

Proposed Special Quality & description	Supporting Special Features	Related SQs in 2021–26 Plan
SQ1. A cross-border river valley landscape of striking contrasts The Wye Valley National Landscape straddles the English-Welsh border which gives the area a distinctive identity, with the river at its heart. It is defined by strong contrasts in landform and scenery, creating a distinctive and varied landscape. In the north, the river meanders through the broad meadows of the Herefordshire lowlands, giving the landscape a more open and gentle character. Further downstream, the scenery becomes more dramatic, with steep wooded slopes, sheer cliffs and striking gorges. These more enclosed and rugged sections are interspersed with broader valley reaches, rounded hills and prominent bluffs, adding further variety to the landscape.	• River Wye corridor • Broad floodplain meadows • Herefordshire lowlands • Steep wooded slopes • Limestone cliffs and dramatic gorges • Rounded hills and bluffs • Riverside settlements • Market towns • 16 Landscape Management Zones • Cross-border setting and identity	• SQ1 Overall Landscape • SQ3 River and Tributaries • SQ10 Riverine Geomorphology • SQ11 Picturesque, Extensive and Dramatic Views • SQ20 Vernacular Architecture • SQ21 Language and Dialects.
SQ2. Dramatic geology and geomorphology The Wye Valley's rocks, landforms, soils and river processes are fundamental to the National Landscape's natural beauty, having shaped the valley's cliffs, caves, gorges, river terraces, tufa features and soils. The Wye Valley National Landscape contains an impressive variety of geological outcrops and important examples of active and past geomorphologic processes, including the full sequence of the Carboniferous Limestone Series. The differing geology has given rise to a range of distinctive settlement and farming patterns. The landscape continues to be shaped by natural processes, especially through the river and its tributaries.	• Silurian rocks of the Woolhope Dome • Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone • Quartz conglomerate • Carboniferous Limestone • Limestone cliffs, caves and limestone pavement • Gorges • River terraces • Landslips • Tufa dams and deposits • Natural stream channels • Distinctive soils • Geological exposures • Geological SSSIs and Local Geological Sites • Influence of geology on settlement, farming, woodland, quarrying and building materials	• SQ6 Silurian Rocks • SQ7 Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone • SQ8 Quartz Conglomerate • SQ9 Carboniferous Limestone • SQ10 Riverine Geomorphology • Parts of SQ1 Overall Landscape • SQ11 Picturesque, Extensive and Dramatic Views • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Associated Landscapes • SQ20 Vernacular Architecture

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SQ3. A renowned river system The River Wye, its tributaries, floodplains, wetlands and river landforms are central to the character, ecology and cultural identity of the Wye Valley National Landscape. The river connects places, habitats and communities, supports internationally and nationally important wildlife, and has shaped settlement, farming, industry, recreation and people's sense of place. There is a Public Right of Navigation on the Wye reflecting the historic use of the river as a transport corridor. The Wye is a Special Area of Conservation and it was the first major river to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest along its entire length. There is also a Charter for the River Wye recognising its "intrinsic rights" as a living ecosystem.	• River Wye and tributaries • Tributaries and side valleys • Floodplains, riverside meadows, wetlands and riparian habitats • River Wye SAC and SSSI • Riparian species • Water quality • River crossings, bridges and ferries • River as historic transport route • River-based recreation	• SQ3 River and Tributaries • SQ10 Riverine Geomorphology • SQ11 Views • SQ12 Tranquillity • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Landscapes • SQ17 Railway Heritage • SQ24 Wye Valley Walk
SQ4. Nature-rich and connected habitats The Wye Valley National Landscape is particularly important for its rich, varied and connected wildlife habitats. Its river, valley-side ancient woodlands and bat roosting sites form a remarkable concentration of internationally important habitats, supported by a wider network of SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, local wildlife sites and priority habitats. The National Landscape's predominantly wooded and riverine character is complemented by a matrix of species-rich grasslands, pastures, hay meadows, traditional orchards, hedgerows, drystone walls, wetlands, commons, sunken lanes, road verges and boundary habitats. Together, these form a strong habitat mosaic that makes the landscape robust and permeable for many species, supporting nature recovery across farmed, wooded, riparian, common, settlement-edge and other managed landscapes.	• River, woodland and bat SACs • SSSIs, National Nature Reserves and local/key wildlife sites • Priority habitats and locally important habitats • River, tributary, wetland and riparian habitats • Ancient woodland, limestone woodland and wooded slopes • Bat roosts, flight lines and foraging habitats • Species-rich grasslands, pastures and hay meadows • Traditional orchards • Hedgerows, copses, field margins, banks, lanes and verges • Commons, village greens and access land with nature conservation value • Boundary habitats and transitional habitats	• SQ4 Species-rich Grassland • SQ5 Boundary Habitat Diversity and Connectivity • SQ26 Small Commons and Greens • SQ27 Orchards • SQ1 Overall Landscape • SQ2 Woodlands • SQ12 Tranquillity • SQ20 Vernacular Architecture • SQ22 Old Tracks • SQ18 Ancient and Veteran Trees • SQ25 Access Land • SQ3 River and Tributaries

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	- Habitat connectivity between rivers, woodlands, farmland, grasslands, commons, wetlands and settlements - Traditional and nature-friendly land management	
SQ5. Exceptional ancient woodlands and veteran trees Woodlands are one of the Wye Valley National Landscape’s dominant landscape features. Most are ancient woodland of high nature conservation value and are irreplaceable. They provide nationally and internationally important habitats, contribute strongly to scenic beauty and tranquillity, and hold deep cultural and historic associations through woodland management, boundaries, estates, commons and settlement. The limestone woodlands are especially notable as a refuge for rare species and form part of one of the largest remaining areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the country. As living relics of great age, ancient and veteran trees contribute to both biodiversity and cultural history and can inspire a strong sense of awe and mystery.	- Ancient semi-natural woodland - Planted ancient woodland sites - Wye Valley Woodlands SAC and other designated woodland sites - Limestone, beech, yew and ravine woodland - Wooded gorge sides and wooded slopes - Coppice and woodland management heritage - Ancient, veteran and notable trees - Trees in hedgerows, parklands, estates, commons, lanes and settlements - Woodland biodiversity and nature conservation interest, including characteristic woodland habitats and associated species - Woodland connectivity with rivers, grasslands, hedgerows, commons and farmland habitats	- SQ2 Woodlands - SQ18 Ancient and Veteran Trees - SQ5 Boundary Habitat Diversity and Connectivity - SQ11 Views; - SQ12 Tranquillity; - SQ19 Historic/Registered Parks and Gardens

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SQ6. Picturesque views, tranquillity and dark skies The Wye Valley National Landscape is renowned for its extensive and dramatic views, including viewpoints that helped shape the British appreciation of landscape and inspired some of the great British poets and writers. The Reverend William Gilpin was inspired in 1770 to write his treatise on the notion and depiction of landscape and gave birth to the ‘picturesque’ movement. Its sensory qualities are equally important: tranquillity, relative remoteness, naturalness, dark skies, birdsong, river sounds, woodland enclosure, seasonal colour and changing light. These qualities are central to how people experience the National Landscape and are vulnerable to incremental change.	• Picturesque, extensive and dramatic views • Symonds Yat Rock, Wynd Cliff and other recognised viewpoints • Designed and informal viewpoints • Framed river views • Wooded enclosure • Views to cliffs, gorges, castles, Tintern Abbey, river meadows and wooded slopes • Picturesque movement • Artistic and literary associations • Tranquillity • Relative remoteness • Naturalness and wildness • Dark skies • Low levels of visual and noise intrusion • Natural sounds, including birdsong, river sounds and woodland sounds	• SQ11 Picturesque, Extensive and Dramatic Views • SQ12 Overall Sense of Tranquillity, Remoteness, Naturalness/Wildness and Dark Skies • SQ1 Overall Landscape • SQ2 Woodlands • SQ3 River and Tributaries • SQ9 Carboniferous Limestone • SQ15 Medieval Defensive and Ecclesiastical Sites • SQ19 Historic/Registered Parks and Gardens
SQ7. A deeply layered historic landscape The Wye Valley National Landscape contains an abundance of sites of historic and cultural significance. Several nationally significant cultural, industrial and artistic associations have roots in the Wye Valley. It is a palimpsest landscape, where successive periods of human activity remain visible in the land. Prehistoric caves and hillforts, Roman and early medieval sites, Ergyng, Offa’s Dyke, castles, churches, monasteries, Tintern Abbey, industrial sites, quarries, mills, railways, wharves, bridges and historic parks together tell the story of a river valley shaped by movement, defence, faith, farming, industry, tourism and settlement. The river is both the backbone and the border of the historic environment that underlays the landscape of the Wye Valley. The river was the main transport route up and down the valley, superseded by the railway. Tributaries cascade down side	• Palaeolithic cave sites • Prehistoric hillforts and settlement remains • Roman sites • Early medieval sites • Offa’s Dyke • Medieval defensive sites and landscapes • Medieval ecclesiastical sites and landscapes • Tintern Abbey • Post-medieval industrial landscapes • Wireworks, papermaking, tanning, tin-plate, quarrying and milling sites • Water-powered industry and tributary valleys	• SQ13 Prehistoric Sites • SQ14 Roman and Early Medieval Sites including Offa’s Dyke • SQ15 Medieval Defensive and Ecclesiastical Sites • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Associated Landscapes • SQ17 Railway Heritage • SQ19 Historic/Registered Parks and Gardens • SQ18 Ancient and Veteran Trees • SQ22 Old Tracks

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valleys to join the Wye, giving focus to settlements and power to pioneering industries. The Wye Valley's time-depth is experienced through individual heritage assets, but also through wider cultural and historic landscapes, routeways, designed landscapes and the relationship between archaeology, landform, river and woodland.	• Wharves, bridges and river infrastructure • Railway heritage, including bridges, tunnels and embankments • Historic and registered parks and gardens • Designed and Picturesque landscapes • Scheduled monuments and archaeological remains	• SQ23 Offa's Dyke Path
SQ8. Distinctive settlements, vernacular buildings and built heritage Local building materials, settlement form, scale, rooflines, walls, lanes, bridges and enclosure patterns give different parts of the Wye Valley National Landscape their distinctive sense of place. Market towns, villages, hamlets, farmsteads, commoners' cottages, estate houses, churches, mills and other historic buildings are closely related to the river, landform, routes, geology and historic patterns of land use. Traditional dry-stone walls are a particularly important feature, reflecting local geology, historic landownership, farming and common land management. They contribute to the small-scale field pattern, provide habitat for wildlife, and form part of the experience of lanes, paths, settlements and farmed landscapes. The built heritage of the National Landscape remains recognisably local, rural and settled, rather than generic.	• Market towns, villages and hamlets • Riverside settlements • Farmsteads • Commoners' cottages • Historic parks, gardens and estate houses and buildings • Vernacular architecture • Local building materials and detailing • Dry stone walls • Settlement patterns influenced by river, routes, geology and landform • Historic bridges, walls and small-scale built features • Conservation areas • Listed buildings and locally distinctive buildings • Small-scale rural buildings, boundaries and lanes	• SQ20 Vernacular Architecture • Parts of SQ1 Overall Landscape • SQ6-SQ10 Geology and Geomorphology • SQ15 Medieval Defensive and Ecclesiastical Sites • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Associated Landscapes • SQ17 Railway Heritage • SQ19 Historic/Registered Parks and Gardens • SQ22 Old Tracks

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SQ9. Living culture, language and identity The Wye Valley National Landscape has a living cultural identity expressed through Welsh language and place names, local accents and dialects, myths and stories, artistic and literary associations, local food, rural skills and community stewardship. These cultural associations are part of how the palimpsest landscape is understood, valued and cared for, and they help connect the Wye Valley’s natural beauty with the people who live in, work in and visit it.	• Welsh language • Welsh place names • Forest of Dean dialects and accents • South Herefordshire dialects and accents • Myths and stories associated with the Wye/Gwy • Local identity and sense of belonging • Artistic, literary and cultural associations • Picturesque associations • Local food and drink traditions • Orchard traditions and cider/perry heritage • Woodland products and rural skills • Farming, forestry and commoning traditions • Volunteering, interpretation and community stewardship	• SQ21 Welsh language, accents and dialects • SQ27 Orchards • SQ11 Picturesque, Extensive and Dramatic Views • SQ12 Tranquillity • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Associated Landscapes • SQ17 Railway Heritage • SQ19 Historic/Registered Parks and Gardens • SQ20 Vernacular Architecture • SQ26 Small Commons and Greens
SQ10. Access, recreation and direct experience of the landscape The Wye Valley National Landscape is experienced through a rich and extensive network of historic routes, promoted trails, access land, commons, river-based and valley-side recreation, viewpoints and pathways. These routes and places allow people to experience and appreciate the river, woodlands, views, heritage, settlements, wildlife and tranquillity directly.	• Offa’s Dyke Path • Wye Valley Walk • Old tracks and sunken lanes • Rights of way network • Access land • Commons and village greens • Riverside routes and river access points • Viewpoints and promoted views • Walking, cycling, horse riding and quiet countryside recreation • Canoeing and other river-based recreation • Recreational links with market towns, villages and visitor hubs • Responsible recreation and quiet enjoyment compatible with conserving natural beauty	• SQ22 Old Tracks • SQ23 Offa’s Dyke Path • SQ24 Wye Valley Walk • SQ25 Access Land • SQ26 Small Commons and Greens • SQ3 River and Tributaries • SQ11 Picturesque, Extensive and Dramatic Views • SQ12 Tranquillity • SQ15 Medieval Defensive and Ecclesiastical Sites • SQ16 Post-medieval Industrial Sites and Associated Landscapes

