries of the Washford River system, which runs north-east to meet the sea at Watchet.

The landscape has significant woodland cover, including deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland, and some surviving orchards. There are areas of ancient woodland, and plantation on ancient woodland sites. The pattern and size of woodland is varied, ranging from small irregular broadleaf and mixed woodland swathes within the combes, to large geometric coniferous blocks that drape over the hilltops. The largest areas of coniferous plantation are located along the southern boundary e.g. Kennisham Hill, Langham Hill, Hazery Plantation and Eastern Woods. There has also been extensive coniferous planting to the south of Combe Sydenham. Although smaller in size, these areas of plantation have a strong visual connectivity with the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills landscape type which lies to the north.

Mixed hedgerows and hedgerow trees make an important contribution to the overall well-treed character of the landscape- mature beech and oak trees are particularly eye-catching features. The eastern part of the LCT also contains mature parkland trees, including veteran trees, in the designed landscapes at Nettlecombe (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) and Combe Sydenham.

Red soils, green pastures and hedgerow trees in the eastern part of the LCT

Deciduous woodland and conifer plantation at Combe Sydenham

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Nettlecombe Park
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous sites, including woodland, grassland, streams and quarries

Ancient Woodland	Scattered throughout. Largest include Langridge Wood, Forehill Wood and Chargot Wood
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Allercott Quarry West; Atowey Farm Quarry; Kingsbridge New Mill Quarry; Golsoncott Quarries; Leigh Barton Quarry

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

This is primarily a farmed landscape, with the majority of field patterns dating from the medieval period, although there are also small patches of post-medieval and ancient enclosures. The irregular-shaped fields form a patchwork pattern, clearly edged by banked, mixed hedges (on lower ground) and some beech hedges (on higher ground in the south of the LCT, where it merges with the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons). Commercial game shooting takes place within the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes, often in conjunction with traditional farming or forestry, and game crops, feeders, pens and birds may be seen throughout the LCT.

Many of the farms and hamlets are have been established for several hundred years. They contain numerous Listed Buildings, and two of the farmsteads are Conservation Areas. The fields contain excellent examples of gutter systems which drained higher land, and flushed spring grass with warmer water to extend its growing season. The village of Clicket (south of Timberscombe) was abandoned in the late nineteenth century, but the crumbling ruins of houses can still be seen. Together with adjacent deserted medieval farmsteads, it is designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

There are two areas of designated historic parkland, both towards the east of the LCT. Nettlecombe Court is a sixteenth century red sandstone manor house (Listed Grade I) surrounded by a parkland listed Grade 2 on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It is a late eighteenth century park, incorporating extensive earlier deer parks and wood pasture. Combe Sydenham (formerly the seat of the Sydenham family, with connections to Sir Francis Drake) contains the remains of a complicated water catchment system with leats and ponds, but much of the parkland is now under conifer plantation. The area around the house is now a country park. A smaller parkland estate can also be seen at Chargot, Luxborough. This estate contains a Grade 2* listed house, and surrounding parkland, lakes and woods (today used for game shooting).

Although today the area has a strongly agricultural feel, in the nineteenth century the Brendon Hills were exploited for their mineral resources, particularly iron ore. Mines on Brendon Hill (in the adjacent Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT) were served by the West Somerset Mineral Railway (WSMR) which connected Gupworthy with the coast at Watchet, from where the iron ore could be transported by boat. The WSMR comprised two conventional sections of track linked by an incline between Comberow and Brendon Hill. The lower parts of the track (within the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes LCT) is a road today, and the incline is still visible up the steep, wooded valley side. Many of the mines, settlements, stations and other buildings have since been lost as features within the landscape, but others remain, including miners' cottages, structures associated with the WSMR and industrial placenames (e.g. Tacker Street). Slate was extracted from Treborough Quarry for over 600 years, and today the site is within Treborough Woods County Wildlife Site.

Nettlecombe Court

Nettlecombe Park in spring

All the settlements within this LCT are small, with some villages and hamlets comprising clusters of farms, often in association with a church. Most are nestled in the combe bottoms alongside rivers; some nucleated (e.g. Kingsbridge, Luxborough) and others more scattered. Roadwater developed as a series of mills along the Washford River, which have subsequently been infilled by residential development, giving it a more linear feel. The building materials reflect the underlying geology, and include red sandstone, painted stone and render, with slate or thatch roofs. There are also examples of locally-distinctive walling using vertical slates, such as at Chidgley. Roadwater, Kingsbridge and Pooltown (Luxborough) all contain recently-built housing using locally-distinctive materials. Settlements are connected by a network of winding lanes and tracks, but often there is no direct route between them

Typical rural lane near Churchtown

Leighland Chapel hamlet in its landscape setting

Historic farmstead at Hook Farm, near Leighland Chapel

West Somerset Mineral Railway incline near Comberow

Designated Cultural and Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Incline between Brendon Hill and Comberow and remains of Combe Row Station; Churchyard crosses at Churchtown, Treborough and Nettlecombe; WWII pillbox, Glasses Farm; Cist in Langridge Wood; Enclosure & Barrows on Monkslade Common
Listed Buildings	Scattered throughout, especially in the south of the LCT. Include many farms, farm buildings, churches

Conservation Areas	Leigh Barton and Colton Farm
Registered Park/ Garden	Nettlecombe Court; Combe Sydenham
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Clickets deserted Medieval village and adjacent deserted farmsteads; part of Bat's Castle and Gallox Hill; Part of West Somerset Mineral Railway and associated mine-workings; Colton Pits mining remains

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

Much of this LCT is difficult to access by road, and there is a sense of peace and timelessness about this area. With the exception of Combe Sydenham Country Park at the eastern edge of the LCT, there are few visitor attractions or marked viewpoints, and no main roads pass through. Consequently the area is relatively rarely visited, and the deep wooded valleys give it a slightly secretive quality. The lanes are quiet, and much of the area has a strong sense of tranquillity. This is particularly apparent when one considers how busy parts of the area would have been when the iron ore mines were in production.

The mix of green improved pastures, strong red soils of ploughed fields, greens and goldens of arable crops, dark green of woodland blocks, distinctive parklands and views of the sea make for a very colourful and highly textured landscape with significant variety of scene. However, much of the landscape is of a smaller scale than found in other parts of the National Park.

There are very few sources of light pollution within the LCT, although light pollution from towns within the vicinity (e.g. Wiveliscombe, Watchet and Williton) may reduce the quality of night skies.

The '*Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study*' picks up on the landscape compositions associated with the parkland areas, with descriptions including *picturesque, changing seasons, both man-made and natural* and *classical painting*. People here felt *free, relaxed, inspired, de-stressed* and *connected with the changing seasons.*

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The wide elevation range and associated landform variation creates a changing sense of enclosure, and a series of unravelling, surprise views. These range from dark, well-wooded combes to open hilltops that offer extensive coastal and inland panoramas, including towards the Quantocks AONB to the east. There are also views over the surrounding LCTs, including the Farmed and Settled Vale, Open Moorland, Plantation (with Heathland) Hills and Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons. The Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes are also visible from the Quantock Hills AONB.

Horizons are often wooded, either formed of woodland/ plantation blocks within the LCT, or in the adjacent Plantation (with Heathland) Hills. Despite removal of some of the dish antennae, the lattice radio tower on Kennisham Hill (within the National Park) is prominent on the skyline, as are the masts at Washford and Elworthy (beyond the National Park boundary).

There is an excellent network of paths within the LCT, and the Coleridge Way runs through it from east to west, bringing walkers into the area. Combe Sydenham is also a popular Country Park and base for walks.

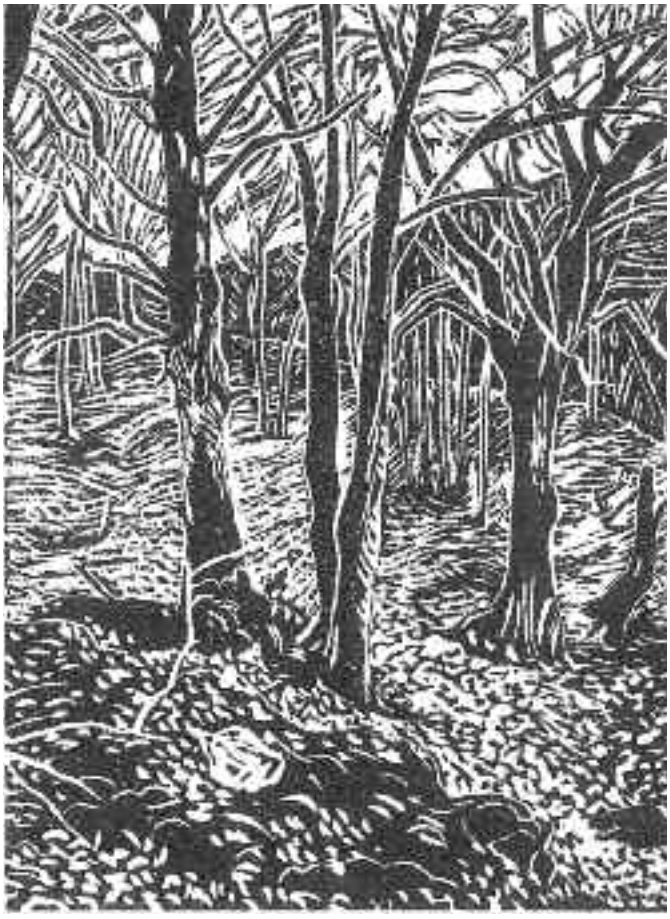
View from Croydon Hill (within LCT H) across LCT I towards Dunkery Hill and Porlock Vale. This view has been opened-up by recent tree felling within LCT H.

View over Nettlecombe Park towards the Quantock Hills, from near Chidgley

The Brendon Hills, seen on the skyline from the A358 (western boundary of the Quantock Hills AONB)

Cultural Associations

Contemporary artists have captured the patterns and textures within this landscape, the sense of enclosure within the woodlands, and the glimpsed longer views.



My Secret Wood, Kennisham
Image ©Rosina Woodthorpe

Kennisham, Looking towards Luxborough
Image © Rosina Woodthorpe

Combe Sydenham has connections with Sir Francis Drake, who married Elizabeth Sydenham in 1585. Nettlecombe was visited by the influential nineteenth century garden designer J.C. Loudon, who describes Nettlecombe and the surrounding landscape in "*In Search of English Gardens*: *The Travels of John Claudius Loudon and his wife Jane*"[1]. It is interesting to note that the description is before the planting of conifer blocks on many of the hill tops.

> *We were astonished and delighted with the view from the windows of the house, looking up the steep sides of the rounded hills that rose on every side, and which were mostly crowned with old oak woods. Rounded hills covered with grass at the top, with winding valleys having sloping sides; the valleys more or less wide, and the sides of hills differing in degrees to steepness; occasionally with water in the bottom in the form of a stream or brook...*

[1] National Trust Publications (1990) pp226-8

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The unique combination of landscape features within this LCT gives it a specific combination of Natural Capital Assets, which provide a number of ecosystem services.

This is a well-wooded landscape, containing a variety of woodland. Trees help to regulate climate by sequestering (storing) carbon and absorbing air pollution. They regulate water flows and improve water quality by absorbing rainwater and slowing run-off into rivers (thereby reducing downstream flooding). The deciduous woodlands are rich in biodiversity, offering habitats to a wide range of plants, insects, animals and birds. Plantations also provide timber for fuel and building. Traditionally, wood from cut hedgerows has been used as fuel in woodburners, and this remains an opportunity to support traditional hedgerow management.

The function of trees in slowing the rate at which rainwater reaches rivers is likely to become increasingly important as climate change results in increased intensity and frequency of storm events.

The soils and water supplies of farmland areas enable production of food, fibre and fuel. The mix of pastoral and arable farming evident here indicates the ability of the Natural Capital Assets such as soil and groundwater to provide a range of goods. Land also functions to capture, store and channel water supplies.

This is an historic landscape, shaped by centuries of farming practices. As such it contributes to a variety of cultural ecosystem services such as recreation, aesthetic experiences and understanding of the past. There are excellent opportunities for people to explore and enjoy the landscape at Combe Sydenham Country Park, and through the good network of paths within the area, including the Coleridge Way.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within LCT I

LCA I1: Brendon Hills

There is only one LCA within the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes LCT as the landscape character and sense of place are considered to be fairly consistent across it.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT I

The Brendon Hills has a distinctive and **strong** landscape character. A defining feature is the landform- steep slopes, rounded summits and enclosed combes offering inspiring changes of scene yet having a seamless quality which unifies the landscape. Woodland cover also plays a key role in defining landscape character - both the coniferous blocks on high ground and enclosing broadleaf trees in the combes provide distinctive wooded skylines and enclosed, leafy valley sides and floors.

There are occasional examples of poorly-maintained hedgerows, but on the whole, the condition of the landscape within this LCT is considered to be **good**. There is only one SSSI within this LCT (Nettlecombe Park), and this has been assessed as being in 'favourable' condition. However, there are a number of listed buildings which have been assessed as 'at risk' based on a combination of their condition and occupation status. These are: Manor Mills, north of the main historic nucleus of Roadwater; two limekilns near Treborough, and chest tombs in the churchyards at Churchtown and Elworthy. In addition, a conduit near Pooltown and Leigh Barton stables have been assessed as listed buildings in relatively poor condition.

Since the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment was written, work has been done at Nettlecombe to restore estate railings, and to plant replacement parkland trees. From fieldwork undertaken in 2016, game shoots appear better managed such that pens, coloured feeders and other shooting infrastructure can appear to be less visible from roads and footpaths. Formerly 'stripy' game crops are now more likely to be naturalistic in form, or kept to field edges. They are therefore less apparent in the landscape, although they may still be present. Similarly, forestry tracks and woodland

clearance is not always visible from outside the woodland, especially if there is no public access. Communications masts outside the National Park still affect local skylines and wider views, as does Kennisham Tower, although it has been recently reduced in height.

There are positive examples of newer buildings which have been carefully integrated into existing settlements in terms of their design, siting and materials. There are also areas of former coniferous plantation which have been cleared and are now exhibiting a heath character (for example on the western slopes of Croydon Hill) and which allow open views across the wider landscape.

Natural Flood Management is also taking place within this LCT. The Washford Upper Catchment Multi-benefits Project began in 2015 and combines enhancements to biodiversity, improvements to the ecological condition of the river, and flood reduction. The Williton Flood Protection Project, covering the catchments of the Monksilver and Doniford Streams is currently being developed by the Environment Agency and partners, with work scheduled to take place between 2018-2020.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT I

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly affected by a variety of forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure, and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main forces for change acting on this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that forces for change acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Conifer plantations reaching maturity	Felling of mature conifer plantations affects landscape character, and also provides opportunities for positive change. For example, there are opportunities for heathland re-establishment, and the planting of broad leaved woodland, including restoration of ancient woodland sites. There are also opportunities to open up views across the wider landscape.
Changes in woodland management and funding	Changing woodland management priorities and funding schemes continue to affect this well-wooded landscape. Replanting of conifers on ancient woodland sites is likely to continue if it is financially beneficial. Grants for planting new woodland and management of broad leaved regeneration of woodland are inadequate with current land values and therefore there is very limited uptake. There is currently no funding for encouraging permitted access into woodland.
Forest tracks	Tracks for forestry management can become a landscape issue if they become too wide or suffer from erosion (by vehicles or water). Often they are hidden by surrounding trees, but if woodland is felled, they appear as linear scars. Forest tracks can also be linked to increased run-off and flooding.
Game shooting	Game crops can be prominent in the landscape, particularly if they have a geometric or stripy pattern which stands out against the natural curved form of the landscape. There can also be a cumulative impact of tracks, feeders, pens, birds etc. in views from roads and public rights of way.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Changing farming practices	Increased intensification of arable agriculture is likely to result in changes in crop choice, larger machinery (requiring wider gateways and tracks) and larger storage buildings. A change from traditional small farms to larger farms (arable and pastoral) leads to landscape change and a potential loss of traditional farming techniques. The increased use of plastic sheeting can potentially contribute to increased surface water run-off.
Demand for larger agricultural buildings	The current trend towards indoor rearing of livestock demands agricultural buildings of a size and scale not previously seen within the National Park. Such buildings can be very visually intrusive and difficult to accommodate sensitively within the landscape. They can also be a source of light pollution
Decline in management of hedgerows and field boundaries.	Management of environmental features such as hedgerows and hedgebanks are particularly vulnerable to change in land management grants. If grants are reduced and the upkeep of traditional field boundaries becomes unviable, then the landscape pattern will be lost, as well as habitat links between woodland areas.
Loss of parklands	Historic parklands within the LCT have been affected by past conversion to arable land use or forestry. Parkland trees are also vulnerable to disease or over-maturity which will result in the loss of parkland character.
Loss of orchards	Orchards have been lost from this landscape in recent decades, changing the pattern of the landscape and its seasonal colour. There is potential to manage/ reinstate traditional orchards, and reintroduce this element back into the landscape.
Recreation pressure	This is a relatively little-visited part of the National Park, with generally low levels of recreation, usually limited to walkers and cyclists. However, the area is also occasionally used for larger-scale recreation activities such as charity events, which can cause problems (e.g. erosion of paths and tracks) if not carefully managed, or if conventional recreation is not prioritised.
Loss of historic features	Historic features within the landscape (particularly those associated with mining heritage) are being damaged by vegetation. For example, trees are growing along The Incline and the path along it is very difficult to access, with the top section of the footpath along the incline closed.
Loss of character of rural lanes, and traffic issues	There is potential for the special qualities of narrow, hedged rural lanes to be lost due to unnecessary signage and other 'clutter', particularly through villages/ hamlets and at junctions. Some traditional signposts are in a poor condition. Wide vehicles (including farm vehicles) may also damage gateways, bridges and sunken lanes. Lorries use the B1390 (narrow in places) to avoid restrictions at Dunster, resulting in loss of tranquillity, and damage to the road surface.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Demand for residential development	New development could appear incongruous within the landscape if it is not carefully sited and designed with reference to settlement form, scale and building materials. .
Skyline features	Skylines within the LCT are very prominent and therefore sensitive to change. Where masts occur on summits (e.g. Kennisham) they can be seen over a wide area. Large farm buildings may be viewed against skylines when seen from lower viewpoints. Poles and wires alongside roads and in villages/ hamlets are also noticeable.
Views outside the National Park	There are extensive views from this LCT over land outside the National Park. Vertical features (for example the communications masts at Washford) are prominent in views. New developments, renewable energy schemes (e.g. solar farms) and highways schemes outside the National Park boundary will all potentially affect views from within the National Park. They may also increase light pollution.
Tree disease	This is a well-treed landscape, with different types of woodland and trees. It is therefore vulnerable to a range of tree pests and diseases, including (for example) ash dieback, phytophthora, leaf miner moth and bleeding canker (which particularly affect horse chestnut trees). Not only is tree disease likely to affect the types of species present, but felling to prevent further spread of disease is also likely to affect the appearance of woodland and parkland within the landscape.
Climate change	Woodlands within the LCT are likely to be affected by drought, and by increased frequency and intensity of storms, including rain (increasing flood risk) and high winds blowing over or damaging trees. Changing temperatures and seasonal patterns may affect crop choices and farming patterns, which will be particularly noticeable in parts of this LCT used for arable crops

Recently felled and partially replanted woodland with tracks visible, Eastern Wood

Pheasant feeder, near Roadwater

Lattice tower of wireless station on Kennisham Hill

Poorly maintained traditional signpost, Robbery Gate

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT I

Landscape Strategy

Woodlands are well-managed in a holistic way, and contain a mosaic of deciduous and coniferous woodland, heathland and glade habitats which reflect the landscape patterns of the LCT. Game shoots are managed in a way which is not detrimental to the character of the landscape, and the cumulative impacts of game crops, feeders and other game-rearing equipment is minimised. Hedgerows and hedgebanks are well maintained, as are the designed landscapes of historic parks. Recreation is encouraged, and there is wider awareness of this part of the National Park. Development is sensitive to the existing built form of the area, and views (particularly skylines) are free from intrusive features. The historic features of the landscape, including its mining heritage, are celebrated and easy to access.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT I

Protect

- Protect skylines from visually-intrusive masts and other structures including new housing and agricultural buildings.
- Protect archaeological sites such as The Incline, including raising awareness of the area's mining heritage, and encourage public access where possible.
- Protect views from the National Park which include land outside the National Park Boundary. Work with neighbouring authorities (including Quantock Hills AONB) to ensure a consistent response to development proposals outside the National Park boundary.
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution (e.g. arising from new agricultural buildings) within the LCT.

Manage

- Manage woodlands, considering plans for plantations once they reach maturity, for example creating heathland areas or re-planting with broadleaf species (particularly in plantations on

ancient woodland sites). Consider extending the coverage of broadleaved woodlands, and enhancing the links between them, to increase resilience to climate change impacts. Work with landowners to encourage good practice with regard to forestry tracks.

- Work with land owners to manage parklands, including retention and restoration of features such as estate railings which are characteristic of this type of landscape. Manage and monitor parkland and veteran trees, and support planting of new specimens so that parkland trees continue to be a feature of the landscape. Nettlecombe Park should be managed in accordance with its SSSI Management Plan.
- Manage commercial game shoots, and work with farmers and landowners to minimise the cumulative impacts of game crops, feeders and other equipment.
- Manage surviving traditional orchards, and consider supporting the planting of new ones in appropriate locations (e.g. adjacent to farmsteads, hamlets and villages).
- Manage farmlands, including hedgerows, hedgebanks, gateways, walls, and hedgerow trees to retain the traditional pattern of the landscape, and also to provide habitat corridors between woodlands.
- Manage recreation within the area, encouraging visitors (thereby reducing visitor pressure at more vulnerable sites in other parts of the National Park) and providing suitable facilities, paths and interpretation. This could focus on the area's mining heritage. Work with organisers of large-scale recreation events to minimise landscape impacts.

Plan

- Work with the Highways Authority to minimise signage, road markings and street lighting which erode the rural character of lanes. Restore dilapidated traditional road signs.
- Work with multiple landowners to develop a large-scale and holistic plan for the area's woodlands.
- Campaign at a National level for forestry, woodland and farmland grants which will encourage responsible public access into private land (e.g. paths in permitted access woodland), promote woodland biodiversity and enable the long-term survival of landscape features such as traditional species-rich hedgerows and hedgebanks.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following document:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Silvanus for The Exmoor Society, August 2013)
- T*he Exmoor Guidelines for the Management of Game Birds in the National Park*, Exmoor National Park Authority. Available on Exmoor National Park Authority website

Specific Planning Guidelines for Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes with LCT I

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Valley bottom/ lower slope settlements, often comprising loose associations of farmsteads and hamlets around river crossing points. Roadwater is more linear in form, possibly reflecting industrial influences.	Linear development which extends along the lanes and onto higher slopes away from the river valley location and undermines perceptions of a compact small scale community.	Where development along lanes is necessary, ensure it is broken up with areas of open space/landscape to avoid perceptions of high density linear growth which detracts from traditional nucleated settlement form. Avoid elevated locations for new development. Encourage infill where it would reinforce and respond to the nucleated settlement form, whilst ensuring that there is no detrimental impact on the settings of listed buildings and prominent elevated locations are avoided.
Limited palette of building types including terraced cottages, detached houses and farm complexes.	Development which is of an inappropriate form or with inappropriate detailing and arrangement that does not reflect local distinctiveness.	Ensure new built form reflects and draws on the design cues of existing local vernacular buildings. Ensure the proportion of wall is greater than windows.
Tight, winding and enclosed rural lanes connecting and passing though settlements.	New development along roadsides within or adjoining settlements which suburbanises the lane e.g. through curtilage treatment, straightening of road, introduction of pavements, kerbs, lighting or signage.	Care should be taken with curtilage treatment and ensuring the correct physical and visual relationship between dwellings and the road, in order to retain roads' rural character and sense of enclosure within and approaching settlements.
Rounded hills and slopes and wooded skylines. 'Squat' church towers rarely break the skyline but are set on the valley sides with a land/wood backdrop.	New vertical structures which break the skyline and are visually obvious and draw the eye.	Ensure new vertical structures are set below the skyline or visually integrated through use of carefully sited native planting.

A carefully-designed new house utilising local materials and vernacular features

Kingsbridge, with older and newer houses blending in the valley floor

Large agricultural buildings, Churchtown. The buildings follow the landform down the valley side, and avoid breaking the horizon. Materials and colours are generally muted and non-reflective

Locally-distinctive bank facing of vertical slates, Chidgley