

Landscape, Seascape & Cultural Services

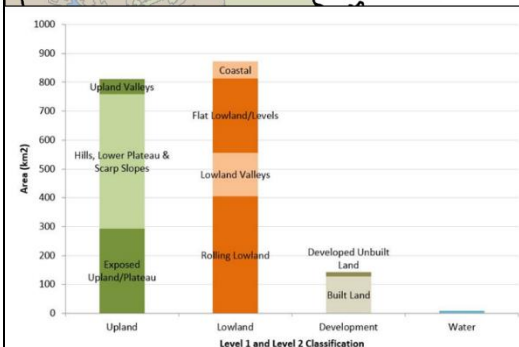
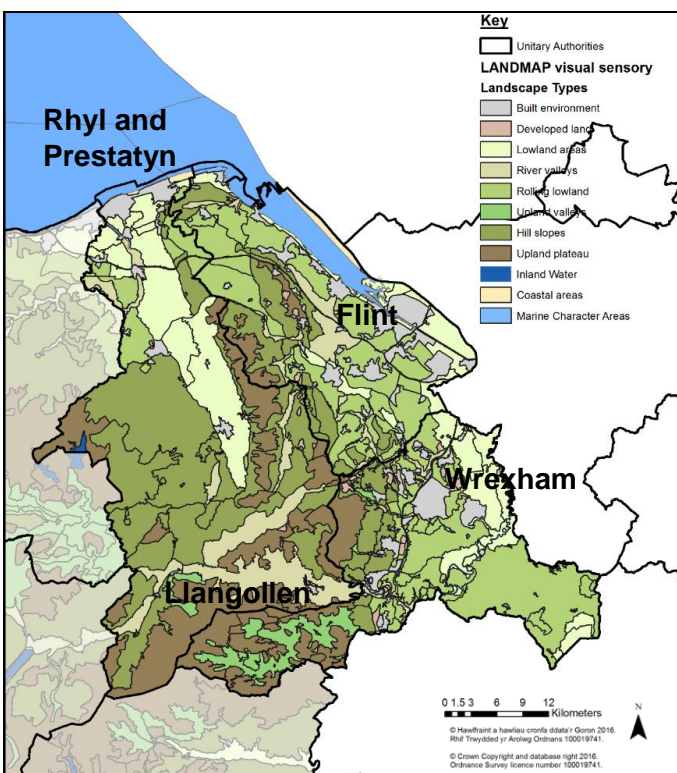
Shaped by nature and people over time, landscapes are the settings in which we live, work and experience life. All landscapes matter. They combine natural resources, culture and economy. Many environmental resilience and place-based planning challenges that shape our future wellbeing and prosperity are best addressed at a landscape-scale.

Landscape characteristics and qualities combine to create a distinct sense of place. Sense of place is key to understanding how we derive cultural inspiration and well-being from landscape. Understanding the contribution of landscape to cultural services is part of the natural resources approach.

www.naturalresources.wales/landscape

The North-East Wales Landscape

*The area encompasses the north-east borderland – a predominately quiet, traditional and attractive rural area with coast, rural lowlands and hills. An accessible populated area, with some major transport routes and towns, with Wrexham the principle centre. The Dee Estuary provides strong coastal sense of place to the north. A central chain of upland hills and valleys forms the **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB**, providing a scenic backdrop to much of the area. Cultural heritage is strongly displayed in the area's landscapes, settlement, buildings, and mix of Welsh and English place names – particularly evident in the **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site**, prehistoric hillforts, castles, historic landscapes parks and gardens.*



Headline characteristics

- 21% of the area lies within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Almost equal areas of lowland (48%) and upland (44%) landscapes.
- 8% of the area is classified as development (143km²), above the national average of 5.14%
- A strong borderland character formed by the chain of hills and upland plateau that rises from the Cheshire plain with hills a visual backdrop to many of the areas towns, villages and transport routes.
- Wild and tranquil qualities associated with the coastline at Gronant dunes, the Dee estuary, Halkyn Mountain, the Clwyds, Llandegla Moor, Llantysillio and Ruabon Mountain, Fenn's Moss, the upper Ceiriog valley, and the Berwyns.
- Dramatic accessible escarpments near Prestatyn, the Vale of Clwyd and Llangollen, above Minera and the highest point of the Berwyn ridge at Cadair Berwyn.
- Many distinctive landforms – e.g. Griag Fawr, Gop Hill, Moel yr Parc, Moel Arthur, Moel Famau, Dinas Bran, Eglwyseg escarpment, Ruabon Mountain etc.
- The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site is designated for its spectacular aqueduct crossings and feat of engineering in a topographically challenging location.
- 6 Registered Historic Landscapes recognise the strong diverse cultural influences of prehistoric remains, medieval farming, defences, estate lands, houses and gardens, religious establishments, extractive and processing industrial activity within the contemporary landscape.

Distinctive landscapes and sense of place

The county of **Denbighshire** has diverse character, with a settled busy coastline and quieter rural farmed valleys, enclosed by gentle hills which rise to the distinctive upland ridgelines of the Clwydian Range, Llantysillio Mountain and Berwyn Mountains. Moorland plateau lies at Llandegla and Denbigh Moor with some large coniferous plantations.

The settled coastal plain includes the resort towns of Prestatyn and Rhyl, 20th century development and the A55 corridor. Urban influences are set within an area strongly influenced by views and access to the coast, traditional rural farmland, wooded coastal escarpments and the upland hills of the Clwydian Range.

The Clwydian Range includes escarpments, dramatic edges, limestone features (outcrops, pavement, use in walls and buildings) mosaic habitats, deciduous woodland, medieval field systems, open moorland, and history through its prehistoric hillforts, traditional farming, parks and quarrying industry that has influenced land use and settlement. The area is strongly rural, tranquil, with a sense of history and in places wildness.

The Vale of Llangollen, Eglewsygy and Morwynion valleys have strong visual unity with the adjacent moorland ridges of Llantysillio Mountain and the Berwyn.

The Eglewsygy limestone escarpment is particularly dramatic; Dinas Bran and its ruined castle and Vale Crucis are very distinctive landmarks near Llangollen; Horseshoe falls is an attractive curved weir in an engineered river setting; Llangollen nestles within a scenic narrow valley; and the wooded valley slopes, farmland mosaic, traditional settlement and meandering river Dee contribute to a very scenic valley gateway between Wales and England.



Eglwyseg mountain, Vale of Llangollen © John Briggs

The **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB** covers much of the upland area between Prestatyn and Llangollen.

The Vale of Clwyd with medieval market towns, castle at Denbigh, historic farming and estate influences, lined by the Clwydian Range forms a distinctive area.

Llyn Brenig is a large remote reservoir popular for sailing, fishing, walking and cycling on Denbigh Moor.

Wide ranging aerial views from various points in the uplands provide a strong regional sense of place and peace, with views to the Snowdonia skyline; out over the coast, to the Wirral and Lake District on a clear day; and from the south along the Berwyns into mid Wales and to Southern Snowdonia.

Flintshire has some diverse landscapes including the expansive Dee Estuary, wooded coastal escarpments, rolling farmed lowlands, extensive open common land at Halkyn mountain, some intricate wooded valleys at Loggerheads and the upland Clwydian Hills forming the western skyline of the county.



Halkyn Mountain © Raymond Roberts NRW

The Dee Estuary is a wild, exposed and a visually dynamic changing landscape of water, intertidal mud flats and sand banks. The narrow coastal saltmarsh is lined by coastal hillslopes of fields and woodland on steeper slopes and side valleys. The dunes and coastline at Telacre and Gronant are particularly wild and tranquil, with the light house at point of Ayr forming a local landmark and point where the Dee Estuary meets the Irish Sea.

Scattered rural and urban settlement line the edge of the hillslopes, shallower hillslopes and valleys. The Point of Ayre gas refinery, Mostyn docks, business park and storage yards punctuate the edge of the estuary. Urban

settlement and industrial development is more extensive characteristic at Deeside. The Flintshire Bridge forms an iconic structure and elevated crossing of the River Dee in this area.

Gop Hill with its ceremonial cairn (the largest in Wales) is a distinctive landmark above the farmed Trelawnyd Plateau, with limestone buildings. Halkyn Mountain, limestone plateau forms an exposed upland area of common land with mosaic of moorland, rough grassland, scrub, extensive historic lead mining and more recent limestone quarries. Attractive views of the Clwydian Hills to the west and expansive views north over the Wirral to Liverpool and beyond provide a strong regional sense of place.

The **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB** covers much of the western uplands of the county.

Land rises to the west of Mold as a line of rolling rugged limestone hills and forms the edge of the AONB at Gwernymydd. The small-scale undulating nature of landform, areas of woodland and plantations combine in

places to create a visually remote and isolated tranquil character. There is a strong sense of rural traditions derived from agricultural practices, worker settlement and quarrying.

Moel Famau, the highest point of the Clwydian Hills is marked by the remains of the Jubilee Tower with pockets of moorland amongst improved pasture. Small valleys cut into the hills some with plantations, reservoirs and limestone villages.

The county of **Wrexham** is a diverse area with lowland medieval farming, estate parkland and settlement traditions to the east, more urban and transport related influences around the town of Wrexham and the A483 corridor centrally, before hills and valleys start to form with a mix of scattered rural and urban mining villages. Further west, elevated moorlands and the glaciated valleys of the Dee and Ceiriog are upland in character.



Vicarage Moss, Gresford © Raymond Roberts NRW

Borderland location and mix of Welsh and English cultural influences is evident in places names, the diverse character of villages, estate lands and grand houses.

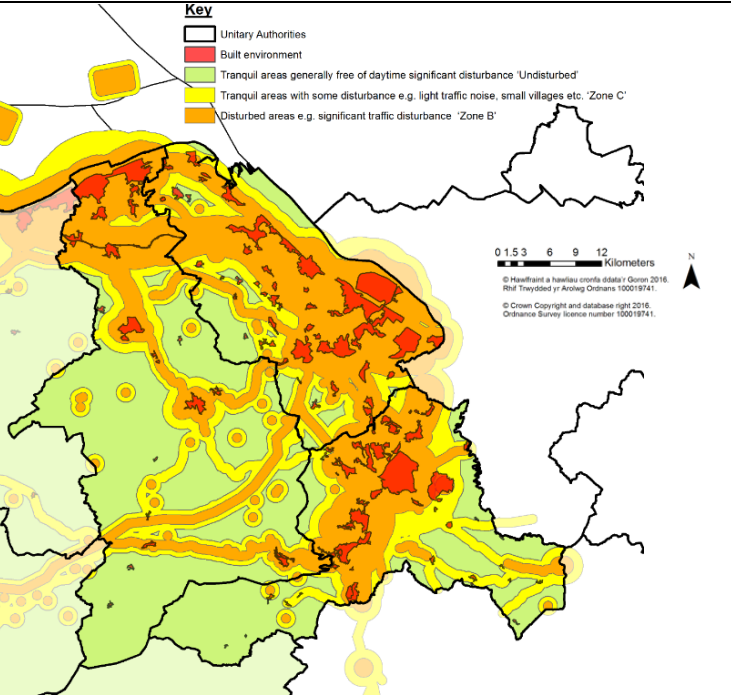
The moorland of Ruabon/ Esclusham Mountain forms the distinctive western backdrop to the area. The Berwyn Mountains enclose the Ceiriog Valley to the south west where hill farming and welsh identity is strong. These areas are visually distinctive, tranquil, remote and wild.

Fens Moss is as a rare area of low lying fenland of ecological importance, and provides a rare feeling of wildness in a lowland landscape.

The lower Dee floodplain, Wych valley, Nant-y-ffrith valley and Ceirorg Valley are tranquil and remote. Valley topography, river terraces, deciduous woodlands and running water and limited development make these areas tranquil. The kettle holes at Pant yr Ochan are an interesting glacial feature of the Wrexham Delta near Wrexham. The Wrexham ‘pondscape’ - the excavation of marl pits to improve fields adds to character and ecological habitats.

The Dee Valley at Cefn Mawr forms a dramatic gateway to the Vale of Llangollen. It includes important cultural features of Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site, Offa’s Dyke scheduled monument, historic parks and gardens, with the river and canal an important ecological habitat. Chirk Castle and Erddig are notable intact examples of historic property, gardens and parkland with many other examples of historic estate influence across the area particularly at Wynnstay.

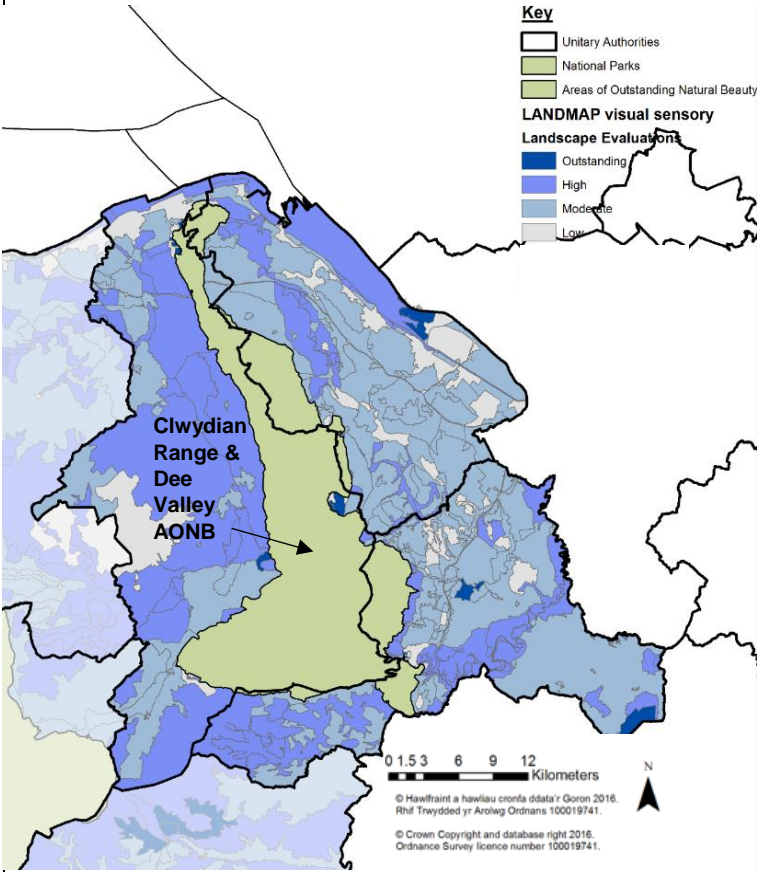
Ruabon/Esclusham Mountain, the Dee Valley (as it joins the Vale of Llangollen) and Chirk Castle all lie within the **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB**



Tranquillity

- Tranquillity is found within the uplands and remote Ceiriog Valley, Lower Dee Valley and Welsh Maelor where farming traditions in land use and settlement predominate.
- The Berwyn Mountains form one of the two largest tranquil areas that are over 1000km² in Wales.
- Major transport networks, and the clustered pattern of settlement and development particularly along the northern and eastern edges of the area affect tranquillity.
- Major offshore wind farms at Rhyl Flats and Burbo Banks have altered seascape views and tranquillity. Onshore wind farm development at Cloceanog forest is evolving and becoming more extensive than mapping currently indicates.
- Tranquil areas have decreased by 10% (81km²) over a 12-year period, 780km² of tranquil landscapes remained in 2009.

LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Landscape Evaluation



- Over 50% landscape is evaluated very highly. The area includes the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.
- 10% (185km²) is evaluated as a **nationally outstanding** visual & sensory landscape, 68% are upland
- 42% (763km²) are evaluated as **high, regionally important** landscapes, 58% are associated with the uplands and 41% lowlands
- Conserve and enhance outstanding and high landscapes
- Within landscapes of lower quality, the general principle is to enhance landscapes to contribute to wellbeing
- Many of the area’s towns and villages about landscapes of high value along one settlement edge, with slightly fewer within Flintshire and Wrexham
- As a general principle of landscape resource management, we should seek to conserve and enhance outstanding and high landscapes as these contain characteristics of national and county value
- Qualities such as tranquillity, wildness, naturalness, built heritage and cultural identity, aesthetic appreciation and recreation, are cultural services of landscape that contribute to people’s wellbeing.

Landscape Change

- Settlement expansion from residential areas into adjacent rural areas accounts for the greatest change.
- Commercial development has increased. Restoration of quarries and landfill, steelworks redevelopment and the discontinuation of used chemical works are all evident. Potential landscape improvement from chimney removal. Landfill restoration improving local landscape character
- Denbighshire records the most change, ranging from the expansion of built up areas, quarries and changes in the natural environment
- Area under pressure from future wind development, which could affect the uplands of Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Expansion of caravan park/leisure facilities are notable. Also, pressure from motorcross.
- Changes to upland vegetation cover through grazing regimes is evident. Parts of the Berwyn Mountains have changed to improved pasture from moorland. Scrub clearance and vegetation control is making a difference within the AONB as has the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme. Forest felling and replanting is evident, particularly in the Vale of Llangollen and Ceiriog Forest.

