

**PROPOSALS FOR DESIGNATION OF
SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS
IN BLAENAU GWENT**



**FINAL REPORT
MARCH 2009**

for
BLAENAU GWENT
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

by

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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. Local planning authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. Such designations should not unduly restrict acceptable development.”

EXISTING SLAs AND THEIR ORIGINS

1.5 In BGCBC’s Unitary Development Plan, the existing policy number EN18 Special Landscape Areas states that: “Development proposals in areas designated as Special Landscape Areas will be required to demonstrate respect for their setting in terms of design, siting and landscaping. Development proposals detrimental to the features or qualities of Special Landscape Areas will not be permitted.”

1.6 The existing SLAs were identified using *LANDMAP* data. But since that time the *LANDMAP* data has been quality assured and refined, and in the light of the methodology now set out by CCW, these areas must now be revised.

1.7 These existing SLAs have served to assist in protecting against inappropriate development and conserving the landscape quality with particular regard to the visual qualities.

PROPOSED SLA POLICY

1.8 The proposed SLAs are put forward on the premise that in the developing LDP:

- SLA policy is considered to be necessary over and above other designations and policies relating to the landscape, and that:
- the purpose of the SLA policy will reflect:
 - The need to **protect against inappropriate development** where it is likely that there will be particular pressures for development or change;

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

2.0 BACKGROUND TO LANDMAP

LANDMAP INFORMATION SYSTEM

2.1 The adopted *LANDMAP* Information System of landscape assessment, developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) over the past few years, provides a consistent database across Wales for the classification and evaluation of landscapes.

2.2 *LANDMAP* assesses the landscape by a series of five component aspect layers of equal importance. Each aspect is assessed against a standard set of criteria with regards to character and value. It is the use of all five aspect datasets of information that promotes sustainable landscape decision-making as what may be less important to in one particular Evaluated Aspect may be of high importance in another. Giving all five layers equal consideration ensures no aspect of the landscape is overlooked. The aspect layers are:

- Geological landscapes (GL)
- Landscape habitats (LH)
- Visual and sensory landscapes (VS)
- Historic landscapes (HL)
- Cultural landscapes (CL)

2.3 Under each aspect the county is divided into discrete geographical units (aspect areas) which are classified, described and evaluated. All this information is stored on GIS and Collector file electronic databases and can be sorted and manipulated to provide a variety of forms of information.

THE FIVE ASPECTS

2.4 In more detail, the five aspects consist of:

The **Geological Landscape** considers the physical, primarily geological, influences that have shaped the contemporary landscape. This Aspect identifies those intrinsic landscape qualities, which are linked to the control or influence exerted by bedrock, surface processes, landforms and hydrology. Emphasis is placed on those elements of geology, which have had the strongest influence in landscape generation through erosion (e.g. glacial cirques) or deposition (e.g. river floodplains), or a combination of such processes.

Examples of specific questions asked in the Collector survey record include: characteristic components (features), geological and topographical character, current processes, educational value, rarity (rock types/fossils), mineral extraction and designations.

Landscape Habitats focuses on recording habitat and land cover information at a landscape scale. The recording of habitat features, characteristics and their spatial relationships within the context of the wider landscape offers opportunities for macro-scale management planning in order to conserve biodiversity. More localised information can be accessed through other more detailed data sets, such as the Phase 1 Habitat Survey and species-specific records. Aspect Areas defined may encompass whole valleys, dominant habitats or a mosaic of habitats within an agricultural environment.

Specific questions asked in the Collector survey record include identifying the key five Phase 1 habitats present within the aspect area, habitat features (veteran trees, caves, ponds), protected sites and species, threat species, significance, fragmentation.

The **Visual and Sensory** aspect is a process of mapping landscape characteristics and qualities as perceived through our senses, primarily visually. It considers the physical attributes of landform and land cover, their visible patterns of distribution and their interrelationship. The senses of hearing and smell are also considered as part of the perceived characteristics of the landscape.

Landscape elements and features, the aesthetic presence of water and seasonality are examples of specific questions asked in the Collector survey, also, important qualities,

boundary type, scale, enclosure, diversity, colour, sense of place, night time light, materials, views, smell, features to conserve/enhance.

The **Historic Landscape** Aspect identifies those landscape qualities that depend on key historic land uses, patterns and features. It identifies only those classes of historic land uses, patterns and features that are structurally prominent and contribute to the overall historic character of the present landscape. As *LANDMAP* requires a wider consideration of the landscape's historic dimension, commonplace historic features are ranked alongside 'traditionally' pre-eminent sites and monuments.

Examples of specific questions asked in the Collector survey record include: historic pattern and elements, designations, traditional boundary types, vernacular building style, features of archaeological interest in a landscape context, e.g. standing stones in a prehistoric environment.

The **Cultural Landscape** Aspect is taken to include any kind of human activity that can be related to landscape. The Cultural Aspect, therefore, describes the links between landscape and people, from the fundamental way in which cultural, or human activity, shapes the landscape, to the way in which culture shapes the way we respond to landscape. The focus is on mapping the landscape where it has been, or is being, visibly and recognisably fashioned today by a particular cultural activity or process, or where it has been directly represented, depicted or described in art, literature or folklore. This may be described as the contemporary 'cultural essence'.

Examples of specific questions asked in the Collector survey record include: cultural context, character, influences, associations, artistic work, famous people/institutions, folklore, events, traditions, scientific discoveries, significant place names.

EVALUATION

2.5 All *LANDMAP* aspect areas, across the five aspects, have a single overall evaluation score ranging from a local to an international scale of importance, the definitions of which are summarised below:

Outstanding = International or national importance

High = Regional or county importance

Moderate = Local importance

Low = Little or no importance

The overall evaluation scores for each *LANDMAP* layer are determined by the evaluation criteria for that layer. The evaluation criteria for each Evaluated Aspect are summarised in the table below:

Geological Landscape (GL)	Landscape Habitats (LH)	Visual & Sensory (VS)	Historic Landscape (HL)	Cultural Landscape (CL)
Research Value Educational value Historical Value Rarity/uniqueness Classic Example	Priority habitats Significance Opportunity Decline rates Threat Fragmentation Importance for key species	Scenic quality Integrity Character Rarity	Integrity Survival Condition Rarity Potential	Recognition/ transparency Period Rarity Documentation Group value Survival Vulnerability Diversity Potential

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:

- The methodology has been refined by CCW guidance, and therefore the criteria for SLA designation have changed;
- Planning policy has changed;
- 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.
- 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.

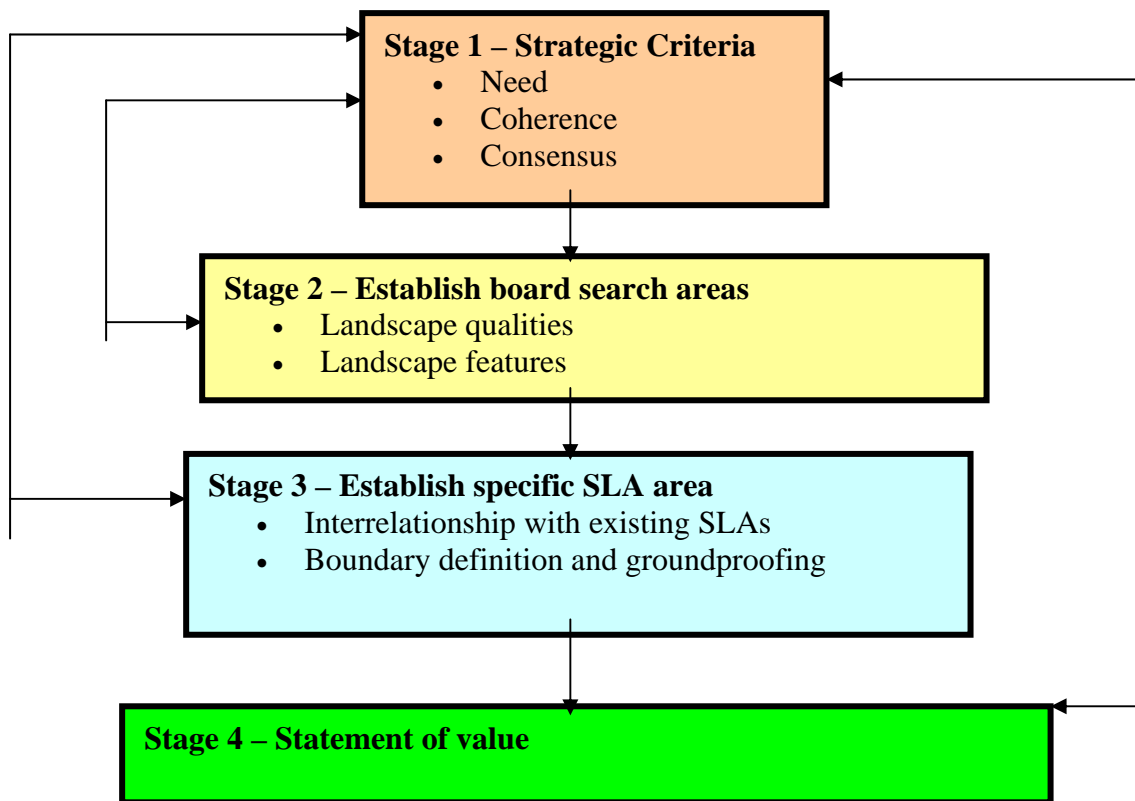
DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY

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 for defining the proposed SLAs:

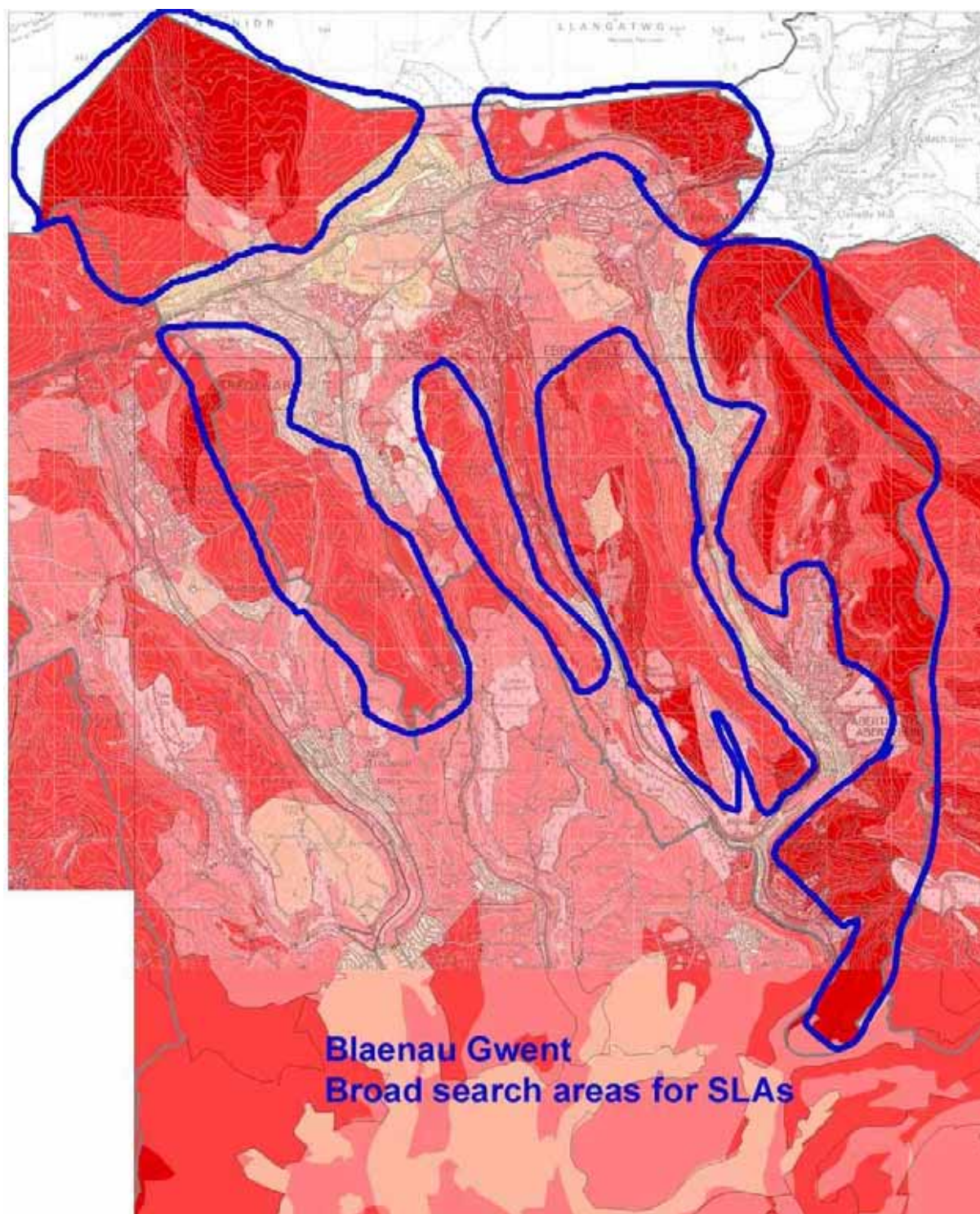
3.5 The use of *LANDMAP* information is integral to this process at all stages.

- At Stage 1 it is used to define the need for SLAs by reference to the evaluations and recommendations of each of the five aspects that make up the *LANDMAP* Information System (visual & sensory, historic landscapes, landscape habitats, geological landscapes and cultural landscapes).
- At Stage 2 the GIS-mapped evaluations provide the basis for establishing broad search areas. By overlaying of overall evaluations of all the aspect areas, it is intended that the resulting maps indicate where broad search areas occur.
- At Stage 3 a detailed interrogation of the *LANDMAP* information is used to help refine the areas for proposed SLAs.
- The Statement of Value, at Stage 4, uses information gleaned from all the aspects of the *LANDMAP* Information System.

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 INFORMATION GUIDANCE NOTE 1 –
LANDMAP AND SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS (Feb 2008)

3.7 This Guidance Note brings together the information in the studies referred to above and provides guidance that is flexible and adaptable for the differing requirements of individual local authorities. It is important to note that the evaluations for each aspect in *LANDMAP* are not the only basis cited for the need for SLA designation. How this guidance relates specifically to Blaenau Gwent is discussed in the following paragraphs.

USE OF *LANDMAP* INFORMATION FOR SLA DESIGNATION IN BLAENAU GWENT

3.8 Both the uses of overall evaluations and of all 35 evaluations have been tested against the *LANDMAP* information for BGCBC. There are several differences between the

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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, which show a continuity of land management. Remnants of all periods of history, from Neolithic to recent, tend to be preserved on these open landscapes where they have not been disturbed by industrial processes.</p>
<p>‘Unspoilt’ areas: Remoteness & tranquillity</p>	<p>Although nowhere is truly remote within BGCBC, this is a relative term that can be applied to those areas that are away from the busy-ness of the main valleys and heads of the valleys area, even if not separated from them by any great distance. These contrasts between remoteness and busy-ness, in topography and in human activity, are made more poignant by their close proximity and add much to the special sense of place throughout the South Wales valleys. The high plateau and ridges provide extensive remote areas, where extensive views are of other empty uplands. The northern edges of the county, part of the Brecon Beacons</p>
	<p>Likewise there are ‘tucked away’ valleys, which are secluded from the activities of the main valleys.</p>
<p>Vulnerability & sensitivity to change</p>	<p>There is an added need to safeguard many aspects of the landscape where there are particular pressures for development. SLA designation of these areas is not in order to prevent development, but to ensure that the siting and design of developments do not have an unnecessarily adverse effect on the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>This occurs around areas of urban growth, especially related to the A465 corridor where buffer zones are proposed.</p> <p>The extensive areas of urban fringe along the lower sides of the valleys, are prominent, often neglected and vulnerable to insensitive change.</p>
<p>Locally rare landscape</p>	<p>Those parts of BGCBC that are locally rare include the limestone uplands, the early ‘patches’ workings, and medieval field patterns.</p>
<p>Setting for statutory designated landscapes</p>	<p>Although boundaries are drawn around various special landscapes, in reality these places do not exist in isolation but are to a greater or lesser degree dependant on the surrounding landscape to enhance their special qualities. It is therefore important to safeguard these surrounding landscapes.</p> <p>The Brecon Beacons National Park lies immediately to the north of the county, with small parts within the north eastern fringes of the county. The adjacent landscape forms a transition and buffer between the wilder land of the National Park and the more settled areas of the heads of the valleys.</p>

3.12 The following larger areas are considered to have no need for SLA designation, or to have a reduced likelihood of need, and therefore have been excluded from any broad search area unless there are other overriding factors.

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.
Other protective policies	There are areas that are best served by other LDP policies that provide strong protective measures which may be more appropriate than SLA designation. For instance, Green Wedge policy where the need to ensure that there is no coalescence of settlements is the only reason for retaining or protecting open space. These have yet to be re-defined in Blaenau Gwent.
Current and recent extraction and industry	SLA designation is inappropriate where there are large areas such as working quarries, and landfill sites, where restoration and other developments are required. These occur at Trefil Quarry and at Silent Valley landfill site.
Major development sites	Where there are areas zoned as major development sites in the forthcoming LDP it is more appropriate to apply specific design guidance than SLA designation. This applies particularly to the Dualling of the A465 corridor. Other potential development sites (other than Ebbw Vale steelworks) are relatively small in scale

COHERENCE

3.13 The proposed SLAs need to be of sufficient size for the effective safeguarding, managing and promotion of the special attributes of the area concerned.

3.14 In BGCBC these proposed SLAs may be made up of differing landscape types, such as open hilltops and their surrounding slopes with fields and valleys. These, however, relate to each other to form a single landscape unit. Where policy and management issues are applicable to only part of an SLA, this is made clear in the Statement of Value. In some cases the proposed SLAs adjoin each other but are considered as separate SLAs due to key difference in need and therefore policy and management proposals.

CONSENSUS

3.15 *LANDMAP* has embedded in its methodology a considerable degree of consensus in its evaluations and recommendations. Further and more detailed agreement to the proposed SLAs will, however, relate to the LDP consultation process in due course. At this current stage consensus is judged by:

- Existing SLA designation – all these have been considered to see if there is sufficient need for continuing designation as SLA
- Areas that include sites with other conservation designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), candidate SINCS, cLNRs and Registered Historic Landscapes. The presence of these designations increases the need for the more holistic SLA designation to safeguard the wider landscape.
- Areas of forestry have been included in the proposed SLAs because in all cases they are a part of the overall landscape type, usually valley sides. As it is expected that there will be no specific policy in the LDP relating to woodlands, there is a need to include forestry in the SLAs.
- Continuity with existing or proposed SLAs in adjoining counties.

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.

4.0 PROPOSED SLAS IN BLAENAU GWENT

PROCESS

4.1 The process of defining the set of proposed SLAs for BGCBC has taken place over an extended period. This has allowed for a carefully considered approach to be adopted. This takes account of the emerging methodologies and use of *LANDMAP* as shown in the Development of Criteria report and the Landscape Value maps. It has allowed for testing against local need criteria and against the application of the methodologies in adjoining local authority areas. While the basis of the iterative methodological process outlined in the chart has been adopted for BGCBC, the emphasis has been given to local need criteria.

4.2 The following activities have informed the definition of the proposed SLAs:

- Review of existing SLAs;
- Client team meetings and informal discussions at all stages;
- Site visits to gather overall impressions, to check specific issues and refine judgements;
- Mapping of information in a series of overlays showing existing SLAs, areas to be excluded, *LANDMAP* higher evaluated areas, Landscape Value mapping;
- Mapping of urban boundaries, potential development sites, cSINCs, cLNR and and statutory designations, plus local need criteria;
- Careful scrutiny of all *LANDMAP* and other base information;
- Production of report, maps and Statements of Value for all proposed SLAs.

4.3 This process has shown synergies and deviations that have been put to the test. The outcome is that eight proposed SLAs are put forward in this study, as detailed in the following Statements of Value.

STATEMENTS OF VALUE

4.4 The Statements of Value have been prepared using the format agreed in the CCW Guidance Note 1. It is assumed that boundaries shown on the accompanying maps may require detailed refinement by the local authority as the LDP policy framework develops.

4.5 In general, it has been considered prudent to include rather than omit areas within the proposed SLAs. For instance, some areas that come into existing Green Wedges have been included in the proposed SLAs, as have some development sites. These may be omitted from the SLAs if necessary at a later stage of LDP procedure.

4.6 For each Statement of Value there is:

- Description of the **location, boundaries and general description** of landscape types, accompanied by a map showing boundaries and other designations.
- The **need** for SLA designation is summarised in a table relating to the overall *LANDMAP* values, plus local criteria.
- Specific **coherence** and **consensus** issues area noted.
- The lists of primary landscape qualities and **features**, and **of key policy and management issues** are mainly extracted from the *LANDMAP* databases. These lists are arranged in relation to the sub-divisions (landscape types) of the SLA.
- The table of ***LANDMAP* data** provides references to all the *LANDMAP* aspect areas and their overall evaluations (see para. 2.5 for an explanation of the values).

LIST OF PROPOSED SLAs

4.7 The following proposed SLAs are described in the Statements of Value

- St Illtyd Plateau & Ebbw Eastern Sides;
- Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James;
- Cwm Tyleri & Cwm Celyn.
- Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn & Cefn yr Arail;
- Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney Hill & Sirhowy Sides;
- Cefn Manmoel:
- Trefil & Garnlydan Surrounds;
- 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, remainder – second most important value Valley sides: mainly second most important value
Prominence	Valley sides prominent from routes and settlements of Ebbw valley
‘unspoilt’	Plateau untouched by industrialisation or urban expansion
Vulnerability	Plateau – decay of field boundaries, sensitive to any development
Rarity	Plateau – large area of relatively intact early fieldscape

COHERENCE:

This area forms one landscape block, the two contrasting landscape types being intimately integrated.

CONSENSUS:

All the area is part of an existing SLA except some of the coniferous forestry and urban fringe.

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

The proposed SLA includes the Cefn Bach cSINC site at Swffryd that is currently within the urban boundary but has been excluded as a development site.

All the adjacent land in Torfaen is currently designated SLA (under review).

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

St. Illtyd plateau:

- Well-preserved pattern of pre-industrial farmland of small rectangular fields with distinctive stone walls and overgrown beech and holly hedges, centred on, and integral with, early settlement of St. Illtyd, of considerable historic and cultural significance.
- Panoramic views especially west and south, to other plateau landscapes.
- Remote from busy valleys, with ‘other world’ atmosphere due to obvious pre-industrial character.
- Two areas of acid and neutral grassland are cSINCs, also LBAP priority habitats
- Old hedges are of considerable biodiversity value as well as historic and visual value.

Ebbw Valley sides:

- Valley sides form attractive backdrop to main valley settlements and routes, due to convoluted topography and a variety of semi-natural vegetation.
- Mosaic of native woodland with bracken, dry heath and conifer plantations, plus areas of unimproved acid grassland.
- Five areas of upland oak woodland with beech are cSINCs, LBAP priority habitats
- The minor side valleys provide recreational links to uplands.

KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

St. Illtyd plateau:

- Safeguard rich archaeological, historic and cultural heritage:
 - Maintain integrity of fieldscape by restoration and maintenance of field boundaries (beech hedges & stone walls) and farm structures
 - Environmental enhancements at St Illtyd
- Conserve remoteness and tranquillity:
 - No development that significantly enlarges St. Illtyd or compromises its remoteness.
 - Control of fly tipping, and other neglect
- Conserve LBAP priority habitats, including grassland and hedgerows:

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

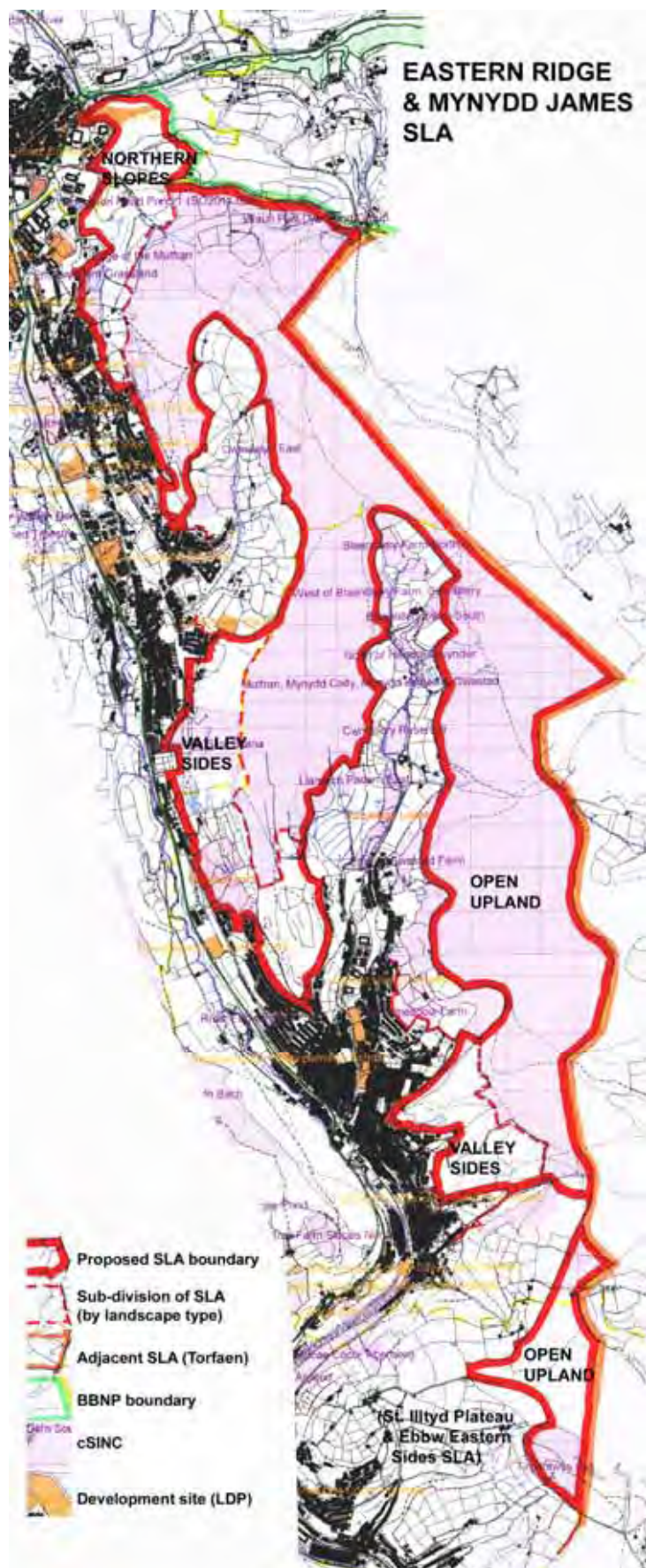
Ebbw Valley sides:

- Enhance fringes to settlements:
 - Control fly-tipping, etc.
 - Any developments to be sensitive to setting/landscape
 - Improvements to footpaths/recreational access to wider countryside
- Conserve habitats and natural qualities:
 - Allow natural woodland regeneration on valley sides
 - Control of bracken
 - Management of cSINC woodlands

ST. ILLTYD PLATEAU & EBBW EASTERN SIDES LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	226	Enclosed farmland of plateau	High
	985	Valley sides	High
LH	063	Plateau farmland	u/a
	055	Swffryd Wood (valley sides)	High
	058	Cwm Cnyw (valley sides)	u/a
	061	Cwm Cyffin (valley sides)	u/a
	064	Main valley sides	u/a
HL	044	'St. Illtyd Fieldscape' All of plateau and valley sides	O/S
GL	022	Plateau	Mod
	023	South part of eastern ridge	Mod
CL	228	'Special Landscape Areas' All part of large area which includes all of eastern ridge	High

EASTERN RIDGE & MYNYDD JAMES STATEMENT OF VALUE



LOCATION, BOUNDARIES & GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The extensive Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James SLA covers all of the open land of the eastern ridge, and its slopes to the Ebbw Fach valley, excluding Cwm Tyleri and Cwm Celyn (which form a separate SLA). Lying within the upper valleys and heads of the valleys sections of the coalfield, it extends from above the south part of Abertillery to the A465 road and National Park boundary in the north.

Its western boundary coincides with the urban boundary along the main valleys sides and the enclosed land of the side valleys. Apart from the National Park north of the Blaenavon Road, all the eastern edge is formed by the county boundary with Torfaen, running along the top of the ridge.

There are three main landscape types within this area. The large majority is **open upland** common land, in places extending down the valley sides as well as over the ridges, and rising to the highest point in Blaenau Gwent on Coity Mountain. The remainder of the Ebbw Fach **valley sides** are a mosaic of woodland and fields as well as areas of tips and past workings. The **northern slopes**, overlooking the Heads of the Valleys and Brynmawr, are a mix of open hillsides and fields, pock-marked with past tipping and extraction.

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. Remainder – moderate value or less.
Prominence	Open upland skyline, especially Coity Mountain due to its height. Northern slopes are prominent from A465 at ‘gateway’ to typical ‘Valleys’ landscape
‘unspoilt’	Higher parts of open upland , away from evidence of industrialisation
Vulnerability	Urban edge of valley sides vulnerable to insensitive piecemeal expansion. Northern slopes due to proximity to A465 junction and related development site.
Rarity	Historic ‘patches’ small-scale opencast alongside Blaenavon Road on the northern slopes .
Setting	Open upland is part of setting of Blaenavon World Heritage Site (WHS) Northern slopes and ridge are setting of adjacent BBNP

COHERENCE:

Forms one landscape block, with the three landscape types merging together. Areas of forestry are included which, although not ‘special’ in themselves, form part of wider landscape.

CONSENSUS:

All the area is part of an existing SLA, except north of Blaenavon Road
Exact boundaries to be defined by local authority in relation to other designations, urban boundary and development sites.
From Blaenavon Road southward, all adjacent land in Torfaen is currently designated SLA (under review).

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

Open upland

- Unimproved acid grassland, with areas of bog, bare peat, flush, dry heath. All part of BAP habitat – upland heath in good condition. All the open land is cSINC.
- Wealth of archaeological remains representing many phases of human history from prehistoric to recent, including evidence of mining and industry which may relate to activities within Blaenavon Registered Historic Landscape. Eastern parts of the area are within the Blaenavon Registered Historic Landscape (but not the WHS).
- Remnants of patches (early opencast coal extraction) on either side of Blaenavon Road.
- Remote and bleak in contrast to adjacent valley, with panoramic and distant views, and forming distinctive and remote skylines.
- Spectacular but secluded gorge in southernmost forestry.

Valley sides

- Form varied backdrops for valley settlements and routes throughout.
- Bourneville Slip is cSINC for mosaic of habitats, including neutral and acidic grasslands, mire, open water and wet heathland. Also contains dwarf shrub heath, an LBAP habitat.
- Part of important gap between Heads of the Valleys and mid valley settlements.

Northern slopes

- Prominent backdrop and skylines from Brynmawr and Heads of the Valleys road.
- Areas of patches and other early workings, of historic value

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

KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

Open upland:

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

Valley sides:

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

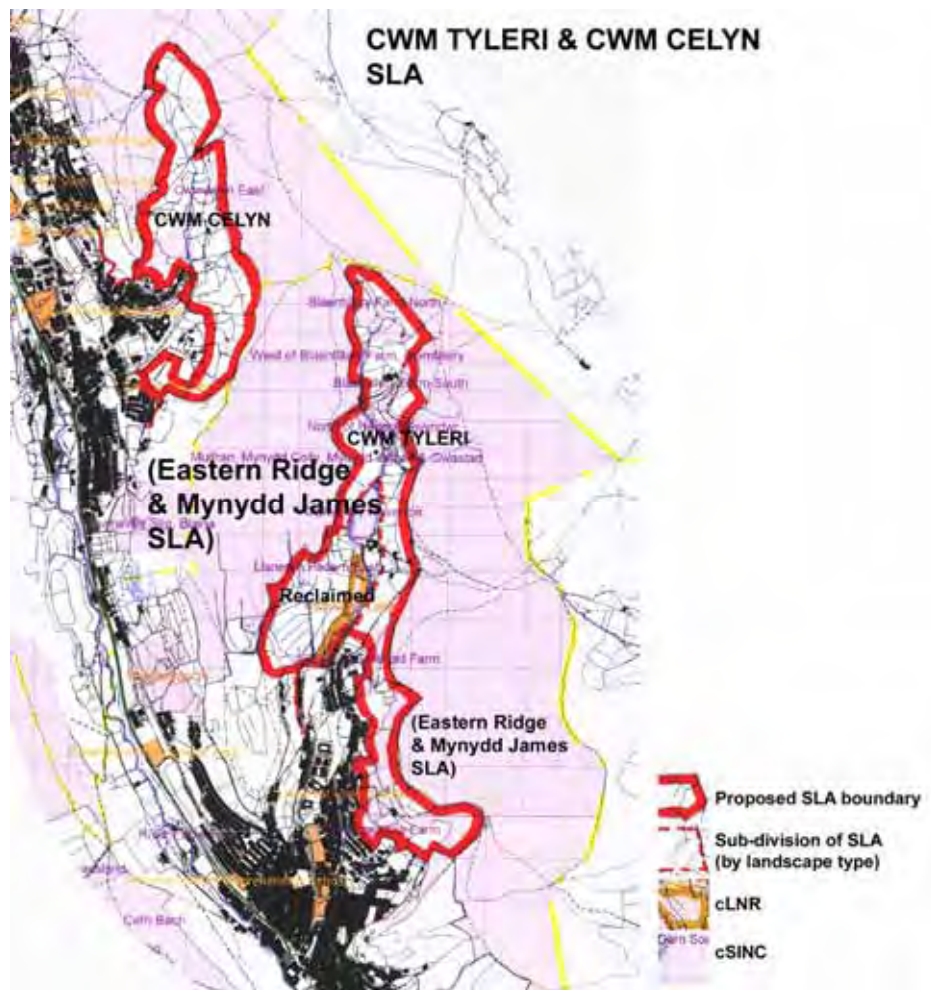
Northern slopes:

- Safeguard overall landscape of entrance to Heads of Valleys:
 - Reduce decline of field boundaries, land management etc.
 - Conservation of the patches historic landscape features.
 - Integration of new development around edges.
 - 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
GL	021	Tops of eastern ridge – ‘Cwm Tillery-Coity Mt’	Moderate
	019	Eastern slopes of Mynydd James and Mulfran	High
	015	North end of Ebbw Fach valley	Moderate
	016	Clydach valley	O/s
CL	228	All part of large area including all of eastern ridge – ‘Special Landscape Areas’	O/s

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.

CWM TYLERI & CWM CELYN STRATEGIC CRITERIA NEED:

LANDMAP	All second or third most important landscape value areas
'unspoilt'	Both valleys are mainly 'unspoilt' by industry and reclamation
Vulnerability	Both valleys vulnerable to highly visible extensions of settlement on valley sides

COHERENCE:

The strong topography gives coherence to both these small valleys.

CONSENSUS:

The upper half of Cwm Tyleri and all of Cwm Celyn are part of an existing SLA.

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

The proposed SLA includes the Greenmeadow Farm cSINC site at Cwmtillery that is currently within the urban boundary but has been excluded as a development site.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

- Strong rural character, with lack of industrial activity evident (except reclaimed tips in Cwm Tyleri).
- Five cSINCs areas of woodland and unimproved grassland - LBAP habitats – beech and yew woodlands, oak woods, wet woodland, purple moorgrass and rush pasture and dwarf shrub heath.
- Nineteenth century reservoir in Cwm Tyleri, now cSINC and cLNR, and attractive focus for recreation.
- Hidden, 'tucked away' quality.
- Small fields with stone walls in poor condition and scattered farmhouses

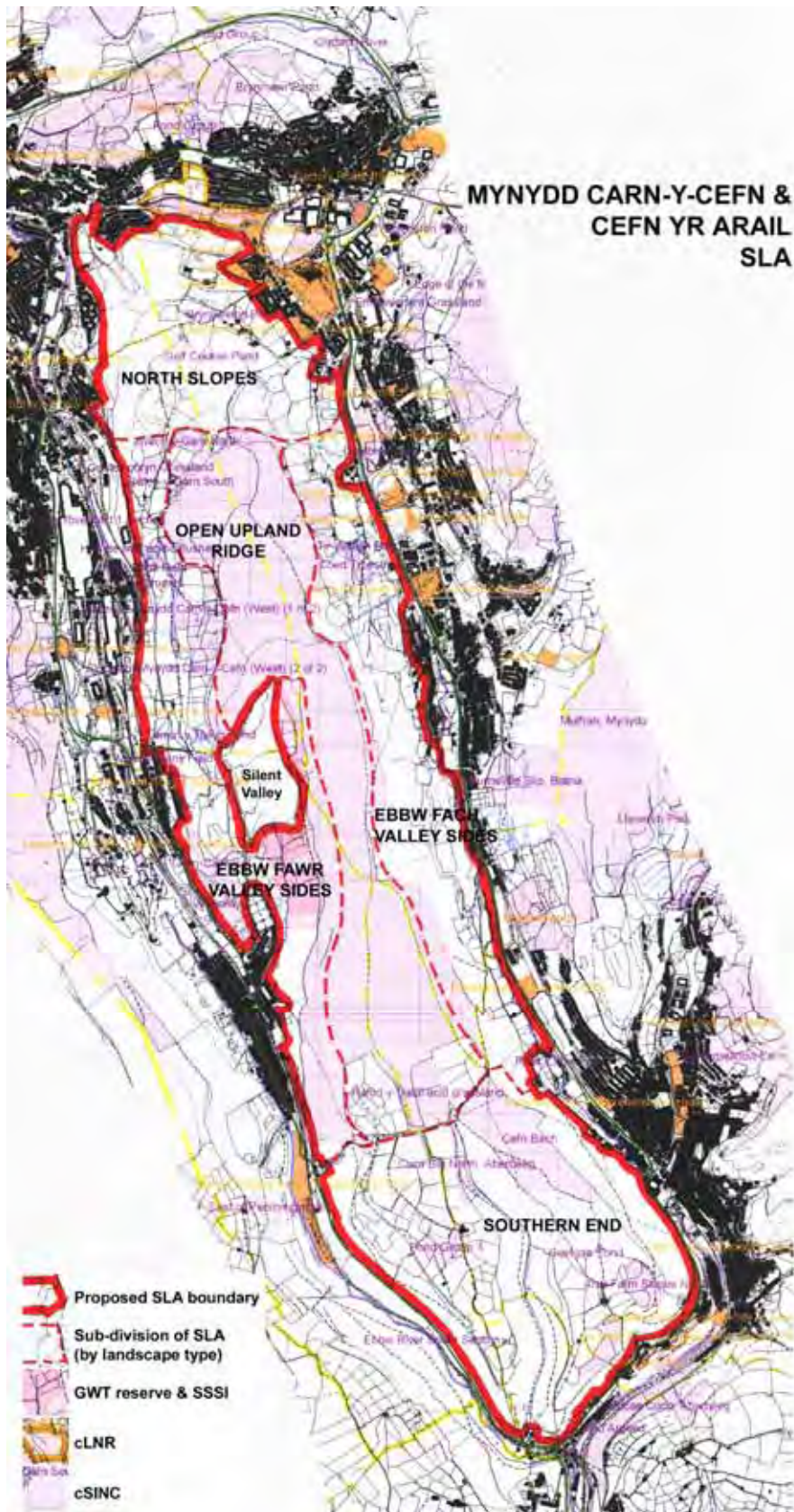
KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Rebuild defining edge stone walls
- Conserve openness, simplicity, rock feature
- Control of bracken
- Maintain and enhance priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets
- Manage cLNR, in line with ecological management plan guidelines

CWM TYLERI & CWM CELYN LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	808	Cwm Tillery	High
	246	Cwm Celyn and adjacent Ebbw Fach valley sides	Mod
LH	079	East side of Cwm Tillery	Mod
	070	West side of Cwm Tillery	Mod
	071	Wooded west side of Cwm Tillery	High
	067	Fields at end and lower east side of Cwm Tillery	High
	086	Valley bottom of Cwm Celyn	u/a
HL	034	'Cwm Tillery' Enclosed land	High
	024	'Cwm Celyn'	High
GL	020	West side of Cwm Tyleri	Mod
	021	Eastern slopes of Cwm Tillery and all of Cwm Celyn – also includes adjacent higher land	High
CL	228	'Special Landscape Area' All part of large area including all of eastern ridge	O/s

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 **Ebbw Fawr and Ebbw Fach valley sides**, with their mix of open land, reclaimed land and tips, quarries and rough ground. In the **north** the more rounded slopes overlooking the Heads of the Valleys are a mix of fields, un-reclaimed tips and recreational uses. On the **southernmost** lower parts of the ridge there are fields with dense forestry on the adjacent steep valley sides.

MYNYDD CARN-Y-CEFN & CEFN YR ARAIL STRATEGIC CRITERIA NEED:

LANDMAP	North slopes: low values Open upland: third most important landscape value Ebbw Fach sides: Moderate value Ebbw Fawr sides: second & third most important value Southern: varied
Prominence	Open upland forms prominent skyline from both valleys. Southern end and Cwm Big prominent from southern approach up Ebbw valley
'unspoilt'	Main length of open upland is away from evidence of industrialisation. Areas of old fields in southern end are undisturbed
Vulnerability	Expansion of landfill at Silent Valley on Ebbw Fawr side Control of landslips around West Side on Ebbw Fach side Re-working of tips at southern end
Rarity	Areas of 'patches' near Winchestown in north

COHERENCE:

All one long ridge, including both valley sides, forming single landscape unit.

CONSENSUS:

Most of the area, from West Monmouthshire Golf Course southwards, is an existing SLA, apart from forestry in the south. These areas of forestry in the south are included in this SLA whereas the existing SLA omits them. Together with the forestry on the other sides of the valleys, this forestry forms an attractive landcover, emphasising the enclosed character of the Ebbw valleys at this point.

This proposed SLA extends further north than the existing SLA to include the lower slopes of the ridge which are continuous with the high ridge and form a very visible backdrop to Brynmawr and other settlements.

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

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

North slopes:

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

Open upland ridge:

- Distinctive open skyline seen from valleys on either side
- Panoramic views across to other ridges
- 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:

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

Ebbw Fawr sides:

- Varied backdrop to valley settlements
- Beech and yew woods, including Cwm Merddog Woodlands SSSI and GWT Reserve at Silent Valley
- cSINCs with acid grassland - LBAP habitats.
- Good views into valley

Southern end:

- Distinctive forked ‘stop-end’ to ridge
- Well-preserved pattern of pre-industrial farmland of small rectangular fields with distinctive stone walls and overgrown beech hedges, similar to those around St. Illtyd across the valley.
- Steep densely forested sides gives very enclosed character to valley
- Some unimproved grassland habitats on tops, including four cSINC areas of acid grassland, LBAP habitats.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

North slopes:

- Conserve areas of patches and tips for historic value.
- Conserve open character of area

Open upland ridge:

- Conserve and enhance open moorland habitats:
 - maintain low level of grazing;
 - heathland management, including establishment of heather;
 - control of bracken encroachment.
- Safeguard archaeological resource:
 - preserve open nature of historic landscape;
 - conserve the archaeological resource;
- Conserve ‘unspoilt’ qualities:
 - Discourage/control use of motorbikes;
 - Resist large-scale development, including tree planting, especially on skylines.

Ebbw Fach sides:

- Conserve and enhance variety of habitats:
 - Manage/conserves grassland BAP habitats in line with LBAP targets;

- Conserve geological interest:
 - Sensitive stabilisation at West Side
 - Conserve exposures, etc.

Ebbw Fawr sides:

- Enhance built/rural interface;
 - Clean up/control tipping and other abuse around edges of settlements;
 - Conserve allotments, smallholdings, etc on edges of Ebbw Vale and Cwm
 - Conserve openness, simplicity, rock features;
 - Integration of Silent Valley landfill
- Conserve/enhance habitats:
 - Manage/conserv e grassland and woodland BAP habitats, in line with LBAP targets;
 - Management of Cwm Merddog SSSI.

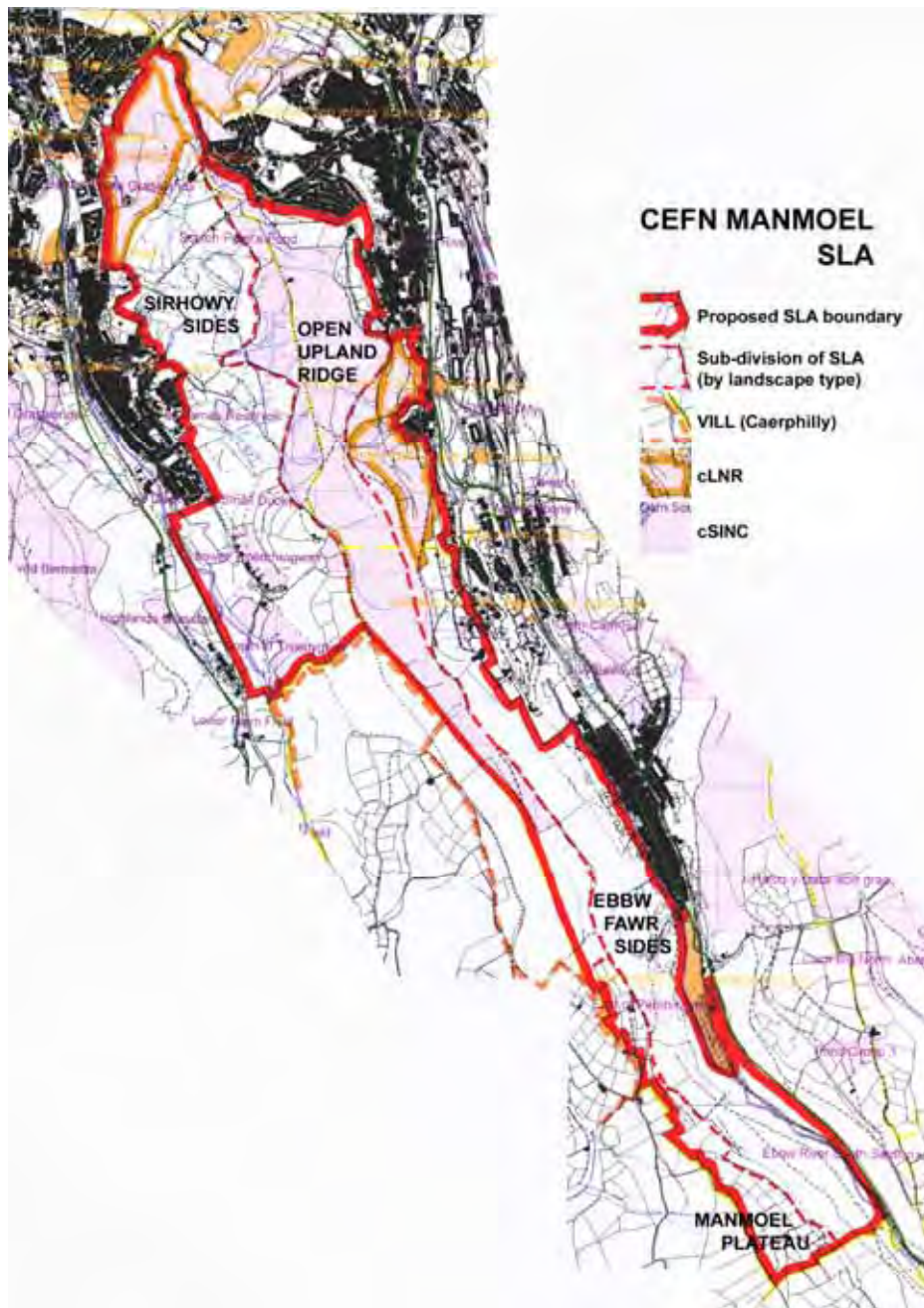
Southern end:

- Safeguard rich archaeological, historic and cultural heritage:
 - Maintain integrity of fieldscape by restoration and maintenance of field boundaries (beech hedges & stone walls) and farm structures
- Conserve and enhance habitats:
 - Manage/conserv e grassland habitats;
 - Reduce coniferous/increase broadleaf woodland in forestry areas.
- Conserve remoteness and tranquillity:
 - Discourage vehicular access;
 - 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 by the urban boundary of Tredegar and the upper fringes of Ebbw Vale, with Sirhowy Hill Woodlands and the open land to the north of Mountain Road included in the SLA. In the west the sides of the Sirhowy valley are included, down to the urban boundaries of Georgetown, Peacehaven, and including Troedrihw-gwair. The county boundary cuts along the top of Cefn Manmoel,

southward to Mynydd Pen-y-fan, forming the southern part of the western boundary of the SLA. The eastern boundary is drawn around the upper edges of Ebbw Vale, Garden City, Festival Park, and down to the valley floor at Cwm and southward, following the urban boundary in most places.

There are four main landscape types within this area. There is the **open upland** ridge, extending from Hilltop southward to above Cwm. The northwestern slopes overlook the **Sirhowy** Valley and are covered with a mix of planted woodland and open fields. The eastern part, being the steep Ebbw Fawr **valley sides**, have a varied profile and areas of tipping, quarrying, reclaimed land and open commonland, as well as dense forestry in the south. The southern part of the ridge, a long slither of which is in this SLA, is covered with a distinctive field pattern relating to the old settlement of **Manmoel**.

**CEFN MANMOEL
STRATEGIC CRITERIA
NEED:**

LANDMAP	Open upland: moderate landscape value, except north of road which is low. Sirhowy sides: Low value, except around Troedrhiw-gwair which is moderate. Ebbw sides: Moderate value, except tips and forestry in south which is low.
Prominence	Open upland is prominent skyline Northern part of Sirhowy sides is prominent backdrop to Tredegar.
'unspoilt'	Most of open upland , away from evidence of industrialisation. Pre-industrial field patterns of Manmoel plateau
Vulnerability	Manmoel plateau decay/destruction of beech hedges. Lower edges of Ebbw & Sirhowy sides vulnerable to insensitive development, especially on reclaimed land
Rarity	Manmoel field pattern part of large area of relatively intact early area relating to ancient settlement

COHERENCE:

All part of one ridge, including both valley sides, forming single landscape unit.

CONSENSUS:

All open ridge and sides, from Mountain Road south, including Manmoel fields, are an existing SLA.

Graig Farw forestry is included because, along with forestry on steep valleys sides opposite (in Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn & Cefn yr Arail SLA), it forms important part of gap between settlements and very much part of character of restricted, enclosed landscape.

Coed y Rhyd forestry included as important backdrop for Tredegar.

Most of Sirhowy Hill Woodlands included as important backdrop to Tredegar and for LNR status.

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

Adjacent land in Caerphilly, as extension of the ridge, is VILL, apart from reclaimed tips and southernmost fields which are degraded by insensitive developments and loss of field boundaries.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

Open upland ridge:

- Distinctive open skyline seen from valleys on either side
- Panoramic views across to other ridges and Brecon Beacons
- Extensive area of mosaic habitats, cSINC, mainly acid grassland, with purple moorgrass and upland heath BAP habitats.
- Possible pre-historic cairns.

Sirhowy sides:

- Varied backdrop to Tredegar
- Areas of acid grassland and wet woodland around Troedrhiw-gwair are cSINCs
- Good views into valley and across heads of the valleys
- Historic/cultural interest of reduced settlement of Troedrhiw-gwair
- Forestry with good access and fishing
- Sirhowy Hill Woodlands is cLNR and developing into attractive recreation area

Ebbw Fawr sides:

- Varied backdrop to valley settlements

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

Manmoel plateau:

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

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

Open upland ridge:

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

Sirhowy sides:

- Conserve and enhance variety of habitats:
 - Manage/conserv e grassland and woodland priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets;
 - Manage Sirhowy Hill Woodlands in line with LNR guidelines
 - Reduce coniferous/increase broadleaf woodland in Coed y Rhyd forestry area.
- Conserve historic and archaeological interest:
 - Conserve field and enclosure patterns, buildings, etc around Troedrhiw-gwair;
 - Conserve viability of small-scale farming.
- Enhance urban edges:
 - Reduce/control fly-tipping;
 - Manage/improve pedestrian access to open areas, including Sirhowy Hill Woodlands

Ebbw Fawr sides:

- Enhance built/rural interface:
 - Clean up/control tipping and other abuse around edges of settlements;
 - Conserve openness, simplicity , rock features;
 - Recreational access improvements;
 - Riverside improvements at Cwm
- Conserve/enhance habitats:
 - Manage/conserv e grassland and woodland priority habitats, in line with LBAP targets;
 - Reduce coniferous/increase broadleaf woodland in Graig Fawr forestry area.

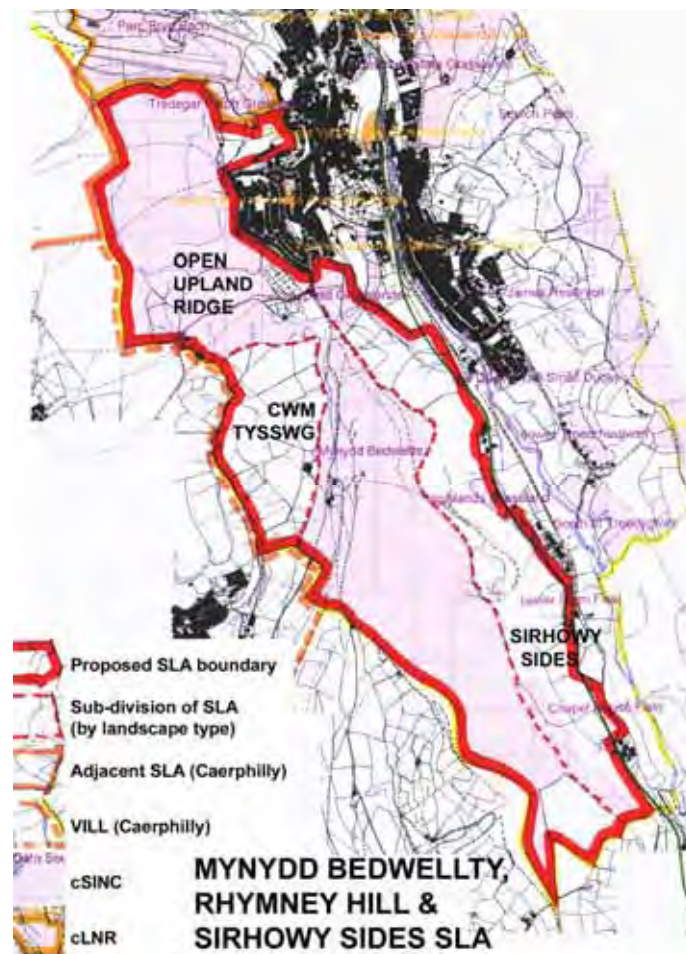
Manmoel plateau:

- Safeguard rich archaeological, historic and cultural heritage:
 - Maintain integrity of fieldscape by restoration and maintenance of field boundaries (beech hedges & stone walls) and farm structures
- Conserve remoteness and tranquillity:

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	
	713	Eastern slopes/Ebbw Fawr valley side	Moderate	
	861	North of Mountain Road	Low	
	334	Sirhowy valley sides	Moderate	
	404	Southern forested sides of Ebbw Fawr	High	
	119	Manmoel fields	High	
LH	014	Sirhowy sides, north of Mountain road, through to Waun-y-Pound	Moderate	
	015	Open tops above Ebbw Vale, both sides of Mountain road	High	
	016	Ebbw valley sides near Briery Hill	u/a	
	029	Main part of open ridge	High	
	027	Forestry on Sirhowy valley side	Moderate	
	026	Fields on Sirhowy valley sides	u/a	
	030	Ebbw sides around Garden City	High	
	031	Ebbw sides around Festival Park and Cwm	High	
	093	Reclaimed land on Ebbw valleys sides and top, near Cwm	Moderate	
	094	Ebbw valleys side near minor road to Manmoel	High	
	076	Forestry on southern Ebbw sides, and other forestry	Moderate	
	092	Manmoel fields	u/a	
	HL	019	Open land north of Mountain road	Moderate
		028	Forestry above Georgetown	Low
027		Sirhowy valley sides above Troedrhiwgair	Moderate	
029		Cefn Manmoel and Ebbw sides	Moderate	
030		Ebbw sides south of Festival Park	High	
019		Ebbw sides around Festival Park	Moderate	
037		Reclaimed land at Cwm	Moderate	
039		Forestry on Ebbw Vale side in south	Moderate	
040		Manmoel fields	O/s	
GL	010	North of Mountain Road – ‘Ebbw Vale’	Moderate	
	011	Cefn Manmoel & Ebbw Vale sides – ‘Cefn Manmoel’	Moderate	
	009	Sirhowy valley sides – ‘Coed-y-Rhyd’	Moderate	
CL	843	All part of large area including all of Cefn Manmoel and sides – ‘General Upland Areas’	o/s	

MYNYDD BEDWELTY, 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:

- Distinctive open skyline, including cairn and Cefn Golau cemetery, seen from valleys on either side
- Panoramic views across to other ridges to west, and north to Brecon Beacons, & into valley from Cefn Golau.
- Minor road along ridge, only example in Blaenau Gwent, probably old ridge-top route, affords good views.
- 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.
- Cefn Golau cholera cemetery – Scheduled Monument

Sirhowy sides:

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

Cwm Tysswg:

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

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

Open upland ridge:

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

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

Sirhowy sides:

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

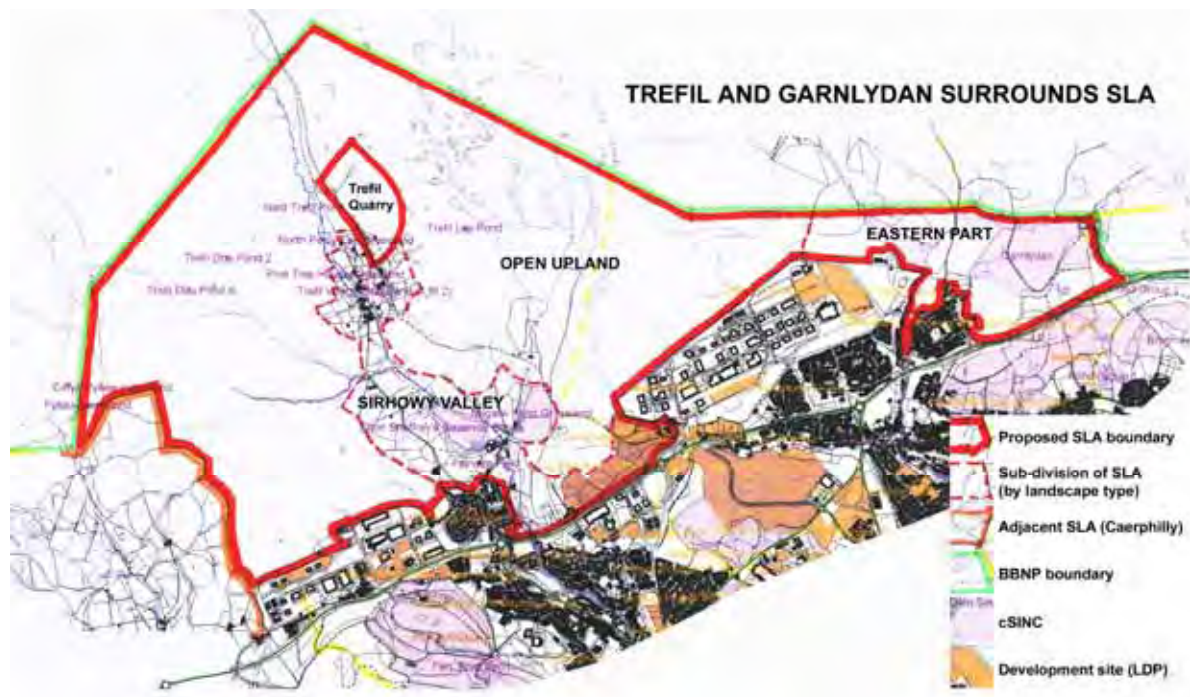
Cwm Tysswg:

- Continued use as farmland.

MYNYDD BEDWELTY, 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
	673	Cwm Tysswg	Moderate
	713	Sides and bottom Sirhowy valley	High
LH	006	Rhymney Hill	Moderate
	020	Mynydd Bedwellty	Moderate
	008	Cwm Tysswg & around Cefn Golau cemetery	High
	019	Sirhowy sides below cemetery	Moderate
	021	Sirhowy sides north of Bedwellty Pits	High
	022	Sirhowy sides below Darren Ddu	Moderate
	023	Sirhowy sides and all bottom	Moderate
	024	Lower eastern slopes of Sirhowy	High
HL	026	Rhymney Hill	Moderate
	036	Mynydd Bedwellty & sides down to main road	High
	027	Cwm Tysswg over to Sirhowy sides and all bottom	Moderate
GL	005	Rhymney Hill – ‘Nant-y-Bwch’	Moderate
	006	Mynydd Bedwellty & Cwm Tysswg – ‘Bedwellte’	Moderate
	007	Sirhowy valley side – ‘Cefn Golau’	Moderate
CL	843	General Upland Areas	High
	228	Mynydd Bedwellty – ‘Special Landscape Areas’	O/s

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:

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

Open upland:

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

Valley:

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

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

Eastern part:

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

KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

Open upland:

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

Valley:

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

Eastern part:

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

TREFIL & GARNLYDAN LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	399	All open land, including eastern part	High
	214	Enclosed land of valley and margins	Moderate
	352	Trefil Quarry	High
	307	Carno plantation	Mod
	431	'Rassau Open' - Cwm Carno	Low
LH	001	All open land in west	High
	004	All enclosed land of valley and margins	Moderate
	002	Trefil Quarry	Moderate
	009	Carno forest and valley	Low
	037	North eastern open land	O/s
	044	Garnlydan reservoir and parts to south	High
HL	001	'Trefil Ddu' All open land	Moderate
	3/005	'Trefil' All enclosed land of valley and margins	Low
	002	'Nant Trefil Quarry'	High
	5/004	'Carno Plantation'	Low
	007	'Mynydd Llangatwg' - East of Llangynidr road	Moderate
GL	002	Upper slopes	High
	001	Trefil Quarry and nearby	High
	003	Lower slopes – southern part	Moderate/low
	004	All central part of SLA	Moderate
	015	From Garnlydan reservoir eastward	Moderate
CL	971	'Limestone landscapes' Most of open land, including eastern part	O/s
	228	'Special Landscape Areas' Trefil, adjacent slopes and valley. All part of wider aspect area of upland	High

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:

- 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.
- Northern half of area is prominent from A465

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

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

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

BEAUFORT COMMON LANDMAP DATA:

Aspect	A.A.no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	643	Most of area ‘Beaufort Hill’	Low
LH	044	All area	High
HL	007	‘Mynydd Llangatwg. Northern third, near A465	Moderate
	008	‘Mynydd Carn-y’-cefn Fieldscape’ Southern two-thirds	Moderate
GL	015	Most of area – ‘Nant-y-Glo’	Moderate
	010	Beaufort Hill – ‘Ebbw Vale’	Moderate
CL	843	‘General Upland Areas’ All part of large aspect area	o/s