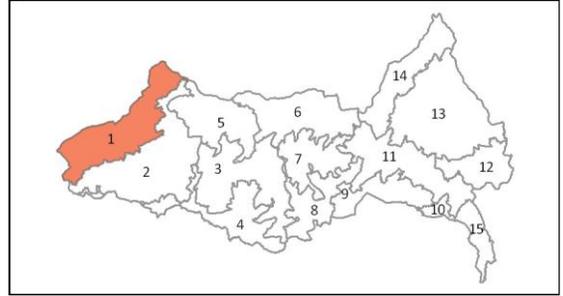


LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 1: *TOWY VALLEY FOOTHILLS***Broad Landscape Type: *LOWLANDS******Description*****Location and Context**

This linear LCA forms the north-western edge of the National Park, and comprises the land between Y Mynydd Du and the Towy Valley including the villages of Myddfai and Llanddeusant. The towns of Llandovery and Llandeilo lie just outside the LCA, beyond the National Park boundary.

**Summary Description**

A peaceful, pastoral landscape lying below the distinctive uplands of Y Mynydd Du (the Black Mountain) and Mynydd Myddfai. Its landscape is characterised by low ridges of hills and extensive ancient woodlands, with its enclosed fields contrasting with the open moorland of Y Mynydd Du which forms its backdrop. It has a timeless, secretive quality, with winding lanes connecting ancient farmsteads, villages and prominent archaeological sites, and strong cultural associations with the legends of the Physicians of Myddfai.



The Sawdde valley near Llanddeusant

Historical Development of the Landscape

This is a long-settled landscape, with some farms traceable through legend back to the twelfth century. This ancient settlement is reflected in the patterns of lanes, farms, fields and woodland. Its most prominent historic sites (Carn Goch Iron-Age camp and Carreg Cennen Medieval Castle) are both defensive structures, reflecting the Towy Valley's past strategic importance.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Underlain by some of the oldest rocks in the National Park: mainly sandstones and mudstones from the Ordovician and Silurian and lower Devonian periods.
- Complex undulating topography comprising a series of ridges running broadly NE-SW, parallel to the Towy valley.
- Numerous rocky mountain streams flow into the rivers Cennen and Sawdde, both tributaries of the River Towy.
- Land use dominated by pastoral farming, with extensive areas of woodland and some forestry.
- Hedges with mature hedgerow trees enclose small, irregular fields (with evidence of assarting) and line deep lanes. Higher areas enclosed with stone walls, with fields generally more regular in shape.
- Extensive areas of deciduous ancient woodland with bluebell groundcover on valley sides and along watercourses. Some patches of coniferous forestry, particularly in the north and centre of the LCA.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, marshy grassland, fen/mire, dry heath, neutral and acid grassland.
- A rich historic landscape, including a diversity of defensive sites spanning several millennia.
- Settlement includes the nucleated village of Myddfai, plus numerous scattered farms and hamlets including Llanddeusant and Trap.
- A network of sunken, winding lanes and tracks often with high hedge banks. The A4069 runs across the centre of the LCA.
- An intricate, small-scale landscape, but with sudden open views providing a sense of space and orientation, particularly where there are views to landmarks such as the Mynydd Du, Trichrug and Carreg Cennen Castle.
- A rich, varied landscape with harmonious compositions of landform and woodland, and seasonal variation in colour and texture.

Landmap Components (See Appendix 3 for components of all LANDMAP aspect areas)

Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Dyffryn Tywi Valley sides south (O); Llanddeusant and Myddfai farmlands (H); Banc Pen Arthur ridge (M); Cefn Garreg ridge (M); Crwbin Ridge (H)
Key to Landmap evaluation criteria: (O) Outstanding: of international importance. (H) High: of regional or county importance. (M) Moderate: of local importance. (L) Low: of little/no importance	

Settlements

Within the LCA, settlement is limited to the nucleated village of Myddfai, plus numerous farms and hamlets. These are generally stone built, with some paint and/ or render. Barn conversions for residential use are becoming increasingly common. This LCA also plays an important role as the setting for larger settlements outside the National Park (Llandoverly and Llandeilo).

Key Views

Landmarks such as Carn Goch and Carreg Cennen Castle are prominent in views from within the LCA, and are also key viewpoints. Backdrops to views looking outwards from the LCA include the profiles of Y Mynydd Du and Mynydd Myddfai, and across the Towy Valley to the hills beyond. This LCA also forms the backdrop and setting to elevated views from Y Mynydd Du LCA.

Evaluation

Special Qualities

The natural beauty and recreational factors that make this landscape special are summarised in the table below, along with examples of their sensitivities to landscape changes. This LCA is closely related (both visually and in terms of land management) with the adjacent uplands of Y Mynydd Du. Any changes in one area will impact on the other. For example, reduced grazing on the uplands will change their appearance from the lowlands. Similarly, developments in this area are likely to be visible in views from the uplands. The LCA also has strong visual links with land beyond the National Park boundary, and will potentially be affected by developments in these areas.

Criteria	Special Qualities for this Landscape Character Area	Sensitivities
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic quality and sense of place results from the harmonious composition of deciduous woodland, landform, field patterns and distinctive upland skylines. 	<p>Loss of traditional features (woodland, lanes, hedgebanks, field boundaries, farm buildings etc.)</p> <p>Insensitive introduction of large-scale buildings which do not sit comfortably within the existing landscape.</p> <p>Changes to open upland skylines (e.g. telecommunications masts).</p>
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An intact and well-managed historic landscape including historic lanes, farms, fields, settlements, woodlands and archaeological sites which together create a very strong sense of time-depth and an unchanging quality. 	As above.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A productive farmed, settled landscape with very few detracting features in the form of modern development, noise or transport corridors, and therefore high levels of tranquillity. Higher land (e.g. Carn Goch) has a sense of exposure, but generally the landscape is relatively enclosed and intimate with occasional long views. Long views generally include relatively wild upland landscapes (Y Mynydd Du and Mynydd Myddfai). 	<p>Loss of tranquillity resulting from increased development and/ or traffic.</p> <p>Loss of enclosure and intimacy as a result of woodland and/ or hedgerow loss.</p>
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural connections with the legendary Physicians of Myddfai, recorded in the C.14th <i>Red Book of Hergest</i>. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rare example of an intact historic landscape which can be directly linked with twelfth century legends. It is also an excellent example of a landscape evolved from the hillfarming tradition with common grazing. 	Loss/ decline of hillfarming traditions and historic landscape features. (See comments under 'sense of place' above)
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive ancient woodlands with bluebell groundcover, including accessible woodland Nature Reserves at Tregyb Wood and Cennen. Both of these (along with other woodland, 	<p>Decline in traditional woodland management (e.g. coppicing).</p> <p>Land management changes</p>

	grassland and geological sites) are SSSI. The LCA contains a concentration of semi-improved and unimproved species-rich pasture.	resulting in reduction of biodiversity, e.g. loss of unimproved grassland.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous cultural designations, including approximately twenty Scheduled Monuments ranging from prehistoric barrows to post-medieval lime kilns. These include the exceptionally well-preserved defensive sites of Carn Goch Iron Age Hillfort and Carreg Cennen Medieval Castle; the latter is a popular visitor attraction, and both are prominent hilltop landmarks. Partially included in the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Area 3). 	<p>Loss/ damage to archaeological sites as a result of visitor pressure, neglect, and/ or natural processes of erosion.</p> <p>Potential impacts of developments (including prominent development beyond the national park boundary) on the settings and views from elevated archaeological sites.</p>
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network of lanes, tracks and footpaths (including the Beacons Way long distance route) enabling access into this high quality landscape, and enjoyment of its tranquillity. 	Inappropriate use of tracks by 4x4 vehicles and off-road motorbikes.
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly- accessible archaeological sites (e.g. Carn Goch Hillfort and Carreg Cennen Castle), woodland Nature Reserves and the red kite feeding centre provide further opportunities for understanding the area's special qualities and sense of place. Myddfai village is a focus for the area, with its ancient church and cultural connections. There is a Youth Hostel at Llanddeusant and campsites in the area. Accessible from local centres of population in Llandovery and Llandeilo, Llandovery railway station, and from the A40 and A4069. 	

Contribution to Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure (refer to sections 4.6 & 4.7 for terminology)

Principle ecosystem services include provisioning and regulating services, providing food, fibre, water, climate regulation and pollination. In common with the rest of the National Park, this LCA also contributes to cultural services e.g. spiritual enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation and tourism, and aesthetic experiences. Main Green Infrastructure features include extensive arable pasture, woodland, watercourses and long distance trails. These include the Beacons Way, River Towy tributaries, and extensive woodlands.



Deciduous woodland and pasture near Myddfai



Carreg Cennen Castle



View north-east from the stone banks of Carn Goch Hillfort

Forces for Change in the Landscape

Local Forces for Change and Their Landscape Implications

(See also the general forces for change described in section 6.0)

Past and Present

- Planting of coniferous forestry blocks (particularly in the north and west of the area) on open land, or as replanting of ancient woodland.
- Farm modernisation and diversification, for example increase in the size of farm buildings, and the introduction of new features into the landscape such as ménages.
- Decline in traditional hillfarming, and an ageing farming community.
- Conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to private dwellings.
- Loss of traditional communities and associated village infrastructure such as pubs, changing the built heritage and social cohesion of the area.
- Entry of numerous areas of pasture into the pilot Tir Cymen agri-environment scheme.
- Influence of the Prince of Wales' estate, particularly around Myddfai where Prince Charles has a residence.
- Developments beyond the National Park boundary (e.g. Ribbon development along the A40 to the west of the Towy) affecting views out of the area and changing their undeveloped character.
- Damage by 4 x 4 vehicles and off-road motorbikes.

Future

- Continued decline in traditional hillfarming, resulting in amalgamation of holdings, redundant buildings, reduced grazing of common land, loss of traditional field boundaries etc. coupled with demand for agricultural modernisation.
- Unpredictability of future agri-environment schemes, potentially affecting farm income, farm conservation measures and maintenance of historic features such as hedgebanks.
- Potential loss or species change within native woodland and plantations as a result of climate change, increased pests and diseases (e.g. Phytophthora) and increased frequency of storm events.
- Demand for alternative energy sources within and outside the LCA with potential implications on the landscape and views.
- Continued development of settlements outside the National Park boundary with visual impacts on views from the National Park.



New ménage



Larger-scale modern agricultural buildings



Expansion of settlements just beyond the National Park Boundary (e.g. Llandeilo) can have visual impacts on the LCA

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To maintain and enhance the integrity and quality of this historic landscape through the retention and good management of historic features such as woodland, lanes, field boundaries, farms and archaeological sites. Agriculture is encouraged (for example through enabling modernisation to be done as sensitively as possible) and the landscapes associated with traditional hillfarming are retained and enhanced. The area's archaeological and nature conservation sites are well managed, and visitors are encouraged. The area remains an attractive foreground to views from higher land, and views from the area remain free from intrusive modern development.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's numerous **historic and archaeological sites**.
- Protect and restore where necessary **historic landscape features** such as field boundaries and bridges. Protect and enhance the **built heritage** of the area, including traditional farms and villages, whilst retaining its sparsely-settled character.
- Protect the landscape's network of **quiet lanes**, enclosed by species-rich hedgebanks, resisting unsympathetic highways improvements or signage.
- Protect the **open upland skylines** which form the backdrop to the area.

Manage

- Manage **conservation sites and semi-natural habitats** such as grasslands, wetlands and commons to retain biodiversity, using appropriate levels of grazing.
- Manage **woodland** to improve age and species diversity, using traditional techniques such as coppicing and grazing where appropriate, and control of non-native species.
- Manage **archaeological sites** and their settings, with sensitive interpretation as appropriate.
- Manage **farmland**, enabling change to occur sensitively, and encouraging a viable farming community using traditional methods to manage traditional landscape features and enhance biodiversity.

Plan

- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats** such as woodland, wetlands and grassland.
- Plan to **increase visitor numbers** to this area (without detriment to its special qualities) through, for example, marketing of the area, and sensitive improvements to visitor infrastructure.
- Plan to **minimise the visual impacts** on this area of any **developments outside the National Park boundary**.