

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 83.21 hectares

**% of LDU within AONB:** 100%



**Date surveyed:** 24 February 2010

**Survey points:** SS457435, SS458433, SS456430.

**Summary of landscape character**

This LDU mainly covers the grass/scrub covered sand dunes of Woolacombe Warren, owned by the National Trust, occupying sloping ground backing the wide beach of Woolacombe Sand. The northern fringes of the LDU include a mini golf course and tourism-related development on the southern edges of Woolacombe. To the east, the Warren grades into steeply sloping rough grassland, heath and scrub sitting below the elevated downland of Woolacombe Down (LDU 579). Westward views are dominated by views of the beach and the sweeping curve of Morte Bay, framed by coastal headlands at Morte and Baggy Points (to the north and south respectively). The LDU is an important area for informal recreation including dog walking, crossed by sections of the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path. The landscape evokes a sense of wildness, particularly owing to its contrast with areas of modern development at Woolacombe.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY**

<b>Landform description</b>	Undulating and westward sloping sand dunes forming the base of land sloping up to Woolacombe Down. The LDU provides natural shelter to the beach immediately adjacent to the west.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>		<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
		N/A	N/A	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>		<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	The sand dunes are unenclosed.		N/A	N/A
<b>Other land uses (e.g.</b>	The sand dunes are used for informal recreation – particularly walking and mountain biking. The northern part of the LDU includes a golf course and			

recreation)	other tourism-related developments.		
<b>WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS</b>			
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	There are no trees or woodland within this exposed sand dune landscape – only low-growing patches of scrub. Shelterbelts are a frequent feature of Woolacombe.		There are large patches of gorse and hawthorn scrub within the sand dunes. Wind-sculpted Monterey cypress shelterbelts are distinctive features within Woolacombe.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	The sand dunes of the Warren fall within the wider Woolacombe Down County Wildlife Site. The area is important for its mosaic of unimproved calcareous and acidic dune grasslands supporting species such as marram, thyme and privet. It also includes the Putsborough Sands RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Site).		
<b>SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT</b>			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The LDU includes the southern fringes of Woolacombe (a Conservation Area) in the north, including a sports ground, hotel and other recreational facilities, as well as a water treatment works. Otherwise the landscape is characterised by its absence of built development.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The northern section of the LDU includes access roads serving the sports ground and other recreational activities. The Warren is crossed by a network of informal paths across the dunes, along with sections of the South West Coast Path and Tarka Trail running its length.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	The Conservation Area of Woolacombe is valued for its mix of Victorian and Edwardian villa-style houses and grand hotels – including gothic revival, classical, Tudor revival and renaissance.	N/A	N/A
Modern development styles / materials	A range of building styles and materials are found – colourwashing is common (particularly light blue, peach, pink and white), with either grey slate or red tile roofs.		

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>
	Aside from historic buildings within the Woolacombe Conservation Area, there are no historic features visible in the landscape.

## VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	<p>The sloping, elevated character of the Warren affords extensive views across Morte Bay, beyond Woolacombe Sand to the west.</p> <p>Northerly views are dominated by development at Woolacombe (including caravan sites and holiday parks). Southern views are largely undeveloped and scenic (apart from the caravan park and car park at Putsborough Sands which is particularly busy in the summer) – with the rocky cliffs at Baggy Point forming a dramatic coastal feature on the skyline.</p>	<p><b>385</b> (Woolacombe Sand)</p> <p><b>579</b> (steep slopes up to Woolacombe Down and Woolacombe development)</p> <p><b>578</b> (north coast around to Morte Point)</p> <p><b>897</b> (south coast to Baggy Point)</p> <p><b>402</b> (Woolacombe Down)</p> <p><b>853</b> (downland to the north-east)</p>	<p>385</p> <p>579</p> <p>578</p> <p>897</p> <p>402</p> <p>853</p>
<b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b>	<p>The sand dunes evoke a wilderness quality particularly emphasised due to the close proximity of modern development at Woolacombe. The LDU is used for informal recreation, particularly walking and mountain biking – with peak holiday periods seeing an influx of activity into the landscape, reducing perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness.</p>		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SSSI	1	0.05%
County Wildlife Sites	1	42.06%

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area
Maritime cliff and slope	56.91	68.39%
Coastal sand dunes	36.86	44.3%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Perceptual qualities are greatly dependent on the seasons and influx of visitors / recreational users within the LDU. Extensive tourism-related development at Woolacombe has a pervading influence on the area – eroding levels of tranquillity in the north of the LDU.
Views	The elevated, sloping landscape affords wide-ranging views across Morte Bay, framed by dramatic coastal headlands. As above – views to the north are dominated by development at Woolacombe.
Land use	Development and recreational land uses in the north of the LDU contrast with the semi-natural habitats covering the majority of the landscape.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	No issues noted in the field – the landscape is defined by its absence of woodland. The Monterey cypress shelterbelts in Woolacombe form distinctive features.
Semi-natural habitats	Encroachment of hawthorn and gorse scrub is impacting on the dune grasslands in some locations. Visitor pressure can also lead to footpath erosion in parts. Future sea level rise and coastal squeeze may result in a gradual erosion of the sand dunes to the old cliff base.
Settlement and development	Development and recreational land uses are encroaching into the northern section of the LDU, detracting from the ‘wild’ qualities of the coastal landscape. Caravan parks are prominent in views to landscapes outside the LDU – e.g. within and above Woolacombe (LDUs 579 and 853).
Local vernacular	Modern buildings on the edge of Woolacombe stand out in the muted backdrop – often being painted in bright colours.

## **COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES**

The north of the LDU containing the development at Woolacombe has been classified in the North Devon & Torridge LCA as part of the 4C Coastal Slopes and Combes with Settlement LCT. In addition, part of the upper dune slopes which previously fell within LDU 579 (classified as 2C Steep Open Slopes in the LCA) have been pulled back to fall within this LDU as part of the 4F Dunes categorisation. **The AONB might wish to consider changing the LDU boundary to exclude development at Woolacombe (within 4C), to ensure that this LDU only covers the sand dunes (4F).**