

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Fal Ria, Truro and Falmouth

LCA No CA13

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 38: 23, 24, 58, 68, 69, 102, 103, 157U, 158U, 159, 160U, 161, 162U, 165, 166U, 167, 235, 236, 247, 329, 338, 341, 342, 371, 391, 392U, 394U, 395U, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400U, 401U, 402, 405, 406U, 415



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved.
Cornwall County Council 100019590, 2008.

Location	Includes the area around Falmouth and Truro and west towards Shortlanesend and Threemilstone. Includes the Tresillian and Percuil river systems and takes in the coastal margin of the Roseland peninsula to Portscatho.
Designations	19 LDUs are either completely or partly within the AONB; 16 LDUs contain SSSIs; 3 LDUs are within the Roseland Heritage Coast; 5 are within the WHS Devoran area and 1 within the Gwennap WHS area. 18 LDUs contain SACs; 19 contain SMs and there is 1 CGS site.

Description

This Landscape Character Area is dominated and strongly influenced by the Fal Ria, which comprises a series of interlocking tributary creeks flowing into the River Fal which widens out into a large estuary and internationally important deep water harbour. The Ria changes appearance daily, the low tides revealing silted up creeks and Interidal Mudflats with Coastal Saltmarsh vegetation that grades in places to wetland and wet grassland and Wet Woodland. Saline Lagoons are found in a few places. The area is also influenced strongly by the coast at its southern edge, with a narrow coastal strip of rough ground and low cliffs and headlands that shelter sandy beaches. Defence fortifications at each side of the mouth of the estuary such as Pendennis and St Mawes Castles, and the twentieth-century battery and gun emplacements at St Anthony Head, demonstrate the harbour's strategic importance. The creeks and rivers form a series of steep valleys cloaked in ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. In some areas the woodland has been cleared and pasture extends to the water, often with scrubby vegetation. On the ridges between the valleys there is a variable land use of forestry and mixed farmland of both arable and pastoral, with extensive arable land use creating an impression of a rich and productive landscape. There are significant areas of estate with distinctive ornamental and conifer planting, Monterey Pines a distinctive feature. The field pattern is mainly small and irregular anciently enclosed land with larger and more regular fields indicating the more recent enclosure of rough ground and the removal in places of Cornish hedges. Some areas of rough ground with Lowland Heathland and Fens survive, as at Carrine Common. Settlement is hugely influenced by the rivers. Older settlements lie mostly at the heads of the historically navigable reaches of the river systems, with later waterside settlements closely associated with the rise of industrial

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

and commercial activity. A few settlements away from navigable rivers lie along the valley floor in linear form along the transport corridors, or at valley crossing points. Later housing generally extends up the valley sides. The western side of the ria is much more developed than the eastern side and much more urban with Falmouth and Penryn close to the estuary, and Truro at the uppermost navigable point. Road, rail and river transport links in between these settlements, docks, shipping and industrial and waterfront development give the western side of this character area a very busy feel which is far from tranquil, except in the more isolated creeks. In contrast, on the eastern side of the ria, pretty villages many with medieval churches nestle at the heads of tranquil creeks and largely retain their historic scale and layout. There is a strong vernacular of slate walls rendered and painted white, pink or cream with slate and thatched roofs. Another important feature occurring at the heads of creeks are tide mills with waterwheels that were driven by the tide such as at Polingey creek, Lamorran, Penpol and Froe.

Key Landscape Characteristics

An interlocking and winding ria (drowned river valley) system of small creeks and river valleys that drain into the River Fal that broadens to form the Fal Estuary.

Muddy creeks with brackish open water and wet grassland, merging with Coastal Saltmarsh close to tidal limits.

Semi-natural woodland and Ancient Woodland on steep slopes, with ornamental and conifer estate planting inland on the undulating plateau with Monterey Pines a feature. Where woodland does not dominate the slopes there are pasture fields usually with scrub vegetation down to the water's edge. Extensive forestry north of Ladock and west of Tresillian.

Farmland is a mix of pasture and arable with some areas of upland rough ground with a small field pattern of anciently enclosed land with more regular larger fields indicating areas of more recent enclosure. Fields are bounded by Cornish Hedges with extensive tree cover on these boundaries, adding to the wooded feel.

Creeks that are dominated by former ports in small villages, with an industrial, water-related character of small quays and landing stages.

Harbours and defence fortifications at the mouth of the estuary. Quays and tide mills at the heads of creeks.

A coastal zone of low rocky cliffs backed by farmland interspersed with discrete woodlands.

Transition between coastal and tidal river waterscapes, with many boats and ships emphasizing the marine character.

Medieval settlements at the heads of creeks with strong vernacular of slate with render, painted pink, cream or white with frequent medieval churches. Linear villages occur along main transport routes on the valley floors with some larger urban and industrial areas.

Tree lines linking villages, farms and cottages and forming tunnels.

A busy landscape with much movement of people between the urban centres and lots of river traffic.

Geology and soils

Mainly shallow hard rock soils over hard rock of the middle and undifferentiated Devonian periods with slates, greywackes and siltstones giving rise to well-drained fine loamy soils. At the marine levels there are estuarine muds.

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

Topography and drainage

A river landscape of low rounded hills divided by an intricate system of small twisting valleys that drain into the vast ria system at the heart of the area. The rivers are tidal as far inland as Truro and Tresillian. The ria forms an estuary stretching inland from Falmouth to almost Truro and is one of the largest natural harbours in the world. The valleys of the main rivers, Rivers Fal, Tresillian and Truro and their tributaries, cut deep into the plateau. Valley sides are steep and well wooded. At the coast the cliffs are low with headlands sheltering sandy beaches.

Biodiversity

With the juxtaposition of the wild land associated with the estuarine ria, with the urban centres of Truro and Falmouth, this Landscape Character Area has a varied range of natural, semi-natural and urban habitats, making it a rich area for biodiversity. The steeper slopes of the many small valleys have significant areas of broadleaved woodland and in places conifer plantation. Much of the woodland is Ancient Woodland with large areas of Upland Oakwood and Upland Mixed Ashwoods on the slopes, linking to areas of scrub, bracken and neutral grassland, and wetlands with Wet Woodland and fragmented areas of Fens in the valley bottoms along, and at the head of, the many small streams. Carine Common SAC has a large area of Lowland Heathland with associated Fens and neutral grassland. The LCA has several estates with planned landscapes which have areas of Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland, as at Tresillian, Enys, Trewarthenick and Pencalenick. The farmed land is predominantly improved grassland and arable, with a network of Cornish hedges linking the semi-natural habitats in the stream valleys, and in the more sheltered parts mature trees on hedges are a feature. There is a high proportion of intertidal habitat, with large areas of Coastal Saltmarsh and Intertidal Mudflats, with smaller areas of Reedbeds, and Saline Lagoons at Swanpool, Trelissick, Froe and Tresempole Pond. The LCA also includes the coastal strip at the southern tip of the Roseland peninsula, which has maritime cliff, scrub, bracken and small areas of neutral grassland, and part of the coast is within the Fal and Helford SAC.

Land Cover

Most of the land cover is farmland and estate lands with dense woodland interspersed with unsettled rough ground mainly in the inland parts of the valley system. A significant area is the built environment of Truro and Falmouth. The ria has extensive mudflats within the estuary grading to saltmarsh and brackish wetland habitats.

Land Use

Land use is mainly pastoral farmland and parkland with some forestry. The west side of the river is settled with a number of developments of detached houses in their own grounds as well as the major towns of Truro and Falmouth and surrounding villages. There is a high level of recreational and tourist provision especially around the estuary. Harbours can be found at St Mawes and Falmouth as well as marina facilities in the creeks. There is an industrial docks complex at Falmouth. Historical fortifications stand at the mouth of the estuary for the protection of the anchorage.

Field and woodland pattern

Most of the undeveloped ridges between the river valleys are predominantly Anciently Enclosed Land of small fields with sinuous boundaries with early medieval farming settlements scattered through them, many with names prefixed by tre. There are a few areas of more recent enclosure of former heath and rough ground with a larger scale pattern reinforced by rectilinear fields with straight boundaries. The prominent tree-lined boundaries add to sense of a wooded area. Some Cornish hedges have visible stone facing. Throughout the area are blocks of interlocking mixed woodland which are especially prominent in the parkland areas. There are large blocks of ancient, broadleaved woodland along the creeks but generally less than in the Helford Ria, (LCA09). Gaunt Monterey pines make a distinguished impact on the

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

area.

Settlement pattern

The general rural settlement pattern is dispersed medieval farm hamlets, many now shrunk to single farms. Older nucleated settlements mostly lie at the head of the historically navigable portions of the rivers and developed as trading ports; these include Penryn, Truro and Tregony; sea-going vessels could reach as far as Tregony and Tresillian before the rivers silted up. St Mawes is unusual as a medieval port relatively close to the open sea. Other settlements grew as post-medieval commercial and industrial ports, as at Falmouth and, on a smaller scale, Tresillian, Devoran and Point. Grampound was a medieval 'new town' at a bridging point on a main routeway. Ponsanooth is a post-medieval industrial settlement. On the western bank of the estuary Truro, Penryn and Falmouth have developed as major urban areas with the villages in between being enlarged by areas of low density housing. Although the area is well treed the intensive industrial and residential developments greatly influence the character of the area. Although Truro has largely turned its back on the river, Falmouth's waterfront has been redeveloped and many of the quays as well as the docks area remain. The land around Mylor Bridge is bordered by two creeks and retains a special intimate character, with significant parklands and woodland, and attractive little villages, connected by many small lanes lined by trees, forming tunnels of vegetation. The area to the east of the main estuary is much more rural and less easily accessible, St Mawes close to the mouth of the estuary is the major settlement on this side.

Transport pattern

The main transport routes are the A390 in the north of the character area and the A39 on the western side of the ria. The remainder of the area is served by B roads and winding, well treed minor roads. Truro is on the main railway network with a branch line to Falmouth. Ferry crossings are at Trelissick, (King Harry Ferry) taking cars and passenger ferry from Falmouth to St Mawes. Footpaths and woodland walks are local features. The river was formerly the major transport highway and is now heavily used for recreation, the Carrick Roadstead being one of the largest natural harbours in the world. Falmouth was a major port until the early 20th C and still has industrial dockland. Truro retains the historic Town Quay, which small vessels can approach at high tide, but modern quay facilities have been created on the Truro River to the south of the town at Lighterage Quay.

Historic features

The Landscape Character Area includes numerous traces of Iron Age and Roman period defended farm enclosures (rounds), emphasising the well-settled nature of the landscape in later prehistory, and there is an unusual defended riverside enclosed site of this period at Roundwood. There are probable sites of early medieval Christian settlements at many creekside settlements, including Lamorran, St Clement and Feock. Well-preserved remains of the historic urban topography of medieval 'new towns' survive at Truro, Penryn, Tregony and Grampound; Tregony is also notable for the survival of a fossilised medieval stripfield system. King Harry Ferry is an ancient crossing, with spectacular scenic views and occasionally ocean-going shipping laid up in the reaches. Pendennis and St Mawes castles have defended the estuary since the early 16th century; a further battery at St Anthony Head is late nineteenth and twentieth century in date. Devoran on the end of the Mineral Tramway displays the remains of an historic industrial port. A major element of the LCA in the vicinity of the river network is the large ornamental landscapes laid out around the Tregothnan, Trelissick (National Trust), Enys, Trefusis and Carclew estates.

Condition

Intact and generally well managed, but with a mature tree structure and some poor hedges. In some areas farmland is more often arable and/or scrubby. The river corridors are intact with range of habitats grading into each other. 18th/ 19th century field pattern re-organisation and 20th century hedge removal has

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

enlarged the scale and increased the sense of openness of some areas, especially near Truro and Falmouth. The large urban centres (Falmouth and Truro) have a significant impact over a wide landscape. These centres are larger than most in the county and out of scale with the landscape pattern. The tranquillity of some rural areas can be disturbed by river activity (seasonal). Conversion of pasture to arable and increasing industrial development dilutes farmland character. Recreational pressure on water leads to loss of tranquillity. Within some transport corridors there are cumulative impacts from road/rail and river links and associated modern infrastructure - scale and materials. Some localised impacts from mineral extraction. Urban and rural development and the transport corridor impact on the rural/riverside landscapes. Wind turbines and pylons impact as does golf course and campsites. Sensitive to urban sprawl, housing creep along transport corridors and poor management of field boundaries.

Pressures

- Water-recreation linked infrastructure.
 - Development spreading out from urban centres along transport network.
 - Increasing transport network improvement /demand.
 - Creeks and river may still be subject to siltation, which may limit navigation/recreation.
 - Change in agricultural practice.
 - Conversion of farm buildings to industrial units and urban development to industrial buildings.
 - Redevelopment of large waterside sites.
 - Flood defences.
-

Aesthetic and sensory

An open landscape subject to tidal changes. Light reflecting off the water increases the awareness of the river and contrasts with the landcover. The wooded valleys feel enclosed, especially in the upper river reaches. This is an area of great contrasts. Tranquil in many parts despite the major conurbations and traffic routes. There are spectacular views along the river and creeks from various viewpoints (King Harry Ferry, Tolverne). The sheltered local climate has permitted the development of pockets of landscape such as the grove of palms in the churchyard at St Just-in-Roseland, and the important ornamental landscapes of large estates such as Treliassick, Pencalenick and Tregothnan.

Distinctive features

Good views over Falmouth Docks from Castle Drive, and of river from ferries; fortifications at entrance to estuary (Pendennis and St Mawes castles). Truro Cathedral; Many former ports, such as Penryn, Pill, Roundwood, Restronguet, now silted up, but with attractive relic quays; Collegewood viaduct at Penryn; Tresillian maltings.

Visions and objectives

This is a stunning visual landscape dominated by the Fal estuary, its creeks and its side rivers. Even though the area encompasses the busy towns of Truro, Falmouth and Penryn with their associated villages and housing developments, the creeks appear to maintain their air of tranquillity, a sense that is equally found in the enclosed valleys of the upper sections of the rivers. The objective must be to maintain this natural beauty whilst accommodating development and increased recreational use.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- Develop a strategy for the use and recreation of the tidal estuary and creeks.
 - Support measures to control the water environment and seek to influence the design of flood defences to ensure they are integrated with the landscape.
 - Develop design guidance for new development.
-

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

Support measures for woodland management, especially the oak woodland on the steep valley sides above the estuary, and seek to extend woodland where appropriate.

Seek to restrict development in the river valleys but develop a strategy to allow more recreational access.

Conserve variety and contrast of river landscape through preparation and use of planning guidelines for new infrastructure associated with recreation and other river activities.

Conserve the tranquillity of undeveloped creeks along with the size and scale of creekside settlements.

Conserve the character of farmsteads through the development and location of design guidance for farm conversions.

Conserve historic gardens by providing information and access to funding.