

C. Low Farmed Coast and Marsh



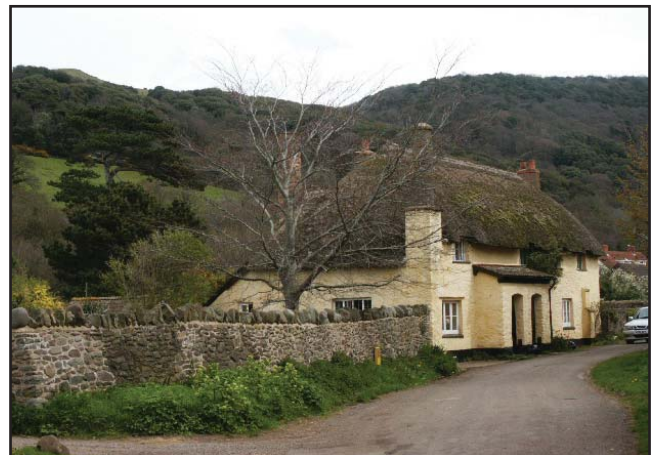
Bossington Hill frames the enclosed farmland and the open, treeless saltmarshes.



Limekilns and World War II pill boxes are landmark features where the marshes meet the shingle ridge of Bossington Beach.



Locally distinctive hedgebanks – pebble-faced using material from the adjacent beach.



Pebble walls and rounded chimney stacks on thatched cottages form a strong sense of place at Bossington.



Views across the farmed landscape (pasture and arable) to the village of Porlock – the High Wooded Coast and Combes landscape forming a striking backdrop.

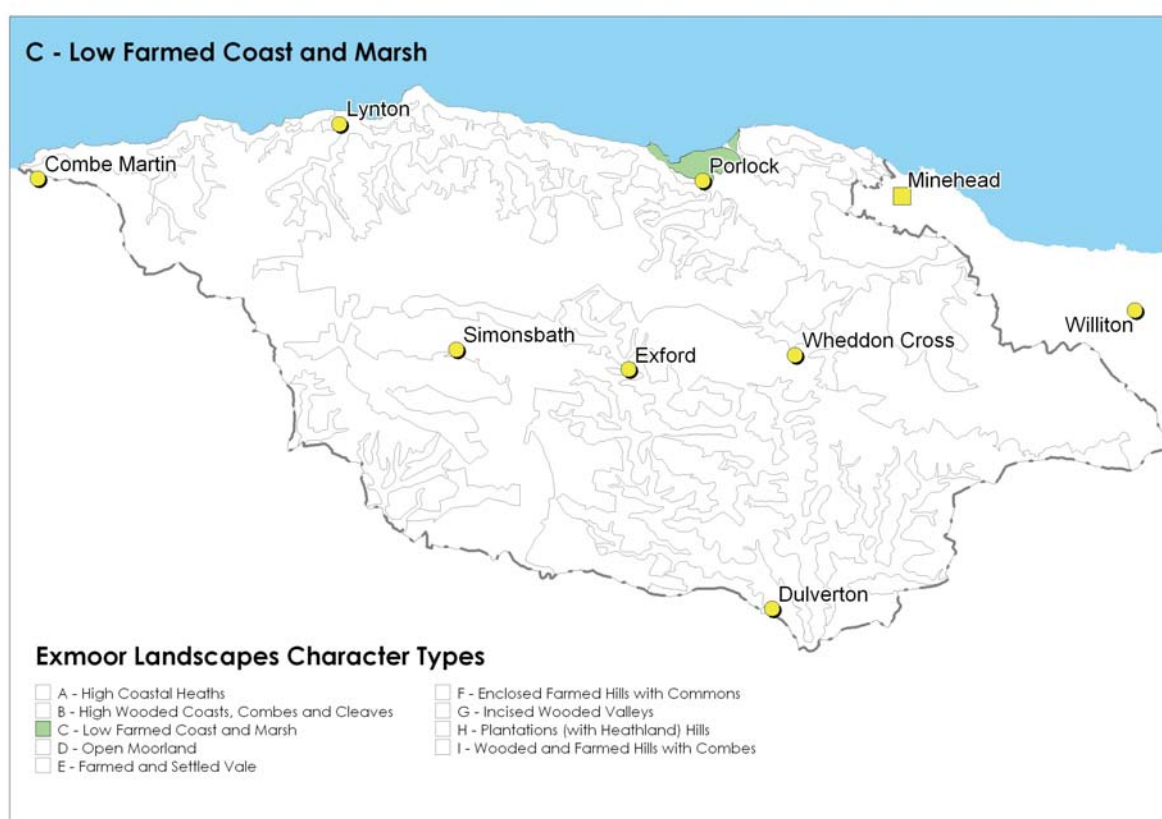


Hurlstone Point forms a strong natural container on the east side of Porlock Bay.

5. C: Low Farmed Coast and Marsh

Location and Boundaries

- 5.1 There is just one character area (Porlock - Bossington) belonging to the **Low Farmed Coast and Marsh** landscape type. The area occurs within the northeast of the National Park. Located at the heads of the *Porlock- Dunster - Minehead Farmed and Settled Vale*, and abutting the pronounced landforms of Bossington Hill and Worthy Wood, the *Porlock – Bossington Low Farmed Coast and Marsh* forms a broad arc of land that fronts and opens out onto Bossington Beach, Porlock Beach and Porlock Bay.



Key Characteristics

- Simple land cover of **open, treeless salt marshes giving way further inland to enclosed farmland** of improved pastures and some cereal cropping.
- **Strong influence of the sea due** to proximity to, and views across, **Porlock Bay** (from the shingle ridge).

- Separated from Porlock and Bossington beaches by a shingle ridge (Porlock Ridge). The ridge has been breached, resulting in a change from freshwater to saltwater marsh behind.
- **Striking flat terrain** (occurring at 5-15m AOD) contrasting with enclosing landforms of the adjacent wooded slopes, coastal heaths and vale.
- Surface geology defined by **drift river deposits, salt marsh deposits** (mainly clay) and a mix of silt, sand, and clay with rock fragments.
- **Farmland defined by small fields** divided by **pebble faced hedgebanks**.
- Prominent landmark features in the form of an old **limekiln and World War II pillboxes**.
- **Settlement concentrated at Porlock Weir** and the picturesque village of **Bossington** with its **rounded chimneystacks, thatched roofs, lime-washed and stone walls**.
- **The landscape is not remote but is tranquil**. Tranquillity does however reduce in high season when visitor numbers increase.

Landscape Character Description

- 5.2 The landscape of *Porlock – Bossington Low Farmed Coast and Marsh*, is a low-lying, strikingly flat arc of land occurring between 5 and 15m AOD. The landscape looks out over Porlock Bay and is enclosed by the prominent landforms and wooded slopes of Bossington Hill to the east and Worthy Wood to the west. The coastal promontory of Hurlestone Point forms a strong container and lends significant character to the *Low Farmed Coast and Marsh* landscape. The higher ground combined with the sweep of settlement at the vale edge (West Porlock, Porlock and Bossington) forms a relatively marked transition to the adjoining *Farmed and Settled Vale*.



Flat, open landscape contained by Bossington Hill and Hurlestone Point.

- 5.3 The landscape can be split into two distinct parts – the area of agricultural land to the south and the area of open marsh to the north (abutting Porlock shingle ridge). These two areas create a strong visual contrast – the muted hues of the marsh juxtaposing with the bright green pastures of the agricultural land.
- 5.4 This is a landscape undergoing considerable natural change. The shingle ridge (Porlock Ridge) at the base of Bossington Beach, has been breached by the sea. As a result, what was once freshwater marsh on the land immediately behind has been inundated with saltwater.
- 5.5 The marshes are largely absent of vertical elements with visual interest and very much concentrated on the horizontal plane. Porlock ridge and saltmarsh is designated as SSSI, being nationally important for its coastal geomorphology and coastal habitats particularly the saltmarsh and herb-rich vegetated shingle. Lengths of fencing have been added to the edge of the saltmarsh area to direct walkers away from sites of ground nesting birds.
- 5.6 The area of farmland is characterised in the east by anciently enclosed land (modified between the 17th and 19th centuries) and by recently enclosed land (18th – 21st century) in the west. Although exhibiting different periods of enclosure, the field pattern is of regular, geometric form. Pasture (sheep, some cattle and horses) principally defines the agricultural land but there are some fields containing cereal crops. Oil seed rape in the landscape creates a dramatic flush of colour and is visually prominent when looking into the

landscape from surrounding areas of higher ground. Mixed hedgerow banks, in varying states of repair, demarcate the fields. The hedge banks are locally distinctive, faced with large pebbles from the shores of Porlock Bay.

- 5.7 The *Low Farmed Coast and Marsh* landscape is underlain by a solid geology of mudstone and sandstone but is predominantly defined by surface drift river terrace deposits, salt marsh deposits (mainly clay) and a mixture of silt, sand and clay with rock fragments. The surface geology of the farmed area is overlain by loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils that are deep, stoneless and “clayey”.
- 5.8 At the base of Bossington Beach and forming prominent landmark features are a series of ruins – a limekiln (a relic from when lime was brought by boat and kiln-heated for farming use) and defendable pillboxes built during the Second World War.
- 5.9 The picturesque village of Bossington has a quaint character. With the majority of dwellings owned by the National Trust (the village forming part of the Holnicote Estate) there is a consistent traditional (and local) vernacular style – houses and agricultural buildings of exposed stone, lime-washed walls and thatched roofs with characteristically round pillars and chimneys. As with the local hedge banks, wall coping stones are often formed from large beach pebbles.



Large pebbles from Bossington beach used as a building material.

- 5.10 Porlock Weir is the other settled area within this landscape and has a notably different character to Bossington. Set at the foot of Worthy Wood and at the back of Porlock Beach, Porlock Weir with its pub, restaurant, gift shops, harbour area and large car park, has a busier 'visitor-orientated' feel and this is particularly true during the holiday season.
- 5.11 This is not a remote landscape but is nonetheless tranquil in many areas. In the case of the saltmarsh, an untamed, natural character pervades.

Landscape Evaluation

Strength of Landscape Character

- 5.12 The strikingly flat landform, the simple contrast of saltmarsh and surrounding farmland and the influence of coastal views and dramatic enclosing hills, combine to create a landscape of **strong** character overall. The open character of the landscape is to some extent interrupted by post and rail fencing.



Fencing interrupts the open character of the landscape.

Landscape Condition

- 5.13 The condition of the *Low Farmed Coast and Marsh* is judged to be **moderate** and there is a sense that landscape condition is declining. The principal area of concern is the hedgerow boundaries - appearing denuded and gappy in a number of areas.



Recently planted hedgerow sections.

- 5.14 Some new hedgerow sections have been planted. However, hedgerows closest to the salt marsh do appear particularly weak, probably due to the changing physical state of the adjacent area (from freshwater to saltwater marsh). Small-scale littering in places reduces the overall visual quality of the landscape.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the **Low Farmed Coast and Marsh** landscape type is to **conserve** the many features that combine to create such strength of character – the important saltwater landscape, the local vernacular of Bossington and Porlock Weir, the uninterrupted views to surrounding areas of higher ground for example. There is however a real need to **enhance** the landscape by developing a landscape management strategy in line with the changing physical state of the landscape (from freshwater to saltwater marsh).

The following table highlights the range of **Issues** recognised through field survey as having (or likely to have in the future) a negative impact on the landscape. The associated **Objectives** are those that would benefit landscape character (and visual amenity) and condition thereby improving overall landscape quality. It is recognised that some of these may be in conflict with other objectives e.g. ecological, agricultural or recreational. The objectives are intended to act as a guide for future consultation work and to inform, for example, the development of actions or implementation strategies.

Those issues considered to be long-term landscape threats appear first in the table (under the heading '**Key Issues**' and highlighted in grey). Landscape issues considered, at present, to be less threatening (of secondary significance) appear after the Key Issues under the heading '**Secondary Issues**'. These secondary issues are nonetheless important considerations.

Landscape Issues	Objectives
Key Issues:	
<p>Decline in visual quality and weakening of landscape pattern. This is due to the loss and denudation of trees and hedgerows as a result of the natural transition from freshwater to saltwater marsh.</p>	<p><i>Strengthen the landscape appropriate to the changing physical conditions of the landscape. Implement a management strategy that considers the future character of the saltmarsh area given its changing physical state.</i></p>
Secondary Issues:	
<p>Small scale littering, reducing visual amenity and quality of the area.</p>	<p><i>Work with education officers to heighten awareness of negative impact of litter on the landscape – working towards a litter-free landscape.</i></p>
<p>Interruption of the simple, open character of the salt marsh landscape due to post and rail fencing (diverting footpaths away from ground nesting bird sites).</p>	<p><i>To keep the saltmarsh area as open as possible – working with landowners to consider the use of more visually sympathetic boundaries.</i></p>