

Area of LDU within AONB: 290.1 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 26 February 2010

Survey points: SS446318, SS442316, SS443316

Summary of landscape character

This LDU is characterised by an extensive sandy beach, divided from Northam Burrows to the east by a distinctive cobble ridge of rounded grey boulders and pebbles. The sand drifts northwards to form 'The Neck', sitting at the mouth of the Taw & Torridge Estuary. Shallow streams flow across the beach from the base of the cobble ridge to meet the sea. The open LDU affords wide-ranging views across Bideford Bay towards Hartland Point, whilst northerly views beyond the estuary are framed by Saunton Sands and Braunton Burrows, emphasising the landscape's strong coastal character. The beach is a popular seaside destination for a range of recreational activities.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY			
Landform description	Flat, open sandy beach, backed by a sloping cobble ridge of pebbles and boulders. A small wave-cut platform is a feature in the south, and a submerged forest is visible at low tide.		
LAND USE AND PATTERNS			
Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	N/A	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	N/A
Other land uses (e.g.	The whole LDU comprises a beach and intertidal sands, used for a range		

recreation)	of recreational activities including sand yachting and kite surfing.			
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>			
	The majority of the LDU falls within the Northam Burrows SSSI. The cobble ridge, which shelters the adjacent sand dunes from the sea, is noted as a classic coastal feature – particularly valued for the size of its boulder sediments backing an extensive sandy intertidal zone. The wider SSSI is an important site for overwintering and migratory birds.			
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT				
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>			
	There is no settlement within this LDU.			
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>			
	N/A			
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	N/A			
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT				
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>			
	There are no visible historic features within this constantly changing coastal landscape. However, a submerged forest is visible during certain low tides, indicating past sea level rise during the Holocene period. Sometimes old boots can be revealed.			
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 wide open beach allows extensive views along the coast – particularly to Braunton Burrows and Saunton Sands beyond the estuary to the north, and across Bideford Bay along the undeveloped section of coast to Hartland Point		364 (Northam Burrows) 358 (Braunton Burrows) 360 (Saunton	358 360 088 398

	<p>(to the south-west). The white building of the Saunton Sands Hotel stands out as a landmark in northward views.</p> <p>The rising landform of the cobble ridge and elevated sand dunes beyond restrict eastward views towards development at Northam, although views along the beach to the south are dominated by development at Westward Ho!</p>	<p>Sands)</p> <p>088 (Braunton Marsh)</p> <p>398 (Braunton Great Field)</p> <p>382 (ridgeline/cliff above Saunton)</p> <p>403 (elevated ridge/downland including Saunton Down)</p> <p>693 (Clovelly coast)</p> <p>694 (Hartland Point)</p> <p>836/835 (Westward Ho!)</p>	<p>382</p> <p>403</p> <p>364</p> <p>835</p> <p>836</p> <p>693</p> <p>694</p>
<p>Perceptual qualities (description)</p>	<p>The beach has a strong sense of containment and separation from the wider Northam Country Park and the settlement of Northam by the cobble ridge and elevated sand dunes that form its eastern boundary. As such, the beach evokes a wild, unspoilt quality, with strong visual connections to the surrounding seascape. Levels of tranquillity vary across the seasons owing to its popularity as a tourism destination. Southward views to ridgeline development at Westward Ho! detract from the beach's tranquil and open character.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	1	75.9%

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area
Coastal sand dunes	0.42	0.15%
Maritime cliff and slope	0.37	0.13%
Mudflats	0.08	0.03%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The beach has a wild, unspoilt character, although this is eroded by prominent southward views of recent ridgeline development at Westward Ho! and large modern buildings on the seafront.
Views	The LDU is defined by its sweeping coastal views, including to Hartland Point in the south-west, and to the elevated downland above Saunton in the north. As above – these views are intruded into in the south by development at Westward Ho!
Land use	N/A
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	N/A
Semi-natural habitats	The SSSI land (primarily the cobble ridge) is currently assessed as in unfavourable recovering condition by Natural England. The focus is on allowing natural coastal processes to take place (realigning the pebble ridge) whilst protecting the old rubbish tip to the north. This may lead to the future loss of some areas of Northam Burrows to the sea.
Settlement and development	No issues within the LDU itself. Surrounding development is prominent in views to the south.
Local vernacular	N/A