

Area of LDU within AONB: 88.7 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 18%



Date surveyed: 3 March 2010

Survey points: SS567473, SS560478, SS556480, SS547481

Summary of landscape character

A fractured series of low cliffs and coves along the most easterly stretch of coastline within the AONB, running from Ilfracombe in the west to the AONB boundary in the east. Steeply-sloping or vertical cliffs are often exposed and display a distinctive multi-coloured stratigraphy, with pasture and scrub or woodland fringing the cliff tops and extending intermittently down steep slopes and landslips. The Iron Age hill fort on Hillsborough Hill above Ilfracombe is a prominent feature on the coastline. Whilst predominantly wild in character, the sporadic impact of tourism development is felt throughout and the busy A399 remains in close proximity along the southern LDU boundary.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	A fractured series of cliffs and coves, with cliffs of varying height often exposed and displaying a distinctive tilted, multi-coloured stratigraphic sequence. Coves are rocky with occasional grey sand beaches and trend predominantly to the north-west, with Water Mouth stretching significantly inland and forming a distinctive sheltered harbour. Outcrops of limestone are also distinctive features.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>		<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Rough grazing land.		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	Post-and-wire fencing
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Caravan parks at Watermouth, Briery Cave and Lester Point, plus boat harbour at Watermouth and Theme Park at Watermouth Castle.			

WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>	
	Mature woodland dominates the clifftop in the east, between Briery Cave and the eastern AONB boundary, whilst shrubby woodland occurs along the southern slope overlooking Watermouth harbour. Localised woodland and trees are associated with settlement, including a distinctive line of mature Scots Pine at Widmouth.		Predominantly broadleaved (including mature beech in the east), with distinctive stands of Scots Pine associated with settlement.	
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>			
	Maritime unimproved grassland and scrub occurs along the coastline, with County Wildlife Site designations at Hillsborough/Beacon Point in the west, Widmouth Head in the centre, and Newbury Beach Fields in the east. Hele, Samson's & Combe Martin Bays are designated as a SSSI on merit of the coastline's geological interest.			

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	Settlement consists of a few scattered dwellings in the centre (i.e. Widmouth and south of Rillage Point), caravan parks further east, and the fringes of Combe Martin in the east and of Hele in the west.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The winding A399 roughly follows the shape of the coastline and forms the southern LDU boundary, whilst well-maintained tarmac lanes lead into the area to serve holiday parks (connected internally by an unsealed track). The South West Coast Path follows the length of the coastline.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Whitewash with grey tile roofs.	Exposed stone walls.	N/A
Modern development styles / materials	Holiday park infrastructure and modern imitation of traditional vernacular.		

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>
	The fringes of Hillsborough Head hillfort in the west, plus quarries alongside the South West Coast Path at Napps and Rillage Point. Also a Victorian castle (Watermouth Castle) in the centre, a summer house on the warren in Watermouth Harbour, and the coastguard cottages at

	Rillage Point.		
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>
	Views along the South West Coast Path of the coastline, especially in the west, with sporadic views from the A3499 over the sea/coast (especially the viewpoint overlooking Hele Bay in the west and looking down from Widmouth into Watermouth in the centre). Views in the east are more restricted by woodland.	580 (settled slopes/combes to the south) 387 (Ilfracombe)	580 387
Perceptual qualities (description)	The wildness of the coastline and the general lack of development is affected in parts by sporadic caravan parks and the proximity of the A399 (and of Ilfracombe and Combe Martin to the immediate west and east respectively). Thus while still largely tranquil, this is not a remote landscape or one strongly associated with 'escapism'.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	3	12.09%
County Wildlife Sites	4	15.99%
Local Nature Reserves	1	5.51%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Scheduled Monuments	1	1.37%
Listed Buildings	5 (1 grade II* and 4 grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	0.52	0.59%
Maritime cliff and slope	27.37	30.87%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The 'wildness' of the coastline is affected by the location of caravan parks and the proximity of settlement in the east and west, as well as the A399 forming the southern LDU boundary.
Views	Caravan parks impinge occasionally into views, although they are largely hidden behind woodland. Holiday homes at Hele extend to the edge of the bay, affecting views from the viewpoint in the east.
Land use	Holiday parks and a harbour are features of the centre/east of the LDU, while Watermouth Castle operates as a theme park.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	Evidence of thick ivy cover in the eastern woodland suggests a lack of management.
Semi-natural habitats	Cliffline is largely undeveloped, with the entirety of Hele, Samson's & Combe Martin Bays SSSI classed as being in a favourable condition by Natural England.
Settlement and development	Modern holiday homes at Hele extend up to the Bay's sea wall, whilst in the east housing at Combe Martin extends north of the A399 into the AONB. Holiday parks form the most prominent settlement within the LDU.
Local vernacular	Mobile homes at Hele, plus infrastructure associated with holiday parks, out of character with the local vernacular.

COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES

The small part of the LDU to the east of Hillsborough Hillfort could be as forming an extension to either LDU 581 (currently classified in the North Devon & Torridge LCA as part of the 4C Coastal Slopes and Combes with Settlement LCT) or absorbed within the urban area of Ilfracombe (LDU 387). This would leave this LDU (583) wholly within the 4H Cliffs LCT.