

Landscape Character Type 1: Plateaux

LCT 1A OPEN INLAND PLANNED PLATEAUX

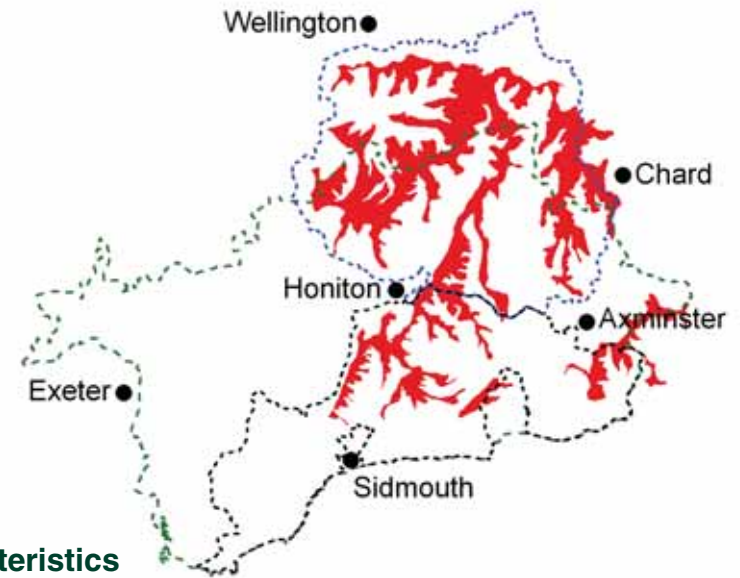
Constituent Land Description Units 104, 143, 145, 154, 155, 158, 159, 166

Location

These inland plateaux are located on high ground throughout the area, with a general north/south trend except in the NW, where the trend is east/west. In the south they are more obviously dissected by incised river valleys.

Description

This type is the most elevated of the plateau landscape types, open and clearly visible over a wide area, with an abrupt boundary to the adjoining landscape type – the steeply sloping scarp. Its landform is level to gently rolling, sloping at the edges and extending into long, narrow ridges, which share the same land use and landscape pattern, at a smaller scale and over more undulating terrain. Dairy farming is the dominant land use, with some mixed cultivation, on heavy brown soils underlain with clay-with-flints or Upper Greensand. The very uniform appearance is due to the regular field pattern and lack of woodland. Both field and road boundaries are low, fairly narrow earth banks with short (0.5-1m height) hedges and sparsely scattered hedgerow trees. Fields are of medium to large size, rectangular in shape, indicating 19th century enclosure of former common land, with some unenclosed areas and relic commons (now copses) and small conifer plantations. Beech is a prominent species in hedges and as a hedgerow tree, especially in the north, with oak and overgrown hazel hedges more common in the south and towards the edge of the plateaux. In the northern part of the plateaux some roads are lined with mature beech trees. Long straight roads occupy the centre of the plateau, with minor roads at right-angled junctions, winding and narrowing towards the plateau edge. Settlement is limited to isolated farmsteads and occasional clusters of buildings, usually at crossroads, except for 20th century settlement associated with airfields. (Older settlements span the boundary with the scarp). Although there are extensive views across and out of the plateaux, these may be obscured by woodland on the adjoining scarp slopes.



Key Characteristics

- High open flat plateaux
- Rectangular field pattern of medium to large scale
- Predominantly pastoral farming on heavy soils
- Well trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks
- Sparsely scattered boundary trees, usually beech with oak towards plateau edge
- Very uniform appearance
- Beech is frequent at the northern end of the area, with oak and hazel more common towards south and around edge
- Occasional copses and small conifer plantations punctuate the open farmland
- Long straight roads in centre, with narrow winding minor roads towards the edge
- Isolated farmsteads and clusters of buildings at crossroads; 20th century settlement associated with airfields
- Extensive views often blocked by woodland on boundary



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging management to maintain hedges at between 1 and 2 metres of woody growth to encourage species diversity. Plant up gaps and replace individual hedgerow trees as they become over mature or die, but ensure that they are appropriately spaced
2. Encouraging maintenance of earth banks.
3. Encouraging continuing management of beech hedges and tree rows to maintain local prominence, including replanting individual trees in rows to maintain continuity, while generally encouraging the planting of locally indigenous multi-species hedges.
4. Encouraging management of ditches and verges to ensure their continued contribution to the ecological network.

Farming and land use: conserve by

1. Encouraging the maintenance of pastoral farming as the dominant land use throughout this type.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

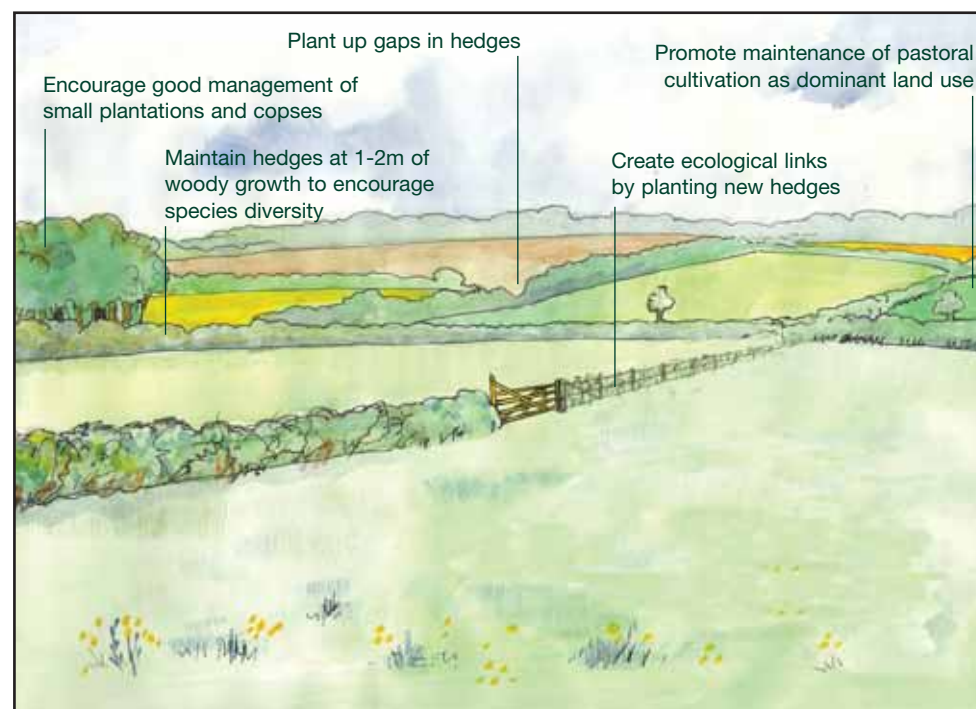
1. Encouraging the management of scrub and bracken invasion to improve wet heath habitats.
2. Encouraging an integrated approach to the management of the biodiversity and archaeological resource.
3. Encouraging good management of the small copses in damp patches and the creation of ecological links to existing field boundaries by planting new hedges.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the retention and management of small estate plantations and coverts, which are characteristic of this landscape type.
2. Encouraging a change to broadleaf cover or manage as (wet) heath, where appropriate, as conifer plantations mature to increase local biodiversity and create more effective ecological corridors.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the existing settlement pattern; resisting anything other than small-scale development.
2. Locating development away from the plateau edge, where it would be more visible.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Semi natural habitats: Identifying and surveying areas of heathland, acid grassland and species-rich permanent pasture

Informal recreation: Balancing the recreation and educational (biodiversity and historic) value of unenclosed areas of permanent pasture ground, (many of which have already been identified as former turbaries, and their biodiversity potential assessed). Most are located away from roads and are accessible only by pedestrian rights of way.

Transport network: Discussing with highways authorities ways of reducing signage without jeopardizing road safety, as the local pattern encourages speeding, while signage detracts from the openness and unsettled character.