

Landscape Character Type B: High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves



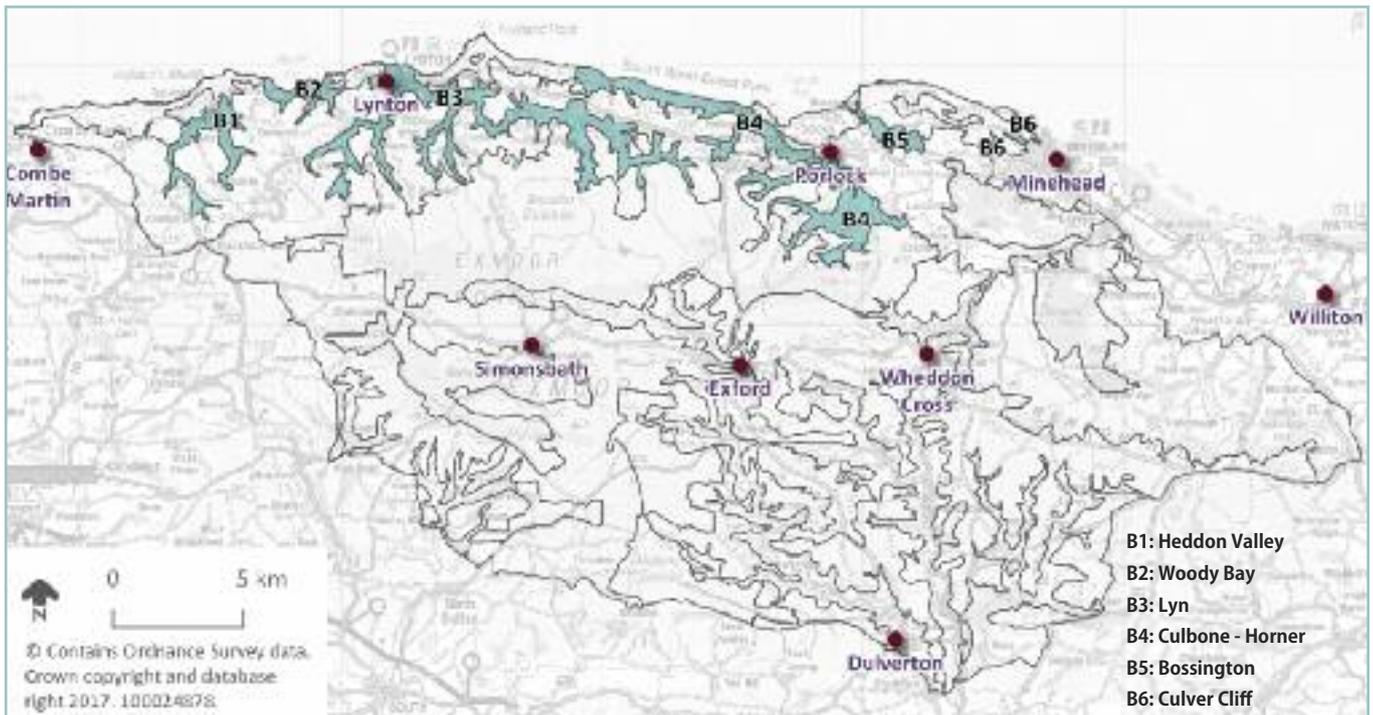
Summary Description

This LCT is located in the northern part of the National Park. It comprises wooded coastal valleys and wooded cliffs, and extends for almost the full east-west length of the Exmoor coast. It is closely associated, both physically and visually, with the adjacent LCTs, comprising High Coastal Heaths, Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons, Low Farmed Coast and Marsh, Open Moorland and Farmed and Settled Vale.

The largest settlements within the LCT are Lynton and Lynmouth, both near the mouth of the Lyn Valley. There are several small hamlets further inland, and scattered farms and hotels. The wooded hillsides of the LCT form the setting to several towns and villages, including Minehead and Porlock.

This is a striking and dramatic landscape of steeply incised wooded valleys and cliffs. Trees cloak the valley sides, and the dense and predominantly deciduous woodland changes colour with the seasons. The LCT includes the full length of the combe valleys, from springs rising near the moor, turning to rushing streams, often with waterfalls, and finally meeting the sea as rivers flowing into rocky bays. Where the watercourses meet the sea, the wooded valley sides give way to steep wooded slopes that extend along the coast forming densely wooded cliffs, cleaves and bays.

There are six Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, each representing a different catchment. The LCT is also within 5 Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) identified in the Seascape Character Assessment.



Key Characteristics of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves

- Underlain by Lynton Formation geology, (grey or dark grey silty slates or siltstones and grey sandstones) with deposits of alluvium in valleys.
- A dramatic landform of steep, convoluted coastal slopes and deeply-incised narrow valleys and combes, generally between 0 - 300m AOD.
- A series of steeply descending, fast-flowing rocky streams and rivers flow towards the coast, each with an individual character.
- Dominated by tree cover with continuous tracts of predominantly deciduous woodland (much of which is ancient) clothing the steeply sloping valleys and coast. Small pockets of pastoral farmland and settlement on valley floors and lower slopes.
- Small-scale field pattern, interspersing the woodland, reflecting medieval enclosure of the landscape (although some boundaries have been modified from the seventeenth century onwards).
- Generally sparsely settled, but with a varied settlement pattern and character from linear hamlets to seaside towns.
- Historic landscape features include bridges, churches, estate buildings and ornamental woodland planting.
- Primary and secondary roads follow some watercourses, but much of the LCT is inaccessible by road.
- Views of wooded combes and cliffs are one of Exmoor's most striking features. Seasonal colour changes are particularly dramatic.
- Away from the coastal settlements and major roads, the landscape has a tranquil character, and in many places feels remote.
- Strong cultural associations with artists, writers and poets, and a strong social memory of the Lynmouth Flood of 1952.
- A landscape popular with visitors containing a number of 'honeypot' sites

Natural Landscape Features

The underlying geology of Lynton Formation slates has been incised by a series of watercourses, creating numerous steep-sided V-shaped valleys which get deeper towards the coast. The cliffs and valley sides contain rocky outcrops, often hidden within woodland, and there are dramatic scree slopes in the steep, unwooded gorge near Watersmeet. Soils are typically freely-draining slightly acid loamy soils.

Many (but not all) of the streams within the valleys are included within designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The streams are generally rocky and fast-flowing with occasional waterfalls and pools, including the well-known waterfalls at Watersmeet. This is a popular spot for visitors to enjoy the rocky rivers in their wooded gorge setting. The East Lyn River, which in spate can transform from a rocky stream to a raging torrent, is an important habitat for migratory fish species, salmon and sea trout - which spawn throughout its length - and for the iconic otter. The sides of the valleys are often covered in dense deciduous woodland (much of it ancient) and the deep, wooded, sinuous corridors form dark, dramatic patterns in the landscape and create breathtaking scenery.

This LCT contains the longest continuous stretch of Atlantic oak woodland on the western coast of Britain, and forms a significant proportion of South-west England's total remaining Atlantic oak woodland. The ancient coastal sessile oak woodland with associated lichens and ferns is of international importance for its conservation value, and most (but not all) is designated accordingly (as SSSI and as part of the Exmoor and Quantocks Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation). As well as sessile oaks, parts (e.g. Culbone Wood and Woody Bay) contain endemic whitebeams, and others (e.g. North Hill and Ashley Combe) contain exotic species planted within ornamental schemes. Ancient yew trees also grow within the woodland. Small areas of the Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation also fall within this LCT.

Coastal features include steep, hog's back cliffs, coastal combes and waterfalls. There are coastal caves at Yenworthy, and a natural arch at Sir Robert's Chair, known as 'The Giant's Rib'. Much of the foreshore is inaccessible except at a few locations, including Lee Bay and Woody Bay.



The River Heddon



Twisted oaks above Woody Bay

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods (B1, B2, B3, B4); Exmoor Heaths (B3, B4, B5, B6)	Ancient Woodland	Extensive areas in B1, B2, B3, B4, B6
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (B1, B2); Watersmeet (B3); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (B3, B5, B6); North Exmoor (B3, B4), Glenthorne (B4)	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Hawkcombe Woods (B4); Dunkery and Horner Woods (B4)
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous woodland and grassland sites throughout LCT	Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ (B2, B3)
Local Geological Site (LGS)	East Lyn Group (B3); Ashton Cleave Scree and Weir Water Reserve (B3); Yellowstone Cliff and Culbone Rocks (B4); Porlock Weir to Bossington Beach (B5); Culver Cliffs (B6)	Heritage Coast	Exmoor Heritage Coast (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6)
		Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (transition zone) (B1, B2, B3)

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

The Iron-Age sites at Bury Castle (B5) and the Lyn Gorge (B3) are among the oldest recorded sites, both occupying prominent positions above river valleys. There are numerous medieval sites within this LCT, including the twelfth century Culbone church (said to be the smallest 'complete' church in England), and other churches, lanes, walls, bridges, tracks, fords, farms, hamlets, fields, mills, lime kilns, harbours and manors. Many of these are still integral parts of the landscape today, and remain in use for their original purposes, with some designated as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments. They generally occur in the more accessible river valleys, although Culbone church is located in a wooded cliff top position.

Churches and bridges are of stone construction, but domestic buildings exhibit a wide range of styles and building materials. The use of stone varies across the LCT, generally with more reddish sandstone used in the east, and greyer slate in the west. Other buildings are rendered or painted, and hung slates are sometimes seen on north-facing walls. Roofing materials also vary, including thatch, tile and slate. Farms and hamlets are often located at the crossing-points of rivers (bridges or fords) or at the base of the steep valley-side slopes. With the exception of some hotels, buildings are small in scale.

The nineteenth century saw parts of the LCT appreciated and developed as a fashionable picturesque landscape. Examples of this are the remnants of the ornamental woodland planted on North Hill by the Luttrell family of Dunster Castle (B6) and the ruined Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe (B4) where remaining landscape features include ornamental plantings, towers, terraces, tunnels and viewpoints. Other estate buildings also survive, including the toll house for Worthy Toll Road (B4), and the area is a Principal Archaeological Landscape. The northern part of Selworthy (including the distinctive whitewashed church) is located within this LCT (B5). Selworthy is an estate village within the Holnicote Estate (National Trust), overlooking the Farmed and Settled Vale LCT.



Culbone Church

As the area developed as a tourist destination, new infrastructure and towns began to appear, particularly in the coastal parts of the LCT. These include the seaside towns of Lynton and Lynmouth (both Conservation Areas), which exhibit mid-Victorian seaside architecture (e.g. sash windows and pointed gables) as well as more traditional buildings. There are several large nineteenth century hotels and houses (such as the Woody Bay Hotel, Lee Abbey, Martinhoe Manor and Glenthorne House) which occupy prominent positions on valley sides or overlooking the cliffs.



Historic harbour, Lynmouth (rebuilt after Lynmouth Flood of 1952)

The cliff railway between Lynton and Lynmouth is still in use, as is the network of steep roads and carriage drives. Monterey and other pines planted on prominent positions above Lynmouth harbour form distinctive features of its 'Little Switzerland' character. Work was started (but not completed) on a resort at Woody Bay, and the remains of the pier, tidal swimming pool and landing posts may still be seen on the shoreline.



Woodland paths and tunnels, Ashley Combe



Toll House, Worthy



Cliff railway between Lynton and Lynmouth



Hunter's Inn Hotel

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Myrtleberry North Camp Promontory Fort (B3); Leat from hydro-electric station (B3); Malmsmead and Oare bridges (B3); Sweetworthy Deserted Medieval Village (B4); Bury Castle (B5)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Countisbury and Lyn Gorge (B3); Ashley Combe and Culbone (B4); Ley Hill (B4); Horner Wood (B4); Sweetworthy and Bagley (B4); Bury Castle, Selworthy (B5)

Conservation Areas	Lynton (B3) Lynmouth (B3) Selworthy (B5)
Listed Buildings	Numerous cottages, farms, mills, toll houses, limekilns, churches, (throughout, with concentrations in Lynton (B3) Lynmouth (B3), and Selworthy (B5))

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

Within this LCT there are great contrasts in the perceptual qualities of the landscape. For example, the towns of Lynton and Lynmouth have a bustling, seaside quality, particularly in summer. Similarly, popular 'honeypot' sites such as Watersmeet and Lorna Doone Farm can also feel busy and touristy, with concentrations of people and traffic. However, one does not have to walk far to experience a profound sense of tranquillity and remoteness, qualities which are enhanced by the dense tree cover.

The sounds of water and birdsong are particularly noticeable away from main roads, towns and parking places, and the smells of woodland, damp soil and water are distinctive. The dampness of the woodlands, and the presence of lichens and ferns give it a 'temperate rainforest' feel. Running water is

a key characteristic of this landscape, including rocky streams, rushing rivers and waterfalls. The extensive deciduous woodland creates a landscape of strong textures, which change with the seasons. Colours too are constantly changing, with autumn particularly dramatic. In storm conditions, the coastline is buffeted by winds and seas sweeping up the Bristol Channel, giving a very different feel to the landscape and seascape.

The character and feel of this landscape is also strongly influenced by its sense of history, which often appears to be hidden in the woodland, and puts visitors in mind of people who have gone before. For example, walks through the LCT reveal the tunnels of Ashley Combe, carriage drives along from Woody Bay, abandoned lime kilns, and ancient tracks to the coast.

Adjectives used to describe this specific LCT in the 'Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study' include *river valley, rocky, water rushing, fairytale, and dramatic*. Emotional responses unique to wooded valley landscapes included *protected, delighted, mesmerized, reflective and ethereal*.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The A39 runs through parts of this LCT, and is a popular tourist route. However, much of this LCT is only accessible using steep minor roads, or footpaths/ bridlepaths. The South West Coast Path runs east-west through the LCT and is an important route through the landscape, providing access to the coastal woodlands.

Within the LCT there is an overriding sense of enclosure due to enveloping valley sides and the density of tree cover. In summer, the woodland can be so dense that it is not possible to see the sea from the Coastal Path. Where long views do occur, they are often sudden and dramatic, framed by woodland or topography. The cliffs and foreshore are some of the most inaccessible parts of the National Park, forming part of the 'hidden coast' of Exmoor. However, they are visible from the sea, with the wooded cliffs rising up out of the water and contrasting with the farmland and moorland visible above and behind.



Above: Lynmouth and the River Lyn c.1820, by William Payne. This view is particularly interesting as it shows Lynmouth before its development as a coastal resort. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Devon Archives and Local Studies Service



Right: Winton Waterfall by Peter De Wint © Birmingham Museums Trust. Reproduced with permission

Cultural Associations

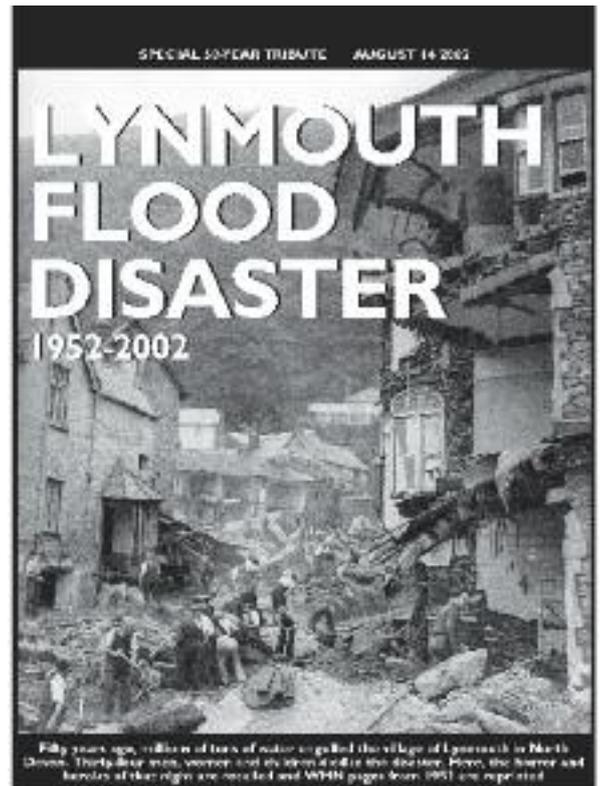
This LCT has many cultural associations. It inspired the Romantic poets Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, and R.D. Blackmore set his novel *Lorna Doone* in the Oare/ Badgworthy valley. Ada Lovelace (mathematician daughter of Lord Byron) had a family home at Ashley Combe, the Italianate grounds of which are still partially visible today. Artists including Turner and Samuel Palmer have been inspired by the coastal woodland landscapes.

*The hanging woods, that touched by Autumn seem'd
As they were blossoming hues of fire and gold,
The hanging woods most lovely in decay,
The many clouds, the sea, the rock, the sands,
Lay in the silent moonshine – and the owl,
(Strange, very strange!) the Scritch-owl only wak'd,
Sole voice, sole eye of all that world of beauty!*

From *Osorio*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
written following a visit to Culbone

On a more sombre note, the devastating floods of 1952
in the Lyn Valley remain strong in social memory.

**(Right) Newspaper supplement commemorating 50 years since the Lynmouth
Flood. Reproduced with kind permission of the Western Morning News.**



Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The majority of the LCT is deciduous woodland, a rich and diverse habitat supporting numerous species of plants, animals, insects and birds. Woodland is a vitally important Natural Capital Asset, and provides a number of other Ecosystem Services, including the regulation of water quality and flood risk by filtering of surface water and slowing its flow, improving air quality through the sequestration of carbon and the production of oxygen (through photosynthesis), soil formation (through decomposition of leaf litter) and the provision of timber for fuel. Many of these ecosystem services play an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and are likely to become increasingly important in the future. The rivers are also a key asset, providing a range of services including fresh water supplies, habitats, energy and recreation. They have a traditional association, celebrated in literature, with game fishing. The rivers and woodlands provide natural noise masking and contribute to the sense of tranquillity.

The LCT provides a number of cultural ecosystem services; it plays an important role in recreation and

enjoyment of the National Park, and there are a number of 'honeypot' sites within this LCT, including Watersmeet, Lynmouth and Doone Farm (all B3). Its footpaths (including long stretches of the South-west Coast Path), viewpoints and visitor facilities provide people with opportunities to exercise, learn and enjoy the spectacular scenery. This contributes to people's spiritual enrichment and physical and mental wellbeing. The LCT contains many cultural heritage sites, including historic buildings and ornamental woodlands, which contribute to people's sense of history and sense of place: they also provide opportunities to learn about local history including cultural and social development.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

Within the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT, there are six distinctive LCAs, each representing a different river catchment. Their landscape characteristics create a distinctive 'sense of place' which are included in the descriptions below. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile.

LCA B1: Heddon Valley



Hunter's Inn

Description

The most westerly LCA within this LCT, it comprises two watercourses – a tributary of the River Heddon, and the River Heddon itself, plus the springs and streams which feed them. Unlike the other LCAs within this LCT, this landscape does not extend to the coast. Instead, at Heddon's Mouth Cleave, woodland merges into the heathland of the Holdstone Down and Trentishoe High Coastal Heaths (LCA A1) which extend to the coast at Heddon's Mouth Beach.

The watercourses converge at Heddon's Mouth Wood, which has become a focal point for visitor activity with the Hunter's Inn, and National Trust visitors' centre and car park. Away from Hunter's Inn, settlement is limited to occasional farms and cottages. Although Hunter's Inn is served by an exceptionally steep minor road, much of the LCA is only accessible on foot.

The sloping valley sides of the River Heddon are densely covered with deciduous woodland. The tributary valley has a more mixed land use of woodland and farmland (predominantly pasture in small, irregular fields). Much of the area is owned and managed by the National Trust as part of its Heddon Valley estate. Much of the woodland is ancient, and forms part of the West Exmoor Coast and Woods SSSI. The northern part of the woodland is also designated SAC.



LCA B2: Woody Bay



Lee Bay and Woody Bay from Lee Abbey

Description

The heavily-wooded LCA of Woody Bay extends from West Woody Bay Wood to Cuddy Cleave and Six Acre Woods. The LCA includes the wooded coastal cliffs, and also three small stream valleys that run towards (and merge before meeting) the coast, with a spectacular coastal waterfall at Woody Bay. The valleys open out into two scallop-shaped bays - Woody Bay and Lee Bay - of which there are breathtaking views from the steep, narrow and winding coastal road. Woody Bay cove contains the remains of a jetty and tidal swimming pool constructed in the nineteenth century as part of an unsuccessful speculative tourist resort development. The South West Coast Path runs east-west across the full length of the LCA, and there are a number of other footpaths and bridleways in the combs which provide wonderful opportunities for woodland walks. Settlement is limited and includes isolated farms and

dwelling. However, the large buildings of Lee Abbey (located within an adjacent LCT), Woody Bay Hotel and Martinhoe Manor are prominent features in the landscape, visible from both land and sea.

The vast majority of the LCA is designated SSSI for its coastal woodland habitats, and the western part is within the Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods SAC. It contains a range of lichens and ferns, spectacular twisted oak trees and endemic Whitebeams.



LCA B3: Lyn



Lynmouth, looking up the Lyn Valley

Description

One of the largest LCAs of the **High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves** LCT, the Lyn LCA is centred around the East Lyn and West Lyn rivers, and their convergence at the deep and densely wooded gorge where the towns of Lynton and Lynmouth lie. The LCA also includes a number of tributary valleys, ranging from the remote wooded combe surrounding Hoarok Water, to the more open landscape of the Doone Valley. At Watersmeet, where the waters of Hoarok meet the East Lyn River, there are dramatic waterfalls. This has long been a popular area with visitors, who use the car park, footpaths and refreshment facilities.

The Doone Valley (along the course of the Oare and Badgworthy waters) is both wooded and farmed, and the nearby moorland also influences its character. It has strong associations with R.D. Blackmore's novel *Lorna Doone* and is much visited, giving parts of the valley a strong tourist value and function; the concentration of visitor facilities creating a more 'touristy' character in places.

The valleys of the East Lyn and West Lyn rivers are very densely wooded. The A39 and B3234 follow the watercourses and ascend and descend over

very steep gradients. They are often busy, particularly in summer, as visitors converge on the dramatically-sited coastal towns of Lynton and Lynmouth, which were nicknamed 'Little Switzerland' by the Victorians. Lynton (with strong Victorian architectural influences) sits above the more traditional harbour and seaside town of Lynmouth, and the two are connected by a steep road and a cliff railway.

Several valleys contain small-scale dispersed settlements. Hamlets or farms typically have a linear form as they line watercourses (e.g. Brendon, Rockford and Barbrook). Grey sandstone, white painted stone and slate are the principal building materials of traditional cottages farms & farm buildings.



LCA B4: Culbone - Horner



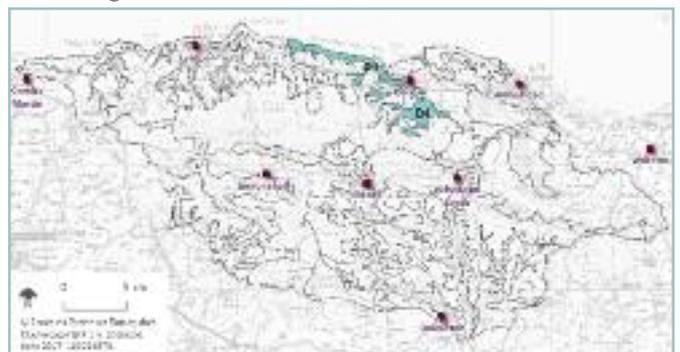
Horner Wood from Webber's Post viewpoint

Description

This is the largest of the six LCAs within the **High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves LCT**, and stretches from Glenthorne Plantation in the west to Horner Plantation in the east. It includes both wooded coastal cliffs and extensive areas of inland woodland. As with other LCAs, it includes numerous tributary valleys.

The coastal woodlands of Culbone Wood, Yearnor Wood, Worthy Wood and The Parks join to form the longest continuous tract of coastal woodland in the country. It forms the backdrop to the adjacent settlements of Porlock and Porlock Weir. These woodlands cover the cliffs and contain a number of historic features, including Glenthorne House, Culbone church and the remains of the Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe. Settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses, often accessed via tracks. A toll road winds its way through the woodland, offering a peaceful route alongside tumbling streams and fern-clad wooded banks.

Further south, the wooded Hawkcombe valley comprises a series of smaller combes, each with spring-fed streams running off the open moorland. Hawkcombe is a National Nature Reserve with good footpath provision, but no through roads. Horner Wood, in the southern part of the LCA, adjoins the Open Moorland LCT at Dunkery Hill, and forms part of the Dunkery and Horner Wood National Nature Reserve. It is an exceptionally large area of ancient woodland, containing more than 1000 ancient trees. Hawkcombe & Horner Woods are designated SSSI and SAC.



LCA B5: Bossington



Description

One of the smallest LCAs, Bossington comprises woodland (predominantly deciduous, but with some coniferous planting) covering the interconnected combes of Church Combe, Lynch Combe, Allerford Combe, Holnicote Combe and Selworthy Combe. Some of the combes are dry whilst others are fed from water running off the High Coastal Heaths. The woodland extends off the steeper slopes to form a woodland strip following the stream that runs through Bossington and on through the Low Farmed Coast and Marsh to the sea.

At the base of the woodland in the east is the village of Selworthy, with its prominent, limewashed church which stands out against its wooded backdrop. The northern part of Selworthy village is within this LCT, and comprises a mixture of small stone and rendered cottages nestled below the woodland. The wooded combes are served by a number of well-used footpaths which enable access to Bossington Hill and Bury Castle - a well-preserved Iron Age enclosure situated within the woodland.



LCA B6: Culver Cliff



The wooded setting to Minehead

Description

This is the most easterly and the smallest of the LCAs belonging to the **High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves** LCT, and actually comprises three small sub-areas separated by small patches of enclosed farmland. It characterises the coastal slopes which extend north-west from the Higher Town area of Minehead, and provides a strong wooded context and setting to the town.

The area falling within the National Park boundary forms part of a larger wooded coastal landscape that offers a striking backdrop to Minehead harbour and promenade. This LCA also includes the inland areas of Moor Wood and Bratton Wood that surround Wood Combe and Bratton Ball respectively. Wood Combe is designated SSSI and SAC. The woodlands contain a variety of species, including some early nineteenth century ornamental planting.

This LCA is largely unsettled, and is difficult to access by road. Nevertheless it contains a dense network of footpaths and bridleways, especially on Culver Cliff, which have dramatic views of the coast and across the Bristol Channel to Wales.



Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT B

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

SCA 2: Porlock Bay

SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove

SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay

SCA 7: Lee and Woody 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 B

The steep valleys, rivers and extensive woodlands remain dominant features in the landscape and contribute to its **strong** and distinctive character. In general, their condition is **good**, although there are risks that this may change in the future, particularly as a result of tree disease.

Not all the woodlands within this LCT are designated SSSI. Of the sites which are designated SSSI, the majority are considered to be in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. Some are in 'favourable' condition, including the environs of Lee Bay, the lower stretch of the River Lyn and the upper reaches of the Horner Valley. SSSIs in unfavourable declining condition have been identified at Croscombe Wood (B2) and the Oare Valley south of Yenworthy Common (B3). This was due to undergrazing, lack of scrub control and the presence of rhododendron.

Within much of this LCT, the dominant landscape features are natural (e.g. coastal features, rivers,

woodlands) rather than built. Nevertheless, where concentrations of historic and built features occur (particularly B3) they make a significant contribution to the strong character of the landscape and its distinctive sense of place. Built elements of the landscape are generally in good condition, although some sites (for example the ruined Italianate gardens at Ashley Combe, B4) are neglected and other archaeological sites are threatened by scrub and bracken growth. A headstone at Lynton Church is on the buildings at risk register, and the unoccupied School House in Lynton is identified as being of relatively high risk. Conservation Area Appraisals identify minor issues with inappropriate signage and advertisements, and replacement PVCu windows and doors, resulting in a loss of historic character, but overall the condition is fair and there are no major causes for concern.

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT B

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly being affected by a variety of 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 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 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
Encroachment by invasive species and lack of woodland management	Loss of woodland ground cover and natural ecosystems where invasive exotic species such as rhododendron spread into natural woodland. Parts of the oak woodlands also incur the spread of species such as beech and sycamore. Spread of invasive ornamental Cherry Laurel remains a problem in B6.	B2,B4, B6
Visitor pressure	Concentrations of tourist facilities (e.g. car parks, advertisements) changing the National Park character to a more managed 'Country Park' feel, and adding clutter into the landscape. Erosion of popular paths and viewing areas, and conflicts over access to the river (canoeing).	B1,B3,B5
Development pressure	Risk of settlements expanding out of their traditional landscape setting, for example expanding up hillsides (examples of this may be seen at Lynton, where white bungalows are prominent within the trees above the town). Large single developments (often tourism-related) in open countryside. Urban fringe land uses and development extending up to the National Park boundary in Minehead impact on Exmoor's landscape and seascape setting.	B3
Loss of coastal views	Decline in traditional woodland management (e.g. coppicing) resulting in dense tree cover obscuring views from paths and viewpoints. This is a general issue, but particularly acute in this LCT due to the quantity of woodland cover.	All
Loss of historic features	Bracken, scrub and trees pose a threat to buried and surface archaeology (e.g. Bury Castle, B5)). Ornamental gardens (B4) are in a poor state of repair, with paths and structures neglected, and trees reaching over-maturity.	B4, B5
Urbanisation of road corridors	There is a risk of eroding rural character due to signage, parking areas and other urbanising influences along the A39.	B3, B4
Light pollution	Loss of dark skies and star visibility. Recent mapping by the CPRE shows that Lynton, Lynmouth and Minehead are particular sources of light pollution, although part-night lighting helps. Lighting is also visible across the Bristol channel.	B3, B6
Renewable Energy	Exploitation of tidal energy in the Bristol Channel would result in offshore structures and coastal landfall sites. Hydropower schemes may also introduce new structures and features into the landscape.	B2, B3, B4, B6

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Tree diseases	Oak is vulnerable to a variety of diseases and pathogens, including phytophthora. Ash dieback is also a threat. Given the international importance of Exmoor’s coastal woodlands, tree disease is a major concern in this LCA.	All
Coastal erosion	Loss of coastal features and heritage sites as a result of coastal erosion, which will be exacerbated by sea level rise. Coastal squeeze may result in loss of beaches, rocky foreshore habitats and coastal woodland, and damage to coastal archaeological sites.	B2,B3,B4, B5,B6
Climate change, flooding and sea level rise	Coastal sites and settlements are more vulnerable to flooding, particularly during high tides. Increased frequency of high-intensity storms also increases the risk of flooding from rivers.	B5



Rhododendrons in Culbone Wood



Lynton from Countisbury Hill showing visibility of buildings on valley sides above Lynton

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT B

Landscape Strategy

The extent, condition and variety of woodland are conserved and enhanced, along with historic landscape features (including remnants of former designed landscapes). The water quality of rivers and streams is good and their corridors are ecologically rich. Woodlands are responsive to climate change impacts, free of invasive species, and plantations on ancient woodland sites are sensitively restored. Visitors have opportunities to visit and explore the landscape, enjoy a variety of dramatic views, and savour its remoteness, with visitor facilities designed sensitively and discreetly. Settlements retain their traditional character and form, and are enhanced by strong landscape settings. The perception of wildness and sense of place are retained throughout the LCT.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT B

Protect

- Protect archaeological sites, (for example Bury Castle above Selworthy), ensuring that they do not suffer damage from bracken or scrub encroachment. Earthwork sites within woodland are particularly vulnerable to damage by the roots of encroaching trees. Raise awareness of accessible coastal historic sites, such as those associated with the failed Victorian seaside development at Woody Bay.
- Protect the wooded landscape settings of settlements and historic sites.

Manage

- Retain the sense of remoteness which can still be experienced in parts of the LCT through avoidance of intrusive new development, and minimising visual impacts of roads and paths.
- Continue to manage levels of encroachment by rhododendron and other non-native species, particularly where coastal oak woodlands are threatened.
- Manage ornamental plantings, including replanting with non-invasive exotic species where appropriate (e.g. Monterey Pine around Lynmouth).
- Actively manage woodland sites to improve provision of ecosystem services and to encourage sensitive restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites.
- Work with riparian owners and permitted recreational groups to ensure positive management of rivers and minimal damage to banks and ecology through recreational uses. For example, minimising disturbance of bankside vegetation to minimise washing-downstream and further spread of invasive species (LCT B3).

Plan

- Explore the potential to enhance historic designed landscapes (for example Ashley Combe) including restoring important viewpoints and retaining, or possibly restocking ornamental species to conserve character.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing the quality and variety of viewing opportunities, whilst minimising the negative impact of viewpoints (e.g. parked cars) on the landscape.
- Ensure that renewable energy schemes and associated infrastructure are sensitive to their location, conserve the scenic quality of the area, and do not adversely impact on the rich ecology of the rivers and streams.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following documents:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Silvanus for the Exmoor Society, August 2013)
- SAC and SSSI Management Plans

Specific Planning Guidelines for High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3. Please note that the village of Selworthy is also covered within LCT E.

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
Visual and physical dominance of undeveloped wooded slopes which act as a dramatic backdrop to all settlement types. (All)	Growth of towns and hamlets up valley slopes Development of larger scale buildings (agricultural or tourism-related) seeking locations with elevated views.	Ensure new development does not extend onto most sensitive slopes, particularly upper slopes and unfettered skylines. Ensure landscape backdrop remains dominant in views.
Strong Victorian architectural styles which provide unity and cohesiveness of character to coastal resort towns. (B3)	Peripheral and infill development which relates poorly to existing vernacular.	Ensure new development visually and physically integrates with existing character in terms of mass, density, and height.
Glimpsed views down onto complex roofscape which builds anticipation and defines approach to low-lying settlements. (B3)	Introduction of new development which appears visually discordant due to scale and choice of materials.	Ensure roofing materials and roof design protects the local character of the roofscape and its complex visual composition.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Loose structure of dwellings within river valley hamlets where landscape permeates the settlement and open space provides sense of place. (B1, B2, B3, B4). The clustered yet predominately linear form of hamlets reflects the close relationship of built form to valley form, rivers and roads. (B1, B2, B3, B4)	New development which comprises an uncharacteristic density of dwellings; replaces open space which forms part of the fabric and form of the hamlet; peripheral or infill development which affects the scale or form of the settlement or lessens its relationship to surrounding linear features.	Ensure a density of new dwellings which reflect the typical arrangement of the settlement. Protect open areas which perform a valued role in providing local distinctiveness. The layout, siting and scale of development in small rural communities should be consistent with their small scale traditional form.
Dwellings constructed of stone and white washed render, with slate, thatch or tiled roofs and wooden windows and doors. Plots defined by low stone walls. These elements form a typical rural vernacular. (All)	Introduction of new built form which detracts from the traditional vernacular either as a result of materials, form, mass or roof pitch.	Ensure new development considers the local vernacular style in the locality and develops a positive visual dialogue with existing built form and the landscape character.
Dispersed isolated pattern of rural dwellings which primarily cluster around river crossing points within the river valleys. (All)	Proliferation of isolated development which relates poorly to landscape context either visually or functionally resulting in a loss of the legibility of settlement pattern.	Ensure new development is of an appropriate scale and relates to existing settlement patterns and boundary features. Development should reinforce perceptions of natural and unsettled character.
Incidental historic built features (bridges, fords, churches) often in uncluttered natural settings which aid orientation and local distinctiveness. (All)	Introduction of new development in the setting of these valued features including new signage and alteration to road and lane character.	Protect the setting of important historic features and avoid development which will visually intrude or adversely affect their significance.
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 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)



Traditional valley-side farm, nestled into a fold of the landform above Woody Bay



Vernacular valley floor cottages, near Hunter's Inn, constructed of rendered/whitewashed stone with slate roofs



Thatched cottages in terraces constructed parallel to the river, Lynton



New Lynton Pavilion building, blending with surrounding buildings in terms of its scale, materials and design.



Street scene, Lynton, showing relatively dense Victorian terrace housing, with sash windows, pointed gables and direct frontage onto the street



Lynton Town Hall (built 1900) is a civic building of relatively large scale. It is a mixture of manorial, Gothic and Tudor styles.



Woody Bay from near Martinhoe