

Landscape Character Type F

Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons



A typical view of fields, farms and common land horizons, looking towards Challacombe from near Barton Town

Summary Description

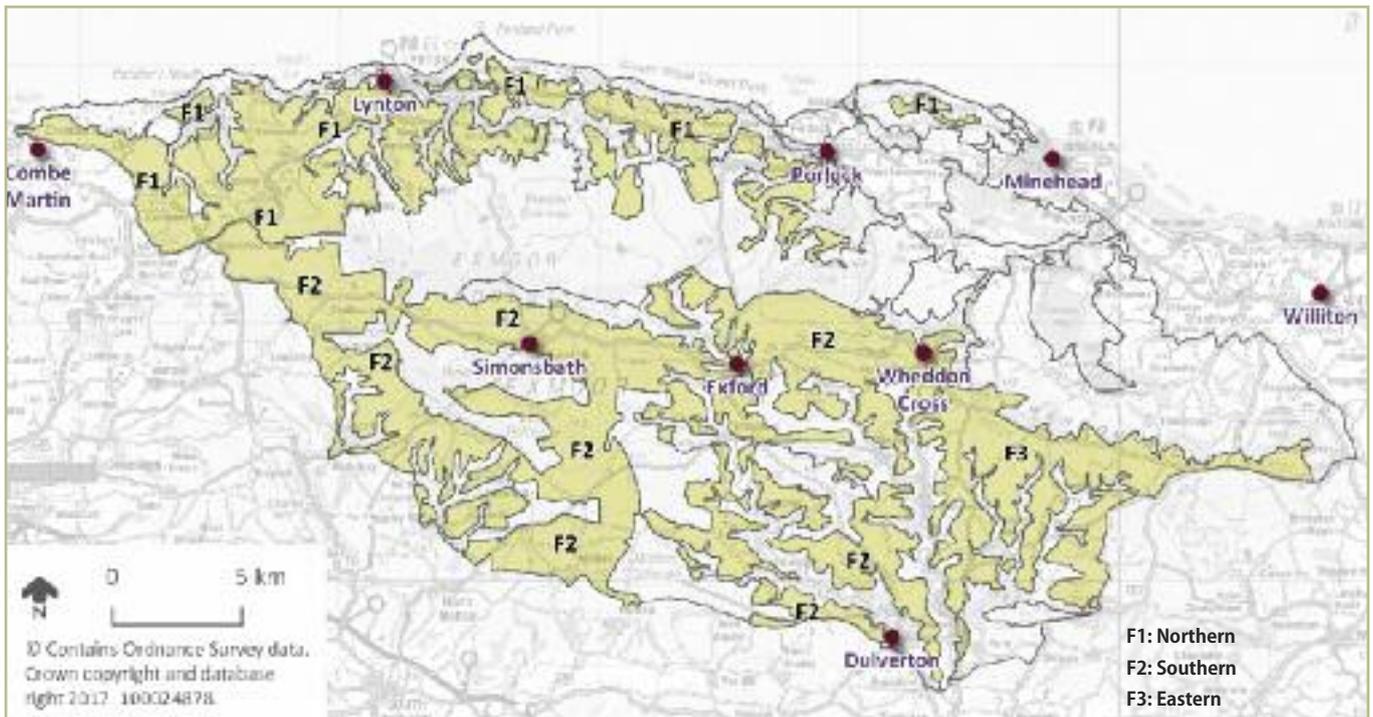
This is the largest of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs), and extends across the National Park from north to south and from east to west. Despite its extensive area, it is often fragmented by other landscape types, including Open Moorland (LCT D), the wooded valleys of the High Wooded Coasts, Combes and Cleaves (LCT B), and the Incised Wooded River Valleys (LCT G). To the north it is bounded by the High Coastal Heaths (LCT A). There are numerous farms within this LCT, but only a few settlements, including Parracombe, Simonsbath, Wheddon Cross, Martinhoe, Trentishoe and Twitchen.

The landscape comprises a patchwork of green fields, peppered with grazing sheep and cattle. On lower slopes, lush hedges create an irregular and smaller-scale field pattern, whilst on higher land,

where farm land and commons have been ‘carved out’ of the surrounding moorland, the fields are more geometrically-shaped, and bounded by beech hedgebanks or fences. The beech hedgebanks, and the contrast between the fields and the moorland, are defining features of Exmoor.

Long views, often encompassing adjacent landscape types, are a key feature of this LCT. The fields of the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** are often seen in the context of contrasting open moorland, woodland, incised valleys or open water (Wimbleball).

There are three Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT, reflecting the variations in landscape character which give each a unique sense of place.



Key Characteristics of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons

- Varied underlying geology comprising broad east-west bands of mudstones, sandstones and slates.
- A broad, rolling terrain of hills and ridges, varying in elevation from 250m to 450m AOD.
- Agricultural land use defined by pasture. Sheep are prevalent, but cattle and horses are also present. Occasional small areas of arable land on lower slopes although aerial photos indicate this has declined in recent years.
- Semi-natural habitats include a range of grasslands, copses and streams.
- Land cover defined by permanent pasture enclosed by beech hedge banks. Areas of open commons also occur, with fields demarcated by post and wire fencing.
- Regular pattern of late enclosure fields on higher land, with older enclosures in valleys exhibiting a more irregular pattern.
- Numerous medieval and post-medieval farms, and scattered hamlets and villages, usually in sheltered positions on valley sides
- Narrow rural lanes and tracks flanked by tall beech hedges create a strong sense of enclosure, restricting views and contrasting markedly with the adjacent areas of unenclosed moorland.
- Strong influence of adjacent landscapes, including open moorland, wooded valleys, plantation hills, coastal heaths and Wimbleball Lake.
- Long views of patchwork fields, and beyond into adjacent landscapes.
- The landscape feels managed, but is not densely settled, giving it a peaceful and tranquil feel.

Natural Landscape Features

With an elevation ranging between 250-450m AOD, the landscape occurs over a series of broad, rounded hills and ridges that form an area of transition between the lower-lying Incised Wooded River Valleys and the combes of the High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves, and the upland areas of Open Moorland and High Coastal Heaths.

Often the transition between these landscapes and the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons is gradual, and therefore there are a number of areas of Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons which are included within habitat designations focused on neighbouring LCTs. Examples of such habitat designations include a small part of the Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation, and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The varied geology within the LCT is revealed in a series of Local Geological Sites, many of which occur in former quarries.

Within this landscape are a number of streams which form the upper tributaries of larger rivers. These tributaries often run in steep-sided valleys with narrow, flat valley floors.

Soil quality varies markedly within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons. Generally, the better-quality agricultural land occurs on lower slopes and in river valleys, where the soil is relatively fertile and free-draining. On higher land, particularly where the underlying rocks are impermeable, the acid soils are thinner and more waterlogged, and much more marginal for agriculture. Within the farmland there are a number of sites locally-designated for their biodiversity value, including small woodlands, moorland, rivers and various different types of grasslands, such as meadows, moorland and unimproved grassland. These landscape-scale habitats support a range of wildlife, including bats and dormice.

Farmed landscape on rounded ridge landform with moorland behind





Valley floor farmland (rough grazing) in the Barle Valley near Simonsbath

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Exmoor Heaths (small area) (F1, F2)	County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous throughout, including commons, meadows, moors, woods, unimproved grassland, rivers and wetland sites.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	West Exmoor Coast and Woods (F1); River Lyn (F1); Exmoor Coastal Heaths (F1); North Exmoor (F1, F2); River Barle (F2); South Exmoor (F2);	Local Geological Site (LGS)	Balls Cross (F2); Pinkery Head Section (F2); Shortcombe Rocks (F2); Luckwell Bridge Mill (F2); Wheddon Cross Car Park (F2); Newland Quarry (F2); Thornemead Seepages (F2); Birchcleave Quarry (F2) Cophold Farm Quarry (F3)
Biosphere Reserve	North Devon Biosphere Reserve (Transition zone) (F1, F2)		

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

This landscape contains evidence of human occupation spanning several millennia, but is dominated by the moorland enclosures of the nineteenth century. It is primarily a farmed landscape, with relatively few recent influences from development or tourism.

Centuries of farming has limited the survival of prehistoric landscape features (particularly stone monuments), but nevertheless there are numerous

Bronze Age barrows, often located on hill summits and ridge tops. The stone row at Culbone appears to be a prehistoric stone row later inscribed with crosses, and forms part of the medieval parish boundary. The only excavated Bronze Age enclosed settlement on Exmoor (with radio-carbon dated evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation) is at Holworthy, within LCA F1. A further prehistoric settlement site survives at Bagley, with deserted

medieval settlements nearby. There are also several prehistoric enclosures known as 'hillslope enclosures' visible as earthworks within this LCT. Iron-Age sites are also well-represented within the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons**. Often known as 'castles', these sites have survived as substantial earthworks. Their precise function is unknown, but they are mostly situated in commanding positions overlooking river valleys, and are likely to have been defended settlements. Holwell Castle near Parracombe is a medieval motte and bailey castle, sited to control the Heddon Valley. Many of the sites described above are Scheduled Monuments, and Bagley is a Principal Archaeological Landscape.

Many of the settlements and lower-lying farms were recorded in the Domesday Survey in 1086. Parts of this landscape are therefore very ancient, with farms, roads, churches and bridges contributing to the Exmoor landscape for centuries. Small villages and hamlets lie in sheltered, valley bottom locations (e.g. Parracombe, Twitchen and Challacombe), although others (such as Martinhoe) are more exposed. Farms are often tucked into sheltered locations part-way up valley sides, or in folds at the edges of intersecting valleys. There is a particularly fine example of a medieval farmstead at West Challacombe Farm (National Trust owned) near Combe Martin. The main hall has been dated to 1470, with other parts of the complex even older. Many valley settlements are surrounded by irregular, hedged fields of medieval origin. Some field systems (such as those around Parracombe and Codsand Moor) are Principal Archaeological Landscapes, and Parracombe's four historic hamlets (each with distinct origins and character) are a Conservation Area. Characteristic features of farms are complex gutter systems such as the 'catch meadows', used to flush spring grass with relatively warm water to encourage early growth to sustain livestock. Today the remains of these systems are visible as narrow banks on the hillside, running parallel to the contours in fields close to farms. Although arable land is rare on Exmoor today, historically there was much more cultivation, as evidenced through the linear earthworks of ridge and furrow, created through ploughing. Other archaeological evidence for historic farming within this LCT includes rectangular 'pillow mounds'

where rabbits were reared, and the remains of medieval strip field systems.

In the west of the LCT, on Knap Down above Combe Martin, are a unique series of strip fields reclaimed from moorland dating from the nineteenth century. Local tradition states that they were laid out and allocated to ensure villagers got an equal share of good and bad land.

Extensive areas of the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** are formed of more recently-enclosed fields. Regular in shape and generally found on areas of higher ground, these fields reflect a period of enclosure dated to the 1800s. At this time, the Knight family bought a large proportion of the remaining Royal Forest, and set about taming and reclaiming the land for agriculture. They drained and limed the acidic peaty soils, burnt rough grass, and planted miles of beech hedges to act as wind breaks. Model farms comprising modern houses and farm buildings (often including water-powered or horse-powered machinery) were built high on the moors, close to the new fields. Through this process of enclosure and improvement the Knights and other landowners converted the moorland into improved grasslands, and defined much of the land cover pattern visible today, which often appears to be carved out of the surrounding moorland. The Knights also constructed or upgraded many of the roads through the area, including the B3223 through Simonsbath. These roads are often lined with high beech hedges.

This LCT also contains extensive areas of common land. These areas for animal grazing were allocated to the various parishes which surround the moorland. Their enclosure and parcelling-up into fields was a process which took place over many centuries. Some common land is likely to have been enclosed during the medieval period, but the majority took place during the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Under this process, parish commons were divided into fields which were distributed (or 'apportioned') to landowners within the parish. Outer common boundaries were usually demarcated by beech hedgebanks, with the fields within separated by fences. Throughout Exmoor there are narrow, hedge-banked lanes used for the movement of animals to/from the commons.

In the west of the National Park, the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway line remains a visible marker in the landscape between Blackmoor Gate and Woody Bay station at Moorlands. Mining and quarrying took place within this LCT, and its legacy is particularly apparent in the eastern part, which contains the only surviving engine house and chimney on Exmoor, and the bed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway (a Principal Archaeological Landscape) which was used to transport extracted iron ore. Silver and lead mining took place in the west of the LCT, between West Challacombe and Parracombe.

Buildings within the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** are generally small in scale. They exhibit a wide range of materials, including local stone

(generally redder towards the east and greyer towards the west), render, whitewash, and hung slates, with roofs of slate, tile and occasionally thatch. Ridge heights and eaves heights are generally low. Traditional Exmoor farmsteads are constructed of locally-available materials, and contain the range of buildings required for traditional mixed upland farming. Many farmyards used water power to run machinery (for example for processing fodder crops), and integrated water management into their layout. Later Knight Estate farms are often symmetrical in appearance. The Knight family lived in Simonsbath House (now a hotel), which is the largest house in this LCT. Throughout the LCT there are a range of old and modern farm buildings, and associated structures such as small wind turbines.



Simonsbath House, in the centre of the former Royal Forest, was the home of the Knight Family, and is now a hotel and outdoor education centre.

Knight Farm and surrounding shelterbelt at Warren Farm including more modern farm buildings that have been incorporated into the complex.



Cutting and track bed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway

Designated Cultural Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Numerous prehistoric barrows, often in hilltop/ ridge top locations (F1, F2, F3) including the henge or disc barrow on the Woolhanger Estate; Iron-Age sites at Bagley (F1); Countisbury Castle (F1); Stock Castle (F1); Roborough Castle (F1); Beacon Castle (F1); Oldberry Castle (F2); Bagley deserted medieval farm (F1); Culbone Hill inscribed stone (F1) motte and bailey at Holwell Castle (F1)
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Parracombe Medieval field system (F1); South Common (F1); Culbone Hill (F1); Sweetworthy and Bagley (F1); Challacombe Field System (F2); Simonsbath (F2); Codsand and Dunkery (F2); Kitnor Heath (F2); West Somerset Mineral Railway (F3); Withiel Florey medieval settlement (F3)
Conservation Areas	Parracombe (F1); Lower East Lyn Farm Complex (F1)
Listed Buildings	Scattered throughout, with a cluster around Simonsbath (F2). Listed buildings include farmhouses, farm buildings, churches, AA box, phone box, bridges

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

This is an enclosed, 'tamed' landscape, and as such does not share the same wild and remote qualities of the adjacent Open Moorland. However, because of the dispersed pattern of settlement and the limited intrusion from main roads, much of the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** has a peaceful, tranquil character.

The commons tend to have a more open, textured and simpler landscape character. Some unmanaged beech hedge banks remain, and these form distinctive gappy tree-lines that are eye-catching features. Late enclosed land often has a more regular field pattern, and a sense of having been 'carved out' of the surrounding moorland with reclaimed fields appearing to march up the hillsides. Again, the beech hedgebanks are often prominent features in the landscape, even though they are often in poor condition. In contrast, the areas of older enclosure often have irregular, small-scale field patterns which form striking mosaic patterns in views. Their mixed hedgerows and small areas of woodland add to the varied colour and texture of the landscape.

Parts of the area have the feel of a settled and productive agricultural landscape, whilst others (often the highest areas) have a more evocative feel, representing the struggle to enclose and improve moorland which remains marginal in terms of farmland. Features such as the ruined engine house at Burrow farm and dilapidated hedgebanks add to this localised sense of

abandonment, as does the increase of secondary woodland and encroachment of gorse onto common land. Historic landscape features such as field gutter systems evoke admiration for previous generations who toiled so hard to carve a living from the land, and who worked so closely with it. Sources of light pollution are minimal within this LCT, and with the localised exceptions of Lynton and Combe Martin, it is generally well removed from large settlements which emit light pollution. As a result, skies are exceptionally dark, and star visibility excellent.

The relatively settled, sheltered character of the Enclosed Hills with Commons is apparent in the *'Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study'*. Descriptive words unique to this landscape type include *pastoral, rural, straight, livestock, farmland, jaggedy hedgerows* and *sloping hills*. Emotional responses to the farmed landscape include *at rest, thankful, quiet, calm* and *peaceful*.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

Intervisibility with surrounding LCTs means that the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** is an important element in the views from and towards surrounding landscapes, including many of Exmoor's most well-known viewpoints. The distinctive field patterns, smaller scale and green colours of this LCT provide a contrasting (and complementary) setting to the open moorland and woodland.

There are many long views from within this LCT, particularly from higher ground. However, despite

the extensive area covered by the LCT, there are few views which encompass only this LCT. Instead, views include elements of the surrounding LCTs, such as the smooth horizons of the Open Moorlands, the textured horizons of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills, or the wooded valley sides of the Incised Wooded River Valleys. From many northern areas there are views across the High Coastal Heaths or High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves towards the sea.

Often views from roads crossing the **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** are limited by the high

hedgebanks, which can create a tunnel-like effect and restrict views into the surrounding landscapes. There are relatively few paths within this LCT, and there are also few areas of access land. It is therefore relatively difficult to explore on foot. Visitor attractions and car parks are also very limited (Woody Bay Station is an exception) so there are relatively few opportunities for people to explore this landscape. However, there are small campsites (for example Wimbleball and Halse Farm) and several farms offer Bed and Breakfast accommodation.



Ancient field patterns in enclosed farmland around Twitchen

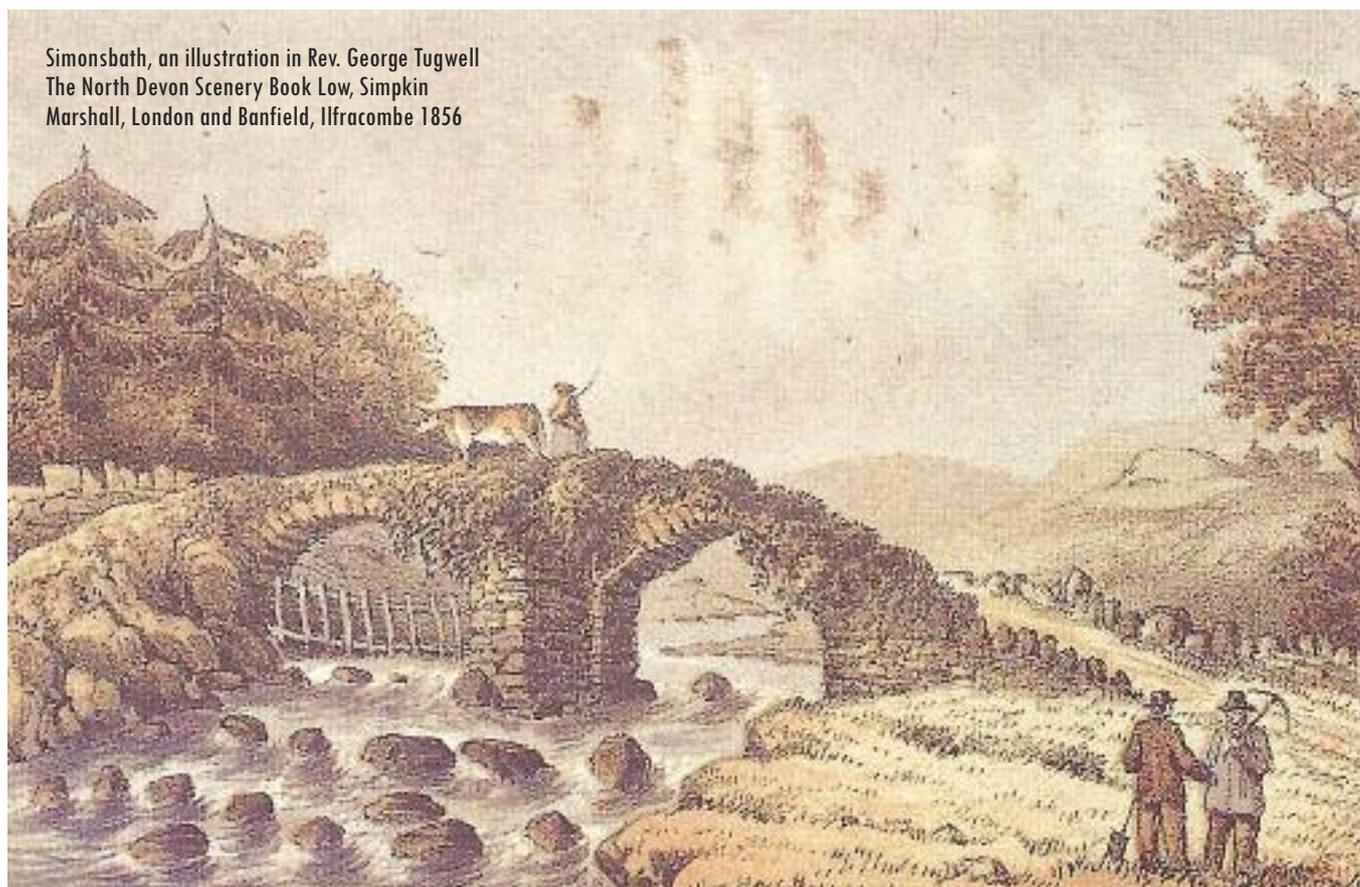


Beech-lined roads are distinctive features of the landscape.

Cultural Associations

It is interesting to note that there are relatively few poems, paintings or writings celebrating Exmoor's farmland, compared to its moorland, woodland or coast. Nevertheless, the farmland provides an important foil for the landscapes which surround it.

Within the farmed landscape are a wealth of names (of fields, lanes, crossroads and gates) which tell the story of its enclosure over the centuries, and are a cultural resource in their own right. Also associated with this landscape is a rich oral history of traditional farming methods, often handed down through generations, and complemented by an intimate understanding of the landscape, its microclimates and how to utilise natural processes to make the land productive.



Simonsbath, an illustration in Rev. George Tugwell
The North Devon Scenery Book Low, Simpkin
Marshall, London and Banfield, Ilfracombe 1856

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The farmland soils, water supplies and trees within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons are all Natural Capital Assets, which enable the functioning of a number of ecosystem services. Within this LCT, the primary ecosystem services relate to provisioning - i.e. supplying food, fibre and fuel. The network of streams, and the small reservoirs such as Nutscale and Bray also provide fresh water. Traditionally, wood from cut hedgerows has been used as fuel in woodburners, and this remains an opportunity to support traditional hedgerow management.

The Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons help to regulate water flows and water quality by absorbing rainwater and slowing run-off into rivers;

regulate climate through storing carbon and improve air quality by removing pollutants from the atmosphere. This LCT is also important for pollination, biodiversity and geodiversity.

Although this LCT is not as well-visited as other parts of the National Park, it nevertheless contributes to a number of cultural ecosystem services (the non-material benefits which people obtain from ecosystems) such as a sense of history, recreation, and positive aesthetic experiences. This is particularly true where the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons play a role in views from other landscape types, such as the Open Moorland and High Coastal Heaths.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within this LCT

Within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons LCT, there are three distinctive LCAs, each with a unique 'sense of place' as described in the descriptions below. Any LCA-specific management or planning recommendations are identified within the recommendations at the end of this LCT profile. The LCAs within this LCT were reviewed during the process of updating the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, as it was felt that the former 'Southern' LCA covered a very large area with exceptional variations in character. As a result, the former 'Southern' LCA was split into two smaller LCAs, now named 'Southern' and 'Eastern'.

LCA F1: Northern



View from Easter Lane above Leeford, looking north-west towards the coast.

Description

The northern LCA extends from Porlock Hill in the east to the National Park boundary at Combe Martin in the west. Its character and views are strongly influenced by the surrounding LCTs, and it also plays an important role in their visual settings. Its northern boundary is met by the various LCAs of the High Coastal Heaths and High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves landscape type. The wooded combes extend south into the landscape, breaking up the hills, and the densely wooded steep valley sides provide dramatic and unexpected views. The southern boundary of the area is almost entirely met by the Northern Open Moorland, and the smooth moorland skyline dominates the southern horizon. One of the key things distinguishing the Northern LCA is the proximity to Exmoor's northern coastline, and the views along the coast and out to sea.

Although the vast majority of field boundaries are defined by beech hedge banks, there are some localised areas of stone wall boundaries that add localised character variation, e.g. at Trentishoe and

Countisbury Common. Farms nestle in sheltered valleys, and the ancient settlements of Martinhoe, Parracombe and Trentishoe cluster around their square-towered churches.

Most of the roads are steep, narrow lanes running between the patchwork of fields, but the A39 passes through this landscape from Porlock to Blackmoor Gate and has a localised influence on noise levels and tranquillity. This LCA also contains the line of the former narrow gauge railway that connected Barnstaple to Lynton.



LCA F2: Southern



View from open moorland just west of Simonsbath, looking north towards Duredon Farm

Description

The Southern Area covers a large area of land, stretching from just east of Wheddon Cross in the east, to the A39 at Blackmoor Gate in the west. Isolated farms dot the valley sides below the ridges, and there are scattered historic settlements clustering in valley bottoms (e.g. Challacombe and Simonsbath) and on valley sides (e.g. Hawkridge, Twitchen and Wheddon Cross). Along with a number of Incised Wooded River Valleys, this LCA defines much of Exmoor's southern boundary. The Open Moorland LCT has a strong influence on its character, as its northern edge abuts the Northern Open Moorland, and it also borders the moorland blocks of Southern Open Moorland and Winsford Hill. It is in these areas, close to the open moorland, where there is the strongest sense of the farmland being reclaimed from moorland. This farmland also provides the immediate setting and context to the open moorland.

This LCA contains the farms enclosed by the Knight family, and the symmetrical farmhouses, often whitewashed, standing high on the open hillsides surrounded by shelterbelts and regular-shaped fields, are distinctive features. Elsewhere (particularly around villages and hamlets on lower land) field patterns are more irregular and their ancient patchwork of hedgerows contrasts markedly with the simplicity of the nearby commons and open moors. These areas are often influenced by sudden views down into the Incised Wooded River Valleys.



LCA F3: Eastern



View looking south from Burrow Farm Engine House

Description

The Eastern Area extends from near Wheddon Cross to the eastern boundary of the National Park. It includes the ridge followed by the B3224 (relatively busy in terms of traffic), and the 'fingers' of land which extend to the south, and are separated by the tributary valleys of the Haddeo and Exe.

There are a number of landscape features which make this LCA distinctive. Its location in the east of the National Park means that it is less closely related (both physically and visually) with the Open Moorland LCT, and instead has stronger connections with the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes and the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills, which form a wooded horizon to the north. Conifers are seen more frequently in views - as large-scale plantations, shelterbelts, and roadside hedges. From high land, such as Treborough Common there are views north towards the sea. Views east encompass the rolling farmland beyond the National Park, and there are also distinctive views into the Haddeo Valley and across the popular recreation site at Wimbleball Lake. Settlement is limited to scattered farms which tend to nestle in sheltered locations on valley sides, often near the sources of streams.

The ridges are generally free of buildings.

Fields are often relatively small and less regular in shape, and a greater proportion of land is in arable cultivation. Farming is relatively intense compared to other parts of Exmoor, and there are some large and occasionally untidy farmyards and storage areas. There are more mixed-species hedges, although beech hedgebanks are still seen, particularly on higher ground. The industrial heritage of the area is relatively prominent within the landscape, with surviving features including Burrow Farm engine house, abandoned buildings at Gupworthy, and the top part of the incline, cutting and trackbed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway. There are also a number of remains of water management schemes, including water meadows and mills. The lattice tower of Kennisham Hill Wireless Station is a prominent feature on the horizon.



Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) associated with LCT F

SCA 1: Minehead Harbour to Hurlstone Point

SCA 4: Gore Point to Countisbury Cove

SCA 5: The Foreland and Lynmouth Bay

SCA 7: Lee and Woody Bays

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 F

A key distinguishing feature of this landscape is its banked beech hedgerows. Whilst these are present over much of the LCT, their condition is declining in many places, and they have either been allowed to deteriorate, or been patched with post and wire fencing. As a result the landscape patterns are gradually declining, which is affecting the strength of landscape character. This is assessed as being **moderate-good** overall.

The condition of the landscape is quite **varied**, with some areas better managed than others. Overall, however, the condition is **moderate-strong**. The majority of SSSIs within this LCT have been assessed as being in 'unfavourable recovering' condition, with some in 'favourable' condition. A small area of SSSI at Yenworthy Common is within this LCT, and assessed as being in 'unfavourable declining' condition due to undergrazing, lack of scrub control and the presence of rhododendron. A small number of farmhouses, and churchyard monuments at Kentisbury, are listed buildings recorded as being in relatively poor condition. The Conservation Area appraisal for Parracombe notes that most buildings are in a good condition, but that there are localised issues with PVCu windows and doors (particularly on unlisted buildings); insensitive property boundary treatments (e.g. close-boarded fencing) and visually-intrusive overhead wires and poles.

The relative lack of access into this LCT (due to the relatively sparse footpath network and lack of open access land) means that landscape change may not always be visible.

Some problems raised in the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment have increased, including the presence of masts and other visually-prominent features within and outside the National Park, and the construction of large agricultural sheds due to changes in farming practices and disease control (although generally, efforts have been made to ensure these are designed and sited as sensitively as possible). The intensification of farming methods such as raising cattle/ sheep in barns for significant parts of the year requires agricultural buildings and ancillary services of a scale and mass that is increasingly difficult to accommodate sensitively into the surrounding landscape pattern and field boundaries. These buildings are increasingly being sited on more elevated ground, and are therefore more visible over wider distance, and with a greater visual impact. The weakening of the landscape pattern due to the declining condition of walls, hedgerows and hedgebanks remains an ongoing issue. Litter (for example old silage bags) remains a very localised issue. Use of plastic sheeting as a crop cover creates a temporary change.



Crop cover within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons landscape (LCA F3)

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT F

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly 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
Changes in farming practices	Recent decades have seen changes to farm management, including an increase in farm diversification (e.g. Bed and Breakfast, holiday cottages, campsites, haulage, and commercial shooting). Some smaller family farms have been sold, and children are not always taking over farms from their parents. This results in amalgamation or fragmentation of farm holdings, and potentially a loss of local knowledge of traditional land management. All of these can have major impacts on the fabric and appearance of the landscape.	All
New agricultural buildings	Changing agricultural practices require larger and more modern farm buildings. Even when carefully designed and sited, the scale and mass of new buildings have a considerable impact on the landscape. Recent examples of new agricultural buildings include sheds for overwintering herds of 300+ and intensive poultry production. Light spill from roof lights can also be an issue unless buildings are designed to avoid this.	All
Loss/poor maintenance of banks and hedgebanks	Loss of distinctive landscape features results in decline of strong landscape pattern. An associated issue is the loss of traditional rural skills such as walling and hedge laying.	All
Encroachment of gorse and scrub into pastures	Reduction in livestock numbers and changes to management means that some areas (particularly on high land/ steep slopes) are becoming increasingly vegetated with encroaching scrub, bracken and trees. This changes the visual appearance of the landscape, and may also be damaging to archaeological sites.	All
Changing agricultural cropping practices	Plastic sheeting, fleece crop covers and plastic silage bags can change the appearance of the landscape, and are particularly obvious in direct sunlight. Plastic sheeting can potentially contribute to increased surface water run off.	F3
Pressure for new housing	Pressure for new agricultural dwellings in isolated locations without previous residential use can be visually intrusive and impact on the undeveloped character of the area.	All

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts	LCAs affected
Changes to agricultural funding schemes	Loss of grants to maintain historic landscape features (e.g. hedgebanks) or to manage wildlife habitats could result in deterioration of their condition. The future of land management grant schemes are uncertain.	All
The presence of vertical features within the landscape	Poles, pylons, telecommunication masts and wind turbines are particularly prominent within this LCT where they occur in isolated locations, or are visible against the skyline. Their presence creates a sense of visual 'clutter' and is detrimental to the character of the landscape. In some locations, communications masts have been 'hidden' within copses of evergreens. However, these trees are now reaching over-maturity, and alternative solutions will need to be found in coming years. Such structures are often sited within this LCT in preference to open moorland sites. Overhead wires and poles are particularly noticeable alongside roads, and in settlements (e.g. Parracombe).	All
Loss of character of rural lanes	Increasing signage, kerbs and road markings affecting the rural character of lanes, particularly around settlements. Traditional road signs are sometimes in poor condition.	All
Storage and littering	Localised examples of prominent machinery and scrap storage areas create an uncared-for appearance. Smaller-scale dumping and littering also occasionally occurs, particularly in laybys. Increased use of silage requires storage of plastic-wrapped bales, which are often sited near roads for convenience, but become prominent in views, for example along the A39.	All
Changes outside the National Park impacting on views.	Many areas of the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons have views over surrounding areas. Development in these areas (e.g. building construction, renewable energy schemes, road schemes and changes in land management (such as use of extensive plastic sheeting on crops) can all impact on views from the National Park. Examples of existing features in views include Batsworthy and Fullabrook windfarms, and masts at Roborough.	
Climate change	Increased temperatures and changes to precipitation patterns are likely to lead to affect growing seasons and crop/ livestock choices. This in turn will affect the pattern and appearance of the landscape. Natural Flood Management projects may have minor effects on this LCT, but will provide important benefits downstream, and in other LCTs.	All
Renewable energy	Farm-scale renewable energy schemes include small-scale wind turbines, and solar panels. Wind turbines can appear particularly prominent in views due to their vertical form, and movement which catches the eye. Solar panels can appear intrusive, particularly if viewed from above, or if they are not sympathetic to the building on which they are mounted.	All



Spread of scrub up steep former pasture, near Barton Town (Challacombe)



Degradation of earth bank as trees die, and tree roots are no longer able to hold the bank together

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT F

Landscape Strategy

The condition of the landscape is enhanced, particularly through traditional management of hedgerows, banks and hedgebanks, and appropriate levels of grazing on common land. The distinctive patterns of fields within the landscape are retained. Farm businesses are successful, with any new buildings well-designed and integrated into the landscape. Vertical features (such as poles, masts and wind turbines) are not intrusive within the landscape, and skylines are clear and uncluttered. Any new development is carefully integrated, with minimal impacts on views. Historic landscape features and archaeological sites are in good condition, and awareness of the area's history (particularly its industrial heritage) is raised. The **Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons** provides an attractive setting for the surrounding moorland, woodland, coast and open water, and views are kept free of incongruous features, particularly on horizons or close to the boundaries with other LCTs.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT F

Protect

- Protect historic farm buildings and houses, ensuring that any conversion of redundant buildings to new uses is sensitive to their appearance and location.
- Protect archaeological sites, particularly those vulnerable to damage by animals or erosion, or which are threatened by encroaching scrub and bracken.
- Protect the relationships between buildings and the surrounding landscape. Where new buildings are required, try to maintain this relationship through careful design, siting and mitigation planting (see guidance below).
- Protect dark night skies, minimising sources of light pollution within this LCT, and in surrounding LCTs.

Manage

- Manage hedgerows, hedgebanks and banks, using traditional management methods where possible, and using species in keeping with those in existing hedgerows.

- Manage and repair stone walls where they occur (e.g. around Martinhoe).
- Manage commercial shoots to minimise impacts on the landscape and wildlife (for example through naturalistic game crop planting, careful siting of feeders and pens, and appropriate intensity of stocking. See LCT G and National Park guidance for more information).
- Consider dynamic management of the boundaries between farmland and moorland, identifying opportunities to restore grazed moorland.
- Follow management plans for SSSIs and other designated sites.

Plan

- Survey Principal Archaeological Landscapes outside moorland areas to better understand their condition and management requirements.
- Enhance recreational access into this landscape, enabling it to be more widely appreciated as a destination in its own right (for example through protecting the line of the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway to provide a future opportunity for access).
- Ensure that the LCA continues to function as an attractive setting for adjacent moorland, woodland and coastal landscapes, and Wimbleball Lake.
- Ensure that new development proposals (including those outside the National Park boundaries) are appropriately assessed, and that suitable development management policies are in place.
- Promote oral history projects with the older generation of farmers to gather knowledge of traditional Exmoor farming practices.

Specific Planning Guidelines for Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons Landscape Character Type. See also the general landscape planning guidelines in Part 3.

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
Loose organic arrangement of buildings in small scale settlements set in sheltered locations.	New development which introduces an uncharacteristic suburban form, layout or density of dwellings or extends settlement into more exposed locations. Proliferation of new development away from existing settlements.	Ensure new development is small scale, emphasises the settlement form and incorporates a range of building types which reflect the settlement origins.
Legible historic field boundaries associated with villages and hamlets, and forming an important setting and context for settlements.	Development which does not relate and respond to settlement character and urban fringe land uses that undermine the relationship between settlement and setting.	Ensure land use patterns and features (i.e. stone walls, field boundaries) associated with built form/settlement are conserved particularly where they form a historically or perceptually valued setting.

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Isolated pattern of farmsteads on middle valley slopes, tucked into landform (e.g. below break of slope, or nestled within combs) and associated with shelter planting.	Farm expansion (including ancillary activity e.g. storage, as well as new built form, associated agricultural dwellings, surfaced tracks and widened gateways) onto more exposed slopes.	Use of appropriate colours and materials (e.g. matt roofs and timber boarding on walls) to allow new large scale agricultural buildings to visually recede. New farm buildings should sit in folds of the landscape and be associated with mitigation planting comprising native species. Buildings should emphasise landform where feasible, for example by stepping roofs. Consideration should be given to elevated views from surrounding areas.
Pattern of traditional farm buildings providing strong connections to the landscape and sense of history.	Poor condition and dereliction of farm building placing some traditional and listed structures at risk and poor conversion of buildings resulting in a loss of traditional features and character.	Ensure that conversions maintain the style and character of the original building in terms of form, scale, materials and detailing. Ensure consideration is given to curtilage treatment and avoid suburbanisation of the setting of the building.
Diversity of building materials but still recognisable local palette.	New development or unsympathetic updating of buildings which do not reflect aspects of local vernacular.	Ensure use of traditional materials, colours and textures are used to inspire new design and reflect the traditional building palette of Exmoor.
Domestic buildings fit the landform with stepped roof lines, low eaves and dormer windows, and chimneys.	New development which does not contain traditional vernacular features and is disconnected from the landscape context such that it appears suburban in character.	Ensure that new development relates to the topography of the landscape in terms of stepped roofs and terracing and visually fits its historic context. Particular care should be taken with landscaping to reflect traditional curtilage treatments.
Open rounded skylines and expansive landscape without overt forms of development.	Proliferation of vertical features which break skylines and undermine sense of tranquillity and traditional rurality.	Isolated vertical structures to be associated with existing farmsteads, settlements or native planting. Ensure structures are seen predominately with a backdrop of land, buildings or vegetation, rather than against the sky.
Dark night skies.	Lightspill from roof lights in agricultural buildings.	Provide cowling on lights within sheds to minimise light spill from roof lights at night.



Traditional stone and tiled barns stepped down the slope, Cloutsham



Traditional farmhouse and outbuildings with three different building materials: slate, thatch and tin, Twitchen



Modern barn at Riscombe, using timber boarding to blend in to the wooded backdrop, and tucked into a fold in the landscape near to existing farm buildings.



The prominence of large buildings can be mitigated by associated planting and attention to detailed siting where appropriate.



This skyline copse of conifers within farmland is quite conspicuous within the landscape, and will soon be reaching over-maturity. However, it hides a mobile phone mast.



Structures can appear less visible when viewed against a backdrop of trees.