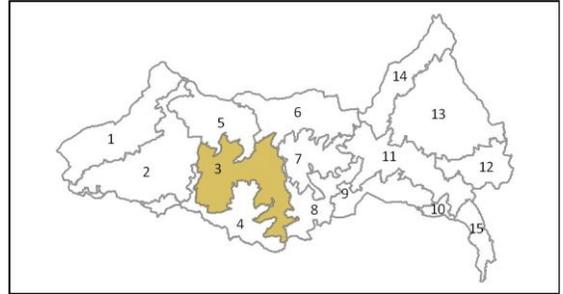


**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 3: FFOREST FAWR****Broad Landscape Type: UPLANDS****Description****Location and Context**

This upland LCA is located towards the west of the National Park, between the uplands of the Central Beacons (to the east) and Mynydd Du (to the west). To the north and south are lower, enclosed Upland Valley landscapes.

**Summary Description**

A bleak, upland moorland landscape, the character of which is locally influenced by its past use as a royal hunting ground and more recent estate ownership, apparent through the dry stone boundary walls, estate cottages, shelterbelts and former rabbit farms. Remains of prehistoric and medieval occupation, and later industrial archaeological sites, are visible in the landscape. Away from the occasional roads which run across the area, it feels tranquil, and with a sense of remoteness and relative wildness. Its distinctive flat-topped summits and steep northern escarpment are prominent in views from the north.



*View north up Afon Llia, with Maen Llia on the horizon*

**Historical Development of the Landscape**

The area's long history of private ownership (first as a royal hunting forest and latterly as the Cnewr Estate) make it distinct from surrounding areas by its dry stone walls, estate cottages, shelter belts etc. Although this landscape feels empty and unsettled today, it has not always been so. The lack of recent development means that many features of earlier phases of occupation have survived including prehistoric monuments (cairns, standing stones etc.), field systems, abandoned medieval settlements, industrial sites (e.g. quarries and railway lines) and WW2 defences.

## Distinctive Characteristics

- Complex underlying geology, with the Senni and Brownstones formations of the Old Red Sandstone in the north, a broken band of Carboniferous Limestone across the middle, and Marros Group sandstones and mudstones in the south. All three units form north-facing escarpments, that of the Old Red Sandstone being the most imposing.
- A glaciated landscape with a steep northern escarpment and a series of elevated summits. Cwms, and deep valleys are separated by intervening ridges (generally running north-south). Landform in the south of the LCA is less dramatic, forming a gently sloping plateau dissected by river valleys.
- Steep, fast flowing and rocky mountain streams (often spring-fed, or sourced from upland bogs), flow into larger rivers in valley bottoms. Ystradfellte Reservoir located near centre of LCA.
- Predominantly unenclosed moorland used for open grazing, with some forest blocks, particularly in the south and west of the LCA.
- Trees almost entirely coniferous, planted in forestry blocks often with sharp outlines. Distinctive coniferous shelter belts in the northern part of the area.
- Very few field boundaries, but dry-stone walls marking estate boundaries are distinctive to this LCA. Occasional post-and-wire fences.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including marshy grassland, dry heath, acid/ neutral flushes and small areas of blanket bog. Vegetation composition reflects variations in underlying geology.
- Extensive prehistoric ritual landscapes, particularly in the south-east. Also evidence of Roman road, medieval settlements, industrial archaeology, WW2 defences and estate influences.
- A very lightly-settled landscape today, with occasional estate cottages and farms at its periphery. However in the past it has been much more densely settled, and the landscape contains evidence of settlement over millennia.
- An elevated, simple and expansive landscape, with colours and textures varying subtly with the underlying geology. Much of the LCA remains inaccessible except on foot, giving a sense of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness.

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

<b>Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas</b>	Fforest Fawr West (O); Fan Fawr/Fan Llia [Fforest Fawr East] (O); Cadair Fawr (H); Carreg Cadno (O); Mynydd y Garn (H); Y Wern Forest (M); Senni Valley (H); Nant y Fedwyn Upland (M); Ystradfellte Reservoir (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

Settlement is very limited in this area, but the estate buildings have a distinctive architecture, often symmetrical, whitewashed and embellished with porches etc. This LCA forms the horizon in views from a number of settlements to the north and south.

## Key Views

Key views out from within the LCA include those from the summits, with panoramic views over surrounding lower land, and across to the neighbouring uplands. The LCA is an important component in views from surrounding areas, often forming the horizon.

## 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>High scenic quality and a strong sense of place, particularly where there are views of distinctive summits and over surrounding lower land to provide a landscape context.</li> </ul>	Impacts from built or other developments (including quarrying within the LCA) which may detract from the LCA's sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
<b>Landscape quality and integrity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An extensive area of upland which is particularly valued for the integrity of its historic landscapes, and for its tranquillity and sense of remoteness.</li> </ul>	Visual impacts, noise and night-time light pollution associated with developments beyond the National Park boundary.
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High tranquillity, resulting from many factors including openness, perceived naturalness, low noise (though roads have localised impacts at the periphery of the LCA), landform and dark skies (this LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area). With the exception of occasional roads and Penwyllt quarry, few factors detract from the tranquillity. The LCA's inaccessibility, openness, timelessness and relative lack of human influence also contribute to its sense of relative wildness. In poor weather conditions the landscape becomes much more hostile and disorientating.</li> </ul>	<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>Traffic impacts: visual and noise.</p> <p>Neglect of estate features such as stone walls, particularly if estate management or ownership changes in the future.</p>
<b>Artistic and cultural associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associations with Opera singer Madam Adelina Patti, who lived at Craig-y-nos (in LCA 4) and had a private area at Penwyllt railway station.</li> </ul>	
<b>Rarity or representativeness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of an extensive upland landscape with a history of private land ownership going back to Medieval times, leaving distinctive traces in the landscape. The links between geology, biodiversity and people through time are readily apparent. The LCA also contains cliff habitats which support plant communities unique to the Brecon Beacons and are important examples of glacial geomorphology</li> </ul>	<p>See above</p> <p>Cliff habitats are sensitive to damage by climbing, abseiling etc.</p>
<b>Natural heritage features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive SSSIs, designated for their vegetation representing limestone and brownstone plant communities including some Alpine plants, rare hawkweeds and whitebeam species unique to the Brecon Beacons. National Nature Reserves at Ogof Fynnon Ddu and Craig Cerrig-gleisiad. Part of the Brecon Beacons SAC is also within this area.</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</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An important geological landscape, within the Geopark and containing good examples of limestone features such as limestone pavements (some designated RIGS sites), solution hollows and sink holes. The Ogof Ffynnon Ddu cave system (designated SSSI) is the deepest (and one of the largest) in Britain.</li> </ul>	affecting surface vegetation, geological exposures and cave systems.
<b>Cultural heritage features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rich archaeological environment with an exceptionally large assemblage of prehistoric ritual sites (including ring cairns, round cairns and standing stones designated Scheduled Monuments). Other Scheduled Monuments include a section of Roman road, deserted Medieval settlements, Post-medieval pillow mounds (resulting from rabbit farming) and WW2 infantry support trenches. Other archaeological sites include those associated with mining and transport, including quarries, tramways (e.g. the Brecon Forest Tramroad) and the route of the Neath and Brecon Railway with its station at Penwyllt. South-east part of LCA included on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (no.48).</li> </ul>	Damage to archaeological features through natural processes (e.g. erosion), neglect, visitor pressure and also visual impacts on their settings.
<b>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to explore and appreciate some of the most remote land in the National Park (and in Southern Britain) via the Beacons Way, extensive open access land and publicly-accessible nature reserves. Summits afford spectacular views.</li> </ul>	Insensitive visitor management and over-intensification of visitor numbers may impact on the LCA's special qualities.
<b>Recreation provision and access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible from major roads, and can be appreciated whilst driving along them. Caving offers further recreational opportunities.</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. Plantations provide timber and wood fuel. 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 open access land, open water, rivers, woodland plantation, and the Beacons Way long distance trail. The Ogof Ffynnon Ddu - Pant Mawr and Craig Cerrig-gleisiad National Nature Reserves offer educational and leisure opportunities.



*Prehistoric Standing Stone at Maen Llia*



*The distinctive table-top summit of Fan Gyhirych. Note the estate wall*



*Craig Cerrig gleisiad NNR on the Old Red Sandstone northern scarp*

## **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 construction of reservoirs and planting of forestry plantations, in this LCA and in adjacent LCAs which can be seen in views. Ongoing management/ clearance of plantations.
- Past quarrying leaving scars in the landscape. Continued occasional quarrying activities (particularly Penwyllt) locally reducing tranquillity.
- Developments beyond the National Park boundary affecting views from the area and its special qualities, especially to the south.
- Light pollution from roads, settlements and other developments affecting dark skies (particularly to the south of the LCA).
- Past and present estate management (e.g. shelter belt planting) affecting the landscape.
- Theft of walling stone, especially adjacent to roads, and poor maintenance of walls.
- Visually intrusive modern road signage on minor roads.
- Loss of traditional moorland vegetation (e.g. heather moorland) and ecological resilience resulting from changes in grazing practices (see section 6.0 for more detail).
- Bracken encroachment on side slopes.
- Repeated damage by wild fires.
- Acid rain, pollution and artificial drainage caused ecological degradation of upland habitats, particularly peat bogs, affecting biodiversity and the water flows in underlying cave systems.
- Loss of archaeological features as a result of natural processes (e.g. limestone solution and river erosion) and damage (e.g. illegal 4x4 vehicles/ off-road motorbikes on the Sarn Helen Roman road).
- Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme within the Cnewr estate.

#### **Future**

- Potential changes in land management /private ownership may affect the retention and management of estate features such as walls and cottages.
- 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.
- Management of plantations, particularly if trees are cleared.
- Tree loss due to disease e.g. *Phytophthora ramorum*.
- Continued loss of archaeological features.
- Climate change potentially affecting environmental conditions and upland vegetation.
- Continued development pressure and planning applications beyond the southern boundary (e.g. windfarms (TAN 8 area), quarrying, open casting and waste developments) affecting views south from the area and impacting on tranquillity and dark skies.
- Positive moorland management schemes improving the condition and variety of upland vegetation.



*Insensitive road sign, Tawe valley*



*Penwyllt quarry*



*Deer fencing along dry stone wall*

## Strategy

### Overall Strategy

To protect and enhance the special qualities of the landscape, including tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness, and its historic features, long views and open skylines. Development beyond the National Park boundary does not undermine the views or special qualities of the area. Positive land management enhances its biodiversity, geodiversity and distinctive estate features. The outstanding archaeology of the area is appropriately managed, protected from damage, recorded where necessary and its settings are respected. Visitors are encouraged to visit and appreciate the area and its special qualities (including its extensive Nature Reserves), but without putting unacceptable visitor pressure on the landscape or its biodiversity.

### LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

#### Protect

- Protect the **undeveloped character** of the landscape, and its special qualities including **tranquillity, remoteness, 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 surviving **estate features** (e.g. stone walls).
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's rich **archaeological landscape**, in particular its prehistoric features around Cwm Cadlan and Mynydd-y-glog, and record archaeological features which are being lost through natural processes.
- Protect the **views** to and from the National Park which are integral to its setting.

#### Manage

- Work with land owners and commoners to 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.
- Work with landowners and commoners to manage **grazing land** using a viable grazing regime which supports traditional hillfarming, encourages biodiversity and retains an open moorland landscape.
- Manage **forestry plantations** with regard to their existing and potential biodiversity, and potential damage to underlying archaeology. Use/ develop forest management plans where possible.
- 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 quarrying** activities within the LCA.
- Plan to reduce the **visual impact** of mineral extraction, wind turbines and other development 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, blanket bog and heath. Reduce the overall area of acid grassland and encourage heather regeneration (whilst maintaining a mosaic of habitats for ground nesting birds and to retain species diversity).
- Plan to encourage landowners, public bodies and NGOs to re-open old railway line as a **cycle route**.