

Area of LDU within AONB: 872.5 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 25 February 2010

Survey points: SS450377, SS448375, SS439380 (viewed from LDU 382), SS471380 (from LDU 399)

Summary of landscape character

This LDU comprises the wind-swept, extensive sand dunes of Braunton Burrows, which sit behind the sweeping sandy beach of Saunton Sands on the AONB’s west coast. The dunes and the marram grasslands, rich wildflowers (over 500 species) and wildlife they support are internationally important, forming part of the wider North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and also being designated as a SAC and SSSI. The Burrows create a hummocky landform, capitilised upon by the MOD for tank driver training – a long-standing land use associated with the sand dunes. The north-eastern part of the LDU is a golf course, whilst car parking and holiday chalet developments intrude into its northern edge. Overall though, the dunes evoke a strong sense of remoteness and wildness, forming a visual and ecological link with the beach to the west and the low-lying marshland to the east.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Hummocky sand dunes and dune slacks forming three valley / ridges lying between the sweeping beach of Saunton Sands and the low-lying marshland of Braunton Marsh. Some of the sand dunes reach 30 metres in height. The dunes reach Crow Point at the LDU’s southern extent, which is a major feature at the entrance to the Taw/Torridge Estuary.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>		<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
		Rough 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	Extensive post-and-wire fencing around

			the boundary of the dunes.
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	The north-eastern section of the LDU forms Saunton Golf Course, which is well-integrated into its sand dune setting. Car parking and associated buildings are located in the north-eastern corner of the LDU. The northern edge of the landscape includes a large surfaced car parking area and holiday chalets. The vast majority of the LDU is sand dunes.		
WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS			
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	There are some patches of secondary woodland and scrub along the northern edges of the Burrows. The majority of the sand dune landscape is unwooded.		Broadleaved.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	The sand dunes are internationally important for biodiversity (designated as a Biosphere Reserve, SAC and SSSI); supporting a rich diversity of plants and animals – for example over 500 species of wildflowers, 33 species of butterfly and numerous many fungi, lichens, ferns and bryophytes (mosses, liverworts).		
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	This landscape is unsettled apart from a small collection of holiday chalets in the north, a toilet block and large car park for visitors to Saunton Sands, buildings relating to the golf course, and the edge of individual properties mainly located within LDU 382.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The dunes are crossed by a network of sandy informal paths and tank trails. The northern LDU boundary includes tarmac access roads serving the car parks and holiday chalets. The South West Coast Path intersects the eastern LDU boundary in several locations, before crossing its width in the south along a track known as the 'American Road'. There is also a boardwalk in the southern part of the LDU.		
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	The holiday chalets in the north are constructed of brown stained timber with grey tile roofs and white painted window/door frames. Other modern buildings, including those relating to the golf course, are of a range of styles and materials.		

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>
	<p>No visible features – this is a wild and relatively remote landscape with little visible evidence of human occupation.</p> <p>However, the area has a strong association with the military – used as an American training ground in the Second World War in preparation for their assault on Normandy beaches. Approximately six concrete-built practice landing craft remain in the landscape in the south. Tank training continues today, with the vehicles helping to manage and enhance the internationally important sand dune habitats by helping to control the growth of vegetation and opening up the soil.</p>

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>
	<p>The elevated nature of the sand dunes affords extensive views across the surrounding land- and seascape to as far as Hartland Point in the south-west. There is a strong visual and relationship between the Burrows and both Saunton Sands to the west, and Braunton Marsh / Great Field to the east (with the town of Braunton in the distance).</p> <p>Northerly views are defined by the cliffs and higher downland above Saunton (including the prominent white-painted Saunton Sands Hotel on the ridge and telecommunications masts on Long Lane); whilst views to the south over the Taw & Torridge Estuary include glimpses of development at Appledore and Westward Ho! framed by Northam Burrows / beach in the foreground.</p>	<p>360 (Saunton Sands)</p> <p>088 (Braunton Marsh)</p> <p>382 (ridgeline/cliff to the north)</p> <p>398 (Braunton Great Field)</p> <p>399 (lower ridge slope to the north-east)</p> <p>526 (upper ridge slope to the north-east)</p> <p>403 (elevated ridge/downland including Saunton Down & Long Lane)</p> <p>361,362,364 (Northam coastal areas)</p> <p>835, 836 (Westward Ho!)</p>	<p>360</p> <p>088</p> <p>382</p> <p>398</p> <p>399</p> <p>526</p> <p>403</p> <p>361</p> <p>362</p> <p>364</p> <p>836</p> <p>694</p>

		694 (Hartland Point)	
Perceptual qualities (description)	<p>The undeveloped, exposed dunes convey a wilderness quality and strong sense of place. Their peacefulness and high levels of tranquillity are broken sporadically by the tank driving activities of the military. The summer months see an influx of people to the area, using parts of the dunes for recreation and as informal routes through to the beach at Saunton Sands. Views to development to the south (e.g. Westward Ho!) and east (Braunton) enhance feelings of relative tranquillity and remoteness.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	5	16.16%
SAC	1	12.39%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	12 (grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of total LDU land area
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	366.38	56.80%
Coastal sand dunes	69.02	10.70%
Fens	23.194	3.60%
Mudflats	0.72	0.11%
Reedbeds	14.13	2.19%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The landscape's peacefulness and high levels of tranquillity are broken sporadically by the tank driving activities of the military. The summer months see an influx of people to the area, using parts of the dunes for recreation and as informal routes through to the beach at Saunton Sands. Views to development to the south (e.g. Westward Ho!) and east (Braunton) enhance feelings of relative tranquillity and remoteness.
Views	Inter-visibility between the Burrows and their surrounding landscape is high due to their sheer size and elevated position. Detracting skyline features viewed from the LDU include the telecommunications masts on the north-eastern ridgeline (LDU 403) and views south towards development and industry lining the estuary (including Northam and Westward Ho!). The bright white building of the Saunton Sands Hotel is an imposing feature on the cliff side immediately north of the LDU.
Land use	The golf course in the north-east of the LDU is well integrated into its landscape setting, making the most of the undulating sand dune formations. The presence of large surfaced car parks and holiday chalets on the northern edge of the LDU detracts from the wild, remote sand dune landscape.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	N/A – this is generally a treeless landscape. Areas of scrub / secondary woodland require clearance to enhance open sand dune habitats.
Semi-natural habitats	Natural England currently assesses the sand dune habitats as in unfavourable recovering condition (requiring scrub clearance). Cattle grazing through HLS is seeking to address these issues. The dunes remain an internationally important haven for wildlife but are at increasing risk from sea level rise (as is the prominent estuary feature at Crow Point).

Settlement and development	This is generally an unsettled landscape. Industrial-scale farm sheds/buildings can detract from the historic sense of place of the LDU.
Local vernacular	Recreation and tourism-related development in the north of the LDU does not reflect the local vernacular of the area. However, due to the absence of development over much of the landscape, this does not overtly detract from overall character.