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GLANLLYNFI GARTH WIND FARM

Draft Environmental Statement

Appendix 6I - Assessment of Landscape Effects:
Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Special Qualities



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Appendix

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides a detailed assessment of effects on the Special Qualities (SQs) of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BBNP).
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development is not located within the nationally designated landscape and there can be no direct impact on the areas of the BBNP within the Study Area.
- 1.1.3 Nonetheless, the Proposed Development may indirectly affect the character and SQs, including views and perceptual qualities, for which the BBNP is valued and designated. This assessment therefore considers the effects of the Proposed Development on the key characteristics of the landscape, SQs and the integrity of the designation.
- 1.1.4 It is important to note that wind farm development is not necessarily incompatible with the valued qualities of a landscape, this will depend on the nature and / or effects of the development and the nature of the SQs. A visual effect on a view from within the BBNP for example, may or may not affect the SQ and the integrity of the designation. In particular, paragraph 5.46 of GLVIA3¹ further advises:
- *"An internationally, nationally or locally valued landscape does not automatically or by definition have high susceptibility to all types of change."*
 - *"It is possible for an internationally, nationally or locally important landscape to have relatively low susceptibility to change resulting from the particular type of development in question, by virtue of both the characteristics of the landscape and the nature of the proposal."*
 - *"The particular type of change or development proposed may not compromise the specific basis for the value attached to the landscape."*

1.2 Cumulative assessment

- 1.2.1 The cumulative landscape assessment has been informed by a review of **Figure 6.6**, the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 6.12.1** to **6.12.11** and wirelines, and has been undertaken in relation to the following scenarios:
- Cumulative Scenario 1: Baseline wind turbines (Operational + Consented); and
 - Cumulative Scenario 2: Other proposed wind turbines (Cumulative Scenario 1 + Planning Application + Scoping Opinion).

¹ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd edition*. London. Routledge

2. Assessment of effects: Special Qualities

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The effects of the Proposed Development on the SQs have been assessed in accordance with the methodology set out in **Appendix 6A** and with the NatureScot Special Landscape Qualities - Guidance on assessing effects².
- 2.1.2 The BBNP SQ assessment comprises four stages:
- Stage 1: The Proposed Development;
 - Stage 2: Scope of the Assessment and Baseline Conditions. The assessment is supported by ZTV, viewpoint analysis and site survey;
 - Stage 3: Assessment of effects on SQs, noting any relevant landscape characteristics that underpin the SQs, how the area is experienced by people and opportunities for further mitigation; and
 - Stage 4: Summary of significant effects on SQs - providing a summary of the assessment, noting the effects on the SQs and the implications for the integrity of the designation.

2.2 Stage 1: The Proposed Development

- 2.2.1 The Proposed Development is not located within the BBNP, being a minimum distance of approximately 15 km from its boundary. A full description of the Proposed Development including the design evolution with reference to Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales³ is contained in **Chapter 4: Development Description**.
- 2.2.2 The focus of this assessment is the proposed wind turbines during the operational phase, including their composition, height and rotation relative to other operational wind farms visible from within the BBNP. Ground-based or other associated infrastructure including the grid connection, which forms part of the Proposed Development would be barely perceptible at longer distances. The upper part of a crane may be periodically and temporarily visible during the 22-month construction phase and aviation warning lights could also be potentially visible from part of the BBNP in clear conditions. A Night-time Assessment of the aviation warning lights undertaken in accordance with the Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment⁴ will be included as an appendix in the Final ES.

² NatureScot (2025) *Special Landscape Qualities - Guidance on assessing effects*. (Online). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/special-landscape-qualities-guidance-assessing-effects>

³ Design Commission for Wales (2023) *Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales*. (Online). Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-12/designing-for-renewable-energy-in-wales.pdf>

⁴ NatureScot (2024) *Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment*. (Online). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-aviation-lighting-impact-assessment>

2.3 Stage 2: Scope of the Assessment and Baseline Conditions

Geographical extent of potential effects

- 2.3.1 The BBNP boundary is illustrated in **Figure 6.9** which is overlapped by the blade tip ZTV, indicating the maximum extent of theoretical visibility across the National Park. The ZTV indicates the following main areas of potential visibility from within the BBNP:
- At distances of between approximately 15 km and 20 km, theoretical visibility is predominantly absent from within the BBNP, with the exception of blade tip visibility of up to four turbines from a localised area to the north of Coelbren. The hub height ZTV in **Figure 6.3** confirms an absence of hub height visibility from across all areas of the BBNP at distances of 15 km to 20 km from the proposed turbines.
 - At distances of between 20 km and 25 km, theoretical visibility is indicated across the south facing slopes of Waun y Ddraenen and Lorfa where up to four turbines may be visible as well as at the summit and upper most slopes of Carreg Goch, where up to eight of the proposed turbines may be visible. Continuing in a clockwise direction, the ZTV extends across Carreg Lwyd and Carreg Cadog and the forested slopes to the south. Continuing east, small, localised areas of theoretical visibility can be observed at the summit of Cadair Fawr, Garn Ddu and at the triangulation point on Cefn Cil-Sanws.
 - At distances of between 25 km and 28 km, theoretical visibility extends across Foel Deg ar Bedol and Craig Derlwyn on the north-western edge of the Study Area, as well as across Garreg Lwyd, Foel Deg and Cefn Carn Fadog to the east. Continuing in a clockwise direction, potential visibility occurs across Bwlch y Ddeuwylt and the summit and south facing slopes of Fan Hir, with views also potentially occurring from across Cefn Cul to the west of the A4067 and the summits and upper south facing slopes of Fan Gyhirych, Fan Fraith, Fan Nedd and Fan Llia to the east of the A4067. Towards to north-easterly edge of the Study Area, the summit and southern slopes of Fan Fawr, together with the slopes of Cefn Cew, Gwaun Nant Ddu, Waun Lysiog and Waun Wen coincide with the blade tip ZTV, which also extends across Cefn yr Ystrad.

Special Qualities of the BBNP

- 2.3.2 The baseline description of the SQs of the BBNP, as defined in Y Bannau The Future, A Management Plan for Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028⁵, is as follows:

- “Special Landscapes:

Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty: The National Park’s sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty observed across a variety of harmoniously connected landscapes, including marvellous gorges and waterfalls, classic karst geology with caves and sink holes, contrasting glacial landforms such as cliffs and broad valleys carved from old red sandstone and prominent hilltops with extensive views in all directions. A landscape that provides a sense of time depth and timelessness.

Contrasting patterns, colours, and textures: A working, living “patchwork” of contrasting patterns, colours, and textures comprising well-maintained farmed landscapes, open uplands, lakes and meandering rivers punctuated by small-scale woodlands, country

⁵ Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (2023) *Y Bannau The Future. The Management Plan for Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028*. (online). Available at: <https://future.bannau.wales>

lanes, hedgerows and stone walls and scattered settlements, grouped around landscape, community, experiences and wildlife.

- **Special Communities:**

An intimate sense of community: An intimate sense of community where small, pastoral towns and villages are comparatively safe, friendly, welcoming and retain a spirit of cooperation.

A Sense of place and cultural identity: A sense of place and cultural identity - "Welshness" - characterised by the indigenous Welsh language, religious and spiritual connections, unique customs and events, traditional foods and crafts, relatively unspoilt historic towns and villages, family farms and continued practices of traditional skills developed by local inhabitants to live and earn a living here, such as common land practices and grazing.

- **Special Experiences:**

Enjoyable and accessible: Enjoyable and accessible countryside with extensive, widespread and varied opportunities to pursue walking, cycling, fishing, water-based activities and other forms of sustainable recreation or relaxation.

Sounds, sights, smells and tastes: A feeling of vitality and wellbeing that comes from enjoying the National Park's fresh air, clean water, rural setting, open land and locally produced foods.

Sense of discovery: A sense of discovery where people explore the National Park's hidden secrets and stories such as genealogical histories, prehistoric ritual sites, relic medieval rural settlements, early industrial sites, local myths and legends and geological treasures from time immemorial.

Peace, tranquillity and dark skies: A National Park offering dark night-time skies, peace and tranquillity with opportunities for quiet enjoyment, inspiration, relaxation and spiritual renewal.

- **Special Nature:**

Mosaic of Diversity: The geology and climate vary greatly across the Park creating an elaborate patchwork landscape rich in biodiversity. The Park hosts heathlands, grasslands and woodlands, with uplands and lowlands, natural lakes and riparian habitats. The Park contains limestone pavement and blanket bogs of international and national importance. Several endangered species survive in the Park, including some for which the Park is their furthest extent of their natural range.

Living Landscape: An abundance of wildlife thrives in semi-natural habitats that have been lived in and shaped by human settlement for millennia. The landscape is interlaced with ancient hedgerows bustling with life, enclosing wildlife-rich hay meadows, and primeval woodlands that cloak some steep-sided valleys. Veteran trees adorn the landscape, carrying the scars of centuries of changing dependency on their resources. Heather-dominated uplands maintained through grazing by horses, sheep and cattle are a testament to the intimate relationship between biodiversity and farming."

2.3.3 All of the BBNP overlapped by the ZTV within the LVIA Study Area is included in this assessment, which is aided by a review of the visualisations for Viewpoint 20 (**Figure 6.34**), which is located within the BBNP. A further viewpoint from the Triangulation (Trig) Point on Fan Gyhirych, which fulfils the criteria for an additional viewpoint requested by the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), will be included as part of the Final ES.

2.3.4 A review of the SQs listed above concluded that the following should be included in the assessment as they relate to visual and perceptual aspects of the BBNP:

- ***Special Landscapes: Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty;***
- ***Special Landscapes: Contrasting patterns, colours, and textures;***
- ***Special Experiences: Sounds, sights, smells and tastes; and***
- ***Special Experiences: Peace, tranquillity and dark skies.***

2.3.5 There would be no effect on the SQs related to physical characteristics or on those relating to culture and the community. For these reasons, the following SQs have been excluded from the assessment:

- *Special Communities: An intimate sense of community;*
- *Special Communities: A Sense of place and cultural identity;*
- *Special Experiences: Enjoyable and accessible;*
- *Special Experiences: Sense of discovery;*
- *Special Nature: Mosaic of Diversity; and*
- *Special Nature: Living Landscape.*

2.3.6 NRW, through its response to the Scoping Report, confirmed its agreement with the SQs for the BBNP which have been scoped into the LVIA, although recommends that the ES use these SQs as headings and that assessment of the impacts to them are informed by detailed supporting evidence such as Landscape Character Assessments and LANDMAP (PEDW ID.8 in **Table 6.4** of **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual**).

Landscape Character Areas and LANDMAP

2.3.7 The Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment⁶ defines 15 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the National Park, six of which coincide with the blade tip ZTV and LVIA study area as shown in **Figure 6.9** as follows:

- LCA 2: Y Mynydd Du;
- LCA 3: Fforest Fawr;
- LCA 4: Waterfall Country and Southern Valleys;
- LCA 7: Central Beacons;
- LCA 8: Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys; and
- LCA 9: Mynyddoedd Llangatwg and Llangynidr.

2.3.8 A very small proportion of the landscape north of Coelbren on the southern boundary of the BBNP lies within LCA 4: Waterfall Country and Southern Valleys and coincides with the blade tip ZTV, with 1-2 blade tips theoretically being visible. This area lies outside of the hub height ZTV as shown in **Figure 6.3** and as a consequence, this LCA will not be considered further in the assessment.

2.3.9 The methodology for the Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment confirms that LANDMAP data has been used throughout the process of preparing the Character Assessment, and that “*LANDMAP area boundaries have been*

⁶ Fiona Fyfe Associates with Countryside, Alison Farmer Associates and Julie Martin Associates (2012) *Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment*. (online). Available at: <https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/planning/draft-strategy-and-policy/landscape-character-assessment/>

used as a basis for the Landscape Character Area boundaries. Where possible, LCA boundaries have followed boundaries from the Visual and Sensory LANDMAP layer.”

- 2.3.10 LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas (VSAAs) which have been scoped into the assessment in accordance with the process outlines in Natural Resources Wales’s *Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments GN46*⁷ are shown in **Figure 6.8c**. The published summary descriptions for those which coincide with the LVIA Study Area and ZTV is included below alongside the relevant LCA.

LCA 2: Y Mynydd Du

- 2.3.11 The distinctive characteristics of this LCA are recorded in the published Profile⁸ as follows.

- *“Varied underlying geology. Devonian age Old Red Sandstone in the north overlain by bands of Carboniferous Limestone, Marros Group sandstones and mudstones to their south. Sandstones and mudstones of the lowermost South Wales Coal Measures are exposed in the south. The highest land in the west is formed from the Twrch Sandstone, whilst that in the east is formed from Plateau Beds.*
- *Elevated, flat-topped ridge of the Carmarthen Fans running east-west across the area, with a distinctive northern scarp face. To the south is a gently southern sloping plateau dissected by steep valleys.*
- *Glacial lakes below the northern scarp: Llyn y Fan Fawr & Llyn y Fan Fach. Numerous mountain streams source in springs & bogs.*
- *Land use almost entirely open grazing (often by hefted flocks) on unenclosed common land.*
- *Very few field boundaries; limited to sheep-folds and occasional peripheral enclosures.*
- *Tree cover within the LCA limited to occasional broadleaved trees and shrubs alongside streams.*
- *Panoramic views north-west and south.*
- *Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including modified blanket bog, dwarf shrub heath, limestone pavement, limestone grassland, acid/ neutral flush and marshy grassland. Variations in vegetation cover caused by changes in underlying geology and grazing.*
- *Historic features include numerous prehistoric monuments, Roman features, transport routes, agricultural remains and industrial archaeology.*
- *Settlement within the LCA limited to scattered farms at the periphery, but there is a close visual relationship with communities and roads to the south of the National Park, and in adjacent LCAs.*
- *A4069 crossing the area in the west in a series of dramatic hairpin bends.*

⁷ Natural Resources Wales (2025) *Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments GN46*. (Online). Available at: <https://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/evidence-to-inform-development-planning/using-landmap-in-landscape-and-visual-impact-assessments-gn46/?lang=en>

⁸ Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 2 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-8-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

- *An empty and open landscape, expansive and large in scale with smooth, open horizons. Generally simple composition, with vegetation and geology creating subtle changes in texture.”*

- 2.3.12 Amongst the sensitivities of this landscape, as recognised in the LCA 2 Profile and of relevance to the Proposed Development, are the *“Impacts from built or other developments (including those in long views) which may detract from its sense of tranquillity and remoteness. As well as visual impacts, the area is also sensitive to noise and night-time light pollution associated with developments beyond the National Park boundary”* and *“Features which break the smooth, open skylines”*.
- 2.3.13 This LCA is also noted as exhibiting *“High levels of tranquillity as a result of the landscape’s openness, perceived naturalness, lack of noise, and dark skies. Few factors detract from the tranquillity, and the LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area. Contains the National Park’s most extensive area of land more than 2km from a tarmac road. This remoteness, and the area’s sense of relative wildness, is enhanced by the LCA’s openness, exposure, timelessness and lack of human influences.”*

Relevant LANDMAP VSAs

BRCKNVS118 Dorwen ar Gledd

- 2.3.14 The summary description for this VSAA states: *“The area is a large-scale exposed limestone upland massif rising to 550m AOD from 205m AOD in Tawe valley. It is potted with shakeholes and evidence of quarrying, now defunct. Its uneven appearance distinguishes it from the smoother lines of Fan Hir to the north. The vegetation cover is coarse grasses, heath, bracken/gorse and other scrub encroaching from lower levels. The land form is particularly distinctive viewed from the Tawe valley”*.
- 2.3.15 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.12% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 34.11% in Category 8, 64.96% within Category 9 and 0.81% within Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding on account of its *“high, impressive and distinctive massif of limestone upland which dominates the Tawe valley. It gives drama to the area and is of high scenic quality. While it has been quarried in the past it is essentially unspoilt and provides a wild area close to settlements in the Tawe valley”*.

BRCKNVS363 Black Mountain

- 2.3.16 This VSAA is described in the LANDMAP Survey as a *“Dramatic exposed upland moorland area with particularly strong landform in the Fan Brycheinog and Fan Hir sandstone escarpment, which rises from around 600m AOD to 800m AOD: this forms part of the distinctive Beacons skyline. The area contains the headwater of the Tawe and lesser rivers. The landcover is dominated by coarse grasses with some wet flushes - the overall impression is of fairly uniform cover with little dwarf shrub vegetation. There are very few public paths - none of which fully cross the area. The area is extensive, wild and much affected by weather. Long views are possible from high parts of the area. The area appears to be grazed, primarily by sheep”*.
- 2.3.17 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.11% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 22.46% in Category 8, 76.01% in Category 9 and 1.42% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding due to *“The areas dramatic topography is of high scenic quality. The area has a distinctive and consistent character throughout with a strong sense of place engendered by wild, remote and exposed character. The slopes of Fan Brycheinog and*

Fan Hir form a distinctive skyline when viewed from the North as part of the overall Beacon range”.

CRMRTVS016 The Black Mountain

- 2.3.18 The summary description for this VSAA states: *“The area is a large scale exposed limestone and millstone grit upland massif rising to 600m AOD at Foel Fawr and Foel Fraith from 200m AOD on the western fringes. It has some rock exposure in scree and outcrops and is potted with shakeholes and evidence of limestone quarrying, now defunct, on its northern flanks. Its uneven appearance distinguishes it from the smoother lines of sandstone to the north. Small incised valleys are evident in places with rocky stream beds and some scrub. The vegetation cover is dominated by coarse grasses with some heath/dwarf woody upland shrubs. The skyline is generally gently undulating with some high points and forms a strong backcloth to the surrounding lowland to the north and south. The rights of way are limited but the area is open access land and the Beacons Way runs along the northern edge linking to Carreg Cennen to the north. Change detection 2014: Mynydd Bettws windfarm (504) conspicuous from southern parts”.*
- 2.3.19 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.24% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 40.2% in Category 8, 58.2% in Category 9 and 1.36% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding on account of *“This upland moorland massif gives drama to the area and is of high scenic quality with attractive long views to the north. While it has been quarried in the past it is essentially unspoilt by development and has a consistent open character. Overgrazing is an issue leading to rough grass dominating. This strong limestone and millstone grit massif with rock exposure has a wild and remote character. The topography is varied by shakeholes and cairns which give further interest. High open limestone upland is rare in the county”.*

LCA 3: Fforest Fawr

- 2.3.20 The Profile⁹ for LCA 3 Fforest Fawr describes the distinctive characteristics of this landscape as follows:
- *“Complex underlying geology, with the Senni and Brownstones formations of the Old Red Sandstone in the north, a broken band of Carboniferous Limestone across the middle, and Marros Group sandstones and mudstones in the south. All three units form north-facing escarpments, that of the Old Red Sandstone being the most imposing.*
 - *A glaciated landscape with a steep northern escarpment and a series of elevated summits. Cwms, and deep valleys are separated by intervening ridges (generally running north-south). Landform in the south of the LCA is less dramatic, forming a gently sloping plateau dissected by river valleys.*
 - *Steep, fast flowing and rocky mountain streams (often spring-fed, or sourced from upland bogs), flow into larger rivers in valley bottoms. Ystradfellte Reservoir located near centre of LCA.*
 - *Predominantly unenclosed moorland used for open grazing, with some forest blocks, particularly in the south and west of the LCA.*

⁹ Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 3 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-3-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

- *Trees almost entirely coniferous, planted in forestry blocks often with sharp outlines. Distinctive coniferous shelter belts in the northern part of the area.*
- *Very few field boundaries, but dry-stone walls marking estate boundaries are distinctive to this LCA. Occasional post-and-wire fences.*
- *Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including marshy grassland, dry heath, acid/ neutral flushes and small areas of blanket bog. Vegetation composition reflects variations in underlying geology.*
- *Extensive prehistoric ritual landscapes, particularly in the south-east. Also evidence of Roman road, medieval settlements, industrial archaeology, WW2 defences and estate influences.*
- *A very lightly-settled landscape today, with occasional estate cottages and farms at its periphery. However, in the past it has been much more densely settled, and the landscape contains evidence of settlement over millennia.*
- *An elevated, simple and expansive landscape, with colours and textures varying subtly with the underlying geology. Much of the LCA remains inaccessible except on foot, giving a sense of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wildness”.*

2.3.21 Of relevance to the Proposed Development and amongst the identified sensitivities of this landscape are the “*Visual impacts, noise and night-time light pollution associated with developments beyond the National Park boundary*” and “*Features which break the smooth, open skylines*”.

2.3.22 This LCA is also recorded as having “*High tranquillity, resulting from many factors including openness, perceived naturalness, low noise (though roads have localised impacts at the periphery of the LCA), landform and dark skies (this LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area). With the exception of occasional roads and Penwyllt quarry, few factors detract from the tranquillity. The LCA’s inaccessibility, openness, timelessness and relative lack of human influence also contribute to its sense of relative wildness*”.

Relevant LANDMAP VSAAs

BRCKNVS141 Fan Fawr/Fan Llia (Fforest Fawr East)

2.3.23 This VSAA is described as a “*Dramatic exposed upland moorland rising from around 400mAOD to a maximum of 734mAOD at Fan Fawr. The landform is particularly distinctive on the northern escarpment which has steep faces of exposed rock in parts [Craig Cerrig- gleisiad]. This upland continues the distinctive skyline of the Brecon Beacons. The area drains to the south to the Taf Fawr, Mellte and Hepste. The steep sided valley of the Afon Dringarth holds the Ystradfellte Reservoir. Vegetation is dominated by coarse grasses, grazed by sheep, interspersed with rushes in wet flushes, which gives a consistent landcover. There are very occasional areas of dwarf woody vegetation [gorse/bilberry] and scrub is encroaching on lower slopes. Occasional trees are found valley bottoms. Stone walls are used in parts to define the edge of the moorland or boundaries. These are in a poor state of repair in most places. Long views are possible over lower areas to north and south and along the upland massif east and west. The northern area is popular with walkers and hikers. Often the tops are shrouded in clouds and mists, and the area can be very bleak and wild. The A4059 passes through the southeastern fringes introducing noise but reducing the feeling of isolation in this area*”.

2.3.24 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.21% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 34.3% in Category 8, 65.49% in Category 9 and 0 % in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be

Outstanding with the justification for this noting *“This area of upland has a high scenic quality due to its dramatic landform such as at Fan Frynych and Fan Fawr. These peaks are important parts of the Beacons skyline. The area has panoramic views and forms the backcloth to the lower valleys to the north and south. The area has consistent character throughout and a strong sense of place due to its topography and remoteness. It is popular for walking in its northern parts, along the escarpment, which indicates consensus on value”*.

BRCKNVS185 Y Wern Forest

- 2.3.25 This VSAA is described in the LANDMAP Survey as *“Extensive area of coniferous plantation on high southern slopes of Carreg Cadno. Small watercourses run through the area. The edges are very straight in places such as along dismantled railway to west forming abrupt edges. There is no public access to the area via PROW”*.
- 2.3.26 The VSAA is recorded as having 8.65% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 66.13% in Category 8, 25.22% in Category 9 and 0% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Moderate on account of *“The area is consistently managed as forest resource and has integrity and consistency of character.”*

BRCKNVS230 Carreg Cadno

- 2.3.27 The summary description for this VSAA states: *“The area is an exposed limestone upland massif rising around 540m (AOD) from 205m (AOD) in the Tawe Valley. It is rugged with extensive rock exposure, and the area has sink holes. A large quarry, Penwllt, lies on its western edge, by the Tawe Valley. It is now defunct and unreclaimed, recently used as a pipeworks. It is discreetly located and not visible from the valley but has a distinct sense of place with the adjoining quiet settlement. The wider area vegetation cover is coarse grasses, heath and bracken in places, encroaching from lower levels. it has some stone walls which enclose large areas. The adjacent conifer plantations create abrupt boundaries”*.
- 2.3.28 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.41% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 33.9% in Category 8, 65.64% in Category 9 and 0.06% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding on account of *“The area is a high and impressive massif of limestone which echoes the Downen Gledd massif to the west. It has dramatic outcrops of rock and is of high scenic quality. It is essentially unspoilt and has a consistent character throughout. The quarry at its western end is no longer used and is not a significant enough detractor to reduce the areas value”*.

BRCKNVS922 Nant y Fedwyn Upland

- 2.3.29 This VSAA is described in the LANDMAP Survey as a *“Gently undulating upland moorland dominated by coarse grasses and with some areas of bracken and wet flushes vegetation in gentle stream valleys. The area is on sloping land between two blocks of coniferous forestry and has no public rights of way crossing (part of new estate). The forestry creates abrupt edges to relatively featureless moorland. Maesgwyn wind farm is highly visible to the south”*.
- 2.3.30 The VSAA is recorded as having 25.62% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 73.57% in Category 8, 0.81% in Category 9 and 0% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Moderate with the justification for this noting *“The area is fairly consistent in character as*

upland moorland and is relatively unspoilt. It has views of uplands to the north as well as the valleys landscape to the south”.

BRCKNVS955 Fforest Fawr West

- 2.3.31 This VSAA is described as an “*Exposed upland moorland dominated by landform of Fan Gyhirych at 725mAOD with other peaks at 663mAOD [Fan Nedd] and 560mAOD. The main peak has been sculpted by glaciation on its northern face and exhibits similar characteristics to the sandstone Brecon Beacons to the west. Steeper slopes are gullied by erosion although these are vegetated. Various rivers including the Nedd Fechan have their headwaters in steep sided valleys. The landcover is simple, dominated by coarse grasses with rushes in wet flushes. The area is grazed by sheep and Welsh Black cattle. Bracken is found in patches, including in dingles. Deciduous scrub also has a foothold in these small valleys. Apparently single species large coniferous woodland blocks lie on the upper slopes. These disrupt and contrast with the simple flow of the landscape. Small blocks of scots pine copses lie to the west of the Crai Reservoir, presumably for game. The area is essentially unenclosed”.*
- 2.3.32 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.27% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 43.01% in Category 8, 56.45% in Category 9 and 0.27% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding with the justification for this noting “*The area has a high scenic quality as a varied upland with strong landform. Superb scenic views are possible in and out of the area. The landform of Fan Gyhirych is distinctive and rare nationally although consistent with the Brecon Beacons character. The area has a consistent management and character throughout”.*

CYNONVS735 Cadair Fawr

- 2.3.33 The summary description for this VSAA states: “*Dramatic landscape of rough grazed grassland with rock outcrops and some marshy areas lying between approximately 300m and 485mAOD. Wind noise is a dominant aesthetic factor which evokes particular experience of exposure and wildness. Spectacular upland views dominated by large expanse of sky/clouds. Strong visual link with Brecon Beacons”.*
- 2.3.34 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.04% of its area within the visually tranquil category 6, 5.05% in Category 7, 66.76% in Category 8, 28.15% in Category 9 and 0% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be High.

LCA 7: Central Beacons

- 2.3.35 The distinctive characteristics of this LCA are recorded in the published Profile¹⁰ as follows:
- “*Geology of Devonian Senni and Brownstones Formations, highly visible in the northern scarp. Covering of plateau beds on the highest land gives the ridges a flat-topped appearance.*
 - *A glacially-sculpted landscape with a dramatic northern scarp, below a line of dramatic peaks including Pen y Fan (the highest point in the Brecon Beacons at 886m ASL). A*

¹⁰ Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 7 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-7-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

series of horseshoe-shaped valleys radiate out from the centre, with a gradual slope downward to the south.

- *Fast-flowing streams (fed from springs or upland bogs) radiate out from this central point. The source of the River Taff is in this LCA. Small glacial lake at Llyn Cwm Llwh below Corn Du.*
- *Land use almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land.*
- *An open landscape, with trees limited to small patches of wood pasture on sheltered valley sides, although there are views across the adjacent plantations of the Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys.*
- *Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including marshy grassland, montane heath, modified blanket bogs, and dry heath/acid grassland mosaic.*
- *A range of historic features, including abandoned settlements to 20th century artefacts including pill box, tank traps and military memorials. Relatively few prehistoric sites compared to other LCAs.*
- *Very little settlement or other development within this LCA. However, views from the area encompass the surrounding settled landscape. The A470 follows the western boundary of the LCA.*
- *An open, expansive landscape with a sense of airy spaciousness and of being 'on the top'. The simple texture of the vegetation contrasts with the rough, stripy appearance of the crags. A dramatic, repeating pattern of triangular-shaped faces on the northern scarp, and lines of flat-topped ridges extending into the distance to the east and west."*

2.3.36 Amongst the sensitivities of this landscape, as recognised in the LCA 7 Profile and of relevance to the Proposed Development, is *"Development within or outside the LCA which impacts on views from summits (particularly on the lower land which forms the LCA's northern setting, and on the summits of the east-west ridge of the Brecon Beacons)"*.

2.3.37 This LCA is also recorded as featuring *"High levels of tranquillity due to the landscape's openness, perceived naturalness, low noise and dark skies (the LCA is within the BBNP core dark skies area). There are few detracting features in terms of human development, but the numbers of people present on paths and summits can reduce the sense of tranquillity. The combination of inaccessibility, landform and absence of settlement gives the central part of the LCA a sense of remoteness. These qualities, combined with its sense of openness and exposure also create a sense of relative wildness, particularly when contrasted with the settled valleys to the north"*.

Relevant LANDMAP VSAs

BRCKNVS833 Brecon Beacons

2.3.38 This VSAA is described as a *"Dramatic exposed upland moorland rising from around 400mAOD to a maximum of 886mAOD at Pen y Fan. The landform on the northern escarpment which is scalloped by glaciation in a series of valleys, one with a cwm lake. Its face is stepped in horizontal layers of exposed brownstone capped by a harder rock resulting in a distinctive flat top. This distinctive skyline has come to represent the essence of the Brecon Beacons. Deep steep sided valleys with small streams run north and south. The topography is characterised by long slopes and plateau tops terminating in steep falls. Vegetation is dominated by coarse grasses, grazed by sheep, interspersed with rushes in wet flushes, which gives a consistent landcover. There are very occasional areas of dwarf woody vegetation [gorse/bilberry] and scrub and bracken are encroaching on lower slopes. Occasional trees are found valley bottoms. Panoramic views are*

possible over lower areas to north and south and along the upland massif east and west. The area is popular with walkers and hikers. This has led to unsightly erosion on the most used paths, particularly from Storey Arms to Corn Du and Pen y Fan, the Beacons Way and on the plateau tops themselves. The most used paths have been improved with steps/stones. Often the tops are shrouded in clouds and mists, which combined with the precipitous drops has given the area a reputation for danger to unwary visitors. Indeed the area can be very bleak and wild, even though it is clearly well trodden in parts”.

- 2.3.39 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.07% of its area within the visually tranquil category 7, 29.13% in Category 8, 70.79% in Category 9 and 0 % in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be Outstanding with the justification for this noting *“The area has particularly high scenic quality with panoramic views due to its distinctive and dramatic topography. The skyline of Pen y Fan and Fan y Big form an important landmark which express the essence and high point [literally and metaphorically] of the Beacons. The area has a consistent and distinctive character throughout with a strong sense of place. The area is a major attraction for hikers and sightseers, which indicates strong consensus on the area's value and scenic quality”.*

LCA 8: Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys

- 2.3.40 The distinctive characteristics of this LCA are recorded in the published Profile¹¹ as follows:

- *“Mostly underlain by Devonian age sandstones of the Brownstones Formation, with small areas of the upper Old Red Sandstone Grey Grits and Carboniferous Limestone in the south, and Twrch Sandstone on the southern margin.*
- *A series of steep V-shaped valleys separated by flatter uplands. The Taff valleys have a strong north-south orientation and drain southwards, whilst the Talybont valley lies broadly north-east to south-west and drains into the Usk.*
- *Chains of artificial reservoirs occur in valleys, linked by rivers. Mountain streams (and occasional waterfalls) flow down the steep valley sides, sculpting sandstone and limestone rocks.*
- *Coniferous forestry is dominant land use, plus reservoirs, pasture and open moorland.*
- *Surviving field boundaries usually stone walls, occasionally patched with post and wire. Some former field boundaries still visible within forestry plantations.*
- *Extensive coniferous forests, with some larch and patches of more mixed deciduous woodland (for example on the western side of the Llwyn-onn valley). Deciduous trees also associated with watercourses.*
- *Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including modified blanket bog, marshy grassland, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, flush/ spring and acid grassland.*
- *Many historic features lost under reservoirs and forests. Surviving features include farms, field boundaries and Vaynor church. Parts of the Brecon and Newport Railway survive, including Pont-sarn viaduct, the opening of the tunnel which connected the*

¹¹ Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 8 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-8-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

Talybont and Taff valleys, and some track (now the Brecon Mountain Railway) and station buildings.

- *Very limited settlement within the LCA (Llwyn-onn, Pontsticill and occasional farms). Other built development includes housing for reservoir workers, large-scale water treatment works below dams, and former limestone quarries.*
- *Recreation provision e.g. car parks, picnic areas, trails, Garwant Forest Visitor Centre, watersports.*
- *Generally, a simple landscape composition, with large blocks of forest in simple valley landform. Forests appear strongly textured (especially where they include deciduous trees) and contrast in colour with surrounding open moorland."*

- 2.3.41 Of relevance to the Proposed Development and amongst the identified sensitivities of this landscape are the "Changes in the composition of the landscape and views from the area" and "Loss of tranquillity as a result of visually intrusive/ audible developments beyond the National Park boundary".

Relevant LANDMAP VSAAs

MRTHRVS387 Vaynor Uplands

- 2.3.42 This VSAA is described as "*This big open unenclosed landscape rises to over 490m AOD in the north-east and to 300m AOD along its southern edge. It forms a large block of upland between the Taf Fawr and Taf Fechan and looms high above the basin in which Merthyr Tydfil is located. The vast scale contrasts with the more fragmented and/or linear character areas elsewhere. The area is exposed, bleak and empty of settlement with almost no access - there is one right of way crossing the southern quarter and a few footpaths skirting the edge. It includes V-shaped stream valleys draining to east/west/south. The vegetation cover is predominantly upland grassland with large areas of poorly drained moorland. Most of the area is typical of large parts of the upland moorland in the Brecon Beacons. However, the distinctive craggy outcrops on Cefn Cilsanws at 480mAOD along the southern edge are a focal point with scrub vegetation and grey scree slopes below. This hillside forms a focal point on the main road north into the Brecon Beacons*".
- 2.3.43 The VSAA is recorded as having 0.07% of its area within the visually tranquil category 6, 10.41% in Category 7, 43.34% in Category 8, 46.11% in Category 9 and 0.07% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be High with the justification for this noting "*The area has high scenic quality with panoramic views. It has consistent and unspoilt character throughout and a strong sense of place through rock outcrops and moorland character. The area forms part of the Brecon Beacons upland area*".

LCA 9: Mynyddoedd Llangatwg and Llangynidr

- 2.3.44 The distinctive characteristics of this LCA are recorded in the published Profile¹² as follows:
- *"A north-facing scarp formed by Carboniferous Limestone; the moors to the south having a thin cover of Twrch Sandstone and displaying karstic features including cliffs,*

¹² Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 9 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-9-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

caves, shake holes and limestone pavement. Area of lowermost South Wales Coal Measures sandstones ('Farewell Rock') and mudstones in the east.

- *An elevated plateau-like landform, mostly above 400m ASL. From high ground, horizons appear low and smooth.*
- *Boggy ground and springs forming the sources of several rivers. Few waterbodies, including small upland pools and Llangyndir reservoir.*
- *Land use almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land. Extensive quarries (no longer worked), and small area of plantation on southern edge.*
- *An open landscape with no field boundaries and very few trees.*
- *Semi-Natural Habitats of Principal Importance to Wales including dry dwarf shrub heath, marshy grassland, unmodified blanket bog, modified blanket bog, acid/ neutral flush and limestone cliff habitats.*
- *A concentration of prehistoric archaeological sites, including numerous Cairns on high ground, plus more recent archaeology associated with quarrying.*
- *Very limited settlement, but views to settlement in the Usk valley to the north, and other development (e.g. roads, pylons) beyond the southern boundary of the National Park.*
- *An exceptionally open landscape, with subtle changes in texture and seasonal colour resulting from variations in moorland vegetation”.*

- 2.3.45 Of relevance to the Proposed Development and amongst the identified sensitivities of this landscape is the “*Inappropriate development, (including outside the National Park) which affects skylines and/or views*”.

Relevant LANDMAP VSAAAs

BRCKNVS372 Mynydd Llangynidr and Mynydd Llangattock

- 2.3.46 This VSAA is described as an “*Exposed upland moorland on undulating plateau top dominated by unimproved poor grassland. Some wet flushes occur and there are patches of heath vegetation which create subtle patterns and welcome relief from the otherwise consistent vegetation cover. Rock exposures [limestone] including scree and cliffs occur in places, particularly on the northern slopes facing the Usk valley. There is evidence of small quarries and borrow pits with their associated waste tips which have been colonised with vegetation. These create further interest. The large disused quarry at Cwar y Hendre is informally used for recreation, and earthmoving operations are occasionally carried out. There is an isolated reservoir at Cairn Mound. There are superb panoramic views of the Black Mountains to the north and of the South Wales Valleys to the south and away from the road the area is tranquil. One road crosses the area from north to south and is often used by people wishing to enjoy the views. The laybys are well used. Evidence of the deprived nature of the valleys settlements to the south is provided by occasional burnt out cars or rubbish*”.
- 2.3.47 The VSAA is recorded as having 3.92% of its area within the visually tranquil Category 7, 67.73% in Category 8, 28.36% in Category 9 and 0% in Category 10. The Overall Evaluation (as recorded in Question 50 of the LANDMAP Survey) is judged to be High with the justification for this noting “*The area affords panoramic views particularly on its northern fringes. The consistent expansive open character of the landscape maintains its integrity and is relatively unspoilt. The area provides an important refuge from the urban*

character of the valleys to the south. It has a strong sense of place with its simple horizons and vegetation cover which are highly influenced by weather and sky”.

2.4 Stage 3: Assessment of effects on the BBNP SQs

- 2.4.1 A total of four SQs are considered relevant to this assessment and have been assessed below with a summary of the assessment provided under the Stage 4 heading.

Special Landscapes: Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty

Proposed Development: Operational Phase

- 2.4.2 The relevant components of this SQ which may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development relate to the BBNPs “*Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty observed across a variety of harmoniously connected landscapes*” and the “*extensive views in all directions*”. Its “*sense of time depth and timelessness*” is also a quality which may be altered as a consequence of the presence of up to eight turbines within the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

- 2.4.3 The sensitivity of this SQ is assessed as High. This has been derived from the High value of the National Park designation and the High to Medium susceptibility of this SQ to the type of change proposed. The high levels of inter-visibility and corresponding strong visual relationships with surrounding landscapes from the slopes and summits of the uplands, together with the strong sense of time depth, are visual and perceptual characteristics which indicate a higher susceptibility to change, tempered slightly by the visual presence of existing vertical infrastructure (pylons and wind turbines) beyond the BBNP’s boundary from parts of the National Park, as evidenced in the baseline photograph for Viewpoint 20 (**Figure 6.34**).

Magnitude of change and level of effect

- 2.4.4 Where visible, the Proposed Development would appear as up to eight turbines or turbine blades from within the areas of inter-visibility indicated in the ZTV in **Figure 6.9**, which extend across a number of the summits and south facing hill slopes within the southern parts of the BBNP. There would be no inter-visibility from a large part of the area of the BBNP which coincides with the Study Area. As recorded in the Viewpoint Assessment in **Appendix 6K**, some localised Moderate/Minor levels of visual effect (derived from a High visual receptor sensitivity and a Very Low magnitude of change) are likely to be experienced by recreational receptors using local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) across Craig Derlwyn, (Viewpoint 20, **Figure 6.34**).
- 2.4.5 As a consequence of separation distance, the visible scale and extents of the Proposed Development would typically occupy a narrow proportion of the views which are available from the BBNP. Wide, panoramic views are commonly described for the LCAs and their constituent VSAs which coincide with the Study Area, as demonstrated in the “*Panoramic views north-west and south*” which are described as a distinctive characteristic of LCA 2, with “*Long views are possible from high parts of the area*” cited for VSA BRCKNVS363 Black Mountain, which also forms part of LCA 2. Elsewhere, “*Long views*” and “*panoramic views*” are recorded for VSA BRCKNVS141 Fan Fawr/Fan Llia, with “*Superb scenic views*” identified for VSA BRCKNVS955 Fforest Fawr West, within

LCA 3. Within the part of LCA 7 which coincides with the Study Area and ZTV, “*Panoramic views are possible over lower areas to north and south*” are identified for VSAA BRCKNVS833, whilst “*panoramic views*” contribute to the High Overall Evaluation of VSAA MRTHRVS387 Vaynor Uplands within LCA 8. Similar “*superb panoramic views of the Black Mountains to the north and of the South Wales Valleys to the south*” are recorded for VSAA BRCKNVS372, which forms part of LCA 9.

- 2.4.6 As shown in **Figures 6.6** and **6.9** and evidenced in the baseline photography from Viewpoint 20 (**Figure 6.34**), there are a number of existing turbines present in southerly views from the BBNP including those located in closer proximity to the southern boundary of the BBNP. These include the 13 turbines (125 m to blade tip) within the Maesgwyn Wind Farm, which are located a minimum of approximately 1 km to the south of the BBNP’s southern boundary, as well as the Mynydd y Betws Wind Farm (16 turbines with a blade tip height of 110 m) and two 100 m to blade tip turbines at Tairgwaith, with both operational wind energy schemes being located approximately 3 km from the BBNP boundary. The Proposed Development would therefore become an incremental and only occasionally new, distant man-made vertical element within the “*extensive views in all directions*”, often in conjunction with existing human influences and built form adjoining the boundary of the BBNP. The “*variety of harmoniously connected landscapes*” would continue to be observed and the Proposed Development would not significantly detract from the BBNP’s “*sweeping grandeur*” which is experienced in views to the north.
- 2.4.7 The magnitude of change upon this SQ is assessed as Very Low from areas of the BBNP which coincide with the ZTV giving rise to a level of landscape effect which would be Moderate/Minor and Not Significant. The nature of this effect would be long term (reversible), indirect, and adverse. From the majority of the BBNP, there would be no change to this SQ.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites (Scenario 1)

- 2.4.8 With reference to **Figure 6.6** and **Figure 6.9** (sheets 1-4), the closest operational wind energy schemes to the southern boundary of the BBNP are the Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms, which are judged to have a Moderate to Moderate/Minor effect (Low-Very Low magnitude) on this SQ given their proximity to the BBNP, tempered by their maximum blade tip height (125 m). Other consented and operational schemes which are located at increased separation distances, and which vary in height from 76 m (Ferndale) to 200 m (Twyn Hywel and Mynydd Fforch Dwm, with the closer Mynydd Fforch Dwm turbine located approximately 10.8 km from the BBNP boundary) would have a very limited influence on this SQ (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The level of combined cumulative landscape effect on this SQ would be Moderate to Moderate/Minor and Not Significant (due to the operational Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms). The additional cumulative landscape effect on this SQ would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant. The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites + Applications + Scoping (Scenario 2)

- 2.4.9 The distribution of planning application schemes within the Study Area and the scoping scheme at Upper Lliw means that their visual presence beyond a number of closer wind energy schemes would have a very limited influence on this SQ. The scoping schemes at Carreg Wen (Low magnitude) and Hirfynydd (Low-Very Low magnitude) would have an increased influence on the SQ given their scale and relative proximity (approximately 3.6 km and 5.3 km respectively). The additional cumulative landscape effect would remain

Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be **Moderate** and locally **Significant**, due to the scoping scheme at Carreg Wen and the prominence of the proposed 18 turbines at 230 m to blade tip in the “*extensive views in all directions*”, with the closest LCA 4: Waterfalls Country and Southern Valleys recognising “*Southern parts of the LCA (particularly higher land) have intervisibility with land beyond the National Park boundary, with long views southwards*”¹³ as part of the key views. The “*strong sense of time-depth*” within LCA 4 also forms part of this SQ and may be locally altered by the Carreg Wen scoping scheme. The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Special Landscapes: Contrasting patterns, colours, and textures

Proposed Development: Operational Phase

- 2.4.10 The pertinent component of this SQ is the variety of contrasting land use and land cover, “*punctuated*” by both natural and man-made landscape elements such as hedgerows, trees, stone walls and buildings.

Sensitivity

- 2.4.11 The sensitivity of this SQ is assessed as High. This has been derived from the High value of the National Park designation and the Medium susceptibility of this SQ to the type of change proposed. The susceptibility of the SQ has been assessed as Medium given that it relates to a variety of different land use, which include existing wind farm development visible from within the BBNP. However, it is also noted that wind farm development beyond the National Park boundary could be of sufficient scale to disrupt or dominate the existing patterns of land cover and landscape elements visible in the general views that are available from within the BBNP.

Magnitude of change and level of effect

- 2.4.12 There would be no direct changes to the “*patchwork*” of contrasting patterns, colours, and textures within the National Park boundary as a consequence of the Proposed Development. Whilst the proposed turbines would appear as new and distant features in outward views towards the Proposed Development Site, they would affect a very small part of the overall visual experience gained from these upland landscapes.
- 2.4.13 The land cover and patterns across these landscapes are typically simple, uniform and consistent as evidenced in the description for LCA 2 (“*Land use almost entirely open grazing (often by hefted flocks) on unenclosed common land*”), supported by the summary for BRCKNVS363 Black Mountain which refers to “*.....the overall impression is of fairly uniform cover...*” and for LCA 3, which is described as “*Predominantly unenclosed moorland used for open grazing, with some forest blocks*” and its component VSAs BRCKNVS141 Fan Fawr/Fan Llia (Fforest Fawr East) (“*consistent landcover*”), BRCKNVS922 Nant y Fedwyn Upland (“*relatively featureless moorland*”) and BRCKNVS955 Fforest Fawr West (“*landcover is simple*”). This is also found across LCA 7 (“*Land use almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land*”) with BRCKNVS833 Brecon Beacons referencing a “*consistent landcover*”; the extensive coniferous forestry across LCA 8 (“*Generally a simple landscape composition, with large blocks of forest..... contrast in colour with surrounding open moorland*”) and across LCA

¹³ Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Julie Martin Associates, Alison Farmer Associates and Countryside. (2012). Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 4 Profile (Online). https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCA-4-PROFILE_final_120930.pdf

9 (*“almost entirely open grazing on unenclosed common land”*). The simple nature and consistency of the land use and land cover reduces the potential for the introduction of the Proposed Development to significantly contrast with the existing patterns within this part of the BBNP, whilst the separation distance means that the turbines would not dominate the *“patchwork of contrasting patterns, colours, and textures”*.

- 2.4.14 As evidenced in the baseline photography from Viewpoint 20 (**Figure 6.34**) (which will be supplemented by a further viewpoint within the BBNP at Final ES), outward views from the BBNP feature a number of operational wind energy schemes. The Proposed Development would therefore introduce an incremental man-made vertical element beyond the existing land cover within the National Park boundary.
- 2.4.15 The Proposed Development would lead to a Very Low magnitude of change on this SQ within areas of the BBNP which coincide with the ZTV. The level of landscape effect on this SQ would be Moderate/ Minor and Not Significant to None. The nature of this effect would be long term (reversible), indirect, and adverse to neutral.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites (Scenario 1)

- 2.4.16 The closest operational wind farms to the southern boundary of the BBNP at Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith, which have a maximum blade tip height of 125 m, would not dominate or strongly contrast with the simple and consistent nature of the land cover which commonly occurs within the southern margins of the BBNP (Low-Very Low magnitude). Other consented and operational schemes which are located at increased separation distances, would have a very limited influence on this SQ (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The additional cumulative landscape effect on this SQ would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the level of combined cumulative landscape effect would locally be Moderate to Moderate/Minor and Not Significant (due to the operational Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms). The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites + Applications + Scoping (Scenario 2)

- 2.4.17 The separation distance between the BBNP and the planning application schemes and the scoping scheme at Upper Lliw means that they would have very limited influence on this SQ. The scoping schemes at Carreg Wen (Low magnitude) and Hirfynydd (Low-Very Low magnitude) would have a slightly increased influence on the SQ given their relative proximity (approximately 3.6 km and 5.3 km respectively). The additional cumulative landscape effect would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be Moderate and Not Significant, due to the scoping scheme at Carreg Wen, with a Not Significant effect concluded due to the simple nature of the land cover. The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Special Experiences: Sounds, sights, smells and tastes

Proposed Development: Operational Phase

- 2.4.18 The relevant component of this SQ relates to the visual qualities concerning *“sights”* and a *“rural setting”*. The Park’s fresh air, clean water, open land and locally produced foods would not be affected by the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

- 2.4.19 The sensitivity of this SQ is assessed as High. This has been derived from the High value of the National Park designation and the High to Medium susceptibility of this SQ to the type of change proposed. The high levels of inter-visibility and corresponding strong visual relationships with surrounding landscapes from the slopes and summits of the uplands, are visual which indicate a higher susceptibility to change, tempered slightly by the visual presence of existing vertical infrastructure (pylons and wind turbines) beyond the BBNP's boundary from parts of the National Park.

Magnitude of change and level of effect

- 2.4.20 The eight turbines comprising the Proposed Development would become new, small scale visual components in outward views from southern margins of the National Park. Existing views from these areas along the BBNP's boundary feature operational wind turbines, existing vertical infrastructure and other intervening built form that are unlikely to detract from the enjoyment of the National Park and the ensuing "*feeling of vitality and wellbeing*". In terms of the rural setting, this is already partially diluted by the proximity of the southern boundary to the ribbon of settlements along the A465 and A4221 corridors including the towns of Ystradgynlais and Merthyr Tydfil.
- 2.4.21 Given the wide, panoramic views available from the BBNP, which often extend to 360°, and the narrow proportion of these views which would be affected by the Proposed Development (2° of the horizontal field of view at Viewpoint 20), the magnitude of change upon this SQ is assessed as Very Low from areas of the BBNP which coincide with the ZTV. This would give rise to a level of landscape effect which would be Moderate/Minor and Not Significant to None within areas outwith the ZTV. The nature of this effect would be long term (reversible), indirect, and adverse.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites (Scenario 1)

- 2.4.22 With reference to **Figure 6.6** and **Figure 6.9** (sheets 1-4), the closest operational wind energy schemes to the southern boundary of the BBNP are the Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms, which are judged to have a Moderate to Moderate/Minor effect (Low-Very Low magnitude) on this SQ given their proximity to the BBNP, tempered by their maximum blade tip height (125 m) and presence beyond other man-made influences including pylons, major road corridors and settlements. Other consented and operational schemes which are located at increased separation distances, would have a very limited influence on this SQ (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The additional cumulative landscape effect on this SQ would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be Moderate to Moderate/Minor and Not Significant (due to the operational Maesgwyn, Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms). The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites + Applications + Scoping (Scenario 2)

- 2.4.23 The location of the planning application schemes within the Study Area and the scoping scheme at Upper Lliw means that their visual presence beyond a number of closer wind energy schemes would have a very limited influence on this SQ (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The scoping schemes at Carreg Wen (Low magnitude) and Hirfynydd (Low-Very Low magnitude) would have an increased influence on the SQ given their scale (230 m and 200 m to blade tip respectively) and relative proximity (approximately 3.6 km and

5.3 km respectively). The additional cumulative landscape effect would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be Moderate and Not Significant, due to the scoping scheme at Carreg Wen. A Not Significant effect has been concluded as whilst having a visual role in outward views, the presence of the turbines outside of the BBNP's boundary would not significantly detract from the *"feeling of vitality and wellbeing that comes from enjoying the National Park's..... rural setting....."*, which is weaker along the southern margins. The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Special Experiences: Peace, tranquillity and dark skies

Proposed Development: Operational Phase

- 2.4.24 The relevant component of this SQ relates to the visual and perceptual qualities concerning *"tranquillity"*. This SQ also references *"dark night-time skies"*, and the assessment of effects on this component of the SQ will be reported as part of the Night-time Assessment, undertaken as part of the Final ES.
- 2.4.25 Tranquillity is defined in NRW's State of Natural Resources Report 2025¹⁴ as *"a relative abundance, perception or experience of nature, natural landscapes, and features and/or a relative freedom from unwanted visual disturbance, signs of human influence and artificial noise."*
- 2.4.26 The introductory text to NRW's Tranquillity and Place Report No: 569¹⁵ also provides context to the theme of tranquillity stating:
- "Tranquillity is associated with the degree to which places and ecosystems deliver a state of quiet, calm, peace and well-being. This can be described as a relative abundance, perception or experience of nature, natural landscapes and features (e.g. birdsong, natural sounds, moving water, stars and perceived wildness) and/or a relative freedom"*.
- 2.4.27 A webmap¹⁶ illustrating the results of NRW's Tranquillity and Place Mapping tranquil places study provides an evidence base with regard to tranquillity and considers the following:
- The Combined map of Theme 1 indicators (rural) brings the results of 10 indicators together in one map. The 10 indicators relate to: naturalness of the land cover, seeing wide open spaces, seeing the sea, seeing streams, rivers and canals, seeing standing water, seeing woodland, seeing time depth, LANDMAP Visual & Sensory outstanding and high landscapes, seeing natural designations and seeing conservation areas.
 - The Combined map of Theme 2 indicators (rural) draws together the results of six indicators which relate to seeing large settlements, seeing villages and scattered houses, seeing roads, seeing railways, seeing active above surface quarries/mines, and seeing large non-natural infrastructure.
 - The Normalised Theme 3 Dark Skies (rural and urban) mapping.
 - The Combined map of Theme 4 Part 1 indicators (rural) relates to the audible influences on tranquillity such as hearing moving water, hearing the sea, hearing nature, hearing low flying aircraft, hearing lots of people and hearing non-natural

¹⁴ Natural Resources Wales (2025). State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR2025). (Online). Available at: <https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/f45ehjei/sonarr2025-final-report.pdf>

¹⁵ Green C, Manson D, Chamberlain K 2022. Tranquillity and Place. NRW Report No: 569. (Online). Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/865c1876d9f64280a3dfc6e2769a46a5>

¹⁶ Available to view at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/865c1876d9f64280a3dfc6e2769a46a5>

sounds. These maps have not been reviewed since there would be no audible influence on tranquillity from the Proposed Development.

- The Theme 5 Map of visually tranquil areas (rural) combines the data for themes 1, 2 and 3. The results from this map are shown in **Figure 6.10**. This broadly shows that the majority of the BBNP which coincides with the LVIA Study Area for the Proposed Development is categorised as being within Level 8 or Level 9 in terms of visual tranquillity on a scale in which Level 2 represents areas of lowest tranquillity for rural areas (with Level 1 applied to urban areas) and Level 10 indicates highest tranquillity levels. This therefore indicates high (but not the highest) levels of tranquillity. There are also some small peripheral areas which are categorised as Level 7 on the scale of visual tranquillity. These are all reflected in the visually tranquil categories reported for the VSAs in Section 2.3, which provides a breakdown of the percentages of each category found within the individual VSAs.

Sensitivity

- 2.4.28 The sensitivity of this SQ is assessed as High. This has been derived from the High value of the National Park designation and the High to Medium susceptibility of this SQ to the type of change proposed well beyond the BBNP's boundary.

Magnitude of change and level of effect

- 2.4.29 There would be no change to the 10 natural (Theme 1) indicators of tranquillity as a consequence of the Proposed Development. The landscape within the BBNP which coincides with the LVIA Study Area and ZTV would continue to display high levels of naturalness of the land cover and presence of wide-open spaces.
- 2.4.30 Of the six detractors from tranquillity considered under Theme 2, only one could potentially be affected by the Proposed Development and relates to seeing large non-natural infrastructure. The Viewpoint Assessment in **Appendix 6K** concludes that receptors at Viewpoint 20 would experience Very Low magnitudes of visual change as a consequence of the Proposed Development. The baseline photography and cumulative wirelines indicate that the proposed turbines would be experienced as part of much wider landscape panoramas, many which include existing large non-natural infrastructure, with this pattern of visibility also occurring from the more elevated summits and uplands. The separation distance between the Proposed Development and the BBNP ensures that it is not of a scale that would make it a prominent non-natural feature.
- 2.4.31 NRWs Tranquillity and Place Report No: 569¹⁵ demonstrates that the perception of tranquillity can be influenced by 16 visual indicators; 10 positive contributors to higher levels of tranquillity and six detractors from tranquillity as well as the presence of dark skies. The Proposed Development would affect only one of these 16 indicators relating to seeing large non-natural infrastructure. Within this single indicator, it should also be noted that the methodology presented in the Tranquillity and Place¹⁵ report, assigns a score of '1' for seeing large scale infrastructure at distances in excess of 5 km, with a score of '9' awarded for seeing large scale infrastructure at a distance of 500 m¹⁷ (and where a higher score indicates lower tranquillity). Whilst the Proposed Development would be greater in height than the maximum 120 m height used for in the scoring methodology, it nevertheless provides a useful guide to the limited contribution to which seeing the proposed turbines would have to tranquillity at a separation distance in excess of 15 km. The magnitude of change upon this SQ is therefore assessed as Very Low from areas of

¹⁷ A score of 6 is given for seeing large scale infrastructure at a distance of 1 km, a score of 3 for a distance of 2 km and a score of 2 for seeing large scale infrastructure at a distance of 5 km.

the BBNP which coincide with the blade tip ZTV giving rise to a level of landscape effect which would be Moderate/Minor and Not Significant. The nature of this effect would be long term (reversible), indirect, and adverse. From the majority of the BBNP, there would be no change to this SQ.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites (Scenario 1)

- 2.4.32 The closest operational wind farm to the BBNP is the 125 m to blade tip the Maesgwyn Wind Farm, which is located at a minimum distance of approximately 1 km to the south of the BBNP's southern boundary. The closest areas of landscape within the BBNP to this wind energy scheme coincide with VSAABRCKNVS436 Tawe Valley and Cwm Twrch, where visual tranquillity is recorded in the LANDMAP Survey as being predominantly category 7 (32.9%) and category 8 (62.05%) and BRCKNVS597 Coed-y-Rhaiadr, where visual tranquillity is recorded in the as category 7 (12.23%), category 8 (76.24%) and category 9 (11.53%), but where the extensive coniferous plantation within this area precludes a proportion of the outward views to the south. With regard to tranquillity, only one indicator could be altered (seeing large non-natural infrastructure), giving rise to a Low magnitude of change on this SQ. Other consented and operational schemes within the Study Area are of a scale or at a separation distance that the magnitude of change would be Low-Very Low (Mynydd y Betws and Tairgwaith Wind Farms) or less (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The additional cumulative landscape effect on this SQ would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be Moderate and Not Significant (due to the operational Maesgwyn Wind Farm). The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

Cumulative Assessment: Proposed Development + Operational + Consented Sites + Applications + Scoping (Scenario 2)

- 2.4.33 The separation distances between the planning application schemes within the Study Area and the scoping scheme at Upper Lliw means that they would have a very limited influence on this SQ (Very Low to Zero magnitude). The scoping schemes at Carreg Wen (Low magnitude) and Hirfynydd (Low-Very Low magnitude) would have an increased influence on the SQ given their scale (230 m and 200 m to blade tip respectively) and relative proximity (approximately 3.6 km and 5.3 km respectively). LANDMAP VSAA CYNONVS833 Penderyn, which is the closest VSAA within the BBNP to the Carreg Wen scheme, is recorded as having visual tranquillity as predominantly category 7 (49.99%) and category 8 (44.53%). The additional cumulative landscape effect would remain Moderate/Minor and Not Significant whilst the combined effect would be Moderate and Not Significant, due to the operational Maesgwyn Wind Farm and scoping scheme at Carreg Wen. A Not Significant effect has been concluded as all contributors to tranquillity would continue to be observed. The nature of this effect would be cumulative, indirect, long term (reversible) and adverse.

2.5 Stage 4: Summary of Significant Effects on SQs

- 2.5.1 The Proposed Development is not located within the BBNP, being a minimum distance of approximately 15 km from its boundary. In assessing the indirect effects of the Proposed Development on the visual and perceptual SQs of the BBNP the assessment has concluded that there would be no significant effects on the SQs or the integrity of the BBNP.
- 2.5.2 In all cases the Proposed Development would be seen in the context of other operational and consented wind farm development according with that pattern of development.

Although cumulative, the Proposed Development would represent a non-significant additional cumulative effect. The Proposed Development would also not significantly contribute to combined cumulative effects resulting from other operational and consented wind farms and wind farm applications.

2.5.3 The effects of the proposed aviation warning lights of the Proposed Development on the BBNP will be considered as part of the Final ES.

2.5.4 A summary of the SQ assessment for the BBNP is set out in **Table 6I.1**.

Table 6I.1 SQ Assessment for the BBNP

Special Quality	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Level of effect
Special Landscapes			
Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty	High	Very Low to Zero	Moderate/Minor and Not Significant to None
Contrasting patterns, colours, and textures	High	Very Low to Zero	Moderate/ Minor and Not Significant to None
Special People			
Intimate sense of community	Not assessed – cultural quality that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		
Sense of place and cultural identity	Not assessed – cultural quality that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		
Special Experiences			
Enjoyable and accessible:	Not assessed – physical (recreational) quality that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		
Sounds, sights, smells and tastes	High	Very Low to Zero	Moderate/Minor and Not Significant to None
Sense of discovery	Not assessed – cultural quality that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		
Peace, tranquillity and dark skies	High	Very Low to Zero	Moderate/ Minor and Not Significant to None
Special Nature			
Mosaic of Diversity	Not assessed – physical characteristic that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		
Living Landscape	Not assessed – physical characteristic that could not be affected by the Proposed Development which is well beyond the BBNP boundary.		