

Save our Special Landscapes

Carmarthenshire is a county noted for its stunning landscapes punctuated by ancient towns and castles. Aside from having the oldest town in Wales, our County was the birthplace of the legend of King Arthur and Merlin. It is not surprising therefore that in recent decades we have seen a growth in our tourism industry. Carmarthenshire was also chosen to be the home of the National Botanic Gardens. What more fitting location could there be than the county known as the “garden of Wales.”

All this beauty and all this heritage is now under threat. Our County Council is currently consulting on our new Local Development Plan. It contains a surprise. All 18 Special Landscape Areas including the Towy Valley face the axe.

Free reign for pylons?

What this means is that now it will be much easier for developers to concrete our countryside, to permit pylons and bulldoze our fields. Easier to get permission for all sorts of developments that will downgrade our landscape forever. Residents and Natural Resources Wales have already started to raise the alarm. Meanwhile, Carmarthenshire is pretending it is doing nothing special. Yet neighbouring counties still have Special Landscape Areas defined. What’s more, they’re planning on keeping theirs.

What are special landscape areas?

Special Landscape Areas are a way for Councils to recognise important places and landscapes. They are used by Councils across Wales. Carmarthenshire currently has 18 of Special Landscape Areas identified in the Local Development Plan

How are Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) defined?

Special landscape areas were identified by Carmarthenshire County Council using Natural Resources Wales’ LANDMAP. The 18 areas in the current local plan are either classified as ‘outstanding’ or ‘high’ quality, the very highest levels. SLAs are given additional protection and extra importance or ‘weight’ when considering developments. This means that even if development goes ahead there has to be greater mitigation through greater compensation or community payback.

Carmarthenshire’s New LDP

The latest stage of Carmarthenshire’s new Local Development Plan is open for public consultation until the 14 April 2023. It axes policy (Policy EQ6) which lists the 18 special landscape areas. This policy is ‘replaced’ by a weaker new local plan policy on ‘Landscape Character (BHE2)’. This makes no provision for special landscapes. When challenged by residents and Natural Resources Wales Carmarthenshire Council boasted that: *Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are non-statutory designations and as such there is no requirement to designate them within an LDP.*

Why scrapping the Special Landscapes Matters

Scrapping our Special Landscape Areas is a double downgrade for our county. It is worse than not having the policy in the first place. Removing our Special Landscapes tells developers and visitors that Carmarthenshire County Council no longer considers these places worthy of special protection. Just the place to put some concrete or pylons!

Our neighbouring counties such as Swansea and Ceredigion are keeping their Special Landscape Areas.

No wonder **Natural Resources Wales** criticised Carmarthenshire stating:

“We query the lack of reference to Special Landscape Areas in the written statement’ of the local plan.”

Carmarthenshire Residents are demanding that our council reinstate our Special Landscape Areas in the local plan. We also want Carmarthenshire to publish its draft Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) as soon as possible. This will allow residents to see exactly what sort of development will be allowed near our homes.

Carmarthenshire’s 18 Special Landscapes are soon to be abolished by Carmarthenshire County Council



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| 1. Tywi Valley | |
| 2. Carmarthenshire Limestone Ridge | 10. Gwendraeth Levels |
| 3. Teifi Valley | 11. Pembrey Mountain |
| 4. Drefach Velindre | 12. Swiss Valley |
| 5. Bran Valley (North of Llandovery) | 13. Talley |
| 6. Mynydd Mallaen | 14. Lwchwr Valley |
| 7. Llanllwni Mountain | 15. Lower Taf Valley |
| 8. North Eastern Uplands | 16. Cwm Cathan |
| 9. Mynydd y Betws | 17. Cothi Valley |
| | 18. Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries |

Find out more and sign the petition: www.CRAiGSirGar.org