

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Kit Hill

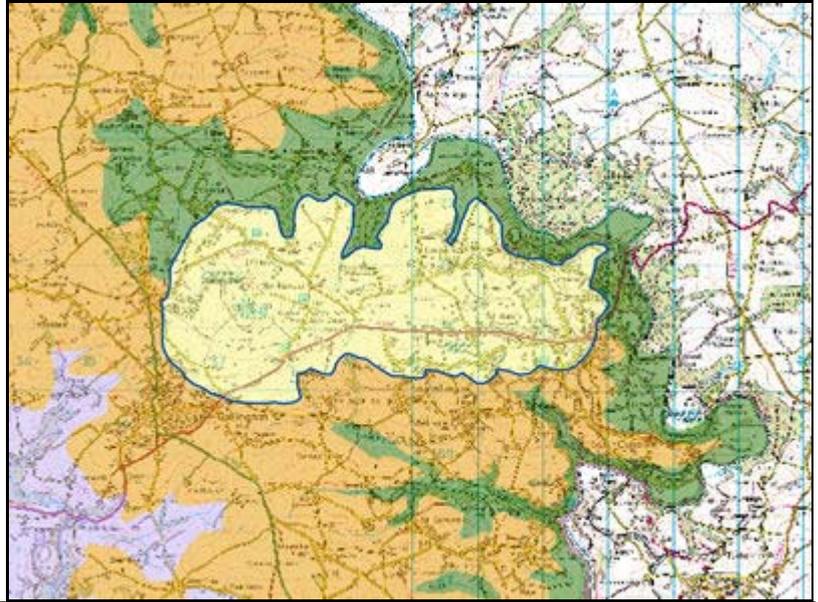
LCA No

CA30

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 1: 303



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Location Oval hill and ridge to the east of A 388, between Kelly Bray and Gunnislake in middle Tamar valley.

Designations Part AONB (Tamar; WHS Tamar); contains SSSI. This LDU also contains a SM site and a CGS site.

Description

Kit Hill is a dominant landmark enhanced by its chimney, visible from Bodmin Moor and the Tamar valley, and its summit offers views up and down the county. This Landscape Character Area consists of a prominent summit of unsettled wildland largely covered in Lowland Heathland scrub and bracken, with widespread evidence of its mining heritage, with a lower granite ridge extending to the east with improved grassland and arable farmland and scattered settlement. Around the hill on sloping but less steep land the pastoral farmland has a planned pattern edged with Cornish hedges.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Dominant, striking granite ridge and summit above Tamar valley.

Open wildland composed of Lowland Heathland contrasting with planned farmland.

Very important archaeological landscape, including significant prehistoric activity and a rich and highly visible mining heritage.

Former mine sites supporting important flora and fauna in places.

Extensive panoramic views, linking Kit Hill, Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor and Tamar Estuary.

Some areas on the lower ridge spoiled by unplanned and inappropriate development.

Important neutral grassland (SSSI) at St Ann's Chapel.

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Geology and soils

Gleyed wet soils over metamorphic hard rock, with important ore deposits which have been extensively mined.

Topography and drainage

Steeply sloping hill (333m AOD) with ridge and surrounding side slopes.

Biodiversity

Small areas of Lowland Heathland with scrub and bracken are scattered along the ridge with the largest area on Kit Hill, with semi-natural habitat associated with previously extensive mining activity. Former mine sites support important flora and fauna in places. There is an important neutral grassland SSSI at St Anns Chapel.

Land Cover

Pastoral farmland with scattered trees and open wildland.

Land Use

Wildland used for recreation (Kit Hill Country Park) and actively managed for access and conservation. Improved grassland and pastoral farmland on the ridge and slopes supports dairy and beef farms, little woodland apart from a few small conifer plantations. Several amenity developments on southern slopes. Large working granite quarry at Hingston Down.

Field and woodland pattern

A relict prehistoric field system lies on the east side of Kit Hill but the Landscape Character Area as a whole is characterised by recently enclosed uniform medium-sized strongly rectilinear fields. The Cornish hedge boundaries are straight with stunted gorse dominated hedgerows on slopes of Kit Hill. Enclosure to the east, on Hingston Down is similar, with numerous small post-medieval farms, intermixed with extensive mining remains. There is sparse woodland without an obvious pattern.

Settlement pattern

Settlement is a mix of dispersed post-medieval small farmsteads, associated with the Recently Enclosed Land, and unplanned linear roadside industrial settlements Chilworthy, Drakewalls, St Ann's Chapel, Coxpark associated with mining and which have expanded substantially in the later 20th century. Non-vernacular building styles and mixed materials. Several large residential parks with mobile homes.

Transport pattern

The A390 crosses the length of this oval CA to the south of Kit Hill, and the B3257 completes a circuit of the Hill to the north and is heavy with quarry traffic. Elsewhere there are typical narrow winding lanes. There is no active railway (but a relic dismantled railway).

Historic features

The topographical distinctiveness of Kit Hill and Hingston Down made them a focus for Bronze Age ceremonial activity and they are notable for the large group of barrows and cairns extending eastwards along the ridge. A Neolithic long mound lies on the south-eastern slope of Kit Hill and remains of a Middle Bronze Age field system have also been identified on the eastern side. Hingston Down was the site of battle between Anglo-Saxon forces and a mixed Cornish-Danish army in 838 AD, an event commemorated by a large 'Saxon' fort constructed on the summit of Kit Hill as a folly in the eighteenth century. The area has also been the focus for extensive mining and associated industrial activity, and there are extensive and complex remains, the most dominant elements of which are ruined engine houses and stacks, the most notable of which is on the summit, constructed in c 1858 and embellished to resemble an ornamental

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column. There are streamworking remains on the hill slopes and extensive quarrying remains; Kit Hill's northern quarry, within the country park, has large waste tips and an inclined plane which carried stone to the East Cornwall Mineral Railway below the hill. Other quarries worked on the south side of the hill and to the east on Hingston Down.

Condition

Kit Hill is actively managed and well used but not degraded/eroded. The Monument on the hill is 'defaced' with telephone masts. Most farmland is well managed but many Cornish hedges require repair. Run-down smallholdings and agricultural plant depots tend to occur on the ridge. Poor planning in the past is evident in unrestricted ribbon developments and creeping urbanisation along main roads, plus expansion of Honicombe Manor. The working quarry at Hingston is expanding and appearing over the skyline from many vantage points. Some mining remains have been subject of recent consolidation e.g. Hingston Down.

Pressures

- Demand for new housing including affordable housing.
- Amenity developments on southern slopes.
- Increasing prominence of Hingston Down Quarry and associated development.
- Fragmentation of farm holdings.

Aesthetic and sensory

Kit Hill is an inspiring and uplifting location with a true moorland feel with far-reaching wide views over the county. A place where the sights, smells and sounds of the heathlands can be experienced. The outcrops of granite are interspersed with swathes of gorse, bracken and rough grassland.

Distinctive features

Ornate decorative chimney stack on top of Kit Hill, a major landmark over a wide area; mining remains along ridge and especially on the skyline; open landscapes on the ridge with few trees and stunted hedges; some notable mature beech tree-lined roads on the slopes of the hill.

Visions and objectives

Maintain the traditional balance of land uses against current and future pressures and conserve mining heritage.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Conserve biodiversity potential of Kit Hill Country Park through continued good management; conserve archaeological heritage by increasing grazing of scrub.

Conserve traditional pattern of farmland by resisting change from pasture to arable or amenity. Encourage sustainable farming to maintain grazed landscapes through local food initiatives.

Minimise impact of working quarry and increase screening.

Enhance local biodiversity and landscape character by programme to re-establish Lowland Heathland on marginal or redundant land on slopes of Kit Hill and at Hingston Down, prioritise linkages and corridors.

Conserve mining settlement and smallholding landscapes around Kit Hill via protection and design guidance to prevent breakup, fragmentation or inappropriate uses; implement World Heritage Site Management Plan.

Use planning guidelines to encourage the use of sustainable designs and local materials in new developments, and to restrict further creeping urbanisation of area.

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Conserve local landscapes by resisting development that would alter the small scale settlement pattern of this LCA. Development seems to be increasing around the edge of the AONB.

Develop low-key recreation opportunities e.g. footpath, cycle and bridle path links to Kit Hill.