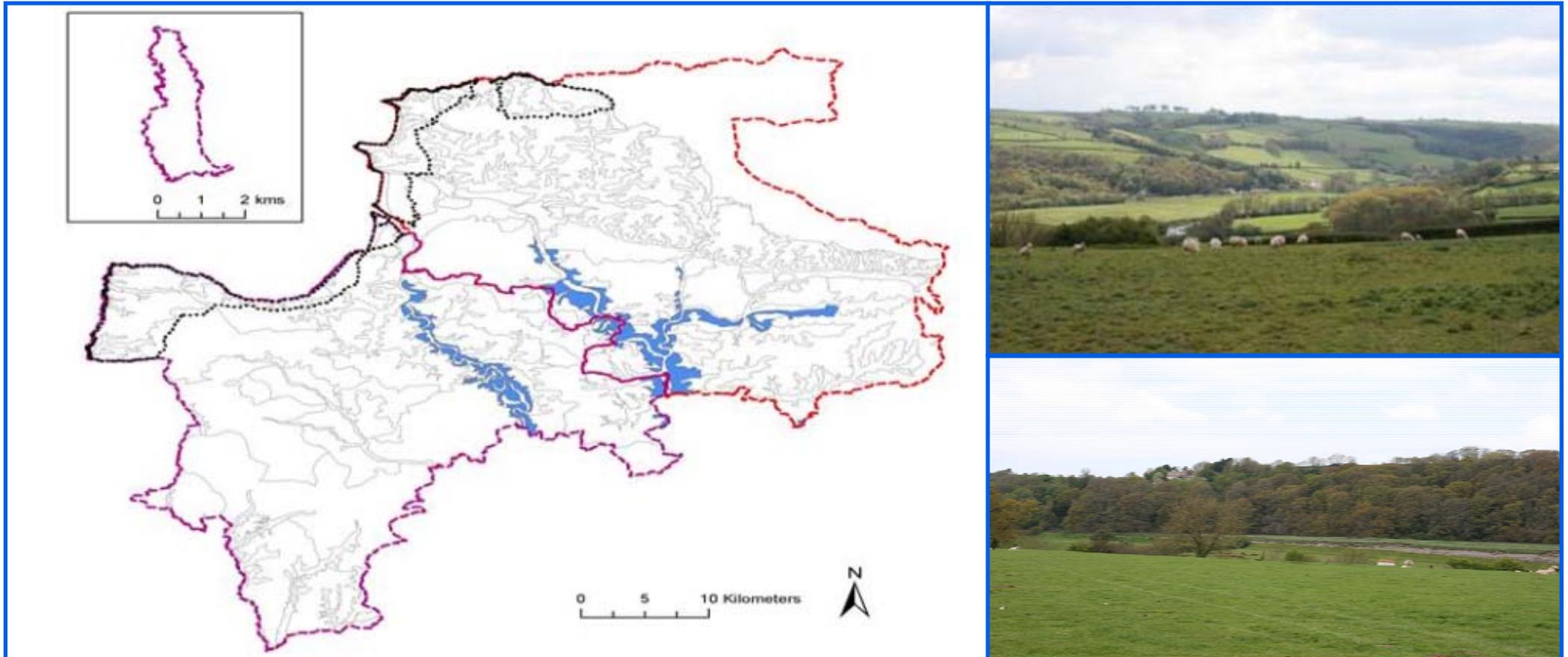


## **PART I: DESCRIPTION**



**CONSITUENT LDUs:** 367, 370, 380, 455, 610, 611, 664, 665, 666, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 738, 741, 743, 745, 793, 812, 817, 826, 837, 844, 845, 873, 875, 876

### **SUMMARY OF LOCATION**

This LCT covers the steep wooded slopes enclosing the main river valleys that cross the two districts (the Taw, Torridge, Tamar, Carey and Mole).

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

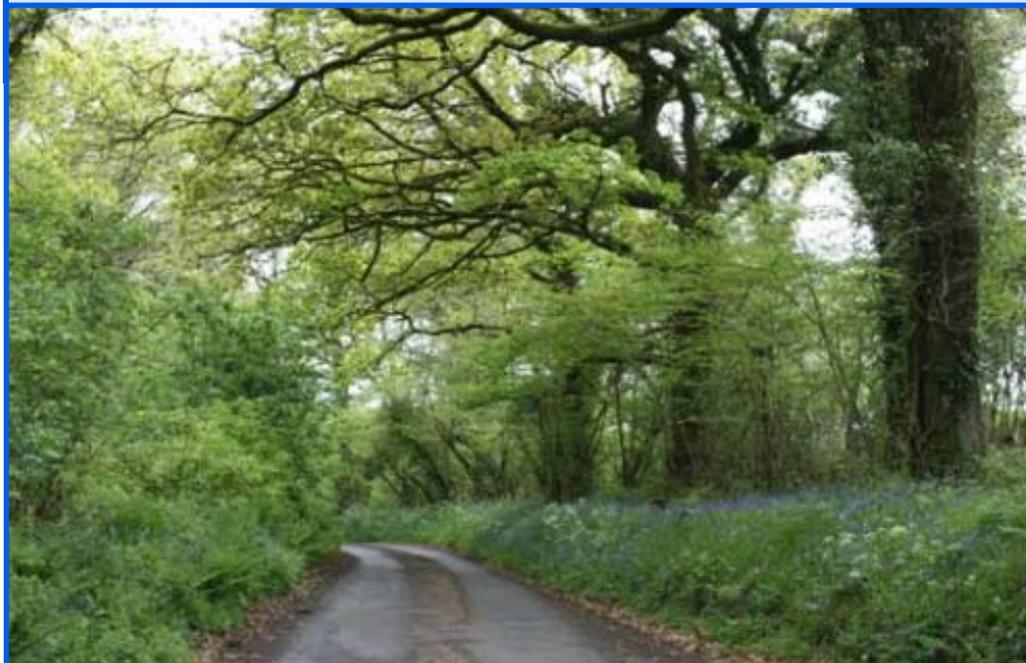
- Steep valley slopes with folds created by small tributary valleys feeding into the Rivers Torridge, Taw, Tamar, Carey and Mole. Elevated landform allowing extensive views across river valleys below.
- Underlying geology of Carboniferous mudstones, siltstones and sandstone, with river courses below carving steep sided, open valleys through the landform.
- Extensive tree cover clothing valley sides – including important areas of oak-dominated ancient semi-natural woodland, beech and non-native broadleaved plantations, patches of wet woodland and large tracts of conifer plantations (often on ancient woodland sites).
- Mixture of field sizes and origins, including irregular medium-scale medieval fields as well as larger regular fields of modern origin.
- Fields divided by mixed species Devon hedges often with wildflower-rich banks and frequent hedgerow trees on lower slopes. Some use of fencing.
- Agricultural land between woodlands comprising a mixture of sheep/dairy pasture, arable fields and rough grazing land.
- Valued semi-natural habitats associated with densely wooded valley slopes, supporting a rich ground flora. Patches of gorse and rough grassland contribute to local landscape diversity.
- Historic features including Iron Age hillforts occupying prominent positions on hill summits (e.g. Castle Hill settlement above the Torridge and Brighley Barton Camp above the Taw – both Scheduled Monuments).
- Estate woodland relating to the Grade I registered Castle Hill parkland fringing the Bray Valley, with an estate character also influencing the wooded slopes around Tawstock Park.
- Local vernacular building styles of cream/whitewashed thatched cottages, with some exposed stone and slate as a roofing material.
- Lightly settled with high levels of tranquillity – occasional farms and individual properties linked by steep narrow lanes plunging down valley slopes and wrapping around valley sides.
- Peaceful landscape with strong sense of remoteness – broken in the Taw Valley by the presence of the Tarka Line railway and main A377 following the valley floors.



## PART 2: EVALUATION

### SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Broadleaved woodlands covering valley slopes.
- Important wildlife habitats and species.
- Narrow green lanes forming tunnels through woodland and roadside hedges.
- Importance for recreation, including the Tarka Trail.
- Sense of peace and tranquillity.



### FORCES FOR CHANGE

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

- Large swathes of 20<sup>th</sup> century conifer planting along valley sides.
- Forestry operations (e.g. use of chainsaws, logging vehicles) interrupting the peace and quiet of the landscape.
- Loss of pasture and rough grasslands on valley slopes to intensive arable production, particularly driven by the introduction of the CAP in the 1970s.
- Decline in grazing levels on the steeper slopes, leading to a spread of scrub, gorse and secondary woodland.
- Removal of species-rich Devon banks to support agricultural intensification, with lengths of fencing replacing traditional boundaries in some locations.
- Decline in woodland management including coppicing and a spread of invasive species affecting the biodiversity of the landscape's woodlands. Deer damage is also an issue in this LCT.
- Decrease in the number and area of traditional farm orchards.
- Recreation pressures and increasing levels of traffic on rural roads. The Tarka Trail multi-user route, created in 1987 along the disused Barnstaple-Bideford railway line, is a popular recreational facility in the landscape.
- Heavy farm traffic the landscape's narrow, winding roads – leading to

**PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)**

- vehicular damage to roadside hedges and woodland. Resultant removal of vegetation by Highways' Authority leading to a change in the character of the roads.
- Decline in grazing levels on steep valley sides, leading to a spread of bracken and gorse particularly on upper slopes.
- Loss of traditional orchards along lower valley slopes.
- Peace and tranquillity interrupted by main roads running along the lower valley slopes – including the A377 along the River Taw and the A386 along the Torridge.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of some settlements, spreading in a linear form from their historic cores e.g. Great Torrington
- Increased traffic on main roads encircling the National Park, particularly the A30 and A38, which associated impacts on tranquillity.
- Views to and intrusion from urban development at Barnstaple and Bideford.

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

- Continuing decline in traditional woodland management skills threatening the age and species diversity of semi-natural woodlands.
- Increase in UK-based tourism with associated requirements for new facilities and infrastructure, as well as an increase in traffic levels on the main roads which cross the landscape.
- Further development pressures leading to the expansion of the fringing settlements of Great Torrington, Bideford and Barnstaple and consequential impacts on levels of tranquillity.
- Further Intensification of agriculture along the valley slopes to support rising food demands, leading to an increased risk of diffuse pollution in watercourses.
- Pressure for an expansion of the area of coniferous plantation and woodland, planted and allowed to spread through natural regeneration to enhance the landscape's roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, storing and sequestering carbon dioxide and providing a low-carbon fuel source (through coppice management).
- Longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation as a result of climate change, including secondary woodland, resulting in a spread of such vegetation in the understoreys of the area's semi-natural and estate woodlands.
- More intense summer drought conditions as a result of climate change, leading to a drying out of wetland habitats including riparian woodlands and meadows.

**3G: RIVER VALLEY SLOPES & COMBES****FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)**

- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back. Individual trees (including valued parkland / veteran trees) may become more susceptible to damage from the increasing frequency and magnitude of storm events.
- Further spread of non-native and alien species in woodlands, spurred on by a changing climate.
- Planting of non-native woodland species to respond to different growing conditions – altering the species composition of the landscape's semi-natural oak and historic estate woodlands.
- Increased demand for bioenergy planting, including Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) as well as a drive towards active woodland management to produce woodfuel as a low-carbon fuel source.



## PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

**OVERALL STRATEGY:** To protect and enhance the peaceful character of the valley slopes, fringed by well-managed woodlands and fields enclosed by an intact network of species-rich Devon banks. Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaves and other semi-natural habitats, creating a climate resilient green network. New recreational spaces and infrastructure links are provided to nearby settlements.

### 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 lightly settled and tranquil character of the landscape, ensuring that new development on the edges of nearby settlements does not encroach into the area (including related lighting schemes).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR3, COR4 and COR8.</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7</li> <li>• Consider producing a Design Guide as a SPD to the LDF.</li> <li>• 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).</li> </ul>
<p>Protect the landscape’s traditional building styles and materials, particularly cream/whitewashed thatched cottages, as well as exposed stone and slate Any new development or extensions should utilise the same materials and building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals</li> <li>• Devon Rural Skills Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR2 and COR6.</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and</li> </ul>

## 3G: RIVER VALLEY SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design).</p>		<p>CO7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF.</li> </ul>
<p>Protect the landscape’s network of quiet sunken lanes enclosed by woodland and species-rich hedgebanks, resisting unsympathetic highways improvements (e.g. hedgerow/woodland cutting) or signage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Devon Green Lanes and Veins Project</li> <li>Encourage the Highways Authority to respect the special character of the landscape’s rural lanes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5, COR6 and COR8</li> <li>Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1</li> <li>Develop a policy for protecting the character of rural lanes in the forthcoming LDF.</li> <li>DCC to roll out a highways protocol / best practice guide on roadside management for rural areas.</li> <li>Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.</li> </ul>
<p>Protect and sensitively manage historic features within the landscape, including Iron Age hillforts occupying prominent positions on hill summits (including through grazing at appropriate levels and recreation management).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Stewardship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8</li> <li>North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>
<p><b>MANAGE</b></p>		
<p>Manage and enhance the valleys’ semi-natural woodlands through traditional techniques including coppicing. Control access by livestock, promoting natural regeneration to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>England Woodland Grant Scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1</li> <li>North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core</li> </ul>

### 3G: RIVER VALLEY SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
enhance longevity whilst using extensive grazing to promote the species diversity of woodland ground flora. Explore opportunities for community utilisation of coppice residues as a low-carbon fuel source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• South West Woodlands Renaissance scheme</li> <li>• Devon Rural Skills Trust</li> </ul>	Strategy: Policy COR6
Manage and extend areas of wet woodland and floodplain grasslands through appropriate grazing and traditional land management regimes – both to enhance their wildlife value and functions in flood prevention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1</li> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>
Manage species-rich Devon hedgebanks through the regular coppicing of hedgerow trees and re-laying of gappy sections, strengthening irregular medieval field patterns. Replace lost lengths and lines of fencing, respecting traditional bank styles and species composition, particularly locations at right angles to slopes to help reduce soil erosion and run-off into watercourses.	<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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>
Manage important areas of rough grassland and gorse scrub on upper slopes through a continuation of livestock grazing at appropriate levels. Support farmers to continue to farm these ‘marginal’ areas as an integral part of their farming system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Devon Food Links</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area</li> </ul>
Manage the area’s existing plantations for sustainable timber production and wildlife interest, creating new green links to surrounding semi-natural habitats. .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• England Woodland Grant Scheme</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR17.</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9.</li> </ul>

## 3G: RIVER VALLEY SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<b>PLAN</b>		
<p>Create, extend and link woodland and wetland habitats to enhance the water storage capacity of the landscape (reducing incidences of downstream flooding) and improve water quality through reducing soil erosion and agricultural run-off. The natural regeneration of woodland should be encouraged and new planting [using climate-hardy species] undertaken to link fragmented sites.</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> <li>• South West Nature Map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torrridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> </ul>
<p>Restore and manage areas of relict traditional orchards and 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"> <li>• Environmental Stewardship</li> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• Devon Food Links</li> <li>• Devon Rural Skills Trust</li> <li>• South West Nature Map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torrridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6</li> <li>• Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area</li> </ul>
<p>Plan for the long-term restoration of the more prominent conifer plantations to open habitats and broadleaved woodlands (where their role in timber production has ceased). Explore the retention of other plantations as recreational spaces (e.g. for mountain biking trails).</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; Torrridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR17.</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9.</li> </ul>

## 3G: RIVER VALLEY SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>Plan for the creation of green infrastructure links to nearby settlements such as Great Torrington, Bideford and Barnstaple, maximising connections with the Tarka Trail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devon BAP</li> <li>• South West Nature Map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Devon &amp; Torrington Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR17.</li> <li>• Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9.</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>