

Landscape Character Type H: Plantation (with Heathland) Hills



View from Vinegar Hill

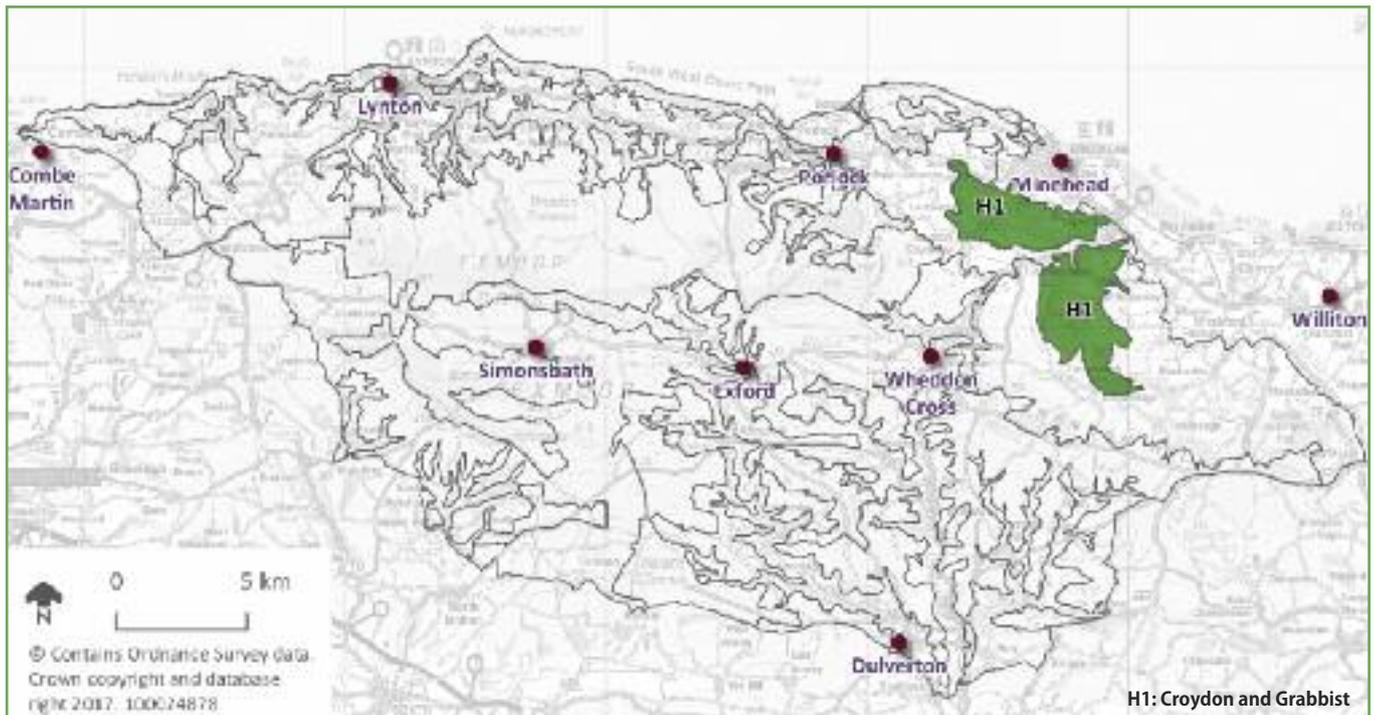
Summary Description

The Plantations (with Heathland) Hills LCT is located in the north-east of the National Park. It comprises the relatively high and predominantly wooded hills to the north and south of Dunster, which forms the setting of the village. The wooded hills form two ridges which are bisected by the Avill Valley. The northern ridge (comprising Periton Hill, Knowle Hill and Grabbist Hill) forms the National Park boundary to the south of Minehead; its remaining boundaries are with the Farmed and Settled Vale (LCT E). The southern ridge (comprising Gallox Hill, Croydon Hill, Black Hill and Monkham Hill) has the Avill Valley (Farmed and Settled Vale LCT) to the north, and the Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes LCT to the east, south and west. However, the wooded hills feature in views from several other LCTs.

This LCT includes the northern part of the village of Wootton Courtenay, but otherwise settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses on lower slopes.

Both ridges are former heathlands which were planted with extensive conifer plantations in the early twentieth century. The dense, dark green forest forms a strong contrast with surrounding areas in terms of colour, texture and landscape pattern. Pockets of heath and broadleaved woodland remain, along with the historic deer park of Dunster Castle. The hill summits are rich in Iron-Age archaeology, from where there are splendid views to the sea and surrounding landscapes.

There is only one Landscape Character Area (LCA) within this LCT (Croydon Hill- Wootton Ridge) as the character of the landscape is fairly consistent across the LCT.



Key Characteristics of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills

- Underlain by relatively hard Devonian sandstone of the Hangman Sandstone formation.
- A series of interconnected hills (balls) and ridges which rise above the surrounding valleys.
- Covered by dense, managed coniferous plantations and some mixed woodland. Includes the tallest Douglas fir tree and magnolia in England in Dunster Forest, and veteran trees in Dunster Park.
- Some surviving pockets of heathland (although under pressure from encroachment) and some areas of newly-restored heathland.
- Occasional small pastoral fields on the peripheries of the LCT, and in tributary valleys. Stone walls of former fields can be seen within the plantations.
- A landscape which has undergone significant change in the twentieth century following extensive conifer planting.
- Very little settlement- part of Wootton Courtenay village and scattered farms.
- A rich archaeological landscape, including several hill-top Iron-Age sites. Dunster Park (deer park) is a Registered Historic Park. Former estate character identifiable in details such as stone-faced banks, rides and veteran trees.
- Views within the LCT often restricted by dense tree cover, although open areas offer both inland and coastal views.
- Wooded hills form the backdrop to views from many surrounding LCTs.
- Conifer plantations create a dark, strongly-textured landscape contrasting with surrounding farmland and moorland.
- A tranquil landscape character over much of the LCT, remote in places, although human influence is evident in way-marked paths and timber management tracks.

Natural Landscape Features

The underlying geology of Devonian Old Red Sandstone (the Hangman Sandstone formation) is a relatively hard rock, and has eroded more slowly than the relatively soft rocks which surround it. As a result, the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** landscape sits at a moderately high altitude within Exmoor. With an elevation range of between 150-380m AOD, this is a visually striking landscape of dramatic convex hills which sit proud and pronounced from the adjacent landscape of the Farmed and Settled Vale. The landform comprises two ridges (Grabbist Hill and Gallox Hill), separated by the valley of the River Avill. The 'Giant's Seat' on Grabbist hill is an ancient (probably peri-glacial) soil slip, which is accentuated by pre-historic earthworks constructed around it. The underlying Hangman Grits geology gives rise to nutrient-poor, stony, acid soils, but the lower part of Dunster Park is underlain by later marl rocks, creating clay-rich soils with higher nutrient status.

Formerly an area of heather moor, the hills (balls) and ridges, cut by a number of combes, are now cloaked in a series of managed coniferous plantations (mostly Douglas fir), and some mixed woodland. There are also some important areas of broadleaved woodland, for example Withycombe Scruffets to Hats Wood, Halse Wood and Whits Wood, which are thought to be ancient semi-natural woodland. The LCT contains a number of notable trees, including

veteran parkland trees in Dunster Park, and the tallest tree in England (a Douglas fir) in Dunster Forest. This grove of splendid forest trees are celebrated in the Tall Trees Trail (accessed from Nutcombe Bottom) which also boasts the tallest magnolia in England. The warm climate, fertile soils, plentiful rainfall and sheltered site combine to create ideal conditions for tree growth.

Some areas of lowland heath survive (for example at Black Hill) and there have been ongoing programmes of heathland restoration. Heather can often be seen alongside the verges of the few roads that cut through the trees, as well as at plantation edges. However, although there are areas of heath, there is also a sense of a battle to compete with the plantations, with added threats of encroachment from bracken, gorse and self-seeding deciduous trees. Without adequate grazing, heath is managed by cutting which creates an unnatural appearance.

Much of the LCT is covered by the Dunster Park and Heathland Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated for its lowland dry heath (supporting the nationally-rare heath fritillary butterfly), dry lowland acid grassland, wood pasture with veteran trees (supporting a nationally-significant assemblage of beetles) and ancient semi-natural oak woodland habitats which support many species of ferns, mosses, insects, birds and mammals, including deer.



Veteran oak trees, Dunster Park



Entrance to the Dunster Forest Tall Trees Trail



Deer on Gallox Hill. Conygar Hill can be seen in the background, and South Wales on the horizon



Managed heath, Gallox Hill



Mixed woodland, Vinegar Hill. Species include holly, yew, Douglas fir, oak, ash, beech and sweet chestnut



Detail of lichen-covered twig, Dunster Park woods

Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Dunster Park and Heathlands
County / Local Wildlife Site (C/LWS)	Numerous sites, including plantations, coppice and combe sites. Most are treed.

Ancient Woodland	Grabbist Hill and Conygar Wood near Dunster; more extensive areas in the centre of the southern ridge, including Monkham Wood, Druid's Combe Wood, Withycombe Scruffets, Whit's Wood, Hur Wood and King's Hedge Coppice.
Local Geological Site (LGS)	Kingsbridge New Mill Quarry; Conygar Quarry

Historic Landscape Features and the Built Environment

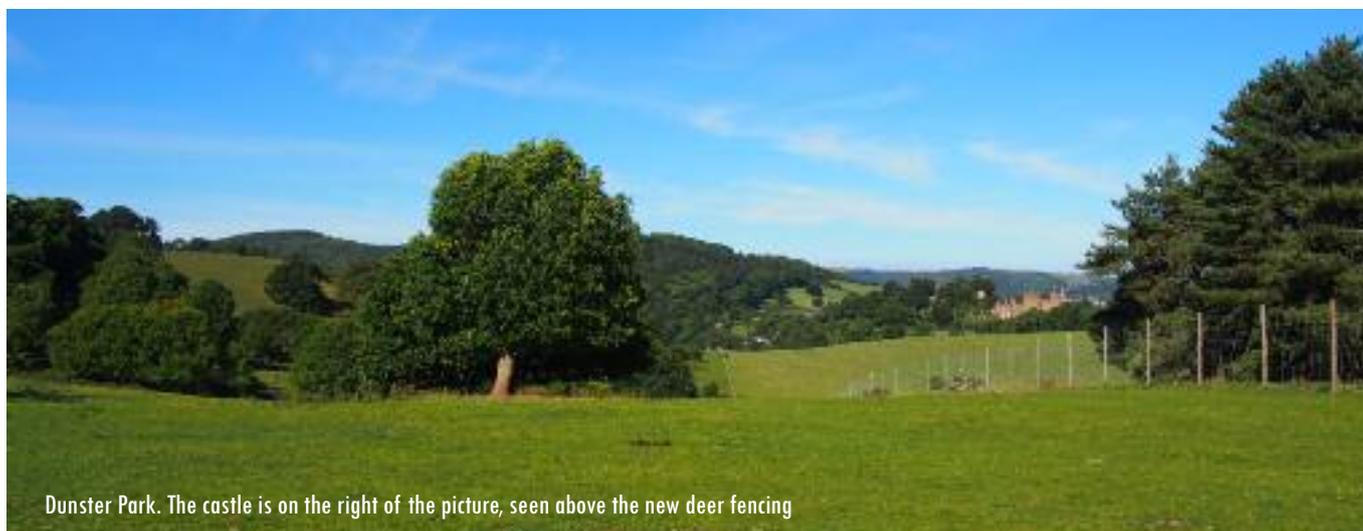
There are several prehistoric sites hidden in clearings within the plantations, the earliest of which are likely to be the barrows on Withycombe Common (a Scheduled Monument). Neolithic/ Bronze Age worked flints have also been found on the Grabbist Hill ridge. The concentration of Iron Age sites, including hillforts, hill-slope enclosures and associated field systems, is unique on Exmoor. Four earthwork enclosures may be found on elevated sites at Gallox Hill, Bat's Castle, Long Wood and Grabbist Hill. All but the Long Wood site occupy defensive hilltop positions with excellent views over the surrounding area, which may suggest control over an important routeway along the Avill Valley/ Porlock Vale. Gallox Hill and Bat's Castle (both Scheduled Monuments) are also designated a Principal Archaeological Landscape, along with the extensive field system of banks, lynchets and clearance cairns which continues to the south and is likely to be of a similar date.

Dunster Park contains elements of recreational landscapes from the medieval period and the 18th Century. It is listed Grade II* on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Following the Norman Conquest, the Dunster estate was granted to William de Mohun, and it is likely that this early estate would have included a deer park for hunting. Wood pasture, in which animals (including deer) are free to graze under trees is still present, along with many veteran trees. In the mid-eighteenth century, a new deer park was laid out to the south of the existing park. Conygar Tower was built at the same time, as part of Luttrell's

embellishments of Dunster Castle and its grounds. Luttrell's aim was to recreate the medieval ambience of the estate, and Conygar Tower was built as both an eye-catcher to be seen from the castle, and a place to be visited. The name Conygar Hill implies that it was used as a rabbit warren in medieval times. Recent restoration of Dunster Park has included installation of new deer-proof post and wire fencing and gates.

The landscape of the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** has seen great changes in the past 100 years, largely due to the planting of extensive conifer plantations for timber production. The 1909 Ordnance Survey map shows plantations at Great Headon (near Tivington) and Staunton Common, but the majority of the plantations were established in the 1920s. Within the plantations are the remnants of the earlier landscapes of heathy hill tops, such as stone walls and ditches. Because of the extensive coniferous plantations, much of the landscape is modern, but there are areas of medieval origin associated with Dunster Park and on some of the lower slopes, where there is surviving ancient woodland and small fields.

Settlement is very limited within this LCT. It includes the northern part of Wootton Courtenay village (including the listed church and manor house within a Conservation Area), but otherwise settlement is limited to occasional scattered farms and houses on the lower slopes and in the combes. Settlement is particularly sparse within the southern part of the LCT.



Dunster Park. The castle is on the right of the picture, seen above the new deer fencing



Gallox Hill Iron Age enclosure
©Historic England Archive



Former field wall within plantation

Designated Cultural and Heritage Sites

Scheduled Monuments	Barrows on Withycombe Common; Late Prehistoric defended enclosure, Long Wood; Hillfort on Grabbist Hill; Late prehistoric defended settlement at Black Ball Camp (Gallox Hill); Bat's Castle Iron-Age Hillfort and outwork; St Leonards Well.
Principal Archaeological Landscapes	Bat's Castle and Gallox Hill

Conservation Areas	Dunster, Wootton Courtenay
Registered Park/ Garden	Dunster Castle (Deer Park)
Listed Buildings	Cluster including church and manor house in Wootton Courtenay; Conygar Tower; New Mill, Luxborough; Wellhead, St Leonard's Well; Boundary stone, Druid's Combe Wood.

Landscape Perceptions and Cultural Associations

Perceptual qualities of the landscape

This is a conspicuous landscape, with the dense, dark green forest forming a strong contrast with surrounding areas in terms of colour, texture and landscape pattern. The contrasts between the deciduous and coniferous trees are strongest in the winter and autumn. The size of plantation blocks creates a large-scale landscape which contrasts with the smaller fields around its periphery, and the remaining patches of open heath and parkland. Within the trees there is a very strong sense of enclosure, which is heightened by suddenly emerging into patches of heathland. The lack of roads and settlement within the landscape makes for a sense of tranquillity over much of the LCT. Some parts of the landscape feel remote, although

this is reduced by recreational features such as waymarked paths, and also by forestry management tracks which create an awareness of human activity in the hills and give it a sense of being a working landscape. It is from these routes and tracks that the scale of the plantations can be appreciated. There is also a sense of a changing landscape, with the old field walls, neglected and hidden within the trees, providing clues to its former use and appearance. There are very few sources of light pollution within this LCT, although it is affected by light pollution from Minehead and other coastal settlements.

The 'Exmoor Landscape Perceptions Study' recorded visitors' perceptions of the forest landscape at Nutcombe Bottom. Adjectives used to

describe this landscape included *peaceful, wooded, awesome, well-managed, stunning, spectacular trees, boardwalks, glorious and with paths*. Emotional responses to this landscape included *relaxed, calm, peaceful, protected and enriched*, but there can also be a sense of claustrophobia within the dense trees.

Key views, viewpoints and landmarks

The majority of the LCT has restricted views due to the density of tree cover. However, in patches of open heath, and where conifers have been felled,

there are wider views, which can appear suddenly as the viewer emerges from the trees. From Black Hill and Wootton Ridge there are views across to Dunkery Hill, and it is easy to imagine the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills covered by heather moorland, and forming part of a much larger northern moorland block. As well as views to Dunkery, the open tracts provide views along the vale to Dunster, across to Minehead and the Bristol Channel, east towards the Quantocks AONB, and south over the Brendon Hills.



View north from Bat's Castle rampart towards Grabbist Hill and Dunster

The Plantation (with Heathland) Hills forms an important wooded skyline and backdrop in views from the adjacent Farmed and Settled Vale, and contributes to its character and sense of place. Wootton Hill also forms the immediate setting to Wootton Courtenay Village, and Grabbist and Gallox Hills form the setting of Dunster. The Plantation

(with Heathland) Hills also form distinctive features in views from other surrounding landscape character areas, including North Hill High Coastal Heaths, Northern Open Moorland, Eastern Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons, and Brendon Hills Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes.



View south towards the Wootton Ridge from North Hill (High Coastal Heath LCT). The forested slopes of the Wootton Ridge contrast with the open moorland on Dunkery Hill (right)



Dunster Castle and Park by William Tomkins (c.1732-1792) © National Trust Images/ John Hammond.
Conygar Tower is prominent toward the right of the picture. Grabbist Hill (un-treed) rises behind the castle.

Cultural Associations

The Plantation (with Heathland) Hills have a long association with the De Mohun and Luttrell families of Dunster Castle, and continue to form the setting of the Castle.

This LCT also has an association with the hymn 'All things Bright and Beautiful' which was reputedly written on Grabbist Hill, and captures the view across the surrounding valleys, woodlands, heaths and buildings:

*The purple headed mountain,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning,
That brightens up the sky.
The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
We gather every day.
The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate...*

Mrs Cecil Francis Alexander 1818-1895

Natural Assets and Ecosystem Services

The forests within the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** were originally planted to provide high-quality timber for a range of uses, including construction, paper-making, fuel and pit props. In addition to these provisioning services, the woodland within this LCT contributes to regulation of air quality, assists with carbon sequestration (storage) and provides oxygen through photosynthesis. Water is regulated through filtration which improves water quality, and slows run-off, reducing the risk of downstream flooding. Although the biodiversity value of coniferous forests is relatively limited, there are areas of greater biodiversity value within the LCT, including the heathland areas (which support fritillary butterflies), deciduous woodlands (habitat for a range of moss, lichen, ferns, trees, insects,

animals and birds) and wood pasture/ parkland with veteran trees (which support nationally-significant insect populations, as well as birds and animals).

Parts of the LCT (such as the Tall Trees Trail at Nutcombe Bottom) are important recreational resources, providing opportunities for people to explore and engage with the forest landscape, and improve their health and well-being. These are important cultural services (the non-material benefits which people receive from ecosystems) along with the cultural heritage and archaeological sites within this landscape (e.g. Iron-Age hillforts and Dunster Deer Park. These sites contribute towards the sense of history and sense of place, whilst providing opportunities to learn about social and cultural development in the local area.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within LCT H

LCA H1: Croydon Hill- Wootton Ridge

There is only one LCA within the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** LCT as the landscape character comprising a mosaic of forested and open hills is considered to be fairly consistent across it. The extent of tree cover, and the occasional long views, contribute to its sense of place.

Strength of Landscape Character and Landscape Condition in LCT H

The strength of landscape character is considered to be **moderate-strong** overall. The prominent, wooded hills create a distinctive landscape character, with a strong sense of place. This is also the case in the deer park, with its more open feel and impressive veteran trees. Recently-installed deer fencing and gates are new elements within the landscape which can appear visually intrusive. Plantations form the backdrop and setting for the parkland landscape and therefore also influence its character. In places, the strength of landscape character is reduced by the blurring of character between woodland and heath. Where heathland is being encroached by bracken, scrub and trees, it can be difficult to know where woodland ends and heathland begins. This affects the condition of the landscape, and also introduces uncertainty about its character- is it woodland, heath, or both? Further uncertainty is introduced where trees have reached

maturity and are being felled. Will these areas be replanted, or restored as heathland? The plantations also form the backdrop and setting for the parkland landscape

The condition of the landscape within the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** is **variable**. Some parts, such as Dunster Park and Nutcombe Bottom are in good condition, with recent investment in management. Other parts are in poor condition, particularly areas of heathland where encroachment by bracken, scrub and trees is damaging archaeology, as well as reducing views and affecting the open heathland character. It is inevitable that areas of recently-felled plantation appear to be in poor condition, but this may change following long-term restoration. As well as archaeological earthworks being vulnerable to vegetation encroachment, other historic landscape features such as field walls are also often neglected,

as they are no longer required for their original purpose. Most SSSIs within the **Plantation (with Heathland) Hills** have been assessed as being in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. However, Black Hill and Dunster Castle Woodlands have been assessed as being in 'favourable' condition, and there are small areas on the peripheries of Alcombe Common which have been assessed as 'unfavourable, no change'. There are no listed buildings assessed as at risk or in poor condition within this LCT. A small part of the Wootton Courtenay Conservation Area is within this LCT. The Conservation Area appraisal notes minor issues with PVCu windows and doors, solar panels, and overhead

wires/ poles, but overall the condition is good. Several issues noted in the 2007 Landscape Character Assessment remain problems, particularly loss of heathland, damage to archaeology and blocking of views as a result of encroachment of bracken and trees into open or cleared areas. Lack of grazing in streamside pastures is a localised issue. Dunster Deer Park has recently seen some restoration, but there is still some loss of historic features such as former field walls which are no longer needed or maintained. Replacement of the pale fence to the deer park with a modern post and wire fence is not sympathetic to the historic character of the area.



Bracken filling Gallox Hill Iron Age enclosure



Eroding earthworks, Bai's Castle Iron-Age hillfort

Landscape Issues and Forces for Change in LCT H

Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly been 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
Damage to archaeology	Earthworks and buried archaeology are very vulnerable to damage by encroaching bracken, scrub and trees. Archaeology is damaged by roots and also (in the case of bracken) by chemicals emitted by the plant. This LCT contains several important archaeological sites in woodland clearings, which are threatened by vegetation, and erosion by animals and visitors. Other historic features (such as stone walls) are suffering from neglect as they are no longer required for their original purpose.
Limited views	The presence of trees limits visual connections with surrounding landscapes, and also makes it difficult to perceive historic landscapes (such as Bat's Castle earthworks and field system) as a single entity. The situation is made worse by scrub encroachment in heathland areas, which blocks views from paths.
Encroachment of gorse and young trees in heathland areas	Encroachment of woodland and scrub into areas of heathland results in a loss of landscape character as the contrast in colour, texture and pattern between forest and heath is lost. It also reduces the extent of heathland habitat, which affects biodiversity. Rhododendron remains a problem in some woodland areas.
Forestry Management	Changes in forestry management (for example felling, re-planting, heathland restoration) all affect the appearance of the landscape - its pattern, colour, texture and also its accessibility and sense of place. The infrastructure required for forestry management, such as tracks, can also impact on the landscape, particularly if tracks are wide or become eroded through overuse or heavy rain. Often they are hidden within woodland and cannot be seen from outside, but if the woodland is felled then they can become visible from a wide area as linear scars on hillsides. Erosion of tracks is also linked to increased run-off and flooding.
Changes in land ownership and forestry grants	There is currently uncertainty over the future of forestry grants, and this is likely to particularly affect the character of this LCT. For example, the landscape will be altered depending on whether it will be more profitable to re-plant with broadleaved or coniferous species. There are currently no grants for restocking. Heathland restoration is also reliant to suitable grants.
Decline in traditional management of commons	Reduction in traditional grazing of pastures and commons (e.g. Alcombe Common), resulting in encroachment of trees and bracken and loss of openness. This affects landscape character and reduces the contrast between farmland and woodland.

Issue/Force for Change	Landscape sensitivities and potential impacts
Landscape restoration schemes	Some areas (e.g. parts of Grabbist Hill ridge) are being restored as heathland following felling of plantation trees. Dunster Deer Park has recently seen some restoration, with new visually-prominent deer-proof fencing and gates.
Development pressure	Whilst there is currently little pressure for building in this LCT, it is possible that proposals for large-scale agricultural buildings may come forward. The elevation of this LCT means that it is also likely to be under pressure to accommodate telecommunications masts. Unless they are carefully sited, such masts would appear as prominent features over a wide area.
Recreation Pressure	Over use of paths (particularly by bikes and vehicles) can lead to erosion and rutting of the path surface. This is particularly true when large-scale events take place. The introduction of car parks, paths and other visitor facilities can affect landscape character if it is not done sensitively.
Climate change	The extensive areas of mature conifers within this LCT are particularly vulnerable to damage by storms and high winds, especially if they are growing on shallow soils. Areas of recent tree felling, with exposed soil, are at risk of erosion following heavy rain. Land management, including clear felling, within this LCT has the potential to affect the flood risk in surrounding LCTs. Broadleaved trees may also be affected by changing climatic conditions leading to a change in the character of woodlands.
Tree pests and diseases	Risk of various species (e.g. larch and oak) from pathogens including phytophthora. Clear-felling to combat these diseases can have significant adverse impacts on landscape character.



Encroachment of bracken and silver birch onto formerly open heath at Alcombe Common



Forestry felling on Croydon Hill



New deer-proof fencing and gates on Black Ball, part of Dunster Forest



Nutcombe Bottom car park.
Popular trails give the landscape a more recreational character.

Landscape Management Recommendations for LCT H

Landscape Strategy

Open habitats which contain archaeological sites are kept clear of bracken and encroaching scrub and trees. Key views are retained and enhanced through vegetation control, particularly on popular routes, which enable connectivity with surrounding landscapes. The deer park remains in positive management, and historic features are retained within the landscape. The landscape is popular with visitors, who use the well-managed recreation facilities and path network, and enjoy a range of quiet recreation opportunities within the forest.

A management plan for this LCT is in place which considers the future of the landscape as coniferous trees reach maturity, and defines areas to be managed as heath, forest or woodland. Heathland areas are kept open, possibly through the introduction of suitable grazing regimes.

LCT-Specific Management Guidelines for LCT H

Protect

- Protect historic features, prioritising archaeological sites which are being damaged by bracken and scrub encroachment.
- Protect views from loss through growing vegetation, particularly key viewpoints from paths and summits. Aim to retain visual connections between viewpoints within the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills and surrounding moorland areas (e.g. North Hill; Dunkery Beacon).
- Protect the undeveloped appearance of the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills in views from surrounding areas.
- Protect the settings of historic assets.

Manage

- Manage broadleaf woodland areas to retain their age/ species diversity and increase resilience against climate change.
- Aim to restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to broadleaved woodland where possible, and to soften the edges of conifer plantations with broadleaved planting.
- Encourage and support greater uptake of continuous cover forestry practices to provide structurally, visually and biologically diverse ecosystems which deliver multiple benefits to people and nature.
- Work with the Forestry Commission and other landowners to minimise the landscape impacts of forestry tracks, for example through keeping widths as narrow as possible, reducing water run-off along tracks, and minimising rutting by wheeled vehicles.
- Continue to control rhododendron within the woodland understorey and where it is establishing on heathland areas.
- Recognise the importance of this LCT as a location for growing high-quality timber.
- Manage recreation facilities such as paths, waymarkers and car parks, in order to encourage visitors to explore, enjoy and value the area, but without damaging its character or physical fabric. Work with the organisers of large-scale events to ensure that they understand the potential impacts on the landscape, biodiversity and historic features, and to keep these impacts to a minimum.
- Further restoration of the deer park (recognising its medieval origins and mid-eighteenth century development into formal parkland) including appropriate boundary treatments and planting.
- Manage SSSIs in accordance with SSSI Management Plans.

Plan

- Work with landowners to develop a long-term and holistic plan for the area, which takes account of archaeology, biodiversity and recreation opportunities, as well as forestry requirements. Identify areas for different management (e.g. as forest, woodland, heath and farmland) and introduce positive management accordingly.

NOTE- See also detailed recommendations in the following document:

- *Unlocking Exmoor's Woodland Potential* (LRJ Associates and Silvanus for The Exmoor Society, August 2013)



Grabbist Hill forms a treed setting to Dunster Castle

Specific Planning Guidelines for the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills

This section describes the planning guidelines which are specific to the Plantation (with Heathland) Hills 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
<p>Unsettled and remote character yet strong inter-visibility between this LCT and surrounding lower lying areas and elevated key viewpoints including North Hill and Dunkery Hill.</p>	<p>Development on the upper slopes which may break the skyline or form an intrusive feature undermining the perceptions of remoteness and isolation on these upland ridges.</p>	<p>Where new development is required set it below skylines and mitigate with native planting reflecting local patterns of vegetation.</p> <p>Dispersed patterns of development, on lower slopes, interspersed with open space and vegetation are preferable to high density linear development along roads adjoining settlements.</p>
<p>Distinctive landscape backdrop to settlements, often comprising former heath/common. Settlements evolved from rural farmsteads and hamlets and draw distinctiveness and sense of place from the landscape context.</p>	<p>Linear development and urban fringe land uses on land above existing settlements which alters loose nucleated village form and undermines the historic link between settlement and heathland/common.</p>	<p>Consider the historic evolution of settlement form and its functional relationship with the wider landscape in order to retain and enhance areas where meaningful relationships remain. Settlement expansion in the form of detached cottages and farmstead arrangements reflect the historic evolution of Wootton Courtenay.</p>
<p>Small scale and rural character of isolated farms on lower slopes and fringes.</p>	<p>Expansion of existing farms altering the small scale remote character of rural settlement.</p>	<p>Mitigate the scale of new farm buildings through breaking up the form and massing of the building through use of subdivided roof and wall structures, muted recessive colours and native planting. Ensure new buildings cluster closely around existing buildings and remain on lower slopes.</p>

Defining Quality to Protect	Perceived Threats and Issues	Guidance
Sense of seclusion and lack of built development.	New/ expanded recreation facilities with associated increase in visitor numbers and cars.	Locate facilities and develop trails in such a way that they encourage visitors to disperse within the landscape rather than be concentrated at single points. Ensure new facilities, access roads and parking areas are well-designed to maximise screening from tree cover, and to minimise loss of mature native trees. Promote high-quality design of buildings which reflect the surrounding landscape (e.g. through use of timber cladding).

