

Landscape Character Type A: High Coastal Heaths



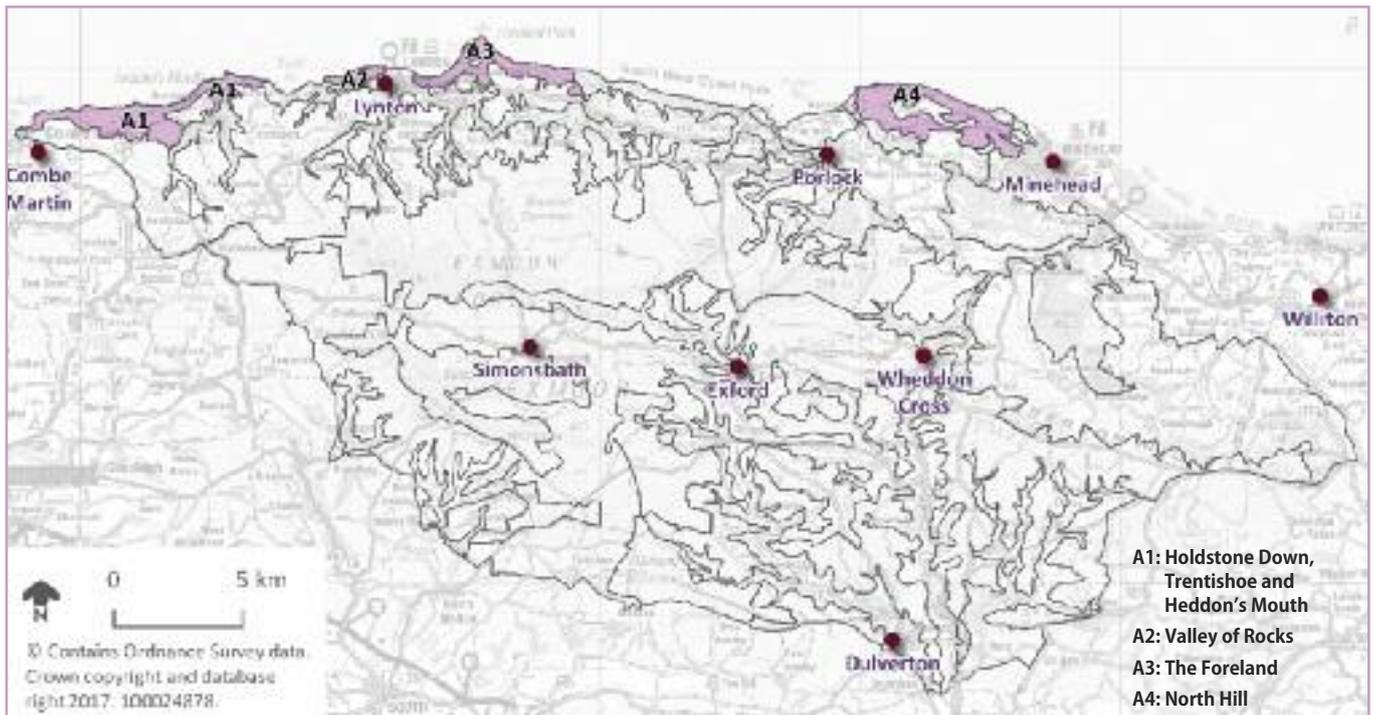
Holdstone Down and Elwill Bay coast, looking towards Heddon's Mouth from Great Hangman

Summary Description

This relatively small Landscape Character Type (LCT) is located along the northern coast of Exmoor. Although it is not continuous, it extends from the western edge of the National Park at Wild Pear Beach to the eastern end above Minehead. It comprises high, rocky cliffs (some of the highest in England) capped with coastal heath and grassland. It is interspersed along the coast by the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, and Low Farmed Coast and Marsh LCT, and is backed inland by the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT and the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT. Settlement is limited to occasional houses on Trentishoe Down, and there are few other buildings, although the archaeology is rich and varied.

This strikingly beautiful landscape is one of the few places in England where heather moorland meets the sea, and therefore has a very strong sense of place. The purple of the heather and yellow of the gorse gives way to the rugged coastline of high, steep, rocky cliffs. This is a dramatic, open and expansive landscape with big skies, creating a sense of exhilaration. There are long views along the coast and out to sea across the Bristol Channel to South Wales. The sweeping views inland are dominated by patchwork fields with wooded valleys and a backdrop of smooth moors.

There are four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, each representing a separate area of coastal heath. This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is also within six Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) identified in the Seascape Character Assessment.



A1: Holdstone Down, Trentishoe and Heddon's Mouth
A2: Valley of Rocks
A3: The Foreland
A4: North Hill

Key Characteristics of the High Coastal Heaths

- Underlying geology of purple, grey, green and reddish-brown Devonian sandstones and mudstones, visible in the colourful cliffs.
- A distinctive landform of undulating plateaux, rounded moorland hills and high, steep and rugged coastal cliffs.
- A largely inaccessible rocky coastline with hogs-back cliffs, small rocky bays, wave-cut platforms, coastal waterfalls, scree slopes and rocky outcrops.
- Primary land cover of coastal heath, containing a mosaic of heather moor, gorse, coastal grassland and scrub habitats.
- An open landscape with few trees.
- Occasional stone walls or fences, but generally this is an unenclosed landscape.
- A rich historic landscape with extensive archaeological sites from prehistoric, Roman, and medieval periods, as well as WW2 archaeology, and the Victorian cricket pitch in the Valley of the Rocks.
- An open elevated landscape –the few scattered dwellings alongside the road at Trentishoe Down are the only settlement.
- Stunning views from the LCT out to sea and inland. The LCT is visible in many views from the northern part of the National Park and forms the setting for the North Devon Coast AONB. Coastal features (such as Hurlstone Point) are important landmarks, as are distinctive landforms such as Castle Rock.
- A strong sense of elevation and exposure to the elements due to the steep cliffs fronting the sea. The inaccessible nature of the cliffs creates a sense of solitude.
- Vivid and striking colours, particularly in spring and summer when the heather and gorse are in flower.
- The South West Coast Path provides footpath access to the slopes and cliffs, and offers far-reaching coastal views.
- Cultural associations with the Romantic Poets.

Natural Landscape Features

Ranging in elevation from 0-442m AOD, this landscape type has a strong and dramatic landform comprising steep and rugged hogs-back coastal cliffs (with coves and combes) that give rise to inland areas of gently undulating moorland plateau and smooth, rounded hills. There are also craggy rock outcrops, particularly around the Valley of Rocks. The coastal cliffs create an impressive coastline, with the scalloped cliff faces revealing the varied colours of the landscape’s underlying geology, ranging from red, to purple, to brown to grey. Exposures of Devonian, Carboniferous and Quaternary rocks revealed in the cliffs can be viewed from the coast path. At the foot of the cliffs are wave-cut platforms, sea caves and rocky bays with hidden, often inaccessible, beaches. There are impressive scree slopes in the Combes around the Foreland. At the Valley of Rocks, some of the oldest and most fossil-rich Devonian rocks in North Devon

are visible. The dry valley with its flat stony floor and towering rocks above is thought to exhibit the results of peri-glacial processes such as frost shattering, but its origins are not fully understood. Rich semi-natural heather moorland comprises the majority of land cover within the LCT, interspersed with gorse and bracken (bracken being dominant on the coastal slopes). Parts of the coastal cliffs have only been recently accessed by climbers, so some areas remain unrecorded. The extensive areas of heathland designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation reflect the ecological value of the landscape type and the range of flowers, lichens, butterflies, insects and birds which it supports. There are larger animals present in the landscape, including sheep, ponies and a herd of feral goats at the Valley of Rocks.



Coastal rock formations and scree slopes, Valley of Rocks



Coastal heath and grassland, North Hill with South Wales on the horizon.

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor Heaths (A1,A3,A4)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (A1,A2); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (A3,A4)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Wind Hill (A3); Bratton Ball South, Moor Wood, Upper Grey Combe (A4)

Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (Transition zone) (A1)
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ (A1, A2, A3)
Heritage Coast	Exmoor Heritage Coast (A1, A2, A3, A4)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Hurlestone Point (A4) Combeshead Quarry (A4)

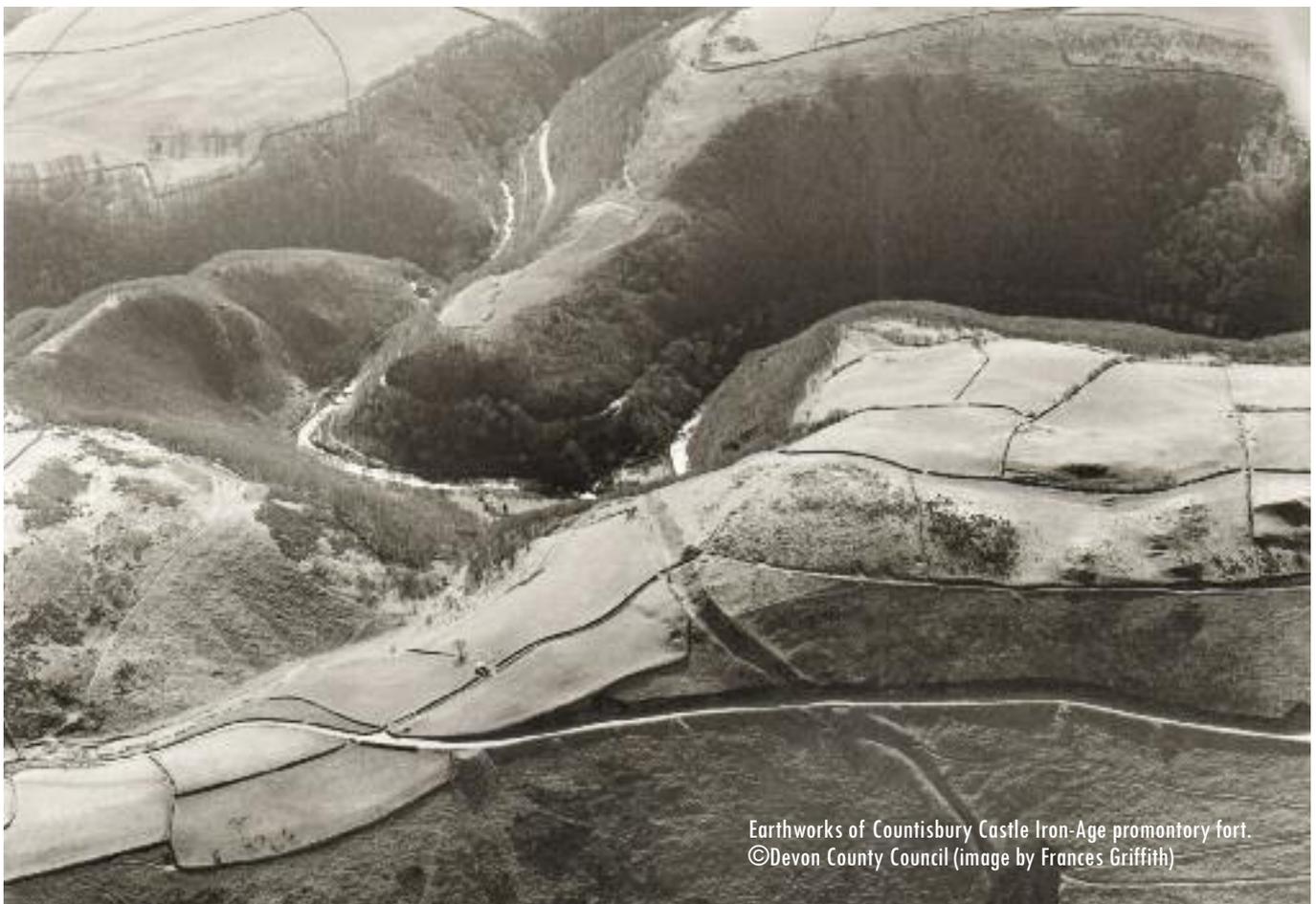
Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

Although this LCT covers a relatively small area, it contains many Scheduled Monuments, and extensive areas are designated Principal Archaeological Landscapes. Because the Coastal Heaths have not been enclosed or farmed recently, many prehistoric monuments have survived within their landscape context. These include numerous Bronze-Age barrows, often sited on hill summits and ridges of higher land so they are visible on the horizon. Other prehistoric features include field systems, cairns and house platforms within the Valley of Rocks, which are largely hidden under bracken. This is one of the best examples of a prehistoric field system on Exmoor - largely because the field walls were constructed of stone, which has endured, despite disturbance and removal in the early nineteenth century. There is also a possible Neolithic Tor Enclosure on Little Hangman Hill. Tor Enclosures occur in other parts of the South West, but this is possibly the only example on Exmoor, and is important because of the lack of other Neolithic monuments in the area.

Larger-scale earthworks visible within the landscape include the Iron-Age sites of Furzebury Brake and Countisbury Castle promontory fort. Of the two known Roman sites within Exmoor - both coastal fortlets/ signal stations - one (Martinhoe Castle) is within this LCT.

Medieval sites include deserted farms, field systems and Burgundy Chapel on North Hill. The vast majority of the LCT is unenclosed pasture, a pattern which has been in place since at least early Medieval times, although there are occasional small pockets of later enclosure (e.g. on Holdstone Down). Iron mining took place near the coast in the far west of the LCT.

North Hill was used extensively in World War Two (WWII) as a military training area. The ranges included access tracks, numerous buildings, triangular tank training circuits, target railways and a renovated radar station. These features survive in varying levels of completeness within today's landscape, and North Hill is designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape.



Earthworks of Countisbury Castle Iron-Age promontory fort.
©Devon County Council (image by Frances Griffith)

This is an area of wide open landscape; the few houses within the LCT are scattered along the road crossing Trentishoe Down. Along with the other

smaller structures within the LCT they appear as incongruous features within an otherwise open and remote landscape.



Martinhoe Castle Roman Fortlet © Historic England Archive



Former military road on North Hill



Cliff-top communications mast and building on Butter Hill (A3)

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

<p>Scheduled Monuments</p>	<p>Trentishoe Barrows (A1); Martinhoe Castle Roman Signal Station (A1); Countisbury Castle Earthworks (A3); Bossington Hill Cairn (A4); Selworthy Beacon Cairns (A4); Purzebury Brake Iron Age Settlement (A4); Bramble Combe Deserted Medieval Farm (A4)</p>	<p>Principal Archaeological Landscapes</p>	<p>Holdstone Down and Little Hangman (A1); Valley of The Rocks (A2); Countisbury and Lyn Gorge (A3); Selworthy WWII Complex (A4); North Hill Medieval Farming System (A4)</p>
		<p>Listed Buildings</p>	<p>Boundary Stones (A1); Duty Point Tower (A2); Foreland Point Lighthouse (A3)</p>

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

The physical and visual connection with the sea is fundamental to the character of this landscape. Its height and lack of enclosure creates a strong sense of openness and elevation which is enhanced by the height of the cliffs. The expansiveness of the views, the steepness of the cliffs and the sense of being 'on the edge' combine to create a sense of exhilaration and danger. Changing weather and sea conditions have a strong influence on the mood of the landscape - storms, fog and sunshine give the landscape and seascape very different qualities. The Valley of Rocks, with its unusual rock formations, has a strongly sculptural quality and also a sense of mystery, particularly when shrouded in mist.

This is a landscape of extraordinarily contrasting colours, which change with the seasons. In summer, there are vibrant purples and yellows in the heather and gorse, bright greens in the bracken and adjacent fields, and blue in the sea. In the autumn, the colours of the heather fade, and the golden brown of the bracken dominates. Colours become more muted, but the autumn colours of the adjacent woodlands are spectacular.

Sounds and smells are important to perceptions of this landscape. Seabirds call on the cliffs and overhead, and in the stillness it is possible to hear the insects in the heather. There are unusual sounds too, such as the booming sound of the compressed air and water in the Gun Chamber Caverns below The Foreland. The coconut-like scent of gorse mixes with the tang of the sea air.

Although some roads pass through the LCT, much of it is inaccessible. The South West Coast Path runs at the top of the cliffs for much of its route, but the height of the cliffs and lack of access at sea level means that some parts of the cliffs and foreshore are inaccessible without climbing equipment. These remote cliffs and coast have become known as the 'hidden edge of Exmoor'. Away from the roads, car parks and hilltop paths, the landscape evokes a strong sense of remoteness, isolation and tranquillity. However, in more accessible and frequently-visited areas, the presence of cars, lots of people, signage, and seating can give it more of a 'country park' feel, especially in summer.

The 'Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study' captured people's responses to this landscape, with

descriptions including *breathtaking, stunning, dramatic, magnificent, peaceful, panoramic, open, high, glorious on a fine day, expansive, exceptional, spectacular* and *beautiful coastline*. Emotional responses included relaxed, happy to be here, exhilarated, uplifted, elated and observant.

Recent research by the CPRE shows that there are no sources of light pollution within the LCT. Nevertheless, the darkness of its night skies are affected by light pollution from nearby Minehead, Porlock, Lynton, Combe Martin, Ilfracombe and the South Wales coast. The beam of Nash Point lighthouse (near St Donat's) sweeping across the sea is a night-time feature.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The **High Coastal Heaths** LCT contains many spectacular and rare views, and these are extremely popular with the public. A wide range of users enjoy these views, whether by car from the A39 or the old military track from Minehead to Bossington Hill; on foot from the South West Coast Path or other paths; or dangling from a rope scaling an otherwise inaccessible cliff. North Hill is a particularly popular destination because of its ease of access, stunning views and proximity to Minehead. There is also an all-terrain mobility service to the coast at Heddon Valley.

The elevation and lack of enclosure or built features within this LCT means that there are long, expansive views. To the north there are panoramic views along the coast and across the Bristol Channel towards the developed coast of South Wales. Lundy is visible on the western horizon from the western part of the LCT. To the south there are views inland over patchwork fields and wooded valleys, with smooth moorland horizons forming the skyline.

The steep cliffs and colourful, rugged coastline are also dramatic when viewed from the sea, with Burgundy Chapel, Hurlstone Point, Foreland Point lighthouse, Valley of Rocks rock formations and the outlines of the Hangman Hills particular landmarks. The Coastal Heaths also feature in views from inland, from where they appear as rounded knolls of purple or brown with the sea behind.

The western part of the LCA plays an important role as the landscape backdrop to the North Devon Coast AONB. From here, the distinctive profiles of the western coastal heaths (LCA A1) form a smooth, open skyline.



Patchwork of fields as seen from Holdstone Down heather moorland



Popular coastal viewpoint at Bossington Hill

Cultural Associations

The rugged Exmoor coastline was popular with the Romantic Poets, including Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. The evocative landscape of the Valley of Rocks is particularly well known, and has been

used as a backdrop for TV shows such as Top Gear, and a Paul McCartney music video. This part of Exmoor, particularly its 'hidden edge' remains popular with artists and photographers.

From Linton an easy and little descent led me to the Valley of Stones. The range of hills here next the sea are completely stripped of their soil, the bones only of the earth remain: in the vale, stone upon stone is scattered, and the fern grows among them. Its origin I could not conjecture...On the summit of the highest point of the hill, two large stones inclining against each other form a portal; here I laid myself at length - a level platform of turf spread before me about two yards long, and then the eye fell immediately on the sea - a giddy depth. After closing my eyes a minute, it was deeply impressive to open them on the magnificent dreariness, and the precipice, and the sea.

Extract from Southey's
Journal of his Exmoor holiday, August 1799

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The coastal heath habitats within this LCT support a wide variety of birds, plants and insects. Historically they would have a range of uses, but many have declined in recent decades. For example bracken was used for animal bedding, and peat for domestic fuel. Today, there is some livestock grazing and biomass production within the LCT so it does make a small contribution to food and fibre production. However, the coastal heaths remain an important Natural Capital Asset and provide a number of Ecosystem Services. These include the sequestration (holding) of carbon in peat soils and the regulation of flooding by absorbing, then slowly releasing water, thus slowing run-off as well as filtering some pollutants. Both of these roles are important in mitigating, and adapting to, climate change impacts.

The LCT is a rich historic landscape, and is also a popular location for visitors, who enjoy the spectacular coastal scenery and the beauty of the landscape. It is particularly well-appreciated from the South West Coast Path. The LCT therefore enables people to obtain non-material benefits such as recreation, reflection, aesthetic experiences and spiritual enrichment.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

Within Landscape Character Type A - High Coastal Heaths, there are four distinctive Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each representing a discrete area of Coastal Heath. Their different landscape characteristics create a distinctive 'sense of place' which are described in the following descriptions. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.



Selworthy Sands by contemporary Exmoor artist Kester Webb. Image © Estate of Kester Webb

LCA A1: Holdstone Down, Trentishoe and Heddon's Mouth



Description

This LCA forms the north-western coastal stretch of the National Park, extending from Great Burland Rocks in the east to Lester Cliff at the western boundary of Exmoor. This area of the High Coastal Heaths includes a significant stretch of Exmoor's coastline containing a series of deep cut cleaves, combs, waterfalls and scree slopes, as well as the lower reaches and mouth of the River Heddon valley. Inland, the landscape is dominated by the smooth rounded heather moorland hills at Holdstone Down (394m AOD), Trentishoe Down (324m AOD) and Girt Down (318m AOD) – their large-scale landforms loom over the moorland foothills and also form the backdrop to the North Devon Coast AONB. The height of the cliffs means that the sea can feel relatively far away.

A secondary road runs between Holdstone and Trentishoe Downs and is dotted with occasional small and informal car parks, as well as some residential properties of varied age and style. The

buildings and road are strong points of human reference in an otherwise open and elevated landscape. The lack of other roads mean that much of the landscape is inaccessible by car, and a sense of isolation and solitude can be experienced, especially on the coastal slopes. From this LCA there are clear views to Lundy, and the surrounding farmed landscapes, including coastal farmland of sheep-grazed pastures delineated by stone walls and stone-faced banks.



LCA A2: Valley of Rocks



Valley of Rocks, showing the cricket pitch surrounded by rock formations

Description

The much-visited Valley of Rocks occurs immediately west of the coastal holiday towns of Lynton and Lynmouth. Although exhibiting the characteristics of the High Coastal Heath LCT, the Valley of Rocks also has a number of features that are unique to this area, such as its dry valley landform, dramatic rock formations and feral goats. It also contains the relatively well-preserved remains of prehistoric occupation including house platforms and a field system.

Once believed to form an exit route to the sea for the river Lyn, the Valley of Rocks is now dry, and exhibits examples of landform process which occur in periglacial conditions. This is a landscape of spectacular views – the coast; the prominent rocks (Castle Rock for example forming a striking landmark as you look down the valley); the steep heathy valley sides and scree slopes. This also appears to be a landscape of two halves: the rugged, wilder, steep-sided slopes and cliffs contrast sharply with the flatter, lower valley

floor that has seen much human influence and change. Its cricket pitch, pavilion, car park and visitor facilities give it a much more ‘tamed’ character, although much work has been done recently to reduce the visual impact of the car park and associated buildings. The sense of gentle, organised recreation in the sheltered valley floor contrasts with the challenging, rugged, windswept and exposed character of the surrounding rocks and coast.



LCA A3: The Foreland



Description

The Foreland is centrally located along Exmoor's northern coastal edge. Extending immediately east from the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves landscape of Lynton and Lynmouth, this LCA offers some of the National Park's most dramatic scenery. Here, the rugged, concave coastline sweeps from east and west, culminating at Foreland Point, the most northerly point on Exmoor to abut the Bristol Channel - indicated by its lighthouse.

Inland views are no less inspiring- a panoramic scene of deeply incised wooded combes, the patchwork landscape of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT and the contrasting open and wild landscape of the Open Moorland LCT.

With the coast road cutting through the area, running between the towns of Porlock and Lynton, human influence in the landscape is apparent. Road

noise, road signs, car parking areas and views of the towns combine to create a landscape which is influenced by humans. However, away from the main road, much of the landscape has retained a sense of tranquillity, becoming increasingly remote towards the coastal cliffs.



LCA A4: North Hill

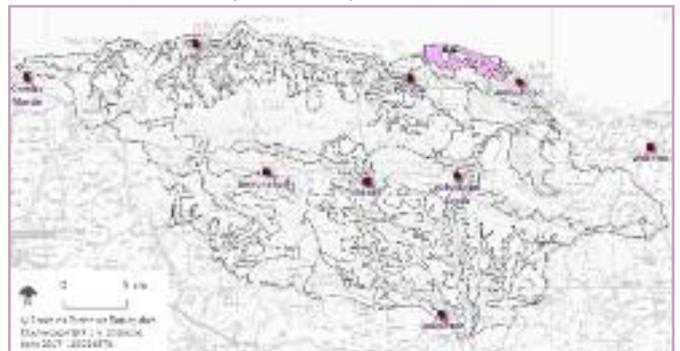


Selworthy Beacon from North Hill

Description

This is the most easterly LCA of the **High Coastal Heaths** LCT, occurring between the two **High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves** landscapes that surround the small village of Bossington in the west and the holiday town of Minehead in the east. It includes Bossington Hill, Selworthy Beacon, North Hill and Bratton Ball. The majority of land cover is characterised by heather moorland, with significant tracts of bracken, gorse and grassland. Grazing Exmoor ponies are often in view. Gorse encroachment is particularly evident along the roadside at the eastern end of the LCA. To the north of Selworthy Beacon is a pocket of Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT, with large fields of improved pasture divided by post and wire fencing. There is one road (Hill Road) providing vehicular access into this landscape- a no through road

(formerly a military track) from the Higher Town area of Minehead, which terminates at a car park. From the road and the informal car parks along its length, there are excellent panoramic views to the sea and the surrounding Landscape Character Areas. Previously used as a military training ground, this LCA is now a much-visited recreation resource, in part due to its proximity and easy access from Minehead.



Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT A

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove

SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay

SCA 6: Valley of Rocks

SCA 8: Woody Bay to Little Hangman

SCA 10: Combe Martin and Ilfracombe Bays

Please refer to the *North Devon and Exmoor Seascape Character Assessment 2015* for more detail.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT A

This LCT has a **strong** and distinctive character: In addition to the striking coastal landforms, the colour of the heather in summer is one of the defining features of the landscape, with the purple hills forming features in views from a considerable distance. The cultural landscape features within this LCT are often relatively subtle (although no less important) such as the faint earthworks of prehistoric features on Little Hangman Hill.

The condition of the landscape is **generally good**, but there are variations in landscape condition within it, and places where work is needed to improve condition. Since the 2007 edition of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment was written, a lot of work has been done to enhance the landscape at Valley of Rocks (A2), and reduce and rationalise the visual impact of services. Moorland vegetation management work has also been carried out, including on North Hill (A4). Nevertheless, much work still needs to be done to

manage heather moorland and to address encroachment of gorse on North Hill (A4), as it continues to block views and reduce the sense of openness. Some decline in the traditional management of field walls in adjacent farmland continues to be a problem, particularly around Trentishoe (A1), and on Countisbury Hill (A3). The popularity of these areas with visitors results in them being particularly susceptible to damage through erosion and littering.

SSSIs within the **High Coastal Heaths** are mostly considered to be in an 'unfavourable recovering' condition. A small proportion is in 'favourable' condition, and a small area to the east of Countisbury Common (Dogsworthy Combe and Wingate Combe) is considered to be in 'unfavourable declining' condition.

There is one site where heritage is considered to be 'At Risk', namely a boundary stone on Holdstone Down (A1).

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT A

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly being affected by a variety of issues and forces for change, which may be natural (e.g. coastal erosion) or man-made (e.g. development pressure, and changes in farming practices). The following table illustrates the main issues and forces for change acting on

this LCT, and how they will potentially affect the landscape. Recommendations for addressing these issues are provided in the following section. Please note that landscape issues and ‘forces for change’ acting across the whole National Park are described in Section 2.9.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes to traditional moorland management	Decline in traditional management practices of grazing, swaling and cutting is resulting in encroachment by bracken, gorse and scrub vegetation, and a loss of the moorland mosaic and open purple heather moor. This can have a big impact on views and wildlife, and may be detrimental to peat soils. Older stands of purple heather are more prone to attack by heather beetle, resulting in loss of vegetation. Changing agricultural grant schemes and production of biofuels have affected the amount of grazing. Traditional stone-faced banks and stone walls are poorly maintained in some locations (e.g. Countisbury Hill (A3) and above Combe Martin (A1)).	All
Gorse encroachment along roadsides	Significant increase in the extent and density of gorse cover has resulted in loss of views from some car-parks, and a channelling of views along the road rather than over surrounding landscapes.	A4
Rhododendron encroachment	Recent efforts have reduced the threat from rhododendron encroachment from adjacent woodlands, but it remains a problem, particularly in steep and coastal locations which are difficult to access.	All
Loss/ damage to archaeology	Buried and surface archaeology is particularly vulnerable to damage by encroaching vegetation. Roots of scrub and bracken physically damage buried archaeology, whilst bracken also attacks it chemically. Hidden archaeology is harder to see, and may be unintentionally damaged. Visitors may also cause erosion of archaeological sites, and some sites are also vulnerable to coastal erosion.	All
Main roads	The A39 is the main coastal route and used by heavy volumes of traffic, especially in summer. As well as noise impacts, the road is a prominent visual feature in the landscape because of its associated parking areas and signage.	A3

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Poorly designed or sited visitor facilities	Concentrations of car parks and associated signposts, interpretation boards, and benches can create visual 'clutter' in the landscape, and cause a more managed 'Country Park' character in popular areas such as North Hill. Informal enlargement of car parking areas can threaten the vegetation and character of adjacent heathland. Erosion is a problem on popular paths.	A2, A4
Masts and turbines	The smooth outlines of this LCT mean that any vertical structures such as masts and turbines are likely to be very visually prominent in views from land and sea, and to interrupt the smooth moorland skylines. This can be seen at the communications mast on Butter Hill, near Countisbury.	A3, but potentially all
Residential development	The existing occasional isolated dwellings on Trentishoe Down are prominent features in an otherwise undeveloped landscape. Not only are the buildings visible, but the surrounding enclosure and domestication of the curtilage has a significant impact on the surrounding landscape character. Extensions and/ or new outbuildings associated with existing buildings would further increase their presence in the otherwise undeveloped landscape.	A1
Development outside the National Park	The long range of views from this LCT means that they may be particularly affected by developments outside the National Park boundary, with South Wales is particularly visible at night.	All
Renewable Energy	Potential future tidal or wind energy schemes in the Bristol Channel could affect views out to sea. On clear days it is possible to see wind turbines and solar farms on the Welsh skyline, and in North Devon.	All
Coastal erosion	Coastal heritage features such as the limekilns at Heddon's Mouth are vulnerable to damage from storms and high tides.	All



Gorse growth blocking view from carpark, North Hill



Path erosion, exacerbated by use of 4x4 vehicles, Selworthy Beacon

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT A

Landscape Strategy

The Coastal Heaths remain an exhilarating and exciting place to be, with a sense of exposure and vulnerability. The rugged, wild and open character of the area is conserved and enhanced, and its tranquillity is retained. There are continuous tracts of healthy open heath without significant areas of scrub, and the moorland appears natural in character. Archaeological sites are well managed. The open quality of the landscape is retained, with long views possible from roads and footpaths, and the South West Coast Path is a sustainable focus for public access. Damaging development (both within and outside the National Park) which may have incremental impacts on views or the undeveloped character of the area is restricted.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT A

Protect

- Protect existing moorland to enhance wildlife habitats and manage to promote large areas of healthy heather moor.
- Protect views from roads and footpaths, and prioritise clearance of visually intrusive gorse scrub which blocks views (particularly on North Hill, LCA 4).
- Protect the expansive views out of the LCT over both land and sea which contribute to its unique character and sense of place. Pay particular regard to the potential impacts of new development, renewable energy projects and light pollution within the setting of the LCT.
- Protect archaeological sites, ensuring that buried and surface archaeology is not threatened by damaging vegetation, and raise awareness of heritage assets, particularly at North Hill and Bossington Hill.
- Protect stone walls and banks, repairing in traditional styles where necessary.
- Protect the open, undeveloped character of the landscape, resisting new dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings or other buildings.
- Resist siting of vertical structures where they will be detrimental to skylines and views.
- Protect peat soils to encourage sequestration of carbon and flood regulation.

Manage

- Control encroaching vegetation, including maintenance of dynamic habitat edges between woodland and moorland, and continue to eradicate rhododendron.
- When burning is to take place, minimise its visual impacts, for example by clearing burnt stumps.
- Identify opportunities to improve habitat connectivity and reduce fragmentation of habitats.
- Manage erosion by visitors, particularly around archaeological and 'honeypot' sites. Remove unnecessary visual clutter such as non-essential signage.

Plan

- Support funding for conservation grazing and other moorland management initiatives.
- Ensure site-based management plans are in place for coastal heathland areas, identifying areas to be kept as moorland, areas to look after as woodland, and areas of active moorland-woodland edge management to allow dynamic habitat edges.
- Develop a strategy for increasing and managing car parking across the LCT to reduce the impacts of concentrated parking.
- Work with the Highways Authorities to minimise urbanising influences from signage along the main road corridors, and ensure consultation and joint working when considering changes to highways, including signage. (LCA 3).
- Work with neighbouring planning authorities (including Welsh planning authorities) to ensure that landscape and visual impacts (including night-time impacts) of proposed developments outside Exmoor National Park are appropriately assessed.

NOTE- See also detailed assessments and management recommendations in the following documents:

- *Exmoor's Moorland: Where Next?* (The Exmoor Society, April 2016)
- *Exmoor Moorland Units* (ENPA, 2011 with subsequent reviews)
- *Principal Archaeological Landscapes on Moorland in Exmoor National Park: Assessment and Condition Survey* (ENPA, January 2015)
- SAC and SSSI Management Plans

Specific Planning Guidelines for High Coastal Heaths

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the High Coastal Heaths Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.



View from near the National Park boundary, Great Hangman, looking west to the North Devon Coast AONB

Defining qualities which need to be protected should new development occur, and which any new development should reflect:

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Sense of isolation and openness (All).	Buildings or structures which cluster together or where frequency increases to undermine sense of isolation or openness.	New development should generally be avoided in this LCT unless it is essential to help conserve or enhance the special qualities of the landscape. Where individual structures are required the cumulative and sequential effects of introducing individual built elements should be considered.
Key views and smooth rounded landform/skylines (All).	Interruption of rounded landform and skyline by vertical features (even relatively low) be they communication masts, turbines, buildings or curtilage planting/fencing.	If integrating buildings sit them into the folds of the landscape and avoid curtilage planting or fencing. Use materials which are sympathetic to the landscape, and avoid use of brightly coloured roofs or large expanses of glass which can draw the eye. Vertical features should be avoided in this LCT. This is a landscape which has been identified as an unsuitable area for small scale wind turbines and free-standing solar arrays.
Surrounding settlements and developments are perceived as beyond and below this area, such that there is a strong sense of separation from development (All).	Encroachment of ad hoc recreational development which blurs the distinction between this type and adjacent more settled landscape types. Development (including large scale turbines) in adjacent coastal landscapes.	Development which appears to bring human influences closer should be avoided e.g. the gradual proliferation of recreational development and/ or larger buildings at the junction between this LCT and surrounding LCTs.
Dark night skies and sense of relative wilderness and isolation, away from development and human activity (All).	Intrusive new development in views from this landscape (particularly where development is located beyond the National Park) which may have adverse impacts by day and by night in terms of light pollution.	Development proposals beyond the National Park boundary, which are likely to be visible from this landscape, should demonstrate that any lighting proposals mitigate sky glow and light intrusions. This is in line with the duties of relevant authorities (see section 2.2)