

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Newlyn Downs

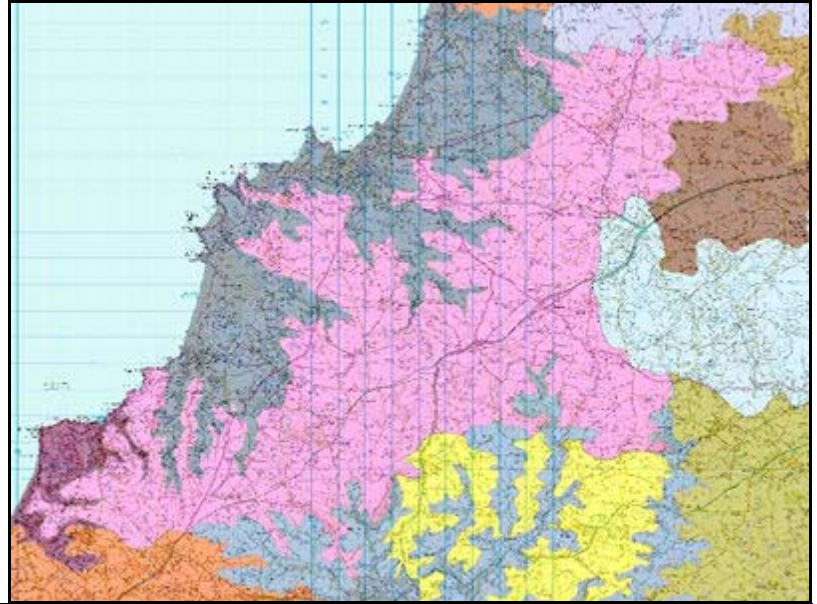
LCA No

CA14

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 5: 236, 345, 354, 374, 403



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Location Plateau running between Truro and Newquay extending eastwards to St Columb Major and westwards towards St Agnes, reaching the coast west of Perranporth.

Designations No AONB; LDU 403 has WHS; All LDUs have SSSIs; All LDUs have SMs.SAC

Description

This extensive Landscape Character Area takes in the open and exposed gently undulating plateau landscape extending east to west with extensive views out to sea from the higher ground. In the north the area acts as a backcloth to the coast (Landscape Character Area 15 Newquay and Perranporth Coast). To the south it meets the river valleys of Landscape Character Area 13 (Fal Ria, Truro and Falmouth). The area is incised by shallow valleys on the margins. Field patterns are predominantly medieval but with strongly rectilinear post medieval enclosure of former rough ground in some areas, particularly in the southern part of the LCA. Land use is a mix of pasture and arable. Cornish hedgerows are prevalent but mature trees are fewer on higher ground due to exposure and close flailing of hedges. There is some woodland, mostly Wet Woodland, in the valleys with small areas of wetlands with Fens. There is a significant area of Lowland Heathland at Newlyn Downs and along the coast between Perranporth and St Agnes. The historic routeway of the A30 and its associated development follows the east-west spine of higher ground. Two windfarms are highly visible at Carland Cross and Four Burrows. Settlement is generally small nucleated villages associated with the communications network and dispersed farm settlements. Tourism development, including caravan sites is prevalent within the northern part of the Landscape Character Area nearest the coast.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Open, gently undulating plateau with shallow valleys, incised with minor river valleys. In the north, these reach the coast.

Medium to large scale broadly rectilinear fields of pasture or arable.

Low Cornish hedges and hedgerows.

Significant area of Lowland Heathland at Newlyn Downs and along the coast between Perranporth and St Agnes

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Landscape Character Area Description

Woodland cover more prevalent in valleys, mainly broadleaved with Wet Woodland with limited mixed plantations.

Dispersed settlement clusters with estate farms. Some nucleated settlements around enlarged medieval churchtowns.

Prominent barrows on higher ground, numerous late prehistoric defended / enclosed farmsteads (rounds) and mining remains in the west.

A30 along the higher ground with associated development (roadside settlements).

Windfarms at two sites along the ridge line.

Long views to the north and the coast.

Geology and soils

The geology of the area is Lower Devonian sandstones, siltstones and slates. The soils are shallow hard rock soils.

Topography and drainage

The area has a gently undulating inland area with open and extensive views rising to a central spine that runs from Carland Cross to Chiverton. The highest point is around 150m AOD and the lowest 50m AOD. Shallow valleys and depressions on the plateau give way to steeper valleys in the north where the fingers of plateau run towards the coast which it actually reaches at Cligga Head with cliffs of around 85m AOD.

Biodiversity

Improved grassland and arable land dominates the Landscape Character Area. Broadleaved woodland is more or less confined along, and at the head of, the small stream valleys with Wet Woodland, and very little Upland Oakwood and some Upland Mixed Ashwoods. These small valleys which drain into the surrounding LCAs 12 (t Agnes), 13 ((Fal Ria, Truro and Falmouth), 15 (Newquay and Perranporth Coast) and 33 (Camel and Allen Valleys), link up small fragmented areas of wetland including Fens, and Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture in the eastern part, small areas of bracken, scrub and neutral grassland, and a large area of Lowland Heathland at Newlyn Downs SAC. Some of the small wetlands form part of the Carrick Heaths SSSI. There is also Lowland Heathland on the coast between Perranporth and St Agnes, with maritime cliff, bracken and scrub. These semi-natural habitats are linked by a network of Cornish hedges, which, in the more intensively farmed areas, are closely flailed, and without mature trees in the more exposed parts.

Land Cover

Mostly improved grassland and pasture with a substantial proportion of arable land. There is some Lowland Heathland and rough ground of scrub and bracken. Also in this LCA are remnants of old mine spoil heaps which have developed naturally regenerating heath vegetation. Small areas of broadleaved woodland occur in sheltered hollows and valleys. A few larger estate woodland blocks occur.

Land Use

The area is primarily used as pastoral and arable farmland with medieval enclosure predominating to the east. On the highest ground, particularly around Newlyn Downs, post medieval enclosure is more prominent. There are old mining areas at East Wheal Rose (Newlyn East), and west of Zelah. An airfield lies on the coast just west of Perranporth and there are two windfarms on the highest ground. Tourist attractions especially caravan sites are a feature of the area, particularly near the coast.

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Landscape Character Area Description

Field and woodland pattern

Field patterns over much of the mid and northern portion of the LCA and lower ground generally derive from fossilised groups of medieval strips and are frequently long and narrow, broadly rectilinear but with gently sinuous boundaries. In areas of former rough ground, particularly in the southern part of the LCA, there are extensive post medieval enclosures on former rough ground, straight sided and rectilinear. The area around Newlyn Downs is still bare from mine spoil although heathland is regenerating. Cornish hedges are the main field boundary with trees in places and hedgerows. Any hedgerow trees and shrubs that occur here are often distinctly wind-pruned, emphasising the exposure to the coastal winds. There is a mixture of arable, ley pasture and permanent pasture interspersed with small areas of woodland in sheltered hollows and valleys.

Settlement pattern

This is a relatively unpopulated landscape, settlements occurring as dispersed farmsteads and small, nucleated villages, many along the ridge of higher land, and now often bypassed by the A30 road, e.g. the old town of Mitchell, and Summercourt village. In these areas, new road development and bridges which cross the dual carriageway are totally unrelated to the local style of architecture or building materials. The old market town of St Columb Major lying to the north of the area has also been bypassed and thus been able to retain much of its character. There are also village-scale nucleated settlements based on enlarged medieval churchtowns at St Newlyn East, Crantock and Cubert.

Transport pattern

The A30 is an historic routeway, running through the area on the higher ground. It is busy and mostly dual carriageway. Other major roads include the A39 bypassing St Columb and the A392 to Newquay. Generally the larger roads follow the ridges where possible, particularly to the south. This allows wide views where the Cornish hedges are low. Minor roads in the west tend to be straight in form, particularly where they pass through former rough ground. In the east, in the more anciently enclosed land, minor roads are more winding following field boundaries usually with high hedges.

Historic features

The A30 is an historic ridgeway passing along the spine of Cornwall, much of which was until relatively recently open rough ground. This is likely to have been a routeway over a long period, extending back into prehistory. The spinal ridge was also the focus for extensive clusters of large Bronze Age barrows, as at Two Burrows, Three Burrows, Four Burrows and Carland Cross. The LCA also includes dispersed settlement pattern of later prehistoric defended farmsteads (rounds), indicating the extent to which this has been a settled landscape over a long period. In the medieval period Crantock was a monastic centre and Mitchell, Summercourt and St Columb Major were market and service settlements. There are substantial areas of mining remains, including engine houses and other structures, with accompanying industrial settlements and post-medieval enclosure. These are particularly concentrated in the western part of the LCA around St Newlyn East, Zelah, Goonhavern, and Mithian. There is dramatic evidence of coastal mining at Cligga Head.

Condition

Generally well managed farmland. New development associated with villages is often of poor design. Woodland is unmanaged in places.

Pressures

- Windfarm development.
 - Tourism facilities including caravan sites.
 - Conversion of farms to commuter dwellings and holiday accommodation.
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Landscape Character Area Description

Conversion of tourism facilities to residential.
Road improvements.
Telecommunications.

Aesthetic and sensory

The area has an open and windswept landscape character combined with extensive views, some to the sea, and a gentle landform. The area is generally uncluttered although the windfarms are prominent features and caravan sites impinge on the edges near the coast. Some of the villages are unchanged by modern development, and this area has an intrinsic, quiet rural character. Some new development acts as a detractor due to poor design.

Distinctive features

The distinctive feature of this landscape is its wide rolling pastoral and arable character with Cornish hedges. Windfarms form prominent elements.

Visions and objectives

This area has an intrinsic, quiet rural character where the landscape is generally uncluttered. The objective must be to encourage the conservation of the existing countryside while strictly controlling development which would clutter the landscape.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Conserve and enhance the existing landscape by encouraging the use of agri-environmental schemes.

Encourage woodland management, in particular the wet woodland in the valleys as well as further planting to extend the tree cover.

Develop a design guide to improve the relationship of the built areas with the open countryside and reduce visual intrusion.