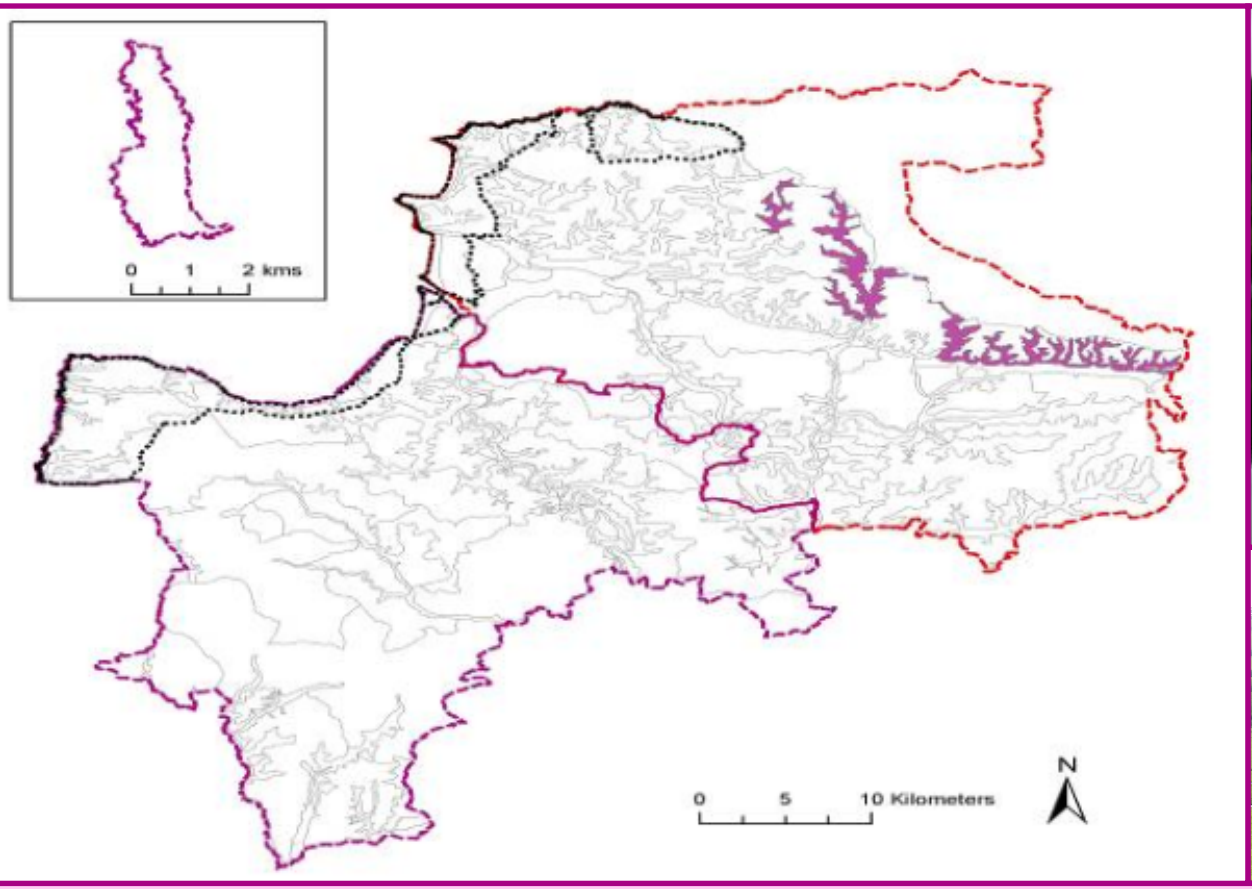
LANDSCAPE TYPE:

3D: UPLAND RIVER VALLEYS

PART 1: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 452, 544, 545, 547, 548, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 563, 566, 567, 570, 571, 572, 576, 603, 609, 660, 812, 849

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

The upland river valleys drain southwards from the high moorland core of Exmoor, containing clean-fast flowing water and slopes clothed in ancient oak woodlands.

PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Views across North Devon.
- Narrow winding lanes crossing historic stone bridges.
- Natural qualities of the rivers and valley woodlands.
- Function of the valleys as part of the setting of Exmoor National Park.
- Strong senses of tranquillity, isolation and 'escapism'.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Construction of the Wistlandpound Reservoir in 1956 (on one of the tributaries of the Yeo). The reservoir also flooded part of the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway which is visible when water levels are low.
- Large swathes of 20th century conifer planting along valley sides and associated with Wistlandpound Reservoir.
- Decline in woodland management including coppicing, deer damage and a spread of invasive species affecting the biodiversity of the landscape's woodlands.
- Recreation pressures and increasing levels of traffic on rural roads, particularly in holiday periods. Wistlandpound Reservoir is a popular visitor destination and the site of the Calvert Trust's activity centre for the disabled.
- 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.
- Loss of traditional orchards along riversides.
- Peace and tranquillity interrupted by main roads in some valleys – particularly the A399 alongside the River Bray.

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

- 20th century expansion of some settlements, spreading in a linear form from their historic cores e.g. Brayford.

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, 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 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).
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back. Individual trees may become more

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)

- 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 Exmoor, also potentially impacting on water quality due to enhanced levels of peat/blanket bog erosion (this is being addressed through the Exmoor Mire project and its successor 'Mires of the Moors').
- 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 understoreys.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back. Individual trees 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 the special qualities of the upland river valleys and their role as part of the setting to Exmoor National Park. The peaceful and historic character of the valley settlements and their industrial heritage is enhanced, whilst 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 heathland habitats, whilst providing recreational spaces within the less prominent plantations. The potential for harnessing the power of the water for renewable energy, through small-scale hydro schemes, 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 landscape's role as a setting to Exmoor National Park, as well as its important views to the protected landscape and across North Devon district.	• Identify the most prominent skylines on the upper valley slopes • Identify important views and view points (and indentify why people think they are important)	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO2 and CO3 • Guidance in development management planning to avoid siting vertical structures on hill summits within this LCT, and on other hill summits visible from this landscape (e.g. the North Devon Downs).
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.	• Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals	• Consider producing a Design Guide as a SPD to the LDF. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR3, COR4 and COR8. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		CO7
Protect the landscape's traditional building styles and materials, particularly local red sandstone with red brick detailing and cream render / thatch cottages. Any new development should utilise the same materials and building styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design). Characteristic features such as white wooden finger posts and stone hump-backed bridges should be retained and kept in a good state of repair.	• Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals • Devon Rural Skills Trust	• Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF. • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR2 and COR6. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7 • Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.
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.	• The Devon Green Lanes and Veins Project • Encourage the Highways Authority to respect the special character of the landscape's rural lanes.	• 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.
Protect and restore historic features within the valley landscapes, particularly those relating to the rivers' industrial heritage such as mills, dismantled railways and bridges.	• Environmental Stewardship • Conservation Area Management Plans / Appraisals	• Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
		Strategy: Policy COR6
MANAGE		
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.	• Environmental Stewardship • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Devon BAP • South West Woodlands Renaissance scheme	• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Manage and extend areas of rush pasture, species-rich meadows and floodplain grasslands through appropriate grazing and traditional land management regimes – both to enhance their wildlife value and functions in flood prevention.	• Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP • South West Nature Map	• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Manage the landscape's distinctive beech hedges on higher slopes to strengthen the strong square field pattern. Reinstate coppicing to mature sections and grown-out trees to ensure the future survival of these characteristic features. Replant lost hedges particularly along slopes to minimise soil erosion and reduce diffuse pollution. Respect the traditional methods and styles of construction (including stone facing on banks).	• Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Manage areas of rough grassland and heath on upper slopes through a continuation of livestock grazing at appropriate levels, along with a programme of scrub removal (including through controlled burning). Support farmers to continue to	• Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Food Links	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area

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farm these 'marginal' areas as an integral part of their farming system.		
Manage the area's existing plantations for sustainable timber production and wildlife interest, creating new green links to surrounding semi-natural habitats. .	• Environmental Stewardship • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Devon BAP • Green Infrastructure Strategy	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policy CO9.
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.	• Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans • South West Nature Map	• 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.	• Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Food Links • Devon Rural Skills Trust • South West Nature Map	• 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	• Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust)	• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO1 • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6

Guideline	**Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)**	**Planning policy links and delivery recommendations**
spaces (e.g. for mountain biking trails) away from the more sensitive habitats surrounding them.	• Devon BAP • Forest Design Plans	
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).		• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR7. • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO12