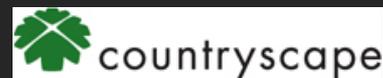




GILLESPIES



A PROPOSED NATIONAL PARK FOR WALES

EVALUATION REPORT

FINAL REPORT – OCTOBER 2024

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APPENDIX A - EVALUATION AREA FIGURES (SEE SEPARATE REPORT)

TROSOLWG O'R ADRODDIAD GWERTHUSO

- 1.1 Yn ei Rhaglen Lywodraethu (2021-2026), mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn nodi ei huchelgais i ddynodi Parc Cenedlaethol newydd yng ngogledd-ddwyrain Cymru, a hwnnw'n seiliedig ar Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol Bryniau Clwyd a Dyffryn Dyfrdwy (a elwir bellach yn 'Tirwedd Cenedlaethol Bryniau Clwyd a Dyffryn Dyfrdwy'). Hwn fyddai pedwerydd Parc Cenedlaethol Cymru - a'r Parc Cenedlaethol cyntaf i gael ei sefydlu o'r newydd yng Nghymru ers 1957. Mae Llywodraeth Cymru, felly, wedi comisiynu Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (CNC) - sef y corff sy'n gyfrifol am ddynodi tirweddau statudol newydd - i werthuso'r achos dros y dynodiad hwn, ac i wneud argymhelliad i Lywodraeth Cymru o fewn tymor presennol y Senedd.
- 1.2 Pwrpas yr Adroddiad Gwerthuso hwn yw asesu'r Ardal Archwilio a nodwyd yn wreiddiol gan CNC ac a ddiwygiwyd yn dilyn Ymgysylltiad â'r Cyhoedd yn 2023 (gweler **Ffigur 2** tudalen 12), a hynny er mwyn pennu darn helaeth o dir sydd â digon o harddwch naturiol cydnabyddedig sy'n bwysig yn genedlaethol, yn ogystal â chyfleoedd i fwynhau hamdden awyr agored, i'w ystyried yn ymgeisydd ar gyfer dynodi Parc Cenedlaethol posibl. Bydd yr ardaloedd yr asesir eu bod yn bodloni'r meini prawf Harddwch Naturiol a Hamdden wedyn yn cael eu tynnu ynghyd o fewn Ardal Ymgeisiol.
- 1.3 Mae'r Ardal Archwilio ddiwygiedig wedi'i rhannu'n 32 o Ardaloedd Gwerthuso i greu fframwaith gofodol o unedau o dirwedd ar gyfer gwerthusiad manwl (gweler **Ffigur 3** ar dudalen 13). Aseswyd pob ardal werthuso yn erbyn y meini prawf harddwch naturiol a hamdden - yn unol â chanllawiau gweithdrefnol CNC¹.
- 1.4 Mae gwerthusiad pob ardal werthuso i'w weld ym **Mhennod 7** (gweler tudalen 29 ymlaen). Yn yr asesiad o harddwch naturiol, tynnwyd ynghyd y gwerthusiad o wybodaeth tirwedd bresennol (LANDMAP, asesiadau cymeriad tirwedd lleol, mapiau GIS) ac ymweliadau safle gan 2 weithiwr tirwedd proffesiynol (i ddod â gwrthrychedd i'r broses asesu a phenderfynu).
- 1.5 Y casgliad cyffredinol yw bod tystiolaeth glir bod gan lawer o'r Ardal Archwilio ddiwygiedig ddigon o harddwch naturiol cydnabyddedig sy'n bwysig yn genedlaethol, yn ogystal â chyfleoedd i fwynhau hamdden awyr agored, i'w chynnwys o fewn Ardal Ymgeisio ar gyfer Parc Cenedlaethol newydd arfaethedig i Gymru (gweler **Ffigur 36** ar dudalen 200). Nid yw ardaloedd nad ydynt yn bodloni'r trothwy harddwch naturiol neu gyfleoedd ar gyfer hamdden awyr agored, neu sy'n cynnwys ardaloedd tameidiog neu wasgaredig o harddwch naturiol, neu sy'n cael eu dylanwadu gan ddefnyddiau tir neu ddatblygiadau sy'n amharu'n fawr ar harddwch naturiol, yn cael eu cynnwys yn yr Ardal Ymgeisiol (cyfeiriwch at **Mhennod 9** tudalen 199 ymlaen).

Y CAMAU NESAF

- 1.6 Bydd ymgynghoriad cyhoeddus â rhanddeiliaid allweddol ar yr Ardal Ymgeisiol ynghyd â chanfyddiadau'r Adroddiad Gwerthuso yn llywio'r camau nesaf. Bydd canfyddiadau'r ymgynghoriad cyhoeddus yn helpu i gasglu cefnogaeth a phryderon y cyhoedd, ac unrhyw faterion neu broblemau, ynghyd - yn ogystal â llywio'r gwaith o bennu Ffin Fanwl. Bydd Asesiad o Ddymunoldeb Dynodi yn helpu i grynhoi'r materion a'r cyfleoedd sydd ynghlwm wrth fynd ati i sicrhau dynodiad Parc Cenedlaethol. Bydd CNC wedyn yn ystyried y canfyddiadau cyn penderfynu cynnal ymgynghoriad statudol ar ffin fanwl ar gyfer Parc Cenedlaethol yn 2025.

¹ Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (Mawrth 2022). *Dynodiad tirlun statudol: gweithdrefnol arweiniad*

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION REPORT

- 2.1 In its Programme for Government (2021-2026), the Welsh Government sets out its ambition to designate a new National Park in North-East Wales based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (herein referred to as 'National Landscape'). This would be a fourth National Park for Wales, and the first new National Park to be established in Wales since 1957. As such, the Welsh Government has commissioned Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the body responsible for designating any new statutory landscape designations, to evaluate the case for the designation and to make a recommendation to Welsh Government within the current Senedd term.
- 2.2 The purpose of this Evaluation Report is to assess the Area of Search (AoS) initially identified by NRW and subsequently revised following Public Engagement in 2023 (see **Figure 2** page 12) to identify an extensive tract of land that has sufficient nationally important and recognised natural beauty, as well as opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation, to be considered a candidate for potential National Park designation. The areas that have been assessed as meeting the Natural Beauty and Recreation criteria are then drawn together within a Candidate Area.
- 2.3 The revised AoS has been subdivided into 32 Evaluation Areas (EAs) to create a spatial framework of landscape units for detailed evaluation (see **Figure 3** on page 13). Each EA has been assessed against the natural beauty and recreation criteria - in accordance with NRW's procedural guidance².
- 2.4 The evaluation of each EA is set out in **Chapter 7** (see page 29 onwards). The evaluation of existing landscape information (LANDMAP, local landscape character assessments, GIS mapping) and site visits by 2 landscape professionals (to bring objectivity to the assessment and decision making process) was drawn together in the assessment of natural beauty.
- 2.5 In overall conclusion, there is clear evidence that much of the Revised Area of Search has sufficient nationally important and recognised natural beauty, as well as opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation, to be included within a Candidate Area for a proposed new National Park for Wales (see **Figure 36** on page 200). Areas not meeting the natural beauty or opportunities for open-air recreation threshold, or containing fragmented or dispersed areas of natural beauty, or that are influenced by land uses or development which greatly detract, from natural beauty, are not included in the Candidate Area (refer to **Chapter 9** on page 199 onwards).

NEXT STEPS

- 2.6 Public consultation with key stakeholders on the Candidate Area and the Evaluation report's findings will inform the next steps. The findings of public consultation will help capture public support, concerns and issues together with informing a Detailed Boundary. An Assessment of the Desirability to Designate will help consolidate the issues and opportunities of pursuing a National Park designation. NRW will then consider the findings before deciding on carrying out statutory consultation on a detailed National Park boundary in 2025.

² Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

3. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In its Programme for Government (2021-2026), the Welsh Government sets out its ambition to designate a new National Park in North-East Wales based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (herein referred to as 'National Landscape'). This would be a fourth National Park for Wales, and the first new park to be established in Wales since 1957. As such, the Welsh Government has commissioned Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the body responsible for designating any new statutory landscape designations, to evaluate the case for the designation and to make a recommendation to Welsh Government within the current Senedd term.
- 3.2 The Planning (Wales) Act 2015, The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and the Natural Resources Policy 2018 together provide an important legislative and policy framework within which NRW operates. Evidence in relation to the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, as set out in NRW's State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) and Area Statements, have also helped to inform the designation process. This evidence has been especially important when assessing forces for change, as well as the consideration of alternative mechanisms for the management of identified forces for change. The designation process also has a focus on nature recovery and climate adaptation and mitigation. NRW will demonstrate that the principles of this policy and legislative framework have been applied in their recommendations.

THE PURPOSES OF A NATIONAL PARK

- 3.3 National Parks are areas legally recognised for their natural beauty and for the opportunities they provide for the enjoyment of the special qualities of an area through outdoor recreation. As well as National Landscapes (previously AONBs), National Parks have the highest level of landscape conservation and protection as set out in paragraph 6.3.8 of Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 2024. Section 5(1) National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPAC 1949) sets out the purposes of National Parks which are:
- conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
 - promoting the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.
- 3.4 In applying the legislative framework in its broadest sense, the questions that need to be answered as part of the designation process are:
- Does the landscape of the study area have sufficient natural beauty?
 - Does landscape of the study area offer sufficient opportunities for open-air recreation when considering a proposal for a National Park?
 - Is it especially desirable to designate the landscape as a National Park?
 - Where should the detailed boundary of a proposed National Park be drawn?

AREA OF SEARCH REPORT

- 3.5 As a precursor to the detailed evaluation stage (as set out in this report), the NRW Designated Landscapes Programme Team have undertaken an initial screening assessment of a proposed area for a potential National Park. The aim of this assessment was to determine the extent of nationally important and recognised natural beauty in the proposed area, as well as an initial analysis of outdoor recreation and attractions. An Area of Search (AoS) Report³ has been produced as a

³ Natural Resource Wales (June 2023). *Area of Search for a potential National Park in North-East Wales*

result of this initial screening assessment and a consultant was appointed to undertake an independent examination of the proposed area and to identify its special qualities⁴. Following the identification of special qualities, another consultant was engaged to identify the forces for change⁵ affecting the area's special qualities. As part of this, a comparative analysis was undertaken of the effectiveness of formal designation in addressing the forces for change compared with other available mechanisms.

- 3.6 The starting point for the AoS was the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape and adjacent areas that had potential to contain sufficient natural beauty to meet the National Park designation criteria. This resulted in an AoS contained by the North Wales coast / Dee Estuary to the north; the Welsh / English border to the east; Eryri National Park to the south west; the A458 to the south - which contains the southern extents of the Berwyns; and the A495 to the south east - in an area of transition between the uplands and Welsh borderlands.
- 3.7 To help inform this initial assessment, mapping was developed to identify areas of natural beauty using the terms and attributes that have established use in the assessment of new statutory landscape designations, across Wales and England. These are set out in the NRW Guidance Note (GN 010)⁶. and include:
- Landscape quality;
 - Scenic quality;
 - Relative wildness;
 - Relative tranquillity;
 - Natural heritage features; and
 - Cultural heritage.
- 3.8 NRW used LANDMAP and other GIS data to provide spatial evidence of landscapes that are of notable value for these attributes. LANDMAP evaluates landscape within a range of nationally consistent, quality assured datasets for Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape. Whilst the appraisal of landscape can rely on perceptions and maybe open to interpretation and preferences, LANDMAP provides a consistent baseline for analysis and professional judgement has been applied in decision making.
- 3.9 The NRW mapping identified areas of natural beauty within and beyond the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. Those areas that, in combination with the existing National Landscape, could create a continuous and extensive tract of land were considered for inclusion within the AoS. Factors such as development effects on landscape quality and integrity, dislocation and distance from the core area of study (the National Landscape) were also considered. This resulted in some areas with notable natural beauty that could not be incorporated into the core area as a single, continuous tract of land, and therefore, were necessarily excluded. As a result of this process, the initial AoS was refined down to the extent as illustrated in **Figure 1** (see page 6).
- 3.10 To meet the requirements of a National Park, an initial analysis of outdoor recreation and attractions was also carried out. This demonstrated that opportunities for open air recreation, associated with the landscapes, natural and built heritage, is well represented. The AoS Report concluded that attractions in the southern portion are slightly more dispersed, due to the extensiveness of the Berwyn uplands and their remoteness. However, significant opportunities for outdoor recreation were identified as being present across the entire AoS.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 3.11 Following on from the identification of the initial AoS, this report sets out the findings of a more detailed evaluation of factors relating to the natural beauty and the opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation. The outcome of this is the identification and recommendations for a proposed Candidate Area to be taken forward for potential National

⁴ Craggatak Consulting (March 2024). *Identification of the special qualities of the area of search for a potential new National Park in North East Wales*

⁵ Land Use Consultants (April 2024). *Forces for Change for North East Wales National Park Area of Search*

⁶ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

Park designation. The purpose of this Evaluation Report therefore is to provide NRW with a Candidate Area to be consulted on in Autumn 2024 and the subsequent progression onto the Assessment of the Desirability of Designation and the finalisation of the Detailed Boundary Identification stages.

- 3.12 As detailed in Chapter 4, the AoS has been subdivided into 32 Evaluation Areas (EAs) that form the spatial framework for this evaluation phase. Each EA is assessed against the natural beauty criteria in accordance with NRW's procedural guidance⁷, along with an assessment as to whether it affords sufficient opportunities for outdoor recreation.
- 3.13 In addition to containing maps, and a list of, and links to, the evidence used, this report seeks to validate and expand on the results of the initial AoS evaluation by identifying any landscape features (e.g. visible archaeological features, distinctive land use patterns and land cover etc.) which notably contribute to, or detract from, the experience of natural beauty. The detailed field work that has underpinned this report identifies and considers any issues which will require further, more detailed scrutiny when defining a detailed boundary, including transitions in landscape and scenic quality, degree of fragmentation, and the degree of impact of any detracting features or settlements on perceptions of natural beauty.
- 3.14 In relation to the key legislative questions therefore, this report addresses the following:
- Does the landscape of the study area have sufficient natural beauty?
 - Does landscape of the study area offer sufficient opportunities for open-air recreation when considering a proposal for a National Park?
 - Where should the detailed proposed boundary of a proposed National Park be drawn?

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.15 Following on from this introductory chapter, the remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- *Chapter 4* - Approach to evaluating natural beauty and open-air recreation;
 - *Chapter 5* - Study area and Evaluation Areas;
 - *Chapter 6* - Methodology;
 - *Chapter 7* - Evaluation of natural beauty and open-air recreation; and
 - *Chapter 8* - Detailed boundary refinement.
 - *Chapter 9* - Conclusion.

REPORT FIGURES

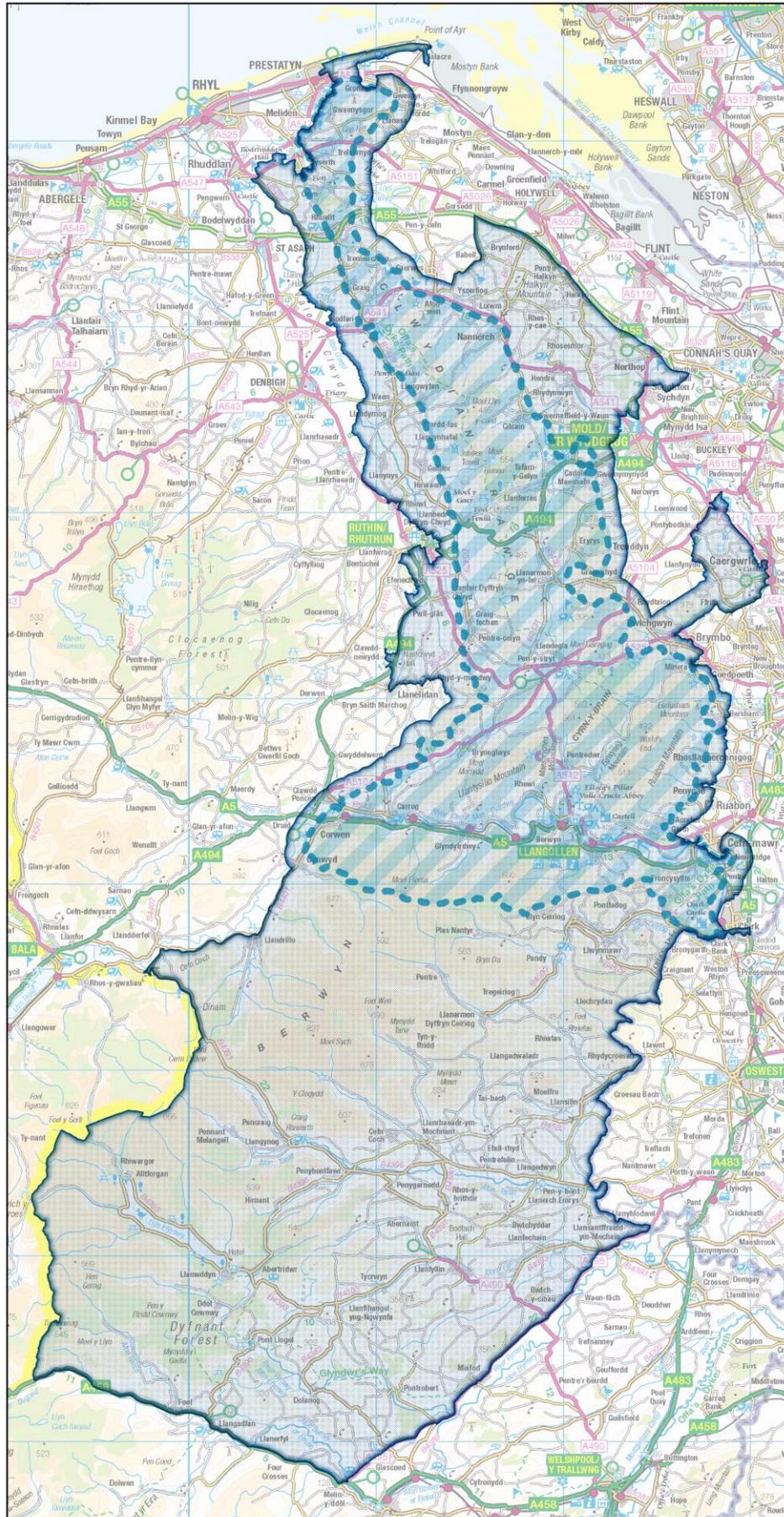
- 3.16 This report is supported by the following figures:
- *Figure 1* - Initial Area of Search;
 - *Figure 2* - Revised Area of Search;
 - *Figure 3* - Evaluation Areas;
 - *Figures 4-35* - Evaluation Areas 1-32 (natural, cultural and recreational mapping attached as separate A3 figures); and
 - *Figure 36* - Proposed Candidate Area.

INITIAL AREA OF SEARCH

- 3.17 The initial AoS as identified by NRW has a total area of 1,365.7 km². The extent of this in relation to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape is illustrated in the following figure.

⁷ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

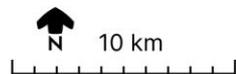
Figure 1: Initial Area of Search



A Proposed National Park for Wales

Figure 1 - Initial Area of Search

-  Initial Area of Search Boundary
-  Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape



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4. APPROACH TO EVALUATING NATURAL BEAUTY AND OPEN-AIR RECREATION

- 4.1 As important context to the findings and associated recommendations of this report, this Chapter sets out an overview of the key points relating to the approach to evaluating natural beauty and open-air recreation, as stated in NRW's procedural guidance⁸.

NATIONAL PARKS

- 4.2 National Parks are areas legally recognised for their natural beauty and the opportunities they provide for the enjoyment of the special qualities of an area through outdoor recreation. National Parks and National Landscapes are Category V Protected Areas forming part of an internationally recognised system of protected areas as defined by the IUCN World Conservation Union 'Guidelines for applying protected area management categories.' In Wales, National Parks and National Landscapes have the highest level of landscape conservation and protection. Planning Policy Wales recognises that National Parks and National Landscapes are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments (6.3.8 Planning Policy Wales).
- 4.3 The following National Park purposes are set out in Section 5(1) National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949):
- conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
 - promoting the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.

WHAT IS NATURAL BEAUTY?

- 4.4 'Natural beauty' is a widely used term to refer to landscapes of high quality and scenic value and is used across a range of UK legislation. The term itself is undefined in law but for the purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes it is considered to include the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Legally, it includes the conservation of its 'flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features' as set out in Section 114(2) NPAC 1949, for National Parks and Section 92(2) CROW Act 2000, for National Landscapes. When NRW is considering the natural beauty of an area for potential National Park designation, account may be taken of its wildlife and cultural heritage (Section 5(2A(a)) NPAC 1949).
- 4.5 It has been confirmed in legislation that land can be considered to be 'naturally beautiful' as a result of human intervention. Therefore, the land-use practice of agriculture, woodland or parkland, or where physiographical features are partly as a result of human intervention in the landscape, does not mean it should be excluded from consideration as part of natural beauty (Section 99 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)).
- 4.6 Natural beauty can be seen as a subjective characteristic of a landscape and ultimately, like other statutory designations, it involves some aspect of value judgment. In considering whether an area has natural beauty therefore, NRW must make a judgment as to whether people are likely to perceive a landscape as having sufficient natural beauty, as one of the two technical factors (together with recreation for National Parks) underpinning the designation process. The main factors relating to natural beauty are:
- Landscape quality;
 - Scenic quality;
 - Relative wildness;
 - Relative tranquillity;
 - Natural heritage features;
 - Cultural heritage; and
 - Other factors may be relevant in some circumstances.

⁸ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

WHAT IS OPEN-AIR RECREATION?

- 4.7 There is no legal definition of what opportunities for open-air recreation means in this context except that it:
- must be open-air and not organised games;
 - must have regard for the land;
 - provide a markedly superior recreational experience; and
 - NRW can give regard to the position of the proposed designation in relation to centres of population.

CHARACTERISATION AND SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

- 4.8 In order to aid the practical evaluation of a broad area of land potentially suitable for designation and to make evaluation a more manageable process, the AoS was sub-divided into units of an appropriate scale. This provides a spatial framework of landscape units which are termed 'Evaluation Areas' (EAs) in NRW's guidance. The use of EAs is intended merely to make the practical work of detailed evaluation of landscapes more manageable. It is not intended to lead to the designation or exclusion from designation of any land merely because of the way in which EAs have been defined.
- 4.9 EAs were defined using landscape character assessments and spatial information recorded on the national LANDMAP resource. This approach is consistent with relevant landscape character assessment guidance⁹, as is NRW's Landscape Character Areas, as set out in the National Landscape Character Area Profiles¹⁰. As such the identification of EAs provide a relatively objective and value-free evidence-base for the next evaluation stage.
- 4.10 Each EA was then assessed against the technical natural beauty and recreation criteria (see Table 2 in Chapter 5 for further details). This is a complex and technical exercise requiring careful assessment and judgment. This stage was informed by a wide range of data and evidence and verified by research in the field. For a potential designation area, it is necessary to stand back and ask in relation to the area as a whole whether it meets the tests set out in statute for designation. This applies to both the technical criteria and the desirability of designation consideration, the latter to be undertaken as a subsequent stage to this evaluation.

APPLYING THE NATURAL BEAUTY CRITERIA

- 4.11 In applying the natural beauty criteria, NRW's guidance notes:
- Natural beauty is not exhaustively defined in legislation. It can be perceived as subjective characteristic of a landscape and ultimately involves some measure of value judgement.
 - The practical application of natural beauty criteria is identical for National Parks and National Landscapes. Therefore, the only technical difference in order to be designated a National Park, is that an area must also meet the recreation criterion.
 - Land included does not need to be the same or similar character.
 - For National Parks, there should be a concurrence of land which meets the natural beauty criterion and land which meets the recreation criterion.
 - Field by field evaluation is not appropriate.
 - Decisions on whether to include land which does not meet the criterion depends on a number of factors (size, location, margins).
 - An area fragmented to such an extent it doesn't meet criterion usually means it is unlikely that the EA overall will qualify.
 - Areas of landscape that are partly a result of human intervention can still have natural beauty (Section 99 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006).

⁹ Countryside Agency (January 2002). *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*

¹⁰ Natural Resource Wales (2014). *National Landscape Character Areas*

- A designation can ‘wash over’ a tract of land even though that area itself doesn’t meet the criteria, even close to the boundary, but only where it sits within a wider sweep of qualifying land¹¹.
- The effects of settlements and other major developments are assessed on their individual merits by considering their particular character and qualities and their relationship to the adjoining landscape. In some cases, a settlement may be considered an incongruous feature, whereas other settlements have cultural heritage qualities relating to natural beauty. This is true regardless of size.
- The effects of incongruous features are assessed for the extent to which they detract from the natural beauty of an area. It is relevant to take into account whether a feature is temporary or transient. It is a matter of judgment whether an incongruous feature has such an adverse effect that the affected land fails to meet the natural beauty criterion or whether it can be included. The cumulative impact of such features and the degree to which qualifying parts of the potential designation are fragmented may be relevant to the assessment.
- An EA that meets the natural beauty criterion either on its own or as part of a wider tract of qualifying land can then be considered as part of a Candidate Area. EAs that do not meet the criterion, or only partially meet the criterion, are not taken forward as part of a Candidate Area.

EVALUATION OF OPEN-AIR RECREATION

4.12 In evaluating the provision of open-air recreation within each EA, the following points are taken into account:

- Opportunities for open-air recreation are not limited to the present provision: consideration can be given to the potential of an area to offer recreational opportunities in the future. Consideration is given to the quantity of open-air recreation offer because the quality of that experience should be greater than that normally found in the wider countryside.
- Recreational opportunities to be taken into account should be consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the area’s natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, as well as the tranquillity of an area. Quiet outdoor recreation is therefore likely to be the most weighty consideration under this criterion.
- The evidence base to make judgments about opportunities for open-air recreation includes consideration of the type, quality, and quantity of opportunities available in the proposed area.
- The extent to which it is possible to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the area’s special qualities, may be taken into consideration. Assessment is also required of future potential opportunities that may become available, where these have a realistic prospect of coming to fruition.
- As with natural beauty, it is not necessary for all factors or indicators to be present across a designation, as different parts can satisfy the recreational criterion for different reasons. Overall, there should be a weight of evidence that an area of countryside has or, is capable of providing, sufficient opportunities for open-air recreation to the extent that it provides a markedly superior recreational experience. Comparisons should not be made to other designated areas or adjacent areas but should instead be considered against ordinary countryside.
- Particular attention should be paid to public access to the land, but it is unreasonable as a matter of principle to expect all land to be accessible. Where there is no access, land may still be visually appreciated and enjoyed by those engaged in open-air recreation elsewhere in the National Park. It has been established that a designation may ‘wash over’ an area of land even when there is no public access to it for recreational purposes.
- When considering opportunities afforded for open-air recreation, account may be taken of the extent to which it is possible to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of an area’s special qualities by the public (Section (2A)(b) NPAC 1949).

¹¹ The Planning Inspectorate (November 2008). *South Downs Inspectors Report to the First Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Transport*

5. REVISED AREA OF SEARCH AND EVALUATION AREAS

REVISED AREA OF SEARCH

- 5.1 As noted in Chapter 2, the outcome of NRW's AoS Report¹² was the identification of an initial AoS illustrated in **Figure 1** (see page 6) that in practice, formed an indicative study area for this detailed evaluation stage. The boundary of the initial AoS considered the findings of the initial desk and field studies, upon which, a professional judgment was made on whether an area merited further detailed evaluation.
- 5.2 As a result of public consultation undertaken in 2023, the initial AoS boundary, as mapped in the AoS Report, was extended to include the following:
- All of EA20 (*Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley*);
 - A northern extension to EA14 (*Hope Mountain*);
 - An eastern extension to EA18 (*Rhos Slopes*) to include part of the Clywedog Valley; and
 - An eastern extension to EA5 (*Caerwys Lowlands*) to include the Bryn Gwyn Hall Registered Park and Garden.
- 5.3 To emphasise the indicative nature of the initial AoS boundary, the detailed field study undertaken as part of this evaluation phase also involved consideration of the adjacent local landscape. As a result, two additional proposed AoS extensions were identified:
- A southerly extension to EA16 (*Pwll-Glâs*) to include landscape with a very similar character and quality; and
 - An eastern to EA32 (*Severn Farmlands South*) to include a small part of the highly scenic Meifod Valley.
- 5.4 On undertaking a subsequent site visit with NRW to these landscapes, it was agreed that the extension to EA16 should be incorporated into the detailed evaluation. However, the eastern wooded slopes of the Meifod valley (EA32) were not included as whilst high scenic quality is evident, adjacent sections of the valley didn't meet the same high landscape quality. The study area was therefore brought back to follow the A495.
- 5.5 The revised AoS boundary that incorporates these additions is illustrated in **Figure 2** (see page 12). With an increase of 74.1 km² from the initial AoS, the total area of the Revised AoS is 1,439.8 km². In mapping the revised AoS boundary, a precautionary approach was adopted to ensure that all landscapes with some realistic potential for National Park designation were considered as part of the detailed evaluation.

EVALUATION AREAS

- 5.6 As illustrated in **Figure 3** (see page 13), the revised AoS has been subdivided into 32 EAs that form the spatial framework for the evaluation of factors relating to the purposes of a National Park.
- 5.7 The identification of the EAs is primarily based on the LANDMAP Visual and Sensory aspect layer and the associated level 3 typology e.g. Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes. As such, nearly all EA boundaries within the AoS follow the exact Visual and Sensory aspect layer boundaries. This ensures constituency of approach within the entire AoS and will allow for a robust interrogation of the underlying LANDMAP data as part of the desk study phase. In most instances, however, the EAs are formed of several aspect areas.
- 5.8 In addition to the LANDMAP data, the identification of EAs has considered the indicative boundaries of the National Character Areas, and at a local level, the mapping of local landscape character areas from a range of published landscape character assessments.

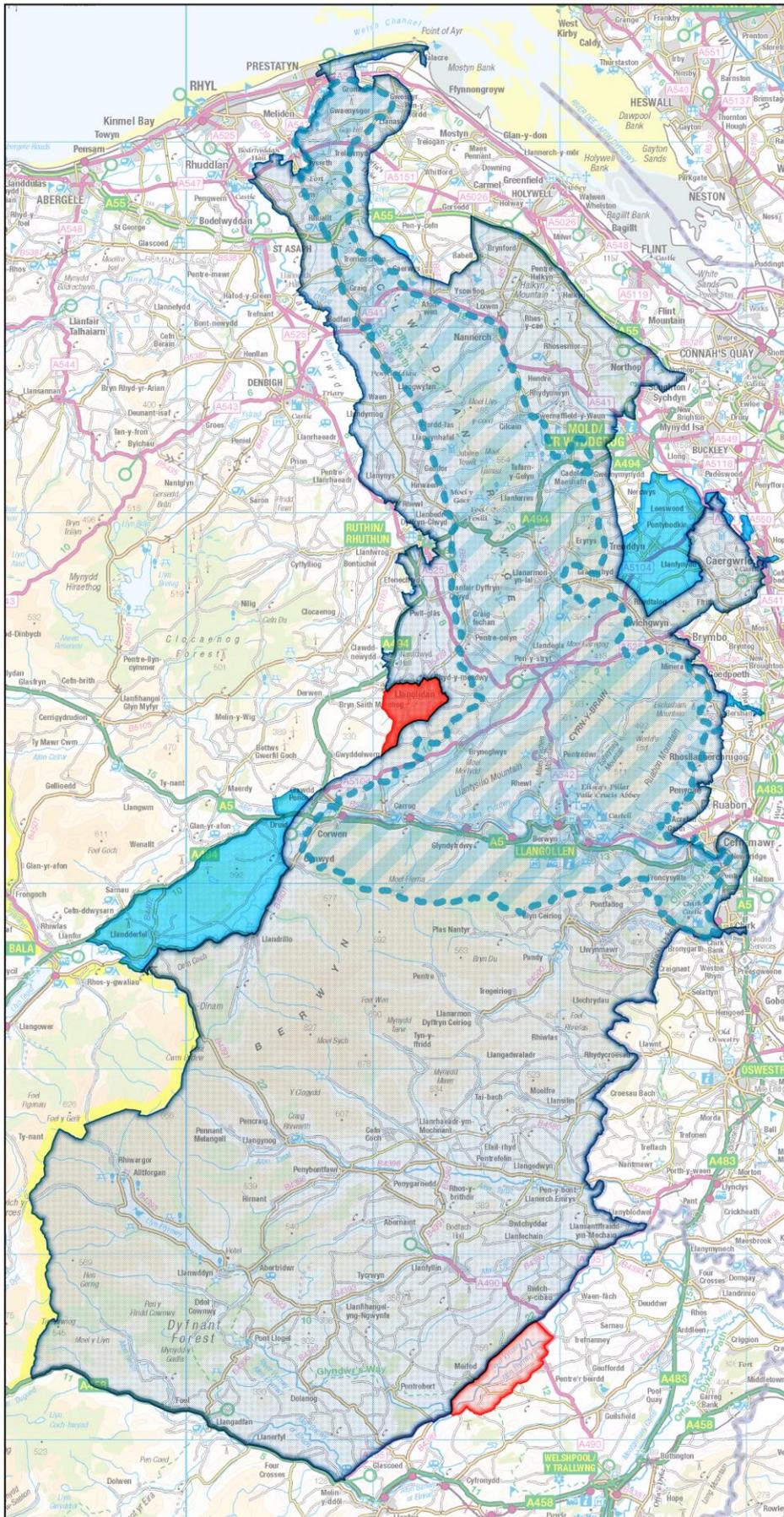
¹² Natural Resource Wales (June 2023). *Area of Search for a potential National Park in North-East Wales*

- 5.9 As far as possible, the EA mapping has also considered broad patterns of aspect area values. Where feasible, the mapping of the EAs reflect the boundary of the National Landscape although where this splits an aspect area, subdivisions have been made where a relatively extensive area of non-National Landscape exists.
- 5.10 The 32 EAs within the study area and the associated coverage of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (NL) are listed in **Table 1**. The EAs which are wholly or mostly with the National Landscape are highlighted in **bold**.

Table 1: Evaluation Areas

EA ref.	EA name	National Landscape coverage
EA1	Talacre and Gronant Dunes	All of EA outside of the NL
EA2	Prestatyn-Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau	All of EA within the NL, apart from 1 km eastern buffer
EA3	Vale of Clwyd North at St Asaph	All of EA outside of the NL
EA4	Clwydian Range North	All of EA within the NL
EA5	Caerwys Lowlands	All of EA outside of the NL, apart from a small area adjacent to EA4
EA6	Halkyn Mountain	All of EA outside of the NL
EA7	Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin	All of EA outside of the NL, apart from eastern fringe adjacent to EA8
EA8	Clwydian Range Central	All of EA within the NL
EA9	Wheeler Valley	All of EA within of the NL, apart from a small area adjacent to EA6
EA10	Mold Lowlands	All of EA outside of the NL, apart from western fringe adjacent to EA8
EA11	Eryrys Uplands	All of EA within the NL
EA12	Alyn Valley	All of EA within the NL
EA13	Eryrys Slopes	All of EA outside of the NL
EA14	Hope Mountain	All of EA outside of the NL
EA15	Clwydian Range South	All of EA within the NL
EA16	Pwll-Glâs	All of EA outside of the NL
EA17	Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain	All of EA within the NL, apart from 1 km western buffer
EA18	Rhos Slopes	All of EA within the NL, apart from 1 km eastern buffer
EA19	Dee Valley and Llangollen	All of EA within the NL, apart from 1 km east and west buffers
EA20	Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley	All of EA outside of the NL
EA21	Berwyn Mountains North	All of EA outside of the NL, apart from northern area adjacent to EA19
EA22	Berwyn Foothills North	Northern half adjacent to EA19 within NL
EA23	Ceiriog Valley	All of EA outside of the NL, apart from eastern end
EA24	Berwyn Foothills South	All of EA outside of the NL
EA25	Berwyn Mountains South	All of EA outside of the NL
EA26	Tanat Valley	All of EA outside of the NL
EA27	Llyn Efyrnwy	All of EA outside of the NL
EA28	Hirnant and Rhialgwn	All of EA outside of the NL
EA29	Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills	All of EA outside of the NL
EA30	Severn Farmlands North	All of EA outside of the NL
EA31	Dyfnant Forest	All of EA outside of the NL
EA32	Severn Farmlands South	All of EA outside of the NL

Figure 2: Revised Area of Search



A Proposed National Park for Wales

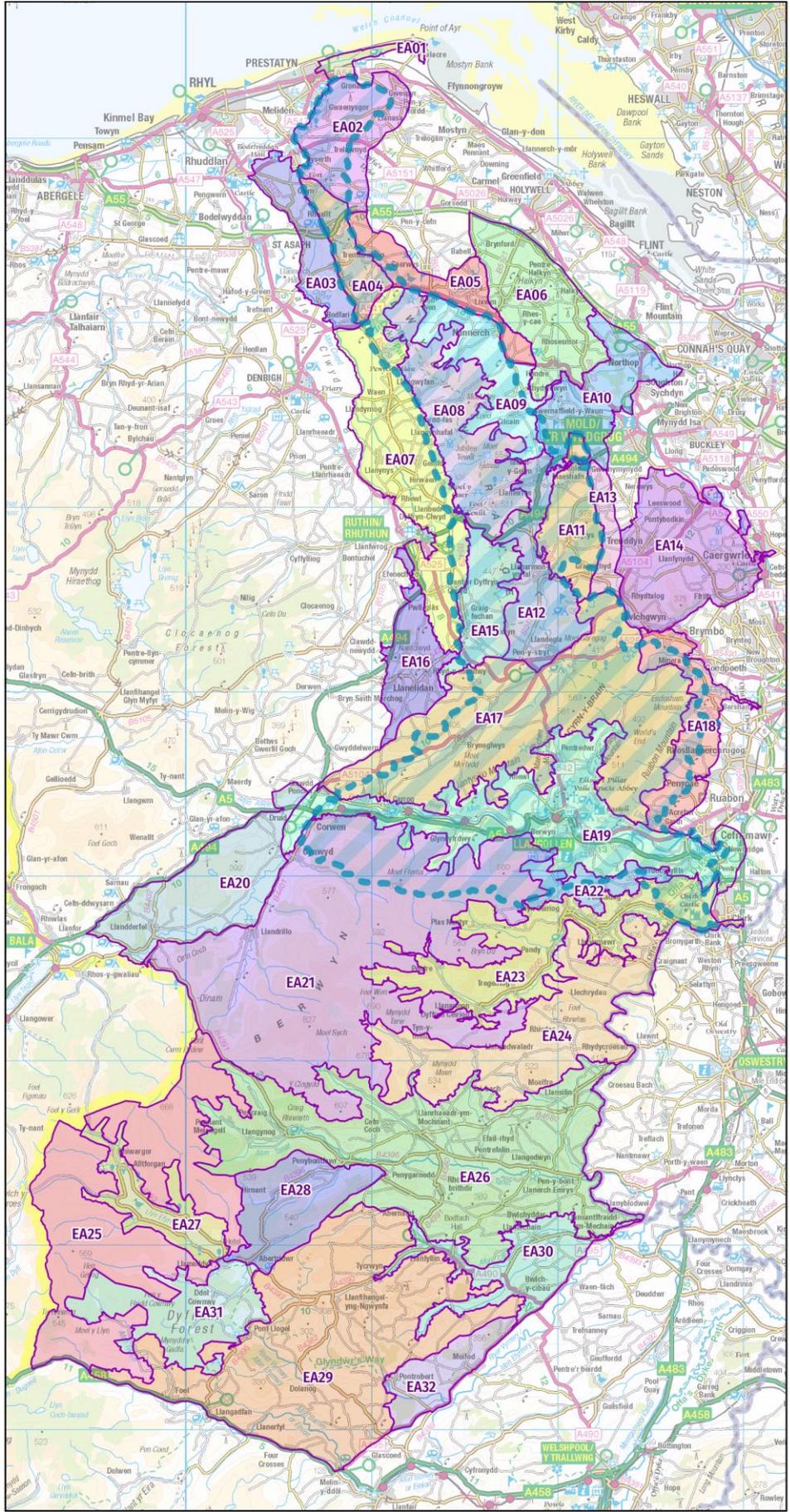
Figure 2 - Revised Area of Search

-  Initial Area of Search Boundary
-  Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape
-  NRW Extensions to Area of Search
- Consultant Extensions**
-  Included in Area of Search
-  Excluded from Area of Search



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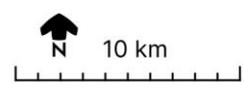
Figure 3: Evaluation Areas



A Proposed National Park for Wales

Figure 3 - Evaluation Areas with National Landscape

- Evaluation Area
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape
- EA01 Talacre and Gronant Dunes
- EA02 Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau
- EA03 Vale of Clwyd North at St Asaph
- EA04 Clwydian Range North
- EA05 Caerwys Lowlands
- EA06 Halkyn Mountain
- EA07 Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin
- EA08 Clwydian Range Central
- EA09 Wheeler Valley
- EA10 Mold Lowlands
- EA11 Eryrys Uplands
- EA12 Alyn Valley
- EA13 Eryrys Slopes
- EA14 Hope Mountain
- EA15 Clwydian Range South
- EA16 Pwll Glas
- EA17 Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain
- EA18 Rhos Slopes
- EA19 Dee Valley and Llangollen
- EA20 Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley
- EA21 Berwyn Mountains North
- EA22 Berwyn Foothills North
- EA23 Ceiriog Valley
- EA24 Berwyn Foothills South
- EA25 Berwyn Mountains South
- EA26 Tanat Valley
- EA27 Llyn Efyrrwng
- EA28 Hirnant and Rhalgwm
- EA29 Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills
- EA30 Severn Farmlands North
- EA31 Dyfnant Forest
- EA32 Severn Farmlands South



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6. METHODOLOGY

NATURAL BEAUTY EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The methodology for determining whether any parts of the study area merit inclusion within a proposed National Park Candidate Area is underpinned by NRW's procedural guidance¹³. As noted in Chapter 2, the guidance identifies the main factors relating to natural beauty are:

- Landscape quality;
- Scenic quality;
- Relative wildness;
- Relative tranquillity;
- Natural heritage features; and
- Cultural heritage.

6.2 In setting out a framework for the evaluation of these six natural beauty factors, Table 4 of the guidance sets out the following factors, sub-factors and associated indicators:

Table 2: NRW suggested factors and indicators for the evaluation natural beauty

Factors	Sub-factors	Indicators
Scenic quality	Aesthetic appeal.	Interest in terms of factors such as scale, form, patterns, enclosure, colour, texture, variety, ephemeral or seasonal interest.
	Striking landform or visual interest.	Striking landform types or features; memorable or unusual views; eye-catching features or landmarks.
	Spiritual or emotional impact on people.	Public and professional consensus that landscape is beautiful.
Sense of place	Unity and distinctiveness of landscape character.	Clear, distinct and recognisable landscape character.
	'Bro' i.e., sense of identity or bond between people and place.	Strong links perceived between communities and their landscape.
Landscape quality	Intactness of the landscape.	Characteristic natural and man-made elements are well represented throughout.
	Condition of the landscape (insofar as this helps to deliver distinctiveness).	Landscape elements are in good condition.
Integrity	Unspoilt rural character.	Relatively few overt industrial or urban influences
	General lack of large-scale, visually intrusive or otherwise inharmonious development.	Incongruous elements are limited, are not visually intrusive, have only localised influence, or are temporary in nature.
Perceptual qualities	Relative wildness.	Low degree of human influence e.g., due to extensive semi-natural vegetation; few built features; openness and exposure to the elements.

¹³ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

Factors	Sub-factors	Indicators
	Relative tranquillity.	Presence and/or perceptions of natural landscape, birdsong, peace and quiet, natural-looking woodland, stars at night, streams and/or sea, natural sounds and similar influences.
	Sense of remoteness and freedom.	Relatively few roads or other transport routes; distant from or perceived as distant from human habitation.
	Timelessness.	Sense of the passing of time and a return to nature due to apparent absence of human intervention.
Associations of artistic and cultural importance	Important associations of the landscape with people, places or events.	Evidence that the landscape has associations with notable people, places or events, past or present.
	Descriptions or expressions of the landscape through literature, painting, music or other art forms; or through language, folklore or modern media.	Descriptions of the landscape in notable literature, topographical writings, or guidebooks, or significant literature inspired by the landscape.
		Depiction of the landscape in art, photography, film or music, or through language or folklore.
Rarity or representativeness	Rarity of the landscape as a whole or elements and features within it.	Presence of a rare type of landscape or rare landscape elements or features.
	Representativeness of the landscape as a whole, or elements and features within it.	Presence of representative examples of a landscape type, or type of landscape element or feature.
Conservation interest	Presence within the landscape of features of particular earth science, wildlife, archaeological, historical or cultural interest that add value to the landscape.	Presence of geology, wildlife and/or habitats, visible archaeological remains, parkland and/or designed landscapes, settlements, buildings or other structures that contribute to scenic quality and sense of place.
		Presence of striking or memorable geomorphological features.
		Presence of particular species that contribute to sense of relative wildness or tranquillity.
		Presence of historic landscape types, elements or features that reveal time- depth or historic influence on the landscape.

6.3 In order to provide an evaluation framework that directly relates to the six main factors of natural beauty (as listed in para. 6.1), the project team, with agreement from NRW, have amalgamated some of the above factors together. Table 3 explains how these factors have been merged.

Table 3: Amalgamation of NRW factors into the evaluation framework

NRW evaluation factors	Incorporation into evaluation framework
Scenic quality	Part of Scenic Quality criterion.
Sense of place	Sense of place incorporated into Scenic Quality criterion.
Landscape quality	Part of Landscape Quality criterion.
Integrity	Integrity incorporated into Landscape Quality criterion.

NRW evaluation factors	Incorporation into evaluation framework
Rarity or representativeness	Rarity or representativeness incorporated into Landscape Quality criterion.
Perceptual qualities	Subfactors of relative wildness, sense of remoteness and freedom, and Timelessness incorporated into Relative Wildness criterion. Subfactor of relative tranquillity forms part of the Relative Tranquillity criterion.
Associations	Associations incorporated into Cultural Interest criterion.
Artistic and cultural importance	Artistic and cultural importance incorporated into Cultural Interest criterion.
Conservation interest	Presence of designated/recorded features of natural interest incorporated into Natural Interest criterion. Presence of designated/recorded features of cultural interest incorporated into Cultural Interest criterion.

6.4 Based on the factors drawn from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) statement on natural beauty¹⁴ and the factors and indicators for open-air recreation as stated in table 5 of NRW's procedural guidance¹⁵, Table 4 sets out how the NRW evaluation factors have been further refined through the identification of seven evaluation criteria, with associated factors and indicators. Together, these provide a practical framework for the detailed technical work of assembling an evidence base for making judgments about natural beauty and the provision and enjoyment of open-air recreation. The factors and indicators listed are the main relevant ones, but the list is not exhaustive and other factors may also apply in exceptional circumstances. Moreover, not all factors will be relevant in every case, and some may be absent in many cases.

Table 4: Evaluation framework

Criteria	Factors considered	Example indicators
NATURAL BEAUTY CRITERIA		
Landscape quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The current physical state or condition of the landscape and its features. ■ Intactness/integrity of the landscape. ■ The influence of incongruous features, elements or land use on the perceived natural beauty of the area. ■ Variation in quality. ■ Rarity and typicality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Characteristic natural and man-made elements are well represented throughout. ■ Landscape elements are in good condition. ■ Incongruous elements are not present to a significant degree, are not visually intrusive, have only localised influence or are temporary in nature. ■ A good quality and typical example of a landscape type. ■ A good quality and rare example of a landscape type.
Scenic quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, visual). ■ The degree of diversity of landform, vegetation cover and settlement. ■ Does the landscape, or part of it, form an iconic or landmark feature? ■ Does the juxtaposition and contrast of this landscape with adjacent landscapes contribute to wider scenic composition? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Landscape character lends a clear and recognisable sense of place. ■ Landform shows a strong sense of scale or contrast. ■ There are striking landform types or coastal configurations. ■ Land cover and vegetation types form an appealing pattern or composition in relation to each other and/or to landform which may be appreciated from either a vantage point or as one travels through a landscape.

¹⁴ Countryside Council for Wales (2006). *A Statement on Natural Beauty*

¹⁵ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

Criteria	Factors considered	Example indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consideration of the setting the landscape may provide to key archaeological/historic features or settlements within the Evaluation Area. ■ The integrity of the landscape in terms of its composition, for example, is it fragmented by built infrastructure in places? ■ Consideration of experiential qualities such as the 'sense of place' and aesthetic qualities (such as colour, texture, contrast, change). ■ The quality of views, including consideration of whether there are focal points, revelatory or panoramic views to and from the landscape or whether views are more contained and intimate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong aesthetic qualities, reflecting factors such as scale and form, degree of openness or enclosure, colours and textures, simplicity or diversity, and ephemeral or seasonal interest. ■ Memorable or unusual views and eye-catching features or landmarks. ■ Characteristic cognitive and sensory stimuli (e.g. sounds, quality of light, characteristic smells, characteristics of the weather). ■ Visible presence of geological features in the landscape.
Relative wildness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape and makes a particular contribution to sense of place. ■ A relative lack of human influence. ■ A sense of openness and exposure. ■ A sense of enclosure and isolation. ■ A sense of the passing of time and a return to nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relatively few roads or other transport routes. ■ Distant from or perceived as distant from significant habitation. ■ Extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation. ■ Uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features and few overt industrial or urban influences. ■ Open, exposed to the elements and expansive in character. ■ Sense of enclosure provided by (e.g.) woodland or landform that offers a feeling of isolation. ■ Absence or apparent absence of active human intervention.
Relative tranquillity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape. ■ Contributors to tranquillity. ■ Detractors from tranquillity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presence and/or perceptions of natural landscape, birdsong, peace and quiet, natural-looking woodland, stars at night, stream, sea, natural sounds and similar influences. ■ Presence and/or perceptions of traffic noise, large numbers of people, industrial or urban development, overhead light pollution, low flying aircraft, power lines and similar influences.
Natural interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes wildlife, habitats, flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features. ■ The coverage of international, national and regional designations. ■ Judgements on perceptual qualities such the relative modification of the landscape and the degree of seclusion or remoteness experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visible expression of geology in vernacular architecture contributing to a distinctive sense of place or other aspects of natural beauty. ■ Presence of visually striking or memorable geomorphological features that make a particular contribution to natural beauty. ■ Presence of wildlife and/or habitats that make a particular contribution to natural beauty. ■ Presence of individual species that contribute to sense of place, relative wildness or tranquillity.

Criteria	Factors considered	Example indicators
Cultural interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular traditions, people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception. ■ The presence of and national and regional designations and other recorded non-designated features. ■ Contribution of the built environment, archaeology and designed landscapes. ■ Historic influence on the landscape and associated time-depth appearance. ■ Characteristic land management practices. ■ Associations with written descriptions. ■ Associations with artistic representations. ■ Associations of the landscape with 'Bro', language, people, places or events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to perceptions of natural beauty. ■ Presence of visible archaeological remains, parkland or designed landscapes that provide striking features in the landscape contributing to perceptions of natural beauty. ■ Visible presence of historic landscape types or specific landscape elements or features that provide evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape. ■ Perceptions of a harmonious balance between natural and cultural elements in the landscape that stretch back over time. ■ Existence of characteristic land management practices, industries or crafts which contribute to natural beauty. ■ Availability of descriptions of the landscape in notable literature, topographical writings or guidebooks, or significant literature inspired by the natural beauty of a landscape. ■ Depiction of the landscape in art, other art forms such as photography or film, through language or folklore, or in inspiring related music contributing to perceptions of natural beauty. ■ Evidence that the landscape has associations with notable people or events, cultural traditions or beliefs which contribute to perceptions of natural beauty.
RECREATION CRITERIA		
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to high quality landscapes. ■ Natural or cultural heritage features or cultural associations. ■ Recreation provision. ■ Accessibility. ■ Potential for enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Good access (physically and / or visually) to areas that offer an experience of high landscape quality and/or scenic quality and/or relative tranquillity and wildness. ■ Presence of natural features, recognised or valued landmarks or other features of interest which enrich the experience of the landscape or contribute to understanding of special qualities or sense of place. ■ Presence of extensive network of rights of way or extent of open access land over much of the area. ■ Opportunities to enjoy a range of different provision for quiet recreational activity. ■ Transport links, including sustainable options, to centres of population. ■ Provision of recreation opportunities suitable for a wide range of people and levels of ability. ■ Possible plans to improve provision for access to or quiet enjoyment of the landscape, so as to provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities, by new provision or improved management of existing provision.

DESK STUDY

6.5 As part of the desk study phase, a wide range of background reading and research has been undertaken to help inform the evaluation phase. As an overview, the main sources of information considered are as follows:

NRW's AoS Report

6.6 The Area of Search (AoS) Report¹⁶ and the associated reports on special qualities¹⁷ and forces for change¹⁸ provided an excellent starting point to understand the key reasons for potential designation. In conclusion, the AoS Report states:

“Our starting point has been Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. Following our analysis of Natural Beauty using LANDMAP and GIS mapping across the north east Wales region, we identified a number of additional areas outside of the existing AONB. We found that some areas have a strong geographical and visual relationship with the AONB, and/or share similar landscape characteristics. Adding these areas to the AONB started to help define a potential extensive tract of land, with a north east Wales sense of identity, cohesion and unity....We have reviewed the existing outdoor activities and attractions within the Area of Search. This shows that opportunities for open air recreation - associated with the landscapes, natural and built heritage of the area is well represented within the existing AONB and the wider Area of Search. Attractions in the southern portion of the area are slightly more dispersed, due to the extensiveness of the Berwyn uplands and remoteness. Opportunities for outdoor activities are however present.”

LANDMAP data

6.7 As noted in Chapter 4, the identification of the EAs is primarily based on the LANDMAP Visual and Sensory aspect layer and the associated level 3 typology. To maintain consistency with this, the desk study phase considered a number of key LANDMAP Visual and Sensory attributes¹⁹ that are particularly relevant to the six natural beauty evaluation criteria. As recorded in the subsequent EA assessments (see Chapter 7) these are:

- Summary description
- Integrity and quality
- Rarity
- Condition
- Trend
- Scenic quality
- Sense of place
- Distinctiveness
- Perceptual and other sensory qualities
- Night-time light pollution

Landscape Character Assessments

6.8 Although there is no consistent coverage of landscape character assessments within the AoS, the following assessments have been particularly useful in providing supplementary evidence to most of the EA assessments:

- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty²⁰
- Powys Landscape Character Assessment²¹

Designated natural, cultural and recreational features

6.9 In addition to LANDMAP and landscape character information, the evaluation of natural beauty and recreation also considers the number and extent of designated natural, cultural and recreational assets, and the degree to which these contribute to the experience of natural beauty. As mapped in **Figures 4-35**, the main data sets considered are listed in Table 5 below:

¹⁶ Natural Resource Wales (June 2023). *Area of Search for a potential National Park in North-East Wales*

¹⁷ Craggatak Consulting (March 2024). *Identification of the special qualities of the area of search for a potential new National Park in North East Wales*

¹⁸ Land Use Consultants (April 2024). *Forces for Change for North East Wales National Park Area of Search*

¹⁹ Natural Resource Wales (March 2024). *LANDMAP methodology: survey questions and definitions*

²⁰ Denbighshire County Council (March 2024). *Supplementary Planning Guidance Note - Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB*

²¹ Land Use Consultants (March 2022). *Local Landscape Character Assessment for the Powys Local Development Plan Area*

Table 5: Mapped designated data sets

Natural	Cultural	Recreational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramsar’s • Special Areas of Conservation (SCAs) • Special Protection Areas (SPAs) • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) • National Nature Reserves (NNRs) • Ancient Woodlands (including plantations) • Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGSs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Landscapes of Historic Outstanding and Special Interest (RLHOSIs) • Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) • Scheduled Monuments • Listed Buildings • Conservation Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Trails • National Cycle Network Routes • Regionally important trails • Public Rights of Way • Open Access Land • Country Parks • Forest Recreation Areas

Historic Environment Record

- 6.10 In addition to the contribution of designated cultural assets, the evaluation also considers the wealth of information contained within the Historic Environment Record (HER). Although it is not practical to list every record, a summary interrogation has been undertaken for each EA.

Recreational literature

- 6.11 As well as the recreational data listed in Table 5, the evaluation has considered a wide range of published recreational literature, such as promoted walks and trails.

FIELD SURVEY

- 6.12 The detailed field survey took place over 12 days during June 2024 and was undertaken by two senior Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute, with significant experience in working on designated landscapes, undertaking landscape designations studies and a wealth of recreational enjoyment of many of the UK’s National Landscapes. On several days, a third team member was also involved.
- 6.13 The field work covered issues identified through the desk study evaluation and focused on collecting the key information on perceptual and scenic qualities, and how all the factors of natural beauty work together in combination in any particular place. The field survey also identified the key landscape features and attributes that contribute to the experience of natural beauty, and conversely, the landscape elements, land uses and land cover that detract from it. It also considered spatial variations in natural beauty, the provision and enjoyment of open-air recreation, and any issues relating to potential boundary refinement that was undertaken as a separate exercise during September 2024.

EVALUATION REPORTING AND RATINGS

- 6.14 Following the completion of the field survey, a detailed written analysis for each EA was undertaken (see Chapter 7) and for each of the seven evaluation criteria, an evaluation rating has been identified. In addition to the LANDMAP evaluation scores (where relevant), the ratings also consider the findings of the field survey and associated analysis. The ratings are based on a five-point scale of high, high-medium, medium, medium-low and low.
- 6.15 The criteria used for making judgements against this 5-point scale is based on the principles of landscape evaluation, as described in Chapter 5 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment²². As a guide, an EA criterion which scores a medium-high value is generally considered to be potentially worthy of a National Park designation although in

²² Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, version 3.

most instances where an EA is recommended for inclusion within the proposed Candidate Area, it should be noted that in line with NRW procedural guidance, not all criteria are required to score highly. As a general rule, areas of landscape whose character is judged to be intact and in good condition, and where scenic quality, wildness and tranquillity, and natural and/or cultural heritage features make a particular contribution to the landscape, are likely to be highly valued. Ultimately, recommendations for proposed Candidate inclusion are based on a professional judgment that considers the spatial distribution of factors relating to natural beauty and recreation, and how each of the evaluation criteria combine to underpin the appreciation of natural beauty. Within this context, Table 6 identifies the parameters that have guided the professional judgment of assessment criterion.

Table 6: Overview of evaluation rating definitions

Criteria	Low	High
Landscape quality	The physical state of the landscape and its features are generally in poor condition, with no or little variation in quality. The landscape offers no or very little contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.	The physical state of the landscape and its features are generally in very good condition, with no or little variation in quality. The landscape quality makes an important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.
Scenic quality	The landscape offers no or very little positive appeal to the senses, nor contribution to the wider scenic composition. It contains no iconic landscape features, is highly fragmented by built development and land use change and offers no or very little visual diversity and quality.	The landscape very noticeably appeals to the senses and contributes to the wider scenic composition. It contains iconic landscape features, is highly intact and offers a very good diversity and quality of visual experience.
Relative wildness	No or very little wild character can be perceived in the landscape.	A relatively high degree of wild character can be perceived in the landscape that makes an important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.
Relative tranquillity	No or very little tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.	A relatively high degree of tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape that makes an important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.
Natural interest	No or very little coverage of internationally/nationally important natural heritage features and other natural interests.	A relatively large coverage of internationally/nationally important natural heritage features and other important interests that that make an important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.
Cultural interest	No or very little coverage of nationally important cultural heritage features, and other associations and interests.	A relatively large coverage of nationally important natural heritage features and other important interests/associations that make an important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty.
Recreation	The landscape offers no or very little provision of accessible open-air recreational provision, with no or very little opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape.	The landscape provides a very good range of widespread and easily accessible open-air opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape.

PROPOSED CANDIDATE AREA BOUNDARY REFINEMENT

6.16 On completion of the evaluation phase, the proposed Candidate Area boundary was then subject to a further phase of detailed boundary refinement. A summary of this is set out in Chapter 8 of this report.

7. EVALUATION OF NATURAL BEAUTY AND OPEN-AIR RECREATION

7.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the detailed evaluation for each of the 32 EAs, as listed in Table 1 (see page 11) and mapped in **Figure 3** (see page 13). In addition to an analysis and associated evaluation rating for each of the seven factors relating to natural beauty and open-air recreation as detailed in Table 4 (see page 16), the landscape context of each EA is also described. As a summary, an evaluation on the overall weight and spatial distribution of factors relating to natural beauty open-air recreation evidence is then presented, and in conclusion, whether or not the EA (or part of) is recommended for inclusion within a proposed Candidate Area for potential National Park designation.

EVALUATION AREA 1

EA1: Talacre and Gronant Dunes	
Landscape context	
<p>Located at the northernmost part of the AoS, all of the <i>Talacre and Gronant Dunes</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, although to the south-west, the EA adjoins it. To the south, EA2 (<i>Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau</i>) provides a distinctive rural backdrop but with the coastal resort of Prestatyn located alongside the western boundary, along with the A548 passing through the southern part, most of the EA exhibits a relatively settled and busy context.</p> <p>The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of Dunes & Dune Slack, Estuary, Lowland Wetland and Flat Open Lowland Farmland visual and sensory LANDMAP units. There are also small Intertidal and Urban areas. Collectively, these units form an east-west orientated coastal landscape, with the western part located within Denbighshire, and the eastern part within Flintshire.</p> <p>To the north of the EA, a coastal beach comprises mostly of a single ridge of sand dunes backed by open grassland, with fine views of shingle beach and sea. At the Point of Ayr, sand dunes and saltmarsh lie adjacent to the Dee Estuary with marram grass backed by moribund dunes with establishing scrub including willow. The saltmarsh is completely flat and open with exposed views of the estuary. To the south of the EA, an area of flat open farmland forms part of a wider coastal plain drained by ditches, with occasional areas of wetland.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Dunes & Dune Slack, Estuary and Wetland units exhibit a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the flat open lowland farmland units assessed as ‘low’ and ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Estuary unit is considered to be ‘outstanding’ as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The Wetland and Dunes & Dune Slack units are assessed as having a ‘high’ rarity, with the Flat Open Lowland Farmland units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The condition of all units is assessed as ‘fair’, apart from the Dunes & Dune Slack, which are ‘good’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is ‘declining’, apart from the Flat Open Lowland Farmland units which are ‘constant’. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the largely intact composition of sand dune and wetland habitats exhibit a high landscape quality, the ‘low’ and ‘moderate’ quality that LANDMAP identifies for the lowland farmland units results in noticeable juxtaposition that affects the appreciation of natural beauty. ■ Within and adjacent to the areas of lowland farmland, the landscape is often fragmented by the influence of incongruous elements and land uses, such as a golf course, the busy A548 main road

EA1: Talacre and Gronant Dunes

	<p>and large caravan parks. Many of the hedgerows within the lowland farmland are also gappy and in poor condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Storms have caused the loss of frontal dunes at Barkby Beach where a protection bund runs along the back edge of the saltmarsh and dunes. ■ Leisure uses also are encroaching upon the dunes to the west and a car park at the Point of Ayr detracts from the locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Dunes & Dune Slack, Estuary and Wetland units exhibit a 'strong' sense of place, with the Flat Open Lowland Farmland units assessed as 'moderate'. ■ The Wetland unit is assessed as having an 'outstanding' distinctiveness, the Dunes & Dune Slack and Estuary units 'high', and the Lowland Farmland units assessed as 'moderate'. ■ The Dunes & Dune Slack, Estuary and Wetland units exhibit a 'high' scenic quality, with the two Flat Open Lowland Farmland units assessed as 'moderate' and 'low'. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across the northern part of the EA, the interplay of semi-natural dune and wetland habitats, and extensive beach, sea and large skies underpins a highly scenic seascape composition. ■ The colours and textures of semi-natural vegetation add visual interest, as well as contributing to a very strong sense of place. ■ From the open beach and accessible dunes, there are panoramic views over the Irish Sea that with good visibility, extend to the distant outline of the Lake District National Park and the Isle of Man. ■ Talacre lighthouse forms a very distinctive focal point from most parts of the open coastline. ■ The partially wooded slopes of the <i>Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau Trelawnyd Plateau</i> (EA2) provide a distinctive and highly scenic National Landscape backdrop to the EA. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, the appreciation of some inland views and the associated scenic quality are often diminished by a proliferation of intrusive built development and incongruous land uses around the southern, western and eastern fringes of the EA. ■ In places, offshore wind turbines also detract from the scenic quality of the seascape. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Dunes & Dune Slack, Estuary and Wetland units exhibit 'wild' and 'remote/exposed' qualities. ■ All other units have 'settled' influence and therefore, are not considered to be remote or wild. <p>The following factors also contribute to a sense of relative wildness and the associated appreciation of natural beauty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extensive composition of semi-natural and natural coastal habitats contributes to a strong sense of wildness across most northern parts of the EA, particularly to the east. This is further emphasised by the exposure to adverse winter weather conditions.

EA1: Talacre and Gronant Dunes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relative lack of human influence, a sense of isolation can sometimes be experienced from within the dunes and parts of the beach. <p>Inland however, any sense of relative wildness within the agricultural landscape and the golf course is very difficult to discern.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the Wetland and Estuary units, most parts of the landscape are subject to noise and activity. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, none of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although parts of the beach and sand dunes can offer a sense of peace and quiet at times, with nearby caravan parks and good access from Prestatyn, the beach can be very busy during periods of good weather. ■ Inland, noise from the busy A548 along with activity taking place in the nearby settlements, results in very little, if any, sense of tranquillity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 4a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Dee Estuary (Wales) Ramsar site, covering approx. 72% of the EA. ■ The Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy SAC, covering approx. 56% of the EA. ■ The Dee Estuary (Wales) SPA, covering approx. 72% of the EA. ■ The Gronant Dunes and Talacre Warren SSSI, covering approx. 52% of the EA. ■ The Dee Estuary / Aber Afon Dyfrdwy SSSI, covering approx. 1% of the EA ■ An area of a Restored Ancient Woodland Site, covering approx. 0.5% of the EA. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the EA's natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a suite of nationally and internationally important nature conservation designations (as well as a Nature Reserve) covering most of the EA, the variety and wealth of natural interest significantly contributes to a strong sense of being close to nature. ■ The composition of dune systems, marram grass, wetlands and native wildflowers notably contribute to a distinctive natural character and along the coast, the natural dynamics of the marine environment heighten the sense of naturalness. ■ Species of note include Natterjack Toads that breed in shallow pools and a migrating Little Tern colony that breed in the dunes. Interesting dune plants include marram grass, Sea Holly and Glasswort. The mudflats also attract many birds such as Oystercatcher. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Cultural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 4b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Listed Buildings – Nant Hall Hotel and Point of Ayr Lighthouse (both listed Grade II). <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p>

EA1: Talacre and Gronant Dunes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A wide range of sites, mostly relating to navigation/marine safety (lighthouse and associated cottages, lifeboat station) or 20th Century defences (pill boxes and gunnery range). ■ A warren suggests medieval rabbit rearing within the sandy dunes, and there are some later industrial archaeology sites. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes marginal land (dunes/foreshore).</p> <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic features related to maritime safety (Lighthouse, lifeboat station, etc.) ■ World War II defensive structures, relating to the vulnerability of this stretch of coast/estuary to enemy attack. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 4c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A section of the Wales Coast Path leads through the sand dunes. ■ National Cycle Network Route 5 follows the southern bank of the Prestatyn Gutter and then leads south towards Gronant and the National Landscape beyond. ■ There are several sections of PRoW, two of which provide links to the beach from nearby residential areas. <p>Further research and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is very good access to and through the dunes, beach and local nature reserve, all of which are located in close proximity to large centres of population. ■ The easily accessible beach and dunes provide an excellent resource to enjoy the natural beauty of the scenic seascape, and the associated natural and cultural interests. ■ There are several locally and nationally promoted walks along the coast. ■ Although outside of the EA, the Offa's Dyke Centre is located at the nearby Prestatyn beach. ■ The farmed landscape to the south of the EA is largely inaccessible. <p>Overall, the recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as high.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>With a very large part of the EA covered by nationally/internationally important nature conservation designations, there is no doubt that natural interest of the EA is outstanding. Related to this, the composition of extensive semi-natural and natural habitats underpins a very strong and distinctive sense of place, with a high landscape and scenic quality. The provision of open-air recreation and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the coast is also excellent.</p> <p>However, the landscape and scenic quality of the EA as a whole is affected by the much lower quality of the farmland and a golf course to the south. As part of this, a proliferation of intrusive built development and incongruous land uses around the southern, western and eastern fringes of the EA notably erode and detract from the experience of natural beauty, especially when viewed from higher ground to the south. Furthermore, there is only a very narrow corridor of lesser quality landscape within the EA that could potentially connect the higher quality coastal landscape to north with the National Landscape to the south. Considering all of these factors, it is recommended that all of EA should be excluded from the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Extensive sand dune habitats



Easy access through the dunes



Floristic diversity



Point of Ayr Lighthouse



Lowland farmland adjacent to A548 and caravan park



Visitor car park at Point of Ayr



Prestatyn in the backdrop to the golf course



Coastal protection at Barky Beach

EVALUATION AREA 2

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau	
Landscape context	
<p>Located to the south of EA1 (<i>Talacre and Gronant Dunes</i>), all of the <i>Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, apart from a 1 km swath of outer hillslopes that form the eastern EA boundary. The almost adjoining settlements of Prestatyn, Meliden/Gallt Melyd and Dyserth lie adjacent to the western boundary of the EA, and to the south, there is a marked transition to the uplands of EA4 (<i>Clwydian Range North</i>).</p> <p>The majority of the EA is formed by an amalgamation of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Open Rolling Lowland visual and sensory LANDMAP units. There are also smaller areas of Mosaic Rolling Lowlands, Mosaic Lowland Valleys and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units, along with some Dispersed Settlement and Villages.</p> <p>To the north of the EA, distinctive limestone coastal hills are characterised by traditional farmland covered in a mixture of open calcareous and improved grasslands. Along the northern fringes, steep scarp slopes with areas of scrub and dwarf woodland, have a strong exposed coastal influence. To the west of the hills, the scarp is well wooded with limestone rock outcrops. To the east of Trelawnyd, gently rolling lowland farmland has a strong pattern of small regular and irregular pastoral fields enclosed by thick hedges with trees. To the north of Axton, a unique area of scattered linear & angular patterned settlements on limestone commons exhibits a small scale traditional character. To north of the limestone commons, the Afon-y-Garth valley has a sheltered estate character. To the south-west of the EA, an extensive plateau is characterised by a number of limestone features including stone buildings, stone walls and limestone outcrops. Some small scale conifer plantations also dominate the scene in places. To south-east of the EA, rolling farmland is typified by large sized regular mixed fields with blocks of conifer woodland punctuating hilltops.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
Landscape quality	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The larger areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Open Rolling Lowland units exhibit a 'moderate' integrity and quality, with most other units assessed as 'high'. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit (Coastal Limestone Hills near Prestatyn) is considered to be 'outstanding' as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The larger areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Open Rolling Lowland units exhibit a 'moderate' rarity, with most other units assessed as 'high'. ■ For the units that have been assessed, landscape condition is either 'fair' or 'good'. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing, Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units, and an area of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland is assessed as 'declining', with all other units assessed as 'constant'. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The composition of mature broadleaved woodlands (some Ancient) and dense intact hedgerows on the northern slopes exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. ■ The steep limestone escarpment to the west of the unit is well wooded and in association with its rocky outcrops, it forms an intact feature and robust edge to the National Landscape. ■ Areas of estate parkland to the north-east of the EA are generally intact and their wooded appearance has a notable influence on the quality of the local landscape. ■ Sheltered valleys tend to have an intact field pattern of small to medium sized pastures with strong hedgerow boundaries. ■ Stone walls on the plateau are generally in reasonable condition.

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and small woodlands (some Ancient), follow the valley sides and hill slopes although in places, small scale conifer plantations detract from the quality of the local landscape. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In some places, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ Particularly to the north and east, the suburban appearance of some scattered farmsteads detract from the rural character of their surroundings. The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can also appear unsympathetic with their local setting. ■ In comparison to the southern part of the EA, parts of the landscape to the north and the hillslopes to its east tend to be of a lesser landscape quality. ■ In the north-west of the EA, intrusive telecommunication masts have negative influence on the local landscape. ■ The busy A5151 dissects the EA, resulting in some localised landscape fragmentation. ■ The impact of Ash dieback also affects landscape quality in places. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approximately half of the EA units (and total EA area) exhibit a 'strong' sense of place, with the remaining half assessed as 'moderate'. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit (Coastal Limestone Hills near Prestatyn) exhibits an 'outstanding' distinctiveness, with the larger areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Open Rolling Lowland units assessed as 'high'. All other units are assessed as 'moderate' or 'low', apart from a small area of Mosaic Rolling Lowland near to the coast which also 'high'. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit (Coastal Limestone Hills near Prestatyn) exhibits an 'outstanding' scenic quality, with all other units assessed as either 'high' or 'moderate', apart from an area of Mosaic Rolling Lowland which is assessed as 'low'. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Along the western edge, the enclosing limestone escarpment with its associated semi-natural woodlands and rocky outcrops form highly distinctive landscape feature. The wooded slopes and limestone outcrops of Graig Fawr that rise steeply above the village of Meliden are particularly dramatic and offer scenic views of the North Welsh coast. ■ Particularly when viewed from the north, the partially wooded northern hillslopes form a highly scenic backdrop to EA1 (<i>Talacre and Gronant Dunes</i>) and the nearby town of Prestatyn. In places, there are long views over the Irish Sea. ■ With limestone features including stone buildings, stone walls and rocky outcrops, the extensive plateau exhibits a strong sense of place. The traditional village of Llanasa is particularly picturesque. ■ With its ceremonial cairn (the largest in Wales), the partially forested slopes of Gop Hill forms a prominent landmark above the village of Trelawnyd. From the cairn, there are views over the Irish Sea and glimpses of the Dee Estuary. ■ Areas of farmland with a mosaic of field patterns and woodland along steeper ground, along with lower-lying scattered settlement, narrow lanes and streams, have a prevailing rural quality.

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau

	<p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, the presence of telecommunication masts and large modern farm buildings detract from the appreciation of scenic quality in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Areas of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic, Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and the Mosaic Rolling Lowland units exhibit 'wild' and 'remote/exposed' qualities. ■ All other units have 'settled' influence and/or a sheltered character and therefore, are not considered to be remote or wild. <p>The following factors also contribute to a sense of relative wildness and the associated appreciation of natural beauty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With rocky outcrops and a good coverage of SSSI and Ancient woodlands, the steep westerly scarp often exhibits a sense of relative wildness, particularly when experience against a juxtaposition of nearby settlement (outside of EA). ■ The northern hillslopes have a strong exposed coastal influence. ■ A localised sense of the passing of time and a return to nature can be experienced from within the pattern of Ancient woodlands scattered throughout the EA. ■ In the north of the EA, a sense of enclosure can sometimes be experienced within sheltered wooded valleys. <p>As a large part of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture however, with a network of sometimes busy roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal elsewhere.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The coastal hills, the sheltered upper Afon-y-Garth valley around Gyrn Castle and parts of the Trelogan rolling lowland farmland at the eastern margins of the EA exhibit a sense of peace and tranquillity. ■ Due to influence of settlement and roads, the sense of tranquillity is less evident within most other parts of the EA. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, only the southern of the EA experiences relatively dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within areas of woodland away from busy roads and other activity, a localised sense of peace and tranquillity can often be experienced. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 5a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5 SSSI, covering approx. 3.5% of the EA. ■ 66 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 3.5% of the EA.

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 9 RIGS sites, covering approx. 2.1 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a concentration of RIGS and SSSI woodlands on the steep westerly scarp, these semi-natural habitats and geological features significantly contribute to an outstanding natural beauty. ■ At Prestatyn hillside and Bishop’s Wood for example, wildflowers such as harebell and wild thyme thrive on the grassy upper slopes and rare junipers are also found. Woodland includes yew, Scots Pine and ancient oak, and in damp areas, bluebells and wild garlic add to seasonal interest. Fulmars also nest on the high ledges, and buzzards and kestrels circle overhead. ■ The exposed location of Graig Fawr near the coast and the limestone outcrops have resulted in the presence of a number of species normally associated with sea cliffs. ■ An interesting cave is located to the south of Gop Cairn. ■ Steeper hill slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and semi-improved grassland communities. ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ Although many hedgerows are in declining condition, there are some species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, that provide biodiversity interest. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 5b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments - numerous, including many prehistoric barrows, Moel Hiraddug Iron-Age hillfort, part of Offa’s Dyke, Medieval castle at Dyserth, churchyard cross at Trelawnyd and medieval house at Siamber-Wen. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Golden Grove (17th-early 20th Century terraced garden with topiary and a walled garden set in wider parkland); Gyrn Castle (19th Century picturesque garden with lakes and woodland, and a perambulatory circuit incorporating rock garden and terraced garden); and Talacre (18th and early 19th Century landscape part and informal pleasure grounds). ■ Conservation Areas – many, including Talacre (see above), and historic villages of Glan yr Afon, Llanasa, Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, including domestic, religious, agricultural, education and commercial buildings, as well as many associated with estates and designed landscapes. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, with visible features including agricultural features (e.g. strip fields, ridge and furrow and boundary stones); industrial features (e.g. lead mines pits, limekilns and engine houses) and defensive features (e.g. World War II decoy). ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character).

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small areas of marginal land (often contains relatively high numbers of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous surviving prehistoric funerary monuments, often in prominent hilltop locations. ■ Moel Hiraddug Iron Age hillfort is the most northerly in the chain of hillforts along the Clwydian range. It contains extensive ramparts and internal hut circles are visible. It has also produced outstanding archaeological finds including a plaque dating from the 2nd Century BC. ■ Part of Offa’s Dyke, which terminates nearby at Prestatyn. ■ A concentration of Historic Parks and Gardens reflecting the scenic quality of the landscape between the Clwydian Hills and the coast. Today the parks and gardens add to the time-depth of the landscape, as well as the positive contribution of mature trees and garden vegetation. ■ A high density of surviving medieval features including houses, farms and churches, often within historic villages. ■ High number and diversity of Listed Buildings reflecting the quality of the historic built environment within this EA. ■ Gop Hill with its ceremonial cairn (the largest in Wales) is a distinctive landmark above the farmed Trelawnyd Plateau. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
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<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 5c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 21 areas of Open Common and Open Access Land, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA. ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads south along the western escarpment from the nearby town of Prestatyn to the Coed Cym in EA4 (<i>Clwydian Range North</i>). ■ A section of National Cycle Network Route 5 leads through the eastern part of the EA, connecting the settlements of Gronant, Llanasa and Berthengam (just outside of the EA). ■ To the north of the A5151, there is a relatively good coverage of well-connected PRoWs that link with surrounding settlements. To the south of the main road however, the PRoW network is quite sparse. <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Areas of Open Access along the western escarpment, including Graig Fawr and Moel Hiraddug, provide easily accessible opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of this highly scenic landscape. These areas also lie close to large centres of population. ■ The Dyserth Way that broadly follows a lower-lying alignment with Offa’s Dyke National Trail along a disused railway also provides easily accessible opportunities to enjoy the wealth natural and cultural heritage along the base of the western scarp. ■ With a nearby car park in Trelawnyd, the promoted Gop Loop walk provides access to the hill and associated cairn. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
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Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Within the large majority of the EA that is designated National Landscape, most of the landscape retains a high landscape and scenic quality and although some parts have been affected by land use change and unsympathetic development, overall, the EA is still considered to meet the test of having an ‘outstanding natural beauty’. With

EA2: Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau

regard to the eastern fringes that are outside of the National Landscape, there is no strong evidence to suggest that the landscape is of sufficient natural beauty to merit further consideration.

In relation to recreation, there are a wealth of opportunities to enjoy the outstanding landscape of the westerly escarpment, many of which are easily accessible and close to large centres of populations. As part of this, the nationally important Offa's Dyke National Trail is a key feature. To the east of the EA, recreational opportunity is largely limited to the use of National Cycle Network Route 5 and PRow, although as the network is relatively extensive and well connected, there are many opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the National Landscape. As such, it is recommended that all areas within the National Landscape are **included** within the proposed Candidate Area, while the areas outside the National Landscape should be **excluded**.



Overlooking Prestatyn from western escarpment



Towards Gyrn Castle Registered Park and Garden



Tree-lined rural lane with stone walls



Limestone cliff at Prestatyn hillside



Gop Hill from north



Open Access land at Graig Fawr



Gop Hill and cairn from south



Communication tower and mast north of Gwaenysgor

EVALUATION AREA 3

EA3: Vale of Clwyd North and St Asaph	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Vale of Clwyd North and St Asaph</i> EA is located at the north-western part of the AoS. All of the EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, although to the east, where the uplands of EA4 (<i>Clwydian Range North</i>) provide a highly distinctive backdrop, the EA adjoins it. To the south, there is a gentle transition to EA7 (<i>Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin</i>), with all of the landscape to the west located outside of the AoS. The EA is formed by an amalgamation of three Flat Lowland Mosaic visual and sensory LANDMAP units, along with areas of built development.</p> <p>As an overview, the central part of the EA is characterised by an improved pastoral landscape where hedgerow trees give the area a strong wooded appearance. A small to medium intimate field pattern also exhibits a very rural agrarian character although where the busy A55 dissects the landscape, the influence of settlement and development prevails. To the north and south of the EA, the landscape is typified by areas of distinctive wooded estate and parkland.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approximately half of the Flat Lowland Mosaic total area exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the other half assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ Approximately half of the Flat Lowland Mosaic total area is assessed as having a ‘high’ rarity, with the other half assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ For the two units that have been assessed, the landscape condition is ‘fair’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all Flat Lowland Mosaic units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the north and south of the EA, Historic Parks and Gardens afford a strong wooded estate character where their intact nature and good condition notably contribute to landscape quality. ■ Across most of the EA, there is strong pattern of intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees that enclose improved grasslands. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In some places, hedgerows are gappy, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ The busy A55 passes through the centre of the EA and along with associated built development at Rhualt, this results in some landscape fragmentation and weakening of rural character. ■ To the south of the A55, two lines of large pylons appear highly intrusive in the local landscape. ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear unsympathetic to their local setting. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Flat Lowland Mosaic units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of all Flat Lowland Mosaic units is assessed as ‘strong’. ■ All Flat Lowland Mosaic units exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality.

EA3: Vale of Clwyd North and St Asaph

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The areas of wooded estate, including areas of Ancient Woodland, contribute to a distinctive sense of place and scenic quality. ■ When looking east, the highly scenic backdrop of EA4 (<i>Clwydian Range North</i>) notably contributes to the scenic quality of this lower-lying EA. ■ With a sense of wooded enclosure and small-medium sized fields, the EA often exhibits an intimate quality. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although much of the EA exhibits a strong rural character, the consistent pattern of small woodlands and small-medium sized enclosures often lacks diversity of landform and vegetation cover. ■ Apart from the highly scenic views towards the National Landscape, many views from within the EA are curtailed by dense woodlands. ■ Towards the centre of the EA, lines of large pylons, the busy A55 route and some unsympathetic built development notable detracts from the scenic quality of the surrounding landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As all Flat Lowland Mosaic units have a ‘settled’ influence, they are not considered to be remote or wild. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As most of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal although in their locality, Ancient Woodlands can instil a sense of naturalness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is low.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approximately half of the Flat Lowland Mosaic total area is assessed as being tranquil. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, most of the EA experiences quite dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The traditional farmed landscape is generally peaceful, particularly to the south where there is concentration of Ancient Woodlands. ■ Noise from the busy A55, along with the visual intrusion of large pylons, significantly detracts from the experience of tranquillity within the central part of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 6a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 51 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 4.7% of the EA. ■ 2 RIGS sites, covering approx. 0.3 % of the EA.

EA3: Vale of Clwyd North and St Asaph

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ There are some species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, that provide biodiversity interest. <p>However, as most of the landscape has been subject to modification through intensive farming practices, much of the EA exhibits little natural interest that notably contributes to experience of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The southern part of the EA is within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Interest. As illustrated in Figure 6b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Registered Parks and Gardens - Brynbella, Late 18th, 19th and 20th Century landscape park and informal garden (Grade II); Bodrhyddan, late 16th Century to late 19th Century landscape park, formal garden of parterre and topiary, and informal garden (Grade II*). ■ Conservation Area – part of Bodfari village. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, with particularly frequent and diverse examples of domestic and agricultural buildings (farmhouses, barns, ranges, cartshed, stables, etc.). There are several halls and estate buildings. Bodrhyddan Hall is listed Grade I, and its icehouse, garden structures and home farm are also listed. Brynbella (associated with Registered Park and Garden above) is listed Grade II*. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, particularly related to agriculture (e.g. marl pits, ponds, farmhouses and agricultural buildings). ■ Travel sites are also represented: The Deva-Varae Roman Road runs east-west across the EA, close to its modern successor the A55, and a former railway line (with bridges) runs close to the southern boundary of the EA. ■ Several other HER sites relate to mining/quarrying activity. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fine examples of estate houses and landscaped grounds at Bodrhyddan and Brynbella (Registered Historic Parks and Gardens containing numerous listed buildings, woodland and mature trees) which add to the sense of place and character of the landscape. ■ Extensive areas of intact rural historic landscape including irregular field patterns, historic farms and other historic features which contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>

EA3: Vale of Clwyd North and St Asaph

Recreation

As illustrated in Figure 6c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:

- A very small area of Open Common Access Land, covering 0.06 % of the EA.
- The EA accommodates a relatively extensive and well connected network of PRoW, particularly towards the central part. There are also good links to the nearby settlement of St Asaph.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following factors:

- A section of the North Wales Pilgrim’s Way leads through the EA.
- Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the Pilgrim’s Way and the network of PRoW, the EA offers very little open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape are assessed as **low-medium**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Although the EA exhibits a relatively high landscape and scenic quality and has a wealth of nationally important cultural interests that often manifest in a distinctive sense of place, the contribution of natural interest to the experience of natural beauty is quite limited, as are the perceptions of relative tranquillity and wildness. Considering all of these factors, the natural beauty of the landscape is not considered to be outstanding. Furthermore, as the EA has relatively limited access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation, it is recommended that all of landscape should be **excluded** from the proposed Candidate Area.



Highly scenic backdrop of the Clwydian Range



Traditional farmhouse set amongst Ancient Woodland



Intimate rural lane



Forested backdrop of Coed Cym



Large pylons and farm buildings



Declining field boundaries and large farm buildings

EVALUATION AREA 4

EA4: Clwydian Range North	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Clwydian Range North</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. The lower-lying EA2 (<i>Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd</i>) and EA5 (<i>Caerwys Lowlands</i>) adjoin the eastern boundary, and to the west, EA3 (<i>Vale of Clwyd North at St Asaph</i>). Separated by a small part of EA7 (<i>Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin</i>), the Clwydian range continues further south to EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) and EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>) beyond.</p> <p>Most of the EA is formed by an amalgamation of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic (approximately 78% of EA) and Wooded Rolling Lowland visual and sensory LANDMAP units. There are also very small areas of Barren/Rocky Upland and Urban units.</p> <p>A distinctive, partly wooded range of hills are characterised by an intimate small scale well defined field pattern bounded by mixed species hedgerows with hedgerow trees, stone walls and small woodland blocks. Areas of woodland tend to lie along small valleys and depressions leading from the side slopes, whilst the upper slopes and ridge line is more open with a larger field pattern of rough grazing. To the north, the forested outcrop of Coed Cwm forms a prominent feature where the northern slopes exhibit an attractive array of steep wooded slopes mixed with farmland.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
Landscape quality	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The large area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the Wooded Rolling Lowland unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit is considered to be ‘outstanding’ as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The Wooded Rolling Lowland unit is assessed as ‘high’. ■ The landscape condition of the Wooded Rolling Lowland unit is assessed as ‘good’, although the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for both units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across most parts of the rolling lowlands, there is intact pattern of irregular fields enclosed by managed hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, set amongst a consistent pattern of small woodlands. ■ Steeper slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and semi-improved grasslands, some enclosed by stone walls. ■ A scattered pattern of stone cottages tend to integrate well with the surrounding rural landscape. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where the A55 crosses the landscape, especially where it is in cutting, this results in landscape fragmentation. ■ Two pylon lines to the north of Tremeirchion are prominent in the local landscape. ■ In some places, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ Areas of forestry with little species diversity have a localised impact on landscape quality.

EA4: Clwydian Range North

	<p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and the Wooded Rolling Lowland units exhibit a 'strong' sense of place. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits an 'outstanding' distinctiveness, with the Wooded Rolling Lowland unit assessed as 'high'. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits an 'outstanding' scenic quality, with the Wooded Rolling Lowland unit assessed as 'moderate'. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the rolling wooded lowlands, interspersed with small valleys and enclosing uplands, exhibits a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a strong sense of place. ■ The uplands form a prominent scenic backdrop to adjacent settled lower areas and the northern most section exhibits an attractive array of steep woodlands. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy. ■ From areas of open higher ground, there are scenic views of interlocking hills and valleys, and to the west, long range views over the Vale of Clwyd and beyond. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the scenic quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, the A55 road corridor and the two pylon lines to the north of Tremeirchion detract from the scenic quality of the local landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units exhibit 'remote/exposed' qualities. <p>The following factors also contribute to a sense of relative wildness and the associated appreciation of natural beauty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the extent of semi-natural habitats is quite limited, a strong sense of remoteness and exposure is experienced from areas of higher open ground. ■ Although the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal within lower-lying parts, semi-natural vegetation along small watercourses and patches of Ancient Woodland contribute to a sense of naturalness in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and the Wooded Rolling Lowland units are noted as being tranquil. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, nearly all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p>

EA4: Clwydian Range North

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the landscape is generally very peaceful, particularly from areas of higher ground. ■ Near to the A55 however, tranquillity is locally affected by the noise of busy traffic. ■ The visual intrusion of pylons also reduces the experience of tranquillity in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 7a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 SSSIs, covering approx. 0.16% of the EA. ■ 50 parcels of Ancient Woodland sites, covering approx. 8.1% of the EA. ■ 2 RIGS sites, covering approx. 0.4 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ There are some species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, that provide biodiversity interest. ■ Steeper slopes support woodland including conifer plantation and semi-natural broadleaved woodland, as well as some patches of rough grassland. ■ The knolly landform to the south of the EA is particularly distinctive. ■ Buzzards and kestrels are frequently seen circling overhead. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural heritage features to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Cultural interest</i>	<p>The southern part of the EA is within the Dyffryn Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Interest. As illustrated in Figure 7b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – several prehistoric sites, including Cae Gwy Cave and Ffynnon Beuno Cave (Caves with evidence of early prehistoric inhabitation), a series of Bronze Age barrows (burial mounds) on ridge tops, and Moel y Gaer Bodfari Iron-Age hillfort. The post-medieval engine house and chimney of Pennant Mine is also a Scheduled Monument. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – St Bueno’s College (Grade II). Comprises a terraced fruit and vegetable garden and pleasure grounds with formal elements. ■ Conservation Areas – Villages of Cwm, Tremeirchion and Bodfari. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, with a notable number of Grade II* medieval religious sites, as well as domestic, industrial and agricultural buildings. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, including visible sites relating to mining (mines, quarries), transport (Deva-Varae Roman Road between Chester and St Asaph), agriculture (farmhouses, sheepfolds) and settlement. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character) including extensive areas on the steep western slopes of the Clwydian Range.

EA4: Clwydian Range North

- Smaller areas of designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character) associated with gentry houses and St Beuno’s College.
- Marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology) including that around Moel y Gaer Bodfari.

The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:

- Archaeologically significant twin cave sites at Cae Gwyn and Ffynnon Beuno, Tremeirchion, where animal bone and human Palaeolithic tool-bearing deposits have been found.
- Bronze Age Barrows and Iron Age hillfort of Moel y Gaer form part of a longer chain of distinctive funerary and defensive sites along the ridge of the Clwydian Range.
- A notable number of medieval churches and associated monuments, including the Church of Saints Mael and Sulien, Church of Corpus Christi, and the Church of St Stephen.
- Offa’s Dyke National Trail, running the length of the EA.
- St Beuno’s Jesuit College (founded 1848) contains a series of Listed Buildings within wider gardens and landscaped grounds. Today it is a retreat centre where people draw inspiration from spiritual exercises and the wider landscape.
- Association with 19th Century poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, who studied at St Beuno’s College and whose work, although written in English, was influenced by the poetic forms of Welsh literature.
- The landscape of the Clwydian Range of hills continues to provide inspiration for many contemporary Welsh writers and artists, including some involved in the ‘Heather and Hillforts’ National Lottery Heritage Fund project.

Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as **high**.

Recreation

As illustrated in Figure 7c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:

- 13 areas of Open Country and Open Access Land, covering approx. 1% of the EA.
- A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail meanders through a large part of the EA.
- A well connected network of PRoW provide access to large parts of the EA, with good links to the Offa’s Dyke National Trail.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- A section of the North Wales Pilgrim’s Way leads through the northern part of the EA.
- There is potential to improve the recreational offer within areas of forestry at Coed Cym, as well as promoting sensitive access to a wealth of cultural features.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Most of the EA, all of which is designated National Landscape, retains a high landscape and scenic quality and although some parts have been affected by land use change and unsympathetic development. Despite this, overall, the EA is still considered to meet the test of having an ‘outstanding natural beauty’. In relation to recreation, there is a good provision of opportunities to enjoy the outstanding landscape, in particular via the nationally important Offa’s Dyke National Trail and Pilgrim’s Way. The landscape is also in quite close proximity to large centres of population and there are some opportunities to further improve the recreational offer. As such, it is recommended that all of EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Rolling wooded lowlands



Interlocking hillslopes



Intimate wooded valley



Knolly landform of Moel y Baer



Views to west over the Vale of Clwyd



Distinctive rural character



Offa's Dyke National Trail



Strong pattern of trees and woodland

EVALUATION AREA 5

EA5: Caerwys Lowlands	
Landscape context	
<p>Located to the north-east of the AoS, all of the <i>Caerwys Lowlands</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, apart from a small area of steeper ground to the north-west. The EAs within the adjacent National Landscape consist of the higher-lying EA4 (<i>Clwydian Range North</i>) and to its south, EA9 (Wheeler Valley). A small part of EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) also forms a backdrop along the western boundary. EA6 (<i>Halkyn Mountain</i>) forms part of the eastern boundary and to the north, a small part of EA2 (<i>Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau</i>). The large majority of the EA consists of a Mosaic Rolling Lowland visual and sensory LANDMAP unit (approximately 88%), with most of the remaining part Open Rolling Lowland.</p> <p>Most of the EA is characterised by open lowland plateaux spurs and associated lower wooded valley/scarp slopes, with a mixture of traditional & improved farmland. To the north, an area of open lowland with a mixture of traditional & improved farmland is typified by a large and relatively open field pattern with managed hedgerows.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The large area of Mosaic Rolling Lowland exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the Open Rolling Lowland unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of both Lowland units is assessed as ‘high’. ■ The landscape condition of the Lowland units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Mosaic Rolling Lowland is assessed as ‘improving’, with the Open Rolling Lowland assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the valley slopes of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland, there is a good coverage of Ancient Woodlands, along with areas of plantation woodland. Collectively, these underpin a largely intact wooded valley appearance. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the north-west of the EA, caravan parks and lodges can sometimes detract from their prevailing rural locality. Two motorcross sites within valley side fields also appear incongruous to their local surroundings. ■ There are two active sand extraction pits to north of the A541, although as these largely screened from view by surrounding woodland, their impact on landscape quality is very localised. ■ Within areas of Open Rolling Lowland towards the north of the EA, large pylons that traverse the landscape and its setting, significantly detract from the surrounding rural quality. ■ On the Open Rolling Lowland, some hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ In open areas, the replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can also sometimes appear unsympathetic with their local setting. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Lowland units exhibit a ‘moderate’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of both Lowland units is assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA5: Caerwys Lowlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scenic quality of both Lowland units is also assessed as ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The heavily wooded and sheltered intimacy of the incised Ysceifiog valley (east of Afon-wen) has a very strong sense of place where the interplay of the distinctive National Landscape backdrop results in a highly scenic continuation of a wider wooded valley landscape. ■ Although views to the south of the EA tend to be curtailed by dense woodland, where these open out, there are highly scenic views towards the partially wooded valley sides of the nearby Wheeler Valley and the Clwydian Hills. ■ Views across the open rolling lowland tend to be less scenic although when looking south from areas of higher ground, the small densely wooded valleys nestled in the lower-lying landscape to the east and west of Afon-wen are viewed against a highly scenic backdrop of the National Landscape. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within most areas of Open Rolling Lowland to the north of EA, the uniform pattern of open regular pastures often exhibits a pleasant scenic quality although to the east, large pylons crossing the landscape notably diminish this quality. ■ The scenic quality of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland to the east and west of the Ysceifiog valley is generally less strong, particularly where unsystematic land use and development impacts on the locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Lowland units have a ‘settled’ influence and therefore, are not considered to be remote/exposed or wild. <p>The following factor also contributes to a sense of relative wildness and the associated appreciation of natural beauty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the heavily wooded Ysceifiog valley, the semi-natural character of Ancient Woodlands and the associated Ddôl Uchaf Nature Reserve exhibit a strong sense of enclosure and a return to nature. <p>As most of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture with a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being tranquil. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, none of the EA experiences particularly dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within Ysceifiog valley, the local landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity, often heightened by the sounds of birdsong. ■ Although parts of the open farmed landscape can be quite peaceful, the network of main and minor roads, along with intrusive appearance of large pylons, notably diminish the experience of tranquillity.

EA5: Caerwys Lowlands

	<p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 8a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 SSSIs, covering approx. 0.7% of the EA. ■ 97 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 7.8% of the EA. ■ 2 RIGSs, covering approx. 0.6 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The concentration of Ancient Woodlands and the associated Ddôl Uchaf Nature Reserve within the Ysceifiog valley support a range of woodland flora and fauna that in their locality, contribute to a strong sense of naturalness. ■ The Ddôl Uchaf Nature Reserve is a former quarry site that now flourishes as a wildlife-rich patchwork of woodland, grassland, ponds and river. The limestone-rich soils support wildflowers with the woodland canopy made up of sycamore, ash and willow, and the lower storey made up of hawthorn, elder and hazel. The unusual geological characteristics of the site also form a series of ponds that attract three native species of newt, as well as grass snakes and many dragonflies. <p>Elsewhere, the scattered pattern of Ancient Woodland adds local interest to a wider landscape that has largely been subject to modification through intensive farming practices. As such, most of the EA exhibits little natural interest that notably contributes to experience of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 8b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – The EA contains six isolated prehistoric round barrows, mostly towards the north of the EA, and a prehistoric enclosure at Bron Fadog. ■ Registered Parks and Garden – Bryngwyn Hall, a mid 19th Century – early 20th Century garden associated with a house, with a woodland walk (Grade II). The wider estate contains parkland and plantation woodland. ■ Conservation Areas – Ysceifiog village is entirely within this EA, and The Wern, Nannerch and Caerwys are partially within it. The Wern contains a listed historic mill building. ■ Listed Buildings – a range of listed buildings, including domestic (e.g. houses, farms), social (e.g. school, hotel, Inn, community hall) and industrial (lime kilns, works). Several are clustered in village of Ysceifiog. Houses at Pantgwynmawr and Bryn Sion are Grade II*, all others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, including a notable number relating to quarrying (disused quarries and limekilns), as well as domestic and agricultural features such as farms, ponds etc. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes extensive irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). Within the fieldscapes there are also influences from mineral extraction, industry, designed landscapes and woodland.</p> <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA5: Caerwys Lowlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Notable number of isolated Bronze Age funerary monuments, unusually sited below ridge tops. Several are located within the Bryngwyn Hall estate; ■ Concentration of listed buildings within Conservation Area at historic village of Ysceifiog; ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ The Wheeler valley forms part of an important ancient route linking the Alyn and Clwyd valleys between Mold and Denbigh, now represented by the A541. ■ Association at Caerwys (adjacent to this EA) is Gruffydd ap Cynan, King of Gwynedd 1081-1137, and a key figure in Welsh resistance to Norman rule. Gruffydd is credited with reforming Welsh bardic tradition to accord with that of the Irish language bards and sponsoring an Eisteddfod at Caerwys during his reign. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 8c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7 areas of Open Country, covering approx. 0.15 % of the EA. ■ Good networks of PRoW radiate from the settlements of Caerwys and Ysceifiog although elsewhere, the network is relatively limited. <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Ddôl Uchaf Nature Reserve provides an important accessible resource for local communities. ■ A section of the North Wales Pilgrim’s Way leads through the northern part of the EA. ■ Apart from the PRoW network, there are very few other opportunities to enjoy the landscape through the provision of open-air recreation. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as low.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>In relation to factors that contribute to natural beauty, there are some important features and qualities but as their influence is relatively localised, none of the criteria are rated as ‘high’. Although the heavily wooded Ysceifiog valley has a very strong sense of place where the interplay of the distinctive National Landscape backdrop results in a highly scenic composition, the experience of natural beauty is not considered sufficient at the landscape scale. Consequently, the natural beauty of the EA is not judged to be outstanding. Furthermore, the provision of open-air recreation is also quite limited, with relatively few opportunities to enjoy the landscape. Considering all of these factors, it is recommended that all of EA outside of the National Landscape should be excluded from the proposed Candidate Area. Given the higher landscape and scenic quality of the small area of land that is within the National Landscape however, this part of the EA should be included.</p>	



Overlooking the EA to a backdrop of the Clwydian uplands



Overlooking the Ysceifiog valley towards the Wheeler Valley



Ddôl Uchaf Nature Reserve



Pylons and large farm buildings on Open Rolling Lowland



Simple pattern of Open Rolling Lowland with pylons



Scattered development and pylons



Holiday lodges



Motocross site

EVALUATION AREA 6

EA6: Halkyn Mountain	
Landscape context	
<p>Located to the north-east of the AoS, all of the <i>Halkyn Mountain</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. Along the western boundary, there is a gentle transition to EA5 (Caerwys Lowlands) and to the south, a more marked transition to the prevailing wooded landscape of EA10 (<i>Mold Lowlands</i>). The eastern EA boundary forms the outer extent of the AoS boundary.</p> <p>The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP units (totalling approx. 70% of EA) and one unit of Upland Moorland. There are also several very small areas of Wooded Lowland Valleys, Dispersed Settlement, Excavation, Village and Road Corridor units.</p> <p>The western part of the EA consists of a limestone plateau with a diverse mosaic of traditional farmland with small regular semi-improved fields and hay meadows, and contrasting pockets of rough grassland, wetland and scrub. To the east of the plateau, an exposed open upland limestone ridge exhibits a mosaic of semi-natural moorland, rough grassland, scrub and bracken. The eastern part of the EA is characterised by steep east facing pastoral slopes with linear watercourse woodlands, and a strong pattern of small to medium sized irregular fields enclosed by thick hedges.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The landscape integrity and quality of the three main units varies between ‘low’ ‘medium’ and ‘high’. ■ The rarity of one of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units and the Upland Moorland area is assessed as ‘high’, with the other Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of one of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units is assessed as ‘good’ although the Upland Moorland unit is rated as being in ‘poor’ condition. The other Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for one of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units is assessed as ‘constant’, with the other two main units assessed as ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a diverse mosaic of traditional farmland contrasting with pockets of rough grassland, wetland and scrub, the limestone plateau to west of the ridge tends to be more intact and of higher landscape quality, than the more fragmented parts to the east and north of the EA. Traditional farm buildings are also generally better maintained. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of semi-natural moorland and rough grassland on the limestone ridge are often subject to the encroachment of scrub and bracken. ■ The quality and integrity of the open moorland landscape is also often degraded and fragmented by the presence of intrusive quarrying activity. ■ To the north of the EA, two lines of large pylons traverse the landscape and significantly detract the surrounding rural quality. ■ Although some dwellings related to the mining industry have a traditional character, a widespread pattern of scattered built development, including some with a suburban appearance, along with a dense network of often busy roads, detracts from landscape quality. The negative influences of settlement and busy roads is particularly evident towards the north-eastern boundary.

EA6: Halkyn Mountain

	<p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units and the Upland Moorland area exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the other Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of one of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units and the Upland Moorland area are assessed as ‘high’, with the other Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ One of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units and the Upland Moorland area exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality, with the other Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Limestone Plateau to the east of the ridge exhibits a strong rural character and distinctive sense of place. Its pleasing scenic quality is also enhanced by views towards a backdrop of the Clwydian uplands. ■ Irregular hedged field patterns on the surrounding slopes. ■ There are highly scenic views to the relatively distant backdrop of the National Landscape from some western parts of the EA. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the colours, textures and semi-natural character of extensive areas of moorland along the exposed limestone ridge contribute to the scenic quality of the landscape, its appreciation is often diminished by the presence of quarrying activity, large pylons, and other scattered built development around its margins. ■ Towards the north-eastern boundary of the EA, a pattern of dense settlement, busy roads, pylons and quarries results in very little opportunity for the appreciation of scenic quality. ■ Views to north-east over the Dee are much less scenic, largely due to the influence of the intervening A55 corridor and nearby areas of industry and dense settlement. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upland Moorland unit is noted to exhibit ‘wild’ and ‘exposed’ qualities. ■ All other units have ‘settled’ influence and/or a sheltered character and therefore, are not considered to be remote, exposed or wild. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As most of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal although in their locality, Ancient Woodlands can instil a sense of naturalness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being tranquil. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, none of the EA experiences dark night skies.

EA6: Halkyn Mountain

	<p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although pockets of peace and seclusion can be found within parts of the EA, particularly within the more wooded parts to the south, a network of busy roads, along with the visual intrusion of pylons and other activity taking place, significantly restricts the opportunity for a tranquil experience within most parts of the landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 9a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following regionally/nationally/internationally important natural designations, some of which overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC, covering approx. 17% of the EA. ■ 7 SSSIs, covering approx. 20% of the EA. ■ 90 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 3.6% of the EA. ■ 6 RIGSs, covering approx. 1 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extensive areas of SAC and SSSI designations support a wide range limestone habitats and associated species. As such, a very strong sense of naturalness can be experienced across a large part of the EA. ■ The SAC designation includes areas of bogs, marshes, heath, scrub, dry grassland, deciduous woodland and rocky outcrops. Of particular note, Halkyn Mountain has the most extensive recorded area of the metalliferous <i>Festuca ovina – Minuartia verna</i> grassland community in Wales. A large great crested newt population also breeds in an abandoned quarry workings and various other waterbodies across the site. ■ To the south of the EA, a large concentration of Ancient Woodlands make a valuable contribution to the natural beauty of the local landscape. ■ To the west, species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses, also provide biodiversity interest. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>Most of the eastern part of the EA is within the Holywell Common and Halkyn Mountain Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 9b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Numerous Bronze Age round barrows (isolated and in clusters); Moel y Gaer Rhosesmor Iron-Age Hillfort at the southern edge of the ridge. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Halkyn Castle: Comprises terraced garden, informal woodland garden, walled garden and small landscape park dating from 1820s and associated with Halkyn Castle listed buildings and conservation area (Grade II). ■ Conservation Areas – Halkyn village and castle. ■ Listed Buildings - Very numerous, reflecting domestic, agricultural and industrial history of the area. Industrial sites related to the area’s industrial importance include lime kilns, engine houses, ore dressing shed and brick kiln. There are also many agricultural sites and domestic sites ranging from small cottages to Halkyn Castle. Halkyn Castle and Stable Block, and Llwyn-erddyn, are listed Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to Historic Environment Record sites, the EA includes:</p>

EA6: Halkyn Mountain

- A very dense concentration of mineshafts on Halkyn Mountain and Holywell Common.
- Around the peripheries of the EA are a wide range of sites representing domestic, social and agricultural heritage.
- Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated.

In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:

- Extensive areas of extractive landscape, comprising upland common with abundant and widespread remains of former extractive industries, bounded by areas of irregular fieldscapes of probable medieval origin, including areas of possible strip fields of medieval origin.
- Areas of regular-shaped fields which appear to represent the enclosure of medieval open fields. These historic field patterns, with their hedged boundaries, contribute to landscape fabric and character. The extractive landscapes are assessed to be outstanding examples in LANDMAP.

The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:

- High number of prehistoric (Bronze Age) barrows, some isolated and others clustered. They are unusually sited, with not all on ridge top sites, and some in valley floors close to watercourses.
- Moel y Gaer Rhosesmor hillfort is sited on the summit of the isolated hill at the south end of Halkyn Mountain. Extensive excavations in 1972 (prior to the construction of a covered reservoir within the site) revealed a succession of timber buildings dating from the Neolithic period to sometime before the Roman conquest of the area. A timber longhouse on the site has been dated to 3000BC and may represent the earliest human occupation of the region.
- Halkyn Castle is a picturesque mansion designed by John Buckler for Earl Grosvenor, overlooking the Dee Estuary. It is set within gardens, parkland and estate woodland, and the complex is designated as Listed Buildings, Conservation Area and Registered Historic Park and Garden.
- Halkyn Mountain and Holywell Common contain extensive and highly distinctive relict 18th and 19th Century (and possibly earlier) lead and zinc ore mining remains and associated features, unparalleled elsewhere in Wales. In 1850, 11500 tons of lead was produced here, amounting to 12% of the British total. The landscape comprises a myriad of craters and tips which remain intact and are particularly apparent from the air. Most of the archaeological evidence is for shallow workings. Larger mines retain evidence of leats and reservoirs to serve the dressing floors. There are also occasional surviving small terraces of houses.
- The irregular hedged field patterns on the surrounding slopes tell the story of enclosure from the medieval period onwards. These contribute to scenic quality and the strong sense of time-depth.

Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as **high**.

Recreation

As illustrated in Figure 9c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:

- 97 areas of Open Common and Open Access Land, covering approx. 18 % of the EA).
- A short section of National Cycle Network Route 5 leads along part of the outer north-eastern EA boundary.
- Most of the EA is covered by an extensive and well connected network of PRoW, with good links to nearby settlements.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- The relatively extensive areas of Open Access land provide very good access, in close proximity to large centres of population, for the enjoyment of a wide range of natural and cultural features.

EA6: Halkyn Mountain

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With large parts of the EA designated a SAC and a Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, there is no doubt that the natural and cultural interest of this unique landscape makes a very significant contribution to the experience of natural beauty. Easily accessible opportunities for the recreational enjoyment of the landscape are also very good. However, for the reasons given above, both landscape and scenic quality are only considered to be average and although there are some scenic parts, the overall quality of the landscape is not considered to be outstanding in the context of a National Park designation. Furthermore, to the west of the EA, all of the intervening landscape between this EA and the National Landscape is recommended for exclusion from the proposed Candidate Area. As such, it is recommended that all of this EA should be **excluded** from the proposed Candidate Area.



Diverse mosaic of extensive moorland habitats



Highly scenic backdrop of the Clwydian uplands



Church of St. Mary, Halkyn



Distinctive limestone hill



Large pylon lines



Scattered suburban development



Skyline quarrying activity



Scattered development and pylons

EVALUATION AREA 7

EA7: Vale of Clwyd Denbigh – Ruthin	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from a narrow swathe of lower hillslopes to the west, all of the <i>Vale of Clwyd Denbigh - Ruthin</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. The small part within the National Landscape soon transitions to an elevated backdrop of EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) and EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>). The south-western boundary adjoins EA16 (<i>Pwll-Glâs</i>) and further north, the western EA boundary forms the outer edge of the AoS. The picturesque town of Ruthin also lies adjacent to the western EA boundary. The EA is almost entirely formed by one visual and sensory LANDMAP unit, namely Flat Open Lowland Farmland. There is also a very small area of Flat Lowland Mosaic and some small Village/Urban units.</p> <p>The western part of the EA is dominated by the valley floor of the River Clwyd floor and to the east, gently rising valley sides. The EA is characterised by a pastoral vale with patchwork of small to medium sized fields that exhibit well vegetated boundaries interspersed with mature trees and small woodland blocks.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The large area of Flat Open Lowland Farmland exhibits a ‘low’ integrity and quality, with the much smaller area of Flat Lowland Mosaic assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of both lowlands units is assessed as ‘high’. ■ The landscape condition of the Flat Open Lowland Farmland unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The Flat Lowland Mosaic has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Flat Open Lowland is assessed as ‘declining’, whilst the Flat Lowland Mosaic is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The pastoral vale exhibits a relatively strong pattern of managed hedgerows with hedgerow trees. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering course River Clwyd that leads through much of the EA, as well as its small contributory streams. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures (including a large commercial dairy building) can sometimes appear with unsympathetic with their local setting, as does some modern residential development. ■ In places, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. <p>Although a number of busy roads traverse the EA, these tend to be well integrated into the landscape, as are the largely traditional settlements that they connect.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Flat Open Lowland Farmland exhibits a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Flat Lowland Mosaic assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of both Lowland units is assessed as ‘high’. ■ The Flat Open Lowland Farmland exhibits a ‘high’ scenic quality reducing to ‘moderate’ for the Flat Lowland Mosaic. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA7: Vale of Clwyd Denbigh – Ruthin

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the south of the picturesque village of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd (towards the south of the EA), the gently undulating vale is strongly contained by a dramatic backdrop of the Clwydian uplands to the east, and the highly distinctive low wooded hills of Pwll-Glâs (EA16) to west. This highly scenic setting installs a strong sense of place and notably enhances the scenic appeal of this part of the vale. ■ To the south of Dyffryn Clwyd, a strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands also contribute to a distinctive and traditional rural quality. ■ Although the Clwydian uplands provide a highly scenic backdrop to the east of the northerly part of the EA, the more distant containing backdrop of the Denbigh and Derwen Hills to the west (outside of the AoS), has less of an influence on the sense of place and the associated appreciation of scenic quality, than the wooded hills of Pwll-Glâs to the south. ■ To the south of the EA, views are focused along the vale towards a backdrop of the Clwydian uplands and wooded hills of Pwll-Glâs. ■ To the north, views are either focused towards the Clwydian uplands to the east, or the more distant Denbigh and Derwen Hills that rise above the vale to the west. <p>As with landscape quality, there are very few incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA. To the north of Dyffryn Clwyd however, where the landform becomes flatter and the farmland is subject to more intensive farming practices, the scenic quality of the landscape is generally weaker than that to the south.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Lowland units have ‘settled’ influence and/or a sheltered character and therefore, are not considered to be remote or wild. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semi-natural vegetation along river corridors contribute to a sense of localised naturalness. ■ As most of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture with a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty is assessed as low.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being tranquil. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, the majority of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The traditional farmed landscape is generally peaceful, particularly to the south where the influence of busy roads and settlement are less apparent. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 10a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 77 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 1.4% of the EA. ■ 2 RIGS sites, covering approx. 0.01 % of the EA.

EA7: Vale of Clwyd Denbigh – Ruthin

	<p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ There are some species rich hedgerows, as well as habitats associated with watercourses and roadside verges, that provide biodiversity interest. ■ However, as most of the landscape has been subject to modification through intensive farming practices, most of the EA exhibits little natural interest that contributes to experience of natural beauty. <p>Overall, therefore, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>With the exception of a small area in the north-east of the EA, the entire EA is within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 10b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Diversity of types and periods, including prehistoric barrows, Plasnewydd Romano-British Temple cropmark, Churchyard cross at St Meugan’s Church (medieval), Ruthin Castle (medieval) and Ffynogion domestic Moated Site (medieval). ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Ruthin Castle (Mid-19th Century landscape park, formal garden and shrubbery walks); Plas Newydd (17th-19th Century small park, walled garden, formal and informal garden); Garthgynan (Mid-17th Century with earlier foundations, formal walled garden, orchard and fish ponds). All are Grade II. ■ Conservation Areas – Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd village, and Ruthin/Llanfwrog (including town centre, castle and part of the castle grounds). ■ Listed Buildings – Exceptionally high concentration of Listed Buildings, found clustered in historic towns and villages, and also isolated within rural areas. They represent a diversity of domestic, religious, defensive, agricultural and commercial buildings, with many dating to the medieval or post-medieval periods. Three of the churches (St Meugan, St Cynhafal and St Saeran), Ruthin Castle and Nantclwyd House are Grade I. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, with many relating to settlement (e.g. houses, churches, monuments, smithy, agriculture (e.g. sheep folds, field banks, water trough), and travel (e.g. trackways, railway line, bridges). ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very large areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Several designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). The historic parkland of Ruthin Castle is identified as being Outstanding within the LANDMAP assessment. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rich legacy of medieval buildings including churches, houses and Ruthin castle. Llanynys (now a hamlet) was originally a clas foundation (a unit of administration based on medieval monastic settlement) preserving vestiges of medieval field systems.

EA7: Vale of Clwyd Denbigh – Ruthin

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Several designed landscapes, associated with larger and small estates which contribute to the character of the landscape, including the grounds of Ruthin Castle. The designed landscapes have group value with associated Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. ■ Irregular organic enclosures over a large area of the Vale of Clwyd possibly representing the Welsh inheritance system of gavelkind, fossilised in the predominantly small and irregular field pattern. ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as farms, roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Offa’s Dyke National Trail in the north of the EA. ■ Llanynys is noteworthy as the site of the 9th century Llanfor of the early Welsh stanzas, Canu Llywarch Hen. ■ John Puleston Jones, born in Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd in 1862, and devised a braille system for the Welsh language which is still in use. ■ Home of various contemporary artists portraying connections with and inspiration from the local landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
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<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 10c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 8 very small areas of Open Common and Open Access Land, covering approx. 0.04 % of the EA. ■ Most of the EA is covered by an extensive and well-connected network of PRow, with good links into the adjacent National Landscape and the town of Ruthin. ■ There are also locally promoted circular walks from Llandyrnog and Llanynys. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRow, the EA offers very little other open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
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Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With nearly the entire EA within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, along with a good coverage of other important historic features and associations, the cultural interest of the EA significantly contributes to the appreciation of natural beauty. With regard to natural interest however, the EA exhibits little notable value. Concerning factors relating to landscape and scenic quality, the EA exhibits a prevailing rural quality although in terms of its landscape and physiographic features, the simple pattern lacks diversity. Perceptions of relative tranquillity and wildness are also quite limited. Considering these factors, the natural beauty of most of the landscape outside of the National Landscape is not considered to be outstanding. Furthermore, as the EA has very little to offer in providing access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation. Therefore, it is recommended that most of the EA should be **excluded** from the proposed Candidate Area.

However, as the landscape to the south of Dyffryn Clwyd is strongly contained by a dramatic backdrop of the Clwydian uplands to the east, and the highly distinctive low wooded hills of Pwll-Glâs (EA16) to west, it affords a high scenic quality with a strong sense of place. As such, it is recommended that this part of the EA, in addition to the narrow westerly swath of the National Landscape, should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area. Although the recreational offer is relatively minimal, it should be recognised that this small area of landscape serves as a scenic gateway into the National Landscape from the nearby town of Ruthin.



Backdrop of wooded hills to south-west of EA



Backdrop of Clwydian uplands to south-east of EA



Overlooking the vale towards the Denbigh and Derwen Hills



Typical rural scene



Modern development in a rural setting



Backdrop of Clwydian uplands to north-east of EA



Clwydian uplands to north of EA



Heavily treed appearance of vale pastures

EVALUATION AREA 8

EA8: Clwydian Range Central	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Clwydian Range Central</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA7 (<i>Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin</i>) and EA9 (<i>Wheeler Valley</i>) adjoin the western and eastern boundaries respectively, and to the south is EA12 (<i>Alyn Valley</i>) and EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>). The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two Upland Moorland visual and sensory LANDMAP units (covering 87.5% of EA), with the remaining part consisting of two smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA is dominated by rolling upland hills with high rounded peaks, covered with extensive swathes of semi-natural open moorland. To the west of the upland hills, steep slopes are characterised by a relatively small scale field pattern dominated by largely overgrown hedges and occasional small broadleaf woodlands. The slopes are also bisected by narrow, well vegetated stream valleys.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of the of two Upland Moorland units is assessed as ‘high’, with the two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the larger Upland Moorland unit is considered to be ‘outstanding’ as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The other Upland Moorland unit and the larger area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing exhibit a ‘high’ rarity, with the smaller one assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ For the two units that have been assessed (one of each type), the landscape condition is ‘good’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across most parts of the exposed uplands, there are extensive areas of semi-natural moorland vegetation although in places, this is subject to scrub and bracken encroachment. ■ Steeper slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and semi-improved grasslands, some enclosed by stone walls. ■ Along some parts of the steep hillside slopes of western edge, where the landscape is characterised by a relatively small scale field pattern dominated by largely overgrown hedges, management appears extensive rather than intensive, with livestock farming predominating. ■ Along the lower western scarp slopes, a scattered pattern of stone cottages integrate well with the surrounding rural landscape. <p>Apart from the Moel Y Parc transmitter and a few areas of forestry with little species diversity, there are no other incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The three largest units (nearly all of EA) exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the small area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The three largest units exhibit an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, with the small area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The three largest units also exhibit an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality, with the small area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA8: Clwydian Range Central

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between a very distinctive series of smooth rounded uplands, including those within EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>), and their associated valleys, exhibits a highly scenic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place. ■ The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent settled lower areas, particularly to the west where they rise dramatically above the Vale of Clwyd. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy. ■ The colours and textures of extensive heather moorland add to the visual interest. ■ From the summit of Moel Famau, there are stunning views across the Vale of Clwyd to Eryri and the North Wales coast. ■ From other areas of open higher ground, there are long distance scenic views of interlocking uplands and valleys, and to the east, over the Wheeler Valley and beyond. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although its scale relates to the large mass of the Moel Y Parc landform, the Moel Y Parc transmitter (229m high) to the north of the EA is very noticeable on the skyline. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The two Upland Moorland units exhibit ‘wild’, ‘remote’ and ‘exposed’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With extensive areas of semi-natural moorland habitats, the exposed and remote uplands exhibit a very strong sense of wildness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the EA is noted as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relative absence of settlement and development, a strong sense of tranquillity can be experienced from nearly all of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 11a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 42 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 1.2% of the EA. ■ 14 RIGS sites, covering approx. 3.2 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA8: Clwydian Range Central

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a strong sense of naturalness. ■ The heather moorland provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds. Of particular importance is the black grouse, one of the rarest birds in Wales ■ The highly distinctive upland ridge and peaks rise to 554m, forming the highest parts of the County. The domed profiles of Moel Arthur (RIGS) and Moel Famau are particularly distinctive landform features. ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ Steeper western slopes support semi-natural broadleaved woodland, as well as some patches of rough grassland. ■ Buzzards and kestrels are frequently seen circling overhead. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The western part of the EA is within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 11b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments - Four prehistoric hillforts along the ridge of the Clwydian Range (Moel-y-Gaer, Pen-y-Cloddiau, Moel Arthur and Moel Fenlli). Also, prehistoric round barrows at Moel Eithinen and Coed Clwyd. ■ Listed Buildings – with the exception of the Jubilee Monument, these are all domestic and agricultural structures associated with upland farms, including farmhouses, barns, range, houses, sheds, privy, shippon and stable. All are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sites reflecting the varied historic land uses of this upland landscape, including boundary banks, mining/quarrying activity, agricultural, settlement and religious sites. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of marginal land (containing prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology) identified as being of Outstanding quality. ■ The edges of the EA encompass areas of irregular fieldscapes, with historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character, and an area of designed landscape. ■ At the northern tip of the EA is an area of other fieldscapes representing the upland common area of Moel y Parc, possibly an area once included with Ruthin Castle Estate (it was owned by Ruthin castle in the 18th century), and in the west an area of designed landscape associated with Glyn Arthur. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Spectacular series of Iron Age hillforts of Foel Fenlli, Moel y Gear, Moel Arthur and Penycloddiau, which form part of a defensive chain of sites crowning the summits of the Clwydian Range. As individual sites they are impressive, but together they form a unique group of hillforts in Wales which demonstrate the intimate relationship between landform and human territory. Current understanding is that each hillfort would have been the focal point of a well-defined territory extending across the vale beneath, and over the uplands, so that each for would have access to the same range of natural resources.

EA8: Clwydian Range Central

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jubilee Monument at the summit of Moel Famau was started in 1810 for the golden jubilee of King George III, and eventually completed in an Egyptian style, topped by an obelisk which blew down in 1867. The remains of the plinth have been consolidated and form a local landmark and popular destination for walkers. ■ Good surviving examples of historic upland farm buildings. ■ Part of Offa’s Dyke National Trail, running along the main ridge of the Clwydian Range. ■ Lack of modern development contributes to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Continuing tradition of holding great cultural celebrations at the top of Moel Famau, with crowds gathering at Jubilee Monument to celebrate Royal weddings and jubilees. ■ The summits of the Clwydian Range provide inspiration to a wide range of contemporary artists and writers, including those involved in the ‘Heather and Hillforts’ project. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 11c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moel Famau Country Park, covering approx. 21.5 % of the EA. ■ 2 areas of Public Access Public Forest, covering approx. 11.6 % of the EA. ■ 3 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering approx. 24.1 % of the EA. ■ 28 area of Open Access Country, covering approx. 15.1 % of the EA. ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads through the entire central part of the EA. ■ Around the margins of the EA, sections of PRoW provide links with areas of Open Access and the Moel Famau Country Park. <p>Further desk study and findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moel Famau and much of the surrounding land make up Moel Famau Country Park, which attracts about 200,000 visitors each year. It provides a number of well-marked walking and cycling routes. ■ The car park at Coed Llangwyfan is the gateway to two impressive hillforts – Penycloddiau and Moel Arthur. There are public footpaths to both hillforts where spectacular views can be enjoyed. The circular waymarked walking trail follows a sheltered level path from the car park through the woodland to a viewpoint. ■ Considering the wide range of recreational provision, there are a wealth of opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of the uplands. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>Nearly all of the EA, all of which is designated National Landscape, retains a high landscape and scenic quality and with a wealth of natural and cultural features, the EA is still considered to meet the test of having an ‘outstanding natural beauty’. In relation to recreation, there is an excellent provision of widespread opportunities to enjoy this stunning landscape and its associated wealth of natural and cultural interest. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Coed Moel Famau trail



Overlooking the Vale of Clwyd



Looking south from Moel Arthur to Moel Famau



Looking east from Moel Arthur



Looking north from Moel Arthur



Distinctive contrast of rolling wooded lowland and open upland



Towards Moel Famau



Recreational route at Coed Liangwyfan

EVALUATION AREA 9

EA9: Wheeler Valley	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Wheeler Valley</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, apart from an area of outer slopes to the east of the EA that links with a small part of the incised Alyn valley to the north of Pantymwyn. Along the western EA boundary, EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) forms a containing backdrop to the valley, and to the east, the EA boundary adjoins parts of the mostly low-lying landscapes of EA5 (<i>Caerwys Lowlands</i>), EA6 (<i>Halkyn Mountain</i>) and EA10 (<i>Mold Lowlands</i>). The EA is mostly formed by a large Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP unit (covering 81% of EA) along with two smaller units of Wooded Lowland Valleys. Small Village units are also within the EA.</p> <p>Most of the EA is characterised by the lower east facing slopes of the Clwydian Range that are covered with scrub and rough grassland, and smaller sized hedged pastures with linear woodlands following gulleys and watercourses. To the south-east, the EA also includes part of the narrow Cilcain valley where valley sides contain hedged pastures with deciduous woodland on steeper slopes either side of the rocky river bed. A narrow wooded valley of the Afon Chwiler also follows the north-eastern boundary.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The large area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit exhibits a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality, with the two smaller units of Wooded Lowland Valleys assessed as ‘high’. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit and one of the Wooded Lowland Valleys is assessed as ‘moderate’, with the other Valley unit assessed as ‘high’. ■ Apart from the condition of the smaller Wooded Lowland Valley unit which is assessed as ‘good’, the other two units have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all three units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On most parts of the valley sides, there is intact pattern of irregular fields enclosed by managed hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, set amongst a consistent pattern of small woodlands. ■ The two parts of narrow wooded valleys exhibit an extensive coverage of linear woodlands, most of which, are Ancient. ■ A scattered pattern of stone cottages integrates well with the surrounding rural landscape. <p>Although forestry can have a localised impact in places, there are no other notable incongruous elements or land use that detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place for all three units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ All three units exhibit a ‘moderate’ distinctiveness. ■ The scenic quality of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit and one of the Wooded Lowland Valley unit is assessed as ‘moderate’, with the other Valley unit assessed as ‘high’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA9: Wheeler Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor with narrow wooded valleys, rolling wooded valley sides and a backdrop of enclosing uplands provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a strong sense of place. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic views over the valley towards a distinctive backdrop of the Clwydian uplands. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as having ‘wild’, ‘remote’ or ‘exposed’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As most of the EA is actively farmed and has a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal, although semi-natural vegetation along water courses and the presence of Ancient Woodlands, contribute to a sense of naturalness in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The two Wooded Lowland Valley units are described as being ‘tranquil’, although the larger area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing is not. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Land cover and settlement characteristics are strongly rural and where development is minor or absent perceptions of tranquillity, remoteness and wildness can be particularly strong. ■ The traditional farmed landscape is generally very peaceful, particularly towards the head of valley and from areas of higher ground; and ■ Near to the network of roads that connect villages along the valley floor however, the experience of tranquillity is locally affected by noise and activity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity experience to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 12a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC, covering approx. 1.5% of the EA. ■ 2 SSSIs, covering approx. 1.9% of the EA. ■ 96 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 4.7% of the EA. ■ 3 RIGS sites, covering approx. 0.6 % of the EA.

EA9: Wheeler Valley

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distinctive scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands (some designated SAC) support a good range of woodland flora and fauna. ■ Steeper slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and rough grasslands. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Cultural interest</i>	<p>A very small part of the upper tributary valleys near Hanfaes is within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 12c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – prehistoric features including round barrows at Plas-Yw and east of Penbedw Hall, and a stone circle and standing stone at Penbedw Park. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Penbedw Park, comprising a landscape park, formal woodland, multi-phase garden with formal and informal elements, dating from the Mid-17th Century, 18th Century and 19th Century (Grade II*). ■ Conservation Areas – The Wern, Nannerch (part); Nannerch village, and Cilcain village. ■ Listed Buildings – a wide range of Listed Buildings reflecting the area’s long history of settlement. Listed Buildings include domestic, agricultural, religious and industrial structures. The Church of St Mary is Listed Grade I. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites reflect the area’s long history of settlement, agriculture and industry, including marl quarries, limekilns, smith, mills, strip fields, farmsteads and mineshafts. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Penbedw is a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. It represents the survival and development of the grounds at Penbedw since the 17th Century, including a wilderness with a grotto and summerhouse. It has group value with the associated estate buildings and structures, and the two prehistoric tumuli and stone circle (all Scheduled Monuments) also found within the park. ■ Extensive area of irregular fields with considerable archaeological and historical content. ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ The slopes of the Clwydian Range provide inspiration to a wide range of contemporary artists and writers, including those involved in the ‘Heather and Hillforts’ project. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 12c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moel Famau Country Park, covering approx. 0.1 % of the EA. ■ 21 very small areas of Open Country, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA.

EA9: Wheeler Valley

- Most parts of the EA are covered by a good network of PRoW, with links to nearby settlements and adjacent EAs.
- There are further opportunities to establish circular walks around Cilcain, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRoW, the EA offers very little other open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **low-medium**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

The large majority of the EA that is designated retains a high landscape and scenic quality, and with a wealth of cultural features, this distinctive valley landscape is still considered to meet the test of having an 'outstanding natural beauty'. In relation to recreation, apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRoW, the EA offers very little other open-air recreational provision or access to features of natural and cultural interest. However, as there are very extensive areas open access in the adjacent EA8 (*Clwydian Range Central*) that overlook this highly scenic landscape, it is an important part of the wider recreational resource. The EA also lies in quite close proximity to large centres of population. For these reasons, it is recommended that all of EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.

With regard to the small part of the EA outside of the National Landscape to the east of Cilcain that extends into the narrow of Nant Alyn, this area is affected by the presence of caravan parks and a nearby quarry. As such it is recommended that this should be **excluded** from the proposed Candidate Area.



Overlooking the valley to a backdrop of the Clwydian uplands



Distinctive field patterns on valley sides



Intimate rural lane



Wooded stream corridor



Strong rural character



Distinctive valley landform



Riparian habitats along the Nant Alyn



Contrast of valley and upland backdrop

EVALUATION AREA 10

EA10: Mold Lowlands	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from a small area of land to the south-west of Pantymwyn, all of the <i>Mold Lowlands</i> EA is located outside of the of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA6 (<i>Halkyn Mountain</i>) is located to north, parts of EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) and EA9 (<i>Wheeler Valley</i>) to the west, with EA11 (<i>Eryrys Uplands</i>) and EA13 (<i>Eryrys Slopes</i>) to the south. The north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the EA form the outer eastern extent of the AoS. The EA is mostly formed by an amalgamation of a large Mosaic Lowland Valleys visual and sensory LANDMAP unit (approximately half of the EA), two Mosaic Rolling Lowland units, and a Flat Open Lowland Farmland unit. There are also very small areas of Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes and Built Land (villages, urban and road corridor) units.</p> <p>As an overview, large parts of the EA are characterised by lowland wooded small river valleys with associated parkland and pastoral farmland. Towards Mold, gently rolling lowland farmland slopes towards the River Alyn where the landscape has a strong pattern of small to medium irregular shaped pastoral fields enclosed by low-cut hedges with occasional hedge trees. Estate farmland also lies on more gently sloping ground closer to the valley floor with associated stone estate buildings and structures. Mixed plantations are prominent on valley sides. Towards Pantymwyn, rolling lowland farmland with large sized regular fields are enclosed by blocks of conifer woodland on hilltops.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit and one of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland units is assessed as ‘high’, with the other Mosaic Rolling Lowland unit assessed as ‘moderate’. The small area of Flat Open Lowland Farmland is assessed as ‘low’. ■ The rarity of the four main units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of the two Mosaic Rolling Lowland units is either ‘fair’ or ‘good’. The other two units have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all four units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across the large majority of the EA, there is a strong pattern of small to medium irregular shaped pastoral fields enclosed by managed hedgerows with blocks of mixed plantation woodland ■ On more rolling ground, there are large areas of well-managed parkland and associated estate farmland, along with a distinctive pattern of sinuous wooded river valleys. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the north of the EA, settlement and built development sometimes detracts from rural quality, as does intrusive industrial development outside of the EA located around the northern fringes of Mold. ■ In some places, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Mosaic Lowland Valleys and Mosaic Rolling Lowland units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Mosaic Rolling Lowland assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA10: Mold Lowlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distinctiveness of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys and Mosaic Rolling Lowland units is assessed as ‘moderate’, and the Mosaic Rolling Lowland ‘weak’. ■ The Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit exhibits a ‘high’ scenic quality, reducing to ‘moderate’ for the and Mosaic Rolling Lowland units, and ‘low’ for the Mosaic Rolling Lowland unit. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The composition of rolling irregular pastures with a good coverage of Ancient Woodlands contributes to a distinctive sense of place and strong rural character. ■ Large areas of designed parkland are particularly attractive, and their heavily wooded appearance make a valuable contribution to the experience of natural beauty. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is a strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly near to the wooded river corridors. ■ Views tend to focus on the appreciation of rolling parkland and the associated swathes of broadleaved woodland. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Views of settlement and built development, most if which is outside of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as having ‘wild’, ‘remote’ or ‘exposed’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As most of the EA is actively farmed and has a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal, although semi-natural vegetation along water courses and the presence of Ancient Woodlands contribute to a sense of naturalness in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are described as being ‘tranquil’, with some described as ‘noisy’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, none of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Away from busy roads and settlement, the traditional farmed landscape is generally peaceful, especially where dense woodlands provide a sense of enclosure. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 13a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC covering approx. 4.7% of the EA. ■ 2 SSSIs, covering approx. 5.2% of the EA. ■ 192 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 11.2% of the EA.

EA10: Mold Lowlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5 RIGS sites, covering approx. 2.6 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distinctive and relatively extensive pattern of Ancient Woodlands (some designated SAC) support a good range of woodland flora and fauna, and at the landscape scale, their presence makes a valuable contribution to the experience of natural beauty. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses, particularly the wooded valleys, provide the focus on biodiversity interest. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 13b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Three separate sections of Wat’s Dyke early medieval earthwork; medieval fortified house at Llys Edwin; a prehistoric round barrow at Rhual-Isaf, and 20th Century ordnance factory (Ministry of Supply Valley Site). ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Three extensive Registered Parks and Gardens (all Grade II*), namely Gwysaney landscape park, comprising part of a former deer park (c. 1664) with an early 19th Century arboretum containing several unusual species, and an early 20th Century formal garden; Soughton Hall landscape park and formal garden dating from the 18th and 19th Centuries with well-preserved parkland planting, and Rhual – a rare survival of an unaltered 17th Century formal forecourt with walls and alcoves, and a 17th Century bowling green and skittle alley. The formal gardens are set within a wider small landscape park containing parkland trees, woodland and paths. Ancillary structures including the kitchen garden also survive. All three are associated with surviving historic buildings and so have important group value. In addition, Colomendy Park (a Late-18th Century to Mid-19th Century landscape part with an informal garden, pleasure grounds and a wall garden) is partially within this EA. The remainder is within EAs 11 and 12. ■ Conservation Areas at Cadole and Northop. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, reflecting the long history of settlement, farming and travel in this EA. Several (including Grade II* structures) are associated with historic estates at Rhual, Soughton Hall and Gwysaney. Rhual Mansion and the Church of St Eurgain and St Peter are listed Grade I. Many are concentrated in the historic village of Northop. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous and varied sites, with a notable concentration of sites relating to mining in the area, including engine house, hammerstone, tramways, mine buildings, shafts, horse whim etc. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Part of the EA is identified as Outstanding in terms of historic landscape. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diversity of defensive monuments ranging from the early medieval period (Wat’s Dyke), medieval period (Llys Edwin) and modern period (Ministry of Supply Valley Site).

EA10: Mold Lowlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Llys Edwin Medieval fortified house site is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval settlement. It is well preserved and is an important relic of the medieval landscape, whilst retaining significant archaeological potential. ■ Llys Edwin is also associated with the foundations of the Fifteen Tribes of North Wales and is thought to be the seat of Welsh Chieftain Edwin of Tegeingl. ■ Large houses (Listed Buildings) with associated designed parkland and grounds taking advantage of views including across the Dee Estuary and the Alun Valley and creating a verdant quality to the landscape with many mature parkland trees, woodland and avenues. They also add to the sense of time-depth and local distinctiveness. Gwysaney, Soughton Hall, Rhual and part of Colomendy are all within this EA. ■ Colomendy Park is associated with 18th Century artist Richard Wilson. ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ The Alleluia Monument (Listed Building), near Rhual Park, was erected in 1736 by Nehemiah Griffith to commemorate a battle thought to have taken place in the vicinity in about AD 420. ■ John Blackwell (1797-1840) who used the bardic name Alun was a Welsh language poet was born near Mold. He was a shoemaker and won prizes for poems and essays in the Welsh language. Supported by friends he graduated from Jesus College, Oxford, and in 1828 was awarded a prize at the Royal Denbigh Eisteddfod for his Welsh elegy on the death of Bishop Reginald Heber. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 13b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loggerheads Country Park, covering approx. 0.1 % of the EA. ■ 21 very areas of Open Common and Open Access Land, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA. ■ Around Pantymwyn, there is a concentration of well-connected PRoW although to the north of the River Alyn, the extent of PRoW is relatively sparse. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRoWs, the EA offers very little other open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>With regard to factors relating to natural beauty, the EA scores relatively high in most cases. In particular, the composition of rolling irregular pastures with a good coverage of Ancient Woodlands contributes to a distinctive sense of place and strong rural character. The large areas of designed parkland also make a valuable contribution to the experience of natural beauty. However, although the landscape is of significant cultural interest and exhibits strong time depth, the landscape and scenic quality is not considered to meet the high standards of National Park, despite being very attractive. Moreover, the recreational offer is very limited and therefore, it is recommended that all of EA outside of the National Landscape should be excluded from the proposed Candidate Area for designation. The small part within the National Landscape, most of which is designated as a SAC, should however be included.</p>	



Rolling wooded farmland



Sense of rural intimacy



Wooded valley



Estate farmland



Wooded parkland



Enclosure of plantation woodland



Views of intrusive industrial development (outside of EA)



View of prominent college building (outside of EA)

EVALUATION AREA 11

EA11: Eryrys Uplands	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from a small area to the south of the EA, all of the <i>Eryrys Uplands</i> are within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, with the eastern EA boundary forming the outer eastern extent of the National Landscape. EA12 (<i>Alyn Valley</i>) is located to the west, EA13 (<i>Eryrys Slopes</i>) to the east, and EA10 (<i>Mold Lowlands</i>) is located to the north. The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic visual and sensory LANDMAP units (approximately two thirds of EA) and two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units. There are also small areas of Open/Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes, and Excavation units.</p> <p>The western part of the EA is dominated by limestone hills, crags and escarpment, with open pastures and edge woodland adjoining farmland characterised by stone walls and buildings. A diverse vegetation cover contrasts with the adjacent upland mass of the southern Clwydian Range. In places, the topography is sharply folded with prominent bluffs and crags with an interesting mixture of wooded depressions and rock exposure. To the east, the landscape of the Coed Gwern-Rhiw plateau is heavily wooded with limestone outcrops. To the north, the plateau/hill fringes exhibit a diverse mosaic of traditional farmland with contrasting pockets of rough grassland, wetland, bracken and gorse, punctuated by traditional farm buildings.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All three units that make up most of the EA exhibit a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit is considered to be ‘outstanding’ as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units are assessed as having a ‘high’ rarity. ■ The condition of the two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units is assessed as ‘fair’. The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit is not assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition is either ‘constant’ or ‘improving’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On the more pronounced area of limestone hills, the landscape exhibits a distinctive folded topography, with a strong pattern of prominent bluffs and crags. ■ On the settled plateau/hill fringes, there is a diverse and intact mosaic of traditional farmland with small regular semi-improved fields and hay meadows, and a scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm buildings and cottages. ■ On the wooded plateau, geometric mixed woodland tends to be dominated by conifers, although some recent broad-leaved planting has taken place. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Former quarry sites detract from the quality of their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit and the larger of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA11: Eryrys Uplands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic is assessed as having an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, and the two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units are both ‘high’. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic exhibits an ‘outstanding’ scenic, with the two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units ‘high’ and ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The highly scenic and distinctive composition of limestone hills with wooded depressions, exposed rocky crags and escarpment, contribute to a very a strong sense of place and the associated appreciation of natural beauty. ■ The colours and textures of rocky outcrops contrasting with pockets of rough grassland, wetland, bracken, gorse & scrub add visual interest, as does the presence of mine chimneys and lime kilns. ■ The pattern of traditional stone cottages scattered amongst a mosaic of small regular fields and hay meadows exhibits a highly distinctive rural character. ■ From the summit of Moel Findeg, there are spectacular views across the Alyn Valley to the summit of Moel Famau. To the east, there are uninterrupted views across Flintshire stretching as far as Merseyside and the Cheshire Plain. <p>Apart from the localised influence of former quarry sites, there are no other incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the wider scenic quality of this unique landscape.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits ‘wild’ and ‘remote/exposed’ qualities. <p>Th findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The very visible presence of exposed rocky crags and escarpment contribute to a strong sense of wildness, as do patches of semi-natural vegetation. ■ A sense of ‘exposure’ is also experienced across much of the limestone plateau. ■ The settled hill fringes however, exhibit very little sense of wildness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the experience of natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All three units exhibit factors relating to the experience of tranquillity. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences quite dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the EA is generally tranquil, although traffic passing along the network of minor roads has an effect in places. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the experience of natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 14a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7 areas of SSSIs, covering approx. 13.8% of the EA.

EA11: Eryrys Uplands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 49 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 9.8% of the EA. ■ 16 RIGSs, covering 9.7% of the EA. <p>Further desk study research and the findings of the field survey also identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relatively high coverage natural designations, the variety and wealth of natural interest significantly contributes to a strong sense of being close to nature. ■ Exposures of limestone escarpment instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ The EA has a diverse vegetation cover including heathland, rough grassland, wetland, bracken, gorse and scrub. ■ The local nature reserve at Moel Findeg is a unique example of lowland heathland occurring at high altitude. ■ At Coed Nercwys, the woodland provides an excellent habitat for wildlife such buzzards, goldcrests and coal tits. A marshy area with cotton grass at Llyn Ochin also attracts dragonflies and newts. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 14b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monument – Nercwys Mountain Cairn (prehistoric ritual/funerary monument). ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – small part of Colomendy Park (most of the park is within EA12 and EA10) comprises a Late-18th Century to Mid-19th Century landscape with an informal garden, pleasure grounds and a wall garden (Grade II). ■ Listed Buildings – several, all Grade II, including domestic structures (e.g. houses, farmhouse), agricultural structures (e.g. cartshed, barn, stable) and industrial structures (e.g. mine chimney, engine houses and lime kiln). Holt Hostel (which provides cheap recreational accommodation) is also Listed. Listed Buildings are generally scattered in the north and in the south of the EA. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many sites relating to extractive industries, including a notable concentration of ones relating to lime extraction and burning. ■ There are also numerous agricultural sites and some cairns and other prehistoric features. ■ Several of the HER sites are located within woodland/plantation. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA is mostly ‘Other Fieldscapes’ relating to extractive industries, and Regular Fieldscapes representing late enclosure of former unenclosed hill land, together with some areas of more anciently enclosed irregular fields. There are also substantial areas of woodland and plantation.</p> <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic features such as chimneys and lime kilns relating to extractive industries over a long period of time. ■ Part of Colomendy Park, registered for the historical interest of its small Late 18th- Early 19th Century park and garden, with picturesque woodland walks, rockwork tunnel, walled garden, views of the Clwydian Range, and for its association with the 18th Century artist Richard Wilson.

EA11: Eryrys Uplands

	<p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 14c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of Public Forest, covering 6.8% of the EA. ■ 4 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering 0.8% of the EA. ■ 3 areas of Open Access Country, covering 3.6% of EA. ■ The EA is covered by a relatively extensive network of well-connected PRoW, with good links to nearby settlements and adjacent EAs. <p>Further research and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the Public Forest of Coed Nercwys (served by 2 car parks), there are several well-signposted routes for walkers, cyclist and horse riders. ■ There is a short walk that leads through birch woodland to summit of Moel Findeg. ■ There are further opportunities to establish cycle routes along quiet rural lanes that link with Coed Nercwys. <p>Overall, the recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as high.</p>

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

The large majority of the EA that is designated National Landscape retains a high landscape and scenic quality and with a wealth of natural and cultural features, this highly distinctive landscape is still considered to meet the test of having an ‘outstanding natural beauty’. In particular, the rocky limestone hills make a very important contribution to this unique landscape. In relation to recreation, the EA also offers a very good provision of access opportunities to enjoy a wealth of natural and cultural features, along with some stunning views of the wider landscape. The EA also lies in quite close proximity to large centres of population. For these reasons, it is recommended that all of EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.

With regard to the small part to the south of the EA that is outside of the National Landscape, the impact of Stoddard’s quarry (now closed), notably erodes the landscape and scenic quality of the local area and therefore, it is recommended that this should be **excluded** from the proposed Candidate Area.



Highly distinctive landform of limestone hills



Exposed limestone plateau



Stone walls



Mine chimney



Rural pastures



Tree-lined lanes



Recreational route through Coed Nercwys Forest



Path through Moel Findeg Nature Reserve

EVALUATION AREA 12

EA12: Alyn Valley	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from a very small area of land along the eastern boundary, all of the <i>Alyn Valley</i> EA is located within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA11 (<i>Eryrys Uplands</i>) forms a distinctive containing backdrop along the eastern boundary, and to the west, the more pronounced elevations of EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>) and EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>). EA9 (<i>Wheeler Valley</i>) is located to the north, and EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>) to the south. The EA is formed by an amalgamation of three visual and sensory LANDMAP units, namely Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing, Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes, and Mosaic Lowland Valleys.</p> <p>To the west of the EA, a diverse pattern of overgrown hedges and small woods form the lower east facing slopes of the Clwydian Range. The field pattern is complemented by linear woodlands following side slope valleys and watercourses. The central part of the EA is characterised by a limestone valley to the south of Loggerheads Country Park. The valley is dominated by the rapidly rising land mass of the Clwydian Range to the west but has its own distinct character dictated by the field patterns and distribution of mature vegetation with occasional gorge and outcrops. To the south-east, a series of low limestone ridges and small linear woods with field clearings exhibit a very distinctive landscape pattern.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All three units are assessed units assessed as having ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes, and the Mosaic Lowland Valley units are considered to be ‘outstanding’ as they include characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing unit is assessed as ‘high’. ■ For the units that have been assessed, landscape condition is either ‘fair’ or ‘good’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The other two units have not been assessed. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the south-east of the valley, there is a concentration of Ancient Woodlands relating to a series of limestone ridges that exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. ■ Across most of the EA, there is a consistent pattern of irregular fields enclosed by intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering River Alyn. ■ The valley contains a scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm building and cottages. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing and Mosaic Lowland Valley units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes exhibits an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, with the Mosaic Lowland Valley and Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing units assessed as ‘high’. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality, with the other two units assessed as either ‘high’.

EA12: Alyn Valley

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor, gently rolling wooded valley sides enclosed by a backdrop of the Eryrys Uplands to the east and the Clwydian Range to the west, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. ■ The concentration of Ancient Woodlands on limestones ridges to the south-east of the EA is particularly distinctive. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic views over the valley towards a distinctive backdrop of containing uplands. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’, although the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes exhibits a sense of exposure. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A localised sense of the passing of time and a return to nature can be experienced from within the pattern of Ancient woodlands scattered throughout the EA, especially to the south-east of the valley. ■ As a large part of the EA is subject to agricultural management, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal elsewhere. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘tranquil’, although three units are recognised as having a ‘sheltered’ quality. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences quite dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The valley is generally peaceful, although less so where main and minor roads pass along the valley floor. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 15a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 areas of SAC, covering approx. 0.2% of EA. ■ 4 areas of SSSI, covering approx. 4.5% of the EA.

EA12: Alyn Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 152 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 5.7% of the EA. ■ 5 RIGS, covering approx. 7.2% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The exposed limestones ridges to the south of the valley (designated RIGS), exhibit a strong natural character. ■ A relatively high coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, instil a sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout large parts of the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 15b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments - three prehistoric sites (Rhos-Ddigre Caves, Moel Llech Round Barrow and Tyn-y-Mynydd Round Barrow) and one Medieval defensive site (Tomen y Faerdre Castle Mound). ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – part of Colomendy Park (the majority of the park is within EA12 and EA10). Colomendy comprises a Late-18th Century to Mid-19th Century landscape part with an informal garden, pleasure grounds and a wall garden (Grade II). ■ Conservation Areas – Llanferres and Llanarmon-yn-Iâl historic villages with medieval origins. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, often clustered in historic villages including Llanferres and Llanarmon-yn-Iâl Conservation Areas. They include historic bridges over the River Alyn, as well as many buildings including churches, chapels, houses, schools, farm buildings and halls. Elizabethan house of Bodidris and its stable block and cottage are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to Historic Environment Record sites, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A wide range of features associated with the valley landscape, including bridges, mills, farms, field boundaries as well as settlements. ■ Distinctive to this EA are the number of cave sites, some of which have been excavated to reveal evidence of human occupation. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Small areas of marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tomen y Faerdre Castle Mound is the remains of a motte and bailey castle, thought to have been built by Owain Gwynedd in 1149 in connection with his annexation of Powys. It was then taken by Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd of Powys and burnt in 1157, and later restored and ditched by King John of England in 1212. ■ Limestone caves within the Alyn Valley provide evidence of human use from the Palaeolithic period onwards. Several were excavated in the 19th Century, revealing human remains, animal bones, charcoal fragments and flint flakes.

EA12: Alyn Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ As well as Colomendy Historic Park and Garden, Gelli Gynan Ornamental Park and Garden is a good local example, although not on the Register. ■ Colomendy Park is associated with 18th Century artist Richard Wilson. ■ Offa’s Dyke National Trail runs through the southern part of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
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<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 15c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 areas of Open Common and Open Country Access Land, covering approx. 3.2% of the EA. ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads the southern part of the valley and extends into the Clwydian uplands to the west. ■ Most of the EA is covered by a reasonable network of well-connected PRoW, with links to nearby settlements and adjacent EAs. <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Offa’s Dyke National Trail and the large areas of Open Access Land to the east and west of the EA, form an essential part of the recreational enjoyment of this highly scenic valley from surrounding EAs. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as medium-high.</p>
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Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With very nearly all of the EA designated as National Landscape, the landscape retains a high landscape and scenic quality and with a wealth of natural and cultural features, this highly distinctive landscape is still considered to meet the test of having an ‘outstanding natural beauty’. In particular, the high scenic quality of the valley makes a very important contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty, as well as significantly contributing to the recreational enjoyment from nearby upland landscapes to the east and west of the valley. As such, it is recommended that all of the EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area, with the very small part of non-National Landscape **excluded**.



Distinctive backdrop of Eryrys Uplands



Distinctive backdrop of Clwydian Range



Limestone outcrops



Wooded hillslopes



Stone walls



Rural pastures



The valley from the north



Footpath into the valley from the north

EVALUATION AREA 13

EA13: Eryrys Slopes	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Eryrys Slopes</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA11 (<i>Eryrys Uplands</i>) that is mostly located within the National Landscape, forms a containing backdrop to the west of the EA, and to the south-east, the EA adjoins EA14 (<i>Hope Mountain</i>). The north-eastern EA boundary forms the outer extent of the AoS. The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two visual and sensory LANDMAP units, namely Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing, and Mosaic Upland & Plateaux.</p> <p>Most of the EA is consists of steep east facing pastoral slopes below the limestone plateau of EA11. The slopes exhibit a strong pattern of small to medium sized irregular fields enclosed by thick hedges with significant numbers of mature trees and linear watercourse woodlands. Further south, enclosed farmland with hedgerows and hedgerow trees forms part of a wider limestone plateau.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units are assessed as having a ‘moderate’ landscape integrity and quality. ■ With regard to rarity, both units are also assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ For the two units that have been assessed, the landscape condition is ‘fair’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The Mosaic Upland & Plateaux unit has not been assessed. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the south of the EA, a line of large pylons that traverse the landscape and its setting to the north significantly detract from the prevailing rural character of the landscape. ■ Most of the landscape consists of intensely managed pastures. ■ Hedgerows are often gappy and degraded or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear unsympathetic with their local setting. ■ Some residential dwellings exhibit a suburban character. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units exhibit a ‘moderate’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of both units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The scenic quality of both units is also assessed as ‘moderate’ <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the scenic quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, views of large pylons from most parts of the EA notably detract from the appreciation of scenic quality. As such, there are no particularly scenic views from the EA, nor towards it. ■ Although much of the EA exhibits a prevailing rural character, the consistent pattern of medium sized irregular enclosures, often with degraded field boundaries, lacks diversity of landform and vegetation cover. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>

EA13: Eryrys Slopes

<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the units are not considered to be remote, exposed or wild. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As nearly all of EA is subject to intensive agriculture, with a very limited coverage of semi-natural habitat, the sense of relative wildness is very minimal. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is low.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is identified as being ‘tranquil’, and both units are recognised as having a ‘sheltered’ quality. As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, most of the EA experiences quite dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The upper slopes are generally quite peaceful although noise and activity in the lower-lying and more settled parts of the landscape, along with the visual intrusion of large pylons, significantly detracts from the experience of tranquillity across large parts of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 16a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 2.0% of the EA. 1 RIGS, covering approx. 0.1 % of the EA. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna, their coverage is relatively minimal, as is their contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty. As most of the landscape has been subject to modification through intensive farming practices, most of the EA exhibits little other natural interest that notably contributes to experience of natural beauty. <p>Overall therefore, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 16b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Areas – part of Plas Onn, Nercwys. Listed Buildings – some Listed Buildings in the northern part of the area, all are domestic or agricultural, and include Fron Hall and its associated farm. The U-shaped range west of Fron Hall is designated Grade II*; all others are Grade II. HER sites: numerous, with many related to mining (quarries, shafts, sandpits, mines, limekilns, ponds, etc.) and agriculture (farm buildings, stable blocks, barns, common land boundary markers, etc.). Some are also Listed or otherwise designated <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous sites, with many related to mining (quarries, shafts, sandpits, mines, limekilns, ponds, etc.) and agriculture (farm buildings, stable blocks, barns, common land boundary markers, etc.). Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated.

EA13: Eryrys Slopes

	<p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Part of Plas Onn Conservation Area and associated Listed Buildings. ■ The presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contributes to some sense of time-depth. ■ Historic farms with surviving traditional buildings. ■ Reminders within today's landscape of previous industrial land-uses in this area. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 16c (see attached A3 figures):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The central part of the EA has a good network of PRow although to the north and south, it is relatively sparse. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRow, the EA offers very little open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as low.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>Although the EA forms an important backdrop to the lower-lying landscape to the east, and a transition to the National Landscape to the west, none of the factors that relate to natural beauty are especially strong or apparent. Landscape and scenic quality is quite ordinary, and there are relatively few natural and cultural features of interest. The strength of perceptual qualities is also very limited. Furthermore, as the EA has very little to offer in providing access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation, it is recommended that all of EA should be excluded from the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Declining field boundaries



View over lower-lying landscape



View of slopes from lower-lying landscape



Scattered built development



Large farm buildings



Intrusive pylons

EVALUATION AREA 14

EA14: Hope Mountain	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Hope Mountain</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, although a small part adjoins it at the boundary of EA17. All other boundaries of the EA form the outer extent of the AoS. Along the south-western boundary, the EA adjoins parts of EA13 (<i>Eryrys Slopes</i>), EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>) and EA18 (<i>Rhos Slopes</i>). The large majority of the EA is formed by an amalgamation of three Mosaic Rolling Lowland visual and sensory LANDMAP units, a Wooded Lowland Valley unit, and a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit.</p> <p>As an overview, the character of the EA is quite varied. Hope Mountain consists of an elevated limestone ridge with steep east facing pastoral slopes and gentler western slopes. There is a pattern of small to medium sized irregular fields enclosed by hedges and thin woodlands. To the south of the ridge, there is a mixture of semi-natural moorland, rough grassland and pasture, with the steeper slopes covered in woodland, scrub and bracken. To the south of the ridge, the narrow wooded valleys of Llanfynydd and Hope exhibit some very steep slopes enclosing a narrow flat valley floor with pastoral farmland in small fields. To the north of the valleys, the landscape has a gently rolling landform with farmland characterised by a strong pattern of small regular and irregular shaped pastoral fields enclosed by thick hedges with trees. To the north-west, there is gently rolling farmland with medium sized improved grassland & arable fields. Hedges are low cut with some hedgerow trees, and there are small blocks of woodland and some areas of wetter pasture with gorse. To the north-east of the EA, rolling lowland farmland with wooded estates slopes towards River Alyn. Blocks of mixed plantation are prominent on valley sides. To the south-west, open upland ridges exhibit a mixture of semi-natural moorland, rough grassland and large sized improved grassland fields, along with areas of forestry and scrub.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All units exhibit a ‘high’ integrity and quality, except for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit which is assessed as ‘low’ ■ The rarity of the Wooded Lowland Valley unit is assessed as ‘high’ with all other units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of all units ranges between ‘good’ and ‘fair’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’, apart from the one of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland units which is ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The open upland ridge at Hope Mountain exhibits a mixture of semi-natural moorland, rough grassland and large improved grassland fields, with the steeper edges covered in woodland. ■ Steep east facing pastoral slopes below the limestone plateau exhibit a strong pattern of small to medium sized irregular fields enclosed by thick hedges, with significant numbers of mature trees and linear watercourse woodlands associated with a number of parklands. ■ Towards the centre of the EA, an area of gently rolling lowland exhibits a strong pattern of small regular and irregular shaped pastoral fields enclosed by thick hedges with trees, as well as intact riparian woodlands. ■ To the south of the EA, a narrow sinuous valley occupied by the upper tributary of the River Alyn the Nant-y-ffrith, and the Llanfynydd and Hope valleys to the north, exhibit a good coverage of woodlands. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p>

EA14: Hope Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In many places to the north and west, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ On some steep scarp slopes, semi-natural habitat is subject to bracken encroachment. ■ In places, the remains of quarrying and mining activity are evident. ■ To the south-west of the EA, a line of large pylons that traverse the landscape and its setting to the north, significantly detract from the prevailing rural character of the landscape. ■ Some villages and residential dwellings exhibit a suburban character. ■ In places, the impact of horsiculture weakens the landscape structure and rural character. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place within the Wooded Lowland Valley unit is assessed as ‘high’, with all other units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of all units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Wooded Lowland Valley unit exhibits a ‘high’ scenic quality, with all other units assessed as ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The wooded north-easterly facing scarp slopes of Hope Mountain. ■ The narrow wooded Llanfynydd and Hope valleys are particularly distinctive and exhibit a strong sense of intimacy and enclosure. ■ The area of gently rolling lowland towards the centre of the EA has a strong rural character and from elevated areas to the east, the composition of intact enclosed pastures and linear riparian woodlands is particularly distinctive. ■ On east facing pastoral slopes below the limestone plateau, the pattern of irregular fields enclosed by thick hedges, with significant numbers of mature trees and linear riparian woodlands, forms a scenic composition. ■ Similar to landscape quality, the scenic quality of the more elevated areas and associated wooded valleys to the south, is notably more scenic than the farmed landscape to the north and west of the EA. ■ Although most of the northern landscape is less scenic, the presence of two large Registered Parks and Gardens make a valuable contribution to the scenic quality of their locality. ■ From some limited areas of open ground, there are highly scenic views over the heavily wooded Nant-y-ffrith valley. ■ From a viewpoint within Waun-y-llyn Country Park, there are long views to Deeside, Chester and Liverpool. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the south-west of the EA, an area of upland fringe landscape with geometric forestry appears quite featureless, and with a line of large pylons, the scenic quality is not particularly strong.

EA14: Hope Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the Hillside & Scarp Slopes offer some long range views over lower-lying ground to the north and west, these are not especially scenic as in most cases, areas of extensive built development, including some prominent industrial uses (outside of EA), notably detract from their appreciation. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are assessed as being ‘wild’, although the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic is identified as being ‘exposed’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With areas of semi-natural habitat, a sense of remoteness and exposure can be experienced from areas of higher ground. ■ Although the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal within most lower-lying parts, semi-natural vegetation along small watercourses and patches of Ancient Woodland contribute to a sense of naturalness in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Only the Wooded Lowland Valley unit is identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, the western parts of the EA experience quite dark night skies, but to the east, much less so. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pockets of relative tranquillity can be found within some rural parts in the centre of the EA, as well as within most elevated areas to the east and associated wooded valleys to the south. ■ To the west and north however, busy roads, settlement, along with the visual intrusion of large pylons, significantly detract from the experience of tranquillity across large parts of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 17a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SSSI, covering approx. 0.2% of the EA. ■ 167 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 6.5% of the EA. ■ 8 RIGS, covering approx. 0.7 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands supports a range of woodland flora and fauna, and especially within the central and southern parts of the EA, the distinctive presence of linear valley/riparian woodlands make a valuable contribution to the experience of natural beauty. ■ On the steep scarp slopes, areas of semi-natural moorland and rough grassland contribute to sense of naturalness.

EA14: Hope Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At Waun-y-llyn Country Park, there is a small lake surrounded by semi-natural vegetation and woodlands. ■ In less intensively farmed areas, species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest. ■ Birds of prey are frequently seen circling above areas of higher ground. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The southern part of the EA is within the Dyffryn Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Interest. As illustrated in Figure 17b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – numerous, covering an exceptionally wide range of periods and types, reflecting the long history of occupation and travel in this area. They include several prehistoric round barrows and Carreg-y-llech standing stone, Caer Estyn Iron-Age hillfort, a Roman occupation site at Ffrith, stretches of Offa’s Dyke (early Medieval), the medieval Caergwrle Castle, and two medieval/post medieval bridges, including a packhorse bridge at Caergwrle. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – there are a series of Registered Parks and Gardens along the eastern edge of the EA: Leeswood Hall (18th Century transitional formal/informal landscape garden – Grade I); Hartsheath (19th +20th Century landscape park with formal and informal garden – Grade II); Plas Teg (17th Century and 19th Century with courtyard entrance, walled garden, shrubberies and Avenue – Grade II), and Bryn Iorcyn (17th Century walled gardens incorporating a dovecote – Grade II). ■ Conservation Areas – Leeswood Hall, Caergwrle historic core (including the castle) and Treuddyn village. ■ Listed Buildings – many and diverse Listed Buildings, including several Listed Grade I and II* associated with estates. A pack horse bridge is also Grade I. The range of Listed Buildings, including houses, farm buildings, estate buildings, churches, chapels, bridges, shops, schoolroom etc. reflect the high level of survival of historic buildings within this settled EA. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A great diversity of domestic, industrial, agricultural and transport sites across the EA, which together tell the story of its settlement and exploitation over many thousands of years. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the EA is characterised by irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). Within these are areas of designed landscapes, woodland, extractive industries and nucleated settlements. The nucleated settlement of Caergwrle (and its contiguous settlement of Hope which is outside the EA) is identified as being Outstanding. <p>To the west of the village of Hope, the EA also includes ‘Park in the Past’, a project aimed at building the first entire timber auxiliary fort using authentic techniques and materials, the first Roman fort to be built in Britain in almost 2,000 years.</p> <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The historic settlement of Caergwrle, with a dramatically sited medieval castle and Iron-Age hillfort on either side of a steep valley crossed by a historic bridge.

EA14: Hope Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The series of historic estates on the western side of the Alun Valley, generally dating from the 17th-19th Century and providing examples of different stages and styles of designed landscapes. They also have group value with their associated houses, farms, estate buildings and garden features. ■ Offa’s Dyke, including sections of surviving earthworks. ■ Roman settlement site at Ffrith, on the narrow valley floor of the steeply incised River Cegidog. ■ Chain of Bronze Age barrows on the eastern valley side above the River Terrig. ■ Diverse fieldscapes, deeply dissected by stream and river valleys. Predominantly irregular fieldscape types also include woodland, nucleated settlement, extractive industries and designed landscapes. The intact historic landscape features and field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and a strong sense of time depth. ■ Caergwrle Castle built by Dafydd ap Gruffydd. The Caergwrle Bowl (dating from the Bronze Age and made of shale, tin and gold, with markings thought to represent a ship) was discovered here in 1823. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 17c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Waun-y-llyn Country Park, covering approx. 0.6% of the EA. ■ 1 area of Open Country and Open Access Land, covering approx. 0.6 % of the EA. ■ The EA has a relatively extensive and well-connected network of PRoW, with good links to nearby settlements. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At Waun-y-llyn Country Park, there is a circular walk that starts from a car park that leads up to the high point on the mountain. There are also footpaths from the settlements of Hope and Caergwrle. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>The landscape associated with Hope Mountain, as well as the wooded valleys to the south and the more rural parts towards the centre of the EA, exhibit a notably higher landscape and scenic quality than the northern parts and the upland fringe landscape to the south-west of the EA. Although these more scenic parts might have some potential to meet the test of ‘outstanding’ natural beauty in isolation, given that the upland fringe landscape between these areas and the National Landscape boundary further to the west is of much lesser quality, a coherent and sufficient tract of connecting high quality landscape cannot be identified. Notwithstanding this key point, apart from the Country Park and the network of PRoW, the EA has little to offer in providing access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation. Considering all these factors, it is recommended that all of EA should be excluded from the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Extensive woodlands along western slopes of Hope Mountain



Scenic view over the Nant-y-ffrith valley



Looking west over rural interior



Highly distinctive eastern slopes



Pylons and weak landscape pattern to west



Upland fringe to south-west



View of Coed-Llai



Large industrial units towards Chester

EVALUATION AREA 15

EA15: Clwydian Range South	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Clwydian Range South</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. The upland landscape continues to the north where the EA adjoins EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>), and to south, where it transitions to EA17 (Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain). EA12 (<i>Alyn Valley</i>) is located to the east, and to the west, the much lower-lying EA7 (Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin). Approximately half of the EA consists of an Exposed Upland/Plateau and Hills visual and sensory LANDMAP unit, with the other half a Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes unit. As an overview, the EA is defined by a prominent undulating ridge with a series of upland hills covered in heather, gorse and bracken. To the west of the distinctive uplands, steep hillside slopes are characterised by a relatively small-scale field pattern dominated by largely overgrown hedges and occasional small broadleaf woodlands. The slopes are bisected by narrow often well vegetated stream valleys descending for the upper slopes of the adjacent upland.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of both units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of both units is assessed as ‘high’. ■ The landscape condition of the Exposed Upland/Plateau and Hills is assessed as ‘high’, and the Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes unit ‘moderate’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for both units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across most parts of the exposed uplands, there are extensive areas of semi-natural moorland vegetation although in places, this is subject to scrub and bracken encroachment. ■ Along most parts of the steep western scarp slopes, where the landscape is characterised by a relatively small-scale field pattern dominated by largely overgrown hedges, management appears extensive rather than intensive, with livestock farming predominating. ■ Along the lower slopes of western scarp, a scattered pattern of stone cottages and farm buildings tend to integrate well with the surrounding rural landscape. ■ Steep sided valleys are well vegetated. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Lowland units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of both Lowland units is assessed as ‘outstanding’. ■ The scenic quality of both Lowland units is also assessed as ‘outstanding’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between a very distinctive series of smooth rounded uplands, including those within EA8 (<i>Clwydian Range Central</i>), and the associated incised valleys, exhibits a highly scenic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place. ■ The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent settled lower areas, particularly to the west where they rise dramatically above the Vale of Clwyd.

EA15: Clwydian Range South

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy. ■ The colours and textures of extensive heather moorland add to the visual interest. ■ From areas of open ground to the west, there are stunning views across the Vale of Clwyd to Snowdonia. ■ From other areas of open higher ground, there are long distance scenic views of interlocking uplands and valleys, and to east, over the Alyn Valley towards a backdrop of the Eryrys Uplands. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the east of the EA, a tall lattice telecoms mast locally detracts from the upland landform. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Exposed Upland/Plateau and Hills is identified as being 'wild'. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With extensive areas of semi-natural moorland habitats, the exposed and remote uplands exhibit a very strong sense of wildness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units are identified as being 'tranquil'. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relative absence of settlement and development, a strong sense of tranquillity can be experienced from nearly all of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 18a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 66 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 6% of the EA. ■ 1 very small RIGS, covering approx. 0.02 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a strong sense of naturalness. ■ The heather moorland provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds. Of particular importance is the black grouse, one of the rarest birds in Wales. Buzzards and kestrels are frequently seen circling overhead. ■ The upland ridge and peaks rise to 467m at Moel Gyw and from lower-lying areas, their profile forms a very distinctive landform feature.

EA15: Clwydian Range South

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and along the western slopes, their concentration in narrow valleys significantly contribute to the experience of natural beauty. ■ Within other incised glens, the high proportion of trees, woodland and other vegetation notably contribute to a strong sense of naturalness. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Cultural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 18b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – three prehistoric round barrows (Moel y Plas, Moel Llech and Moel Gyw) and Coed Henblas medieval moated site. ■ Listed Buildings – a few Listed Buildings, reflecting the very light settlement of this predominantly upland area. The Listed Buildings include houses, a farm and a chapel. All are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Types of sites that generally reflect the underlying topography – sites present in upland areas include tumuli, enclosures and historic field boundaries, whilst those on the lower slopes in the periphery of the EA include houses, farm buildings, limekilns and sheepfolds. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. ■ Medieval park of Bathafarn and part of Gelli-Cynan ornamental park and garden are recorded in the HER but are not on the Register. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A high proportion of marginal land (which often contains a relatively high density of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). The marginal land is identified within LANDMAP as being Outstanding. ■ Some irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive area of upland unenclosed land forming the southern part of the Clwydian Range. The Bronze Age barrows on hill summits are consistent with the pattern of prehistoric monuments elsewhere along the ridge of the Clwydian Range. There is also evidence of upland subsistence around Moel Llanfair. ■ Well-preserved medieval moated homestead site north of Graig fechan, and other examples of historic farms on lower slopes associated with irregular fieldscapes. ■ Bathafarn (medieval park of the Lordship of Ruthin) is recorded in the HER though not on the Register. It was divided into fields in the post-medieval period. A document of 1592 describes boundaries, the character of the park and the evolution of the landscape which may still be traced today. ■ Offa’s Dyke National Trail, running along the ridge-top. ■ The summits of the Clwydian Range provide inspiration to a wide range of contemporary artists and writers, including those involved in the ‘Heather and Hillforts’ project. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 18c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3 areas of Open Access Country, covering approx. 9.2% of the EA.

EA15: Clwydian Range South

- A section of the Offa's Dyke National Trail leads through the northern part of the EA.
- Although the network of PRoW is relatively sparse, there are several links to the Offa's Dyke National Trail.

Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Considering the relatively large proportion of Open Access Land and the Offa's Dyke National Trail leads through the EA, there is a good provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of these uplands.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With all of the EA designated as National Landscape, most of the landscape retains a high landscape and scenic quality and with a wealth of natural and cultural features, the EA is still considered to meet the test of having an 'outstanding natural beauty'. In relation to recreation, there is a good provision of relatively widespread opportunities to enjoy this stunning upland landscape, and its associated wealth of natural and cultural interest. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Exposed upper farmed slopes and upland



Highly distinctive backdrop of upland landform



Contrast of farmed slopes and backdrop of Central Uplands



Well vegetated valley



Highly scenic views over Pwll-Glâs towards Mynydd Mynllo



Extensive views west of the Vale of Clwyd



Rural lane leading down to incised valley



Unspoilt upland farmland

EVALUATION AREA 16

EA16: Pwll-Glâs	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Pwll-Glâs</i> EA is located to the south of Ruthin, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. Along the north-eastern boundary, there is a gentle transition to EA7 (Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin), and to the south-east, a more abrupt transition to EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>) and EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon</i>). The western EA boundary forms the outer extent of the AoS boundary, the northern part of which, follows the A949. To the south of the A949, the small village of Llanelidan lies on south-western boundary. In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is formed by an amalgamation of Wooded Hill & Lower Plateau, Mosaic Lowland Valleys, Open Hillside & Scarp Slopes, and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic visual and sensory units.</p> <p>As an overview, the landscape to the north of the EA is a well wooded hilly landscape with occasional outcrops of limestone. This area has a very distinct pattern of woodlands which largely follow the underlying topography in bands running north south. To the west of the wooded hills, a small wooded valley with a prevailing parkland character accommodates the River Clwyd. To the south of the EA, the landscape is more open and exhibits a distinctive pattern of small hills with wooded dells.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Mosaic Lowland Valleys exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the other three units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Wooded Hill & Lower Plateau and Mosaic Lowland Valleys units is assessed as ‘high’, with the other two units assessed as having a ‘moderate’ rarity. ■ The landscape condition of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The other three units have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the northern part of the EA, there is a concentration of Ancient Woodlands relating to a series of limestone ridges that exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. ■ In lower-lying areas, there is a consistent pattern of irregular fields enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees. ■ Areas of well managed parkland with mature trees and woodlands. ■ To the south, overgrown hedgerows give the impression of strong tree cover. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering Clwyd and Morwynion rivers. ■ A scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm building and cottages. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from landscape quality although the effect of Ash die back could have a major future impact on landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Wooded Hill & Lower Plateau and Mosaic Lowland Valleys units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Open Hillside & Scarp Slopes and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA16: Pwll-Glâs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distinctiveness of the Wooded Hill & Lower Plateau and Mosaic Lowland Valleys units is assessed as ‘high’, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ All four units exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between intimate valley floors, heavily wooded ridges and rolling hills provide a highly scenic composition, particularly when viewed from areas of higher ground to the east. ■ The concentration and the north-south alignment of Ancient Woodlands are particularly distinctive, as are areas of designed parkland. ■ To the north-east of the EA, a series of rugged limestone cliffs rise above wooded pastures. ■ A strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy. ■ Towards the south of the EA, there are highly scenic views towards a distinctive backdrop of the Llantysilio mountain and the Berwyn uplands beyond. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With an extensive coverage of Ancient Woodlands and mature trees lining field boundaries, a strong sense of the passing of time and a return to nature is experienced throughout the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘tranquil’, although three units are recognised as having a ‘sheltered’ quality. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the EA is very peaceful, particularly where woodlands and matures trees provide a strong sense of rural intimacy. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 19a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 129 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 20.9% of the EA. ■ 1 SSSI, covering approx. 5.8% of the EA. ■ 3 RIGS, covering approx. 1.7% of the EA.

EA16: Pwll-Glâs

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A very high coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, they instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ A series of rugged limestones cliffs exhibit a strong natural character in their locality. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout most of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The north-eastern part of the EA is within the Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 19b (see attached A3 figures) the EA also includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Craig Adwywynt prehistoric camp and Tom Dongen prehistoric round barrow. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Eyarth House (20th Century informal garden with rock garden, island beds and a walled garden) and Eyarth Hall (Late 16th Century onwards terraced garden with ornamental spring and pond). Both Grade II. ■ Nantclwyd has a parterre garden, and extensive parkland grounds including a lake and woodland, but is not Registered. ■ Conservation Area – Llanelidan village. ■ Listed Buildings –numerous, with clusters at Llanelidan village and Nantclwyd Hall. They reflect the history of settlement in the area, with many domestic buildings, along with estate buildings, agricultural buildings, churches chapels, school, etc. The church of St Elidan is Grade II* along with houses at Pen-y-Graig farmhouse, Plas-uchaf, Nantclwyd Hall, Ty Cerrig and Pwll Y Callod. All other buildings are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites reflecting the estate landscapes, as well as historic villages and field patterns, former railway lines and industrial sites, particularly associated with watercourses (e.g. sawmill and flower mill on the River Clwyd). ■ Several structures have also been identified within woodlands. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of designed landscape, where parkland and estate landscapes contribute to landscape fabric and character. ■ There are also large areas of irregular fieldscapes where historic field patterns contribute to landscape fabric and character. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Iron Age hillfort at Craig Adwywynt, located on a ridge of land between two tributaries of the River Clwyd and utilising natural cliff lines within its defensive earthworks. ■ Several historic estates, with houses often set within landscaped grounds, although not all the grounds are Registered. Listed buildings and garden structures add group value to the

EA16: Pwll-Glâs

designations, and the designed estate landscapes with parkland, gardens, trees and woodland add to the distinctive character of the area.

- Irregular organic enclosures over a large area of the Vale of Clwyd possibly representing the Welsh inheritance system of gavelkind, fossilised in the predominantly small and irregular field pattern.
- Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth.

Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as **medium-high**.

Recreation

As illustrated in Figure 19c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:

- A very extensive and well-connected network of PRoW.

The recreational features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:

- The extensive network of PRoW provide many opportunities to explore and enjoy this very peaceful rural landscape.
- There are good footpath and bridleway links to adjacent EAs that are included with the proposed Candidate Area.
- There are good opportunities to create local circular walks around the network of PRoW, as well as cycle routes around the network of quiet rural lanes.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With a very high proportion and a distinctive pattern of Ancient Woodlands, along with limestone cliffs, small rolling hills and areas of parkland, the EA exhibits a strong sense of place. Limestone cottages and farmsteads also make a notable contribution to sense of place, and a strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands, contribute to a very rural and intimate experience. A strong time-depth is also experienced throughout the EA. Although recreational opportunities are largely limited to the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the PRoW network, this is very extensive and well-connected. There are also good opportunities to further enhance the network to establish locally promoted circular routes that link with the town of Ruthin, as well cycle routes along the quiet rural lanes. As such, it is recommended that nearly all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.

The small area recommended for **exclusion** lies to the north of the A949 where a golf course detracts from the appreciation of natural beauty. Further north towards Ruthin, it is considered that this part of the EA does not constitute a sufficient tract of land to form a coherent designated area at the landscape scale, especially as the landscape to the north of Dyffryn Clwyd within EA7 (*Vale of Clwyd Denbigh – Ruthin*) is recommend for Candidate Area exclusion.



Overlooking the south of the EA from the Clwydian Range



Distinctive limestone cliffs



Rolling hills



Mature-treed field boundaries



Enclosed valley floor



High coverage of Ancient Woodlands



Intimate rural character



Parkland character

EVALUATION AREA 17

EA17: Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from a narrow swathe of hillslopes to the west, all of the <i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. To the south, the EA forms a containing backdrop to the National Landscape of EA19 (<i>Dee Valley and Llangollen</i>) and to the east, EA18 (<i>Rhos Slopes</i>) forms the outer lower-lying easterly slopes, the western parts of which, are within the National Landscape. Along the northern boundary, there are several upland and lowland EAs that adjoin this landscape, with EA12 (<i>Alyn Valley</i>) and EA15 (<i>Clwydian Range South</i>) forming a northerly continuation of the National Landscape. The EA largely consists of an amalgamation of several Uplands visual and sensory LANDMAP units, along with an Open Hillside & Scarp Slopes unit, and an Open Lowland Valleys unit. There are also small areas of Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes, Grazing, and Excavation units.</p> <p>To the east, the EA includes Ruabon and Esclusham mountain, an open and expansive upland heather moorland peak that dominates the surrounding lower lying landscape. The lower slopes display an open and well defined agricultural field pattern gradually changing to the open heather moorland that dominates much of the upper slopes. To the south, Llantysilio Mountain forms a distinctive undulating ridge with spur slopes covered in a mixture of heather, gorse and bracken. The flanks of the upland are deeply incised with hanging valleys and the open moorland summits. To the north of Llantysilio Mountain, the farmed Morwynion Valley exhibits a distinctive field pattern with overgrown hedges and trees. To the north of the valley, the landscape is characterised by a series of strongly undulating hills with fields enclosed by well vegetated hedgerows with a high incidence of hedgerow trees.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two of the Upland areas exhibit a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with all other main units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the undulating upland ridge is assessed as ‘outstanding’, with another upland area of expansive upland heather moorland rated as ‘high’. All other units are assessed as having a ‘moderate’ rarity. ■ The landscape condition of half of the units is assessed as ‘fair. The other half have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’ apart from the Open Hillside & Scarp Slopes which are ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Along the distinctive undulating ridge to the south of the Morwynion Valley, there are extensive areas of heather moorland although in places, this is subject to gorse and bracken encroachment. ■ Extensive areas of open moorland habitats also cover the high plateau and Ruabon Mountain. ■ Within the Morwynion Valley, there is a relatively strong pattern of mature hedgerows and trees although two lines of large pylons notably detract from its rural character. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The slate quarry at Horseshoe Pass notably detracts from the landform of the ridge and is often highly visible from the lower-lying landscape valley. ■ On the uplands to the north of the Morwynion Valley, some of the hedges that enclose a pattern of medium to large size pastures are overgrown, with others often gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing.

EA17: Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the north-east of the EA, a large area of geometric forestry, with some recent felling, contrasts with the surrounding semi-natural vegetation. Within this area, pylons, telecommunication masts, fragmented stone walls and some scattered upland fringe development also notably detract from the quality of the local landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All areas of Upland exhibits a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Open Hillside & Scarp Slopes and Open Lowland Valley units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of the undulating upland ridge unit is assessed as ‘outstanding’, with all units rated as ‘high’. ■ All units exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the distinctive undulating ridge and spur slopes, the high plateau and mass of Ruabon Mountain, and the broad profile of Morwynion Valley exhibits a highly scenic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place. ■ The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent settled lower areas, particularly to the east where Ruabon Mountain forms an important landmark within the southern part of Wrexham Maelor. ■ The contrasting colours and textures of extensive heather moorland add to the visual interest. ■ In lower-lying Morwynion Valley, there is a relative sense of shelter. ■ From areas of open ground to the west, there are stunning views overlooking the Morwynion Valley towards a distant backdrop Eryri. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, the presence of a large slate quarry and pylons within the Morwynion Valley detracts from the appreciation of scenic quality within the central part of the EA, and to the north-east, forestry and pylons. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All upland areas are identified as exhibiting ‘wild’, ‘remote’ and ‘exposed’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation on Ruabon Mountain and the ridgeline of Llantysillio Mountain exhibit a very strong sense of wildness. ■ As most of Morwynion Valley is subject to intensive agriculture, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most Upland units are identified as being ‘tranquil’.

EA17: Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most of the upland areas are very tranquil. ■ Within the Morwynion Valley, a network of busy roads along with the visual intrusion pylons limits the experience of peace and tranquillity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 20a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC, covering approx. 45% of EA. ■ 5 areas of SSSI, covering approx. 45% of EA. ■ 62 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 0.9% of the EA. ■ 11 RIGSs, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Covering nearly half of the EA, the Berwyn a Mynyddoedd de Clwyd SPA makes a particularly important contribution to the natural beauty of the uplands. The SPA designation (most of which extends further south into the Berwyn), contains the largest stands of upland European dry heath in Wales, and supports the most extensive tract of near-natural blanket bog in Wales. ■ The heather moorland provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds. Of particular importance is the black grouse, one of the rarest birds in Wales. Buzzards and kestrels are frequently seen circling overhead. ■ The upland ridge and peaks rise to 577m at Moel y Gamelin and from lower-lying areas, their profile forms a very distinctive landform feature. ■ In contrast to the uplands however, most of the Morwynion Valley landscape has been subject to modification through intensive farming practices, and therefore, exhibits little natural interest that notably contributes to experience of natural beauty. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high .</p>
<i>Cultural interest</i>	<p>The Vale of Clwyd Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest clips the EA boundary to the north, and in the south of the EA, Maesyrychen Mountain is within the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest. However, the majority of the EA is not within a Registered Landscape.</p> <p>As illustrated in Figure 20b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – many prehistoric sites, including cairns, barrows, hillforts and a stone circle. Most are in upland locations. There is also a medieval motte and bailey castle at Tomen y Rhodwydd (Castell yr Adwy). ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Plas yn lâl (Landscape park, informal garden and walled garden dating from the 19th Century but with earlier origins). Grade II.

EA17: Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Listed Buildings – relatively few, reflecting the largely unsettled upland character of this area. Most of the Listed Buildings are domestic or agricultural and are Grade II. The church of St Tysilio is Grade II*. Plas yn lâl House and garden statues are also Listed. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes very numerous and varied sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Those within the highest upland areas reflect changing land uses including cairns, enclosures, upland subsistence and structures relating to sport (shooting butts, duck pond, etc.). ■ Valley sites often relate to settlement and agriculture (e.g. farms, chapels, sheepfolds and field boundaries). ■ Also notable are the number of historic quarry sites, and associated tramways, inclines and other buildings. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of marginal land (containing relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). ■ Irregular fieldscapes (containing historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ A small area of designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Earthworks of Moel y Gaer and Caer Drewyn Iron-Age hillforts/camps in dramatic locations overlooking the Dee Valley (Scheduled Monuments). ■ Concentration of Bronze Age funerary monuments (barrows and cairns) in the east of the EA, along with a Creigiau Eglwyseg stone circle (Scheduled Monuments). ■ Tomen y Rhodwydd (Castell yr Adwy) medieval motte and bailey castle at the head of the Nant y Garth Pass. Its construction is recorded in 1149, and its destruction in 1157. ■ Plas yn lâl landscape park was laid out and planted in the 1820s, but the grounds (including woodland) are much older. At 300-370m above sea level, this is the highest registered historic park and garden in Wales and contains many mature parkland trees. It has group value with the associated house and garden statues which are Listed Buildings, and an association with the Yale family. ■ Rich legacy of mining, quarrying, transport and associated settlement. ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes, particularly in valleys. ■ Offa’s Dyke National Trail crosses this EA between the Dee Valley and the Clwydian Range. ■ Plas yn lâl is the ancient seat of the Yale family (from who descended the Yales of America, including the founder of Yale University). <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 20c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 44 areas of Open Access Common Land and Open Country, covering approx. 47.5 % of the EA. ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads through the eastern part of the EA.

EA17: Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain

- The Morwynion Valley accommodates a relatively extensive network of PRoW, with several links to areas of Open Access on Llantysilio Mountain. Sections of PRoW also link Ruabon & Esclusham with areas of settlement to the east.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Considering the large proportion of Open Access Land and the presence of Offa's Dyke National Trail there is an excellent provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of these uplands.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as **high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Despite the negative influence of some incongruous elements and land uses, the large majority of the EA retains a high landscape and scenic quality, particularly the areas of distinctive uplands. As such, the EA is considered to still meet the test of 'outstanding' natural beauty. Of particular relevance, extensive areas of SPA make a very significant contribution to its natural and scenic value. In relation to recreation, there is an excellent provision of widespread opportunities to enjoy this stunning upland landscape, and its associated wealth of natural and cultural interest. As such, it is recommended that all of EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area. Due to the influence of a line of pylons and a weak landscape pattern however, the lower non-National Landscape slopes along the western edge of the EA are recommended to be **excluded**.



Diverse moorland habitat



Towards Ruabon Mountain



Overlooking the Morwynion Valley



Distinctive upland ridge and summits



Backdrop of Clwydian Range



Declining landscape to the north-east



Large pylons Morwynion Valley



Slate quarry at Horseshoe Pass

EVALUATION AREA 18

EA18: Rhos Slopes	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the upper slopes of the <i>Rhos Slopes</i> EA are within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, with the lower ones outside. EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>) adjoins the western boundary, with the eastern boundary forming the outer eastern extent of the AoS. The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP units (covering 60% of EA), along with smaller areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic, Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing, and Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys units. There are also very small areas of Excavation, Upland Grazing, Wooded Upland/Lowland Valleys, and Urban/Village units.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA is formed by the lower eastern slopes of Ruabon and Esclusham mountain that are typified by rolling and undulating topography with an intricate network of small irregular fields enclosed by well-defined hedgerows and mature trees. Wooded stream corridors also lead down the slopes. To the north, the EA also includes the Minera limestone scarp, an area of marginal rough grazing with extensive tree cover and limestone outcrops, and to its north, the heavily wooded upper Clywedog Valley.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of all of the main units is assessed as ‘moderate’, apart from the Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing unit which is assessed as ‘low’. ■ The rarity of the three larger areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units is assessed as ‘high’, with the Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing and Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valley units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ For the two units that have been assessed (one of each type), the landscape condition is ‘good’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a marked transition in landscape quality between the National Landscape designated upper slopes, and the non- National Landscape lower slopes. ■ Along the upper scarp slopes, there is an intact pattern of small-medium sized pastures, with well-defined hedgerow boundaries and scattered trees. The landscape also has a relatively strong rural character, and a consistent pattern of narrow liner woodlands follow small streams leading down the slopes. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With most of the landscape consisting of intensely managed pastures, the landscape pattern along the lower slopes is much weaker. Field boundaries are often gappy and degraded or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear unsympathetic with their local setting, and some residential dwellings exhibit a suburban character. ■ To the north of the EA, farmland and rural features are in decline, and a line of large pylons that traverse the landscape significantly detracts from the quality of the landscape, as does the settlement edge of Coedpoeth. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>

EA18: Rhos Slopes

<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place varies between ‘strong’ within areas of higher ground, to ‘weak’ within some lower-lying areas. ■ The three largest areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units exhibit a ‘high’, distinctiveness, reducing to ‘moderate’ for the Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing and Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valley units. ■ Apart from one area of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic (within the National Landscape), that exhibits a ‘high’ scenic quality, all other units are assessed as ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As identified in the LANDMAP assessment, there is a noticeable variation in scenic quality between the National Landscape upper slopes, and the non-designated lower slopes. ■ The prevailing undeveloped character of the upper slopes typically provides a scenic transition to the backdrop of open uplands in EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>), and there are no incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from its appreciation. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In contrast however, the lower slopes exhibit relatively little scenic quality and, although much of it exhibits a prevailing rural character, the consistent pattern of medium sized irregular enclosures, often with degraded field boundaries, lacks diversity of landform and vegetation cover. ■ The visual intrusion of large pylons, along with a backdrop of extensive settlement in the wider lower-lying landscape, also limit its scenic appeal. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units exhibit ‘wild’ and ‘remote’ quality. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal within lower-lying parts, semi-natural vegetation along small watercourses and patches of Ancient Woodland locally contribute to a sense of naturalness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the Hill & Lower Plateau Grazing unit, all others are identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, the upper slopes experience quite dark night skies. <p>The field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A strong sense of relative tranquillity is found within wooded sections of the Clywedog Valley. ■ Large areas of settlement and busy roads in close proximity to the east of the EA, along with the visual intrusion of large pylons to the north, significantly detract from the experience of tranquillity along many parts of the lower slopes.

EA18: Rhos Slopes

	<p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 21a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC, covering approx. 1.6% of EA. ■ 1 SSSI, covering approx. 4.4% of EA. ■ 13 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 2.0% of the EA. ■ 6 RIGS, covering approx. 0.4% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Along the upper western fringes, areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a strong sense of naturalness. ■ The scattered pattern of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna, and where these follow small streams, their linear pattern forms important semi-natural features within an otherwise farmed landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 21b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – most of the Scheduled Monuments are post-medieval industrial archaeology sites, including Bersham Ironworks and a concentration of sites around Minera including limekilns, lead mine, shafts and mounds. Within the EA there are also two sections of Offa’s Dyke, and Pen y Gaer prehistoric hillfort. ■ Conservation Areas – Minerva Conservation Area is entirely within the EA. Penycae and Bersham Conservation Areas are partially within it. ■ Listed Buildings – Listed Buildings are generally concentrated within the Conservation Areas and the valley south of Minera. Many are related in some way to the area’s industrial legacy and associated settlement, including ironworks, chimneys, engine houses, churches, chapels, cottages, etc. There are also domestic buildings, and several structures associated with country estates. The Church of St Mary and a building at Bersham Ironworks are Grade II*. The others are Grade II. ■ The southern part of the EA is also within the Essential Setting of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site. <p>With regard to Historic Environment Record sites, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many relating to mining/extraction, including numerous shafts, tanks, quarries, limekilns, leats, tramways, collieries etc. ■ There are also some agricultural and settlement sites which are likely to pre-date the industrial features. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Minera is an Outstanding example of settlement associated with industrial activity. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA18: Rhos Slopes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Surviving evidence of the area’s notable industrial legacy, including industrial archaeology and associated settlement. Minera and Bersham are particularly good examples. ■ The landscape around Minera is a complex area of former industry (lead mining, quarrying and metals processing) fringed by associated settlements. Mixed fieldscapes surround settlements, which pre and post-date the mining activity. ■ Pen-y-Gaer prehistoric hillfort at the southern end of the EA, overlooking the Dee Valley. ■ Extensive areas of irregular field boundaries contributing to scenic quality and the sense of time-depth. ■ Sections of Offa’s Dyke with visible earthworks <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 21c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Minera Lead Mines Country Park, covering approx. 0.6% of the EA. ■ 7 small parcels of Open Access Common Land, covering approx. 1.5 % of the EA. ■ 12 small areas of Open Access Country, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA. ■ The EA has a good network of PRoW, particularly around the villages of Minera and Garth. Along the upper slopes, there are also several links with extensive areas of Open Access within the adjacent EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>). <p>Further desk study and findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside via the network of PRoWs and outdoor recreation at the Country Park, the EA offers little other open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>Located within the National Landscape, it is clearly evident that the highly scenic upper slopes still meet the test of ‘outstanding’ natural beauty and although the provision of open-air recreation is quite limited, this is a relatively small area of landscape that is very close to an extensive area of Open Access within EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>). As the upper slopes form a gateway into this area from large centres of nearby population, it is therefore recommended that this part of EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area. However, the landscape and scenic quality of the lower non- National Landscape slopes is notably weaker. The northern area is also influenced by pylons, overhead wires and the settlement edge of Coedpoeth which affects the farmed valley section of the Clywedog valley. It is therefore recommended that the eastern part of the EA should be excluded.</p>	



Distinctive upper slopes



Less distinctive lower slopes



Prevailing rural character



Backdrop of uplands



Large pylons to north of EA



Views of extensive settlement to east



Wooded valley near Minera



Scattered built development on lower slopes

EVALUATION AREA 19

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Dee Valley and Llangollen</i> EA is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, apart from small areas of valley floor to the east and west of the EA. A strong sense of containment is provided by EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>) to the north, and to south, by EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>) and EA22 (<i>Berwyn Foothills North</i>). The EA is mostly formed by a large Mosaic Lowland Valleys visual and sensory LANDMAP unit (covering 62% of EA), and smaller areas of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic, Open Rolling Valleys and Open Rolling Lowland. There are also very small areas of Urban/Village units, and a small areas of Extraction.</p> <p>The EA is focused the valley of Llangollen, where the meandering River Dee forms prominent focus. Narrow steep-sided valley are covered with a mosaic of woodland and pasture. Further west, the open valley floor widens, and the river valley complex carries both the Rivers Alwen and Dee. To the north, the Horseshoe Pass valley exhibits a diverse topography of rounded hills and slopes with plentiful woods and trees. Vegetation cover is varied, ranging from mixed deciduous woodland on the valley sides and hillocks to an intimate small scale field pattern on the valley floor and lower slopes defined by mature hedgerows with numerous hedgerow trees. In addition to several settlements, most notably, the picturesque town of Llangollen, the valley floor accommodates two principal road corridors, as well as the Llangollen Canal and major freight and passenger rail lines.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The large area of Mosaic Lowland Valleys exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and Open Rolling Valleys assessed as ‘moderate’. The Open Rolling Lowland unit that accommodates the A5 is assessed as ‘low’. ■ The rarity of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit is considered to be ‘outstanding’ as it includes characteristic features and qualities that are unique, exceptionally uncommon, or are the best example. The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and the Open Rolling Valleys units are assessed as having a ‘high’ rarity, and the Open Rolling Lowland unit ‘low’. ■ The condition of all units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Mosaic Lowland Valleys and the Open Rolling Valleys units is assessed as ‘declining’, and for the other two units, ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Along the steep valley sides, there is a high coverage of Ancient Woodlands that exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. ■ Within most of the EA, there is a consistent pattern of irregular fields enclosed by intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering River Dee and its tributaries. ■ The valley sides contain a scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm building and cottages. <p>Although the main road and a quarry can have a localised impact in places, there are no other notable incongruous elements or land use that detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place for the Mosaic Lowland Valleys and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes units is assessed

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen

	<p>as ‘strong’, reducing to ‘moderate’ and ‘weak’ respectively for the Open Rolling Valleys and Open Rolling Lowland units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Mosaic Lowland Valleys and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes units exhibit an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, and for the other two lower-lying units, ‘moderate’. ■ The scenic quality of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes units is also assessed as ‘outstanding’, reducing to ‘moderate’ and ‘low’ respectively for the Open Rolling Valleys and Open Rolling Lowland units. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the flat valley floor and meandering River Dee, and the steep valley sides with a series of mounds and low hills contained by a backdrop of the Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain to the north and the Berwyn Mountains to the south, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a very strong sense of place. ■ A concentration of Ancient Woodlands on steep valleys sides, interspersed with several designed landscapes, make a particular contribution to the highly picturesque valley. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands also contributes to a very distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts away from the busy road and settlement, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic and often dramatic views over the valley towards a distinctive backdrop of containing uplands. To the west of the valley, views of the meandering River Dee are also highly scenic. ■ Occupying the summit of a steep conical hill towards the centre of the valley, Castell Dinas Brân Castle forms a very prominent landmark, as does the stunning backdrop of the Eglwyseg limestone escapement. <p>Apart from the busy road and a quarry located high above the valley, there are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as having ‘wild’, or ‘exposed’ qualities although the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit is identified as being ‘remote’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The rugged backdrop of exposed limestone crags contributes to a sense of wildness at the head of Eglwyseg valley. ■ Semi-natural vegetation along watercourses and the strong pattern of Ancient Woodlands, contribute to a strong sense of naturalness in their locality. ■ As most of other parts of the EA are actively farmed, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal elsewhere. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are described as being ‘tranquil’, although the Mosaic Lowland Valleys and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes are noted for their ‘sheltered’ quality.

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences quite dark night skies, apart from the landscape around Llangollen and near to areas of settlement at the eastern and western ends of the valley. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The traditional farmed landscape is generally very peaceful, particularly towards the heads of side valleys, and from areas of higher ground. ■ Near to the busy A5 that leads along the valley floor however, the experience of tranquillity is noticeably affected by noise and activity associated with the road and settlement, particularly near to Llangollen. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity experience to the natural beauty of the EA is medium.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 22a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 SACs, covering approx. 6.4% of the EA. ■ 2 SSSIs, covering approx. 1.9% of the EA. ■ 442 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 11% of the EA. ■ 11 RIGS, covering approx. 0.8 % of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The exposed limestone crags and escarpment form very prominent natural features in the backdrop to the valley. ■ The highly distinctive pattern of Ancient Woodlands (some designated SAC) support a good range of woodland flora and fauna and with a relatively extensive landscape coverage contribute to strong sense of naturalness in their locality. ■ The Berwyn a Mynyddoedd de Clwyd SAC designation (most of which extends further south into the Berwyn), contains the largest stands of upland European dry heath in Wales, and supports the most extensive tract of near-natural blanket bog in Wales. The heather moorland provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds. ■ The River Dee SAC supports a wide range of aquatic and riparian habitats. ■ Some steeper valley slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and rough grasslands. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The eastern part of the EA is within the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 22b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site and most of its Essential Setting. ■ Scheduled Monuments – a range of sites from several different periods. Prehistoric sites include Eliseg’s Pillar, Craig Arthur Kerb Cairn, Darland Wood Round Barrows and Gwerclas Mount. Early medieval sites include two sections of Offa’s Dyke. Medieval sites include Valle Crucis Abbey, Corwen Churchyard Cross, Llangollen Bridge, and Castell Dinas Brân. Post-medieval sites include bridges (Pont Dyfrdwy, Pont Carrog and Pont y Cysylltau), Capel y Rug, Deeside Slateworks and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal.

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen

- Registered Parks and Gardens – a series of Registered Parks and Gardens follow the Dee Valley. These include: Argoed Hall (19th Century terraced garden and informal woodland grounds – Grade II); Trevor Hall (17th-19th Century walled garden and woods with bath house – Grade II*); Plas Newydd (17th-19th Century romantic garden and formal garden – Grade II*); Vale Crucis Abbey (Medieval and 18th Century – Grade II); Bryntisilio (Formal 19th Century terraced garden with shrubberies – Grade II); Llantysilio Hall (18th-19th Century park, informal garden, walled garden and avenue – Grade II); Vivod (Victorian garden and kitchen garden - Grade II*).
- Conservation Areas – Corwen village, Llantysilio estate, Llangollen historic core, Plas Yn Y Pentre and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.
- Listed Buildings – there are almost 400 Listed Buildings within this EA, covering domestic, agricultural, transport, religious, cultural, tourist and industrial sites, as well as estates. Those listed Grade I include: Plas Ucha, Rug Chapel, Llangollen Bridge, Valle Crucis Abbey, Pillar of Eliseg, Newbridge Lodge gates, St Collen’s Parish Church, Pont Cysylltau, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Trevor Hall.

With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:

- An exceptional number of sites, again reflecting the diversity and history of the landscape within this EA.
- Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated.

In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:

- Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character)
- Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character)
- Marginal land (containing relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology).
- There are several areas largely within this EA which are identified as being Outstanding historic landscapes, namely: Halton (irregular fieldscape, containing parts of the Pontcysyllte WHS); Pontcysyllte (other settlement, containing a diverse range of historical themes including agriculture, parkland and early industrial archaeology); Hendom (military, medieval settlement and military area containing Owain Glyndwr’s motte); Dee Valley (irregular fieldscape, containing woodland, parkland, bridges and the Llangollen Canal aqueduct); Valle Crucis (designed landscape, including medieval abbey remains and later Park and Garden); and Castell Dinas Brân (military, medieval castle and surrounding landscape).

The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:

- Castell Dinas Brân which overlooks Llangollen from the east. It is a medieval masonry castle located within the earthworks of an earlier Iron Age hillfort. It occupies the summit of a steep conical hill which is topped by the picturesque ruins of the castle. Castell Dinas Brân was possibly built by Gruffydd ap Madog, son of the founder of Vale Crucis Abbey.
- 18th Century artists JMW Turner and Richard Wilson painted Castell Dinas Brân.
- The Cistercian Abbey of Valle Crucis lies near the confluence of the Eglwyseg and the Dee and was founded by Madog ap Gruffydd in 1201. The now-ruined abbey buildings are typical of many Cistercian foundations and lie in a secluded river valley surrounded by farmland. To the north of the Abbey is a fragmentary 9th Century cross – the Pillar of Eliseg. According to a 17th Century transcription of the now-weathered Latin inscription, it celebrated the glories of the house of Powys.

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plas Uchaf, an impressive timber-framed manor house at the northern end of the Eglwyseg Valley, at World’s End. It is dated 1563. ■ Glyndwr’s Mount is associated with Welsh Prince Owain Glyndwr (c.1354-1416), who is reputed to have called his followers to war against the English Crown from here. ■ The River Dee and its associated transport features, which demonstrate successive innovations in the history of transport. These include the Llangollen Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal, constructed by Thomas Telford and opened in 1805. From its source at the Horseshoe Falls, the canal follows the northern side of the valley before crossing the Dee on the dramatic Pontcysyllte aqueduct. This 18-arched stone and cast-iron structure takes narrowboats high over the valley. It is the longest aqueduct in Great Britain and the highest canal aqueduct in the world. The canal and aqueduct are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. ■ Trevor Wharf (on the north bank of the Dee) is where Telford reputedly stayed during construction of the aqueduct. ■ The London-Holyhead road (now the A5) also runs through the Vale and was also designed by Thomas Telford. A railway was subsequently constructed through the vale. It closed to passengers in the 1960s, but a section is now open as a tourist steam railway. ■ Industrial archaeology from limestone quarrying on the Eglwyseg cliffs, lead mining and slate quarrying. ■ The town of Llangollen straddles the river Dee via the arched bridge built about 1500. It is a Conservation Area containing a concentration of Listed Buildings. The historic core of the town lies on the southern side, focussing on the church. It expanded due to the woollen industry, which was powered by the River Dee, and then because of tourism following the arrival of the railway line. ■ Numerous historic parks and gardens within the Dee Valley, including the late 19th-Early 19th Century picturesque gardens at Plas Newydd and at Vale Crucis, and Trevor Hall – an example of a 17th-18th Century garden in a fine position overlooking the Dee Valley. ■ Plas Newydd was the home of the ‘Ladies of Llangollen’ (Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby) who at the turn of the 19th Century were patrons of the arts and did much to promote a resurgent interest in Welsh culture. In the grounds is the Bards’ memorial, constructed in 1958 to celebrate the life and work of local poets Jonathan Hughes – regarded as the ‘father’ of the modern eisteddfod (1721-1805), Thomas Jones (1820-1876) and William Roberts (1858-1919). Plas Newydd is a Listed Building, Historic Park and Garden and also an important historical LGBTQ site. ■ Llangollen has built on its strong cultural traditions and is now known throughout the world for the International Eisteddfod held annually in the town. ■ Llangollen is the home of many contemporary artists, poets and writers who are inspired by the dramatic and picturesque landscape and its rich cultural history. ■ Local folklore associates Valle Crucis with Owain Glyndwr who disappeared in about 1410 after the failure of his rebellion against the English. ■ There is a potential link between Dinas Brân and Bran the king from the second branch of the Mabinogion. According to legend, Bran was the owner of a magic cauldron that returned life to the dead, a possible origin for the myth of the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 22c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads along the base of Eglwyseg Mountain and the sides of the north-eastern valleys.

EA19: Dee Valley and Llangollen

- Dee Valley and Llangollen Country Park, covering approx. 0.2 % of the EA.
- 11 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering approx. 4.5% of EA.
- 40 areas of Open Access Country, covering approx. 2.9% of EA.
- 1 area of Open Access Public Forest, covering approx. 0.3 % of the EA.
- Particularly around Llangollen, the valley accommodates a relatively extensive network of PRoW although to the west, access along the river corridor is limited. In addition to providing good access to a wealth of natural and cultural features that THE valley offers, there are good links with adjacent areas of Open Access land to the north and south of the EA.

Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- There is wealth of opportunities and a wide range of ways to enjoy the area through activities such as, walking, cycling, river sports and wild swimming. Some of these provisions are host national and international events.
- The River Dee offers opportunities for swimming, fishing and canoeing.
- Largely following the Llangollen Canal, National Cycle Network Route 85 connects the settlements of Llangollen and Chirk.
- Rock climbing at Creigiau Eglwyseg and the surrounding the head of the valley is popular with walkers and cyclists.
- From the busy town of Llangollen, there are a number of local walks that provide easy access to the stunning landscape of the valley.
- The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Trevor Basin attracts approximately 330,000 visitors a year, and the Horseshoe Falls approximately 115,000.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

For the large majority of the EA that falls within the National Landscape, the EA still clearly meets the test of 'outstanding' natural beauty. Of particular note, this highly scenic valley offers some of the most the varied and extensive coverage of natural and cultural features, many of which can be accessed and enjoyed by a wide range of recreational opportunities. For these reasons, it is recommended that all of EA within the National Landscape should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.

With regard to the small parts of the EA outside of the National Landscape at the eastern and western outer extents of the EA, there areas are notably less scenic and are influenced by busy roads and settlement. As such, it is recommended that these parts of the EA should be **excluded**.



The meandering River Dee



Looking west over the valley



Looking west from Castell Dinas Brân



Llangollen Heritage Railway



Stunning backdrop of Eglwyseg limestone escarpment



Peaceful valley sides



Backdrop of Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain



Traditional limestone cottages

EVALUATION AREA 20

EA20: Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Mynydd and the Upper Dee Valley</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. The south-eastern boundary adjoins EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>) and to the north-east, EA19 (<i>Dee Valley and Llangollen</i>). A small part of the southern boundary adjoins the boundary of the Eryri National Park, with all of the western EA boundary forming the outer extent of the AoS. The EA is mostly formed by an amalgamation of two Upland Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP units, two Mosaic Lowland Valleys units, a Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes unit, an Open Lowland Valley unit, a Hillside and Scarp Slopes Grazing unit, and a Farmland Mosaic Low Valleys unit.</p> <p>As an overview, the western part of the EA is characterised by a series of wooded hills interspersed with a patchwork of enclosed pastures that collectively, form an important setting to the village of Llandderfel, and the nearby meandering River Dee. Centrally to the north, the EA is dominated by the unenclosed heather and grass moorland of Mynydd Mynyllod although around its periphery, coniferous plantations and large fields of improved grassland prevail. To the south of Mynydd Mynyllod, the landscape is characterised by steep valley sides with coniferous forestry and large open fields that lead towards the open floodplain of the River Dee. Further north, the valley sides are typified by a small-medium scale field pattern enclosed by mature hedges and scattered hedgerow trees.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
Landscape quality	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys units and the Farmland Mosaic Low Valleys unit is assessed as ‘high’, with all other units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit around Llandderfel is assessed as ‘high,’ with all other units assessed as ‘moderate’, apart from the Wooded Hillside& Scarp Slopes unit which is ‘low’. ■ The landscape condition of the Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit around Llandderfel is assessed as ‘good’, reducing to ‘fair’ for five of the other units that have been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Open Lowland Valley, and the Hillside and Scarp Slopes Grazing units is assessed as ‘constant’. The other units are ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Mosaic Lowland Valleys unit, which accommodates a meandering section of the River Dee to the south of Llandderfel, exhibits a distinctive pattern of large irregular pastures enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, with mature trees lining much of the sinuous riverbanks. ■ On Mynydd Mynyllod, there are relatively extensive swathes of unenclosed upland moorland and rough grazing, although in places, this is subject to scrub encroachment. ■ To the north of the EA, the estate landscape exhibits a good coverage of intact wooded hedgerow and individual trees that enclose a distinctive pattern of irregular fields. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On the slopes to the south and east of Mynydd Mynyllod, forestry felling and replanting often results in a highly visible fragmented pattern on the hillslopes that contain the valley. Braich Ddu wind farm and nearby metrological masts also significantly detract from the prevailing rural character of the surrounding landscape, as does a line of intrusive pylons further north. ■ Within parts of the open lowland valley towards the east of the EA and the lower hillslopes to the north, the integrity of the landscape and its associated rural character is often weakened by

EA20: Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley

	<p>fragmented field boundaries, some replaced with post and wire, the influence of scattered suburban dwellings, a caravan park, as well as some incongruous land uses and elements, such as horsiculture and solar panels.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The two Upland Grazing units and the two Mosaic Lowland Valleys units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. All other units are assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of the Upland Grazing units, the Mosaic Lowland Valleys units, and the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes unit is assessed as ‘high’, with all other units rated as ‘moderate’. ■ Apart from the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes unit and the Open Lowland Valley unit which are assessed as having a ‘moderate’ scenic quality, all other units are assessed as ‘high’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the flat valley floor and meandering River Dee, with wooded valley sides and hillslopes contained by the upland backdrops of the Eryri National Park and the Berwyn, provides a scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms, with a strong sense of place. ■ Particularly to the south of the EA, the meandering River Dee with its floodplain pastures and mature trees provides a very picturesque rural setting to the nearby village of Llandderfel. To the south of the village, densely forested steep hillslopes also instil a strong sense of place. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are scenic views over the valley although to the north, the presence of wind turbines and pylons can sometimes detract from their appreciation. ■ On the exposed summit of Mynydd Mynyllod, there are highly scenic long-distance views towards the Eryri National Park. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As with landscape quality, issues such as the influence of wind turbines, scattered development, pylons and forestry operations, result in a noticeable deterioration of the appreciation of the wider scenic quality of the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The two Upland Grazing units of the Mynydd Mynyllod are identified as having ‘wild’ and ‘remote’ qualities. ■ No other units exhibit a ‘wild’ quality. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As most of the EA is actively farmed and has a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal, although semi-natural vegetation along watercourses and the presence of Ancient Woodlands around the margins of the EA contribute to a sense of naturalness in their locality.

EA20: Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley

	<p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apart from the Wooded Hillside & Scarp Slopes unit and the Farmland Mosaic Low Valleys unit, all other units are identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, most of the EA experiences quite dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Away from busy roads and settlement, the traditional farmed landscape is generally peaceful, especially where dense woodlands provide a sense of enclosure. ■ Traffic noise and movement from often busy minor roads noticeably detracts from the experience of tranquillity along most parts of the valley floor. ■ To the north and east of the EA, the visual intrusion of pylons and wind turbines also erodes the experience of tranquillity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 23a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/internationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SAC covering approx. 1.4% of the EA. ■ 3 areas of SSSIs, covering approx. 1.8% of the EA. ■ 162 parcels of Ancient Woodland Sites, covering approx. 9% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The River Dee SAC supports a range of important aquatic and riparian habitats that in its locality, exhibits a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Rocky outcrops and swathes of upland moorland on Mynydd Mynyllod exhibit a strong semi-natural character. The area is also an important breeding ground for curlew. ■ Some steeper hillslopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and rough grasslands. ■ Ancient Woodlands support a good range of woodland flora and fauna, and at the landscape scale, their presence makes a notable contribution to the experience of natural beauty. ■ In places, species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with small watercourses, also provide a local focus on biodiversity interest. <p>However, much of the lower-lying landscape has been subject to modification through intensive farming practices and therefore, it exhibits little natural interest that notably contributes to experience of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The south-west corner of the EA is just within the Bala and Bala Lakesides Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest, but none of the places mentioned within the description are within this area of overlap. As illustrated in Figure 23b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p>

EA20: Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – a variety of prehistoric sites, including Branas-Uchaf Round Barrow, Y Gaerwen Enclosure, Cefn Ddwysarn Camp, Rug Mound, Mynydd Mynyllod Enclosure, Tan-y-Coed Burial Chamber and Tyfos Stone Circle. Also two medieval/post-medieval bridges (Pont Fawr and Pont Cilan) and more recent ornamental gates at Rug. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous Listed Buildings, particularly in the north and the south of the EA, reflecting underlying pattern of settlement in lower-lying parts of the EA. They include domestic, agricultural, religious and garden sites but there is a notable absence of industrial sites. The Parish church of St Derfel is listed Grade I. There are also several domestic properties listed Grade II*: Rug, Branas Uchaf, Crogan, Henblas. and Pale Hall. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, reflecting the long history of settlement in this EA. There are a notable number of Roman sites, probably associated with to the Roman road from Caer Gai to Rhûg, and features relating to transport – bridges, tracks, disused railway etc. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. ■ Extensive area of parkland, with gardens, woodland, lake and associated buildings at Rhûg Park, but not Registered. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large areas irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Designed landscapes (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character) around Rhûg. ■ An area of marginal land (containing relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains) associated with Mynydd Mynyllod. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diversity of prehistoric sites, representing a range of purposes and periods. Most are on higher land, although Tyfos stone circle and Rug mound are in riverside locations. ■ Historic bridges across the River Dee (Scheduled Monuments and/or Listed Buildings) reflecting the importance of the Dee Valley as a transport corridor. ■ Several well-preserved high-status houses, some with associated buildings and/or grounds (although the grounds are not Registered). ■ Upland of Mynydd Mynyllod containing several prehistoric archaeological sites and features associated with upland subsistence (including sheepfolds and clearance cairns). ■ Medieval township of Llandderfel, containing numerous listed buildings. ■ In places, a lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Evidence of historic transport corridors utilising the Dee Valley: Roman road, medieval bridges, turnpike road, disused railway line and associated features. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 23b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering approx. 5% of the EA.

EA20: Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley

- 9 areas of Open Country, covering approx. 0.6% of EA.
- There is a good network of PRoW radiating from Llandderfel and to the north of the EA, although elsewhere, the coverage of PRoW is relatively sparse.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Although there is a good access across Mynydd Mynyllod, the EA offers relatively little other open-air recreational provision and access to features of natural and cultural interest.
- There are opportunities to establish riverside walks from Llandderfel.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **low-medium**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

With regard to factors of natural beauty, the EA scores relatively high in relation to landscape and scenic quality. In particular, the two Mosaic Lowland Valleys units that form a setting to the picturesque village of Llandderfel are especially scenic, and with a very distinctive backdrop of the nearby Berwyn uplands and the Eryri National Park, there is a very strong sense of place. The natural character and quality of the meandering River Dee also makes a significant contribution to the natural beauty of this part of the EA. With good PRoW links from Llandderfel, and opportunities to further develop the recreational offer along the river, most of the two Mosaic Lowland Valleys units are therefore, recommended for **inclusion** within the proposed Candidate Area.

In relation to the highly scenic Upland Grazing units of the Mynydd Mynyllod, their natural beauty is notably eroded by the prominence of the Braich Ddu wind farm. When viewed from the valley to the south-east, the appreciation of these uplands is also diminished by the presence of intrusive land use taking place along the intervening valley sides. The rural character of the central and eastern end of the Dee Valley is also weakened by fragmented field boundaries and occasional presence of suburban dwellings, caravan park development, horsiculture and solar panels. Whilst the Mynydd Mynyllod exhibits some strong landscape qualities in its own right, the uplands feel quite detached from the proposed Candidate Area. For all of these reasons, it is proposed to **exclude** the Mynydd Mynyllod uplands from the Candidate Area, as well as areas with weaker natural beauty to the east and north.



Overlooking the valley towards the Berwyn



Distinctive hillslopes



Wooded setting of River Dee



Wooded setting of Llandderfel



Declining landscape quality



Valley floor pastures



Prominent wind turbines



Forestry on open hillslopes

EVALUATION AREA 21

EA21: Berwyn Mountains North	
Landscape context	
<p>The area of uplands to the north of the <i>Berwyn Mountains North</i> EA that provides a backdrop to EA19 (<i>Dee Valley and Llangollen</i>) are within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, although most of the prevailing upland landscape to the south is outside. EA20 (<i>Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley</i>) is located to the west of the EA, and to the south, a small part of EA25 (Berwyn Mountains South) and EA26 (Tanat Valley). EA22 (<i>Berwyn Foothills North</i>), EA23 (Ceiriog Valley) and EA24 (Berwyn Foothills South) adjoin the eastern boundary. The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of three Upland Moorland visual and sensory LANDMAP units (approximately 75% of EA) and a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit. There are also very small areas of Upland Grazing, Wooded Upland Valleys, Wooded Upland & Plateaux.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA consists of extensive tracts of open and remote moorland, with heather, bilberry and rough grazing predominant. There are also some upland lakes, with a number of large boggy areas in lower lying areas. Ridgelines and low rising summits form the main points of interest. To the west of the uplands, the slopes are characterised by a mosaic well defined small tree and hedge lined fields that closely follow the underlying topography. The higher and more exposed parts are covered in mixed woodland, bracken and scrub. Large parts of the slopes are also covered in forestry plantation.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two of the Upland Moorland units (covering approx. 50% of EA) exhibit a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the other Upland Moorland unit assessed as ‘moderate’. The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit is assessed as ‘low’. ■ The rarity of all three Upland Moorland units is assessed as ‘high’, reducing to ‘moderate’ for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit. ■ The condition of one of the smaller Upland Moorland units is assessed as ‘fair’, and for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit, ‘poor’. The condition of the two largest Upland Moorland units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across most parts of the exposed uplands, there are extensive areas of semi-natural moorland vegetation although on steep slopes, this is subject to scrub and bracken encroachment. ■ Along most parts of the steep western scarp slopes, where the landscape is characterised by a relatively small scale field pattern dominated by largely overgrown hedges, management appears extensive rather than intensive, with livestock farming predominating. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the west of the EA, geometric forestry plantations can sometimes contrast with the strong-natural character of the surrounding landscape. ■ Along the lower slopes of western scarp, a scattered pattern of stone cottages and farm buildings tend to integrate well with the surrounding rural landscape. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>

EA21: Berwyn Mountains North

<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two of the Upland Moorland units (covering approx. 50% of EA) exhibit an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, with the other Upland Moorland unit and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit assessed as ‘high’. ■ Two of the Upland Moorland units (covering approx.50% of EA) exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the other Upland Moorland unit and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The scenic quality of the uplands that enclose the head of the Tanat Valley is assessed as ‘outstanding’. The other two Upland Moorland units are assessed as ‘high’, with the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibiting a ‘moderate’ scenic quality. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between a very distinctive series of smooth rounded uplands, including those within EA17 (<i>Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain</i>) to the north, and EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>) to the south, along with a pattern of incised wooded valleys along the western scarp, exhibits a highly scenic and often dramatic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place. ■ The colours and textures of extensive heather moorland add to the visual interest. ■ The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent lower-lying areas, particularly to the west. ■ Within wooded/forested valleys, there is strong sense of shelter. ■ From areas of high open ground, there are stunning long distance scenic views of interlocking uplands. To the north, there are highly scenic views over the Dee valley, to the east over the Ceiriog and Tanat valleys, and to the south, long distance views towards the Eryri National Park. <p>Apart from areas of forestry to the west of the EA, there are no other incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from the appreciation of scenic quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All four units exhibit ‘wild’ and ‘remote’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With extensive areas of semi-natural moorland habitats, the exposed and remote uplands exhibit a very strong sense of wildness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the experience of natural beauty is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All three Upland Moorland units exhibit factors relating to the experience of tranquillity. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relative absence of settlement and development, a strong sense of tranquility can be experienced from nearly all of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the experience of natural beauty is assessed as high.</p>

EA21: Berwyn Mountains North

<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 24a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of SPA, covering 60.0% of the EA. ■ 3 areas of SACs, covering 55.9% of the EA. ■ 6 areas of SSSI, covering 60.1% of the EA. ■ 1 National Nature Reserve, covering 13.8% of the EA. ■ 153 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 1.4% of the EA. ■ 5 areas of RIGSs, covering 0.15% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With more than half of EA designated for its internationally important biodiversity, the extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a very strong sense of naturalness. ■ The Berwyn mountain range is the largest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Wales covering 24,321 ha and comprising of a mosaic of habitats. They also form part of the Berwyn & South Clwyd Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Berwyn Special Protection Area (SPA). ■ There are large tracts of upland heathland and blanket bog as well as a large block of managed heather moorland which extend into the LCA. The SSSI supports nationally scarce plants and rare invertebrates including a number of important associated upland breeding birds, including the hen harrier, merlin, red grouse and black grouse. ■ The upland peaks rise to 603m at Moel Pearce and from lower-lying areas, their profile forms a very distinctive landform feature. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>This EA contains the entirety of the Berwyn Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest, and part of the Tanat Valley Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 24b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Exceptionally large number, including prehistoric ritual sites (e.g. barrows and stone circle), field systems, settlement sites and mining sites; medieval settlements, field systems and churches. ■ Conservation Area – historic core of Llandrillo village. ■ Listed Buildings – Generally confined to the western periphery of the EA, and concentrated in the villages of Llandrillo and Cynwyd, they include domestic, religious, transport and industrial sites. The church of All Saints is Grade I, and houses at Plas-yn-Faerdref and Ty'n y Llwyn are Grade II*. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A high density of sites, with upland sites relating to settlement and land uses over millennia, including standing stones, field patterns, boundary stones, sheepfolds, quarries and grouse shooting. ■ Lower-lying land contains sites including houses, mills, field systems, barns, ponds and kilns. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA is:</p>

EA21: Berwyn Mountains North

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Largely marginal land (contains high proportions of prehistoric remains, relicts of earlier field patterns and industrial archaeology). ■ The LANDMAP assessment identifies The South Berwyn area as being Outstanding. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Cefn Penagored ridge, between Nant Cwm Tywyll and Nant Esgeriau displays the remains of former prehistoric field systems consisting of low stone banks and several hut circles, comprising a remarkably complete Bronze Age landscape of fields, hits and other habitations. The area also includes elements of a prehistoric spiritual landscape, including a small stone circle, and numerous burial cairns and standing stones. ■ Further groups of Bronze Age burial cairns at Moel Ty Uchaf, and on other summits and ridges. ■ Ffridd Camen (between Nant Cwm Tywyll and Clochnant) contains well-preserved evidence of the area’s medieval cultivation. A substantial stone-faced bank divides the stone-strewn land to the east and the cultivated stone-cleared land to the west, which is subdivided into strips. Behind the bank are the remains of two long houses and a stone pound (animal enclosure). This is likely to have been typical of the general pattern of land use on the western slopes of the Berwyn mountain in the medieval period. Less well-preserved examples exist elsewhere in this EA. ■ The extensive and well-preserved evidence for Bronze Age and medieval upland settlement and land use makes it one of the best examples of its type in central Wales and the area has significant potential for further study. ■ The Berwyn has inspired various writers and artists, including contemporary author Jim Perrin (author of ‘The Hills of Wales’ which describes forays into famous and forgotten Welsh uplands). <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EAs natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 24c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of National Nature Reserves, covering 13.8% of the EA. ■ 11 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 39.8% of the EA. ■ 11 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering 23.7% of the EA. ■ Although the extent of PRow is relatively minimal there are several links to the extensive areas of Open Access. <p>Further research and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two Forest Recreation Routes are located in the Cynwyd Forest, and one in the Ceiriog Forest. All of these routes link with other PRow. ■ Considering the large proportion of Open Access Land, there is a very good provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of these uplands. ■ A large area of upland is designated for horse riding access. <p>Overall, the recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as high.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>The EA exhibits a wealth of natural, cultural and perceptual qualities that combine to instil a very sense of natural beauty. Of particular relevance, extensive areas of SPA/SSSI make a very significant contribution to its natural and scenic value. In relation to recreation, there is an very good provision of widespread opportunities to enjoy this stunning upland landscape, and its associated wealth of natural and cultural interest. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Exposed plateau



Extensive moorland habitats



Ongoing forestry management



Long views towards the Clwydian Range



Wooded Upland Valley



Forested valley



Limited road access



Forested westerly slopes

EVALUATION AREA 22

EA22: Berwyn Foothills North	
Landscape context	
<p>The northern part of the <i>Berwyn Foothills North</i> EA (to the north of the ridgeline) is within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, although the southern part, where the uplands slope towards the Ceiriog valley, is outside. EA19 (<i>Dee Valley and Llangollen</i>) is located to the north, and to the south, EA23 (<i>Ceiriog Valley</i>). EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>) adjoins the western boundary. The EA is a relatively small landscape, entirely formed by an amalgamation of two Upland Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP units.</p> <p>The EA is characterised by a simple pattern of medium to large open field systems bounded by shelter belt planting and plantations, with semi-improved pastures on lower slopes. There is little diversity in vegetation cover.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Upland Grazing units are assessed units assessed as having ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the southern area of uplands (most of which extends further south around the upper parts of EA23), exhibits a ‘high’ rarity, and for the northern area, ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of the southern Upland Grazing unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The northern unit has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for both units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The EA exhibits a prevailing rectilinear field pattern, with hedgerows often appearing gappy and degraded, or replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ In places, geometric shelter belts and forestry plantation detract from the prevailing rural character. ■ The EA has simple landscape pattern, with a limited diversity of landcover and few landscape features. ■ To the north-west of the EA, two telecommunication masts detract from the rural character of their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units exhibit a ‘moderate’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of both units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The scenic quality of the southern unit is assessed as ‘high’, reducing to ‘moderate’ to the north. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the landscape is relatively featureless, it exhibits a prevailing undeveloped and rural character. ■ From lower-lying areas to the north and south, the uplands form a scenic undeveloped backdrop. ■ Although views across the gentle slopes are not particularly eye-catching, there are highly scenic views over the Ceiriog valley to the south, and to the north, over the Dee valley towards a dramatic backdrop of the Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain.

EA22: Berwyn Foothills North

	<p>Apart from the localised influence of forestry and a telecommunication masts, there no other incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’, although both units are identified as being ‘exposed’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As nearly all of the EA is subject to agricultural management and the occurrence of semi-natural habitat is very minimal, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal, despite being exposed. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘tranquil’, although the southern unit recognised as being ‘remote’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a prevailing undeveloped character and only a few remote rural lanes, the EA is generally very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 25a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of SAC, covering 0.24% of the EA. ■ 1 area of SPA, covering 0.24% of the EA. ■ 6 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 0.01% of the EA. ■ 1 areas of SSSI, covering 0.24% of the EA. <p>the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural interest is relatively limited although in less intensively farmed areas, species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide local biodiversity interest. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The northern edges of the EA are within the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 25b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The north-eastern part of the EA is within the Essential Setting of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site. ■ Scheduled Monuments – prehistoric round barrows at Wilderness and Pen-y-Brongyll. <p>With regard to Historic Environment Record sites, the EA includes:</p>

EA22: Berwyn Foothills North

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Various agricultural structures and features including boundary walls, farm buildings, sheepfolds, shepherd’s hut, well and pond. Also some small quarries and sand/gravel pits. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites may be otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). ■ Small areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prehistoric barrows, including one of a series situated along the ridge extending from Vivod Mountain towards Llangollen. The others in the series are within EA21. ■ Straight ridge-top roads, which may have early origins, or may be associated with the post-medieval enclosure of upland commons, which created the regular pattern of straight-edged fields found in the southern part of this EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 25c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 1.7% of the EA. ■ 1 area of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering 0.03% of the EA. ■ There are only two short sections of PRoW with the EA, although one of these provides access to an adjacent area of Open Access in EA21. <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although there are very limited opportunities for the enjoyment of outdoor recreation within the EA, the uplands are an important backdrop that forms part of the recreational experience from surrounding EAs, including that from a large area of nearby Open Access land in EA21. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>Although most factors relating to natural beauty are not rated as highly as many other EAs within the National Landscape, it is considered that the northern part of the EA still meets the test of ‘outstanding’ natural beauty. With regard to the southern part outside of the National Landscape, its scenic appreciation is significantly enhanced by some spectacular views of the Ceiriog valley. From lower-lying areas, the EA also forms an important undeveloped backdrop. With regard to recreation within the EA, the landscape has very little to offer although from adjacent EAs, it forms part of the wider landscape that contributes to recreational enjoyment.</p> <p>Whilst the EA has a limited provision of recreational opportunities, with few natural and cultural features that contribute to the experience of natural beauty, it should be recognised that this EA is very small and in the context of the higher quality surrounding EAs, all of which are recommended for inclusion within the proposed Candidate Area, it still has a significant function in relation to a potential National Park designation. As such, it is recommended that all of the EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Undeveloped rural character



Simple landscape pattern



Highly scenic view over the Ceiriog Valley



Highly scenic view over the Dee valley



Geometric field pattern



Strong relationship with Ceiriog valley



Occasional shelterbelts



Telecommunication masts to north-west of EA

EVALUATION AREA 23

EA23: Ceiriog Valley	
Landscape context	
<p>Apart from the area in and around Chirk Castle Registered Parks and Garden located to the north-east of the EA, all of the <i>Ceiriog Valley</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA22 (<i>Berwyn Foothills North</i>) forms a containing backdrop to the north of the EA, and to the west and south-west, EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>). EA24 (<i>Berwyn Foothills North</i>) adjoins the south-eastern EA boundary. The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys visual and sensory LANDMAP units, and smaller areas of Hill & Lower Plateau Mosaic and Upland Grazing units.</p> <p>The main part of the EA consists of a steep-sided valley in three parts. The upper valley is more open, whilst the middle section is narrow, steeply sloping and wooded, with a small and intimate field pattern. Between Glyn Ceiriog and Chirk, there is a mosaic of farms and woodland that contains the typical characteristics of an unspoilt and deeply rural Welsh valley. Upper slopes are relatively open with patches of bracken, rough grassland and rocky outcrops. Conifers and broadleaved woodlands frequent the middle and lower slopes. To the east, the valley is dominated by estate parkland with mature trees. The estate centres upon Chirk Castle and has extensive formal and informal gardens.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All units are assessed as having a ‘moderate’ landscape integrity and quality. ■ With regard to rarity, all units are assessed as ‘high’. ■ Apart from the Upland Grazing unit which is ‘fair’ the landscape condition of all units is assessed as ‘good’. ■ The trend of landscape condition for all four units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Particularly towards the east of the valley, there is a concentration of Ancient Woodlands along the valley side that exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. ■ Across most of the EA, there is a consistent pattern of irregular fields enclosed by intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering Afon Ceiriog. ■ The wooded grounds of Chirk Castle are particularly well managed. ■ The valley contains a scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm building and cottages. <p>Apart from areas of conifer plantation which can detract from the rural character of their locality, there are no incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place within the larger area of Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys (covering approx.70% of EA) is assessed as ‘high’, as is the area of Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes at Chirk Castle and surrounding estate. The other two units are assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes exhibit an ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, with the two Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys assessed as ‘high’. The Upland Grazing unit is assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA23: Ceiriog Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scenic quality of the larger area of Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys is assessed as ‘high’, as is the area of Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes. The other two units are assessed as ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor, and the often very steep wooded valley sides enclosed by a backdrop of Berwyn uplands, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a very strong sense of place. ■ Perched above a steep wooded valley, the Chirk Aqueduct and nearby Railway Viaduct form impressive landmarks. There are also highly scenic views along the valley. ■ The concentration of Ancient Woodlands on valley sides is particularly distinctive and to the east of the EA, the wooded grounds of Chirk Castle make a valuable contribution to the scenic quality of this part of the valley. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic views over the valley towards a distinctive backdrop of containing uplands. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’, although the Upland Grazing unit is identified as being ‘exposed’ and ‘remote’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With occasional rocky outcrops and a pattern of Ancient woodlands scattered throughout the EA, a sense of localised wildness can be experienced from many parts of the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes unit and the two Open/Wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys units are identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, nearly all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is an increasing sense of tranquillity towards the head of valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 26a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3 areas of SACs, covering 2.9% of the EA. ■ 1 area of SPA, covering 2.7% of the EA. ■ 220 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 7.1% of the EA.

EA23: Ceiriog Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 areas of SSSIs, covering 9.8% of the EA ■ 3 areas of RIGSs, covering 0.09% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The steep valley slopes with occasional rocky outcrops make a very valuable contribution to natural beauty of the valley. ■ A relatively high coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, instil a sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout large parts of the valley. <p>Overall therefore, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 26b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Chirk Aqueduct, which carries the Llangollen Canal over the Ceiriog Valley, is part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site. The eastern part of the EA (including some of the grounds of Chirk Castle) is also within the Essential Setting of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site. ■ Scheduled Monuments – Great diversity of Scheduled Monuments representing different periods and types of sites. Prehistoric sites include barrows, a mound, and Mynydd Bach Camp hillfort. Pen-plaenau is a Roman marching camp. Early medieval sites include four sections of Offa’s Dyke with surviving earthworks. Castell y Waun is a medieval castle site. Post-medieval sites are related to transport/water supply and include part of the Pontcysyllte aqueduct and canal, and the Chirk embankment of the Holyhead Road. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – Chirk Castle landscape park, terraced garden and informal garden, dating from late 18th Century with some later alterations. Listed Grade I. Also part of Brynkinalt, a large Early-19th Century picturesque landscape park with formal and informal pleasure gardens, Grade II*. ■ Conservation Areas – historic village and river crossing at Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, and part of Chirk. ■ Listed Buildings – wide ranging and numerous Listed Buildings, often concentrated in historic settlements (e.g. Pontfadog, Glyn Ceiriog and Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog) and in the grounds of Chirk Castle. Chirk Castle and its gates are listed Grade I. The stable ranges, Chirk Aqueduct, Chirk Canal Basin, Chirk Railway Viaduct, Dolwen and Ceiriog Memorial Institute are listed Grade II*. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very numerous and varied sites, reflecting the area’s long history of settlement (e.g. houses, chapels, inns), industry (e.g. quarries, mills, leats, powder works), agriculture (e.g. field patterns, farm buildings, tracks, farmsteads) and transport (e.g. tramways, bridges). There is also a prisoner of war camp site at Hendre. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape character)

EA23: Ceiriog Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designed landscape (parkland and estate landscapes contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Chirk Castle Designed Landscape is identified as being Outstanding in the LANDMAP assessment. The adjacent Halton irregular fieldscapes are also identified as being Outstanding. ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape character). <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defensive sites from prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods, as well as well-preserved sections of Offa’s Dyke, reflecting different conflicts and the contested nature of this area over a long period of time. ■ The importance of the area for innovative transport and water management, demonstrated in the Chirk Aqueduct which carries the Llangollen Canal over the Ceiriog Valley (World Heritage Site and Scheduled Monument) and the adjacent Chirk Railway Viaduct, as well as the Chirk Embankment of the Holyhead Road, designed by Thomas Telford. ■ Chirk Castle, a medieval deer park with later landscape park and formal gardens partly designed by William Eames, set in an elevated position overlooking the Ceiriog Valley. Outstanding features within the layout include the early 18th Century entrance gates (listed Grade I) and a statue of Hercules by van Nost. The topiary and yew hedging is also exceptional. There is group value with Chirk Castle (Listed Grade I) and numerous other listed structures and ornaments around the estate. In addition, a section of Offa’s Dyke (Scheduled Monument) crosses the park. ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Ceiriog Memorial Institute, built in the Arts and Crafts style in 1911, celebrates Welsh culture and notable local figures, including Huw Morris (1662-1709) Royalist and poet, and the Rev. Robert ‘Cynddelw’ Ellis (1812-75) poet, author and antiquary. Its stained glass windows are of outstanding interest. ■ Other notable local figures in Welsh language and culture include John Edwards (born 1699) who translated John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress into Welsh, and Islwyn Ffowc Ellis (1924-2004) one of Wales’s most popular Welsh language writers. ■ The Ceiriog Valley remains a source of inspiration, including to contemporary artist Rosie Davies, recently commissioned to paint works to illustrate “Gunpower, Granite and Grit”, a publication on the industrial past of the Ceiriog Valley by John Milner and Beryl Williams. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 26c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 4.2% of the EA. ■ A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail leads around the western edge of the Chirk Castle Designed Landscape. Promoted horse riding and offroad cycling routes follow the upland edges of the valley crossing into EA22 and EA24. ■ The central part of the valley around the village of Glyn Ceiriog is traversed by a very dense network of PRoW although to the east of Pontfadog, there are only a few sections. To the west of the EA, a section of PRoW also provides access to an adjacent area of Open Access in EA21. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p>

EA23: Ceiriog Valley

- There is a substantial visitor and recreational offer based around Chirk Castle Estate, with good links to the nearby Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site in EA19. The Chirk Aqueduct is an important visitor destination (attracting approximately 150,000 visitors a year), as is Chirk Castle. A series of good waymarked routes walks are promoted by the National Trust, the Wrexham Canal and Rivers Trust, and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, most notably, the Chirk Figure of 8. The area is also accessible by public transport with a train station at Chirk and bus routes.
- There are several local walks towards the east of the valley and on National Trust land at Glyn Valley, the old tramway route leads through attractive woodland.
- From nearby areas of Open Access land in the EA21 (*Berwyn Mountains North*), highly scenic views over the valley form an important part of the recreational enjoyment.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

The Ceiriog valley is a highly scenic rural landscape that with very steep enclosing valley sides, exhibits a very strong of place. The valley also has a wealth of natural and cultural features to enjoy, including the designed landscape of Chirk Castle. The valley also offers an excellent range of accessible recreational opportunities, located in quite close proximity to large centres of population. As such, it is recommended that nearly all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area. As Chirk Aqueduct straddles the Welsh-English border and the site is covered by management of the World Heritage Site, the valley floor which comprises a thin slither of the EA has however been **excluded**.



Chirk Aqueduct



Afon Ceiriog



Heavily wooded valley



Rocky outcrops



Glyn Valley Tramway



Forested valley sides



Enclosure of steep valley sides



Distinctive rural character

EVALUATION AREA 24

EA24: Berwyn Foothills South	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Berwyn Foothills South</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. This area of semi upland plateau, small dissecting valleys and peak of Mynydd Mawr, separates and encloses EA23 (<i>Ceiriog Valley</i>) to the north and EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>) to the south. The eastern edge is defined by the Welsh/English Border, whilst to the west, the area merges with EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>). Very nearly all of the EA is formed by an amalgamation of two Upland Grazing visual and sensory LANDMAP units, the largest of which (covering approx. 75% of the EA) is the Mynydd Mawr Upland. Wooded Lowland Valley unit, and a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA is characterised by an exposed area of upland grazing. The boundaries of medium to large fields of semi improved grasslands are relatively weakly defined and in places, fields are bounded by shelter belt planting and plantations. On lower slopes, the pattern of hedgerows tend to be stronger.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both Upland Grazing units exhibit a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the area of uplands to the north of the EA (most of which is contained within EA23) is assessed as ‘high’ with the larger Mynydd Mawr other unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of the Mynydd Mawr unit is assessed as ‘fair’. The other upland unit has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for both units is assessed as ‘constant’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although much of the landscape has a simple landscape pattern, the wooded Llyn Moelfre is a distinctive feature. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hedgerows often appear gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ In places, geometric shelter belts and forestry plantation detract from the prevailing rural character. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sense of place within the Mynydd Mawr unit is assessed as ‘high’, with the other unit ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of the Mynydd Mawr is ‘outstanding’, with the smaller unit ‘high’. ■ Mynydd Mawr exhibits an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality, and the other unit ‘high’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the prevailing undeveloped and rural landscape has quite a simple pattern, the valleys which dissect exposed plateau contributes to a strong sense of place and scenic quality. ■ The composition of wooded valley sides enclosing a small lake at Llyn Moelfre is particularly attractive.

EA24: Berwyn Foothills South

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ From lower-lying areas of the Ceiriog and Tanat valley to the north and south respectively, the uplands form a scenic undeveloped backdrop. ■ Although most views across the gentle slopes are not particularly eye-catching, there are highly scenic views over the Ceiriog and Tanat valleys, and to the north-west, the distinctive backdrop of the Berwyn uplands. <p>Apart from the localised influence of geometric shelter belts and forestry plantation, there no other incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mynydd Mawr is assessed as being ‘wild’, and both units ‘exposed’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With areas of semi-natural habitat, a strong sense of remoteness and exposure can be experienced from areas of higher ground. ■ As most lower-lying areas are subject to agricultural management and the occurrence of semi-natural habitat is quite minimal, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Only the smaller unit is identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experience dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a relatively sparse scattered settlement pattern connected by quiet rural lanes, the EA is generally very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 27a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 areas of SAC, covering 0.01% of the EA. ■ 1 area of SPA, covering 0.05% of the EA. ■ 52 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 1.8% of the EA. ■ 2 areas of SSSI, covering 0.1% of the EA. ■ 1 RIGS, covering 0.01% of the EA. <p>The findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In less intensively farmed areas, species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with Ancient Woodlands, watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest in their locality. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>

EA24: Berwyn Foothills South

<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The Southernmost slopes of this EA (facing the Tanat Valley) are within the Tanat Valley Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 27b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – four prehistoric ritual/funerary monuments (Ysgwennant Barrow, Graig cairn, Y Garnedd Wen Round Cairn and Orseddwen Cairn) and a long section of Offa’s Dyke early medieval linear earthwork. ■ Listed Buildings – generally located in the southern part of the EA, reflecting the underlying light settlement pattern. Most of the Listed Buildings are domestic (including some high-status properties), along with a bridge, a church, an agricultural building and a telephone box. Houses at Tyddyn Cynar and Hafod are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Higher areas with numerous prehistoric ritual sites (cairns, barrows etc.) as well as enclosures, sheepfolds and quarry sites. ■ Lower areas generally contain sites related to agriculture, settlement and industry, such as houses, chapels, mills, farmsteads and farm buildings. ■ The Lake Vyrnwy aqueduct, with its valve houses, is also recorded on the HER as it crosses this EA bringing water from Lake Vyrnwy reservoir. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ Some marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). ■ Irregular Fieldscapes in the Upper Tanat Valley (in the west of EA24) are assessed as Outstanding in LANDMAP, due to its wealth of historic elements of all periods and themes within an agricultural landscape. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Long section of Offa’s Dyke early medieval linear earthwork. ■ Numerous prehistoric cairns and barrows (some of which are Scheduled Monuments) dating from Neolithic to Bronze Age. Some are in groups whilst others are isolated. ■ Outstanding Irregular Fieldscapes landscape containing different elements preserved within a medieval/post medieval agricultural landscape associated with the Tanat Valley to the south. ■ Lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 27c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 2.88% of the EA. ■ 1 area of Open Access Common Land, covering 0.07% of the EA. ■ The central part of the EA has a good network of PRoW although elsewhere, it is relatively limited. There are however quite good links into adjacent EAs.

EA24: Berwyn Foothills South

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Although opportunities for the enjoyment of outdoor recreation within the EA are quite limited, the uplands are an important backdrop that forms part of the recreational experience from surrounding EAs, including that from a large area of nearby Open Access land in EA21.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **low-medium**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

The EA exhibits a high scenic quality, as well a strong time depth with a good range of range of historic features. The landscape also has a strong rural character and distinctiveness. Its appreciation is also significantly enhanced by some highly scenic views of the Ceiriog and Tanat valleys, and to the north-west, the Berwyn uplands. From lower-lying areas, the EA also forms an important undeveloped backdrop. With regard to recreation within the EA, the landscape has relatively little to offer although from adjacent EAs, it forms part of the wider landscape that contributes to recreational enjoyment. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Strong rural character



Sheltered valley



Exposed plateau



Backdrop of the Berwyn



Scenic view over Llyn Moelfre



Long distance view to north-east



Expansive views to north



Isolated farmstead

EVALUATION AREA 25

EA25: Berwyn Mountains South	
Landscape context	
<p>All of the <i>Berwyn Mountains South</i> EA is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape although to the south-west, the EA adjoins the Eryri National Park. The EA largely encircles EA27 (Llyn Efyrynwy) with parts of EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>), EA28 (<i>Hirnant and Rhialgwn</i>), EA29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i>), and EA31 (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>) also adjoining the eastern boundary. The uplands of EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>) extend further north. Approximately 84% of the EA consists of a very large Upland Moorland visual and sensory LANDMAP unit. There are also small areas of Upland Grazing, Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing, Wooded Upland & Plateaux, and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA consists of extensive tracts of open and remote moorland, with heather, bilberry and rough grazing predominant. There are also some upland lakes, with a number of large boggy areas in lower lying areas. Ridgelines and low rising summits form the main points of interest.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The integrity and quality of the large Upland Moorland unit is assessed as ‘high’. The smaller units are either ‘high’ or ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Upland Moorland is assessed as ‘high’. Smaller units are either ‘high’ or ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of the Upland Moorland unit has not been assessed. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across the exposed uplands, there are extensive areas of intact semi-natural moorland vegetation although on steep slopes, this is subject to scrub and bracken encroachment. <p>There are no incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from landscape quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upland Moorland unit exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. Smaller units are either ‘strong’ or ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of the Upland Moorland unit is assessed as ‘high’. The smaller units are either ‘high’ or ‘moderate’. ■ The scenic quality of the Upland Moorland unit is also assessed as ‘high’, with the others either ‘high’ or ‘moderate’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between a very distinctive series of smooth rounded uplands, including those within EA21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>) exhibit a highly scenic and often dramatic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place. ■ The colours and textures of extensive heather moorland add to the visual interest. ■ The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent lower-lying areas to the east. ■ From areas of high open ground, there are stunning long distance scenic views in all directions. To the north, there are highly scenic views over a continuation of the Berwyn uplands, and to the

EA25: Berwyn Mountains South

	<p>south and west, the Eryri National Park. To the east, there are also views over Llyn Efyrynwy, the Tanat Valley, and the Dyfnant Forest.</p> <p>There are no other incongruous elements or land use that notably detract from the appreciation of scenic quality.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upland Moorland unit is identified as being ‘wild’, ‘exposed’ and ‘remote’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With extensive areas of semi-natural moorland habitats, the exposed and remote uplands exhibit a very strong sense of wildness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upland Moorland unit is identified as being ‘tranquil’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a near absence of settlement and development, a strong sense of tranquillity can be experienced from all parts of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the natural beauty of the EA is high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 28a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of SPA, covering 85.1% of the EA. ■ 1 area of SAC, covering 77.9% of the EA. ■ 1 SSSI, covering 85.14% of the EA. ■ 1 area of National Nature Reserves, covering 44.9% of the EA. ■ 18 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 0.07% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With most of the EA designated for its internationally important biodiversity, the extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a very strong sense of naturalness. ■ The Berwyn mountain range is the largest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Wales covering 24,321 ha and comprising of a mosaic of habitats. They also form part of the Berwyn & South Clwyd Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Berwyn Special Protection Area (SPA). ■ There are large tracts of upland heathland and blanket bog as well as a large block of managed heather moorland which extend into the LCA. The SSSI supports nationally scarce plants and rare invertebrates including a number of important associated upland breeding birds, including the hen harrier, merlin, red grouse and black grouse. ■ The upland peaks rise to 544m at Waun Drawsfan and from lower-lying areas, their profile forms a very distinctive landform feature.

EA25: Berwyn Mountains South

	<p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>A small area in the north-east of the EA is within the Tanat Valley Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 28b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Several prehistoric ritual and funerary sites, and two medieval sites: Bryn Gwyn deserted rural settlement (partially within EA27) and Llanwddyn Hospitium grange. ■ Listed Buildings – milestone at on the A458 at Bwlch-y-Fedwen (Grade II). <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A wide range an high density of sites related to many different upland land uses over various time periods. These include cairns, enclosures, boundary stones, walls, sheepfolds, shooting boxes, grouse butts, peat cutting sites, tracks and quarries. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is almost entirely marginal land (containing relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). ■ The Southern Berwyn Marginal Land area is assessed as Outstanding due to the combination of early settlement and land use (Neolithic to Bronze Age burial and ritual monuments), evidence of medieval and post-medieval subsistence agriculture in dispersed rural settlements, 19th Century and later game management, peat cutting, and extensive mining and quarrying remains. <p>The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wide range of prehistoric ritual and funerary monuments, including kerb cairns, standing stone, round cairns and a chambered round cairn. There is a concentration of sites on high land in the east of the EA. ■ Llanwddyn Hospitium medieval grange site (Scheduled Monument) – an outlying farm or estate associated with monastic land holding. This site represents a farming establishment developed by the Hospitallers over 600 years ago. It consists of the foundations of a rectangular building and other platforms, surrounding by a bank and ditched enclosure. A spring also lies within the enclosure, and cultivation ridges are evident within and around the enclosure. It is approached over a finely constructed dry-stone bridge. ■ Bryn Gwyn deserted rural settlement is located on the slopes of Bryn Gwyn, above Lake Vyrnwy. It includes at least nine earthen house platforms which are connected by the banks of a contemporary field system. The fields contain marks of ridge and furrow cultivation. Also present is a structure named as Llechwedd Hafod. ■ Other features providing evidence of upland subsistence farming in different periods. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 28c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 78.8% of the EA. ■ 4 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering 3.7% of the EA. ■ 1 area of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering 0.3% of the EA.

EA25: Berwyn Mountains South

- Although the extent of PRoW is relatively minimal there are several links to the extensive areas of Open Access.

Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- A large area of upland is designated for horse riding access.
- Considering the very large proportion of Open Access Land, there is an excellent provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of these uplands.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **medium-high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

The EA exhibits a wealth of natural, cultural and perceptual qualities that combine to instil a very sense of natural beauty. Of particular relevance, extensive areas of SPA/SSSI make a very significant contribution to its natural and scenic value. In relation to recreation, there is an excellent provision of widespread opportunities to enjoy this stunning upland landscape, and its associated wealth of natural and cultural interest. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Distinctive field pattern



Extensive moorland vegetation



Rugged slopes of Y Berwyn



Upland grazing



Exposed moorland



Isolated farmstead



Incised upland glen



Wooded upland glen

EVALUATION AREA 26

EA26: Tanat Valley	
Landscape context	
<p>Located outside of the of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, the <i>Tanat Valley</i> EA has a strong relationship with the enclosing uplands, particularly at its more dramatic western end where the EA borders the EA 25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>). To the north-west of the EA a containing backdrop is provided by the EA 21 (<i>Berwyn Mountains North</i>), and to north, the EA 22 (<i>Berwyn Foothills South</i>). To the south of the EA, there is gentle transition to the EA 30 (<i>Severn Farmlands North</i>) and EA 29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valleys and Hills</i>). To the south-west of the valley, EA 28 (Hirnant and Rhialgwm) forms a prevailing forested backdrop.</p> <p>The EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of the Flat Open Farmland, the Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes, the Upland Valleys, and the Exposed Upland/Plateau visual and sensory LANDMAP units. Collectively, these units form a large west-east orientated valley. In addition to the Afon Tanat, the valley also includes several tributaries contained in the narrow branching valleys of the Cwm Pennant and Cwm Rhiwarth.</p> <p>At a more local level, this is a valley of three parts - with a steep side U shaped valley with some dramatic peaks (Craig Rhiwarth) and ridges to the east of Pen y Bont Fawr; with a broader valley in the area of Llanrhaeadr Ym Mochnant; before the valley narrows again, lined by wooded valley slopes to the south and the Llansilin Hills to the north. The settlement of Pen y Bont Llanerch Emrys is located on the Welsh/ English border to the east at the AoS boundary and, therefore, forms an important gateway to the Tanat Valley.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The upland farmland units tend to exhibit a ‘high’ integrity and quality, reducing to ‘moderate’ along the valley floor. ■ The upland farmland units are considered to be ‘rare’ and include characteristic features and qualities features that are uncommon in a regional or county context. The valley floor is considered to be of ‘moderate’ rarity. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Across the large majority of the EA, there is strong pattern of intact species rich hedgerows that enclose improved grasslands. ■ In some places however, hedgerows are gappy and degraded, or have been replaced with post and wire fencing. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the valley sides. ■ Relatively narrow valley bottoms have a distinct agricultural field pattern of medium to large fields with strong hedgerow boundaries. ■ Steeper slopes support a fragmented but distinctive patchwork of woodland, scrub, bracken and semi-improved grassland communities. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear with unsympathetic with their local setting. ■ The impact of large-scale historical slate and lead mining, particularly towards the head of the valley, has a relatively localised local but noticeable adverse impact on landscape quality. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the natural beauty of this EA is assessed as medium high.</p>

EA26: Tanat Valley

<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Llanfyllin Mosaic North, Upper Tanat Valley, Craig Rhiwarth, and Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochant exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with remaining parts assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Upper Tanat Valley and Craig Rhiwarth are assessed as having ‘outstanding’ distinctiveness, whilst other units are ‘moderate’ or ‘high’. ■ The Upper Tanat Valley and Craig Rhiwarth exhibit an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality, with most other units assessed as ‘high’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor, rolling valley sides and enclosing uplands and narrow upper valleys provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a strong sense of place. ■ The strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded river corridor. ■ The Tanat and Rhaeadr valleys forms an important foreground to the dramatic rising upland. ■ From lower-lying areas, scenic views are gained along the valley, including from the scenic route between Pen-y-bont Llanerch Emrys and Llangynog. ■ From areas of higher ground, longer range views are focused west over the valley to backdrop of upland peaks. Particularly open views are experienced northwards with the Berwyn Hills forming a distance skyline. <p>Apart from a quarry towards the head of the valley and some areas of forestry felling, there are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from the scenic quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upper Tanat Valley and Craig Rhiwarth exhibit ‘wild’ and ‘remote’ qualities. ■ Most other parts however tend to be ‘settled’ and therefore, are not considered to be remote or wild. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The semi-natural character of enclosing uplands with areas of bedrock exposure, including distinct tributary valleys containing the dramatic and scenic Pistyll Rhaeadr (the highest waterfall in Wales) and the craggy peak of Craig Rhiwarth, contribute to a sense of wildness towards the head of the valley. ■ As most of the EA is subject to intensive agriculture with a network of roads and associated scattered built development, the sense of relative wildness is generally very minimal elsewhere although at a local level, semi-natural vegetation along river corridors contribute to a sense of naturalness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness experience to the natural beauty of the EA is moderate.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The EA experiences dark night skies as indicated by the Natural Resources Wales map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, which are locally reduced in proximity to Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochant. ■ No LANDMAP assessment is provided on other factors relating to tranquillity.

EA26: Tanat Valley

	<p>The findings of the field survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The traditional farmed landscape is generally very peaceful, particularly towards the head of valley and from areas of higher ground. ■ Near to the network of minor roads that connect villages along the valley floor however, the experience of tranquillity is locally affected by noise and activity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity experience to the natural beauty of the EA is medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 29a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 SPA, covering 5.9% of the EA. ■ 2 areas of SAC, covering 2.9% of the EA. ■ 393 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering 4.3% of the EA. ■ 7 areas of SSSI, covering 6.4% of the EA ■ 8 RIGSs, covering 0.5% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A relatively high proportion of Ancient Woodlands scattered along the valley sides make a significant contribution to the natural beauty of the valley. ■ Towards the western end, the enclosing uplands are also designated part of the Berwyn SSSI and SAC that extends into the adjacent EAs. These moorland habitats support a wealth of important species that underpin a very strong semi-natural character. ■ The lower part of the valley widens and comprises the well-developed floodplain and meandering river system of the River Tanat, which appears braided in part and includes oxbow lakes. Here, there are a number of fluvioglacial apron/terraces on the north side of the Tanat Valley that sharply transition into the undulating valley sides. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses, particularly the wooded Iwrch Valley, provide the focus on biodiversity interest. ■ The Afon Tanat and numerous streams including Cwm Nant-y-Meichiaid and the Cain Valley support species-rich flushes and fen and mire plants. ■ Steeper slopes support a high proportion of woodland including conifer plantation and semi-natural broadleaved woodland, as well as acid grassland and limited dry dwarf shrub heath communities; ■ Near Mynydd-y-briw, dry heaths and western acidic oak woodland are important habitats. ■ There are a number of wooded knolls and one at Allt Dolanog common is mainly bracken and heath. ■ Bedrock exposures, including distinct tributary valleys containing the dramatic and scenic Pistyll Rhaeadr (the highest waterfall in Wales) and the craggy peak of Craig Rhiwarth, are important natural features. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural heritage features to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>

Cultural interest

Most of the central and northern parts of the EA are designated the Tanat Valley Registered Historic Landscape and illustrated in Figure 29b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following cultural features:

- Scheduled Monuments – A large number of Scheduled Monuments, representing a diversity of sites primarily from the prehistoric and medieval periods. Prehistoric sites include ritual/funerary sites such as Maes Mochnant Standing Stone and Nant y Gangen round cairns, a series of hillforts including Craig Rhiwarth and Llwyn Bryn-Dinas, and a lead mine at Craig-y-Mwyn. Medieval sites include numerous defensive sites, including Sycharth Castle (Owain Glyndwr’s manorial home), the domestic site of Ty Ucha farmstead and Aber-Naint Dyke monument. There is also a Roman supply depot at Llansantffraid ym Mechain.
- Registered Parks and Gardens - Llangedwyn Hall, an Early 18th terraced garden overlooking the Tanat Valley, set within wider estate (Grade II*).
- Conservation Areas – Historic village cores of Llansilin, Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant, Penybontfawr and Llangynog.
- Listed Buildings – Very numerous, reflecting the settled nature of this EA, and the survival of historic buildings within it. They also reflect the diversity of past land uses within this EA. Listed Buildings include houses, farm buildings, mining remains and churches, with a notable number of medieval buildings. The churches of St Melangell and St Silin are Listed Grade I. Domestic buildings at Henblas, Lloran Ucha, Glascoed, Plas-uchaf, Ty-newydd and Pen-y-bryn, agricultural buildings at Henfache and Llwyn-onn, and religious buildings at St Dogfan and Capel Seion are Grade II*.

With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:

- Very numerous sites, again reflecting the number of surviving historic features within this landscape. Sites include domestic, commercial, religious and agricultural buildings, milestones, earthworks, mills, bridges and former railway line.
- Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated.

In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:

- Very extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character).
- Marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology).
- LANDMAP identifies the Lower Tanat, Upper Tanat and Bryngwyn Irregular Fieldscales, and the Southern Berwyn Marginal Land, as being Outstanding, due to the wealth of surviving features, including prehistoric ritual sites, hillforts, later prehistoric enclosures, medieval ecclesiastical, settlement and defensive sites, and later mining and quarrying. Together they create a complex and highly important landscape, mostly contained within a medieval/post-medieval agricultural setting.

The features which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:

- Remains of prehistoric ore workings seen at the upper end of Cwm Orog, north of Craig Rhiwarth hillfort.
- Impressive Iron-Age hillforts including Llwyn Bryn Dinas and Craig Rhiwarth, each of which dominates visual prospects of their respective halves of the valley.
- Rich medieval ecclesiastical history still apparent in the landscape, with very early churches at Pennant Melangell and Llanrhaeadr. Surrounding villages resulted from medieval religious foundations.

EA26: Tanat Valley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The pattern of irregular, anciently-enclosed fieldscapes in the upper Tanat valley and its tributaries. The lack of modern development and presence of intact historic landscape features such as roads and irregular field boundaries contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Legacy of medieval sites, including several mottes such as Cefn-Coch, Cefn Glaniwrch and Maerdy (several are Scheduled Monuments). As well as defensive sites there are also many medieval and post-medieval houses with surviving timber-frame construction. ■ Llangedwyn Hall comprises a Listed Building set within a Registered Historic Park and Garden including surviving 18th Century terrace gardens and wider estate woodland and parkland. ■ Long history of extractive industries from prehistory onwards, but with visible remaining evidence of lead, phosphorous, slate and granite working around Llangynog, including mine buildings, tramways, inclines, spoil heaps and miners’ cottage. ■ Line of Tanat light railway (1904-1960) along the valley floor, terminating at Llangynog. The track has been removed but line and stations still discernible. ■ Shrine to St. Melangell (the legend of St Melangell dates back to the 8th Century and parts of the existing church are 12th Century). One of the most remote and beautiful churches in Britain it remains a place of pilgrimage. It stands in a round churchyard which dates from the Bronze Age and contains yew trees around 2000 years old. ■ Important ecclesiastical site and foundation at Llanrhaeadr, dedicated to St Dogfan. It was one of the ‘Welsh churches, with villages and churchyards’ burnt by the English in 1165, as recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis. It was also the incumbency of Bishop William Morgan when he completed his Welsh translation of the Bible (a highly significant event in Welsh language and culture) in 1587. ■ Associations with the Mabinogion legend, which claims that the name Mochnant (pig-stream or pig-valley in Welsh) is one of the places that Gwydion spent the night whilst bringing swine to Math from Pryderi, king of Ceredigion. ■ Associations with Owain Glyndwr, the last native-born Welshman to hold the title Prince of Wales, who had a manorial home at Sycharth Castle, Llansilin (medieval motte and bailey, now a Scheduled Monument). ■ Pistyll Rhaeadr, the tallest waterfalls in Wales, were described in George Borrow’s “Wild Wales” (1862) which increased visitor interest. ■ The 1995 film “The Englishman who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain” was filmed in Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant and Llansilin. ■ World-renowned harpist Nan Richards Jones (1888-1979) is buried in Pennant Melangell. ■ The Tanat Valley continues to inspire writers and artists, including Welsh novelist, poet and translator Sian Melangell Dafydd, and artist Eleri Mills. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural heritage to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 29c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 36 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering 4.7% of the EA. ■ 4 areas of forest recreation areas, covering 0.05% of the EA. ■ 1 area of National Nature Reserves, covering 0.4% of the EA. ■ 1 area of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering 0.07% of the EA. ■ 6 areas of Open Access Common Land, covering 0.07% of the EA.

EA26: Tanat Valley

- 1 area of Open Access Other Statutory Land, covering 0.01% of the EA.
- The valley contains a very extensive and well connected network of PRoW that provides good access throughout the landscape. There are also good links with surrounding EAs.

The findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- A scenic route runs east/west along the valley floor.
- To the west of the valley, a NRW Forest Route leads south from Llangynog into EA28.
- There are further opportunities to better manage the existing network of PRoW, and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape within the EA is assessed as **medium**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of Natural Beauty and Recreational evidence

With a large part of the EA designated as a Registered Historic Landscape, the landscape exhibits a very strong time depth and cultural identity. In particular, a distinctive pattern of Ancient Woodlands and irregular, anciently-enclosed fieldscapes on valley sides make very valuable contribution to experience of natural beauty, as does a wealth of visible cultural heritage features scattered throughout the landscape. The interplay between the intimate valley floor, rolling valley sides and enclosing uplands and narrow upper valleys is highly scenic, and the very distinctive composition and the strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands also contributes to a traditional rural character. Although landscape and scenic quality to the east is not as strong as the more dramatic parts to the west, the landscape still retains a strong sense of place and coherent experience of natural beauty. The natural beauty of the landscape is also enhanced by the appreciation of a wealth of varied habitats and wildlife and in most places, the landscape is very peaceful.

Although the provision of opportunities for the enjoyment of outdoor recreation is largely limited to the network of PRoW, its extensive nature provides good access to the wealth of natural and cultural heritage throughout the landscape. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** with the proposed Candidate Area.



Overlooking the valley to a backdrop of the Berwyn uplands



Distinctive field pattern on valley sides



Overlooking valley to west



Contrast of open uplands and farmed valley sides



Highly scenic upland valley



Species rich verges



Mature trees scattered along valley floor



Natural interest along the Afon Tanat

EVALUATION AREA 27

EA27: Llyn Efyrynwy	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Llyn Efyrynwy</i> EA is located to the south-west of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. Centred on the large water body of Llyn Efyrynwy/ Lake Vyrnwy, EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>) forms a surrounding upland backdrop to nearly all of this lower-lying valley landscape. At the entrance to the valley, very small parts of EA28 (<i>Hirnant and Rhialgwm</i>) and EA31 (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>) lie adjacent to the south-east boundary, beyond which, lies the small village of Llanwddyn. In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is formed by an amalgamation of a large Wooded Upland & Plateaux visual and sensory unit (approximately 65%), a large Lake unit (25%) and a small part of a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit.</p> <p>As an overview, the character of the EA is heavily influenced by Lake Vyrnwy, an extensive area of artificial open water caused by the damming of the River Vyrnwy to form the current reservoir that is characterised by the Victorian development and construction of the dam. Extensive areas of forestry plantation dominate the steep valley sides and ridges above the lake.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Lake unit exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Lake and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units are assessed as ‘high’, with the large Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit assessed as having a ‘moderate’ rarity. ■ The landscape condition of all three units have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Wooded Upland & Plateaux and Lake units is assessed as ‘constant’, with the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing assessed as ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Around most of the lake, there is a strong contrast between the expanse of open water and the steep, heavily forested valley sides. ■ In some places, areas of clear fell have been undertaken that in its locality, can detract from the appreciation of natural beauty. Where areas have been replanted with conifers and broadleaves however, the diversity of woodland cover contributes to the experience of natural beauty. ■ Along the southern sides of the narrow Eunant valley (located at the western head of the main valley), a large tract of Ancient Woodland exhibits a very strong and intact landscape pattern. <p>Apart from the impact of felling, there are no other incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All three units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of the Lake unit is assessed as ‘high’, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Lake unit exhibits an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality although conversely, the scenic quality of the Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit is assessed as ‘low’. The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is assessed as ‘high’.

EA27: Llyn Efyrnwy

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the large expansive of open water and the heavily forested valley sides underpins a highly scenic composition. ■ Heavily influenced by surrounding uplands, the prevailing semi-natural character of the upper reaches of the narrow incised Eunant valley are particularly scenic. ■ To the east of EA, the distinctive masonry stone dam wall and associated bridge forms an impressive landmark feature, as does the nearby Straining Tower. ■ When travelling around the lake, there are varied views across the water, often framed by trees. ■ Occasional steep rocky outcrops and cliffs around the lake add to the visual interest. ■ Towards the west of the EA, there are highly scenic views towards a distinctive backdrop of the Berwyn uplands. ■ From most parts around the lake, there is a strong sense of wooded shelter and intimacy. <p>Apart from the impact of felling, there are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being 'wild'. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the west of the EA, a high coverage of Ancient Woodland within the narrow Eunant valley, along with its associated rocky stream contained by surrounding uplands, has a relatively strong wild character in its locality. ■ Given the large coverage forested valley sides, the experience of wildness is generally very minimal elsewhere across the EA, although as noted in the LANDMAP assessment, the large expanse of open water contributes to sense of remoteness. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA's natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Lake and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units are identified as being 'tranquil'. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although most of the EA is very peaceful, the lake and its associated natural and cultural features can often attract a relatively large number of visitors and particularly during summer months, recreational activity taking place around the lake can detract from its tranquillity. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 30a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parts of a SPA, covering approx. 8.6% of the EA. ■ Parts of a SAC, covering approx. 5.7% of the EA.

EA27: Llyn Efyrynwy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Several parts of SSSI, covering approx. 8.6% of the EA. ■ Parts of a National Nature Reserves, covering approx. 8.4% of the EA. ■ 51 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 7.4% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A RSPB reserve supports an abundance of wildlife, such as flycatchers, wood warblers and redstarts amongst woodland, dippers nesting by the rocky streams, and goosanders on the open water. ■ The RSPB bird hide offers excellent views of woodland alive with chaffinch, dunnock, brambling, marsh tit, great spotted woodpecker, sparrow hawk, siskin, greenfinch nuthatch, house sparrow, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, long tailed tit, tree creeper and robin. ■ Birds of prey such as buzzard, peregrine, hen harrier and goshawk often circle overhead. ■ The coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a good range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, they instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Areas heathland on upland slopes and damp pasture on valley floors also contribute to diverse array of habitats, with a great variety of wildlife. ■ With an incised rocky stream, the upper reaches of the narrow Eunant valley exhibit a strong semi-natural character. ■ Limestone cliffs and outcrops are a distinctive natural feature in their locality. ■ Although just beyond the EA boundary, the impressive Rhiwargor waterfall is one of the largest in Wales. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 30b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments - Bryn Gwyn deserted rural settlement (partially within EA25). ■ Listed Buildings – The Lake Vyrnwy straining tower and approach bridge is Grade I, as is the Stone Masonry Dam, one of the largest at the time. A series of bridges around Lake Vyrnwy and an obelisk are listed Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A range of sites primarily relating to settlement and agriculture, including some now beneath the lake (including the old village of Llanwddyn) or within the forestry plantations which surround it. ■ There are also several quarries which may relate to construction of the dam and other features. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dominated by the designed landscape of Lake Vyrnwy. This late 19th Century reservoir scheme and associated designed landscape including conifer plantations, reservoir structures, and a hotel is assessed as Outstanding. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The expansive open water of the dammed reservoir.

EA27: Llyn Efyrynwy

- Bryn Gwyn deserted rural settlement is located on the slopes of Bryn Gwyn, above Lake Vyrnwy. It includes at least nine earthen house platforms which are connected by the banks of a contemporary field system. The fields contain marks of ridge and furrow cultivation. Also present is a structure named as Llechwedd Hafod.
- Structures associated with Lake Vyrnwy reservoir (constructed 1881-1888) including the straining tower and approach bridge, dam, road bridges, and the memorial obelisk commemorating the workers who died during construction of the dam and associated reservoir works. The conifer planting, and associated buildings such as the hotel also contribute to the designed landscape.
- The inundated village of Llanwddyn, now beneath the reservoir.

Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as **medium-high**.

Recreation

As illustrated in Figure 30c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:

- Several areas of Open Access Country, covering approx. 6% of the EA.
- To the north-east of the lake, there is a well-connected network of PRow that in addition to providing good access to the local landscape, link with extensive areas of Open Access within EA25 (*Berwyn Mountains South*).

Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- The lake area was designed as a leisure venue, centred around the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel as part of the post-damming development.
- The lake provides a wealth of recreational opportunities including canoeing, kayaking, sailing and windsurfing.
- There a number of promoted walks around the lake including a one-mile circular route alongside the riverbank and through sessile oak woodland, and several longer distance routes along forest tracks.
- As noted above, there are many opportunities for bird watching, with the bird hide being easily accessible.
- With bike hire available near to the bridge, the road around the lake provides an excellent route to appreciate the natural beauty of this unique landscape. The network of forest tracks are also ideal for mountain biking.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Focused on the highly scenic Lake Vyrnwy, the *Llyn Efyrynwy* EA is a unique landscape with very distinctive sense of place. The interplay between the large expansive of open water and the heavily forested valley sides are particularly dramatic and at the head of the valley, the incised Eunant valley has a strong semi-natural character, where a nearby backdrop of encircling uplands (with EA25) enhance its high scenic quality. With a wealth of designated habitats, including the accessible RSPB nature reserve, the landscape supports an abundance of wildlife. Structures associated with the Lake Vyrnwy reservoir, including the straining tower and approach bridge, dam, and road bridges, form highly impressive cultural features that further contribute to the natural beauty of the area. In relation to recreation, the EA offers an excellent provision of various activities to enjoy the stunning scenery of the lake and surrounding landscape, many of which are easily accessible. As such, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Looking east over Lake Vyrnwy



Extensive Ancient Woodland in the Eunant valley



Straining tower back by imposing uplands



Semi-natural character of the Afon Eunant



Highly distinctive Dam bridge



Limestone cliff



Cycle route around the lake



Highly scenic Eunant valley

EVALUATION AREA 28

EA28: Hirnant and Rhialgwm	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Hirnant and Rhialgwm</i> EA is located to the south of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>) forms a containing upland backdrop to the west, and to the north, the lower-lying EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>). To the south-west, there is a gentle transition to EA31 (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>) and to the south-east, EA29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i>). In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of three visual and sensory units of Upland Grazing, Wooded Upland & Plateaux, and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic.</p> <p>To the north of the EA, the character is defined by an area of upland grazing with a pattern of small scale and well-defined fields in lower-lying areas, and more open larger fields on higher ground. To the south-west, the EA is dominated by large blocks of coniferous plantation, with some mixed broadleaf woodland in lower lying areas. To the east of the EA, rolling farmland with a strong pattern of dense hedgerows, with mature hedgerows trees and small woodlands exhibits a traditional rural character.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits a ‘high’ integrity and quality, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The rarity of the Upland Grazing and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units are assessed as ‘moderate’, with the Wooded Upland & Plateaux assessed as having a ‘low’ rarity. ■ The landscape condition of all three units have not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Upland Grazing and Wooded Upland & Plateaux units is assessed as ‘improving’, with the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic assessed as ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In lower-lying areas to the east, there is a strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees and small woodlands. ■ In some lower-lying areas to the west, broadleaf woodlands planted on areas of felled forestry provide landscape diversity. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large areas of coniferous plantation to the west of the EA, including ongoing felling, detract from the rural character and rolling landform of the surrounding landscape. ■ On areas of higher open ground to the north, the integrity of the landscape and its associated rural character is often weakened by fragmented field boundaries, some replaced with post and wire. ■ Some areas of upland grazing are also subject to scrub encroachment. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Wooded Upland & Plateaux and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, and the Upland Grazing unit, a ‘moderate’ one. ■ The distinctiveness of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit is assessed as ‘high’, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA28: Hirnant and Rhialgwm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Upland Grazing and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality, although the Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit is assessed as ‘low’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between intimate valley floors and rolling valley sides, enclosed by a backdrop of uplands to the north, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. ■ To the east, a strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher open ground, there are scenic views over rolling farmland and valleys. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large areas of forestry plantation and associated felling detract from the wider rural character of the landscape and in many places, obscures views. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit is identified as being ‘wild’, and the Upland Grazing unit exhibits ‘exposed’ qualities. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Given the large coverage forestry, any sense of wildness is hardly apparent to the west of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA’s natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No units are identified as being ‘tranquil’, although the Upland Grazing unit is noted as being ‘remote’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With relatively few roads and a low density of scattered cottages farms, all of the EA is very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 31a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 38 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 1.5% of the EA. ■ 1 area of SPA, covering approx. 0.1% of the EA. ■ 1 areas of SSSI, covering approx. 0.1% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p>

EA28: Hirnant and Rhialgwm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Areas of forestry form part of the RSPB nature reserve that extends west into EA27 (<i>Llyn Efyrynwy</i>). Although the nature conservation value of forestry plantation is relatively limited, areas of broadleaf woodland in lower-lying areas supports an abundance of wildlife. ■ Although the coverage of Ancient Woodland is relatively limited, these support a good range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, they instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout eastern parts of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>The north-eastern edge of the EA is within the Tanat Valley Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. As illustrated in Figure 31b (see attached A3 figures) the EA also includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Isolated prehistoric ritual/funerary monuments at Cil Haul barrow, Bwlch Sych round cairn and Carnedd Das Eithin round cairn. Early medieval linear earthwork at Clawdd Mawr. ■ Conservation Areas – Hirnant and part of Llanwddyn village. ■ Listed Buildings – relatively few Listed Buildings, reflecting the sparse settlement pattern in this EA. They include domestic, agricultural and religious buildings. The parish church of St Wddyn is Grade II*; all others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sites primarily relating to settlement and agriculture, including wells, house sites, mills and chapels. HER Sites also encompass past extractive industries, including Roman mines at Clochnant, and various quarries, shafts, magazine, etc. ■ Sites relating to Lake Vyrnwy aqueduct are also found within this EA. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character) and marginal land (contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). The Irregular Fieldscapes within the Upper Tanat Valley are identified as Outstanding. They represent a primarily post-medieval and early agricultural landscape containing a wealth of historic elements of all periods and themes – prehistoric ritual and funerary, medieval settlement and later mining and quarrying creating a complex and highly important landscape. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rich and exceptionally intact historic landscape comprising field patterns, lanes, farms, houses and other features contributing to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Clusters of Listed Buildings within Conservation Areas at Hirnant and Llanwddyn. ■ Prehistoric funerary monuments, including the prominently-sited Carnedd Das Eithin. ■ Legacy of quarrying and mining going back to the Roman period. ■ Iolo Williams, Welsh ornithologist, nature observer, television presenter and author working in both English and Welsh, grew up in Llanwddyn (the village is within this EA and also EA31). <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>

EA28: Hirnant and Rhialgwm

<i>Recreation</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 31c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 9 areas of Open Access land, covering approx. 14.2% of the EA.■ A network of PRoWs is concentrated in the northern part of the EA, that in addition to providing access to the local landscape, link with extensive areas of Open Access within EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>). <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Two areas of publicly owned forest provide horse riding access.■ The network of forest tracks is also ideal for mountain biking. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as medium-high.</p>
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Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Most northern and eastern parts of the EA generally exhibit a high landscape and scenic quality, with a strong rural character. Compared to other surrounding EAs however, the extent and number of natural and cultural features that contribute to the appreciation of natural beauty is relatively limited. To the west of the EA, extensive areas of forestry also weaken the experience of natural beauty. In relation to recreation, the EA offers a good provision of accessible opportunities to enjoy the landscape, and areas of forestry could be further enhanced to provide promoted walking and cycling routes, and associated car parks.

The appreciation of natural beauty is less strong to the west as the landscape transitions from areas better represented in the EA. There is however a good provision of access to enjoy the landscape. This area is also bordered by EAs that more strongly meet the natural beauty criteria and as such, it may be considered for inclusion as it sits within these tracts of qualifying land. Including this area therefore enables a contiguous large-scale area of landscape that in main, strongly meets the assessment criteria to be included within the Candidate Area. It is therefore recommended to **include** this EA within the proposed Candidate Area.



Heavily treed valley floor



Backdrop of open uplands



Distinctive pattern of irregular fields



Tree-lined rural lane



Broadleaf woodland amongst extensive forestry



Extensive forestry felling

EVALUATION AREA 29

EA29: Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i> EA is located to the south of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. To the south-west, a small part of EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>) forms an upland backdrop, and to the west, EA31 (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>) forms a forested setting. EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>) and EA28 (<i>Hirnant and Rhialgwm</i>) are located to the north-east and north-west respectively, and along the eastern EA boundary, there is a gentle transition to EA30 (<i>Severn Farmlands North</i>) and EA32 (<i>Severn Farmlands South</i>). The southern EA boundary, which follows the A458, forms the outer extent of the AoS. In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing visual and sensory units, a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit, and an Upland Grazing unit.</p> <p>As an overview, the large majority of this very rural EA is formed by extensive areas of traditionally farmed rolling pastoral farmland, with small scale irregular field patterns defined by mature hedgerows and a significant proportion of mature hedgerow trees. Small broadleaf woodlands are common in lower-lying areas, especially along watercourses. To the north-east of the EA, the character is defined by an area of upland grazing with a pattern of small scale and well defined fields in lower-lying areas, and more open larger fields on higher ground.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
Landscape quality	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All four units exhibits a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units is assessed as ‘high’, and the Upland Grazing unit ‘moderate’. The landscape condition of the smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit around Llanerfyl is assessed as ‘good’. The other three units have not been assessed. The trend of landscape condition for the Upland Grazing unit and the larger Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit around Llanfyllin is ‘improving’, ‘with the other two units assessed as declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the EA’s natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across most of the EA, there is a strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by dense intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees, extending over a series of distinctive rolling ridges and hills. On the valley sides, there is a consistent coverage of Ancient Woodlands throughout the EA that exhibit a very strong and distinctive landscape pattern. A linear pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow gently meandering water courses, especially along the River Vyrnwy. The valley contains a scattered pattern of well-maintained traditional farm building and cottages. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively small areas of forestry and occasional large modern barns. On areas of higher open ground to the north-east, the integrity of the landscape and its associated rural character is sometimes weakened by fragmented field boundaries. Some areas of upland grazing are also subject to scrub encroachment. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
Scenic quality	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit and the smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA29: Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distinctiveness of the two Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units is assessed as ‘high’, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit exhibits an ‘outstanding’ scenic quality, and the other three units are assessed as ‘high’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the EA’s natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between intimate valley floors with rolling wooded valley sides and ridges provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition, with a strong sense of place. ■ The concentration of Ancient Woodland on valleys sides is particularly distinctive. ■ A strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows, with mature trees and small woodlands, exhibits a traditional and deeply rural character. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors. ■ From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic views over interlocking rolling hills and ridges, and the Banwy and Vyrnwy valleys. <p>Apart from the localised impact of forestry, there are no incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’, although the Upland Grazing unit exhibits an ‘exposed’ quality. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A localised sense of the passing of time and a return to nature can be experienced from within the pattern of Ancient woodlands scattered throughout the EA, and along tree-lined water courses. ■ As most of the EA is subject to agricultural management, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal elsewhere. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA’s natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing and the smaller Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic units are identified as being ‘tranquil’. The larger Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit also exhibits a ‘sheltered’ quality. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a pattern of quiet rural lanes and a low density of scattered cottages farms, the EA is generally very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 32a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following nationally/regionally important natural designations, some of which, overlap:</p>

EA29: Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 565 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 4.9% of the EA. ■ 14 areas of SSSI, covering approx. 0.6% of the EA. ■ 1 areas of Regionally Important Geological Site, covering approx. 0.01% of the EA. <p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Important habitats include upland oakwoods, wet woodland, purple moor grass, rush pasture, fens, and lowland meadows. ■ A good coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout of the EA. ■ The wooded cliffs and banks of the River Vyrnwy at Coed Copi'r Graig SSSI are particularly distinctive features. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the EAs natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 32b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Several Iron Age hillfort sites, including Pen y Gorddyn, Allt Dolanog, Pen-Llys and Gogerddan Camp, as well as a Bronze Age round cairn. There is also part of the Bwlch-y-Cibau Dyke medieval earthwork, and a medieval motte and bailey at Llysun. ■ Conservation Areas – historic villages of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa and Dolanog. ■ Listed Buildings – numerous, particularly around the peripheries of the EA and also clustered in Dolanog. They include a wide range of religious, domestic and agricultural sites. The Primary House at Rhos Fawr Isaf, John Hughes Memorial Chapel, Cruck Barn at Rhosfawr and Neuadd Cynhinfa are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, and covering a range of themes, including settlement, agriculture, travel, industry, mineral extraction and religious sites. ■ The site of a medieval deer park is recorded near Llangadfan. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character) and small areas of marginal land (often contains relatively high proportions of prehistoric remains and industrial archaeology). ■ The Irregular Fieldscapes within the Lower Tanat Valley and Bryngwyn (in the northern part of EA29) are assessed as Outstanding. They are dominated by medieval and later agriculture with farms and houses, and a small number of earlier prehistoric monuments, including significant numbers of defended hillforts, as well as later medieval / early medieval defensive sites. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the EAs natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A series of three Iron Age hillforts on high land overlooking the Vyrnwy valley, and a further one near the confluence of the River Twrch and the River Banwy. Their exact function is unknown but their location in close proximity to each other suggests they may be associated with land divisions. ■ Extensive farmed areas with irregular field patterns likely to represent early piecemeal clearance from medieval times onwards. There are also numerous historic farms and houses, and other

EA29: Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills

	<p>historic landscape features such as roads and tracks. The lack of modern development and the presence of intact historic landscape features contribute to scenic quality and the strong sense of time-depth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic village of Dolanog contains numerous Listed Buildings within or close to a Conservation Area. ■ Welsh hymn writer Ann Griffiths (1776-1805) associated with Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa. Her hymns are considered to contain some of the great Christian poetry of Europe. They were influenced by the traditional Welsh plygain folk carols. Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa retains its tradition of plygain carol singing. ■ Royal Harpist Alis Huws (born 1995) was born in Foel. ■ <i>Life in a Welsh Countryside, A Social Study of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa</i> by Alwyn D Rees (1950) is a classic social study of life in a predominantly Welsh-speaking village and is regarded as the first example of Welsh sociology. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 32c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A section of the Glyndwr's Way National Trail leads through the EA, connecting the villages of Pontrobert and Pont Llogel. ■ 23 areas of various types of Open Access land, covering approx. 3.2 % of the EA. ■ A very dense and well-connected network of PRoWs that in addition to providing good access to the local landscape, link with extensive areas of Public Forest Land in EA31 (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>). <p>The recreational features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The dense of network of PRoW provide a wealth of opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of the rural landscape, and its associated natural and cultural features. ■ There are further opportunities to better manage the existing network of PRoW, and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>This large EA has a deeply rural character where the interplay between intimate valley floors with rolling wooded valley sides and ridges, exhibits a highly scenic and distinctive composition. There is a good coverage of Ancient Woodland scattered on valleys sides, and a strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows, with mature trees and small woodlands, throughout most the EA. With a wealth of cultural features, this very peaceful landscape also exhibits a very strong time-depth. Towards the southern edge of the AoS there are however localised pockets of landscape that exhibit a weaker landscape character and quality. The drawing of a detailed boundary to exclude these areas was however problematic, given the lack of strong and defensible boundaries in this area. For this reason, the edge of the Candidate Area follows the A548. Although recreation is largely limited to the quiet enjoyment of the landscape via the extensive network of PRoW, the Glyndwr's Way National Trail is a key feature. There are also further opportunities to enhance the footpath network and establish cycle routes along rural lanes. Consequently, it is recommended that all of EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Highly scenic rolling hills and ridges



Long views looking south



Ancient Woodlands on valley sides



Mature trees on rolling irregular fields



Deeply rural character



Meandering River Vyrnwy



Rolling hills and ridges



Sheltered valley

EVALUATION AREA 30

EA30: Severn Farmlands North	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Severn Farmlands North</i> EA is located to the south-east of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. There is a gentle transition to EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>) to the north, and to the south, EA29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i>) and EA32 (<i>Severn Farmlands North</i>). The eastern EA boundary, which follows the A495, forms the outer extent of the AoS. In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two visual and sensory units (each covering approximately half of the EA) of Mosaic Rolling Lowland and Flat Open Lowland Farmland.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA is focused on a relatively small valley that accommodates the River Cain, a tributary of the River Severn located further to the east (outside of the EA). The traditional character of the Mosaic Rolling Lowland is defined by a mosaic of small field patterns and intermittent patches of mixed broadleaf and deciduous woodland that closely follows the underlying landform. The Flat Open Lowland Farmland consists of a patchwork of medium to large fields with often overgrown hedgerows and numerous hedgerow trees.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units exhibit a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the Open Lowland Farmland unit is assessed as ‘high’, with the Mosaic Rolling Lowland unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of both units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Open Lowland Farmland unit is assessed as ‘constant’, with the Mosaic Rolling Lowland unit assessed as ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In lower-lying areas, there is a strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees and small woodlands. ■ A strong pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering River Cain. ■ To the south, there is a distinctive pattern of wooded hills, many of which are covered in Ancient Woodland. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In places, hedgerows are sometimes gappy and degraded. ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear unsympathetic with their local setting. ■ Suburban style development on the fringes of Llanfyllin can detract from the rural character of the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Open Lowland Farmland unit exhibits a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the Mosaic Rolling Lowland assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of both units is assessed as ‘high’. ■ Both units exhibit a ‘moderate’ scenic quality.

EA30: Severn Farmlands North

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor with rolling valley sides enclosed by wooded hills provides a scenic composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. ■ A strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In some lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded river corridors. ■ From areas of higher open ground, there are scenic views over rolling farmland and valleys. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some more recent settlement and development associated with the A490 and the B4393 corridors can detract from the prevailing rural character. ■ Small conifer plantations sometimes detract from the pattern of broadleaf woodlands. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Relative wildness</i></p>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A localised sense of the passing of time and a return to nature can be experienced from within the pattern of Ancient Woodlands scattered throughout the EA, along treelined water courses. ■ As most of the EA is subject to agricultural management, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal elsewhere. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA’s natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<p><i>Relative tranquillity</i></p>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parts of the Open Lowland Farmland unit are identified as being ‘tranquil’, with other parts ‘noisy’. The Mosaic Rolling Lowland unit is noted as being ‘sheltered’. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, most of the EA experiences dark night skies although lighting in the villages of Llanfyllin and Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain has a localised impact. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although most of the EA is very peaceful, traffic passing along the A490 and the B4393 has a localised impact, as does activity taking place in and around the villages of Llanfyllin and Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Natural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 33a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 164 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 5.5% of the EA. ■ 1 small part of a SAC, covering approx. 0.01% of the EA. ■ 2 small parts of a SSSI, covering approx. 0.01% of the EA.

EA30: Severn Farmlands North

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The coverage of Ancient Woodlands support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, instil a sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout parts of the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 33b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Prehistoric defensive sites at Derwlwyn Coppice Hillfort and Bryngwyn Wood Camp, and a prehistoric enclosure at Bwlch-y-Cibau. Also part of Bwlch-y-Cibau Dyke medieval earthwork, and a medieval motte and bailey castle at Domen Castell. ■ Registered Parks and Gardens – There are three Registered Parks and Gardens within this EA: Plas Bodfach (19th Century gardens within wider parkland – Grade II); Neuadd Bodynfoel (early 19th Century formal gardens, semi-natural woodland and a small park – Grade II), and Bryngwyn (late 18th Century with small formal garden set in a park with a lake and intact shelter belts – Grade II*). ■ Conservation Areas – historic cores of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain, Llanfechain, Bwlch-y-cibau and Llanfyllin. ■ Listed Buildings – very numerous, reflecting the historic and settled character of this EA. Listed Buildings are often clustered in historic settlements such as Llanfechain and Llanfyllin. They include domestic, commercial, agricultural, religious and educational buildings, as well as buildings and structures associated with estates. There are several listed bridges, but a notable absence of industrial buildings. Ffynnant Farmhouse, Bryngwyn Hall, The Manor House, Plas Nant-y-Meichiaid, the Council House, the Church of St Ffraid, the Church of St Garmon, Cefnlllyfog Farmhouse, and Y Dolydd (Union Workhouse) are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous sites, reflecting the long history of settlement in this EA. Many of the sites relate to agriculture (e.g. farms, ridge and furrow, mills, enclosures, ponds, farm buildings). Others include settlements (houses, chapels, shops, gasworks, medieval market sites) transport (bridges, tracks, structures relating to the Oswestry and Newtown dismantled railway) and estate features (e.g. lodges, walled gardens, driveways). ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Almost entirely comprised of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). The Bryngwyn area of Irregular Fieldscapes, which covers most of this EA is identified as Outstanding. This is described as an area of irregular fields and woodland, dominated by medieval and later agriculture with farms and houses, some designed landscape, but also a small number of earlier prehistoric burial and ritual monuments, and significant numbers of later prehistoric defended hillforts and enclosures, early medieval and medieval defensive works. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Iron Age hillforts in prominent locations overlooking the valleys below.

EA30: Severn Farmlands North

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic villages of Llanfechain and Llanfyllin on crossing points of River Cain contain numerous Listed Buildings within Conservation Areas. ■ Extensive areas of intact irregular field patterns and associated features such as farms, houses, roads and mills. These historic landscape features, and the lack of modern development, contribute to scenic quality and the strong sense of time-depth. ■ Several Registered Parks and Gardens on valley sides, giving the EA a relatively settled and designed feel, with parkland trees adding to its well-treed character. Associated Listed Buildings – including houses, lodges and stables – increase the group value. ■ Line of the Oswestry and Newtown railway following the valley floor of the River Cain. The track has been removed but the embankments, bridges and some station buildings remain. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 33c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 areas of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering 0.2% of the EA ■ A dense and well-connected network of PRoW that in addition to providing good access to the local landscape, link with adjacent EAs. <p>Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The dense of network of PRoW provide many accessible opportunities in quite close proximity to large centres of population for the quiet enjoyment of rural landscape, and its associated natural and cultural features. ■ There are further opportunities to better manage the existing network of PRoW, and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as medium.</p>
<p>Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence</p>	
<p>Focused on a scenic valley that accommodates the River Cain, the rolling valley sides enclosed by wooded hills exhibit a strong sense of place, and a traditional rural character. An extensive pattern of small irregular fields with intermittent patches of mixed broadleaf and deciduous woodland that closely follows the underlying landform are particularly distinctive. There are also several wooded Registered Parks and Gardens on valley sides that, in addition to the irregular fieldscape, instil a strong sense of time-depth throughout most of the landscape. Listed buildings are also scattered throughout the EA, with dense clusters within the villages of Llanfyllin and Llanfechain. Towards the eastern edge of this area there are some pockets of landscape that exhibit a weaker landscape character and quality. The drawing of a detailed boundary to exclude these areas was however problematic, given the lack of strong and defensible boundaries in this area. For this reason, the edge of the Candidate Area follows the A495.</p> <p>Although recreation is largely limited to the quiet enjoyment of the landscape via the extensive network of PRoWs, there are further opportunities to enhance the footpath network through the creation of circular walks around villages, and establish cycle routes along rural lanes. Although this EA does not score as highly as some other EAs, on balance, it is recommended that all of EA should be included within the proposed Candidate Area.</p>	



Distinctive backdrop to Cain Valley



Peaceful wooded valley sides



Enclosed valley floor



Long views west towards the Berwyn uplands



Strong rural character



Valley slopes alongside A945

EVALUATION AREA 31

EA31: Dyfnant Forest	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Dyfnant Forest</i> EA is located to the south of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. EA25 (<i>Berwyn Mountains South</i>) forms a distinctive containing upland backdrop to the west, and to the east, there is a marked transition to the more open EA29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i>), and to the north, the lower-lying EA26 (<i>Tanat Valley</i>). EA28 (<i>Llyn Efyrynwy</i>) and EA29 (<i>Hirnant and Rhialgwm</i>) are located to the north. In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of two visual and sensory units. The Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit (<i>Dyfnant Forest</i>) covers approximately two thirds of the EA, with nearly all of the remaining part consisting of a Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit.</p> <p>The Dyfnant Forest unit is characterised by large and extensive blocks of mixed age coniferous plantation and forestry that accommodates an extensive path network and public access throughout. Beyond the extensive areas of dense forestry, the landscape is typified by traditional rural farmland with a pattern of small scale, irregular fields on rolling ridges.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units exhibit a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is assessed as ‘high’, with the Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of both units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is assessed as ‘constant’, and the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To the east, there is a strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees and small woodlands. ■ To the west, isolated pockets of small scale pastures contrast with the extensive coverage of surrounding forestry. ■ Along the floodplain of the River Vyrnwy, there is an intact composition of damp pastures and mature riverine trees. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive forestry masts the rolling landform and detracts from the rural character of surrounding farmland. ■ Broad areas of clear felling often result in desolate open areas amongst dense surrounding forestry. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Both units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place. ■ The distinctiveness of both units is assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit exhibits a ‘high’ scenic quality, with the Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA31: Dyfnant Forest

	<p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor and rolling valley sides, with a backdrop of uplands, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. ■ To the east, a strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the treelined river corridor. ■ From some areas of higher open ground, there are scenic views over rolling farmland and valleys. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large areas of forestry plantation and associated felling detract from the wider rural character of the landscape and in many places, obscures views. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being 'wild'. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semi-natural habitats along the River Vyrnwy and pockets of Ancient Woodland can instil some sense of wildness in their locality. ■ Given the large coverage forestry, any sense of wildness is hardly apparent within most of the EA. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA's natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit is identified as being 'tranquil', with the Wooded Upland & Plateaux unit assessed as being 'remote'. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With extensive areas of forestry, and relatively few roads and settlement, all of the EA is very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 34a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations, some which, overlap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 area of SPA, covering approx. 1.1% of the EA ■ 1 area of SAC, covering approx. 0.2% of the EA. ■ 102 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 10.6% of the EA. ■ 4 areas of SSSI, covering approx. 1.4% of the EA. ■ A very small part of a National Nature Reserve, covering approx. 0.1% of the EA ■ 1 area of RIGSs, covering approx. 0.01% of the EA.

EA31: Dyfnant Forest

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The semi-natural character of the treelined River Vyrnwy. ■ Ancient Woodland supports a good range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, they instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest in some eastern parts of the EA. ■ Pockets of native deciduous trees within areas of forestry. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 34b (see attached A3 figures) the EA also includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – three prehistoric ritual/funerary sites (Llechwedd Du round cairn, Maes Dyfnant round cairn, and Mynydd Dyfnant stone alignment). Also medieval pillow mounds (rabbit warrens) at Soldiers’ Graves. ■ Conservation Areas – part of Llanwddyn, below Lake Vyrnwy. ■ Listed Buildings – mostly concentrated in Llanwddyn, the village below Lake Vyrnwy, and in Pont Llogel. Most of the Listed Buildings (including most of those in Llanwddyn) are domestic. There are also some structures relating to Lake Vyrnwy, some agricultural buildings, Pont Llogel, and Llwydiarth sawmill. The Lake Vyrnwy Dam is Grade I. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most sites are associated with agriculture and settlement, including farmsteads, wells, bridges, mills and chapels. ■ There are also sites and ‘warren’ place-names relating to the historic land use of rabbit farming. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). ■ A small part of EA31 is within the Southern Berwyn area of Marginal Land, which is identified in the LANDMAP Assessment as being Outstanding <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Victorian village of Llanwddyn, a replacement village for that inundated by construction of Lake Vyrnwy. The Lake Vyrnwy Dam is also within this EA. ■ Areas of irregular fieldscapes, and their associated farms, lanes and other historic features. The intactness of the historic landscape and the lack of modern development contribute to scenic quality and strong sense of time-depth. ■ Iolo Williams, Welsh ornithologist, nature observer, television presenter and author working in both English and Welsh, grew up in Llanwddyn (the village is within this EA and also EA27). <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 34c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 9 areas of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering approx. 66.9% of the EA ■ 2 areas of Open Access Open Country, covering approx. 1% of the EA.

EA31: Dyfnant Forest

- 3 areas of Forest Recreation Areas, covering approx. 0.02% of the EA.

Further desk study and the findings of the field survey also identified the following:

- Known as the Rainbow Trails, there are nearly 100 miles of tracks and trails with five horse riding trails and three carriage driving trails in Dyfnant Forest. The network of forest tracks are also ideal for mountain biking.

Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as **high**.

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Although extensive forestry clearly detracts from landscape and scenic quality, there are some highly scenic parts, particularly to the east of the EA and along the River Vyrnwy corridor. Where forestry does not obscure views, the interplay between the intimate valley floor and rolling valley sides, with a backdrop of uplands, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. In relation to recreation, Dyfnant Forest and the associated Rainbow Trails offer an excellent provision of accessible opportunities to enjoy the forest via foot, bike or horse. The forest lies between EA25 (*Berwyn Mountains South*) and EA29 (*Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills*) which both meet the natural beauty criteria. The character of the Dyfnant EA has a bearing on the adjacent EAs. As such, it is recommended to **include** all of the EA within the proposed Candidate Area. This recognises the value of part of the area for its natural beauty, the recreation provision across the area and its geographical relationship with the Berwyn and Vyrnwy Valley.



Heavily forested hills



The picturesque River Vyrnwy



Backdrop of uplands



Secluded valley floor



Damp floodplain pastures



Wooded valley sides



Recreation at Dyfnant Forest



Extensive forestry replanting

EVALUATION AREA 32

EA32: Severn Farmlands South	
Landscape context	
<p>The <i>Severn Farmlands South</i> EA is located to the south-east of the AoS, and all of the landscape is outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. To the west, there is a gentle transition to EA29 (<i>Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills</i>) and to the north, the EA adjoins a small part of EA30 (<i>Severn Farmlands South</i>). The eastern EA boundary, which follows the A495, forms the outer extent of the AoS.</p> <p>In relation to LANDMAP, the EA is largely formed by an amalgamation of parts of four visual and sensory units. Approximately two thirds (both roughly a third of the total EA area) are made up of Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and Open Rolling Lowland units. There are also two smaller areas of Flat Open Lowland Farmland and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units.</p> <p>As an overview, the EA is focused on a valley that accommodates the River Vyrnwy, a tributary of the River Severn. The wider landscape is characterised by extensive areas of traditional rural rolling farmland defined by a mosaic of small field patterns and intermittent patches of mixed broadleaf and deciduous woodland that closely follows the underlying landform.</p>	
Criteria	Analysis
<i>Landscape quality</i>	<p>With regard to factors relating to landscape quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All four units exhibit a ‘moderate’ integrity and quality. ■ The rarity of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic, Flat Open Lowland Farmland and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units is assessed as ‘high’, and the Open Rolling Lowland unit ‘moderate’. ■ The landscape condition of all four units has not been assessed. ■ The trend of landscape condition for the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic is ‘improving’, and the Flat Open Lowland Farmland is assessed as ‘constant’. The other two units are ‘declining’. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In lower-lying areas, there is a strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by largely intact hedgerows, interspersed with mature hedgerow trees and small woodlands. ■ There is a distinctive pattern of wooded hills, many of which are covered in Ancient Woodland. ■ A distinctive pattern of mature trees and ribbon woodlands follow the gently meandering River Vyrnwy. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that notably detract from the landscape quality of the EA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In places, hedgerows are sometimes gappy and degraded. ■ The replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger modern structures can sometimes appear unsympathetic with their local setting. <p>Overall, the contribution of landscape quality to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Scenic quality</i>	<p>In relation to factors of scenic quality, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Flat Open Lowland Farmland and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units exhibit a ‘strong’ sense of place, with the other two units assessed as ‘moderate’. ■ The distinctiveness of the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic, Open Rolling Lowland and Flat Open Lowland Farmland units is assessed as ‘high’, with the Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing unit assessed as ‘moderate’.

EA32: Severn Farmlands South

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units exhibit a ‘high’ scenic quality, and the other unit a ‘moderate’ one. <p>The features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The interplay between the intimate valley floor with rolling valley sides enclosed by wooded hills provides a scenic composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place. ■ A strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a distinctive and traditional rural scene. ■ In lower-lying parts of the valley, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy. ■ From areas of higher open ground, there are scenic views over rolling farmland and valleys. <p>Incongruous elements or land uses that noticeably detract from scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small conifer plantations sometimes detract from the pattern of broadleaf woodlands. <p>Overall, the contribution of scenic quality to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high</p>
<i>Relative wildness</i>	<p>With regard to the experience of relative wildness, the LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None of the units are identified as being ‘wild’. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A localised sense of the passing of time and a return to nature can be experienced from within the pattern of Ancient woodlands scattered throughout the EA, and along tree-lined water courses. <p>As most of the EA is subject to agricultural management, the sense of relative wildness is generally minimal elsewhere.</p> <p>Overall, the contribution of relative wildness to EA’s natural beauty is assessed as low-medium.</p>
<i>Relative tranquillity</i>	<p>The LANDMAP data identifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Flat Open Lowland Farmland and Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing units are identified as being ‘tranquil’. The Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic unit also exhibits a ‘sheltered’ quality. ■ As indicated by the NRW map of Dark Skies and Light Pollution, all of the EA experiences dark night skies. <p>The findings of the field survey identified the following factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With a pattern of quiet rural lanes and a low density of scattered cottages and farms, the EA is generally very peaceful. <p>Overall, the contribution of relative tranquillity to the EA’s natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<i>Natural interest</i>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 35a (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following internationally/nationally/regionally important natural designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 very small part of a SAC, covering approx. 0.05% of the EA. ■ 144 areas of Ancient Woodland, covering approx. 21.3% of the EA. ■ 1 RIGS, covering approx. 0.02% of the EA. ■ 4 parts of a SSSI, covering approx. 0.2% of the EA.

EA32: Severn Farlands South

	<p>The natural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A very high coverage of Ancient Woodlands throughout the EA support a range of woodland flora and fauna and in their locality, instil a strong sense of naturalness. ■ Species rich hedgerows, as well as habitat associated with watercourses and roadside verges, provide biodiversity interest throughout the valley. <p>Overall, the contribution of natural interest to the natural beauty of the EA is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Cultural interest</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 35b (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes the following designated cultural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scheduled Monuments – Two prehistoric hillfort sites (Ffridd Mathrafal and Bryn y Saethau), and medieval domestic site at Cwrt y Person. ■ Conservation Areas – Part of Meifod village is within this EA. ■ Listed Buildings – A range of Listed Buildings, with several clustered within Meifod village. They include domestic, agricultural, commercial, industrial and religious buildings and structures. Houses at Pentre’r Gof, Garth-fawr, Goetre and Dolobran Hall, and the Quaker Meeting House at Dolobran, are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. <p>With regard to the Historic Environment Record, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Several sites, primarily relating to agriculture over many centuries, including clearance cairns, marl pits, farm buildings, wells etc. ■ There is a concentration of HER sites in and around the village of Pont Robert, and several associated with Dolobran Hall. ■ Some Historic Environment Record sites are also Listed or otherwise designated. <p>In relation to LANDMAP Level 3 Historic Landscape Categories, the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive areas of irregular fieldscapes (historic field patterns contributing to landscape fabric and character). The Bryngwn area of Irregular Fieldscape, which covers much of EA32, is identified as being Outstanding. It is described as an area of irregular fields and woodland, dominated by medieval and later agriculture with farms and houses, some designed landscape but also a small number of earlier prehistoric burial and ritual monuments and later prehistoric defended hillforts and enclosures, and medieval defensive works. ■ The Dyffryn Meifod area of Regular Fieldscapes, which includes the Vyrnwy Valley within this EA, is also identified as being Outstanding. <p>The cultural features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pair of Iron-Age hillfort sites on adjacent summits to the south of the River Vyrnwy, now partially hidden within plantation woodlands. ■ Village of Meifod (partly within this EA) is a nucleated church settlement of possible medieval origin. It contains numerous Listed Buildings and a Conservation Area. The medieval moated site of Cwrt y Person (Scheduled Monument) is nearby, within the valley floor. ■ Intact pattern of irregular fields with associated farms, lanes and other historic structures. These historic landscape features, and the lack of modern development, contribute to scenic quality and the strong sense of time-depth.

EA32: Severn Farmlands South

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong connections with the early Quaker movement. Dolobran estate in the Vyrnwy Valley is the earliest known seat of the Lloyd family, who were prominent Quakers. In the 18th Century a branch of the family founded Lloyds Bank. The Quaker meeting house at Dolobran was built in 1701 by Charles Lloyd of Dolobran (1662-1747), and the Grade II* Listed structure is an early local example of building in brick. Meetings ceased in 1828 but the building was restored in 1970. <p>Overall, the contribution of cultural interest to the EA's natural beauty is assessed as medium-high.</p>
<p><i>Recreation</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figure 35c (see attached A3 figures) the EA includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A section of the Glyndwr's Way National Trail leads through the EA, connecting the villages of Pontrobert and Meifod. ■ 5 areas of Open Access Public Forest Land, covering approx. 12.6% of the EA. ■ A well-connected network of PRoW provide good access to the local landscape and link with surrounding EAs. <p>The recreational features and qualities which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of natural beauty are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a locally promoted footpath route around Meifod. ■ The dense of network of PRoW provide a wealth of opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of rural landscape, and its associated natural and cultural features. ■ There are further opportunities to better manage the existing network of PRoW, and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes. <p>Overall, recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of the landscape is assessed as medium-high.</p>

Summary evaluation - overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty and recreational evidence

Focused on a scenic valley that accommodates the River Vyrnwy, the rolling valley sides enclosed by wooded hills exhibit a strong sense of place, and a traditional rural character. An extensive pattern of small irregular fields with intermittent patches of mixed broadleaf and deciduous woodland that closely follows the underlying landform are particularly distinctive. The intact pattern of irregular fields with associated farms, lanes and other historic structures, also instil a strong sense of time-depth throughout the landscape. Towards the eastern edge of this area there are some pockets of landscape that exhibit a weaker landscape character and quality. The drawing of a detailed boundary to exclude these areas was however problematic in an area with few strong and defensible boundaries to follow. For this reason, the edge of the Candidate Area follows the A495. Although recreation is largely limited to the quiet enjoyment of the landscape via the extensive network of PRoW, the Glyndwr's Way National Trail is a key feature. There are also further opportunities to enhance the footpath network and establish cycle routes along rural lanes. Consequently, it is recommended that all of EA should be **included** within the proposed Candidate Area.



Overlooking the Vyrnwy valley



Intimate valley floor pastures



Tree-lined rural lane



Extensive Ancient Woodland on Allt Fawr



Floodplain pastures



Towards the wooded slopes of Moel Main



Scenic views over Meifod valley (outside of EA)



Looking south along A945 (EA boundary)

8. DETAILED BOUNDARY REFINEMENT

- 8.1 On completion of the evaluation phase, the proposed Candidate Area boundary was then subject to a further phase of detailed boundary refinement, the approach to which has followed NRW Guidance Note (GN 010)²³. Supplemented with a suite of 1:25,000 maps of the proposed Candidate Area boundary, the Boundary Report provides a detailed explanation and justification setting out why the constituent EAs, or parts of, have been taken forward for potential National Park Designation.
- 8.2 As an overview, the proposed Candidate Area boundary has been drawn as follows:
- In the northern part of the study area, the Candidate Area boundary follows the existing National Landscape boundary.
 - To the south-east of the National Landscape, the Candidate Area boundary follows the Welsh-English border.
 - Where the Welsh-English border meets the A495, most of the Candidate Area boundary follows the A495, although the settlement of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain has been excluded, whilst all of the village of Meifod (including its Listed buildings to the east of the main road), is included.
 - To the south of the study area, the Candidate Area boundary follows the A548.
 - To the south-west, the Candidate Area boundary follows the Eryri National Park boundary.
 - To the north of the Eryri National Park, the Candidate Area boundary largely follows the western and northern boundaries of the two Mosaic Lowland Valleys visual and sensory LANDMAP units around Llandderfel within EA20 (*Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley*). From the National Park boundary, the Candidate Area boundary initially follows field boundaries and a small part of the northern bank of the River Dee. The Candidate Area boundary then follows a short section of the B4401 and to the south of Tyn-Y-Ddol, it leads north along woodland edges. To the north-west of Llandderfel, it then follows several field boundaries and a short section of the B4402. All of the remaining part that rejoins with the B4401 follows field boundaries, except for small sections of woodland edges and watercourses.
 - In EA16, the Candidate Area boundary follows a combination of roads, woodland edges and field boundaries that largely reflect the AoS boundary. From the National Landscape boundary, it follows field boundaries and short sections of local road and woodland edges. Near to Llanellidan, the boundary mostly follows local roads before it then joins with the A494.
 - To the west and east of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd within EA7 (Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin), the southern part of which is included within the proposed Candidate Area, the Candidate Area boundary follows a local road that leads east from the A494 that adjoins the National Landscape boundary.
 - Along the western boundary, the Conservation Areas and associated Listed Buildings within the settlements of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Llandrillo and Cynwyd have been included within the Candidate Area boundary.

²³ Natural Resource Wales (March 2022). *Statutory landscape designation: procedural guidance*

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

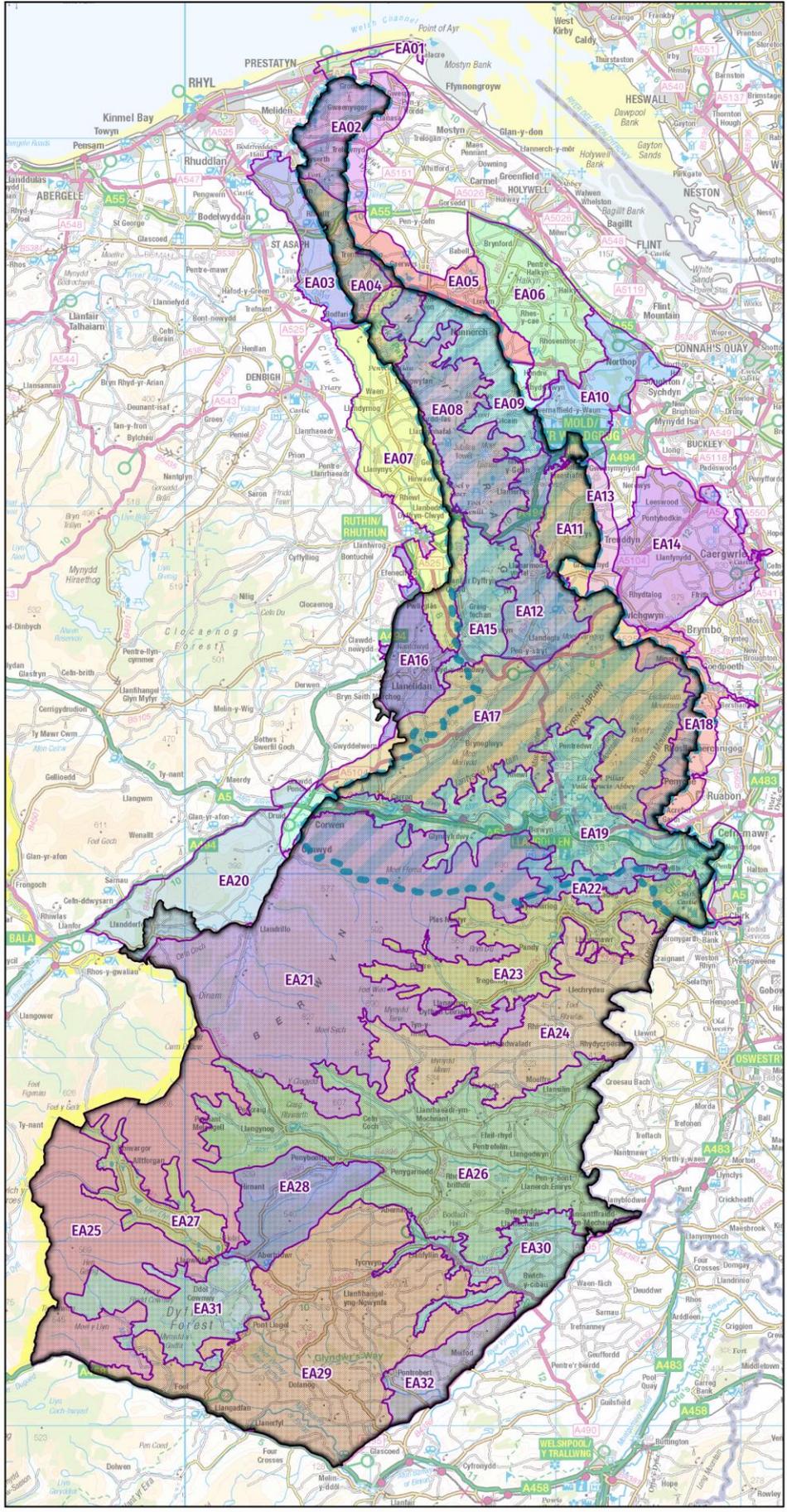
SUMMARY OF EVALUATION AREA FINDINGS

9.1 This concluding chapter sets out a summary of the evaluation findings and the associated recommendations and justification of a Candidate Area for potential National Park designation. As illustrated in **Figure 36** (see page 200), the following table sets out a summary of EA recommendations for inclusion or exclusion within a proposed Candidate Area (CA):

Table 7: Summary of Evaluation Area findings

EA ref.	EA name	Recommendation
EA1	Talacre and Gronant Dunes	All of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA2	Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau	Nearly all of EA (all of National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA3	Vale of Clwyd North at St Asaph	All of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA4	Clwydian Range North	All of EA included within proposed Candidate Area
EA5	Caerwys Lowlands	Most of EA (all non-National Landscape) excluded from proposed CA
EA6	Halkyn Mountain	All of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA7	Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin	Nearly all of EA (all non-National Landscape) excluded from proposed CA
EA8	Clwydian Range Central	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA9	Wheeler Valley	Nearly all of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA10	Mold Lowlands	Nearly all of EA (all non-National Landscape) excluded from proposed CA
EA11	Eryrys Uplands	Nearly of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA12	Alyn Valley	Nearly all of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA13	Eryrys Slopes	All of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA14	Hope Mountain	All of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA15	Clwydian Range South	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA16	Pwll-Glâs	Most of EA included within proposed CA
EA17	Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain	Nearly all of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA18	Rhos Slopes	Half of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA19	Dee Valley and Llangollen	Nearly all of EA (all National Landscape) included within proposed CA
EA20	Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley	Most of EA excluded from proposed CA
EA21	Berwyn Mountains North	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA22	Berwyn Foothills North	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA23	Ceiriog Valley	Nearly all of EA included within proposed Candidate Area
EA24	Berwyn Foothills South	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA25	Berwyn Mountains South	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA26	Tanat Valley	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA27	Llyn Efyrynwy	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA28	Hirnant and Rhialgwm	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA29	Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA30	Severn Farmlands North	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA31	Dyfnant Forest	All of EA included within proposed CA
EA32	Severn Farmlands South	All of EA included within proposed CA

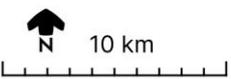
Figure 36: Proposed Candidate Area



A Proposed National Park for Wales

Figure 36 - Candidate Area

- Candidate Area
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape
- Evaluation Area
- EA01 Talacre and Gronant Dunes
- EA02 Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnd Plateau
- EA03 Vale of Clwyd North at St Asaph
- EA04 Clwydian Range North
- EA05 Caerwys Lowlands
- EA06 Halkyn Mountain
- EA07 Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin
- EA08 Clwydian Range Central
- EA09 Wheeler Valley
- EA10 Mold Lowlands
- EA11 Eryrys Uplands
- EA12 Alyn Valley
- EA13 Eryrys Slopes
- EA14 Hope Mountain
- EA15 Clwydian Range South
- EA16 Pwll Glas
- EA17 Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain
- EA18 Rhos Slopes
- EA19 Dee Valley and Llangollen
- EA20 Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley
- EA21 Berwyn Mountains North
- EA22 Berwyn Foothills North
- EA23 Ceiriog Valley
- EA24 Berwyn Foothills South
- EA25 Berwyn Mountains South
- EA26 Tanat Valley
- EA27 Llyn Efyrrw
- EA28 Hirnant and Rhialgwm
- EA29 Vyrnwy and Banwy Valley and Hills
- EA30 Severn Farmlands North
- EA31 Dyfnant Forest
- EA32 Severn Farmlands South



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9.3 As illustrated in **Figure 36**, the large majority of the Evaluation Areas (EAs) within the Area of Search (AoS) are recommended for inclusion within the proposed Candidate Area. In total, the proposed area is 1,166.11km². As a summary, the following paragraphs set out a justification that underpins these recommendations.

EVALUATION AREAS INCLUDED WITHIN THE PROPOSED CANDIDATE AREA

9.4 In the northern part of the Area of Search, all of the Evaluation Areas (EAs) that lie wholly or are partly within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape are recommended for inclusion within the proposed Candidate Area. Of fundamental relevance, since the time that the National Landscape was designated in 1985 and then extended in 2011, no significant changes in relation to incongruous elements and/or land uses have been identified that would compromise its nationally important status of 'outstanding natural beauty'.

9.5 As an overview, the main reasons that underpin the inclusion of the National Landscape EAs within the proposed Candidate Area are:

Prestatyn - Dyserth Scarp and Trelawnyd Plateau (EA2)

9.6 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- Along the western edge, the enclosing limestone escarpment with its associated semi-natural woodlands and rocky outcrops form a highly distinctive landscape feature. The wooded slopes and limestone outcrops of Graig Fawr that rise steeply above the village of Meliden are particularly dramatic and offer scenic views of the North Welsh coast.
- With a concentration of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) woodlands on the steep westerly scarp, these semi-natural habitats and geological features significantly contribute to an outstanding natural beauty.
- Particularly when viewed from the north, the partially wooded northern hillslopes form a highly scenic backdrop to the coast and associated settlements. In places, there are long views over the Irish Sea.
- With limestone features including stone buildings (many of which are Listed Buildings), stone walls and rocky outcrops, the extensive plateau exhibits a strong sense of place.
- Gop Hill forms a prominent landmark above the village of Trelawnyd. From the cairn, there are views over the Irish Sea and glimpses of the Dee Estuary.
- Numerous surviving prehistoric funerary monuments, often in prominent hilltop locations.

9.7 In relation to recreation:

- Areas of Open Access along the western escarpment, including Graig Fawr and Moel Hiraddug, provide easily accessible opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of this highly scenic landscape. These areas also lie close to large centres of population.
- The Dyserth Way that broadly follows a lower-lying alignment with Offa's Dyke National Trail along a disused railway also provides easily accessible opportunities to enjoy the wealth of natural and cultural heritage features along the base of the western scarp.
- A dense and well-connected network of public rights of way (PRoWs) with opportunities to create and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes.

The Clwydian Range (EA4, EA8 and EA15)

9.8 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The uplands of the Clwydian Range form very prominent and highly distinctive physiographic features.
- The interplay between a series of smooth rounded uplands and associated valleys exhibit a highly scenic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place.

- The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent lower-lying areas.
- There are stunning views over interlocking uplands, over the Vale of Clwyd to Eryri National Park, to the North Wales coast, and over the Wrexham Maelor to the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge.
- With extensive areas of semi-natural moorland habitats, the exposed and remote uplands exhibit a very strong sense of wildness and tranquility.
- The heather moorland provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds. Of particular importance is the black grouse, one of the rarest birds in Wales.
- A series of impressive prehistoric hillforts and distinctive round barrows are dotted along the uplands.
- Extensive areas of marginal land are identified as being of ‘outstanding’ historic landscape quality.

9.9 In relation to recreation, the Clwydian Range offers:

- The Moel Famau Country Park, which attracts about 200,000 visitors each year, provides a good network of well-marked walking and cycling routes.
- Extensive areas of Open Access Land over semi-natural moorlands provide a wealth of opportunities to enjoy the upland landscape and its associated natural and cultural features.
- A section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail meanders over the uplands, with excellent links to an extensive network of PROWs.
- A wealth of opportunities and a wide range of ways to enjoy the area through activities such as cycling, river sports and wild swimming, some of which host national and international events.

Wheeler and Alyn Valleys (EA9 and EA12)

9.10 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between the intimate valley floor with narrow wooded valleys, rolling wooded valley sides and a backdrop of enclosing uplands provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a strong sense of place.
- A very strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a highly distinctive and traditional rural scene.
- In lower-lying parts, there is strong sense of shelter and intimacy, particularly along the wooded stream corridors.
- From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic views over the valleys towards a distinctive backdrop of the Clwydian uplands.

9.11 In relation to recreation, the valleys offer:

- A very dense and well-connected network of PROWs (including a section of the Offa’s Dyke National Trail in the Alyn Valley) that in addition to providing good access to the local landscape, link with extensive areas of Open Access in adjacent uplands.
- From large areas of Open Access land in adjacent uplands, these highly scenic valleys form an essential component of the visual amenity and enjoyment of recreational users.
- Opportunities to create and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes.

Eryrys Uplands (EA11)

9.12 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The highly scenic and distinctive composition of limestone hills with wooded depressions, exposed rocky crags and escarpment, contribute to a very strong sense of place.
- The colours and textures of rocky outcrops contrasting with pockets of rough grassland, wetland, bracken, gorse and scrub add visual interest, as does the presence of several mine chimneys and lime kilns.

- The pattern of traditional stone cottages scattered amongst a mosaic of small regular fields and hay meadows exhibits a highly distinctive rural character.
- From the summit of Moel Findeg, there are spectacular views across the Alyn Valley to the summit of Moel Famau. To the east, there are uninterrupted views across Flintshire stretching as far as Merseyside and the Cheshire Plain.
- The very visible presence of exposed rocky crags and escarpment contribute to a strong sense of wildness.
- With a relatively high coverage natural designations, the variety and wealth of natural interest significantly contributes to a strong sense of being close to nature.

9.13 In relation to recreation, the valleys offers:

- A relatively extensive network of well-connected PRoW, with good links to nearby settlements and adjacent EAs.
- In the Public Forest at Coed Nercwys (served by 2 car parks), there are several well-signposted routes for walkers, cyclist and horse riders.
- There are further opportunities to establish cycle routes along quiet rural lanes that link with Coed Nercwys.
- A close proximity to large centres of population.

Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain (EA17)

9.14 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between the distinctive undulating ridge and spur slopes, the high plateau and mass of Ruabon Mountain, and the broad profile of the Morwynion Valley, exhibits a highly scenic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place.
- The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent settled lower areas, particularly to the east where Ruabon Mountain forms an important landmark within the southern part of Wrexham Maelor.
- Extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a strong sense of naturalness. The Berwyn a Mynyddoedd de Clwyd Special Protection Area (SPA) makes a particularly important contribution to natural beauty as it contains the largest stands of upland European dry heath in Wales and supports an extensive tract of near-natural blanket bog. The heather moorland also provides excellent nesting and feeding areas for upland birds.
- Earthworks of Moel y Gaer and Caer Drewyn Iron-Age hillforts/camps occupy dramatic locations overlooking the Dee Valley. There is also a concentration of Bronze Age barrows and cairns in the east of the uplands, along with a Creigiau Eglwyseg stone circle.

9.15 In relation to recreation:

- The uplands accommodate large areas of Open Access Land and along with a section of the Offa's Dyke National Trail, there is an excellent provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of this landscape.

Dee Valley and Llangollen (EA19)

9.16 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between the flat valley floor and meandering River Dee, and the steep valley sides with a series of mounds and low hills contained by a backdrop of the Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain to the north and the Berwyn Mountains to the south, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms with a very strong sense of place.
- A concentration of Ancient Woodlands on steep valleys sides, interspersed with several designed landscapes, make a particular contribution to this highly picturesque valley.
- From areas of higher ground, there are highly scenic and often dramatic views over the valley towards a distinctive backdrop of containing uplands. To the west of the valley, views of the meandering River Dee are also highly scenic.

- Occupying the summit of a steep conical hill towards the centre of the valley, Castell Dinas Brân Castle forms a very prominent landmark, as does the stunning backdrop of the Eglwyseg limestone escapement.
- The meandering River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC) supports a wealth of aquatic and riparian habitats.
- The valley contains several areas identified as being an ‘outstanding’ historic landscape, with the town of Llangollen, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Horseshoe Falls (World Heritage Site) forming notable cultural landmarks in the landscape.

9.17 In relation to recreation, the EA offers:

- A wide range of outdoor activities that are accessible to large centres of nearby population, including fishing, canoeing and rock climbing. The valley also has as an extensive network of footpaths and cycle routes to enjoy the wealth of cultural and natural features throughout this highly picturesque landscape.

9.18 In relation to the southern (non-National Landscape) parts of the AoS, most of the EAs are recommended for inclusion within the proposed Candidate Area. The main reasons for this are:

Pwll-Glâs (EA16)

9.19 Although outside of the National Landscape, Pwll-Glâs is recommended for inclusion within a proposed Candidate Area for the following main reasons:

9.20 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between intimate valley floors, heavily wooded ridges and rolling hills provide a highly scenic composition, particularly when viewed from areas of higher ground to the east.
- The concentration and the north-south alignment of Ancient Woodlands are particularly distinctive and to the north-east of the EA, a series of rugged limestone cliffs rise above wooded pastures.
- A strong pattern of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small woodlands contributes to a very traditional rural character and strong sense of place.
- Towards the south of the EA, there are highly scenic views towards the distinctive backdrop of Llantysilio Mountain with the Berwyn uplands beyond.
- Extensive areas of designed landscape make a significant contribution to the natural beauty of the landscape.

9.21 In relation to recreation:

- Located in close proximity to the historic town of Ruthin, the extensive network of PRoWs provide many opportunities to explore and enjoy this very peaceful rural landscape.
- There are good footpath and bridleway links to adjacent EAs that are included with the proposed Candidate Area.
- There are good opportunities to create local circular walks around the network of PRoWs, as well as cycle routes around the network of quiet rural lanes.

Berwyn Mountains (EA22 and EA25)

9.22 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between a very distinctive series of smooth rounded uplands, including those within EA17 (*Llantysilio to Ruabon Mountain*) to the north, along with a pattern of incised wooded valleys along the western scarp, exhibits a highly scenic and often dramatic composition of contrasting landforms, with a very strong sense of place.
- The uplands form a very prominent and highly scenic backdrop to adjacent lower-lying areas, particularly from the west and the heads of the valleys to the east.
- From areas of high open ground, there are stunning long distance scenic views of interlocking uplands. To the north, there are highly scenic views over the Dee valley, to the east over the Ceiriog and Tanat valleys, and to the west and south, long distance views towards the Eryri National Park.

- With more than half of the EA designated for its internationally important biodiversity, the extensive upland areas of semi-natural heather moorland vegetation exhibit a very strong sense of naturalness.
- The Berwyn mountain range is the largest SSSI in Wales covering 24,321 ha and comprising of a mosaic of habitats. They also form part of the Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains Special SAC and Berwyn SPA. The SSSI supports nationally scarce plants and rare invertebrates including a number of important associated upland breeding birds, including the hen harrier, merlin, red grouse and black grouse.
- A wide range of prehistoric ritual and funerary monuments, including kerb cairns, standing stones, round cairns and a chambered round cairn. The extensive and well-preserved evidence for Bronze Age and medieval upland settlement and land use makes it one of the best examples of its type in central Wales.

9.23 In relation to recreation:

- Considering the large proportion of Open Access Land, there is a very good provision of accessible opportunities to explore and enjoy the stunning natural beauty of these uplands.
- Two Forest Recreation Routes are located in the Cynwyd Forest, and one in the Ceiriog Forest. These routes link with the wider network of PROWs.
- A large area of upland is designated for horse riding access.

Rolling hills and settled valleys (EA23, EA26, EA28, EA29, EA30 and EA32)

9.24 Although the extensive rolling hills and valley landscapes to the south-east of the AoS each have their own unique identity and associated natural and cultural features of interest, there are a number of common factors that underpin their inclusion with the proposed Candidate Area. These are:

9.25 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between intimate valleys and rolling hills, often enclosed by a backdrop of uplands to the west, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place.
- Extensive and very strong patterns of irregular pastures enclosed by species rich hedgerows with mature trees and small Ancient Woodlands contributes to a highly distinctive and traditional very rural character.
- From areas of higher open ground, there are highly scenic views over rolling farmland and valleys.
- Rich and exceptionally intact historic landscape comprising field patterns, lanes, farms, houses and other features contribute to scenic quality and a strong sense of time-depth throughout these landscapes.
- High concentrations of Listed Buildings within distinctive Conservation Areas, and a large number of Prehistoric funerary monuments and Iron Age hillfort sites.

9.26 In relation to recreation:

- There is a substantial visitor and recreational offer based around Chirk Castle Estate, with good links to the nearby Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site in EA19.
- A very dense and well-connected network of PROWs (including a section of the Glyndwr's Way National Trail to the south) that in addition to providing good access throughout large parts of the landscape, often link with extensive areas of Open Access in adjacent uplands.
- From large areas of Open Access land in adjacent uplands, these highly scenic landscapes often form an essential component of the visual amenity and enjoyment of recreational users.
- Many opportunities to better manage the existing network of PROW, and create and promote circular walks around villages, and cycle routes along quiet rural lanes.

Llyn Efyrrwy (EA27)

9.27 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- The interplay between the large expanse of open water and the heavily forested valley sides underpins a highly scenic composition. Heavily influenced by surrounding uplands, the prevailing semi-natural character of the upper reaches of the narrow incised Eunant valley are particularly scenic.
- To the east of EA, the distinctive masonry stone dam wall and associated bridge forms an impressive landmark feature, as does the nearby Straining Tower.
- When travelling around the lake, there are varied views across the water, often framed by trees. Towards the west of the EA, there are highly scenic views towards a distinctive backdrop of the Berwyn uplands.
- A RSPB reserve supports an abundance of wildlife, such as flycatchers, wood warblers and redstarts amongst woodland, dippers nesting by the rocky streams, and goosanders on the open water.
- Dominated by the designed landscape of Lake Vyrnwy, the late 19th Century reservoir scheme and associated designed landscape including conifer plantations, reservoir structures, and a hotel is assessed as ‘outstanding’.

9.28 In relation to recreation:

- the EA offers an excellent provision of various activities to enjoy the stunning scenery of the lake and surrounding landscape. Recreational opportunities include canoeing, kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, fishing and birdwatching and there a number of promoted walks around the lake and several longer distance routes along forest tracks.

Dyfnant Forest (EA31)

9.29 Factors relating to natural beauty:

- Although extensive forestry clearly detracts from landscape and scenic quality, there are some highly scenic parts, particularly to the east of the EA and along the River Vyrnwy corridor.
- Where forestry does not obscure views, the interplay between the intimate valley floor and rolling valley sides, with a backdrop of uplands, provides a highly scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landscapes with a strong sense of place.

9.30 In relation to recreation:

- Known as the Rainbow Trails, there are nearly 100 miles of tracks and trails with five horse riding trails and three carriage driving trails in Dyfnant Forest.

Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley (EA20)

9.31 Although most of the EA has been excluded from the proposed Candidate Area, the two Mosaic Lowland Valleys LANDMAP units that form an important setting to the picturesque village of Llandderfel have been included for the following reasons:

- The interplay between the flat valley floor and meandering River Dee, with valley sides and hillslopes contained by the upland backdrops of the Eryri National Park and the Berwyn, provides a scenic and distinctive composition of contrasting landforms, with a strong sense of place.
- Particularly to the south of the EA, the meandering River Dee with its floodplain pastures and mature trees provides a very picturesque rural setting to the nearby village of Llandderfel. To the south of the village, densely forested steep hillslopes also instil a strong sense of place.
- The River Dee SAC supports a range of important aquatic and riparian habitats that imparts a strong sense of naturalness to the landscape.

9.32 In relation to recreation:

- There is a good network of PRow radiating from Llandderfel.
- There are opportunities to establish riverside walks from Llandderfel.

EVALUATION AREAS EXCLUDED FROM THE PROPOSED CANDIDATE AREA

- 9.33 Although most of the AoS is recommended for inclusion within a proposed Candidate Area, there are several EAs that have been identified as not meeting the 'natural beauty' test, the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation and other considerations such as defining an 'extensive tract of land' and 'contiguous area'. The main reasons for this are:

Talacre and Gronant Dunes (EA1)

- 9.34 Although the extensive sand dunes and associated internationally important habitats exhibit a high scenic quality, with a wealth of easily accessible opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation, the landscape and scenic quality of the EA in places is affected by surrounding built development and land uses. In particular, there is a proliferation of intrusive built development and incongruous land uses around the southern, western and eastern fringes of the EA that notably erode and detract from the experience of natural beauty. Furthermore, there is only a very narrow corridor of lesser quality landscape within the EA that could potentially connect the higher quality coastal landscape to the north with the National Landscape to the south.

Vale of Clwyd (EA3 and EA7)

- 9.35 Apart from a small area to the south of EA7 (*Vale of Clwyd Denbigh-Ruthin*) that has been included within the proposed Candidate Area, most parts of the Vale have been excluded as the contribution of natural interest to the experience of natural beauty is quite limited, as are the perceptions of relative tranquillity and wildness. Although landscape and scenic quality is relatively high, the combination of factors relating natural beauty are not considered strong enough for inclusion within the Candidate Area. Furthermore, these EAs have relatively limited access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation.

North-eastern slopes and lowlands (EA5, EA10 and EA13)

- 9.36 In relation to factors that contribute to natural beauty within the non-National Landscape parts (where relevant), there are some important features and qualities, but their influence is either relatively localised and/or the combined contribution of qualities is not considered to be strong enough at the landscape scale. In many places, landscape and scenic quality is quite ordinary, and there are relatively few natural and cultural features of interest. The strength of perceptual qualities is also generally quite limited, as is the provision of open-air recreation and the associated opportunities to enjoy the landscape.

Halkyn Mountain (EA6)

- 9.37 With large parts of the EA designated a SAC and a Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, there is no doubt that the natural and cultural interest of this unique landscape makes a very significant contribution to the experience of natural beauty. Easily accessible opportunities for the recreational enjoyment of the landscape are also excellent. However, the presence of quarrying activity, large pylons, and other scattered built development means that landscape and scenic quality and the associated appreciation of natural beauty is notably eroded.

Hope Mountain (EA14)

- 9.38 Although some parts of this EA have some potential to meet the natural beauty threshold, in isolation, farmland within the central northern area is of lower quality and fragments the pattern of natural beauty. The upland fringe landscape that borders the National Landscape boundary further to the west is also of much lesser quality, which means a coherent and connecting high quality landscape cannot be identified. Furthermore, the EA has relatively little to offer in providing access to, and opportunities for, the enjoyment of open-air recreation.

Mynydd Mynyllod and the Upper Dee Valley (EA20)

- 9.39 In relation to the highly scenic Upland Grazing units of Mynydd Mynyllod, their natural beauty is notably eroded by the prominence of the Braich Ddu wind farm. When viewed from the valley to the south-east, the appreciation of these uplands is also diminished by the presence of intrusive land use taking place along the intervening valley sides. The rural character of the central and eastern end of the Upper Dee Valley is also weakened by fragmented field boundaries and the occasional presence of sub-urban dwellings, caravan park development, horsiculture and solar panels. Whilst Mynydd Mynyllod exhibits some strong landscape qualities in its own right, the uplands feel quite detached from the proposed Candidate Area. For all of these reasons, the Mynydd Mynyllod uplands have been excluded from the proposed Candidate Area, as well as areas of weaker natural beauty to the east and north of the EA. The valley floor and hillslopes at Llanderfel are, however, particularly scenic and distinctive and are included in the proposed Candidate Area.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

- 9.40 In overall conclusion, there is clear evidence that most of the Area of Search has sufficient nationally important and recognised natural beauty, as well as opportunities for the enjoyment of open-air recreation, to be included within a Candidate Area for a proposed new National Park for Wales. Areas not meeting this threshold of natural beauty or opportunities for open-air recreation, are not included in the Candidate Area.

NEXT STEPS

- 9.41 Public consultation with key stakeholders on the Candidate Area and the Evaluation report's findings will inform the next steps. The findings of public consultation will help capture public support, concerns and issues together with informing a Detailed Boundary. An Assessment of the Desirability to Designate will help consolidate the issues and opportunities of pursuing a National Park designation. NRW will then consider the findings before deciding on carrying out statutory consultation on a detailed National Park boundary in 2025.

- END -

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