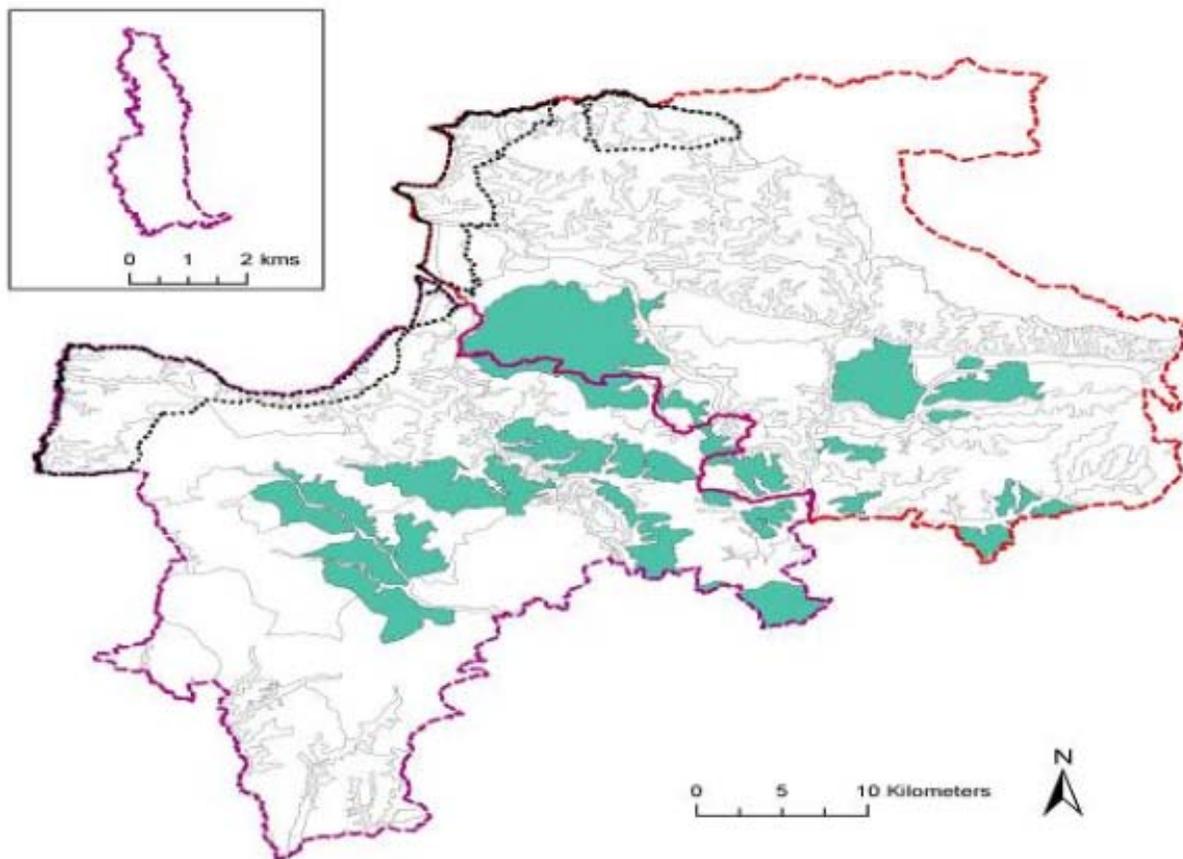


PART I: DESCRIPTION

CONSITUENT LDUs: 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 372, 375, 378, 380, 454, 455, 456, 552, 598, 600, 609, 610, 611, 653, 660, 665, 674, 675, 676, 678, 680, 681, 686, 705, 740, 741, 812, 87, 825, 826, 837, 844, 845, 873, 875, 876

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT comprises the upper catchments of the main river valleys, comprising a gently rolling pastoral landscape of fields bounded by thick Devon hedges, crossed by a network of springs and tributary streams.

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES**KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE**

- Strongly undulating landform of rolling hills and farmland cut by tributary streams feeding into the main river valleys.
- Underlying geology comprising mudstones and siltstones with bands of sandstone creating the rolling landform ('Culm Measures').
- A pastoral landscape, with some fields of arable cultivation on higher slopes, forming a strong mosaic with copses, interlinking Devon hedges and small woodlands as well as occasional small blocks of coniferous plantation.
- Strong pattern of medium-scale fields of medieval and post-medieval origin enclosed by species-rich Devon hedges with flower-rich banks. Thick hedges with frequent hedgerow trees found on more sheltered valley slopes.
- Some areas of intensive arable cultivation in larger, regular fields found on more elevated land. Villages and tributary valleys often characterised by smaller, historic field patterns.
- Nature conservation interest provided by areas of species-rich Culm grassland, rich valley mire, wet woodland and damp meadows associated with tributary valleys and springs. Patches of gorse on higher slopes give some areas an upland feel (e.g. around Abbots Bickington).
- Dispersed historic villages and hamlets clustered on hilltops with farmsteads distributed throughout, linked by a network of winding rural roads and steep sunken lanes crossing watercourses over stone bridges.
- Strong local vernacular of whitewash and white/cream rendered cottages with painted window and door frames and slate roofs. Some buildings constructed of exposed stone with red brick detailing, with the use of thatch important locally (e.g. Tawstock).
- Linhays (traditional animal shelters) constructed of cob and local stone with slate or corrugated iron roofs, reinforce a strong history of farming.
- Crossroads marked by distinctive white finger posts.
- Main roads (particularly the A39), prominent pylon lines and the influence of modern development at Bideford and East the Water erode levels of tranquillity locally – although overall this is a peaceful and highly rural landscape.
- Square church towers form strong local landmark features peeping through the rolling hills, many of which are Grade II* Listed. The Iron Age hillfort of Hembury Castle occupies a prominent position above the Duntz valley.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Open landscape with important vantage points and uninterrupted vistas.
- Narrow sunken lanes and species-rich hedgebanks.
- Copses, woodlands and tree clumps.
- Cob, thatch and whitewashed buildings, including traditional linhays.
- Little or no light pollution resulting in starlit skies.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- The past planting of small blocks of conifer plantations in parts of the landscape (e.g. Winkleigh).
- Small, privately owned woodlands suffering from a lack of management (particularly coppicing) and spread of invasive/exotic species.
- Conversion of pasture to arable production on higher land, particularly spurred on by the introduction of the CAP in the 1970s.
- Post-war Intensification leading to the loss of areas of Culm grassland (through drainage), meadows, traditional orchards and rough grasslands on higher land.
- 20th century farm amalgamation and modernisation, with large buildings often occupying prominent locations.
- Hedgerow removal on more elevated land in the drive for agricultural intensification. Replacement of some lengths with post-and-wire fencing whilst others are tightly flailed.
- Widening of gateways to fit larger farm machinery.
- Smallholdings being taken on as 'hobby farms', with a spread of equine enterprises and second homes spurring on a decline in affordable housing.
- Prominent telecommunications masts and pylon lines crossing the landscape (e.g. north of Hiscott).

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES**PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)**

- Presence of main roads such as the A39, eroding local perceptions of peace and tranquillity.
- 20th century expansion of some ridgeline settlements (e.g. Lower Lovacott, Winkleigh, Great Torrington) – white / cream dwellings standing out in a linear form on the skyline.
- Views to modern development at Bideford, Northam and East-the-Water and South Molton (including the Norboard Factory).
- Gradual ‘gentrification’ and suburban influences creeping into the landscape, eroding the historic character of some villages and farms.
- The wider area’s importance for tourism and recreation leading to demand for facilities such as caravan parks, holiday accommodation and visitor attractions – many as farm diversification enterprises due to a decline in the agricultural economy.

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

- Uncertain future for the agricultural economy – levels of future agri-environment support and market prices for farmed products unknown.
- Development pressure within the area (including Great Torrington, South Molton and along the main A39 / A361 corridors), particularly due to its attractiveness of the area as a place to live. Linked knock-on effect on availability of affordable housing and rural skills.
- Continued trend in hobby farming and the development of further equine enterprises – pushing house prices out of the reach of many local people (particularly young farmers) leading to a further decline in rural skills.
- Increase in domestic tourism with associated demands for new facilities and infrastructure, as well as an increase in traffic levels on rural roads.
- Longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining areas of Culm grassland and other open habitats.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back.
- Individual hedgerow trees may become increasingly susceptible to damage from the increasing frequency and magnitude of storm events.

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)

- Changes in crops and land use as a consequence of climate change and response to changing markets (e.g. bioenergy crops such as miscanthus).
- Increased demand for wind turbines and communications masts on the open ridgelines.
- Emerging demand for large-scale photovoltaic developments, capitalising on the solar radiation levels of slopes with a southerly aspect.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.



3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the landscape’s strong rural character and historic sense of place. The farmed landscape comprises a rich mosaic of fields bounded by an intact network of species-rich Devon hedges. Valued farmland and woodland habitats are managed and extended, with opportunities for Green Infrastructure links to settlements pursued.

Landscape and planning guidelines

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
PROTECT		
<p>Protect important views to and from the hills across the surrounding landscapes, including to Dartmoor, Exmoor and the North Devon Coast AONB. Protect stone church towers as important landmark features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important views and viewpoints (and identify why people think they are important). Avoid the location of skyline development which would detract from landmark church towers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance in development management planning to avoid siting vertical structures on the hills within this LCT, and on other hill summits visible from this landscape.
<p>Protect the landscape’s strong rural character and dark night skies, resisting highway improvements and lighting schemes that would affect these special qualities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the Highways Authority to respect the special qualities of the landscape’s sunken lanes Devon Green Lanes and Veins project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4, COR5 and COR6 Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1. Prepare design guidance focused on the quality of development and the special attributes of the landscape (e.g. lighting design guidance to preserve dark night skies). Develop a policy for protecting the character of rural lanes / ancient

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		<p>trackways in the forthcoming LDF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC to roll out a highways protocol / best practice guide on roadside management for rural areas.
<p>Protect the landscape’s variety of traditional building styles, including whitewash and painted window/door frames, exposed local stone and red brick and thatch. 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 cob/stone linhays, white wooden finger posts and stone bridges should be retained and kept in a good state of repair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Rural Skills Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR4 and COR6, and COR8 • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7. • Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF. • Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.
<p>Protect the setting and integrity of Hembury Castle hillfort (including through sensitive grazing levels and recreation management) and other archaeological features found across the landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO7 and CO8 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Protect the landscape’s dispersed settlement pattern of historic nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads. Resist the further spread of new development (including caravan and camping sites) 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"> • Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4, COR6, and COR8 • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO6 and TO5

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
MANAGE		
<p>Manage and enhance the strong irregular field patterns of much of the landscape, restoring lost and gappy Devon hedgebanks (particularly on intensively farmed slopes where they can provide a role in stabilising the soil and reducing agricultural run-off into the main river catchments). Respect any local variations in Devon bank construction and topping hedgerow species, utilising local materials wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of the farmed landscape, including through the creation of species-rich grass buffers around arable fields (also serving to reduce agricultural run-off). Retain areas of rough grazing land and heathy patches on high slopes to reinforce their ‘upland’ character.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1, CO9 and CO14 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Manage and extend areas of Culm grassland, rich valley mire, wet woodland and damp meadows through appropriate grazing and traditional land management regimes – both to enhance their wildlife value and functions in flood prevention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Share best practice between farmers working in areas of Culm grassland (e.g. through demonstration events). • Ensure management prescriptions provide a balance between wildlife needs and those of local farmers so agriculture remains viable.
<p>Reinstate traditional management techniques to the landscape’s semi-natural woodlands, particularly coppicing, to promote a diverse age and species structure and provide a low carbon fuel source to local communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England Woodland Grant Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<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"> • Environmental Stewardship • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 and COR17 • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9 • Green Infrastructure Strategy
PLAN		
<p>Plan for the expansion of fragmented Culm grassland sites and other wetland habitats to create an intact and climate-resilient green network, where conditions allow (e.g. considering underlying geology / soils).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Plan for the long-term restoration of the more prominent conifer plantations to open habitats (where their role in timber production has ceased).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • South West Nature Map • Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Plan for a network of green spaces and green infrastructure links to support future population growth in existing settlements whilst integrating development into the landscape and providing local spaces for access and recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR17. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy TO6 • Green Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Restore and manage areas of relict traditional orchards and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core

3A: UPPER FARMED WOODED VALLEY SLOPES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>explore opportunities for the creation of new ones, including community orchards to promote local food and drink production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon BAP • South West Nature Map • Devon Food Links 	<p>Strategy: Policy COR6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area