

BLAENAU GWENT
PROPOSALS FOR DESIGNATION OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 In May 2008 Bronwen Thomas Landscape Architect was appointed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) to carry out a study of the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the county.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1.2 The objective of this study, as defined in the study brief is to “carry out a review of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in Blaenau Gwent for inclusion in the Local Development Plan using the methodology set out in Countryside Council for Wales’ (CCW’s) *LANDMAP Information Guidance Note 1 – LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas* (Feb 2008) and other related documents.”

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA DESIGNATION

1.3 Special Landscape Areas are non-statutory designations applied by local authorities to define areas of high landscape importance. These may be designated for their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural or historical value. Planning Policy Wales advocates the use of *LANDMAP* as the formally adopted methodology for landscape assessment in Wales. CCW has developed a guidance note on the use of *LANDMAP* in identifying Special Landscape Areas and this forms the basis of the methodology adopted in this study.

PLANNING POLICY WALES

1.4 In *Planning Policy Wales*, Chapter 5: Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and The Coast, paragraph 5.3.11 says:

“Non-statutory designations, such as Special Landscape Areas, should be soundly based on a formal scientific assessment of the nature conservation, landscape or geological value of an area. Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values.

- o The need to conserve and enhance existing distinctive and valued qualities and features of the landscape to avoid unacceptable deterioration, change or development;
- o The need to raise awareness of these distinctive landscapes and thereby raise standards of design to bring about positive change.

Therefore each aspect area has several evaluation criteria scores that underpin and determine the final overall score.

These evaluations have been used to identify the broad search areas and to inform the Statements of Value for each proposed SLA.

KEY QUALITIES & FEATURES

2.6 All the aspect areas also key qualities and features identified and management proposals. These have been drawn out from all five aspects to provide the basis for the guidance within each Statement of Value.

3.0 DEFINING THE CRITERIA FOR SLAS IN BLAENAU GWENT

REQUIRED CHANGES TO SLAs

3.1 One of *LANDMAP*'s uses is to support planning policy development such as SLA designation. This is now being put to the test in the current development of LDPs throughout the Principality, in SLA designation. This use within BGCBC is discussed in this chapter.

3.2 It is apparent, therefore, that the main changes since the original designation of the existing SLAs, have been:

- x The methodology has been refined by CCW guidance, and therefore the criteria for SLA designation have changed;
- x Planning policy has changed;
- x Various developments and other changes and initiatives have taken place or been planned throughout the geographical area of BGCBC and therefore the need for protection and conservation has changed.
- x The identification of important sites for biodiversity across borough, such as candidate Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (cSINCs) and candidate Local Nature Reserves (cLNRs) has added to the understanding and need for conservation management.

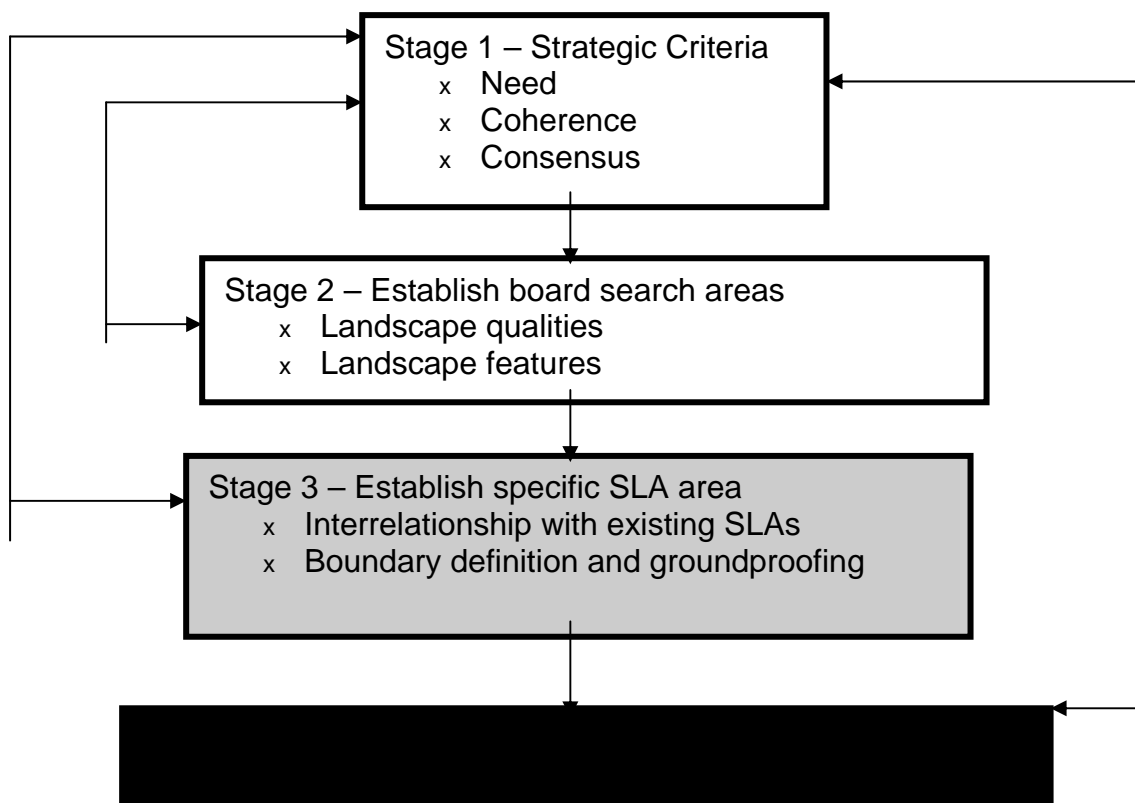
3.3 These factors must be borne in mind when comparing the previous SLAs with those proposed in this study because, in most cases, it is not the landscape itself that has changed.

DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY

3.4 Between March and July 2007 the South East Wales Local Authority consortium engaged consultants TACP to develop criteria for the designation of SLAs. That report (referred to here as the Development of Criteria report) proposed the iterative model in the diagram 'Methodology Process' below as the process 0.00i[(3.6(ntu9eu7d toSfor)6Me)-6(thodology Ps 0.00 xnow[(pTw the r)1(g)i(casesndia)5(5(t,W guivious SLAs with those)]TJ 0.001rew T* promss6(i(di))6(eferrw7 T

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Methodology Process



3.6 The use simply of overall evaluations as the way of establishing broad search areas, means that the methodology may miss out on defining some locally important landscapes. Therefore CCW engaged Environment Systems to develop a more refined method of overlaying all the 35 evaluation criteria of the five aspect layers. The outcome has been digitised maps showing an aggregate of all aspects thereby providing an evaluation score to all areas. The resulting Landscape Value maps appear to give a more balanced overview as a basis to define broad search areas. These are shown on the figure below.

LANDMAP evaluations and previously designated SLAs. This is partly due to a more holistic approach to using *LANDMAP* data than previously. Also, the *LANDMAP* data does not identify some areas of important landscape throughout the county. There are, however, other reasons inherent in the *LANDMAP* information for BGCBC that make it not sufficient alone for providing the basis for identifying the proposed SLAs. These include the following facts:

- x The Historic Landscapes aspect areas were only given overall evaluations, rather than defining each evaluation criteria. This does not give as much information and reason for evaluation as other aspects. Therefore this aspect does not make sufficient contribution to the *LANDMAP* methodology for defining broad search areas across BGCBC.
- x The Landscape Habitats aspect areas have not all been evaluated. Most of the unevaluated aspect areas are in the east of Blaenau Gwent. As with the Historic Landscapes, where aspect areas have been evaluated, only overall evaluations are given, giving limited information.
- x It has been found that some large aspect areas (especially geological landscapes and cultural landscapes) have evaluations relating only to small parts of that aspect area and therefore cannot be considered relevant to the definition of broad search areas.
- x The *LANDMAP* evaluations mainly relate what is there now, and do not primarily address future planning needs in the way required for SLA designation.

3.9 Notwithstanding the above points, the *LANDMAP* data for Blaenau Gwent undoubtedly provides a wealth of information. The evaluations, recommendations and descriptions of the aspect areas have been drawn on to assist in defining the need and extent of all the proposed SLAs. It has also been used as the basis for identifying special landscape features and qualities. Professional judgement and local knowledge has been used to decide on the relevance and tease out the appropriate proposals in these cases.

LOCAL CRITERIA FOR DEFINING NEED IN BGCBC

3.10 In addition to the *LANDMAP* data, the CCW Guidance Note 1 allows for other more specific or local needs to be identified at stage 1, and therefore included at all later stages. It is these specific and local needs that have been found to be equally important criteria for defining the proposed SLAs in BGCBC, backed up and refined by the *LANDMAP* data.

3.11 In particular these local criteria are:

Local need criteria	Explanation
Prominence - major	Major prominent hillsides and skylines that are in full view of the busiest parts of BG are the most likely to provide an overall impression of the county, namely those seen from the main through routes, especially the Heads of the Valleys road.
Prominence - moderate	As the settlements are mainly within the valleys or heads of the valleys area, the valley sides, bluffs and ends of ridges that overlook these form a highly visible, ever-present backdrop to all the activities of the valleys The land near main transport routes is in the foreground for travellers, making it highly visible. Therefore any detrimental changes in these areas are conspicuous, especially where distant views are restricted. Most importantly this occurs on either side of the Heads of the Valleys road (and its proposed re-alignment).
Spectacle - views	Accessible and well-loved viewpoints, where wide views open up into the valleys and across the heads of the valleys and into the Brecon Beacons, can be spectacular in BGCBC.

	<p>These are best seen from the roads over the ridges, and from along these ridges. In particular, the views opening up southward at the 'viewshed' on the Llangynidr road are spectacular.</p>
<p>'Unspoilt' areas: Pre-industrial patterns of land use</p>	<p>Areas of irregular fields , bounded by large mixed hedges or drystone walls indicate long-established patterns of farming and often support mosaics of valuable habitats. This type of landscape is most extensive on the lower plateau in the south of the County, where there has been less disturbance from extraction and industry.</p> <p>There are some large areas of open common land on plateau and ridges,</p>

Brecon Beacons National Park	This covers a relatively small part of the countryside to the north of the A465 Heads of the Valleys road in the extreme north east of the county. SLA designation is not required as this would be duplication, and National Park status is overriding
Country Park	Brynbach Country Park at Tredegar is currently managed for conservation and does not need additional protection.

URBAN BOUNDARIES AND URBAN FRINGES

3.16 In most cases the proposed SLAs adjoin the mapped urban boundaries. These urban boundaries have yet to be walked to verify their accuracy, as part of the LDP process. The use of the urban boundaries means that the urban fringes are included in the proposed SLAs, whereas previously these had been excluded from SLA designation. The urban fringes, however, are generally seen as coherent parts of the lower slopes of the valleys, providing an interface between settlements and open countryside. Most LANDMAP aspect areas, across the five aspects, include the urban fringes as part of the wider landscape areas. As these areas are often particularly susceptible to changes, whether through neglect and abuse, or because of incremental changes in development, they are considered important parts of the wider proposed SLAs. Several potential development sites on the urban fringes have been rejected and are therefore included within the SLAs. This occurs, for instance, at Swffryd and at Greenmeadow Farm in Cwm Tyleri, and is noted in the Statements of Value.

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS IN ADJOINING COUNTIES

3.17 Caerphilly County Borough lies adjacent to all the western and southern boundary of BGCBC. Using the South East Wales Authorities current methodology, a recent study – ‘Designation of Special Landscape Areas’ produced by TACP - gives recommendations for SLAs. This has been ratified by Caerphilly Council. Originally there were seventeen SLAs in Caerphilly, this has been reduced to seven, some of which are slightly larger than previous ones. The Upper Rhymney Valley SLA abuts BGCBC from its northern tip to halfway across Rhymney Hill.

3.18 An additional designation of Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILL), relating specifically to the Visual & Sensory aspect data has also been proposed. The Northern Rhymney Valley VILL continues south from the above SLA to include Cwm Tysswg, abutting BGCBC. The Manmoel VILL covers the Manmoel plateau adjacent to BGCBC.

3.19 Torfaen County Borough lies to the east of Blaenau Gwent. In the Adopted Torfaen Local Plan (2001) the entire stretch of countryside adjacent to Blaenau Gwent, from the Blaenavon Road to Cefn-crib in the south, is designated Special Landscape Area. Torfaen CBC is currently (March 2009) reviewing the SLAs, therefore it is expected that these areas will be altered.

3.20 Monmouthshire County extends up Clydach Gorge, having a short length of boundary with BGCBC. All this part of Monmouthshire adjacent to Blaenau Gwent is within BBNP and therefore SLAs are not appropriate.

3.21 Powys lies to the north of Blaenau Gwent. As all this lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park, SLAs are not relevant.

3.22 Where the proposed SLAs in Blaenau Gwent do not coincide with those in adjacent counties, an explanation is included in the Statement of Value.

LIST OF PROPOSED SLAs

- 4.7 The following proposed SLAs are described in the Statements of Value
- x St Illtyd Plateau & Ebbw Eastern Sides;
 - x Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James;
 - x Cwm Tyleri & Cwm Celyn.
 - x Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn & Cefn yr Arail;
 - x Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney Hill & Sirhowy Sides;
 - x Cefn Manmoel:
 - x Trefil & Garnlydan Surrounds;
 - x Beaufort Common.

ST. ILLTYD PLATEAU AND EBBW EASTERN SIDES STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Taking up most of the south-eastern ‘peninsula’ of Blaenau Gwent, this area lies in the extreme south-east of the county, adjacent to the boundary with Torfaen in the east.

Its western and southern boundary is the convoluted edge of the urban boundary along the lower valleys sides, from Swffryd in the south to Six Bells in the north. This area is continuous with the Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James SLA, their joint boundary being the extent of the enclosed farmland.

This is part of the dissected plateau of the mid section of the coalfield. The area consists of two distinct landscape types. The plateau, rare in Blaenau Gwent for being the only extensive area of enclosed farmland, is centred on the ancient settlement of St. Illtyd. To the west and south, the plateau drops away forming the steep, well-wooded Ebbw Fach valley sides, including several small side valleys. All the area has generally hardly been disturbed by industrialisation.

ST. ILLTYD PLATEAU AND EBBW EASTERN SIDES
STRATEGIC CRITERIA

NEED:

LANDMAP

Plateau: St Illtyd surrounds – most important landscape value,

- o No development on cSINC sites
- o Long-term management/restoration of hedges and grasslands.

Ebbw Valley sides:

- x Enhance fringes to settlements:
 - o Control fly-tipping, etc.
 - o Any developments to be sensitive to setting/landscape
 - o Improvements to footpaths/recreational access to wider countryside
- x Conserve habitats and natural qualities:
 - o Allow natural woodland regeneration on valleyslano estbrackeng/landscape
 - o

EASTERN RIDGE & MYNYDD JAMES

STRATEGIC CRITERIA

NEED:

LANDMAP

Open upland and Valley sides : second most important
landscape value

Northern slopes : adjacent to Blaenavon Road – most important.

- x Remnants of various communication routes between Brynmawr and Clydach Gorge, of historic interest.

KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

Open upland:

- x Conserve and enhance open moorland habitats:
 - o maintain low level of grazing;
 - o heathland management, including establishment of heather;
 - o control of bracken encroachment.
- x Safeguard archaeological resource:
 - o preserve open nature of historic landscape;
 - o conserve the archaeological resource;
 - o conserve areas of patches.
- x Conserve 'unspoilt' qualities:
 - o Discourage/control use of motorbikes
 - o Resist large-scale development, including tree planting, especially on skylines.
 - o Rebuild defining edge stone walls on valley sides.

Valley sides:

- x Enhance built/rural interface;
 - o Clean up/control tipping and other abuse around edges of settlements;
 - o Conserve openness, simplicity, rock features;
 - o Recreational access improvements;
 - o Integration of new edge developments.
- x Conserve/enhance habitats:
 - o Manage/conservate Bourneville Slip;
 - o Reduce coniferous/increase broadleaf woodland.
 - o Manage priority habitats in line with LBAP targets.

Northern slopes:

- x Safeguard overall landscape of entrance to Heads of Valleys:
 - o Reduce decline of field boundaries, land management etc.
 - o Conservation of the patches historic landscape features.
 - o Integration of new development around edges.
 - o Sensitive design of development on the Ben Ward's Field site within the SLA

EASTERN RIDGE & MYNYDD JAMES LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	688	All of open ridge (& other ridges)	High
	291	North of Blaenavon Road	Low
LH	042	North-east corner of area	High
	043	Top of Cwm Celyn	High
	047	Mulfran	High
	062	Open moorland south of Abertillery	Moderate
	078	Open moorland north of Abertillery	High
	088	Mynydd James	u/a
HL	025	'Mynydd Coity' - All of eastern ridge	Moderate
	876/ 047	'Clydach Fieldscape South' Northern slopes of Mulfran and Clydach valley	u/a

CWM TYLERI & CWM CELYN STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

These two south-flowing side valleys of the Ebbw Fach, in the eastern part of the county, are enclosed by the upland of the Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James SLA, in the upper valleys section of the coalfield.

The boundaries of both these valley areas are the extent of the enclosed land on the upper slopes and the urban boundary on the lower valleys.

Although separate, they consist of a single landscape type, being enclosed valley sides, mainly fields, with areas of woodland. Cwm Tyleri includes areas of reclaimed land and lakes which are now becoming well-integrated into rural valley landscape.

**MYNYDD CARN-Y-CEFN & CEFN YR ARAIL
STATEMENT OF VALUE**

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This is the main north-south ridge in the centre of the county, between the Ebbw Fawr and Ebbw Fach valleys. The full length of the ridge is within Blaenau Gwent (unlike the other ridges) and it shows landscapes typical of all the ridges.

The northern boundary is defined by the edges of the open land around Winchestown and Beaufort Hill. To the west the Ebbw Fawr valley sides are included, down to the urban boundary of the valley bottom settlements, from Ebbw Vale to Cwm, and main A4046 road in between. Similarly, on the eastern side, the edges of development and reclaimed land alongside the main A467 road define the boundary of the SLA. To the south, where the ridge drops away to Aberbeeg, the main valley roads and scattered development alongside define the edge of the SLA. Silent Valley landfill site has been excluded from the SLA.

Within this SLA there are four main landscape types. There is the central open upland ridge. On either side are steep

Exact boundaries to be defined by local authority in relation to other designations, urban boundary and development sites.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

North slopes:

- x Areas of 'patches' (early opencast workings) of historic value.
- x Backdrop to Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr

Open upland ridge:

- x Distinctive open skyline seen from valleys on either side
- x Panoramic views across to other ridges
- x All open land is cSINC with mosaic habitat – heathland, acid grassland, mire and oak woodland, LBAP habitat – purple moor grass and rush pasture, upland oak woodland, beech and yew woodland, dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog

Ebbw Fach sides:

- x Varied backdrop to valley settlements, with rock exposures, woodland, open grassland, quarries, etc
- x Two small cSINCs, wet woodland and mosaic habitats
- x Impressive areas of landslip, fault lines, rifts between West Side and Darren Ddu
- x Good views into valley

Ebbw Fawr sides:

- x Varied backdrop to valley settlements
- x

- x Conserve geological interest:
 - o Sensitive stabilisation at West Side
 - o Conserve exposures, etc.
- Ebbw Fawr sides:
- x Enhance built/rural interface;
 - o Clean up/control tipping and other abuse around edges of settlements;
 - o Conserve allotments, smallholdings, etc on edges of Ebbw Vale and Cwm
 - o Conserve openness, simplicity, rock features;
 - o Integration of Silent Valley landfill
 - x Conserve/enhance habitats:
 - o Manage/conserv e grassland and woodland BAP habitats, in line with LBAP targets;
 - o Management of Cwm Merddog SSSI.
- Southern end:
- x Safeguard rich archaeological, historic and cultural heritage:
 - o Maintain integrity of fieldscape by restoration and maintenance of field boundaries (beech hedges & stone walls) and farm structures
 - x Conserve and enhance habitats:
 - o Manage/conserv e grassland habitats;
 - o Reduce coniferous/increase broadleaf woodland in forestry areas.
 - x Conserve remoteness and tranquillity:
 - o Discourage vehicular access;
 - o Limit damage caused by re-working of tip.

MYNYDD CARN-Y-CEFN & CEFN YR ARAIL LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	688	All open ridge (and other similar ridges to west and east	High
	713	Western slopes/Ebbw Fawr valley side	Moderate
	246	Eastern slopes/Ebbw Fach valley sides	Moderate
	762	Enclosed land of Hafod-yr-dafol & Arial	Moderate
LH	052	North third of ridge	High
	082	Mid third of ridge	High
	084	Slopes above Cwm	O/s
	051	Western slopes above Waun Lloyd	Moderate
	074	Southern eastern third of ridge	u/a
	075	South-western spur	u/a
	073	Southern slopes	u/a
HL	022	'Mynydd Carn-y-cefn' Almost all of ridge	Moderate
	021/21	'Ebbw Vale (East side)' Western slopes in north half	Moderate
	039	'Graig Fawr Woods' Western slopes in south half	Moderate
	008	Mynydd Carn-y-cefn Fieldscape' Eastern slopes	Moderate
	032	'Darren Ddu Woods' Small part of eastern slopes	Moderate
	044	'St. Illtyd Fieldscape' Small part of south eastern slopes near Arail	O/s
GL	013	All west side of ridge	Mod
	017	All east side of ridge	Mod
CL	843	'General Upland Areas' All part of large area	High

CEFN MANMOEL
STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION,
BOUNDARIES &
GENERAL
DESCRIPTION

This is the
northwest-
southeast ridge
and sides between
the Sirhowy valley
and the Ebbw
Fawr.

Its northern
boundary is defined

- x Extensive area of cSINC around Garden City, for mosaic habitats including dwarf shrub heath and mesotrophic lakes, LBAP habitats.
- x Rich archaeological remains of industry, including tips, levels, inclines, quarries.
- x Includes stretches of river where not culverted.
- x Enclosed quality of steep forested sides in south

Manmoel plateau:

- x Part of wider historic pattern of fields around ancient settlement of Manmoel (in Caerphilly) of considerable historic and cultural value.
- x Distinctive beech hedges
- x Some unimproved grassland habitats

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

Open upland ridge:

- x Conserve and enhance open moorland habitats:
 - o maintain low level of grazing;
 - o heathland management, including establishment of heather;
 - o control of bracken encroachment

CEFN MANMOEL LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	688	All open ridge (and other similar ridges to west and east	High

MYNYDD BEDWELLY, RHYMNEY HILL & SIRHOWY VALLEY STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This is the northwest-southeast ridge and valley sides in the west of the county, between the Sirhowy and the Rhymney valleys. Its western boundary is the county boundary with Caerphilly. It extends from the edges of Bryn Bach Park and the urban boundary of Tredegar in the north to the county boundary in the south. In the east the area includes all the Sirhowy valley western sides to the county boundary in the south.

There are three main landscape types in this area. Rhymney Hill and Mynydd Bedwellty form the open upland ridge, similar to the other ridges in the county. The steep east-facing sides of the Sirhowy valley, down to the A4048, are also primarily open land, with disused quarries and areas of tips. In the west there is the shallow side valley of Cwm Tysswg with its fields, forming part of the Rhymney valley (Caerphilly).

MYNYDD BEDWELLY, RHYMNEY HILL & SIRHOWY VALLEY

STRATEGIC CRITERIA

NEED:

LANDMAP	Open upland: moderate landscape value Sirhowy sides: moderate/third most important landscape value. Cwm Tysswg: third most important value
Prominence	Open upland: Rhymney Hill is prominent from the A465. Ridge forms prominent skyline from east side of Sirhowy valley
Spectacle	Open upland: Particularly good views north into BBNP from road along ridge. Also to Tredegar & upper Sirhowy from Cefn Golau
'unspoilt'	Most of open upland, away from evidence of industrialisation
Vulnerability	Urban fringes of Tredegar
Rarity	Ridge-top route remains as minor road through open upland Tredegar patches, northern part of open upland

COHERENCE:

This area is all one ridge, covering most of the open land west of Tredegar and A4048, excluding Brynbach Country Park.

CONSENSUS:

All the area is an existing SLA.

Exact boundaries to be defined by local authority in relation to other designations, urban boundaries, edges of Brynbach and development sites.

In adjacent Caerphilly – northern part of Rhymney Hill is SLA, southward to Cwm Tysswg is VILL. Further south the adjacent Caerphilly landscape is enclosed fields of lesser value.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

Open upland ridge:

- x Distinctive open skyline, including cairn and Cefn Golau cemetery, seen from valleys on either side
- x Panoramic views across to other ridges to west, and north to Brecon Beacons, & into valley from Cefn Golau.
- x Minor road along ridge, only example in Blaenau Gwent, probably old ridge-top route, affords good views.
- x Large cSINC, all of open upland. Mainly acid grassland, with purple moorgrass and rush pasture and upland dwarf shrub heath LBAP habitats. Also smaller area of acid grassland cSINC on Tredegar Patches.
- x Cefn Golau cholera cemetery – Scheduled Monument

Sirhowy sides:

- x Varied backdrop to valley and A4048, with rock outcrops, quarries, woodland, grassland.
- x Significant areas of pre-industrial fields.
- x Areas of acid grassland cSINC, LBAP habitat
- x Beech woods, including Darren Ddu cSINC
- x Extensive length of valley side with no development

Cwm Tysswg:

- x Secluded farmland, undisturbed by industrialisation
- x Pleasant views into Rhymney valley

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

Open upland ridge:

- x Conserve and enhance open moorland habitats:
 - o maintain low level of grazing;
 - o heathland management, including establishment of heather;

- o control of bracken encroachment.
- x Safeguard archaeological and historic resource:
 - o preserve open nature of historic landscape;
 - o conserve/restore cholera cemetery and surrounds;
 - o conserve the archaeological resource, including prehistoric cairns;
 - o conserve areas of patches in north.
- x Conserve 'unspoilt' qualities:
 - o Discourage/control use of motorbikes
 - o Resist large-scale development, including tree planting, especially on skylines.
 - o Sensitive roadside improvements along ridge

Sirhowy sides:

- x Conserve and enhance variety of habitats:
 - o Management and natural regeneration of native woodlands
 - o Low level of grazing, including restriction of grazing in wooded areas;
 - o Control spread of bracken;
 - o No drainage 'improvements' in acid grassland habitats.
 - o Managing priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets
- x Safeguard historic resource:
 - o Retain field patterns and stone walls;
 - o Conserve inclines, quarries and other relicts of extractive industry.
- x Conserve open qualities:
 - o Retain as undeveloped gap between heads of valleys and mid valleys settlements;
 - o Enhance roadsides.

Cwm Tysswg:

- x Continued use as farmland.

MYNYDD BEDWELLY, RHYMNEY HILL & SIRHOWY VALLEY LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	688	All open ridge (and other similar ridges to west and east	High

TREFIL AND GARNLYDAN SURROUNDS STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This area is the northernmost part of Blaenau Gwent, comprising the lower slopes of the Brecon Beacons to the margins of industrial estates, housing and A465 road. Its western and northern boundaries are the county boundaries with Caerphilly and Powys/BBNP. The area continues eastward to where the National Park extends into Blaenau Gwent. To the south, the boundary follows the urban boundary.

Three main landscape types are represented here. The majority of the area to the west and north is open upland commonland, including areas showing many typical limestone features such as sink holes. Around the shallow valley of the upper Sirhowy there are patterns of fields. To the east, around Garnlydan, the large features of forestry and reservoirs dominate in a more varied landscape which includes the small valley of Cwm Carno, and areas of open upland.

TREFIL AND GARNLYDAN SURROUNDS

STRATEGIC CRITERIA

NEED:

LANDMAP	Open upland = most important landscape values , plus some parts second & third most important. Valley = low values East = parts third most important value, parts low value
Prominence	Much of the area is seen from A465 & its proposed re-routing, the valley and east parts in close-up, and the open upland as more distant landscape
Spectacle	Nine Arches viaduct in the valley is a landmark along A465 Spectacular views across all of Heads of the Valleys from Llangynidr Road in east part
'unspoilt'	Open upland is most remote part of county
Vulnerability	A465 re-routing through valley and east parts, plus expansion of housing and industry here.
Rarity	Limestone character of northern open upland
Setting	All the open upland and east parts are setting for BBNP

COHERENCE:

The area forms a continuous belt of Brecon Beacons fringes and hinterland of Heads of the Valleys development.

CONSENSUS:

Most of area is part of existing SLA. Fields nearest to A465 have been added to include the prominent and vulnerable land that will be affected by the re-routing of the A465. Exact boundaries to be defined by local authority in relation to other designations, urban boundary and development sites, including re-routing of A465.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

Throughout:

- x Margins of Brecon Beacon National Park, forming important buffer zone with Heads of Valleys.
- x Highly visible, both close-up and distance, from A465 and therefore important for overall perception of region by travellers.
- x Fringes of coalfield industrial activity with well-preserved (un-reclaimed or re-developed) industrial remains.

Open upland:

- x Essentially part of the Brecon Beacons landscape
- x Fine contrasting panoramic views, north to Pen-y-Fan, south across Heads of Valleys
- x Remote, large-scale, bleak and generally tranquil
- x Marshy grassland, with unimproved acid grassland, dry acid heath, plus calcareous grassland in the disused quarry, are all LBAP habitats
- x Some prehistoric cairns and stone circle
- x Industrial archaeological interest in early quarries and tramway
- x Millstone Grit and Limestone landscapes are potential RIGS
- x Increasingly popular for leisure and recreational access into BBNP.

Valley:

- x Margins and links to Brecon Beacons, both visually and for access
- x Pattern of small irregular fields typical of gradual encroachment onto open land
- x Nant-y-Bwlch or 'Nine Arches' viaduct and Sihowy below form an attractive landmark on A465
- x Several areas of unimproved marshy grassland are cSINCs

- x Disused tramways and railway, including Nine Aches fine example of viaduct of historic interest
- x Use of boulders for wall building – not found elsewhere in county

Eastern part:

- x Garnlydan reservoir and surrounds is cSINC, and areas to north (in BBNP) are SAC
- x Fine wide views of Heads of Valleys and south from Llangynidr road
- x Upland heathland and grassland BAP habitats

KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

Open upland:

- x Conserve and enhance open moorland and other habitats:
 - o maintain low level of sheep grazing;
 - o heathland management for variety of habitats;
 - o manage calcareous grassland habitat of disused quarry;
 - o maintain water table;
 - o Manage priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets
- x Safeguard archaeological resource:
 - o preserve open nature of historic landscape;
 - o conserve the archaeological resource of prehistoric monuments and industrial tramways and quarry features;
- x Conserve 'unspoilt' qualities:
 - o Discourage/control use of motorbikes within quarry areas;
 - o Control fly-tipping, especially alongside road beyond Trefil;
 - o Rebuild defining edge stone walls on valley sides.
- x Retain key sections of quarry exposures and other features relating to RIGS designations
- x Manage expansion of quarry and use of former quarry to conserve and enhance habitats, provide new landscape uses and features, control abuse.

Valley:

- x Strategy to conserve valley as access to open countryside, biodiversity interest, tramways and railways, especially in relation to re-routing of A465
- x Conserve wet grassland habitats – no land drainage, in line with LBAP targets

Eastern part:

- x Maintain present grazing to conserve habitats
- x Integrate forestry with more broadleaves and improved edges
- x Manage Garnlydan reservoir for habitats and recreation
- x Sensitive integration of re-routed A465

BEAUFORT COMMON STATEMENT OF VALUE

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This is the belt of heads of the valleys land bounded by the A465 in the north and the urban boundaries of Beaufort and Brynmawr in the south.

It consists of one landscape type, an area of rounded hills, lower than those to both north and south, mainly rough pasture land, with open access to recent woodland in the west, with areas of both reclaimed and un-reclaimed old tips, including areas of ‘patches’ of historic value.

BEAUFORT COMMON STRATEGIC CRITERIA NEED:

LANDMAP	All = lower values
Prominence	Northern parts are prominent from A465
Vulnerability	Much of area vulnerable to continuing decline
Rarity	Most extensive area of rural heads of the valleys land in Blaenau Gwent
Setting	Edge of BBNP along north-east boundary, in Clydach Dingle

COHERENCE:

This is one simple landscape unit, contiguous with eastern part of Trefil and Garnlydan surrounds SLA across A465 to north.

CONSENSUS:

Part of eastern half is an existing SLA.

All this area is proposed as SLA because of it being representative of heads of the valleys but generally in need of positive conservation (rather than development or continuing decline).

Exact boundaries to be defined by local authority in relation to urban boundaries and other designations, including Green Wedge, and development site, and management of Beaufort Hill Woodlands.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

- x Typical area of undeveloped heads of the valleys land between main settlements, with mix of run-down marginal farmland and woodland and recreation on reclaimed/reprofiled land.
- x Northern half of area is prominent from A465

- x South eastern part is backdrop to Brynmawr
- x Panoramic views from high points, across heads of the valleys, down Clydach Gorge and to Brecon Beacons.
- x Two mosaic habitat cSINCs cover more than half the area, with Beaufort Hill Ponds and Woodlands also a cLNR
- x Lowland meadow and upland heathland BAP habitats are present.
- x Attractive secluded Beaufort Hill ponds.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- x Reduce decline in general condition:
 - o Restoration of stone walls and hedges
 - o Control of fly-tipping and other abuse
 - o Ensure viability of farming and small holding uses
- x Retain open landscape character
 - o No major development on skylines
- x Manage habitats to improve biodiversity:
 - o Continued management of Beaufort Hill Ponds and Woodlands for habitat development and low key recreation, in line with ecological plan guidelines;
 - o Management of priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets
 - o Protection of lapwing habitats;
 - o No drainage 'improvements' to grasslands

BEAUFORT COMMON LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
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