

Appendix 3

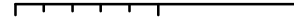
Landscape Character Area Profile Summaries

The following profiles provide information on the landscape factors which should be considered in each of the Landscape Character Areas within the National Park.

Full profiles for each Landscape Character Area (including explanations of forces for change affecting each LCA) may be seen in the *Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment* (August 2012), along with a detailed methodology, background information on the landscape character assessment process, a short explanation of the development of the Brecon Beacons National Park landscape, and information on the general forces for change affecting t

Brecon Beacons National Park

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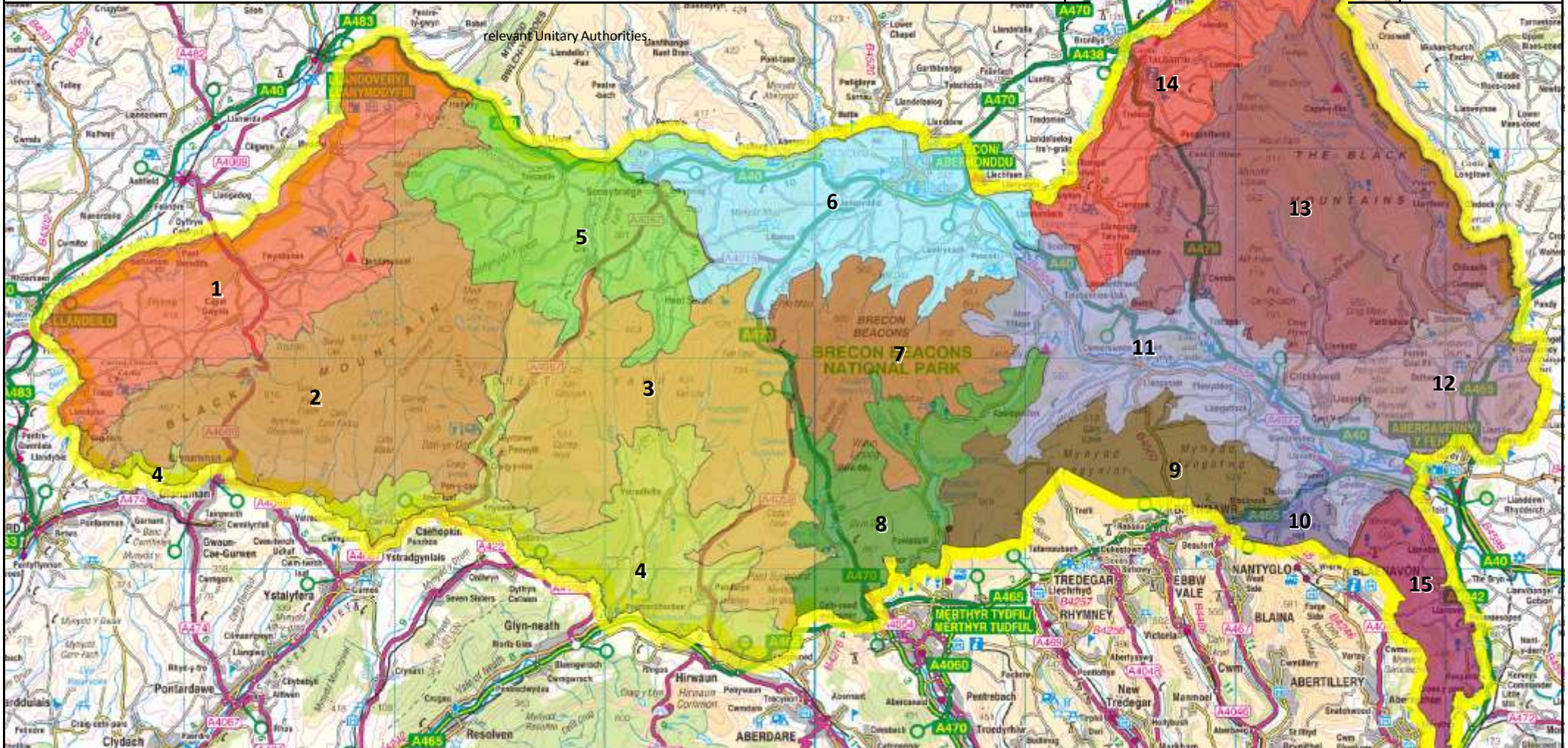
Therefore Landscape Character Areas may extend

Landscape Character Assessments prepared by

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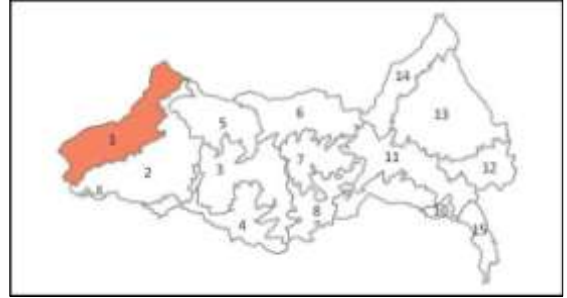


relevant Unitary Authorities.

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|--------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Towy Valley Foothills | 4. Waterfall Country and Southern Valleys | 7. Central Beacons | 10. Clydach Gorge | 13. The Black Mountains |
| 2. Y Mynydd Du | 5. Western Usk Tributaries | 8. Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys | 11. Eastern Usk Valley | 14. Wye Valley Foothills |
| 3. Fforest Fawr | 6. Middle Usk Valleys | 9. Mynyddoedd Llangatwg and Llangynidr | 12. Skirrid and Sugar Loaf | 15. Blorenge Summit and Slopes |

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

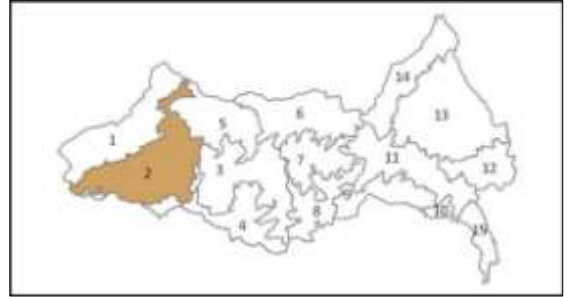
- Manage **conservation sites and semi-natural habitats** such as grasslands, wetlands and commons to retain biodiversity, using appropriate levels of grazing.
- Manage **woodland** to improve age and species diversity, using traditional techniques such as coppicing and grazing where appropriate, and 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**.

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)

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

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 Glanamman, 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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<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>
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive areas of open moorland with smooth, open skylines and very few incongruous features within the LCA. 	
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the largest expanses of surviving open moorland in southern Britain, containing some of the most inaccessible land within the National Park. 	See above
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	<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>
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rich archaeological landscape, with over 30 Scheduled Monuments (plus numerous non- 	Damage to archaeological features through natural

	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.	processes (e.g erosion), neglect, visitor pressure, and also visual impacts on their settings.
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	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.
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	

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 20th 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

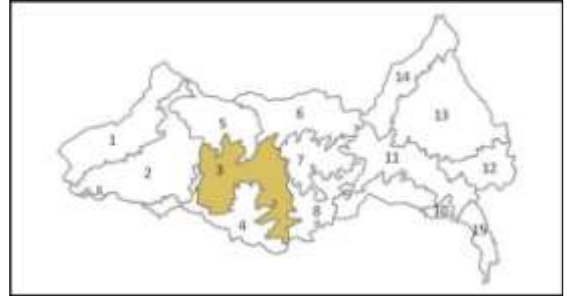
- Manage and enhance valuable **moorland habitats** (e.g. heather moorland and blanket bog), retaining and increasing the area's biodiversity.
- Manage **wetland sites** such as blanket bog to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity, reducing impacts of water flows on cave and river 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).

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)

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	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); Ystradfelltefellte Reservoir (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

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Impacts from built or other developments (including quarrying within the LCA) which may detract from the LCA's sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extensive area of upland which is particularly valued for the integrity of its historic landscapes, and for its tranquillity and sense of remoteness. 	Visual impacts, noise and night-time light pollution associated with developments beyond the National Park boundary.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<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>
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>See above</p> <p>Cliff habitats are sensitive to damage by climbing, abseiling etc.</p>
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<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"> 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. 	affecting surface vegetation, geological exposures and cave systems.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Penwylt. South-east part of LCA included on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (no.48). 	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"> 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. 	Insensitive visitor management and over-intensification of visitor numbers may impact on the LCA's special qualities.
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible from major roads, and can be appreciated whilst driving along them. Caving offers further recreational opportunities. 	

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**.

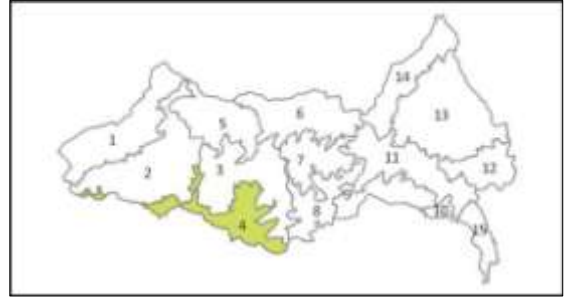
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 4: WATERFALL COUNTRY AND SOUTHERN VALLEYS

Broad Landscape Type: UPLAND VALLEYS

Description

Location and Context

This LCA is located in the south of the National Park, adjacent to the National Park boundary. It includes the villages of Ystradfellte, Penderyn and Glyntawe, and comprises the enclosed limestone landscapes to the south of Y Mynydd Du and Fforest Fawr LCAs. It includes a small outlier of similar character to the west of Brynaman, and is partially intervisible with land beyond the southern National Park boundary.



Summary Description

The predominantly limestone geology of this LCA creates its characteristic rough texture and grey colour, appearing in the crags, walls and buildings of this enclosed and relatively settled pastoral landscape. Ancient woodlands surround the streams and spectacular waterfalls which are found in the south of the LCA, flowing in deep, fern-filled gorges. Between the valleys are ridges of higher land with a more open quality and long views. The dark green of the extensive blocks of conifers in the south of the area contrasts with the surrounding grasslands.



The Nedd Fechan river near Pont Melin-Fach has a popular riverside path and is designated SSSI and SAC

Historical Development of the Landscape

The relatively sheltered natural landform of this area has made it a focus for settlement, agriculture and transport for many centuries. Historic villages, farms, roads, bridges and fields are integral parts of this landscape. Evidence also remains in the landscape for Bronze Age settlement and ritual activity (cairns), Iron Age hillforts, Roman occupation (roads and camps) and later industrial activities including quarrying, lime burning, water-powered mills and a gunpowder factory. 20th century changes to the landscape included forest plantation and road improvements.

Distinctive Characteristics

- A complex underlying geology. Carboniferous limestone in the north with extensive cave systems. Elsewhere, predominantly sandstones and mudstones of the Marros Group and South Wales Lower Coal Measures.
- A dramatic landform of steep, enclosed valleys, separated by ridges of flatter, higher land.
- A series of fast-flowing, rocky streams and rivers running along the valley floors, often in shallow gorges. Numerous waterfalls – some spectacular- particularly at changes in geology. Many waterfalls are accessible, including the popular Sgwyd yr Eira ('fall of snow')
- Land use predominantly pastoral agriculture, but with extensive areas of forestry, particularly in the south of the area.
- Limestone walls and hedgerows enclosing irregular fields in valleys, with some hedges (predominantly beech or hawthorn). Higher land less enclosed, with more use of post-and-wire fencing.
- A well-wooded landscape, with ancient broad-leaved woodland in valleys and along streams, with blocks of conifer plantation on higher land.
- Key Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, wet woodland, a range of grasslands (calcareous, neutral and acid), fens, limestone pavement and wet heath.
- A range of historic features in the landscape giving the area a strong sense of time-depth and reflecting the LCA's past use for settlement, agriculture, transport and industry.
- Settlements include villages of Ystradfellte and Penderyn, plus numerous scattered farms. Development concentrated in valley floors, particularly along the A4067 and A4059. Some intervisibility with settlements, roads and other development beyond the National Park boundary
- Limestone geology, field patterns and woodland creating a strongly textured landscape in the valleys, with grey and green the dominant colours. Higher areas are more open and simple in composition, with dark blocks of conifers contrasting in colour with the surrounding grassland.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Nedd Fechan and Mellte Valleys (O); Penderyn (M); Tawe Valley and Cwm Twrch (M); Upper Tawe Valley (H); Coed-y-Rhaiadr (M); Gwaun Hepste (M); Hepste Valley (H); Black Mountain Southern Slopes; Bryn Henllys Open Cast (L)
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

Settlement within this LCA is relatively limited, with small settlements including the clustered, valley floor villages of Ystradfellte and Penderyn, both with ancient church sites. Traditional buildings are usually stone built and painted white, with slate roofs. There are several settlements to the south (along the A4067 and A4109, outside the National Park boundary) which have a close visual relationship with this LCA. It provides their setting and backdrop when viewed from the south, and developments in these villages (which are generally linear in form, following the contours of the hillsides) are visible from the National Park.

Key Views

Long views across the area may be viewed from adjacent Upland LCAs, and from within the valleys themselves. Southern parts of the LCA (particularly higher land) have intervisibility with land beyond the National Park boundary, with long views southwards. Magnificent close-up views of waterfalls may be experienced from riverside paths.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The combination of rivers, waterfalls, woodland and pastoral land against a rugged limestone backdrop gives the area high scenic quality and a strong sense of place. 	Changes in traditional land management, and introduction of incongruous features into the landscape
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of land use and restriction of development to the main roads along valley floors has generally enabled the LCA's landscape quality and integrity to be retained over the majority of the area. 	As above
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfalls paths stimulate many senses, with unique combinations of sight, feel, sound and smell. They also provide opportunities to experience closeness to nature; their enclosure and visual isolation enabling a sense of tranquillity. Parts of the LCA are within the core dark skies area. 	Loss of tranquillity due to visible or audible developments.
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contains some of the most dramatic and accessible waterfalls in the National Park. 	
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High nature conservation importance, including numerous SSSIs covering woodlands, river systems, meadows, grasslands and other habitats. Three sites are also designated SAC for their variety of woodland and wetland habitats and the plants and butterflies they support. An important geological landscape, containing some of the largest cave systems in Britain. The area is within the Geopark and contains RIGS and geological SSSIs (exposures and limestone pavements). 	Changes in woodland and grassland management (e.g. changes in grazing practices). Cave systems are vulnerable to changes in surface conditions, e.g. denudation of peat bogs leading to increased groundwater flows.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An historic landscape with a strong sense of time-depth. Scheduled Monuments and other archaeological sites and buildings reflect the survival of features in the landscape from many periods, including Roman roads, small traditional farms and industrial sites. The gardens of Craig-y-nos-Castle (home of opera singer Adeline Patti) are listed grade II* as an example of a romantic high Victorian garden in a spectacular setting. 	Decline in traditional hillfarming leading to loss of landscape features. Archaeological features vulnerable to natural processes (e.g. limestone solution; water erosion) as well as damage or neglect.

<p>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities include caving, canoeing cycling and walking, including the many accessible ‘Waterfall Country’ paths. These paths enable access to many waterfalls, including the iconic Sgwyd yr Eira and Upper Henrhyd waterfalls. 	
<p>Recreation provision and access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of recreation opportunities, with visitor infrastructure concentrated along main roads. Visitor attractions include Dan-yr-Ogof showcaves, Craig-y-nos Country Park, Porth-y-ogof cave entrance and Penderyn distillery. Accessible from main roads and from settlements outside the National Park to the south. 	

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

Principal ecosystem services include extensive pasture (food provision), woodfuel and timber and water resources. 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.

Green Infrastructure features include the extensive accessible woodland at Coed y Rhaiadr. Other features of note are the tributaries of the Tawe, Neath and Amman, and their associated landscapes. There are a number of recreational, leisure and cultural heritage assets such as Craig-y-nos Country Park and the access to Dan-yr-ogof caves.



Ystradfellte village in its landscape setting



*Upper Henrhyd waterfall.
(Photo by Robin Lines)*



Bluebell woods in the Nant Cyw 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 mining of silica and gunpowder works in the Nedd and Mellte valleys.
- Past planting of extensive forestry plantations, particularly in the south of the area changing the composition of the landscape.
- Management of forests, especially as trees reach maturity.
- Decline in traditional hillfarming (particularly in more marginal areas) resulting in a loss of traditional practices such as common grazing, and landscape features such as dry stone walls. Economic pressures for farms to expand/ amalgamate, and to construct larger agricultural buildings.
- Loss/ alteration to vernacular domestic and agricultural buildings.
- Ongoing quarrying at Penderyn, adjacent to the LCA.
- Extensive existing opencast workings and a wind farm just beyond the southern boundary of the National Park are prominent in views, especially from higher land.
- Impact of light pollution on the area's dark skies.
- Recreation pressure (car parking, footpath erosion, litter, wild camping etc.) at popular sites, particularly along main roads.
- Localised 'urban fringe' issues such as fly tipping.

Future

- Continued decline in traditional hillfarming affecting the landscape and biodiversity of the area.
- Uncertainty over future agricultural grants potentially affecting stocking numbers and the maintenance of historic features such as walls and hedgebanks.
- Management of forests, particularly once trees have been felled.
- Tree loss due to disease e.g. *Phytophthora ramorum*.
- Continued implementation of the *Waterfall Country Management Plan*.
- Potentially significant impacts from future wind farm developments in close proximity to this area (TAN 8 areas E and F are close to the southern boundary of the National Park).
- Applications for further opencasting, quarrying, waste schemes and electricity schemes just beyond the southern boundary which would affect views from this area.



Forestry plantations and pylons in the south of the LCA, near the National Park boundary.



Afon Hepste quarry near Penderyn



Windfarm beyond the National Park boundary to the south, viewed from within the National Park.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To maintain and enhance the special qualities of the landscape, in particular its historic features and magnificent waterfalls, resisting development which would impact on views from the area. Agriculture is supported, and traditional practices such as common grazing encouraged. Woodlands, rivers and other semi-natural habitats are well managed, as are historic features and their settings. The landscape is accessible to visitors and local people, with opportunities for appropriate recreation. Geological features, including caves, are in good condition. The special qualities of the area are not compromised by inappropriate development within or outside the National Park.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect (through appropriate management) **historic features** within the landscape, including those associated with **farming and settlement**.
- Protect the **built heritage** of the area, particularly **vernacular buildings**.
- Protect the **upland skylines** and occasional **long views** which form the backdrop to the area.
- Protect vulnerable **geological sites** such as limestone pavements.

Manage

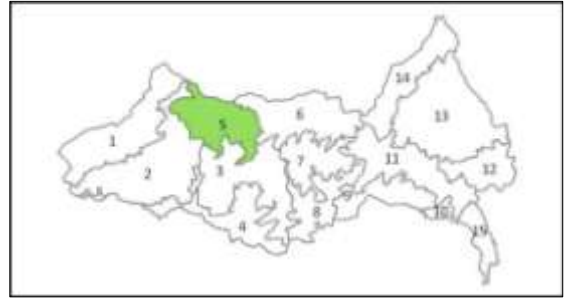
- Manage **semi-natural habitats** such as grasslands and moorlands through appropriate management and grazing.
- Manage **farmlands**, encouraging a viable farming community which farms in a traditional way to maintain the landscape and biodiversity of the area.
- Manage broadleaf **woodlands** using traditional techniques (e.g. coppicing) to encourage age and species diversity.
- Manage **coniferous forests** to maximise biodiversity and minimise visual impacts and damage to archaeology, particularly following felling.
- Manage (and record where necessary) **archaeological sites**, particularly where they are at risk (e.g. 4x4 damage to Sarn Helen Roman Road)
- Manage **recreation**, encouraging visitors and local people whilst minimising impacts on the area's biodiversity, heritage and special qualities.
- Manage **cave systems** (and related surface vegetation and activities) to protect subterranean habitats and features.

Plan

- 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 semi-natural habitats**, e.g woodland and grasslands.
- Plan to **reduce the visual impacts** of existing open-cast sites, windfarms, quarries and other development beyond the National Park boundary, and **resist applications** for future development which would **harm the special qualities** of the area.
- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution.
- Plan **recreation** strategically across the National Park, reducing pressure on 'honeypot' sites.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 5: WESTERN USK TRIBUTARIES**Broad Landscape Type: UPLAND VALLEYS****Description****Location and Context**

This LCA is located towards the west of the National Park, and lies between the northern National Park boundary and the uplands of Y Mynydd Du and Fforest Fawr. It includes the village of Trecastle and the smaller settlements of Defynnog, Crai and Heol Senni. To the east is a gradual transition into the Middle Usk Valleys.

**Summary Description**

This LCA comprises the valleys and intervening ridges which connect the unenclosed moorland with the lower land of the Usk valleys. It is a pastoral landscape, less expansive than the uplands but not as intimate as other more wooded or enclosed landscapes. Irregular fields surrounded by hedges fill valley floors and lower slopes, contrasting with the open moorland above. It is strongly influenced by the surrounding uplands which form its backdrop and contribute to its high visual quality. Management through centuries of hillfarming has given the area a strong sense of time-depth with ancient farms, winding lanes, wood pasture and species-rich fields.



The Senni Valley

Historical Development of the Landscape

Although the landscape contains some prehistoric monuments, the most profound influence on its development has been centuries of traditional hill farming, with enclosed pasture on lower land and common grazing on the moorlands above. The adjacent Cnewr estate also affects the appearance of this LCA, particularly in the architecture of the estate cottages and farmhouses. Along the northern edge of the LCA runs the A40, a former coaching route, with associated settlements such as Trecastle.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Underlying geology of Devonian mudstones, overlain by glacial deposits, and alluvium in the larger valleys.
- A series of relatively narrow valleys, the largest having glacially-eroded U-shaped profiles, whilst smaller ones are V-shaped, eroded by streams. Between the valleys are ridges of higher land.
- Meandering streams with narrow floodplains and occasional waterfalls flow into the larger but still fast-flowing River Usk. Bodies of open water include the Usk Reservoir and smaller Cray reservoir.
- Predominantly pastoral land use on improved/ semi-improved grass. Also significant areas of woodland, unimproved grassland, wood pasture on valley sides and moorland on higher ground.
- Field boundaries predominantly hedges enclosing irregular fields, often grown out or replaced with post-and-wire. Flower-rich hedgebanks along roads.
- Scattered patches of ancient deciduous woodland, particularly in valley bottoms and along streams. Occasional clumps of conifers and other non-native species around farms. Larger forestry plantations in the far west.
- Semi-natural habitats of principal importance to Wales including neutral and marshy grassland, swamp, wet heath/ acid grassland mosaic and broadleaved woodland.
- Farming landscape contains many historic features, e.g. lanes, farms, bridges, field patterns etc. Also pre-historic and medieval sites and transport routes including Roman road and coaching route.
- Settlement pattern consisting of occasional nucleated villages (Trecastle, Crai, Defynnog), and scattered farms. Main roads locally influence the landscape (e.g. A40; A4067)
- Varied texture and a timeless, peaceful quality. Moderate scale between the open uplands and more enclosed and wooded farmlands. Wide views over valleys, and a strong visual connection with Fforest Fawr and Y Mynydd Du.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Upper Usk and Hyddfer valleys (H); Senni Valley (H); Cwm Crai (H); Trecastle hinterland (M);; Glasfynydd Forest (M); Usk Reservoir (H); Mynydd Wysg (M); Glasfynydd Forest (M); Fforest Fawr West (O); Fforest Fach (M);; Cray Reservoir (H); Usk Valley West of Brecon (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

The largest settlement in the LCA is Trecastle, situated on a major east-west route (a former coaching route and now the A40) with the remains of a medieval motte and bailey castle. Other smaller settlements include Crai and Defynnog, which has a prominent white-painted church tower, and a strong estate influence in its architecture. Farms and hamlets are scattered throughout the LCA, generally of traditional stone construction and often painted white, with some more modern farm buildings. In the eastern part of the LCA, there is more of an influence of estate architecture, particularly in the distinctive white-painted farms and cottages, often embellished with window pediments, gables etc.

Key Views

The area forms the setting to the higher areas of Fforest Fawr and Y Mynydd Du in terms of their foreground when viewed from the north, and also in views northwards from their summits. Some of the best views within LCA 5 are the long views down valleys (for example down the Senni Valley) often from near the boundaries of the 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:

Criteria	Special Qualities for this Landscape Character Area	Sensitivities
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High scenic quality and a strong sense of place, resulting from the landforms, visual variety, distinctive upland backdrops and traditional pastoral management of the area. 	<p>Introduction of large scale or incongruous features, particularly where skylines are interrupted.</p> <p>Decline in hillfarming affecting the traditional management and landscape features of the area.</p>
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High landscape quality and integrity as a result of centuries of consistent agricultural management, and few incongruous features. 	As above
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A peaceful, pastoral landscape with few factors detracting from its tranquillity and timelessness. The western part is within the BBNP core dark skies area. 	As above
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This landscape typifies the traditional hillfarming landscape, centred on the relationship between enclosed valleys and the open common land above. 	As above
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of habitat sites designated SSSI, including rare examples of once-common habitats, e.g. unimproved wet pastures and fens. The River Usk is designated SSSI and SAC as an example of a river flowing over sandstone, and the associated plant and animal communities within this linear ecosystem. 	Changes in grazing patterns or improvement to grasslands could affect rare habitats.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong sense of time-depth from built landscape features including lanes, bridges, farms and field patterns, as well as Scheduled Monuments from the Prehistoric period on higher land (cairns, barrows, standing stones and Twyn-y-Gaer hillfort) and the Medieval motte and bailey at Trecastle. 	Loss of archaeological/historic features as a result of erosion, damage, neglect or insensitive modernisation.

Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Reserve at Twyn-y-Gaer enables public access to a woodland site. 	
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good network of lanes, footpaths and bridleways providing access into this attractive landscape. 	

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

Principal ecosystem services include provisioning and regulating services. In addition to farmland, provisioning and regulating services derive from the extensive Glasfynydd Forest and the Usk Reservoir. These features support climate and water regulation whilst providing a source of fuel and fresh water. The River Usk provides food and recreation services including fish, angling, water craft and access to water. In common with the rest of the National Park, this LCA also contributes to cultural services including spiritual enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation and tourism, and aesthetic experiences.

Main Green Infrastructure features are the forest, reservoir and river system mentioned above, which can also support recreation and leisure pursuits. Other features of note include the Twyn y Gaer Nature Reserve and historic assets.



Pastoral scene west of Trecastle with Fforest Fawr and Central Beacons in the distance.



Rushy pasture habitat and traditional hillfarm in the Hydfer Valley



Trecastle village street (now the A40) and historic coaching inn.

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

- 20th century construction of Usk and Crai reservoirs impounding water and affecting water flows in the River Usk. Associated coniferous planting adding new features into the landscape, often with artificial straight-line boundaries.
- Construction of natural gas pipeline causing permanent changes to surface vegetation and buried archaeology.
- Construction and upgrading of roads including the A40 and A4067 with localised impacts on the area (traffic movement and noise).
- Loss of hillfarming traditions due to a lack of succession in hillfarming families. This is a particular problem in this relatively marginal farming area with small individual landholdings. Consequences on the landscape are the amalgamation of farm holdings (sometimes with new, larger-scale farm buildings), dilapidation of traditional farm buildings and poor management of hedgerows and meadows. Changes in grazing patterns on common land also affect the landscape of this LCA (see section 6.0)
- High-quality conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to residential use.
- Loss of hedgerows and replacement with post-and-wire fencing.
- New local farming initiatives can be a positive force for change e.g. Brecknock Lamb.
- Decline in traditional management of hedgerows, broadleaved woodlands and wood pasture.
- Management of coniferous plantations, particularly as trees reach maturity.
- Water quality of streams and rivers.
- Demographic changes, e.g. population decline in some hillfarming areas, but an increased demand for housing in other parts of the LCA (eg. around Trecastle).

Future

- Continued agricultural changes including loss of traditional hillfarms, farm amalgamation, new farming initiatives and changes in agri-environment schemes, all potentially affecting the traditional appearance of the landscape.
- Management of coniferous plantations, particularly following felling.
- Continued development pressure, particularly in the north of the area.



Usk Reservoir (constructed in 1955 to supply water to Swansea) and associated forestry. Viewed from the north, with Y Mynydd Du behind.



Brecknock Lamb for Marks and Spencer- an example of changing agricultural markets and positive local initiatives.



Barn in the Crai Valley, derelict as a result of changing farming practices. Many similar barns throughout the National Park have been converted to residential use.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To maintain the traditional features and special qualities of the landscape, ensuring that any agricultural changes are as sensitive as possible to the area's landscape and habitats. Farming is supported and its viability is increased, with farmers encouraged to continue traditional hillfarming practices in their management of common land, hedgerows and meadows. The area continues to provide an attractive setting for the surrounding uplands. New development around existing settlements is sensitively accommodated into the landscape. Semi-natural habitats such as woodland and grassland sites are well managed, and archaeological/ historic features (including built heritage) are protected and well looked-after. Appropriate recreation is encouraged, and people enjoy and appreciate the landscape.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the area's **archaeological sites**, and the **historic landscape features** such as lanes and hedgerows which contribute to the character of the area.
- Protect the area's **built heritage** ensuring that any changes (e.g. conversions of barns to residential use) are done as sensitively as possible.

Manage

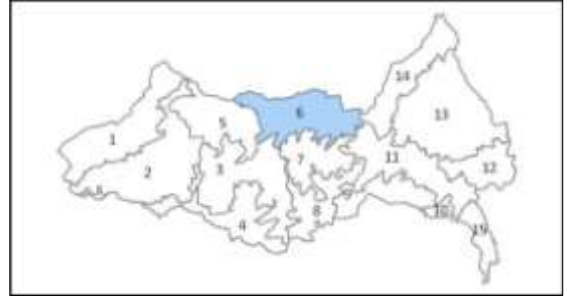
- Manage **farmland** through the encouragement of a viable farming community, farming the land in a traditional way which maintains the landscape and enhances biodiversity.
- Manage **wood-pasture and common land** through encouragement of appropriate levels of grazing and other positive management practices.
- Manage **woodland** (using traditional techniques such as coppicing) to retain age and species diversity.
- Manage **wetland and grassland sites** to maximise their biodiversity, using appropriate management and grazing.
- Manage **plantations** to enhance their biodiversity, protect archaeological features and improve their appearance in the landscape, particularly as trees reach maturity.
- Manage **recreation**, encouraging people to enjoy the landscape whilst retaining its special qualities.

Plan

- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats** within the area such as woodland, hedgerows and grasslands.
- Plan to **work with landowners** (specifically Welsh Water and Forestry Commission Wales) with regard to reservoir and forestry management.
- Plan to ensure that any **new development is well designed and well sited** within the landscape.
- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 6: *MIDDLE USK VALLEYS***Broad Landscape Type: *SETTLED VALLEYS******Description*****Location and Context**

This LCA is located in the north-central part of the National Park, between the Central Beacons LCA and the National Park boundary. It includes the settlements of Brecon and Sennybridge. Its boundaries with adjacent LCAs are transitional rather than abrupt: the Western Usk Tributaries to the west and the Eastern Usk Valley and the Wye Valley foothills to the east. Its character continues northwards beyond the National Park boundary.

**Summary Description**

This is an area of transitional landscape, connecting the uplands of the Central Beacons with the lower and more settled Usk Valley. It is visually dominated by the high northern scarps of the Central Beacons which form a dramatic southern backdrop to the area. A generally pastoral agricultural landscape of green fields divided by hedgerows, its character is also locally influenced by upland heath, designed parklands, urban development, valley floodplain and transport routes. A landscape of historical strategic importance, it contains defensive sites from the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods, and as well as recent military use.



View of Brecon town and the Central Beacons from Pen-y-crug Hillfort

Historical Development of the Landscape

Despite its peaceful appearance, many of the surviving historic features in this landscape reflect its strategic position and its need for defence over many centuries. Such sites include Iron-Age hillforts, Roman fort, Medieval castles, mottes and town defences, and more recent military sites including the army's Welsh headquarters at Brecon. Legacies also survive from more peaceful times, including historic houses and their associated parklands from the 17th to 19th centuries, and the historic Monmouthshire and Brecon canal.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Underlying geology largely of red/ brown Devonian mudstones with occasional sandstones overlain by glacial deposits of clay, and fertile alluvium deposited by rivers.
- Gently undulating landform containing the valley of the River Usk, and several tributary valleys leading down from the Central Beacons. Isolated hills of harder rock are prominent in the landscape (e.g. Yr Allt and Fenni-Fach).
- River Usk flows within a broad floodplain along the northern boundary before turning south-east. Fed by a series of rocky, fast-flowing tributary streams (e.g. Tarell and Cynrig). Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal follows the River Usk south-east of Brecon
- Predominantly pastoral land use, with pockets of heathland, forestry, arable, parkland, urban and military land uses.
- Field boundaries generally hedgerows (often trimmed) enclosing semi-regular fields).
- A variety of trees, including hedgerow and riparian trees, coppice woodlands, small conifer plantations and parkland trees including veteran trees and non-native specimens.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, dry heath/ acid grassland, neutral grassland, fen and standing water.
- Historic features from a range of periods (from prehistoric hillforts to early modern canal) but with a concentration of transport-based and defensive structures including Pen-y-crug hillfort, Y Gaer Roman fort and Medieval castles, mottes, town banks etc. Later historic parks and country houses also influence the landscape.
- The town of Brecon on a crossing point of the Usk, with its castle, cathedral (originally a priory church) colourful Georgian houses, and modern peripheral housing and industrial buildings.
- Important past and current transport corridors, including the A40, A470, and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.
- Good recreation/ tourist infrastructure e.g. Cycle / riding trails, National Park Visitor Centre, youth hostel, B&Bs.
- Visually dominated by the Central Beacons on the southern horizon, this is a relatively open landscape with a settled, verdant feel.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Glyn Tarell and Cynrig valley (H); Clos Coed and environs (H); Cilieni Valley (M); Sennybridge (L); Usk Valley West of Brecon (H); Mynydd Bach Trecastell (H); Mynydd Iltid (H); Forest Lodge (M); Usk Valley East of Brecon (H); Ysgir Valley (M); Honddu Valley (H); Felinfach Farmlands (M); Llanfilo Farmlands (M); Brecon (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 contains the historic town of Brecon- an important local commercial and administrative centre, and several smaller nucleated villages including Sennybridge (with its military base), Libanus and Llanfrynach. There are also numerous hamlets and scattered farms, many of which are built in traditional materials and styles. The LCA contributes to the approaches, backdrop and setting to these settlements, which themselves influence the character of the landscape, giving it a more settled and developed feel.

Key Views

High points such as Pen-y-crug hillfort offer panoramic views across the LCA and the countryside to the north outside the National Park. Views south from within Brecon town towards the Central Beacons create a very strong sense of place. Many major and minor roads within the LCA also have excellent views of the Central Beacons. The area also forms the foreground to views northwards from the summits of the Central Beacons.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong sense of place, and high scenic quality particularly due to the visual dominance of the Central Beacons to the south. 	Introduction of visually-intrusive features, particularly on skylines or in locations which impact on views to or from the Central Beacons, and on the setting of Brecon.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well-managed landscape which forms the setting to the Central Beacons and to the town of Brecon. 	Changes in agricultural practices resulting in loss of traditional landscape features such as hedgerows and vernacular buildings. Decline in grazing affecting common land in the Central Beacons.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Away from towns and main roads, the area has a peaceful, pastoral quality with a sense of timelessness. 	Insensitive development; loss of traditional hillfarming landscapes; Localised impacts of military training.
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early cultural association with Gerald of Wales who resided at Llanddew outside Brecon. Later strong military associations. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contains some of the most familiar and well-known views in the National Park, creating a very strong sense of local identity. 	As above
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated nature conservation sites include ancient woodland (especially in river valleys) SSSIs at Nant Menasgin and Blaen-Car woods, Gyfartha meadow, Illtyd Pools (upland marsh) and the River Usk and its tributaries. The latter is also designated SAC as an example of a river running over sandstone forming a linear ecosystem with its associated habitats. Illtyd Pools is a Local Nature Reserve. 	Decline in management of woodland and other sites; river water quality issues.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous Scheduled Monuments, many of which represent the occupation and defence of this area over millennia. Much of the area is within the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (area 58). Sites included on the Register of Historic 	Loss of archaeological sites as a result of natural processes, erosion and damage by visitors. Loss of historic landscape

	<p>parks and gardens include Penpont (grade II*), an early C.19th 'picturesque' park in the Usk Valley influenced by Humphrey Repton and containing some of the earliest larch trees in Britain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The attractive town of Brecon, with its castle, cathedral, bridges, historic college, Georgian buildings and 19th Century barracks. The core of the town is a Conservation Area, and there are numerous Listed Buildings. 	<p>features due to neglect or changes in land management (particularly sites in private ownership).</p> <p>Insensitive modernisation affecting the appearance of built heritage features.</p>
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many opportunities for enjoyment of the landscape, including walking, cycling, horse riding, canoeing and boating. Many historic sites are publicly accessible (e.g. Pen-y-crug hillfort; Y Gaer Roman fort). 	
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A popular tourist/ recreation area with good tourist infrastructure and a range of attractions including the National Park Visitor Centre, horse riding centres, canoeing launch points on the Usk, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and towpath, the Taff Trail and the Three Rivers Ride. Accommodation includes numerous hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, campsites and a youth hostel. The area also provides access to popular walks in the Central Beacons. 	<p>Concentrations of recreational activities causing erosion problems and damage to historic/ environmental features.</p> <p>Informal signage and recreational development impacting on the character of the landscape.</p>

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

Principle ecosystem services include pasture and arable farming (food provisioning), woodlands and fresh water. The River Usk provides food and recreation services including fish, angling, watercraft and access to water. 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. Main Green Infrastructure assets include the River Usk corridor, the extensive mix of coniferous and deciduous woodland stands, Traeth Mawr Nature Reserve, the Taff Trail, and visitor attractions including Brecon Cathedral and the Roman fort at Y Gaer.



Pen Y Fan with farmland and parkland in the foreground



Penpont Parkland in the Usk Valley



Brecon Castle and town with the Central Beacons beyond

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

- Settlement expansion, particularly linear development along main roads, and spreading of Brecon town from the valley floor up on to higher land, making built development much more visible within the landscape.
- Demand for development of settlements, including low-cost housing, economic growth, efficient transport etc.
- Construction and upgrading of main roads with traffic becoming a locally visual and audible presence in the landscape.
- Telecommunications mast on Yr Allt is a prominent feature in the landscape over a wide area.
- Construction of natural gas pipeline causing permanent changes to surface vegetation and buried archaeology.
- Water flows in River Usk affected by reservoir construction, past moorland drainage (grips) and climatic variation.
- Past planting of relatively small-scale conifer plantations on steeper slopes.
- Military training, particularly in the north of the LCA.
- Hedgerow loss and replacement with post-and-wire fencing.
- Decline in traditional hillfarming, particularly in higher and more marginal parts of the LCA. Consequences on the landscape are the amalgamation of farm holdings (sometimes with new, larger-scale farm buildings), dilapidation of traditional farm buildings, poor management of hedgerows and meadows, and undergrazing of common land.
- High-quality conversions of redundant agricultural buildings to residential use.

Future

- Continued demand for housing and other development, particularly around existing settlements in the northern part of the area.
- Continued modernisation of agriculture and a decline in traditional hillfarming techniques such as grazing of common land and meadows, affecting biodiversity and the traditional appearance of the landscape.
- Continued amalgamation of farm holdings and a need to construct larger farm buildings.
- Changes in agricultural grants and funding potentially affecting the maintenance of traditional landscape features such as hedgerows.



Development on edge of Brecon expanding up the hillside



The A470 through Glyn Tarell



Sign for military vehicles using rural lane south of Brecon

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To retain and enhance the area's special qualities, in particular its views and historic features, ensuring that any new development is sensitively designed and accommodated within its landscape setting.

Agriculture is viable, with farmers encouraged to use traditional land management techniques to retain and enhance landscape features and biodiversity. Iconic views to and from the Central Beacons are protected and enhanced, and historic sites, buildings and features are in good condition. The landscape impacts of new developments and military use are minimised. Visitors and local people are encouraged to enjoy the landscape through a wide variety of recreation opportunities, but without detriment to the area's special qualities.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **open upland skylines and views to the Central Beacons** which form the backdrop to the area.
- Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's numerous **historic and archaeological sites**.
- Protect and enhance the **built heritage** of the area and the settings of settlements.
- **Protect (and manage) historic features within the agricultural landscape** e.g. **hay meadows, field boundaries and narrow lanes**.

Manage

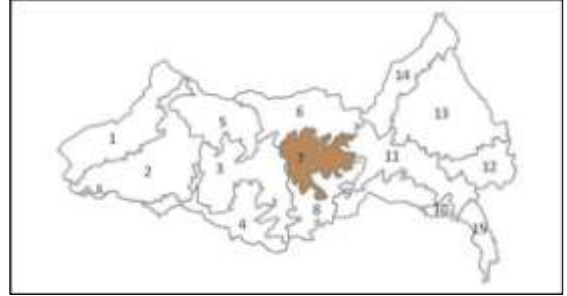
- Manage **recreation** where necessary to encourage enjoyment of the landscape, but minimise its impacts on the landscape and biodiversity of the area, and also to minimise conflicts between different recreational users (e.g. canoeists and fishermen).
- Manage **farmland**, encouraging a viable farming community using traditional methods to manage traditional landscape features and enhance biodiversity.
- Manage **semi-natural habitats** such as grassland, wetlands and commons to retain biodiversity, using appropriate management and levels of grazing.
- Manage **woodland** to improve age and species diversity, using traditional techniques (e.g. coppicing) where appropriate, and control of non-native species where necessary.
- Manage **archaeological sites** and their settings, with sensitive interpretation as appropriate.
- Manage **designed landscapes**, replacing parkland/ veteran trees to ensure their continued presence within the landscape.
- Manage **plantations** to enhance their biodiversity and appearance within the landscape, particularly as trees reach maturity.

Plan

- Plan to **minimise the visual impacts** on this area of any **developments within or outside the National Park boundary, ensuring that new developments are well designed and sited**.
- Plan to **work with military authorities** to ensure that military use has minimal impacts on the area's landscape and special qualities.
- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats** such as woodland, wetlands and grassland.
- Plan to **encourage local communities to enjoy the landscape**, and to be actively involved in its management.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 7: *CENTRAL BEACONS***Broad Landscape Type: *UPLANDS******Description*****Location and Context**

The Central Beacons LCA is located in the centre of the National Park, and includes Pen y Fan, its highest point. The Uplands continue westwards into the Fforest Fawr LCA, whilst to the north and east are the Middle and Eastern Usk Settled Valleys. To the south are the Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys.

**Summary Description**

The dramatic sandstone crags which form the northern face of this LCA are one of the most distinctive and iconic features of the National Park, and form the setting to the town of Brecon and its surroundings. As the highest land in the National Park, the Central Beacons have spectacular views in all directions and provide popular walking routes. It has a sense of being at the heart of the National Park, detached from the more developed areas to the north and south.



Craig Cwn Sere and Cribyn from Bwlch Duwynt

Historical Development of the Landscape

This landscape illustrates human interaction with the landscape over a very long period of time, from clearance of the land in prehistoric times, to the WW2 remains and military memorials of the 20th century. One of the primary influences on this landscape has been the changing patterns of grazing over many centuries, often by hefted flocks of local breeds of sheep and cattle.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Geology of Devonian Senni and Brownstones Formations, highly visible in the northern scarp. Covering of plateau beds on the highest land gives the ridges a flat-topped appearance.
- A glacially-sculpted landscape with a dramatic northern scarp, below a line of dramatic peaks including Pen y Fan (the highest point in the Brecon Beacons at 886m ASL). A series of horseshoe-shaped valleys radiate out from the centre, with a gradual slope downward to the south.
- Fast-flowing streams (fed from springs or upland bogs) radiate out from this central point. The source of the River Taff is in this LCA. Small glacial lake at Llyn Cwm Llŵch below Corn Du.
- Land use almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land.
- An open landscape, with trees limited to small patches of wood pasture on sheltered valley sides, although there are views across the adjacent plantations of the Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including marshy grassland, montane heath, modified blanket bogs, and dry heath/ acid grassland mosaic.
- A range of historic features, including abandoned settlements to 20th century artefacts including pill box, tank traps and military memorials. Relatively few prehistoric sites compared to other LCAs.
- Very little settlement or other development within this LCA. However, views from the area encompass the surrounding settled landscape. The A470 follows the western boundary of the LCA.
- An open, expansive landscape with a sense of airy spaciousness and of being ‘on the top’. The simple texture of the vegetation contrasts with the rough, stripy appearance of the crags. A dramatic, repeating pattern of triangular-shaped faces on the northern scarp, and lines of flat-topped ridges extending into the distance to the east and west.

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

Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Brecon Beacons (O)
<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 is very little settlement within this LCA, although the remains of former settlements can be seen at the periphery of the area. The high peaks of the Central Beacons LCA contribute to the distinctive settings of lower-lying settlements, particularly Brecon.

Key Views

Panoramic views in all directions from summits and a sense of being ‘on top of the world’, whilst experiencing the full east-west extent of the Brecon Beacons. This LCA also forms the backdrop to views from adjacent uplands and valleys.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An iconic landscape which forms the centre of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It has exceptionally high scenic quality and a strong sense of place resulting from its elevation, dramatic and distinctive topography, and panoramic views. 	Introduction of incongruous features into the landscape which affect perceptions of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness. These can include recreational infrastructure e.g. car parks, waymarkers, paved paths.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extensive and generally well-managed area of open, undeveloped landscape of high quality, which forms some of the highest land in southern Britain. 	Concentrations of people can also reduce the sense of tranquillity.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of tranquillity due to the landscape's openness, perceived naturalness, low noise and dark skies (the LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area). There are few detracting features in terms of human development, but the numbers of people present on paths and summits can reduce the sense of tranquillity. The combination of inaccessibility, landform and absence of settlement gives the central part of the LCA a sense of remoteness. These qualities, combined with its sense of openness and exposure also create a sense of relative wildness, particularly when contrasted with the settled valleys to the north. The landscape can become hostile in poor weather conditions. 	<p>Development within or outside the LCA which impacts on views from summits (particularly on the lower land which forms the LCA's northern setting, and on the summits of the east-west ridge of the Brecon Beacons).</p> <p>As this open, exposed landscape is higher than its surroundings, it forms the horizon in views from many surrounding areas. It is therefore particularly sensitive to the introduction of features on its skylines (e.g trees, telecommunications masts) which would be prominent in views from a wide area.</p>
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visited by Tudor chronicler John Leyland (1506-52) who distinguishes between 'Arture's hille- the top or highest of the peaks' (probably Pen y Fan) and Banne Brekeniawk- the Brecon Beacons. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The northern scarp of the Central Beacons, with its triangular crags, is an iconic symbol for the Brecon Beacons National Park, and contains rare plant species. 	
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of importance for nature conservation, containing a very extensive SSSI (with smaller areas also designated SAC) 	Changes in land management, e.g. changes in grazing levels affecting the composition of moorland vegetation.

	designated for their moorland and cliff habitats. Crags and wet flushes contain a number of rare plants including Arctic alpine plants, bog orchids and Hawkweeds unique to the Brecon Beacons. Relict soil deposits enable the reconstruction of past environments.	Damage to fragile habitats through intense recreational use. Changes in environmental conditions (e.g. air and water quality) and water retention affecting surface vegetation, geological exposures and cave systems.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorials within the landscape include the Tommy Jones Obelisk and a discreet military memorial near the summit of Pen y Fan. There are also aeroplane crash sites. Scheduled Monuments include abandoned settlements from the prehistoric and medieval periods, and a Roman road crosses the area north-south. It also has a notable absence of prehistoric ceremonial sites compared with the slightly lower surrounding upland areas. 	Loss/ damage to archaeological features through natural processes and erosion by visitors.
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main summits and ridges are exceptionally popular walking routes with stunning views. The summit of Pen y Fan is relatively accessible, being an hour's walk from the A470 on a well-made path. 	The popularity of the area for recreation can lead to footpath and habitat erosion, and also reduce the sense of tranquillity and remoteness which visitors come to seek
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good recreation infrastructure in terms of car parks, paths, Beacons Way etc. providing access into the landscape. 	

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 assets include the Beacons Way and open access to uplands.



View north from Corn Du.



Corn Du Brownstones scarp.



The Central Beacons from Libanus

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

- 20th century construction of reservoirs and planting of forests in adjacent LCAs, affecting views from the area, particularly towards the south.
- Development in surrounding areas (e.g. roads, built development) affecting views from the LCA and reducing its special qualities of tranquillity and dark night skies.
- Loss of habitat variation and ecological resilience as a result of changes in 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.
- Denudation of peat bogs as a result of pollution, acid rain and land management.
- Current reduction in grazing numbers as a result of a decline in traditional hillfarming and common grazing.
- Recreational pressure e.g. path erosion, litter, demand for car parking.
- Pressure to waymark and/or pave popular routes, potentially reducing the area's feeling of wildness and remoteness.

Future

- Continued recreational pressure, and issues of path erosion, car parking etc.
- 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.
- Positive moorland management improving vegetation diversity and improving the condition of the moorland, including peat bogs.
- Visual impacts associated with the management/ clearance of forestry plantations in adjacent LCAs.
- Developments in adjacent LCAs or beyond the National Park boundary which may affect the views and special qualities of this area, including tranquillity and dark night skies.
- Climate change potentially affecting environmental conditions and upland vegetation.



Path erosion on the summit of Pen y Fan, revealing the underlying sandstone.



Bags of stone (dropped by helicopter) for pitching the popular path to Corn Du from Storey Arms.



20th century forestry plantations and reservoirs have dramatically changed views to the south.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To protect the area's open, undeveloped, dramatic and tranquil landscapes, and enhance its special qualities. Recreation is encouraged, but discreetly managed to minimise its environmental and visual impacts. Appropriate levels of grazing and other land management techniques are encouraged to improve the area's biodiversity and upland habitats. Historic and cultural features within the landscape are protected where necessary. Views out from the LCA are unaffected by visually-intrusive development.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **undeveloped character of the landscape**, and its qualities of **remoteness, tranquillity and dark night skies**.
- Protect the **open moorland landscape**, avoiding the development of vertical structures, the planting of trees and inappropriate path construction methods.
- Protect the area's **geological and geomorphological features**, and its rare habitats and species.
- Protect and enhance valuable **moorland habitats**.
- Protect (through appropriate management) the **archaeological and cultural features** and their settings where appropriate.
- Protect **expansive views** across the LCA and into adjacent areas, paying special regard to the adjacent lowlands and the uninterrupted ridges which extend to the east and west.

Manage

- Manage and enhance **upland habitats**, 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 **recreational pressure** (e.g. footpath erosion) to minimise its visual impacts and damage to sensitive habitats. Minimise impacts of recreation on **perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity**.

Plan

- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution.
- 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).
- Plan to **manage recreation strategically** across the National Park, encouraging visitors to explore areas beyond the popular 'honeypot' sites and summits.

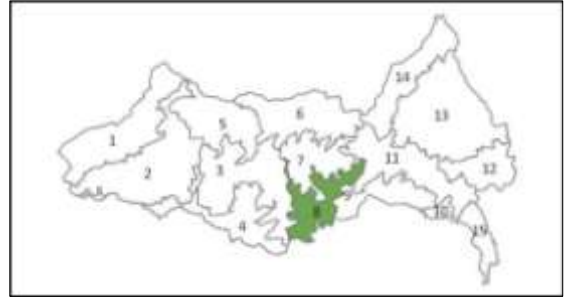
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 8: TALYBONT AND TAFF RESERVOIR VALEYS

Broad Landscape Type: UPLAND VALLEYS

Description

Location and Context

This LCA is located in the south of the National Park, and abuts its southern boundary near Merthyr Tydfil. To the north is the Central Beacons, to the west Fforest Fawr and to the east Mynyddoedd Llangatwg and Llangynidr, and the Eastern Usk Valley.



Summary Description

This LCA is characterised by its reservoirs, surrounded by steep sided, dark green forested valleys. Between the reservoir valleys are more open ridges of upland moorland which have long views across the reservoirs and their surrounding forests. This LCA is easily accessed from Merthyr Tydfil and the A470, and is a popular recreation destination.



The Talybont Valley

Historical Development of the Landscape

The landscape was dramatically altered in the early to mid 20th century, when strings of reservoirs were created through the damming of steep valleys. There are three reservoirs in the Taf valley, four in the Taf Fechan valley, and one large one in the Talybont valley (Glyn Collwn). All are surrounded by extensive conifer plantations and have associated water treatment works and other structures. Pockets of fields, farms and woodland remain (for example around Vaynor) which give an indication of how the valleys would have looked prior to their flooding. The area has strong links with the towns to the south; providing natural resources such as limestone and water, and also acting as a transport corridor. A Roman road, turnpike road (now the A470), industrial tramways, and the Brecon and Merthyr Railway (now forming part of the Taff Trail) all run through this LCA.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Mostly underlain by Devonian age sandstones of the Brownstones Formation, with small areas of the upper Old Red Sandstone Grey Grits and Carboniferous Limestone in the south, and Twrch Sandstone on the southern margin.
- A series of steep V-shaped valleys separated by flatter uplands. The Taff valleys have a strong north-south orientation and drain southwards, whilst the Talybont valley lies broadly north-east to south-west and drains into the Usk.
- Chains of artificial reservoirs occur in valleys, linked by rivers. Mountain streams (and occasional waterfalls) flow down the steep valley sides, sculpting sandstone and limestone rocks.
- Coniferous forestry is dominant land use, plus reservoirs, pasture and open moorland.
- Surviving field boundaries usually stone walls, occasionally patched with post and wire. Some former field boundaries still visible within forestry plantations.
- Extensive coniferous forests, with some larch and patches of more mixed deciduous woodland (for example on the western side of the Llwyn-onn valley). Deciduous trees also associated with watercourses.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including modified blanket bog, marshy grassland, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, flush/ spring and acid grassland.
- Many historic features lost under reservoirs and forests. Surviving features include farms, field boundaries and Vaynor church. Parts of the Brecon and Newport Railway survive, including Pont-sarn viaduct, the opening of the tunnel which connected the Talybont and Taff valleys, and some track (now the Brecon Mountain Railway) and station buildings.
- Very limited settlement within the LCA (Llwyn-onn, Pontsticill and occasional farms). Other built development includes housing for reservoir workers, large-scale water treatment works below dams, and former limestone quarries.
- Recreation provision e.g. car parks, picnic areas, trails, Garwant Forest Visitor Centre, watersports.
- Generally a simple landscape composition, with large blocks of forest in simple valley landform. Forests appear strongly textured (especially where they include deciduous trees) and contrast in colour with surrounding open moorland.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Vaynor Uplands (H); Penmoelallt (M); Carnafell Valley and Talybont Forest (H); Upper Taf Fechan Valley (H); Taf Fawr Valley (H); Beacons Reservoir (M); Upper Taff Fawr (M); Taff Fawr (H); Vaynor Farmlands (M); Taff Fechan (H); Ponsticill and Pentwyn Reservoirs (O); Ponsticill Reservoir (O); Brecon Beacons (O); Talybont Reservoir (O); Upper Neuadd Reservoir (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

Settlements within the LCA limited to the village of Pontsticill, hamlets such as Llwyn-onn and scattered farms. These include some traditional stone-built buildings, but also more modern development, including housing for reservoir workers. There is some visual connection with the towns to the south, particularly area of elevated modern housing, including the northern edge of Merthyr Tydfil.

Key Views

Key views include the attractive compositions of water, trees and distant hills which can be seen from many lakeside viewpoints. Higher ridges have views across the reservoir valleys, into the surrounding LCAs, and also encompass land beyond the National Park boundary. There are views across this LCA from surrounding uplands including the Central Beacons, and from popular summit viewpoints such as Pen y Fan.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterbodies, forests and landform combine to create a distinctive character, high scenic quality and strong sense of place, which is heightened by views to the Central Brecon Beacons and other high land on the horizons. 	Changes in the composition of the landscape and views from the area.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well-managed landscape, with forests and other land generally in good condition. 	Neglect/ poor management of forests and farmland. Changes to grazing patterns of upland areas.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive forests create a sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness, despite this LCA's proximity to urban areas. The enclosure experienced within the forests contrasts with the openness and long views experienced across lakes and from higher land. Parts of the LCA are within the BBNP core dark skies area, which enhances the sense of tranquillity. 	Loss of tranquillity as a result of visually intrusive/ audible developments beyond the National Park boundary.
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This LCA contains some of the largest forests and waterbodies in the National Park, giving it a unique character and recreational opportunities. 	
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular geological interest, with the western part of the LCA in the Geopark. Also several geological SSSIs associated with the limestone (including Nant Glais Caves) and RIGS near Pontsticill. Accessible conservation sites include bird hides at Talybont Reservoir SSSI, and a Local Nature Reserve at Penmoelallt ancient woodland. This LCA also contains rare whitebeam trees and hawkweeds. 	Caves are sensitive to surface conditions (e.g. changes in vegetation and water storage capacity).
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of cultural heritage sites, including Scheduled Monuments dating from the Neolithic to Medieval periods, Vaynor church, and surviving industrial archaeology relating to the Brecon and Newport railway, including the Pont-sarn viaduct and tunnel openings. Extensive prehistoric sites survive on higher land. 	Archaeology vulnerable to natural processes, damage and erosion, including during forestry felling operations. Standing buildings (e.g. surviving railway buildings) vulnerable to neglect and vandalism.

<p>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of outdoor recreation within a high quality landscape, including Nature Reserve and bird hides, Garwnant Forest Visitor Centre (with trails, low ropes course, children’s play area, café, visitors centre etc.), and water-based recreation including fishing and sailing. The landscape can also be experienced from the Brecon Mountain Railway from Pontsticill Station. 	<p>The forested nature of the landscape in this area gives it a relatively high carrying capacity for recreation, but it must be managed to ensure that the area’s special qualities are not affected.</p>
<p>Recreation provision and access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptionally good access and infrastructure for recreation, including car parks, picnic sites, trails (including a wheelchair accessible trail at Taf Fechan forest), the Taff Trail cycle route, Beacons Way long distance route and numerous other paths. This LCA is a gateway into the National Park from the south, and is also a popular access route into the Central Brecon Beacons (LCA 7). 	<p>Potential impacts of recreation on reservoir water quality.</p>

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

Extensive plantations aid in climate regulation and provide timber. The various reservoirs provide fresh water, support wildlife and regulate water flows, whilst small areas of farmland support food production. 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.

Green Infrastructure features include the extensive woodland plantations and reservoirs which support leisure and recreational pursuits. This LCA includes a variety of visitor attractions such as the Brecon Mountain Railway, river corridors and mountain moorland.



Pontsticill Reservoir with the Brecon Beacons on the horizon



*Garwnant Visitor Centre, Llwyn-
onn Reservoir*



Water-eroded rocks in the Taf Fechan 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 construction of reservoirs and plantation of straight-edged forests, significantly altering the previous character of the landscape.
- Construction and upgrading of main Brecon- Merthyr road (A470) through the area with associated heavy and fast-moving traffic.
- Past quarrying of limestone leaving scars in the landscape.
- 'Urban fringe' influences of adjacent urban areas and high visitor numbers (e.g. litter, fly-tipping, 'police operation' notices, evidence of car break-ins etc).
- Land uses just beyond the southern boundary associated with adjacent development, e.g. golf clubs, derelict quarry etc.
- Water quality issues in reservoirs.
- Ongoing management of forests, particularly where trees are reaching maturity.
- Impacts of *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogens, particularly on larch trees.
- Decline in traditional hillfarming, particularly in more marginal areas, and associated impacts on traditional common grazing of upland areas.
- Loss/ damage/ neglect of archaeological and historic sites and buildings and their settings (including during forestry felling operations).
- Changes in surface conditions and management affecting underlying cave systems e.g. through impacts on groundwater flow.

Future

- Long-term management of forests to improve their biodiversity and fit within the landscape, and to ensure minimal damage to archaeology.
- Development proposals beyond the National Park boundary to the south (including open cast coal extraction, windfarms (TAN 8 area F is close to the southern boundary) and waste schemes) potentially affecting views southwards, particularly from higher land.
- Designation of the Talybont Reservoir as a Local Nature Reserve.
- Continued decline in grazing of upland areas affecting upland habitats and the open appearance of the landscape in these areas.
- Continued loss of archaeological and built heritage features.
- Climate change potentially resulting in increased storm damage to forests, new pests and diseases and changes in tree species to those more tolerant of altered conditions.
- Climate change effects on water quality and supply.



Vaynor Quarry, skirted by the southern boundary of the National Park.



Phytophthora felling and information poster near Storey Arms Centre



The main A470 near Cantref Reservoir

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To sensitively manage forestry, water resources and recreation to ensure the long-term enhancement of the area's biodiversity and special qualities, and enhance views of the area from adjacent higher ground.

Forests and woodlands are well managed to increase biodiversity, improve their fit within the landscape, encourage recreation and protect archaeology, particularly once trees reach maturity. People are encouraged to visit and enjoy a wide range of appropriate recreation within the landscape, but it is managed to minimise impacts on sensitive habitats and water resources. Archaeological and built-heritage features are protected, and recorded where necessary. Upland commons are in good condition.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect (through appropriate management) **historic features** within the landscape, including industrial archaeology, and prehistoric sites on higher land.
- Protect the **upland skylines** and occasional **long views** which form the backdrop to the area.
- Protect vulnerable **geological sites**.

Manage

- Manage **coniferous forests** to maximise biodiversity, minimise damage to archaeology, and enhance views from surrounding uplands, particularly following felling.
- Manage **upland habitats**, (including through encouragement of appropriate levels of grazing) to retain and enhance biodiversity and environmental conditions in underlying cave systems.
- Manage **recreation**, encouraging visitors and local people to enjoy the landscape whilst minimising impacts on the area's biodiversity, heritage and special qualities.
- Manage **archaeological sites**, recording where necessary and respecting their settings.
- Manage pockets of remaining **farmland**, encouraging a viable farming community which farms in a traditional way to maintain the landscape and biodiversity of the area.
- Manage remnant **broadleaf woodlands** to encourage age and species diversity.

Plan

- Plan to **work closely with landowners** in the area (specifically Forestry Commission Wales and Welsh Water) with regard to forest and reservoir management.
- Plan for the **creation, extension and linking of semi-natural habitats**, e.g deciduous woodlands and grasslands.
- Plan **recreation** strategically across the National Park, reducing pressure on 'honeypot' sites and encouraging recreation in areas with relatively high capacity.
- Plan for **community education and involvement** in the management of the area, developing links with the communities beyond the National Park boundary.
- Plan to **reduce the visual impacts** of existing extraction/ development beyond the National Park boundary, and **resist applications** for future development which would **harm the special qualities** of the area.
- Plan to retain the area's **dark skies** and reduce incidence of light pollution.

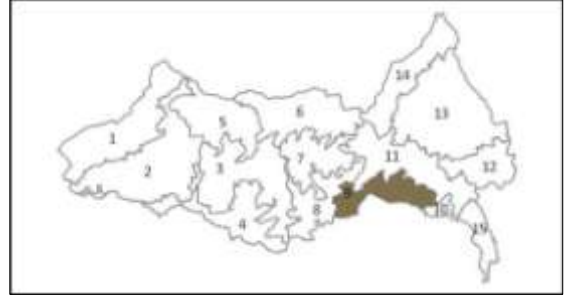
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 9: MYNYDDOEDD LLANGATWG & LLANGYNIDR

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)

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)
<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

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-yr-ystrad limestone pavement and Mynydd 	<p>Changes in environmental conditions (e.g. air and water quality) and water retention</p>

	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

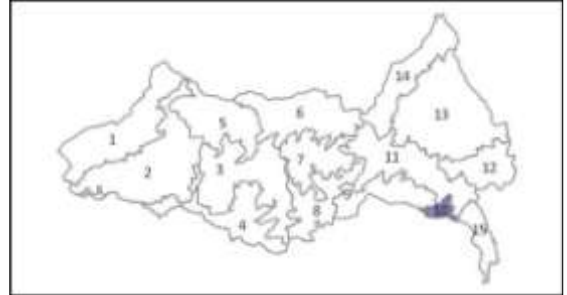
- Manage and enhance valuable **moorland habitats** retaining and increasing the area's biodiversity.
- Manage valuable **wetland** sites such as blanket bog to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity, reducing impacts of water flows on cave and river systems and potentially reducing 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).

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 10: *CLYDACH GORGE***Broad Landscape Type: *SETTLED VALLEYS******Description*****Location and Context**

This small LCA is located towards the eastern end of the National Park, on its southern boundary. It includes the Clydach Gorge between the settlements of Brynmawr and Gilwern, and also Gilwern Hill. The A465 'Heads of the Valleys Road' runs through the gorge. To the north-west is Mynyddoedd Llangatwg and Llangynidr LCA and to the north-east is the Eastern Usk Valley LCA. Blorenge Hills and Slopes LCA is to the east.

**Summary Description**

This distinctive LCA is characterised by its dramatic and deep gorge. Beech woodlands cling to its steep sides, and contain remains of the area's rich industrial past, including viaducts, tramroads, quarries, ironworks and lime kilns. In the bottom of the gorge, the River Clydach leaps over rocks and waterfalls. Despite its steep topography, this is a settled landscape, with a busy main road running through the gorge, and lines of terraced houses along the hillside. Above is Gilwern Hill, also an important industrial site, with views across and into the gorge below. This part of the area is within Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.



Clydach Gorge from Gilwern Hill

Historical Development of the Landscape

The area's exposed mineral resources, woodlands and water supply provided all the requirements for early industrial exploitation. Records of this begin in the 17th Century, but industrial processing may have begun earlier. From the 17th century until the end of the 20th century, the Clydach Gorge was used for iron ore extraction, charcoal production, iron production, stone quarrying and lime production. The remains of these industries, and their associated settlements, buildings, transport routes and spoil tips create an exceptionally rich historic landscape.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Complex underlying geology ranging from Brownstones at the foot of the gorge, through Carboniferous Limestone, and Marros Group sandstones and mudstones to South Wales Lower Coal Measures on the higher ground to the south. The rocks contain many caves.
- A spectacular, steep-sided gorge, falling from 350m ASL to 100m ASL over a distance of approx. 5km. Gilwern Hill on the south side of the gorge rises to over 440m ASL.
- Fast-flowing River Clydach running along the base of the gorge, fed by tributary streams and waterfalls down steep valley sides.
- Contemporary land use a mixture of woodland, settlement, moorland and derelict industrial land. Some pasture on shallower slopes.
- Enclosed fields generally limited to the shallower slopes at the gorge's eastern end. Here, small semi-regular fields are divided by walls or hedges.
- Extensive beech woodlands covering the valley floor and sides. Bluebell carpets in spring.
- Examples of regeneration of habitats on abandoned spoil tips and opencast sites.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, acid and calcareous grasslands, and heath (on Gilwern Hill).
- Outstandingly rich industrial archaeology of iron working, coal mining and quarrying, and their associated settlements and transport routes. Pen-fford Goch contains evidence of some of the earliest coal extraction processes around Pen-ffordd-goch.
- A well-settled landscape, including industrial villages and more recent development. Also a key transport route, including historic tramways and railways. The Heads of the Valleys Road (constructed in the 1960s) snakes down the gorge. Pylon lines also run through the gorge.
- A dramatic sense of enclosure at the base and sides of the gorge, contrasting with the more open feel of the hill tops above. Beech woods and limestone outcrops create a strongly textured, complex landscape with seasonal colour changes.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Clydach Gorge (H); Gilwern Hill (O); Llanelly hill tip (M); TRFNVS030 (M); A465 (L); Clydach Scree Slopes (M); Langattwg Mountain (O); Clydach valley (M); Tredegar town (M); A465 (M); Twyn Blaen-nant (L)
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

Settlements within the gorge itself (for example Clydach and Cheltenham) are generally linear in form, following the contours of the hillsides. They are industrial in their origins, containing workers' housing (usually terraced) and associated buildings such as chapels and pubs. On the flatter land above the gorge, settlements such as Llanelly Hill have developed in a much more scattered and piecemeal fashion.

Key Views

These include dramatic views across the gorge from the surrounding higher land, and from within the gorge itself (for example from the Heads of the Valleys road). Many views are framed by trees, and/ or include archaeological features such as viaducts, tramways or spoil tips.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spectacular landform, combined with woodland and industrial archaeology creates a strong sense of place which is unique within the National Park. 	<p>Development which detracts from the physical grandeur of the gorge (e.g. roads; pylons), results in woodland loss, or damages/ detracts from the area's archaeology and its setting.</p> <p>Ad-hoc development on high ground (e.g. Llanelli hill) is visually intrusive in views from this LCA and the Eastern Usk Valley.</p>
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The steepness of the landform creates a strong sense of awe, whether experienced from the bottom of the gorge or looking across it. 	As above
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary legend that William Shakespeare may have written 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in a cave in Clydach Gorge. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rare surviving assemblage of industrial archaeology concentrated within a small area, partially designated World Heritage Site, and representing a microcosm of the Welsh industrial past. 	<p>Loss of archaeological sites through neglect, 'redevelopment'/clearing-up or natural processes of revegetation and erosion. The settings of archaeological sites are also vulnerable to inappropriate development.</p>
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of importance for nature conservation, with four SSSIs, designated for their geological interest, habitats and/or importance to bats. Two sites (Cwm Clydach Woodlands and part of Mynydd Llangatwg) are also designated SAC. Ancient beech woodlands contain rare whitebeam trees, unusual fungi assemblages and rare vascular plants including orchids. 	<p>Decline in woodland management resulting in a loss of biodiversity and woodland condition.</p>

Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several Scheduled Monuments and a large number of non-scheduled sites reflecting the area's rich industrial heritage, including iron works and furnace remains, quarries, limekilns and industrial settlements with their associated buildings (e.g. chapels, pubs etc.). Included in the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Areas 16+52) • A concentration of transport routes including tramroads, railways and viaducts, and the canal embankment at Gilwern where the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal crosses the gorge. 	<p>As above.</p> <p>Archaeological sites and historic buildings in private ownership are particularly vulnerable to damage or neglect.</p>
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape can be appreciated by walking, cycling and by vehicle along the lanes (often following historic tramroad routes) and from the dramatically-sited A465. Caving offers further recreational opportunities. 	<p>Difficulties of access: the A465 acts as a barrier to safe crossing of the gorge floor, and does not link with the lanes providing access to the sides of the gorge.</p>
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths, the Taff Trail and Cwm Clydach National Nature Reserve enable public access into the gorge. Gilwern Hill is open access land. 	<p>As above</p>

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

The River Clydach provides fresh water, and surrounding woodland provides a source of wood fuel and timber production. 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.

Main Green Infrastructure assets include the River Clydach corridor which is flanked by deciduous woodland and the Cwm Clydach Nature Reserve. There are numerous cultural heritage assets associated with former industry in the area.



Clydach Gorge ironworks (Scheduled Monument) in the base of the gorge.



Woodlands and viaduct on valley side



Revegetating spoil tips on Gilwern Hill

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

- Overhead high-voltage power lines are very dominant in views, particularly where they are seen against the sky.
- Construction of the A465 'Heads of the Valleys Road' along the gorge in the early 1960s. As well as its visual impacts and the physical barrier the road presents, traffic noise levels are very high as sound rebounds off the sides of the gorge.
- Relatively recent ad-hoc development (e.g. at Llanelly Hill) is visually intrusive, particularly on high ground.
- Past quarrying, coal working, and other industrial processes have left scars in the landscape, but also contribute to its sense of history.
- Loss/ dereliction of industrial and other heritage sites, particularly where it is in private ownership.
- Lack of appreciation of importance of sites (e.g. abandoned tips which are not necessarily visually appealing, but are of great importance for their archaeology and/or nature conservation interest).
- Abandonment of valley-side fields.
- Lack of management of upland areas (heath, grassland, etc) resulting in a loss of biodiversity.
- A scrappy, urban fringe appearance (e.g. poor-quality buildings, *Leylandii* hedges etc.), particularly on higher land.
- Incidence of anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping.
- Positive management related to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.

Future

- Proposals to dual the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road through the gorge.
- Continued development pressure.
- Continued woodland management issues (e.g. loss of species diversity due to climate change, storm damage and lack of management).
- Continued loss/ damage to archaeological sites and built heritage, particularly those which are not visually appealing.
- Improved management and interpretation of the area's industrial heritage through closer associations with the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.



Elevated modern development and pylons at Llanelly Hill seen from across the gorge. This development can also be seen from across the Usk valley.



Neglected industrial building alongside former railway line.



The Heads of the Valleys Road runs through the gorge, creating noise and visual impacts. Dualling of the road is currently being proposed.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To enhance the special qualities of the area, whilst encouraging appreciation of its landscape value, biodiversity and archaeological importance. The area's rich archaeological heritage is protected, managed and recorded. The biodiversity of its woodlands, grasslands, upland habitats and derelict sites are retained and enhanced where necessary. Local people and visitors are encouraged to visit the area and access to its natural and heritage sites is improved. Any future development is used as a positive force for landscape change, through good design, siting and compensatory measures

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **dramatic appearance of the landform** and its sense of scale.
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's rich **archaeological landscape**, including its industrial features.
- Protect the area's **built heritage** (and its settings where appropriate).

Manage

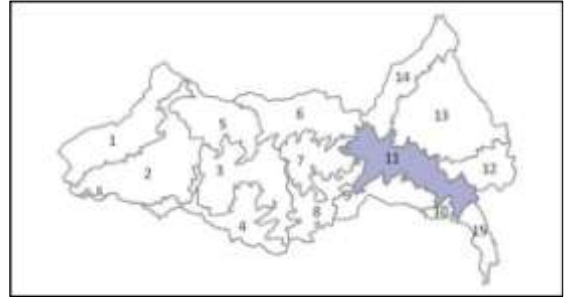
- Manage **archaeological sites and features** with regard to the recommendations of the World Heritage Site Management Plan where relevant. Particular care should be given to the management of less appreciated and/ or understood sites.
- Manage **woodland** (using traditional techniques such as coppicing where appropriate) to retain its biodiversity and to increase age and species diversity.
- Manage **upland areas and remnant farmland** to enhance their biodiversity.
- Manage **urban fringe issues** to avoid damage to sensitive habitats and archaeological features, and minimise any appearance of neglect.

Plan

- Plan to work with engineers/ designers from the earliest stages to ensure that proposals to dual the **A465 through the gorge have the minimal possible negative impacts** on the landscape, and where possible **enhance the special qualities** of the area (e.g. by improving access, enabling motorists to stop and appreciate the landscape, and reducing road traffic noise).
- Plan to ensure that any future development **fits with the grain of the landscape** and enhances its dramatic appearance.
- Plan to put **high-voltage power cables underground** where feasible.
- Plan to **reduce incidence of anti-social behaviour** such as fly tipping through **community education and involvement** in the management of the area.
- Plan to develop the area's relationship with the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape **World Heritage Site** and to extend the proportion of the area associated with it.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 11: EASTERN USK VALLEY**Broad Landscape Type: SETTLED VALLEYS****Description****Location and Context**

This linear LCA includes the floor and lower sides of the Usk Valley. It extends from Pencelli to the eastern edge of the National Park near Abergavenny, and includes several settlements including Crickhowell, Talybont and Bwlch. It has nine adjacent LCAs, including the high land of the Central Beacons to the west and the Black Mountains to the east.

**Summary Description**

This settled, luxuriant valley contrasts with the surrounding open and craggy hills. Its wide, flat valley floor with its patchwork of fields is an important transport route, containing main roads and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. A fertile, agricultural landscape, the Usk Valley is also strongly influenced by parkland planting and in places is densely wooded. The valley has a long history of settlement, and contains several villages, numerous farms and country houses with their associated grounds. A series of Iron Age hillforts overlook the valley, and the southern part has industrial links with the Clydach Gorge and Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.



The Usk Valley west of Crickhowell

Historical Development of the Landscape

The development of this landscape reflects its strategic role as a key route and transport corridor over millennia, as well as its long use for traditional agriculture and industry. Iron Age hillforts are prominent on the valley sides, with later defensive features including a series of Medieval mottes and castles such as Tretower. Villages developed at crossing points of the river, with some historic bridges surviving. Later, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal was constructed along the valley, and the southern end was influenced by industrial development. The picturesque qualities of the valley were appreciated, and several small country houses were constructed, with associated parks and gardens.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Underlying geology of Devonian sandstone and mudstone, giving a characteristic red colour to soils and river banks. Depositions of silt create fertile soil on the valley floor.
- A generally broad, flat-bottomed glaciated valley, with steep sides and occasional dome-shaped hills of harder rock rising from the valley floor.
- The wide and fast-flowing River Usk following a meandering course along the valley floor, fed by streams flowing along smaller tributary valleys. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal also follows the valley.
- A mixture of land uses, predominantly agriculture (mainly pastoral and some arable), but also parkland, settlements, woodlands and forests (particularly on steeper slopes).
- Valley floor fields generally more regular in shape than those on valley sides, creating a patchwork effect. Mostly bounded by hedges, but with stone walls in higher tributary valleys, and sometimes associated with estates.
- A well-treed landscape containing coniferous forests and bluebell woodlands on valley sides, riparian trees along watercourses, hedgerow trees and a range of specimen and veteran trees in parkland and gardens.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, neutral grassland, hedgerows and riverine habitats.
- Concentration of historic buildings and structures, including castles, churches, villages, bridges, farms and country houses. A series of Iron-Age hillforts look down from the valley sides. Industrial archaeology associated with Garn Ddyrys ironworks and the canal.
- The canal has distinctive lifting bridges, and a basin and inclined planes at Llanfoist. A well-settled landscape with a long history of use as a transport corridor.
- Settlements generally centred around historic bridging points of the Usk. At the southern end of the valley are more recent industrial villages (e.g. Gilwern).
- A soft, gentle, verdant landscape contrasting with the rugged higher land above. Deciduous trees provide seasonal changes in colour and texture.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Usk Valley - Llangattock (H); Usk Valley Hills (H); Carnafell Valley and Talybont Forest (H); Crownon Valley (H); Usk Valley East of Brecon (H); Usk Valley Northern Slopes (H); Crickhowell (H); Llanelly Hill (H); The Tumble (H); Gilwern (M); Lower Usk & Olway valleys (H); Sugar Loaf scarp slopes (H); River Usk (O); Govilon(L)
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 part of the Usk valley contains several settlements, the largest of which is Crickhowell. Most of the older settlements originate on the valley floor at crossing points on the river, although there are exceptions, such as Llanelli with its ancient churchyard. Later industrial settlements (Gilwern and Govilon) are associated with the canal. Farms are generally situated on the valley sides, and are often painted white. There is a close physical and visual relationship between settlements and their landscape setting- for example Table Mountain hillfort can be seen from the main street in Crickhowell. In recent years, expansion of settlements onto the side slopes of the valleys has made them more apparent in views.

Key Views

Views across and into the valley from above contribute to the landscape quality and sense of place of adjacent LCAs, including the Central Beacons, Black Mountains, and Skirrid and Sugar Loaf. Framed views within the valley are contained - and often dominated - by the profiles of ridge tops above the valley sides.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The contrasts between the settled, fertile, wooded valley and the open rugged land above it create a landscape of high scenic quality and with a strong sense of place. This is enhanced by the distinctive profiles of the ridges along the tops of the valley sides. Vistas constantly change along the valley. 	Introduction of intrusive development which affects the composition of the landscape, or the profiles of the ridges.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well-managed landscape, with a strong sense of time-depth, and although in places there is an awareness of modern developments this is generally not overwhelming. 	<p>Agricultural changes affecting the traditional management and appearance of the landscape (e.g hedgerow loss).</p> <p>Insensitive development which is poorly designed, sited or out of scale in relation to the surrounding landscape.</p>
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pockets of tranquillity occur in tributary valleys, away from the influences of main roads and settlements. Western ends of tributary valleys (below the Central Beacons) are within the BBNP core dark skies area. 	<p>Impacts from visually or audibly intrusive development.</p> <p>Increase in light pollution from roads and settlements.</p>
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tretower and the Usk Valley sketched by artist JMW Turner .Writer JRR Tolkein reputedly stayed at Buckland Hall while writing <i>Lord of the Rings</i>. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the best examples in the National Park of a fertile valley in very close proximity to rugged uplands. Contains important and rare industrial archaeology, particularly in relation to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and the transport of industrial products to it. 	<p>Loss of the traditional composition of the landscape.</p> <p>Loss of industrial archaeology due to neglect, damage and natural processes.</p>
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature conservation sites include the River Usk (designated SSSI and SAC as a high-quality example of a river flowing over sandstone, with its associated habitats, plant and animal species within a linear ecosystem). The Usk tributaries are also designated SSSI, as are the Usk Bat Sites. Ancient woodland occurs along tributary streams, and there is a forest nature reserve at Dyffryn Crawnnon. 	<p>Pollution affecting water quality.</p> <p>Decline in traditional woodland management.</p> <p>Loss of ecological connectivity.</p>
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of historic parks and gardens along the valley, reflecting the many opportunities to exploit 	Loss of mature parkland trees due to age, disease or

	<p>its picturesque setting. Many contain veteran trees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous Scheduled Monuments, plus other archaeological sites, reflect the area's need for defence in the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. Others represent its surviving built heritage (churches, bridges etc). The historic core of Crickhowell is a Conservation Area. The north and south of the area are included on the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (areas 58 and 16). Important industrial archaeology associated with the canal and transport of iron products from Blaenavon (e.g. Llanfoist canal basin, tunnels, tramways, inclines, lifts etc.). The southern part of the LCA is included within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. 	<p>storm damage. Lack of replacement of parkland trees.</p> <p>Loss of archaeological sites/features due to erosion, damage and natural processes.</p> <p>Neglect of built heritage and designed landscapes (particularly those in private ownership) and loss of character due to insensitive modernisation.</p>
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network of footpaths (including the Beacons Way, Usk Valley Walk and canal towpath) provide opportunities to explore the valley landscape and access the surrounding higher land. Forest Nature Reserve at Dyffryn Cwannon. 	
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good visitor infrastructure in the main valley (hotels, restaurants, pubs, campsites etc.). Recreation opportunities encompassing cultural sites such as Tretower. 	<p>Physical impacts (e.g. erosion, traffic) and impacts on the character of popular sites due to recreation pressure.</p>

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

The River Usk and associated valley landscape provides food (pasture and arable farming), water (through abstraction) and woodland timber sources. The low lying landscape or arable floodplain and woodland stands support flood alleviation and climate regulation which benefits local settlements. The River Usk provides food and recreation services including fish, angling, watercraft and access to water. 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. Prominent Green Infrastructure features include the River Usk, Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and woodlands. There are also long distance routes such as the Usk Valley Walk, Beacons Way and Taff Trail.



The Usk at Crickhowell



Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Talybont



Valley floor scene near Buckland hill

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

- Development pressure causing settlements to expand up valley sides and become more visible in views across and within the valley.
- Continued demand for new housing and other development.
- The need to extend/ modernise traditional buildings to maintain viability and comfort.
- Introduction of pylon lines, particularly at the eastern end of the valley.
- Increase in traffic and upgrades to road infrastructure, including localised impacts from the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road.
- Water abstraction, and impoundment in upstream reservoirs, affecting the natural water flow and river processes in the River Usk. These factors, coupled with lowering of land levels in the floodplain (due to a reduction in groundwater levels) increase the area's susceptibility to flood risk.
- Increased volumes of sediment entering the River Usk due to increased ploughing, and a lack of semi-natural woodland alongside the river in LCAs 6 and 11. This affects the extent of sediment deposition in the riparian zone and impacts on river processes and ecology.
- Agricultural changes, e.g. decline in traditional hillfarms and grazing patterns, and the introduction of new crops such as oil seed rape and maize which affect the appearance of the landscape.
- Removal of hedgerows/ stone walls or replacement with post-and-wire fencing.
- Pressure for larger agricultural buildings and infrastructure (e.g. biodigester).
- Neglect of parkland and designed landscapes.
- Management of commercial forests, particularly as trees reach maturity.
- Recreation pressure at popular sites (erosion, litter, car parking issues etc.)
- Loss/ neglect of archaeological sites and historic features.
- Inclusion of the southern part of the area in the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site should positively affect the management of industrial heritage features within the landscape.

Future

- Continued demand for housing and other development, and for improvements to transport and infrastructure.
- Continued agricultural change, including intensification of farming methods (requiring farm building infrastructure), new woodland planting, new Glastir agri-environmental schemes and crop changes.
- Potential for extraction of mineral resources, with associated visual and noise impacts.
- Ageing of commercial forestry plantations and the impacts of felling on landscape and biodiversity.



Hedgebanks replaced with post and wire fencing and commercial forestry on valley sides, Crawnon Valley.



Agricultural changes: ploughing of valley side land, large farm buildings and horse jumps near Llangattock.



Late 20th Century housing in Crickhowell expanding the settlement up the hillside

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To retain and enhance the special qualities of the landscape, ensuring that demands for development and infrastructure do not adversely affect its composition. Any new development, infrastructure and recreation facilities sit comfortably within the landscape. Agricultural changes are undertaken sensitively, with traditional features and grazing regimes maintained. Archaeological and historic sites are protected and managed, and built heritage is in a good state of repair. The biodiversity of the area is retained and enhanced, and appropriate recreation - including appreciation of cultural sites - is encouraged and well managed.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **open upland skylines** of the tops of the valley sides which frame the valley.
- Protect the **composition of the landscape** with its continuous vistas of fertile lowlands and woodland, juxtaposed with the distinctive craggy uplands and moorland above.
- Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's numerous **historic and archaeological sites, and designed parkland landscapes.**
- Protect and enhance the **built heritage** of the area and the settings of settlements.
- **Protect (and manage) historic features within the agricultural landscape** such as **hay meadows, field boundaries and narrow lanes.**

Manage

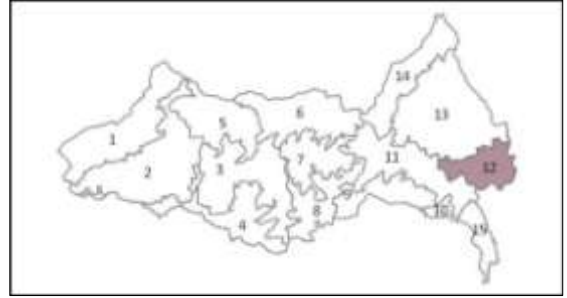
- Manage **recreation** where necessary to encourage enjoyment of the landscape and its cultural sites, but minimise its impacts on the landscape and biodiversity of the area. Also minimise conflicts between different recreational users (e.g. canoeists and fishermen).
- Manage **farmland**, enabling change to occur sensitively, and encouraging a viable farming community using traditional methods to manage traditional landscape features and enhance biodiversity.
- Manage **semi-natural habitats** such as grassland and river corridors to retain biodiversity, using appropriate management and levels of grazing.
- Manage **woodland** to improve age and species diversity, using traditional techniques (e.g. coppicing) where appropriate, and control of non-native species where necessary.
- Manage **archaeological sites** and their settings, with sensitive interpretation as appropriate. Manage relevant sites with regard to the World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- Manage **designed landscapes**, replacing parkland/ veteran trees to ensure their continued presence within the landscape.
- Manage **plantations** to enhance their biodiversity and appearance within the landscape, particularly as trees reach maturity.

Plan

- Plan for **community education and involvement** in the management of the area.
- Plan for the **creation, extension and linking of semi-natural habitats** such as heather moorland, woodland and species-rich grasslands.
- Plan to **minimise the visual impacts of new development and infrastructure** on this area, ensuring that new developments are **well designed and sited.**
- Plan to retain the dark skies in the western part of the area, and reduce incidence of light pollution.
- Plan to **underground power lines** where feasible.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 12: SKIRRID AND SUGAR LOAF**Broad Landscape Type: MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS****Description****Location and Context**

This relatively small LCA is located on the eastern edge of the National Park. It comprises the land to the north of Abergavenny and forms the northern setting of the town. It includes the distinctive peaks of Sugar Loaf and Skirrid. To the north is the Black Mountains LCA, and to the west the Eastern Usk Valley.

**Summary Description**

The distinctive pointed summit of Sugar Loaf and landslip cleft of Skirrid are prominent landmarks over a wide area, including Abergavenny, the eastern end of the Usk valley and surrounding uplands. They provide popular walking routes for visitors and local people, affording panoramic views over the surrounding valleys, Somerset and the Bristol Channel, the Malvern Hills and across to the Black Mountains. Their open moorland contrasts with the surrounding lower land, which is characterised by farmland, woodland and deep flower-rich lanes.



View of Skirrid with deep lane in the foreground

Historical Development of the Landscape

This landscape contains evidence for its settlement and defence over many centuries, but with a particular concentration of Medieval sites such as churches (including St Michael's Chapel on Skirrid), inns, castles and Abergavenny Priory Deer Park. There are also two 17th gardens and their associated country houses, Prehistoric round cairns on Sugar Loaf and a prehistoric hillfort at Twyn-y-gaer.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Lower land underlain by Devonian mudstones. Sugar Loaf's lower slopes comprised of Senni Formation sandstones, its upper slopes comprised of Brownstones and its capping Quartz Conglomerate.
- Very distinctive landforms, caused by erosion of all but the hardest rocks which are left as distinctive pyramid-shaped peaks. Post-glacial landslips have given rise to Skirrid's cleft profile. Below the peaks are steep valleys, and the wider Gavenny Valley.
- Small streams draining the uplands, flowing into the River Usk (to the west), Abergavenny Reservoir or the River Gavenny (in the east of the LCA).
- Land use predominantly agricultural in valleys (mostly pasture with some arable) and grazed moorland on higher land.
- Extensive deciduous woodlands, particularly on the lower slopes of Sugar Loaf formerly connected with the tanning industry in Abergavenny. Small coniferous plantation on Skirrid.
- Field boundaries predominantly species-rich hedgerows, with deep, flower-rich banks along valley lanes.
- Semi-natural habitats of principal importance to Wales including broadleaved woodland, dwarf shrub heath, acid and neutral grassland, neutral rock exposures.
- Historic features include defensive structures, standing buildings e.g. churches (including St Michael's Chapel on Skirrid); country houses and inns as well as landscape features (lanes, hedgebanks etc.) and prehistoric sites.
- The town of Abergavenny is just outside the LCA, but has close visual and cultural links. Within the LCA is the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney, plus other scattered hamlets and farms. The Gavenny/ Honddu Valleys are a long-standing transport corridor and today contain a main road and railway line.
- Contrast between the soft, settled, wooded valleys and the open moorland and distinctive landforms of the higher land. Vegetation provides variation in texture and seasonal colour.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Sugar Loaf scarp slopes (H); Northern Hills (H); Vale of Grwyney (H); The Sugar Loaf (O); Llanvihangel Crucorney Hinterland (M); Sugar Loaf Mountain (O); Monnow Valley (H) Bettws Hill (H); Ysgryd Fawr (O);
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

The town of Abergavenny is located adjacent to this LCA, just outside the National Park Boundary. The visual relationship between Abergavenny and this LCA is very strong, so the landscape provides a distinctive backdrop and setting for the town, and views from the LCA are visually affected by expansion or prominent development in the town. The villages of Llanvihangel Crucorney and Llangenny are within the LCA, along with other scattered farms and hamlets. Most buildings in the LCA (including some modern developments) are constructed from local stone and blend into the landscape.

Key Views

Key views within the LCA are those from the summits of Sugar Loaf and Skirrid, which are strongly influenced by surrounding LCAs (and in the case of Skirrid, by land outside the National Park and into England). This LCA also plays an important role in the setting of Abergavenny and has a strong visual relationship with the town. It is a prominent feature in views from several surrounding LCAS.

Evaluation**Special Qualities**

The natural beauty and recreational factors that make this landscape special are summarized 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"> High scenic quality and sense of place, resulting from the composition of soft, wooded valleys and distinctive uplands. The surrounding LCAs (particularly the Black Mountains and Eastern Usk Valley) contribute to its character and views. 	Visually-intrusive development in surrounding areas affecting views, particularly where it extends up valley sides.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high-quality landscape, with farmland, woodland and moorland generally well managed and in good condition. 	Changes in grazing management or species composition affecting moorland vegetation (e.g. bracken infestation).
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long views, openness and elevation give a sense of tranquillity despite their proximity to Abergavenny and other settlements. Indeed, the presence of settlements as small elements in views from high land can enhance the viewer's sense of detachment. 	Loss of tranquillity as a result of visible or audible development in surrounding areas.
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous legends explaining the unusual shape of Skirrid. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very distinctive landforms give the surrounding area a strong sense of place. 	
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive ancient deciduous woodlands (including Coed y Cerrig Nations Nature Reserve) which cover the lower slopes of Sugar Loaf are designated SAC and SSSI for their woodland and wet woodland habitats. Other ancient woodland exists in valleys throughout the area. Other SSSIs include Llanvihangel Moraine, Usk bat sites (also SAC), and the tributaries of the River Usk (also SAC). 	Loss of woodland as a result of poor management, disease (e.g. <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>) or climate change.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rich cultural landscape, including three Registered Historic Parks/ Gardens (Abergavenny Priory Deer Park, Llanvihangel Court and Trewyn 17th Century gardens), and four Scheduled Monuments, of which three are medieval sites. There are also many historic buildings, including the 15th Century Skirrid Inn and a network of deep, ancient lanes. 	Potential neglect of historic landscape features in private ownership. Loss of character of rural lanes through insensitive highways development or road signs.

<p>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skirrid and Sugar Loaf contain numerous footpaths and are very popular walks for visitors and local people. Coed y Cerrig National Nature Reserve provides public access to a wet woodland site of international importance. 	<p>Large numbers of visitors leading to footpath erosion, and damage to habitats and archaeological sites.</p>
<p>Recreation provision and access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high-quality recreation experience which is easily accessible from Abergavenny town and railway station. There are several campsites in the LCA, and Skirrid is the start of the Beacons Way Long Distance Route. 	

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

Principal ecosystem services include food production from pasture and upland rough grazing. Tributaries of the Usk provide food and recreation services including fish, angling and access to water. 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.

Green Infrastructure assets include numerous area of woodland, and long-distance paths including Offa’s Dyke Path and Beacons Way. The Stanton and Coed y Cerrig Nature Reserves are educational and recreational features.



Coppice trees at Coed y Cerrig wet woodland nature reserve



SSSI and SAC ancient woodland to south of Sugar Loaf. The medieval deer park pale runs across the centre of the picture



View from the summit of Sugar Loaf showing the Usk Valley and Black Mountains beyond.

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 and continuing expansion of adjacent settlements, making them more prominent in views.
- Traditional use of the Gavenny- Monnow watershed (running north-south between Sugar Loaf and Skirrid) as a transport corridor. Traffic on the A465 and railway line and the A465 add dynamic elements to the landscape.
- Coniferous plantation on the western slope of Skirrid.
- Construction of prominent, large-scale agricultural buildings, and diversification of agriculture away from traditional hillfarming towards arable cropping, poultry farming, etc.
- Conversions of traditional barns to residential use.
- Spread of bracken over areas of heather moorland/ grassland, particularly on Sugar Loaf.
- Reduced diversity of moorland vegetation as a result of changing common grazing practices. See section 6.0 for more detail.
- Decline in the traditional management of woodlands.
- Damage to hedgebanks alongside roads due to increased volumes of traffic or use by wide vehicles.
- Construction of mobile phone masts.
- Pipelines including gas supply and the water main from Grwyne reservoir to Abertillery affecting surface vegetation and buries archaeology.

Future

- Continued expansion of settlements.
- Decline in 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.
- Intensification of farming in valleys, including construction of large farm infrastructure buildings, and decline in management of traditional features such as hedgebanks, hay meadows, vernacular buildings etc.
- Climate change potentially affecting the environmental conditions and species diversity of woodlands and upland areas.
- Loss of woodland and trees to pests/ diseases (e.g. *Phytophthora ramorum*).
- Potential loss, neglect or damage to historic built features and parks/ gardens within the landscape, especially if in private ownership.
- Continued positive moorland management, programmes of bracken control etc.



Cumulative effects of incremental changes: Mobile phone mast, new woodland planting and barn conversion north of Skirrid.



Controlling the spread of bracken is an ongoing management issue on Sugar Loaf.



Abergavenny has a strong visual and cultural relationship with the surrounding peaks.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To enhance the settings of the area's distinctive landforms, ensuring that the special qualities of upland peaks and surrounding valleys are retained and enhanced. Traditional management of upland commons, woodlands and farmland is encouraged. The historic features and landscapes of the area are maintained in good condition. Long views from high land are not affected by visually-intrusive development. Discreet visitor management enables high numbers of visitors to enjoy popular routes without damage to sensitive habitats or features.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **open moorland landscape** with its **distinctive profiles** and upland habitats.
- Protect the area's long **views**, minimising visual impacts from development in surrounding areas, (including outside the National Park boundary).
- Protect the area's **network of quiet lanes** enclosed by **species-rich hedgebanks**, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highways works or signage.
- Protect enclosed **valley landscapes** and their **traditional features** such as vernacular farm buildings, hedgerows and hay meadows.
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's **archaeological and historical sites** and their settings.

Manage

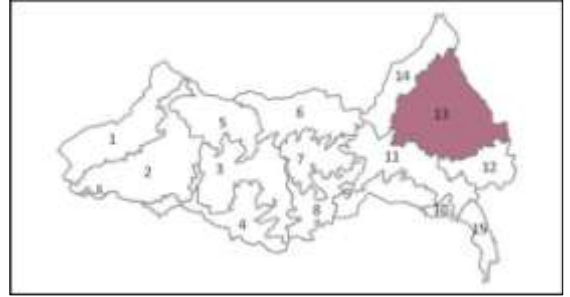
- Manage areas of **upland moorland** through encouragement of appropriate levels of livestock grazing and heather management to enhance biodiversity and maintain an open moorland landscape. Encourage control of bracken infestation to prevent it dominating other moorland vegetation.
- Encourage a **viable farming community** which enables the biodiversity and traditional appearance of the landscape to be retained.
- Manage **ancient woodlands** using traditional techniques to increase age and species diversity, and remove invasive non-native species where necessary.
- Manage **valley-floor meadows** using appropriate grazing and cutting to retain their biodiversity.
- Manage **recreational pressure** (particularly on popular walking routes) in order to minimise damage to habitats, paths and archaeological features.

Plan

- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats such as woodlands**, heaths and meadows.
- Plan to **minimise the impacts on views** resulting from future development and transport infrastructure.
- Plan to develop a **Park-wide visitor management strategy** to minimise impacts of visitors on popular sites, and encourage visitors to explore lesser-known parts of the National Park.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 13: *THE BLACK MOUNTAINS***Broad Landscape Type: *MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS******Description*****Location and Context**

This large LCA includes the highest land associated with the Black Mountains. It is located on the eastern edge of the National Park, and its character extends beyond the National Park boundary into England. To the north is the Wye Valley Foothills LCA, to the west the Eastern Usk Valley LCA and to the south Skirrid and Sugar Loaf LCA.

**Summary Description**

This LCA is largely defined by its topography: a series of broad ridges running north-south and separated by narrow, steep-sided valleys. It contains some of the highest land in the National Park- the summit of Waun Fach is over 800m above sea level. The higher moorlands are empty and remote, contrasting with the more pastoral and settled valleys between them. This is a rich archaeological landscape, with a concentration of surviving prehistoric features on the higher land, as well as the Medieval Llanthony Priory in the Vale of Ewyas. The valleys contain a network of ancient farms, fields, woodland and winding lanes.



View south-west from Twmpa, showing the ridges of the Black Mountains

Historical Development of the Landscape

This landscape has been shaped over several millennia, with features surviving from many phases of human occupation. The earliest monuments are prehistoric cairns and barrows representing an extensive ritual landscape, and there are also early defensive sites including the prominent surviving Iron Age hillforts at Table Mountain. Surviving Medieval landscape features include Llanthony Priory, Cwmyoy church and many of the lanes and farms. The lack of modern development, and the continuation of traditional farming practices of valley pasture and upland common land has enabled the survival of many earlier features.

Distinctive Characteristics

- High ground formed by Senni formation sandstones creating the steep scarp which forms the northern edge of the LCA. Highest land formed by Devonian Brownstones which dip down slightly towards the south. Older mudstones occur in the depths of the Vale of Ewyas and Rhiangoll valley. Plateau Beds form the sloping tableland south from Pen Allt-mawr and a small area of Carboniferous rocks form the upper slopes of Pen Cerrig-calch.
- Distinctive ridged landform with flat tops, and dramatic scarps along the northern face. In long views from the west, the horizontal ridges have a profile similar to breakers on a beach. Landslips such as Cwmyoy create distinctive landforms.
- A series of rocky rivers (fed by tributary streams sourced in upland bogs and streams) draining southwards into the Usk or Monnow along V-shaped valleys. Reservoir at Grwyne Fawr constructed in the early C.20th to supply water to Abertillery.
- Higher land used for open grazing of sheep ponies and some cattle on unenclosed common land. Pastoral farming and forestry in valleys.
- Deciduous woodland limited to valley floors, particularly in south of LCA. Extensive forestry in central part (Mynydd Du Forest) with pockets in other valleys. Field boundaries generally hawthorn hedges enclosing semi-regular fields. Some hedges trimmed (especially in valleys) whilst others grown out, with hedgerow trees.
- Semi-natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including dry modified bog, wet modified bog, blanket bog, bare peat, flushes, acid dry dwarf shrub heath, acid and neutral grassland and broadleaved woodland.
- Numerous prehistoric sites (ritual and defensive) surviving in their landscape context, particularly on higher land. Medieval ecclesiastical sites include Llanthony Priory and Cwmyoy church.
- Very limited settlement within the LCA (scattered farms and hamlets) but visual connections with towns beyond (e.g. Hay-on-Wye & Crickhowell). Roads generally restricted to valley bottoms.
- Upland areas large in scale, appearing empty and spacious, with distinctive flat horizons. Valleys more enclosed and intimate, with more complex patterns and varied textures. Ridges and valleys create a repeating rhythm in the landscape.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Black Mountains (O); Vale of Grwyney (H); Rhiangoll Valley (H); Mynydd Llangorse (O); Mynydd Du (M); Olchon Valley Ridge (O); Vale of Ewyas (O); Monnow Valley (H); Sugar Loaf scarp slopes (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

This LCA is very lightly settled, with scattered farms and hamlets in valleys, usually constructed of local stone. However, it forms the backdrop and setting for larger settlements; the northern scarp creates a distinctive setting for Hay-on-Wye and other settlements along the Wye valley, and the ridge of Pen Cerrig-calch (and the hillfort at Table Mountain) contribute to the setting of Crickhowell and settlements in the Usk Valley.

Key Views

Panoramic views are obtained from high land over surrounding LCAs and out of the National Park to the north and east. The distinctive northern scarp and long ridges of this LCA contribute to views from a considerable distance away, including from Herefordshire to the east, and from the northern side of the Wye Valley, beyond the National Park. This LCA also contributes to the setting of the Usk Valley, and is visible from many summits and areas of high land within the National Park.

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"> High scenic quality and a strong sense of place, resulting from its elevation, panoramic views, dramatic and distinctive topography, historic sites, and traditional land uses. 	Development within this LCA and surrounding areas affecting views, particularly from higher land.
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High landscape quality, enhanced by the contrasts between pastoral agriculture in valleys and the open commons above. 	Decline in traditional hillfarming and grazing affecting the appearance of the landscape.
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large-scale landscape, with a strong sense of openness and expansiveness on higher ground, particularly when valley bottoms are not visible. Horizons are notably flat and unbroken. In poor weather the landscape is bleak, exposed and disorientating. Extensive commons have a strong sense of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness, with very few incongruous features and little noise or disturbance caused by traffic or other detracting influences. Much of the common land is relatively inaccessible by road. Valleys (particularly forested areas) have a much greater sense of enclosure. Although they feel less remote and wild, many have a tranquil feel and few detracting features. 	Introduction of incongruous features, particularly on ridge lines.
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Llanthony Priory visited by 12th century chronicler Gerald of Wales, 19th Century poet Walter Savage Landor, and artist JMW Turner, who made studies and paintings of the Priory. 20th Century designer Eric Gill lived at Capel y Ffin. 	
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important upland habitats (e.g. peat bogs) and opportunities to experience tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness. 	Changes in land management, e.g. changes in grazing levels affecting the composition of moorland vegetation.
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous nature/ geological conservation designations, including an extensive moorland SSSI. The River Usk tributaries are also designated SAC. Ancient woodland concentrated in the south of the LCA. 	Changes in environmental conditions (e.g. air and water quality) and water retention affecting surface vegetation.

<p>Cultural heritage features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rich archaeological landscape containing an exceptionally high concentration of Scheduled Monuments (over 40) including numerous prehistoric barrows, cairns, enclosures and hillforts, and also Medieval domestic and ecclesiastical sites (including Llanthony Priory). Several cultural sites (e.g Iron Age hillfort at Table Mountain) are prominent landmarks. Historic park at Tre-wyn partially within this LCA. • Railway and village of up to 450 people constructed in the heart of the LCA 1910-1928 during construction of Grwyne Fawr Reservoir. 	<p>Loss/ damage to archaeological features as a result of natural processes or erosion/ damage by visitors.</p>
<p>Opportunities for landscape enjoyment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good opportunities to access extensive areas of high-quality, remote, tranquil and relatively wild landscape, including open access land, Beacons Way and Offa's Dyke Path (which runs along the eastern boundary of the National Park). Gospel Pass is a popular high-level road with parking areas. The area is particularly popular with less experienced walkers such as Duke of Edinburgh's award groups. Hang gliding at Hay Bluff and Three Wells. 	<p>Too much footfall can result in damage to paths and habitats, and also reduce levels of tranquillity.</p>
<p>Recreation provision and access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further recreation opportunities at accessible cultural sites including Llanthony Priory and Crug Hywel hillfort on Table Mountain, both with outstanding views. Forestry trails provide active recreation such as mountain cycling, and there are popular picnic sites (e.g. Standing Stone car park) 	

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 the extensive woodland plantations of the Mynydd Du Forest, Grywyne Fawr Reservoir and rivers. The LCA is popular for a range of recreational and leisure activities.



Hay meadow in Vale of Ewyas



Crug Hywel hillfort, Crickhowell



Llanthony Priory

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 reservoir at Grwyne Fawr.
- Past extensive forestry plantation at Mynydd Du forest in the centre of the LCA.
- Historic air pollution and acid rain, and ongoing nitrogen deposition caused ecological degradation of upland habitats, particularly peat bogs, affecting biodiversity and water-holding capacity.
- Reduced diversity of moorland vegetation as a result of changing common grazing practices. See section 6.0 for more detail.
- Bracken encroachment on side slopes.
- Loss of traditional hillfarms and economic pressures for farm amalgamation and expansion, resulting in loss of agricultural buildings and changes in agricultural management.
- Forest management/ clearance.
- Footpath erosion on popular and accessible routes (e.g paths near Gospel Pass).
- Damage to hedgerows along narrow lanes by wide/ passing vehicles, and insensitive signage/ highways works affecting the traditional character of lanes.

Future

- Potential loss of the open landscape and smooth horizons as a result of development (e.g. masts/ turbines) or planting of trees.
- Reduction in woodland management, and in management of traditional valley habitats such as hay meadows.
- Loss of traditional hillfarms, and potential changes to agri-environment schemes affecting management of historic landscape features, grazing patterns and vegetation, e.g. effects and outcomes of the Glastir Common Land Element.
- Management of forestry plantations, particularly if trees are cleared.
- Tree loss due to disease, e.g. *Phytophthora*.
- Loss of archaeological features as a result of damage and natural processes.
- Climate change potentially affecting environmental conditions and upland vegetation.
- Increased visitor pressure affecting upland habitats, archaeological sites and paths.
- Development and road schemes (including outside the National Park) affecting views from high land.
- Positive moorland management schemes improving the condition and variety of upland vegetation.



Coniferous forestry plantation



Footpath erosion (Gospel Pass)



A natural force for change: landslide at Cwmyoy.

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To retain and strengthen the special qualities of both mountains and valleys, protecting their tranquillity, remoteness and the area's distinctive topography of smooth horizontal ridges and steep northern scarp.

The area's valuable upland and valley habitats are well managed, and traditional agricultural methods (such as common grazing) are supported. Archaeological and historic features are protected and managed as appropriately. Visitors are encouraged, but good visitor management minimises damage to paths, habitats and archaeology. The area's long views are protected from visually-intrusive development.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **open character** of the ridges, their **unbroken skylines and qualities of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness**.
- Protect the **open moorland landscape** and its valuable **upland habitats**.
- Protect **valley landscapes** and their **traditional features** such as vernacular farm buildings and hay meadows.
- Protect (through appropriate management) the area's **archaeological sites and their settings**, in particular the prehistoric upland sites and medieval valley sites.
- Protect the area's **sparsely-settled character**, ensuring that any new development is carefully sited and designed.
- Protect the area's **network of quiet lanes** enclosed by **species-rich hedgebanks**, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highways works or signage.

Manage

- Manage land through encouragement of a **viable farming community**, farming the land in a traditional way which enables the upland and valley landscapes of the area to be retained and enhanced.
- Manage areas of **upland common** through encouragement of appropriate levels of livestock grazing to enhance biodiversity and maintain an open moorland landscape.
- Manage upland **wetland** sites such as blanket bog to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity.
- Manage **plantations** to encourage biodiversity and minimise damage to archaeology.
- Manage **ancient woodlands** using traditional techniques to increase age and species diversity.
- Manage **valley-floor meadows** using appropriate grazing and cutting to retain their biodiversity.
- Manage **recreational pressure** (particularly on popular walking routes and at 'honeypot' sites with easy parking) in order to minimise damage to habitats, paths and archaeological features.

Plan

- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats** such as heather moorland, broadleaved woodland and valley grasslands.
- Plan to develop a **National Park-wide visitor management strategy** to minimise impacts of visitors on popular sites, and encourage visitors to explore lesser-known parts of the National Park.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 14: WYE VALLEY FOOTHILLS**Broad Landscape Type: LOWLANDS****Description****Location and Context**

This linear LCA lies between the northern escarpment of the Black Mountains and the northern National Park Boundary. Hay-on-Wye is located at its north-eastern end of the LCA, which contributes to the setting of the town. At its western end (near Llangors Lake) it merges with the Middle and Eastern Usk LCAs.

**Summary Description**

A series of ridges run down from the Black Mountains towards the Wye Valley, creating a series of narrow, enclosed valleys which gradually broaden out. These valleys form the basis of a strongly agricultural landscape, visually dominated by the northern scarp of the Black Mountains, with farms nestling at the heads of valleys. It is a well-wooded landscape with ancient woodlands on valley sides and alongside streams, as well as some conifer plantations. The tops of the ridges support heath habitats, and many contain prehistoric monuments. Along the northern edge of the LCA are a series of nucleated settlements (Hay-on-Wye being the largest). Llangors Lake is an important archaeological and recreation site.



Typical scene near Llanigon, showing farmland and woodland with the northern scarp of the Black Mountains

Historical Development of the Landscape

This landscape has been shaped by patterns of settlement and farming for many centuries. The earliest features are prehistoric ritual sites (including tombs) which have survived on unenclosed higher land. Hay Castle dates from the early Norman period, and there are many other Medieval features, including the famous crannog on Llangors Lake. As well as the castles, many of the villages, churches, roads, field patterns and farms date from the Medieval period. Evidence for later quarrying and industrial use of the landscape includes tramways and pottery kilns.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Underlying geology of Devonian mudstones, with older Silurian mudstones in the Wye valley. The Brownstones scarp face of the Black Mountains lies immediately to the south.
- A series of ridges and intervening valleys running from the base of the Black Mountains scarp down towards the Wye valley.
- Llangors Lake (at the southern end of the LCA) the largest natural lake in Wales, formed in a large glacial kettle hole. A series of spring-fed steep mountain streams with waterfalls flow north-west from the base of the Black Mountains scarp to the Wye Valley.
- Land use predominantly agricultural (pastoral on valley sides, with some arable on flatter land), with areas of woodland, forest and common.
- Field boundaries mostly hedged, with high hedgebanks along lanes. Field patterns irregular in valleys, but straight-edged fields on higher land indicates later enclosure.
- Extensive ancient deciduous woodland on steep valley sides and alongside streams. Some areas of coniferous forestry, and occasional parkland trees.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including mixed oak and ash woodlands, upland heath, lowland grassland, hedgerows, wetlands and reed beds.
- A rich historic landscape with a long history of settlement and defence. Archaeological sites include Neolithic chambered tombs and the early-medieval crannog (artificial island) on Llangors Lake, possibly built by Brychan, king of Brycheinog in the 9th century.
- Norman town of Hay-on-Wye the largest settlement, at the northern tip of the LCA. A line of smaller villages follows the north-western boundary of the LCA.
- Contrasts of pattern, colour and texture between ridges and valleys, visually dominated by the Black Mountains scarp.

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

Key Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Black Mountains Northern fringe (O); Llangorse Lake Basin (H); Black Mountains (O); Three Cocks farmland (M); Llangorse Lake (O); Talgath (M); Hay-on-Wye (H); Wye Valley (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

Hay-on-Wye is the largest and most well-known settlement in this LCA, and its landscape setting is integral to the town’s identity and sense of place. Like the other smaller settlements in this LCA (e.g. Talgarth, Trefecca, Felindre, Llangors), Hay-on-Wye is located within the valley floor, and because it is set low in the landscape, is relatively well hidden in views from surrounding areas. The valley-floor villages are generally nucleated in form, although some (e.g. Llangors) have some modern linear development. There are historic farms scattered throughout the area, often at the heads of valleys. Barn conversions are common, as are larger modern agricultural buildings.

Key Views

This LCA forms the foreground to views north from the top of the Black Mountains scarp, and also forms the setting to the Black Mountains scarp in views looking south-east from the Wye Valley. Views within the LCA are often dominated by the Black Mountains scarp, and there are long views out across the Wye valley from high land.

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
Scenic quality and Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic quality and a strong sense of place resulting from the backdrop of the Black Mountains scarp, the varied landform, and the harmonious but interesting composition of farmland, woodland and common land. 	<p>Changes in land management and loss of landscape features associated with traditional hillfarming, e.g. common land and hedgerows.</p> <p>Introduction of incongruous features into the landscape.</p>
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High landscape quality and condition, reflecting the overall good management of the land. Historic landscape patterns are generally well-preserved with few detracting influences, particularly away from the Wye Valley. 	As above
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate levels of tranquillity over much of the area, partly due to the ridged landform which creates a sense of isolation, and reduces factors (such as road noise and views to development) which detract from tranquillity. Despite being a settled landscape, much of the LCA has a strong sense of timelessness. 	Increased presence of factors detracting from tranquillity (e.g. roads; views of development)
Artistic and cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many literary connections, including the annual Hay-on-Wye literary festival. The early Welsh Stanzas <i>Canu Llywarch Hen</i> may have been written at Llangors, and parts of the LCA are also within 'Kilvert Country' described in Rev. Francis Kilvert's 19th century diary. Treffecca College was an early Methodist community and educational establishment. 	
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of nature conservation sites, including heathland, woodland, grassland, wetland and geological SSSIs, and SACs at Llangors Lake and River Wye. 	Loss of extent or biodiversity of woodlands and other semi-natural habitats as a result of changing farming practices or reduced management.
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An historic landscape with a long history of settlement and defence reflected in the 	Loss of archaeological features as a result of

	<p>number and variety of Scheduled Monuments and other archaeological sites, and the inclusion of much of the area in the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales. (Areas 36+58). Of particular note are the prehistoric ritual sites (including tombs such as Penywyrhod), surviving medieval field systems on higher areas, and also medieval defensive sites on lower land (including Hay Castle, and Llangors crannog).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rich built heritage (particularly in Hay-on-Wye) with Conservation Areas at Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth, historic parks and gardens, and associations with 12th century chronicler Gerald of Wales, who visited and described this area. 	<p>natural processes, erosion or damage.</p> <p>Loss or neglect of historic buildings or landscapes (particularly those in private ownership) and loss of architectural integrity due to insensitive modernisation.</p>
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good network of lanes and footpaths (including the Three Rivers Ride) provides access into the landscape. There are accessible conservation sites at Park Wood, Pwll-y-wrach and Llangasty Nature Reserves. 	
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied recreation opportunities, ranging from gliding, to watersports on Llangors Lake to Hay-on-Wye book festival. Hay-on-Wye is a centre for tourist accommodation, and there are also campsites and adventure centres. 	

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

The principal ecosystem services are provisioning and cultural services. Extensive lowland agricultural land provides a source of food production, with woodland areas providing a source of fuel and timber. 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. Llangors Lake and its associated recreational facilities are prominent Green Infrastructure features. Woodland areas, Park Wood and Pwll-y-wrach Nature Reserves, long distance trails and heritage features form a network of Green Infrastructure assets.



Meadow below the Black Mountains scarp.



Hay-on-Wye in its landscape setting



Llangors Lake

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

- Plantations of conifers, and disused stone extraction quarries visible in the landscape.
- Decline in traditional hillfarming and associated loss of traditional features of the agricultural landscape, e.g. replacement of stone walls or hedges with post and wire fencing.
- Intensification of agriculture resulting in large-scale agricultural buildings and alternative crops which affect the appearance of the landscape (e.g. bright yellow oil seed rape is visible over a wide area).
- Conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to domestic use.
- Lack of management of woodlands (e.g. decline in coppicing).
- Loss or damage to archaeological features and built heritage due to neglect/ poor management/ damage/ natural processes.
- Visual impacts and damage to sensitive habitats by illegal use of 4x4 vehicles and off-road motorbikes.
- Recreational influences at Llangors (boats, caravans etc.) and conflicts between different user groups (e.g. between sailing and motor boats).
- Water quality issues at Llangors Lake, including eutrophication.
- Housing demand and settlement expansion.
- Gas pipeline construction permanently affecting surface vegetation and buried archaeology.

Future

- Agricultural changes including continued modernisation (including increased scale of farm infrastructure buildings) and a decline in traditional hillfarming techniques such as grazing of common land and meadows, affecting biodiversity and the traditional appearance of the landscape.
- Future changes in agricultural grants and funding potentially affecting the maintenance of traditional landscape features such as hedgerows.
- Loss of trees and woodlands as a result of climate change, poor management and lack of replacement of veteran trees.
- Future development and settlement expansion, particularly in the Wye valley.
- Potential conflicts between demands for recreation and nature conservation at sites such as Llangors Lake.



Scarring and vegetation damage by off-road vehicles



Intensive water-based recreation at Llangors



New housing development Felindre

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To conserve and enhance this agricultural and historic landscape, retaining the quality of settings to settlements, and accommodating development and recreation sensitively without compromising its special qualities.

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 historic features and built/ designed heritage of the area are appropriately managed and maintained, and their settings are respected. Recreational facilities and new development are sensitively accommodated within the landscape. The area remains an attractive foreground to views from higher land, and views from within the area remain free from intrusive modern development.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- Protect the **open upland skylines** which form the backdrop to the area.
- Protect and appropriately manage the landscape's numerous **historic and archaeological sites**.
- **Protect** (and manage) **historic features within the agricultural landscape such as hay meadows, field boundaries and narrow lanes**.
- Protect and enhance the **built heritage** of the area and the settings of settlements.

Manage

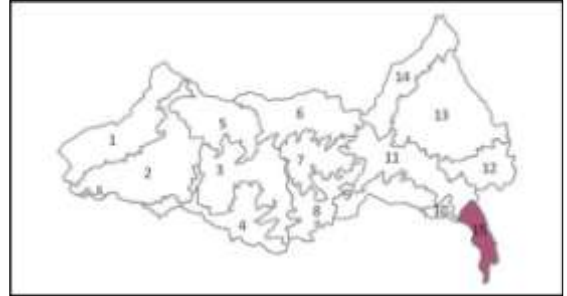
- Manage **semi-natural habitats** such as grassland, wetlands and commons to retain biodiversity, using appropriate levels of grazing.
- Manage **woodland** to improve age and species diversity, using traditional techniques (e.g. coppicing) where appropriate, and control of non-native species.
- Manage **archaeological sites** and their settings, with sensitive interpretation as appropriate.
- Manage **designed landscapes**, replacing parkland/ veteran trees to ensure their continued presence within the landscape.
- Manage **recreation** (particularly around Llangors) to minimise its impacts on the landscape and biodiversity of the area, and to minimise conflicts between different recreational users.

Plan

- Plan to **create, extend and link semi-natural habitats** such as woodland, wetlands and grassland.
- Plan to **minimise the visual impacts** on this area of any **developments within or outside the National Park boundary, ensuring that new developments are well designed and sited**.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 15: *BLORENGE HILLS AND SLOPES***Broad Landscape Type: *MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS******Description*****Location and Context**

This LCA forms a 'peninsula' of land which extends southwards at the south-east corner of the National Park. Its western boundary is the top of the Bloreng Ridge, and its eastern boundary is the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. To the north are the Eastern Usk Valley and the Clydach Gorge.

**Summary Description**

The slopes of this LCA have an exceptionally timeless and peaceful quality and a sense of being rarely visited. Scattered farms are linked by deep lanes lined with exposed tree roots and flower-rich banks, whilst the Bloreng moorland ridge provides a contrasting backdrop and sense of orientation. From the ridge there are panoramic views. The landscape has a rich industrial history (particularly apparent at the popular recreation site of Goytre Canal Wharf) and lies partially within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.



Bloreng from the south-east

Historical Development of the Landscape

Although today this is a peaceful, agricultural landscape, it has been shaped by both agriculture and industry. The irregular fields and surviving woodland suggest that the fields were created by assarting (clearance of woodland for agriculture), probably in the Medieval period, and it is likely that many of the farms, fields and lanes date from this period. In the 17th-19th centuries, this was also an industrial landscape, connecting the mining and iron production sites in the valley of the Afon Lwyd to the west with the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to the east. Numerous tracks and tramways survive, as well as the loading wharf at Goytre, and smaller-scale industrial features such as hammer ponds, charcoal hearths and limekilns. Bloreng was used as a grouse moor by the owners of Blaenavon Ironworks.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Old Red Sandstone and mudstones underlie most of the area, with Carboniferous Limestone, Marros Group and South Wales Lower Coal Measures Sandstones forming the plateau areas.
- Highest land of Blorenges in the north-west of the LCA, extending southwards in a craggy ridge along the western boundary of the LCA. Land slopes downwards towards the east, with concave slopes (more pronounced in the north) creating 'punchbowl' shapes to the landform.
- Fast-flowing streams (often spring fed) running down from the ridge towards the Usk (to the east of the LCA). Small glaciated cwm lake lying below Blorenges summit. Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal forming the eastern boundary of the LCA.
- Land cover of open moorland on Blorenges summit and ridge tops, with pastoral farmland & pockets of woodland/forestry on lower slopes
- Irregular fields on valley sides (possibly resulting from assarting) enclosed by hedgerows with some stone walls. Some replacement of traditional boundaries with post and wire fences. Moorland unenclosed.
- A well-treed landscape, including a blend of deciduous and coniferous trees in valley-side woodlands, plus hedgerow and riparian trees and tree-lined lanes.
- Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including wet and dry dwarf shrub heath, acid grassland, blanket bog, broadleaved woodlands, calcareous grassland and acid/neutral rock exposure.
- Many historic features relating to the area's agricultural and industrial past, in particular its associations with the Blaenavon iron industry.
- A very lightly-settled landscape, with scattered farms increasing in density towards the east of the LCA. Distinctive domestic building styles more associated with canal architecture than the local vernacular.
- The high plateau of the Blorenges is easily accessible by car (B4246) and the public can enjoy panoramic views from the high car park.
- Contrasts in scale, texture, colour and enclosure between the open moorland and the pattern of woodland and pasture below. Together they create a harmonious composition with strong seasonal changes in colour. Folly prominent on western horizon in south of the LCA.

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

Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Blorenges scarp slopes (H); The Blorenges (O); Goytre Lowland (H); Garnclochdy Hills (O); Mynydd Garnclochdy (H); Twyn-Gwyn (M)
<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

Settlements within the LCA are limited to scattered farms (reducing in density towards the north and west). Nevertheless there is a locally-distinctive building style influenced by canal architecture. The LCA contributes to the setting of a number of settlements surrounding it (including Abergavenny, Llanfoist, Govilon and Blaenavon) by providing an elevated backdrop which adds to their sense of place.

Key Views

Key views are mostly from higher land, including Blorenges summit and the ridge which forms the western boundary of the LCA. Because of its proximity to the National Park boundary, these panoramic views include land both within and outside the National Park. Within the LCA, the enclosure and deep lanes means that views are often sudden and spectacular. The LCA is prominent in views from outside the National Park, including from the A4092, and the Newport-Abergavenny railway line, from where it is seen as a wooded foreground with the western ridge behind.

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"> High scenic quality resulting from the harmonious juxtaposition of moorland, woodland and pasture. Distinctive concave landforms, the Blorenge ridge and long views across the Usk valley create a strong sense of place, enhanced by the bluebell carpets, deep lanes and woodland. 	<p>Negative changes in land management (e.g. replacement of hedgerows with post-and-wire fencing). Introduction of visually-intrusive features into views.</p>
Landscape quality and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well-managed landscape of high visual quality, which has retained its integrity and intactness and has few detracting features within it. 	As above
Perceptual qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valley sides are exceptionally peaceful, with a sense of enclosure, timelessness and very few detracting influences. Moorland feels more open and exposed, with longer views over surrounding landscapes. 	As above
Rarity or representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant remains of industrial landscapes and features, partially included within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. Building styles are distinctive within the National Park. 	Loss of archaeological features such as former tramways through neglect or damage. Insensitive alterations to buildings resulting in a loss of local distinctiveness.
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High conservation and geological interest, with complex geology resulting in a variety of habitats within a relatively small area. Blorenge is designated an extensive SSSI for its moorland habitats, including peat bogs and is home to the southernmost population of red grouse in Britain. Extensive ancient woodlands with bluebells occur throughout the area, including Coed-y-person Beechwoods SSSI. Geological interest includes Llanover Quarry SSSI (site of a wide range of Devonian fossil plant material) and a possible extensive cave complex. 	<p>Loss of upland and woodland habitats due to changes in land management and/ or grazing.</p> <p>Damage to habitats by fly tipping/ illegal fires and other antisocial behaviour.</p>
Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rich historic landscape of particular importance for its industrial archaeology, specifically the tramroads, inclines, tunnels 	Archaeology vulnerable to neglect, damage and environmental processes.

	and wharves used to transport products from Afon Lwyd valley to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. It contains existing and remnant impounded water bodies (e.g. Keepers Pond), several Scheduled Monuments and numerous other archaeological sites including prehistoric cairns, a holy well, manor house, watermills, hammer ponds, limekins and charcoal hearths. Partially included in the Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Area 16).	Settings to sites may also be affected.
Opportunities for landscape enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blorenges is open access land, easily accessible from Blaenavon, Govilon and Abergavenny and provides an accessible recreation resource for local communities as well as visitors. Woodland Local Nature Reserve at the Punchbowl. 	Localised 'urban fringe' issues such as off-roading and fly tipping.
Recreation provision and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relatively dense network of public rights of way (some following historic tramroads) enables access into this high quality landscape. Goytre Wharf is a focus for recreation accessible from the A4092. Air sports (e.g. hang gliding) is popular from the north-east face of the Blorenges. 	Lanes are narrow, steep and unsuitable for large numbers of vehicles. Potential conflicts with pedestrians and/or cyclists.

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

Ecosystem services provided by this landscape include provisioning, regulating and cultural services. Examples include food production from pasture and moorland grazing land, and timber production. 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.

Main Green Infrastructure assets include the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, numerous woodland stands and nature reserves. The Usk Valley Walk follows the canal towpath linking the area to wider Green Infrastructure resources such as the River Usk and Clytha Park.



Blorenges summit moorland and WHS interpretation.



Pastoral scene on valley side



Goytre Canal Wharf

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 planting of coniferous plantations on lower slopes.
- Localised impacts in the landscape reflecting agricultural changes, e.g. replacement of hedges/ walls with post-and-wire fences; introduction of larger agricultural buildings.
- Changes in common grazing practices and management of former grouse moors affecting upland habitats.
- Degredation of peat bogs as a result of pollution, drainage and changes in management.
- Repeated damage to habitats by wildfires and illegal burning.
- Decline in woodland management, and threat of tree loss through disease such as *Phytophthora ramorum*.
- Damage to hedgebanks by wide vehicles or volume of traffic.
- Positive management and increased visitor numbers due to inclusion in the World Heritage Site and the Forgotten Landscapes Project.
- Localised 'urban fringe' issues e.g. off-roading and fly-tipping, particularly in the west of the area.
- Footpath erosion on summit path.
- Loss of locally-distinctive building styles as a result of neglect or insensitive modernisation (e.g. loss of wooden casement windows).
- Past settlement expansion and construction of large buildings outside the National Park which affect views out.
- Past construction of telecommunications masts on Blorenge summit interrupting the smooth skyline.

Future

- Continued agricultural modernisation, and potential changes in agri-environmental schemes affecting grazing levels and the repair of historic features such as hedgebanks.
- Management of coniferous plantations, particularly when trees reach maturity.
- Continued expansion of surrounding settlements affecting views.
- Continued management of the area in association with Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.
- Climate change affecting upland habitats and woodlands through changes in environmental conditions and species composition.



Hedgerow replaced with post and wire fencing.



Damage to hedgebanks on narrow lanes caused by wide or passing vehicles.



Locally distinctive farmhouse in a poor state of repair

Strategy

Overall Strategy

To retain the area's peaceful character, long views and special qualities whilst celebrating its rich heritage. Farming is supported, with traditional practices such as common grazing and hedgerow maintenance encouraged. Woodland, plantations and upland moorland are well managed, increasing their biodiversity. The heritage of the area is understood, valued and visited by local people and visitors, but without damage to its historic features or undeveloped character.

LCA-Specific Management Guidelines

Protect

- 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**, including its industrial features.
- Protect the **long views** from the area, including those to land outside the National Park.

Manage

- Manage **archaeological sites and features** with regard to the recommendations of the World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- Manage **farmland**, maintaining traditional landscape features such as hedges, stone walls and flower-rich meadows.
- Manage **woodland and plantations** to increase age and species diversity.
- Manage valuable **wetland sites** such as blanket bog to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity.
- Manage **common grazing land** through encouragement of viable grazing regimes and heather management which support traditional hillfarming practices, encourage biodiversity and retain 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.

Plan

- Plan to ensure that the World Heritage Site's emphasis on industrial archaeology does not overshadow the importance of other **archaeology** in the area.
- Plan to increase **visitors' awareness** of this part of the National Park and encourage recreational use, whilst ensuring that the area's **peaceful quality and narrow lanes** are not damaged by an increase in traffic e.g. develop cycle/ footpath routes along old tramways.
- Plan for **community education and involvement** in the management of the area.
- Plan for the **creation, extension and linking of semi-natural habitats** such as heather moorland, woodland and species-rich grasslands.
- Plan to **reduce the visual impact of development** beyond the National Park boundary.

