

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Newquay and Perranporth Coast

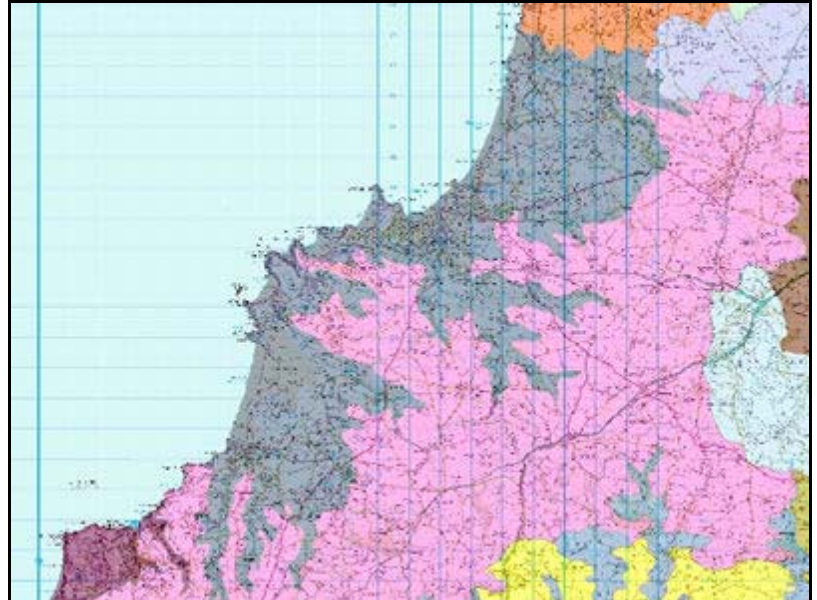
LCA No

CA15

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 32: 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 76, 77, 78, 115, 116, 117, 118, 175, 176, 177U, 178, 296, 343, 344, 346, 347, 348, 349U, 350U, 351U, 352, 353



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Location Northern coast running east from Perranporth and including Newquay.

Designations No AONB; LDU 14, 117, 118 have WHS; 6 LDUs contain SACs; 12 LDUs contain SSSIs; 18 LDUs contain SMs; 7 LDUs contain CGS.

Description

The area is an exposed northwest facing coastline with numerous surfing beaches and small sandy coves, backed by dramatic cliffs in the east and extensive Coastal Sand Dunes in the west. Inland there are sheltered valleys with narrow woodlands and small areas of wetland along the small streams which run to the coast and pastoral and arable land enclosed with Cornish hedges. The maritime cliff remains largely undeveloped and includes small areas of heath and rough ground. The area attracts large numbers of tourists and surfers and this has led to a proliferation of holiday accommodation especially in association with the holiday resort of Newquay and settlements such as Perranporth. Caravan and camp sites and associated roadside development have a major impact on the landscape character especially during the summer months. Newquay Cornwall Airport and RAF St Mawgan lie to the north on the coastal plateau.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Gently undulating north west facing coastal shelf dissected by small streams with narrow valleys to the sea.

Open and exposed landscape with little tree cover.

High slate cliffs form a dramatic and varied coastline with long sandy west facing surf beaches.

Extensive areas of rough ground, scrub, and sand dune systems.

Small to medium scale field pattern.

Large settlements based on tourism and other clustered settlements with small or estate farms.

Caravan and campsites scattered across the coast and hinterland.

Tourist signage and other features on roads.

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Geology and soils

The geology is Lower Devonian slates, siltstones and sandstones. Contorted and altered slates form dark cliffs and dramatic headlands between which lie broad sandy beaches and sand dunes, as at Penhale Sands. North of Newquay the cliffs become higher and more dramatic with a long narrow sandy beach at their foot. In these cliffs the green and purple banded slates are exposed to view. The soils are shallow hard rock soils inland and raw on the coast in the dunes.

Topography and drainage

The landform is gently undulating with softly rounded hills dissected by small streams which have formed narrow valleys, becoming progressively incised as they meet the coast. The land slopes from around 80m AOD inland to sea level. Cliffs at the coastline rise to 80m AOD at Shag Rock, Perranporth. Dunes occur, most notably at Penhale Sands which extend inland and reach 60m AOD. Most streams run through beaches to the sea but there is a small estuary and saltmarsh on the River Gannel at Newquay.

Biodiversity

The farmed land is mostly improved grassland/pasture but with a high proportion of arable, especially on the higher, flatter areas between the numerous small stream valleys that drain northwest from the Newlyn Downs (LCA 14) hinterland. Locally, as at West Pentire, coastal arable fields are important nationally for arable weeds, these colouring the fields red and yellow in summer. Cornish hedges in this exposed area are generally lacking mature trees, except in sheltered valleys, but are important ecological links to the semi-natural habitats in the small valleys. The valleys have small fragments of wetland, including Fen, and broadleaved woodland, including some Wet Woodland, mostly along the streamsides. On the steeper slopes small fragments of neutral grassland exist, usually adjacent the habitats above, and in places with bracken and scrub. There is an area of Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland at Carnanton, near St Mawgan, with associated Ancient Woodland, identified as Upland Mixed Ashwoods. The coastal strip has a high diversity of habitats with the substantial Coastal Sand Dune area of Penhale Dunes SAC near Perranporth a dominant landscape feature. Other areas of blown sand at Holywell, and Crantock have developed into Coastal Sand Dunes, and inland on Kelsey Head (an SSSI) an area of Lowland Calcareous Grassland is associated with the sand dunes. There is a small area of coastal Lowland Heathland near Perranporth, but most of the long sections of rocky coast is maritime cliff with small areas of scrub and neutral grassland. The Gannel estuary has a large area of Coastal Saltmarsh and mudflats, and Reedbeds are found in the lower parts of some valleys, and at Mawgan Porth there is an area of Coastal Floodplain and Grazing Marsh.

Land Cover

Landcover is still predominantly rural with improved grassland/pasture with some arable. Most enclosure is post medieval. Between Perranporth and Newquay, there are extensive areas of Coastal Rough Ground and sand dunes. This coastal land has a history of alteration as a result of iron mining. These areas have an attractive wilderness quality, although in places this has been marred visually by development such as caravan parks and the golf course north of Perranporth. Vegetation is low lying and windswept by prevailing sea winds, and hedgerows contain few trees. Tamarisk trees are a feature of some of the coastal hedges. Rough ground and coastal Lowland Heathland occurs in fragmented patches on steep slopes near the coast or exposed headlands, while trees and scrub vegetation occurs in the sheltered river valleys and particularly concentrated around Perranporth.

Land Use

Pastoral and arable farming is the main land use. Tourism in this area of Cornwall has, since the mid-19th century, become a major influence affecting built development, land use and landscape character alike.

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Attractive because of its wide sandy beaches, good surfing conditions and dramatic coastline, tourism has flourished, with abundant colourful signposts, special activity complexes, holiday resorts, caravan sites and golf courses. Highly coloured displays of bedding plants on the approach roads often strike a discordant note in contrast to the more natural colours of the undeveloped landscape. St Mawgan airfield lies on the coast, dating from World War 2. Part of the site is now the Newquay Cornwall Airport and receives commercial flights, reducing the area's tranquillity. The MOD uses parts of the dunes at Penhale Sands and Holywell Bay restricting access and maintaining visually prominent communication mast complexes. There are relicts of mining at Goonhavern and North Treamble.

Field and woodland pattern

This landscape, despite the modern day tourist activity, still demonstrates the once close relationship between Anciently Enclosed Land and the Coastal Rough Ground which was once used for summer grazing. Along the coast north of Newquay there are areas of larger scale fields of Recently Enclosed Land, representing 19th century enclosure of clifftop Coastal Rough Ground. Otherwise, the field pattern is generally small to medium scale, with many areas of distinctive long-narrow fields fossilising patterns of medieval strips, as at Trevarrian and Tregurrian, south of Mawgan Porth. Agriculture is generally a mix of arable, improved/ley pasture and permanent pasture. Cornish hedges predominate with some hedgerows. Trees are found in the hedgerows in more sheltered areas back from the coast. Limited woodland occurs in sheltered valleys as riparian or valley side strips. These are usually broadleaved such as in Penwartha Combe with some mixed coniferous in places such as at Trelaske.

Settlement pattern

Settlement is concentrated in the main tourist towns of Newquay and Perranporth, both of which were until the mid-19th century small fishing ports. The Gannel is an important estuary forming a southern edge to Newquay. Here, modern housing development and large holiday resorts or shopping centres/supermarkets are visually dominant and swamp the coves of Porth and Mawgan Porth. Built development has spread beyond the enclosed valleys at the coast onto higher, more exposed land with little buffer planting to soften edges. Similarly, where caravan parks are located on skylines, they stand out as blocks of white, glistening in the sunlight in an otherwise green landscape. Elsewhere there are nucleated settlements based on enlarged medieval churchtowns, as at St Mawgan and St Columb Minor or industrial settlements as at Goonhavern, Perranporth and Newquay itself. The coastal settlements, however, have been most strongly influenced by the rise of tourism from the late nineteenth century. There is a dispersed pattern of rural settlement of medieval farmsteads and 'miners' smallholdings' and post medieval farms on late-enclosed plots. Traditional materials are stone with slate roofs.

Transport pattern

The A392 links Newquay with the A30 and A39 whilst the A3075 runs close to Perranporth. The area is therefore well connected to the trunk road network. Newquay is also on the railway network. Many of the main roads have modern large scale developments associated with them, extending the commercial and tourist influence. The lanes between tend to be winding with high hedges, although sometimes the tourist developments replace these with inappropriate enclosures out of Landscape Character with the area. Newquay Cornwall Airport provides a link to short haul destinations. The South West Coast Path runs along the cliffs and alongside the dunes. In the old mining area close to Goonhavern is an intricate network of footpaths, bridleways and by ways. A disused railway line links Newquay with Perranporth and St Agnes (LCA 14).

Historic features

Prehistoric monuments are particularly visible on the coast, including a number of prominent Bronze Age barrows on cliff tops and headlands, and a series of Iron Age promontory forts or cliff castles at Penhale Point, Kelsey Head, Trevelgue Head and Griffin's Point. There are numerous traces of later prehistoric

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defended farmsteads (rounds) within the Anciently Enclosed Land part of the CA, indicating a long history of dispersed agricultural settlement in the area. Archaeological investigations in the Newquay urban area have discovered a Bronze Age settlement and Iron Age cemetery at Trethellan and Romano-British activity close to Atlantic Road. A settlement of the tenth and eleventh centuries AD has been investigated at Mawgan Porth. The church at St Columb Minor is a medieval foundation linked with the collegiate church at Crantock. St Piran's Oratory and Church at Penhale Sands are important Cornish cultural sites, together with St Piran's Round. Rialton Manor was owned by Bodmin Priory at the time of Domesday and was later the head manor of the medieval hundred of Pydar with administrative functions. The large mansion at Lanherne, St Mawgan, was a centre for the important Cornish family of Arundell, as was the splendid later sixteenth century manor of Trerice. The CA includes areas of mining remains around Penhale Sands, Perranporth and Goonhavern and significant features of Newquay's development as an industrial port also survive. The architecture of some of Newquay's major hotels also reflects an important phase in the development of railway-based tourism. St Mawgan airfield dates from World War II.

Condition

Well managed farmland generally although some fields in decline. Some rough ground and dunes close to tourist areas show signs of wear.

Pressures

- Tourism- holiday facilities, caravan parks, theme parks, golf courses, signage.
 - Walls and enclosure, road improvements.
 - Reduced management of rough land.
 - Recreation pressure on coast path.
 - Expansion of Newquay.
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Aesthetic and sensory

The area is an exposed, coastal influenced landscape, with the smell of the sea prevalent. The quiet rural parts and the wild landscape character of both cliff tops, headland, and sand dunes provides a sense of escape and tranquillity away from honey-pots full of people and activity during the summer months. It is also the contrast of these areas with those that have been altered by tourism that help highlight the value of this coastal landscape.

Distinctive features

The most distinctive features are the long wide west facing surf beaches, the cliffs, coastal rough ground and dunes as well as holiday parks.

Visions and objectives

An area where there is a strong contrast between the developed and undeveloped coast. The objective must be to conserve the undeveloped sections of coast and improve the appearance of the tourist areas, restoring and repairing in keeping with the landscape character that makes this area such a popular destination.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Create a coastal management plan to conserve the undeveloped coast, manage areas subject to wear and tear and accommodate the requirements of the tourist industry.

Develop a design guide to enhance caravan and holiday parks and reduce their visual intrusion in the general landscape.

Soften urban edges with appropriate mitigation and planting.

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