

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - East Cornwall and Tamar Moorland Fringe

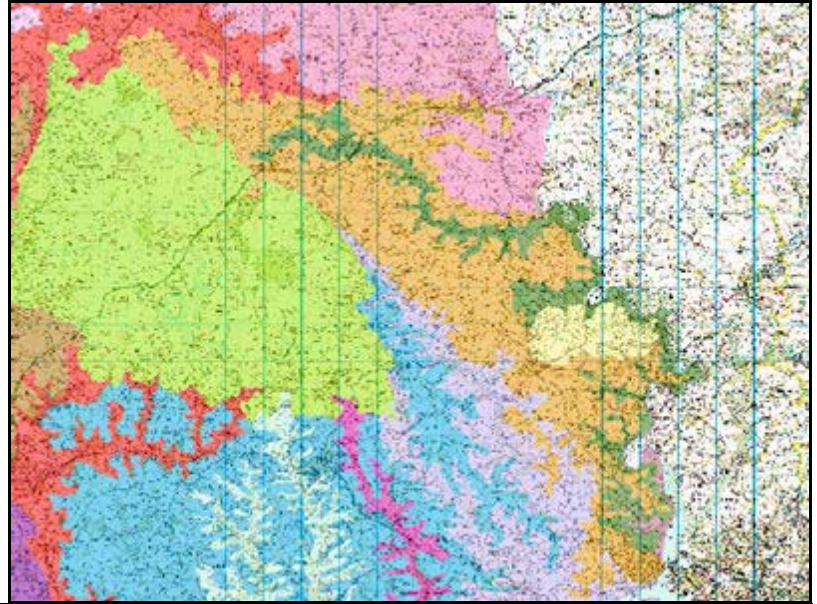
LCA No

CA26

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 10: 211, 217U, 233U, 310, 312, 311, 313, 413, 420U, 421U



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Location	Western slopes of Tamar Valley. Area includes the valley of the River Inny a Tamar tributary and is bounded to the west by the north-eastern edge of Bodmin Moor and the River Lynher. This large Landscape Character Area extends north from Saltash to Davidstow and includes Callington and the south western edge of Launceston.
Designations	4 LDUs are within the Tamar AONB and 1 in the Cornwall AONB; 2 LDUs are within the Tamar WHS; 3 contain SSSIs. 5 LDUs contain SACs and 4 contain SPAs; 9 contain SMs and 5 contain CGS.

Description

Domesticated and enclosed landscape of the western slopes of the middle Tamar Valley. The plateau is dissected in its northern area by narrow river valleys whose waters rise on the granite of Bodmin Moor. These gradually deepen as they pass over the softer rock on the edge of the moor. In general this is a moorland fringe area with small fragmented areas of wetland and rough ground in the small stream valleys. Further south and to the east the margins of the plateau are dissected by short river valleys, some steep-sided, which are tributaries to the Tamar or Lynher. The plateau can be bleak and exposed but mostly retains its shrubby hedge landscape except on higher former rough ground areas such as Viverdon where the hedges are banks with grass and gorse. The sheltered valley sides allow more luxurious hedge growth and the landscape appears to be more wooded though true woodland is restricted to the steepest valley sides and the wetter valley bottoms. The plateau has always provided a transport network and settlement sites and the area includes several busy roads and several major settlements. Saltash with its proximity to Plymouth provides a more urban contrast to the more tranquil northern parts of the Landscape Character Area.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Undulating plateau incised by tributary valleys.

Open medium-scale mixed farmland, predominantly improved pasture of mainly medieval enclosure, retaining much of its original pattern.

Steeper valley sides clothed with mixed woodland on ancient woodland sites.

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



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Prominent valley of River Inny with moorland fringe feel; with wetlands, neutral grassland and broadleaved woodland in valley bottom, and church-based hamlets on slopes.

Different land uses linked by strong pattern of Cornish hedges with trees in sheltered parts throughout and dominance of older vernacular villages.

Small field pattern generally, but with patches of rough ground and large areas of recently enclosed land with a rectilinear pattern on summits.

Narrow winding sunken lanes overhung with tall, tree-lined hedges linking dispersed farms and hamlets.

Mix of large settlements with 20th century edge development, medieval churchtowns and hamlets with good vernacular architecture and some modern infill.

Small developed ridge covered with extensive modern housing development close to Launceston.

Visual influence at northern end of Davidstow airfield and conifer plantations in adjoining Landscape Character Area, plus visual influence of Plymouth in southern part.

Contrast of bustling major roads and towns with intimacy and tranquillity of rural villages and river landscapes.

Geology and soils

Shallow hard rock soils over hard rock, Upper Devonian slates and Lower Carboniferous thin limestones and shales.

Topography and drainage

Undulating plateau with some higher summits up to 200m. Includes shallow river valley of the River Inny flowing south-east to join Tamar, and many smaller deeper tributary valleys flowing south and west to the Lynher and north and east to the Tamar.

Biodiversity

The Landscape Character Area covers the higher ground (except for Kit Hill LCA 30) between the Lynher, Tamar and Kensey valleys of LCAs 25, 29 and 31, and here the diversity of semi-natural habitats is low, as much of the flatter, higher land is farmed, with improved grassland and some arable. A few small fragmented areas of wetland exist at the heads of and along the numerous small stream valleys, with linear broadleaved woodland along the streams. However where the northwestern part of the LCA includes the upper part of the Inny valley, there is a higher proportion and diversity of semi-natural habitat with small linear broadleaved woodlands along the stream valleys and numerous small and fragmented areas of wetland, including Fens and Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture, and neutral grassland, scrub and bracken. The LCA has an important network of ancient species rich Cornish hedges with many mature trees, and these hedges link the semi-natural habitats in the adjacent LCAs.

Land Cover

Much of the LCA is pastoral farmland with improved grassland and some arable, with scattered trees and settlement. Small areas of linear woodland exist along the stream valleys, and there are small fragments of wetland and rough ground, more so in the northwestern part in the upper parts of the Inny valley.

Land Use

Improved pastoral farming, with broadleaved woodland in steep sided valleys, and some mixed plantation woodlands in linear blocks along roads; arable farmland on flatter areas on summits.

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



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Recreation/amenity/tourism uses especially close to major roads.

Field and woodland pattern

Medieval field patterns are widespread. There is a pattern of small fields, predominantly long and narrow with slightly sinuous boundaries, with contrasting patches of rough ground and large areas of recently enclosed land, strongly rectilinear and on a larger scale, surrounded by Cornish hedges with hedgerows. Near Davidstow the small fields are surrounded by mature beech trees, while more recent enclosures have hawthorn. Within the downland of Golberdon and Viverdon Down there is a dispersed pattern of 18th and 19th C enclosure, as well as patches of 20th C boundary alterations.

Settlement pattern

This is predominantly a well-preserved medieval landscape, focused around a scatter of medieval churchtowns. The large towns of Saltash and Launceston, lie on the periphery, and Callington in the centre, with clustered villages with scattered small farms and small churchtowns on valley slopes. There are mining-related villages on the eastern edge, including Harrowbarrow and Kelly Bray. Elsewhere there are a number of small roadside and crossroads settlements, most of which developed in the post-medieval period with considerable later twentieth century expansion; examples include Five Lanes / Trewint, Tregadillet, Coad's Green and Bray's Shop. Strong vernacular architecture in general, with some late 20th C larger-scale development using modern materials, such as render and clay/concrete tiles. Vernacular buildings are of shillet with slate roofs and proximity to Bodmin Moor and Kit Hill has provided slate and granite, used together. Lewannick and St Clether are enlarged churchtowns with a medieval core. Callington has a 20th C edge. 20th century dormitory settlements such as Hatt, Burraton and Trematon lie in the wider Saltash area.

Transport pattern

Straight roads (A30) and more winding (A388) roads are mixed with winding narrow lanes. Some boundary banks have beech hedging especially in the north. Launceston has a network of modern connective roads which, with their heavily wooded roadsides, dilute local landscape character and distinctiveness. The railway crosses the southern fringe. Long distance footpaths in the NW near Davidstow, and part of the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail in the South.

Historic features

There are a number of holy wells (for example, Dupath) and crosses. Prehistoric elements are not particularly visible within this Landscape Character Area, although there are a number of examples of later prehistoric defended farmsteads (rounds). There are also scattered barrows on the fringes of Bodmin Moor to the north and on Viverdon Down. One of the few later Neolithic henges in Cornwall is at Castlewich, south of Callington. Saltash is a planned medieval town, associated with a ferry link across the Tamar and maritime trade. Cotehele is the finest late medieval house in Cornwall (NT), just within this CA although more obviously related to the Tamar valley. The 16th-17th century Hatt House is another architecturally distinguished house, listed Grade II*. There are substantial remains of former mining around Callington, Harrowbarrow and Gunnislake. Drakewalls tin mine is visible from the A390, near Greenhill arsenic works chimney stack, which is a major landmark. Three engine houses of Holmbush Mine can be seen just north of Kelly Bray.

Condition

Generally intact and well managed throughout, with mature trees on boundaries locally distinctive. Ecological corridors are fragmented and patch survival is localised. Some boundaries are in decline. Elsewhere, changes in the intensity and type of land use appear to be well managed, with good ecological corridors and strong hedges. The impact of the transport corridor and urban development are both localised, with the impact of rural housing low but widespread. Change from pasture to arable is

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



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widespread with moderate impact, and there is some loss of farmland to amenity uses especially golf courses. Hedges are close flailed on arable land. There is some industrial-scale horticulture with glasshouse complexes around St Dominick. Large road junctions have high local impact, especially at night with excessive lighting. Several impacts arise from adjoining Landscape Character Areas especially in the northern part, including the airfield, large conifer plantations and windfarm, which have a high visual impact by contrast with the rural tranquility of this part of the Landscape Character Area.

Pressures

- Development and housing, especially along A388 corridor between Callington and Saltash.
 - Road improvements, especially A388.
 - Changes in farming practice and fragmentation of landholdings.
 - Loss of farmland to amenity uses, especially golf courses.
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Aesthetic and sensory

An intimate and ancient landscape especially away from main transport corridors. Sunken lanes and small fields create a feeling of timelessness. Contrast between sheltered side valleys and open exposed plateau especially in the north where areas close to Bodmin Moor in the upper Inny have a moorland edge feel. Visual influence of Davidstow airfield and conifer plantations in northern part - different scale and land uses.

Distinctive features

Contrast between the moorland edge feel of the northern section and the Inny Valley and the more intimate landscapes of the middle Tamar Valley with its anciently enclosed field pattern and lush hedge growth. Contrast between the remoter small settlements of the northern section and the more developed southern area especially around Callington and Saltash. Relics of mining history in the middle Tamar especially around Callington/Kelly Bray and Gunnislake.

Visions and objectives

Maintain the strength of landscape character of this Landscape Character Area which has enabled it to accommodate 20th century change so far; conserve rural tranquillity and variation in scale landscape characteristic of the northern area, and protect the southern area from further urban influence.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve field pattern by preparing and providing guidance on hedge and tree management and through encouraging take-up of agri-environment schemes.
- Conserve the woodland pattern within valleys by encouraging restocking.
- Provide positive incentives for replanting and management of traditional grazed orchards.
- Enhance biodiversity and river landscapes by encouraging retention and expansion of semi-natural habitats in river valleys.
- Monitor changes in farming practices and offer guidance on location of bio-fuel crops.
- Enhance the robust settlement pattern by preparing and providing design guidance on new development.
- Adopt tighter planning policies with regards to potential ribbon development along major roads.
- Conserve the mining history of this through the implementation of the World Heritage Site management plan.

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Conserve local landscape character by ensuring that applications for large-scale development in adjoining Landscape Character Areas with potential high visual impact are rejected/modified.

Retain distinctive medieval field patterns wherever possible.