Landscape considerations in Forests & Woodlands

Jill Bullen, Senior Landscape Specialist
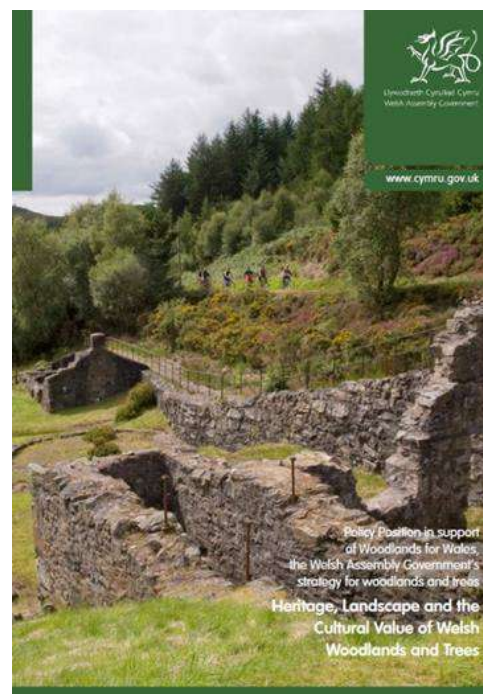
UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)
Sustainable forest management

Landscape sub-section (S6.4, page 96)

- Standards and requirements
- International agreements/conventions
- Assessment of forestry proposals for approval & compliance

'Woodlands for Wales' Vision 50+ years

*'Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands **that enhance the landscape**, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats'*
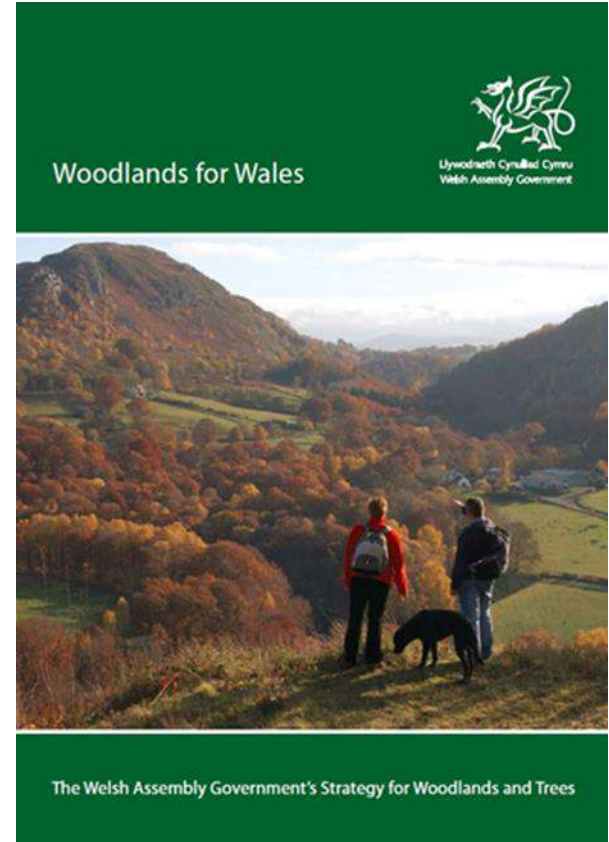
Forestry strategy 6 outcomes include:
*Woodlands that are **better adapted to deliver a full range of benefits**, including urban woodlands*

NRW forestry remit 10 areas of action include

*Recognition of Woodland for Wales outcomes and the forest sector when taking forward **Integrated Natural Resource Management** and an 'ecosystems approach' to decision making*

Welsh Government 5-year action plan

*Target of **2,000 hectares of new planting per annum***

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Woodlands for Wales

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

The Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees

UKFS & Landscape Convention

European Landscape Convention, UK signed 24/02/06

"an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors"

all Landscapes matter, living, working places, shared cultural and natural heritage

Landscape and SMNR

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UKFS Landscape (p96)

Natural components
geology, landform, soils, watercourses, climate

Human influences
land use, land management, settlement

Aesthetic qualities
visual and sensory impressions

Cultural values
historical, social and personal associations

SMNR Cultural Services from Landscape

Mental
Places that provide Joy, happiness, spiritualness, freedom, escape, connection, 'feel good'

Social
Places to meet others, do worth-while things, share experiences, and learn

Physical
Places for active lifestyles – where the quality of the environment brings additional benefits

Valued attributes of Landscape

Scenic Quality

Distinctiveness

Sense of place

Tranquility

Wildness

Historic/ cultural continuity and 'Time depth'

Cultural landscapes

Harmonious change

The principles of forest design, informed by the landscape context, should be applied to ensure landscape and visual aspects are appropriately addressed.

Forests should be designed and managed to take account of:

Landscape context

Landscape character

Landscape and visual sensitivities

Historic context

Designed landscapes

Landscape Character, use to…

- Identify key characteristics, qualities and distinctiveness
- Understand what is important and why
- Historic character, context, value and patterns
- Relate to opportunities for change & management guidelines
- Inform forest design
  - Is woodland already a characteristic of the landscape?
  - What type of woodland: broadleaved/conifer/mixed?
  - Scale of landscape and woodland: large or small copses?
  - How can woodland relate to landform?
  - Will it contribute positively to character and scenic quality?
  - Will it contribute to special qualities, designed landscapes?
  - Where can I find this information?

Landscape and visual sensitivities to change

- Designated and highly valued landscapes
- Strong sense of place
- Historic field patterns, features, designed landscape
- Prominent natural skyline, distinct features, rock outcrops
- Very open with fragile habitats e.g. marsh, bog, heath, species-rich grassland
- High visibility overall (landform) and importance of views
- Scale: open and panoramic, enclosed and intimate
- Receptors: settlements/roads/PROWs/Open Access/National Trails
- Sensitivity of receptors: residents/visitors/viewpoints, landscapes of high value

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape summary, key characteristics, qualities, sense of place…

National Landscape Character Areas

National scale

48 NLCAs

Landscape Character Areas

Regional/authority scale

+ management guidelines

LANDMAP 5 spatial datasets

Local scale

+ management guidelines

+ evaluation landscape importance

+ most detailed resource to use
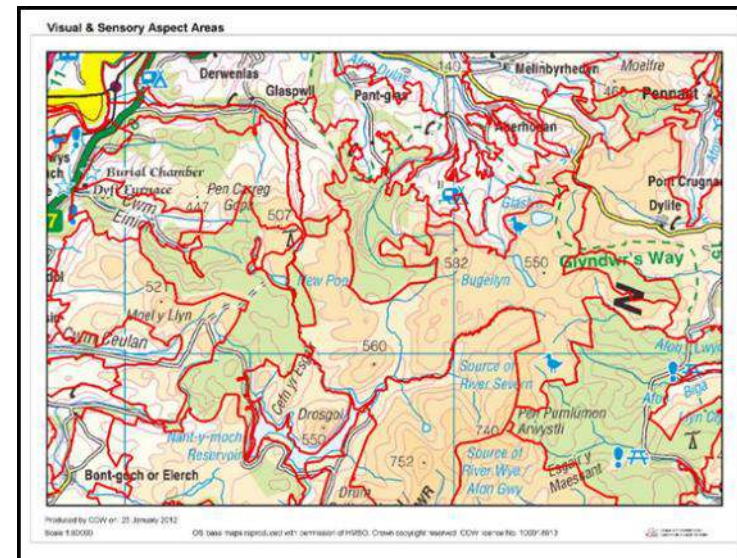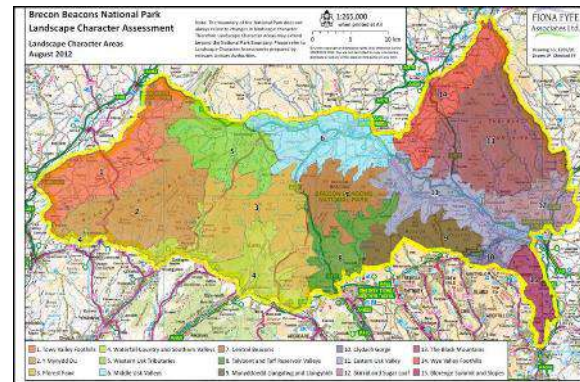
LANDMAP landscape baseline

- Detailed surveys of landscape information
- Understand historic landscape patterns
- Interrelationships between people, places and resources
- Important characteristic features: retain visibility to, integrate in open ground
- Opportunities and management recommendations
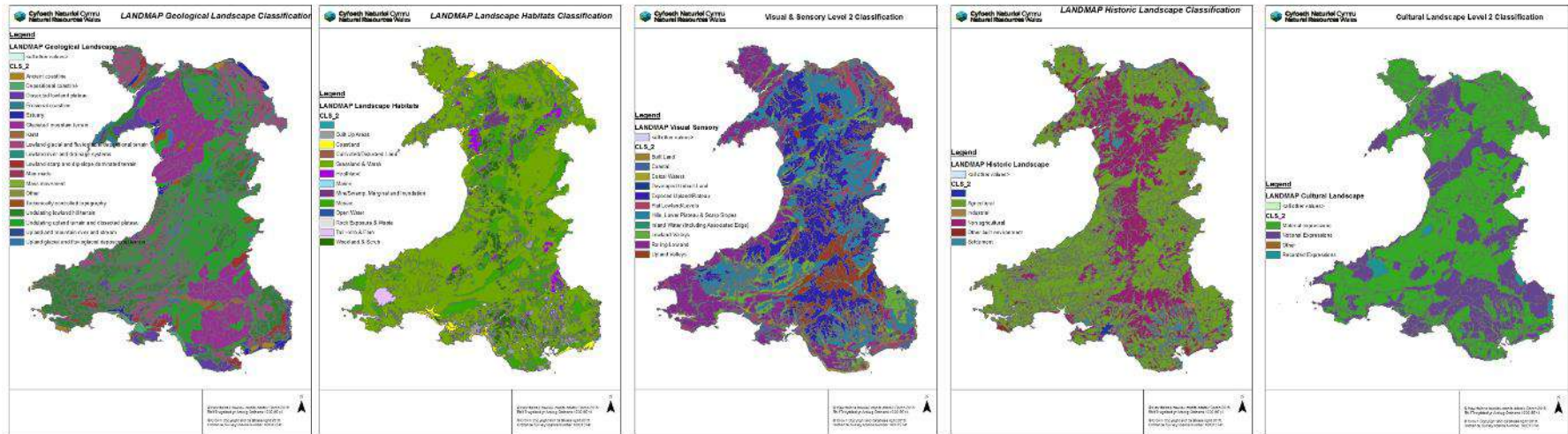
| Geological Landscape ~2670 | Landscape Habitats 2738 | Visual & Sensory 1940 | Historic Landscape 2538 | Cultural Landscape 906 surveys |

https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/evidence-to-inform-development-planning/landmap-the-welsh-landscape-baseline/?lang=en

Seascape Character Assessment

Seascape summary, key characteristics, qualities, sense of place, relationship land and sea…

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National Marine Character Areas
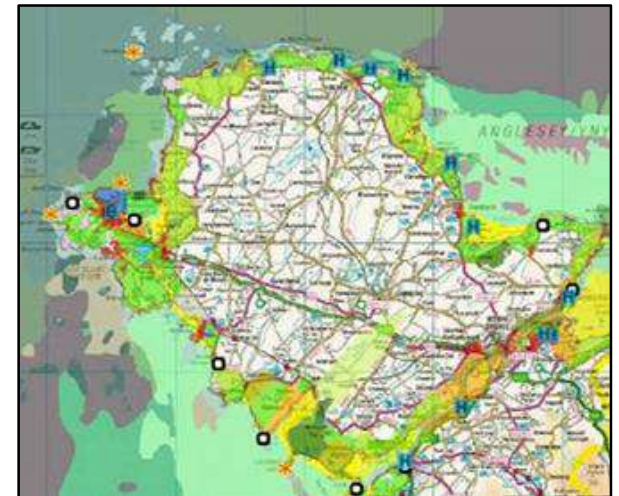National scale
29 MCAs
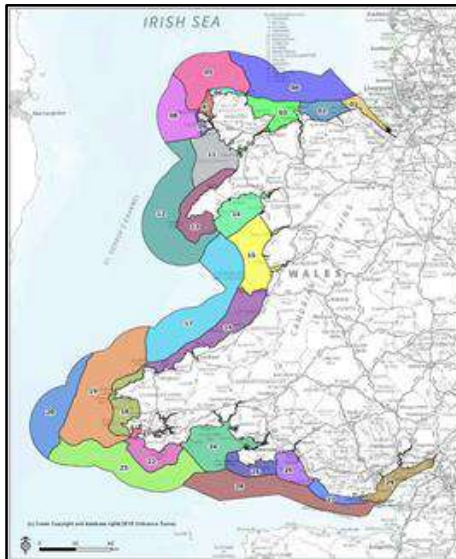
Seascape Character Areas
50 at national scale
+ management guidelines

Seascape Character Assessment (Ynys Mon, SNPA, PCNPA)
Local scale SCA for coastal woodlands
+ management guidelines
+ most detailed resource to use

Landscape Designations

- National Parks (3) purposes: **conserve and enhance natural beauty**, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (5): **conserve and enhance natural beauty**, take into account needs of agriculture, **forestry**, rural industries, economic and social needs. Meet recreation demand when consistent with conservation of natural beauty

  - 25% Wales internationally designated by law, nationally important, equal status - living, working landscapes
  - Management Plan identifying **special qualities,** Action Plan, State of Report

Special Landscape Areas

- High landscape importance, non-statutory but within LDP/SPG

- Designated for their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical value

- Use SLA descriptions to understand what is important, key characteristics to retain and opportunities for improvement

Heritage Coasts (14)

- Scenically outstanding, undeveloped, unspoilt coast, inland to ~1.5 miles

Register of Historic Parks & Gardens (statutory) (~400)

- Protect and conserve historic and visual character and manage change

Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (58)

- To understand Outstanding and Special historic interest and character

LANDMAP Landscape Baseline for Wales

- Outstanding and High evaluated landscapes are of national and county importance

UNESCO World Heritage Sites (3 + 1 candidate)

UNESCO Geoparks (2)

Tranquil Areas Map of Wales

Where existing forests do not meet the UKFS Requirements for Forests and Landscape, improvements should be made when management opportunities arise

- *New planting*
- *Felling and restocking*
- *Design does not meet UKFS requirements*

Forests should be designed and managed to take account of:

Forest design principles
Shape
Landform
Pattern of enclosure
Scale
Diversity
Unity
Spirit of place

Shape in the landscape

- Forest boundaries, graded edges, interlocking shapes
- Perceived internal shapes from species, coupes, roads
  - What are dominant influences: landform/landcover?
  - Use landform: irregular/rugged, rolling mosaics/field patterns?
  - Discordant/pleasing?
  - Natural patterns and forms, integration, outliers?
  - Link to landscape character and pattern? Geometric/regular or 'organic'
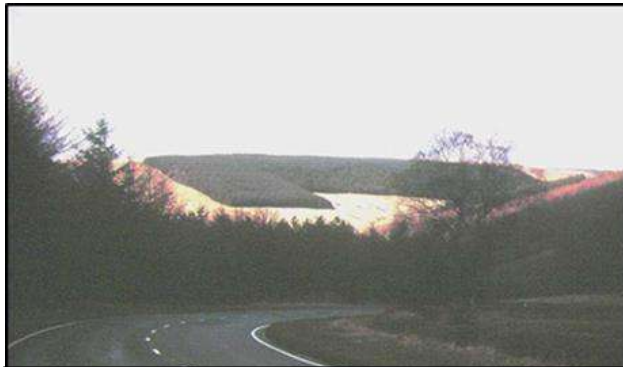
Landform as a dominant influence

Visual forces

- 'Up the valleys', hollows, concave landforms – take treeline higher
- 'Down the spurs', ridges, convex landforms – drop treeline
- Flat landscapes drawn to horizons

- Don't cut across landform with virtual rulers!
- Careful on crossing skylines, or favour low points
- Don't slavishly follow fence lines when landform is prominent
- Think branches & twigs – landform general shape form & finer landform for edges

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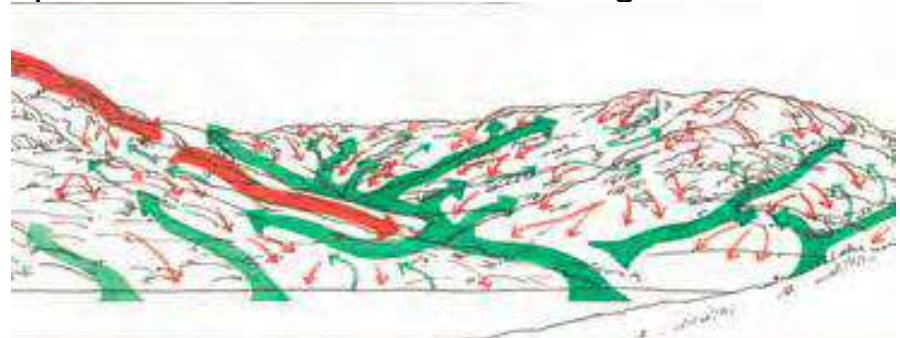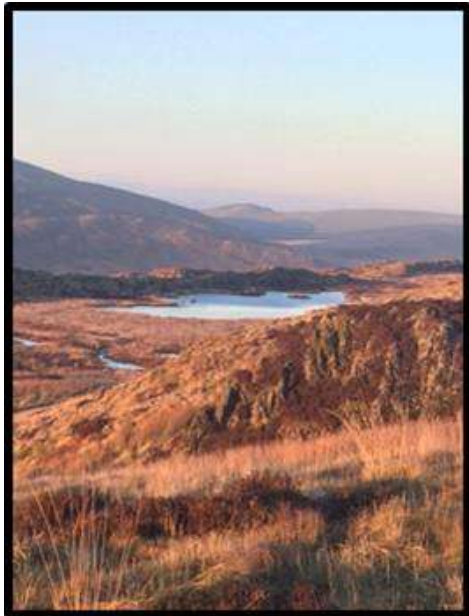
Enclosure as a dominant influence

Irregular Fieldscape Winding lanes, species+ hedgerows, copses, AW

Regular Fieldscape Geometric shapes, plantations (medieval/strip/enclosure)

Wooded Landscape >50% cover

Mosaic landscapes woodland patchwork 20-50%, <10ha, hedgerow trees (59% Wales)

- Reinforce/relate to existing fieldscape pattern
- Relate woodlands to hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Strengthen woodland/mosaic character where decline is evident
- Enhance connectivity
- Don't mask important historic fieldscapes
- Extensive forests in enclosed areas are less appropriate, consider multiple medium

Scale

- Relationship of key elements (e.g. woodland) within the whole landscape.
  Intimate: personal scale, gardens
  Small: community scale, woodland clearings, small field or woodland units, restricted views
  Medium: moderate scale
  Large: observer feels small, wide valleys or woodlands
  Vast: mountain ranges, extensive forests, plains (scale may increase with expanse of view)

- Important for size of woodland and management units: coupes, species, open spaces
- Smaller scale in valley bottoms, increasing in scale on hilltops and mountains
- 1/3rd and 2/3rds
- Oddities:
  - small blocks isolated in an open large landscape
  - skyline scaling

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Diversity of elements, form, colour, texture

Uniform: Unvarying

Simple: Little variation (not = landscape value, character or quality)

Diverse: Widespread variation, broad range of elements

Complex: Complete variation, little recognisable pattern

Diversity

- Seasonal interest can introduce diversity
- Diversity of structure/age and species composition appears as different textures
- Features, water, open areas, geological/historic features,
- Panoramic/framed views
- Diversity *may* be more characteristic of lowlands than uplands
- Work with landscape character, important to retain local distinctiveness

Unity

- Repetition of similar elements or qualities to give a sense of unity/consistency
- Unity:
  - Woodlands are in harmonious character with landscape
  - Well integrated woodlands that appear to of belong

- Disunity:
  - Significant disruption to sense of unity
  - Unbalanced, not compatible, jar (size/shape/edges/monotony…)
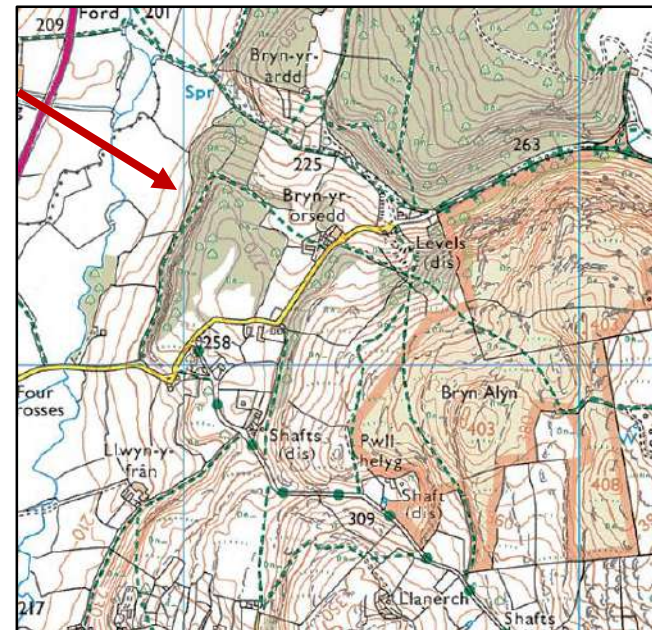
Spirit of place, Special

Tranquillity

Spiritual response

Sense of place

Veteran trees

Rocks and deep mosses

Historic monuments

Intangible cultural heritage

Water

Breathtaking views…

Types of views/viewers

- Conserve and enhance
- Provide access to
- Network and connect with

Management and visibility in historic landscapes
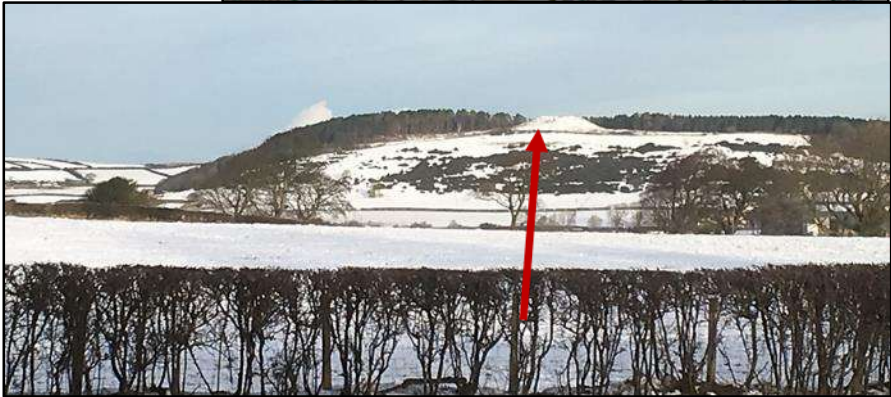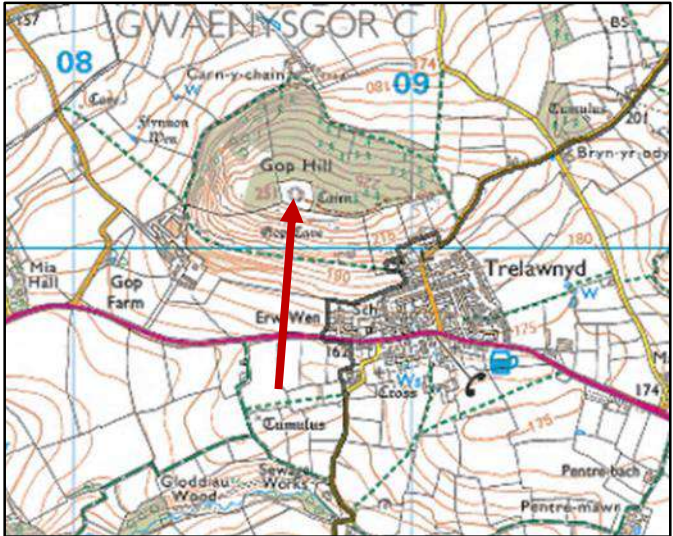
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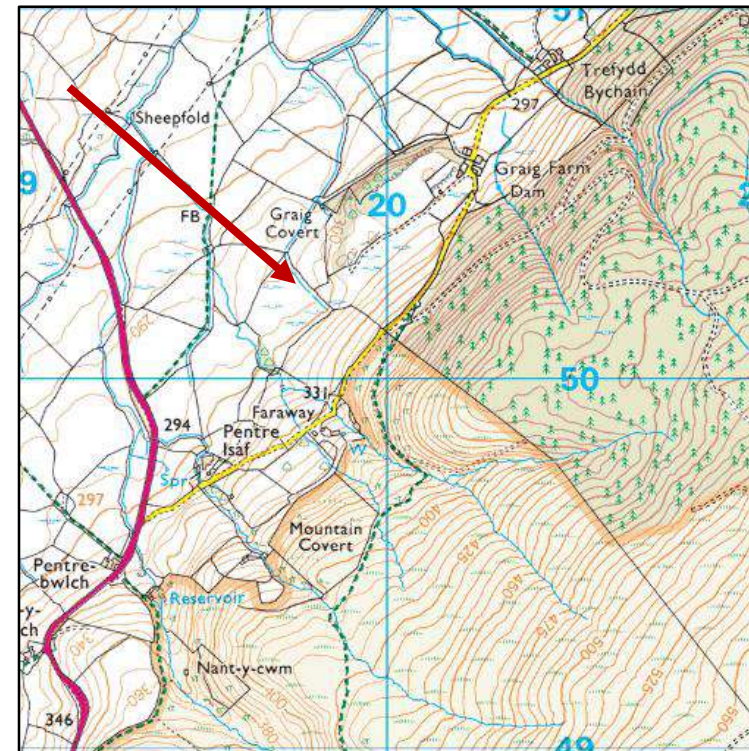
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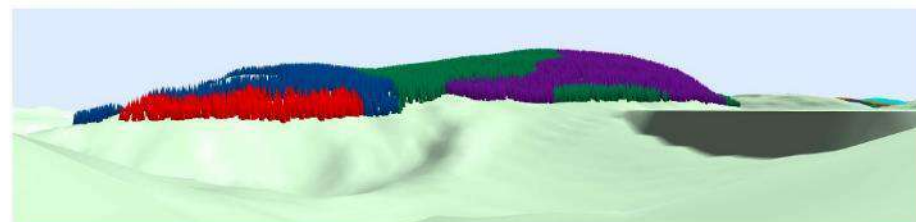
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Forest design principles

Shape

Landform

Pattern of enclosure
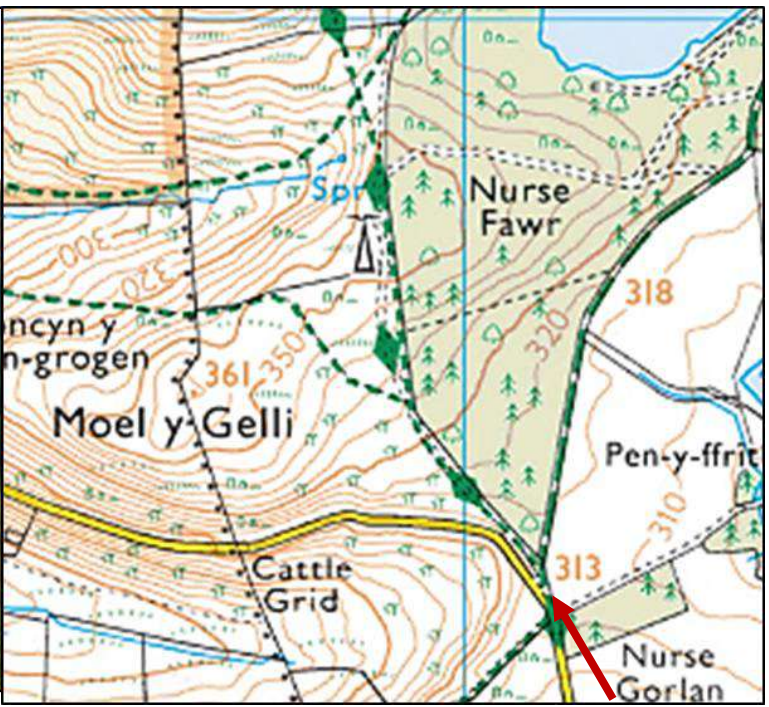
Scale

Diversity

Unity

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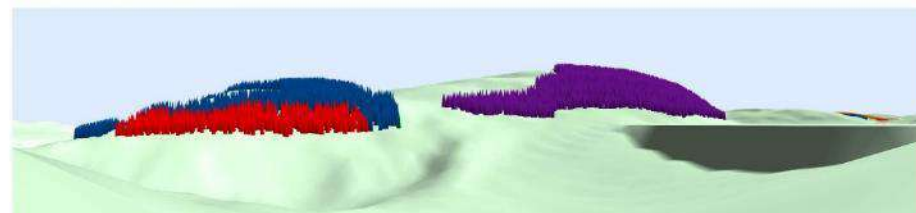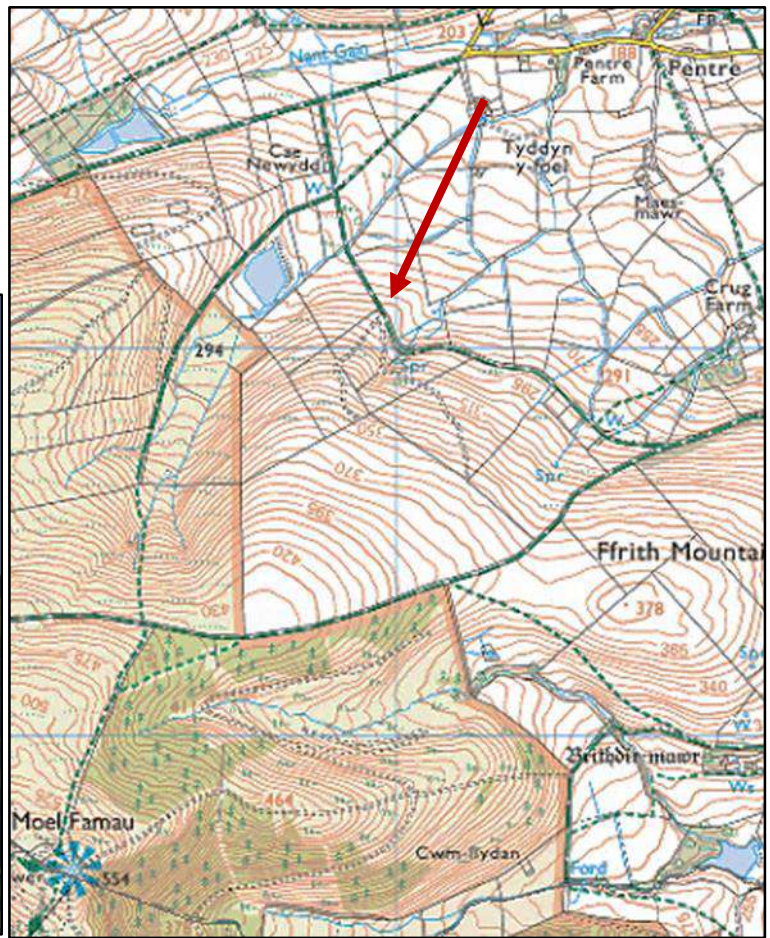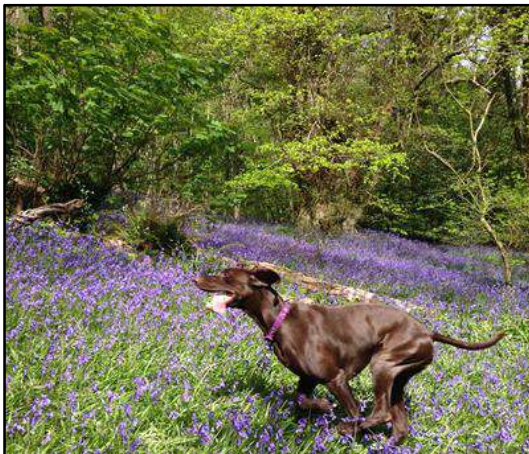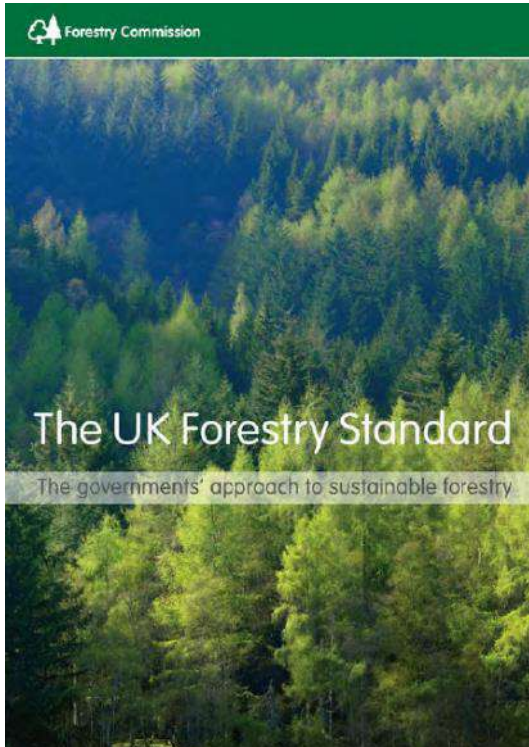
All Landscapes matter

- Contribute to local landscape character and distinctiveness
- Understand sensitivity and value
- Retain the experience of sense of place
- Locally appropriate landscape change

- **Conserve and enhance important landscapes**
- **Enhance landscapes to contribute to wellbeing**

- Apply Forest Design principles for positive outcomes
- Opportunity to improve existing woodlands
- Long wooded landscape legacy for new

Diolch Thankyou