

LDU: 578

LCT: 4H, 2C, 4C

Area of LDU within AONB: 236.5 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 69%



Date surveyed: 24 February 2010



Survey points: SS479464, SS478465, SS454447, SS454446, SS456445

Summary of landscape character

This LDU comprises the dramatic north-western coastline of the AONB, stretching from the western fringes of Ilfracombe (Torr's Point) to Morte Bay. The majority of the coast is unsettled, with rocky cliffs displaying complex, folded strata backed by coastal heath and rough maritime grassland. The landscape retains high levels of tranquillity and evokes a wild, exposed character, disrupted in the south by tourism-related development around the coastal headland from Woolacombe. All of the landscape falls within the North Devon Heritage Coast and most is owned by the National Trust.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Undulating, rocky coastline punctuated by small coves and bays. Cliffs up to 100 metres high display a complex geology of mainly Upper Devonian sandstones and slates. Cliffs are backed by often steeply sloping land with rounded summits.
-----------------------------	--

LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Rough grazing	Pasture fields, particularly on the north coast.	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	The majority of the LDU comprises rough grazing land on open cliff slopes and	N/A	There are some stone-faced Devon hedges in parts (many in a poor state of

	summits.		repair)
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Recreation: walking along the South West Coast Path and Tarka Trail. The coastline above Morte Point is open access land.		
WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS			
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	The exposed coastline is essentially devoid of tree cover, apart from occasional wind-sculpted specimens associated with coastal properties and patches of stunted woodland and scrub.		Individual mature pine specimens and ornamental plantings (e.g. palms) are associated with coastal properties. Blackthorn scrub and stunted oak-dominated patches of woodland feature sporadically along the north coast.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	The majority of the north coast is County Wildlife Site-designated, supporting a mosaic of maritime grasslands, coastal heath, bracken and scrub (including gorse and blackthorn). The coast around Morte Point is designated as SSSI, primarily for its valued stretches of coastal heath and presence of breeding sea birds.		
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The main area of development is a linear stretch of mainly hotels and holiday apartments lining the road linking Morteheo and Woolacombe – the majority falling within the Woolacombe Conservation Area. Large seafront properties are also strung along the coast framing Lee Bay. The eastern edge of the LDU is dominated by views of development at Ilfracombe (outside the AONB).		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The South West Coast Path provides access around the full length of the coastline, with the Tarka Trail also linking some sections. The landscape is devoid of roads apart from a minor route looping around the headland between Morteheo and Woolacombe. The coast backing Morte Point is open access land.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	The Conservation Area of Woolacombe is valued for its mix of Victorian and Edwardian villa-style houses and grand hotels – including gothic revival, classical,	N/A – the majority of the LDU is unsettled.	Slate walls are strong unifying features of the coastline above Lee – reflecting the rocks displayed in the cliffs. Sections are also replicated in new development on the

	Tudor revival and renaissance.		edge of Woolacombe.
Modern development styles / materials	A range of building styles and materials are associated with the coastal development in the south, often replicating Victorian and Edwardian styles – e.g. cream, white and peach painted walls, grey tiled roofs, terracotta detailing on chimney pots, ornate brickwork and pitched gable ends. Some 20 th century hotels and large car parking areas are incongruous in their coastal setting and out-of-keeping with local vernacular styles.		
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	Aside from buildings within the Woolacombe Conservation Area (including the Grade II Listed Castle Hotel), the only other historic feature of note is Bull Point lighthouse, originally built in 1879.		
VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES			
Views	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility of LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	Expansive views are afforded out to sea from the full length of coast, with Lundy highly prominent in westward views. The south Wales coast is also visible on the horizon from the northern coastline. Views to the south are framed by the expansive beach of Woolacombe Sand, with Baggy Point forming a recognisable coastal feature on the south-western skyline.	895 (coastal combes in the north) 853 (downland backing the coast) 387 (Ilfracombe) 386 (Woolacombe Warren and town) 385 (Woolacombe Sand) 579 (slopes backing Woolacombe Warren) 897 (coastal headland including Baggy Point) 403 (elevated downland above	895 853 387 386 385 579 897 403 402 (elevated downland to the south east)

		Baggy Point)	
Perceptual qualities (description)	<p>The lack of development and road access results in high levels of tranquillity, with perceptions of escapism and inspiration afforded by the South West Coast Path as it rises above dramatic rocky cliffs. These perceptual qualities are diluted around Woolacombe where tourism land uses dominate, whilst views to Ilfracombe from Torrs Point reduce feelings of remoteness and tranquillity in that location.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	2	24.92%
County Wildlife Sites	3	42.71%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	2 (grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland heathland	52.73	22.29%
Maritime cliff and slope	138.08	58.38%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness are high around the coast, although the popularity of nearby resorts at Woolacombe and Ilfracombe makes this a well-used walking route and thus a 'shared' experience (particularly in summer).
Views	Development at Woolacombe and Ilfracombe is clearly visible in the eastern and southern extents of the LDU, contrasting with the wild and undeveloped qualities of the majority of the coastline.
Land use	Tourism land uses (particularly caravan parks) and modern development has encroached along the coast from Woolacombe, impacting on the 'unspoilt' and 'wild' qualities of this section of the landscape.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	Sections of stone-faced Devon hedge are often in a poor state of repair.
Trees and woodland	N/A
Semi-natural habitats	SSSI currently assesses the coastal habitats around Morte Point as in favourable condition. County Wildlife Site designations across much of the north coast – with the habitats assumed to be under appropriate management regimes (no issues noted in the field). Localised erosion from users of the SW Coast Path and Tarka Trail may be an issue, particularly in the summer months.
Settlement and development	Development at Woolacombe and Ilfracombe is clearly visible in the eastern and southern extents of the LDU, with new development spreading along the coast above Grunta Beach.
Local vernacular	Although many developments seek to replicate the local Victorian and Edwardian architecture, large hotels and car parks along the coast are prominent features, out of keeping with their unspoilt coastal setting.

COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES

Following the classification of Landscape Character Types for the North Devon & Torridge LCA (November 2010), this LDU now falls within three LCTs: the settlement and combe mouth at Woolacombe being classified as 4C Coastal Slopes and Combes with Settlement; the coastline falling within 4H Cliffs; and a very small proportion falling within the 2C Steep Open Slopes LCT. **The AONB might consider tweaking the boundaries to follow the 4H Cliffs LCT boundary, with the parts currently crossing into 4C and 2C being reallocated into new LDUs.**