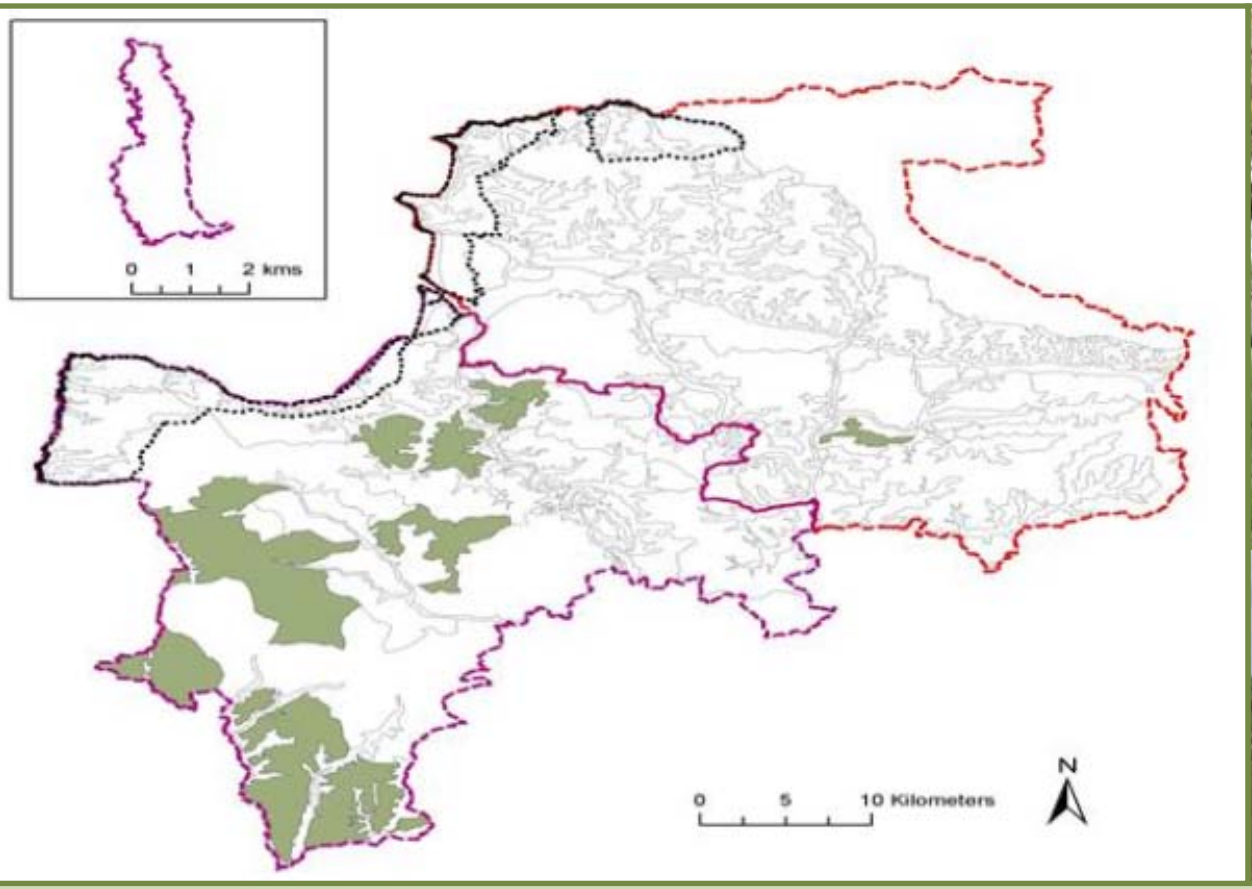
PART 1: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 351, 456, 611, 665, 666, 675, 676, 678, 681, 686, 687, 705, 734, 738, 740, 741, 742, 743, 745, 793, 817, 837, 876

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

The Inland Elevated Farmland LCT covers areas of high and gently undulating farmland, mainly in Torridge District with a small patch south-west of South Molton across in North Devon. Many of the hill summits enable long views across the surrounding landscapes and beyond, including to Dartmoor National Park.

LANDSCAPE TYPE:

5A: INLAND ELEVATED UNDULATING LAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT WITHIN NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

- Elevated land cut by a series of tributaries forming folds in the landform. Parts are high and remote with far-reaching views to Dartmoor, including summits of over 200 metres.
- Underlying geology of Culm Measures – comprising smooth bands of mudstones, siltstones and harder outcrops of sandstone. Rich red soils are often exposed through ploughing.
- Tributary valleys lined by broadleaved and wet woodland providing contrasting shelter and texture. Small farm woods, occasional conifer blocks and avenues of mature beech on hill summits and along roadsides.
- Medium-scale regular fields of recent enclosure, with pockets of smaller fields of medieval origin on valley slopes and tracts of unenclosed rough grazing along valley bottoms.
- Fields enclosed by mixed species hedges (predominantly thorn) with flower-rich banks and frequent hedgerow trees in sheltered locations. Some locally distinctive hedges topped with gorse and beech (e.g. near Hele and around Holsworthy). Occasional amalgamated fields bounded by fences.
- Strong farmed character with pasture fields grazed by cattle and sheep, occasional fields of arable cultivation and rough grazing of rushy meadows along valleys.
- Linhays (traditional livestock shelters) of local stone and cob, with corrugated iron or slate roofs, forming notable features of the farmed landscape.
- Local vernacular of white-washed buildings with slate or thatch roofs, often with red brick detailing. Some buildings of local sandstone with red bricks around window/door frames. Square church towers with ornate pinnacles form distinctive local landmarks (e.g. Bradworthy).
- Scattered historic features including clusters of Bronze Age bowl barrows on summits, an Iron Age hillfort overlooking the Tamar Valley at Northcott Wood, Iron Age enclosure and Roman marching camp at Higher Kingdon and the remains of the 13th century Frithelstock Priory.
- Farms dispersed throughout the landscape often on exposed ridges, sheltered by groups of trees of evergreen shelterbelts. Nucleated villages also occupying prominent ridgeline positions, with linear development of white/cream houses and bungalows often spreading outwards from the historic core.
- Straight roads traversing ridges and dipping down into valleys, crossing streams on sandstone bridges.
- Landscape's strongly rural character diluted by the presence of prominent pylon lines, wind turbines near Bradworthy, industrial developments outside Holsworthy and busy roads including the main A388.
- Overall high levels of tranquillity with dark night skies.
- Important sites of Culm grassland (including Brendon Farm and Common Moor Langtree SSSIs and Kismeldon Meadows SSSI and SAC), species-rich fen and rush pasture, valley mire, unimproved grasslands and scrub in valley bottoms and areas of impeded drainage.

PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Long views from elevated ridgelines.
- Patchwork of fields and hedges.
- Working, rural landscape.
- Valued Culm grassland and wetland habitats providing texture to the landscape.
- Quiet, relaxed and tranquil.

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 enlargement, the conversion of pasture to arable and hedgerow removal / damage.
- Intensification of agriculture and demand for productive farmland leading to the drainage of wetlands and Culm grasslands – leaving behind a fragmented habitat resource.
- Remaining areas of 'marginal' unimproved grasslands and Culm frequently left undergrazed, leading to scrub/tree succession.
- Agricultural intensification and a decline in the agricultural economy leading to an amalgamation of smaller farms into larger, industrial-scale units.
- Lack of hedgerow management, with sections replaced or gapped up with post-and-wire fencing whilst others are intensively flailed (some evidence of new hedgerow tree planting observed in the field).
- 20th century planting of conifer plantations within the open landscape and a decline in levels of woodland management (e.g. coppicing) for the area's broadleaved woodlands.
- Increase in visitor, farm and industrial traffic on the rural road network.
- Rising house prices and a lack of affordable housing – forcing young people out of the area and leading to an ageing farming population.

- Growth in tourism and recreation, including camping/caravan sites in prominent locations. Nearby reservoirs (Upper & Tamar Lakes and Roadford Lake) are popular visitor and recreation facilities.
- Spread of suburban influences and land uses on the fringes of the main settlements, including land put down to 'hobby' farming and pony paddocks.
- Linear spread of housing outside some settlements' historic cores and infill development within, often prominent on ridgelines (e.g. St Giles-on-the-Heath).
- Industrial development (including a biogas plant) on the edge of Holsworthy.
- Installation of prominent pylon lines crossing through the landscape.
- Noise and visual intrusion of main roads dissecting the landscape, including the A388,
- Demand for commercial scale wind turbines on the open ridgelines, with a small wind farm already present in the landscape near Bradworthy.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 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).
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread as a result of climate change (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and species intolerant of water level extremes die back.
- Individual hedgerow trees (key landscape features) may become more susceptible to damage from the increasing frequency and magnitude of storm events.
- Increasing demand for commercial wind farms, as well as domestic scale turbines taking advantage of the wind resource on the high open ridges.
- 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 built vernacular.
- Further growth in the popularity of the wider area for recreation and tourism, eroding the landscape's high levels of tranquillity and leading to increased demand for facilities (including farm conversions and more camping/caravan sites), related infrastructure and increased traffic levels.
- Development pressure (housing, commercial and industrial) in and around the main settlements responding to a rise in the resident population.

PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the landscape's important role in agriculture whilst strengthening and expanding fragmented areas of semi-natural habitat, the hedge network and woodlands. Open ridgelines and long-ranging views are protected through the careful siting of new development, whilst valued cultural features from Bronze Age barrows to linhays stand out as recognisable features in the landscape. New development is integrated into its landscape setting with Green Infrastructure links provided to enhance sustainable recreational opportunities.

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 strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness and long-ranging views (including to Dartmoor National Park), avoiding the location of new development on prominent, open ridgelines,	• Identify the most prominent skylines in the area	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR 4 and COR6. • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1, CO3 and CO16. • Consider adopting a development management policy stating that any new development in the area should avoid the most prominent open skylines.
Protect the landscape's variety of traditional building styles, including white-washed and exposed stone, often with red brick detailing, and slate or thatch as roofing materials. 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 landscape features such as white wooden finger posts, sandstone bridges and linhays should be retained and kept in a good	• Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans • Devon Rural Skills Trust	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR1, COR6 and COR8. • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and CO7. • Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF. • DCC to roll out a highways protocol / best

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
state of repair.		practice guide on roadside management for rural areas. • Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals.
Protect the landscape's pattern of dispersed farmsteads and nucleated villages on ridgetops. Resist the further spread of new development outside historic cores, including along roads.	• Conservation Area Appraisals / Management Plans	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR3 and COR4
Protect and appropriately manage the rich cultural heritage of the area, including Bronze Age bowl barrows on ridgetops, Iron Age hillforts and enclosures, the Roman marching camp at Higher Kingdon and the remains of the 13th century Frithelstock Priory. This should include grazing at appropriate levels and recreation management.	• Environmental Stewardship	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO7 and CO8.
Protect the farming and land management traditions of the area, continuing to support local farmers to extensively graze remaining areas of Culm grassland, fen, meadow and mire as integral parts of their farming systems.	• Environmental Stewardship • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • Devon Food Links	• Share best practice between farmers working in areas of Culm grassland (e.g. through demonstration events). • Strengthen and promote links between local markets and produce from the area (e.g. Ruby red beef raised on Culm grassland). • Ensure management prescriptions provide a balance between wildlife needs and those of local farmers so agriculture remains viable.
MANAGE		
Manage the area's conifer plantations, wet woodlands and small farm woods for sustainable timber production and to enhance their wildlife interest, undertaking new planting to create green links to surrounding semi-natural habitats. Explore the potential for the	• Environmental Stewardship • England Woodland Grant Scheme	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6, COR7 and COR17

Guideline	Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)	Planning policy links and delivery recommendations
community use of woodfuel as a sustainable energy source.	• South West Woodland Renaissance • Devon BAP • Green Infrastructure Strategy	• Devon's Structure Plan: Policies CO9, TO6 and TO5.
Manage the landscape's varied Devon hedgebanks and avenues of trees, reflecting local variations in styles and species composition. Reinstate coppicing and hedge laying to neglected sections, planting new trees where specimens are over-mature (consider using climate-hardy species to ensure longevity). Reinstate lost and gappy sections, particularly at right angles to slopes, to strengthen field patterns and reduce soil erosion / run off into adjacent watercourses.	• Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Devon Hedge Group • Devon Rural Skills Trust	• Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO9
PLAN		
Plan for the expansion of fragmented Culm grassland sites to create an intact green network, where conditions allow (e.g. considering underlying geology / soils).	• Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • The Working Wetlands project (Devon Wildlife Trust) • South West Nature Map	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6
Plan for the long-term restoration of the more prominent conifer plantations to open habitats (where their role in timber production has ceased), including re-creating Culm grasslands and other semi-natural habitats within open rides and on areas of wet ground.	• 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

Guideline	**Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies)**	**Planning policy links and delivery recommendations**
Plan for a network of green spaces and green infrastructure links to support future population growth in nearby settlements (including Holsworthy, South Molton and Bideford); integrating development into the landscape and providing local spaces for access and recreation.	• South West Nature Map	• North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR5 and COR17. • Devon's Structure Plan: Policy TO6. • Green Infrastructure Strategy