

# CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



## Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Middle Tamar Valley

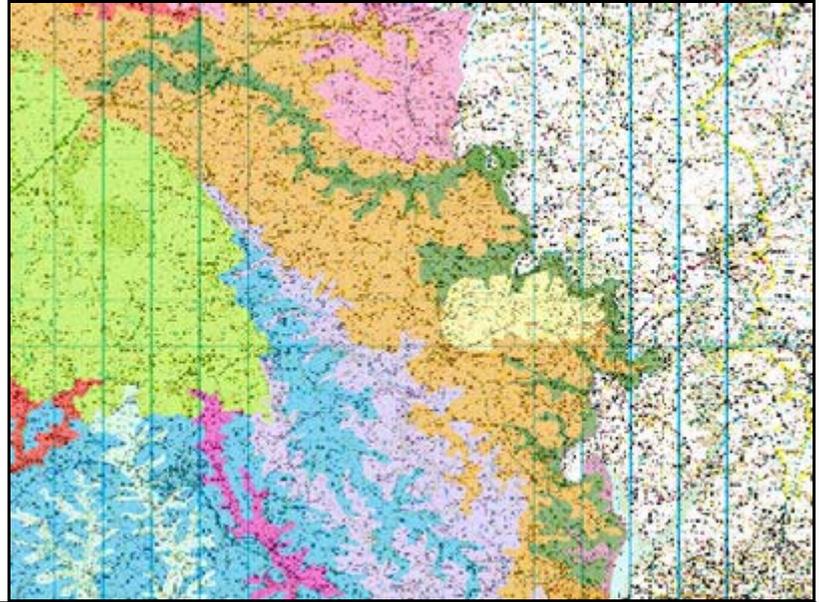
LCA No

CA29

JCA

### Constituent LDUs

Total 8: 33, 90, 301, 408, 412, T02, T14, T18 (T07, T11, T17, T22, T24 in Devon)



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**Location** Middle reaches of river Tamar (and lower part of River Inny), and its many short tributaries, from the outskirts of Saltash in the south to Bohetherick, and through its upper meanders towards Launceston (Greystone Bridge/ Treburley). The Landscape Character Area takes in the valley of the River Inny to Polyphant.

**Designations** All LDUs are within the Tamar Valley AONB; 5 are within the Tamar Valley WHS; 5 contain SSSIs. Five LDUs contain SPAs and 7 contain SACs; 4 contain SMs.

## Description

River valley with picturesque views over water, gently undulating farmland and extensive woodland. Gorge-like effect of river system, especially where it has cut through the granite ridge. The south-flowing river follows a highly sinuous and changing course, often with very steep wooded sides. Its generally short tributary valleys have a complex folded landscape character and are barely visible from adjoining high land, especially in the south. Further north the topography becomes more gentle and open, with a more typical river valley aspect.

### Key Landscape Characteristics

River valley, narrow in parts, meanders in tight loops between steep wooded slopes, with dramatic gorge through granite ridge.

Inner meanders support wider floodplains with improved farmland behind earth dykes and outer fringe of Coastal Saltmarsh and Reedbeds.

Extensive mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland on valley sides, with improved grassland and pasture on lower lying areas and pockets of arable or horticultural land on higher valley edge.

Medieval quaysides and 19th mining settlements.

Core of Tamar WHS area with mine spoil, engine houses and chimneys dominant features in the landscape.

Winding narrow sunken lanes and 'packhorse' paths give access to former quays.

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Lower Inny Valley, a shallow meandering tributary valley with broadleaved woodland, wetlands and Fens and Wet Woodland and slopes of bracken, scrub and neutral grassland above.

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### Geology and soils

Shallow hard rock soils over hard rock; the mines of this area exploited an important concentration of tin, copper and arsenic lodes. Sandy brown soils with some alluvium and fen peat. Important mineralogical sites on spoil tips.

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### Topography and drainage

Dramatic landform with steeply sloping valley sides around incised river through gorge with narrow floodplain. Main river with several minor tributaries, draining south east. Inny Valley more open and slow flowing.

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### Biodiversity

The Landscape Character Area is well-wooded with extensive mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland on sloping valley sides, with areas of Upland Oakwood and Upland Mixed Ashwoods, some within semi-natural or replanted Ancient Woodland, and some on former mine sites, and some designated at SSSI as at Greenscombe Wood. A high proportion of them have conifer plantations within them. Further upstream in the Inny valley along the valley bottoms there is some Wet Woodland and small areas of wetland with Fens. Also on the steep slopes in the middle section of the Inny Valley are small areas of neutral grassland, bracken and scrub. These habitats form almost continuous corridors of semi-natural vegetation. Below Calstock towards the lower Tamar valley are small areas of estuarine habitats; Fens, Reedbeds and Coastal Saltmarsh. Together with Fens and other wetland habitats, flatter areas of the neutral and improved grassland close to the river and alongside LCA 27 (Lower Tamar and Tavy Valleys) have been identified as Coastal Floodplain and Grazing Marsh, important for wintering birds, and are part of or are adjacent to the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC. Most of the farmed land is improved grassland or pasture with some in horticultural use and little arable land, with networks of Cornish hedges with mature trees forming ecological corridors. Former mine sites support important flora and fauna in places. . The habitats in the LCA closely borders and links to adjacent habitats in LCA 27 along the river Tamar and LCA 26 in the Inny Valley.

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### Land Cover

Mainly pastoral farmland with improved grassland, limited horticultural and little arable use. There is extensive mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland, with scrub and bracken in the Inny Valley, and over relic mine sites. Towards the lower part of the Tamar valley are estuarine habitats of Reedbeds and Coastal Saltmarsh.

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### Land Use

The steep wooded valley sides are well-wooded with some improved grassland and pasture on lower slopes and valley bottoms. There is very little arable land. Tourism, recreation and amenity uses are prevalent. There are several areas of former and current market gardening and orchards e.g. Bohetherick, and Calstock.

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### Field and woodland pattern

Unenclosed or small fields with curving sinuous boundaries, mainly post-Medieval in origin, with well-wooded Cornish hedges with trees. Remnant strip patterns and orchards lie on the slopes downstream of Calstock. Mining smallholdings feature in the central section around Gunnislake. Extensive woodlands occur on steeper valley sides giving a strongly wooded appearance to landscape.

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### Settlement pattern

Clustered villages with scattered small farms. Small nucleated riverside villages are typical. Local materials are stone and slate. A mix of medieval and mining settlements. Morwellham, (Devon) once an important port, is maintained as a museum of living history. Several settlements along the western shores of the Tamar and Inny are of medieval origin, Cargreen, Botus Fleming, Calstock, Gunnislake, and Latchley associated with the medieval road network and crossing points for the Tamar and Inny. There are a substantial number of medieval farm and manorial settlements within the area and elite houses at Cotehele (just outside in LCA 26 ( East Cornwall and Tamar Moorland Fringe)) and Pentille.

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### Transport pattern

The A390 crosses the valley at Gunnislake. Elsewhere the pattern is of winding lanes with Cornish hedges with hedgerows throughout, often steep. Ancient routes converge on former quays. The railway (Tamar Valley Line) crosses this LCA on a notable viaduct at Calstock.

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### Historic features

There is a cluster of later prehistoric hillforts at Carthamartha and, just outside the LCA to the north, Castle Park Hill, facing similar sites on the Devon side of the Tamar; there is also a series of small defended farm enclosures on the slopes above the Inny. A possible early Christian monastic site lies alongside the river at Landulph and there are medieval chapels at Chapel, St Dominick, and Cotehele chapel. A number of historic bridges over the Inny lie within this Landscape Character Area. Kerrybullock deer park near Lockett was the largest of the Duchy of Cornwall's medieval deer parks, extending over some 600 acres. The extensive woodlands and plantations along the Tamar were to an extent ornamental, offering pleasure drives and walks, but were also the focus of industrial activity for timber and bark and charcoal burning. Mining was a major industrial component of the LCA and much of the river trade would have been associated with it; there are extensive mining remains in the Calstock, Cotehele and Gunnislake areas. Downgate, Lockett, Calstock and Gunnislake all developed in response to the rise of large-scale mining in the area. Other industries included lime burning and numerous mills, particularly on the Tamar's tributaries.

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### Condition

Good in river valley with widespread intact and well managed ecological corridor and balanced mix and age structure of trees coupled with low intensity land use. Many mine sites have been conserved but further work is necessary to arrest serious decline in condition. Chimneys collapse each winter. Problems with invasive plants in the riparian corridor, partly due to the abandonment of farming on marginal land. Increased use of polytunnels on surviving horticultural holdings.

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### Pressures

- Tourism.
  - Settlement expansion.
  - Decline in farming, horticulture and river-based industries.
  - Rising house prices in countryside accessible to Plymouth.
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### Aesthetic and sensory

A tranquil area confined by woodland. A dramatic and atmospheric landscape created by its strong landform and land use, focused on the river.

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### Distinctive features

River landscape and granite gorge; strong contrast with open heath of Kit Hill to the west.

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### Visions and objectives

Maintain the very distinctive character of this landscape by retaining existing land uses, controlling development and enhancing and managing its woodlands.

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## Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Conserve wooded landscape character by ensuring that valley side woodlands are well managed and encouraging planting/replanting with native broadleaved species.

Encourage re-stocking of pastures, especially by the river, to prevent invasion by scrub and invasive plants.

Enhance local settlements by ensuring, through provision of design guidance, so that development reflects local vernacular style and materials.

Conserve and protect the internationally important mining heritage, including mining settlements and smallholdings, implement World Heritage Site Management plan.

Conserve and protect current and former quays and encourage use of the river for transport.

Conserve valuable riparian and valley floor habitats by encouraging retention of and reversion to wetland habitats, plus control of invasive plants.

Enhance local distinctiveness by encouraging restoration/recreation of traditional fruit growing and orchards within area.