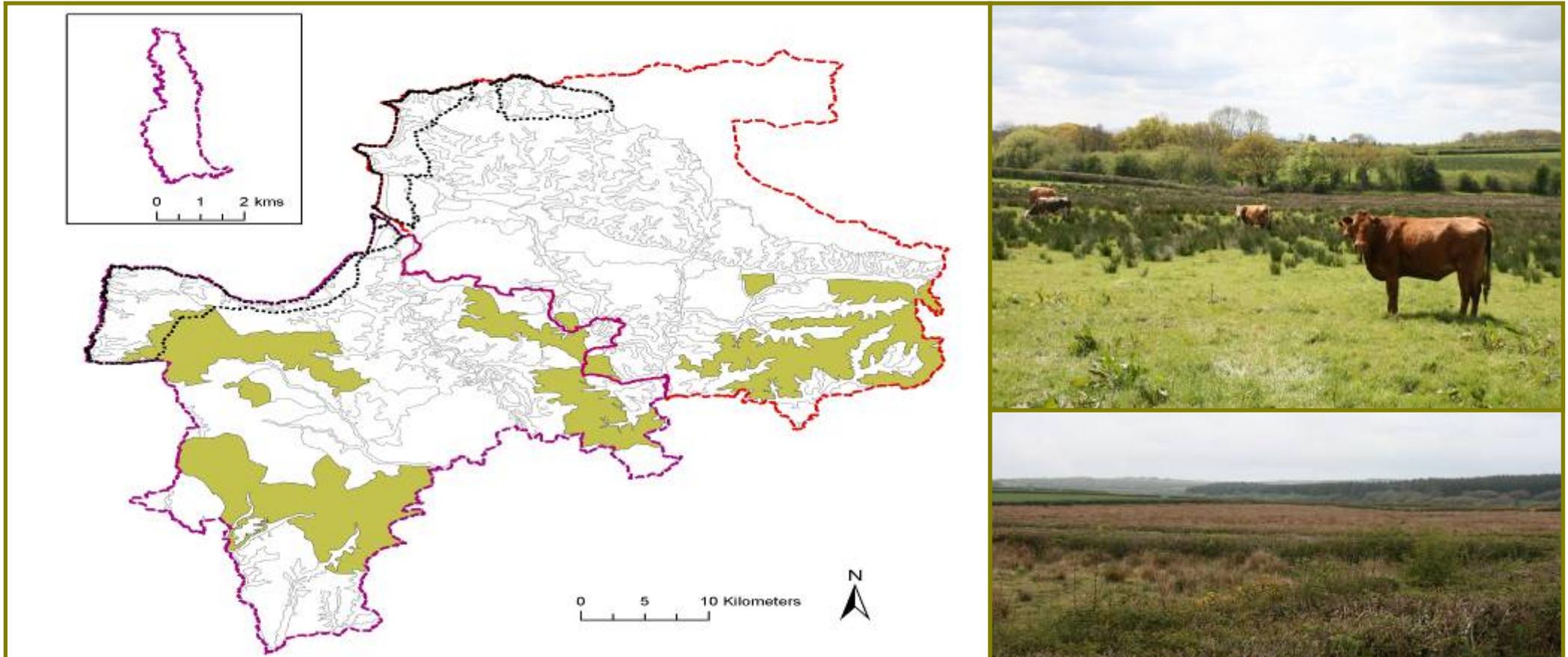


**LANDSCAPE TYPE:  
IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND**

**PART I: DESCRIPTION**



**CONSITUENT LDUs: 405, 599, 603, 609, 610, 611, 660, 674, 678, 680, 681, 684, 686, 687, 688, 689, 705, 740, 741, 742, 743, 745, 793, 812, 817, 825, 834, 837, 842, 844, 875, 876, 881**

**SUMMARY OF LOCATION**

This LCT is distributed across Torridge District, stretching into the south and south-eastern corner of North Devon. It covers the landscape's high open tracts of Culm grassland and 'moors' which sit on the poorly drained soils and sandstone ridges of the *Culm Measures* geological series.

**IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND****KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE**

- Gently undulating landform, in some places of a plateau-like character.
- Underlying geology of Culm Measures – mudstones and siltstones with bands of sandstone creating gently rolling topography. Areas where sandstone dominates are of a higher, plateau character.
- Elevation affording long views across the landscape and beyond – e.g. to the contrasting lush green fields of the surrounding farmland and the high moorland landscapes of Dartmoor and Exmoor.
- Large blocks of conifer plantation (particularly in Torridge District), as well as frequent patches of beech/oak woodland, secondary woodland on plantation edges and willow carr associated with streams.
- Open areas of Culm grassland and patches of heath surrounded by a regular pattern of medium-scale post-medieval and modern fields, with some earlier fields of medieval origin with curving boundaries.
- Square-cut beech hedgebanks with rushy verges bordering wet ditches. Patches of bracken and gorse, as well as wind-sculpted beech trees, give an exposed feel to higher locations. Areas on the fringes of more intensive farming include mixed species hedges with flower and fern-rich banks.
- Pastoral character including rough cattle/sheep grazing on expanses of Culm grassland and heath. More intensive farming, including occasional arable fields, poultry units and localised pony paddocks on the fringes of the 'moors'.
- Landscape crossed by frequent streams, springs, wet ditches and small ponds fringed by wet woodland, rush pasture and meadows.
- Internationally designated expanses of herb-rich Culm grassland supporting the most important regional stronghold for marsh fritillary butterflies. Large tracts of wet heath, rich flushes, valley mires, fen and marshy grasslands.
- Frequent clusters of nationally important Bronze Age barrows on elevated sites, disused quarries and the remains of a medieval castle at Winkleigh.
- Variety of traditional building styles, particularly white/cream cob render with slate. Villages often include white and cream modern bungalows extending out from the historic core.
- Sparse settlement pattern with scattered farmsteads, small clustered hamlets and nucleated villages often occupying ridgetop positions.
- Straight roads crossing along ridgelines, occasionally running through tunnels created by mature beech trees particularly on the fringes of settlements. Distinctive white finger posts at road crossing points.
- Golf courses, fishing lakes, caravan parks, equestrian centres, disused airfields, industrial land uses and main roads dilute perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness locally.



**PART 2: EVALUATION****SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES**

- Distinctive Culm grassland habitats and associated birdlife.
- Traditional management regimes (including grazing by North Devon Reds).
- Small field patterns enclosed by thick Devon banks and surrounded by open grazing land.
- Isolated farms and farmsteads.
- High levels of tranquillity and remoteness.

**FORCES FOR CHANGE****PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

- Past drainage of Culm grasslands to convert land to agriculturally productive farmland (e.g. arable land and permanent pasture around Stibbs Cross).
- Uneven grazing levels and distribution leading to vegetation succession in some areas, whilst other areas of Culm grassland are closely grazed leading to a uniform grass sward.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century afforestation across significant areas of Culm grassland / lowland 'moors'. Some areas now being felled and restored to heathland / Culm grassland (e.g. Dunsdon National Nature Reserve).
- Tensions between the requirements of nature conservation designations (SAC / SSSI) and traditional farming practices.
- Agri-environment schemes too rigid / not tailored enough to local conditions (e.g. reduced stocking rates required on designated sites whilst higher stocking has traditionally been the norm).
- Legislative requirements of the Commons Act 2006 – including for all areas of common land to have management regimes in place.
- Development pressures encroaching into the landscape from the larger settlements such as Holsworthy, Quoditch and Winkleigh (including pony paddocks).
- Prominent ridgeline developments of white/cream housing.

**IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND****PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)**

- Industrial land uses and intensive poultry farming on former airfields around Winkleigh.
- New development of white / cream rendered bungalows and cottages – generally in keeping with broad styles of the local vernacular.
- Small cluster of wind turbines visible in views from this LCT near Bradworthy.
- The installation of domestic-scale renewables such as building-mounted wind turbines,
- Tourism-related development and land uses, such as golf courses, caravan sites, fisheries and fishing lakes.
- Feeling of neglect in some locations due to an ongoing decline in the agricultural economy – e.g. overgrown hedges, derelict farm buildings, inappropriate farm building repairs, general farm ‘clutter’.

**FORCES FOR CHANGE****FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

- Increase in UK-based tourism with associated demands for new attractions (e.g. golf courses) and infrastructure, as well as an increase in traffic levels, car parking, recreational pressures and farm conversions.
- Population growth and settlement expansion, along with the need for supporting infrastructure and services.
- The effects of climate change – including more intense drought conditions affecting the landscape’s wetland habitats and Culm grasslands.
- Longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining areas of heathland and Culm grassland.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back.
- Drive for increased domestic food production, putting further pressure on unimproved agricultural land.
- Uncertainty over future levels of agricultural subsidies to support farming on ‘marginal’ land such as the Culm grasslands and moors.
- UK-wide policy drive for increased woodland planting, planted to enhance the landscape’s roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, storing and sequestering carbon dioxide and providing low-carbon fuel sources (through coppice management).

## IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND

### FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)

- The elevated plateaux likely to come under increasing pressure for the development of commercial wind turbines.
- Expansion in the growth of bioenergy crops such as Miscanthus as a result of market demand for 'green' energy and fuel sources, out of keeping with current cropping patterns.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps



# IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND

## PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

**OVERALL STRATEGY:** To protect the landscape’s traditional farming systems which are integral to the survival of rare Culm grassland habitats. New development is integrated into its landscape setting, avoiding prominent open ridgelines, and opportunities are sought for the creation of Green Infrastructure networks to support future population growth and provide space for recreation.

### Landscape and planning guidelines

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<b>PROTECT</b>		
<p>Protect the farming and land management traditions of the area, continuing to support local farmers to graze the Culm grasslands and lowland moors as integral parts of their farming system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust)</li> <li>• Devon Food Links</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share best practice between farmers working in areas of Culm grassland (e.g. through demonstration events).</li> <li>• Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area (e.g. Ruby red beef raised on Culm grassland).</li> </ul>
<p>Protect the landscape’s strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness through avoiding the location of new development on prominent, open ridgelines,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the most prominent skylines in the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Objective EQ1; Policies A1, B1, B2, G1, G5 and H2.</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR 4 and COR6.</li> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO3 and CO16.</li> <li>• Consider adopting a development management policy stating that any new development in the area should avoid the</li> </ul>

## IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		most prominent open skylines.
<p>Protect the landscape’s variety of traditional building styles, including cream cob/render, slate and local stone. Any new development should utilise the same materials and building styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design). Characteristic features such as white wooden finger posts and lincays should be retained and kept in a good state of repair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans</li> <li>• Devon Rural Skills Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Objectives LH1 and LH2; Policies A1, A4, G1 and G4.</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR6 and COR8.</li> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7.</li> <li>• Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF.</li> <li>• Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.</li> </ul>
<p>Protect the landscape’s sparse settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, small clustered hamlets and nucleated villages. Resist the further spread of new development outside the limits of the landscape’s villages and hamlets, including along roads. Utilise the landscape’s woodland cover and topography to filter views of any recent/ new development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR3 and COR4</li> </ul>
<p>Protect and appropriately manage the rich cultural heritage of the area, including Bronze Age barrows on elevated sites, disused quarries and the remains of the medieval castle at Winkleigh.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MANAGE</b></p>		

## IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>Manage areas of Culm grassland through appropriate grazing and burning regimes whilst protecting their high wildlife importance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust)</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9.</li> <li>• Share best practice between farmers working in areas of Culm grassland (e.g. through demonstration events).</li> <li>• Ensure management prescriptions provide a balance between wildlife needs and those of local farmers so agriculture remains viable.</li> </ul>
<p>Manage the area's existing plantations for sustainable timber production and wildlife interest, creating new green links to surrounding semi-natural habitats. Explore their use as recreational spaces away from the more sensitive habitats surrounding them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• England Woodland Grant Scheme</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Objectives C1, C3 and C4.</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR17</li> <li>• Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO9, TO6 and TO5.</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>PLAN</b></p>		
<p>Plan for the expansion of fragmented Culm grassland sites to create an intact green network, where conditions allow (e.g. considering underlying geology / soils).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR17</li> </ul>

## IF: FARMED LOWLAND MOORLAND & CULM GRASSLAND

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>Plan for the long-term restoration of the more prominent conifer plantations to open habitats (where their role in timber production has ceased), including re-creating Culm grasslands within open rides and on areas of wet ground.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust)</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Forest Design Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>
<p>Plan for a network of green spaces and green infrastructure links to support future population growth in nearby settlements; integrating development into the landscape and providing local spaces for access and recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Policies BG5 and G2.</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR17.</li> <li>• Devon's Structure Plan: Policy TO6.</li> </ul>