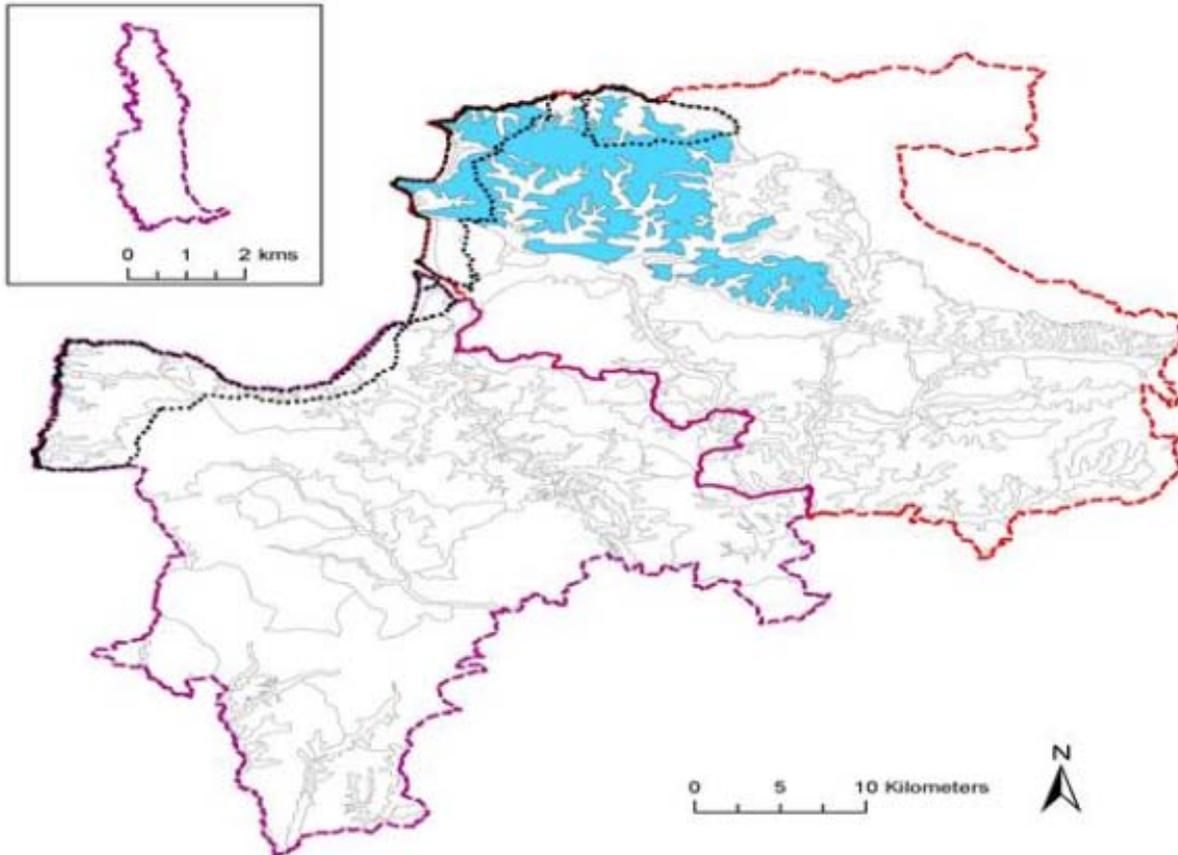


PART I: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 358, 88, 387, 388, 390, 393, 396, 398, 399, 401, 402, 403, 452, 453, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 532, 533, 535, 538, 539, 541, 542, 545, 546, 567, 572, 576, 578, 579, 580, 581, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT covers the North Devon Downs, including the elevated ridges between Combe Martin, Berrynarbor and Ilfracombe. It comprises an area of high open farmland with broad, rounded ridges slowly dropping in altitude towards Barnstaple and the Taw-Torridge Estuary. The northern part of the LCT is characterised by frequent coastal views.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

- Rolling downland landscape with broad rounded ridges and hilltops, dropping in altitude in the south to meet the Taw/Torridge estuary and Barnstaple. Hill summits afford expansive views across the landscape and beyond, including to the coast and estuary.
- Northern and coastal sections of the landscape underlain by resistant Morte slate, whilst softer bands of sandstone, shales and mudstone characterise southern parts of the LCT, resulting in a more undulating topography.
- Landscape drained by springs and small streams feeding into steep valleys and combes carving through the downland (separate LCTs). Views to these wooded valleys provide contrasting colour and texture to this strongly agricultural landscape.
- A simple agricultural landscape dominated by the sky – glimpses of the north and west coasts convey a maritime influence to the areas of downland closer to the sea.
- Sparse woodland cover, limited to occasional blocks of coniferous plantations (e.g. King's Warren), small farm woods and wind-sculpted pine shelterbelts. Sporadic clumps and avenues of beech sit on prominent ridgelines – e.g. above Shirwell Cross.
- Mixture of medium-scale curving medieval fields and larger post-medieval and modern fields with dead-straight boundaries. Some areas of open downland still remain.
- Range of boundary styles including grassy Devon banks with patches of wind-pruned gorse and scrub (particularly where exposed to coastal winds), flower-rich banks with mixed-species hedges, and Morte slate-faced grassy banks.
- Square-cut beech hedgebanks particularly in the east where influenced by the proximity to Exmoor. Post-and-wire fences enclose some of the more intensively farmed fields.
- Semi-natural habitats limited to fragmented sites of species-rich acidic and neutral grassland, rush pasture, small patches of semi-natural woodland, scrub and bracken.
- Historic features include nationally important prehistoric burial sites (round and bowl barrows crowing hills), ancient hilltop enclosures, historic quarries as well as parkland estates including the 15th century Saunton Court and the 18th century Youlston Park (both Grade II Listed).
- Strong local vernacular including cream and whitewashed cob/render, exposed local stone with slate roofs and some local use of thatch, e.g. Heanton Punchardon and Prixton. Square stone church towers are characteristic landmarks. This LCT includes many listed buildings.
- Sparsely settled and peaceful character, with dispersed farmsteads sited in dips in the landform and nucleated villages and hamlets located in tributary valleys and around crossroads.
- Settlement linked by straight roads enclosed by hedgbanks, with occasional gaps providing long views across the landscape and intermittent views of the sea.
- Caravan and holiday parks, as well as other tourism-related land uses detract from traditional landscape character, particularly in locations close to the coast.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Dramatic and far-reaching views.
- Smooth rolling skylines, often only broken by protruding square church towers.
- Valued wildlife habitat within the farmland and associated with the hedge network.
- Large square fields.
- Small communities.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Post-war intensification of agriculture spurred on by CAP-related subsidies in the 1970s, leading to field amalgamation and the conversion of unimproved grasslands to intensive pasture and arable.
- Agricultural intensification and a decline in the agricultural economy leading to an amalgamation of smaller farms into larger, industrial-scale units.
- Spread of 'hobby farming' and equine enterprises.
- Varying levels of hedgerow management, with long lengths replaced or gapped up with post-and-wire fencing whilst others are intensively flailed or neglected (due to a lack of subsidies to support hedge management outside protected sites, and fencing being viewed as more cost-effective and stock-proof).
- Growth in the popularity of the seaside resorts of Ilfracombe, Woolacombe and Croyde, leading to significant settlement expansion and encroachment into the surrounding landscape.
- Spread of tourism-related development and land uses into the landscape – particularly holiday parks with bright white chalets/static caravans and camp sites.
- Modern expansion of some villages with recent housing incorporating a range of vernacular styles, e.g. West Down.
- Development of the Mullacott Cross Industrial Estate within the LCT with current expansion proposals. Pale green clad buildings stand out in the landscape.

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

- Rising house prices and a lack of affordable housing – forcing young people out of the area and leading to an ageing farming population.
- Past development policies favouring ‘key settlements’, leaving small rural communities without key services.
- Increase in visitor, farm and industrial traffic on the rural road network – particularly the main A39 and A361 roads which cross through the landscape.
- Views to modern development around the Taw-Torridge Estuary (Barnstaple, South Molton, Braunton, Northam, Westward Ho!)
- Demand for on-shore and off-shore wind farms – including recent approval for 22x110 metre turbines on Fullabrook Down and the proposal for the large *Atlantic Array* off-shore windfarm in the Bristol Channel (which would be visible from some downland summits).



FORCES FOR CHANGE

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Further growth in popularity of the area for recreation and tourism, leading to further demand for facilities (including farm conversions and more camping/caravan sites), infrastructure and higher traffic levels.
- Changes in crops and land use as a consequence of climate change and response to changing markets (e.g. for more UK-based food production and alternative crops such as Miscanthus or SRC).
- Individual hedgerow trees and isolated tree clumps (key landscape features) may become more susceptible to damage from the increasing frequency and magnitude of storm events.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases as a result of climate change (particularly phytophthora pathogens), threatening the survival of characteristic hedgerow trees and tree clumps, as well as valued specimens within parkland estates.
- Ongoing demand for both on-shore and off-shore wind farms and other renewable energy developments such as solar farms (proposals already in the pipeline), as well as domestic scale turbines taking advantage of the landscape’s wind resource.
- Cumulative effects of different scales and designs of wind turbines in the landscape.
- Emerging demand for large-scale photovoltaic developments, capitalising on the solar radiation levels of slopes with a southerly aspect.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps, resulting in incremental changes to the historic built vernacular.

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)

- Development pressure in nearby settlements and resorts due to the ever-increasing popularity of the area as a place to live – population increase leading to more demand for affordable housing, services and infrastructure.



PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: The flowing skylines and open views provided from the Downs are protected from new development, preserving the landscape’s high levels of tranquillity. The importance of the area for farming is combined with its potential for new wildlife refuges, with fragmented habitats re-linked, the hedge network restored, and environmentally sensitive farming methods pursued. The landscape’s close proximity to the popular North Devon coast is capitalised upon, with Green Infrastructure links created from expanding settlements and holiday resorts to take the pressure away from the coastal hotspots. The small communities of the Downs become exemplars of sustainable development, with sensitively designed facilities and infrastructure provided to serve the needs of the 21st century and ensure self-sufficiency.

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 landscape’s far-reaching views (including to the coast and Exmoor National Park) and flowing open skylines, avoiding the location of new development on downland hill summits. Ensure local church towers remain landmark features on skylines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important views and viewpoints (both onshore and offshore) and identify why people think they are important. Protect square church towers as local landmark features by avoiding the location of further vertical structures on the same skyline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives EQ1, EQ2 and CO4; Policies B2 and D5. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR 4 and COR6. Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO3 and CO16. Shoreline Management Plan policies Guidance in development management planning to avoid the siting of new development on open skylines. Consider undertaking a seascape assessment to help guide future off-shore development away from the most

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
5C: DOWNLAND

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		permitted highway development proposals.
Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's archaeological heritage including prehistoric burial sites, ancient hilltop enclosures and historic quarries. This should include livestock grazing at appropriate levels and managing recreation pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objective LH1, ART4, CC3; Policies A1 and F2. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8
Protect and manage the landscape's parkland estates at Saunton Court and Youlston Park, ensuring that the location of any new development does not affect their setting or designed views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship Estate Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives LH1, ART4, CC3; Policies A1 and F2. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6. Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO7 and CO8.
MANAGE		
Manage and protect the landscape's small farm woodlands, beech clumps and pine shelterbelts as characteristic features within the open landscape. Traditional woodland management (including coppicing) should be revived, with wood promoted as a sustainable energy source for local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> England Woodland Grant Scheme Environmental Stewardship South West Woodland Renaissance South West Nature Map Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL1, FL2 and G5; Policy E2. North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6. Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9
Manage and protect the landscape's network of beech-dominated hedgebanks and characteristic wind-sculpted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Stewardship Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL1; Policy E1

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
5C: DOWNLAND

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		sensitive locations (using the emerging Natural England guidance).
<p>Protect the landscape’s high levels of tranquillity and dark night skies through the control and management of development, including highways.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives LH2, EQ1 and TH3; Policies A1, B1, G5 and H2 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4, COR5, COR6 ,and COR8 • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO6 and CO16. • 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 the sparse settlement pattern of farmsteads and nucleated villages/hamlets nestled in valleys and landform dips. Ensure that any new development incorporates local vernacular building styles of cream and whitewashed cob/render, exposed local stone with slate roofs and some local use of thatch wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design).</p> <p>Characteristic features such as white wooden finger posts should be retained and kept in a good state of repair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CORDIALE Interreg bid (South West Protected Landscapes Forum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives, LH1 and LH2; Policies A1, A4, G1 andG4 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4, COR6 and COR8 • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7 • Prepare landscape-specific design guidance to support the LDF. • Devon CC Environmental Review of

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
5C: DOWNLAND

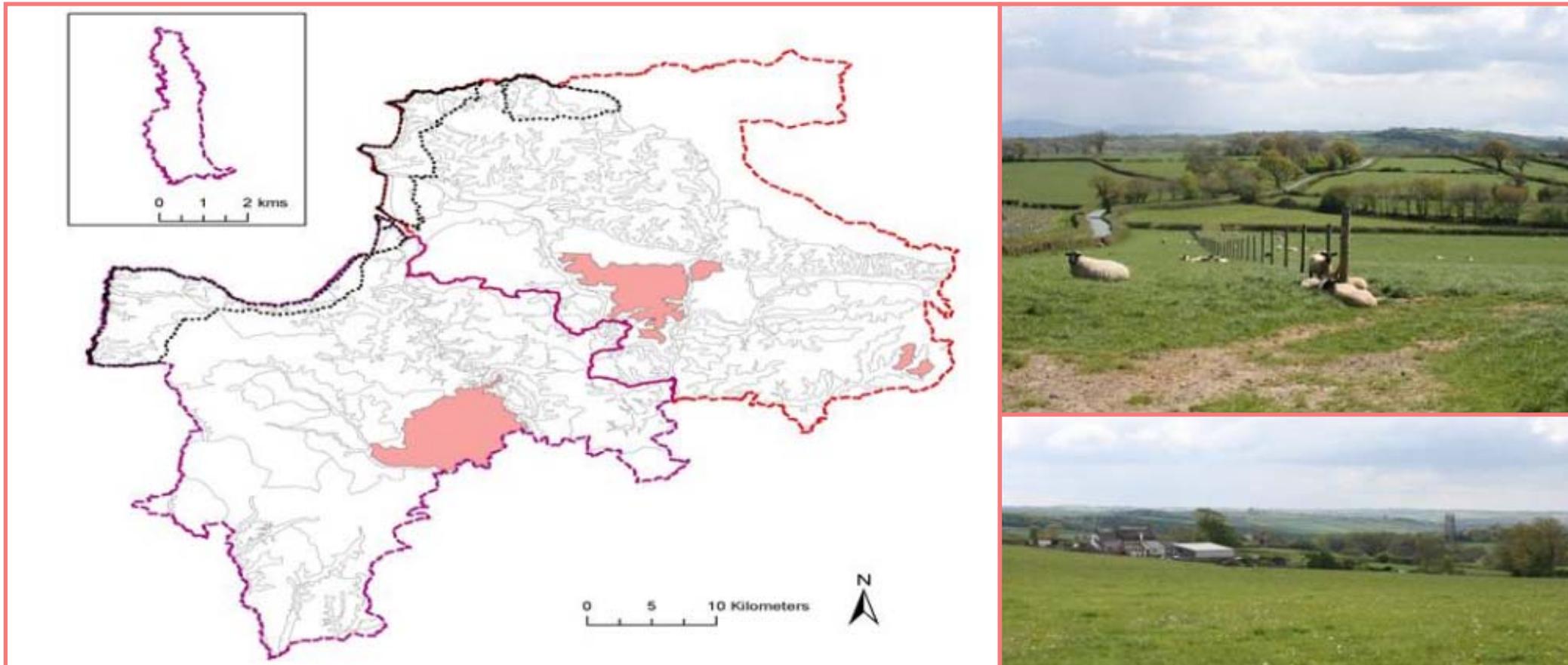
Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
<p>hedgerow trees, replanting ageing or diseased specimens (with climate hardy species) to ensure the future survival of these characteristic features. Replace gappy sections and lengths of fencing to reinforce square field patterns. New hedgebank construction should reflect local variations (e.g. choice of species, height/width of bank and patterns of stone-facing).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Hedge Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9
<p>Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of agricultural fields by encouraging the creation of uncultivated field margins, grass buffer strips around intensively farmed fields and other wildlife-friendly farming methods. These measures will also help reduce diffuse pollution into adjacent water courses draining from the downland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL1; Policy C1, E1, E3 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9
<p>Manage and re-link fragmented patches of species-rich grassland and rush pasture within the farmed landscape. Support farmers to extensively graze these areas as integral parts of their farming systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • South West Nature Map • Devon Food Links • Devon BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives FL1; Policies C1, E1 and E3. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9. • Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area.
PLAN		
<p>Plan for the increasing tourism demands and expansion of nearby resorts (particularly Ilfracombe, Woolacombe and Croyde), through the development of a network of Green Infrastructure links to the landscape. This will serve to create opportunities for sustainable access and recreation away from the busy coastline of North Devon.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives BG5; Policies C1, C2 and C4 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR2, COR4, COR5, COR8 and COR17

LANDSCAPE TYPE:
5C: DOWNLAND

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"> • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO6, CO9, TO6. • Green Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Plan for population increase and development pressure within the LCT's small villages and hamlets, with new sustainable development appropriately linked to facilities and infrastructure to serve the needs of local communities (see also the 'Protect' guidelines for new development).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan: Objectives, LH1 and LH2; Policies A1, A4, G1 and G4 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4, COR6 and COR8 • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7

**LANDSCAPE TYPE:
5D: ESTATE WOODED FARMLAND**

PART I: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 370, 374, 456, 552, 600, 609, 679, 682, 683, 686, 705, 812, 817, 825, 837, 875

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT covers the distinctive estate farmlands and woodlands of North Devon and Torridge – concentrated on the main estates in the southern halves of the two districts.