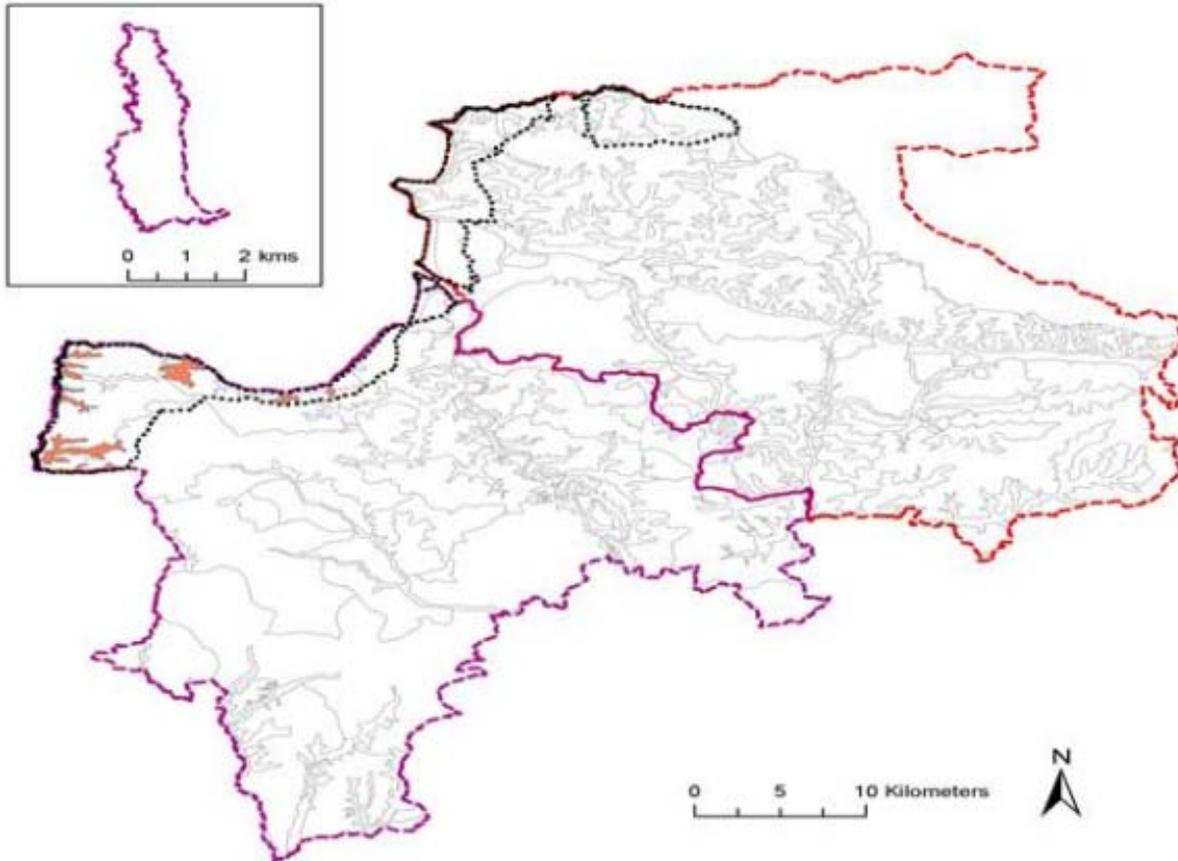


**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES**

PART I: DESCRIPTION



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CONSTITUENT LDUs: 404, 405, 684, 686, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 842

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT comprises the peaceful coastal combes carving through the AONB landscape in Torrington District.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

- Narrow, steep-sided valley landforms stretching inland from the coast, lined by fast-flowing streams.
- Sandstone bedrock geology of the Crackington (and Bude) formations.
- Spectacular views to the sea and dramatic coastal cliffs afforded through gaps in tree cover, and as the combes open out towards the coast.
- Woodland is a significant feature of most combes, occurring both along the streamline and on valley sides, with semi-natural oak woodland predominating.
- Varying field patterns – elongated medieval or post-medieval field patterns generally characterise the wider valley bottoms, often enclosed by post-and-wire fencing and the surrounding woodland, whilst the edges of modern or medieval fields overlap onto the upper slopes from adjacent areas, often bounded by thick Devon hedges.
- Rough pasture predominates along the valley bottoms, with rough grazing land also occurring on the valley sides in between woodland. Both pasture and arable fields occasionally overlap onto the upper slopes.
- Rich variety of semi-natural habitats, including ancient oak-dominated woodland, wet woodland, unimproved grassland (including Culm grasslands), and internationally-important areas of maritime scrub, grassland and heath towards the coast.
- Features such as stone-built mills, lime kilns and quays reflect the area's industrial past (e.g. Mouth Mill, Bucks Mills and Docton Mill).
- Very lightly settled, with small groups of dwellings and historic hamlets of local stone and whitewash with slate and sometimes thatched roofs, often sited at stream crossing points.
- Low levels of access, with minor roads generally crossing valleys and only occasionally along them, whilst footpaths and bridleways provide snake alongside streams.
- High levels of tranquillity – often the only sounds to be heard are from birdsong, the fast-flowing water of the combe streams, and the distant roar of the sea.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Secluded, intimate and small-scale landscapes.
- Contrast between sheltered woodlands and open vistas framed by the sea.
- Ancient woodland and rich biodiversity shaped by salt-laden winds.
- Historic fishing village at Bucks Mills.
- 'Olde worlde' village charm and a strong historic sense of place.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Recreation and tourism pressures around Bucks Mills and more accessible lengths of the South West Coast Path, with associated increase in traffic levels on rural roads and demand for facilities such as car parking and signage.
- Post-war agricultural intensification leading to a spread of arable and improved pasture at the expense of semi-natural habitats and wetlands.
- Field enlargement and loss of traditional stone-faced hedges in favour of fencing, as a result of modern farming practices.
- Some sections of gappy or remnant Devon hedgebanks, often replaced by fencing.
- Declining levels of woodland management leading to a spread of invasive species and scrub (such as rhododendron, turkey oak and brambles).
- 20th century planting of conifers on former ancient woodland sites.
- Occasional modern farm buildings and houses but generally settlements retain their historic character.
- Tranquillity broken in some combes by forestry operations and pheasant shoots.
- Views to ridgeline development at Westward Ho! from the coastal reaches of north-facing combes

4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES**FORCES FOR CHANGE****FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

- Ongoing growth in the popularity of the area for recreation and tourism, eroding the landscape's high levels of tranquillity and leading to increased demand for facilities (including through farm diversifications / conversions), infrastructure and higher traffic levels on rural roads.
- Decline in rural skills as young people move away from the area (due to a lack of affordable housing) resulting in an ageing farm workforce, with consequential impacts on the management of landscape features such as Devon hedges, woodlands and traditional buildings.
- Continued planting of conifers, affecting the nature conservation value of the landscape's internationally important oak woodlands.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread as result of climate change (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back.
- Sea level rise and coastal erosion as a result of climate change, leading to the 'squeeze' of coastal habitats and potential erosion of sections of the South West Coast Path.
- Expansion in the growth of bioenergy crops such as Miscanthus and Short Rotation Coppice as a result of market demand for 'green' energy and fuel sources, out of keeping with current cropping and woodland patterns.
- Changes in crops and land use as a consequence of climate change and response to changing markets (e.g. a future drive for higher levels of domestic food production leading to a further spread of arable land).

- Demand for both on-shore and off-shore wind farms – e.g. proposals for the Atlantic Array off-shore windfarm in the Bristol Channel which could be visible from the higher land and coastal sections of the north-facing combes.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps – leading to incremental change to traditional buildings.



PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the secretive and historic character of the coastal combes, with characteristic glimpses of the sea and surrounding coastline. Features relating to past industry are protected and sympathetically restored, and ancient woodlands are actively managed and re-created where they have been replaced over the last century by conifer plantations. Opportunities are sought to re-link and enlarge semi-natural habitats (to strengthen climate change resilience), surrounded by a working farmed landscape of fields enclosed by an intact network of Devon hedges.

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 the combes’ characteristic sense of seclusion and remoteness, ensuring limited new development is contained within existing settlement limits and any new farm buildings are integrated into their landscape setting (e.g. through woodland planting).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management plan: Policies A1 and H2 North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR3, COR4, COR6. Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO6 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).
<p>Protect important views from the combes, frequently characterised by glimpses of the sea and the wider coastline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important views and viewpoints both to and from the combes (and identify why people think they are important). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives EQ2 and CO4; Policies B2 and D5. Devon Structure Plan: policies CO3, CO4 and CO5.

4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>Protect the landscape’s traditional building styles and materials, particularly local stone and whitewash with slate and sometimes thatched roofs, Any new development or extensions should utilise the same materials and building styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design).</p> <p>Protect and, where required, sensitively restore other features of the local vernacular including stone bridges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals • Devon Rural Skills Trust • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF. • North Devon Sustainable Energy Action Plan • AONB Management Plan: Objectives LH1 and LH2; Policies A1, G1 and G4. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR6 and COR8. • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8.
<p>Protect the landscape’s network of winding rural lanes, resisting unsympathetic highways improvements (e.g. hedgerow/woodland cutting) or signage. Promote sustainable transport options to reduce traffic levels to destinations such as Bucks Mills and Clovelly during busy holiday periods.</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. • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management plan: Objectives F1, F3, TH1, TH2, TH3; Policies H1, H2 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR6. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and TO6. • 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, where appropriate sensitively restore industrial heritage features within the landscape, particularly stone-built mills, lime kilns and quays. Where appropriate, provide low-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management plan: Objective LH1, ART4, CC3; Policies A1 and F2. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy:

4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
key interpretation to enhance public understanding of the landscape's cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<p>Policy COR6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7
MANAGE		
<p>Manage and enhance the combes' ancient oak woodlands through traditional techniques such as coppicing and a programme of invasive species removal. 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship England Woodland Grant Scheme Devon BAP South West Woodlands Renaissance scheme Devon Rural Skills Trust National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL1, FL2 and G5; Policies A1, C1 and E2. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6, COR7.
<p>Manage and extend areas of wet woodland and wet 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 Devon BAP South West Nature Map National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL2; Policies C1 and E2 Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO9 and CO13 North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Manage 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 and stone-facing styles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship Devon BAP Devon Hedge Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Policy A1, North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6

4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES

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<p>and materials, particularly in locations at right angles to slopes to help reduce soil erosion and run-off into watercourses.</p> <p>Replace lost or over-mature hedgerow trees (particularly wind-sculpted specimens on higher ground) as important landscape features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Rural Skills Trust • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1
<p>Manage and re-link valued mosaics of unimproved grassland (including Culm and maritime grasslands), heath and scrub including through livestock grazing at appropriate levels. Support farmers to continue to farm these ‘marginal’ areas as an integral part of their farming system and protect them from alternative land uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Food Links • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<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		
<p>Plan for the restoration of conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to broadleaved woodlands (incorporating climate-hardy species) and other semi-natural habitats such as Culm grasslands and heath, particularly to account for habitat / species migration due to future climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objective FL2; Policies E2, E3, F1 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
<p>Plan for the future effects of climate change along the coast, allowing natural processes to take place as much as possible whilst ensuring local people are involved in decision-making relating to their future landscapes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map • National Trust Estate Management Plans (Peppercombe Valley and parts of Bucks Mills valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR2 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO5

4D: COASTAL SLOPES & COMBES

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
	Mills valley)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives; EQ3, CO1, CO3, CC4, Policies A2, C1, D1, D5, K2, L1 • Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2 currently in consultation phase).