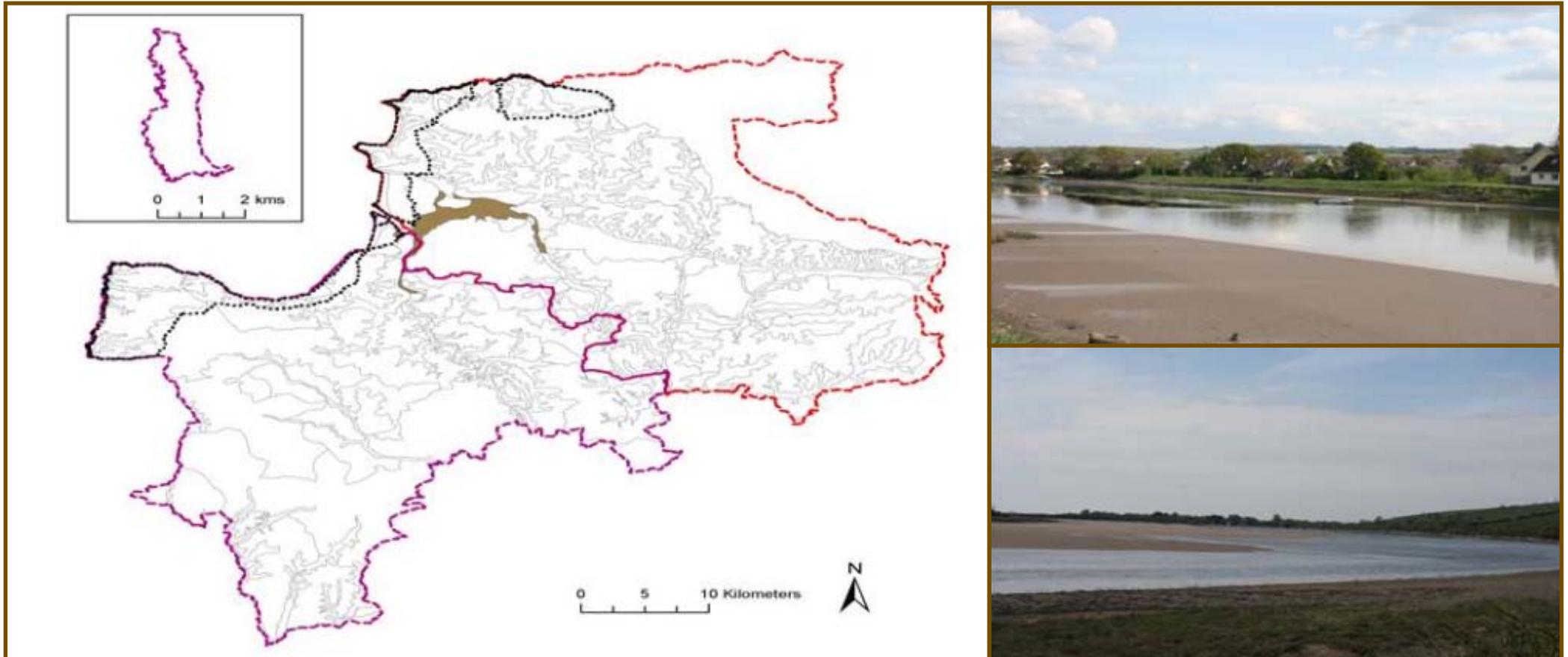


PART I: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 358, 88, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 372, 378, 380, 393, 419, 454, 536, 540, 664, 665, 675, 676, 677, 681, 683, 837, 838, 839, 840, 850, 851

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT covers the broad Taw-Torridge Estuary and its surrounding mudflats and marshes. All but the estuary mouth falls within North Devon district.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

- Broad, sweeping estuary of the Taw / Torridge, with expansive mudflats and sandbanks inundated by water from the sea at high tide.
- Backed by gradually rising land, the estuary reaching its coastal extent between the sand dunes of Braunton and Northam Burrows.
- Estuary immediately fringed by areas of saltmarsh, sand spits, lagoons and reclaimed farmland.
- Tree cover limited to overgrown hedges and areas of scrub within fringing farmland, with small blocks of broadleaved and ancient woodlands overlooking the tidal reaches of the Taw and Torridge rivers.
- Banks of estuary defined by grazing marsh, arable fields and rough grassland divided by brackish ditches, fencing and thorny hedges.
- Farmland drained and enclosed in post-medieval and recent times, comprising regular fields and unenclosed marshes.
- Nationally important for biodiversity – supporting major populations of migratory and overwintering wading birds, fish including sea trout and salmon, rich saltmarshes with rare plants and flowers, and areas of brackish water fringed by willow.
- Streams and drainage ditches flowing into the estuary across the surrounding farmland.
- Strong maritime history associated with the textile trade – including the 24-arched Grade I listed Long Bridge in Bideford, the listed Barnstaple Long Bridge and historic quays dotted along the shore.
- Unsettled landscape, although strongly influence by housing, industrial and commercial development associated with Barnstaple, Appledore and Bideford sitting on the estuary banks.
- Main roads crossing the water on bridges; adjacent farmland crossed by the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path.
- Sewage works located on the north bank of the estuary, with views of nearby development and the airfield at Chivenor also affecting overarching perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness associated with the estuary.
- Strong sensory characteristics: colour and texture of habitats; smell of mudflats and the sea; birdsong and calls; sight of sunlight reflecting off water.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Open feeling and expansive views
- Unique flora and fauna, particularly important for overwintering birds.
- Opportunities for waterfront access and recreation (including cycle paths).
- Evidence of historic quays.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Light and noise pollution, as well as visual intrusion, from nearby development at Barnstaple, Appledore, Northam and Braunton.
- Estuary crossed in two locations by the A39 major road corridor, impacting on the landscape's levels of peace and tranquillity.
- Noise and air pollution also produced from the main A361 running parallel to the northern estuary bank.
- Industrial and commercial development close to the estuary, including sewerage works on the northern bank.
- Past sand and gravel dredging from Crow Point (5,000 tonnes per year), decreasing the feature's ability to protect the estuary mouth from coastal erosion.
- Development of Chivenor Airfield and associated barracks in the 1940s, forming significant features on the fringes of the estuary.
- Some fields fringing the estuary suffering from a lack of grazing, with a spread of brambles and scrub giving an impression of neglect.
- Lack of hedgerow management also resulting in gappy and overgrown sections, with some lengths replaced by fencing.
- Saltmarshes fringing the estuary at Skern currently assessed as in unfavourable declining condition by Natural England, due in part to poaching and overgrazing by commoners' stock wandering from Northam Burrows.

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

- Popularity of the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path for informal recreation. The wider coast's popularity as a visitor destination resulting in high traffic levels on surrounding roads at weekends and during holiday periods.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

**FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER**

- Further growth in popularity of the area and the surrounding coast for recreation and tourism, impacting on the estuary's levels of tranquillity and leading to increased demand for facilities, infrastructure (including car parks and signage) and higher traffic levels.
- Future growth of Barnstaple, Braunton and Bideford/ Northam/Appledore as the main towns serving the two districts, further intruding into the open estuary landscape.
- Spread of hobby farming and the rising cost of land close to the main settlements, resulting in a further erosion of traditional agricultural land uses and neglect of hedgerows alongside the estuary.
- Sea level rise and coastal erosion as a result of climate change, resulting in a significant rise in the estuary's water levels and a consequential widening of its channels.
- Future climate change modelling predicting that by 2100, most spring tides will breach the current flood defences protecting settlements and farmland along the estuary fringes.
- Increasing demand for the tidal energy of the estuary to be harnessed as a renewable energy source in response to government targets for climate change mitigation (proposals have already been put forward for this type of scheme).

PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the open character and expansive views to and from the estuary, ensuring new development on its fringes is incorporated into its landscape setting. The cultural heritage and natural evolution of the estuary is conveyed through sensitive interpretation, and local communities are involved in planning for future landscape change as a result of sea level rise and changes in coastal erosion.

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 open character of the estuary and its important views to and from the surrounding landscapes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important views and view points (and identify why people think they are important) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a seascape assessment to help inform the sensitive siting of future development (including within and along the estuary fringes) – following the emerging Natural England guidance. Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H1, C5; Objectives HCL1, HCL6. North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012)
Protect, and where appropriate, restore historic features along the estuary edges, including quays and bridges. Provide sensitively sited interpretation to help tell the story of the ever-changing nature of the landscape and its cultural significance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative working with English Heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objective LH1, LH2, ART4, CC3; Policies A1, F2, G1 Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8 North Devon & Torridge Joint Core

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
4A: ESTUARIES**

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		Strategy: Policy COR6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H3, E4, L1, L3; Objectives HCL2, HCL5, CL3
MANAGE		
Manage the landscape's popularity for recreation, encouraging use of existing facilities such as the Tarka Trail and SWCP whilst providing sustainable transport options and green infrastructure links to the surrounding towns (see further under 'Plan').	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the use of 'zoning' and promote less sensitive sites for tourism (e.g. inland). • Develop further sustainable transport initiatives / park & ride schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives BG5, ART1, ART3; Policies F1, F3, G2, H1. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policy TO6. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR17 • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies S2, S3, S5, C3; Objectives SSHC1, SSHC8, CC5.
Manage the agricultural land fringing the estuary, encouraging local farmers to use the pastures and marshes for livestock grazing as part of their farming systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H4, E2 & R1; Objectives HCL1, RES2, ECON1, ECON5
Manage the estuary's internationally important habitats, including saltmarshes and mudflats, ensuring marshes are grazed at appropriate levels and the location of engineered sea defences respect the natural environment wherever possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives; CO3, Policies C1, D3, D5 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon's Structure Plan: Policy CO5 • Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
4A: ESTUARIES**

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		<p>currently in consultation phase).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012) • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies B1 & B3; Objectives Bio 2, Bio5, Bio6 and CCI
<p>Manage and restore lost and gappy hedgerow sections, particularly at right angles to slopes, to reinforce the landscape's regular field patterns and reduce erosion/diffuse pollution into streams and the estuary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Policy A1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
PLAN		
<p>Plan for the future impacts of climate change, particularly as a result of sea level rise and coastal erosion, allowing natural processes to take place wherever possible whilst ensuring that local communities are involved in making decisions about their future landscape. Plan for opportunities to expand estuarine habitats to build resilience to future climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives; EQ3, CC4, Policies A2, D1, K2, L1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR2 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO5 • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012) • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies C1, C2, C8; Objectives CCI, CC2, CC6 • Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
4A: ESTUARIES**

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		currently at consultation stage)
<p>Plan for the future expansion of nearby towns on the estuary fringes (Barnstaple, Braunton, Bideford), incorporating new development into its landscape setting and providing green infrastructure links to routes such as the Tarka Trail and SW Coast Path.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives; BG5, ART1, TH1, TH2; Policies: FI, G1, HI • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR3, COR5 and COR17 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy TO6 • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies C5, E4 • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012)