

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 556.73 hectares

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



**Date surveyed:** 2 March 2010

**Survey points:** SS358247, SS355243, SS317252

**Summary of landscape character**

This LDU covers the coastline stretching from Cockington Cliff westwards to Windbury Head, characterised by steep rocky cliffs punctuated by small pebble beaches and wooded coastal combs. Plunging waterfalls add to the drama of the landscape, which is unsettled apart from small historic fishing villages nestled into the cliffs at Clovelly and Buck’s Mills. The coast is very exposed with extensive sea views – stretching across Bideford Bay to south Wales and along the coastline to the north-east, as well as picturesque views to Lundy Island in the west. This is a wild and highly tranquil landscape with a strong sense of place, falling within the Hartland Heritage Coast.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY**

<b>Landform description</b>	Rocky coastline with steep north-facing sandstone and slate cliffs rising to 150 metres in parts. Fast-flowing streams form deep incisions into the rocks to create steep valley and coastal waterfalls plunging to the sea. Blackchurch Rock is a very prominent feature on the coast at Mouthmill Beach, and an outcrop of red sandstone defines the coast at Portledge. The geological value of this section of coast is reflected in RIGS designations.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Some patches of rough grazing land on cliff summits, in between large tracts of woodland.	Pasture and occasional fields of arable cultivation backing coastal woodlands where the LDU broadens further inland in the east.	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>

	The majority of the landscape is covered in woodland with some patches of open coastal heath. Modern fields characterise land in the east of the LDU, including some sinuous boundaries following earlier medieval lines.	Medium	Devon hedgebanks with occasional hedgerow trees further inland.
<b>Other land uses (e.g. recreation)</b>	The land backing the rocky cliffs is mainly covered in woodland, some of which is managed for pheasant shooting.		

### **WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS**

<b>Trees / woodland cover</b>	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Extensive ancient and semi-natural woodland clings to the coastal cliffs and lines the combs which incise into the landform.	The woodlands topping the cliffs are dominated by sessile oak, with more varied species further inland including ash, hazel, beech, birch and sycamore.  Areas of conifer plantation are scattered within some areas of woodland further inland – e.g. Buck’s Wood and areas around Portledge.
<b>Semi-natural habitats</b>	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	A significant proportion of this coastal landscape is nationally and internationally designated for its wildlife habitats – including extensive sessile oak woodlands with rare lichens and a rich ground flora, areas of maritime heath, and species-rich coastal grasslands. The cliffs support important breeding colonies of sea birds.	

### **SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Settlement pattern</b>	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	Settlement is limited to the historic fishing villages of Clovelly (part of a private estate) and Buck’s Mills– built into the cliff sides with the latter also occupying a steep-sided coastal combe. There is also a cluster of buildings associated with the Grade II* Listed Portledge Hotel in the east of the LDU.		
<b>Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)</b>	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	Road access to this coastal section is limited to minor access routes into Clovelly (although car access is prohibited to the village centre), Buck’s Mills and Portledge. The cliffs are crossed along their length by the South West Coast Path.		
<b>Local vernacular</b>	<i>Predominant traditional</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features</i>

<b>styles and materials</b>	<i>building materials</i>		<i>reflecting vernacular</i>
	Local sandstone and slate, with red brick detailing on chimney stacks and windows. Or whitewashed cottages often with black painted details (window/door frames).	Use of thatch, particularly in Buck's Mills and the Peppercombe Valley.	Stone walls are unifying features reflecting the local vernacular. In Clovelly lengths often incorporate round boulders from the nearby beach.
<b>Modern development styles / materials</b>	N/A		

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>
	Both Clovelly and Buck's Mills are Conservation Areas with a high concentration of Listed Buildings, reflecting the importance of their built heritage based on fishing and industrial trade. Other historic features include 18 <sup>th</sup> century lime kilns relating to Buck's Mills, using limestone and coal imported from South Wales. The remains of an Iron Age hillfort can be seen at Peppercombe Castle, as can defensive earthworks above Buck's Mill, designated as a Scheduled Monument. A bowl barrow along the coast at Gallantry Bower is also defined as a Scheduled Monument, and Windbury Head hillfort is a prominent feature sitting above the coastline – also a Scheduled Monument (straddling LDUs 684 and 694),

## VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	This section of coast affords spectacular views dominated by the sea – across Bideford Bay, out to Lundy, north towards Wales, and north-east across the AONB coastline. The white building of the Saunton Sands Hotel is a recognisable feature on the distant north-easterly skyline.  Ridgeline development at Westward Ho! is visible in views from this coastline.	<b>694</b> (coast extending westwards)  <b>404</b> (combe west of Clovelly)  <b>342</b> (adjacent inland landscape)  <b>684</b> (adjacent inland landscape)  <b>362</b> (Northam Sand)  <b>360</b> (Saunton	694 404 342 684 362 360 358 382 399 526 403

		Sands) <b>358</b> (Braunton Burrows) <b>382</b> (Saunton Sands Hotel) <b>835,836</b> (Westward Ho!)	835 836
<b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b>	This section of coast evokes high levels of peace, tranquillity, remoteness and wildness. This is particularly emphasised by the absence of modern development and the strong historic character of the area's fishing villages.		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SAC	2	35.12%
SSSI	3	39.53%
County Wildlife Sites	7	21.39%
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Scheduled Monuments	2	0.03%
Listed Buildings	95 (90 grade II, 5 grade II*)	

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland beech and yew woodland	71.51	12.85%
Lowland heathland	22.50	4.04%
Maritime cliff and slope	213.41	38.33%
Upland oakwoods	8.32	1.5%
Wet woodland	71.51	12.85%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	This is a highly tranquil landscape evoking a sense of escapism and wildness. These perceptions can be diluted in some locations during the peak tourist season – Clovelly, Buck's Mills and the South West Coast Path are popular visitor destinations. Views to modern development at Westward Ho! detract from the unspoilt qualities of the coastline.
Views	Views are expansive and have a strong maritime influence.
Land use	Areas of conifer plantation detract from the semi-natural woodland cover that characterises much of the coast.
Field patterns	Modern fields characterise farmland backing the coast in the east of the LDU. However, boundaries often follow earlier medieval lines and patterns are reinforced through an intact hedgebank network.
Field boundaries	No issues noted in the field.
Trees and woodland	Some areas of the SSSI-designated woodlands are currently assessed as in unfavourable condition, owing to the spread of rhododendron, brambles and turkey oak impacting on the diversity of the woodland understorey. The past planting of conifers on former ancient woodland sites is also a negative factor influencing condition. Natural England has an aim to replant the conifers with native broadleaves.
Semi-natural habitats	See above.
Settlement and development	No issues noted in the field – settlements retain their cliff- and combe-side historic settings within the landscape.
Local vernacular	The villages have a characteristically strong and unifying built vernacular, reflected in their high number and concentration of Listed Buildings.