

Landscape Character Type 2: Scarp slopes

LCT 2B COASTAL SLOPES AND COMBES

Constituent Land Description Units 04, 29, 59, 61, 63, 64, 95

Location

A series of incisions in the south coast, between Sidmouth and Beer, excluding the river valleys and estuaries of the Otter, Sid and Axe.

Description

Individual small coastal areas of generally wooded slopes and branching valley systems. Many valleys are narrow and steep, with well wooded upper slopes and remnant orchards, and have an intimate, tranquil and enclosed character. Other valleys are more gently sloping and have an open scrubby downland character, especially along their upper boundaries. Land cover is a mix of unenclosed woodland and small to medium irregular fields, mainly in pastoral cultivation and with much wet pasture. This gives way to scrub along the upper edge of the adjoining cliffs. There is little settlement on the steeper slopes, but within the wider combes historic settlements often occur as a series of hamlets, occasionally with a strong tourism influence where there is reasonable vehicular access. The road network is generally narrow and winding, with very little vehicle access to the coast. Steep paths down to beaches and the South West Coast Path provide extensive rights of way for pedestrians and access to the high, open and exhilarating top slopes with their extensive coastal views.



Key Characteristics

- **Narrow, steep valleys or more open shallow systems**
- **Coastal influence in exposure, vegetation and extensive views**
- **Mix of unenclosed woodland, especially along watercourses, and small to medium irregular fields**
- **Mainly pasture, with wet pasture and scrub**
- **Earth banks**
- **Old settlements in combes, with stone as dominant building material**
- **Narrow winding roads and limited vehicle access to coast**
- **Extensive coastal rights of way with steep paths down to beaches**
- **High, open and exhilarating on top slopes, grading to intimate and enclosed in lower valley**
- **Remnant orchards**



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging management that maintains the characteristic earth banks, often with mature tree rows on top.
2. Encouraging management and restoration of historic field boundaries.

Farming and land use: conserve and restore by

1. Encouraging retention and restoration of permanent pasture throughout, especially on the plateau boundary.
2. Maintaining unimproved pasture.

Field pattern: conserve and enhance by

1. Retaining the unenclosed pattern of the wooded parts of this type.
2. In pastoral areas, encouraging (a) retention of the irregular, small to medium, boundary pattern; (b) good management of field boundaries, including gapping up where necessary; and (c) the retention and maintenance of locally distinctive field gates.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the management of scrub, especially gorse, to prevent scrubbing up.
2. Encouraging the conservation and improvement of ecological corridors by planting new hedges or copses to link discrete woodlands.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

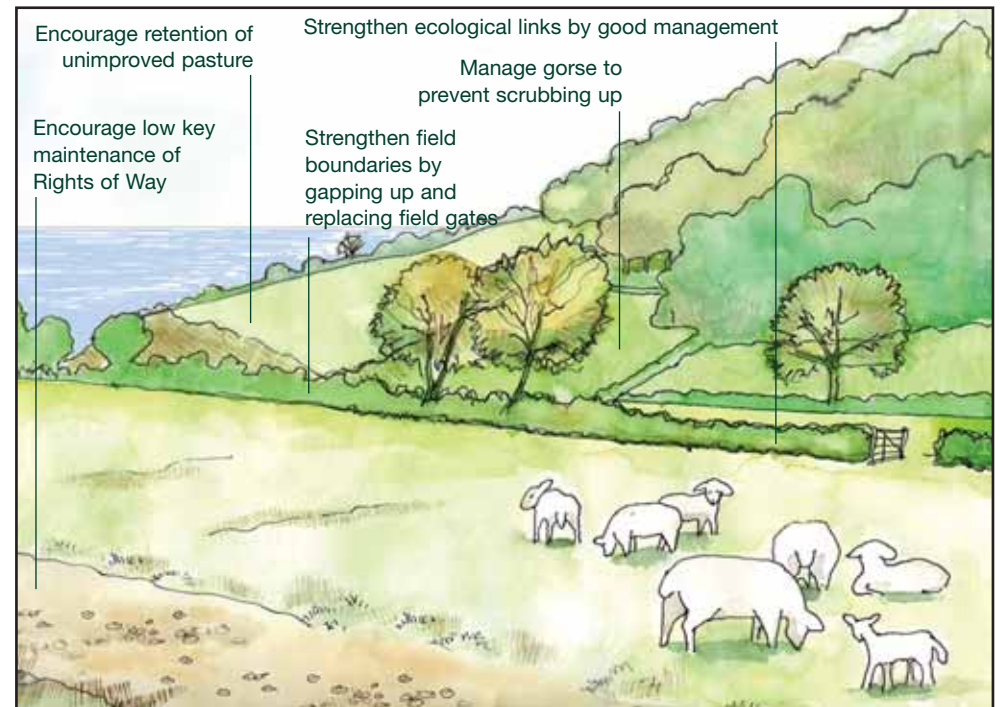
1. Encouraging the planting of broadleaves where new or extended woodlands are appropriate.

Informal recreation: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the appropriate maintenance of rights of way along the coast (South West Coast Path) and through combs down to the beach.
2. Encouraging the creation and maintenance of rights of way through appropriate woodland areas, to broaden recreational opportunities and reduce pressure on the coastal combs.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent pattern of sparse settlement.
2. Ensuring that recreation and leisure-related infrastructure along the coast and at the mouth of combs are of a scale, size and type that contribute to the unspoilt character and tranquillity of the cliff landscapes in the adjacent Landscape Character Type.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Farming and land use: Promoting the maintenance and restoration of orchards.