

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Seaton River Valley

LCA No

CA24

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 1:92



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Location South Cornish coast. North-south valley of the River Seaton to the east of Liskeard, between St Cleer in the north and the small coastal village of Seaton in the south.

Designations The LDU contains SSSIs and lies within Caradon District WHS. This LDU also contains a CGS site.

Description

A small river valley in the south east part of Cornwall flowing from the high ground near St Cleer on the edge of Bodmin Moor (Landscape Character Area 32) roughly southwards to the coast at Seaton. The valley is steep sided and twisting cutting through the plateau of the neighbouring Landscape Character Area 22 (South East Cornwall Plateau). In the northern section it is open, mainly given over to pasture, with a small flood plain but in the lower southern section it becomes more enclosed where woodland and conifer plantations clothe the valley sides. The little side valleys encompassed in this Landscape Character Area are very heavily wooded and more or less inaccessible. Elsewhere access is limited to where the road system crosses the river except for the lower section where a road runs along the valley floor from the A38 to Seaton. There is little settlement except for three villages of which Seaton on the coast is the largest having expanded to accommodate the holiday trade. There is a small beach here and part of the valley behind the village has been taken over as a countryside park. At the northern end of the valley is the edge of the old mining area that lies at the foot of Caradon Hill as well as the holiday complex at Rosecraddock Manor. The valley runs close to the eastern edge of Liskeard and could be under pressure from the towns extending urban development.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Steep sided tight valley system, well wooded throughout with more extensive woodland to south and some pasture farmland.

Ancient Woodland with Upland Oakwood, Upland Mixed Ashwoods and Lowland Mixed Deciduous on the valley slopes.

Intimate, remote, small scale and secret.

Small lanes enclosed by tall Cornish hedges, dense with flowering vegetation.

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Seaton village is small tourist centre at southern end of river.

Small sandy beach at the coast.

Geology and soils

Shallow hard rock soils over hard rock from the lower Devonian period.

Topography and drainage

A twisting narrow valley with steep sides and unusually a small flood plain in the upper reaches east of Liskeard and also south of Hessenford to the coast. Between these two sections the valley is narrower and more enclosed. Short tributary valleys feed the main river.

Biodiversity

The Landscape Character Area has significant areas of mixed woodland, much of it Ancient Woodland, with some Upland Oakwood, Upland Mixed Ashwoods, Lowland Mixed Deciduous and conifer plantations which link to areas of bracken and scrub on steeper slopes and broadleaved woodland and scrub along the stream valleys. In the valley bottoms are small areas of Wet Woodland. Most of the farmed land is improved grassland with little arable land, but there are tiny fragments of neutral grassland in the valley, more so on the steeper slopes. The network of Cornish hedges link the semi-natural habitats in the small valleys and many have mature trees, creating linear woodlands between the fields. The semi-natural habitats along the upper reaches link into LCA 32 (Bodmin Moor), with the majority of the LCA surrounded by LCA 22 (South East Cornwall Plateau).

Land Cover

Mostly mixed woodland, much of it Ancient Woodland with large areas of conifer plantations and farmland with trees. Landcover south of Coldrenick is dominated by woodland, while to the north it is more pastoral with some small farms, linear woodlands along the streams and more improved grassland and pasture.

Land Use

Improved pastoral farmland with trees, extensive mixed woods and conifer plantations. There is very little arable in this area and a high proportion of plantation and scrub. Part of the valley behind Seaton has been designated a Local Nature Reserve.

Field and woodland pattern

Mainly small fields of ancient origin, larger to the north, bounded by curving sinuous Cornish hedges with hedgerows. The medieval field pattern dominates, accentuated by the tall Cornish hedges especially in the upper part of the valley. Lower down between Seaton and the A38 extensive woodlands clothe the steep valley sides, mainly conifer plantations and these stretch into the little side valleys in this area. Between Hessenford and Seaton the valley floor is covered in Wet Woodland.

Settlement pattern

There are three villages within this LCA, Tremar, Hessenford and Seaton. Seaton has a small beach and has expanded with the tourist trade. Elsewhere there are small farms built the vernacular style and using local materials - stone and slate.

Transport pattern

The valley is crossed by the A38 trunk road, the A390 in the northern part and the A387 at Hessenford. The B3247 runs along valley floor between Hessenford and Seaton. Elsewhere a series of narrow winding,

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overhung lanes plunge steeply off the plateau towards the valley floor. The main railway line crosses the valley to the north. There are tracks through some woodlands but few official footpaths especially in the lower section north of Seaton.

Historic features

Historic mill sites, railway viaducts and road bridges - including the site of a medieval bridge at Seaton - are the most obvious historic features in the LCA. Hessenford is a post-medieval settlement and Seaton almost entirely twentieth century.

Condition

An intact and well managed landscape. The ecological corridors are intact, with continuous patch survival and moderate land use. Impact of transport corridor is localised but high especially near the A38. Intensive woodland management in south is beginning to impact on structural diversity.

Pressures

- Moderate localised urban pressure from Liskeard.
 - Conversion of broadleaved woodland to conifer plantation.
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Aesthetic and sensory

A very tight, close, intimate landscape dominated by woodland and landform. Moderately tranquil.

Distinctive features

Extensive woodland within steep narrow valley; old mills, viaducts and bridges - girder viaduct at Menheniot (1933).

Visions and objectives

This is a small scale undisturbed landscape with little access except where the road system crosses the valley. The objective must be to maintain the existing Landscape Character by managing the woodland effectively and ensuring that rural development is well integrated into the landscape pattern.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Develop design guidance for expansion at the edges of Liskeard and Seaton.

Develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands, encourage the reversion of Ancient Woodland Sites from conifer to broadleaved planting where appropriate and extend woodland where feasible.

Consider the recreational potential of the woodlands and include in any plan the possibilities of enhancing and extending the existing footpath network.

Discourage development on the valley floor and support measures to maintain the water courses in a healthy condition.

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