



Special Features

## SECTION THREE

# THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AONB

In setting out a programme of management for the protection and enhancement of the AONB it is first necessary to define those individual features that make up the special character of the area. Following consultation with local communities, public bodies and agencies with an interest in the areas management a list of twelve Special Features has been identified of those particular elements of the landscape that make the Clwydian Range special.

Whilst it is recognised that there are a number of other elements within the landscape that are of particular value it is important to identify those features within the Clwydian Range that represent the finest qualities nationally.

It is also recognised that the special character of the Clwydian Range AONB is made up of the unique combination of all its Special Features and as such objectives contribute towards the enhancement and conservation of the character of the AONB as a whole.

It is important that management does not focus exclusively on only one Special Feature but takes into consideration the complex patterns of landscape characters and features that make up the landscape. The Clwydian Range is remarkable for the diversity of both habitat and character that make up this special area.

## Special Features List

### Biodiversity.

- Limestone Grassland and Pavement
- Broadleaved Woodland
- River Valleys
- Heather Moorland

### The Historic Environment

- Hillforts, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology
- Small Historic Features
- Traditional Boundaries

### Access and Recreation

- Loggerheads and Moel Famau Country Park
- The Offa's Dyke National Trail
- The Rights of Way Network

### Culture and People

- The Built Environment
- Sustainable Communities







## The Vision for the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Clwydian Range AONB is a dynamic landscape with flourishing communities and a thriving local economy. This landscape supports a rich biological and cultural resource that is accessible to all. The landscape of the Clwydian Range is cherished as a peaceful haven by those living in and visiting the AONB and is treasured for its open spaces and commanding views. Its special features are understood and appreciated by all.

Communities and visitors are fully engaged in a partnership with the Joint Advisory Committee and its staff, which empowers them to have a stake in the AONB and invest in its future.

The Clwydian Range is a flagship for sustainable development and forward planning and its international protection as a Category V protected landscape is influential on an international, national and local stage.



## State of the AONB Report

FIG 1 Biodiversity

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Semi Natural Limestone Grassland and Pavement (SNLG&amp;P)</b>	Calcareous Grassland primarily occurs in two areas in the north from Prestatyn to Cwm and centrally along the Alyn Valley. Culminating in the second largest limestone pavement in Wales at Bryn Alyn. The majority of SNLG&P are SSSI's. <b>Extent</b> 215 Hectares 1.3% of AONB SNLG&P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-grazing encourages scrub encroachment.</li> <li>Over grazing resulting in loss of species diversity.</li> <li>Quarrying.</li> <li>Enrichment of soils due to fertilizer and subsequent loss of variety of species.</li> <li>Removal of pavement for rockeries.</li> <li>Fencing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideal State</b> – Diverse rich mix of flora from the scrub</p> <p>% under positive management</p> <p><b>Condition</b> Unfavourable – Declining</p>

FIG 2

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Broadleaved Woodland</b>	Many of these woodlands represent a link with the landscape as it appeared following the last ice age and supports a diverse range of flora and fauna. Ash woodlands are particularly important in the Alyn Valley where it has been designated candidate SAC. In other parts of the AONB oak wood are significant. <b>2.2% of the AONB semi ancient woodland.</b> <b>345 Hectares of ASNW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grazing preventing natural regeneration.</li> <li>Loss due to localized quarrying in the limestone areas.</li> <li>Lack of specific woodland mgt.</li> <li>Potential conflict between shooting and conservation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideal State</b> – Broad age structure of native trees with a rich ground flora.</p> <p><b>% of woodland in the AONB in WGS</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Unfavourable – Stable</p>

FIG 3

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>River Valleys</b>	There are two significant River valleys in the AONB. The River Alyn from Cilcain to Llanarmon-yn-Iâl and the River Wheeler from Bodfari to Melin-y-wern - <b>18km being their combined length</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of the water</li> <li>Loss of bankside vegetation</li> <li>Loss of otters through traffic kills on A494</li> <li>Loss of water voles</li> <li>Access to the river</li> <li>Fertilizer run off</li> <li>Flooding</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideal State</b> – Clean water with a diverse range of bankside flora and fauna</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To monitor fish counts, otters, water voles and bank side vegetation.</li> <li>% increase in evidence of otters and water voles.</li> <li>% of river with bank side vegetation</li> </ul> <p><b>Figures unknown</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Favourable-Stable</p>

FIG 4

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Heather Moorland</b>	<p>Consists of a mix of heather, bilberry and gorse. It has a distinct range of bird life including grouse, stonechat and whinchat.</p> <p>The heathland in the AONB is between Bodfari and Llandegla and primarily on or adjacent to the ridgeline of the AONB.</p> <p><b>1813 Hectares</b> <b>11.5% of AONB</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been a substantial loss of this habitat through agricultural improvements in the 1970's, where areas were improved to grassland to improve sheep management.</li> <li>The division of the common through internal fences and subsequent loss of hefted flocks.</li> <li>In other areas the loss has meant the concentration of heathland species on the fragmented heather that remained.</li> <li>Some areas are over grazed.</li> <li>Some areas are under grazed.</li> <li>A significant area of heathland has been lost to bracken invasion.</li> <li>Due to the thin soils areas that have heavy recreation are prone to erosion.</li> <li>The CROV Regulations mean that all the significant remaining heath will be subject to open access.</li> <li>Lack of appropriate rotational heather management</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideal State</b> – As broad age structure of heather with associated other plants, bilberry etc.</p> <p>The central blocks are under positive management through public ownership and ESA Agreement.</p> <p><b>% of heath under positive management.</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Unfavourable – Improving</p>

FIG 5 The Historic Environment

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Hillforts and Scheduled Ancient Monuments</b>	<p>The chain of iron age hillforts astride the ridgeline of the Clwydian Range are its most high profile and unique archaeological sites.</p> <p>The 6 hillforts so close together provide one of the highest concentration in Western Europe</p> <p><b>There are 47 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the AONB.</b></p> <p>Before any work is carried out on these sites permission must be sought from CADW. Many of these sites provide evidence of past mining, quarrying and settlements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erosion to the hillforts through recreation and sheep scrapes.</li> <li>Damage through inappropriate land management e.g. quarrying, tree planting and over grazing.</li> <li>Lack of archaeological digs, therefore lack of modern understanding of their purpose.</li> <li>Erosion</li> <li>Ploughing/Agricultural pressure</li> <li>Damage from metal detection</li> </ul>	<p>3 are owned by the County Councils.</p> <p>A considerable amount of work has already been carried out on the worst of the erosion</p> <p><b>Number of hillforts with management plans - 0</b></p> <p><b>Ideal State</b> – That sites are maintained in a favourable condition.</p> <p>Sites are visited by CADW every 5 years.</p> <p><b>Condition</b> Favourable - Stable</p>



FIG 6

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Small Historic Features</b>	<p>These are the features that collectively create the unique character of the AONB and are unlikely to be conserved although they are an important part of the fabric of the landscape.</p> <p>Examples: Red telephone boxes, water troughs, milestones, stone stiles, old wells, old road signs named rocks and milk stands.</p>	<p>These features tend to 'disappear' and part of this is because there is not a comprehensive list held anywhere. They also disappear through being modernized or through road improvement schemes.</p>	<p><b>% loss of features identified</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Stable – improving</p>



FIG 7

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Boundaries</b>	<p>The main types are native hedgerows on slopes and drystone walls in the limestone and upland shale area. The other type are hedgerows on a stone retaining wall. These linear features are valuable wildlife habitats, which act particularly well as corridors between habitats.</p> <p><b>Extent - length of boundaries within AONB - Unknown</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of walls due to agricultural improvements.</li> <li>Loss due to lack of maintenance.</li> <li>Loss of skills to maintain in a traditional way.</li> <li>Expense of maintenance.</li> <li>Modern maintenance is not suitable</li> </ul>	<p>Need survey of boundaries and a grading so those that have greatest impact on the landscape are and prioritized for action.</p> <p><b>% of boundaries in good condition</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> unfavourable-improving</p>



FIG 8 Access and Recreation

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Loggerheads and Moel Famau Country Parks.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located at heart of AONB on A494</li> <li>Complex is purpose built in the centre of an attractive Country Park</li> <li>The buildings include offices, Café, and Visitors Centre, which includes a section dedicated to the AONB.</li> <li>The information centre attracts 50,000 visitors per year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Centre has several roles:- Inform public about AONB, The Country Parks history and Denbighshire Countryside Service.</li> <li>Large numbers of visitors centred on relatively small areas leading to erosion and congestion.</li> <li>Financial constraints relating to facilities and Services such as education centre, Loggerheads Mill, Jubilee Tower.</li> <li>Poor physical and intellectual links between sites and other places of interest.</li> <li>The centre is not part of the TIC network.</li> <li>Congestion at Car Parks during peak periods.</li> <li>Effect of large visitor numbers on agricultural and conservation interests.</li> <li>Introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To monitor state, carry out 5 year survey on visitors to the centre.</li> <li>% of visitors content with the facilities at Loggerheads.</li> <li>% of visitors who are aware that they are in an AONB.</li> </ul> <p><b>Condition</b> Favourable</p>

FIG 9

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Offa's Dyke National Trail</b>	The Trail starts in Prestatyn and for the 1st 45km of its 285km to Chepstow, it is within the Clwydian Range AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The economic benefit brought to businesses.</li> <li>TMaintenance of the trail.</li> <li>TDamage to SAMs.</li> <li>TMonitoring of Visitors to trail.</li> <li>TThe formation of a Trail Trust rather than be managed by CCW and NAW.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Trail is in favorable condition. A full survey was undertaken in 1997 by the CCW.</li> <li>All work is prioritized.</li> <li>% of trail improved over 5 years.</li> </ul> <p><b>Condition</b> Favourable – improving</p>

FIG 10

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Rights of Way Network</b>	<p>An extensive network of paths, bridleways and byways. Some have great historical significance including the Leete Path and old Drover's Roads. The network brings specific economic benefit to the local economy.</p> <p><b>km of footpaths</b> <b>km of bridleways</b> <b>km of byways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erosion on ridge line paths.</li> <li>The network not completely open.</li> <li>Illegal use of routes by cyclists, horse riders and motor vehicles.</li> <li>Important historical and wildlife features adjacent to rights of way including walls, hedges etc. that are neglected.</li> <li>Sheep worrying.</li> <li>Visitors not abiding by Country Code.</li> <li>Honey-pot capacity.</li> </ul>	<p>Denbighshire C.C has 1,838 items of infrastructure and 881 maintenance items to deal with in the AONB. Flintshire C.C – N/A</p> <p><b>% of he network available to the Public</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Stable – improving</p>

FIG 11 Culture and People

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>The Built Environment</b>	<p>The built environment encompasses a diverse range of buildings from scattered farmsteads to nucleated villages.</p> <p>They often reflect the historic development of communities and their relationship in the landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsympathetic Boundaries.</li> <li>Unsympathetic Conversion and extensions.</li> <li>Pressure on LAs to provide plots for new build.</li> <li>Introduction of alien plant species.</li> </ul>	<p><b>% of JAC recommendations that are adopted with by F.C.C and D.C.C.</b></p> <p><b>Condition</b> Stable – improving</p>



FIG 12

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	ISSUES	STATE
<b>Sustainable Communities</b>	<p>Vibrant communities are a integral element of a sustainable landscape. Communities are constantly changing and it is important to recognize and protect those elements we value.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolation both geographical and social.</li> <li>Investment in rural facilities.</li> <li>Development pressure.</li> <li>Lack of engagement in local events and traditions.</li> <li>Changing make up of rural communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a mechanism for monitoring state of community.</p> <p><b>Condition</b> Favourable - Declining</p>

