

Area of LDU within AONB: 120.8 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 24 February 2010

Survey points: SS455438. SS456430. SS455431

Summary of landscape character

This LDU comprises the wide and long sandy beach of Woolacombe Sand (merging into Putsborough Sand in the south) on the west coast of the AONB. It is framed along its eastern extent by the sand dunes of Woolacombe Warren, which is in turn backed by a steep cliff side rising up to Woolacombe Down. The northern end of the beach is flanked by the tourism resort of Woolacombe, whilst Napps Cliffs frame its southern extent, creating a broad sweeping bay. The area is a popular tourism destination including for surfing, kite surfing, dog walking and traditional beach holiday activities. As such, the perceptual qualities of the landscape are greatly affected by the changing seasons – contrasting between times when the expansive beach is deserted and the only sounds to be heard are the roar of the sea; to summer days when the northern and southern parts of the beach are busy with people and buzzing with activity.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

| LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Landform description | Wide, flat sandy beach sheltered by sand dunes, broken by occasional small rock outcrops (including Mill Rock SSSI). | | |
| 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. recreation) | The beach is used for a range of recreational activities including walking, sunbathing and surfing (including 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 beach comprises golden sands with occasional small rocks, including Mill Rock Geological SSSI (valued for Upper Devonian fish remains present in a layer of volcanic rock). It has a close physical and ecological relationship with the adjacent sand dunes of Woolacombe Warren, part of the wider Woolacombe Down County Wildlife Site. The LDU also includes a small area of maritime cliff and slope in its south-eastern corner within the Saunton to Baggy Point SSSI. | |

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|---|
| Settlement pattern | <i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i> | | |
| | There is no settlement or development within this LDU, although nearby development at Woolcombe is influential in the north – as is a caravan site / car parking area at Vention in the south to serve Putsborough Sand. | | |
| Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way) | <i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i> | | |
| | There are no roads or formal rights of way crossing the LDU. The South West Coast Path and Tarka Trail are in close proximity, running the length of the neighbouring LDU of Woolacombe Warren (386). | | |
| 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 historic features visible in the landscape. |

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 and open aspect of the beach affords extensive views across the sweeping bay to Morte Point in the north and Baggy Point in the south. There is a strong visual and relationship between the beach, the | 386 (Woolacombe Warren) 579 (steep slopes up to | 386 579 578 |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | <p>sand dunes of Woolacombe Warren, and the steep slope behind to the east – which provide shelter to the exposed coastal landscape.</p> <p>Northerly views are dominated by strong glimpses of development (including caravan sites and holiday parks) at Woolacombe and along the coastal headland towards Morteheo. Southern skylines are interrupted by the caravan site and car park at Putsborough. Baggy Point forms a dramatic coastal feature in south-westerly views.</p> | <p>Woolacombe Down and Woolcombe development)</p> <p>578 (north coast around to Morte Point)</p> <p>897 (south coast to Baggy Point)</p> <p>402 (Woolacombe Down)</p> <p>853 (downland to the north-east)</p> | <p>897</p> <p>402</p> <p>853</p> |
| <p>Perceptual qualities (description)</p> | <p>The perceptual qualities of the landscape are greatly affected by the changing seasons – contrasting between times when the expansive beach is deserted and the only sounds to be heard are the roar of the sea; to summer days when the beach is busy with people and buzzing with activity. Development at Woolacombe has a strong influence on the north of the LDU, eroding levels of tranquillity.</p> | | |

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

| Designation | Number | % of LDU land area |
|----------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| NATURE CONSERVATION | | |
| SSSI | 2 | 0.13% |

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

| UK BAP Priority Habitat | Area (ha) | % of LDU land area |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| NONE | N/A | N/A |

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Perceptual qualities | Perceptual qualities are greatly dependent on the seasons and influx of visitors / recreational users to the beach (Woolacombe has a bed space capacity of 11,700 ¹). 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 long, wide beach allows sweeping views across the length of Morte Bay, framed by dramatic coastal headlands. As above – views to the north are dominated by development at Woolacombe and along the coastal headland towards Grunta Beach. |
| Land use | No issues identified for the LDU – tourism related development is encroaching up against its boundaries in parts (particularly related to Woolacombe and Putsborough Sand). |
| Field patterns | N/A |
| Field boundaries | N/A |
| Trees and woodland | N/A |
| Semi-natural habitats | No issues noted in the field – the beach was clean and litter free (currently holds Blue Flag status). Both areas of SSSI-designated land are currently assessed by Natural England as in favourable condition. |
| Settlement and development | No issues within the LDU itself. Development associated with Woolcombe is spreading along the prominent coastal headland to the north which sweeps around towards Morteheo. Caravan parks are characteristic in views to landscapes outside the LDU – e.g. within and above Woolacombe and at Putsborough Sands (LDUs 579 and 853). |
| Local vernacular | N/A |

¹ Bridgwater Bay to Bideford Bay Shoreline Management Plan