

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 566.7 hectares

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



**Date surveyed:** 26 February 2010



**Survey points:** SS457452. SS468450

**Summary of landscape character**

This is a gently undulating landscape, sloping steeply up from the coast in the north-western corner of the AONB. The majority of the LDU is of a windswept, pastoral character, with areas of rough grassland punctuated by occasional shelterbelts shielding farmsteads and caravan parks from the elements. The coastal fringes include tracts of maritime heath, unimproved grasslands, stunted woodlands and scrub, forming valued wildlife habitats. The main areas of settlement are at Morteheo on the west coast, and around Borough Cross in the east of the LDU. The landscape includes the Morteheo and Woolacombe Golf Course and a number of caravan / holiday parks, indicating its popularity as a tourism destination. The elevated landform and steep coastward slopes afford spectacular views over Morte Bay, the north coast of the AONB and adjacent downland landscapes.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY**

<b>Landform description</b>	Elevated landform rising up from the coastal cliffs to form an undulating landform with gently rounded hill summits. The highest point is at Borough Cross, reaching over 200 metres above sea level.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>		<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture		Rough grassland with patches of scrub nearer to the coast. Very occasional fields of arable cultivation interspersed within the pastoral landscape.	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>		<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Land fringing the coast is largely unenclosed heathland /		Medium to large-scale,	Devon hedgebanks with some stone

	rough grazing land. Inland is a mixture of regular post-medieval and modern fields, some retaining curving boundaries tracing earlier lines. More irregular, medieval fields remain around Higher Warcombe and to the east of the golf course.	smaller medieval fields around Higher Warcombe.	facing (slate) visible. Topping hedgerows are sparse and scrubby, frequently with patches of gorse giving the area an upland feel.
<b>Other land uses (e.g. recreation)</b>	There are a number of caravan/camping and holiday parks within the landscape, as well as the Morteheo & Woolacombe Golf Course.		

## WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

<b>Trees / woodland cover</b>	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	<p>This is an exposed landscape strongly influenced by coastal winds. The few areas of tree planting are limited to shelterbelts associated with holiday parks and the occasional farmstead.</p> <p>Open heathland and scrub along the coast includes patches of woodland.</p>	<p>Primarily evergreen shelterbelts, with occasional patches of broadleaved woodland providing additional shelter to holiday parks and farms.</p> <p>There are occasional patches of semi-natural broadleaved woodland associated with coastal scrub and heathland.</p>
<b>Semi-natural habitats</b>	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	<p>Areas of semi-natural habitat are mainly associated with locations closer to the coast – where there are tracts of maritime grassland, remnant heath, unimproved grasslands and large patches of blackthorn scrub, much of which falls within the Bull Point &amp; Rockham Bay County Wildlife Site. Land south of Morteheo is also valued for its gorse scrub, bracken, broadleaved woodland and herb-rich grassland habitats, whilst Doctor’s Cleave in the north-eastern corner of the LDU contains important areas of species-rich neutral grasslands (part of the Hillymouth County Wildlife Site).</p>	

## SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

<b>Settlement pattern</b>	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>
	<p>The main area of settlement is the village of Morteheo, clustered at the top of a coastal cliff but sheltered by the rising land beyond, and development east of Brough Cross – a linear settlement crowning higher land in the east of the LDU. Occasional farmsteads are scattered across the landscape, and holiday/caravan/camping sites are a frequent feature.</p>
<b>Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)</b>	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>
	<p>The landscape has a sparse transport network of rural lanes enclosed by high hedgebanks, often traversing steep slopes. A network of public footpaths crosses fields to link farms, settlements and holiday parks.</p>

	National Cycle Route 27 follows Morteheo Station Road.		
<b>Local vernacular styles and materials</b>	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Varied styles (particularly in Morteheo), including brick, exposed stone, coloured render and slate hanging. Traditional farm buildings are mainly of exposed local Morte Slate.	A line of Victorian commercial buildings within Morteheo have distinctive steep Dutch gables and first floor balconies with ornate iron railings.	Walls of Morte slate with rough White Spar coping stones are distinctive features of Morteheo, reflecting the local geology.
<b>Modern development styles / materials</b>	Modern housing spreads in linear form east of Borough Cross, including a range of styles and materials. New development within the Morteheo Conservation Area has sought to replicate traditional styles and materials, with the use of rendered rubble stone with [imported] slate hangings.		
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>		
	The Morteheo Conservation Area includes a range of traditional and vernacular buildings, including its medieval church with a square tower – a prominent feature when approaching the village from the east. The wider landscape includes a cluster of three standing stones, constructed of quartz, located north of Damage Barton (Scheduled Monuments). There are also Grade II* and II listed buildings relating to farm buildings at Damage Barton.		
<b>VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES</b>			
<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	There are extensive views from this elevated, open landscape across the surrounding area and coast – including wide vistas across Morte Bay and glimpses of the North Devon AONB coastline.  Views from the southern part of the LDU include glimpses of development at Woolacombe, often framed by high downland to the south (Woolacombe Down and Pickwell Down).  Views from the south and east towards this LDU (e.g. from LDUs	<b>578</b> (north and west coast)  <b>895</b> (Borough Valley)  <b>385</b> (Woolacombe Sand)  <b>386</b> (Woolacombe Warren)  <b>579</b> (Woolcombe)	578 579 402 385 386 852

	<p>402 and 852) are often characterised by linear development along the skyline, including housing spreading from Borough Cross along Morteheo Station Road and bright white caravans/chalets at Woolacombe Bay Caravan Park on a prominent ridgeline.</p>	<p><b>402</b> (Woolacombe &amp; Pickwell Down)  <b>852</b> (downland to the east)</p>	
<p><b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b></p>	<p>This is a strongly rural landscape with a maritime influence, given its close proximity to the coast. The cliff-top village of Morteheo retains its historic character and traditional sense of place, with a range of building styles and materials reflecting its cultural development. Perceptions of tranquillity are high throughout the landscape given its sparsely settled character, but this is affected significantly in peak visitor periods when the landscape's holiday parks are busy and traffic on rural roads increases (including from people travelling to the popular seaside resort of Woolacombe).</p>		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SSSI	1	4.15%
County Wildlife Sites	5	12.28%
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Scheduled Monuments	3	0%
Listed Buildings	13 (1 grade I, 1 grade II* and 11 grade II)	

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area
Lowland heathland	23.43	4.13%
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	0.53	0.09%
Maritime cliff and slope	88.38	15.60%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	This landscape has an overriding sense of tranquillity, given its sparsely settled character and exposed, maritime influence. The presence of a number of holiday parks and camping/caravan sites on prominent ridgeline locations, modern housing around Borough Cross, as well as a golf course, dilutes these perceptual qualities, particularly during the peak tourist season.
Views	The elevated, sloping landscape affords wide-ranging views across Morte Bay and the north coast, as well as adjacent inland landscape outside the AONB. South-westerly views include glimpses of development at Woolacombe, whilst bright white caravans can intrude into views across the LDU.
Land use	The strongly pastoral character of the landscape, along with its tracts of rough coastal habitats, is fragmented by the presence of recreational land uses and occasional fields of arable cultivation.
Field patterns	Large areas of the landscape are divided by modern or post-medieval fields, eroding previous medieval enclosures. However, this pattern emphasises the open, farmed character of the landscape.
Field boundaries	Sparse hedgebanks with patches of scrub contribute to a sense of exposure. New sections of Devon bank around the golf course display neat facing in local slate, reinforcing local character.
Trees and woodland	No issues noted in the field – the landscape is defined by its overall absence of woodland. Patches of semi-natural woodland within County Wildlife Sites are assumed to be under favourable management.
Semi-natural habitats	No issues noted in the field – semi-natural habitats are largely limited to the coastal margins of the landscape. There may be opportunities to enhance the wildlife interest of farmland through arable reversion and low-input grassland regimes.

Settlement and development	Modern development is mainly associated with settlement east of Brough Cross, spreading in linear form along Station Road – visible from the surrounding areas due to its ridge-top location, Caravan parks and holiday chalets are also prominent built features within the landscape. Some 20 <sup>th</sup> century expansion of Morteheo is largely shielded from view by the landform.
Local vernacular	Modern development, including bungalows and suburban-style housing, is prominent in the exposed landscape east of Borough Cross. New development in Morteheo has largely sought to incorporate local building styles.