

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Kellan Head to Millook Haven Coast

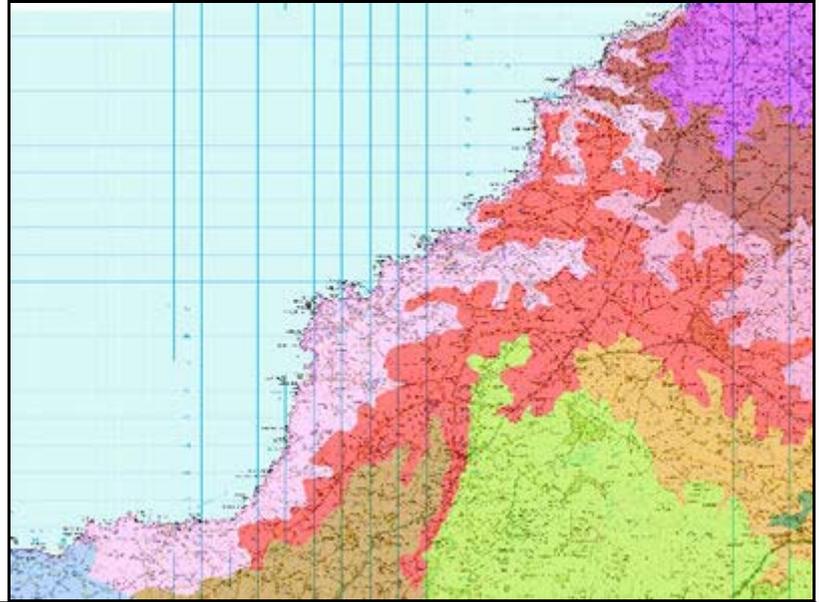
LCA No

CA35

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 7: 48, 51, 107, 108, 248, 249, 318



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Location Northern coastal strip centred on Tintagel and Boscastle.

Designations LDUs 48,107,248,249,318 are fully within AONB and Heritage Coast and LDU51 is in part; no WHS; LDUs 51, 107, 248, 318, 319 have SSSIs; 6 LDUs have SMs: 3 LDUs have CGS.

Description

This dramatic coastline incorporates the highest cliffs in Cornwall at 240mAOD and some of the most indented and complex with cliffs, promontories, inlets, coves, islands and stacks. The coastal strip has extensive semi-natural habitats and much is a SAC. The narrow band of land slopes from the plateau to the south and east and is incised with short, narrow valleys which offer a sheltered and intimate contrast to the open land with woodland (Some is Ancient Woodland) in some places and features such as fords over streams. The area is open and exposed, wild in places and the climate exerts an influence on vegetation with the few trees being wind sculpted. The field pattern is small scale medieval in places with small patches of rectilinear medium grain enclosed coastal rough ground in others. Cornish hedges mainly use local slate, sometimes in distinctive herringbone patterns. The area is best known for the medieval castle on the island at Tintagel with its mythical connections to King Arthur which is a tourist magnet. There are several nucleated settlements of medieval origin, some of which expanded as small ports during the post-medieval slate mining period, some also used for fishing. Remains of slate mining are still in evidence at the coast.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Exposed coastline of complex slate and shales geology with rugged high cliffs with coves, promontories, stacks and small islands including the highest cliffs in Cornwall.

Sloping landform from plateau to east with lower landform to the west.

Strong influence of coastal winds, restricting tree growth with hedgerow trees adopting sculptured forms.

Combination of medieval enclosed land, often around settlements to medium rectilinear enclosed land, some from coastal downland.

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Woodland occurring only in incised valleys.

Coastal heath along cliffs and steep valley inlets.

Distinctive small nucleated villages often associated with the coast as former ports.

Slate mining remains on the coast.

Tintagel castle, a major landmark.

Geology and soils

Predominantly Upper and Middle Devonian slates with pillow lava in places with Lower Carboniferous slates with thin limestones and shales including the Tintagel Volcanic formation. Sandstones are evident towards the north. The geology is particularly striking at the coast and in the cliffs around Tintagel. The geology of the area gave rise to many slate quarries, the last of which finished working in 1937. Many of the quarries were worked directly into the cliff face and, as a result, this section of coast bears extensive remains of quarry workings. Cuts into the rock face and platforms used for loading direct to boats moored at the cliff bottom are still clearly identifiable. Soils are shallow hard rock soils.

Topography and drainage

The land lies between the Delabole plateau (Landscape Character Area 36) and the coast. The character of the coastline falls into three main sections. To the southwest, the cliffs are a combination of vertical or chamfered rising to around 85m AOD. Small incised valleys run at right angles to the coast and it is primarily concave in shape with Port Quin Bay and Port Isaac Bay. The middle section centred on Tintagel has a more complex geology, much folded and faulted the hardened rocks form stacks, small islands and features such as Tintagel Island, a rounded headland connected by a narrow isthmus to the main coastline. The scale is similar to the southerly section. To the north east where the plateau in the form of Tresparrett Down borders the coast, the cliffs rise to up to 240m AOD, the highest in the county. The profiles are tumbled and slumped on the less stable shales and sandstones as at Rusey and High Cliffs. Deeply incised valleys with large streams run down to the coast at Boscastle (River Valency), Crackington Haven and Millook Haven. St Nectan's Glen and the Rocky Valley are popular local features near Tintagel.

Biodiversity

Most of the Landscape Character Area is farmed with improved grassland and some arable on the higher flatter areas and semi-natural habitats in the valleys and along the coast. The many small and deeply incised valleys almost all have areas of broadleaved woodland, with some of these Ancient Woodland, with Upland Oakwood (as at Dizzard Wood and Minster and Peter's Wood near Boscastle), Upland Mixed Ashwoods, and Wet Woodland. There are small fragmented areas of Fens, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures within wetland areas associated with the valleys, especially towards the upper reaches of the streams. The more open sides of the valleys that have escaped intensive cultivation have large areas of scrub, bracken and neutral grassland. These habitats form important corridors and link to the coastal semi-natural habitats of maritime cliff, scrub, bracken and neutral grassland, and fragmented areas of coastal Lowland Heathland. From Start Point to Millook the coastal strip is a SAC, forming part of the Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly Coast SAC which extends along the coast into LCA 38(Bude Basin) and 37 ((Western Culm Plateau). The network of Cornish hedges form important ecological corridors between the farmed land and the semi-natural habitats.

Land Cover

The land cover is predominantly improved grassland/pasture with some arable mainly to the south.

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Woodland, scrub, bracken and neutral grassland is mainly confined to the steep valleys in the north of the area. Rough ground and coastal heath cover the cliffs.

Land Use

The land use is mainly pasture for beef, dairy and sheep, but there are areas of arable cropping. Enclosure is over 60% medieval. Fishing is still carried out from Port Isaac although tourism is more important to the local economy here and in other small settlements along the coast including Tintagel, Bossiney and Boscastle.

Field and woodland pattern

The open coastal landscape consists mainly of pasture and some arable land. To the north, the sinuous, treeless hedges and stone walls of the medieval-derived anciently enclosed fields form a strong network which emphasises the rolling landform. Slate walls built with alternating diagonal courses create a herringbone pattern locally called 'curzyway'. The slates are tightly packed and hedge vegetation is much sparser and consists of more drought-tolerant plants than many of the hedges and banks elsewhere in the county. The medieval open field system at Forrabury, the Forrabury Stitches, is a distinctive feature and an important historic survival. The area includes numerous examples of fossilised stripfield systems. There are small patches of Recently Enclosed Land on former coastal rough ground, often extending into the Landscape Character Area from the enclosure of downland rough ground in the adjacent areas; this forms a medium rectilinear pattern with trees at lower levels. Broadleaved woodland is mainly limited to the steep valleys such as the Valency and adjacent valleys, and Rocky Valley near Bossiney. Species include Sessile Oak with Bilberry. The intimate sheltered character of these areas contrasts with the open exposed landscape of the upper slopes and coast. The exposed nature of the coast is emphasised by the unusual dwarf oak woodland on the cliffs at Dizzard.

Settlement pattern

The rural settlement pattern is based on dispersed medieval farm settlement clusters set within the distinctive landscape of Anciently Enclosed Land. There are a few nucleated settlements, some of which focus on small harbours or landing places (Port Quin, Port Isaac, Crackington Haven) with historic trades in fishing and later limestone, slate and coal. Others (Bossiney, Tintagel) lie on the plateau behind the coastal cliffs, with small historic havens at the foot of steep-sided stream valleys below them. Boscastle combines the two forms and has historic centres on the coastal slope and around its picturesque harbour. Port Isaac has charming 18th and 19th century cottages and narrow streets, alleys and 'opes' winding down the slopes. Here and at Port Gaverne, Boscastle and Port Quin, there are significant remains of the former fishing industry. The slate industry created some enlarged medieval farm settlements on the flatter more exposed land behind the coast (Treknow, Trewarmett) and this zone has also seen expansion of settlements from the rise of tourism from the mid 19th century and increase in housing in the later 20th century; this area behind the coast is also the location for caravan and camp sites. The use of slate, with some rendered buildings and red brick details, is characteristic throughout the area. Cob also occurs as a building material; a technique using wet clay with straw and lime. Cob buildings are rendered or slate-hung for weatherproofing.

Transport pattern

B roads wind their way along part of the coast serving the above settlements. They run inland at points leaving sections of coastline poorly accessed such as south of Tintagel. Narrow lanes, often on steep gradients, serve farmsteads and scattered dwellings. These often run between high hedges. Some of the older lanes are sunken into the land with high banks on either side. The South West Coast path follows the coastline.

Historic features

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The highest profile feature is the early thirteenth century castle at Tintagel, on the site of an early medieval royal centre. This complex extends across Tintagel Island and the adjacent mainland and is a place of myth and legend associated with King Arthur, having a strong sense of place. Willapark headland, above Boscastle harbour, is a spectacular Iron Age cliff castle; another possible cliff castle, more probably a medieval deer park lies on Tintagel's Willapark headland. A further late prehistoric earthwork in a commanding position is at Castle Point, St Gennys. There are medieval castle sites at Boscastle and Bossiney and the upper settlement at Boscastle retains much of the historic topography of its origins as a medieval planned settlement. Forrabury Stitches is an important well-preserved medieval open stripfield system close to Boscastle. Tintagel, Trevalga and Forrabury churches form important landmarks on the coastal plateau; Minster church is secluded in a charming woodland setting and was the location of medieval monastery. The harbours and much of Boscastle and Port Isaac are listed; here, and at Port Gaverne and Port Quin, there are significant remains of the post-medieval fishing industry. The remains of the slate industry form interesting coastal features.

Condition

Moderate to good in most places although areas of tourism development degrade some areas around Tintagel and Boscastle.

Pressures

Tourism development and visitor pressure particularly around Tintagel.
Loss of hedges.

Aesthetic and sensory

The area has a wild and exposed coastline with dramatic cliffs and breathtaking views. Small coves and islands create a complex, varied landscape character. Steep, narrow and sometimes wooded valleys, contrast with open hillsides and coast.

Distinctive features

The castles, port villages and hamlets with remains of slate mining. Strong Cornish hedges with slate detailing; the striking geology of the coast; Rocky Valley and St Nectans Glen; coastal woodland at Dizzard.

Visions and objectives

The wild and dramatic nature of the coast line together with the link with King Arthur makes this area a magnet for tourism. The objective must be to conserve and if possible enhance the existing Landscape Character of the medieval field pattern and related Cornish hedges, broadleaved woodland in the valleys, coastal rough ground including heath, narrow hedged and banked lanes and the coastal settlements whilst mitigating the effects of tourism and recreation.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Prepare village plans and design statements for the villages.

Prepare management plans for the conservation and maintenance of the natural environment.

Develop tourism strategy for coastal areas especially for Tintagel and Boscastle to mitigate the visual impact.

Maintain importance of historical features and medieval field pattern using local materials and construction techniques in the reconstruction of hedges.

Manage the broadleaved woodlands of the steep-sided valleys to maintain landscape character.

Manage traffic in order to retain the landscape character of lanes including widths, banks and

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hedges.