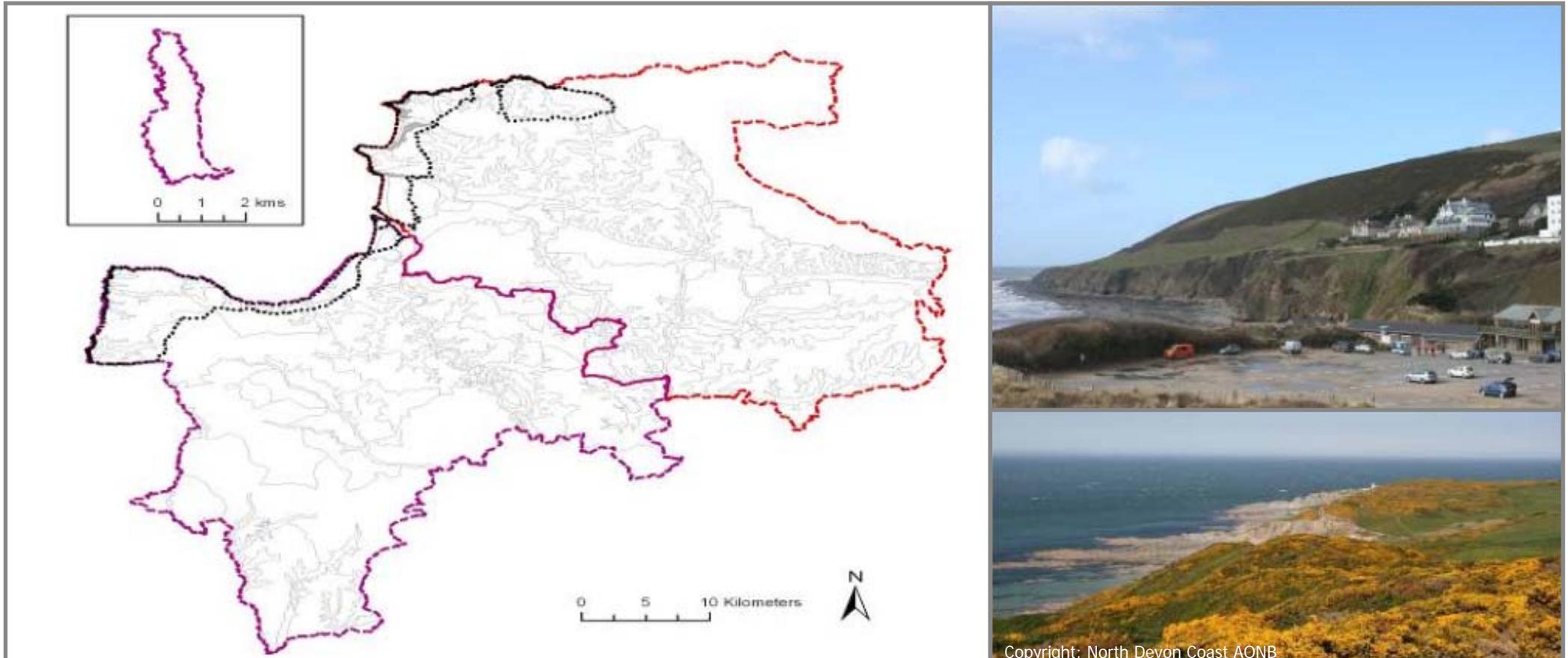


## **PART I: DESCRIPTION**



**CONSITUENT LDUs: 385, 386, 402, 403, 579, 853**

### **SUMMARY OF LOCATION**

This LCT covers the steep west-facing slopes below Woolacombe Down and wrapping above the coastal cliffs around Morteheo. It also includes the south-facing slopes that fall away below Saunton Down, overlooking Braunton Burrows and Saunton Sands. All of this LCT falls within the North Devon Coast AONB.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE**

- Very steep slopes dropping away from downland hill summits towards the coast. The elevated slopes afford long-ranging and panoramic views across the coastal landscapes of the North Devon AONB.
- Varied geology, with the slope encircling Morteheo comprised of Morte slate, the steep slope dropping westwards from Woolacombe Down underlain by sandstone, and the slope below Saunton Down comprising mudstones – all laid down during the Late Devonian period.
- An exposed, windswept landscape with tree cover limited to occasional wind-sculpted shelterbelts and individual pine specimens associated with properties, along with patches of blackthorn scrub and small areas of stunted oak woodland in the north.
- Stone-faced Devon hedges (with the use of Morte slate being locally distinctive) with sparse topping vegetation – usually patches of wind-pruned gorse and scrub. Some fields are divided by post-and-wire fencing.
- Nature conservation interest provided by a mosaic of maritime grasslands, coastal heath, bracken and scrub (including gorse and blackthorn). The slopes inland from Morte Point are designated as SSSI, primarily for their valued stretches of coastal heath and presence of breeding sea birds.
- The landscape is largely used for rough grazing (mainly by sheep).
- Slopes crossed by occasional springs and streams draining from the downland above, trickling down to meet the sea.
- Historic environment features include ancient cultivation terraces on the slopes above Saunton and a scattering of former quarries which historically provided local building stone. A lookout and arrow on the slopes above Putsborough beach dates from World War II.
- Range of vernacular building styles including the mix of Victorian and Edwardian villa-style houses and grand hotels of Woolacombe, the white-painted Art Deco-style landmark building of the Saunton Sands Hotel, as well as traditional buildings of whitewash and local Morte slate.
- Linear tourism-related development spreading along the road between Woolacombe and Morteheo, with individual properties also strung out along the Saunton road overlooking Braunton Burrows. The majority of the landscape is unsettled owing to its steep topography.
- The slope below Saunton Down affords clear views of development at Braunton, Instow, Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!, diluting the otherwise high levels of tranquillity and remoteness associated with this landscape.
- Upper slopes are mainly open downland and remnant heath, whilst lower slopes are often enclosed in a regular medium-large scale pattern of post-medieval and modern fields.



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## **PART 2: EVALUATION**

### **SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES**

- Distinctive topography including windy narrow slopes, dramatic headlands and minor combe valleys
- Amazing coastal views
- Sense of naturalness with important areas of remnant coastal heath
- Valued area for recreation – including circular walks
- Exciting balance between lively coastal activities nearby and the slopes' remote feel.



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### **FORCES FOR CHANGE**

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

- Post-war intensification of agriculture spurred on by CAP-related subsidies in the 1970s, leading to an improvement and enclosure of former areas of heathland and downland in favour of pasture.
- Scrub encroachment due to a localised decline in grazing levels, affecting the landscape's open character and wildlife interest of remaining heathland.
- Steady growth in tourism and recreation since the development of nearby seaside resorts in the Victorian era. Linear spread of modern development along roadsides (including between Mortehoe and Woolacombe).
- Recreation pressure associated with the nearby beaches, sand dunes and the South West Coast Path, leading to erosion of paths and the presence of infrastructure such as car parks (e.g. the slope overlooking Woolacombe).
- Demand for wind turbines on the open slopes and the adjacent elevated downland.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the nearby settlements of Braunton, Instow, Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!, now dominating southward views along the coast.

## LANDSCAPE TYPE: 2C: STEEP OPEN SLOPES

### FORCES FOR CHANGE

#### FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Further growth in popularity of the area for recreation and tourism, eroding the landscape's high levels of tranquillity and leading to increased demand for facilities and public access.
- Pine shelterbelts and individual wind-sculpted trees (key landscape features) may become more susceptible to damage from the increasing frequency and magnitude of storm events as a result of climate change.
- Changes in crops and land use as a consequence of climate change and response to changing markets (e.g. for increased UK food production and emerging markets for energy crops).
- Development pressure due to the ever-increasing popularity of the area as holiday destination



- Further decline in grazing levels on the steeper slopes leading to an increase in scrub and low-level tree cover, affecting the biodiversity value of areas of coastal heath and the condition of archaeological features (e.g. cultivation terraces above Saunton).
- Sea level rise and coastal erosion as a result of climate change, leading to the 'squeeze' of coastal habitats, unstable sections of cliff and impacts on the course of the South West Coast Path.
- Demand for both on-shore and off-shore wind farms, as well as domestic scale turbines taking advantage of the open landscape's wind resource.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.



## PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

**OVERALL STRATEGY:** Protect the open and remote character of the landscape, with long coastal and seaward views. Expand remnant patches of coastal heath to strengthen landscape character and future climate change resilience, whilst ensuring archaeological features remain traceable in the landscape. Strengthen the network of stone-faced hedgebanks and promote further recreational links between nearby coastal resorts and adjacent inland areas, taking the pressure away from the busy North Devon coast.

### 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>		
Protect the landscape's open and generally unsettled character, preventing the further spread of development from nearby tourist centres along roadsides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans</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 COR6.</li> <li>Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO3 and CO16.</li> </ul>
Protect the slopes' extensive open views along the coast, out to sea and inland, ensuring new development avoids the most prominent open skylines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify important views / viewpoints both from and to the landscape (and identify why people think they are important).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AONB Management Plan: Objectives EQ1, EQ2 and CO4; Policies B2 and D5.</li> <li>North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> <li>Devon Structure Plan: policies CO1, CO3, CO4, CO5</li> </ul>
Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's archaeological features, including ancient cultivation terraces on the slopes above Saunton, historic quarries and World War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>National Trust Estate Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:  
2C: STEEP OPEN SLOPES**

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>It features. Manage scrub encroachment by supporting extensive grazing at appropriate levels, and protect the sites from erosion by managing public access.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGE</b>		
<p>Manage, extend and re-link patches of rough grassland and heath, including through a continuation of livestock grazing at appropriate levels. Support farmers to continue to farm these ‘marginal’ areas as integral parts of their farming systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Devon Food Links</li> <li>• National Trust Estate Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO6, CO9, TO6.</li> <li>• Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area</li> </ul>
<p>Manage the network of distinctive stone-faced hedges, restoring lost lengths to reinforce historic field patterns. Ensure any new sections replicate traditional styles of construction (e.g. patterns of stone facing) and species composition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Devon Hedge Group</li> <li>• Devon Rural Skills Trust</li> <li>• National Trust Estate Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL I; Policy EI</li> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9</li> </ul>
<b>PLAN</b>		
<p>Plan for the future impacts of climate change, particularly coastal squeeze, seeking to expand semi-natural habitats and wildlife networks to allow for habitat/species migration within the landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• South West Nature Map</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• National Trust Estate Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-12)</li> </ul>

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:**  
**2C: STEEP OPEN SLOPES**

<b>Guideline</b>	<b>Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)</b>	<b>Planning policy links and delivery recommendations</b>
<p>Plan for the continuing popularity of the area for tourism and recreation, seeking to link and create access routes to nearby tourism centres to encourage exploration of inland landscapes and reduce car use (taking the pressure off the coast).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB Management Plan: Objectives BG5; Policies C1, C2 and C4</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR2, COR4, COR5, COR8 and COR17</li> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO6, CO9, TO6.</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>