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1.0 CYFLWYNIAD

Cafodd asesiad LANDMAP o ardal Sir Frycheiniog o Bowys ei gomisiynu ym mis Rhagfyr 2002. Roedd yn cynnwys rhannau o Barc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog. Roedd y Grŵp Cleientiaid yn cynnwys Cyngor Sir Powys, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog a Chyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru.

Atodiad technegol i gronfa ddata ddigidol o ran yr agwedd weledol a synhwyrdd yw'r ddogfen yma. Mae ardaloedd yr agweddau gweledol a synhwyrdd wedi cael eu mapio ar y GIS [mewn MapInfo] gyda chyswllt rhwng y wybodaeth yn y gronfa ddata â phob maes agwedd. [LANDMAP Collector].

Mae'r atodiad technegol yn cynnwys:

- disgrifiad byr o'r maes astudio o safbwynt ei rinweddau gweledol a synhwyrdd;
- esboniad o'r fethodoleg a ddefnyddiwyd a'r ffyrdd y mae wedi'i haddasu i'r maes astudio penodol;
- materion allweddol a gododd wrth ddefnyddio'r broses LANDMAP yn Sir Frycheiniog.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A LANDMAP assessment of the Brecknockshire area of Powys, including areas in the Brecon Beacons National Park, was commissioned in December 2002. The Client Group comprised Powys County Council, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the Countryside Council for Wales.

This document forms the visual and sensory aspect technical annex to a database stored in digital format. The visual and sensory aspect areas have been mapped on the GIS [in MapInfo] and the information stored in the database is linked to each aspect area [LANDMAP Collector].

The technical annex provides a brief description of the study area in terms of its visual and sensory qualities, an explanation of the methodology employed and ways in which it has been adapted to the particular study area, and key issues which have arisen from the application of the LANDMAP process in Brecknockshire.

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The desk study for the project was carried out in January 2003 and the bulk of the site survey work in late January and February 2003. This work was based on the LANDMAP method extant at the time. The work was subsequently put on hold while the LANDMAP method was reviewed and finally updated in June 2003. The existing work was then reviewed and upgraded in line with the new method. A meeting and site visit was held with the QA assessor at the beginning of the project to ensure that the assessment would be in line with best practice. The method has been in line with the revised method and has included the following tasks:

- Desk study of relevant documents including Brecon Beacons Management Plan 2000-2005, Brecknockshire Local Plan 1997, BBNP Local Plan 1999.
- Review of adjacent study areas boundaries
- Candidate aspect areas mapping at 1:25,000
- Draft classification and definitions
- Site visit
- Site assessment sheets and photos
- Checking areas difficult to access with aerial photos
- Refinement of boundaries
- Discussion with QA supervisor and client
- Final classification and definitions
- LANDMAP Collector
- Digitising boundaries
- Final QA and client feedback

Due to the deadlines set for completion before the end of March all the site assessment work was carried out in the winter months. This means that the area was not seen or experienced at its best and was sometimes under snow cover. Other sources of photos of relevant areas have been used as well as drawing on the assessor's knowledge of the area.

Due to the inaccessibility of some areas which were either some way from public roads or without public access, photos had to be taken from some distance and aerial photography used to refine the assessment. Enough representative similar areas have been accessed for there to be confidence in the results.

The site assessment forms based on the old LANDMAP method have been supplemented by additional forms which have added the information required by the revised method eg aesthetic qualities. These have formed the basis of the data entered into LANDMAP Collector.

Issues that have arisen in carrying out the assessment are as follows:

Adjoining authorities:

The adjoining authorities LANDMAP assessments have been studied and the following issues noted:

Monmouthshire- the valley bottom of Usk has been defined in a slightly different way. The difference is not regarded as significant by either aspect specialist.

Blaenau Gwent- the assessment here is very fine grain and is not regarded as being in accordance with LANDMAP practice. It is understood this is to be revised significantly.

Carmarthenshire- no boundaries match. This is an issue that will need to be discussed with the aspect specialist.

Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr- - the boundaries match.

3.0 CLASSIFICATION, DEFINITIONS AND EVALUATION

3.1 Classification and Definitions

A classification has been developed for Brecknockshire. Figure illustrates the relevant categories for the county. Figure 2 defines what each of the categories has been taken to mean. Both are extracts from the current LANDMAP manual. These are commented on subsequently.

**Figure 1 Visual & Sensory Aspect hierarchical classification system
Extract relating to Brecknockshire**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Barren upland
		Upland moorland
		Upland grazing
		Wooded upland & plateaux
		Mosaic upland & plateaux
		Open upland valleys
	Upland valleys	Open/wooded mosaic upland valleys
		Wooded upland valleys
		Hills & scarp slopes
		Hill & scarp moorland
		Hill & scarp grazing
		Wooded hills & scarp slopes
Lowland	Lowland valleys	Wooded/pasture mosaic hills & scarp slopes
		Open lowland valleys
		Wooded/pasture mosaic lowland valleys
		Wooded lowland valleys
Development	Built land	Village
		Urban
	Developed unbuilt land	Amenity land
		Informal open space
		Excavation
		Reclaimed Land
Water	Inland water	Derelict / waste ground
		River
		Lake

Figure 2 Definitions of Classification for Brecknockshire

Upland	Areas predominantly rising to over 300m (excluding <i>Development</i> and <i>Water</i> classes); also includes the lower slopes of higher areas rising from around 150m. 150m should not be used as a hard and fast differentiation between <i>Upland</i> and <i>Lowland</i> , it should be treated as broad distinction. <i>Upland</i> areas may extend below 150m in some instances where they are more widespread above this altitude. See also the definition of level 2 class <i>Hills & scarp slopes</i> below which can be seen as the intermediate class between <i>Upland</i> and <i>Lowland</i> . Further guidance might be gained from looking at land use patterns in the area. <i>Upland</i> land use tends to be marginal grazing, with more diverse land use in <i>Lowland</i> areas.
Exposed upland & plateau	<i>Upland</i> areas that are predominantly exposed; <i>exposed</i> does not necessarily equate to a lack of tree cover; <i>exposed</i> relates more to landform than land cover in this instance, in that it excludes upland areas which are sheltered by landform such as valleys.
<i>Barren upland</i>	Exposed upland & plateau areas which are significantly (>25%) uncovered rock & scree
<i>Upland moorland</i>	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly moorland (>50%)
<i>Upland grazing</i>	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly grazed grassland (>50%)
<i>Wooded upland & plateaux</i>	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly with significant woodland (>20% tree cover)
<i>Mosaic upland & plateaux</i>	Exposed upland & plateau areas which display a patchwork of small (<10ha) pockets of woodland (20-50% density)
Upland valleys	<i>Upland</i> areas that are predominantly (>50%) valleyed (with a valley floor to ridge height >50m approx.)
<i>Open upland valleys</i>	High valley areas that are predominantly unwooded (<20%)
<i>Open/wooded mosaic upland valleys</i>	High valley areas that are significantly wooded (>20%)
<i>Wooded upland valleys</i>	High valley areas that are significantly wooded (>20%)
Hills & scarp slopes	<i>Upland</i> areas which are predominantly (<50%) unvalleyed hills and scarp slopes. Hills and scarp slopes might be defined as the intermediate landform between <i>Lowland</i> and <i>Upland</i> , but this is extremely difficult to define accurately. So, for the purposes of LANDMAP <i>Hills & scarp slopes</i> forms its own class under the level 1 <i>Upland</i> class. It is defined by the presence of lower landform than other <i>Upland</i> classes, as will rarely extend much lower than about 100m or much higher than about 300m. However, it is more usefully defined as being the type of landform that falls comfortably into neither the <i>Upland</i> or <i>Lowland</i> classes. It will often form an intermediate band between the two. It may also be defined by having more <i>Upland</i> -type land use patterns, yet at a relatively low altitude. A scarp slope is defined as a slope linking lowland with a plateau, and having no significant facing slope.
<i>Hill & scarp moorland</i>	Hills & scarp slope insignificantly wooded (<20%), and predominantly (<50%) hill tops covered with open moorland
<i>Hill & scarp grazing</i>	Hills & scarp slope insignificantly wooded (<20%), and which is predominantly grazed grassland (>50%)
<i>Wooded hills & scarp slopes</i>	Hills & scarp slope areas that are significantly sloped (>10°slope) and predominantly wooded (>50%)
<i>Mosaic hills & scarp slopes</i>	Hills & scarp slope areas which are significantly sloped (>10°slope) and display a patchwork of woodland (20-50% density)
<i>Open scarp slopes</i>	Hills & scarp slope areas which are significantly sloped (>10°slope) and display a patchwork of woodland (20-50% density)

Lowland	Areas predominantly below 100m (excluding Development and Water classes); also includes the higher slopes of lower areas rising from around 150m. 150m should not be used as a hard and fast differentiation between Upland and Lowland; it should be treated as broad distinction. Lowland areas may extend above 150m in some instances where they are more widespread below this altitude. See also the definition of level 2 class Hills & scarp slopes below which can be seen as the intermediate class between Upland and Lowland. Further guidance might be gained from looking at land use patterns in the area. Upland land use tends to be marginal grazing, with more diverse land use in Lowland areas.
Lowland valleys	Lowland areas that are predominantly (<50%) valleyed (floor to ridge height >50m.)
<i>Open lowland valleys</i>	Lowland valley areas that are insignificantly wooded (<20%) with a lack of hedgerow trees.
<i>Mosaic lowland valleys</i>	Lowland valley areas which display a patchwork of small woodland (20-50% density) amongst farmland, perhaps also with a high number of hedgerow trees.
<i>Wooded lowland valleys</i>	Lowland valley areas that are predominantly wooded (>50%).
Development	Predominantly built or developed areas and open areas primarily, visually associated with these (>10Ha). Overrides other classes, so a coastal town will be Development and not Coastal.
Built land	Development areas which are predominantly (>50%) covered in manmade structures or hard-standing
<i>Village</i>	Built land areas that predominantly consists of rural communities and their associated elements, e.g. shops, small-scale workplaces, churches, schools, domestic gardens, roads etc. An upper size limit being defined by the presence of only a handful of commercial properties e.g. <5. A lower size limit being the presence of no commercial properties, church or school.
<i>Urban</i>	Built land areas that predominantly consists of larger, urban communities and their associated elements, e.g. extensive residential estates and streets, commercial, large-scale workplaces, churches, schools, domestic gardens, roads etc. An upper size limit being defined by the presence of only a handful of commercial properties e.g. <5. A lower size limit being the presence of no commercial properties, church or school.
Developed unbuilt land	Development areas which is not Built land
<i>Excavation</i>	Other developed land which shows overwhelming visual evidence of severe surface disruption (>100Ha), such as mines & landfill
<i>Reclaimed land</i>	Other developed unbuilt land which shows overwhelming visual evidence of recent reclamation (>100Ha), such as former tips and open cast sites. Land form and/or land cover contrast with surroundings in terms of structure and/or maturity.
Water	Areas of still water (>10Ha) including open sea, or flowing water (> 20m across) and their immediate edge
Inland water	Large expanses of generally freshwater, consisting of either of the classes below:
<i>River</i>	Inland Water areas that is a large river (perhaps >20m across)
<i>Lake</i>	Inland Water areas that is predominantly a large lake (>50ha)

Reclaimed land has been added as a non-standard Level 3 category under the Level 2 category of Developed Unbuilt Land. This expresses the precise status of the Nant Helen Open Cast reclamation site which cannot be described satisfactorily as upland grazing.

The area has generally been classified as Upland at Level 1. The large valley bottoms have generally been classified as Lowland because of their character as well as their elevation- around 60m-100mAOD. Valley sides which rise substantial heights and are of an upland character have been classified as Upland. This has meant in the case of the Usk Valley that 'Upland' valley sides abut a 'Lowland' valley bottom.

3.2 Aspect Areas and Value

Figure 3 lists the aspect areas and sets out their classification and value.

Figure 3 Aspect areas, classification and value

Area no.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier
1	Usk Valley east of Brecon	Lowland	Lowland Valley	Open lowland valley	H	BBNPVS735
2	Sugar Loaf	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS369
3	Vale of Grwyney	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS580
4	Usk Valley northern slopes	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS397
5	Crickhowell	Development	Built land	Urban	M	BBNPVS622
6	River Usk	Water	Inland water	River	O	BBNPVS980
7	Usk Valley-Llangattock	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS361
8	Mynydd Llangynidr and Mynydd Llangattock	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS372
9	Cwm Carneilw	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded Upland Valley	M	BBNPVS908
10	Crawnnon Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS302
11	Carnafell Valley and Talybont Forest	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded Upland Valley	H	BBNPVS797
12	Talybont Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	O	BBNPVS785
13	Pontsticill and Pentwyn Reservoirs	Water	Inland water	Lake	O	BBNPVS443
14	Upper Taf Fechan Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded upland valley	H	BBNPVS838
15	Upper Neuadd Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	BBNPVS524
16	Brecon Beacons	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS833
17	Taf Fawr Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded Upland Valley	H	BBNPVS738
18	Cantref Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	BBNPVS982
19	Beacons Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	M	BBNPVS606
20	Fan Fawr/Fan Lia [Forest Fawr East]	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS141
21	Mynydd y Garn	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS307
22	Hepste Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS473
23	Gwaun Hepste	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded upland valley	M	BBNPVS911
24	Nedd Fechan and Mellte Valleys	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	O	BBNPVS876
25	Coed y Rhaiadr	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded upland valley	M	BBNPVS597
26	Ystradfellte Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	BBNPVS270
27	Y Wern Forest	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	M	BBNPVS185
28	Nant y Fedwyn upland	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS922
29	Carreg Cadno	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS230
30	Upper Tawe Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS811
31	Nant Helen Open Cast/ reclamation	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Reclaimed land	L	PWYSVS926

Area no.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier
32	Tawe Valley and Cwm Twrch	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	M	BBNPVS436
33	Twyn Eithiniog	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS966
34	Ystradgynlais, Gurnos and Twrch	Development	Built land	Urban	L	PWYSVS884
35	Bryn Henllys open cast	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Excavation	L	BBNPVS365
36	Dorwen ar Gledd	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS118
37	Black Mountain	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS363
38	Fforest Fawr West	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS955
39	Cray Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	BBNPVS880
40	Glasfynydd Forest	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	M	BBNPVS995
41	Mynydd Wysg	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	H	BBNPVS428
42	Usk Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	BBNPVS572
43	Mynydd Bach Trecastell	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS823
44	Upper Usk and Hyddfer valleys	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS790
45	Trecastle Hinterland	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	BBNPVS113
46	Cwm Crai	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS992
47	Fforest Fach	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS424
48	Sennybridge	Development	Built land	Urban	L	BBNPVS936
49	Senni Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS966
50	Forest Lodge	Upland	Upland plateau	Upland grazing	M	BBNPVS236
51	Mynydd Illtyd	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	BBNPVS884
52	Clos Coed and environs	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS394
53	Glyn Tarell and Cynnig valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	BBNPVS148
54	Brecon	Development	Built land	Urban	M	BBNPVS633
55	Usk Valley hills	Upland	Hills and Scarp slopes	Wooded/pasture mosaic hills & scarp slopes	H	BBNPVS1000
56	Llangorse Lake	Water	Inland water	Lake	O	BBNPVS998
57	Llangorse Lake basin	Upland	Hills and Scarp slopes	Hill & scarp grazing	H	BBNPVS522
58	Mynydd Llangorse	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS858
59	Rhiangoll Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS368
60	Black Mountains	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	O	BBNPVS660
61	Mynydd Du	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded upland valley	M	BBNPVS590
62	Vale of Ewyas	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	O	BBNPVS389
63	Black Mountain Northern fringes	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	O	BBNPVS683
64	Hay-on-Wye	Development	Built land	Urban	M	BBNPVS527
65	Three Cocks farmlands	Lowland	Lowland valley	Open lowland valley	M	PWYSVS337
66	Wye Valley	Lowland	Lowland valley	Open lowland valley	H	PWYSVS735
67	River Wye	Water	Inland water	River	O	PWYSVS160
68	Three Cocks	Development	Built land	Urban	M	PWYSVS891
69	Talgarth	Development	Built land	Urban	M	BBNPVS151

Area no.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier
70	Bronllys	Development	Built land	Village	M	PWYSVS949
71	Llanfilo Farmlands	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	BBNPVS711
72	Felinfoel farmlands	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	BBNPVS338
73	Wye Valley slopes	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS529
74	Twyn y Gaer	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland grazing	M	PWYSVS626
75	Onllandefalle Common	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS759
76	Cefn Gledwen and Banc y Celyn uplands	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS955
77	Erwood Hinterland	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS927
78	Llaneglwys Wood	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	H	PWYSVS117
79	Honddu Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	BBNPVS337
80	Ysgir Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	BBNPVS293
81	Maen Richard	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS745
82	Mynnyd Aberysgir	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS708
83	Nant Bran Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	PWYSVS351
84	Cilieni Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	BBNPVS847
85	Maesmerddyn and Twyn Disgwifa Upland	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS741
86	Mynydd Bwlch-y-Groes	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS961
87	Crychan Forest	Upland	Hills and scarp slopes	Wooded hills & scarp slopes	M	PWYSVS842
88	Mynnyd Eppynt [west]	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	L	PWYSVS470
89	Mynydd Eppynt [central]	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	L	PWYSVS148
90	Mynydd Eppynt [east]	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	L	PWYSVS630
91	SENTA valley heads	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	PWYSVS963
92	Mynydd Eppynt Scarp slope	Upland	Hills and scarp slopes	Hill & scarp grazing	H	PWYSVS987
93	Duhonw Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS731
94	Upper Wye Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	PWYSVS920
95	Builth Wells	Development	Built land	Urban	M	PWYSVS684
96	Irfon Valley [East]	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	PWYSVS503
97	Irfon Valley [West]	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	PWYSVS304
98	Cambrian Mountains southern fringes	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS726
99	Irfon Forest	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	H	PWYSVS871
100	Esgair Garn upland	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	M	PWYSVS589
101	Tywi Forest	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Wooded upland and Plateaux	M	PWYSVS982
102	Llyn Brianne Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	O	PWYSVS320
103	Upper Tywi Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	M	PWYSVS293
104	Upper Irfon Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	PWYSVS889

Area no.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier
105	Wye Valley slopes and Cambrian fringes	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS196
106	Bryn Glas and Bryn Moel uplands	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	PWYSVS999
107	Dulas and Cymrun Valleys	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS238
108	Lower Elan Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	M	PWYSVS709
109	Carn Gafallt	Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland	H	PWYSVS954
110	Caban-Coch Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	O	PWYSVS114
111	Claerwen Valley	Upland	Upland valley	Mosaic upland valley	H	PWYSVS824
112	Claerwen Reservoir	Water	Inland water	Lake	H	PWYSVS618
113	Usk Valley west of Brecon	Lowland	Lowland valley	Open lowland valley	H	BBNPVS544

Discussion of aspect areas types

An analysis of the 112 aspect areas reveals the following breakdown:

- Upland moorland- 27
- Upland grazing- 2
- Wooded Upland and hill and scarp slopes -7
- Wooded upland valleys- 7
- Mosaic and open hill and scarp slopes-2
- Open and mosaic upland valleys- 37
- Lowland valleys- 4
- Lakes-13 [12 of which are reservoirs]
- Rivers- 2
- Settlements- 7
- Developed unbuilt land- reclamation and excavation- 2

Discussion of aspect area value

18 areas are evaluated as being of outstanding value. These include the southern range of uplands including the Black Mountains and the Beacons and Fforest Fawr as far as Fan Hir. This is a function of their dramatic and wild character. The rivers of the Usk and Wye and some upland valleys are included. The common theme is water. Llangorse Lake, reservoirs including Caban Coch and Pontsticill and the Nedd Fechan and Mellte valleys due in part to their waterfalls.

50 areas are evaluated as being of high value. These include many upland valleys, lowland valleys and reservoirs.

38 areas are evaluated as being of moderate value. These include small common land areas, forestry, some reservoirs and settlements.

7 areas are evaluated as being of low value. These include the MoD land at SENTA [Mynydd Eppynt], Sennybridge and reclaimed and landfill land.

The overall high value illustrates the predominantly unspoilt and scenic character of the study area including areas outside the Brecon Beacons National Park. This designation was not taken into account in the evaluation of each aspect area. Therefore there are areas inside the Park which are less than outstanding value. The overall integrity of the landscapes of the Park means that areas of lower intrinsic value contribute to the overall character and setting of the more dramatic areas.

4.0 SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Brecknockshire study area covers some superb landscapes around 1790 sq km stretching from Rhayader in the north through to Ystradgynlais in the south west and the edge of the valleys, south of Crickhowell in the south east. North to south the area is 59km and east to west, at its widest point, it is 52km. This landscape has significant uplands and valleys. The highest point is Pen-y-Fan on the Beacons at 886m AOD, with the lowest points located in the eastern part of the Usk Valley and the southern part of the Tawe valley, both at 60m AOD. Over 50% of the area is covered by the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Uplands

The area can be divided simply into four major upland blocks roughly trending east west which dominate the landscape of the county. These are divided by the wide river valleys of the Usk and Irfon. Starting from the south these are the Brecon Beacons and Fforest Fawr massif, the Black Mountains to the east, Mynydd Eppynt, and finally the Cambrian Mountains to the north. The Wye valley acts as the eastern boundary and the northernmost point of the Black Mountains. From these uplands there run tributary upland valleys which feed the larger rivers.

The uplands have different characters. The most distinctive is the flat topped old red sandstone/brownstone northern escarpment of the Beacons. This breathtaking and elegant concave slope runs from Fan Hir in the west through to the Beacons at Fan Nedd, Fan Frynych, Pen y Fan and then along the Black Mountains. The scalloped, glaciated profile of Pen y Fan and Cribyn is a distinctive landmark visible over many miles across mid and south Wales. The whole of the escarpment can be seen clearly from various vantage points as far away as northern Carmarthenshire. The public footpaths on the relatively flat plateau tops afford superb views over the Usk to the north and to the South Wales valleys to the south. These peaks dominate and give drama to the valleys around them. The vegetation is dominated by coarse grasses with wet flushes and heather in places. This limited variety of cover is due to overgrazing by sheep.

The character of the southern massif changes with the geology. The old red sandstone of the northern edge gives way to limestone on the southern fringes. This southern upland is more uneven, pockmarked with swallow holes, and with dramatic rock outcrops around Dorwen ar Gledd and Carreg Cadno which tower over the Tawe valley. To the east, the uplands are more gentle and undulating around Mynydd Llangynidr with occasional outcrops on the northern face above the Usk. Again, the vegetation cover is dominated by coarse grasses although bracken is impinging on the lower slopes.

The sweep of the Black Mountains terminate in Hay Bluff which rises above Hay on Wye and the lowlands of England across the border. This bare dramatic slope with its flat summit attracts hang gliders and mountain bikers as well as hikers and sightseers. At its base is the highest road pass in South Wales, the Gospel Pass, which runs over and down into the Llanthony valley. This valley along with others to the south west cut into the dip slope of the upland massif. The coniferous forest of Mynydd Du lies on the Grwyney Fawr almost reaching the summit of Pen y Gadair Fawr.

Mynydd Eppynt is a lower upland area [around 472mAOD] but is nevertheless bleak. Its feeling of inaccessibility is increased through its use by the MoD for military training based at SENTA in Sennybridge. Only two roads cross the upland and these can be closed. The management regime to facilitate training has led to a distinctive landscape of 'tactical landscape features' such as small conifer blocks spotted across the area, an eastern European mock village and various military structures and buildings. The whole area, including the heads of adjacent valleys, has been allowed to revert, under MoD management, to semi natural vegetation although the

area is still grazed. The conifer blocks are particularly visible and are detractors seen within the context of the wider landscape.

The southern part of the Cambrian Mountains, which reaches 641m AOD at Drygarn Fawr, is part of a very extensive area of remote, wild upland, unbroken by any roads. Its topography of bare hills clothed in coarse grasses with little variation, is fairly consistent and unrelenting in character, apart from the odd rock outcrop, and is grazed by sheep. The abrupt edges of the very extensive coniferous plantations to the south west [the Tywi Forest and Irfon Forest] create a very different character. These clothe the hill tops and form a kind of inverse landscape such as the head of the Tywi valley- coarse open grassland at the lower level and trees at the higher elevations. The steep sided Elan and Claerwen valleys cut into it to the northern edge of the upland and the tributaries of the Irfon, Tywi and Wye do likewise around the south and east.

Rivers and Valleys

The River Usk is an important river which rises in the west of the county around Usk Reservoir and flows east, creating a wide and attractive valley. The character of the river changes along its course, sometimes with a shallow rocky bed and at other points moving slowly in deeper stretches. Overall, it is a fairly fast flowing river and has a strong seasonal range, flooding parts of the surrounding valley bottom. In the summer, the rocky river bed is exposed. The Monmouthshire and Brecon canal interweaves with the river crossing on aqueduct at one point. The traditional bridges over the river and associated settlement add to the character and quality of the valley. Also there are a significant number of large houses with associated parkland in the valley bottom eg Glanus Estate west of Crickhowell.

The River Wye has a national profile as a river and forms a substantial part of the eastern boundary of the study area. Across the boundary is Radnorshire. This river has a very attractive character with slow and fast moving stretches, some with rock exposures and river cliffs. To the east the river lies in a flat floodplain with low banks. The riparian vegetation enhances the character of the river creating enclosure and channelling vistas up the valley. Like the Usk there are significant seasonal variations in water level.

The valleys of the Usk and Wye are settled, sheltered and comfortable landscapes with the most productive land, some of which is arable. It is apparent from the generously proportioned buildings and settlements that most of the wealth is concentrated. The settlements of Crickhowell, Hay on Wye and Brecon are popular destinations for weekend visitors to enjoy the comforts of the lowland valleys in a scenic upland setting. The Irfon valley is much less known and less well defined, wide undulating rural valley landscape.

Upland Valleys

The uplands are incised by valleys, some of which form among the most attractive landscapes in the study area. Many are clearly glaciated with flat bottoms and steep sides [such as the Vale of Eywas or the upper Irfon] while others are 'V' shaped [such as Nant Menasgin valley]. The lower valley sides and bottoms consist of well kept pastures [cattle or sheep], usually enclosed by hedges, with farm houses and dwellings above flood level. Rivers usually have strong deciduous riparian vegetation and some hedgerows have become deciduous tree belts. The latter, though a symptom of reduced management input, can create very attractive landscapes emphasising the sweep of the valley sides. Some valley woodlands are grazed and while they can be attractive, they are unlikely to be able to regenerate and survive in the long term.

Further up the hillside, the boundaries become more ragged and hedges sometimes give way to stone walls. This is the fridd landscape which is being invaded by bracken and scrub as farmers reduce their management

input on marginal land. Whilst the bracken can be attractive, providing splendid autumn colour, it is symptomatic of neglect, and also reduces the overall diversity of vegetation cover on the upper valley sides.

Occasionally conifer belts and blocks have been planted. These are acceptable in some locations as elements in an upland location, particularly where softened by larch and deciduous planting. They otherwise detract, particularly where they form linear belts and where they break skylines. The latter occurs at a model farm and in some estate land.

Overall, the views up or down these secluded and unspoilt rural valleys, flanked and contrasted by bleak upland moorland, is an uplifting and pleasing sight.

Other Water

The empty uplands act as important harvesting areas for water. There are 10 reservoirs in the study area. Some of these create superb landscapes in conjunction with the dramatic uplands in which they lie. These include those in the Elan Valley and in also in the Beacons eg Talybont and Pontsticill Reservoirs. They are visitor attractions in themselves for both informal enjoyment and for sporting activities. Their dam and inlet structures are generally robust with turn of the century stone detailing and they contribute positively to the landscape. The Claerwen reservoir dam and overflow is particularly impressive. The landscape treatment on the edge of the reservoir is critical to determine whether it is attractive or not.

Llangorse Lake is the only apparently natural lake in the county. Its rounded form lies within a basin overlooked by the impressive upland of Mynydd Llangorse. The area is very attractive and the lake is popular for boating, fishing and outdoor pursuits. The associated caravan park is unsightly but is partially screened.

Settlement, Development and Recreation

The area is very thinly settled- it has the lowest number of persons per hectare in Wales [0.2 persons/hectare]. This is probably a function of the extensive area of uninhabited uplands but also of the essentially rural character of the county. The major settlements are located at crossing points on the major rivers- Brecon and Crickhowell on the Usk, Builth Wells on the Wye and Ystradgynlais on the Tawe. Only the latter has grown due to industrial and extractive industries [coal in this case] and is more associated with the Upper Swansea Valley than with the rural market based towns to the north and east. Elsewhere, the settlement is scattered and is mainly farms and similar dwellings located in valleys between the uplands. While the core of all the settlements are positive and pleasant the outskirts of some towns are unattractive. The most noticeable is the western extension of Brecon which rises up the slopes of the Usk valley. Crickhowell also suffers this to an extent.

Ystradgynlais and Cwmtwrch were developed quickly to exploit coal at the turn of the century and therefore are considerably less attractive with their urban features and commercial areas. Around these settlements are the remnants of the industry. Nant Helen open cast has been reclaimed and Bryn Henllys is now being filled with waste. Other detractors such as overhead lines and sub stations reduce the quality of the landscape.

There are some well known visitor hotspots- the Brecon Beacons and the Elan valley. The Beacons attract visitors who want to enjoy the natural beauty of the area, take part in active recreation and get away from it all. These uplands are known for their wildness and inhospitability in certain weather conditions. Their popularity is causing damage to paths in the most used areas [Pen y fan] and work is being undertaken by park rangers to repair scars in the landscape. The Elan Valley reservoirs attract those who tend to be car bound and who enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Cambrians as a backdrop to the elegant linear reservoirs, such as at Caban Coch.

Besides the settlements and well known visitor attractions, the area is generally feels remote and is fairly inaccessible. Development pressure tends to be pushing in from the border country to the east along the better known areas in the Usk valley and to an extent along the Wye. To the west, not only the uplands but also the valleys are thinly populated and have an air of isolation and tranquillity.

Commercial Forestry

Commercial coniferous forestry covers large tracts of land and makes a significant visual impact. Forests provide timber but also recreational and visitor facilities. In some places, the combination of conifers and water can create stunning landscapes and vistas such as at Llyn Brianne or Talybont Reservoir. However, in other places the abrupt edges can be disruptive of the flow of the open landscape of the upland moorland [such as Tywi Forest or Mynydd Du]. Clear felling on a large scale creates ugly scarred landscapes, often on the skyline, until replanting heals the wound [eg Crychan Forest, Carnafell Valley]. The most successful forests are those that have larch and deciduous species to break up the edge and mass of the woodland eg Talybont.

5.0 KEY ISSUES

The overall findings of the assessment are:

- areas were judged to be of outstanding quality.
- areas were judged to be of high quality.
- areas were judged to be of moderate quality.
- areas were judged to be of low quality.

The key issues facing the area and which require management are:

FARMING

- There is a contrast between the rich lowland agricultural landscapes which include some arable land with marginal upland farming. Examples of real rural poverty and associated poor management of the landscape exist. There is a need to improve the prosperity of area, particularly the uplands, without adversely affecting key landscape character/qualities.

UPLAND PASTURE

- While most farms are well managed, particularly in the valley bottoms, on the upper valley sides, bracken and scrub are encroaching in the upper pastures. The associated boundaries are falling into disrepair and are fragmenting. The fridd landscape is increasing and is creating a visually interesting vegetation mosaic in places but which it also indicates a lack of management.

BOUNDARIES

- Hedge boundaries are important to character of area eg holly hedges of Vale of Grwyney.
- Outgrown hedges are distinctive and positive landscape features in some areas.
- Hedges are deteriorating in some areas and are being replaced by fences. This degrades the visual quality of the landscape.
- Cut hedges, particularly those with weak bottoms, could be improved by laying.
- Stone walls are important to the character of the Beacons of the uplands and are deteriorating in hill fence and road side locations.

WOODLANDS

- Commercial coniferous forestry has a major visual impact on the landscape particularly where single species are used [excluding larch/deciduous trees] and where there are significantly straight boundaries. These disrupt the flow of the landscape.
- Coniferous shelterbelts [on estate land and model farm] are visually sterile and disruptive to the flow and character of the landscape.
- MoD coniferous blocks used for training purposes are detractors.
- Broadleaf woodlands are relatively rare and are important landscape elements where they occur eg on steep slopes and beside watercourses. Many are not managed and some are grazed, preventing regeneration.

MOORLAND/COMMONS

- Most moorland areas are dominated by coarse grasses and have a poor diversity of vegetation cover through overgrazing by sheep. Heather is only occasionally found and stream valleys only have occasional shrubs and trees. This leads to a fairly impoverished visual landscape.
- Bracken and scrub is invading from lower levels.

RIVERS

- Rivers and their riparian vegetation and features are important elements in the landscape and natural foci visually and for activity both in the lowland and upland valleys.

RECREATION

- Generally tourism and recreation is low key and is based on the enjoyment of the landscape.
- There are a few upland areas that are honeypots for visitors. These are under pressure and suffer damage such as unsightly erosion. The wilderness qualities of these areas are also affected such as at Pen y Fan and Hay Bluff. Other upland areas appear to have considerably fewer visitors.
- There is evidence of erosion through bike access.
- Caravan sites and other recreation facilities can be minor detractors- such as at Llangorse and in the Usk Valley.

SETTLEMENT

- The traditional settlement cores are attractive with vernacular buildings and spaces and use local material such as sandstone /brownstone. 20th century expansion has disguised the shape of the original towns and have expanded in ways that have an impact on the landscape. This occurs mainly where they have expanded up valley sides in prominent locations eg Brecon and Crickhowell. The latter has been tackled well in parts through appropriate development form which echoes the vernacular pattern.
- Alteration to rural dwellings and farm buildings is evident in places. As cumulatively this is the most noticeable building form, the design of alterations needs to be tackled very sensitively including consideration of integration with deciduous tree planting.
- Suburban style dwellings/boundaries are evident in places and are unsuitable for this rural area.
- MoD development at SENTA in Sennybridge is the most visually obtrusive development in the area and other MoD developments also make a significant impact, developing in areas where private development may not be permitted.

RESERVOIRS

- Most reservoirs contribute positively to the landscape. Those that are best integrated are those with varied and rich vegetation on their edges including trees- both deciduous and coniferous. Those with relatively bare edges appear sterile and a little bleak in their upland settings.
- Boundary treatment including fencing and railings beside reservoirs is generally acceptable although some appear inappropriate eg the use of ranch fencing.
- Visitor management and access is generally positive although some reservoirs could benefit from better access and treatment of this at the water edge.