

Area of LDU within AONB: 261.0 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 85%



Date surveyed: 26 February 2010

Survey points: SS449308, SS449313, SS446318, SS443316

Summary of landscape character

The LDU covers Northam Burrows Country Park, which is a coastal landscape comprising a flat expanse of saltmarsh grazed by free-roaming livestock backed by sand dunes (including the Royal North Devon Golf Course). The landscape is bounded to the north by the Taw & Torridge Estuary; to the west by Northam Burrows beach; and to the south by the settlement of Northam on a prominent ridgeline. The varied coastal landscape is a popular and accessible open space for local communities and visitors alike, affording panoramic views across the surrounding area. Its open aspect evokes a sense of wildness and exposure.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Flat expanse of coastal saltmarsh, contrasting with the adjacent undulating sand dunes.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Common land for extensive livestock grazing on unimproved coastal saltmarsh (including pony grazing)	N/A	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	N/A	N/A	Stock proofing is provided by cattle grids and post/wire fencing.

Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	The whole site is a Country Park, and includes the North Devon Royal Golf Course – which is well integrated and takes advantage of its sand dune setting.			
WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS				
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>	
	N/A		N/A	
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>			
	Northam Burrows is nationally designated as a SSSI, based on the presence of sand dunes supporting a rich diversity of plants, wildflowers and grasses, along with herb-rich wet grasslands and rushes. The LDU is bounded to the west by a cobble ridge (noted for the size of its sediments), providing a buffer between the dunes and the beach below. The whole site, particularly its dune grasslands, is valued for its many species of breeding, feeding and roosting birds.			
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT				
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>			
	There is no settlement within this LDU, apart from buildings related to the golf course (including a museum).			
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>			
	Surfaced tracks with speed bumps and bollards cross the LDU to provide access from Northam and Westward Ho! to the car parks within the Country Park. The South West Coast Path circles most of the LDU, which is all classed as Open Access land.			
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Modern development styles / materials	Golf club house, restaurant and Country Park visitor centre of modern construction (there are current proposals for refurbishing the club house).			
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT				
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>			
	North Devon Royal Golf Course is the oldest in Britain, founded in 1864. A remnant Second World War structure is found near Pimpley Gate.			
VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES				
Views	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>		<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
			<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	The open coastal saltmarsh and elevated sand dunes afford		362 (Northam)	362

	<p>360° views across the surrounding landscape and seascape. Northerly views beyond the Taw & Torridge Estuary are defined by undeveloped ridgelines above, as well as Saunton Sands and Braunton Burrows, with the white building of the Saunton Sands Hotel standing out in the distance. Expansive views are allowed along the undeveloped coast to the far south-west – including to Hartland Point in clear conditions.</p> <p>Views to the east, south and south-west are defined by the white/bright colourwashed housing of Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!, with the square tower of Northam Church a prominent landmark feature. Ridgeline development above Westward Ho! is particularly prominent in views (also encroaching into the AONB at Kipling Tors – LDU 836).</p>	<p>Beach)</p> <p>361 (mudflats fringing the estuary)</p> <p>358 (Braunton Burrows)</p> <p>360 (Saunton Sands)</p> <p>088 (Braunton Marsh)</p> <p>382 (ridgeline/cliff above Saunton)</p> <p>403 (elevated ridge/downland including Saunton Down)</p> <p>835/836 (Westward Ho!)</p> <p>693 (Clovelly coast)</p> <p>694 (Hartland Point)</p>	<p>361</p> <p>358</p> <p>360</p> <p>088</p> <p>382</p> <p>403</p> <p>835</p> <p>836</p> <p>693</p> <p>694</p>
<p>Perceptual qualities (description)</p>	<p>This landscape has a strong sense of relative tranquillity, particularly given the very close proximity of built development at Northam and Westward Ho! The saltmarshes and sand dunes are open and exposed to the elements. Feelings of remoteness are affected by the seasons – the area’s popularity as a Country Park, and the presence of the golf course, can bring an influx of people and traffic into the landscape at weekends and in the holiday season.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	1	96%

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	100.8	38.6%
Coastal sand dunes	63.3	24.3%
Mudflats	0.23	0.09%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	This landscape has a strong sense of relative tranquillity and remoteness given the close proximity of development at Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!. The peacefulness of the coastal landscape is affected at peak times by increased traffic levels and use by recreational users.
Views	See above.
Land use	The coastal saltmarshes are traditionally used for commoners' grazing. The Royal North Devon Golf Course is a long-standing use of the sand dunes, well integrated into its setting, making use of the topography and shelter provided by the dunes.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	N/A
Semi-natural habitats	Just over 40% of the Northam Burrows SSSI is classed by Natural England as in unfavourable recovering condition, whilst 40% is in unfavourable recovering or 'no change' condition (18% is in favourable condition). Issues affecting condition include overgrazing in summer affecting sward diversity, and bramble/scrub encroachment requiring mechanical clearance. Issues relating to sea level rise may mean a realignment of the cobble ridge in the neighbouring LDU (362) and the protection of a recycling tip within this landscape.
Settlement and development	Buildings relating to the golf course are sheltered from view by the undulating sand dunes. Visitor infrastructure including traffic calming measures on access roads, dog litter bins and toilets give the landscape a 'Country Park' feel. Surrounding development is prominent in views, and encroaches into the edge of the Country Park in the south.
Local vernacular	N/A