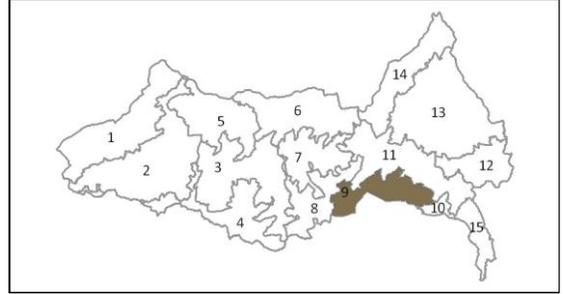


LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 9: MYNYDDOEDD LLANGATWG & LLANGYNIDR**Broad Landscape Type: UPLANDS****Description****Location and Context**

This LCA is located on the southern edge of the National Park, stretching between the settlements of Merthyr Tydfil and Brynmawr. It is surrounded by lower-lying LCAs: The Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys to the west, the Eastern Usk Valley to the north and the Clydach Gorge to the east.

**Summary Description**

This LCA comprises an elevated plateau of moorland, characterised by its openness, smooth profile, lack of settlement, prehistoric archaeology and quarrying legacy. It contains many features of a karst (limestone) landscape, and a mosaic of high-quality moorland habitats. Despite its proximity to settlements, much of the area retains an open, undeveloped quality and is not heavily used for recreation although it has been used recently as a set for various films and TV programmes, Its crags and moorland also provide a dramatic and seasonally-changing backdrop to surrounding lower land including the Usk Valley.



Heather moorland near summit of Mynydd Llangynidr

Historical Development of the Landscape

The lack of modern settlement, forestry or other built development within the LCA has enabled the survival of a rich prehistoric ritual/ ceremonial landscape of individual cairns and a cairn cemetery. The most prominent modern features in the landscape are the huge limestone quarries, and the few modern structures in the landscape are associated with quarrying, e.g. tramroads and miners' housing.

Distinctive Characteristics

- A north-facing scarp formed by Carboniferous Limestone; the moors to the south having a thin cover of Twrch Sandstone and displaying karstic features including cliffs, caves, shake holes and limestone pavement. Area of lowermost South Wales Coal Measures sandstones ('Farewell Rock') and mudstones in the east.
- An elevated plateau-like landform, mostly above 400m ASL. From high ground, horizons appear low and smooth.
- Boggy ground and springs forming the sources of several rivers. Few waterbodies, including small upland pools and Llangyndir reservoir.
- Land use almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land. Extensive quarries (no longer worked), and small area of plantation on southern edge.
- An open landscape with no field boundaries and very few trees.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including dry dwarf shrub heath, marshy grassland, unmodified blanket bog, modified blanket bog, acid/ neutral flush and limestone cliff habitats.
- A concentration of prehistoric archaeological sites, including numerous Cairns on high ground, plus more recent archaeology associated with quarrying.
- Very limited settlement, but views to settlement in the Usk valley to the north, and other development (e.g. roads, pylons) beyond the southern boundary of the National Park.
- An exceptionally open landscape, with subtle changes in texture and seasonal colour resulting from variations in moorland vegetation.

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

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| Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas | Mynydd Llangynidr and Mynydd Llangattock (H); Glangattwg Mountain (O); Mynydd Llangynidr (H); Cwm Carneilw (M); Clydach valley (M); Clydach Scree Slopes (M) |
| 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

This LCA is characterised by its lack of settlement, although it does form an undeveloped moorland backdrop/ skyline in views from more settled areas, including towns and villages in the Usk Valley (e.g. Abergavenny, Llangattock and Crickhowell) and the Clydach Gorge. It also contributes to the settings of settlements immediately beyond the National Park boundary such as Brynmawr.

Key Views

Key views include prehistoric sites, views northwards across the Usk Valley and the hills beyond, and views across to the Central Beacons. This LCA also forms the horizon in views from the Usk Valley and from high land including the Central Beacons and the western part of the Black Mountains.

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 change:

| 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 resulting from combination of openness, landform, moorland vegetation, archaeology and views to distinctive skylines in other LCAs (e.g. profile of Central Beacons). | <p>Introduction of incongruous features into the open landscape.</p> <p>Inappropriate development, (including outside the National Park) which affects skylines and/or views.</p> |
| Landscape quality and integrity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality and good condition moorland mosaic with varied vegetation and age structure including heather, grasses, bog and rocky habitats. | <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> |
| Perceptual qualities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An exceptionally open and exposed landscape. Its landform, and absence of settlement and development give it a sense of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness in parts, despite its proximity to settlements to the south. The western part is within the BBNP core dark skies area. | <p>Proximity to settlement and development to the south mean that perceptual qualities are sensitive to new development (including beyond the National Park boundary) and to anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and illegal vehicle use.</p> |
| Artistic and cultural associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associations with the Chartist Movement whose members met covertly in the Llangynidr caves. Association with various feature films and TV series following its use as a set on many occasions (e.g. <i>Wrath of the Titans</i> filmed in Ystrad quarry). | |
| Rarity or representativeness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation includes heather moorland and rare actively-growing raised bog with an abundance of peat-forming bog mosses. Rare whitebeams and hawkweeds also grow in this LCA. | <p>Changes in land management, e.g. changes in grazing levels affecting the composition of moorland vegetation.</p> |
| Natural heritage features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceptional geological interest for limestone features including RIGS sites at Cefyn-y-yrstrad limestone pavement and Mynydd | <p>Changes in environmental conditions (e.g. air and water quality) and water retention</p> |

| | | |
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| | Pen Cynr patterned ground periglacial features; several geological SSSIs at quarry sites; National Nature Reserve at Craig y Cilau; and the cave system below Mynydd Llangatwg designated SSSI and SAC for its importance as a bat hibernation site. | affecting surface vegetation, geological exposures and caves. |
| Cultural heritage features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A prehistoric ritual landscape, with a concentration of Scheduled Monuments and other non-scheduled sites, including round cairns, platform cairns, cairn cemetery and hut circles. Later Scheduled Monuments include post-medieval/ modern tramroads associated with quarrying. | Damage to archaeological features through natural processes (e.g erosion), neglect, visitor pressure, and also visual impacts on their settings. |
| Opportunities for landscape enjoyment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost entirely open access land with some footpaths/ bridlepaths enabling access to high quality landscapes and long views over the National Park to the Central Beacons. | |
| Recreation provision and access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high-quality, accessible moorland landscape located close to centres of population. | |

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.

Main Green Infrastructure features are the open access to uplands, numerous small watercourses and lakes, and the Craig y Cillau National Nature Reserve. The Usk Bat Sites SAC provides Green Infrastructure for bat species.



Prehistoric Cairn in heather moorland landscape near the summit of Mynydd Llangynidr.



Quarry face showing interbedded limestones and sandstones (also a nesting site for Peregrine Falcons).



Limestone grass moorland and road used in the filming of TV series 'Torchwood'.

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

- Extensive past quarrying operations (particularly in the south of the area) are highly visible in some views.
- Although quarrying has now ceased, redundant quarries are used for infilling, and as film sets which can have localised and occasional effects on the area's tranquillity and wildlife.
- Development pressures beyond the southern boundary of the National Park (e.g. pylon lines).
- Light pollution from roads and towns to the south of the National Park.
- Urban fringe issues such as informal kart- racing, 4x4 vehicles and off-road motorbikes, fly tipping etc. as a result of the proximity of the area to local centres of population.
- 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).
- Historic air pollution and acid rain, and ongoing nitrogen deposition caused ecological degradation of upland habitats, particularly peat bogs, affecting biodiversity and the water flows in underlying cave systems.
- Bracken encroachment on side slopes.
- Damage by wild fires.
- Loss of archaeological features as a result of natural processes (e.g. limestone solution) and damage.

Future

- 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.
- Proposed developments beyond the National Park boundary including opencast mining, waste sites, road upgrades and wind turbines all potentially affecting the special qualities of the area, particularly in views southwards.
- Loss of dark night skies as a result of development and roads beyond the southern boundary of the National Park.
- Climate change potentially affecting environmental conditions and upland vegetation.
- Continued positive management of moorland, and restoration of upland habitats to retain and enhance the quality of the existing heather moorland mosaic.



Pylons, plantation etc. at southern boundary of National Park



Informal kart track near Cwar yr Hendre, with eroded peat bog in the middle distance, and the Central Beacons on the horizon.



Infilling at Cwar Blaen-dyffryn

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To protect and enhance the area's special qualities, including its tranquillity, valuable moorland habitats, geological and archaeological features. The special qualities of the area are not diminished by its proximity to existing and proposed development sites. The area's valuable geological and moorland habitats (particularly its cave systems, heather and peat bogs) remain in good condition. Archaeological sites are appropriately managed and recorded, and their settings are respected. Local communities and visitors are encouraged to visit, enjoy and care for the area.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **undeveloped character** of the **open moorland** landscape, and its qualities of **tranquillity, relative wildness and dark night skies** which exist despite its proximity to centres of population.
- Protect the **geological and geomorphological features** of the area (eg. cave systems).
- Protect the area's valuable **upland habitats**, particularly heather moorland mosaic and active peat bogs .
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's rich **archaeological landscape**, in particular its prehistoric features, and record archaeological features which are being lost through natural processes.
- Protect the long **views** from the area, including those southwards to land outside the National Park.

Manage

- Manage and enhance valuable **moorland habitats** retaining and increasing the area's biodiversity.
- Manage valuable **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 encouragement of a viable grazing regime which supports traditional hillfarming practices, encourages biodiversity and retains an open moorland landscape.
- Manage **recreational pressure** and urban fringe issues to avoid the damage to sensitive habitats and archaeological features, and minimise any appearance of neglect.
- Manage **filming** to minimise impacts on the special qualities of the area.

Plan

- Plan to **reduce the visual impact** of road improvements, windfarms and other development beyond the National Park boundary.
- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution.
- Plan for **community education and involvement** in the management of the area, developing links with the communities beyond the National Park 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).