

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 219.6 hectares

**% of LDU within AONB:** 100%



**Date surveyed:** 4 March 2010

**Survey points:** SS226256, SS227253, SS231251, SS235249, SS258248

**Summary of landscape character**

A long, steep-sided coastal combe stretching inland from the west coast at Blegberry Beach. The lower slopes are predominantly covered in oak-dominated broadleaved woodland, enclosing continuous swathes of open pasture along the narrow valley bottom. This is a highly tranquil landscape, with Hartland Abbey a distinctive feature in the valley bottom and visible from the surrounding elevated land.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY**

<b>Landform description</b>	A long, steep-sided combe stretching inland directly east from the coast, with a small southern finger extending halfway along, and a relatively straight and distinct flat valley bottom in contrast with adjacent combes.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture (with areas of rough pasture)	Edges of arable fields skirting the LDU boundary along the upper slopes.	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Post-medieval Parliamentary enclosure characterises valley bottom fields in the west, whilst modern pasture fields occur in place of medieval water meadows further east. Fields of both medieval and modern patterns encroach	Floodplain fields are very long and open to the west, while to the east they are smaller and patterns are	Post-and-wire fencing covers remnant hedgebanks in the west, while hedges, woods and shaws enclose floodplain fields further east.

	onto the upper slopes.	more broken.	
<b>Other land uses (e.g. recreation)</b>	Hartland Abbey sits within private parkland on the floodplain in the centre-west of the combe, with an adjoining area of ornamental gardens.		
<b>WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS</b>			
<b>Trees / woodland cover</b>	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Dense woodland cover occurs on both slopes along the length of the combe and down into its southern protrusion.		Predominantly oak-dominated broadleaved woodland throughout, with significant stretches of ancient semi-natural woodland along the northern slope in the west (Berry Wood) and centre, as well as on the southern slope in the centre and down into the southern protrusion (Hartland Abbey Woods). Highly twisted trees form a particularly distinctive feature, especially in the west.
<b>Semi-natural habitats</b>	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	Hartland Abbey Woods constitutes a large area of broadleaved woodland covered by County Wildlife Site designation in the centre of the combe, while Berry Wood in the west forms another. The Marsland to Clovelly SAC & SSSI extends into the western edge of the combe, where open slopes provide maritime grassland, scrub and heath habitats. Areas of rough pasture occur along the floodplain, with patches of Culm grassland in boggy corners.		
<b>SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Settlement pattern</b>	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The area is largely devoid of settlement, though Hartland Abbey is a distinctive feature in the centre-west sitting in the middle of the open floodplain within private wood pasture. Otherwise dwellings largely occur at fording points, both in the centre (by the southern protrusion) and most significantly further east at Pattard Bridge (where the outskirts of Hartland begin to encroach to the south). Also, Rosedown Farm and Mill are more isolated settlements in the very east of the combe.		
<b>Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)</b>	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	Rural roads cut across the combe at several points along its length, though rarely travel along the valley (excluding a small stretch to the east of the Abbey). A public footpath, meanwhile, runs along most of the length of the area from the coast in the west to Pattard Bridge (north of Hartland), although private land around Hartland Abbey interrupts access and forces a detour via the surrounding plateau.		
<b>Local vernacular</b>	<i>Predominant traditional</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features</i>

<b>styles and materials</b>	<i>building materials</i>		<i>reflecting vernacular</i>
	Whitewash walls with grey slate roofs (e.g. at Pattard Bridge).	Exposed stone walls of Hartland Abbey, plus red tile roofs and exposed stone walls of the gateway buildings.	Traditional stone bridges e.g. east of Hartland Abbey
<b>Modern development styles / materials</b>			
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>		
	Hartland Abbey dominates the valley bottom in the centre-west of the LDU and traces its origins back to the 12 <sup>th</sup> century, its built characteristics reflecting a combination of medieval, Queen Anne and Georgian styles. Traditional stone bridges across Abbey River are also prominent features.		
<b>VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES</b>			
<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	Along the valley bottom views are generally confined to the floodplain pasture enclosed by woodland. In the west, glimpses from the footpath on the southern slope are afforded through woodland to the coast in the west, the scrub-covered slope to the north (and the farms sitting above) and expansive floodplain pasture stretching below. Hartland Abbey on the valley bottom is the area's most distinctive landmark, visible from the surrounding plateau, while St Nectan's church at Stoke looms prominently over the combe to the south, and a glimpse of the ruined tower above Warren Cliff in the west can be had from the Abbey.	<b>694</b> (coast) <b>684</b> (surrounding elevated land)	<b>694</b> <b>684</b>
<b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b>	A highly tranquil combe landscape, reinforced by the running stream, the area's semi-natural habitats and the historic character of development.		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SAC	1	3.08%
SSSI	1	3.08%
County Wildlife Sites	2	17.2%
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Listed Buildings	8 (1 grade I and 7 grade II)	

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland beech and yew woodland	6.87	3.13%
Lowland heathland	6.23	2.84%
Maritime cliff and slope	6.23	2.84%
Traditional Orchards	6.52	2.97%
Upland oakwoods	16.66	7.59%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Levels of tranquillity are highest in the west away from roads and settlement, though generally they are high throughout.
Views	Modern farm buildings on ridgelines can dominate some views in the west, though otherwise views are generally devoid of development.
Land use	Traditional medieval water meadows along the valley bottom in the east have been lost due to conversion to pasture.
Field patterns	Modern enclosure of traditional water meadows (see above), plus modern patterns encroaching onto some upper slopes (e.g. in the east above Rosedown Mill and the west by Berry Farm).
Field boundaries	Post-and-wire fencing is used over remnant hedgebanks on valley bottom pasture in the west, reinforcing a sense of open pasture in this area. Field boundary condition in the east was not assessed due to lack of access.
Trees and woodland	The extent of woodland covered by County Wildlife Site designation (including much that is ancient and semi-natural) plus evidence from the field suggests that woodlands are being managed favourably and are generally of high ecological value.
Semi-natural habitats	Grassland habitats along the valley bottom (including patches of Culm grassland) lack designation and could potentially be at risk from intensive grazing. Pasture has replaced traditional water meadows along the eastern floodplain, with ensuing loss of habitat.
Settlement and development	There is potential risk of the Hartland hinterland encroaching into the valley at Balhill. Small modern development on the upper slopes includes sewage works and the Hartland Magnetic Observatory (north-west of Hartland), although these are largely screened by woodland and have little impact.
Local vernacular	Vernacular within the area is generally of a traditional style, with restoration of historic stone bridges suggesting that traditional

	features are being well maintained.
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