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1 Crynodeb

Mae'r nodyn canllaw hwn yn cyflwyno'r dull ar gyfer defnyddio LANDMAP i bennu dynodiadau tirwedd lleol, sef Ardaloedd Tirwedd Arbennig. Dynodiad anstatudol a roddir ar waith gan awdurdodau cynllunio lleol i ddiffinio ardaloedd o bwysigrwydd tirwedd mawr o fewn eu terfynau gweinyddol yw Ardaloedd Tirwedd Arbennig. Gall ardaloedd o bwysigrwydd tirwedd mawr gael eu dynodi ar sail eu gwerth ffisegol, amgylcheddol, gweledol, diwylliannol a hanesyddol cynhenid yn y dirwedd gyfoes. Gall tirweddau a ddynodir yn Ardaloedd Tirwedd Arbennig fod yn unigryw, yn eithriadol neu'n neilltuol i ardal yr awdurdod lleol dan sylw.

2 Introduction and Context

This guidance note presents the approach for using LANDMAP to identify local landscape designations, Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). SLAs are a non-statutory designation applied by the local planning authority to define areas of high landscape importance within their administrative boundary. Areas of high landscape importance may be designated for their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical value in the contemporary landscape. Landscapes designated as a SLA may be unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local authority area.

3 National Landscape Designations in Wales

Wales includes national, local, statutory and non-statutory landscape designations. The role of potential SLAs should be considered within the context of that wider framework of designations. In brief, the following landscape designations apply within Wales:

National Parks are extensive tracts of country which by reason of their natural beauty and the opportunities they afford for open-air recreation are nationally important landscapes and therefore it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. The purposes of National Parks are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities which they were designated for.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are areas whose distinctive landscape character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. The primary purpose of an AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The needs of agriculture, forestry, rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities should also be taken into consideration. The demand for recreation can be met but must be consistent with the conservation of natural beauty.

Heritage Coasts are the most scenically outstanding stretches of undeveloped and unspoilt coast.

The **Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest** in Wales identifies a selection of 58 of the best surviving examples of different types of historic landscape. The Cadw sponsored Historic Landscape Characterisation project goes on to record in detail the character of those landscapes on the Register

World Heritage Sites have 'outstanding universal value' and are designated to protect and preserve sites of cultural and natural heritage around the world. Wales has three cultural WHS and one on the tentative list.

National Parks and AONBs are designated under national legislation. In landscape and planning terms National Parks and AONBs are equal in status. Heritage Coasts and historic landscapes on the Register are non-statutory designations. However, where Heritage Coasts coincide with a protected landscape (National Park or AONB) they have legal protection and are often integrated into the management for that area. Historic

Landscapes identified on the Register have no special protection but the Register, and WHS, are a material consideration in the planning process and detailed guidance on its use is established, Cadw (2007). The aim of the Register is to draw attention to the value of these landscapes when planning applications and developments are considered. WHS currently have no statutory basis but have comprehensive Management Plans.

4 Special Landscape Areas in Wales

Special Landscape Areas are a non-statutory designation applied by the local planning authority to define areas of high landscape importance within their administrative boundary. Areas of high landscape importance may be designated for their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical value in the contemporary landscape. Landscapes designated as a SLA may be unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local authority area.

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) may designate, at their discretion, areas of landscape importance within their administrative boundaries with a local landscape designation (usually referred to as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) – this term is therefore used in this guidance). SLAs may be included in a LPA's Local Development Plan (LDP) or Unitary Development Plan (where LDPs have not yet been adopted) to identify areas where there is justification to apply an extra level of landscape protection through special landscape policies.

Some authorities may consider that their landscapes can be managed more effectively by adopting a dual approach to landscape management. In a dual approach, all landscapes will be underpinned equally by LANDMAP (see 5.2), but in addition to this, landscapes of high local importance will be specifically identified as a SLA with additional guidance being produced for these key landscapes. National coverage provides an opportunity to use LANDMAP to help identify or revise SLAs. It also provides the opportunity for SLAs to be regionally contextualised and consistent across planning authority administrative boundaries.

The key issue for each local planning authority is whether to apply a SLA Designation. It is important that the local planning authority makes an individual choice.

A SLA may be designated for one or more reasons (see below) but the role of the SLA must be clearly aligned with the original need for the SLA in order to fulfil the objective of the designation. It is important that the role of a SLA has been carefully considered in conjunction with what the LPA is aiming to achieve with its other planning and management policies.

4.1 Potential role of SLAs

There may be more than one role for an identified SLA

- To recognise and protect (through development management) locally valued landscapes important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place/*bro*

- To influence positive landscape planning. For example by producing design guidance to enhance landscape character or to target land management grants towards the conservation of special landscape features recognised within the SLA
- To raise understanding and appreciation of the importance of local landscapes by communities, visitors and the wider public

5 The use of LANDMAP and landscape information

5.1 LANDMAP

LANDMAP is a whole landscape approach that covers all landscapes, designated and non-designated, it covers the natural, rural, peri-urban and urban areas, (excluding the Cities of Cardiff and Swansea), it includes inland waters and coastal areas to the low water mark. LANDMAP is an all-Wales GIS (Geographical Information System) based landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set. In Wales, LANDMAP is the formally adopted methodology for landscape assessment and is advocated by Planning Policy Wales.

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5.3.13 *'The LANDMAP information system methodology is an important information resource upon which local planning authorities can draw in making the landscape assessments needed to inform local policy, guidance and decision making in this field. LANDMAP describes and evaluates aspects of the landscape and provides the basis of a consistent Wales-wide approach to landscape assessment. LANDMAP assessments should be published. They can help to inform supplementary planning guidance on landscape assessment (covering, for example, local distinctiveness, special landscape areas and design).'*

LANDMAP is comprised of five spatial datasets of information known as the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape. LANDMAP Information is collected in a structured and rigorous way that is defined by the LANDMAP methodology. A GIS map shows the aspect areas and a survey record for each aspect area identified contains the descriptive landscape information; these records are linked to the GIS map.

Complete, quality assured, all Wales coverage of all five layers was completed in 2012, thereby providing a nationally consistent resource for landscape planning and decision making. LANDMAP assessments can provide the required evidence needed to inform and support criteria-based policies and plans. Criteria based approaches fulfil the whole landscape approach of the European Landscape Convention.

5.2 Additional landscape information

LANDMAP provides the most detailed evaluated landscape resource for the identification of SLAs and their boundaries and should form the primary resource for underpinning and justifying any SLAs.

In addition to LANDMAP, many local planning authorities have their own published strategic-level Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) based upon LANDMAP’s spatial framework. These are often adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), forming part of the landscape evidence base used to inform planning and policy decisions under the Local Development Plan (LDP). The information contained within local LCAs (particularly the Landscape Character Area descriptions) could be used to supplement the LANDMAP data using the best available landscape evidence at both strategic and local scales.

Other evidence that should be used, where possible, to supplement LANDMAP to ensure a robust approach is taken to SLA designation/review, includes:

- The descriptions of Wales’s National Seascape Assessment, as well as any local Seascape Character Assessments undertaken at the LPA scale (for those with a coastline)
- The descriptions of the Registered Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (noting that these relate to historic landscape designations in their own right, so cannot alone justify an additional SLA designation)
- Wales Tranquil Areas Map, 2009 (available as mapped information)
- CPRE’s *Night Blight* mapping, 2000

Further guidance on how baseline landscape information should be used in conjunction with LANDMAP is provided in the next section.

6 The approach for defining Special Landscape Areas

A pre-requisite to identifying SLAs is a complete LANDMAP study for the local planning authority. The approach for using LANDMAP to identify or review SLAs has four stages, summarised in Figure 1 below and is detailed in the following sections. The model is an iterative process, and is likely to vary between authorities dependent on the local rationale for designating areas as SLA. A mixture of both quantitative analyses of the LANDMAP data and qualitative research based on further evidence and consultation is recommended, with field verification by landscape professionals forming an essential element to the process.

Figure 1 Model for identifying potential SLAs using LANDMAP

Source: TACP (2007) and LUC (2012)

Stage 1: Strategic Criteria for SLA designation
Need (e.g. establishing the planning need for SLA designation)
Landscape criteria (e.g. local distinctiveness, landscape quality)
Consensus

Stage 2: Establish broad search areas	
Use LANDMAP (selected questions)	Relevant information from each LANDMAP Aspect includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape characteristics • Qualities • Features • Evaluation & evaluation criteria • Rarity, representativeness within authority
Geological Landscape	
Landscape Habitats	
Visual & Sensory	
Historic Landscape	
Cultural Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Character Assessment • Seascape Character Assessment • Register of Historic Landscapes Etc.
Use further available evidence	

Stage 3: Establish specific SLAs
Field verification
Boundary definition
Evaluation of proposed SLAs against Strategic Criteria
Consider relationship with existing SLAs and other designations (if relevant)

Stage 4: Statement of Value and Significance
Written justification of the SLA against Strategic Criteria
Description of special qualities and features
(Optional): Development management / landscape guidance

6.1 Stage 1: Strategic Criteria

Appendix 1 provides an example of the Strategic Criteria developed for a review of SLAs in Gwynedd and Anglesey (LUC, 2012). This includes examples of the factors that need to be considered for each criterion, along with recommended sources of evidence.

6.1.1 Need

Establishing the need and purpose of SLA designation

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5.3.11 *'Non-statutory designations, such as Special Landscape Areas or Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation, should be soundly based on a formal scientific assessment of the nature conservation, landscape or geological value of the site. Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values. Local planning authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. Such designations should not unduly restrict acceptable development'*. Therefore areas considered as SLAs

must demonstrate a need for this designation that is above and beyond existing planning policies for landscape management and protection.

Within a SLA the conservation value of the visual, ecological, historic, cultural and geological landscape must be the primary consideration or purpose of an SLA. Identification of a valid, defensible and clearly justified need for a SLA is paramount to an effective designation.

Examples of rationales and benefits of SLA designation are given below.

- Proposed SLAs have visual, cultural, historical, geological or ecological characteristics and qualities of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of the local landscape designation. No statutory landscape designations protect the landscape yet evidence from a landscape assessment justifies the requirement of effective protection to safeguard the locally important and locally valued landscape characteristics and qualities.
- A particular landscape type is locally or regionally rare. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.
- A locally important landscape has its own significant visual, cultural, historical, geological or ecological characteristics and qualities but would also protect the settings and views to and from other statutory landscape designations and would therefore contribute to and enhance the landscape polices of an adjacent designation.

The SLA designation can be used to raise awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool for targeted landscape management guidelines and grant bids. It can also help raise awareness and recognition for valued landscapes outside those that are nationally designated (e.g. National Parks and AONBs). SLA-specific design guidance can be produced to aid planners and developers to promote development that enhances local landscape character, distinctiveness and landscape quality.

Information contained in the SLA 'Statements of Significance' can be used to highlight to decision makers how landscape change can be guided to respect local landscape character and qualities, thereby safeguarding distinctiveness and landscape value whilst allowing appropriate change.

Need for integrity/cohesiveness in areas designated as SLA

A SLA will be designated for its intrinsic value; as such the size, scale and boundaries will be determined by the landscape character displaying the values for which it is designated. It must cover more than an individual site or feature, forming a recognisable, coherent area of landscape. The area that is designated must be large enough to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and planning – and only occur in one location (i.e. a SLA should not consist of several fragmented landscapes separated by land outside of the designation). It is unlikely that local Landscape Character Areas could be

directly adopted to define an SLA, as these are defined for a different purpose (i.e. an entire LCA is unlikely to merit SLA designation), however as a general rule SLAs may be of a similar size to LCAs, and could, where appropriate, trace their boundaries in parts to allow for a streamlined approach (this applies similarly to underlying LANDMAP aspect area boundaries).

In some SLAs, a coherent and defensible boundary for an SLA may encompass *small* parts of the local landscape that does not display the same high landscape importance. It is the prerogative of the local planning authority to make the decision to include areas of lower landscape importance as long as a clear and defensible justification is made, and can be made at an Inquiry, and they form a *minority* part of the SLA. Circumstances when this may occur may be:

- To include an integral area of similar topography or land cover that could be enhanced
- A proportionately small area of active mineral or other workings that could be restored to a high quality landscape
- In some instances, there may be a part of the landscape that is significantly affected by existing or planned new development or is characterised by significant detractors or damage so that a case may be made to exclude the area from the SLA.

For SLAs on the fringes of a local authority area, their outer boundaries should still reflect the qualities for which they are designated, i.e. the administrative boundary should not act as an arbitrary line. This requires close partnership working between adjacent authorities. Coherence should be considered when drafting the broad search areas and reassessed at the specific SLA stage.

6.1.2 Landscape criteria

By definition, a SLA designation usually only applies to areas that are deemed as 'special' in terms of their local landscape character. This reflects both local distinctiveness and sense of place, as well as landscape quality in its own right. Examples of the former include:

- A landscape that is particularly rare/unique or special in the local context
- An area with a distinct landform or topography, forming a discrete and recognisable area in the local landscape
- A landscape with strong character linked to natural or cultural factors, which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or create a strong degree of naturalness
- A landscape with particular cultural associations, represented in art, literature, music, language or folklore
- An area of recognisable character with a strong sense of place and/or scenic qualities

With regard to landscape quality, usually SLAs contribute to important landscape and visual qualities associated with the wider landscape, with characteristic elements intact and in good condition. Exceptions will be those SLAs recognised for their potential for landscape enhancements, but that might not be deemed to be in good landscape condition at the time of designation (e.g. an area of former mineral workings that could be restored to characteristic woodland or heathland).

Once agreed, each potential SLA will be assessed against the Strategic Criteria in subsequent stages of the process.

6.1.3 Consensus

Gaining consensus on the need for SLA designation within the LPA's administrative area is a key first step in the process. Consensus should then be gained internally (i.e. within the planning and policy teams) throughout the main stages of the process. Establishing a Steering Group to guide and monitor the process would help ensure representative consensus is reached easily and consistently at key points.

Wider public consultation on the Local Development Plan or other Landscape Policy Plans provides the opportunity for wider input into the designation of SLAs.

6.2 Stage 2: Establish Broad Search Areas

Use of LANDMAP information to define Broad Search Areas

This first stage identifies broad search areas for SLA designation using LANDMAP. The broad search areas are determined from the five LANDMAP spatial datasets: the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, the Historic Landscape and the Cultural Landscape. The LANDMAP overall evaluation score and LANDMAP evaluation criteria for each LANDMAP layer will be particularly informative at this stage.

In LANDMAP each spatial layer is divided up into discrete geographical units (polygons in GIS) referred to as aspect areas. Each aspect area is distinctly defined by its unique landscape characteristics and qualities. Every aspect area has a unique survey record which details the aspect areas classification, important or dominant characteristics and qualities, management recommendations and evaluation. For any given authority, there will be five LANDMAP GIS layers, each with their own collection of aspect areas and survey records.

By using GIS to interrogate the classification, evaluation and landscape information for the aspect areas within each LANDMAP layer, a broad picture of areas that might warrant SLA designation will begin to emerge. Examples of this follow in this section.

Understanding LANDMAP Evaluation Scores

All aspect areas have a single overall evaluation score. The overall score is calibrated from a local to an international scale of importance, their definition is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: LANDMAP Overall Evaluated Score

Overall evaluation score	Definition of importance to the LANDMAP layer
Outstanding	International or national
High	Regional or county
Moderate	Local
Low	Little or no importance

The overall evaluation scores for each aspect area are derived from the individual scores attributed to specific evaluation criteria for each LANDMAP layer – the number of criteria varies for each aspect. The same evaluation score categories (from Table 1) are applied to each criteria, to assure consistency. The evaluation criteria for each LANDMAP layer is summarised in Table 2 below. All five LANDMAP layers are important in the identification of SLAs, the criteria highlighted in bold in Table 2 may be particularly informative in identifying SLAs.

Table 2: LANDMAP Evaluation Criteria

Geological Landscape	Landscape Habitats	Visual & Sensory	Historic Landscape	Cultural Landscape*
Research Value Educational value Historical Value Rarity/unique ness Classic Example	Priority habitats Significance Opportunity Expansion rates Sensitivity connectivity/cohesion habitat evaluation Importance for key species	Scenic quality Integrity Character Rarity	Integrity Survival Condition Rarity Potential	Each Aspect Area has a single overall evaluation score only. Survey questions may still be used to define SLAs, for example: Recognition /transparency, Rarity, Group value and Survival

Because of the large number of aspect areas likely to be found within any LPA area across the five aspects it is helpful to use GIS to interrogate the evaluations by using a process called 'unioning'. The unioning process is a geometric intersection, or overlay of two or more spatial datasets, that retains the features from all of the original, source GIS files and creates a new polygon dataset. Through this process broad SLA search areas can be identified. The process is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Example of how LANDMAP data can be combined in GIS (LUC, 2012)

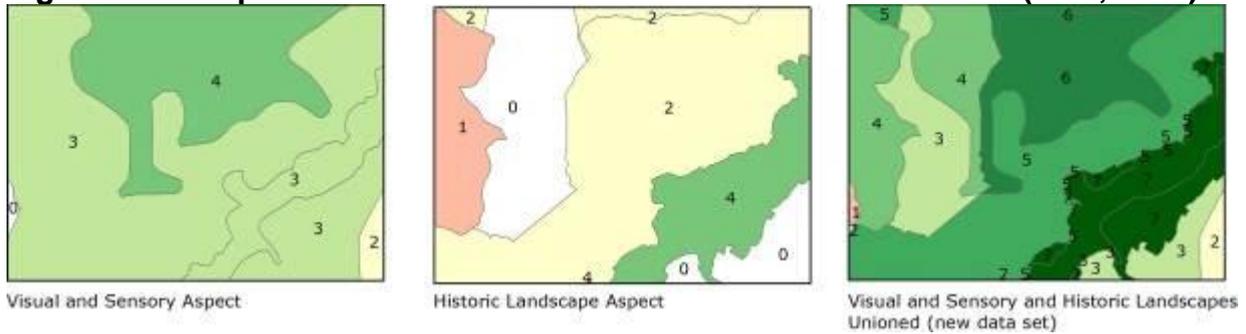
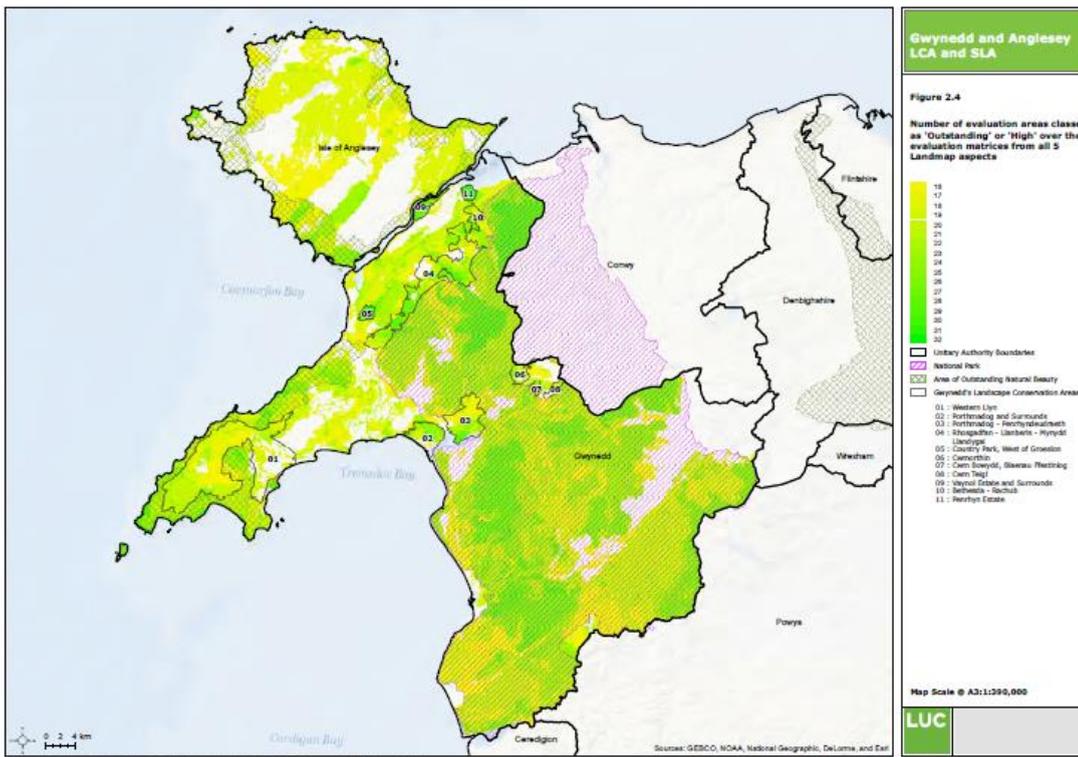


Figure 2 above shows an example of the union process for two LANDMAP aspects (Visual and Sensory and Historic Landscape). The union process retains both the boundary lines and the attribute data. The numbers in the figures show the number of 'Outstanding' evaluations the area received, and the combined data set (far right) shows how these have been added together. This process can be undertaken for all five aspects, so that the resultant dataset (and mapping) presents the combined evaluation data for the whole of the Study Area.

Figure 3 below presents the results generated for Gwynedd and Anglesey – showing the number of 'High' and 'Outstanding' evaluations achieved across the combined LANDMAP aspects (the brighter green indicating the highest number of 'high' or 'outstanding' aspects). This map also shows the location of Gwynedd's previous Landscape Conservation Areas (equivalent to SLAs) which were subject to review, as well as the boundaries of Snowdonia National Park and the Llŷn and Anglesey AONBs.

Figure 3: Combined evaluation scores across all five aspects scoring >High, for Gwynedd and Anglesey (LUC, 2012)

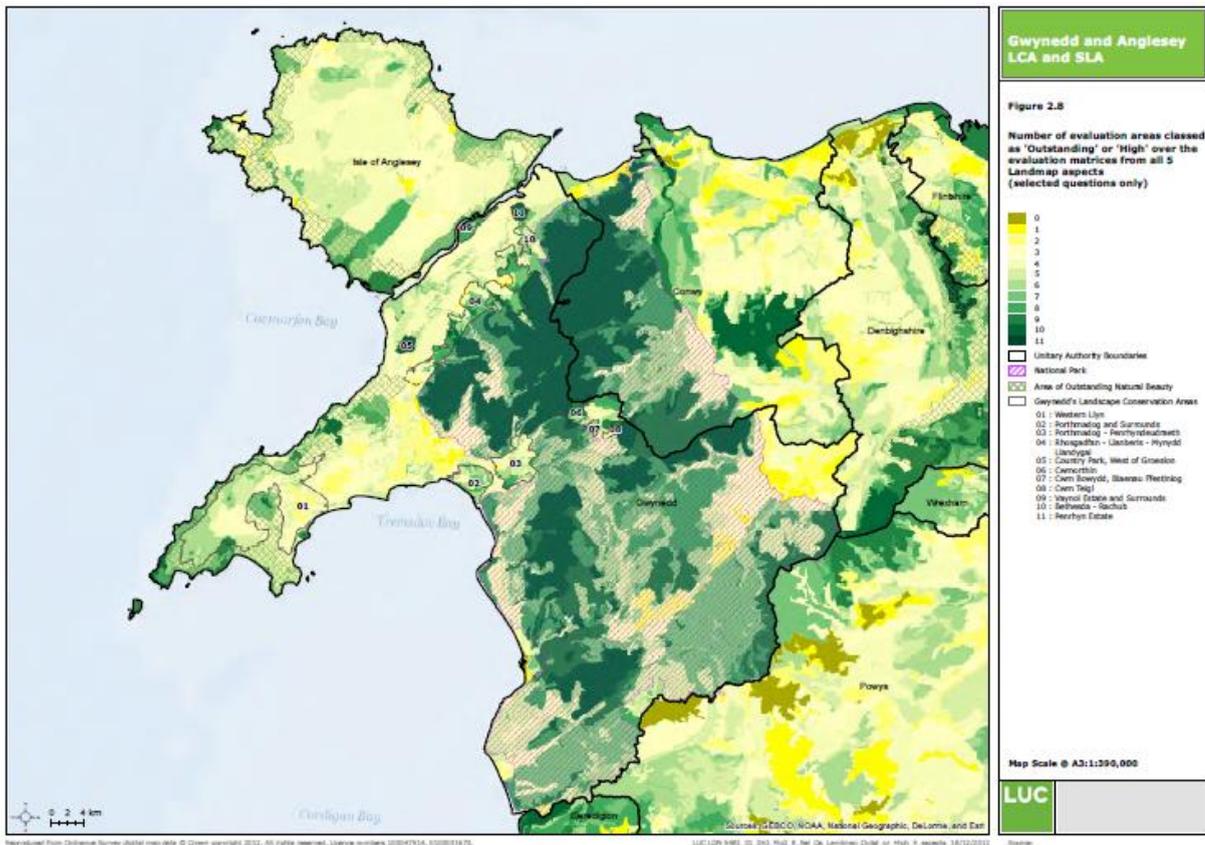


It may be helpful to present the evaluation scores for the Visual & Sensory layer on its own as a reference alongside the combined mapping of the five aspects to help refine potential SLAs.

Experience of applying the combined approach in Gwynedd and Anglesey (LUC, 2012) suggests that selecting the most relevant evaluation criteria (to landscape quality) within the aspects enables a more accurate identification of broad search areas to emerge for the purpose of SLA designation. For the Visual & Sensory aspect, all evaluation criteria should be included, as all are relevant. The evaluation criteria selected for Gwynedd and Anglesey were: Geological Landscape - Classic Example; Landscape Habitats - Priority habitats and Significance; Visual & Sensory - Scenic quality, Integrity, Character and Rarity; Historic Landscape- Integrity and Condition; Cultural Landscape- Recognition /transparency and Rarity. Each LPA should review these to ensure they reflect the Strategic Criteria for SLA designation developed under Stage 1 of the process.

Figure 4 below shows the results of the combined analysis of selected evaluation criteria for Gwynedd and Anglesey (darker green showing the greater number of aspect areas evaluated as >High). When queried alongside Figure 3, there are some clear areas that are consistently evaluated more highly than others – these were therefore identified as the Broad Search Areas for SLA designation.

Figure 4: Combined evaluation scores for selected criteria scoring >High, for Gwynedd and Anglesey (LUC, 2012)



Once Broad Search Areas have been identified using LANDMAP, the results should be shared with planning/landscape professionals within the LPA, (for example a SLA Steering Group for the duration of the project may be helpful) to gain **consensus**. This will provide early verification of the LANDMAP-based Broad Search Areas as well as pin-point locations that may warrant further investigation through the use of other available baseline evidence.

Using further available evidence to refine Broad Search Areas

To ensure robustness at each stage in the process, the Broad Search Areas identified using the LANDMAP process should be further refined using other available baseline evidence, including in particular the local Landscape Character Assessment, if available. If the work includes a review of existing local landscape designations, this stage is particularly important as the LANDMAP Broad Search Areas *may* not always provide a direct correlation with them. Any modifications made to the Broad Search Areas as a result of the further evidence should be documented to ensure a full audit trail of the process can be recorded. This will ensure that the final SLAs will be able to fully stand up to scrutiny.

6.3 Stage 3: Establish Specific Special Landscape Areas

Field verification

A thorough field verification exercise by landscape professionals should form an essential element of the SLA identification and review process. Field work should be systematic,

seeking to visit key locations within each of the Broad Search Areas identified under Stage 2 to refine them down to potential, individual SLAs. Field survey record sheets should be developed to ensure a consistent approach is followed – with a particular focus on assessing each potential SLA against the Strategic Criteria developed under Stage 1. Field surveyors should use an Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 basemap to make annotations and suggested boundaries for the individual SLAs (following clearly decipherable features on the map, such as roads, rivers, field boundaries). Photographs that provide an accurate representation of the landscape of proposed SLAs should be taken and their locations recorded using OS grid references (a GPS handset is helpful for this purpose).

Following the field work exercise, individual SLAs should have been identified, to be further refined under the next task.

Boundary definition

SLA boundaries should be precisely drawn based upon the information gathered to date (particularly map-based annotations made in the field) and professional judgement. As discussed previously, they should be drawn to coincide with permanent physical features that are identifiable on the ground and can be clearly mapped (e.g. roads, rivers, field boundaries or topographical features). If boundaries can coincide with component LANDMAP aspect areas or Landscape /Seascape Character Areas this will be beneficial (to provide a 'nested' approach), although this should not be an overriding factor in their identification (i.e. the SLAs should be fit for their own purpose). They should be fully justified and defensible at Public Inquiry – it is essential to include a boundary justification in each SLA's Statement of Significance compiled under Stage 4.

SLAs may form part of an authority's Local Development Plan and be integrated with their Planning GIS system. It will therefore be important to capture defensible SLA boundaries to a base map that is compatible with the authority's preferences (e.g. Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 or Master Map) to ensure subsequent integration and compatibility. SLAs will not include landscapes already nationally designated as National Park or AONB, but may include other environmental designations (e.g. SSSIs, SPAs, SACs). Where other designations exist within the SLA boundaries, the LPA may find it useful for the Statement of Significance to include reference to these. Where a SLA boundary meets a local planning authority boundary, a consensus between the two authorities on the designation of the SLA should be sought. This promotes regional consistency of local landscape designations.

Evaluation of proposed SLAs against Strategic Criteria

Once the proposed individual SLAs have been identified, and boundaries drawn, further evaluation against the Strategic Criteria should take place to double check that the proposed SLAs are robust and backed up by adequate evidence against each criteria. It is also useful to consult with key staff members within the LPA on the proposed set of individual SLAs (e.g. through a SLA Steering Group if established) to again assure **consensus**.

Any final boundary refinements should be made at this stage.

Consider relationship with existing SLAs (if relevant)

In identifying SLAs, consensus with or divergence from, existing SLAs may occur. The purpose of the review of a local landscape designation is to re-examine the case for SLAs in the context of updated and consistent LANDMAP information. Existing SLAs cannot be automatically lifted into a new LDP. A review of existing SLAs is recommended for inclusion in a LDP.

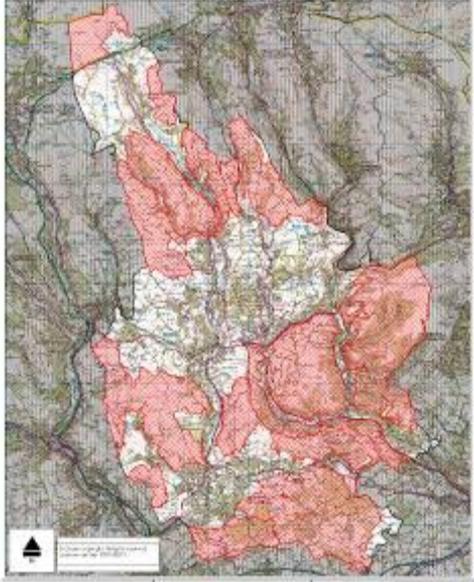
Table 4 is taken from the recent work to review Local Landscape Designations in Gwynedd. The second column provides recommendations for including in a new SLA designation, amending or removing the local landscape designation following an assessment of the county's landscape against the Strategic Criteria developed for the study.

Table 4: Review of Landscape Conservation Areas in Gwynedd Source: LUC (2012)

Previous Landscape Conservation Area (LConA)	Recommendations from the SLA Review
01: Western Llŷn	Incorporate into a new SLA of the same number/name, excluding small areas of developed land in the south on the fringes of Pwllheli and Abersoch.
02: Porthmadog and Surrounds	Incorporate into a new SLA (02: Porthmadog & Tremadog Bay), extending westwards to trace the boundary of the Landscape Character Area ³ (9), and northwards to the edge of Snowdonia National Park.
03: Porthmadog-Penrhyndeudraeth	Incorporate into a new SLA (03: Glaslyn & Dwyrdd Estuary Landscapes), ensuring the boundaries are flush against the edges of the National Park and extend to cover non-NP designated areas of estuary. Exclude developed land around Penrhyndeudraeth and Porthmadog, using LANDMAP's Visual & Sensory aspect as a guide.
04: Rhosgadfan – Llanberis – Mynydd Llandygai	LConA combined with LConA 10 to create one larger SLA (07: North-Western Fringes of Snowdonia), forming a 'collar' around the National Park. The boundary of the new SLA should more closely follows the contours of upland fringe land sloping away from the National Park (including keeping open commons as intact units).
05: Country Park, West of Groeslon	This LConA is not recommended for new SLA designation because of adequate protection already afforded by other designations. The entire area is Grade I Registered Parkland, Country Park and part is a Conservation Area. The walled nature of the parkland also provides a physical barrier from any future development that might affect its setting.

Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the first LPAs to carry out a review of their SLAs in 2007. This review recommended six SLAs to be taken forward. Table 5 highlights the change from the original position in 1996 through stages 2 and 3 of the 2007 review to the final proposed SLAs in 2008.

Table 5: Relationship of existing SLAs to proposed SLAs 2008 Source: TACP (2008)

SLAs in Caerphilly (~1995/96)	Stage 2 Broad Search Areas	Stage 3 Specific Search Areas & Areas recommended for SLA designation 2008
	<p>Northern Rhymney Valley</p> <p>Gelligaer</p> <p>Common/Deri Valley</p> <p>Aberbargoed</p> <p>Caerphilly environs</p>	<p>Upper Rhymney Valley</p> <p>Gelligaer Common</p> <p>Mynydd Eglwysilan</p> <p>North Caerphilly</p> <p>South Caerphilly</p> <p>Mynydd y Lan</p>

6.4 Stage 4: Statement of Value & Significance

The SLA Statement of Value & Significance is the primary information source for designated SLAs. All SLAs for a local authority area should be mapped in a GIS environment and a technical report should draw together all the Statements for the identified SLAs. The report should also clearly set out the methodology undertaken to identify SLAs in the authority area (including definitions and sources of evidence used to assess landscapes against the Strategic Criteria).

The statement for each SLA should be clear and easily convey the landscape’s special characteristics, qualities and local value, thereby making it easily understood by planning officers, developers and land managers. Example Statements of Significance for Caerphilly (2008) and Gwynedd (2012) are included at the end of this document. Suggested information to include in each Statement is set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Suggested headings for inclusion in the SLA Statement of Value & Significance

Naming a SLA	This should reflect its location and be locally recognisable, reflecting a sense of place/ <i>bro</i> .
Location map	Location map at 1:25,000 scale setting the SLA in a landscape context
Boundary justification	Clear explanation for basis of SLA boundaries, including identification and explanation of any other designations wholly or partly within the SLA
Photographs	Convey the key characteristics, qualities and features defining the SLA
Summary description of the SLA	A summary description of the SLA's landscape character (emphasising those qualities and features that are key to the designation) and location within the local authority area (suggest no more than one paragraph long).
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	Statement and reasoned justification of SLA designation against each criteria in turn – with evidence (e.g. LANDMAP aspect area evaluations) provided where possible. The use of a table – as per the example below – helps to set this information out clearly.
Special/valued landscape qualities and features of key importance to planning policy and landscape management	Summary descriptions (suggest using bullet points for ease of reference) to encapsulate the essence of the SLA in terms of its landscape value and contribution from the physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical landscape. This information can be drawn from the summary descriptions of the LANDMAP Aspect Areas included in the SLA and other sources of evidence. The written statement of special/valued landscape qualities and features should define the relationship between what is important to warrant “special” status. In turn, it will be clear that these aspects of the landscape are those that need to be carefully considered when making planning and/or management decisions (both within the SLA and its landscape setting).
LANDMAP	List aspect areas that form the SLA from all five LANDMAP layers – a matrix approach generated in GIS is a logical means of presenting this information (see examples below)

Some LPAs may wish to take the process further than the SLA Statements of Value & Significance, for example through the production of more detailed development management / landscape guidance tailored to each SLA. This will provide a further tool in ensuring that any new development or landscape enhancements respect the special qualities and features of the locally designated landscape.

Example Statement of Value & Significance for the Western Llŷn SLA, Gwynedd
Source: LUC, 2012

01: Western Llŷn

Location Map



Representative photographs



This Special Landscape Area covers the western half of the Llŷn peninsula, wrapping around the eastern edges of Garm Fadryn and extending westwards to the outskirts of Aberdaron. The SLA lies adjacent to the Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Statement of Value & Significance

Landscape description		
<p>A gently undulating coastal plateau that is strongly influenced by the close proximity of the sea. The landscape is highly rural, dominated by productive farmland interspersed with mixed plantations, small woodlands and pockets of heathland. Settlement is dispersed, with nucleated hamlets and villages at crossing points, and isolated individual farms and properties. The area displays a wealth of small-scale historic and archaeological features: lying wholly within a wider Landscape of Outstanding Historic Importance in Wales (Llein and Bardsey Island). There are long views across the area to the AONB-designated coastline and uplands, as well as distant views eastwards to the mountains of Snowdonia.</p>		
How the SLA meets the designation criteria		
<p>Practical (must meet both criteria)</p>	<p><i>Need</i></p>	<p>The SLA sits directly adjacent to the Llŷn AONB. The area is under pressure from tourism-related developments, particularly in the south (e.g. around the resorts of Abersoch and Pwllheli). The elevated and exposed nature of the landscape means that demand for wind energy development and their cumulative effects is a key issue, with southerly slopes also likely to attract proposals for solar photovoltaics.</p>
	<p><i>Integrity/cohesiveness of character</i></p>	<p>The SLA's character is consistent across the area, forming a large proportion of the central peninsular between the AONB-designated coastline.</p>
<p>Landscape (must meet at least one criterion)</p>	<p><i>Local distinctiveness and sense of place</i></p>	<p>The area forms a significant proportion of the wider Llŷn peninsular – a topographically varied and distinctive landscape with a strong historic sense of place (a significant proportion scores 'High' or 'Outstanding' in the LANDMAP Historic Landscapes aspect). The SLA displays well-preserved evidence of the evolution of land use and settlement from as early as prehistoric times, including intricate field patterns enclosed by stone walls, hedge and banks, and historic villages clustered around road crossing points.</p>
	<p><i>Landscape quality</i></p>	<p>This is an intact landscape with a strong rural feel – agricultural farmland dominating, but with valued areas of semi-natural wetland, heathland and woodland contributing to a varied mosaic. The strong field patterns and lightly settled character, with few visual detractors (small conifer plantations and occasional caravan/camping sites) result in a generally high landscape quality.</p>
	<p><i>Scenic quality</i></p>	<p>There is strong intervisibility between the SLA and the surrounding landscapes and seascapes; the open, elevated character of parts of the plateau allowing long, scenic views across the peninsula and further afield (including the mountains of Snowdonia). The largely undeveloped character of the SLA conveys a strongly rural and tranquil quality to the landscape.</p>

Setting of protected landscapes (where relevant)	<i>Setting of nationally important landscapes</i>	The SLA provides a valued setting and significant views to the Llŷn AONB, which lies immediately adjacent. Proposals should have regard to the special qualities of the protected landscape and give due consideration to the AONB Management Plan.
Special Qualities of the SLA		
<p>Planning and management proposals in the SLA and within its landscape setting should take account of the following special qualities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tranquil and rural character of the landscape; • Its elevated and open position– creating strong intervisibility across the peninsula, including significant views to the AONB; • The intricate landscape patterns: including areas of small-scale, irregular fields and 19th century smallholdings; • The outstanding array of historic and archaeological features, within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest; • Valued pockets of semi-natural habitat, including heathland, mire and fen (e.g. Cors Hirdre and Cors Geirch SSSIs); • The dispersed settlement pattern of nucleated villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads; and • The landscape’s important role as a setting to the Llŷn AONB. 		
Reference to the local Landscape Character Assessment and LANDMAP		
<p><i>Link to the local Landscape Character Assessment</i></p> <p>The majority of the SLA falls within LCA 7: Western Llŷn. Small parts of the eastern fringes of the SLA lie within LCA 6 (Llŷn North Coast) and LCA 10: Central Llŷn (Gwynedd Landscape Guide, 2005 – updated 2012).</p>		

Extracts from the Statement of Value “Relevance against Strategic Criteria” for Gelli-gaer Common, Caerphilly Source: TACP (2008).

Primary landscape qualities and features

An extensive, increasingly rare upland landscape in south east Wales, exhibiting numerous examples of continuity of land use from prehistoric times. An open exposed landscape, it has distinct visual and sensory characteristics with extensive views over the coalfield plateau and up to the Brecon Beacons, together with the sense of wind noise and disturbance. Designated as common land, the majority of the area exhibits typical upland heath vegetation. There are a number of statutory and non-statutory environmental designations. Its western edge is formed by the boundary with Merthyr Tydfil Borough along the Cefn Gelligaer and further south the Nant Caiach. The remainder of its boundary is established by the road network and settlement pattern around Penpedairheol and Bargoed, and along the Bargoed Rhymney Valley around Deri and Parc Cwm Darran. The eastern flank of the SLA is typified by more rolling landscape pattern interspersed with woodland blocks, spinneys and hedgerows. Many of the fields are improved grassland. There are a number of vegetation lined minor streams. Physically it is a characteristic glaciated upland landscape and includes at its southern end part of the fault bounded ‘col’, formed by glacial melt waters and linking the Taf and Rhymney Valleys. Today this is used by the cross valley B4254 road.

Need

The core of the area - Gelligaer Common - represents an important and increasingly rare upland landscape within south east Wales exhibiting continuity of land use over many centuries. This is reflected in the archaeological remains from pre Roman times. The area offers extensive opportunities for recreation and access although there are signs of degradation and loss of quality through fly tipping and litter in general. The surrounding, more lowland areas above Penpedairheol, Bargoed and Deri form both physical and visual buffer zones to the core SLA.

Coherence

The area is based upon a distinct, upland landscape unit. The western boundary is formed by the boundary with Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council, along Cefn Gelligaer, however the landscape unit continues into the Merthyr Tydfil area. The other buffer zones are included to establish appropriate, defensible boundaries and reflect the intervisibility between the two landscape units.

Consensus

It relates closely to an existing SLA designated under the Rhymney Valley Landscape Strategy. Professional Stakeholders have supported the designation.

Extracts from the Statement of Value Evaluation Validation for Gelli-gaer Common, Caerphilly. Source: TACP (2008).

LANDMAP layer	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Individual Evaluation Criteria & Score								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Geological	GL 008	Moderate	M	L	L	L					
	GL 009	Moderate	M	L	L	L					
	GL 051	High	H	M	H	H					
Landscape Habitats	LH 112	High	H	H	M	M	M	M	H	U	
	LH 116	High	H	H	M	M	M	M	H	M	
	LH 123	Moderate	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
	LH 128	Moderate	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	
	LH 133	High	H	M	M	H	M	H	H	H	
	LH 142	High	H	M	M	M	M	M	H	H	
Visual and Sensory	VS 114	Low	L	L	M	L					
	VS 143	Moderate	M	M	M	M					
	VS 308	Moderate	M	M	M	M					
	VS 404	High	H	H	M	M					
	VS 785	Moderate	M	M	M	M					
Historical Landscapes	HL 602	Unassessed									
	HL 634	Unassessed									
	HL 831	Unassessed									
Cultural	CL 045	High	M	O	L	U	H	M	M	H	U
	CL 051	Outstanding	M	O	H	H	H	H	L	H	U
	CL 056	High	H	H	L	L	O	H	L	H	U

7 Monitoring and Review

As a non-statutory landscape designation, SLAs should be subject to monitoring and review. The timing and frequency of this will be determined by the local planning authority. Reviews of SLAs could be timed to coincide with any monitoring and updating of LANDMAP Information and/or an authority's Local Development Plan review.

8 References

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LUC (2009) *Wales Tranquil Areas Map*. Countryside Council for Wales Policy Research Report

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9 Contact

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Appendix 1 – Strategic Criteria example

Strategic Criteria developed for the SLA review in Gwynedd & Anglesey (LUC, 2012)

Criteria and rationale	Factors to consider*	Source of evidence
Need (which all potential SLAs will need to meet)		
<p>Need To what extent will designation provide for the more effective management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?</p>	<p>Presence/absence of other designations Strong recommendation from LPA and local support on need for additional level of designation/protection for particular areas Areas where the LPA has identified particular pressures and need for positive planning and management to conserve special character</p>	<p>Information on need agreed through steering group meetings with client and informed by support by local community and other stakeholders</p>
<p>Integrity / cohesiveness of landscape character Is the area to be designated both coherent enough (in terms of character) and of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and planning?</p>	<p>Size – and SLA must be more than an individual landscape feature or site and form a coherent 'area'. Recognisable as a cohesive area– may have distinct boundaries</p>	<p>LANDMAP V&S, Landscape Habitats, Historic Landscapes and Cultural Landscapes evaluations LCA information Field survey</p>
Landscape criteria (all potential SLAs will need to meet at least one)		
<p>Local distinctiveness and sense of place Is the landscape particularly rare/unique or special in the local context? Does the landscape provide an important contribution to the local distinctiveness/sense of place?</p>	<p>Coherent landscape character conferring a recognisable sense of place Distinct landform or topography forming a discrete and recognisable area Strong character linked to cultural or natural factors – which contribute to understanding of its historic character and wider cultural record or a create a strong degree of naturalness A landscape with particular associations for example with representation in art, music, literature, language or folklore</p>	<p>LANDMAP V&S, Landscape Habitats, Historic Landscapes and Cultural Landscapes evaluations, LCA information Historic landscape designations Nature/wildlife designations Field survey</p>

<p>Landscape quality Does the proposed SLA contribute to important landscape and visual qualities associated with the local landscape?</p>	<p>An intact landscape with characteristic landscape elements well represented throughout A landscape with characteristic elements in good condition Incongruous elements or features not present or not visually intrusive</p>	<p>LANDMAP evaluations (selected questions) LCA information Field survey</p>
<p>Scenic quality Does the landscape have particular scenic and aesthetic qualities and appeal to the senses?</p>	<p>Strong visual character with memorable, important or distinctive views. Special perceptual qualities such as strong sense of tranquillity, ruralness or remoteness</p>	<p>LCA information LANDMAP (views) Field survey Intrusion mapping</p>
<p>Setting of protected landscapes criterion (only to be used in conjunction with the above)</p>		
<p>Setting of nationally important landscapes Does the proposed SLA provide a valued setting to nearby protected landscapes (AONBs and National Park), including views both from and to the protected landscape?</p>	<p>Area forms extension to National Park/AONB in terms of character Area of similar high scenic quality as designated landscape Views/inter-visibility both from and to the protected landscape</p>	<p>OS maps LCA information Field survey</p>