



Llangorse Lake

## 2.1. Brecon Beacons National Park

The Brecon Beacons National Park contains some of the most spectacular and distinctive upland landforms in southern Britain. The highest point in the Brecon Beacons National Park is Pen y Fan, found at the centre of the Park. Its distinctive table-topped summit stands at 886 metres, and it is climbed by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

The Park covers 1347 square kilometres (520 square miles) and lies between rural Mid Wales and the industrial South Wales Valleys. It is a diverse landscape, where sweeping uplands contrast with green valleys, with dramatic waterfalls, ancient woodland, caves, forests and reservoirs.

Despite its name, the National Park is much more than the Brecon Beacons; it includes a number of other geological features. The bulk of the Park is underlain by Old Red Sandstone, rocks of Devonian age. These form the characteristic north and north-east facing escarpments of Y Mynydd Du (The Black Mountain), Fforest Fawr, the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains, giving the Park its highest peaks.

The older Ordovician and Silurian rocks of Mid Wales cross

into the north-western corner of the Park, giving a landscape of southwest - northeast trending ridges and valleys. In the south of the Park lie Carboniferous rocks, with limestone forming a conspicuous escarpment in some places. The Park's limestone pavements and cave systems are of European significance. South of this are Millstone Grit scarps and plateaux, whilst Coal Measures outcrop along the Park's southern boundary.

The Park was glaciated during the last Ice Age, as shown by the characteristic U shape of the valleys and the presence of moraines, kames, drumlins and outwash sand and gravels. The drainage generally runs from north to south or vice versa, reflecting the dip of the strata, although the major rivers have west - east courses in the Park area. The broad valley of the River Usk, for instance, cuts across the Park's mountains, whilst the rivers Towy and Wye border the Park.

The National Park has many rich habitats for wildlife, such as upland heaths and commons, bogs, unimproved grasslands, hay meadows, ancient woodlands and watercourses. But no part of the Park is totally "natural": more than 90% is agricultural or pastoral land, including hedged fields and the upland commons, grazed mainly by sheep. Human influence can be seen elsewhere as well, from Neolithic long cairns,



Ogof Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve



Hay meadow, Llangasty

Iron Age hill forts, Roman roads and Norman castles, to disused quarries and ironworks, managed woods and forest plantations, former railways, a canal and reservoirs, as well as the many farmsteads, villages and small market towns.

National Park status does not mean that all the land within the Park is in public ownership. In fact, over 65% of park lands are privately owned by estate owners, farmers and, to a lesser extent, householders. There are several large public and charitable landowners too (see Table 2.1). The BBNPA owns 14% of the Park, more than any other park authority in the UK. It is the single largest landowner in the National Park. BBNPA-owned lands comprise mainly upland common land purchased with the help of grants to manage it for the benefit of the public. Whilst the BBNPA owns the land, it does not manage all of it directly; this is done primarily by local farmers and graziers. The BBNPA is committed to working closely with graziers and other users of the land owned and/or managed by the Authority for the continued provision of public benefits and in the interest of sustainable management of these resources.

The Park is home to 33,000 people, and has a strong Welsh heritage and rich economic, social and cultural life. The largest settlement is the cathedral town of Brecon

Table 2.1. Area and percentage of National Park land by owner category

Land Owner	Landowner Area Owned	% of the Park (hectares)
Privately owned	87598	65
Countryside Council for Wales	1049	0.8
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	5197	3.9
Forestry Commission land*	6401	4.8
Forestry Commission forests**	9622	7.1
BBNPA	19791	14.3
National Trust	4942	3.7
<b>Total Area of Park</b>	<b>134600</b>	<b>100</b>

\*excludes land on long lease from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

\*\*includes land on long lease from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water



Crickhowell



Hay-on-Wye



Treacastle



Walking in the Central Beacons

(population 7,900). Together with Brecon, the settlements of Crickhowell, Gilwern, Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth account for approximately 46% of the Park's inhabitants.

The western part of the Park supports many scattered farmsteads and just a handful of villages - Llanddeusant, Myddfai, Gwynfe, Bethlehem and Trapp. In the central and eastern part the population is mainly concentrated in the Usk Valley, the Hay-on-Wye/Talgarth area, the Hirwaun/Penderyn area and the Clydach Gorge. These patterns arise from a mix of traditional farming areas, mineral extraction and more recent commercial, administrative and commuting areas.

Public administration, education and health professions account for 33% of the Park's employment opportunities, which is not surprising considering Brecon is an important administrative centre for Powys County Council, Dyfed Powys Police, the BBNPA and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Other significant employment sectors within the Park include: distribution, hotels and restaurants (21%); manufacturing (11%); banking, finance and insurance (10.5%) and agriculture (7%).<sup>6</sup>

Over three and a half million people a year come to the Brecon Beacons National Park to enjoy this unforgettable landscape. The mountains, uplands and valleys are all excellent

walking country. Visitors and residents also enjoy horse riding, cycling, mountain biking, fishing, kayaking and other water-based activities. There are major tourist attractions such as the Dan yr ogof Showcaves, and festivals such as the Brecon Jazz Festival, the Green Man Festival, the Hay Festival of Literature, the Crickhowell Walking Festival and celebrations of locally produced food.

## 2.2. Global Significance

There are more than 100,000 protected areas worldwide. Each contributes in its own way to sustaining life on Earth, including the health and well-being of humans. Protected areas provide a wide range of values and benefits to people and the environment, including: protection of biodiversity for its own sake (intrinsic value); soil and land productivity (on-site goods and services); climate regulation (off-site goods and services); local culture and identity (community value); and recreation leading to health and well-being (individual value). Despite their significance, collectively protected areas cover only 12% of the Earth's land surface and 0.5% of marine systems.<sup>7</sup>

The continued provision of benefits and values to society and, indeed, humanity's very survival, hinge upon the

6. Welsh Assembly Government, Department of Economic Statistics. 2010. Personal communication.

7. G.L. Worboys and C. Winkler. 2006. Natural Heritage, in M. Lockwood, G.L. Worboys, and A. Kothari, eds. *Managing Protected Areas: A Global Guide*. Earthscan, London.

# Brecon Beacons National Park Fast Facts



The National Park covers **1,347 square kilometres or 520 square miles**.

There are **1983 kilometres of public rights of way** in the Park: **1415 kilometres of footpaths, 367 of kilometres bridleways and 200 kilometres of byways and restricted byways**.



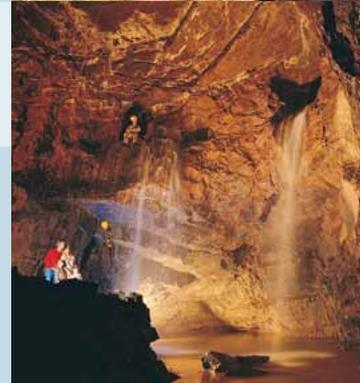
**Fforest Fawr Geopark** is the first European/Global Geopark in Wales and the first in a UK National Park.

The Park contains **21 UK priority habitats** and **48 UK priority species**.



**33,000 people** live in the National Park.

There are **11 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** covering 3,311 hectares or 2% of Park.



More than **£126 million** was spent in 2004 on **tourism-related activities** within the Park.

**Four of the five longest caves/ cave networks** in the UK are in the National Park! **The deepest and third deepest caves** in the UK are in the National Park.



**19 geological SSSIs** exist within or partly in the National Park, covering 12% of the Park's area.

The Park comprises **9 Unitary Authorities** and **50 Community Councils**.



**64 biological SSSIs** exist in the Park, covering 26047 hectares or 15% of the Park area.

The **BBNPA owns more land** (14%) than any other National Park Authority(NPA) in the UK.



Llangorse Lake (Llyn Syfaddan) is the **largest natural lake in South Wales**. It contains the only **crannog** (early medieval man-made island) in Wales.

The **greatest collection of waterfalls** in one small area in the UK is around Ystradfellte/ Pontneddfechan.



There are about **5,376 kilometres of hedgerows**.

More than **200 farm holdings** are in **Tir Gofal (agriculture conservation) schemes**, covering 15.6% of the Park.



Approximately **35 local cultural events and food festivals** are held in the Park each year.

There are **1,943 listed buildings**.



There are over **8,000 species** recorded in the National Park.

There are **268 scheduled ancient monuments, 4 registered historic landscapes** and **17 registered historic parks and gardens**.

successful stewardship of a small but precious portion of the world. The urgency of this responsibility becomes even more critical because natural areas are being lost or modified at an alarming rate across the globe.

Consequently, the Brecon Beacons National Park has international, national and local importance as a protected landscape. The BBNPA's funding and specialist staff help the Park serve as a test-bed for sustainable, innovative development and management that may be applied in a broader context. Some examples of the benefits to society provided by the Park include:

- Contributions to international food security through local food production;
- An understanding of the past and context for today's culture through ongoing conservation of the historic environment;
- Maintenance of the quality and flow of regional water resources;
- Opportunities to reduce stress through recreation, leisure and culinary experiences;
- Awareness and understanding of the integral link between people and their environment; and
- Innovative approaches to renewable energy generation and energy efficiency practices that can be adopted elsewhere.

Many other benefits and values associated with the National Park have been identified by its stakeholders. These are captured in the Park's special qualities (see **Chapter 3**), in **Case Studies** throughout the Plan and in the text describing the topics in **Chapter 7**.

## 2.3. International Context

Brecon Beacons National Park was established in 1957. With its designation as a UK National Park, the Brecon Beacons joined a growing international family of protected areas. Protected areas fall into two general categories: those designated for the strict protection of the natural world and those designated for the purposes of maintaining sustainable relationships between humans and nature. National parks of the UK belong to the latter category, otherwise classified as IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes. Parks in the UK also differ from national parks in other parts of the world because they are largely privately owned whilst many parks in other nations are owned primarily by the State.

IUCN Category V landscapes/seascapes are protected areas managed for both conservation and recreation. Unlike IUCN Categories I-IV, this designation recognises and encourages active, sustainable human presence as part of the evolution and maintenance of the area. These ideals are embodied in the 12 fundamental principles which have been designed to guide management of these areas for the long-term benefit of the environment, society, culture and the economy (see **Annex 4**). The National Park - via this Plan - also delivers international policies and objectives. The Park must conform to European Union (EU) directives in relation to: Special Areas for Conservation (SACs), biodiversity, sustainable development, water quality, noise suppression, greenhouse gas emissions and waste. Adherence to and delivery of these objectives present cascading benefits and challenges both regionally and locally. For example, Common Agricultural Policy reform will influence the Park's landscape, agriculture, biodiversity and economy through farmers' compliance with it. Agricultural policy, in turn, must be reconciled along with enhancement and maintenance of SACs in and around the Park. Currently, there are 11 SACs in the Park covering 2% of its area. Most notable of these is the River Usk which runs nearly the length of the Park from east to west. Because its waters are fed by a large catchment of the Park, the Usk



Fan Brycheiniog

constantly reflects in its waters the activities which occur across the Park. As the Usk travels further downstream, the impacts from these activities are realized outside the Park's boundaries.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations in England & Wales place a duty on public bodies to have regard to River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). The Park is covered by two RBMPs for the Severn and Western Wales River Basin Districts. The WFD seeks to: prevent deterioration in and improve water status; ensure water and waste water capacities; mitigate the effects of floods and droughts; and ensure sustainable water use.

The UK National Parks, Areas of Natural Beauty (AONBs) and other landscape designations are also governed by the European Landscape Convention (signed in 2006) which promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European cooperation on landscape issues (**see Annex 3 for the definition of landscapes**). Along with its aforementioned aims, the convention encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and

social policies and the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.

Other designations also recognise the importance of the landscapes in and around the National Park. The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was inscribed as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site (WHS) in November 2000. As noted by UNESCO, *"the area around Blaenavon is evidence of the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century. All the necessary elements can still be seen - coal and ore mines, quarries, a primitive railway system, furnaces, workers' homes, and the social infrastructure of their community."* The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape and its surrounding area is one of the most significant examples of industrial growth during and after the Industrial Revolution. For this reason, it serves as an exemplar and gateway to the wider Heads of the Valleys area, which collectively fuelled the fires of development for Great Britain and the international community during this era.

In 2005 the Fforest Fawr Geopark was established as the first European/Global Geopark in Wales and the first Geopark in any UK National Park. This international recognition acknowledges the area for its scientific quality, stunning landscapes, educational value and historical or cultural interest. The area covers the western portion of the Brecon Beacons National Park, including the Brecon Beacons, Fforest Fawr and Black Mountain. The main objective of the European Geopark Network is local economic development based on geo-tourism in local communities. Whereas the designation is international, the benefits are truly local.

The BBNPA also belongs to Europarc, the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe, which is the voice for European protected areas.

## 2.4. National Context

The Brecon Beacons was the tenth National Park in Wales and England to be designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. This action confirmed its importance nationally, conferring the UK's highest status for conservation of landscape and natural beauty. The Welsh Assembly Government has further emphasised the Park's importance in the national context through its Vision for the Welsh National Parks in the 21st century:

*"The Welsh National Parks are protected landscapes of international importance which capture much of what is distinct and special about rural Wales, environmentally and culturally. Although predominantly rural in nature, the Parks contain a resident population of over 80,000, are close to important urban communities and have significant potential to enrich the lives of the people of, and visitors to, Wales and to contribute positively to public health and well-being and to the Welsh economy. They are living landscapes, moulded by their communities over thousands of years. They are places where sustainable development is promoted for the benefit of the environment, the economy and for Park communities. They are places that experiment with new approaches in sustainable development and environmental conservation, providing exemplars of best practice for wider Wales, and helping to shape and lead future rural policy and practice. They are also places where all who can influence the future of the Parks work together to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural identity, in line with sustainable development principles. Guided by the Park Authorities, these special areas are becoming progressively richer and more diverse in terms of landscape, wildlife and heritage and are enjoyed and cherished by a full cross-section of society."*<sup>8</sup>

8. Welsh Assembly Government. March 2007. Policy Statement for the National Parks and National Park Authorities in Wales: "Working together for Wales."



UK National Parks

Working together with the other two Welsh National Parks (and sister parks in Scotland and England) and sectors within the Brecon Beacons National Park, the BBNPA and its partners will pursue this vision through their contributions to such national objectives<sup>9</sup> as:

- Mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- Conserving and enhancing Wales' biodiversity;
- Embracing integrated and responsible approaches to the protection and sustainable stewardship of its resources;
- Supporting sustainable use of natural resources within the Park;
- Ensuring that all sections of society have ample opportunities to enjoy and understand the Park's special qualities;

9. Ibid.

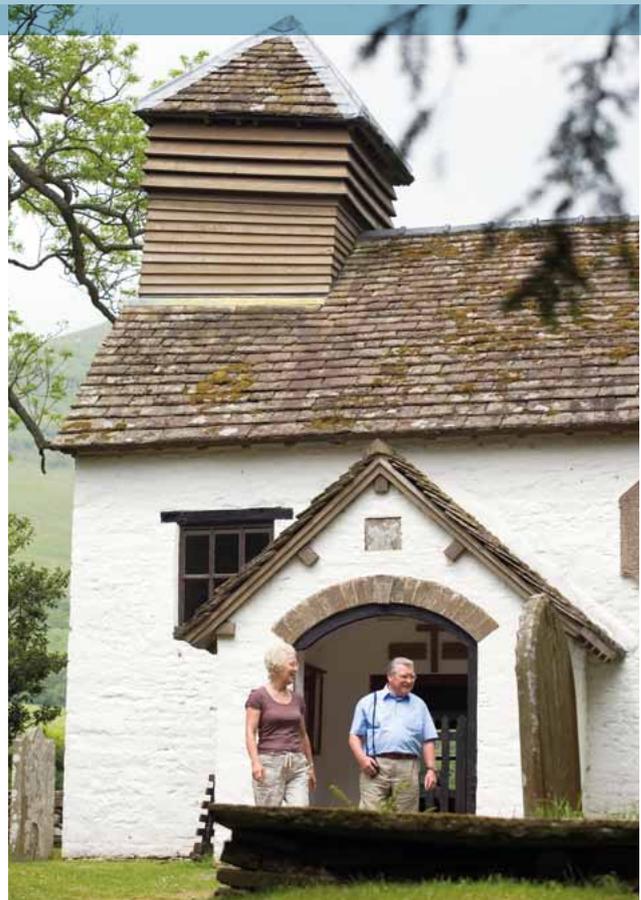
- Integrating sustainable development principles into all areas of Park management;
- Encouraging socio-economic vitality, healthy lifestyles and strong sense of place - inclusive of the Welsh language - across the communities in and surrounding the Park;
- Engaging and working together more effectively with the Park's local communities; and
- Providing a high quality planning service which inspires confidence in the local communities and is efficient, effective, consistent and sound.

Again, as an example, the National Park Management Plan - in conjunction with the Local Development Plan - helps to deliver the outcomes of the Environment Strategy for Wales: integrating environmental considerations; providing environmental education and information; encouraging responsible behaviour; minimising greenhouse gas emissions; minimising waste generation; promoting reuse and recycling and providing for waste management; managing water resources; safeguarding soil; and minimising the impact of mineral working. It does this in the context of the Wales Spatial Plan, the Rural Development Plan, other national policies and the local Community Strategies<sup>10</sup>.

The Welsh Assembly's White Paper, Heritage Protection for the 21st Century (WAG 2007), provides three core principles guiding the heritage protection system in preserving local heritage for people to enjoy now and in the future. These core principles are to: develop a unified approach to the historic environment; maximise opportunities for inclusion and involvement; and support sustainable communities by putting the historic environment at the heart of an effective planning system.

The Park also contains a number of natural designations

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Assembly Government. March 2007. Policy Statement for the National Parks and National Park Authorities in Wales: "Working together for Wales".



St. Mary's Church, Capel y Ffin

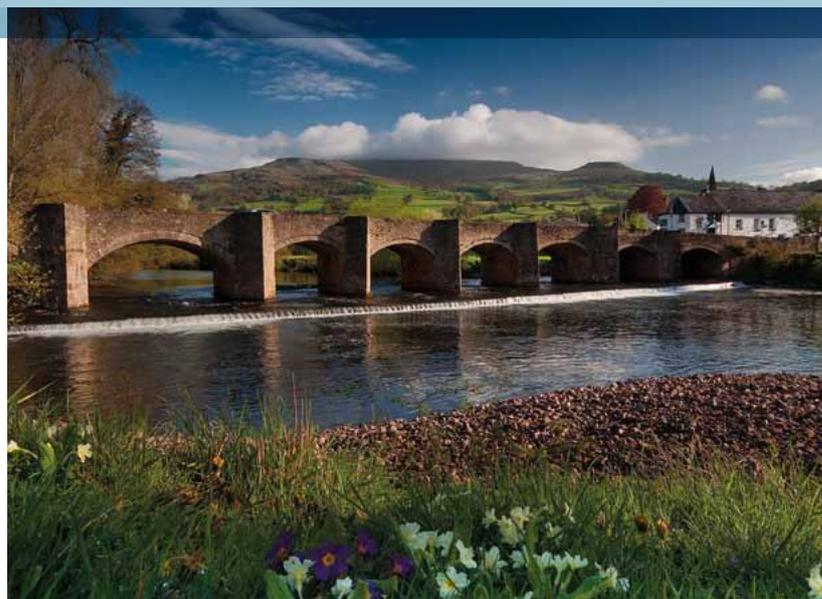
of national significance: biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); geological SSSIs; and Local Nature Reserves. These designations help support 21 UK priority habitats and 48 UK priority species. The Park also contains nationally important cultural and historic designations, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Landscapes of Historic Interest, Historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (**see Maps 7 and 8 and the appropriate sections of the Plan**).

Not only does the Blaenavon World Heritage Site hold international significance but it is also listed in the register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales as described by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), Cadw and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS UK).

The English and Welsh National Park Authorities (NPAs) also work together through the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) to strengthen the voice of the Parks



Brecon town centre



River Usk, Crickhowell

nationally, raising awareness of issues, tackling widespread problems and sharing information. This work is supported by the Society of National Park Staff, and also by the Campaign for National Parks, an umbrella body for interested voluntary organisations.

## 2.5. Regional Context

Administratively, the Brecon Beacons National Park includes 50 Community Councils and 9 Unitary Authorities (see Map 1) comprising Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath/Port Talbot, Powys, Rhondda/Cynon/Taf and Torfaen. Powys accounts for 66% of the Park's area whilst Caerphilly and Neath/Port Talbot have such small holdings within the Park that they do not take up any direct involvement in the Authority. The BBNPA is the planning authority for the National Park area, whilst the constituent Unitary Authorities retain responsibility for all other local government services within their areas of the Park. The BBNPA therefore works in close partnership with these authorities and communities, who appoint members to serve on the Authority.

The Brecon Beacons National Park is the principal gateway between the populated and urbanized Welsh valleys and the more pastoral landscapes of Mid Wales. Residents, visitors

and those seeking recreation, farmers, trades and business people, and members of special interest organisations all live their lives and pursue their work or pleasure here. Likewise many public and voluntary organizations and statutory bodies pursue their functions within the Park. Each has a key role to play in the Park's management. Much of the BBNPA's work also involves developing, coordinating and maintaining partnerships with and among these groups. As it is a statutory duty for all of these bodies to have regard to this Management Plan whilst carrying out various functions where they pertain to the National Park, it is hoped that this will be reflected in the collective endorsement of this Plan and in the actions thereafter.

The Unitary Authorities' Community Strategies have provided context for this Management Plan, and relevant aspects of these have been incorporated into it. The Community Strategies share in common five central themes: health and well-being, lifelong learning, community safety, a better environment and local economic development. These themes are addressed in appropriate sections of this Plan.

The Wales Spatial Plan identifies Brecon as the "hub" of the Brecon Beacons Cluster (primary key settlement) to serve the needs of the surrounding communities. Talgarth and Hay-on-Wye are identified as key settlements, serving both the resident population and surrounding settlements whilst

### Forgotten Landscapes

The **Forgotten Landscapes Project** will help conserve and restore the built features that create the historic character of the landscape and natural landscape features around the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. Access into the wider landscape will be improved and high quality information on the area's important cultural heritage and wildlife made available to visitors.

The project encourages people to become involved in their heritage landscape, to learn more about it, contribute to ideas about its future and to enjoy it! It was originated from a small number of interested organisations led by Gwent Wildlife Trust and Torfaen County Borough Council, and will cover over 40 square kilometers round Blaenavon.

Through a strong local partnership approach it will bring tremendous benefits for local people, farmers, the business community and visitors. It could bring significant long term benefits for the management, preservation and presentation of the historic industrial landscape.

In October 2008 the Project received more than £1.6 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This funding will



Education at Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenavon

ensure that projects such as conservation and restoration of buildings, post-industrial features and ancient monuments, conservation of natural habitat and wildlife, improved access to the wider area and educational projects are delivered to the benefit of the wider community.



Big Pit, Blaenavon

providing links to larger service areas outside of the Park. Ystradgynlais and Crickhowell provide links within the cluster and externally to Swansea Bay and South East Wales.

Relevant parts of other regional strategies have informed this Plan such as the Environment Agency's Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies, Flood Management, Soil Protection Strategy and River Basin Management Plans. The strategic objectives from these plans are reflected in the strategic objectives and priorities for action detailed herein.

Approximately 48% of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site "cultural landscape" lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park. The BBNPA has an obligation under the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention to assist proportionately in the management of the site through the oversight of the Blaenavon Partnership. The Blaenavon Partnership has worked effectively to achieve remarkable results in protecting and managing the World Heritage Site and continues to advance projects that benefit the region such as the Forgotten Landscapes Project (opposite).



**Black Mountain**

## 2.6. Setting the Framework

The Brecon Beacons National Park is a special landscape, exhibiting qualities that collectively cannot be found elsewhere. The context described above provides the framework for defining these special qualities and has guided the formulation of a shared vision of the Park's future. This vision has been translated into 20-year aims and strategic objectives to direct management of the Park so that local strategies can be implemented to achieve 5-year outcomes, actions and policies in the short-term.