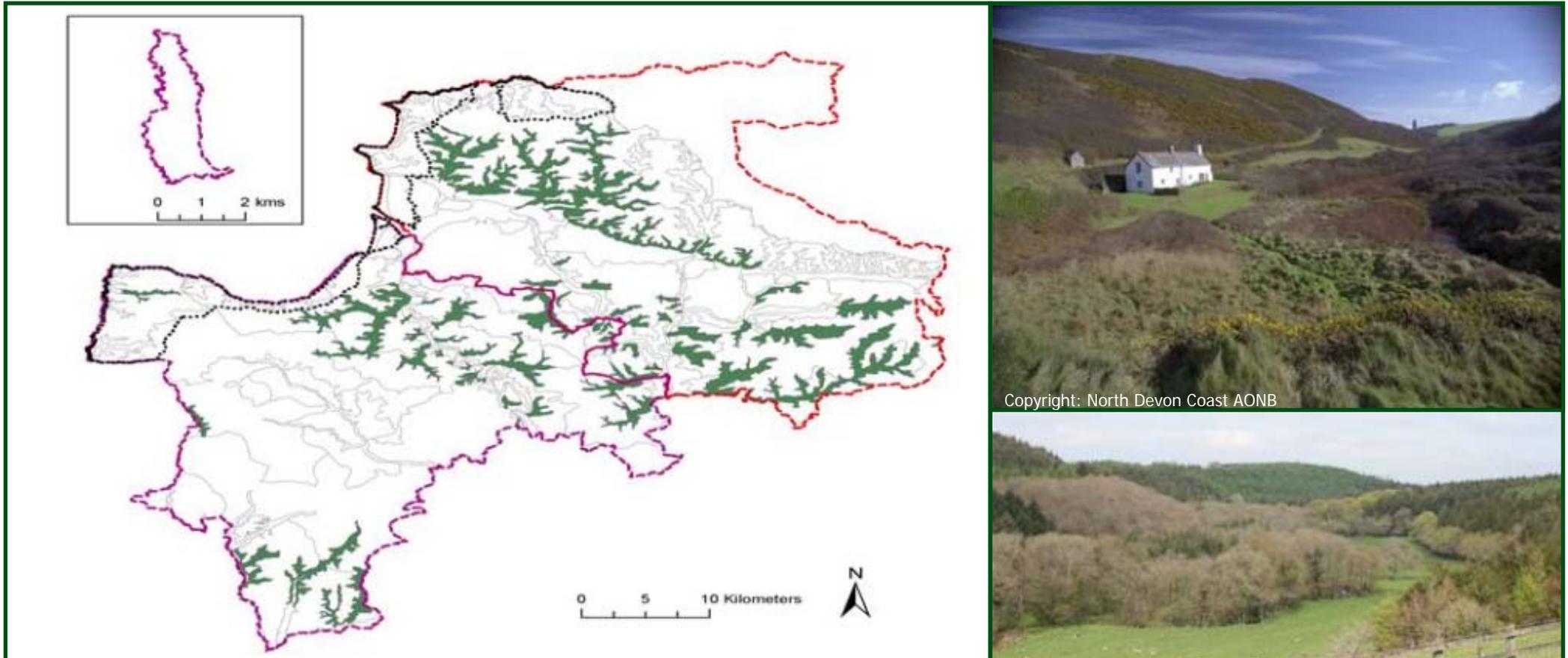


PART I: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 88, 371, 376, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 402, 403, 452, 453, 455, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 541, 542, 543, 545, 546, 552, 566, 567, 571, 572, 576, 609, 610, 611, 660, 665, 666, 674, 675, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 686, 687, 691, 734, 738, 740, 741, 743, 745, 793, 812, 817, 825, 826, 834, 837, 838, 842, 843, 844, 845, 848, 849, 851, 852, 853, 875, 876, 881

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

The Secluded Valleys carve through the highest land of the districts, forming tributaries of the main rivers including the Taw, Torridge, Bray and Mole.

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
3H: SECLUDED VALLEYS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

- Steep-sided, v-shaped valleys with fast-flowing streams and rivers carving through the landscape, crowned by rounded hill summits.
- Includes the main tributary valleys of the Taw, Torridge, Bray and Mole, as well as the tightly enclosed southward-draining downland valleys of North Devon.
- Watercourses carve through underlying Carboniferous sandstones, mudstones and siltstones (Culm Measures). The downland valleys incise steeply through bands of Morte slate in their upper courses, flowing through the sandstones and mudstones from the Late Devonian as they flow south.
- Roadford Lake and the Upper & Lower Tamar Lakes (reservoirs) occupying the heads of the Wolf and Tamar Valleys respectively.
- Dense tree cover cloaking valley sides, including ancient semi-natural oak woodlands with a colourful ground flora, beech-dominated broadleaved woodlands and conifer blocks. Patches of wet woodland tracing river/stream courses.
- Mixture of field sizes and shapes – often smaller, irregular medieval enclosures on lower slopes, with upper slopes merging into larger post-medieval and modern fields, often retaining earlier curving boundaries.
- Species-rich Devon hedges on wildflower-rich banks, with bank-side ferns and frequent hedgerow trees associated with lower valley locations.
- Steep valley sides dominated by pasture grazed by sheep and cattle, with patches of rough grazing land on upper slopes and rushy meadows fringing watercourses.
- Ancient and broadleaved woodlands interspersed with patches of Culm grassland, species-rich rush pasture, Molinia mire, unimproved acid and neutral grasslands, wet meadows and gorse and willow scrub. Parkland estates containing veteran trees within wood pasture featuring along some valleys.
- Sense of time depth provided by a scattering of Bronze Age barrows and tumuli, Iron Age hillforts on prominent hill-top sites (e.g. East Kidland Camp), historic parkland estates (e.g. Grade II* Arlington Court and Grade II Youlston Park) and monastic remains at Hartland Abbey and Frithelstock Priory.
- Mills, dismantled railway lines, mining shafts and stone bridges reflecting the valleys' industrial heritage.
- Nucleated villages, hamlets and farmstead groups at crossing points, with some linear spread along valley floors (e.g. Weave Gifford). Settlement linked by minor roads running along valley floors and sunken lanes falling steeply down slopes.
- Strong local vernacular of exposed local stone and slate, along with cream, whitewashed and yellow buildings, some with thatched roofs. Derelict corrugated iron livestock sheds and lincays frequently feature in valleys within Torridge district.
- High levels of peace and tranquillity frequently defined by sounds of rushing water echoing out from the valley bottoms.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Unspoilt, secluded and secretive character.
- Broadleaved woodlands and coppice clothing valley sides.
- Rich mosaic of water, hedges, small fields and woodland.
- Important wildlife havens.
- Narrow sunken lanes and stone bridges.



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FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Construction of reservoirs at Roadford Lake (in 1989) and the Upper & Lower Tamar lakes (in 1975 and the 1820s respectively), forming prominent landscape features and popular recreation spots.
- Large swathes of 20th century conifer planting along valley sides and associated with reservoirs. Recent broadleaved woodland planting a feature of some valley slopes.
- Decline in woodland management including coppicing, leading to a spread of invasive species and an even age structure, affecting the biodiversity value of the landscape's woodlands.
- Traditional farm buildings (including lincays) falling into a poor state of repair and, in some cases, dereliction – due to their original agricultural functions ceasing.
- Recreation pressures and associated facilities such as holiday parks, along with increasing levels of traffic on rural roads, particularly during holiday periods.
- Heavy farm traffic the landscape's narrow, winding roads – leading to 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.

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

- Experimental project by Devon Wildlife Trust to monitor the reintroduction of the beaver to one of the valleys, with consequential changes to riparian vegetation.
- Non-native wildlife species such as mink introduced, disrupting the natural balance of the river ecosystems.
- Loss of traditional orchards along riversides.
- Peace and tranquillity interrupted by forestry operations (e.g. noise from chainsaws).
- Peace and tranquillity interrupted by main roads in some valleys – including the A361, A39, B3230 and A388.
- Spread of commercial and industrial development on the fringes of Plymouth and Ivybridge – with associated noise and visual impacts felt within the southern parts of the LCT.
- Increased traffic on main roads encircling the National Park, particularly the A30 and A38, which associated impacts on tranquillity.
- 20th century expansion of some settlements, spreading in a linear form from their historic cores e.g. Weave Gifford.
- Some valleys crossed by prominent pylon lines, diluting perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness (e.g. the Duntz).
- Prominent views of urban development outside the LCT, including Great Torrington 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 (including holiday parks and farm diversification enterprises), as well as an increase in traffic levels on the main roads which cross the landscape.
- Further development pressures and demand for farm conversions as the area continues to be a desirable place to live.
- Population increase in the nearby settlements such as Barnstaple, Combe Martin and South Molton leading to higher water supply demands and the potential need for further reservoirs in the landscape.
- Intensification of agriculture on more fertile valley pastures in the valleys' lower courses to meet rising food demands, leading to a loss of semi-natural grasslands and rush pasture and 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).
- More intense periods of drought, as a result of climate change, leading to the drying out of important wetlands including wet meadows and rush pasture,

- Summer droughts also likely to reduce the valleys' water supply from the uplands of the area.
- Increased autumn and winter precipitation levels leading to higher water levels and consequential increases in flood risk in their lower catchments.
- Increase in poaching on river banks due to wetter autumn and winter conditions leading to waterlogged ground.
- Longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including secondary woodland resulting in a spread of such vegetation in the understoreys of the landscape's valued semi-natural woodlands.
- 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 specimens) 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 oak and beech-dominated valley woodlands.
- Higher demand for domestic food production potentially leading to an increase in stocking levels and consequential impacts of poaching and over-grazing.
- 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.
- Potential future schemes to harness the power of the water to produce electricity as a renewable source (hydro-power).

PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect and enhance the secluded character of the river valleys with a strong historic sense of place. Woodlands and wetlands are managed and expanded to help prevent downstream flooding and protect water quality. Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaves and other semi-natural habitats, creating a climate resilient green network. New recreational spaces are created away from the most sensitive locations, and the valleys’ potential to harness power from their fast-flowing water is explored.

Landscape and planning guidelines

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
PROTECT		
Protect the sparse settlement pattern of clustered hamlets, villages and farmsteads often focused at river crossing points. Prevent the linear spread of development along river valleys and roads wherever possible, to maintain the settlements’ characteristic form and peaceful character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR3, COR4 and COR8. Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7 Consider producing a Design Guide as a SPD to the LDF. 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).
Protect the landscape’s traditional building styles and materials, particularly exposed local stone and slate, cream, whitewashed and yellow buildings, and the local use of thatch. Any new	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR2 and COR6.

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
3H: SECLUDED VALLEYS**

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>development should utilise the same materials and building styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design).</p> <p>Characteristic features such as white wooden finger posts, stone bridges and lincays 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"> • 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 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"> • The Devon Green Lanes and Veins Project • Encourage the Highways Authority to respect the special character of the landscape’s rural lanes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5, COR6 and COR8 • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • Develop a policy for protecting the character of rural lanes in the forthcoming LDF. • DCC to roll out a highways protocol / best practice guide on roadside management for rural areas. • Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.
<p>Protect and restore historic features within the valley landscapes, particularly those relating to the rivers’ industrial heritage such as mills, dismantled railways and mining shafts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals • Estate Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
3H: SECLUDED VALLEYS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
MANAGE		
Manage and protect parkland estates within the valleys, including through tree pollarding, new tree planting (for a future generation of climate-hardy veteran trees) and grazing of wood pasture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Estate Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO7.
Manage and enhance the valleys’ semi-natural woodlands through traditional techniques including coppicing. Control access by livestock, promoting natural regeneration to 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"> • Environmental Stewardship • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Devon BAP • South West Woodlands Renaissance scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6, COR7
Manage and extend areas of grassland, species-rich rush pasture, Molinia mire, unimproved acid and neutral grasslands, wet meadows and gorse and willow scrub 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"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Manage the area’s existing plantations for sustainable timber production and to enhance their wildlife interest, creating new green links to surrounding semi-natural habitats. .	<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 COR17 • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO9.
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 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"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
3H: SECLUDED VALLEYS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
PLAN		
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Food Links • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area
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) away from the more sensitive habitats surrounding them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Plan for the potential development of small scale hydro schemes as a valuable source of renewable energy on suitable sites (both in ecological and landscape terms).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR7. • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO12