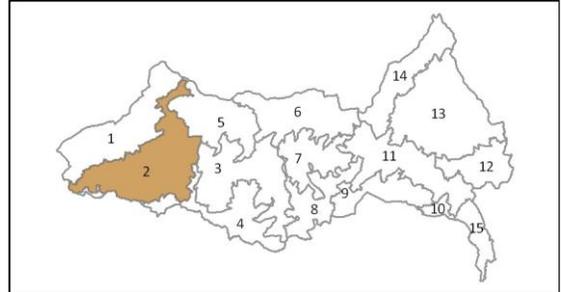


**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 2: Y MYNYDD DU****Broad Landscape Type: UPLANDS****Description****Location and Context**

This large LCA is located in the west of the National Park, and includes the uplands associated with Y Mynydd Du (the Black Mountain). To the north-west is the Towy Valley Foothills LCA, and to the north east and south east are Upland Valleys. The Uplands continue eastwards into the Fforest Fawr LCA. This LCA is prominent in views from roads and settlements to the south and north-west of the National Park.

**Summary Description**

This extensive upland LCA contains some of the most remote areas of the National Park. It includes the open moorland and dramatic scarps and lakes of Y Mynydd Du, locus of the legend of the 'Lady of the Lake'. It is an open, exposed landscape with few trees or settlements, but numerous prehistoric monuments and a legacy of quarrying and other industrial activity. From the edges of the LCA there are spectacular views over surrounding lowlands.



*Bannau Sir Gaer and Fan Brycheiniog from the north*

**Historical Development of the Landscape**

Clearance of woodland in this area is thought to have begun in the Bronze Age, and many cairns, standing stones and other monuments in the landscape date from this time. There was a strong Roman presence in the area, reflected in the Roman roads (some still in use), forts and camps. Centuries of common grazing have created today's open landscape, managed by farmers in close association with the lower enclosed land. There is also a strong industrial legacy in the landscape (particularly in the southern half) where minerals and stone were extracted and processed.

## Distinctive Characteristics

- Varied underlying geology. Devonian age Old Red Sandstone in the north overlain by bands of Carboniferous Limestone, Marros Group sandstones and mudstones to their south. Sandstones and mudstones of the lowermost South Wales Coal Measures are exposed in the south. The highest land in the west is formed from the Twrch Sandstone, whilst that in the east is formed from Plateau Beds.
- Elevated, flat-topped ridge of the Carmarthen Fans running east-west across the area, with a distinctive northern scarp face. To the south is a gently southern sloping plateau dissected by steep valleys.
- Glacial lakes below the northern scarp: Llyn y Fan Fawr & Llyn y Fan Fach. Numerous mountain streams source in springs & bogs.
- Land use almost entirely open grazing (often by hefted flocks) on unenclosed common land.
- Very few field boundaries; limited to sheep-folds and occasional peripheral enclosures.
- Tree cover within the LCA limited to occasional broadleaved trees and shrubs alongside streams.
- Panoramic views north-west and south.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including modified blanket bog, dwarf shrub heath, limestone pavement, limestone grassland, acid/ neutral flush and marshy grassland. Variations in vegetation cover caused by changes in underlying geology and grazing.
- Historic features include numerous prehistoric monuments, Roman features, transport routes, agricultural remains and industrial archaeology.
- Settlement within the LCA limited to scattered farms at the periphery, but there is a close visual relationship with communities and roads to the south of the National Park, and in adjacent LCAs.
- A4069 crossing the area in the west in a series of dramatic hairpin bends.
- An empty and open landscape, expansive and large in scale with smooth, open horizons. Generally simple composition, with vegetation and geology creating subtle changes in texture.

## Landmap Components (See Appendix 3 for components of all LANDMAP Aspect Areas)

<b>Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas</b>	The Black Mountain (O); Dorwen ar Gledd (O); Bannau Sir Gaer and environs (O); Black Mountain (O); Mynydd Myddfai (H); Mynydd Bach Trecastell (H);
<i>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</i>	

## Settlements

There are no settlements larger than individual farms within this LCA, but it nevertheless plays a very important role as a backdrop to the settlements which surround it. These include the farms and villages in LCA1 (for example Llanddeusant and Trap), and the towns and villages immediately to the south of the National Park including Glanaman, Garnant, Brynamman and Cwmllynfell. It is also visible from the high land and roads to the south of these settlements, and from the A4068 where it runs along the National Park boundary. It therefore makes an important contribution to the setting and sense of place of these settlements. The distinctive scarp of the Carmarthen Fans can be seen on the southern skyline from a long distance northwards.

## Key Views

Magnificent views to the north-west (as far as Plynlimon) and South (over south Wales to the north Devon coast). From Mynydd Myddfai it is possible to see the entire length of the Brecon Beacons ridge. This LCA is very prominent in views from outside the National Park, particularly settlements and roads to the south.

## 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:

Criteria	Special Qualities for this Landscape Character Area	Sensitivities
<b>Scenic quality and Sense of place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scenic quality and sense of place stemming from the scale and openness of the landscape, the distinctive topography of the summits, and the panoramic views over the LCA and surrounding lower land.</li> </ul>	<p>Impacts from built or other developments (including those in long views) which may detract from its sense of tranquillity and remoteness. As well as visual impacts, the area is also sensitive to noise and night-time light pollution associated with developments beyond the National Park boundary.</p> <p>Features which break the smooth, open skylines.</p> <p>Small-scale features within the landscape (e.g. Glastir markers and waymarking) which have an individual and cumulative impact on the sense of remoteness and relative wildness.</p> <p>Visual and noise impacts from traffic.</p>
<b>Landscape quality and integrity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive areas of open moorland with smooth, open skylines and very few incongruous features within the LCA.</li> </ul>	
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of tranquillity as a result of the landscape's openness, perceived naturalness, lack of noise, and dark skies. Few factors detract from the tranquillity, and the LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area. Contains the National Park's most extensive area of land more than 2km from a tarmac road. This remoteness, and the area's sense of relative wildness, is enhanced by the LCA's openness, exposure, timelessness and lack of human influences. Its perceptual qualities are influenced by changes in the weather, becoming much harsher and more disorientating in low cloud.</li> </ul>	
<b>Artistic and cultural associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural associations with the Legend of the Lady of the Lake (centred on Llyn y Fan Fach) and the Physicians of Myddfai. Partially included in the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Area 3).</li> </ul>	
<b>Rarity or representativeness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the largest expanses of surviving open moorland in southern Britain, containing some of the most inaccessible land within the National Park.</li> </ul>	See above
<b>Natural heritage features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of considerable importance for nature conservation, with a very extensive SSSI covering much of the area, designated for its vegetation, geology, open water, bird life and cave systems (including Dan yr Ogof Caves NNR). This LCA is within the Geopark, and contains two RIGs sites (limestone pavements).</li> </ul>	<p>Changes in land management, e.g. changes in grazing levels affecting the composition of moorland vegetation.</p> <p>Changes in environmental conditions (e.g. air and water quality) and water retention affecting surface vegetation, geological exposures and caves.</p>
<b>Cultural heritage features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rich archaeological landscape, with over 30 Scheduled Monuments (plus numerous non-</li> </ul>	Damage to archaeological features through natural

	<p>scheduled sites), including a large proportion of prehistoric ritual features, including particularly well-preserved Bronze Age ring and round cairns on summits and ridges. Also Roman roads and camps, medieval settlement sites, and industrial archaeology associated with quarrying and lime burning.</p>	<p>processes (e.g erosion), neglect, visitor pressure, and also visual impacts on their settings.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This LCA is entirely access land and provides valuable opportunities for people to experience remoteness, relative wildness and tranquillity permitted under various legislation. Footpaths and bridlepaths shown on definitive and OS maps do not always exist on the ground, so visitors should be capable of navigating using map and compass.</li> </ul>	<p>The LCA's unique opportunities to experience remoteness, tranquillity and relative wildness are sensitive to a number of developmental and recreational management measures (see above) and over-intensification of recreational use.</p>
<p><b>Recreation provision and access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational opportunities include walking/ riding (including the Beacons Way across the northern part of the LCA), more limited horse riding, plus caving and outdoor adventure centres. A wheelchair-accessible path up the Twrch valley provides access for local communities into the National Park. Laybys on A4069 enable drivers to stop and appreciate the views from roads.</li> </ul>	

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

Principal ecosystem services include provisioning through rough grazing and fresh water supply, and regulation and supporting services through deep peat, organic soils and water regulation. In common with the rest of the National Park, this LCA also contributes to cultural services such as spiritual enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation and tourism, and aesthetic experiences. There is potential for electricity generation through high head micro-hydro schemes.

Green Infrastructure features include watercourses and lakes such as Llyn y Fan Fach and tributaries to the Rivers Towy and Tawe. Y Mynydd Du LCA contains access land, walking trails (including the Beacons Way), viewpoints and historic features.



*Llyn y Fan Fach, home of the legend of the Lady of the Lake and made into a reservoir in the 1920s.*



*Grassland near Herbert's Quarry showing the view north over LCA1 and the Towy Valley to Plynlimon.*



*Ancient woodland and industrial archaeology in the Twrch Valley.*

## **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**

- Past quarrying within the LCA, leading to scarring on hillsides and surface roughness.
- Construction of reservoirs and associated forests in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in adjacent LCAs affecting views and reducing the sense of openness. Impoundment of water in Llyn y Fan Fach reservoir.
- Gas pipeline construction across Mynydd Myddfai creating a linear feature in the landscape and permanently affecting surface vegetation and buried archaeology.
- Large-scale opencast workings, windfarms and other built development just outside the southern National Park boundary prominent in views.
- Light-pollution from roads, settlements and quarries to the south.
- Historic air pollution and acid rain, and ongoing nitrogen deposition affecting vegetation.
- Loss of wetlands and peat bog due to pollution, historic peat cutting and artificial drainage.
- Illegal use of 4x4 vehicles/ off-road motorbikes causing damage to surfaces and vegetation.
- Unpredictable water flows (due to loss of peat bogs) affecting subterranean cave systems.
- Reduced diversity of moorland vegetation (in particular a loss of heather moorland to acid grassland) as a result of changing common grazing practices. See section 6.0 for more detail.
- Repeated damage by wildfires.
- Bracken encroachment on side slopes.
- Incremental changes from small modern features such as sheep pens (constructed from concrete blocks rather than indigenous stone) and Glastir markers.
- Positive moorland management e.g. controlled heather burning, cutting of areas of rank *Molinia* and protection of areas of bare, eroded peat bog. Previous efforts to control bracken by aerial spraying.

#### **Future**

- Developments beyond the National Park boundary (e.g. opencasting, development applications, road improvements) potentially affecting views from this LCA, and its tranquillity & special qualities.
- Wind farm applications from TAN8 Areas visible from the LCA potentially affecting its views, tranquillity and special qualities.
- Continued positive management of moorland, and restoration of upland habitats,
- Loss of traditional hillfarms, and potential changes to agri-environment schemes affecting grazing patterns and vegetation, e.g. effects and outcomes of the Glastir Common Land Element.
- Climate change potentially affecting environmental conditions and upland vegetation.
- Increasing pressure to promote and encourage greater recreational use, and infrastructure to manage increasing numbers of visitors, may lead to loss of qualities of tranquillity and remoteness.



*Opencast coal mine, just to the south of the LCA. Further open casting is proposed.*



*4x4 ruts on a historic trackway to the west of the A4069. Note Carreg Cennen Castle in the distance.*



*Gorse encroachment on a hillside as a result of changing grazing patterns.*

## Strategy

### Overall Strategy

**To protect the open, remote and undeveloped character of the landscape, strengthening its special qualities and conserving its distinctive open skylines and long views.** The special qualities of the area and its views are not damaged by intrusive development outside the National Park boundary. The area's outstanding archaeology is protected, managed and recorded as necessary, and the settings of monuments are respected. Good management of the moorland continues to enhance its biodiversity and habitats, including peat bogs. The geodiversity of the area is also appreciated and appropriately managed. The area is enjoyed by visitors seeking tranquillity and remoteness, but is not damaged by overly-intense recreational use.

### LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

#### Protect

- Protect the **undeveloped character of the landscape**, and its qualities of exceptional **remoteness, tranquillity and dark night skies**.
- Protect the **open moorland** landscape, avoiding the development of vertical structures and the planting of trees.
- Protect the **geological and geomorphological features** of the area such as limestone pavements.
- Protect and enhance valuable **moorland habitats**.
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's rich **archaeological landscape**, in particular its prehistoric and industrial features, and record archaeological features which are being lost through natural processes.
- Protect the **expansive views** to and from the National Park which are integral to its setting.

#### Manage

- Manage and enhance valuable **moorland habitats** (e.g. heather moorland and blanket bog), retaining and increasing the area's biodiversity.
- Manage **wetland sites** such as blanket bog to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity, reducing impacts of water flows on cave and river systems and potentially reducing downstream flooding.
- Manage **common grazing land** through the encouragement of a viable grazing regime which supports traditional hillfarming practices, encourages biodiversity and retains an open moorland landscape.
- Manage **limestone pavement**.
- Manage **recreational pressure** to avoid visual scarring and damage to sensitive habitats and archaeological features. Minimise impacts of recreation on **perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity**.

#### Plan

- Plan to reduce the **visual impact** of quarrying activities and other development beyond the National Park boundary.
- Plan for **community education and involvement** in the management of the area, developing links with the communities beyond the National Park boundary.
- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution, in particular along the southern boundary.
- Plan for the **creation, extension and linking of traditional moorland habitats**, e.g. heather moorland, blanket bog and heath. Reduce the overall area of acid grassland through encouragement of heather regeneration (whilst maintaining a mosaic of habitats for ground nesting birds and to retain species diversity).