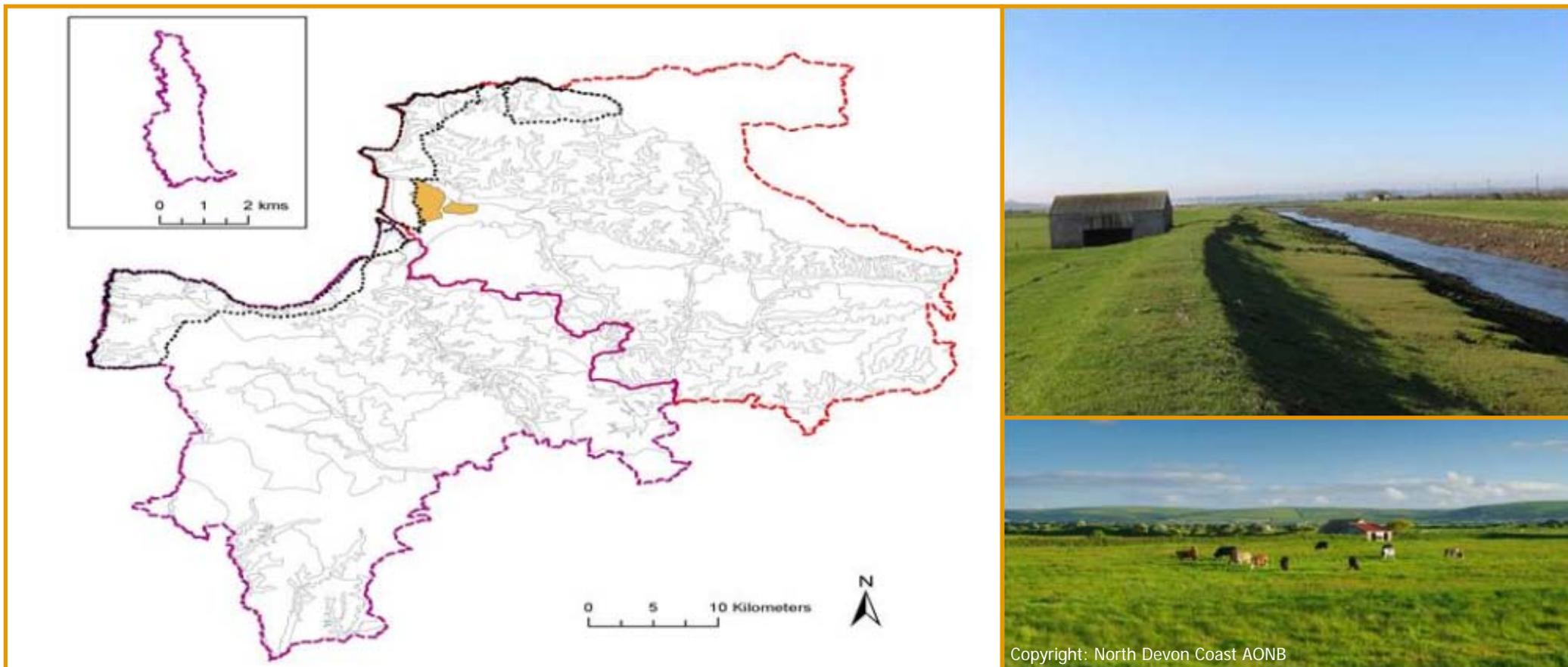


PART I: DESCRIPTION

CONSITUENT LDUs: 358, 88, 363, 393, 398, 399, 400, 401, 540, 850

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

The Marine Levels and Coastal Plain LCT covers the reclaimed estuary fringes of Braunton Marsh and Chivenor airfield on the northern banks of the Taw-Torrige Estuary. It also includes the historic landscape of Braunton Great Field backing Braunton Marsh, classified for the purposes of this LCA as a 'coastal plain'. Both Braunton Great Field and Braunton Marsh fall within the North Devon Heritage Coast.

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS**KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE**

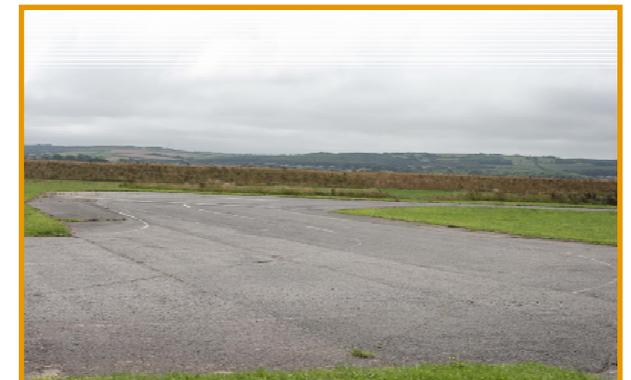
- Flat expansive landscapes bordering the Taw-Torridge Estuary, often with 'big skies' and long views across the wide estuary and seascape.
- Geology of Devonian and Carboniferous mudstones topped with tidal and alluvial deposits of clay, silt and sand.
- Wet pastures and reclaimed marshes enclosed by reed-fringed drainage ditches or low-cut thorn hedges in large, regular fields.
- Preserved medieval open strip fields associated with Braunton Great Field, one of the finest examples surviving in the UK. Landsheds (small earth mounds) and furlong boundaries (tracks) still exist; these originally divided the strip fields when they were created from the communal open field in the later medieval period.
- Mixture of wet grazing marsh and pasture defining the reclaimed land backing the estuary. Braunton Great Field characterised by fertile arable farmland.
- Open ground surrounding Chivenor Airfield and barracks comprising a mixture of recreational grounds, fenced-off airfields and pony paddocks.
- An exposed landscape with limited tree cover; occasional stands providing shelter to isolated farmsteads, with riparian and secondary woodland associated with Swanpool Marsh and the grounds surrounding Willowfield Holiday Centre.
- Reclaimed land backing the estuary crossed by a network of drainage ditches (often brackish) and streams draining into the Taw-Torridge Estuary.
- Habitats of national importance include coastal grasslands, reedbeds, grazing marsh and the landscape's network of drainage ditches (supporting rare aquatic plants). Part of the wider UNESCO Biosphere Reserve centred on the adjacent Braunton Burrows.
- Braunton Great Field is an outstanding preserved example of a medieval open strip field system.
- Strong sense of time depth telling the story of the marsh's 19th century land reclamation from the sea for agriculture, including banks, stone bridges, linhays and sluices. Chivenor Airfield (Royal Marine Base) has a long association with the military.
- Braunton Great Field and Braunton Marsh defined by an absence of settlement; with occasional isolated farms, bungalows and cottages along with a scattering of traditional stone livestock shelters, often with thatched roofs.
- Strong sense of exposure and of being close to the coast, with the horizontal landscape giving a feeling of space and evoking perceptions of 'wildness'.
- Chivenor Airfield includes a dense mixture of 20th century housing, hangars and other military structures. The nearby town of Braunton has a strong influence in views and erodes local perceptions of tranquillity.



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PART 2: EVALUATION

VALUED LANDSCAPE ATTRIBUTES

- Braunton Great Field medieval field system: a jewel in North Devon's crown ('our World Heritage Site')
- An obvious historic landscape: landsheds, furlongs, ditches, stone walls, animal shelters and traditional farming methods.
- Rich biodiversity and wetland habitats for birds.
- Peaceful and tranquil.
- Transition between land/estuary/sea.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Development of Chivenor Airfield and barracks on the northern shores of the estuary in the 1930s, now used as a Royal Marines base and search-and-rescue station. Large-scale hangers are dominant in many views from the open landscapes surrounding the estuary.
- Unmanaged and neglected character of parts of Chivenor Airfield, with scrap caravans and some redundant spaces enclosed by prominent, high fencing out of context with the open landscape setting.
- Encroaching development and urban fringe pressures (including pony paddocks) from Braunton on the eastern fringes of Braunton Great Field / Marsh and the northern-western fringes of Chivenor Airfield.
- Traffic and development associated with the industrial and trading estate east of Chivenor Airfield, impacting on the landscape's natural estuary setting and levels of tranquillity.
- Noise and air pollution from the nearby A361 Barnstaple-Braunton road.
- Presence of modern bungalows, industrial-scale agricultural sheds and polytunnels on land surrounding Braunton Great Field, eroding its historic and open character. However, bulb growing is in itself an historic land use strongly associated with the area.
- Improvement of drained grazing pastures to intensive arable production and horticulture. Falling water levels on the Braunton Marsh having an effect on wildlife and the hydrology of the adjacent SAC/SSSI at Braunton Burrows.

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS**PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)**

- Stone walls and traditional linhays falling into a poor state of repair due to a lack of maintenance.
- Decline in the total number of landowners and land managers on the Great Field (from 140 in the 1830s to 30 owners and 4 strip holders at the turn of the 20th century), leading to a loss of strips and their characteristic landsherd / furlong boundaries.
- Past agri-environment schemes too prescriptive and setting out a metric (rather than the traditional imperial) measurement to form the basis for landsherd restoration on the Great Field. Stewardship in the 1990s / early 2000s therefore failed to halt the decline.
- Spread of secondary woodland and scrub in parts of the landscape, affecting its open character, the condition of semi-natural habitats (e.g. marsh and reedbeds) and creating an 'unkempt' appearance.
- Lack of hedgerow management resulting in overgrown sections, e.g. around Gallowell, Lower Thorn and Middle Thorn fields.
- 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.
- Expansive views to the surrounding open landscape fringing the estuary, and downland hills beyond. The telecommunications masts on Ora Hill (Saunton Down) form detracting features on the northern skyline above Braunton Great Field.

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

- Future growth of Braunton, Barnstaple and Bideford/ Northam/Appledore as the main towns serving the two districts, further intruding into the open landscape.
- Uncertain future for the use of Chivenor Airfield by the MOD (following budget cuts), potentially leading to redundant buildings and land uses within the landscape.
- Further growth in popularity of the area and the surrounding coast for recreation and tourism, impacting on the wider area's levels of tranquillity and leading to increased demand for facilities, infrastructure (including car parks and signage) and higher traffic levels and roads crossing through the landscape (e.g. linking Braunton to car parks serving Braunton Burrows and Saunton Sands, via Braunton Great Field / Marsh).
- 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 field boundaries.
- Further intensification and industrialisation of agriculture, potentially leading to an increase in areas of grazing marsh improved for arable / horticulture and further modern, large scale agricultural buildings appearing in the open landscape.
- Sea level rise and coastal erosion as a result of climate change, resulting in rising water levels across Braunton Marsh and more frequent flood events, affecting the agricultural viability of the area and the composition of valued semi-natural habitats.

PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the open character of the marine levels and coastal plain landscape, as an important backdrop to the Taw-Torridge Estuary and wider North Devon Coast. The outstanding preserved medieval open strip field landscape of Braunton Great Field is protected and enhanced, whilst its importance for agriculture is supported. New development is integrated into its landscape setting and opportunities are sought to promote sustainable access and recreation to the landscape and the wider coastline. The landscape is prepared for the future effects of a changing climate, with wildlife habitats strengthened and expanded to build resilience to the changes that might lie ahead.

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 and largely undeveloped character of Braunton Marsh and Braunton Great Field, ensuring any limited new development respects the scale and historic character of the landscape.		<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 • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012) • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H1, C5; Objectives HCL1, HCL4, HCL6.
Protect the landscape’s expansive views across the Taw-Torridge Estuary and higher downland summits on more distant horizons.	<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"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 and COR8. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1,

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid the siting of vertical structures or large-scale buildings in views from the historic landscape of Braunton Great Field. 	<p>CO2, CO3 and CO6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a seascape assessment to help inform the sensitive siting of future development along the edge of the Taw-Torridge Estuary (following the emerging Natural England guidance). North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012) Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H1, C5; Objectives HCL1, HCL4, HCL6.
<p>Protect and restore historic features relating to the long-standing agricultural use of the area, including stone walls, lincays, bridges, sluices and the strip / furlong / landsheds of Braunton Great Field. Provide sensitively sited interpretation which explains the rich cultural history of the area as well as the changes that might come about as a result of future climate change and sea level rise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8 North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012) Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H3, E4, L1, L3; Objectives HCL2, HCL5, CL3
<p>MANAGE</p>		
<p>Manage the wider landscape's popularity for recreation, encouraging the use of existing facilities such as the Tarka</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the use of 'zoning' and promote less sensitive sites for tourism (e.g. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon's Structure Plan: Policy TO6. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>Trail and South West Coast Path whilst providing sustainable transport options to reduce levels of traffic on minor roads crossing through the landscape.</p>	<p>inland).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop further sustainable transport initiatives / park & ride schemes. 	<p>Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR17</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 S2, S3, S5, C3; Objectives SSHC1, SSHC8, CC5.
<p>Manage areas of grazing marsh, resisting agricultural improvements or conversion to arable / horticulture. Support a continuation of arable and horticultural farming on Braunton Great Field within the original medieval strips, resisting an industrialisation of production (particularly in relation to agricultural buildings). Ensure marginal land fringing Chivenor Airfield remains in agricultural management to protect its open character and role as a backdrop to the Taw-Torridge Estuary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9 North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies H4, E2 & R1; Objectives HCL1, RES2, ECON1, ECON5
<p>Manage the landscape's valued coastal grasslands, reedbeds, grazing marsh and network of drainage ditches, including through a continuation of livestock grazing at appropriate levels and the careful management of water levels on Braunton Marsh.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship Devon BAP South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 Devon's Structure Plan: Policy CO5 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 the historic strip and furlong field</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>patterns across Braunton Great Field, ensuring imperial measurements are used to reinforce the original landscape patterns. Manage hedgerows around Gallowell, Lower Thorn and Middle Thorn to reinforce the sense of a well-managed landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust 	<p>Strategy: Policy COR6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012)
<p>PLAN</p>		
<p>Plan for the future impacts of climate change, particularly as a result of sea level rise, allowing natural processes to take place wherever possible whilst adapting farming practices to respond to future changes. Plan for opportunities to expand wetland habitats to strengthen species and habitat resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2 currently at consultation stage) • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR2 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO5 • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies C1, C2, C8; Objectives CCI, CC2, CC6 • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012)
<p>Plan for the future expansion of Braunton, incorporating new development into its landscape setting and providing green infrastructure links to routes such as the Tarka Trail and SW Coast Path. Ensure new development and associated land uses do not encroach into the valued landscapes of Braunton Great Field and Marsh.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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-

4B: MARINE LEVELS & COASTAL PLAINS

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		2012)
<p>Seek to integrate development at Chivenor Airfield, barracks and industrial estate into its open estuary setting, managing and extending coastal grasslands and grazing marshes around its fringes, penetrating as green corridors between gaps in development. Seek to restore redundant brownfield land and buildings to open coastal habitats to build resilience to future sea level rise (particularly on the fringes of the estuary).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map • Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2 currently at consultation stage) • Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan (2010, currently draft): Policies C5, E4 • North Devon Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2012)