

NEATH PORT TALBOT LANDMAP LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Final Report

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Countryside Council for Wales

December 2004



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Main Cover Photograph:
Upper Clydach River Valley towards Pontardulais

Small Cover Photographs:
Aberavon Sands & Margam Works
Mynydd Bromil Scarp
Cwm Afan at Pontrhydyfen
Mynydd Gwrhyd
Cwmgors

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Study Team

The study team was led by White Consultants and comprised of the Glamorgan & Gwent Archaeological Trust, Cardiff University, David Clements Associates, John Carr Associates and Diacono Associates. The team comprised Simon White, Andrew Butler, David Clements, Richard Lewis, John Carr, Lesley Cherns, Peter Brabham and Mark Diacono.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Context

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, supported by the Countryside Council for Wales [CCW], commissioned White Consultants in December 2002 to prepare a landscape assessment for the county borough based on the LANDMAP process. The assessment is to act as a framework for landscape planning, as a source of advice for the planning authority and as a basis for an action programme. The aim of the study is to ascertain a clear understanding of the landscape resource which contribute to the economic and environmental qualities of the borough. A GIS based product has been produced which will be used by the client bodies.

Approach and Methodology

The project has been carried out using the LANDMAP process [Landscape Assessment and Decision Making Process]. This a method of assessing the landscape developed by CCW. A team of specialists have carried out the assessment guided by a client group and a local information users group consisting of local stakeholders.

In undertaking the landscape assessment, the process has been as follows:

- A briefing and orientation stage where the process and outputs of the study have been defined.
- The generation of evaluated 'aspect' areas for Visual and Sensory, Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitat, Historical Landscape and Cultural Landscape. These have been presented to the local steering group. This information has been mapped and digitised, databases have been prepared and technical reports written for each aspect.
- Contextual information has also been prepared for Landscape Form and Function which has been mapped and digitised. Additional information in the form of a Public Perception study has also been carried out. This is in digital form in a database that can be queried.
- A landscape assessment has brought together the evaluated aspect information and derived landscape character areas. Based on this information, this landscape assessment report has been prepared and the character areas also mapped, digitised and an overall character database prepared as a separate product.

In agreement with the client, the team have followed the LANDMAP revised method dated June 2003. This approach means that the LANDMAP study for Neath Port Talbot will follow the most recent agreed guidance.

The Landscape of Neath Port Talbot

The Neath Port Talbot study area covers approximately 442 sq km stretching from Swansea Bay and Margam in the south to Glynccorrwg, Banwen, Ystalyfera and Gwaun Cae Gurwen in the North. The area rises from sea level at Swansea Bay to approximately 600m AOD at Craig y Llyn, above Glynneath. Remaining below 10m AOD across much of the coastal plain, the land rises dramatically to over 200m AOD at the scarp slope. The Coalfield Plateau ultimately rises to approximately 600m AOD. More than half of the study area below the uplands lies at around 250-300mAOD, making the great majority of the study area, upland or semi-upland character.

The plateau areas are deeply incised as a result of geological faulting and glacial action. This has also given rise to a series of very distinct river-valleys draining south-westwards towards the coast, the most significant of which are the Rivers Tawe, Neath and Afan. These tend to be deep and steep-sided where they cross the Upper Coal Measures, but spread out to become shallower and more meandering features as they fall across the Middle and Lower Measures and approach the coast.

The general fall in elevation to sea level occurs fairly rapidly in the southernmost quarter of the study area, with only a comparatively narrow coastal plain extending approx 2km inland from the coastal limit. Lowland areas are therefore limited in extent and are mainly confined to the coastal fringe, although some more extensive lowland areas extend inland alongside the estuary of the River Neath.

The River Neath estuary is a major physiographical feature, and there are also smaller estuaries associated with the Rivers Afan and Kenfig. A major dune system

runs along a significant stretch of the coast, broken by industry, development and river mouths.

Forestry is a very important land use with up to 43% of the study area being covered. The major plantations are in the upland areas, where conifers predominate, but semi-upland and lowland areas are also extensively planted, the latter often with conifer/broadleaf mixtures or broadleaves alone. A great many former ancient woodland sites have been subsumed into the plantation areas and replanted. Semi-natural woodlands are now more-or-less confined to valley-sides and steeper ground, and are mainly to be found in the semi-uplands and lowlands of the south and west. These make an important contribution to the character of the area.

The main agricultural use of the study area is pasturage, with grazing stock being present from the uplands down to the lowlands. Often this grazing is of an extensive nature, especially on the upland commons. The more sheltered and productive upper slopes and lowland areas have been extensively improved for agriculture, and semi-natural habitats are much more fragmented and limited in extent. Arable production is more-or-less confined to the small area of better-drained Triassic geology in the extreme south of the study area around Margam. The high upland areas to the north and east contain a number of large commons and other similar open uplands which are dominated by acid grasslands and heathlands.

Coal mining has been a major feature of the study area over the last two centuries, and continues to have a significant impact. The area still contains three major opencast coal sites, smaller open cast sites, several private mines as well as the remains of numerous deep coal mines. Iron ore and other minerals have also been extracted in the past, but generally on a much smaller scale. The spoil heaps and ground disturbance from mining and quarrying, past and present, extend over large areas. In some areas these have revegetated naturally. Elsewhere sites have been reclaimed, landscaped or restored to agriculture.

Industrial development is also significant reflecting the area's history as a major centre of coal, metal and petrochemical production. This has tended to be concentrated along the coastal fringe and around the estuary of the River Neath, reflecting the need for good access. These have included canals, railways and major road routes [M4 and A465] as well as the sea [Port Talbot and Briton Ferry Docks]. The extent and intensity of industrial activity has declined in recent decades, but it remains a significant feature of the coastal strip especially. The Llandarcy and Baglan Bay areas are currently undergoing a period of restoration and redevelopment for a mixture of modern commercial and industrial uses.

Modern settlement in the County Borough has been dominated by the demands of industry. At the height of the coal and metal industries, in the mid 19th century, Glamorgan had the fastest growing population in Britain. Subsequent settlement has grown around the centres of industry, firstly around the copper and coal industries at Neath, Neath Abbey and Briton Ferry, but also further up the valleys with the expansion of the coal industry.

Urban development has mainly taken place in the major valleys and is widespread, especially in the valleys of the Rivers Neath and Tawe. Significant residential areas have also developed around former pit villages in the more remote inland and upland parts of the study area.

Report Structure

The overall report is divided into two sections. First, Section A introduces the study [Chapter 1.0] and then summarises the main characteristics of the Neath Port Talbot landscape in a landscape overview under each aspect heading [Chapter 2.0]. In Section B, the summary maps for each aspect and a landscape character area map are introduced. Each character area is then described and evaluated. Appendix 1 includes tables classifying the character areas and listing the aspects areas contributing to each character area.

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SECTION A

1.0 THE STUDY

The Study Area

The study area covers approximately 442 sq km stretching from the urbanised coastal plain on Swansea Bay to approximately 600m AOD at Craig y Llyn on the South Wales coalfield plateau, above Glynneath. The plateau is dissected by valleys, the two largest being the Neath and Tawe. The dominant settlements of Neath, Port Talbot and surrounding towns are located on the coastal plain and in the lower reaches of the Neath Valley.

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2.0 LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

The landscape of Neath Port Talbot is described as a whole below. This is followed by consideration of the landscape for each aspect.

Overview of Neath Port Talbot County Borough's Landscape

The Neath Port Talbot study area covers approximately 442 sq km stretching from Swansea Bay and Margam in the south to Glyncoerrwg, Banwen, Ystalyfera and Gwaun Cae Gurwen in the North. The area rises from sea level at Swansea Bay to approximately 600m AOD at Craig y Llyn, above Glynneath. Remaining below 10m AOD across much of the coastal plain, the land rises dramatically to over 200m AOD at the scarp slope. The Coalfield Plateau ultimately rises to approximately 600m AOD. More than half of the study area below the uplands lies at around 250-300m AOD, making the great majority of the study area, upland or semi-upland character.



The plateau areas are deeply incised as a result of geological faulting and glacial action. This has also given rise to a series of very distinct river-valleys draining south-westwards towards the coast, the most significant of which are the Rivers Tawe, Neath and Afan. These tend to be deep and steep-sided where they cross the Upper Coal Measures, but spread out to become shallower and more meandering features as they fall across the Middle and Lower Measures and approach the coast.

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The River Neath estuary is a major physiographical feature, and there are also smaller estuaries associated with the Rivers Afan and Kenfig. A major dune system runs along a significant stretch of the coast, broken by industry, development and river mouths.

Forestry is a very important land use with up to 43% of the study area being covered. The major plantations are in the upland areas, where conifers predominate, but semi-upland and lowland areas are also extensively planted, the latter often with conifer/broadleaf mixtures or broadleaves alone. A great many former ancient woodland sites have been subsumed into the plantation areas and replanted. Semi-natural woodlands are now more-or-less confined to valley-sides and steeper ground, and are mainly to be found in the semi-uplands and lowlands of the south and west. These make an important contribution to the area's character.



The main agricultural use of the study area is pasturage, with grazing stock being present from the uplands down to the lowlands. Often this grazing is of an extensive nature, especially on the upland commons. The more sheltered and productive upper slopes and lowland areas have been extensively improved for agriculture, and semi-natural habitats are much more fragmented and limited in extent. Arable production is more-or-less confined to the small area of better-drained Triassic geology in the extreme south of the study area around Margam. The high upland areas to the north and east contain a number of large commons and other similar open uplands which are dominated by acid grasslands and heathlands.

Coal mining has been a major feature of the study area over the last two centuries, and continues to have a significant impact. The area still contains three major opencast coal sites, smaller open cast sites, several private mines as well as the remains of numerous deep coal mines. Iron ore and other minerals have also been extracted in the past, but generally on a much smaller scale. The spoil heaps and ground disturbance from mining and quarrying, past and present, extend over large areas. In some areas these have revegetated naturally. Elsewhere sites have been reclaimed, landscaped or restored to agriculture.

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reflecting the need for good access. These have included canals, railways and major road routes [M4 and A465] as well as the sea [Port Talbot and Briton Ferry Docks] . The extent and intensity of industrial activity has declined in recent decades, but it remains a significant feature of the coastal strip especially. The Baglan Bay area is currently undergoing a period of restoration and redevelopment for a mixture of modern commercial and industrial uses.

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Geological Landscape Overview

Introduction

The landscape/geomorphology of the Neath-Port Talbot area is controlled by Upper Carboniferous rocks of the Productive Coal Formation (Lower - Middle Coal Measures) and overlying South Wales Pennant Formation (Pennant Measures/Upper Coal Measures). The geology and geomorphology of the area are well displayed on the digital terrain map [see below]. The straight U-shaped Swansea and Neath



Digital Terrain Map
of Neath Port Talbot

valleys form notably prominent landscape features. Coal mining was an important industry, and evidence of previous mining activity remains in the landscape in the form of spoil heaps, tips, mine shafts and areas of made ground. Neath-Port Talbot occupies a central portion of the South Wales Coalfield, between the hills of Mynydd Blaenafan and Mynydd Blaengwynfi in the high sandstone plateau of the South Wales Pennant Formation (Pennant Measures/ Upper Coal Measures) to the east, and bounded to the west by the Swansea area. The southern part of the area includes the coastal zone from Kenfig to Crymlyn Bog, and the gently north dipping South Crop of the Coalfield eastwards from Port Talbot. Towards the north, the area extends across the south dipping North Crop of the Coalfield.

The upland terrain of the Neath area formed by the high Pennant plateau is deeply dissected by the prominent U-shaped NE-SW trending Neath and Swansea valleys; these are controlled by major, deep seated structural fault zones that have been eroded by glacial, fluvio-glacial and fluvial activity. The Nedd and the Tawe rivers represent major hydrological drainage channels. Between these two valleys, and north of the Swansea valley, smaller V-shaped valleys with a north south to NNW-SSE trend (e.g. Melin valley brook) cut deeply into the Coal Measures Group mudstones, and feed the major river valleys. South of the Neath valley the wide Pennant sandstone plateau area comprises rounded hills and strike ridges. The Afan valley and tributaries dissect the high plateau, and drain south west towards the broad flat coastal strip adjacent to Port Talbot. On the southern, lower plateau of the Vale, the west to east Cynfig is fed by meandering tributaries.

Millstone grit

Millstone Grit Group crops out in the Pyrrddin Valley where the river cuts down through the Productive Coal Formation (Lower and Middle Coal Measures). In the North Crop of the Coalfield, the Millstone Grit succession is generally split into the Basal Grit Formation overlain by the Middle Shales Formation. However, in the South Crop this lithological division is less marked. The Millstone Grit represents an influx of northerly derived quartz rich sediment. The sediments fine southwards across the basin, and the unit oversteps and thins eastwards onto the Lower Carboniferous (Dinantian) Carboniferous Limestone.

Coal measures

The Lower and Middle Coal Measures (Upper Carboniferous) are dominated by mudstones, whereas the Pennant Measures (Upper Coal Measures) are dominated by more resistant sandstones. Further classified into the Farewell Rock Formation (basal Lower Coal Measures), Productive Coal Formation (Lower-Middle Coal Measures), and South Wales Pennant Formation (Pennant Measures). The formations all thicken towards the southwest. Of current opencast workings in the Coal Measures, the largest is in the North Crop at Selar (also Nant Helen). Small private pits exploit measures in the valley sides south of Seven Sisters. On the South Crop, there is a large opencast site at Parc Slip. There are numerous coal pits, tips and disused mines and boreholes throughout Neath-Port Talbot.

The Farewell Rock Formation outcrop lies around the margins of the productive coal basin. This sandstone unit has the *Gastrioceras subcrenatum* marine band at its base. On the North Crop the marine band in mudstones is thin at less than 2m, beneath a well developed sandstone around 45m thick.

The Productive Coal Formation mudstones with coals show reduced marine influence above the Garw coal seam. The Gellideg to Two Foot Nine seams (Lower-Middle Coal Measures) were referred to as the Main Productive Measures, in which the Amman (*Vanderbeckei*) marine band represents the only recognised marine influence. Shales, siltstones and coals form cyclothem 6-30m thick. Extensive ironstone nodules and bands were previously worked commercially. The formation is exposed around the 11 margins of the coalfield, in the sides of the deeply incised valleys through the Pennant plateau outcrop area, and in an E-W tract N of the Moel Gilau Fault in the Afan valley.

Pennant Formation

The South Wales Pennant Formation is dominated by sandstones. These resistant, thick sandstones form the upland areas and the high ground between valleys. The base of the formation is the Upper Cwmgorse (*Cambriense*) marine band, but it is then divided into members based by coal seams: the Llynfi, Rhondda and Brithdir

(Lower Pennant Measures), Hughes, Swansea and Grovesend (Upper Pennant Measures) Beds. Coals are widespread but poorer than the Productive Coal Formation. The onset and spread of sandstone deposition in the Coalfield was diachronous, appearing earlier in the southwest (Llynfi Beds) and later in the northeast (Brithdir Beds). In Neath-Port Talbot, sandstones dominate from the Llynfi Beds. The change to sandstone dominated sedimentation corresponds to a basin-wide change in sediment supply in response to the rising, advancing Variscan landmass to the south; northerly derived, quartz-rich sandstones are replaced by largely southerly derived, lithic sandstones. The younger, 'Upper Pennant Measures' cap the deeply dissected plateaus south of the Neath valley, e.g. the dramatic scarp slope of Mynydd Drumau, and prominent ridge of Mynydd Marchywel. The Pennant succession thickness varies from c.1200m in the southwest to 670m in the North Crop.

Mudstones

Near Kenfig in the south east, a small area from the Mercia Mudstone Group is present of Late Triassic rocks.

Structure and faulting

Neath-Port Talbot forms part of the broad, E-W Variscan syncline of the South Wales Coalfield. Major E-W thrusts and faults affect the southern Coalfield. The Swansea and Neath valleys are tectonically controlled NE-SW features that mark zones of major fault disturbance. There are numerous later, Tertiary N-S to NNW-SSE faults. The major N-S Duffryn and Rhydding faults bound a regional boulder clay-covered graben structure to the north of the mouth of the Afon Nedd.

Glacial deposits

The last, late Devensian glaciation left widespread deposits of boulder clay, which form an extensive and generally featureless cover over the bedrock in valley slopes and floors, although between the Neath and Swansea valleys there are drumlins. On the South Crop, e.g. between Margam and Kenfig Hill, the boulder clay forms more hummocky terrain. Recessional halt moraines were left in the Neath valley at Tonna, Aberdulais and Clyne, and a glacial lake was impounded behind them. Fluvio-glacial gravels flank the Neath valley between Mynydd Drumau and Cefn Morfydd and glacial cirques/ cwms occur at the heads of upland valleys

Periglacial solifluction deposits (head) are common on the valley slopes and along the base of the Pennant scarp south of Kenfig Hill. Landslips are common on the glacially oversteepened sides of the valleys, usually where the thick open jointed sandstones of the Pennant overlie impermeable mudstones of the Productive Coal Formation. Large landslips occur on both sides of the Tawe valley, e.g. at Pant y Ffynnon and Pant teg on Mynydd Drumau, and in the Afan valley, e.g. Duffryn slide. Landslips also affect the Namurian mudstone succession of the Mellte and Pyrrdin valleys.

Fluvial and coastal deposits

Alluvium covers the U and V shaped river valley floors, and river terraces are intermittent along the Mellte and Neath valleys. Alluvial fans occur in the Neath valley where drainage tributaries meet the Nedd floodplain, e.g. at Resolven, and in the Swansea valley where the Upper Clydach river joins the Tawe.

Hill peat is fairly widespread on the Pennant plateau with a large expanse at Dyffryn Cellwen, and a large expanse of peat covers Crymlyn Bog.

A wide coastal zone runs from Port Talbot to Kenfig. Sandy beaches lie seaward of extensive deposits of blown sand dunes ('burrows'). These are replaced landward by a wide zone of marine alluvium. Deposits of glacial sand and gravel, and alluvial fans extend from the mouths of the U- V shaped valleys that dissect the Upper Carboniferous (Productive Coal Formation - South Wales Pennant Formation) upland plateau. At Baglan Bay in the northern part of the coastal zone, there is an estuarine zone at the mouth of the Afon Nedd. At the southern end, the wide coastal plain is cut by the mouth of the Afon Cynfig.

Visual and Sensory Overview

Introduction

In simple terms, the landscape of Neath Port Talbot consists of an extensive sparsely populated upland plateau dissected by populated valleys running to a developed coastal plain and the sweep of Swansea Bay. Overall, the area is dominated by a strong upland character inland, coniferous forestry which covers a third of the area and a significant urbanisation of valleys and coastal plain.

Coastal plain

The landscape to the south west of the county borough is the landscape of the coastal plain, stretching from Margam Burrows in the south to the border with Swansea along Swansea Bay. The dominance of the sea, large, open and exposed, has a strong impact on the area's character. The sweep of the bay with large sandy beaches and views to Mumbles Head and England in the distance is a superb edge to the county borough. The dune complexes bordering the beach are impressive and important natural features which would have dominated the coastline in the past but have been replaced with development over much of their length and are now under pressure for recreation. These include those at Crymlyn, Baglan and Kenfig.



The area is the most heavily developed and settled part of the County Borough containing the settlements of Port Talbot, Baglan and Margam. The predominantly two storey residential built form is dominated by adjacent heavy industry related to the coast, particularly the impressive and visually distinct form of the Port Talbot steelworks to the south. To the north, the Baglan Chemical works are being transformed into a major commercial site with key note architecture. In addition, there are numerous other commercial and industrial developments. The busy M4 is a strong linear element sitting just below the adjacent scarp slope and running the length of the plain. This is important to the perception of the area and is a major source of noise and movement.

Scarp Slope



The flat urbanised coastal plain is complemented by the backcloth of the scarp slope, rising to the east. This is a strong landform, forming the edge of the coalfield plateau, is cut through by steep sided valleys. It is covered with woodland, pasture and rough grassland, heather and scrub and has some rock exposures through small scale quarrying in the past. Some of the vegetation has suffered burning in the past which affects the perception of the adjacent industries in terms of potential air pollution which is not necessarily justified. The scarp slope brings drama to the landscape and is an important element in the perception of the county borough particularly relating to its visibility from the M4 and mainline railway.

Rolling lowlands and hills



The rolling lowland to the south east around Coedhirwaun has more in common with the landscape further east than to the rest of Neath Port Talbot. Its mixed, productive agricultural landscape, close to the M4 is attractive to developers. This area is changing in character through residential and recreational development. Margam Park is a particularly important parkland landscape which spreads up the scarp slope and forms the setting for the castle and abbey. Its prominence is emphasised seasonally with the blooming of rhododendrons visible from the M4. Visually this helps form the gateway to the county borough from the south.

To the west of the mouth of the Neath the landscape becomes more complex with low rounded hills around Earlswood and Jersey Marine which form prominent and distinctive features. These hills are covered with varied landcover including mixed woodland with heather, scrub, exposed rock and uses such as a golf course. The former Llandarcy oil refinery is located to the north with dereliction being rapidly cleared.

Crymlyn Bog

Further west, the extensive Crymlyn Bog runs towards Swansea. This lowland area is traversed by canal but is highly secluded and has a strong sense of place. The fen vegetation appears very consistent and grass like when viewed from above but grows

high enough to restrict views and give a sense of enclosure to those passing through it.

Neath Estuary

The low lying, wide River Neath estuary is a significant area of lowland which shows the marks of low key pastoral agriculture, industrial and post industrial use. This area is surprisingly inaccessible, bleak and remote in nature despite its proximity and visibility from the M4, A465 and surrounding development. The flat areas of pasture either side of the tidal river are important and unusual elements with a distinct sense of place.

Uplands

The broad upland plateau is dominated by coniferous plantation to the east of the River Tawe. However, to the north west, grazed common is a significant element on exposed, higher ground such as Mynydd Garth and Cefn Gwrhyd. The openness and elevation allow extensive views out to the surrounding valleys. In the more settled southern areas, there is a mosaic of enclosed upland grazing and woodland, providing long views across to the coastal plain eg Mynydd Drumau.



Commercial forestry dominated by spruce, covers very large tracts of upland plateau and valley sides, creating a significant visual impact and creating a distinct and consistent character which can be monotonous in places, particularly on the tops. A few recreation routes penetrate these areas [eg Coed Morgannwg Way] but access is generally restricted and the area feels remote. However, the coniferous trees increase the perceived height of the valleys adding to their drama, particularly the Afan Valley. Although the forest is primarily destined for timber production it also serves as a major recreation attraction e.g. Afan Forest Park, which is used for cycling and walking amongst other activities. In places the abrupt boundaries of the forest against open landscape and large scale clear felling create unsightly tracts of landscape. This is mitigated by an edge of deciduous trees in some areas.

Valleys



The upland plateau is dissected by the main valleys of the Tawe, Neath, Afan and Dulais. Although the floor of the valleys is often less than 100mAOD the extensive coniferous plantation on higher slopes, areas of exposed rock and adjacent moorland provides them with a strong upland character. The semi-natural deciduous woodlands on the valley sides are particularly important to the area's character. Trees and woodland on the valley bottom and along riparian corridors are also significant.

The Afan, Dulais and other small side valleys such as the Goytre w Twrd have an enclosed, sheltered character, with views restricted by both the topography and the predominantly deciduous woodland cover. This combined with outgrown hedgerows are a symptom of reduced management input of upland farming, which nonetheless can create an attractive landscape. They contrast with the simpler landform and character of the upland plateau.

The valley floors contain most of the development outside of the coastal plain, with predominantly linear industrial settlements along their lengths, often dominated by terraces. This is especially so along the Tawe [Swansea] Valley, where settlements form a ribbon of development along the northern edge of the valley. Neath forms the largest valley settlement. A significant proportion of newer development has extended urban form from the valley floor to encroach on to the higher valley sides.



Other valleys such as the Afan exhibit significant remnants of their industrial heritage, with dismantled railway lines and significant structures e.g. viaducts and visually intact mining villages. The Neath and Swansea Valleys also contain canals providing cultural historic links. These enrich the visual interest of the valleys although there is a sense of decline where features and their surrounds are not maintained.

Agricultural Landscapes

Much of the agricultural landscape is changing in character through reduced management input particularly on the plateau and upper valley slopes and poorly drained valley bottoms. There is the encroachment of coarse grasses, scrub and

bracken to grazed areas and a deterioration in the field boundaries as stone walls crumble and hedges become outgrown.

Mineral extraction

There has been significant mineral extraction, predominantly on the northern and ESE fringes. This is dominated by open cast coal and former deep mining. The former is still active and extensive although generally screened from public view by elevated locations, mounding and planting. In some places the treatment can knit successfully into the existing landscape while in others planting is alien to its surroundings. These form a different grain and landscape pattern to the surrounding undisturbed landscape. Deep mining is now mainly evident in reclaimed tips and some derelict sites which are revegetating naturally although a number of operators remain active.

Landscape Habitats Overview

Introduction

The county borough is topographically very diverse. A great deal of the area is essentially upland in character, but it does nevertheless contain some lowland areas and coastal habitats. The upland plateaux are marked by heathland and moorland habitats, whilst the great swathes of semi-upland ffridd in the middle elevations support mosaics of rhos pastures interspersed with more-improved grasslands, woodlands and large areas of forestry. The lowlands are essentially rural and agricultural in nature, with dairying and sheep-rearing being the main activities on improved grasslands. The extent of arable production is very small. The coastal plain supports maritime habitats of great value, including sand dunes and saltmarsh and estuaries although a significant area of the coastal plain has been modified by industrial and urban development. Industrial influences have declined in the county borough now, leaving a legacy of secondary habitats on 'brownfield' sites which are often in themselves of wildlife value having been abandoned and left to recolonise by themselves.

The area is essentially acid or neutral in character, there being almost no calcareous influence present in the underlying geology except at depth. Nevertheless, some calcareous influences have made themselves evident in the extraordinary and complex habitats of Crymlyn Bog, an area of outstanding wildlife importance and value.

Numerous rare and declining species are present in the county borough, including many of those which are especially characteristic of the South Wales coalfield and of the region generally.

Woodland

Treecover is a major feature of the area but is hugely dominated by coniferous plantation, mainly in the uplands and semi-uplands of the north and east. More sensitive management regimes are slowly being introduced. Semi-natural woodland is much more limited in extent, but there are significant areas of ancient, upland oak woods on the valley sides and steeper ground of the uplands and semi-uplands. These are mainly dominated by sessile oak, together with species such as birch and more occasional ash. Upland oak woods are a conservation priority both nationally and locally, and significant sites in the study area include y Graig (Alltwen), Melincwrt Wood and the Glynneath area.



Ancient semi-natural woodlands also occur in the semi-uplands and lowland areas, and are mainly dominated by pedunculate oak or mixtures with sessile oak, together with ash and understory species such as hazel. As in the uplands, many ancient woodlands in these lower-lying areas have been replanted, sometimes with broadleaves but more often with conifers or mixtures of the two. Secondary (i.e. non-ancient) woodlands also occur quite extensively in some areas, particularly to the west. Significant lowland woodlands include Craig Cilhendre, Coed Gawdir and the Neath Valley woods.

Wet woodlands ('carrs') dominated by alder and willows are much rarer, and are a conservation priority both nationally and locally. In the study area they are mainly

confined to the lowlands at sites such as Waun Galed, Crymlyn Bog, lower Kenfig and Rheola although some upland sites also occur.

Grasslands

The South Wales coalfield is noted for its species-rich neutral and acid-tending grasslands, which vary from dry swards dominated by grasses such as common bent, through damp and marshy pastures dominated by rushes, through to mires and fen-meadows on shallow peat, dominated by species such as purple moor-grass. Often these habitats occur as mosaics, together with patches of acid grasslands and heathlands, and are referred to locally as 'rhos pastures'. Wales has one of the largest resources of such habitats remaining in Europe, and the purple moor-grass and rush-pasture elements are identified as conservation priorities both nationally and locally.



Rhos pasture habitats remain very widespread and comparatively common, especially in the semi-uplands and lowland areas. Often the drier areas have been partially improved for agriculture but there is also a large component of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Many scarce and uncommon species are associated with the habitat, including the globally-scarce whorled caraway and local species such as meadow thistle and devil's-bit scabious. The latter is the foodplant of marsh fritillary butterfly, which also has some of its last remaining UK and European strongholds in the rhos pastures of South Wales.

Key sites for these habitats are numerous in the study area, but include the Gwhryd Meadows, Craig Ton Y Gilfach, Upper Neath and Dulais Valleys, Carn Caca, Tairgwaith and Coed-cae-gurwen areas. Margam Moor supports an extensive area of semi-improved and some unimproved neutral grassland, but is additionally notable in that these form an area of coastal grazing 'levels'. Hay meadow management still occurs locally in the study area, at Cefn Uchaf and Hafod Wennol.

Acid grasslands occur most frequently in the uplands and are generally rather species-poor, although this is a natural characteristic of these habitats. Extensive areas of acid grasslands occur on the upland commons, but also spread down into the semi-uplands and even locally into the lowlands. Much of this resource is degraded by agricultural improvement and overgrazing, however.

Improved grasslands form a major component of the lower-lying and more sheltered lowlands and semi-uplands. These are of comparatively low biodiversity interest in themselves, although they often form a mosaic with patches of remnant neutral and marshy grasslands, and are typically subdivided by hedgerows which are also of wildlife value.

Heath

Dry acid heath dominated by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) remains comparatively common and widespread in the study area, despite being a national and local conservation priority elsewhere in Britain and Europe. Other heathland types, including wet heaths and grass-heath mixtures, are also widespread. These are commonest in the upland areas, but also occur extensively in the semi-uplands and locally in the lowlands. Often they form mosaics with acid grasslands and locally with rhos pastures, as well as with bogs, mires, fens and flushes. Key sites include Mynydd Gellionen, Mynydd y Garth, Cefn Gwrhyd, Mynydd Allt-y-grug, Earlswood Golf course and the Brynteg area. Many patches of heathland also survive in clearings and failed areas of the upland conifer forests.

Wetland



The study area supports a range of wetland habitats, including some quite extensive areas. The upland commons, for example, contain numerous areas of bog, acid mire and acid flushes, usually forming a mosaic with acid grasslands and heathlands. Key sites include Mynydd Uchaf, Gors Llwyn, Onllwyn, Cefn Gwrhyd and the valley of the Egle, Fforest-goch and Carn Caca.

Fens are a slightly different habitat, being more typical of mineral soils, frequently calcareous in nature and often in lowland situations. An extremely significant example is present at Crymlyn Bog and the nearby Pant y Sais Fen, an area of

outstanding biodiversity significance and value. A large number of rare and declining species occur at this site, including fen orchid. Upland bogs exist in Rhos and Dyffryn Cellwen. Wetland habitats are of limited and declining extent in the UK, and are thus considered to be conservation priorities both nationally and locally.

Reedbeds are of limited and declining extent both nationally and locally, and is regarded as a conservation priority. The study area contains important examples at Pant y Sais Fen and Crymlyn Bog, Red Jacket Fen and along the corridor of the M4 at the inland edge of the coastal plain. Secondary reedbed is also widespread in the industrial developments on the coastal dunes and in the Neath Estuary. Key species associated with this habitat include water rail, reed bunting, reed warbler and sedge warbler.

Bracken

Bracken is a common component of the semi-upland valley-sides, where it often occurs in a mosaic with acid grasslands, rhos pastures, heathlands and small woodlands etc. Such valley-side mosaics are often referred to locally as 'ffridd' habitats. Bracken forms dense uniform stands at the north-eastern edge of the coastal plain, occurring on the sides of small hills and rising ground such as Mynydd Dinas, Mynydd Emroch and Mynydd Brombil. It also forms a significant component of the ground cover beneath the wood-pasture of Margam Park. There is a distinctive bird fauna associated with bracken slopes in South Wales, and light bracken cover provides habitats for rare and declining butterflies such as the high brown fritillary (*Argynnis adippe*).

Hedgerows

The area supports a good network of hedgerows throughout the lowland and semi-upland areas, although these become less frequent with increasing elevation and are replaced by stone walls and fences in the upland. Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows are a conservation priority both nationally and locally, and support a very wide range of plant and fauna species including many declining bird species such as linnet, song thrush and whitethroat etc. Good networks of hedgerows are especially evident in areas such as the Cimla, Margam area and Cilybebyll. Stone walls may also be valuable habitats, especially where these are of traditional dry-stone construction. A variety of ferns and other 'mural' plants are associated with wall, as well as fauna such as molluscs and reptiles. Bats may roost or overwinter within the structure of old walls.

Dunes and Saltmarsh



Sand dune habitat occurs all along the seaboard of the study area, but has been extensively lost or degraded by past residential and industrial developments. However, an extensive area of high quality duneland habitat remains at the Crymlyn and Baglan Burrows around the mouth of the River Neath. The dunes in this area exhibit a wide variation in terms of degree of fixity and development, and there are numerous brackish and freshwater pools or 'slacks'. Some dune development is also present around the estuaries of the Rivers Afan and Kenfig, the latter of which forms the boundary of the extensive Kenfig Dunes, an area of outstanding biodiversity significance which lies just outside, but immediately adjacent to, the study area. The seaward edge of Margam Moor also gives way to coastal sand dunes (Margam Burrows). Such habitats are all regarded as conservation priorities, both nationally and regionally. Key species associated with this habitat in the study area include sea stock, yellow bartisia and sharp rush.



Saltmarsh occurs most extensively in the Neath Estuary, where it extends inland for up to 6km along the tidal lower reaches of the Neath. It also occurs amongst the sand dunes of the Crymlyn and Baglan Burrows, and in the estuaries of the Rivers Afan and Kenfig. Saltmarsh is a national and local conservation priority, and supports key species such as golden samphire, sea lavenders and sharp rush.

Watercourses and waterbodies

There are four major river systems present in the county borough, exhibiting a full range of features from upland headwaters and streams, through wooded valleys and moorland rivers, to lowland mesotrophic rivers and estuaries. All are considered to be of conservation significance, supporting numerous rare and uncommon plants and

fauna. These include species such as otter, kingfisher and white-clawed crayfish. Other important watercourses include the Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals.

Minor ditches and streams are common, especially in the semi-upland and lowland areas. One area of exceptional value is the Margam Moor area of coastal grazing levels. Here the pasture grasslands are bounded by ditches of standing water known locally as 'reens', rather than by hedgerows or fences. The reens receive freshwater at their inland end, but are exposed to saltwater influx at their seaward end, and the resulting brackish conditions support a wide range of specialised plants and invertebrates. Extensive areas of coastal grazing marsh also occur in the Neath Estuary.

There are several major lakes, the largest being the Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir SSSI. Others include Cefn Parc Reservoir, Penrhiwtyn Lake, the Triangular (BP) Reservoir, Cefn Cwrt Reservoir and the lakes in the Gnoll, Margam Country Parks and at Rheola. Most of these larger waterbodies have value for wintering and some nesting waterfowl, and some support rare and uncommon plants and fauna. Llwyn Fach Lake is a large upland tarn which supports rare plants such as water lobelia, quillwort and floating bur-reed. Smaller ponds remain moderately frequent in the study area, especially in the semi-upland and lowland areas. Key fauna species include the rare and protected great crested newt and various dragonflies.

Industrial and Urban sites

The area is rich in industrial sites, which in some areas have had a long term deleterious impact on habitats, for example in the development of the coastal plain. In others the decline and fall into disuse of former industrial sites has resulted in the creation of secondary habitats which are themselves of value. Many areas of coal spoil, for example, have lain undisturbed around now-disused mine sites for long periods of time and have developed secondary habitats which include species-rich grasslands, heathland, marshy grasslands and acid flushes. Many plant species, including a number of orchid species, are now to be found on old spoil sites, often in large numbers.

The industrial past has also given rise to a great many artificial structures such as mine shafts, quarry caves and buildings, many of which now support uncommon plants and fauna such as nesting raptors, black redstart and roosting bats. In more recent time, the clearance of former industrial sites to create large open development plateaux has afforded opportunities for colonisation (often unwelcome) by declining species such as lapwing and brown hare. Key sites include Baglan Bay, Margam Sands, Llandarcy and the upper Dulais valley.

Urban and suburban development has given rise to numerous built-up areas in the study area, especially in the lower Neath valley and in the coastal plain. These areas comprise mosaics of houses, garden, light industrial and commercial developments, schools, hospitals and supporting infrastructure. Generally they are of comparatively low wildlife value, although it should be recognised that many once-common woodland and farmland birds now rely on gardens as food sources and for nesting, whilst minor features such as ponds may support a range of plants, invertebrates and amphibians.

Historic Landscape Overview

Introduction

The history of the County Borough is rich and diverse, from the large number of recorded Neolithic tombs and Bronze Age ritual sites to the very early industrial sites of Neath Abbey, the Gnoll and Melincwrt. These sites of archaeological interest lie within landscapes which often exhibit a considerable depth of historic character.

Mesolithic Period

Evidence of the Mesolithic period is limited. There are seven known finds of Mesolithic flint artefacts in Neath Port Talbot almost all of which have derived from the forestry area to the west of Blaen Rhondda. These chance finds are not indicative of settlement of the area by hunter-gatherers in the post-glacial period

There are four known Neolithic chambered tombs in the Neath Port Talbot area; at Margam Moors, Pen-yr-Alltwen, Carn Llechart and Giant's Grave, Briton Ferry, although the latter is known only from documentary records. A number of Neolithic finds are also known, an axe found on Aberavon beach is particularly significant as it was found with its wooden haft more or less intact. The coastal plain was once much broader and represented a prime location for subsistence activities such as hunting, fowling, fishing and, perhaps, limited agriculture and pastoralism. The Bronze Age period shows a considerable intensification of occupation, although there are no known occupation sites. There are numerous known cairns and cairn fields within the authority area, most are clearly funerary monuments and are almost always placed upon highly visible upland sites along the mountain ridges. The most significant cairn fields lie in the upland area to the north of Pontardawe yet other clusters lie on the Afan Wallia Upland, Mynydd Drumau and Mynydd Marchywel. The distribution of these monuments, as with the Neolithic monuments, probably reflects the routes by which people moved around the landscape. Several particular prehistoric routes or tracks have been identified although their existence is circumstantial.

Bronze Age

Of similar importance in the Bronze Age landscape are the ring cairns. Although they are called cairns, the ring cairns are in fact ritual monuments which seem to have fulfilled a similar function to the stone circles and henges found elsewhere in England and Wales. The Carn Llechart ring cairn is one of the best-known examples in Wales, with a fairly typical location in a natural bowl in the upland landscape. It is adjacent to the Carn Llechart chambered tomb and close to an extensive cairn field.

Iron Age

Evidence of Iron Age occupation comes almost exclusively from upland hillforts and other enclosures within the authority area. In terms of distribution, all lie to the east of the river Neath. It is considered that the frontier between the Iron Age tribes of the Silures and Demetae lay somewhere in the Neath-Swansea area. Although termed "hillforts," the Iron Age enclosures fall into two categories; those that are clearly defensive and those representing wealth, prestige and a command over vast human resources.

Roman Period

Historical sources indicate that the Roman conquest reached Wales around 52-57 AD. Three large marching camps (temporary forts) in the Neath area, at Blaen-Cwm-Bach, Melincwrt and Coelbren, outline Roman activity of this time. Adjacent to Iron Age enclosures and on the line of the Cefn Ffordd suggests that this was a strategic north south route in the conquest period.

The consolidation of Roman power in the Neath valley was marked by a shift of activity to the west side of the river Neath. Buried evidence and a number of Roman milestones mark the course of the main road west from Cardiff, which passes along the line of Water Street in Margam and probably along the line of the modern A48 to Neath. There are two major forts, at Neath and Coelbren, linked by Sarn Helen, which then continues north east towards Brecon, whilst the main coastal road continues west to Swansea, crossing the Tawe at Landore and thence to the fort a Loughor. Signal stations occupied the route of Sarn Helen road, at least one is known on Mynydd Hirfynydd.

Post Roman times



Limited archaeological and documentary evidence exists for the period between Roman occupation and the Norman invasion. One of the principal archaeological evidence of pre-Norman medieval activity is derived from a large number of early Christian inscribed stones. Whilst some may represent burials associated with roads others seem to be associated with "monastic" ecclesiastical sites, suggesting that Margam Abbey, Neath Abbey and St Baglan's were all ecclesiastical centres prior to the establishment of later Medieval monasteries or churches.

Medieval and post medieval period

During the Medieval Period, the Cistercian Monasteries of Neath and Margam exerted an important influence on the area, clearing woodland and developing the agricultural productivity of their lands through a system of Granges. It is suggested that considerable investment by Margam Abbey was used for drainage and other water management including water meadows on the low lying Margam Moor.

After the dissolution of the monasteries the County Borough became increasingly dominated by landed estates. Ownership of landholdings transferring from church to aristocratic landowners, many of whom held the estates almost intact until recent times. However, as elsewhere in South Wales, the increasing importance of industry brought in new entrepreneurial landowners.

Industrialisation

The Neath Port Talbot area was one of early industrial development. Coal extraction is first recorded in the 13th century and copper and iron were worked from Tudor times. By the end of the 17th century a number of significant industrial concerns were developing. A copper works was established at Neath Abbey at the end of the 17th century although copper working began on the site in 1583. Sir Humphrey Mackworth established his Lead and Copper works at Melincryddan in 1690. Shortly afterwards the iron forge at Melincwrt was established. Historical sources dispute the foundation date of Aberdulais, which is placed at either 1667 or 1724.



The history of industrial development in the area revolves around motive power and resources. Whilst the copper industry had its real beginnings in the Neath area, based upon ores from Cumbria, the transition to ores imported from Cornwall, and later South America, shifted the focus to the port of Swansea. Similarly, the early ironworks at Melincwrt and Aberdulais were heavily dependent upon waterpower. Later use of steam to drive machinery shifted the focus away from the valley towards the coast (e.g. the Briton Ferry Iron Works established in 1860). Again, as noted elsewhere, early industrial production relied on timber for smelting. The shift to reverberatory furnaces allowed the use of coal, rather than wood, which presumably was in short supply. However, although there was significant coal production in the area from the 18th century onwards, as for example at Mackworth's Gnoll coal workings, the Neath and Swansea valleys lie within the anthracite region of the coal field, and initially anthracite was of less industrial use than the steam coals mined further east.

The development of the Neath canal (1791) and Swansea canal (1790) had a significant impact on the industry in the area. Not only did this open up easier access to coal extraction in the upper valleys (e.g. at Aberpergwm) but also the Swansea canal provided an important source of water power for industrial concerns along the Swansea valley. The exploitation of the upper valleys and of the more inaccessible Afan valley was further developed by the expanding systems of tramways and railways. This process began early with enterprises such as the Gnoll; the map of 1720 shows new wagon ways connecting the coal workings with the Mackworth's wharf on the river Neath.



The landed estates grew on the strength of coal production, shifting emphasis away from agriculture as their primary means of livelihood. This certainly applied to the Aberpergwm estate, although the Williams' certainly used the coal wealth to expand their holdings. Similarly, the Hywel Gwyn family of Duffryn Clydach made a considerable amount of money simply for allowing drams from the Wernddu colliery to cross their estate on the way to the wharves on the river Neath. The growth of coal extraction in turn led to the development of new settlements for workers at Resolven, Glynneath, Ystalyfera and in the Afan valley. However, the focus of other industries shifted largely to the estuary area at Briton Ferry, Melincryddan and Neath Abbey. A similar pattern has continued to the present with some limited coal production in the upper valleys and the development of industry on the coastal littoral.

The movement of industry to the coastal littoral was, of course, driven by the development of the ports. Although Neath was probably a port from Roman times, the need for deeper anchorages led to the growth of Briton Ferry dock (constructed ca. 1860) and latterly Port Talbot Docks built in 1898. These docks, like those of Cardiff and Newport, grew up as a conduit for the massive coal exports of the period leading up to the First World War. But they also had importance for local iron and steel industries, latterly with respect to the Abbey Steel Works at Port Talbot opened in 1951.



Cultural Landscape Overview

Introduction

The present County Borough Council of Neath Port Talbot was created in 1996. It embraces a high proportion of the western part of the former historic County of Glamorgan (or Glamorganshire), and of the County of West Glamorgan formed at the previous local government reorganisation in 1974.

From the cultural landscape perspective, the area can be divided into three areas: the mountain and moorland region in the north west (former northern part of Lliw Valley Borough Council); the Neath and Dulais Valleys area (pre-1974 Neath Rural and Urban Council areas, and subsequently Neath Borough Council to 1994); and the Afan Valley and adjacent hills leading eastwards (formerly Port Talbot Borough Council). Their distinctiveness is a product of many factors, though topography and geology are arguably the greatest influences in the formation of the separate cultural identities.

North western area

To the west and north of the Tawe and north of Trebanos, the remnants of the former Lliw Valley administrative area consist largely of higher land divided by the Egel River, with small industrial settlements around the edges of the boundary.

In many senses, it is discernible that this attachment to Neath's northern edge retains its own distinctive and rich cultural identity, with Pontardawe as its focal point. It consists of high moorland containing many examples of prehistoric and 19th century exploitation, pockets of field systems on the more fertile lower slopes, some stands of afforestation, and very extensive open cast mining in the semi-circle fringed by predominantly Welsh-speaking settlements on the northern frontier of the coalfield.

Principal settlements and population

The coastal area contains the main centres of population. The surrounding valleys are mainly rural in aspect, interspersed with 18th, 19th and 20th century industrial settlements whose frequency and size diminishes as communications routes into the hinterland become less important. The County Borough's population is approximately 138,000, with an overall trend downwards over recent decades until stabilisation in the early 2,000's. More than 32,500 are aged over 60, and some 30,000 have a long-term illness, of whom roughly half are above pensionable age¹.

The town of Neath is the subject area's principal centre of population. Its strategic importance - militarily and economically - has been recognised by succeeding occupants, from the westernmost elements of the Silures and their interface with the Demetae² in the Swansea Valley area in prehistory, through the Roman, Norman and monastic eras to the period of industrial exploitation of mineral resources. The development of the railways and, later, the internal combustion engine have had - and are still contributing - a marked cultural impact on the area.

The Neath and Dulais valleys provided communications corridors from agricultural and industrial areas to principal road and sea routes until economic considerations required larger sea-going vessels, and the importance of the wharves and docks at Neath Abbey, Giants Grave, Briton Ferry and Baglan subsequently declined, gradually giving way to the docks at Swansea in the 19th century and the deep water facilities at Port Talbot in the 20th.

A noteworthy feature of the Swansea and Dulais valleys area is the continuing strength of the Welsh speaking community.

The economy

The local economy, once dominated by coal, iron, steel and copper industries, continues to experience change. The more recent oil and petrochemical industries



¹ *ibid*

² *An Historical Atlas of Wales from Early to Modern Times, by William Rees; Cardiff 1951*

at Llandarcy and Baglan, which were substantial contributors to the economy, have had a relatively short life, being first established in the 1930s and subject to contraction and cessation over the recent past - though the Baglan Energy Park and adjacent industrial developments are to some extent filling the void. Nevertheless, particular hardship has been experienced in the upper Swansea Valley following the closure of several large employers. Much of the traditional deep coal-mining activity has ceased, though it has been replaced by extensive open-cast extraction on the uplands to the east and west of the Swansea and Dulais Valleys. On a smaller scale, coal mining is still important in the valley communities where small private mines and coal processing and washeries provide valuable local jobs³.

The Neath area in particular suffered greatly in the early 1980s from the very rapid closure of primary industries - coal, iron and tinplate. Unemployment levels rose as high as 18.3% - equivalent to more than 4000 male workers - almost overnight, resulting in a psychological shock whose repercussions are still evident. The transformation of the workforce from manufacturing to service orientation is evident in the large numbers of low paid retail outlet jobs that have sprung up throughout the area - largely in supermarkets and fast food outlets.



Yet the area continues to sustain a strong manufacturing base with more than twice the UK average employed in the manufacturing sector⁴. The steel industry remains by far the largest industrial employer, with around 3000 people employed directly at the Corus works in Port Talbot, although rationalisation of the workforce has affected employment, contractors and suppliers both at the steelworks and the adjacent industrial estate at Margam.

Regeneration

Closure of the Llandarcy refinery in 1998 and the contraction of British Petroleum's Baglan Bay Petrochemical complex have resulted in two of the largest 'brownfield' regeneration areas in the UK (445 and 757 hectares respectively). The County Borough and Welsh Development Agency are working with BP to bring the land forward for development in order to reinvigorate the area's economy. The Government decided in 1999 to allow the development of a gas-fired 500mW power station at Baglan Bay, which will form the core of the Energy Park and will, it is intended, attract the creation of new industry and business through offering discounted electricity⁵,

These two 'brownfield' developments are the latest, and probably the largest in scale, efforts towards regeneration which began in the early 1980s with the creation of the Neath Development Partnership - a consortium of the former Neath Borough Council, the Thomson Organisation, local industry and - later - the WDA whose remit was to identify ways of creating employment opportunities for primary industry workers made redundant by closures. As a cultural phenomenon the initiative deserves mention as it was the first - and, for some years, the only - such partnership where firmly-held Socialist beliefs worked happily and collaboratively alongside capitalist organisations.

The first fruits of the Partnership initiative were the Lonlas Village Workshops at Skewen, development of the Neath Abbey Business Park in conjunction with the WDA and starter-unit workshops at Glynneath. Sites for other significant business parks have been developed in the Dulais Valley at Creunant and Seven Sisters and in the Swansea Valley, at Glanrhyd, Abernant (Cwmgors) and Cymmer.

While there is abundant evidence of regenerative investment in the Neath and Dulais Valleys, other areas such as the Afan and Corrwg Valleys have been slower to respond. Nevertheless, the local initiatives of such organisations as the Glyncoerwg Ponds Co-operative have resulted in a well-regarded leisure activity complex adjacent to the village, and are now poised to make a step change towards creating a nationally important centre of excellence for Mountain Biking based on cycling trails creatively engineered in Forestry Commission plantations linking with Afan Forest Park.

As a response to the national, and local, need for housing, proposals for the development of the 1,000 acre (400+ ha) Llandarcy Urban Village on the oil

³ Neath Port Talbot Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan, January 2003

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

refinery's obsolete land are well advanced. This initiative will absorb and surround the Llandarcy Village Conservation Area built for refinery workers by BP in the 1920s, and will house around 10,000 people on land bordering the Pant y Sais Fen and Crymlyn Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), provide about 2,500 homes and result in the creation of around 3,200 jobs. Key partners are the WDA, Prince's Foundation, BP, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, and it has the full support of the Welsh Assembly Government. Since the refinery's closure, a number of small business units and leisure facilities have been developed.

As well as being demonstrably a 21st Century cultural landscape phenomenon in its own right, the Llandarcy Urban Village is located at the heart of a wider social-engineering concept - the Swansea Arc of Opportunity. This concept is itself a modern cultural development of wide significance, being a part of the Arc's European Union Objective 1 strategy, and building on the regenerative successes of D'Arcy Developments, successor to the Neath Development Partnership. Strategically placed adjacent to junction 43 of the M4 motorway, the Urban Village will go some way to meeting the housing needs of the County Borough area.

The whole of the County Borough has been included in the Objective 1 Programme.

Social deprivation

A critical phenomenon is the fact that of the 42 wards in the County Borough Council area, 11 rank among the 100 most deprived in the Multiple Indices, and 16 are recorded as being the most deprived in the Health Domain⁶. Indeed, the Gwynfi Ward is considered to be the most deprived in Wales in terms of health, while Cymer is ranked as being the worst in terms of the Employment Domain (albeit 8th for overall Multiple Deprivation in Wales); Gwynfi (placed 3) closely follows. These unwelcome statistical records influence the contemporary cultural essence of pockets of the Council area, and are reflected to some extent in the modern patterns of settlement development. Of the 865 wards in Wales 33 (78.5%) of the County Borough's wards fall below the median line of multiple deprivation.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First programme⁷, based on the need to give priority to communities in greatest need of social and economic support, is being targeted at the following wards:

- *Port Talbot*: Sandfields East and West
- *Afan Valley*: Gwynfi, Glyncorwg, Cymer and Brynbryddan and Penllyn in Cwmafan
- *Neath*: Neath East, Briton Ferry West, Fairyland and Pelenna
- *Dulais Valley*: Seven Sisters and Onllwyn
- *Amman Valley*: Brynamman
- *Swansea Valley*: Ystalyfera and part of Pantteg

⁶ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000, National Assembly for Wales

⁷ Neath Port Talbot Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan, January 2003

SECTION B

INTRODUCTION

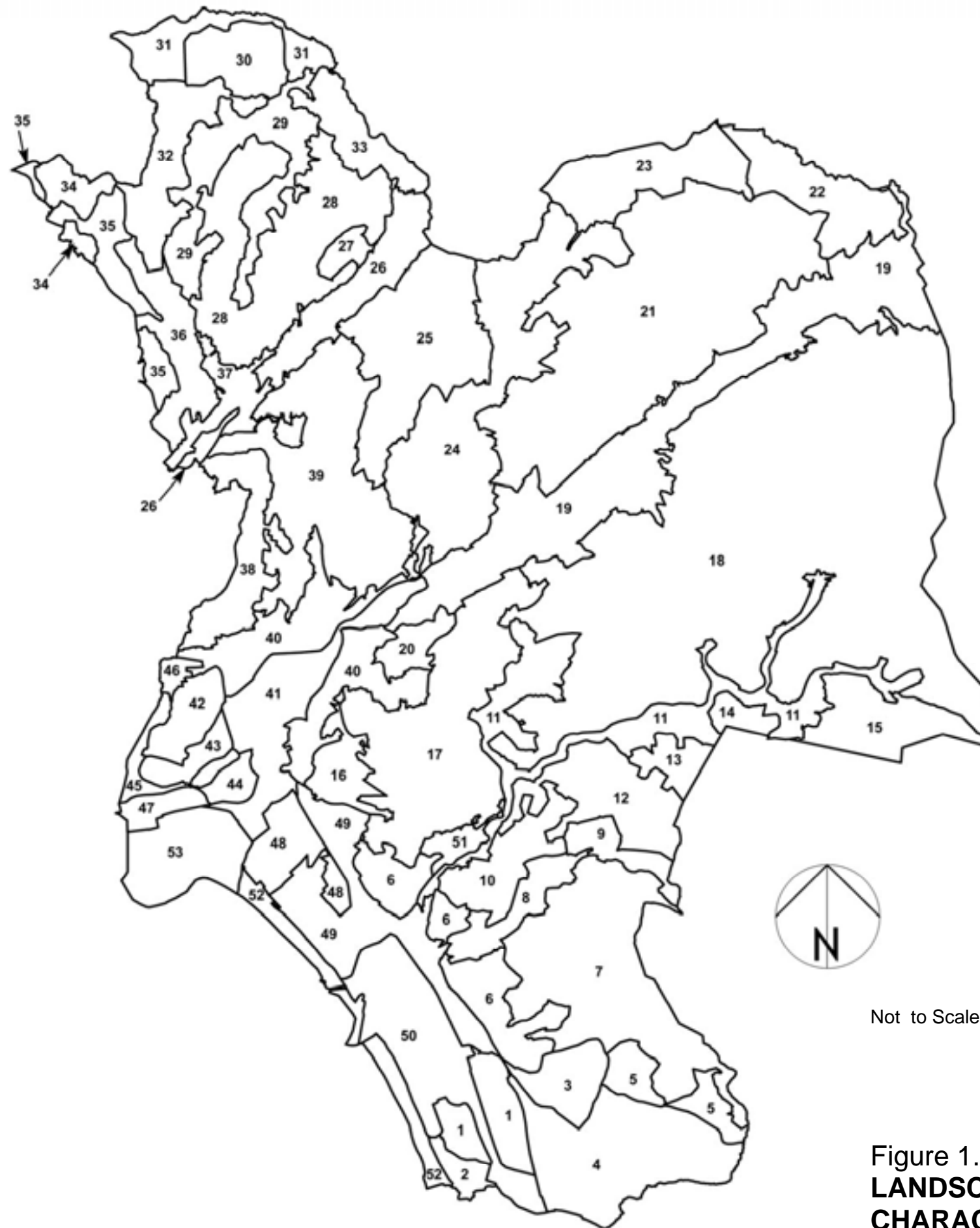
In Section B each Character Area [1-53] is described and evaluated. These are derived from a combination of areas defined by the five aspects. This is led by the visual and sensory aspect which is informed and refined by the other layers. The summary maps for each aspect and the Landscape Character Areas are set out in the following pages as an introduction to the Section. It should be noted that accurate mapping on an OS base is a digitised GIS product held by the Council. This is associated with a database which forms the basis for the descriptions in this report.

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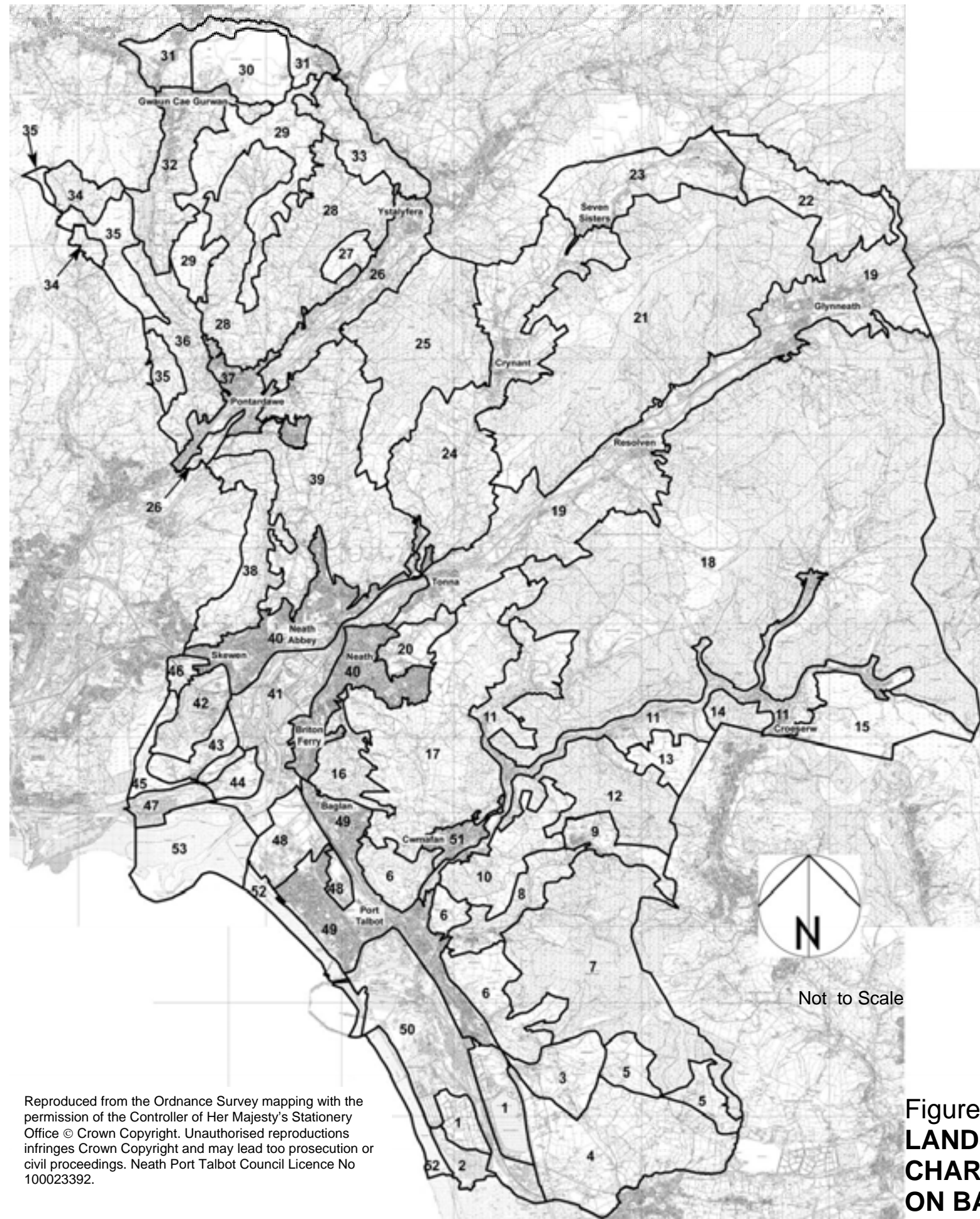
- No Character Area
- 1 Margam Marsh
- 2 Margam Burrows
- 3 Margam Country Park
- 4 Coedhirwaun
- 5 Coedhirwaun Scarp and open scarp tops
- 6 Mynydd Bromil, Mynydd Emroch & Mynydd Dinas
- 7 Mynydd Margam
- 8 Goytre Valley
- 9 Cefn Cethin
- 10 Mynydd Bycham
- 11 Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna
- 12 Mynydd Penhydd
- 13 Foel Trawsnant
- 14 Foel Fawr
- 15 Mynydd y Gelli
- 16 Briton Ferry Woods
- 17 Feol Fynyddau
- 18 Mynydd Resolfen, Craig-y-Llyn & Mynydd Ynyscorwg
- 19 Neath Valley
- 20 Gnoll Park
- 21 Hirfynydd
- 22 Banwen Pyrddin
- 23 Head of Dulais Valley
- 24 Dulais Valley
- 25 Mynydd Marchywel
- 26 Swansea valley
- 27 Mynydd Allt y grug
- 28 Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd & Cwm Egel
- 29 Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth & Cefn Gwrhyd
- 30 East Pit
- 31 Cwm Aman
- 32 Cwm Gors, Gwaun Cae Gurwen & Abernant
- 33 Cwm Twrch
- 34 Nant Melyn & Bryn-chwyth
- 35 Bryn Mawr, Mynydd Carnllechart, Mynydd y Baran & Mynydd Gellionnen
- 36 Upper Clydach River valley & Lower slopes of Mynydd Gellionnen
- 37 Pontardawe, Rhos, Alltwen & Trebanos
- 38 Mynydd Drumau
- 39 Clydach valley, Cilybebyll & Cilffrew
- 40 Neath
- 41 Neath Estuary
- 42 Former Llandarcy Refinery
- 43 Jersey Marine
- 44 Earlswood
- 45 Crymlyn Bog
- 46 Cae'r Hendy
- 47 Elba Crescent
- 48 Baglan Bay works
- 49 Port Talbot, Sandfields, Baglan & Margam
- 50 Port Talbot Docks & Margam works
- 51 Cwmafan
- 52 Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands
- 53 Neath Estuary Mouth



Not to Scale

Figure 1.0
**LANDSCAPE
 CHARACTER AREAS**

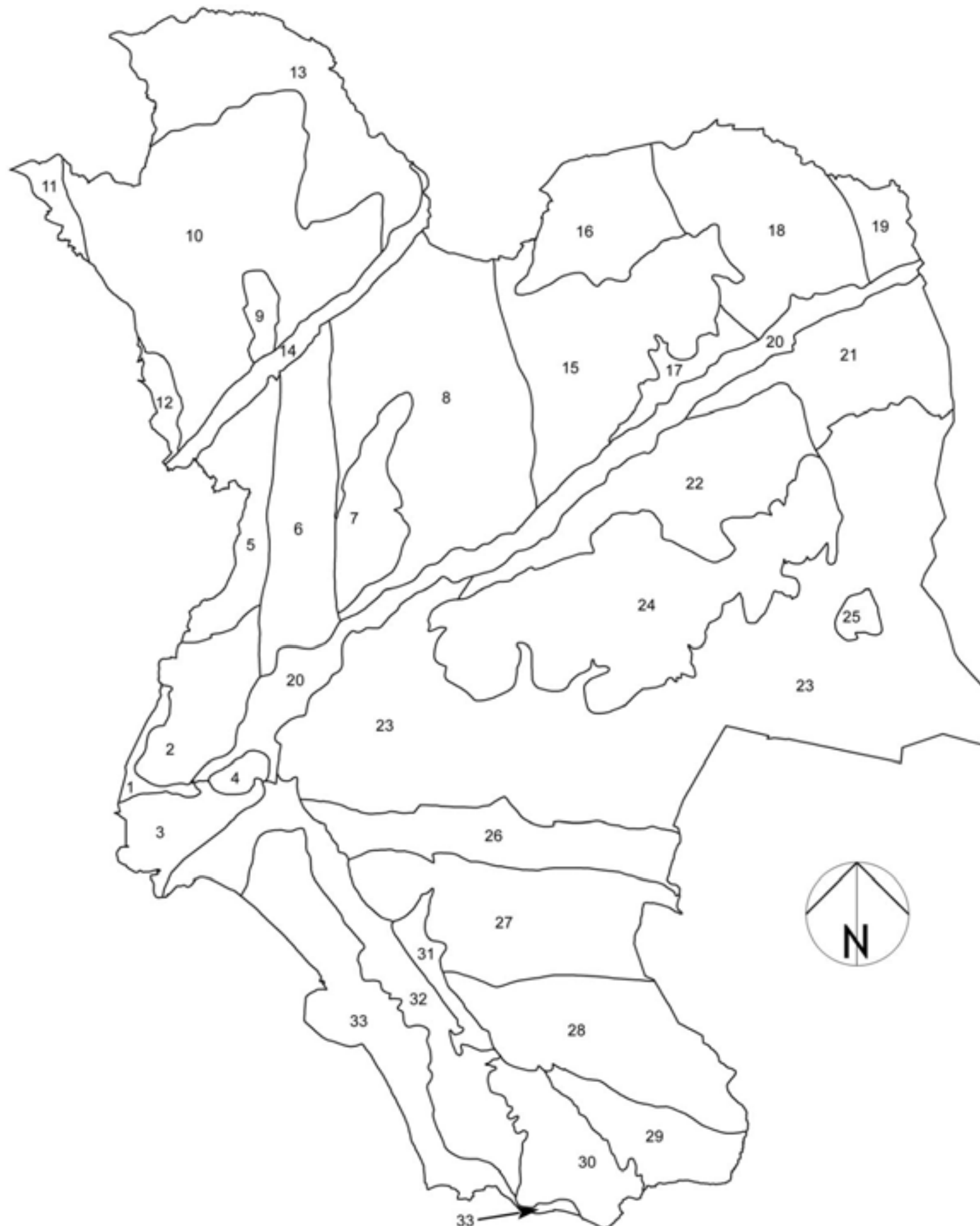
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- 25 Mynydd Marchywel
- 26 Swansea valley
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- 42 Former Llandarcy Refinery
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Figure 1.1
LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER AREAS
ON BASE MAP

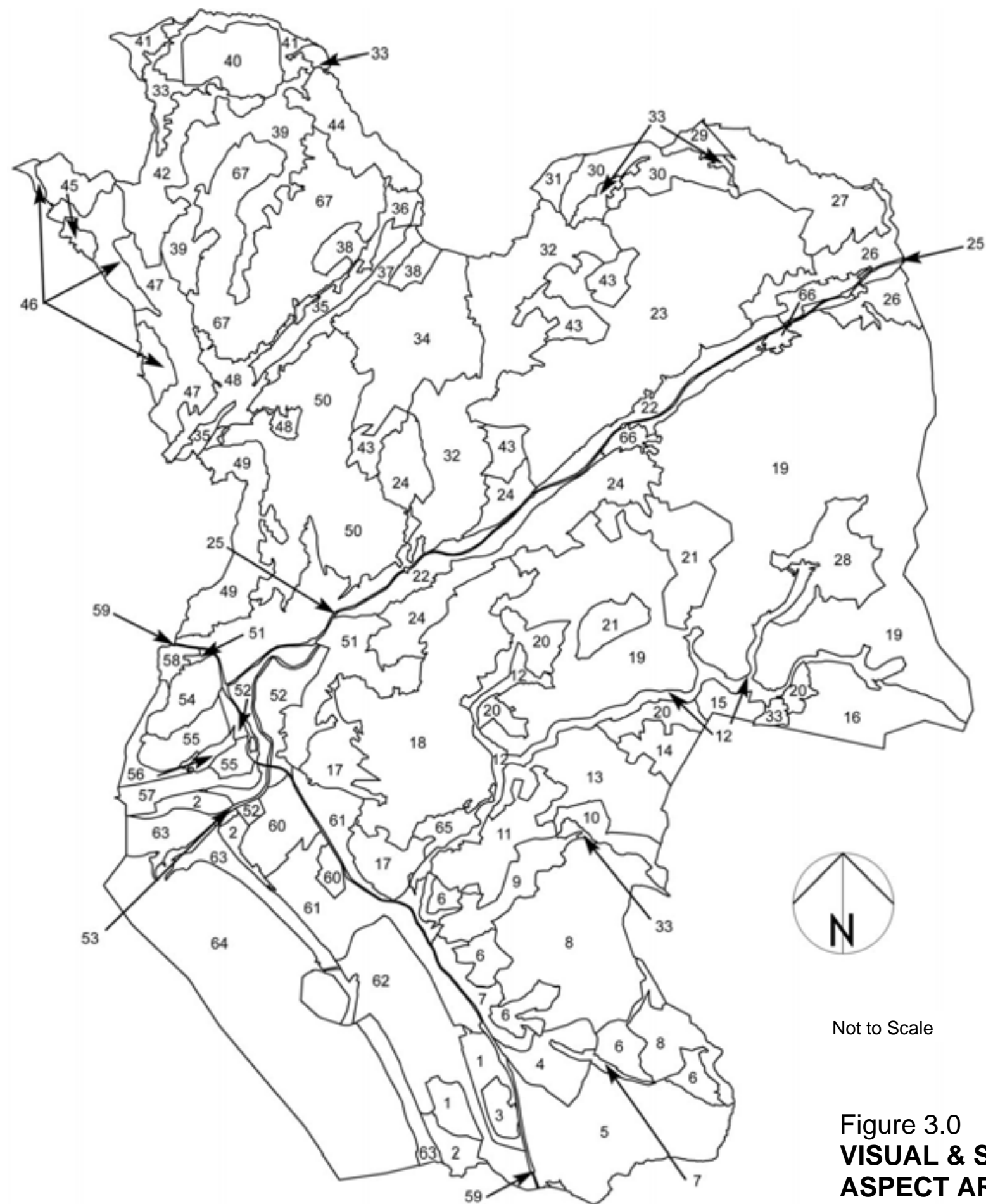
Area No	Area Name	Evaluation
1	Crymlyn Bog	Moderate
2	Jersey Marina	Moderate
3	Crymlyn Burrows	High
4	Pant y Sais	Outstanding
5	Mynydd Drumau	Moderate
6	Rhos	Moderate
7	Blaenhonddan	Moderate
8	Mynydd Marchywel	Moderate
9	Pantgwn	Moderate
10	Upper Clydach Valley	High
11	Banc John	Moderate
12	Trebanog	Moderate
13	Gwaun Cae Gurwen	Moderate
14	Tawe Valley	High
15	Hirfynydd	High
16	Seven Sisters	Moderate
17	Rheola Wood	Moderate
18	Banwen	High
19	Pyrddin Valley	Outstanding
20	Afon Nedd	High
21	Blaengwrath	Outstanding
22	Mynydd Resolven	Moderate
23	Foel Fynyddau	High
24	Mynydd Blaenafon	Moderate
25	Mynydd Ynyscorrwg	Moderate
26	Mynydd Bychan	Moderate
27	Mynydd Emroch	Moderate
28	Mynydd Margam	Moderate
29	Graig Goch	High
30	Kenfig	Moderate
31	Port Talbot	Moderate
32	Margam	Low
33	Margam-Baglan	Moderate



Not to Scale

Figure 2.0
**GEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE
 ASPECT AREAS**

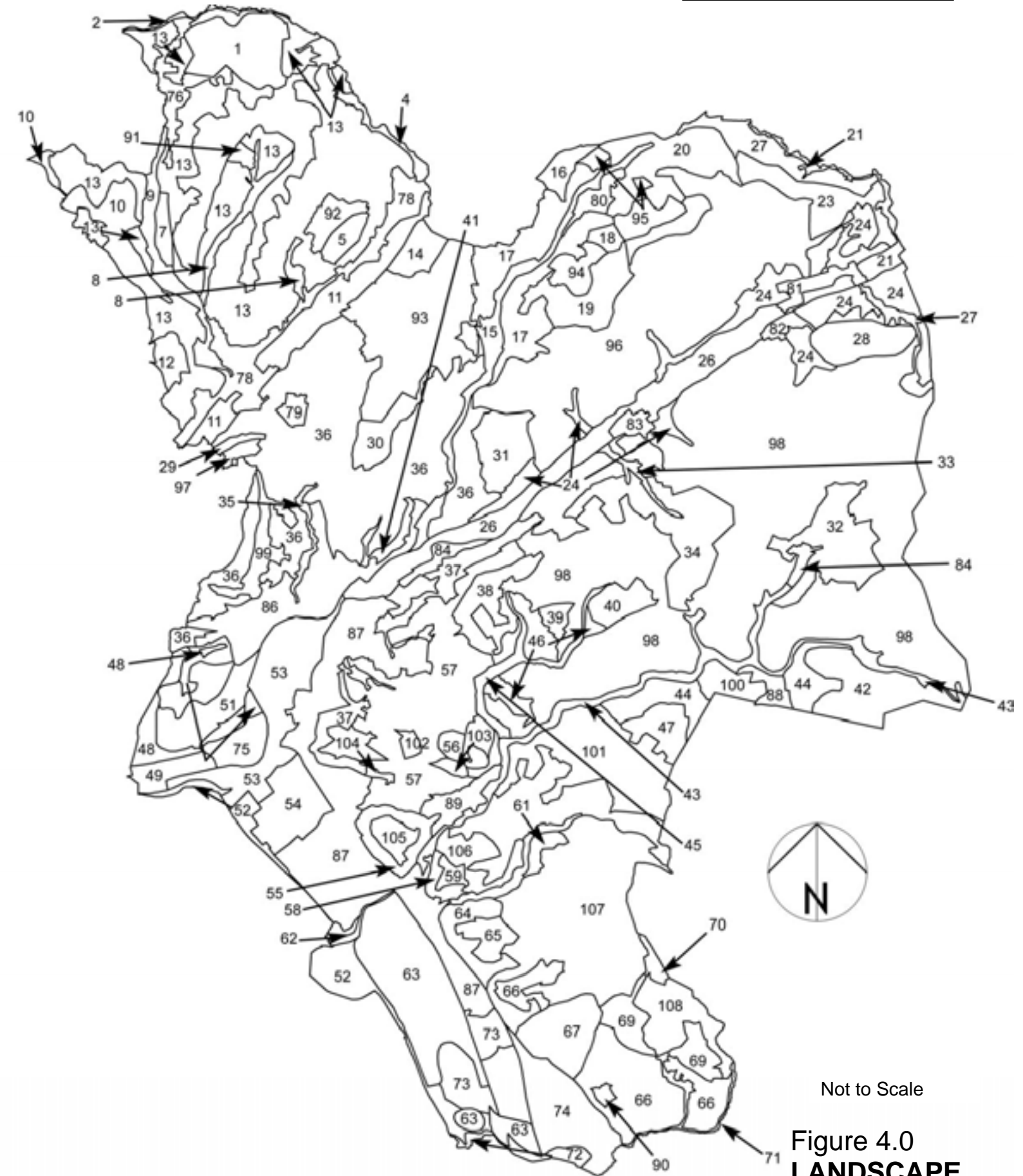
Area No	Area Name	Evaluation	Unique Identifier
1	Margam Marsh	Low	NPTVS277
2	Coastal Dunes	Moderate	NPTVS274
3	Eglwy Nunydd reservoir	Moderate	NPTVS799
4	Margam Country Park	High	NPTVS403
5	Coedhirwaun	Moderate	NPTVS543
6	Mynydd Bromil & Scarp tops	Moderate	NPTVS897
7	Margam Scarp	High	NPTVS811
8	Mynydd Margam	Moderate	NPTVS927
9	Cwm Dyffryn	High	NPTVS916
10	Cefn Cethin	Low	NPTVS448
11	Mynydd Emorch and Mynydd Bycham	Moderate	NPTVS139
12	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna	Moderate	NPTVS936
13	Mynydd Penhydd	Moderate	NPTVS366
14	Foels Trawsnant	Moderate	NPTVS358
15	Foel Fawr	Low	NPTVS465
16	Mynydd y Gelli	High	NPTVS547
17	Mynydd Dinas	High	NPTVS187
18	Mynydd y Gaer / Cefn Morfudd	Moderate	NPTVS703
19	Mynydd Nant y bar / Mynydd Blaenafan / Mynydd Resolfen	Moderate	NPTVS962
20	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna farmed sides	Moderate	NPTVS920
21	Carn caca	Moderate	NPTVS624
22	Neath valley (bottom)	Moderate	NPTVS431
23	Hirfynydd	Moderate	NPTSV357
24	Neath valley sides	Moderate	NPTVS422
25	A465 (T)	Low	NPTVS252
26	Gelliceibryn / Pont Walby	Moderate	NPTVS430
27	Banwen Pyrddin	Moderate	NPTVS970
28	Mynydd Corrwyg Fechan & Mynydd Fforch dwm	Moderate	NPTVS103
29	Dyffryn Cellwen	Low	NPTSV400
30	Head of Dulais Valley	Low	NPTSV661
31	Mynydd y Drum	Moderate	NPTVS640
32	Dulais Valley	High	NPTVS846
33	Upland settlements	Low	NPTVS215
34	Crynant Forest	Moderate	NPTVS359
35	Swansea Valley (bottom)	Moderate	NPTVS286
36	Swansea Valley (settlements)	Low	NPTVS184
37	Swansea Valley (south face)	Moderate	NPTVS458
38	Mynydd Allt y grug & Varteg Hill	High	NPTVS581
39	Mynydd Uchaf / Mynydd Garth	High	NPTVS188
40	Gwauncaegurwen works	Low	NPTVS226
41	Cwm Aman	Low	NPTVS149
42	Cwm Gors	Moderate	NPTVS575
43	Dulais valley moorland	Moderate	NPTVS751
44	Cwm Twrch	Moderate	NPTVS344
45	Nant Melyn & Bryn-chwyth	Moderate	NPTVS485
46	Bryn Mawr - Mynydd Carnllechart	High	NPTVS951
47	Upper Clydach River valley	High	NPTVS612
48	Pontardawe/Rhos	Low	NPTVS878
49	Mynydd Drumau	Moderate	NPTVS658
50	Clydach valley	Moderate	NPVVS340
51	Neath	Low	NPTVS720
52	Penrhiwtyn	Low	NPTVS891
53	Neath River	Moderate	NPTVS752
54	Gelli-bwch works	Moderate	NPTVS592
55	Gelli-bwch hills	High	NPTVS229
56	Crymlyn Bog	High	NPTVS944
57	Crymlyn	Low	NPTVS518
58	Tal-y-fedw	Low	NPTVS902
59	M4	Low	NPTVS397
60	Baglan Bay works	Low	NPTVS960
61	Port Talbot / Sandfields / Margam	Low	NPTVS587
62	Margam works	Moderate	NPTVS837
63	Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands	High	NPTVS697
64	Swansea Bay	High	NPTVS297
65	Cwmavon	Low	NPTVS841
66	Neath Valley settlements	Low	NPTVS967
67	Cefn Gwrhyd - enclosed	High	NPTVS541



Not to Scale

Figure 3.0
**VISUAL & SENSORY
 ASPECT AREAS**

Area No.	Area name	Evaluation	Area No.	Area Name	Evaluation
1	East Pit, Gwaun-cae-gurwen	Low	69	Moel Ton-mawr	Low
2	Afon Aman Corridor	Moderate	70	Cwm Cynfig	Moderate
3	Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth & Cefn Gwrhyd	High	71	Afon Cynfig Corridor	High
4	Afon Twrch Corridor	Moderate	72	Cynfig Estuary	High
5	Mynydd Allt-y-grug	Moderate	73	Margam Moors	High
6	Cwm Du	High	74	Southern Triassic Area	Low
7	Cwm Gors Industrial	Low	75	Earlwood Golf Course	High
8	Afon Egle Corridor	High			
9	Upper Clydach Corridor	High			
10	Mynydd Carnllechert	High	76	Urban Areas	
11	Afon Tawe Corridor	High	77	Gwain-cae-gurwen	Low
12	Mynydd Gellionen	Moderate	78	Cwmllynfell	Low
13	North-Western Ffridd	High	79	Swansea Valley	Low
14	Y darren Widdon	Moderate	80	Rhos	Low
15	Afon Dulais Corridor	High	81	Seven Sisters	Low
16	Mynydd y Drum	Moderate	82	Glyn-neath	Low
17	Upper Dulais Valleysides	Moderate	83	Blaengwrach	Low
18	Hirfynydd Opencast	Low	84	Resolven	Low
19	Hirfynydd	Moderate	85	Glyncorrwg	Low
20	Seven Sisters Revegetated Spoil Area	Low	86	Tonna	Low
				Skewen/Neath Abbey/Bryn Coch/Cilfrew	Low
21	Afon Prydden Corridor	Outstanding	87	Neath/Sandfields/Margam	Low
22	Prydden Valleysides	High	88	Croeserw	Low
23	Banwen Prydden	Low	89	Cwnafon	Low
24	Neath Valleysides	High	90	Coedhirwaun	Low
25	Blaenant y Gwyddyl	High			
26	Afon Neath Corridor	High			
27	Selar Opencast	Low	91	Forestry Areas	
28	Afon Grellech/Llyn	Outstanding	92	Fforch Egel	Moderate
29	Craig Cilhendre	High	93	Coedcae Mawr	Moderate
30	Mynydd Marchywel	Moderate	94	Crynant Forest	Moderate
31	Waun Glyn-nyd	High	95	Nant-y-cafn	Moderate
32	Mynydd Corrwg/Esgair Nantyrallor	Moderate	96	Seven Sisters	Moderate
33	Afon Melincwrt Corridor	High	97	Vale of Neath	Moderate
34	Carn Caca	High	98	Craig Cilhendre	Moderate
35	Afon Clydach Corridor	Moderate	99	Eastern Forests	Moderate
36	Cilybebyll/Blaenrhondan Ffridd	Moderate	100	Dyffryn Woods	Moderate
37	Neath Woodlands	Moderate	101	Foel Fawr	Moderate
38	Cefn Morfudd	High	102	Mynydd Penrhydd	Moderate
39	Mynydd Blaenavon	Moderate	103	Mynydd-y-gaer	Moderate
40	Mynydd Fforch-dwm	Moderate	104	Foel Fynyddau	Moderate
41	Craig Gwladus	Moderate	105	Mynydd Dinas	Moderate
42	Mynydd y Gelli	Moderate	106	Mynydd Emroch	Moderate
43	Afon Afan Corridor	High	107	Mynydd Bach/Mynydd Margam	Moderate
44	Afan Valleysides	Moderate	108	Moel Ton-mawr/Craig yr Aber	Moderate
45	Afon Pelenna Corridor	High			
46	Pelenna Valleysides	Moderate			
47	Foel Trawsnant	Moderate			
48	Crymlyn Bog	Outstanding			
49	Llandarcy/Jersey Marine Industrial	Moderate			
50	Cefn Parc Lake	Low			
51	Llandarcy	High			
52	Coastal Dunes	Outstanding			
53	Neath Estuary	Outstanding			
54	Baglan Bay Industrial	High			
55	Mynydd Dinas	Moderate			
56	Foel Fynyddau	Moderate			
57	Neath Ffridd	Moderate			
58	Mynydd Emroch Slopes	Moderate			
59	Mynydd Emroch Plateau	Low			
60	Afon Dyffryn Corridor	Moderate			
61	Mynydd Bychan/Bryn Valleysides	Moderate			
62	Afan Estuary	Moderate			
63	Margam Industrial	Moderate			
64	Mynydd Brombil Slopes	Moderate			
65	Mynydd Brombil Plateau	Low			
66	Southern Boulder Clay Area	Moderate			
67	Margam Park	High			
68	Eglwys Nunydd	High			



Not to Scale

**Figure 4.0
LANDSCAPE
HABITATS
ASPECT AREAS**

Area No	Area name
1	Margam Moors West
2	Aberavon Sands
3	Baglan Industrial
5	Llandarcy Industrial
6	Port Talbot Industrial
7	Neath Estuary
10	Jersey Marine Industrial
13	Cwmavon Pontrhydyfen Urban/Industrial Corridor
16	Margam Park
17	Gnoll Estate
18	Neath Historic Core
19	Banwaen Tor-y-Betal
20	Rhos Common
21	Margam Mountain
25	Cilybebyll
26	Afan Wallia
27	Hirfynydd
28	Mynydd Marchywel
29	Mynydd Uchaf (Mynydd y Garth)
31	Lower Afan Valley
32	Mynydd y Gaer
33	Giants Grave
34	Shelone
35	Warren Hill
36	Pent y Sais
37	Pant y Sais
39	Vale of Neath (southern valley side)
40	Brynoch Cilybebyll
41	Clydach Cwm Du
42	Rheola
43	Neath Valley Bottom
44	Swansea Valley Bottom
45	Upper Afan Valley
46	Crynant & Seven Sisters Urban Corridor
48	Dulais Valley
49	Talbot Memorial Park
50	Jersey Park
51	Victoria Park, Neath
52	Margam Rural
53	Gwauncaegurwen Industrial
54	Neath Port Talbot Urban Corridor
55	Cefn Morfudd
56	Margam Moors East
57	Margam Sands
58	Eglwys Nynydd Reservoir
59	Twyn Eithinog
60	Mynydd Penhydd and Foel Trawsant
61	Foel Penycastell
62	Foel Fawr
63	Mynydd Allt y Grug
64	Mynydd y Garth
65	Mynydd Gellionnen
66	Mynydd Carnllechart
67	Penlle r' castell
68	Nant-y-glo
69	Mynydd Brombil
70	Mynyddau Emroch a Bychan
71	Cwm Crymlyn
72	Vale of Neath (northern valley side)
73	Bryn-chwyth
74	Dulais Valley SW
75	Dulais Valley NE
76	Dulais Valley NW
77	Burrows Sidings
844	Crymlyn Bog

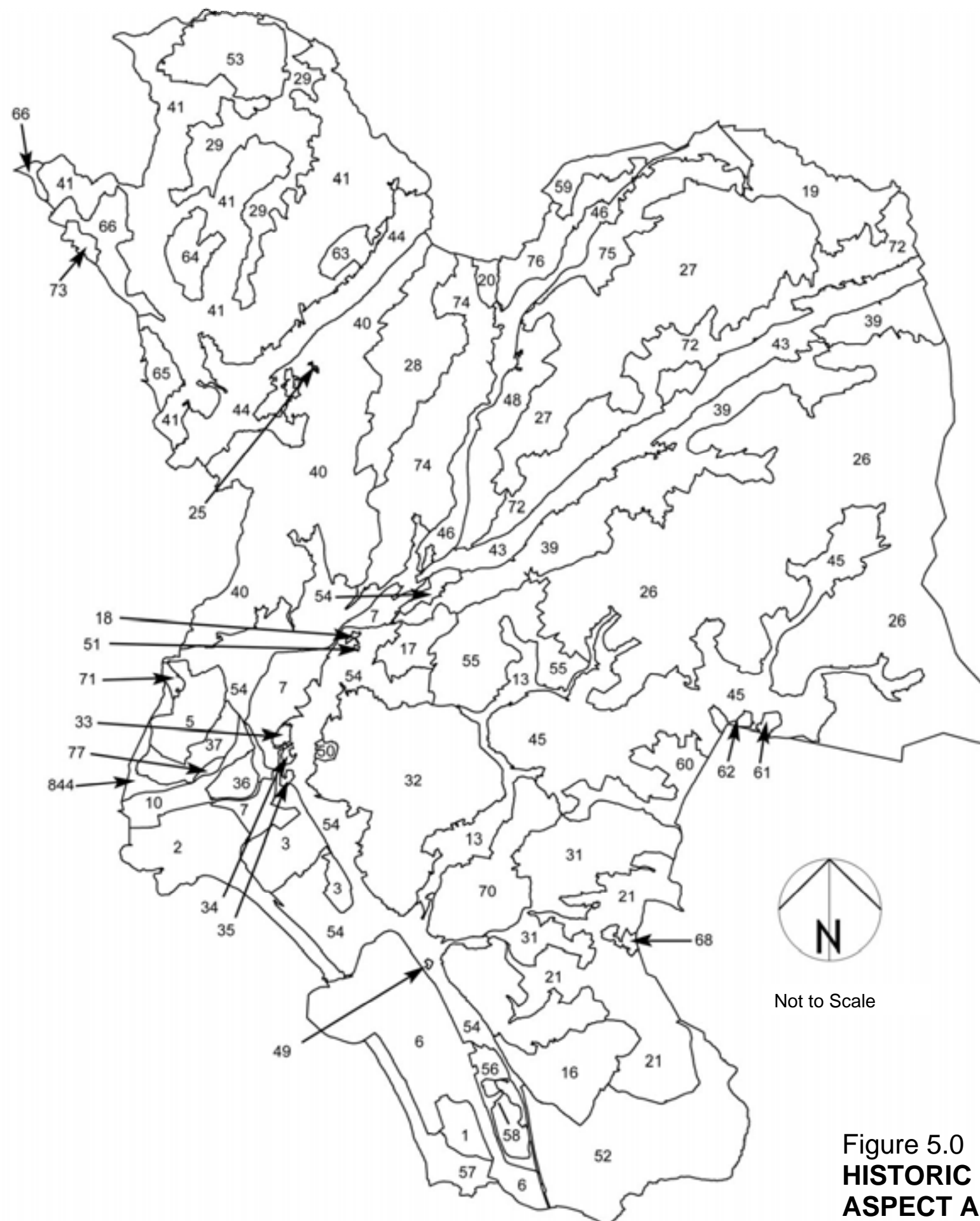


Figure 5.0
**HISTORIC LANDSCAPE
 ASPECT AREAS**

Area No	Area Name	Value
1	Communications Corridor: M4, A48, Railway	Outstanding
2	Celtic Trail National Cycle Network (several)	High
3	Margam Burrows	Moderate
4	Corus Abbey Works, Industrial Estates and Docks	Outstanding
5	Aberafan	High
6	Port Talbot, Taibach, Cwmavon and Margam	High
7	Sandfields Estate	High
8	Baglan Industrial Park	High
9	Baglan	Moderate
10	Briton Ferry	High
11	Melincryddan	Moderate
12	Cimla	Moderate
13	Gnoll Park	Outstanding
14	Neath Centre	Outstanding
15	Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals	Outstanding
16	A465	Outstanding
17	Jersey Marine	High
18	Pant y Sais Fen and Crymlyn Bog	Outstanding
19	Llandarcy Urban Village	Outstanding
20	Skewen	Moderate
21	Neath Abbey and Business Park	Outstanding
22	Nidum, Dwr-y-Felin and Court Herbert	Outstanding
23	Cadoxton, Rhydding and Bryncoch	Moderate
24	Cilfrew, Aberdulais, Craig Gwladys	High
25	Tonna	High
26	Sarn Helen and Roman Camps	Outstanding
27	Margam Park	Outstanding
28	Margam Mountain	Outstanding
29	Pontrhydyfen and Tonmawr	High
30	Afan Forest Park	High
31	Cynonville, Dyffryn, Cymer, Croeserw, Blaengwynfi, Abergwynfi	High
32	Glyncorrwg	Outstanding
33	Landscape designated for Ffynnon Oer Windfarm	High
34	Resolven and Melincourt	High
35	Rheola and Aberpergwm	High
36	Glynneath, Pont Walby, Blaengwrach and Cwmgrach	High
37	Banwen, Dyffryn Cellwen, Seven Sisters	Outstanding
38	Creunant	Outstanding
39	Pontardawe, Trebanos, Ynysmeudwy and Godre'rgraig	High
40	Alltwn, Gellinudd and Rhos	Low
41	Cilybebyll	High
42	Ystalyfera	High
43	Gwaun-cae-Gurwen, Tairgwaith, Cwmgors, Lower Brynamman,	High
44	Cwmllynfell, Pen-rhiw-fawr and East Pit Open Cast	High
45	Western High Ridge: Mynydd y Garth, Cefn Gwrhyd,	High
46	Mynydd Allt y Grug	High
47	West Central High Ridge: Mynydd Marchywel and Hirfynydd	High
48	Eastern High Lands: Resolven Mountain, Mynydd Abergwynfi,	High
	Cefn yr Argoed	Outstanding
	Vale of Neath	Outstanding
	Neath River Tidal Estuary to Aberdulais	Outstanding

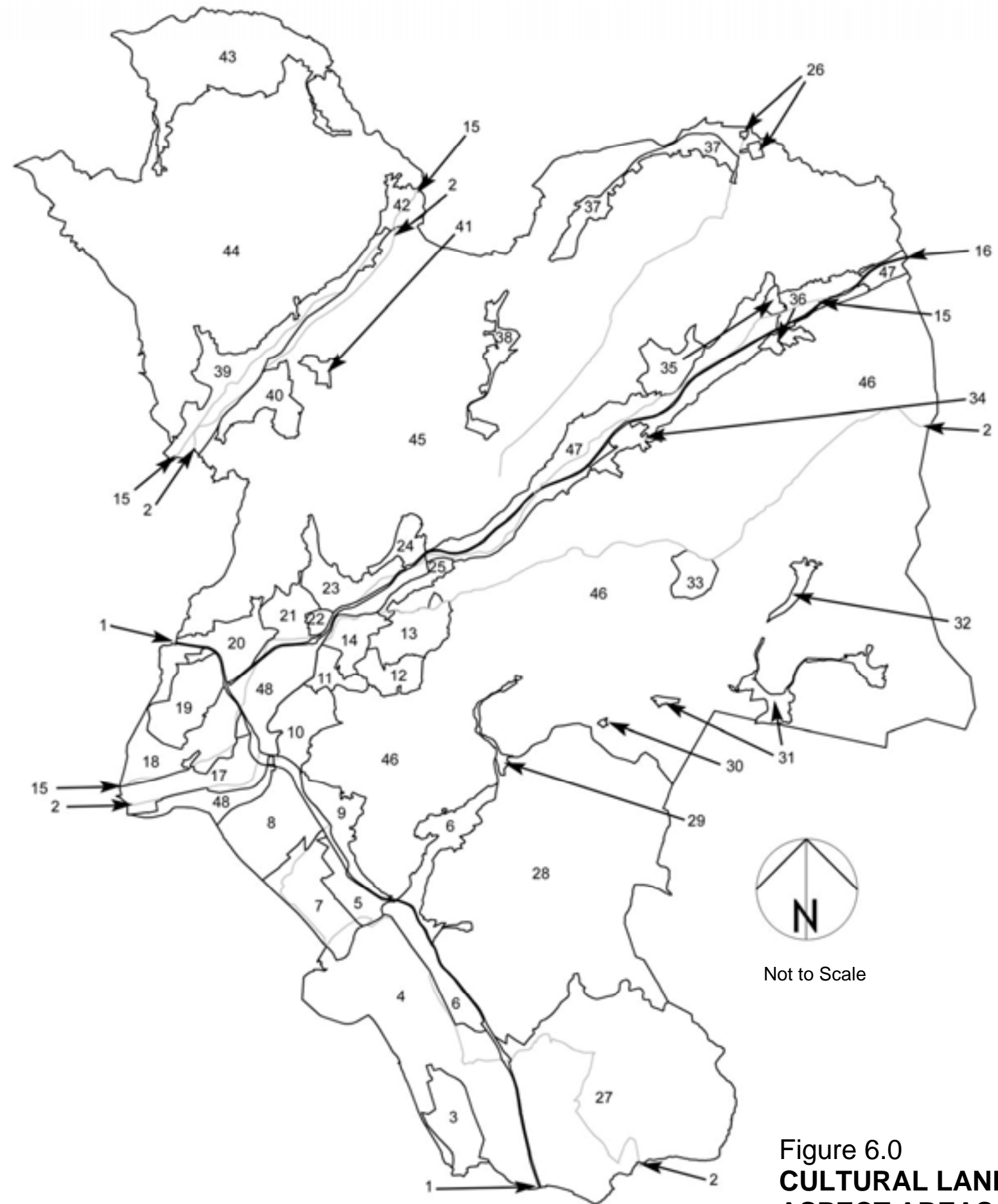
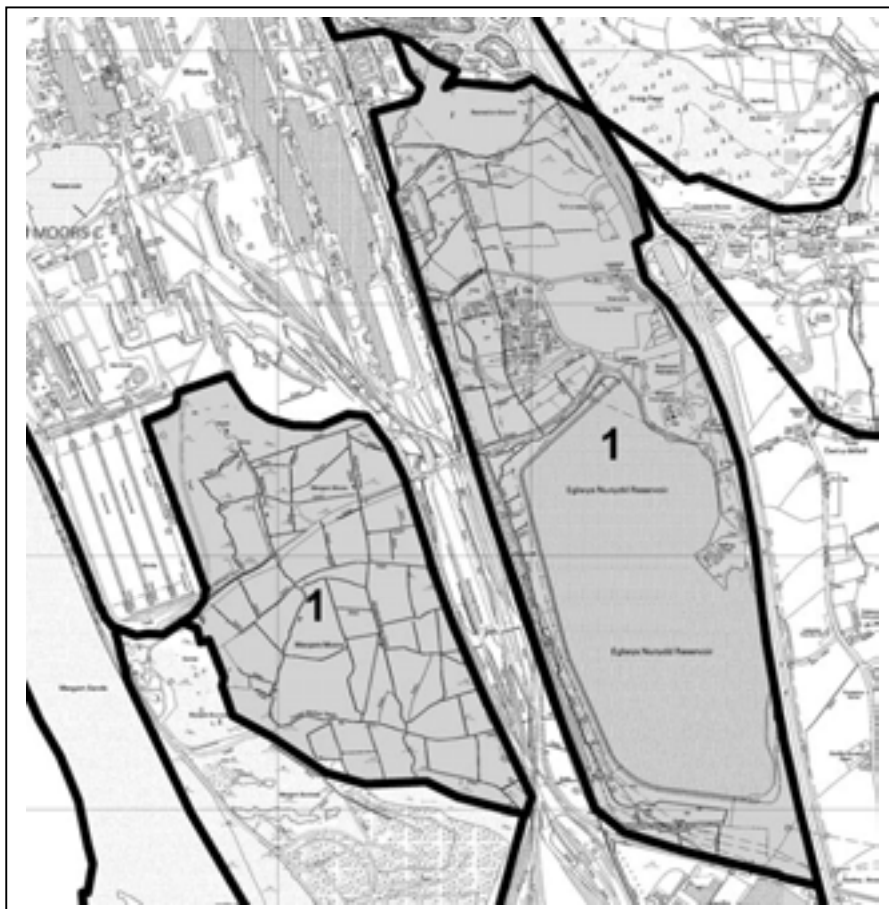


Figure 6.0
**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
 ASPECT AREAS**

CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS

CHARACTER AREA 1

Margam Marsh



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This character area lies in the south of the coastal plain. The land, crossed by the London to Swansea rail line and including Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, is situated between Margam Burrows to the south and west, and the heavy industry and M4 motorway to the north and east respectively. It is low-lying and is comprised of reclaimed salt marshes at heights of between 4.5m and 5m AOD, and the reservoir raised at 10m AOD. It sits on part of the northwest to southeast coastal strip of alluvium, which fringes the coast.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This flat predominantly cattle grazed land, is heavily veined with drainage ditches. These are in turn topped with post and wire fences, and are more dominant towards the west. Willows are prominent through the area especially lining ditches, but also encroaching into fields forming scrubby clumps. To the west, large blocks of wetland species create a more complex and interesting mosaic. To the east the coherence of the area is diluted by areas of industry and amenity landscapes.

Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir is the most important stretch of inland still water in the county borough. The water body reflects the large-scale industry beyond when viewed from the M4. This effect is enhanced by the lack of significant vegetation or edge treatment, resulting in elements far behind appearing closer to the waters edge. The edge treatment also creates an open exposed somewhat sterile character. The Reservoir is used for sailing which adds visual interest.

Public access is limited to a single track, which terminates at the railway and a single footpath. However the area is overlooked by the M4 and mainline railway.

The skyline to the south is dominated by numerous electric pylons and to the west by the steelworks. There is a significant amount of fly tipping throughout currently which adds to the uncared for feel of the area engendered by apparently minimal management.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area of Margam Moors is characterised by marsh, marshy grassland and associated habitats including reedbeds. A significant section, up to 80%, is designated a SSSI and harbours many important plant and invertebrate species, as well as Otter, Kingfisher and Lapwing. Closer to the coastline there is an area of remnant coastal grazing marsh, dominated by neutral grasslands.

A significant area of Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir is designated SSSI, taking in the reed beds and eutrophic standing water, which provide suitable habitats for wintering, migrant and nesting birds.

Historic Characteristics

Margam Moors comprises an area of low-lying reclaimed wetland which formed part of the holdings of the Cistercian Abbey of Margam during the medieval period, being farmed from Morfa Mawr Grange to the west. Three monastic granges associated with Margam are also known from the area, New Grange, Meles Grange and Theodoric's Grange. The strong association with Margam Abbey indicates a likelihood that the reclamation of much of the coastal strip dates to at least the medieval period.

The area, characterised by low-lying enclosed wetland pasture set on a reclaimed salt marsh, is associated with post-medieval fields, probably of medieval origin, with a typically varied field pattern including an evolved, irregular fieldscapes. Boundary features comprise of ridge and furrow, earth and bank, drained ditches and dykes such as the Lower Mother and the Middle Mother Ditches. Other characteristics include local communication features, such as footpaths, tracks and straight lanes.

The historic importance of this landscape lies in its association with Margam Abbey and its Granges.

Cultural Associations

The character of the area is historically linked to Margam Abbey estates, probably also containing buried archaeological remains from prehistoric to late-mediaeval, in view of its proximity to the line of the Roman road and buried town of Kenfig.

The creation of Eglwys Nunydd reservoir for cooling water for the Corus Abbey Steelworks has produced a man-made waterscape, strongly influencing the visual and physical landscape and providing a popular and much used venue for the leisure activity of sailing.

Key Characteristics

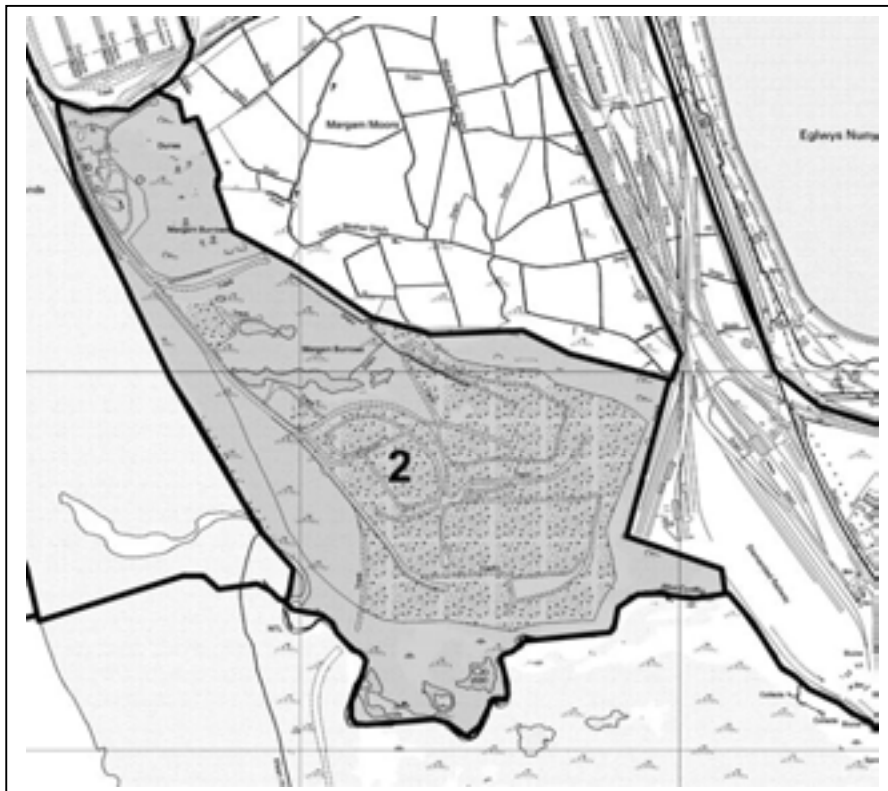
- Flat wetland pasture, veined with drainage ditches and with significant wetland vegetation.
- Strong visual influence of surrounding heavy industry.
- Largest area of inland still water within the County Borough.
- Significant areas of marsh, eutrophic water and wetland habitats, with SSSI designation.
- Historically and culturally linked to Margam Abbey.
- Eglwys Nunydd reservoir is a significant leisure facility for sailing.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
1	Margam Marsh	1 - l 3 - l	32 - l	73 - h 68 - h	1 56 58	3 - h 4 - h

CHARACTER AREA 2

Margam Burrows



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This character area of coastal dunes is located against the southern boundary of the County Borough at the mouth of the Afon Cynffig. It forms the northern extent of a much more extensive dunes complex to the south. These areas of coastal dunes sit seaward of the marine alluvium on the coastal plain and range from 0m to approx 10m AOD.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This exposed coastal landscape comprises of sand dunes varying from approximately 5m to 10m in height. They are clothed in mainly Marram grass although erosion occurs in some areas. Scrub is invading in parts. There are no dwellings or other infrastructure and only minimal public right of way. Landfill is being carried out to the south. Views are dominated by the M4 inland and by Swansea Bay to the west. The area feels relatively remote despite the intrusiveness of industry and the M4.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Although there are elements of remnant industry present, the Kenfig dunes represents an environment of international importance and are designated cSAC, with coastal sand dunes, coastal salt marsh and sublittoral sand and gravel habitats. These habitats harbour a wide range of flora and fauna, including waders, lapwing and brown hare. In the southern part of the area the Cynffig Estuary, a minor river estuary, supports saltmarsh and other riparian habitats, harbouring Otters, Kingfisher and numerous rare, scarce and Priority Species.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The main indicators of past human activity are generated by the recovery of find scatters. These include prehistoric bones, Bronze Age axes, and Roman and medieval finds. This evidence is either indicative of buried sites and landscapes in the vicinity or washed up finds from shipwrecks found along the coast. Structural

remains are limited and generally include modern industrial and military structures of concrete and brick, and several post-medieval shipwrecks. The surrounding area has well-established historic associations. It was a notorious haunt for wreckers and looters during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Key Characteristics

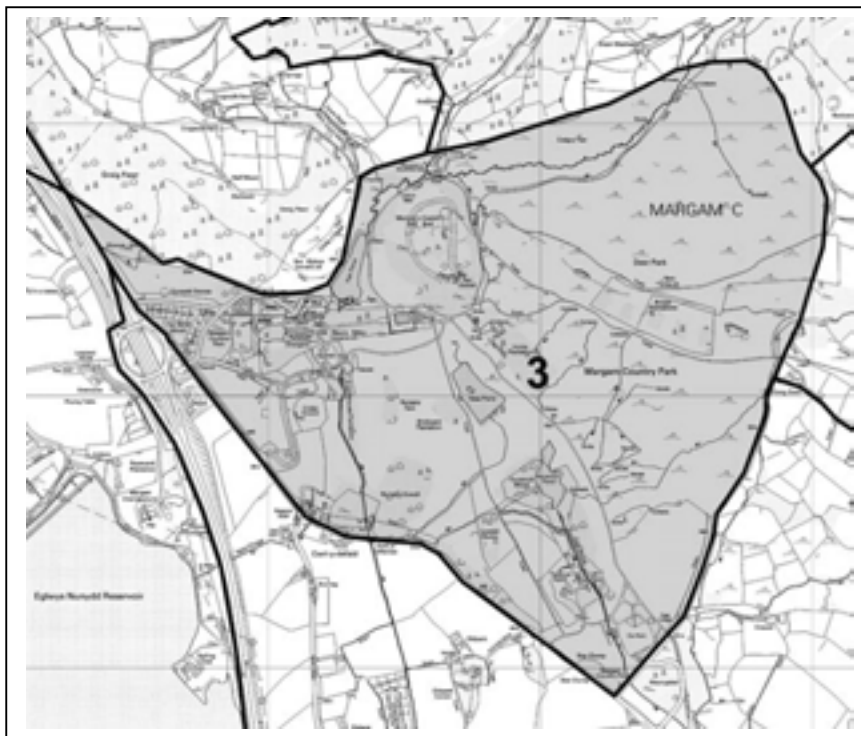
- Northern extent of more extensive dune complex extending south of the County Borough boundary.
- Simple coarse vegetation across a harshly undulating dune landscape.
- Coastal habitat of international importance, harbouring a wide range of species.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
2	Margam Burrows	2 - l	32 - l 33 - m	52 - o 63 - m 72 - h	57	3 - h

CHARACTER AREA 3

Margam Country Park



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This roughly triangular character area lies below and along the scarp slope to the south of the County Borough. Its boundary is defined to the south, south east and south west by the estate wall, and by the scarp slope and extent of the deer park to the north and east. Although the area lies close to both the M4 and Port Talbot, the surrounding areas are predominantly rural; lowland to the south and upland to the north and east.

The park can be divided into three main areas; a low-lying area to the south, a wooded valley, lake and hillfort to the west of the park and an upland plateau to the north and east. Three deer parks are contained within the overall park.

Much of the land ranges from between approximately 30m to 90m AOD, overlaying a geology of glacial sand and gravel to the south west and the tip of the low lying plateau of northeast dipping productive coal to the east. The scarp slope, where the area reaches over 200m AOD is characterised by the upland plateau of South Wales pennant formation. Landslips dominate this area.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The Low lying designed parkland encompasses mosaic grazed land (deer grazed) and mixed woodland, the latter providing a sense of enclosure. The area sits below the scarp slope, which provides an additional sense of protection, Margam Castle dominates the landscape and Margam Abbey on the hillside is also a prominent feature. A number of water bodies provide interest and variation, as do grazing deer. Parkland trees, which emphasise the parkland character, are frequently over mature but new planting has been carried out to provide continuity. The Breast Plantations which form 5 rectilinear forest blocks on the scarp slope are a distinctive feature from a distance. On the periphery of the park, especially on the scarp slope, encroachment of gorse and bracken has occurred.

Dwellings are mainly located to the west, with buildings in the centre acting as visitor facilities for this significant tourist attraction. The buildings (predominantly stone) within and the boundary walls and gates provide a strong, somewhat austere

and imposing, sense of place. Yet many ancillary elements, such as barriers and signage, within the central historic core, while needed for highway purposes, do not sit entirely comfortably in the historic landscape. Additionally there are signs of wear around the castle although some features such as the visitor car park are well designed. A number of minor roads enter the estate and the A48 bounds the western edge of the estate. The Scarp slope of the deer park has been provisionally designated open access land.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area is characterised by a medieval deer park with extant lowland wood pasture and related landscape park features, on neutral soils. BAP habitat of lowland pasture parkland landscape is present. The area harbours many BAP species including reptiles, bats, invertebrates and possibly lichens.

Historic Characteristics

Margam Park is a multi-layered landscape of outstanding historical importance. It includes prehistoric and Cistercian abbey remains, and has Tudor, 18th and 19th century garden and landscaping phases. Of particular importance are the fine walled deer park, the banqueting house façade, the outstanding Georgian Orangery, the Citrus House and the 19th century garden with their fine collection of trees and shrubs. The 1950's garden of Twyn yr Hydd is a delightful and well-preserved period piece within the park.

Margam Castle is a huge 19th century mansion in Tudor and Gothic style set within a large park. The site of the 19th century house is important for its historic association and picturesque position at the foot of a wooded historic hill, with the ruins of Margam Abbey and the 18th century Orangery visible to the west. To the west modern developments such as the Port Talbot steelworks have dramatically altered the original historic setting.

The settlement history of Margam dates from the prehistoric period. Mynydd y Castell is the site of an Iron Age fort, whilst the Early Christian stones found at Margam attest to the continuity of occupation in the area. Robert Consul, Earl of Gloucester, founded the Cistercian Abbey of Margam in 1147AD, the remains of which are located to the west of the park with the parish church of St Mary's. The abbey was dissolved in 1536AD and bought by Sir Rice Mansel of Oxwich Castle, who began construction of a large Tudor mansion based on the former abbey ranges which was extended in the 17th century.

By the mid-18th century the family lands passed into the Talbot family of Wiltshire. In the late 18th century the dilapidated Tudor house was demolished and from 1793 to 1835 there was no principal house until Margam Castle, a Romantic extravaganza was built, by Thomas Hopper and Edward Haycock, for Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot.

By 1942 the Talbots' had sold the estate to the Vale of Neath brewery owner Sir David Evans-Beven, and in 1973 the park was eventually bought by Glamorgan County Council.

Cultural Associations

The area's character is contained within the cultural elements, which date from pre-history through every period up to the 21st century. The whole is a combination of high-grade historic visitor attraction and a variety of multi-period pleasure grounds, and the core area within the Deer Park boundary wall a designated Grade 1 Park in the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. Its significance as a cultural phenomenon extends beyond the present 'cultural' essence' as a visitor attraction.

Key Characteristics

- Mature parkland designated Grade 1 in the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales, owned and managed as a public park.

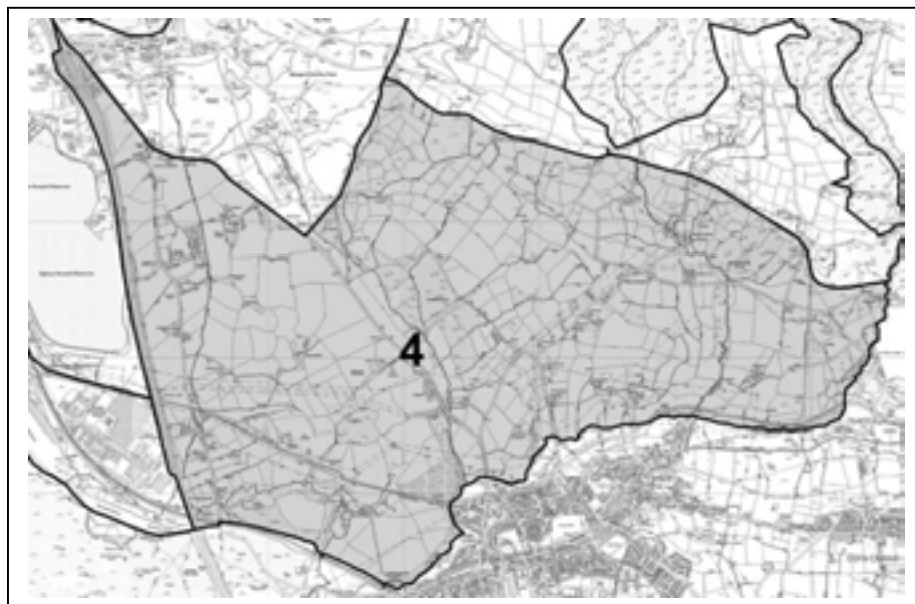
- Remains of Margam Abbey, dating from 12th century, emphasising Cistercian influence.
- Parish church of St Mary's, 18th century Orangery and 19th century, Tudor - Gothic, Margam Castle, set in picturesque and sheltered location.
- Breast plantations are a dominant feature on the scarp slope above the park.
- Significant tourist / visitor attraction.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
3	Margam Country Park	4 - m	28 - m 29 - h 30 - m	67 - h	16	27- o (2 - h)

CHARACTER AREA 4

Coedhirwaun



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This large area of rolling, low-lying land lies to the south of the County Borough. Sitting below the scarp slope, the areas extent is defined by the County Borough boundary to the south and east while the M4 defines its western limits.

The area lies chiefly on the broad low lying plain of glacial sand and gravel except the southeast which lies on a low lying plateau of productive coal formation. The elevation of the area, approximately 10m AOD at its lowest, is mainly below 70m AOD.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This low-lying area of mixed agriculture is dominated by grazed land and has a distinctly rural quality. This character is disrupted to the west, through encroachment of new small-scale developments and a golf course abutting the M4. Blocks of woodland and hedges restrict wide views out and add to a feeling of intimacy. Although the majority of the area is well-managed farmland, pockets of coarse grasses and bracken have encroached on areas of under managed land.

The new settlement of Coed Hirwaun is the only significant settlement within the area. It sits low in a valley in a wooded setting and is not widely visible. There are a scattering of smaller settlements, dwellings and commercial units through the area, which are beginning to suburbanise the character in parts. This is most prevalent to the west, where newer buildings are generally constructed from non-traditional materials, metal sheds and concrete.

The area is highly visible from the M4 to the west and the A48 runs through it. Yet the settlements are primarily connected by numerous narrow deep-set lanes and bank hedgerows, which, along with disused railway lines, provide green corridors through the area. Power lines and further development disrupt the rural character of the area towards Pyle in the south.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area is characterised by improved grassland. To the west the character is comparatively intensive, well drained, lowland farmland, with significant areas of arable. Semi-natural habitats are scarce throughout.

To the east, the extensively improved pasture has also developed neutral pastures and marshy grasslands on the heavy soils. Across the southern boulder clays semi-natural woodlands and significant hedgerow habitats are strong features. This landscape provides suitable habitats for a variety of hedgerow birds, such as linnets and song thrush.

Along the County Borough boundary and below the scarp slope the Afon Cynffig Corridor creates a river corridor, harbouring Otter, Kingfisher and dormouse BAP species, among broadleaf woodland, semi improved neutral grassland and scrub habitat.

Historic Characteristics

During the Bronze Age a standing stone of fine-grained sandstone or mudstone was erected to the far west of the area. Later the Romans built a road along what is now Water Street. In the centuries after the Romans many Early Christian crosses were erected across the area, most have been moved and now reside in the Margam Estate. Without a doubt the main historical character of this landscape is medieval. Llanmihangel Farm to the south is thought to be the site of a grange belonging to Margam Abbey. A large barn at the farm is thought to have been used as the tithe barn for St Michael's Grange, which is now in ruins. It is also the suggested site of a chapel formerly belonging to St Michael's Grange.

Hafodheulog Grange is indicated by documentary evidence as belonging to the 12th and 13th centuries. The site now lies beneath the outbuildings of a large farm of the same name to the south of Kenfig, to the west. Traces were found of what is locally believed to be the stronghold of former lord, possibly the 13th century, Morgan ab Owen. Many Christian inscribed stones have been removed from the vicinity to the Margam Estate such as Cynans Cross, the Ilquici Stone, the Ilci Stone and the Pompeius stone.

The post-medieval fieldscape and discrete areas of woodland almost certainly has its origins in the medieval period.

The proximity to the buried medieval remains under Kenfig Sands and the overwhelming evidence from the granges represents the survival of an extremely important and historically significant medieval landscape. Modern industry has also utilised this landscape; numerous post-medieval mills, boundary stones, enclosures and farmsteads are distributed throughout. Disused mines and tips, to the south, and the Port Talbot Railway, represent the industrial period.

Cultural Associations

The area is recognised historically as part of Margam Park, embracing parts of the original monastic landholdings. It contains cultural elements dating from pre-history through every period up to the 21st century.

The Celtic Trail, Route 4 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, passes through the area, its cultural essence based on contemporary notions of healthy leisure lifestyle. The route provides a recreation linking between this area, urban settlements and the broader landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Mature, managed pastoral landscape, significantly wooded with deciduous cover and containing significant mature hedgerows.
- Suburbanisation close to the M4 in the west, with development and golf course.
- Mosaic of lowland, agricultural and riparian habitats.
- Medieval character of the landscape, with significant earlier elements, often linked to Margam Abbey.

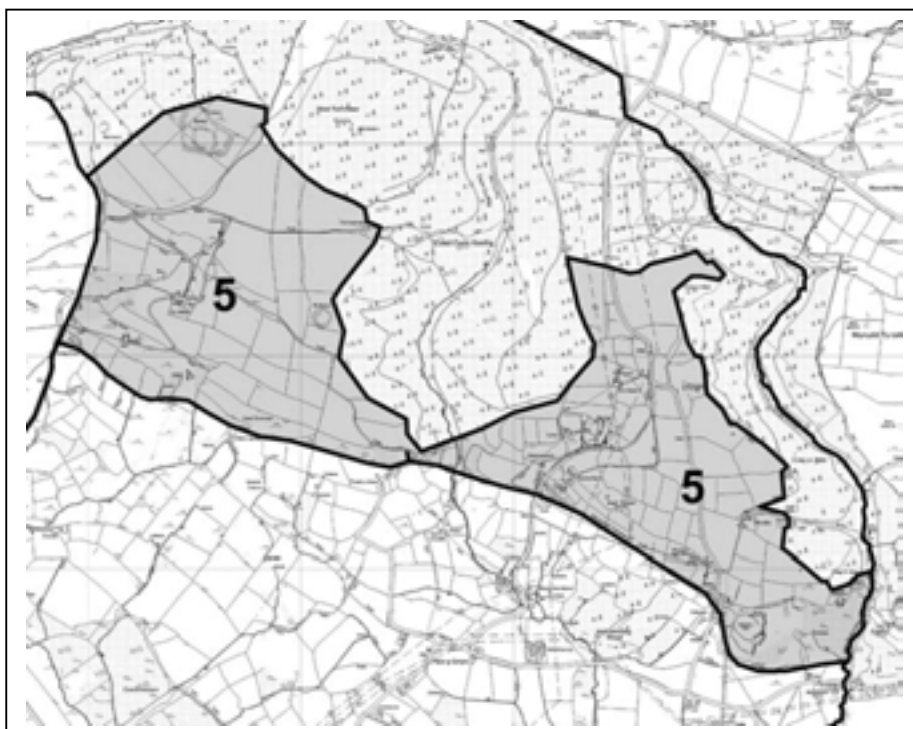
Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect	Earth Science Aspect	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect	Cultural Associations Aspect

		Areas	Areas		Areas	Areas
4	Coedhirwaun	5 - m	29 - h 30 - m	66 - m 71 - h 74 - l	52	27 - o (2 - h)

CHARACTER AREA 5

Coedhirwaun and open scarp tops



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This section of scarp and associated upland is located in the southern part of the County Borough and represents the southern extent of the scarp slope which dominates the coastal plain. It lies above the lowland landscape of Coedhirwaun and is defined by the wooded upland of Mynydd Margam, to the north and east and Margam Park to the north west.

The area lies on the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds sandstones. The scarp slope ranges from approx 90m AOD adjacent to the Coedhirwaun lowlands to over 200m. The open land above continues to rise, ultimately reaching over 270m AOD.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landscape ranges from mixed lowland pasture at the foot of the scarp to upland sheep grazing on higher ground. This altitudinal change is emphasised by the field boundaries, predominantly hedged at the lower slopes and with fences on higher ground. Coarse grass species, bracken and gorse have colonised on higher ground and on the less accessible slopes. There is significant deciduous woodland cover on the lower slopes creating a more settled character, contrasting with the sense of exposure on higher ground, which is extensively open, providing wide views to the west.

A single-track road runs up the scarp to the south, yet through the rest of the area public right of way is by footpaths. There are only scattered farmstead dwellings. These are of natural stone and are only present on the gentler topography at the top of the scarp. To the south there is a significant area of disturbance, from old mine works.

The landform of the scarp provides a backcloth to the settled lowland landscape of Coedhirwaun and is visible from the M4 and surrounding lowland. The higher ground above the scarp is visually less dominant.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Extensively improved pasture of the lowland continues across the scarp, with areas of developed neutral pasture. Semi-natural woodlands and significant hedgerow habitats are strong features providing suitable habitats for a variety of hedgerow birds, such as linnets and song thrush.

The higher ground is covered by semi-upland ffridd habitats, mainly improved pastures but with small remnant areas of acid grassland, heath and bracken.

Historic Characteristics

Situated above the originally densely wooded valley floors and lowland, yet accessible from the adjacent high ground, these hills have been the focus of human activity from at least the Bronze Age, as attested by a number of cairns and barrows across the surrounding uplands. A hill fort represents the Iron Age, it is suggested that hill forts around this area were later reoccupied during the early medieval period.

Linked to the lowland of Coedhirwaun the post-medieval fieldscape and discrete areas of woodland across the south, almost certainly has its origins in the medieval period. Modern industry has also influenced this landscape with disused mines and tips to the south representing the industrial period.

Cultural Associations

The area is recognised historically as part of Margam Park, embracing parts of the original monastic landholdings. It contains cultural elements dating from pre-history through every period up to the 21st century.

Key Characteristics

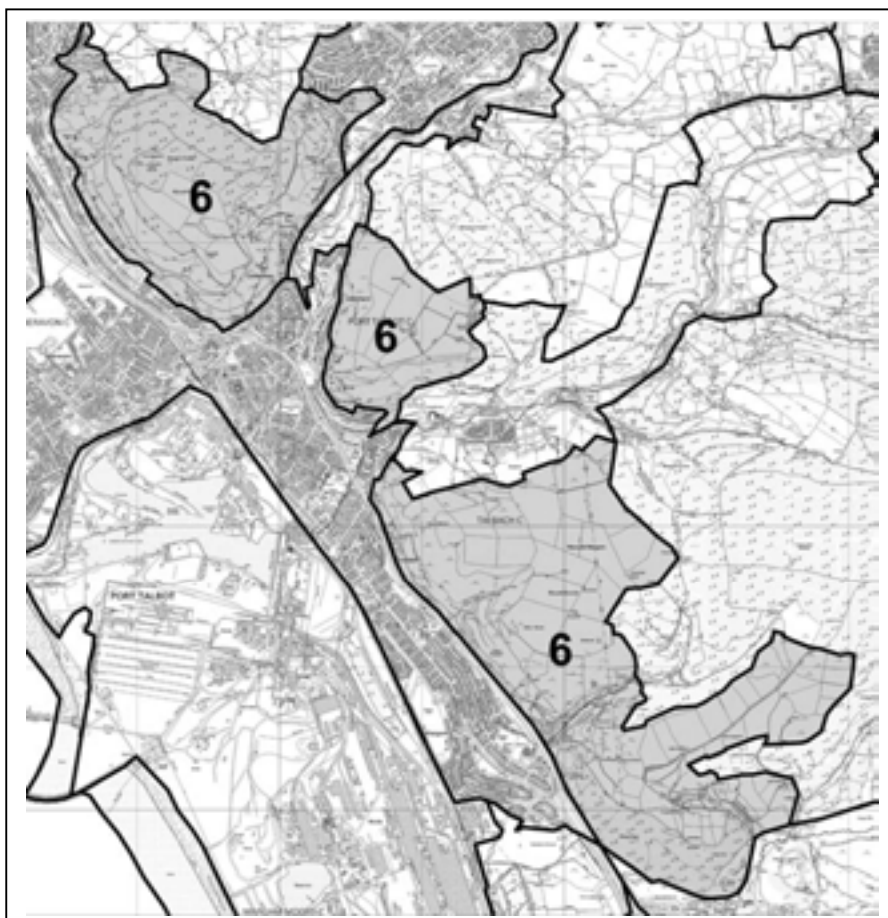
- Prominent section of scarp with exposed top ranging from approx 90m AOD to over 200m AOD.
- Acts as backdrop to Coedhirwaun lowland.
- Mixed grazed lowland pasture at lower elevations, with sheep grazed pasture on higher ground.
- Minimal access and isolated dwellings.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
5	Coedhirwaun Scarp and open scarp tops	5 - m 6 - m 7 - h	28 - m	66 - m 69 - l	21 52	27 - o

CHARACTER AREA 6

Mynydd Bromil, Mynydd Emroch & Mynydd Dinas



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area takes in the scarp slope and open scarp tops rising to the east of Port Talbot, and sitting above the M4 motorway. It forms the edge between the South Wales pennant formation to the east and the coastal plain to the west. The continuity of the area is interrupted by the Afan and Dyffryn Valleys, which cut through the scarp.

The scarp slope rises steeply and dramatically from approx 30m AOD to approx 210m AOD. A more gentle topography continues above the scarp edge, ultimately rising to 258m AOD at Mynydd Dinas, 244m AOD at Mynydd Brombil and over 250m above Margam Park. This lies on a geology of South facing slopes of upland plateau in South Wales pennant formation (Llynfi-Brithdir Beds) sandstones with coals in gently N-dipping beds is dissected by the deep and steep V shaped Cwm Brombil valley running northeast and southwest. Valleys truncated At the steep southern escarpment of plateau, valleys are truncated and surrounded by Landslips on W-facing steep slopes at Graig Fawr and Taibach. To the north, the geology of South Wales Pennant formation (Llynfi-Brithdir Beds) sandstones continues but is north facing. This is dissected by the deep and steep, northeast to southwest valleys of Cwm Dyffryn & Cwm Afan, with landslips present on steep valley slopes.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landform provides a solid backcloth for the coastal plain creating an important and prominent feature. The steep slopes are primarily covered with bracken and scrub, with areas of coniferous plantation and occasional deciduous woodland on

lower ground. There are also areas of rock exposure on steep, high ground enhancing its upland character.

The topography and landcover, generates an exposed upland feel, contrasting with the settled coastal plains below. The sense of exposure continues above the scarp edge, where the convex slopes of upland sheep grazed landscape, contained by broken down walls and fences, provides wide views across Swansea Bay. To the east, the upland is hemmed in by the woodland of Mynydd Margam. There appears to be minimal management input both across and above the scarp. This is emphasised by the extensive areas of bracken and the state of field boundaries.

There is little evidence of settlement, the topography of the scarp acting as a constraint to the development of Port Talbot, although a mast is sited on Mynydd Emroch. Public access is along footpaths and minor tracks. Much of the scarp slope has been provisionally designated open access land.

The scarp is highly visible from the M4, as it runs along the base, while the higher ground is generally hidden from view. The upland characteristics creates a unique in such close proximity to the M4.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The scarp slope is predominantly a semi-upland ffridd landscape, much of which is clothed with bracken. A mosaic of other habitats is present across the slopes with acid grasslands, extensive conifer plantations and Upland heath BAP habitat. The scarp tops are predominantly improved grassland, but with the coniferous woodland of Mynydd Dinas being a significant element to the north.

Historic Characteristics

The landscapes of Mynydd Dinas, Mynydd Emroch and Mynydd Brombil define a regular fieldscape of large enclosures, some of which have been covered by modern forestry obscuring the relict post-medieval fieldscape. A wealth of multi-period activity exists in what appears to be a very busy landscape.

Numerous Bronze Age cairns, singularly, in pairs and in cemeteries, adorn the elevated slopes of Mynydd Dinas, Mynydd Emroch, and Mynydd Brombil signifying its importance as a funerary and ritual landscape.

Much of the medieval landscape owes to the strong ecclesiastical presence of both the Margam and Neath Abbeys. A reoccurring theme is the position and regularity of medieval platform houses and longhuts on the elevated mountain slopes, one suggestion is that they are seasonal settlements or hafodydd in use during the milder parts of the year when stock is grazed on the higher pasture.

Pillow Mounds are a feature of Mynydd Brombil, six classically shaped mounds are found within a large drystone walled enclosure, whilst a less common cruciform type sits within its own large enclosure a little to the east, on the southwestern slope of the mountain. Their provenance is unclear and whilst they could be medieval, the discovery of 18th century pipe clays beneath a collapsed revetment wall to the south of the mounds may hint at a much later date of construction

Industrial activity as one would expect tends to adhere to the periphery, along the more industrialised valley sides of Cwmafon and the Neath Port Talbot urban corridor. Small post-medieval collieries, levels and quarries typify the margin.

Cultural Associations

The character of Mynydd Emroch and Mynydd Brombil is linked to the much broader area of Margam Mountain. It is an evolved landscape containing multi-period cultural expressions untrammelled by industrial exploitation, with extensive archaeological evidence of land husbandry evident.

Key Characteristics

- Steep slopes with rounded plateau tops.
- Unenclosed slopes are dominant by bracken cover.

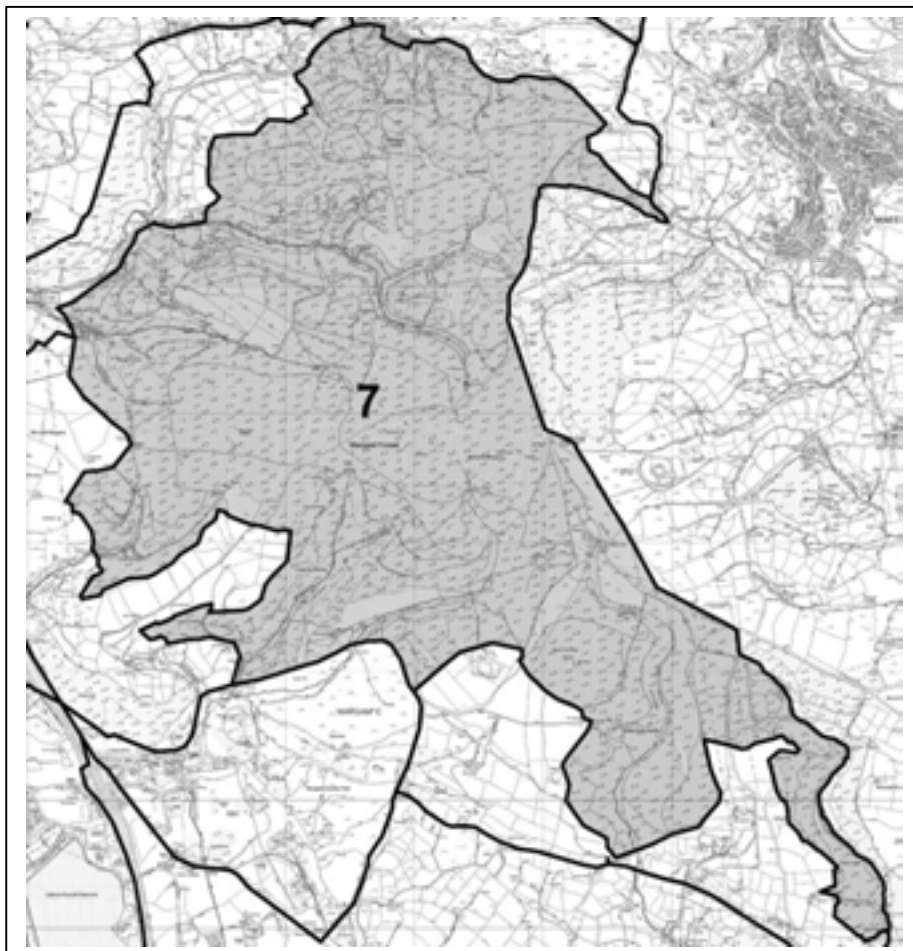
- Plateau tops comprise of sheep grazed pasture, enclosed by broken down walls and post & wire fences.
- Provides a solid backcloth and prominent landform adjacent to the coastal plain.
- Upland character contrasts with settlements and industry of the coastal plain.
- Wide views and sense of exposure from higher elevations.
- A wealth of multi-period activity, evident from the sites present - Bronze Age cairns, Pillow mounds.
- The area is untrammelled by industrial exploitation.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
6	<u>Mynydd Bromil</u> , <u>Mynydd Emroch & Mynydd Dinas</u>	6 - m 7 - h 17 - h	27 - m 28 - m	55 - m 58 - m 59 - l 64 - m 65 - l 66 - m 105 - m 107 - m	16 32 69 70	28 - o 46 - h

CHARACTER AREA 7

Mynydd Margam



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area is a large block of unenclosed upland, much of which is under modern forestry. It is situated on the southwest fringe of the Glamorgan Blaenau that visually dominates the coastal plain. The boundary of the area is defined by the extent of enclosure into this upland and to the east by the County Borough boundary.

The area ranges from 100m AOD in Cwm Dyffryn to Approximately 350m, predominantly across a geology dominated by a north facing, broad upland plateau of sandstones with coals of South Wales pennant formation.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The woodland, consist of significant coniferous plantation cover. Composition of the woodland is predominantly spruce, but with significant larch cover and occasionally pine, providing visual variety.

Its elevation means the area provides the skyline to views from the south and west. Within the forest there is a tranquil quality and its extent allows a sense of isolation to develop. This is enhanced by the absence of development and only minimal access along forestry tracks.

The woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground to the south and north, but enhances the upland character of adjacent valleys.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This extensive area of conifer plantation includes in parts, areas of former ancient woodland and contains many remnants of other habitats, especially, heathlands, rhos pastures and small areas of broadleaved woodland.

Deer, escaped from Margam Park are present with in the area.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The area is dominated by Margam Mountain, which is designated on Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales. It is situated above the originally densely wooded valley floors and lowland, yet accessible from the adjacent high ground. These hills have been the focus of human activity from at least the Bronze Age, as attested by single, and groups of, cairns and barrows. The Iron Age is also well represented by an unusual concentration of distinctive hill forts, enclosures and habitation sites, and the trackways that connected them. Mynydd y Castell, Caer Cwm Philip and Y Bwlwarcau (a fort immediately east of the County Borough boundary) form a chain of strongholds defending the strategically important route corridor across the southern flanks of the mountain. However, the forts are equally well sited to exploit the extensive mountain pastures to the north, and indeed the complex layout and much lower defences at Y Bwlwarcau could suggest that the site's primary function was stock-raising rather than defence.

The early medieval period is well-represented by the suggested reoccupation of the hillforts and the 7th century Bodvoc Stone sited on a Bronze Age barrow on the mountain. Modern remains include the Craig Fawr Chain Home Low Radar Station, located on the southern crest of Margam Mountain, constructed as part of WWII defensive measures. 20th century enclosure has been ignored in most cases, as the historic character remains the same.

Towards Cwm Dyffryn the medieval influence of Margam Abbey is strong represented by Hafod y porth Grange, immediately northwest of Hafod Farm. The grange lies within a field called Waun y Capel (Chapel Meadow) and appears in the bull of Pope Alexander IV (1261) as 'Hauto Portarii.' The fieldscape surrounding this grange is somewhat more irregular than the adjacent landscape although much is now afforested.

Key Characteristics

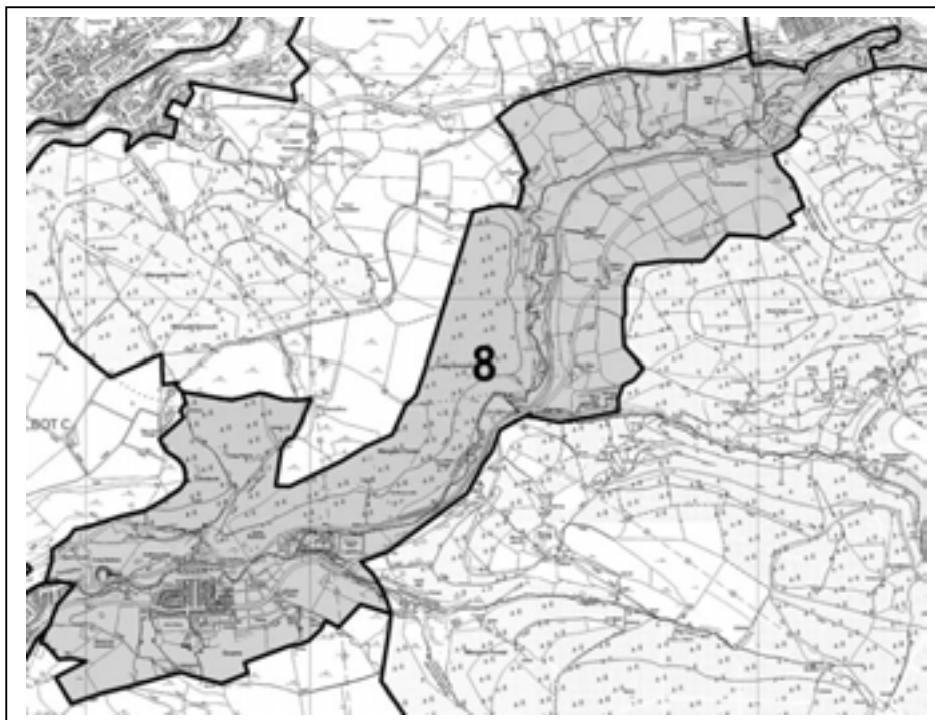
- Large expanse of coniferous woodland across high ground of Mynydd Margam and forming side of Cwm Dyffryn.
- Limited access to area develops sense of isolation.
- Woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground.
- Concentration of Iron Age forts, forming chain across the southern fringe of the mountain.
- Designated in Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.
- Area untrammelled by industrial exploitation.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
7	Mynydd Margam	8 - m	27 - m 28 - m	107 - m 108 - m	21 31 68	27 - o 28 - o 46 - h

CHARACTER AREA 8

Goytre Valley



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This narrow steep sided valley rises from approx 30m AOD, adjacent to Port Talbot to approx 200m AOD at its higher reaches. The valley lies between the wooded upland of Mynydd Margam to the south and Mynydd Emroch to the north. Its southwest course from the settlement of Bryn cuts through the scarp slope adjacent to Margam Industry.

The underlying geology is sandstones with coals of South Wales pennant formation, on this is steeper slopes this is disrupted with landslips and disused coalmines. Boulder clay is evident on the lower valley slopes and with alluvium, glacial sand and gravel terraces present on lower reaches of the valley.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This enclosed and deeply incised valley has a strong upland character. The valley bottom and sides are a mosaic of deciduous, coniferous, mixed woodland and grazed pasture. The pasture is bounded by outgrown hedges, frequently reinforced with fences. The deciduous cover, outgrown hedges and topography, create a strong sense of enclosure and shelter, while the surrounding coniferous plantation enhances the upland character of the area.

There are a scattering of dwellings and developments, connected by the single road which runs through the valley. Many of the more recent interventions and improvements have used cheap materials often with poor finishes, but at present the cumulative impact has limited effect.

Industrial relics are present in the form of a disused mineral railway, now providing recreation access and numerous disused mines.

The valley has a quiet character despite its close proximity to Port Talbot, with a 'hidden' landscape in the valley bottom, creating a tranquil sense of place.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The central corridor of the area comprises of a minor river valley with mainly steep sides, containing lowland mixed deciduous woodland a BAP priority habitat. Otters are present within the river system.

To the east, an area of mosaic landscape, with large areas of semi-upland farmland prevails. This essentially fridd landscape is comprised mainly of improved grassland enclosures but with remnant rhos pastures present. BAP habitats include species rich hedges and purple moor grass and/or rush pasture. Numerous hedgerow birds including linnet and song thrush are present.

The northern flank of the valley is dominated by the coniferous plantation of woodland of Mynydd Emroch which extends into the area.

Deer, escaped from Margam Park are present with in the area.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The medieval influence of Margam Abbey is strong within the valley. The evergreen canopy envelops a relict regular post-medieval regular fieldscape.

This area is characterised as an evolved landscape containing multi-period cultural expressions untrammelled by industrial exploitation. Extensive archaeological evidence of land husbandry evident across the area is now given over to forestry management interspersed with some small farms, which is judged not to have diminished areas cultural essence.

Key Characteristics

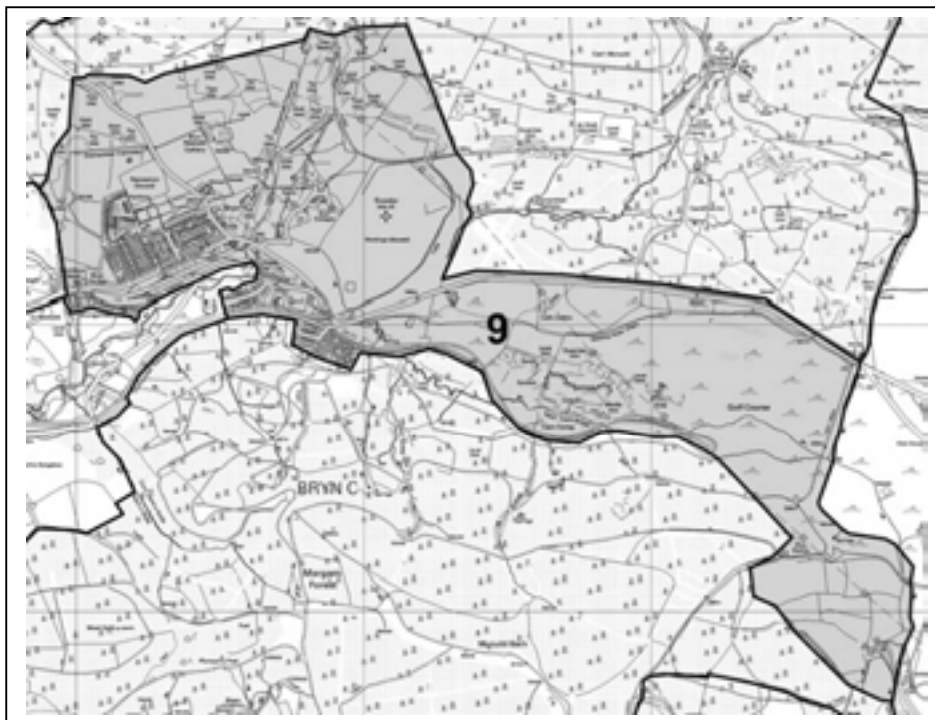
- Enclosed valley with a strong upland feel
- Hidden pasture landscape present in the valley bottom, enclosed with outgrown hedges, with a quiet character despite proximity to large settlements.
- Mosaic of habitats including significant deciduous woodland cover and river corridor.
- Industrial relics in the form of disused mineral railway and less prominent disused mines.
- Strong coniferous woodland cover along west of valley.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
8	Goytre Valley	9 - h	27 - m	60 - m 61- m	31	28 - o

CHARACTER AREA 9

Cefn Cethin



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This narrow strip of mixed use upland landscape, focused around the settlement of Bryn, is situated against the County Borough's eastern boundary. The area is bounded by the commercial woodland of Mynydd Penhydd to the north, and Mynydd Margam the south and runs into Cwm Dyffryn.

The land, ranges from approx 130m AOD in Cwm Dyffryn to 265m AOD on a geology of Productive Coal Measures mudstones with coalmines and tips present.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landcover of the area is a mixture of managed Golf course, disturbed land, rock outcrops and grazing. The predominant vegetation cover is rough grass; this is frequently encroached by bracken. Boundaries are almost entirely post and wire fences, although these are sparse through the area. The golf course and its manicured greens and tree planting contrasts with the character of the surrounding rough grass upland, much of which is primarily grazed by sheep. The whole area feels open and exposed in contrast to surrounding forestry and valley bottoms.

The ex-mining settlement of Bryn is essentially linear in character strung out along the B4282, with newer development has expanded outwards lying awkwardly on higher ground. The original buildings are a mix of stone, brick and render with slate roofs, while newer buildings tend to be render and pebbledash. The core of the settlement is difficult to define, having a limited number of commercial enterprises.

The B4282 road passing from east to west provides the only significant vehicle access, although numerous footpaths and recreation routes provide extensive access. To the north of Bryn an area has been provisionally designated open county.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This essentially ffridd mosaic landscape is comprised mainly of improved grassland enclosures but with remnant rhos pastures present locally. BAP habitats present

include species rich hedges and purple moor grass & rush pasture. Numerous hedgerow birds are present including linnet and song thrush.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The Bryn Railroad was laid down in 1839-40 to carry coal from the collieries around Bryn to the iron and copper works of the English Copper Co. in Cwmafan. Locomotive power was first introduced to the line in 1845. The 1st edition OS map depicts many satellite levels surrounding Bryn-gyrnos and Bryn Collieries connected by a system of tramroads to the Bryn Railroad. Although Bryn has expanded over the past century the character of the surrounding area has remain essentially rural with industrial monuments such as the Bryn Railroad surviving as earthworks.

Key Characteristics

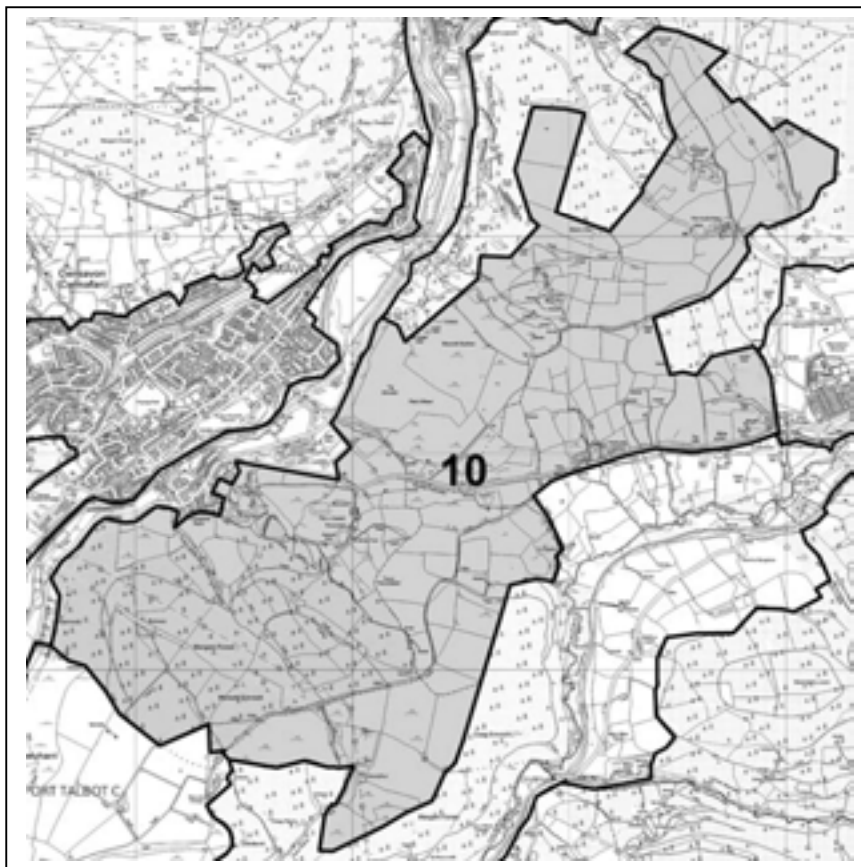
- Open landscape of mixed landcover and management, including Golf Course and disturbed land.
- Ex-mining settlement of Bryn, dominates south west of area, sitting awkwardly on higher ground.
- Industrial remains such as Bryn railroad are present as earthworks.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
9	Cefn Cethin	10 - l	26 - m	61 - m	31 21	26 - m

CHARACTER AREA 10

Mynydd Bychan



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This upland ridge and valley, forms a saddle across the high ground between Cwm Dyffryn and Cwm Afan. It ranges from approx 80m AOD in Cwm Dyffryn to an elevation of 260m AOD lying on a geology dominated by South Wales pennant formation sandstone above Productive Coal formation mudstones and coals.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This upland landscape is primarily enclosed grazing, but also includes a large coniferous woodland running from Mynydd Emroch into Cwm Afan. The patchwork of this medium sized mixed grazed landscape is bound by a combination of fences and outgrown hedges. This, along with areas of bracken infestation on higher ground, indicates a lack of management.

There are scattered isolated dwellings through the area, mainly farmsteads. The only through road, the B4282, crosses the lower saddle from Bryn to Cwmafan, additionally numerous footpaths, tracks and recreation routes provide extensive public access throughout.

On higher ground there is a distinct sense of exposure and isolation. The high elevation also affords wide views to the adjacent valleys and surrounding upland. The character gradually becomes more settled and sheltered on lower ground as enclosure of the valleys and increased maintenance influences the landscape.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This essentially ffridd landscape is comprised mainly of improved grassland enclosures but with remnant rhos pastures present locally. BAP priority habitats

include species rich hedges and purple moor grass and/or rush pasture. This supports numerous hedgerow birds are present including linnets and song thrush.

To the west of the area the character is dominated by the coniferous plantation of Mynydd Emroch which extends into the area. This extensive areas of conifer plantation potentially contains remnant of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands, rhos pastures. The woodland also provides suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill.

Deer, escaped from Margam Park are present within the area.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

Numerous Bronze Age cairns, singularly, in pairs and in cemeteries, adorn the elevated slopes of Mynydd Emroch and Mynydd Bychan signifying the importance of this area as a funerary and ritual landscape. Later during the Iron Age the summits of Mynydd Emroch was chosen for the siting of a hillfort enclosure of Craig Ffairty, this remains unscheduled. This represents a highly organised landscape during late prehistory, a theme that continues into the later periods.

Much of the medieval landscape owes to the strong ecclesiastical presence of both the Margam and Neath Abbeys. A recurring theme is the position and regularity of medieval platform houses and longhuts on the elevated mountain slopes, one suggestion is that they are seasonal settlements or hafodydd in use during the milder parts of the year when stock is grazed on the higher pasture.

Industrial activity tends to adhere to the periphery, along the more industrialised valley sides of Cwmafon, with small post-medieval collieries; levels and quarries typify the area's margin.

Key Characteristics

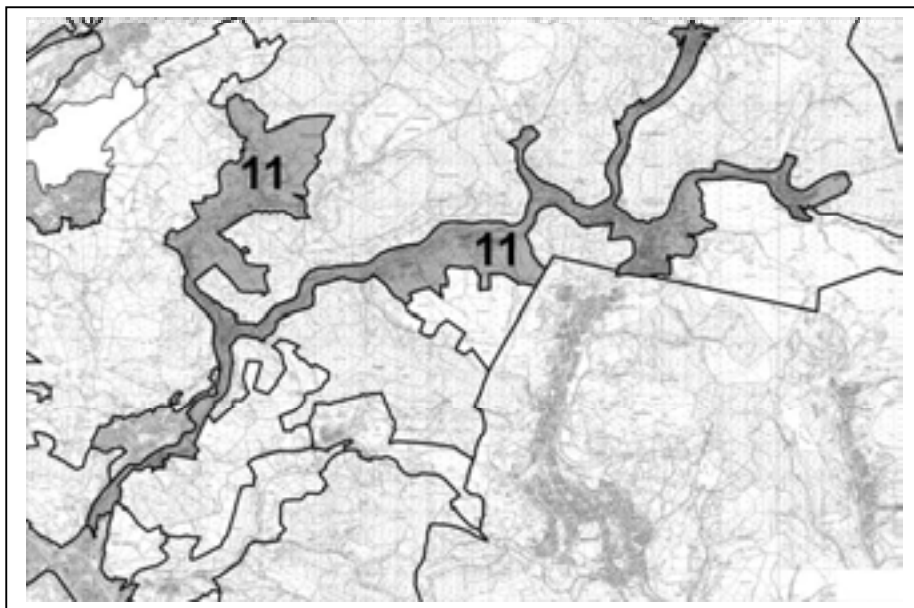
- Mosaic of upland grazed medium sized fields, with significant coniferous woodland running into the valleys.
- Scattered dwellings across the area, linked by minor roads.
- Field boundaries comprise of fences and outgrown hedges.
- Semi upland habitats dominated by an essentially ffridd landscape.
- Bronze age cairns, iron age hill forts and medieval field pattern, historically represents an organised landscape.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
10	Mynydd Bychan	11 - m	26 - m 27 - m	61 - m 106 - m	31 32	28 - o

CHARACTER AREA 11

Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This character area follows the upland valleys of the Afan, Pelenna and minor tributaries. These deeply incised U-shaped valleys of sinuous alignment rise from approx 50m AOD at Port Talbot to approx 300m AOD at Abergwynfi. The Pelenna valley meanders southwards to its confluence with the westward flowing Afan. The valleys dissect the north/northeast dipping sandstone and coals of the South Wales pennant formation. The gentler valley slopes are dominated by boulder clay, while alluvium, glacial sand and gravel terraces underlie the valley floor.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The valley floor is a mosaic of open grassland, very small pastures, rough bracken and scrub and substantial deciduous tree cover. Much of the deciduous cover is focused around the strong riparian vegetation of the river courses. The river is rocky in parts with a character that reflects high seasonal flow. The open valley sides are covered by grazed pasture, which is suffering from significant encroachment of bracken and scrub, and the development of coarse grasses. Most of the boundaries in the area are fenced, or with outgrown hedges and trees marking diminished enclosures.

The enclosed valley squeezes in settlement, which relates to past industrial uses and features such as the dismantled railway with embankments, aqueducts and viaducts. This adds to the drama and interest of the valley. The A4107 runs the length of the Afan valley connecting the settlements, and has dwellings along its length.

There is substantial recreation use of surrounding woodland [Afan Country Park] and also along the valley floor following the course of the river and disused railway line. Access to the valley sides are limited to minimal footpath and bridleway access plus a single-track road. The coniferous plantation of the valley sides in places form abrupt edges.

The valley has a dramatic and at times remote feeling away from the roads and settlement. Yet as views are generally contained within the valley by both vegetation and the topography, an intimate and sheltered nature is created.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The base of the valleys are characterised by river valley systems. The major Afan River valley, steep sided, flowing from a semi-upland landscape to sea level and the minor Pelenna River, a semi-upland steep sided river. The valley bases contain a variety of habitats, including broadleaved woodland interspersed with bracken slopes, areas of acid grassland and rhos pastures plus BAP habitats including; lowland mixed deciduous woodland and purple moor grass and/or rush pasture. BAP species present include Otter, Kingfisher, silver-washed fritillary and various plant species.

The higher, open ground is characterised predominantly by ffridd habitat, with areas of BAP habitat present including, upland Oakwood, upland heath, purple moor grass and/or rush pasture. Numerous rhos pasture species are present.

Historic Characteristics

Disused collieries and levels are commonplace along the entire length of the valley, the largest being Blaenafon Colliery and the Welsh Independent Colliery; the former in Cwm Gwenffrwd and the latter in Cwm Blaenpelenna.

Tonmawr grew in ribbon along the route of the Glyncoerrwg Mineral Railway, more commonly known as Parsons Folly. Built in the mid 19th century, it ran for 7½ miles from the Neath Canal at Aberdulais to the small Blaencregan level. The project ran at a loss and the track was lifted in 1852. A year later the South Wales Mineral Railway connected the collieries at Glyncoerrwg with the dock at Briton Ferry. A spectacular survival is the ten-arch viaduct, constructed in 1897, which carried the mineral railway over the Afon Afan in Pontrhydyfen. Also at Pontrhydyfen, John Reynolds, built a huge stone aqueduct in 1824, to convey water at a suitable height to drive the waterwheel that provided the blast at his Oakwood Ironworks, the four elliptical arches now carry a minor road.

Although industrial features typify the east of the valley, bronze age cairns and medieval house platforms are present on the elevated slopes and surrounding area. Yet industrial exploitation of the area's mineral resource from the 18th to 20th centuries has left, perhaps, the most durable of monuments.

Cultural Associations

The area is characterised by the settlements present and recreation use of the valley. Along the Afan Valley the communities of Cynonville, Dyffryn, Cymer, Croeserw, Blaengwynfi and Abergwynfi are significant in terms of the social as well as physical landscape. In physical terms, these comparatively unspoiled examples of former mining settlements, are neatly established in a scenic locations with abundant evidence of an energetic industrial past that is now largely covered by conifer forests. Socially, they combine to make this one of the County Borough's most deprived areas.

Pontrhydyfen is widely known for the size, complexity and engineering skill behind the aqueduct and viaduct that span the steep valley and is also widely known regionally as the home village of Richard Burton.

The Afan Forest Park sits on the southern flank of the Afan Valley. This is a focal point for existing and emerging tourism-related activities, for initiatives being developed further east up the Afan Valley and north through the Corrwg Valley. The Park is central to the Authority's Tourism Growth Action Plan which includes the creation of a mountain bike centre of excellence.

At Glyncoerrwg an imaginative regeneration initiative is being undertaken in a socio-economically deprived side valley. Having at one time been an important centre for mining and local government, the Co-operative has focused on the creation of the Glyncoerrwg Ponds and the mountain bike centre. The area is linked to the Afan Forest Park network providing a focal point for the trails developed on Forestry Commission land.

Key Characteristics

- Deeply incised valleys with sinuous alignment.

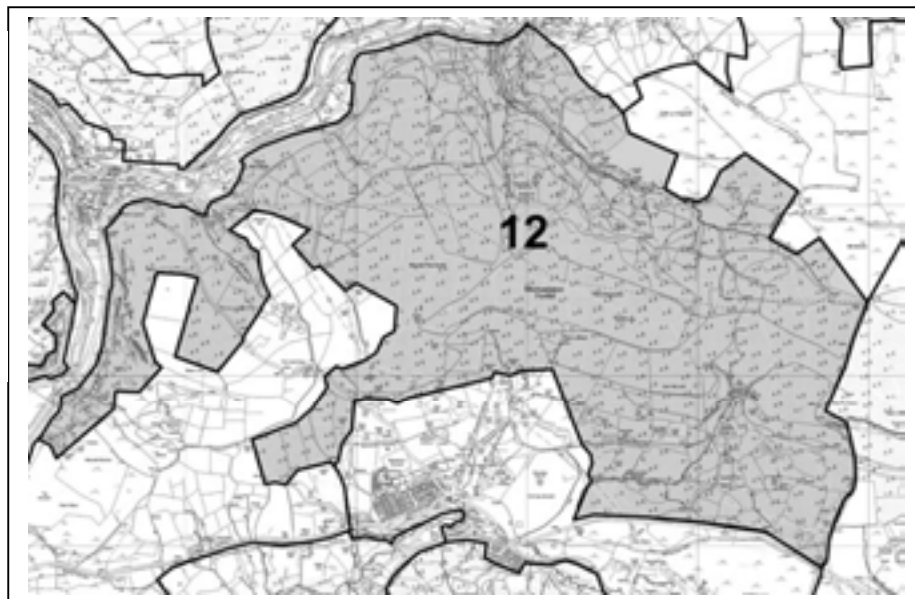
- Valley bottom has been significantly modified by past mining activities.
- Mosaic landscape throughout, the valley bottom contains substantial deciduous tree cover.
- Settlements and features, such as viaduct and aqueduct, relating to past industrial influences.
- Substantial recreational use within the valley, especially Afan Forest Park.
- Mosaic of habitats, river valley systems dominating valley floor, higher ground significant ffridd habitat.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
11	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna	12 - m 20 - m	23 - h 26 - m	38 - h 39 - m 43 - h 44 - m 45 - h 46 - m	13 45	29 - h 30 - h 31 - h 32 - h

CHARACTER AREA 12

Mynydd Penhydd



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area comprises a rolling, afforested plateau cut with minor valleys, and running in to the Afan Valley. It ranges from approx 120m AOD in the Afan Valley to 360m AOD at Pen Disgwyllfn, north of Bryn.

The area is bordered to the east by the County Borough boundary and to the north by the Afan Valley. The geology of the area is dominated by the striking north and northeast dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds. On the gentler slopes of the Afon Afan the underlying geology is boulder clay.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landform creates a distinct topographical element, acting as an enclosing incisor to the Afan valley and forming an integral part of the Valley and to a lesser extent the Ffrwd Wylt valley. Woodland, which covers much of the area, is comprised of coniferous plantation, predominantly spruce with larch, reduces the distinctiveness of the area, but helps to enhance its upland nature. Abrupt edges to moorland and grazed land and extensive areas of clear felling detract from the scenic qualities of the area.

Access through the area is along forestry roads, a significant number of which are integrated into the recreation routes of the Afan Argoed Country Park centre, which abuts the area. Much of the area has a tranquil and remote feel.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This extensive area of conifer plantation potentially contains remnant of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands, rhos pastures and broadleaved woodland. The woodland also provides suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

Situated above the originally densely wooded valley floors and lowland, yet accessible from the adjacent high ground, these mountains have been the focus of human activity from at least the Bronze Age, as attested by a number of monuments. The Iron Age is also well represented by, enclosures and habitation sites, this development suggests that the site's primary function was stock-raising.

The early medieval period is well-represented by the suggested reoccupation of the hillforts and the 7th century.

Key Characteristics

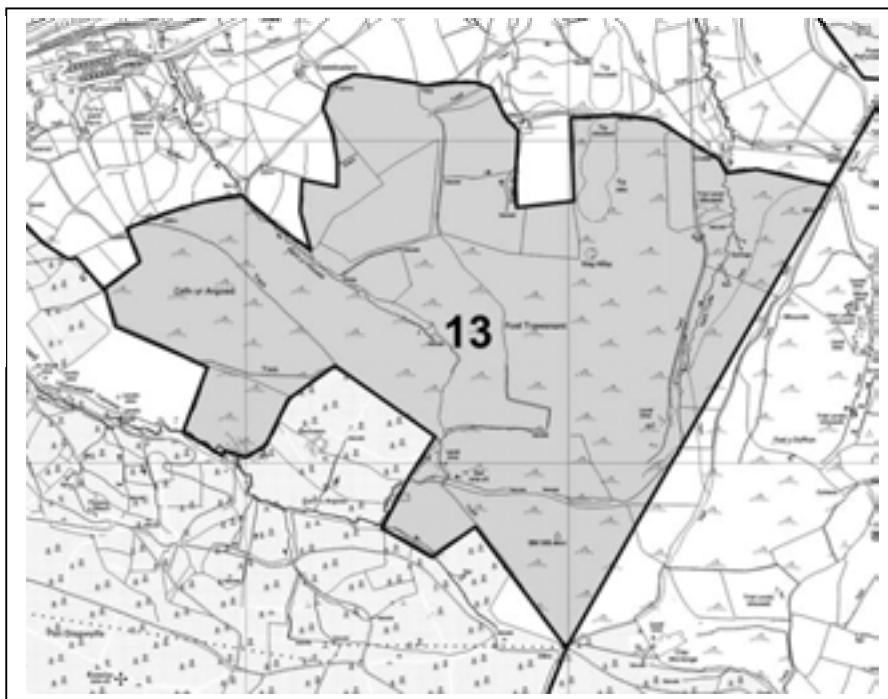
- Large tract of coniferous woodland running across high rolling plateau, and forming side of Afan valley.
- Recreational use of area for biking and other activities from adjacent Afan Argoed Country Park centre.
- Area untrammelled by industrial exploitation.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
12	Mynydd Penhydd	13 - m	23 - h	101 - m	31 45 60	28 - o

CHARACTER AREA 13

Foel Trawsnant



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This area of upland grazing ranges from approx 220m AOD to 371m AOD at the summit. It is bounded to the east by the County Borough boundary, to the south by the woodland of Mynydd Penhrydd and to the north by the Afan Valley.

The geology of the area is dominated by the striking north and northeast dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds On the gentler slopes of the Afon Afan the underlying geology is boulder clay.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This upland grazed landscape has simple cover of unenclosed sheep grazed coarse grass and continues beyond the assessment area to the east. It is bounded by woodland creating a strong edge and preventing views into this area from the surrounding valleys. Minor valleys holding minor watercourses, as well as house platforms on higher ground add visual interest to an area, which generally feels bleak and exposed.

There are no dwellings or structural development present and the only public access is via a footpath and bridleway. Significant tracts of land surrounding access routes have been provisionally designated open county.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This upland habitat, mainly consisting of comparatively species-poor Molinea mire and acid grasslands, with some improved areas and upland heath and acid flushes present. Purple moor grass and/or rush pasture and upland heath, present in the area, are BAP priority habitats. The latter habitat type generally being considered of international importance, holding significant upland plant species.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

Situated above the originally densely wooded valley floors and lowland, yet accessible from the adjacent high ground, this landscape has been the focus of



human activity from at least the Bronze Age. The Iron Age is well represented by, enclosures and habitation sites later taken reoccupied during the early medieval period.

Key Characteristics

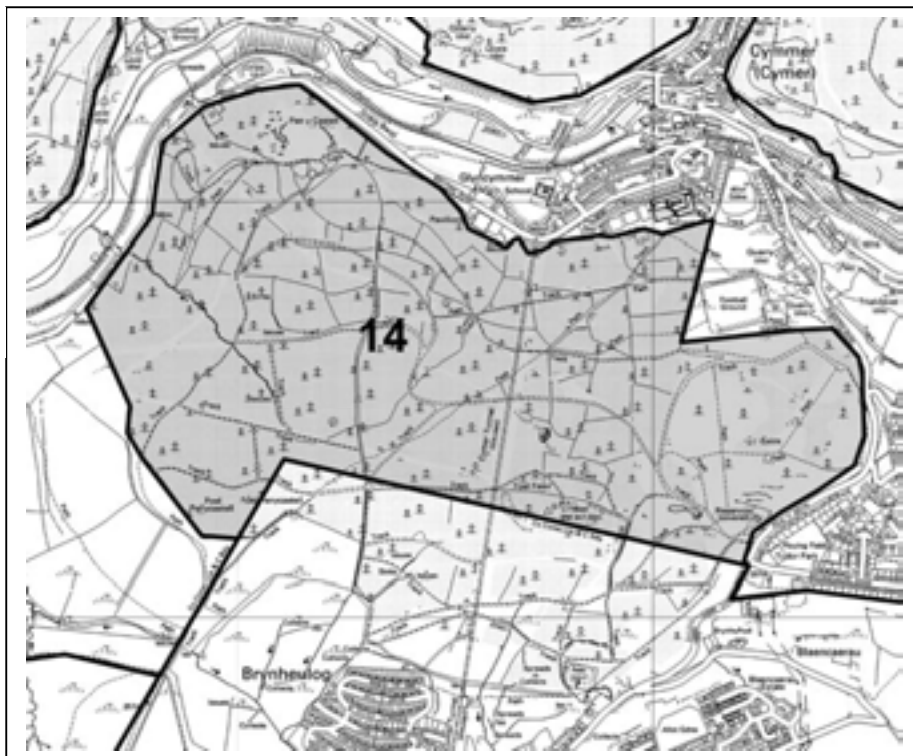
- An area of unenclosed upland grazing ranges from approx 220m AOD to 371m AOD.
- Simple grass cover which extends beyond the county boundary.
- Upland habitats including upland heath and acid flushes.
- Bleak and exposed character.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
13	Foel Trawsnant	14 - m	23 - h	47 - m	60	46 - h

CHARACTER AREA 14

Foel Fawr



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area is comprised of coniferous woodland on the valley side in the upper reaches of the Afan, adjacent to the County Borough Boundary to the south and abutting Croeserw to the east. The area ranges from approx 200m AOD to 350m AOD at its peak. The geology of the area is dominated by the north and north east dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds. Giving way to boulder clay on the gentler slopes of the Afan.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landform of this hillside creates a sharp intervention into the Afan valley, reducing views and exaggerating the sense of enclosure within the valley. Cover is continuous mixed coniferous woodland, which forms harsh edges against open land and the adjacent lowland. This is especially apparent around the settlement of Croeserw, to which the character area provides a backdrop

There is extensive public right of way across the area with numerous paths and tracks.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This areas of conifer plantation potentially contains remnant of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands, rhos pastures. The woodland also provides suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

Situated above the originally densely wooded valley floors and lowland, yet accessible from the adjacent high ground, this landscape has been the focus of human activity from at least the Bronze Age. Emphasis is placed on possible medieval fieldscapes associated with the numerous house platforms which surround the area

Industrial exploitation of the mineral resource at the lower fringes, from the 18th to 20th centuries has left, perhaps, the most durable of monuments; albeit hidden beneath commercial plantation.

The area is the proposed site for a scheme to create a £60 million leisure park complex by private developers, linked to the recreation facilities already developing within the valley.

Key Characteristics

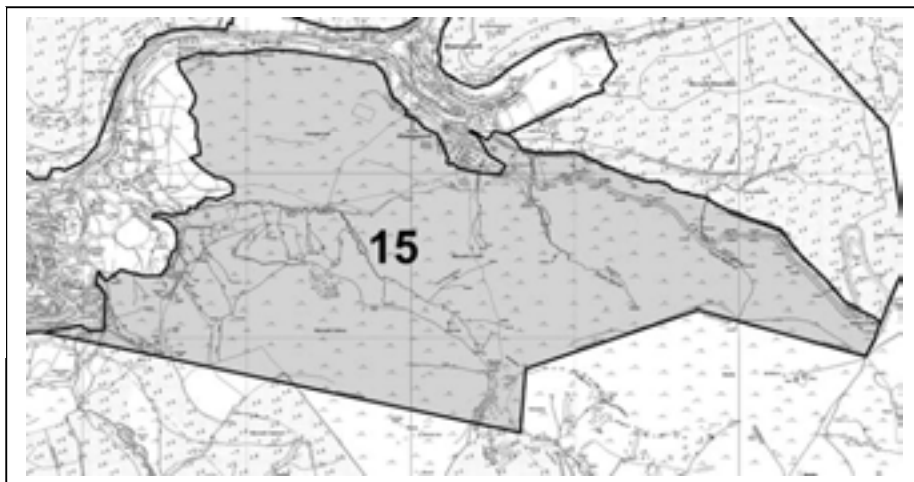
- Tract of coniferous woodland on dominant topographical feature which develops enclosure in Afan Valley.
- Woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground.
- Creates significant backdrop to the settlement of Croeserw.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
14	Foel Fawr	15 - m	23 - m	100 - m	45 60 61	28 - h

CHARACTER AREA 15

Mynydd y Gelli



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



The exposed upland rolling hillsides and valleys, rise from approx 250m AOD in the upper reaches of the Afan valley, which forms the northern fringe of the area, to 555m AOD to the south. The area is defined to the south by the County Borough boundary, although the character of the landscape continues beyond the assessment area.

The geology of the area is dominated by the striking north and north east dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds. These are dissected to the north of the area by the Afon Afan, a deeply dissected U-shaped valley, the sides of which overlay a geology of boulder clay.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This area contains a number of small valleys, tributaries to the Afan. The topography creates an imposing presence, which is enhanced by its simple cover of predominantly coarse grasses. The area provides a contrast to the more complex landscapes of surrounding areas creating a sense of exposure and wilderness after the enclosure of the valley.

The A4107 skirts the northern edge of the area, running along the contours of the slope, acts as a processional entrance into valley and providing the only significant access within the area. A number of footpaths provide additional access and significant areas around these have been provisionally designated open county.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area is predominantly characterised by upland acid grassland and mire communities, with areas of ffridd habitat, comprising a mosaic of acidic and neutral semi-upland habitats at the western edge of the area. Purple moor grass and/or rush pasture, BAP priority habitats and internationally important dry heath habitats are present. The area supports a number of BAP plant species.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

As part of a much more extensive historic landscape extending across Afan Wallia to the north, the area records human endeavours from the earliest manipulate of the environment through to the Industrial Revolution and beyond. During the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) hunter-gatherer peoples utilised this upland environment along leaving behind discarded relics.

During the post-medieval period the aspect area was a witness to some major industrial activity, from the sinking of collieries and levels at lower elevations.

Key Characteristics

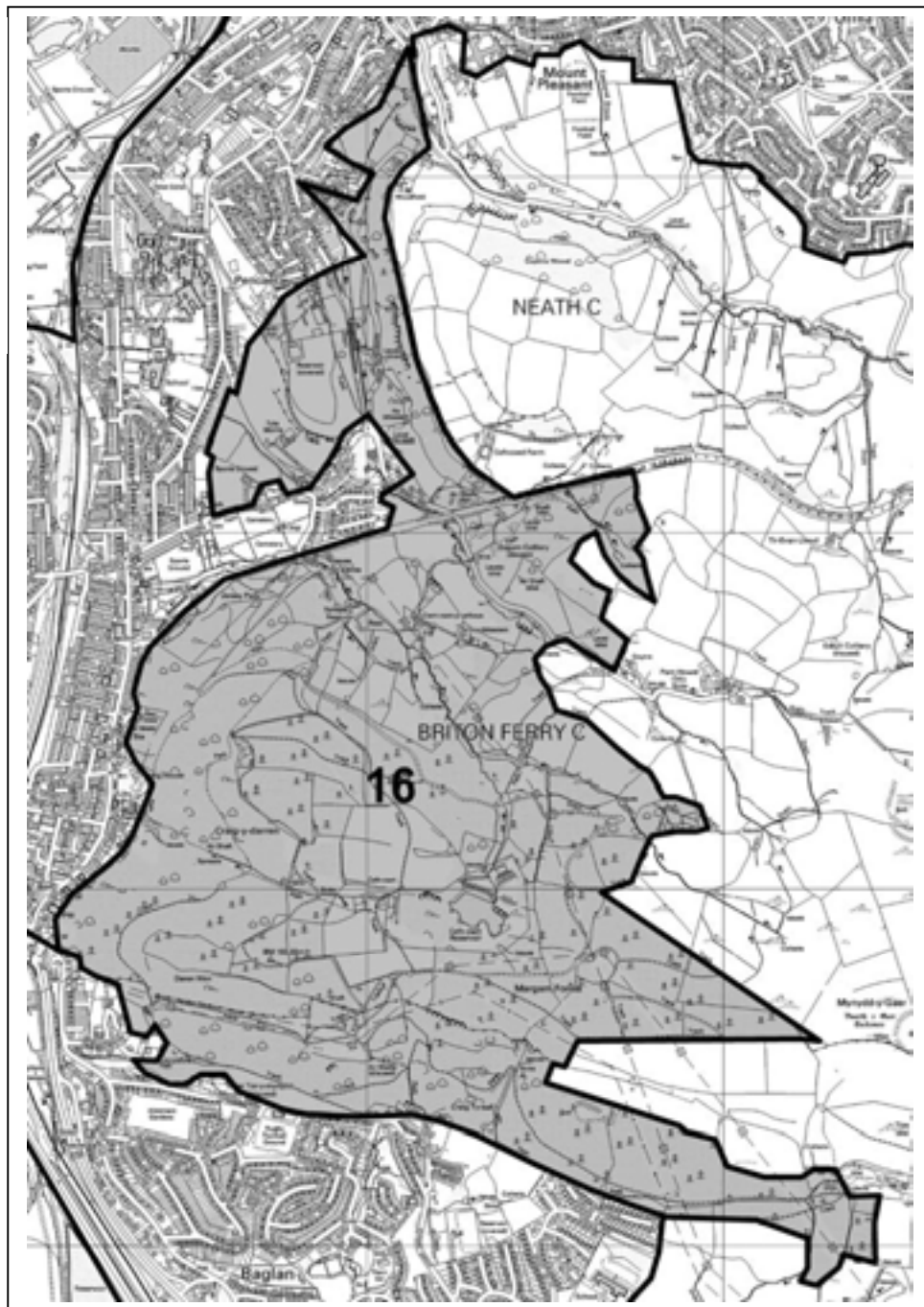
- Dramatic topography and simple landcover creates an imposing presence.
- Exposed and open landscape distinct from closed and complex adjacent areas
- The A4107 skirts the area

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
15	Mynydd y Gelli	16 - h	23 - h	42 - m 44 - m	26	26 - o

CHARACTER AREA 16

Briton Ferry Woods



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area of scarp and rolling landscape lies at the northern extent of the scarp slope which dominates the coastal plains to the west. It is defined to the north and west by the extent of the settlements of Briton Ferry and Baglan, and forms in parts the western extent of the Neath Valley, at its confluence with the coastal plain.

The landform rises from approximately 50m AOD to approximately 200m AOD, on north and north east dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This area constitutes the less dramatic northern extent of the scarp slope, which fringes the coastal plain. It is heavily wooded, with significantly more deciduous cover than Margam Scarp to the south. This creates both a settled backdrop for the settlements of Baglan and Briton Ferry, a sheltered feel from within the area and a dominant feature from the M4. Power lines have created straight swathes through the woodland above Baglan, which are prominent to views from the M4 and north west.

Topography has prevented significant development, with only infrequent scattered settlements present. This contrasts with the adjacent settlements. There are no through roads, with access limited to forestry tracks and recreation routes. To the west, Jersey Park provides a focus for recreation from Briton Ferry.

Industrial relics are widespread, in the form of disused collieries and dismantled railway lines adding both interest and localised disruption.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

At lower elevations semi-natural, extensively ancient woodlands and broadleaved plantations prevail. This Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, dominated by Beech woodland is a BAP priority habitat. Higher ground is dominated by the coniferous plantation of Craig-y-darren. This includes in parts remnants of other habitats.

Historic Characteristics

Numerous Bronze Age cairns adorn the elevated area signifying the importance of this as funerary and ritual landscape. Later during the Iron Age this high ground was chosen for the siting of a hillfort enclosure. This represents a highly organised landscape during late prehistory, a theme that continues into the later periods.

Much of the medieval landscape owes to the strong ecclesiastical presence of Neath Abbey. A recurring theme is the position and regularity of medieval platform houses and longhuts on the elevated mountain slopes, one suggestion is that they are seasonal settlements or hafodydd in use during the milder parts of the year when stock is grazed on the higher pasture.

Small post-medieval collieries, levels and quarries typify the landscape. The Ysnys Maerdy Incline is one of the more remarkable industrial monuments of the area. The incline was apart of the South Wales Mineral Railway, which connected the collieries at Glyncoerrwg with the dock at Briton Ferry. Engineered by Brunel, the line was opened in 1861-3 and closed in 1910; the route belonged almost exclusively, throughout its working life, to mineral traffic.

The spine of Jersey Park lies along the Ysnys Maerdy Incline. The park was built on land given by the Earl of Jersey in 1908; the land was presented to the Neath Urban District Council for the purpose of a public park. The ornamental park is exceptionally well preserved; its original layout of formal and informal areas remains complete and now includes sports facilities.

Cultural Associations

Culturally this hillside is associated with Mynydd y Gaer / Cefn Morfudd to the east. It represents a cultural distinctiveness now given over to conifer forest plantations, an activity that has subsumed extensive evidence of human occupation in prehistory and through the mediaeval periods to the 19th and 20th centuries.

Key Characteristics

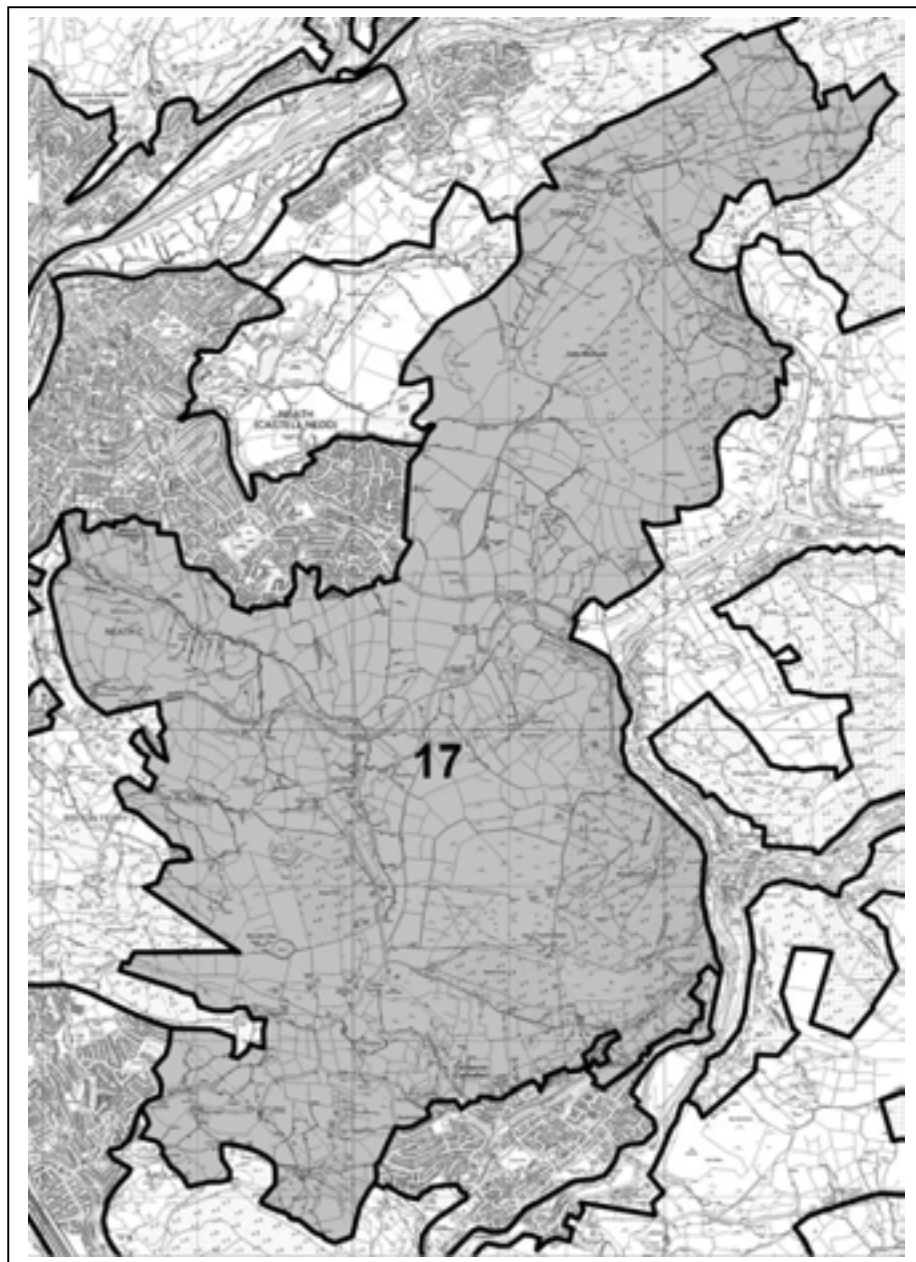
- Wooded scarp forms settled backdrop to Baglan and Briton Ferry.
- Dominant feature from the M4.
- Extensive industrial heritage including, small post-medieval collieries, levels, quarries and Ysnys Maerdy Incline.
- Ancient woodlands and broadleaved plantation prevail on lower slopes.
- The well-preserved Jersey Park, its original layout of formal and informal areas remains complete.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
16	<u>Briton Ferry Woods</u>	17 - h	15 - h 17 - m 18 - l	37 - m 104 - m	32 50	46 - h

CHARACTER AREA 17

Foel Fynyddau



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This extensive area forms the shoulder of upland, which separates the Neath Valley from the Afan and Pelenna valleys. This mosaic landscape ranges from approx 50m AOD to 370m AOD at Foel Fynyddau. The geology of the area is characterised by the N and NE dipping sandstones and coals of the South Wales pennant formation Llynfi-Brithdir Beds (Lower pennant Measures). Towards both the Neath and Afan valleys boulder clay prevails.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This landscape a mosaic pattern of upland grazing and coniferous plantation is dominated by the mass of Foel Fynyddan topped with communication masts. There are numerous field boundary types across the character area including dry stonewalls, but most are in a poor state of repair and fences dominate. The riparian corridors, lined with deciduous trees, act as distinct features and provide a sense of

sheltered enclosure to the lower ground. A settled nature is engendered by the presence of individual dwellings, which are scattered through the area, connected by a number of minor, hedge lined roads. A single road connect the Afan and Neath valley, straddling the ridge at its lowest point. Extensive areas of both Foel Fynyddau and Cefn Morduff have been provisionally designated open access land.

The settled character gradually dissipates on high ground, where management input appears to decrease and a more rugged exposed nature prevails. Here the presence of coniferous woodland has a more significant impact as the edges appear abrupt against the open landscape. Encroachment of bracken and scrub has occurred on higher ground, enhancing the perception of reduced maintenance.

While views are frequently contained on the lower ground, by deciduous cover, there are panoramic views across the coastal plain and to adjacent valleys from the high ground.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Much of the area is characterised by a large area of semi-upland farmland. This is essentially ffridd habitats, sited on rolling land and comprising a mosaic of mainly improved grassland enclosures. A wide range of other habitats are also present including significant remnants of rhos pastures and lowland mixed deciduous woodland, species rich hedgerow, upland heath and purple moor grass & rush pasture, all of which are BAP habitats. The latter habitat type being considered of international importance holding significant upland plant species.

There is more extensive lowland mixed deciduous woodland cover towards the Neath Valley, with semi-natural, ancient, woodlands and broadleaved plantations, on the semi-upland slopes. To the west, against the Afan Valley areas of acid grassland and mire communities, while on the higher plateau this gives way to mainly dry heathland.

There are two distinct areas of coniferous plantation at Mynydd y gaer and Foel Fynyddau. These areas potentially contains remnant of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands and rhos pastures. The woodland also provides suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill.

The area contains a range of BAP flora and fauna, including hedgerow birds as well as kingfisher.

Historic Characteristics

The north of the area is dominated by Cefn Morfudd, an exceptionally busy landscape in historical terms, the exhibiting remarkable multi-period remains. Bronze Age cairns occupy the elevated ridge to the north; these monuments appear to have been specifically sited with commanding views of both the Vale of Neath and Cwm Pelenna. To the east of these lie Blaen-cwmbach Iron Age hillfort and the extensive remains of the Blaen-cwmbach Roman Marching Camp. Medieval earthwork remains are both prolific and impressive, with platform houses belonging to this period frequent and an impressive enclosure and dyke straddling the northern ridge of Cefn Morfudd. Adjacent to the dyke and enclosure lies the route of the Glyncoerrwg Mineral Tram road or Parson's Folly, this section of the tram road is regarded as an outstanding example, and represents the peak of civil engineering reached by horse-operated tramroads.

This landscape is not entirely understood and exhibits a wealth of unique, interesting and puzzling monuments from almost all periods of human history. The importance and significance of this landscape cannot be underestimated.

The southern half of the area is dominated by Mynydd y Gaer, this comprises an area characterised by enclosed upland of a moderately late date.

Numerous Bronze Age cairns, singularly, in pairs and in cemeteries, adorn the elevated slopes of Mynydd y Gaer and Foel Fynyddau signifying the importance of this area as a funerary and ritual landscape. Later during the Iron Age the summit and elevated slopes of Mynydd y Gaer was chosen as a situation for the hillforts enclosures of Buarth y Gaer, Gaer Fawr, and Craig Ty Isaf. This represent a highly

organised landscape during late prehistory, a theme that continues into the later periods.

Much of the medieval landscape owes to the strong ecclesiastical presence of both the Margam and Neath Abbeys. A reoccurring theme is the position and regularity of medieval platform houses and longhuts on the elevated mountain slopes, one suggestion is that they are seasonal settlements or hafodydd in use during the milder parts of the year when stock is grazed on the higher pasture.

The 1st edition OS (1884) records only the partial enclosure of and Mynydd y Gaer, and Foel Fynyddau remained unenclosed until the 20th century and even then the area to the southeast of the mountain, beneath the forestry, has remained unenclosed.

Industrial activity tends to adhere to the periphery, along the more industrialised valley sides of Cwmafon, Neath and the coastal plain with small post-medieval collieries, levels and quarries typify the area's margin. The South Wales mineral railway runs through the area connecting Glyncoerrwg with the docks at Briton Ferry. Engineered by Brunel, the line opened in 1861-3 and closed in 1910. The route belonged almost exclusively, throughout its working life, to mineral traffic. The former chimney on the slopes of Foel Fynyddau was demolished during the second world war. A distinct landmark, it was considered to help direct planes to Swansea. Still evident is the line of the tunnel which ran from the land levels chimney to the valley floor.

Cultural Associations

The area is considered to be part of an extensive area, extending out to the eastern boundary of the County Borough. It represents a cultural distinctiveness now given over to conifer forest plantations, an activity that has subsumed extensive evidence of human occupation in prehistory and through the mediaeval periods to the 19th and 20th centuries. The leisure trail of Coed Morgannwg / St Illtyd's way enters the northern extent of the area.

Key Characteristics

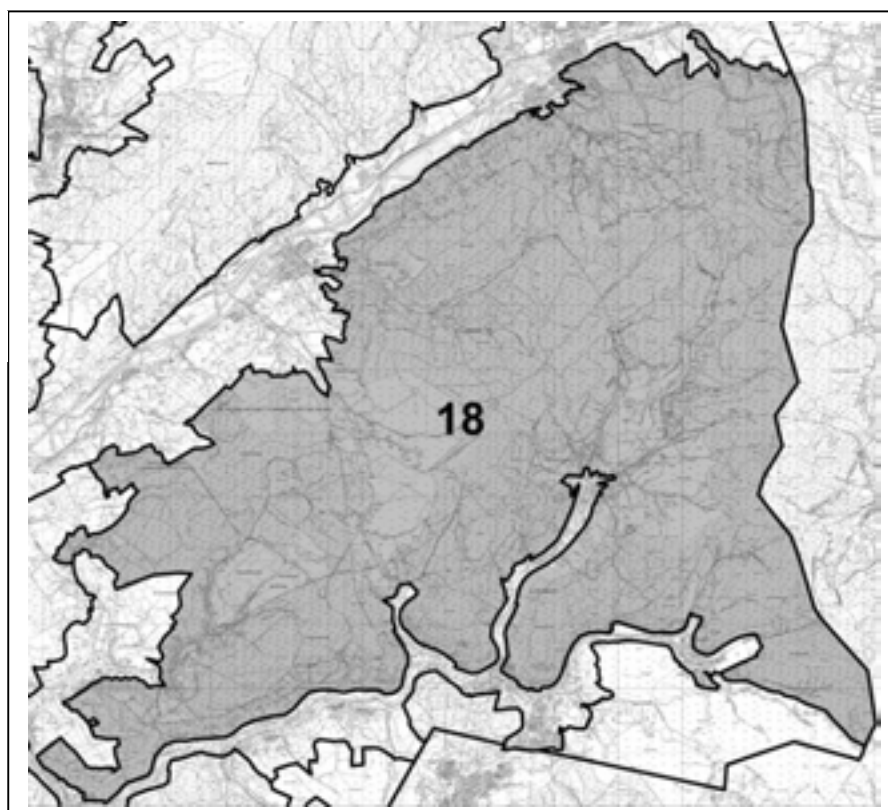
- The mass of Foel Fynyddau, topped with communication masts, is the dominant landform.
- Field are enclosed by numerous field boundary types across the area.
- The landscape contains two distinct areas of coniferous plantation, within a predominantly ffridd landscape.
- Individual dwellings are scattered through the area, predominantly on the lower elevations.
- connect the Afan and Neath valley, straddling the ridge at its lowest point.
- The riparian corridors, significantly lined with deciduous trees.
- The settled character evident on lower ground gradually dissipates on high ground.
- Bronze Age cairns and Iron age hillforts present represent historically, a highly organised landscape.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
17	Feol Fynyddau	18 - m	23 - h 24 - m	37 - m 38 - h 44 - m 56 - m 102 - m 103 - m	32 55	46 - h

CHARACTER AREA 18

Mynydd Resolfen, Craig-y-Llyn & Mynydd Ynyscorrwg



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This extensive plateau constitutes much of the high ground between the Neath and Afan valleys. Rising from approx 50m AOD in Neath valley to 600m AOD in the east. The extent of the area is defined by the open landscape of the adjacent valleys to the north and south and by the County Borough boundary to the east.

The underlying geology is of the South Wales pennant formations. The steep upland slopes of north and northeast dipping sandstones and coals of the Llynfi-Britthdir Beds and the higher plateau of Hughes Beds sandstone. Steep, deep U-shaped tributaries of Afon Afan, with southwest and west facing cirques at their heads and the tributaries of the Nedd with north facing cirques, dissect the plateau. Across the area shafts, mines and quarries disrupt the underlying geology, as do landslips on hill slopes of the plateau. Above Glyn-Neath; south and southwest dipping Productive Coal formation of Llynfi Beds, is dissected by a NNW - SSE fault, which controls the north draining tributaries of the Nedd. There is considerable disturbance from opencast.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This undulating plateau is dominated by coniferous forest, but also contains significant areas of open grazed land and moorland including Carn Caca and tributary valleys of the Afan. Smaller areas of open ground and exposed rock, primarily at summits or on steeper ground further break up the woodland. The landform is riven with numerous small valleys and watercourses, creating fissures in the hillsides and adding topographical interest to this landscape

Plantations of spruce with areas of larch characterise the woodland cover and also create an abrupt, at times, angular edge to open landscape. To its northern and southern extremes the woodland runs down into the Neath and Afan Valleys.

The areas of open landscape contains numerous minor landscape features; numerous cairns, disused mine works and other historic elements which add to the natural features present. The woodland conveys a homogenised appearance, lacking significant character and cloaking any underlying landscape elements. Bracken encroaches especially on higher ground and along watercourses

The woodland cover is a significant feature from both the Neath and Afan Valleys, dominating the skyline and bolstering the upland nature. Conversely the open land has little visual impact on the surrounding landscape, being surrounded by woodland or located beyond the ridge line of the valleys.

There are no roads, settlements or significant structures in this area although the Coed Morgannwg Way and St Illtyds Walk provide access, along long distance trails. There are no settlements or dwellings, adding to a sense of isolation and on the open ground exposed wilderness, within this vast area. Significant tracts of the open landscape within the area have been provisionally designated open access land.

Excavations have produced a dramatic feature above the settlement of Glnneath.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area is dominated by coniferous plantation which provides suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill. This potentially contains remnant of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands, rhos pastures and ancient woodland.

The open land contains a variety of habitats; including extensive mosaics of mire, bog, heath and grasslands; and fridd habitats of acid grassland and rhos pastures

Adjacent to the Neath Valley, more varied habitats characterise the area. An area characterised as a wooded upland river system in steep glacial valley, is of significant value. The area contains lakes in deep hollows surrounded by acid grassland and acid flushes in addition to woodland cover. Valued habitats include, oligotrophic lakes, upland oakland BAP habitats and the internationally significant western acidic woodland. The area harbours a wide range of both BAP and SSSI scheduled plant and animal species including nesting Peregrines. This area was once more extensive, but a large area of opencast mining has impacted on the habitats.

Historic Characteristics

The record of human history is prolific, with evidence from the earliest endeavours to manipulate the environment through to the Industrial Revolution and beyond. During the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) hunter-gatherer peoples utilised this upland environment, evident from discarded lithic blades and awls, reflecting a commitment to the area. The Neolithic finds are somewhat less prolific. During the Bronze Age this upland environment was chosen as an arena for the sitting and acting out of certain aspects (cairn building) belonging to funerary and ritual beliefs. The location of these sites tends toward elevated positions with commanding views of watercourses and or valleys. Two settlements of Iron Age and Roman date; Carn Caca Hillfort and Melin Court Marching Camp representing the continuity of settlement into the historic period, with the exception of these two sites, the majority of are now under forestry. Recognition and preservation of prehistoric landscapes beneath this evergreen canopy has been seriously lacking during the last century, although work by the Forestry Commission in recent years has gone some way in rectifying this situation.

Pre-afforestation this unenclosed landscape was scattered with medieval house platforms and small settlements. It is possible that agricultural settlement during the medieval period relates to one of the local granges subservient to the main abbeys of Neath and Margam, both holding sway over parts of this landscape. Coed Morgannwg Way, a national recreational path, aligned northeast-southwest, dissects the area neatly in two. The route was first used during the Roman period and later as the medieval St Illtyd's Walk.

The landscape is peppered with the remains of many industrial projects; in excess of 150 collieries and levels, over 15 tramroads-Parsons Folly the most infamous, a

viaduct and numerous quarries. The only rival to these monuments is the abundant agricultural remains now buried beneath the modern forestry. Numerous sheepfolds, some dry stonewalls, hedges, enclosures and stone boundary markers can be found distributed throughout. The sheepfolds and some enclosures tend toward higher elevations whilst the walls and hedges occupy much lower elevations along the valley periphery, reflecting the use of the upland as marginal grazing pre-forestation. In short this represents a huge archaeological resource recording activity from the Mesolithic into the present, many monuments remain preserved creating an important multi-period landscape.

Cultural Associations

This extensive area represents a cultural distinctiveness now given over to conifer forest plantations. This has subsumed extensive evidence of human occupation in prehistory and through the mediaeval periods to the 19th and 20th centuries. It contains extensive SSSI designations between Pont Walby and through Cwm Ceffyl to Llyn Fach.

At Ffynnon Oer planning permission has been granted for the creation of a windfarm the latest stage in the evolution of human exploitation of the landscape and defines the current cultural essence of the area.

The High Level Coed Morgannwg Way forms the Route of the Sustrans National Cycle Network passes through this upland. It follows the historic route of Coed Morgannwg Way and in part demonstrates the Forestry Commission's policy to increase public access and enjoyment of its landholdings

Key Characteristics

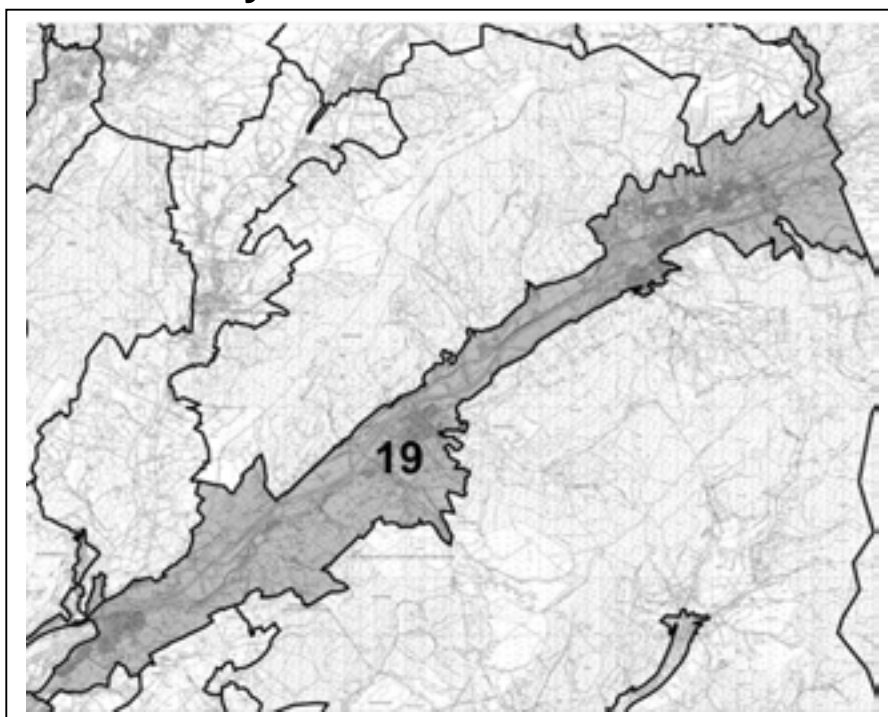
- Expansive upland plateau separating the Afan and Neath Valleys, rising to 600m AOD.
- Extensive coniferous woodland cover, which acts as distinct element in the adjacent valleys.
- Large areas of open moorland and grazed upland.
- Evidence of human history from prehistory to the Industrial Revolution.
- Extensive geological SSSI designations contained primarily to the north.
- Sustrans National Cycle Network passes through this upland.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
18	<u>Mynydd Resolfen, Craig-y-Llyn & Mynydd Ynyscorrwg</u>	19 - m 21 - m 28 - m	21 - o 22 - m 23 - h 24 - m (25 - m)	98 - m 24 - h 27 - l 28 - o 32 - m 34 - h 40 - m 46 - m	26 39	46 - h 33 - h

CHARACTER AREA 19

Neath Valley



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



The character area follows the upland valley of the Neath River, it is contained by the upland plateaux of Hirfynydd to the north and Afan Wallia to the south. To the northeast it extends to the borough boundary, while the southwest is defined by the built edge of Neath. The valley floor rises gently from approx 20m AOD at Neath, to over 70m AOD at the County Borough boundary, with the valley sides extending up approx 250m AOD.

The broad U-shaped valley is dominated by floodplains and channel, consisting of alluvium and terrace geology. The steeper valley slopes are characterised by South Wales pennant formation beds, with extensive cover of boulder clay with areas of peat on the lower slopes. To the east of the area disuse mines, made up ground and opencast disrupt the geology of the area. Beyond the disturbance to the geology Cwm Grwelych and Nant Llyn Fach Streams are designated as Geological SSSI. This area boasts one of the best sequences of rock (Carboniferous) in south wales, plus numerous fossils.

In the northeast of the area, the south and east sloping Productive Coal formation around the closure of a plunging NE - SW synform is cut by a NNW - SSE fault forming the slopes of Afon Pyrddin. Afon Pyrddin lies against the County Borough boundary, this steep valley of east and north facing Farewell Sandstone, is cut down to Millstone Grit sandstone along the river course and is also designated a Geological SSSI.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

Within the valley floor a mixture of settlements, individual dwellings and scattered commercial units lie within a mosaic of pasture. The landscape is bounded predominantly by fences and deciduous woodland, the latter enhancing the sense of enclosure. In places, boundary trees remnants of enclosures add interest and contribute to the sheltered nature of the landscape.

The busy, dualled A465(T) runs through the valley, frequently elevated on embankments and in places diverting the river. Its presence acts as a detractor through much of the valley both visually and aurally, yet it affords views of the

surrounding landscape to large numbers of people. This major road by-passes the settlements of the valley, which are served by the roads the A465(T) has superseded. Along with the Neath Canal and old railway these roads give the valley a sense of being a strong communication corridor.

The River Neath winds its way down the valley and is complemented by the Neath Canal - both containing attractive features including locks, bridges etc. which add to the settled character of the valley floor. The river has riparian vegetation and a natural course which has been canalised in places. The valley floor also contains a number of large tracts of water related to the A465 and industrial works.

On the whole the main settlements of Tonna, Resolven, Blaengwrach and Glynneath are industrial in character and do not have a strong relationship with the river or with the surrounding landscape. Their cores are comprised of stone built dwellings and retail, the centres consisting primarily of terraced dwellings. While towards the periphery the form of the settlement is much more dispersed with semi detached and detached houses of both brick and render facades. These new developments have reduced the link to the surrounding landscape from the core. Commercial development has occurred expanding the settlements on the valley floor.

Away from the valley floor settlement is limited to a scattering of dwellings, while public access is reduced to footpaths and bridleways, which facilitate views across the valley. Land adjacent to Melincourt has been provisionally designated open county.

The valley sides within this area are predominantly a pastoral and deciduous mosaic providing diversity within the valley and contrasting with the heavily coniferous wooded nature of the adjacent plateaux. The pastoral land is primarily sheep grazed, with field boundaries vary attitudinally, from hedges to walls, although many are now replaced or supplemented by fences. To the north east of the area, extensive woodland hides evidence of mineral workings. Some encroachment of bracken has occurred especially on higher ground.

The heavily wooded nature and surrounding topography provide a sense of shelter and enclosure to the valley bottom. Frequently a strong sense of place prevails, often linked to the industrial history of the area or within the intimacy of smaller tributary valleys. This character dissipates towards the higher ground as a more exposed and frequently more degrading nature prevails.

To the northern extent of the area, around Pont Walby there is an increased sense of enclosure developed through a dominance of deciduous cover encapsulating pasture bounded by grown out hedges. The deciduous cover gives a more sheltered, settled feel than much of the surrounding area and hides evidence of excavation workings to the south. To the extreme northeast of the area the narrow valley of Afon Pyrddin, with dramatic waterfalls and deciduous cover runs along the the County Borough boundary. The valley creates an intimate and dramatic visual link and footpath connection to the Brecon Beacons Nation Park which abuts the area.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The valley is dominated by the Afon Neath corridor. This major river flows from semi-upland to the settlement of Neath, forming an important riparian corridor. Numerous habitats are present along its course including, reedbeds and lowland mixed deciduous woodland, both designated BAP priority habitats. The river corridor supports otters, reed warbler, sedge warbler and reed bunting.

In the north east, adjacent to the county borough boundary, the Afon Pyrddin corridor forms part of an extremely important wooded upland river and woodland system. This is considered to represent some of the most diverse habitats in Wales, including upland oakwood, upland mixed ashwood and wet woodland BAP priority habitats, designated SSSI and part of a larger cSAC. This corridor supports a wide range of flora and fauna species including rare bryophytes and lichens in woods and birds including wood warbler, dipper, pied flycatcher and woodcock.

Away from valley floor a mixture of farmland (essentially ffridd habitat), heathland and deciduous woodland prevails, containing species rich hedgerows, upland heath and purple moor grass and rush pasture BAP priority habitats. This upland landscape

supports numerous plant and animal species, including *Carum verticillatum*, barn owl and lapwing LBAP priority species.

Historic Characteristics

While the character of the valley bottom has significant industrial interest, the valley sides contain a more extensive historic character. During the Bronze Age the elevated slopes were chosen as funerary and ritual sites to build cairns; singular, in pairs and in cemeteries such as at Gwenffrwd. The Vale of Neath has strong ecclesiastical ties with both Neath Abbey and Margam Abbey. Aberpergwm Grange stood on the north side of the vale opposite what is now the modern settlement of Blaengwrach. This grange belonged to Neath Abbey as did Rheola Grange. Margam Abbey had at least one grange in the vale on the southern slope of Mynydd Resolfen overlooking Cwm Fforch.

The historic industrial character of the area is readily evident, one of the most significant sites is at Ynys-y-Gerwyn. This was the site of an early tinplate works probably built c1750 to roll tin sheets supplied from the iron forge at Aberdulais. The Neath Canal was built shortly after Ynys y Gerwyn in 1791-96 with moneys provided by the people of Neath to enable the exploitation of the coal reserves of the Upper Neath Valley. The canal linked the valley with Briton Ferry Dock and traffic continued into the 1920's. Several canal features survive along its route, the most architecturally striking are three cast-iron aqueducts. Aberpergwm Aqueduct, Resolfen Aqueduct and Rheola Brook, probably all cast at Neath Abbey Ironworks. The half mile long incline on the Cefn Rhigos tram road, which connected the ironworks at Aberdare to the Neath Canal, was built in 1803-5. The second oldest steam powered incline built in Britain, and possibly the world. At Melin Court Waterfall, lie the remains of an 18th century furnace. Started in 1708, converted to coke in 1795 and closed in 1808. The furnace was powered by a waterwheel fed by a series of leats higher up the valley. The larger Wenallt Ironworks, south of Blaengwrach, were constructed in 1839 to smelt iron with anthracite. The site fell out of use by 1854 and was later demolished during conversion to a patent fuel works.

Several collieries and brickworks were evident on the 1st edition OS map, along the route of the canal. Clyne Colliery situated to the south of Clyne and a substantial brickworks at Melin Court.

Cut into the hillslopes of the valley, on both the north and south sides, are many small collieries, levels and quarries. To the south the Glyncoerrwg Mineral Tramroad, or Parson's Folly, dissects the vale on route to the Neath Canal.

The Vale of Neath Railway was built to connect the iron and coal producing areas of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil with the ports of Neath (Tonna canal port), Briton Ferry and the Swansea Docks. Engineered by Brunel it opened from Neath to Aberdare in 1851. The main A465 road built during the latter part of the last century has completely replaced all other lines of communication along the valley floor.

Situated within the valley bottom is Rheola a substantial, two-storey house in a simple Regency style, situated on the north side of the Vale. John Nash was asked to enlarge the existing farmhouse maintaining its cottage-like appearance. The new house was completed in 1814 and recorded in the paintings by Thomas Hornor. Rheola was built as a Romantic overgrown cottage, rather than a mansion, placed within a natural rustic setting. Hornor described it as 'an attractive feature in a landscape whose prevailing character is repose and seclusion'. Rheola is also known to be the site of a medieval grange, which is now restored as part of the estate.

The landscape of the upper valley is relatively unspoiled and in many respects retains its early 19th century appearance, when painted by artists such as Thomas Hornor. The upper Neath valley draws its importance for what must be a relatively undisturbed medieval or early post-medieval landscape. The extensive area of ancient semi-natural and ancient replanted woodland perhaps closely reflects the landscape of the Welsh Valleys during the medieval period.

The valley floor forms a communications corridor in the truest sense, having played a significant role as a busy route from at least the medieval period. Even before this it can be assumed that the cairn builders of the upper valley sides used the valley

bottom for access. It is industry though, in the form of roads; tramroads, railways and canals, that has left the most significant mark on the landscape.

The canal depot at Tonna is the most complete survivor of its kind in the South Wales valley canals. The pennant sandstone rubble buildings stand on either side of the Neath Canal (1791-6) at Lock number 1. They consist of the canal manager's house and stables on the east side, and on the west side a long timber storage shed with a sawpit inside, and an open shed with block and tackle hoisting gear where lock gates were made. Attached to this are a store and a smithy.

Cultural Associations

The Vale of Neath's topographical beauties have drawn painters, poets and photographers in large numbers over several centuries and attracted wealthy land owners to establish gentry houses. Two of these former gentry estates are Rheola and Aberpergwm. The latter having been subsumed into the National Coal Board estate, but still retaining the estate church of St Cadoc and its fine wrought-iron gates. At Rheola, during World War 2 a vast aluminium factory was built, diminishing the estates prospect.

The Neath canal which runs through the area transformed the economic potential of the upper valley in the late 18th and early 19th century. Industry could be established close to sources of energy and raw materials. The settlements of Pont Walby, Cwmgrach, Blaengwrach and Glynneath owe much to the development of the canal, plus the Vale of Neath Railway, mineral railway and the road system. Each settlement is surrounded by relict industrial workings - notably the Glynneath Inclined Plane and the Wenallt Ironworks the last vestiges of mining activities that sent tonnes of coal and iron products down the canal and mineral railways to the coast.

Plans for restoration of the canal should enable the communities to return their attention to the waterways as part of the diversification of regeneration activities through tourism and leisure use.

Modern communication development is evident through the valley in the form of the A465 (T) dual carriageway. This has resulted in an improvement to the efficiency of travel for industrial, commercial and leisure purposes and improved the safety to residents of settlements along the old road. Yet some say it has also affected the viability of business along the old road.

Key Characteristics

- Broad U-shaped valley with valley bottom ranging approx 20m AOD to approx 70m AOD.
- Mosaic landscape through out, the valley bottom and minor tributaries containing substantial deciduous tree cover.
- Communication corridor, both historically (Neath Canal) and contemporary (A465 (T)).
- Numerous relics of industrial heritage.
- Settled and enclosed nature in valley bottom, exposed on higher ground.
- Mosaic of habitats, river valley system dominating valley floor, higher ground significant ffridd and heath habitat.
- Intimate and dramatic Afon Pyrddin created visual and physical link to Brecon Beacons Nation Park.
- Significant Geological SSSI to the eastern extent of the valley.
- Strong associations with Picturesque movement practitioners and artists generally.

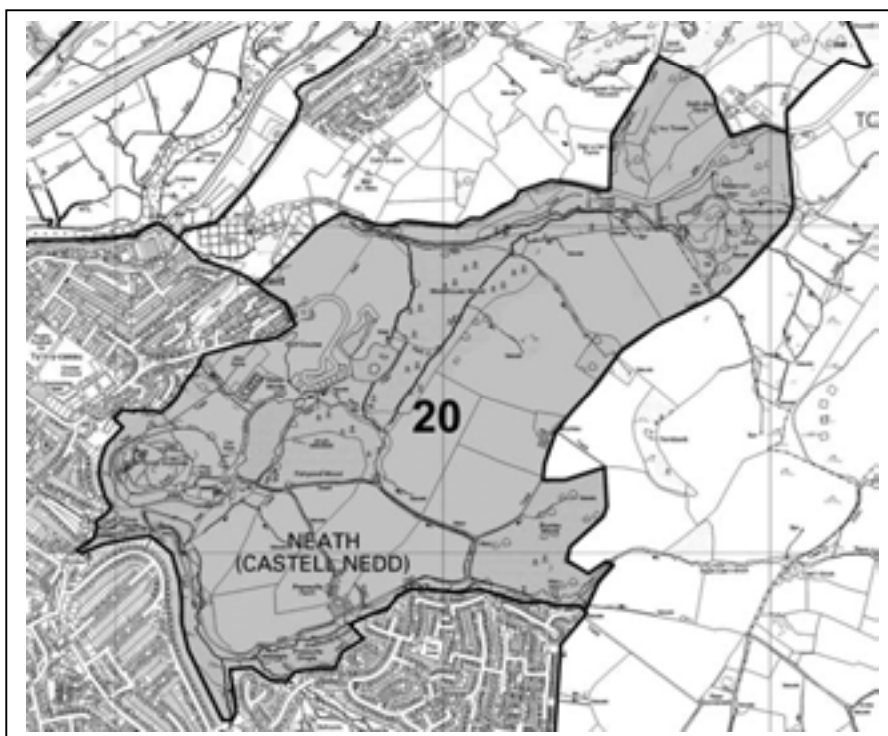
Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
19	Neath Valley	22 - m 24 - m 25 - l 26 - m 66 - l	17 - m 18 - h 19 - o 20 - h 21 - o	21 - o 24 - h 26 - h 31 - h 33 - h	39 42 43 72 74	15 - o 16 - o 34 - h 35 - h 36 - h

			22 - m	36 - m 37 - m 81 - l 82 - l		45 - h 46 - h 47 - o
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CHARACTER AREA 20

Gnoll Park



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This small character area constitutes the extent of Gnoll Park. The park forms the south side of the Neath Valley above the settlement of Neath. It ranges from approx 30m AOD at the built edge of the town to approx 150m AOD. This broad gently sloping land lies on a geology of Boulder Clay.



Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landscaped gardens of Gnoll Park constitute a major recreation facility and also creates a fine setting for the town of Neath. The area is a mixture of recreation grounds (including golf course and adventure play areas), deciduous woodland and ornamental water bodies. Activities and foci within the park are located on lower ground close to the settlement. This enhances the settled character of the area, which dissipates towards the higher elevations as a more rural character prevails. The park affords extensive views out across the Neath Valley.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Much of the area is covered by semi-natural, extensively ancient woodlands and broadleaved plantations, a habitat which continues along the valley side beyond the park. This Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is a BAP priority habitat.

Much of the higher ground is essentially fridd landscape, comprised mainly of improved grassland enclosures but with remnant rhos pastures present locally. BAP priority habitats include species rich hedges and purple moor grass and/or rush pasture. This area supports numerous hedgerow birds including linnet and song thrush.

Historic Characteristics

The estate is perhaps archetypal of a series of landed estates in the Neath area, have their origins in the dissolution of the monasteries and the rise of local or immigrant industrialists.

For four hundred years, from the 16th to the 19th centuries, The Gnoll was the most important house in Neath. It stood on a prominent, steep sided hill on the eastern side of the town having magnificent views of the Vale of Neath from its main west front. The first house on the site was built by the Evans family in the early 17th century and was passed through marriage to the Mackworth family, the pioneer of Neath's copper-smelting industry. The Gnoll stayed in the Mackworth family until the death of Sir Herbert in 1794. During this time the house was extended and altered several times with the addition of a castellated Georgian front, stables, courtyard and coach house. During the 19th and early 20th centuries the house was reduced in size with the demolition of several wings. In 1923 the house was bought by Neath UDC and used as a health clinic, but by 1957 the remainder of the house had been demolished.

The grounds were laid out in three phases; the first in 1724-7 by Thomas Greening for the then elderly Sir Humphrey, featuring a bowling green, terrace and formal cascade. Greening's layout, a sequence of geometrical elements reaching out into the countryside to the east from the rear of the house, represents the concept of landscape gardening realized most famously in the cascade at Chatsworth, and discussed in print by Joseph Addison in 1712. The second stage in the layout of the grounds came in the 1740's with Sir Humphrey's son, Herbert, for whom a much larger cascade was constructed, showing the effect of William Kent's greater artifice in idealizing nature. The third phase was for his grandson, Sir Herbert, after 1765, mainly the building of follies, most notably the Ivy Tower.

Cultural Associations

Although the estate now lacks the original focus of Gnoll House, it still forms a significant leisure park mostly for local people. The beauty of the Vale of Neath so celebrated in the 18th and 19th centuries can still be appreciated in this picturesque enclave. The sense of place is palpable, even though its history may not be fully appreciated by visitors. The Parks importance is bolstered by its designation, Grade II* on the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

Key Characteristics

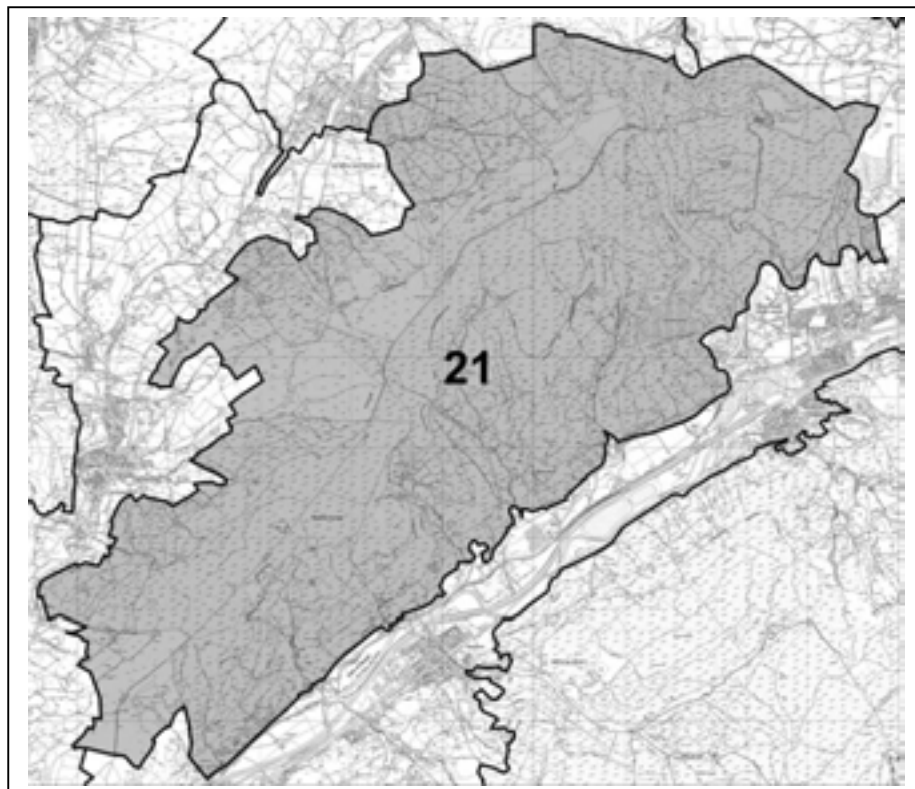
- Creates setting for the town of Neath.
- Significant leisure park for local people.
- Historic landscape gardens
- Grade II* on the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Earth Science Aspect Areas	Biodiversity Aspect Areas	History and Archaeology Aspect Areas	Cultural Associations Aspect Areas
20	Gnoll Park	24 - m	23 - h	24 - h 37 - m 57 - m	17	13 - o

CHARACTER AREA 21

Hirfynydd



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This extensive upland plateau is situated between the Vale of Neath and the Dulais Valley in the north east of the County Borough. Its elevation ranges from 481 m AOD adjacent to the Roman road of Sarn Helen to approx 50m AOD in the Neath valley and 150m AOD in Dulais valley.

The geology of South Wales pennant formation of Llynfi-Brithdir Beds sandstones, with coals, which characterizes the plateau, is dissected deeply by north to south tributary valleys to Afon Nedd, including the U-shaped Rheola Brook valley with cirque at its head. There are Landslips present on steep valley sides below the sandstone of Craig Clwyd Fechan and Craig Clwyd. The lower reaches are characterised by Boulder clay.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This upland plateau is visually dominated by woodland stretching from Vale of Neath over the shoulder to Dulais valley. The cover is almost entirely coniferous plantation with localised areas of upland grazing and moorland. The woodland and landform creates a constant and imposing feature along the Neath valley from Glynnedd to Clyne. In the Dulais valley fingers of woodland descend low down into the valley, breaking up the pastoral mosaic. Generally the forest edges contain deciduous vegetation or are irregular and are complementary to the surrounding landscape.

The open land is less visible from the adjacent valleys, but is a contrast to the dense enclosure of the woodland. These areas are covered with rough grass and heath encroached upon by bracken.

There are a number of cairns and house platforms across the area, providing minor landscape features. Opencast workings are at various stages of operation or reclamation on the northern edges including Hirfynydd Common. These are minor detractors but are not widely visible. There is only minimal access, with St Illtyds Way and the Sarn Helen Roman road crossing the area, although much of the open

landscape of this area has been provisionally designated open county. The absence of dwellings reinforces the remote character of this area. In places, an abrupt edge and clear felling act as detractors.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Much of this area is dominated by coniferous woodland plantation providing suitable habitat for birds such as the Crossbill. Among the conifer planting are isolated areas of former ancient woodland and remnants of other habitats including heathlands and rhos pastures. Across the area relatively large tracts of upland heath support acid grassland, grass heath and mire communities.

As the upland plateau runs down to the northern flank the Neath Valley, areas of valley side ffridd and woodland habitats prevail. These include numerous BAP priority habitats including upland oakwood, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, species rich hedges, upland heath and purple moor grass and rush pasture. With upland heath generally considered of international importance as a habitat holding significant upland plant species.

There is evidence of a Red Squirrel colony within the area [project underway to establish extent of colony].

The area contains 14 nesting pairs of Goshawks.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

Across the plateau the most prolific monuments belonging to Bronze Age funerary and ritual activities; an extensive and impressive assemblage of cairns adorn the elevated slopes and the ridge crest of Mynydd Hirfynydd, they appear singularly, in pairs and in cemeteries.

The high ridge once formed the ancient tribal frontier between the Silures and Demetae. Bearing the hallmarks of having been, at least for some years, the frontier between Rome and the native people of West Wales. The Sarn Helen Roman road which runs across this upland is only a short length of a long communications route to North Wales which holds important archaeological remains along its length. Beacon towers are interspersed at regular intervals along the road which continued in use into the medieval period. The integrity of this Roman artefact has been compromised by its use as a 4x4 adventure track.

Medieval house platforms are located on the north western slope of the mountain in open moor to the west of Carn Cornel. It is likely that the mountain would have been used for upland grazing with tithe paid to Neath Abbey, linked to a medieval grange at Rheola in the Neath Valley.

Industry, which is limited to the periphery, consists of modern quarries and drift levels, some dating to as late as the 1980's such as Carn Cornel Mine and Darrell Colliery, the latter opened in 1979, located to the north on the boundary with the Dulais Valley. The Heol Hen Mine, Ivyrock Mine and Rheadr Mine located along the northern slope of the mountain all belong to the 1980's. Modern opencast workings dominate the landscape to the north of Glynneath.

Key Characteristics

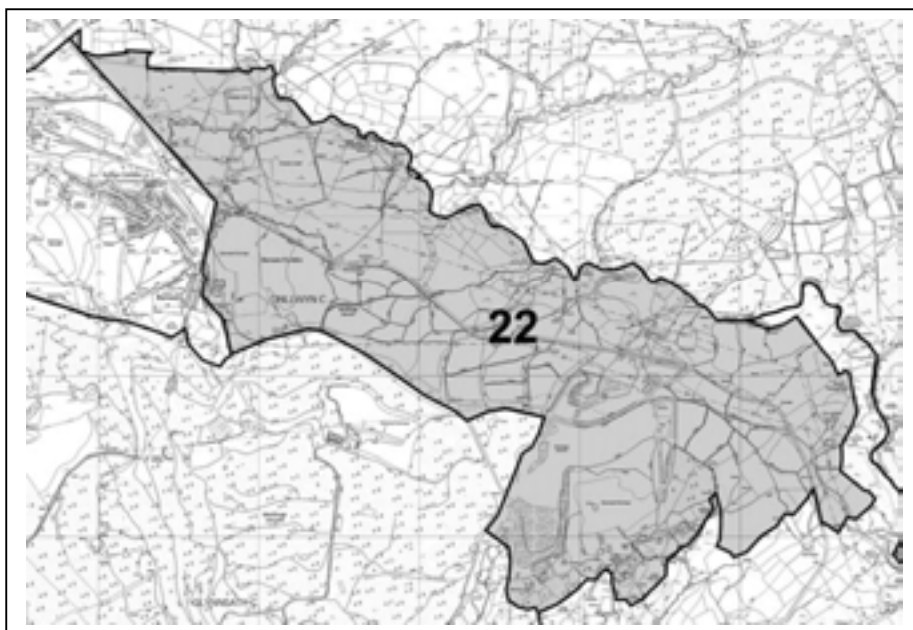
- Upland plateau rising from the Neath and Dulais valley to 481m AOD.
- Large expanse of coniferous plantation.
- Remote nature enhanced by minimal access and lack of dwellings.
- Evidence of prolific Bronze Age funerary and ritual activities across the high ground.
- The Sarn Helen Roman road formed part of a longer communication route to North Wales.
- Disturbance from opencast mining to the north east of the plateau.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
21	Hirfynydd	23 - m 43 - m	15 - h 17 - m 18 - h	18 - l 19 - m 20 - l 24 - h 31 - h 94 - m 95 - m 96 - m	27 72	26 - o 45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 22

Banwen Pyrddin



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area constitutes the broad upland valley running between the head of the Dulais valley and the Upper Neath Valley. It lies to adjacent to the north east boundary of the county borough.

The landform falling gently towards north and east to Afon Pyrddin, ranges in elevation from approx 180m AOD to approx 300m AOD. It overlies a geology of south and east sloping Productive Coal formation around the closure of a plunging NE - SW synform. It is cut by a NNW - SSE fault forming the slopes of Afon Pyrddin, a steep valley of east and north facing Farewell Sandstone cut down to Millstone Grit sandstone along its river course.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The Inter Valley A road which cuts through this landscape defines two separate characters. The land to the east and north of the road has a sheltered character. This is developed through the topography as it falls away to Afon Pyrddin and mature boundary trees which forms a continuation of the wooded valleys of the Brecon Beacons National Park which extends to the northeast. To the south and west of the road the character gradually becomes more exposed, exhibiting significant evidence of opencast reclamation with minimal tree cover. Mixed shelterbelts, not yet mature, following the field pattern provide some shelter and form distinct landscape features.

The pasture of this grazed landscape is in many areas reduced by encroachment of coarse grasses, scrub, bracken and in places, wetland species. This gradual degradation of the land is more significant to the east, where reduced management has also resulted in hedges becoming outgrown and significantly supported by fences. The juvenile landscape to the west appears to be better managed, with a regular field pattern dominated by newly planted hedges.

The inter valley road facilitates broad views out to the uplands of the Brecon beacons National Park to the north as well as more intimate views down to the Afon Pyrddin. There are only scattered dwellings and these are focused along the road side.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The landscape is dominated by grassland habitats, improved pastures on revegetated (reseeded) mine spoil to the west and marshy grassland and mire habitats to the east and adjacent to Afon Pryddin.

Afon Pryddin and adjacent land, forms part of an extremely important wooded upland river and woodland system which predominantly lies beyond the County Borough boundary. This is considered to represent some of the most diverse habitats in Wales, including fen meadow and closely associated habitats and has been designated a biological SSSI. The area contains numerous BAP priority habitats including upland oakwood, wet woodland, reedbeds and purple moor grass and rush pasture. These habitats harbour numerous flora and fauna species including rare bryophytes and lichens in woodland.

At Gorsllwyn, near to the workings at Dyffryn Cellwen lies a raised mire, a habitat rare within South Wales and designated as SSSI

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The earliest evidence for human occupation comes in the form of a chert javelin-head dated to the mid-late Bronze Age discovered in the Afon Pryddin a short distance from the Roman fort of Coelbren.

The Roman period has left a significant quantity of well-preserved remains; the being the large rectangular marching camp located on a roughly north facing slope to the south of Ton Castell farmhouse. The camp, probably built during the Frontinan campaigns is characterised by a sub-rectangular earthen bank and ditch with rounded corners enclosing an area of around 35 acres (14 ha). To the northwest of the marching camp is the more permanent Roman fort at Coelbren (Gm146). The fort occupies low ridge with the Gors Llwyn marsh to the northwest and the Afon Pryddin to the east. The fort is a typical example of Roman military establishments, the main feature being a square earthwork with rounded corners surrounded by concentric ditches, enclosing an area of just over 5 acres (2.1 ha). The ramparts were constructed of timber and earth, whilst the interior contained a series of features such as floors, hearths and the foundations of a building in the southeast corner. Small finds date from the late 1st and early 2nd centuries AD. Occupation does not appear to have continued much beyond the 2nd century.

The Roman road of Sarn Helen inter-sects Coelbren from the south and exits the fort to the east before continuing northeast toward Brecon. The scheduled area of the road can be seen as an agger, or raised causeway.

Key Characteristics

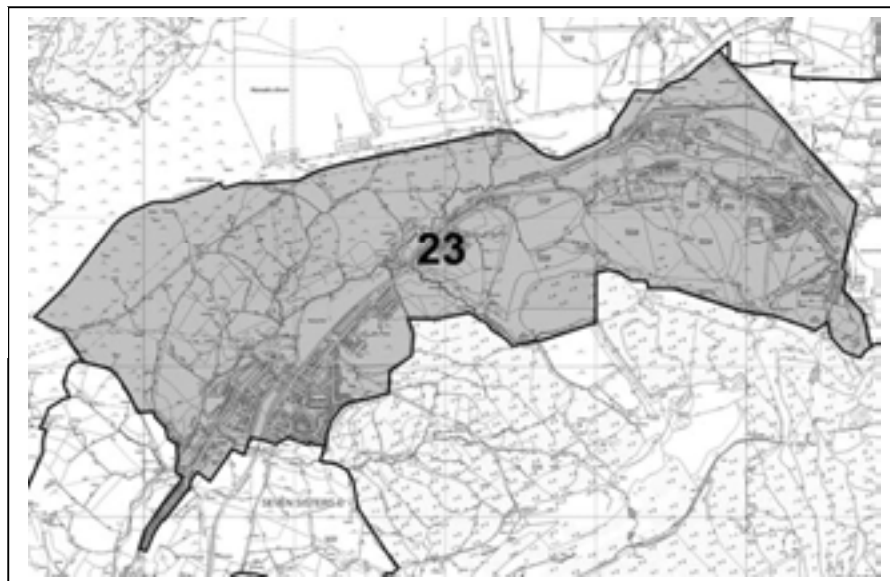
- Gentle upland valley ranging from 180m AOD to approx 300m AOD.
- Inter valley road affords wide views to north and east.
- Significant reclamation from opencast mining to west.
- Afon Pryddin and adjacent land, forms part of an important wooded upland river and woodland system.
- The Sarn Helen Roman road formed part of a longer communication route to North Wales.
- Views to Brecon Beacons National Park.
- Biological SSSI's at Gorsllwyn and Afon Pryddin.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
22	Banwen Pryddin	27 - m	18 - h 19 - o	21 - o 22 - h 23 - l	19	26 - o 45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 23

Head of Dulais Valley



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area lies to the north adjacent to the County Borough boundary; it is defined to the south by Hirfynydd Mountain and to the west by the steeper valley topography of the Dulais. It rising from approx 170m AOD in the Dulais Valley to approx 300m AOD.

The eastern half of the area lies on a geology of mudstones and coals of Productive Coal formation, with extensive areas of worked out and working opencast mining. To the west the north east to south west regional antiform in Productive Coal Measures mudstone with coals, is dissected by the Dulais river valley. The broad slopes are covered extensively with boulder clay.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landcover of much of the area is rough grass and grazed pasture with significant levels of disturbance to the landscape through disused workings and reclamation.

Disturbance is most prevalent to the east at Dyffryn Cellwen, which extend beyond the County Borough boundary to the north. These works with railway lines and washery are concealed from south by earth works and new planting, yet from the north the area is a detractor, which dominates the view. Much of the reclaimed landscape appearing better maintained than the undisturbed land with less coarse grasses, more intact hedges and recent deciduous planting. The new hedges are at present supplemented by wire fences and are not yet significant landscape elements. Likewise the new deciduous planting is not yet of sufficient maturity to influence the character of the area.

The small settlements of Seven Sisters, Onllwyn, Banwen and Dyffryn Cellwen present in the character area are chiefly spread along the A4109. These ex-mining settlements are essentially linear in character strung out along the main valley road. The original buildings are a mix of stone, brick and render with slate roofs, while newer buildings tend to be render and pebbledash. The cores of the settlements are difficult to define with a limited number of commercial enterprises and newer residential areas extending around the core. The settlements have the appearance of being somewhat run down..

To the north west there is a small area of common land, connected to a more extensive tract of open land beyond the County Borough boundary. This area with simple land cover, generally consisting of grasses with extensive areas of bracken, provides a simple aesthetic quality contrasting with the more discordant landscape

around. Areas away from the central road corridor and settlements have a wild, exposed character.

There are numerous minor watercourses, tributaries to the Dulais, across the area, the larger ones containing significant riparian vegetation. Additional areas of woodland, both coniferous blocks and deciduous copses through the area act as dominant landscape features and add visual interest. Electric pylons and cables which are present across the skyline form detractors to the area.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Much of the upper reaches of the valley is characterised as extensive areas of former mine spoil. The area has now been largely revegetated, producing areas of acid grasslands and some grass-heath, with wetter areas of acid flush. Within this area remnants of semi-natural marshy grassland and semi improved neutral grassland habitat survived although much of the area has been reseeded. Although the disturbance of this landscape has deleterious impact on habitats, it has also resulted in the creation of secondary habitats, which are themselves of value.

The major river valley system of the Dulais, provides a variation to the surrounding habitat. Characterised as a comparatively open, semi-upland neutral grassland habitat, improved pastures and further areas of revegetated mine spoil.

An area comprising of a small section of upland grazing lies to the north, this comprises a part of a much larger expanse of upland grassland, heathland and mire communities, which as a whole supports a wide range of upland species. Seven Sisters plantation lies adjacent to this open landscape providing additional habitats, favouring birds such as crossbills.

Historic Characteristics

The north of this area is influenced by Rhos Common, which is situated on the upland of Twyn Eithinog and Mynydd y Drum. Twyn Eithinog contains a group of cairns distributed evenly along the elevated ridge leading to Mynydd y Drum. Generally oval in form these mounds are composed mainly of blocks of red sandstone, quartz conglomerate and quartzite and lie under moorland grasses. The common is of great historical importance as a prehistoric funerary and ritual landscape. Seven Sisters plantation adjacent to the Rhos Common represents the medieval period in the form of a house platform built into the hillside.

The Neath and Brecon Railway was constructed by the local contractor John Dickson and opened from Neath to Onllwyn in 1864. It was around this and the Severn Sisters colliery, opened in 1875, that the settlement of Seven Sisters developed. In 1884 the settlement was little more than a hamlet. Industrial activity in the form of coal levels, mines and collieries characterises much of the upland landscape.

Cultural Associations

Mining settlements, climb through the Dulais Valley and on to high bleak moorland now dominated by open cast, washery and extensive relics of industrial and mining activity. The upper settlements of Banwen, Onllwyn and Dyffryn Cellwen seem to be of a piece connected physically.

Banwen's outstanding features are the continuity and vitality of the Banwen Miners' Hunt and also the large and exposed rugby club, which dominates the area at one end of the community.

Dyffryn Cellwen seems almost to appear on the edge of Banwen and its most distinguishing feature is Sarn Helen and adjacent Roman Fort. While Onllwyn is a linear settlement, set alongside the vast opencast works and washery.

At the lower reaches of the area the settlement of Seven Sisters, provides different character, steep and twisting and lined in parts with tiny, low roofed terraces. The settlement is forever associated with the David Bevan, father of seven girls, after whom he named his colliery.

The cultural essence of the settlements is as much to do with colourful characters and institutions as it is with past industry and regeneration efforts.

Key Characteristics

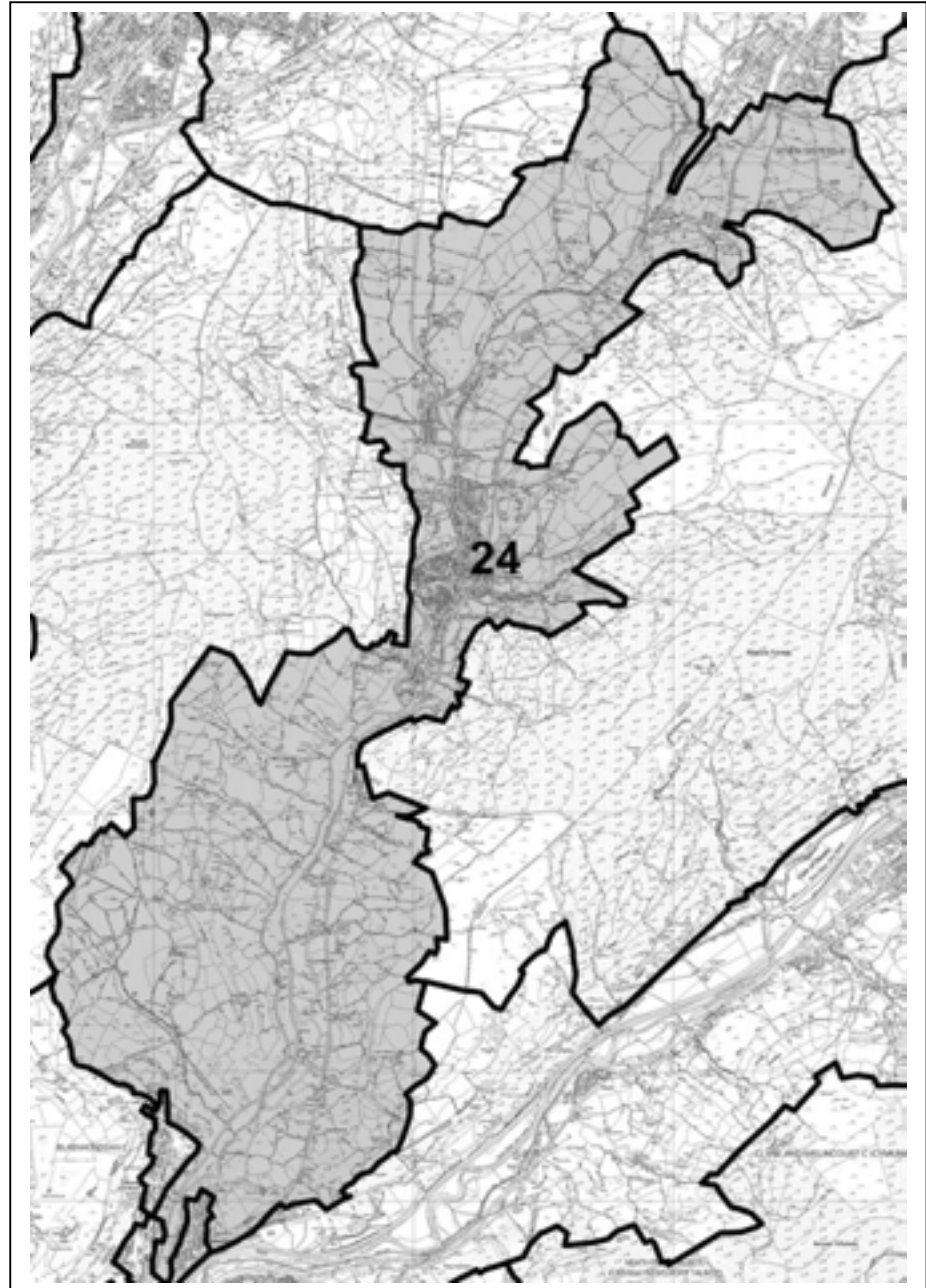
- Head of valley rising from approx 170m AOD to approx 300m AOD.
- Extensive areas of open cast works and reclamation.
- Significant reclamation from opencast mining to west.
- String of settlements following the A4109 up the valley.
- Grazed land is enclosed by both fences and hedges, newer, maintained hedges are present across the reclaimed landscape.
- Numerous minor watercourses, tributaries to the Dulais are present along the valley sides.
- Rhos Common lying to the north represents, historically a funerary and ritual landscape.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
23	Head of Dulais Valley	29 - l 30 - l 31 - m 33 - l	16 - m 18 - h	15 - h 16 - m 17 - m 20 - l 22 - h 80 - l 95 - m	46 59 75 76	37 - o 45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 24

Dulais Valley



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area constitutes the Dulais valley from Seven Sisters to the rivers confluence with the Neath. It is defined to the east and west by the wooded upland plateaux of Hirfynydd Mountain and Mynydd Marchywel and to the north by the County Borough boundary.

The valley ranges from approx 50m AOD to approx 223m AOD. To the west the geology comprises of South dipping South Wales pennant formation of Lower pennant Measures sandstones with coals forming sloping faces with extensive boulder clay present. In the east the valley dissects the South Wales pennant formation in Llynfi - Brithdir Beds. The area is littered with small opencast workings disused coalmines and pits.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This upland valley is wide, rolling and pastoral in character. The field pattern, enclosed by significantly treed field boundaries, many of which are grown out hedges, provides a strong element in this landscape. Additional deciduous cover follows the riparian corridor, the vegetation marking the meandering course of the river. This treed landscape produces a sense of enclosure and retains views within. Although grown out hedges dominate on lower ground, the upper reaches of the valley sides are characterised by drystone walls.

The old mining village of Crynant, the only significant settlement within the area, sits mostly hidden in the valley bottom. A number of dwellings, primarily farmsteads, are scattered throughout the lower reaches of the valley. Also on the valley bottom small-scale commercial development is present and acts as localised minor detractors, these are located along the Valley Road [A4109], which runs through this area. A number of minor roads and tracks provide access across the valley, a mineral railway line is also present. A section of land adjacent to the settlement of Seven Sisters has been provisionally designated open access land.

The wooded pastoral picture of the lower valley, with scattered settlements and discrete settlement creates a settled character, which is reduced on the higher more exposed and wild landscape.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The northern and also higher reaches of the valley area are characterised a large areas of semi-upland 'ffridd' habitats, comprising a mosaic of mainly grassland habitats, mostly these are of neutral or acid character. There is an area of SSSI within this habitat which provides important habitat for the reed bunting.

The lower area to the south is dominated by a large area of semi-upland farmland. This is also essentially ffridd habitat, sitting on rolling slopes. It contains a complex mosaic of mainly grassland enclosures but with many other habitats all of which are essentially circum-neutral or acidic in character. This provides a favourable environment for a variety of grassland plant species, plus Barn Owls and Lapwing, both contained within the local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The major river valley system of the Dulais cuts through the centre of the valley, varying from semi-upland in the north to lowland in the south. The northern valley is comparatively open and mostly neutral grassland and improved pasture habitats. While the southern steeper valley is clad in mainly broadleaved woodland with areas of bracken and revegetated mining spoil. The area provides habitat for both Otter and Kingfisher both contained within the local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Historic Characteristics

The valley contains the remains of an extensive post-medieval fieldscape. Superficially it appears that some of the enclosures in the south are of the Clawdd type and therefore maybe of an earlier date.

A number of significant buildings are present in the valley including the ruined Gelli Galed Farm. The farmstead has considerable importance historically; both for the current building, containing elements date from the end of the 16th century, and for its association with the descendents of Rhys, the Welsh Lord of Resolven.

Industrial activity in the form of coal levels, mines and collieries also characterise this upland landscape. Typical examples include Tor-Cefn Colliery this was shown working on the tithe survey of 1844, and evidence shows that it was in existence by 1842. By 1873 Tor-Cefn was one of seven collieries managed by Evans & Bevan in the Cadoxton and Dulais Higher area, closing in 1886.

The Neath and Brecon Railway was constructed by the local contractor John Dickson and opened from Neath to Onllwyn in 1864. It was around this and the Maes-mawr colliery, that the settlement of Crynant developed. In 1884 the settlement was little more than a small hamlet. But earlier origins of the settlement are evident; the Chapel of Ease with medieval foundation, and several of the houses in the village appear to date from the 18th century.

Cultural Associations

The settlement of Crynant grew up around two anthracite mines sunk in the 19th century. The centre contains villas and pairs of houses similar to Pontardawe in the Swansea valley, architecturally distinct from other settlements in the valley.

In addition to this architectural style the dominant cultural feature is the Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, dominated by the winding wheel. The museum was developed in 1978 by West Glamorgan County Council as a visitor attraction, to provide revenue for the area once the Blaenant drift mine had closed.

Key Characteristics

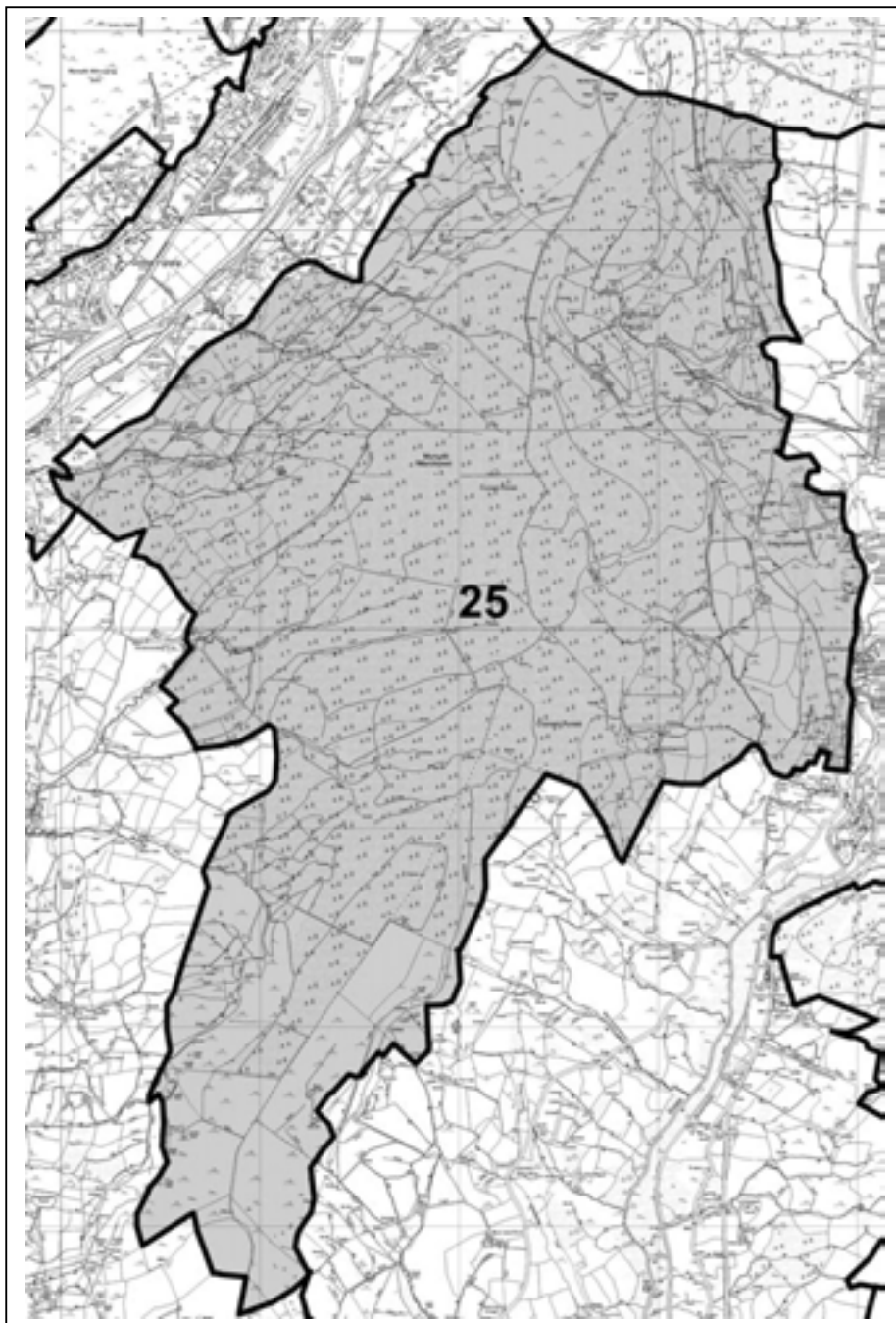
- Valley ranging from approx 50m AOD to 223m AOD.
- River corridor with strong riparian vegetation.
- Settled and sheltered valley.
- Significantly wooded pastoral landscape in valley floor.
- Strong outgrown hedge field boundary.
- Historical Industrial relics present through the valley including the Cefn Coed Colliery Museum.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
24	Dulais Valley	32 - h 24 - m	8 - m 15 - h	15 - h 17 - m 36 - m	20 46 48 74 76	38 - o 45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 25

Mynydd Marchywel



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This area covers the higher ground of the shoulder between the Dulais and Swansea valleys, the northern extent of the area lies against the county borough boundary. Its ranges from 150m AOD in the Swansea valley to highest point at 418m AOD being of significant elevation. The geology of the area consists of a north to south sandstone ridge of South Wales pennant formation Hughes Beds above Hughes/Wenallt coal.



Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This area is covered by almost continuous coniferous plantation, with only occasional clearings. The landform and simple cover creates a dominant element

from both the Dulais and Swansea valleys. In many places the edges of the woodland are regular and geometric, forming an abrupt edge to the surrounding open areas and against the skyline.

The most dominant area of open ground lies to the north-west, where Varteg hill rises above the Swansea valley at 352m AOD, providing a strong visual presence. This open land, covered with moorland vegetation and exhibiting exposed rock outcrops and scree is highly visible from the Swansea Valley, as is the wireless mast which tops the landform and pylons which cross it.

The area has a remote and peaceful character. This is developed through the lack of settlements and roads. A number of tracks and paths including St Illtyd's way provide recreation access into and across the area. The open landscape of this area has been provisionally designated open county.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The Crynant Forest is dominated by conifer plantation but includes areas of former ancient woodland and many remnants of other, once dominant habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands.

To the eastern extent of the area a character of semi-upland 'ffridd' habitat prevails on the valley sides of the Upper Dulais River. This comprises a mosaic of mainly grassland habitats, mostly of neutral or acid character.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Numerous Bronze Age cairns are distributed along the length of the mountain, appearing singularly, in pairs and in cemeteries, most are scheduled. With the close proximity of the abbey at Neath, the survival of medieval remains is good. Two scheduled house platforms, with associated Ridge and Furrow earthworks, of the period are located to the south, within open moorland. This would have come under the influence of the Lordship of Cadoxton-juxta-Neath and the hundred of Neath. The manor was the property of Neath Abbey, who used the uplands of Neath to raise sheep for wool; the platform houses are currently thought to have served as part of this monastically controlled agricultural practice.

Key Characteristics

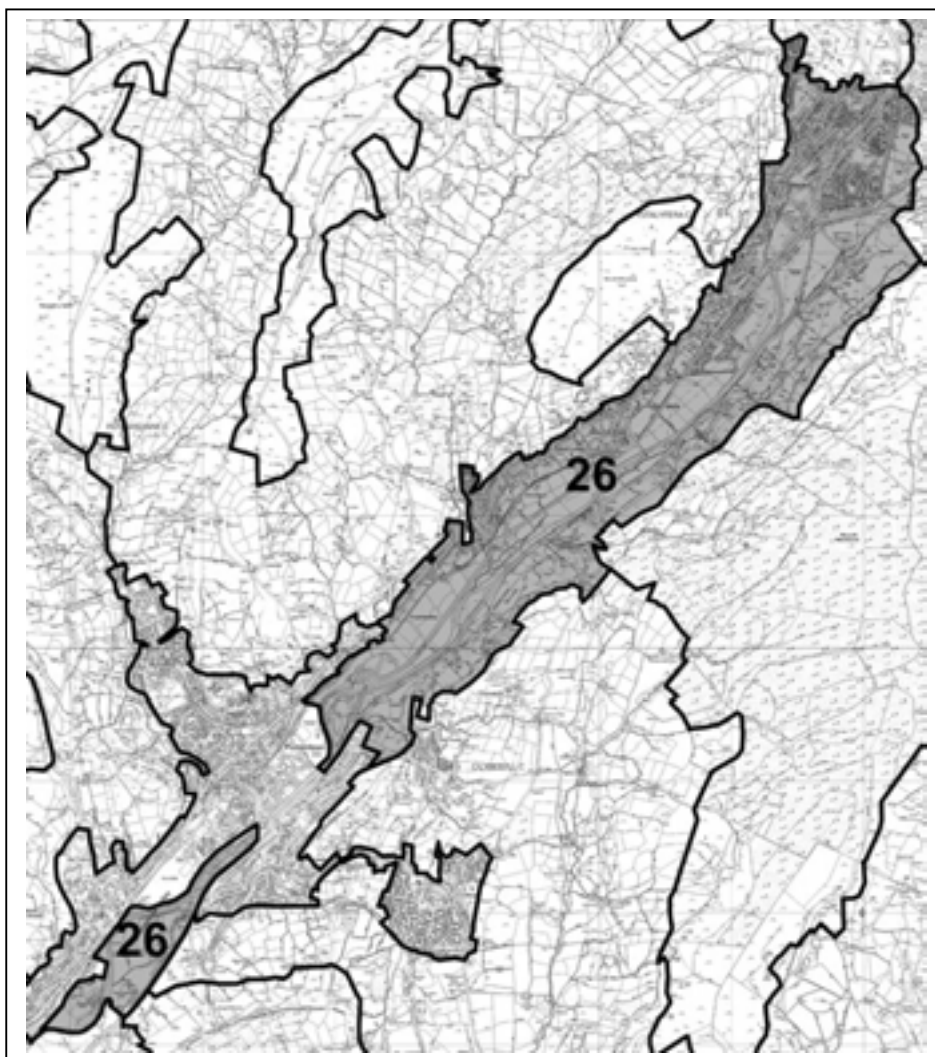
- Upland shoulder between the Dulais and Swansea valleys, ranging from 150m AOD to 418m AOD.
- Cover dominated by coniferous plantation.
- Varteg hill and wireless mast dominant features from the Swansea valley.
- Scheduled cairns distributed across the mountain

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
25	<u>Mynydd Marchywel</u>	34 - m 38 - h 43 - m	7 - m 8 - m	14 - m 30 - m 93 - m	28 40 74	45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 26

Swansea Valley



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area comprises the Swansea valley, it runs north-east to south-west from Ystalyfera to below Pontardawe. The valley floor rises from approx 30m AOD at the southern county border to approx 60m AOD at its northern extent in the county, while the valley sides rise to approx 270m AOD.

The geology of this broad U-shaped valley is dominated by alluvial floodplain and channel, which is bordered by glacial sand and gravel terraces. Mine and made ground in valley floor are evident around Ystalyfera and landslips into valley are present at both Ystalyfera and Trebanos.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

In the base of the valley, the meandering river runs through a mosaic of pasture and deciduous woodland, bounded by a mixture of boundary types, although overgrown hedges are dominant. There is strong riparian vegetation along river course, which is frequently canalised. Throughout areas of recent developments, commercial units and recreational facilities are interspersed within this pastoral landscape acting as detractors and diminishing the coherence of the area.

The southern valley sides are predominantly covered in deciduous woodland on lower ground with extensive areas of rock exposure and rough grazing on higher ground. These wooded valley sides are important to the character of the valley. There are a number of disused mine works along the valley flank, which act as detractors. This contrasts with the more settled nature of the valley floor. Mynydd Farteg in the adjacent character area is a visually strong feature above Ystalyfera.

Bracken is present across the area, in the valley bottom predominantly around the riparian corridor and on the valley sides on the higher, steep slopes.

On the northern edge of the valley bottom a linear strip of settlements is strung along the old main road, these including Ynysmeddwy, Cilmaengwyn, Pantyffynnon and Ystalyfera. The older cores of the settlement are located above the floodplain on sloping topography, while newer development has started to spread across the valley floor. The older buildings are constructed primarily of stone and render, with some structures of significant quality. Newer developments, which sprawl out across the valley, are of materials and building styles which do not reflect the area's vernacular, producing developments which generally detract from the character of the valley.

Access and settlements are restricted to the valley floor where the A4067 runs the length of the area, providing extensive access and but also acting as a detractor. Less intrusive recreation access is provided along the Swansea canal and former railway providing routes along the valley and persisting as relics of industrial history. The road running through the settlements has minor usage, due to the development of the A4067 bypass.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The character of the lower reaches of the area are dominated by the presence of the Tawe River as it runs through mainly lowland habitats. These include BAP priority habitats, including species rich hedgerows and lowland mixed deciduous woodland. The river corridor provides a suitable habitat for Otter and Kingfisher, both BAP priority species. This is flanked by an area of upland acid grassland and heath along the southern valley side, and the string of settlements to the north.

Historic Characteristics

The settlement of Ystalyfera to the north is linked to a relatively late ribbon development along both the Swansea Canal and the Midland Railway. The Swansea Canal, a speculative venture designed to open up the coal trade at the head of the Tawe Valley, was the last of the major canals built in South Wales, becoming fully operational in 1798 and finally closed to traffic during the 1930's. The Swansea Vale Railway began the Midland Railway's Swansea Valley line in 1845 with the company purchase of Scott's tramroad. The tramroad was built in 1817 to carry coal from Scott's Pit to its shipping harbour at White Rock on the Tawe and passenger traffic lasted in to the 1950's.

Significant relics from the Swansea Canal remain including aqueducts and the substantial remains of Lock 17 which formed part of what was an extensive flight of locks. The largest aqueduct on the Swansea Canal, was built in 1794-8, using hydraulic mortar from Aberavon with the Swansea Canal aqueducts being probably the first in Britain to use such mortar as the waterproofing agent. The structure consists of three segmental arches built on top of a feeder weir, the crest of the weir being paved to prevent any scouring of the foundations. A large circular culvert through the north end of the aqueduct carried the tailrace water from a fulling mill at Gurnos.

The Ystalyfera Ironworks, built in 1838, were claimed by the 1850s to be the largest tinplate works in the world. Its bank of eleven blast furnaces was second only to that at Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil. Yet by 1864 Ystalyfera had only six furnaces in blast and the few remaining furnaces were blown out in 1885. The area also contained a sixteen-mill tinplate works, where production continued until after the Second World War, the buildings were demolished in 1946. Much of the works site was reclaimed from the flood-prone Tawe Valley, and impressive iron-slag embankments contain its course to the south of Ystalyfera. The Crimea Colliery, to the south of Ystalyfera, is one of the most intact sets of surviving mid-19th century colliery buildings.

Cultural Associations

The once vibrant, Welsh-speaking community of Ystalyfera has embraced regeneration and local community educational initiatives to overcome the severe economic depression of the 1980s. This has re-introduced a sense of place and spirit of identity. The other former industrial communities of Ynysmeudwy and Godre'rgaig strung along the Swansea Valley are subject to extensive modern housing development and linked to Pontardawe is a sub-regional focal point.

The Swansea Canal transformed the economic potential of the area allowing industry to establish close to sources of energy and raw materials. Current plans for its restoration would enable communities to return their attention to the waterways as part of the diversification of regeneration activities through tourism and leisure use. A more recent development is The Celtic Trail part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network. Its cultural essence is based on contemporary notions of healthy leisure lifestyle linking this urban area to the broader landscape.

Key Characteristics

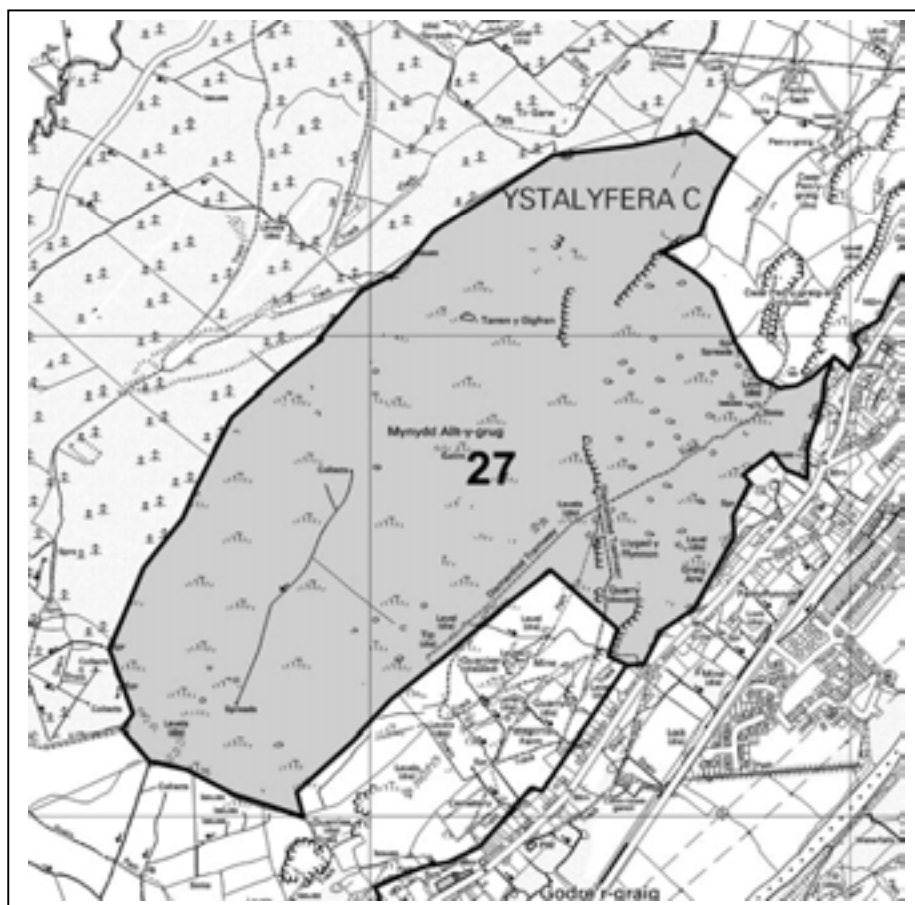
- U- shaped upland valley, with valley bottom ranging from 30m AOD to 60m AOD.
- String of settlements line the northern flank of the valley.
- Mosaic of pasture and deciduous woodland, enclosed by a variety of boundary types.
- Significant riparian vegetation along the Meandering Tawe River.
- Swansea canal and former railway provide recreation routes and persist as relics of industrial history.
- A4067 bypass is dominant within the valley.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
26	Swansea valley	35 - m 36 - l 37 - m	14 - h	11 - h 14 - m 78 - l	40 44	02 - h 15 - o 39 - h 42 - h 45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 27

Mynydd Allt y Grug



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area comprises the upland moorland on the west flank of the Tawe Valley. The area rises from approx 80m AOD at Panyffynnon to 338m AOD at its summit. The area lies on a geology of South dipping sandstone of South Wales pennant formation (Lower Pennant Measures) with a large landslip into the Tawe valley.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This is a significant landform and feature within the Tawe Valley. The moorland vegetation cover and exposed rock outcrops and scree slopes of this exposed upland contrasts with the settled landscape which encapsulates it. Lower edges are being significantly encroached by scrub and bracken. The area is accessed by path to this designated common land, and its fringes have been provisionally designated open access land.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Heathland and both wet and dry acid grassland communities, dominate the higher ground. The southern slopes are characterised by the scree and bare rock outcrop, with areas are revegetated mine spoil. The dry heath habitats of the area are recognised as being of international significance, while the area as a whole exhibits a good range of typical upland plant species, these are dominated by heather.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Linked to other open upland in the surrounding landscape, this area exhibits a density of primarily Bronze Age, recognised as one of the three important and significant funerary and ritual landscapes in Glamorgan. Survival of these funerary and ritual monuments, such as Bronze Age cairns is excellent. The monuments tend to be found located on elevated hillslopes and ridge crests, but not summits, with commanding views down into valley.

Post-medieval boundary stones are frequent features as are sheepfolds indicating the importance of animal husbandry during this period. The adjacent landscape is characterised by boundaries of dry stonewalls; disused quarries are scattered across lower elevations and almost certainly were exploited in the construction of these field boundaries.

In 1965 a landslide from the mountain caused the closure of the former main road and demolition of dwellings. The threat of further landslips has prevented further development within the area.

Key Characteristics

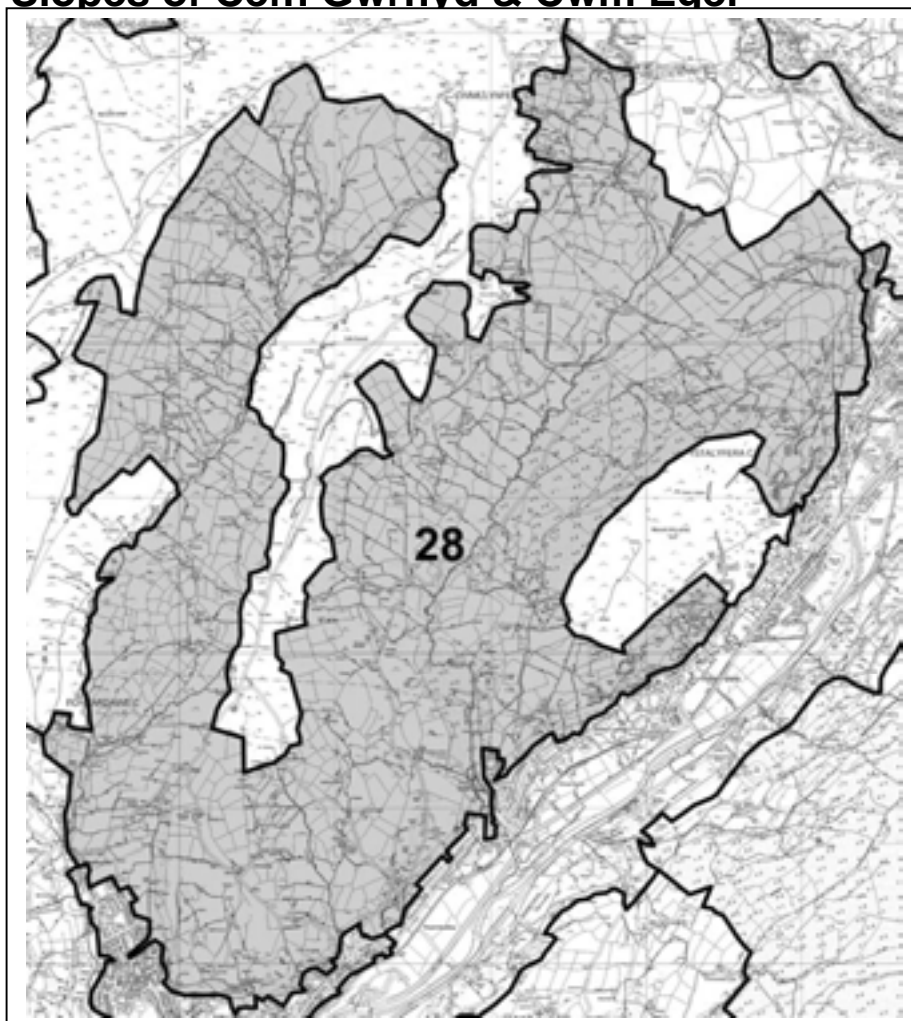
- Significant landform rising to 338m AOD above the Tawe valley.
- Significant exposed rock and scree cover.
- Dry heath habitats of significant importance internationally.
- Evidence of prolific Bronze Age funerary and ritual activities.
- Landslip.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
27	Mynydd Allt y grug	38 - h	10 - h	5 - m 13 - h	63	44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 28

Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd & Cwm Egel



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area constitutes the rolling upland valleys of River Egel, Cwm Du and northern Swansea valley sides which range from approx 250m AOD below Mynydd Allt y Grug, to approx 100m AOD at Pontardawe.

The underlying geology is of South dipping sandstone in South Wales pennant formation (lower pennant measures), dissected by the Upper Clydach valley, Egel valley and Cwm Du valley; these steep valley slopes are covered with boulder clay at their lower extremes.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The landcover is predominantly grazed pasture with deciduous tree cover a significant element especially along riparian corridors. Many hedges are outgrown throughout the lower ground, leaving trees with fences as definitions of the field pattern. Walls are present on higher ground and these are also generally in poor state of disrepair. In the lower, more settled areas, there is a scattering of farmsteads and around these boundaries are generally more intensively maintained.

There are two large, regular blocks of coniferous plantation, which create a contrast to the grain of the landscape. On higher ground encroachment of bracken has occurred adding to an impression of reduced management. There are a number of disused mines and quarry workings scattered through this landscape, creating locally both disruption and visual interest. There is only one minor road which

passes through the area and numerous others that terminate at farmsteads. This restricted access provides a sense of remoteness to a settled and tranquil landscape.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area is dominated by a landscape characterised as an extensive areas of rural semi-upland, which mostly conforms to the current concept of 'ffridd habitat' and mainly comprising rhos pastures. The area contains SSSI designated Gwrhyd Meadows, an extensive area of wet pasture and meadow with a Good range of flora and fauna including include marsh fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary.

In the lower reaches of the area the valleys a more varied character prevails as the valleys meet the Upper Clydach River. The valley of Cwm Du contains a major semi-upland wooded stream valley habitat, containing ancient semi-natural woodland on steep valley sides and dissected by small streams. At Frondeg adjacent to Rhyd-y-fro the neutral grassland, fen-meadow and related habitats present have been designates SSSI.

To the west the upland river corridor of the Afon Egel enclosed by narrow valley contains extensive and relatively undisturbed mire habitats on the valley floor. These areas probably support otters.

To the east Coed Cwm Du is designated SSSI. This valley runs in to the Swansea Valley, its course, lined predominantly with oak woodland, which contains the rare Royal fern plus other woodland wildflower including wood sorrel.

The woodland of Fforch Egel and Coedcae Mawr, areas of extensive conifer plantation, may contain many remnants of other habitats, especially acid grasslands, heathlands, rhos pastures and small areas of broadleaved woodland. This habitat favours birds such as crossbills.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Although much of the landscape in general is characterised, by drystone walls dating from the mid-18th century, earlier interventions are evident. The church at Llangiwig, radically altered in 1812, is medieval as is much of the fieldscape which surrounds it. Industry is limited to isolated, disused pits and levels; these are predominantly close to the open moorland and common land which fringes the area.

The uplands of Mynydd y Garth, which surround this enclosed land, have been described as one of the three significantly important funerary and ritual landscapes in Glamorgan. It is therefore unsurprising that Bronze Age monuments, in the form of standing stones and cairns, find their way into these rural valleys.

Key Characteristics

- Rolling upland valleys ranging from approx 250m AOD to approx 100m AOD.
- Grazed pasture with significant deciduous tree cover.
- Hedgerows are the dominate field boundaries on the lower ground, with stone walls at higher elevations.
- Tracks and single, minor roads provide access to a scattering of farmsteads.
- Extensive areas of SSSI at Gwrhyd Meadows and Coed Cwm Du.
- Two large, regular blocks of coniferous plantation have strong visual impact.
- Scattering of disused mines and quarry workings.
- Remote yet settled and tranquil landscape.

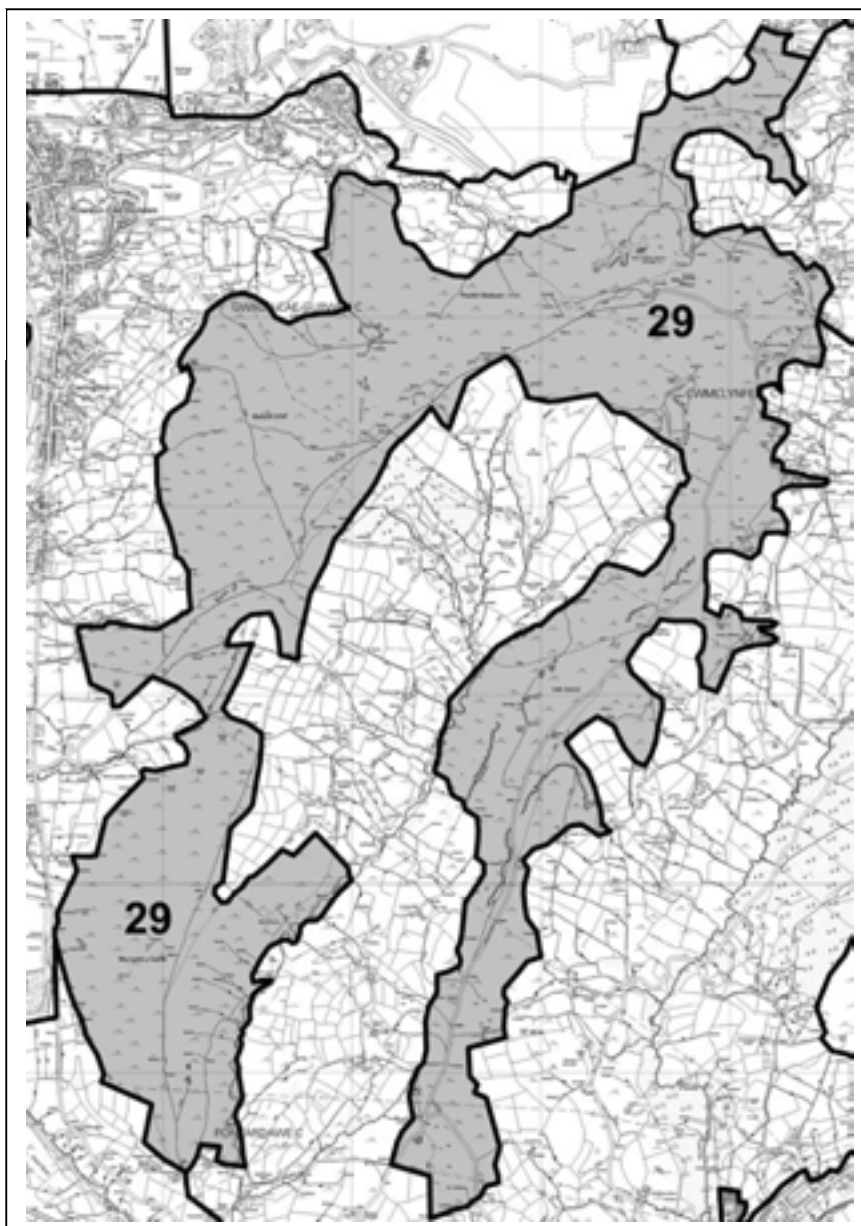
Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
28	Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd &	67 - h	9 - m 10 - h	06 - h 08 - h 13 - h	41	44 - h

	<u>Cwm Ege!</u>			91 - m 92 - m		
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CHARACTER AREA 29

Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth, Cefn Gwrhyd



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This is an area of open upland common on a plateau ranging from 357m AOD at Mynydd Uchaf to approx 150m AOD by River Egel, which takes in the high ground between Twrch valley and Cwm Gors. The underlying geology is of South dipping sandstone in South Wales pennant formation (Lower Pennant Measures) with underlying mudstone of Productive Coal formation.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This Common land is consistently covered in rough grasses, which are managed by sheep grazing. Occasional areas of exposed rock and cairns, break the simplicity of the cover and are notable landscape features. The mountain fence is a remnant drystone wall reinforced by post and wire fencing.

The area contains no settlements and only minor roads and tracks, which enhances a sense of remoteness. The exposed, open and simple character of the common contrasts with the settled nature of the surrounding valleys. This open and elevated landscape facilitates vast panoramic views to the surrounding landscape which can be enjoyed from the rights of ways and roads.

This landscape runs down into Cwm Aman and Cwm Gors creating an open an often exposed nature to the edges of the settlements, and providing a definite visual link in to the broader landscape.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This area is dominated by peat-based vegetation, which comprises of mixtures of dwarf shrub heath, mire communities, flushes and acid grasslands, interspersed with other features and habitats such as scrub, streams, bare peat and rock outcrops. It contains wet and dry heath, both recognised as being of international significance. These including Cefn Gwrhyd Rhdyfro a biological SSSI upland heath containing upland heathland including quaking bog and . These habitats facilitates a wide number of plants, invertebrates and bird species including skylark, wheatear, meadow pipit.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The character area exhibits a density of primarily Bronze Age activity which has been highlighted as one of the three most important and significant funerary and ritual landscapes in Glamorgan. Survival of these funerary and ritual monuments, such as Bronze Age cairns and at least one Neolithic tomb is excellent. These monuments tend to be found located on elevated hillslopes and ridge crests, but not summits, with commanding views down into valleys or adjacent to water courses, a reoccurring theme in the funerary and ritual landscape of South Wales.

Post-medieval boundary stones are frequent features of this upland environment as are sheepfolds indicating the importance of animal husbandry during this period. The landscape of the adjacent farmland is characterised by boundaries of dry stonewalls; disused quarries are scattered across the lower elevations and almost certainly were exploited in the construction of these field boundaries.

This character area is of considerable importance for its density of prehistoric monuments, the presence of early industrial and agricultural activities, and for their setting in a relatively undisturbed upland landscape.

The Gwrhyd Welsh Independent Chapel built in 1856 was located in this exposed site due to its centrality for rural chapel-goers from the surrounding farmsteads. Today it acts as a significant local landmark and cultural feature.

Key Characteristics

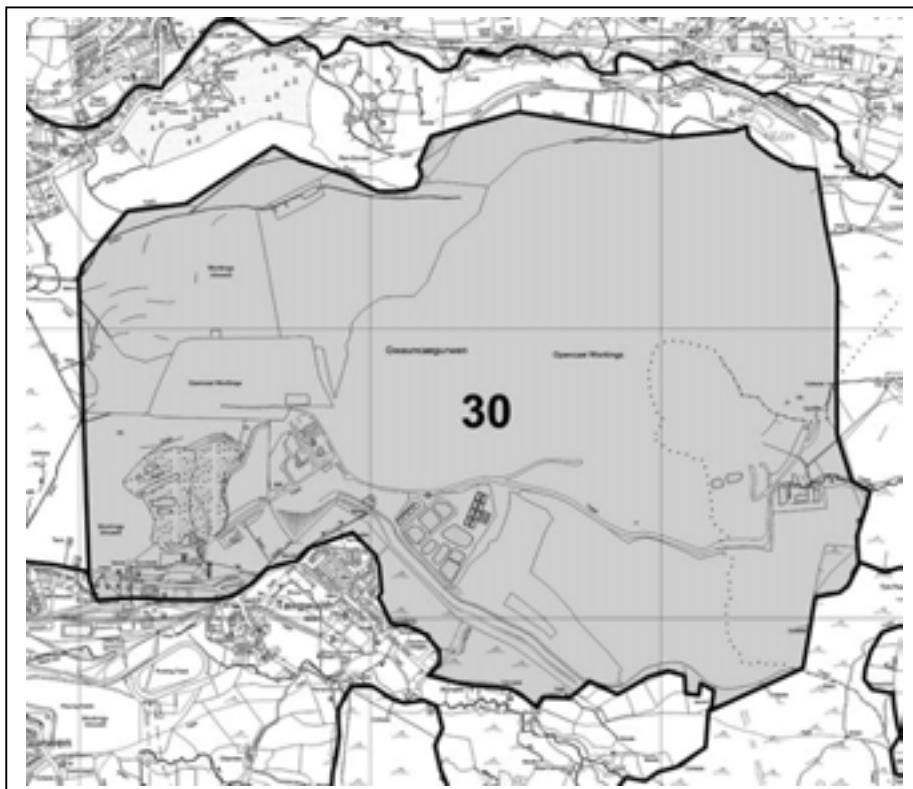
- Open upland common land ranging from approx 150m to 357m AOD.
- Simple sheep grazed landcover.
- Visual link from surrounding valleys.
- Mountain fence is predominantly broken drystone wall reinforced with post and rail fence.
- One of the three most important and significant funerary and ritual landscapes in Glamorgan.
- SSSI upland heath habitats.
- Gwrhyd Chapel.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
29	<u>Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth, Cefn Gwrhyd</u>	39 - h	10 - h	3 - h 8 - h	29 64	44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 30

East Pit



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

The East Pit opencast workings is located in the north west of the County Borough. It is defined by the extent of the working.



Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This expanse of disturbed/reclaimed land and opencast coal workings, have been screened by the construction of landforms clad, with decorative planting although, scrub and rough grasses are developing over time. The perimeter treatment and lack of public access prevents views into the site, yet auxiliary buildings, security fencing, roads and rail lines are significantly dominant features at the periphery of the area.

The area is generally a detractor with in the landscape, its character being linked to the immensity of landform and continuity of boundary treatment, which provides only minimal sense of place.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The area represents a large dormant opencast mine, with adjacent areas of mine spoil, with remnants of extant habitats present in the area, which have gradually been lost to mining.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Opencast workings have limited the survival of archaeological sites, Bryn-Llefrith post-medieval farmstead, immediately to the west of the eastern boundary, no longer exists; although some stonewalls and hedges belonging to the farmstead have survived. Other surviving sites include the remains of a colliery shown on the 1st edition OS (1885) located to the far north. A suggested recumbent standing stone belonging to the Bronze Age survives on moorland to the west, indicating a possible prehistoric presence.

Key Characteristics

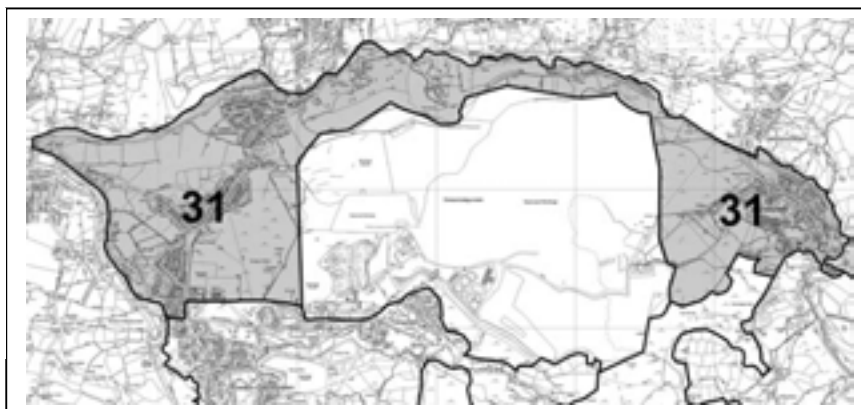
- Extensive opencast mining.
- Remnants of Habitats and Archaeological site persist.
- Screening mounds with decorative planting.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
30	East Pit	23 - m 43 - m	13 - m	1 - l	53	43 - h

CHARACTER AREA 31

Cwm Aman



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area of open upland valley is located to the north west of the County Borough, adjacent to the boundary. It takes in both the Cwm Aman and the disrupted landscape at the head of Cwm Twrch and ranges between 100m AOD to approx 200m AOD. The underlying geology is gently south dipping South Wales pennant formation, Hughes Beds sandstones.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The ground cover of the area is predominantly grazed pasture with increasing coverage of coarse grasses. There is significant riparian vegetation along watercourses especially to west, which adds a sense of enclosure, as do overgrown hedges which dominate where field boundaries are present.

The settlements of Lower Brynamman and Cwmllynfell are situated to the west and east of the area respectively, fringing the East Pit works. The core of Lower Brynamman settlements is difficult to define having a limited number of commercial enterprises. Although Cwmllynfell has a loose, scattered appearance its core is defined by the visually and socially dominant, landmark structures, the Chapel, new community hal and art gallery.

To the east of the area there is significant disturbance, where reclaimed land is evident in the valley bottom. Generally much of the area appears to be suffering from reduced management input, engendering a character of degraded upland grazing.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

A rural semi-upland character prevails at higher reaches of the valley, this constitutes part of a more extensive area, which continues to the south. This landscape conforms to the current concept of 'ffridd habitats' and mainly comprises rhos pastures. It contains numerous BAP habitats including purple moor grass & rush pasture and upland heath. The latter habitat type is generally considered of international importance holding significant upland plant species. These habitats support a wide range of rhos pasture plants, associated invertebrates and the barn owl (LBAP).

Along the northern fringe of the area, a minor upland river dominates the character, however this has little direct impact on the character area.

Historic Characteristics

The industrial character of this landscape is evident in the disused mineral tramroads, levels and quarries throughout. Roger Hopkins leased some 700 acres

(280 ha) of coal at Gwaun cae Gurwen in 1837 and the following year made a start on the construction of a railway from his colliery (at Tairgwaith) to the Swansea Canal at Pontardawe. Only the first mile was completed before Hopkins realised that the Llanelli Railway would better serve his interests, then in the process of building a line up the Amman Valley.

Although much of the industry within the wider landscape was abandoned during the last century, and the landscape has largely reverted to its former rural character, infringement from East Pit works has produced a much more modern character.

Cultural Associations

The overriding cultural distinctiveness of this area is the presence of the enormous acreage of opencast mining that has encroached nearer to the local communities, and that (according to local people) is blighting their environment and the value of their houses. A social phenomenon is the conflict between wishing to earn a decent living close to home while still enjoying the environment.

The area has a high percentage of Welsh speakers at 70%.

Key Characteristics

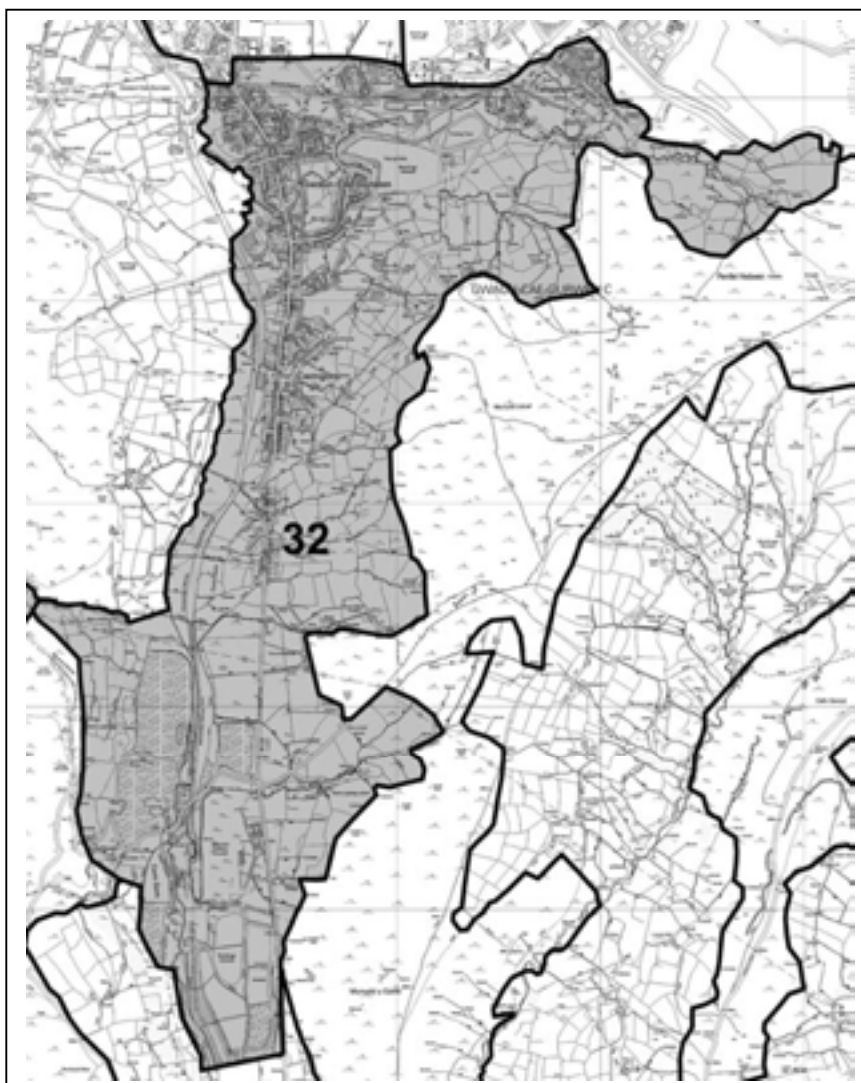
- Open upland valley ranging from 100m AOD to approx 200m AOD
- Predominantly grazed pasture with increasing coverage of coarse grasses.
- Fields enclosed primarily by overgrown hedges.
- Disturbance from opencast reclaimed evident infringement of East Pit works.
- High percentage of Welsh speakers.
- The Character of the Settlements of Lower Brynamman and Cwmllynfell is typical of forming mining villages.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
40	Cwm Aman	33 - l 41 - l	13 - m	02 - m 13 - h 76 - l	29 41 53	43 - h

CHARACTER AREA 32

Cwm Gors / Gwaun Cae Gurwen / Abernant



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This upland valley lies in the north west of the County Borough. It is defined to the east by the open common land of Mynydd Uchaf/Mynydd y Garth and to the west by the County Borough boundary. It ranges from an elevation of approx 250m AOD above East Pit to 150m AOD in the lower valley.

The valley cuts through an underlying geology is of south dipping sandstone of South Wales pennant formation (Lower Pennant Measures) which underlies mudstone dominated Productive Coal formation. There is significant disruption through mining within the valley, and landslips are evident on the valley slopes.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The valley is predominantly grazed, with the presence of invasive bracken, scrub and coarse grasses signifying reduced management input, enclosed by outgrown hedges. Deciduous woodland is a dominant landscape element along riparian corridors and on the lower reaches of the valley sides. There are extensive areas of disturbance on the valley floor with old workings, landfill and commercial developments all acting as localised detractors.

The settlement of Cwmgors stretch along the A474, Tairgwaith lies on the fringe of the opencast works, while sitting between the two Gwaun Cae Gurwen is more nucleated in character. The cores of these settlements are difficult to define and have a limited number of commercial enterprises and with newer residential areas extending around the core. The few original buildings are a mix of stone, brick and render with slate roofs while newer buildings tend to be render and pebbledash.

Views are generally contained within the valley, by both the topography and tree cover, the latter of which screens developments. Yet from adjacent high ground the detracts are highly visible.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

A rural semi-upland character prevails at higher reaches of the valley, this constitutes part of a more extensive area, which continues to the south. This landscape conforms to the current concept of 'ffridd habitats' and mainly comprises rhos pastures. It contains numerous BAP habitats including purple moor grass & rush pasture and upland heath. The latter habitat type generally being considered of international importance. These habitats support a wide range of rhos pasture plants, associated invertebrates and the barn owl (LBAP).

Running through the valley is the river corridor. This contains extensive areas of broadleaved woodland, including oakwood (BAP habitat) on some of the steep valley sections, areas of marshy neutral habitats (e.g. rush-pastures etc) along the watercourse and on drier areas, acid grasslands.

The southern extent of the area is dominated by an area of disturbed industrial development on former mine workings and spoil. Although this disturbance has deleterious impact on habitats, it has also resulted in the creation of secondary habitats, which are themselves of value. Many plant species, including a number of orchid species, are now to be found on old spoil sites, often in large numbers.

Historic Characteristics

Disused mineral tramroads, levels and quarries characterise the north around Gwaun cae Gurwen and Cwmllynfell. Roger Hopkins leased some 700 acres (280 ha) of coal at Gwaun cae Gurwen in 1837 and the following year made a start on the construction of a railway from his colliery (at Tairgwaith) to the Swansea Canal at Pontardawe. Only the first mile was completed before Hopkins realised that the Llanelli Railway would better serve his interests, then in the process of building a line up the Amman Valley. Work on the canal-linked railway was abandoned and Hopkins extended the Llanelli line to his colliery in 1840 (Hughes and Reynolds 1989, 38). Much of the industry was abandoned during the last century, the and significant areas reverted to its former rural character.

Cultural Associations

To the north of Gwaun Cae Gurwen, the overriding cultural distinctiveness is the presence of the enormous acreage of opencast mining that has encroached nearer to the local communities, and that (according to local people) is blighting their environment and the value of their houses. A social phenomenon is the conflict between wishing to earn a decent living close to home while still enjoying a decent environment.

The settlement of Tairgwith also possesses evidence of how mining communities entertained themselves, with the trotting track on the edge of the moor, run as a business.

The community has a strong spirit of enterprise, focused through the efforts of Amman Valley Enterprises resource centre at Gwaun cae Gurwen. The area has a high percentage of Welsh speakers at 70%.

Key Characteristics

- Upland valley ranging from 250m AOD to 150m AOD.
- Predominantly grazed, with invasive bracken, scrub and coarse grasses.
- River corridor runs through the valley with significant riparian vegetation.

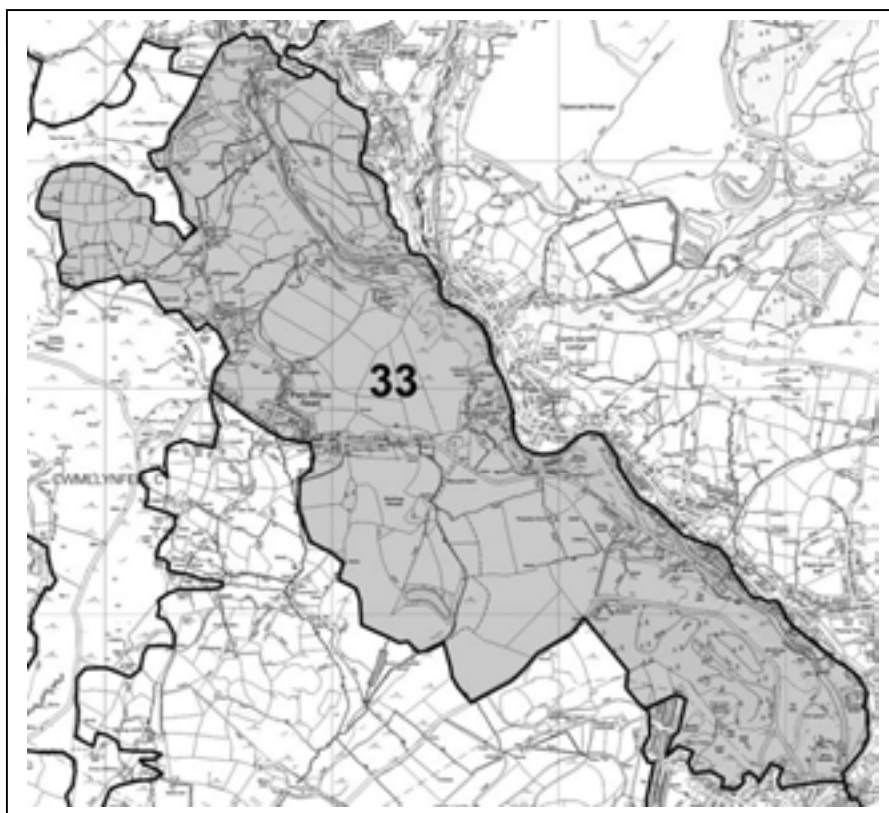
- High percentage of Welsh speakers.
- Disused mineral tramroads, levels and quarries and former colliery.
- Settlements of Gwaun Cae Gurwen and Cwmgors stretch along the A474 .

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
32	Cwm Gors	33 - m 42 - m	10 - h 13 - m	07 09 13 76	41	43 - h 44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 33

Cwm Twrch



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This area lies to the north of the County Borough and covers the south eastern face of the upland valley. It is bounded to the north by the County Borough boundary, which for much of its length follows the Afon Llynfell. It ranges from approx 280m AOD to approx 100m AOD on a geology of gently south dipping South Wales pennant formation, Hughes Beds sandstones.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The valley consists predominantly of enclosed upland grazing. The fields are contained by overgrown hedges, with heavy deciduous tree cover being a significant element, especially on the lower slopes and in the base of the valley. Old mine works through the area, has produced pockets of localised disturbance in the area.

The bottom within the county borough is relatively sparsely populated, with dwellings mainly focused towards the Swansea Valley.

Views within the character area are confined by the built form, topography and substantial tree cover, these elements also produce a sheltered and settled feel contrasting with the surrounding areas.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The character of the lower slopes and base of the valley are represented by a small upland river corridor, valley sides flanked by broadleaved woodland, which include areas of ancient woodland small. Interspersed are areas of neutral grassland probably trending towards rush pasture and localised areas of scrub and old mine spoil. It is suspected that Otters inhabit this environment

A rural semi-upland character prevails at higher reaches of the valley. This habitat part of a more extensive area which continues to the south, conforms to the current

concept of 'ffridd habitats' and mainly comprises rhos pastures. The area contains a good range of rhos pasture plants as well as the barn owl (LBAP)

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The character area lies below to Mynydd y Gwrhyd, described as one of the three significantly important funerary and ritual landscapes in Glamorgan, it is therefore unsurprising that Bronze Age monuments, in the form of standing stones and cairns are evident.

Yet the character area itself is linked to more recent developments with disused mineral tramroads, Levels and quarries dominating. Much of the industry was abandoned during the last century and largely the area has reverted to its former rural character.

Key Characteristics

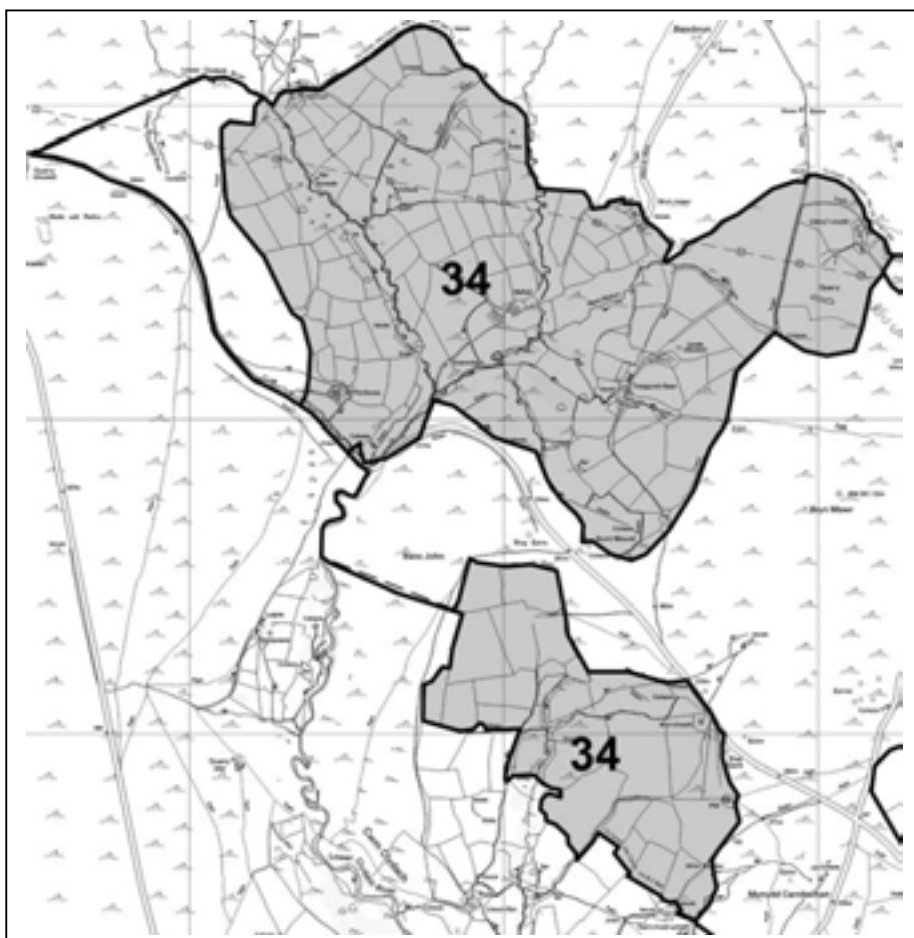
- Upland valley ranging from approx 280m AOD to approx 100m AOD.
- Enclosed upland grazing, bounded by outgrown hedges.
- Significant deciduous cover through lower reaches contain views.
- Small settlements and dwellings line the A4068.
- Pockets of localised disturbance created by disused mine works.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
33	Cwm Twrch	44 - m	13 - m	04 13	41	43 44

CHARACTER AREA 34

Nant Melyn & Bryn-chwyth



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



These upland valleys, which form tributaries to the Lower Clydach River, lie to the north north-east of the County Borough. It is bounded by the unenclosed landscape of Bryn Mawr - Mynydd Carnllechart and the County Borough boundary. The valleys range from on a geology of dipping South Wales pennant formation Hughes Beds sandstones, with alluvium on valley floors.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This landscape is pastoral in character with fields contained by various boundary types, in various states of management with many neglected. Earth banks, which are a significant element on higher ground, promote a strong sense of place. The topography of the area provides an intrinsic sense of enclosure to the valley floors. This is enhanced by tree cover along minor watercourses and field boundaries, which also creates a settled nature, contrasting with the surrounding open landscape.

Isolated farmsteads sit in valley bottoms, with only minimal public footpath access develops a sense of remoteness. A small section of this area has been provisionally designated open county, this lies adjacent to the county borough border near Mynydd y Betws.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The character of these valleys conforms to the current concept of 'ffridd habitats' and mainly comprises of rhos pastures, containing a good range of rhos pasture

plants. A biological SSSI has been designated at Hafod Wennol, here traditionally managed meadows, pasture and rough grazed habitats exist, providing a suitable environment for a variety of orchids.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

This constitutes a wholly rural historic character, defined by an irregular fieldscape. Interest is centred on the Hafod Wennol Farm, the name of which probably reflect the former use of these valleys as seasonal upland pasture.

Key Characteristics

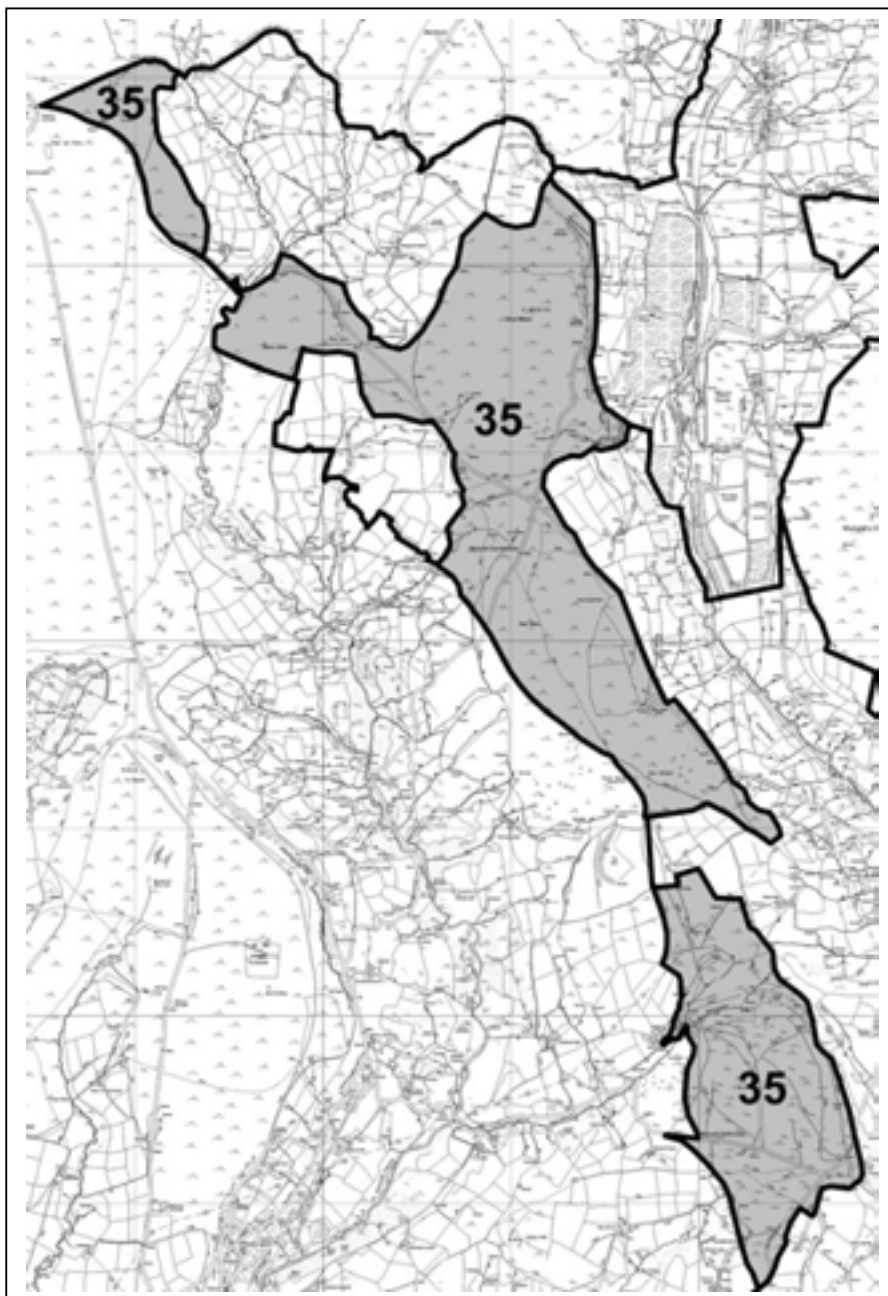
- Tributaries to the Lower Clydach River, 310m AOD to approx 200m AOD.
- A pastoral landscape, with fields contained by various boundary types including earth banks on higher ground.
- Isolated farmsteads in valley bottoms.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
34	Nant Melyn & Bryn-chwyth	45 - m	11 - m	13 - h	41 73	44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 35

Bryn Mawr, Mynydd Carnllechart, Mynydd y Baran & Mynydd Gellionnen



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This constitutes three separate areas of upland common to the north east. Although segregated within the County Borough this landscape continues beyond the boundary and forms an extensive area of open upland. This rolling upland common ranges from 351m AOD to approx 200m AOD and lies on a geology of dipping South Wales pennant formation Hughes Beds sandstones, with landslips on lower slopes.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This upland common predominantly sheep grazed grassland which produces the simple smooth cover evident over much of the area. At the peripheries and on steeper ground running to Cwm Gors coarse grass cover, gorse, bracken and

rhododendron have significantly encroached, disrupting the simplicity. The presence of cairns provides distinct features in this simple landscape and promote the upland character. The mountain fence is a remnant drystone wall reinforced by post and wire fencing.

The elevation of the area provides a distinct sense of exposure and allows extensive views out to surrounding valleys while providing only minimal views in. The lack of settlements and with single-track roads and footpaths traversing the areas providing the only access to area enhance a sense of isolation and wilderness.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

These sections of relatively undisturbed upland common support mainly heathland and acid grassland habitats, but also include isolated areas of mire. Across these areas upland moorland and purple moorgrass & rush pasture BAP habitats are present. The habitats present harbour a good range of typical upland species, including *Carum verticillatum*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Oreopteris limbosperma* and *Drosera rotundifolia*.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The survival of funerary and ritual monuments, such as Bronze Age Cairns is exceptional. These monuments tend to be found located on elevated hill slopes and ridge crests, but not summits, with commanding views down into valleys or adjacent to water courses, a recurring theme in the funerary and ritual landscape of South Wales.

Post-medieval boundary stones are frequent features of this upland environment as are sheepfolds indicating the importance of animal husbandry during this period. Disused quarries are scattered across the lower elevations, these were exploited in the construction of the field boundaries in the surrounding area.

Within this upland landscape sit the visually and historically important Baran and Gellionnen Chapels. The former constructed in 1805 is located at Mynydd y Baran. Gellionnen Chapel dating from 1692, following the toleration act of 1689 is located on Mynydd Gellionnen. Once the focus for isolated communities, these isolated chapels now have small congregations.

Key Characteristics

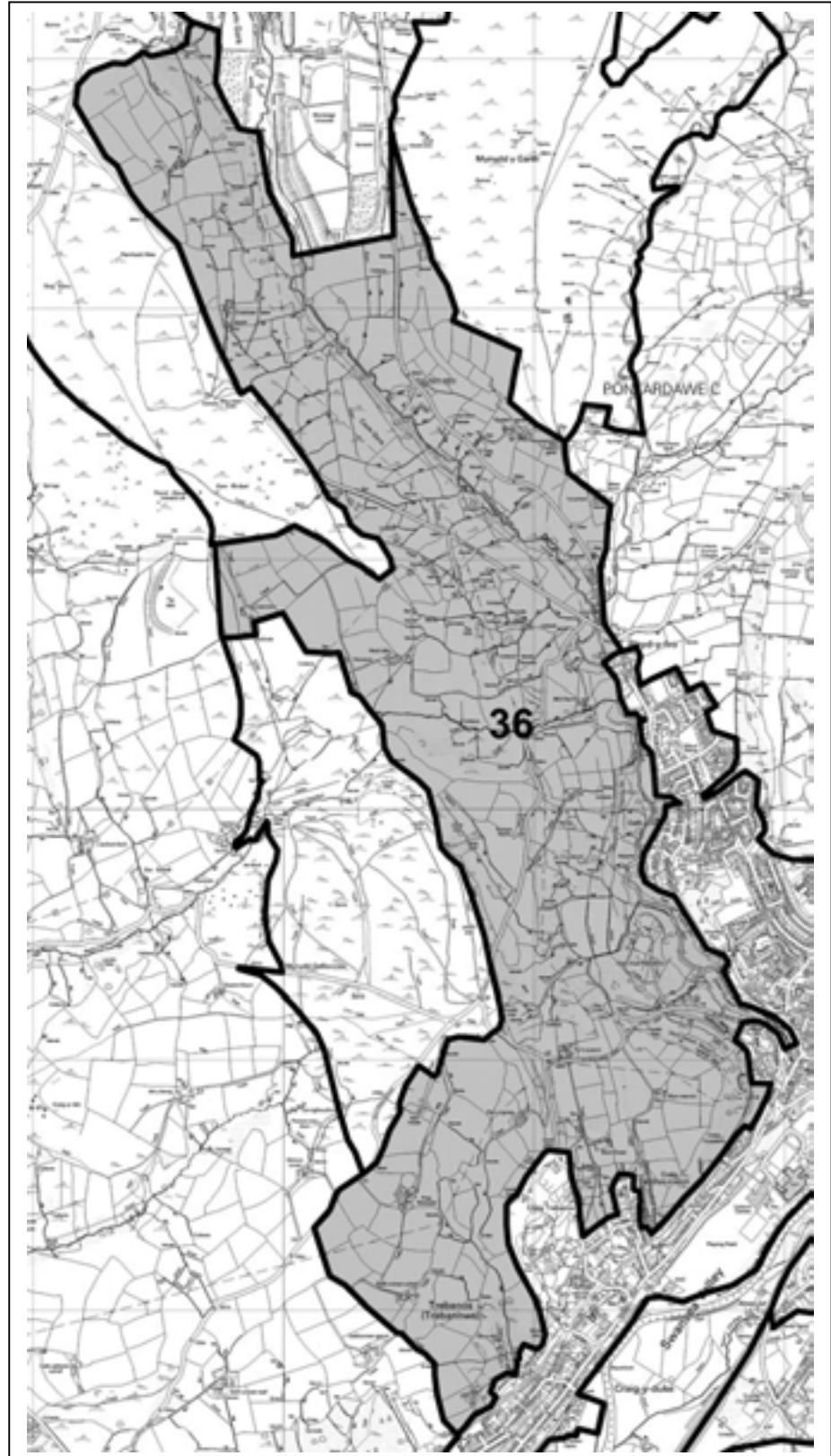
- Three separate areas of upland common, ranging from approx 200m AOD to 351m AOD.
- Extensive panoramic views.
- Simple sheep grazed grassland, with areas of bracken encroachment at fringes.
- Drystone wall reinforced by post and wire fencing constitutes the mountain fence.
- Bronze age Cairns evident across higher ground.
- Isolated upland Baran and Gellionnen Chapels, historic and visual features.
- Relatively undisturbed upland heath habitats.
- Disused quarries along lower slopes.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
35	<u>Bryn Mawr, Mynydd Carnllechart, Mynydd y Baran & Mynydd Gellionnen</u>	23 - m 43 - m	10 - h 11 - m	10 - h 12 - m 13 - h	65 66 67	44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 36

Upper Clydach River valley & Lower slopes of Mynydd Gellionnen



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area constitutes the upland valley following the Upper Clydach River from Pontardawe north-west up Cwm Gors and the lower slopes of Mynydd Gellionnen. The boundaries are predominantly defined by the surrounding unenclosed upland and built form of settlements. The valley rises from approx 50 AOD at Pontardawe to approx 260m AOD at its highest reach. The south draining valley dissects the dipping sandstone geology dominated by South Wales pennant formation (lower pennant measures) with underlying mudstone of Productive Coal formation. The steep valley slopes are covered with boulder clay in their lower parts and with landslips below the sandstone. The base of the valley is alluvium.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The valley is predominantly pastoral in character, with substantial deciduous woodland cover around riparian corridors and on the lower valley sides. Field boundaries mainly consist of over grown hedges, increasing the sense of enclosure, although dry stonewalls and fences reinforcing the more traditional boundaries are also present.

A scattering of settlements are present in the area, mostly along the main road corridor. The A474 provides the main route through the area, creating an intermittent noise source. Away from the valley bottom a network of single-track roads and public rights of ways provide comprehensive access through this landscape.

Although there are minor localised detractors associated with the scattered settlements, in general there are pleasant contained views within the valley. This is especially evident along the valley floor, where deciduous woodland restricts views and helps to strengthen the enclosed, settled and frequently intimate character engendered by the topography.

With in the valley bottom the deep river gorge of Cwm Du, and the Glanrhyd plantation/arboretum both containing mature woodland provide a dramatic and scenic recreation route easily accessible from Pontardawe.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The character of the lower slopes and base of the valley are represented by a small upland river corridor with valley sides flanked by broadleaved woodland. Interspersed are areas of marshy neutral habitat, including rush pasture, while dry areas are present containing acid grassland. BAP priority habitats present include upland oakwood and lowland mixed deciduous woodland. It is supposed that otters and kingfishers inhabit the river corridor. The higher reaches of the valley, comprises of 'ffridd habitats' and mainly comprises rhos pastures.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The valley is characterised by industrial developments, having formed a link between Rhyd y fro in the south through a system of dismantled railways and extant roads, to Gwaun cae Gurwen in the north. This link connected to Roger Hopkins mine at Gwaun cae Gurwen opened in 1837. Disused mines dominate the higher central section of the valley while the periphery is defined by an irregular fieldscape clinging to the lower slopes of surrounding upland. Much of the industry was abandoned during the last century and much is now reverting to its former rural character.

Key Characteristics

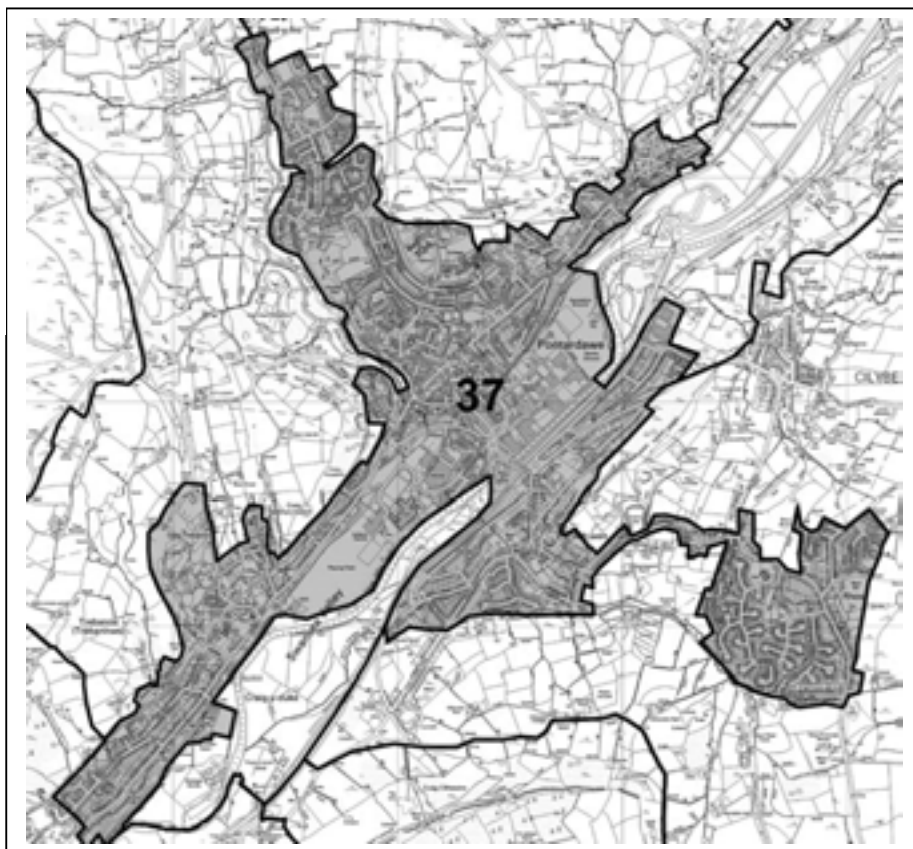
- Upland valley ranging from approx 50m AOD to approx 260m AOD.
- Minor upland river corridor.
- Pastoral with substantial deciduous woodland cover.
- Field boundaries mainly consist of over grown hedges.
- The A474 runs through the valley.
- Contained intimate views within the valley.
- Cwm Du, and the Glanrhyd plantation provide easy recreational access from Pontardawe.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
36	<u>Upper Clydach River valley & Lower slopes of Mynydd Gellionnen</u>	47 - h	10 - h	9 - h 13 - h	41	44 - h

CHARACTER AREA 37

Pontardawe, Rhos, Alltwn and Trebanos



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



These settlements are situated in the north-east of the County Borough. Pontardawe is located adjacent to and straddling the River Tawe, ranging approx 30m AOD to over 100m AOD. It sits within the U-shaped Afon Tawe, the base of which is geologically dominated by alluvial floodplain. Bordering this are glacial sand and gravel terraces with alluvial fan at the mouth of the upper Clydach.

Rhos sits to the west within the Clydach valley, connected to Pontardawe by the A474 and a ribbon of associated developments. It lies at an elevation of over 100m AOD, on a geology of Wales pennant formation sandstones with coals which forms the valley feature between the adjacent pennant plateau ridges.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The settlements of Pontardawe/Alltwn straddle the River Tawe with the core of Pontardawe sited within the Tawe valley. Newer developments and especially the settlement of Alltwn climb up the valley sides and sprawl into adjacent valleys. The core of the Pontardawe, although dominated by the spire of St Peters church has industrial roots. This is evident around the River Tawe and the Swansea canal which are dominated by industrial development that disrupts visual and physical links. Housing has an unusually spacious appearance, in parts of individual three bay houses or semi-detached pairs in contrast to the long terraces which characterise most of the Swansea valley. However 20th century development towards the fringes of Pontardawe is mostly bland and does not reflect the traditional character of the valley communities.

Relatively recent road schemes, have now separated the centre of the settlement from the surrounding residential areas, having a considerable impact on the town. The core of the town has undergone environmental improvements.

Alltwen which sits above Pontardawe, to the south of the Tawe, spreads across the southern flank of the valley. Its core although lacking commercial concerns is compact, with newer development stretch out along the valley. Much of the settlement facilitates views across the Swansea Valley. Trebanos lies on the northern flank of the Swansea valley, extending out from Pontardawe to the County Borough boundary. It sits predominantly on the lower slopes, predominantly strung out along the Swansea Road [B4603] and contained by the valleys topography. There is no easily discernable centre to the settlement.

The settlement of Rhos is linked to Pontardawe and Alltwen by the A474 and a ribbon of associated development. The settlement has the character of a commuter and retirement zone. Although situated in attractive scenery and with a mix of housing design, the settlements themselves do not have a coherent and distinctive character.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The settlements of Pontardawe and Rhos comprises of a mosaics of houses, garden, light industrial and commercial developments, schools, hospitals and supporting infrastructure. Although generally of comparatively low wildlife value, it is recognised that many once-common woodland and farmland birds now rely on gardens as food sources and for nesting, whilst minor features such as ponds may support a range of plants, invertebrates and amphibians.

Beyond the immediate influence of the settlements the major river valley lowland habitats of the Tawe. This area harbours a variety of species including otters and kingfishers.

Historic Characteristics

Pontardawe is conjoined to other settlements in the Swansea Valley by a relatively late ribbon development along both the Swansea Canal and the Midland Railway. The Swansea Canal was the last of the major canals built in South Wales, being fully operational by 1798, this line closed to traffic during the 1930's and only the length at Pontardawe survives.

Tinplate works at Pontardawe were founded in 1843 by William Parsons as the 'Primrose Forge and Tinplate Works'. It was powered by water from the Pontardawe tucking mill and from the adjacent Swansea Canal. Open-hearth furnaces were added later to make it an integrated steel and tinplate works, and under later owners, the Gilbertsons, Pontardawe became virtually a one-company town until the closure of the works in 1962. Most of the site has now been cleared, except for one large late 19th century building of pennant sandstone with brick dressings, still in industrial use. This building retains its tinning bays and a floor of iron slabs; these are rare survivals in the South Wales Valleys.

Cultural Associations

Pontardawe's designation as a sub-regional focal point has been bolstered by the annual Pontardawe Music Festival (now in its 26th year) and the creation of Pontardawe Arts Centre in the former Workingmen's Hall.

The section of the Swansea Canal which has been retained at Pontardawe represents a late 18th century industrial communication route, which transformed the economic potential of the area. It allowed industry to establish close to sources of energy and raw materials. Restoration would enable communities to return their attention to the waterways as part of the diversification of regeneration activities through tourism and leisure use. A more recent development is The Celtic Trail part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network. Its cultural essence is based on contemporary notions of healthy leisure lifestyle linking this urban area to the broader landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Settlements lying within and above the Tawe Valley
- Industrial development focused along the Tawe River and Swansea Canal.
- Architecturally distinct housing and improved centre in Pontardawe.

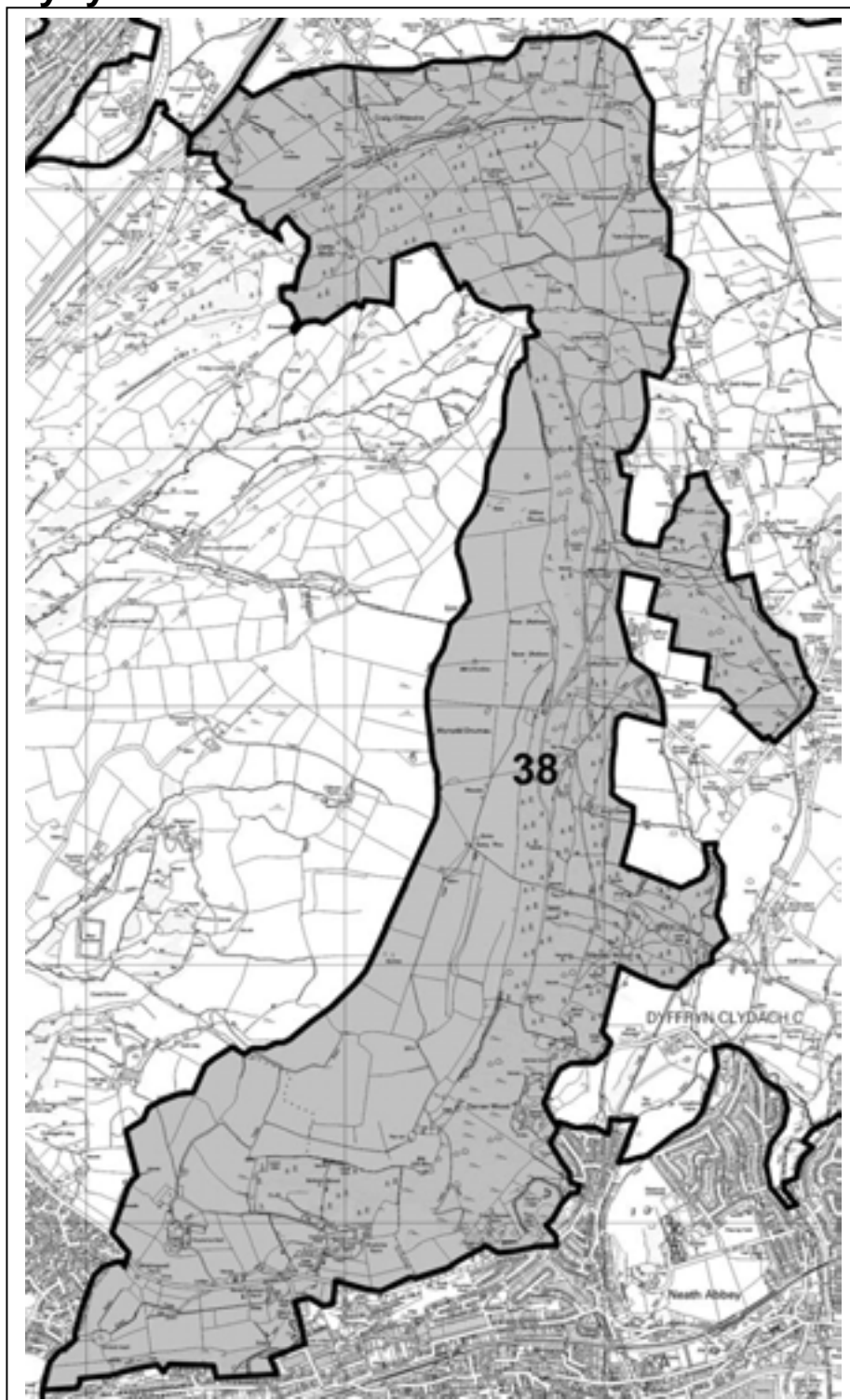
- Pontardawe centre separated from outlying residential areas by road system.
- Alltwen and Trebanos, lacking definite cores, line either side of the Swansea Valley.
- Rhos characterised as a commuter and retirement zone.
- Recognition of Pontardawe music festival.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
37	Pontardawe,	48 - l	5 - m	11	44	05
	Rhos,		6 - m	78		15
	Alltwen &		14 - h	79		39
	Trebanos					40

CHARACTER AREA 38

Mynydd Drumau



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



The hill side of Mynydd Drumau, forms the southern side of Clydach Valley, and a shoulder between the Neath and Swansea valleys. To the west it is defined by the County Borough boundary.

The hillside ranges from approx 50m AOD to 272m AOD on a geology of a fault bounded, north to south upland plateau in South Wales pennant formation, Swansea Beds sandstone.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This significant landform, forming the backdrop to Neath and Skewen is predominantly covered by coniferous woodland particularly on steeper sloping land [purchased by the Woodland Trust and being converted to Broadleaf]. The composition is dominated by spruce but there are significant areas of pine on higher ground. The presence of dramatic cliff faces enhances a remote upland character created by the steep topography and presence of pine woodland and individual pines species on the skyline.

The ridge top is pasture, enclosed primarily by hedges. The lower reaches contain scattered farmsteads and the only road; a minor track. Pasture, enclosed with both managed and overgrown hedges is present around the dwellings. Infestation of Gorse and coarse grasses has occurred on unmanaged land giving an air of neglect to these areas, further enhanced by run down buildings and evident clutter.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The character of the area is a mix of semi upland farmland and woodland. The former is essentially ffridd habitats on the rolling slopes. There is a complex mosaic of grassland enclosures and many other habitats present all of which are essentially circum-neutral or acidic in character. The area provides habitats for a variety of flora and fauna species including *Carum verticillatum* and lapwing (LBAP).

Although much of the woodland is comprised of coniferous plantation, significantly on the lower slopes of the eastern flank, remnant habitats are present. Significant areas of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, BAP priority habitat are present across the slopes. Woodland Trust ownership means that some coniferous forest is being converted to broadleaf woodland.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

There are a number of significant Bronze Age sites on Mynydd y Drumau including burial cairns; a ring cairn and the standing stone 'Carreg Bica,' which has important local folklore associations. Enclosures on the south side of Mynydd y Drumau, include some fine examples of clawdd type boundaries with herringbone pattern walling. At least four medieval house platforms and four post-medieval Pillow Mounds are found on the northern part of the mountain. Three long houses of indiscriminate date are also found in the vicinity of the pillow mounds. Further down the northern slope are more medieval house platforms situated within a complex of irregular shaped fields. The lower western slopes of the mountain are littered with disused levels and mines. Unlike much of the surrounding area, the greater part of Mynydd Drumau's east and north facing slopes are under ancient and semi-natural woodland.

Key Characteristics

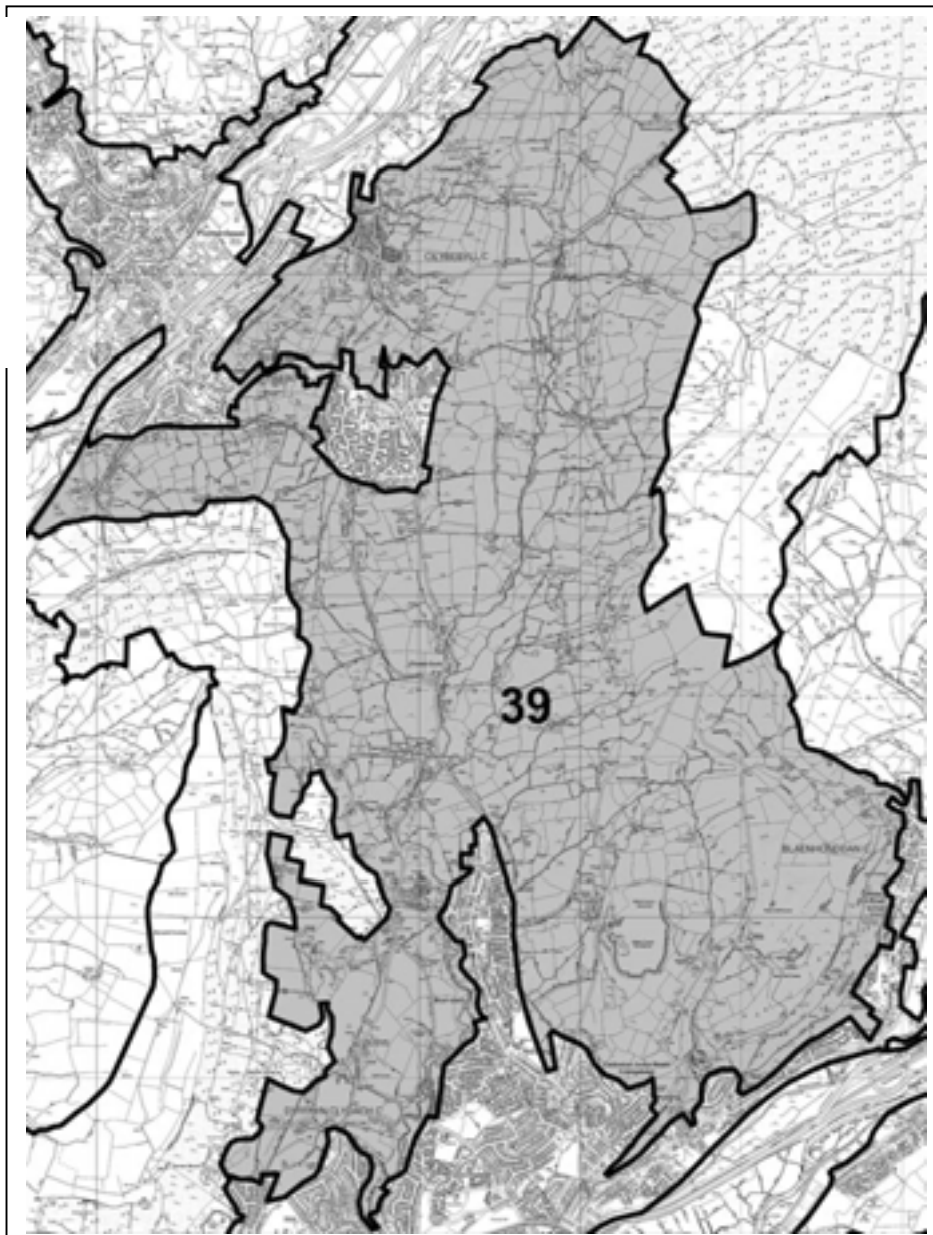
- Dominant landform, creating shoulder between the Tawe and Neath Valleys, ranging from 50m AOD to 272m AOD.
- Predominantly coniferous cover with significant pine cover.
- Ridge top and lower reaches of the area are pasture.
- Boundaries are dominated by hedges, frequently overgrown at lower elevations.
- Exposed rock on higher ground.
- Significant multi period archaeological sites

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
38	Mynydd Drumau	49 - m	5 - m	29 - h 36 - m 97 - m 99 - m	40	45 - h

CHARACTER AREA 39

Clydach valley, Cilybebyll & Cilffrew



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This broad upland valley, forms a saddle between the Tawe and Neath Valley, rising towards Mynydd Drumau in the west and Mynydd Marchywel to the east. It ranging from approx 50m AOD to approx 230m AOD on a geology dominated by South Wales pennant formation sandstones with coals, which forms the valley feature between pennant plateau ridges. There is extensive cover of boulder clay and alluvium patches of glacial sand and gravel in valley floor. There are numerous disused coalmines and shafts throughout the area.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This is a mosaic landscape of grazed land, predominantly enclosed by managed hedges, at times appearing over managed on the lower ground. Through the landscape there are minor clumps of woodland which enhance the mosaic and provide localised sense of enclosure. Across the area there are a scattering of settlements, many located close to the A474, which forms the main access route

through the area. Additionally a number of minor roads and footpaths cross the area. An area adjacent to Alltwen has been provisionally designated open county.

Areas of pasture especially towards the fringes of the area have degraded, and are now dominated by coarse grass and scrub. The main detractor in the area is Gilfach quarry sitting on the western flank of the valley. The open nature of the area allows wide panoramic views to surrounding high ground, which promotes a sense of exposure in this settled open valley.

Through the lower lying landscape between Rhos and Bryncoch there is significant coverage of wetland vegetation on marshland. This adds visual variety to the area from the A474.

The hamlet of Cilybebyll is located in the north close to the Tawe River. This quiet rural retreat could be readily mistaken for a well-heeled hamlet in the English Home Counties in appearance and is in sharp contrast to the linear development along the Swansea Valley and nearby residential estates.

To the south, the Clydach valley becomes more dramatic and enclosed and contains extensive deciduous vegetation along its course. Creating a pleasant and easily accessible recreation route from adjacent settlements.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Much of the valley comprises of ffridd habitat, containing a complex mosaic of grassland enclosures with other habitats present all of which are essentially circum-neutral or acidic in character. The area contains a variety of flora and fauna species including *Carum verticillatum* and lapwing (LBAP).

Species-rich grassland and wet pasture at Cilybebyll provides habitats for a variety of uncommon flora species and is designated SSSI

To the south of the area replanted and semi natural ancient woodland are a significant factor, lining minor valleys. These comprises mainly of semi-natural woodland on valley slopes and combine with neutral grasslands and areas of bracken. It is supposed this area will harbour BAP priority otters.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The small hamlet of Cilybebyll is centred on the Norman church of St John the Evangelist. First mentioned in 1129, the village has remained relatively undeveloped and surrounding field systems retain a largely medieval pattern. Only the tower remains of the medieval church, the rest of the church was rebuilt in 1868.

To the far south and towards the Swansea Valley there is an industrial character which differs from the rural nature of much of the valley. Characteristic industrial feature including quarries of which Gilfach Quarry is the largest, collieries, levels and tips although most have since been abandoned.

Key Characteristics

- This broad upland valley ranging from approx 50m AOD to approx 230m AOD.
- Mosaic landscape of grazed land.
- Wetland vegetation between Rhos and Bryncoch
- Enclosure dominated by maintained hedges
- Scattering of settlements, close to the A474.
- Gilfach quarry is a significant detractor.
- Hamlet of Cilybebyll, centred on the Norman church.

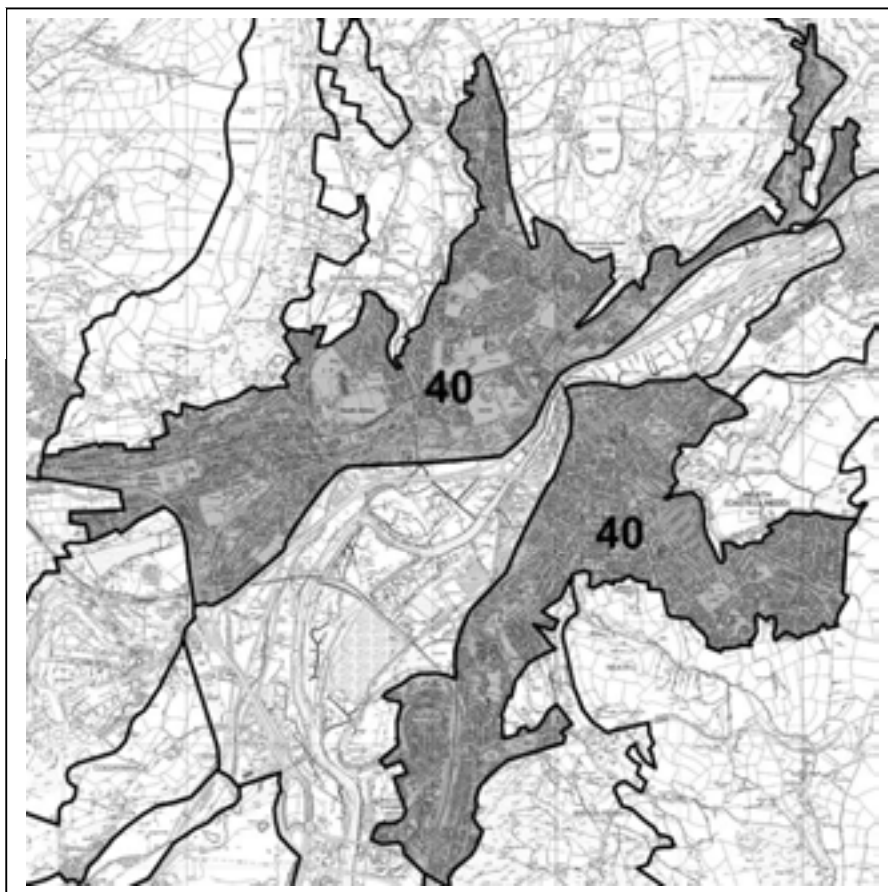
Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
39	Clydach	50 - m	6 - m	35 - m	25	41 - h

	valley, Cilybebyll & Cilffrew		7 - m	36 - m 41 - m	40 74	45 - h
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CHARACTER AREA 40

Neath



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This series of settlements are located around and straddle the River Neath. It is geologically dominated by the U-shaped broad valley floodplain and channel of the River Neath which runs through north-east to south-west through the area. The Alluvium present in the valley floor is flanked by terraces of sand and gravel. The valley cuts through a geology of South Wales pennant formation (lower-upper pennant Measures) sandstones, which dominates the higher ground.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

Neath is an industrial town; the centre is a compact area of retail/commercial uses and dwellings, adjacent to the historic castle, on the south side of the river. The River Neath and Tennant canal has no obvious relationship to the centre or surrounding settlements, unsightly industry tends to separate the town from the tidal river.

Outside of the centre, Victorian stone buildings lie adjacent to the main arteries in the valley bottom, while behind them newer developments sprawl up the valley side. The new development has been developed piecemeal in blocks with commercial and retail development dominating the main traffic corridors. The areas development is constrained by the adjacent salt marshes and enclosing valleysides.

The dense urban centre with its significant stone buildings, castle and market provides a sense of place with significant environmental improvements to the public realm, this sense of place is enhanced by the dominant landform of the valley sides. Towards the periphery this sense of place is lost through poor quality development in places, yet historic features [Neath Abbey ruins and industrial heritage] add distinctiveness to the area.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Although generally of comparatively low wildlife value, it is recognised that many once-common woodland and farmland birds now rely on gardens as food sources and for nesting, whilst minor features such as ponds may support a range of plants, invertebrates and amphibians

Historic Characteristics

Although Neath is characterised as historically 'urban and industrial' it also includes fine examples of much older monuments. Roman Nidum and Neath Abbey are extremely important monuments; The latter comprises the most extensive abbey remains in Wales. Little is visible of the Roman auxiliary fort of Nidum.

The town and borough of Neath originated in the early 12th century when the Afon Nedd formed the western boundary of Norman penetration into South Wales. Castle and borough town were established on the eastern bank of the river, and the abbey was founded shortly afterwards, on the far side of the river 2km to the west. In the later Middle Ages the town and abbey were in competition for river trade, and in 1491 the Town Hall was reported to be in ruins.

The key to Neath's subsequent development as an industrial centre was the availability of coal exceptionally close to the coast. Sir Humphrey Mackworth of the Gnoll, whose mansion dominated the little town from its hilltop, pioneered both copper and lead working from the 1690's, with the celebrated Neath Abbey Iron works began operation soon after (Newman 1995).

The ironworks at Neath Abbey was conveniently located alongside the waterpower resources of the River Clydach a short distance from its confluence with the navigable River Neath. Under Joseph Tregelles Price (1786-1854) the works gained a reputation for high-quality engineering products. The engine manufactory produced locomotives, stationary engines, cast iron roofs and floors, steamships and gasworks. After Price's death stagnation set in, and the works finally closed in 1885.

The Vale of Neath Canal, 1794-5, and subsequent railways, opened up the hinterland of Neath. But the town remained of very modest size, clustered around St Thomas's church, held back from the riverbank by a strip of noxious industry. In 1801 there were 2,500 inhabitants, and half a century later the population had little more than doubled (Newman 1995).

Gwalia Tinsplate Works were erected in 1892 to use steel produced by the Briton Ferry Ironworks. Acquired by the Briton Ferry Steel Co. and closed in 1953. The building has been truncated, and only five of the stone-built bays survive. On an adjacent site to the north was the Villiers Tinsplate Works (1888), of which some modern brick-built buildings remain. An ironworks was established on the eastern bank of the River Neath, at Briton Ferry, in the 1840's. It was reconstructed in the 1890's, still as an iron-smelter, and closed in 1958. The site has been completely cleared with the exception of the blast-engine house of 1910, which housed a Richardson-Westgarth quarter-crank blowing engine.

Cultural Associations

Although the area has significant areas of 20th century development, including the housing of Cimla and around Rhydding and other areas in decline, the cultural identity of the town spans millennia. The site of the roman fort of Nidum, a name, which in anglicised form has been applied to the town and surrounding valley, promoting a lasting identity for the area.

Likewise the Medieval Neath Abbey, which in turn gave its name to the innovative and influential and world-renowned Iron works. Although the setting of the Abbey has been severely compromised to the south by the development of the Neath Abbey Business Park, containing medium sized factory units and other sprawling commercial units, its visibility helps to emphasise the identity of its surroundings and the local area.

The Industrial prominence of the area, linked to the close proximity of coal seams to the coast, exploded with the introduction of transport links, first the wharf built

by the monks of Neath Abbey and later canal and rail links. These late 18th and early 19th century industrial communications routes transformed the economic potential of the area allowed the metal industries along their length flourish.

Current plans for the restoration of the canals would enable communities to return their attention to the waterways as part of the diversification of regeneration activities through tourism and leisure use. To date the canal has been made navigable through Neath to Tonna Depot.

To the South of the River Neath, the historic core of Neath has evolved from a strategic military control point, to a market town, then a centre of industrial prominence and finally to a centre of sub-regional administration and commercial significance.

The town boasts the Gnoll rugby and cricket ground, so central to the psyche of many citizens. Such components make it an outstanding historic and contemporary focal point.

Skewen's growth was generated by the Crown Copperworks. It is most notable for the large number of late 19th and early 20th century Non-conformist chapels that convey a passing or past God-fearing cultural identity. The town is now also a significant shopping and social centre

Briton Ferry has changed dramatically since the affectionate 'Picturesque' depictions by William Weston Young and other 19th century artists. No longer a small, quiet settlement of gentry houses, it is now a mix of residential (on the higher land above the main street) and a somewhat depressed and dowdy former commercial and local administrative linear development, with vestiges of industrial remains. Brunel's dock is silted up; the Giant's Grave ship-breaking yard and notorious residential development are no more, although it still remains a working port. There is an air of activity but of no great energy.

Cimla is a mid-20th century residential development to which the upwardly mobile aspired and which also has local authority owned housing stock. It is physically distinctive from a distance as part of the development marches across the skyline above the Gnoll rugby and cricket grounds. Now it is a sprawling estate well served with numbers of schools, but few retail outlets (e.g. corner shops), and the presence of a small, well regarded respite care and rehabilitation hospital.

Key Characteristics

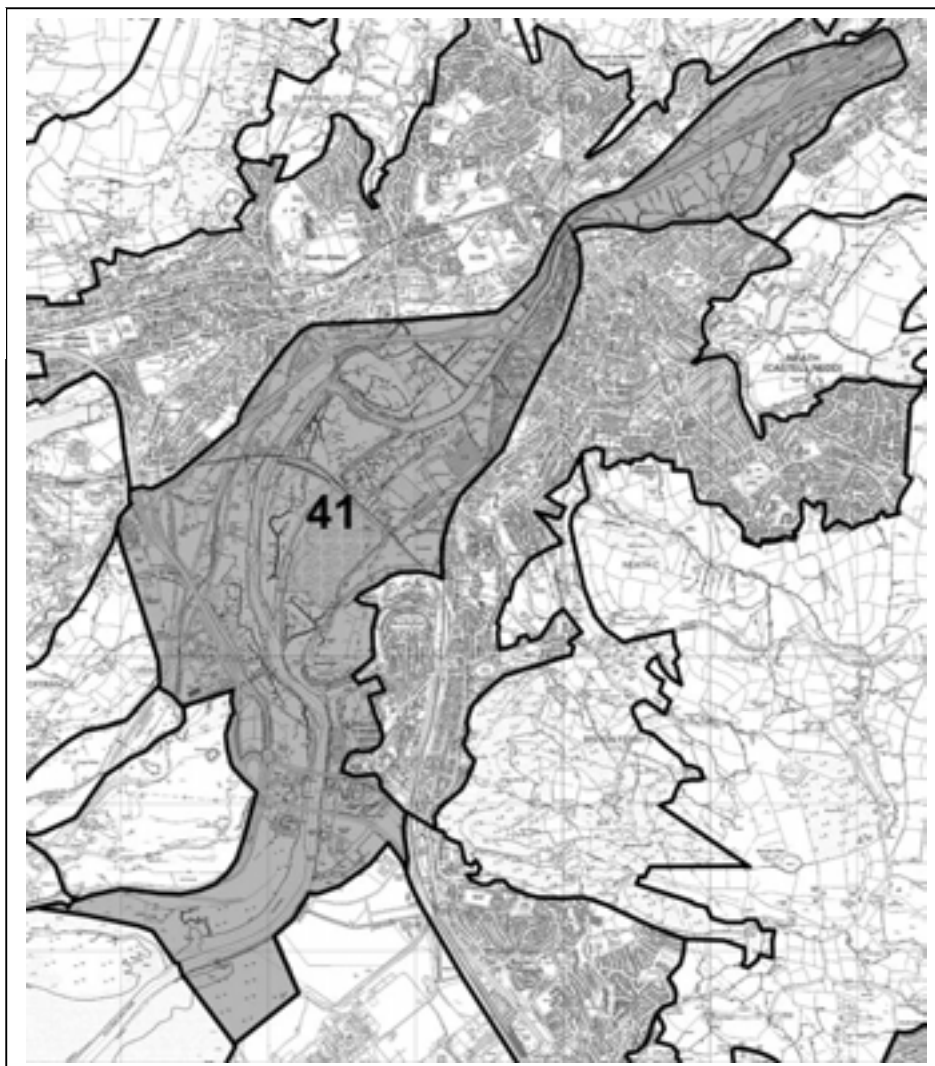
- Series of settlements located around and straddling the Neath River
- Industrial town with compact centre of retail/commercial uses and dwellings.
- Industrial development to separate the town from the tidal river.
- Victorian stone buildings lie adjacent to the main arteries
- Neath Abbey comprises the most extensive abbey remains in Wales.
- Historically 'urban and industrial', with numerous industrial relics remaining.
- Site of the Roman auxiliary fort of Nidum.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
40	Neath	51 - l	2 - m 6 - m 20 - h 23 - h	86 - l 87 - l	18 51 54	02 - h 10 - h 11 - m 12 - m 14 - o 15 - o 20 - m 21 - o 22 - o 23 - m 24 - h

CHARACTER AREA 41

Neath Estuary



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



The Neath Estuary is characterised by the extent of inter-tidal flow along the Lower Neath Valley to the settlement of Tonna. It is defined by the wetland nature of this part of the valley. The estuary comprises of a geology of alluvium and fluvioglacial terraces, which gives way to sand flats at the lower reaches as the river meanders at Briton Ferry.

Earlswood Road Cutting and Ferryboat Inn Quarries located around the M4 are designated geological SSSI, for their well developed sedimentary structure.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The tidal waters of the Neath run up beyond the settlement of Neath, which is an unusual feature within Wales.

The estuary is dominated by a low-lying, complex, urban fringe floodplain and saltmarshes, showing signs of previous and now declining industrial and commercial uses rubbing shoulders with a degraded pastoral agriculture many small ditches vein the fields, draining into the river. The uses of the area include small-scale docks, breakers yards, storage depots, recreational facilities including marina, floodplain pasture, wetland vegetation, saltmarsh and scrub. Boundaries to the area tend to be wire fences.

Old dismantled railway lines and power lines form prominent features crossing the area. Paradoxically, there is only minimal public access into the area, [along the Neath and Tenant canals, which act as a stretch of the Sustrans cycle network], although Giants Graveyard has been provisionally designated open county. Wide views are possible from the M4 and A465 the former crosses the river on viaduct. There are few dwellings and those present are located around the periphery. The land is predominantly an open and empty landscape. There is significant noise from industry, roads and rail. Detractors of industrial estates surround the open pasture. However the old docks moored with boats/ships and the marina create visual interest and connect the area to the sea to the south.

The meandering tidal estuarial river forms the focus, running through the large flood plain and exhibits muddy banks at low tide. The built up riverbanks are a mix of rough grasses and scrubby vegetation. Towards the mouth of the Neath, the area develops a more coastal nature, with dunes to the north and saltmarshes to the south.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This large tidal estuary has extensive saltmarsh and mud flats present through out representing an area of significant importance. The Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh habitat, present are recognised as BAP habitats. This environment provides valuable habitat for a wide variety of species including otter; common goby, sand goby; curlew, lapwing, linnet, oystercatcher, redshank, Cetti's warbler, reed warbler, reed bunting; moths, other invertebrates and numerous flora species. Towards the north western edge of the estuary an industrial area creates a drier habitat of complex mosaic of lowland rural habitats containing remnant semi-natural habitats persist.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

The historical emphasis is heavily biased to the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. However Roman finds are frequent due to the close proximity of the fort (Nidum). Medieval activity, such as Court-sart Grange, associated with Neath Abbey, existed along the banks and tributaries of the Nedd. Records indicate the presence of an early 14th century ferry crossing at Briton Ferry, 'Passagium aque de Bruttone' and a century later called 'Passagium de Briton'.

Heavy industry, belonging to the post-medieval period, now litters the length of the estuary. The Briton Ferry Ironworks were established in 1840 on the east bank of the Afon Nedd; and were closed in 1958. A large area of the saltmarsh to the west of Penhriwtyn has been used as an industrial refuse tip. Post-medieval brickworks built along the eastern bank of the Afon Nedd are also among the now derelict industry of the estuary. For the past two millennia the estuary has witnessed and played host to a very varied human presence creating an important and historically significant area.

Rising above the estuary are three separate moorland character landforms; Giants Grave, Shelone and Warren Hill. Giants grave, containing a small post-medieval quarry at the eastern edge of the knoll and was allegedly the site of a burial chamber destroyed in the building of the canal, lies adjacent to Brynhyfryd. Shelone, which lies next to Briton Ferry contains a small area, 4 acres, of ancient and semi-natural woodland, but of its historic evidence has now been destroyed. Warren Hill bounded by Briton Ferry Docks to the south and the Neath contains the remains of an Iron Age hillfort best preserved around the south and east sides.

Cultural

Despite often-ugly incursions the area has preserved an individual identity of remoteness and wildness in close proximity to bustling and traffic swamped urbanisation. Yet arguably the estuary's most dominant attribute is that it determined the location first of strong strategic points and second the town of Neath, its hinterland and industrial and commercial development.

Other than a few wharves in Newport this constitutes the only river based port in South Wales. Now only vestiges of the previous industry remain; Brunel's dock is silted up and the Giant's Grave ship-breaking yard and notorious housing area are no more.

The river has been exploited as a major military, industrial and commercial waterway from Roman times until the present. Now it is crossed by a 21st century communication corridor, its origins dating back to Roman era now contains the M4 motorway and mainline railway. This now a highly important corridor for the purposes of industry, commerce and leisure.

Key Characteristics

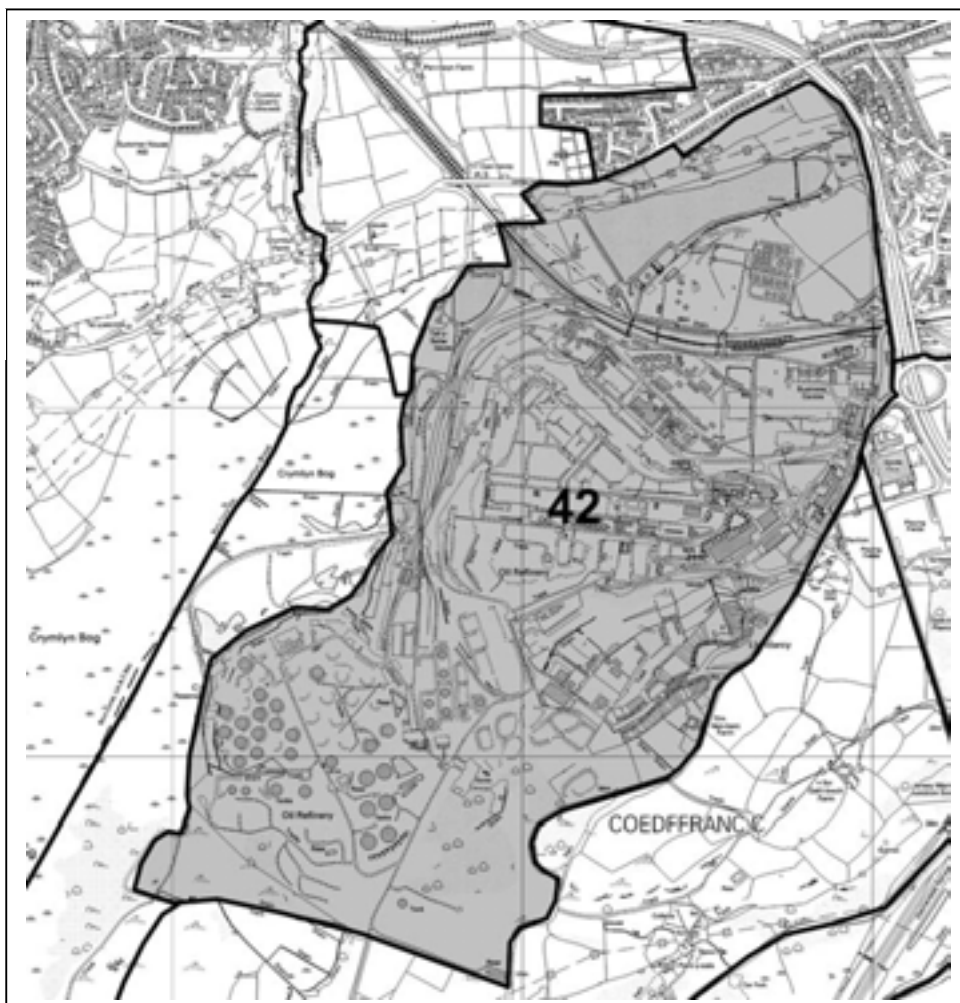
- Estuary dominated by a low-lying, complex, urban fringe floodplain.
- Evidence of previous and now declining industry.
- Landcover comprises of floodplain pasture, wetland vegetation, saltmarsh and scrub and drainage ditches.
- Boundaries are predominantly wire fences.
- Neath Canal provides recreation access.
- Wild open and noisy character.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
41	Neath Estuary	52 - l	4 - o 20 - h	26 - h 53 - o	3 7 33 34 35 54	1 - o 2 - h 15 - o 48 - o

CHARACTER AREA 42

Former Llandarcy Refinery



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This former oil refinery site sits close to the M4, on elevated ground to the east of the Crymlyn Bog. The complex covers around 650 acres (260ha) at an elevation of approximately 50m AOD. It sits on a geology of South Wales pennant formation (lower-upper pennant Measures) sandstones and coals.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The area appears to be predominantly derelict although there are some commercial properties in operation, predominantly redevelopment adjacent to the M4. On the rest of the site there is colonisation of birch on a series of disused level platforms and hard standing areas. These hard standings create structured changes in level which add visual interest. Exposed rock is also in evidence. The only settlement present is Llandarcy Worker Village, contained within Llandarcy conservation area. There is no public access through the area. The boundary treatment of security fencing is locally, an obtrusive detractor from adjacent areas.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This is a complex mosaic of lowland rural habitats surrounding an oil refinery, which in turn is surrounded by wetland habitats of international significance (Crymlyn Bog). Many remnant semi-natural habitats persist throughout the area including woodlands, grasslands, heathlands and mires, providing habitat for a wide range of

species of fauna including reptiles, lapwing, skylark, bats and probably great crested newts.

The more industrial habitat supports numerous avian species. A lagoon, is present in the industrialised area, yet its significance as an ecological element has diminished through contaminated by effluents.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Entirely 20th century, the British Petroleum Oil Refinery complex was officially opened in 1922. It was damaged by bombing during World War II, when it employed 3,500 people and another 8,500 Royal Army Service Corps personnel training in the handling of petroleum products. Llandarcy workers village, constructed with the works, is located to the south of the refinery and is an important example of a Garden Village development. The industrial works are built over a post medieval fieldscape; it is quite likely that this agricultural landscape had earlier origins associated with the medieval granges of St Margaret and Cwrt y Bettws, situated to the south.

Cultural

Llandarcy Urban Village development proposal represents a visionary approach to brownfield landscape reclamation. It is intended as a response to the national need for additional housing, but also includes proposals for self-sufficiency - with shops, offices, schools and mixed-income housing, located adjacent to nationally important communication routes.

Key Characteristics

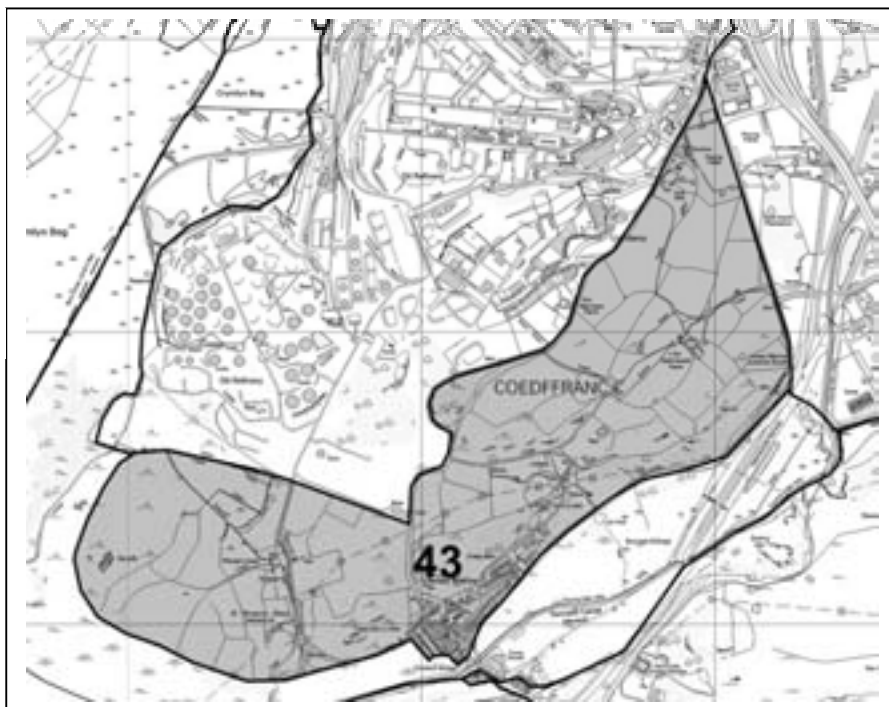
- Former oil refinery site covering approx 260 hectares.
- Colonisation of disused level platforms by birch and scrub.
- Lagoon contaminated by effluent.
- No public access.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
42	Former Llandarcy Refinery	54 - m	2 - m	49 - m 50 - l 51 - h	5	19 - o

CHARACTER AREA 43

Jersey Marine



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This steep sided lowland hill, lying in the south west of the County Borough, rises from approx 10m AOD to 106m AOD. It is bounded to the west by Crymlyn Bog and to the north by the Llandarcy Works. It overlies a geology of South Wales pennant formation (lower-upper pennant Measures) sandstones and coals.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This landform creates a significant feature adjacent to the lower Neath valley along side Pant y Sais. The land is predominantly grazed, with areas of grazed oak woodland. The area contains significant deciduous woodland cover throughout, providing a settled lowland feel. Coniferous plantation lie on its southern flank and areas of exposed rock lie on the skyline these promote an upland character.

Field boundaries are predominantly managed hedges with some defunct hedges containing fences. Areas of the higher grazed land has been encroached by gorse, enhancing an exposed, wild, upland feel to the hill tops. There are a number of scattered dwellings and the small settlement of Jersey Marine, the only settlement in the area, sitting in the south of the area on lower ground, connected to the A483 by a minor road. A single track road runs across the area as the only access. To the east adjacent to Crymlyn Bog an area has been provisionally designated open access land.

From within, the change from wooded lowland cover to apparent upland exposure provides a significant sense of place and removal from the settled surrounding landscape.

The landform provides an important backdrop to Crymlyn Bog and is a significant element when viewed from Swansea.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Many remnant semi-natural habitats persist throughout the area including woodlands, grasslands, heathlands and mires, providing favourable environments for

a wide range of flora and fauna including reptiles; linnet, lapwing, skylark, bullfinch, song thrush, tree sparrow, spotted flycatcher, snipe, lapwing; high brown fritillary, great crested newt and bats.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

During the Bronze Age people chose this elevated area to site their funerary monuments; several well preserved and scheduled cairns can be found to the south of Gelli-bwch Farm with commanding views of the Neath estuary to the east. Roman activity is indicated by a coin hoard, found to the north of Gelli-bwch Farm, relating to the proximity of the area to the fort at Neath.

In 1289 the abbey at Neath came to an agreement with Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, for an extensive area of 'Coitfranc' (Coedffranc) which reflects much of this area but also includes parts of Pent y Sais (HL036) and Jersey Marine Industrial.

A survey of 1602 identified two medieval granges, Cwrt Llan Margaret, most likely the site of the farm now called Penis'r-coed and a second located in the vicinity of the 19th century Cwrt y Bettws Farm. Little now remains of St Margaret's Chapel, first mentioned in 1247 except the lower foundations and small rectangular enclosure situated on a small hill over looking Swansea Bay.

Cultural

The area is considered to be part of the setting for the Crymlyn Bog, potentially providing a buffer zone around the proposed Llandarcy Urban Village. Its classification reflects the late 20th century emphasis on protection of environmentally and culturally important landscapes and structures.

Key Characteristics

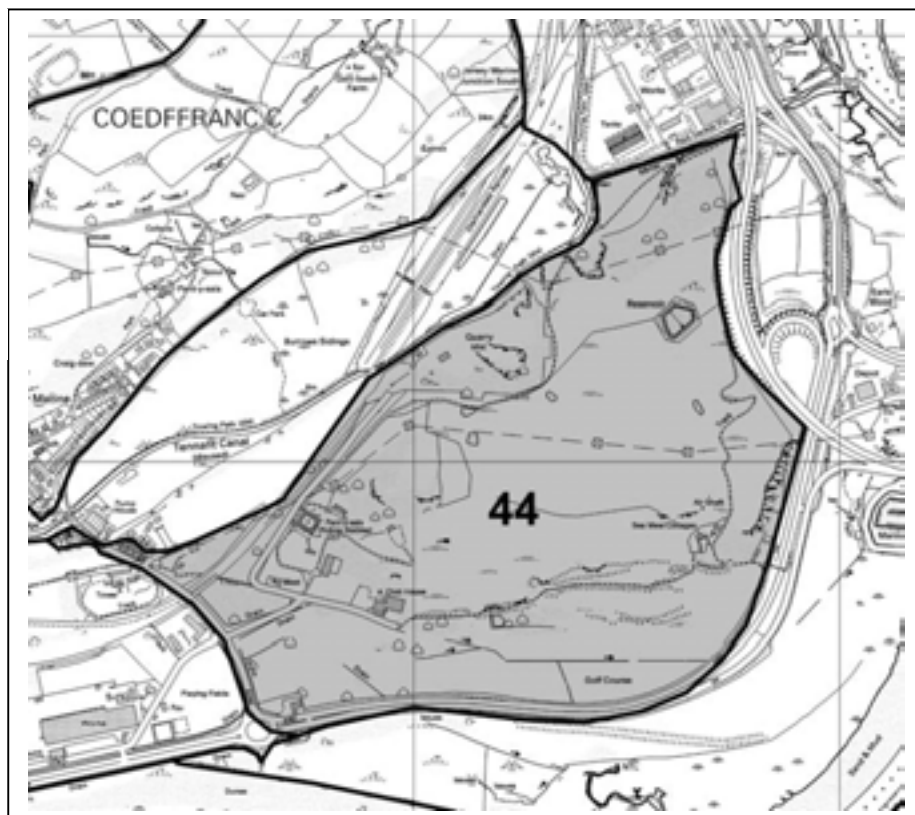
- Dominant landform rising to 106m AOD above the lower Neath Valley
- Significant deciduous woodland cover on lower slopes.
- Boundaries dominated by managed hedges.
- Exposed rock on upper slopes.
- Exposed upland feel and panoramic views from high ground.
- Well preserved and scheduled cairns.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
43	Jersey Marine	55 - h	2 - m	51 - h	37	18 - o

CHARACTER AREA 44

Earlswood



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This steep sided lowland hill, lying in the south west of the County Borough, to the south east of Crymlyn Bog. It rises from approx 10m AOD to 77m AOD on a geology of South Wales pennant formation (lower-upper pennant Measures) sandstones and coals.

Earlswood Road Cutting located around the M4 is designated geological SSSI, for its well developed sedimentary structure.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This landform creates a significant feature adjacent to the lower Neath valley alongside Pant y sais. The area is predominantly used for recreation, including golf course, riding centre and small marina. The higher ground is dominated by coarse grasses and heath, with woodland flanking the lower slopes, dominated by coniferous plantation along its southern extent. Areas of the higher land has been encroached by gorse, enhancing an exposed, wild, upland feel to the hill tops. This engenders a strong sense of place. Buildings tend to be linked to recreation and are situated on the lower ground, while across the higher ground electric supply lines and pylons impact on the skyline. There is no public right of way.

The landform provides a strong visual impact in the east of the county, creating a strong sense of place.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The Golf course which dominates much of the area has been created on former coastal dunes. Surrounding the manicured amenity grassland this area now supports extensive lowland heathland and semi-natural grasslands habitats.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

Together with Pant y Sais this area forms the relict area of Coed Ffranc, shown on 16th and 17th century maps, and is said to have once extended as far as Aberdare. Predominantly unenclosed this landscape reflects the nature of upland areas, rather than the surrounding estuary and fieldscapes. During the Bronze Age peoples chose this elevated area to site their funerary monuments; a well preserved and scheduled cairn (Gm383) can be found on a level plateau on top of the knoll, with commanding views of the Neath estuary to the south. The remaining surviving features belong to the post medieval period. These include a quarry to the north of the aspect, a large reservoir to the east, Crymlyn Burrows colliery (shown on 1st Ed OS) to the extreme west and the modern Pent y Sais golf course.

Cultural

The area contains a mix of relict and modern leisure/recreation facilities, adjacent to dunes and beaches formerly used for bathing. Elements include the remains of 19th century leisure features, modern golf courses, riding stables and a small marina, and an hotel. Modern housing of eclectic design has recently infilled plot in the village of Jersey Marine. Plans for the Llandarcy Urban Village [Area 42] are likely to result in improvements and expansion of leisure facilities.

The area abuts the Crymlyn Bog RAMSAR site which has been recommended as a candidate Special Area of Conservation because it contains habitat type and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context.

Key Characteristics

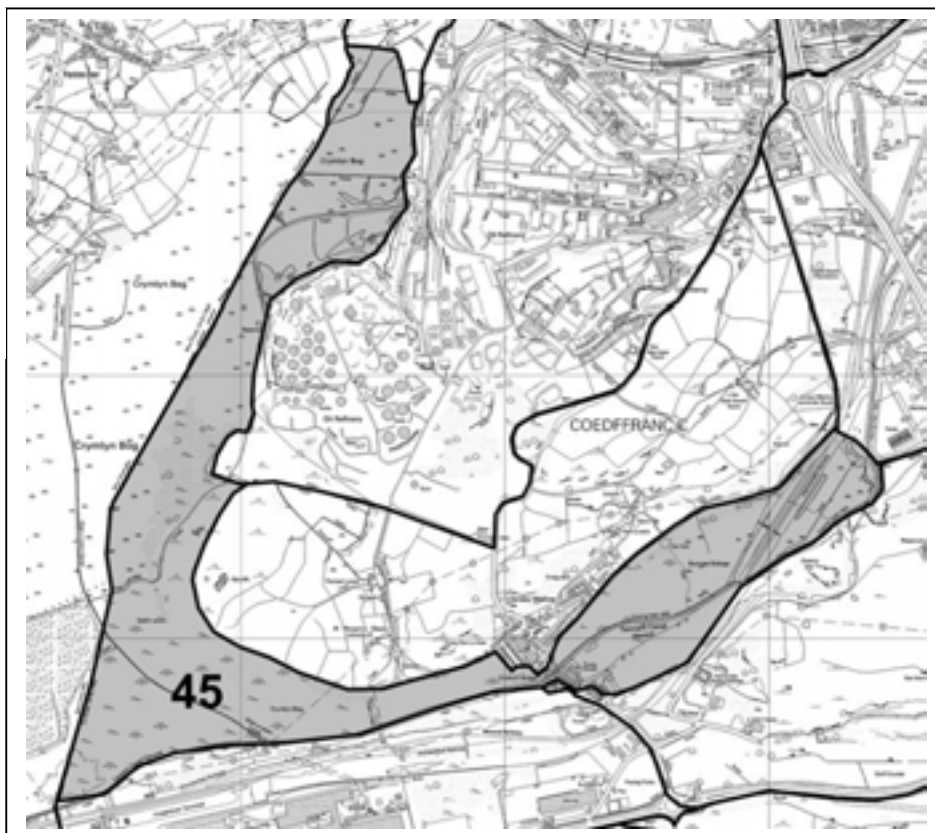
- Dominant landform rising to 77m AOD above the lower Neath Valley.
- Dominated by recreational use (golf course).
- Woodland flanks lower slopes, dominated by coniferous plantation along southern extent.
- Pylons and power lines impact on skyline.
- Well preserved and scheduled cairns.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
44	Earlswood	55 - h	4 - m	75 - h	37	18 - o

CHARACTER AREA 45

Crymlyn Bog



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area comprises of the wetland valley between Bon-y-maen and Jersey Marine, continuing beyond the western boundary of the County Borough . This flat-lying fen lies below 10m AOD in a north to south fault and covered with peat

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The area forms part of a much wider bog which extends west into Swansea. Its simple lowland levels topography with almost uniform vegetation cover contrasts with the complexity of the surrounding topography and cover. The vegetation cover is virtually consistent wetland vegetation, marshy grasses and reeds, with willow, alder and birch scrub growth around the periphery and in clumps within the area. There are no settlements and the only access is along the Tennant canal which skirts the area. The area is therefore very secluded with limited access and a distinct and remote sense of place. The disused Glan-y-wern canals and goods railway lines run through the area. Against the Jersey Marine area a section has been provisionally designated open country.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The wetland contains numerous habitats of international significance and is a candidate Special Area of Conservation; transitional mire & quaking bogs, calcium rich fen dominated by great fen sedge and alder woodland on floodplains and is recognised extensively as a SSSI. The area contains numerous other habitats listed within the local BAP. The area supports a wide range of flora and fauna species including the SSSI scheduled sedge warbler, and LBAP designated otter and water vole.

Historic Characteristics and Cultural Associations

This is a poorly studied area, and there is no dated information on its formation, though it was certainly there in historic times and is marked in virtually the same form as it has today on the Llansamlet tithe map of c1844. It is likely that it is the result of the same movement of sand which is documented elsewhere on the coast in the later Middle Ages, but it may have come into existence earlier. Cores taken through the peat reveal a buried landscape characterised by birch and alder from 1m to 2m below the present ground surface, overlying drier woodland with oak and hazel (Godwin 1940). The bog is crossed by the disused Glan-y-wern Canal which was constructed in the 1780s to connect the Glan-y-wern colliery to the sea, and was linked to the Tennant canal. The southern end of the bog was used for the construction of Tir John power station, and the dumping of its fuel ash. This power station went out of use and was demolished after the 1980s; the site is currently being used for landfill. Otherwise, the whole area remains open wetland.

Cultural

This area, designated SSSI has been recommended as a candidate Special Area of Conservation. It is visited by special interest groups as a fine example of transition mires and quaking bogs.

Key Characteristics

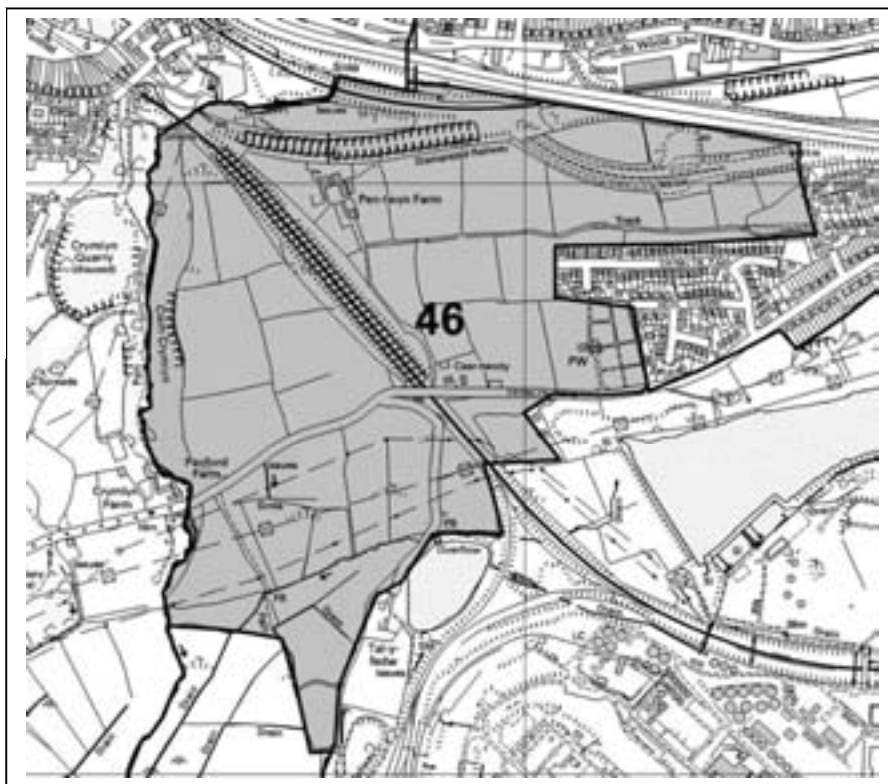
- Flat-lying marsh below 10m AOD.
- Consistent wetland vegetation.
- Remote tranquil area with minimal access.
- Extensive SSSI designation and pSAC.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
45	Crymlyn Bog	47 - h	1 - m	48 - o	10 77	15 - o 18 - o

CHARACTER AREA 46

Cae'r Hendy



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This small area of rolling farmland lies against the western boundary of the County Borough, adjacent to the M4 and connects to larger area beyond the boundary. It ranges from approx 10m AOD to 57m AOD overlaying a geology of South Wales pennant formation (lower-upper pennant Measures) sandstones and coals.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This is a pastoral landscape, with fields bounded by overgrown trees and hedges with trees. There are scattered dwellings through the area and encroachment from surrounding settlements around the fringes. A minor road provides the only public accessing into the area. The mainline railway which passes through the area, the close proximity to the M4 and encroaching development detractor from the rural character.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This semi-upland farmland comprises of a complex mosaic of mainly grassland enclosures but with other habitats present, all essentially circum-neutral or acidic in character. While to the south the area borders on the estuarine mire of Crymlyn Bog a significant SSSI.

Historic Characteristics

Linked to Pant-y-sais to the east, the area exhibits a wealth of evidence for human occupation from the Bronze Age into the present. Roman activity is indicated the proximity of area to the fort at Neath.

The fringes of the area were influenced by more recent development, with the entirely 20th century industrial area of Llandarcy British Petroleum Oil Refinery flanking the east and the M4 to the north. The former, now demolished, site was

officially opened in 1922 and employing 12,000 during World War II, was built over a post medieval fieldscape.

Cultural Associations

The area is considered to be part of the setting for the Crymlyn Bog, potentially providing a buffer zone around the proposed Llandarcy Urban Village. Its classification reflects the late 20th century emphasis on protection of environmentally and culturally important landscapes and structures.

Key Characteristics

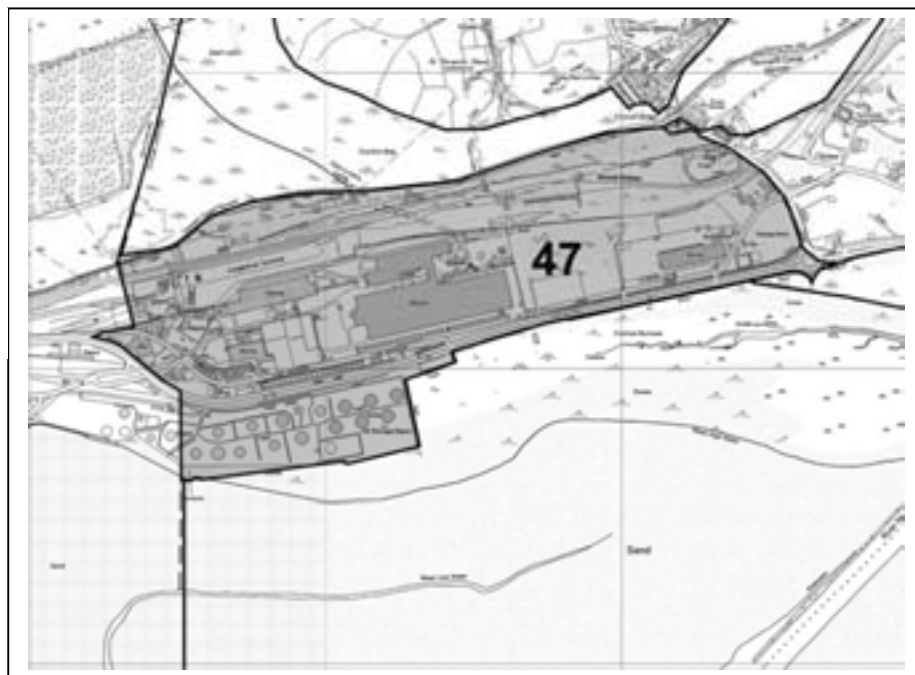
- Rolling farmland ranging from approx 10m AOD to 57m AOD.
- Pastoral landscape, with overgrown hedges with trees.
- Disruption from adjacent development.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
46	Cae'r Hendy	58 - l	2 - m	36 - m	05 54	19 -o

CHARACTER AREA 47

Elba Crescent



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This small coastal strip of modern industry and manufacture and housing is located in the south-west of the borough, south of the Crymlyn Bog, running from the M4, to the east, to the County Borough boundary in the west. It sits at approx 10m AOD on the Broad coastal strip which is dominated by stabilised dunes behind an active dune systems.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This flat lowland lies adjacent to and straddles the A483, Fabian Way corridor, which dominates its character and is the main southern access into Swansea from the M4. It is predominantly covered by development, industry, road and rail connections yet blocks of deciduous woodland help integrate the various elements and create a sense of enclosure in places. The Tank farm against the coastal fringe has been levelled and is reverting to the nature of the adjacent landscape.

A goods railway cuts through the area. Boundary treatment is varied with the development. The area appears discordant with minimal relationship between many of the elements.

The areas mixture of commercial development lack cohesion and are dominated by road corridor. Recent decorative landscape improvements on the road appear poorly maintained though the highway verges are wildlife reserves.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Although there has been a long term deleterious impact on habitats through development of the coastal plain, secondary habitats have developed which are themselves of value. These habitats harbour species such as reptiles; bullfinch, linnet, lapwing, spotted flycatcher, song thrush and great crested newt.

Historic Characteristics

The discovery of a bronze palstave and human skeleton during construction of the industrial works represents the only prehistoric activity. The remaining historical

emphasis is placed on the post-medieval period with the construction of the Tennant Canal and the South Wales Railway through the Pant y Sais valley. The Tennant Canal, which forms the northern boundary of the area, was built by George Tennant in 1820-24 to open up the estate around Neath which he had purchased in 1816. William Kirkhouse engineered the canal from the junction of the Neath Canal at Aberdulais, through the Neath Estuary and Pant y Sais Valley to Port Tennant in Swansea. Traffic was carried on the canal into the 1930's. The South Wales Railway also utilised the Pant y Sais Valley linking Swansea with Chepstow. Built to a survey by Isambard K Brunel in 1845; the railway was finished by 1852, connecting to the national network. The Great Western Railway took over the running of the route in 1863.

Cultural Associations

The Tennant and Glan-y-wern Canals transformed the economic potential of the upper valleys where industry could be established close to sources of energy and raw materials. Current plans for their restoration would enable communities to return their attention to the waterways as part of the diversification of regeneration activities through tourism and leisure use.

To the southern edge of the area the Celtic Trail, part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network passes, its cultural essence based on contemporary notions of healthy leisure lifestyle linking this urban area to the broader landscape.

Key Characteristics

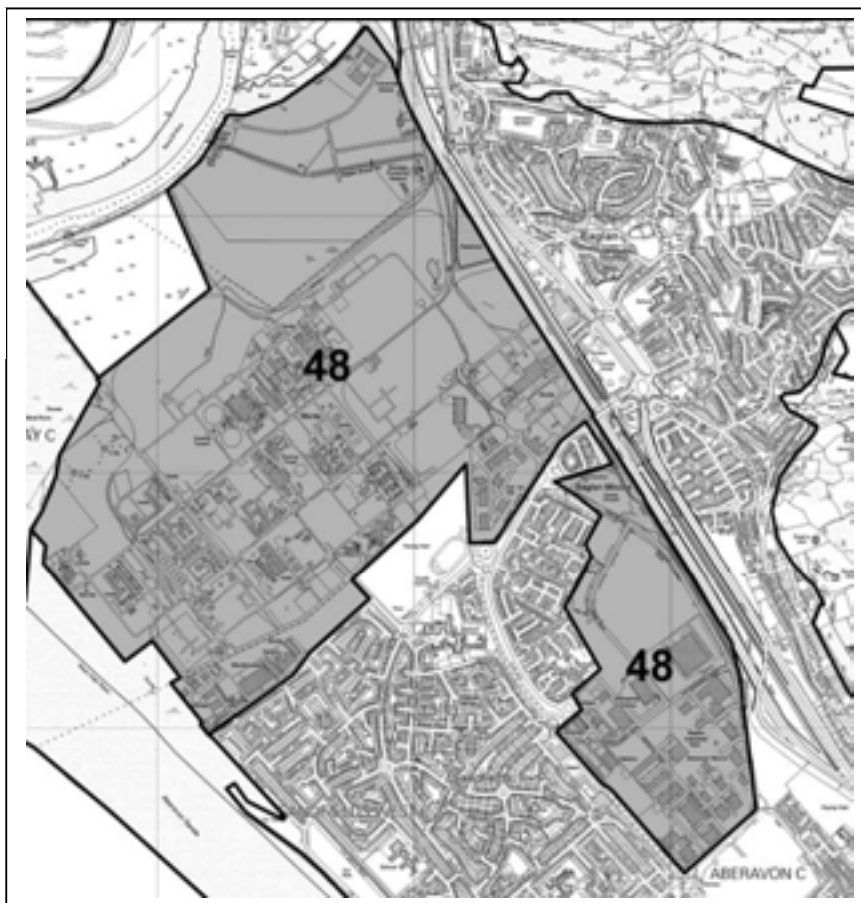
- Industrial development along coastal plain.
- Area straddles the A483 corridor, which is the main southern route into Swansea.
- Goods railway and the Tennant Canal run through the area.
- Significant deciduous woodland cover.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
47	Elba Crescent	57 - l	3 - h	49 - m	10 37	2 - h 17- h 18 - o

CHARACTER AREA 48

Baglan Bay



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This area dominated by commercial, industrial development and hospital complex is situated at northern extent of coastal plain against the River Neath. It sits at approximately 10m AOD on marine alluvium which runs the length of the coastal plain.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

At present the area is dominated by the BP works and GE Power Station, with very large scale industrial structures and chimneys, these are impressive by both day and night although much of the former has been demolished. The area also boasts numerous industrial units, many of high quality design, and large undeveloped sites most noticeably to the north. Sites within the area have recently been significantly landscaped but this has yet to mature. At present the area feels open, exposed and in places, intimidating, due to the undeveloped areas large scale open flat spaces and the presence of BP works. Recent development appears to be well detailed and designed. There are no settlements or public access through the area.

Although the BP plant is a significant element viewed from the M4, the newer developments simply reinforces the impression of a commercial park.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This area of long standing industrial development, on coastal dunes and grasslands contains remnant areas of underlying habitats and recently cleared lands with developing ecological interest, providing a suitable environment for important flora species and fauna such as brown hare, reptiles and lapwing.

Towards the coastal fringes an area of sand dune and littoral habitats prevail, providing a valuable habitat.

Historic Characteristics

Some of these industrial developments are of a late, post World War II date, and in many cases overlie earlier agricultural fieldscapes dating to the Medieval period. While BP Baglan stands on land reclaimed within the last 100-150 years, some earlier industrial features, such as the abortive Neath river railway tunnel are known in the area. Briton Ferry Dock was built between 1858-61 to designs by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The Dock consists of an outer tidal basin, with a total area of about 3ha, and an inner-floating basin of about c4ha. Entry to the basin was through a single lock gate. The gate is the only surviving example of Brunel's experimental work in the development of buoyant lock gates.

Historical importance is placed on the late 19th and 20th century industrial developments. Below ground deposits, such as the known prehistoric peat horizons, have considerable historical value as a preserved archaeological resource.

Cultural Associations

Formally densely packed with now demised metal industry enterprises, strenuous efforts are being made to attract inward investment. This development is typical of the County Borough Council's determination to regenerate its economy and society following wholesale closure of primary industry in the 1980s.

Key Characteristics

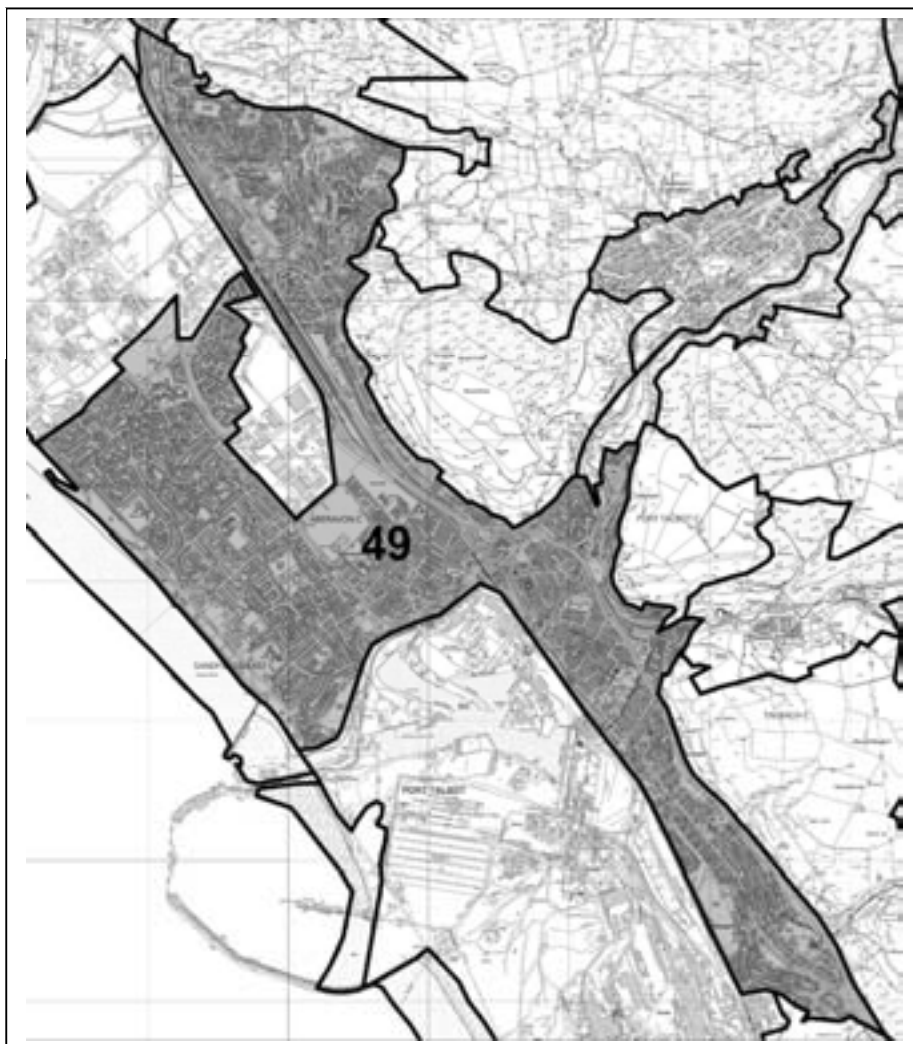
- Large Scale open and industrial landscape on coastal plain.
- Dominance of BP works and GE power station.
- New commercial development dominates much of the area.
- Industrial heritage includes, Briton Ferry Docks.
- Limited tree cover.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
48	Baglan Bay works	60	33 - m	52 - o 54 - h 87 - l	3 7	7 - h 8 - h

CHARACTER AREA 49

Port Talbot, Sandfields, Baglan & Margam



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



These settlements sit on the coastal plain below the scarp slope, stretching from Margam Works in the south to Baglan Works to the north. It is contained to the west by the intertidal Aberavon Sands and to the east by the adjacent scarp slope. It sits at predominantly below 10m AOD, with Baglan rising higher on the adjacent scarp. The area lies on marine alluvium which runs the length of the coastal plain.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The older terraced town centre of Port Talbot extends into Margam with a civic and commercial centre easily distinguishable from the surrounding two-storey housing.

The River Afan runs through the town in a canalised course. Although it is a significant visual element within the Town Centre access to the river course is limited. Views are possible down its course from road bridges and riverside walks are possible towards the river mouth.

Between the steelworks and the BP works lies the vast homogenous Sandfields estate. It abuts the sea at Aberavon seafront where there are a number of leisure related facilities and superb views across Swansea Bay and new housing development have been constructed along the seafront.

On the slopes to the east of the motorway the settlement of Baglan exhibits 20th century housing estates. These climb the slopes of the scarp which has gentler slopes at this point.

The stone terraced dwellings of the older areas of settlement engender a sense of place, which is lost in the newer developments. The presence of the scarp slope and sea add to a strong sense of place and allowing views to both.

The M4 cuts through the settlement, primarily running along the edge of the coastal plain/scarp. The road is elevated above the surrounding settlement, affords rooftop views of the town and facilitating distant views out. Noise, light and visual disruption from vehicles adds to the impact of the motorway as a structure.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This area comprises of a mosaics of houses, garden, light industrial and commercial developments, schools, hospitals and supporting infrastructure. Although generally of comparatively low wildlife value, it is recognised that many once-common woodland and farmland birds now rely on gardens as food sources and for nesting, whilst minor features such as ponds may support a range of plants, invertebrates and amphibians

Historic Characteristics

The name Port Talbot was at first attached to the area further southwest, where tinplate works were established. The flat expanse of 'moor' more than a 2km deep and extending for over 4.8km from Margam to the estuary of the River Neath, provided an ideal site for industry. The modern docks were constructed in 1898, and steelworks established by 1907. The Margam Works began production in 1916. Since the Second World War Port Talbot has been, with Llanwern (Gwent), one of the two major sites for a rationalized steel industry in Wales (Newman 1995).

Situated on the eastern side of the A48, towards the southern end of Port Talbot is the Talbot Memorial Park a small well-preserved urban park (listed Grade II* on the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales). The land was gifted to the Port Talbot Borough Council as a memorial to Emily Charlotte, in 1925 by the trustees of Margam Estate.

Cultural Associations

The relatively modern communications corridor, running along the east of the area, which today contains the M4 motorway, A48 trunk road, and mainline railway, roughly follows the route of the Via Julia Maritima built by the Romans. The corridor developed as a military road, has subsequently influenced the location and development of industry and housing, and with the development of first the A48 and later the M4 transformed the culture of travel and leisure.

The significantly less intrusive Celtic Trail, Route 4 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, passes through the area, its cultural essence based on contemporary notions of healthy leisure lifestyle linking this urban area to the broader landscape.

In the south of the area Port Talbot and the adjacent communities in the Afan Valley represent the core of settlements that owe their development to 19th century industrial activity; the centre of Port Talbot has undergone whole redevelopment in the late 20th century, and the Valley communities are subject currently to regeneration in the form of non-traditional infill housing. The town and Valley communities are distinguished by apparently being separate by the M4, but it passes through the area on an elevated section, so the former historic relationships are not obscured.

Within the Port Talbot area lies Aberafan, the cultural essence of which is based on the survival of the name, and its associations with well-known politicians. Little of the areas historical cultural essence as a mediaeval borough and castle town survives except in a few street names.

To the north of Aberafan lies the Sandfields Estate built for semiskilled and unskilled workers in the 1960s, the estate forms a rectangle of housing development between the former industrial area south of the M4 and Aberavon seafront. The

latter was once a major destination for South Wales miners to spend their leisure time. The presence of the Aquadome cinema and hotels suggests possibilities for future economic vibrancy that has not yet been fully realised. The mouth of the River Afan is presently used by small recreational boats. Further developments are planned to boost tourism and leisure use of the seafront.

Baglan in the north east of the area was originally built as a middle-class linear housing development on a terrace above the communications corridor, the community now sprawls up the hillside. It is essentially a dormitory settlement. The stark white 1930s style house built by a local bookmaker adds a certain wry humour to an otherwise drably respectable area.

Key Characteristics

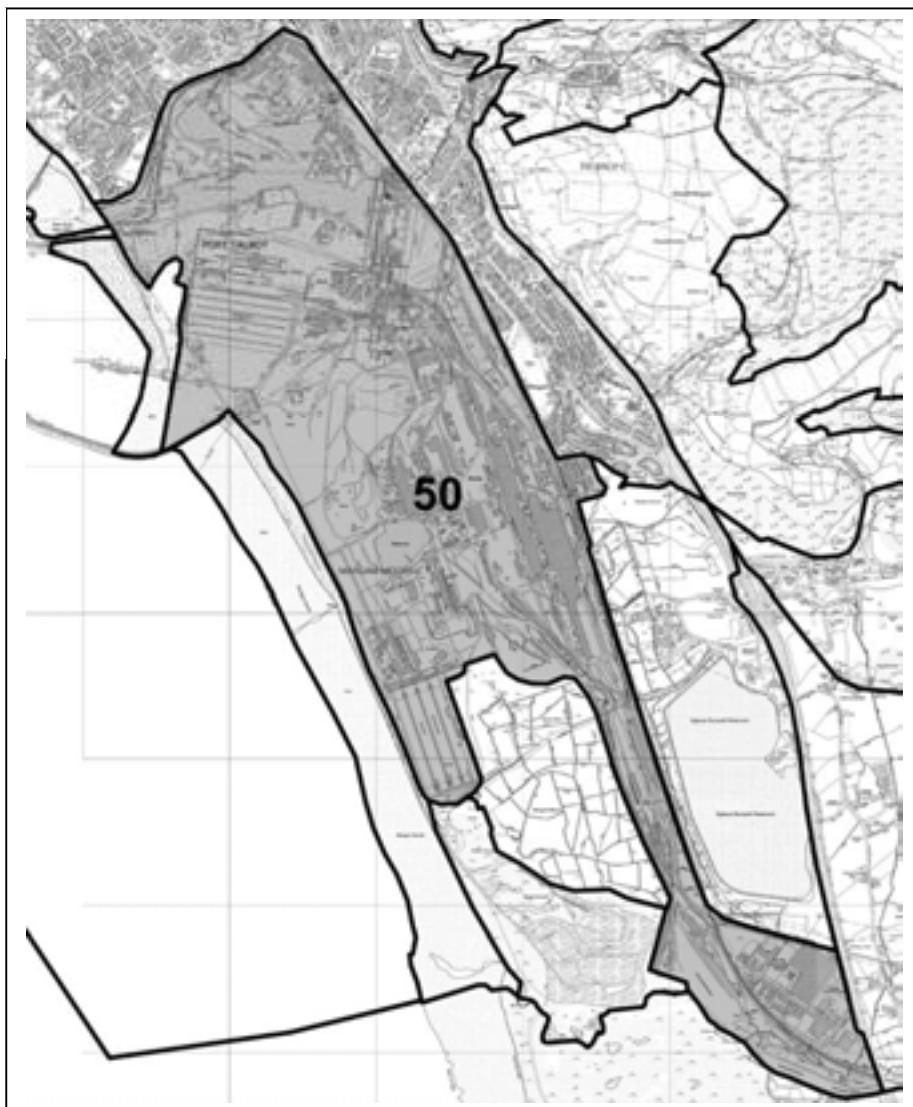
- Industrial settlements lying predominantly on the coastal plain.
- Dominance of M4 through the area.
- The River Afan runs through the town in a highly canalised course.
- Waterfront along Swansea Bay contains leisure related facilities.
- Talbot Memorial Park, a well-preserved urban park is listed Grade II* on the Register of Landscape, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
49	Port Talbot / Sandfields / Margam	61 - l	33 - m	87 - l	49 54	2 - h 5 - h 6 - h 7 - h

CHARACTER AREA 50

Port Talbot Docks & Margam Works



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics



This entirely industrial and port area is situated on the coastal margin of the Margam Moors in the south of the County Borough. It lies between approx 10m AOD and 20m AOD on a geology of marine alluvium fringed by a storm gravel beach.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

Margam Works comprise of large scale heavy industry and Port Talbot docks, a deep water port. The latter having recently been reopened and once again accessed by shipping. The skyline is dominated by the steel works which acts as a significant landmark in the flat landscape. Smaller industrial units lie around the docks and next to the town centre. A network of railways, both passenger and industrial, cross the area including the main London to Swansea line, although there is no public access.

The docks within the area, although large in scale are fairly well hidden from public view. Access to the docks will be transformed with the construction of the pivotal link road which will cut through this area.

The area strong character of the area is dominated by overpowering and noisy heavy industry.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This area of industrial development sitting on former dunes and coastal grassland retains remnants of these habitats, providing a beneficial environment for; brown hare, lapwing and diverse plant species.

Historic Characteristics

During construction of the dock, pre Bronze Age artefacts were recovered representing the earliest activity in the area. A milestone, located to the north of the dock represents the Roman presence.

This was formally part of the holdings of the Cistercian Abbey of Margam during the medieval period and was predominantly agricultural. The area, characterised by low-lying enclosed wetland pasture set on a reclaimed salt marsh area were associated with post-medieval fields, with a typically varied field pattern, these are now either destroyed or buried beneath the industrial works.

The Aberavon Harbour Company was formed in 1834 to build a floating dock to serve the iron and copper industries of Cwmavon. In 1898 the modern docks were constructed and the steelworks by 1907. The dock equipment was hydraulically operated and a reservoir was built 4km to the southeast for this purpose. Iron ore replaced coal as the main traffic through the harbour and by 1972 a new deep-water dock was built for unloading large iron ore carriers.

Cultural Associations

Corus Abbey Steelworks are one of the few remaining steelworks in the UK. They dominate the society and economy of Port Talbot and surrounding urban areas, employing some 3-4000 people, and the seaward landscape visible from the adjacent communications corridor. Their presence has influenced the development of the area.

Key Characteristics

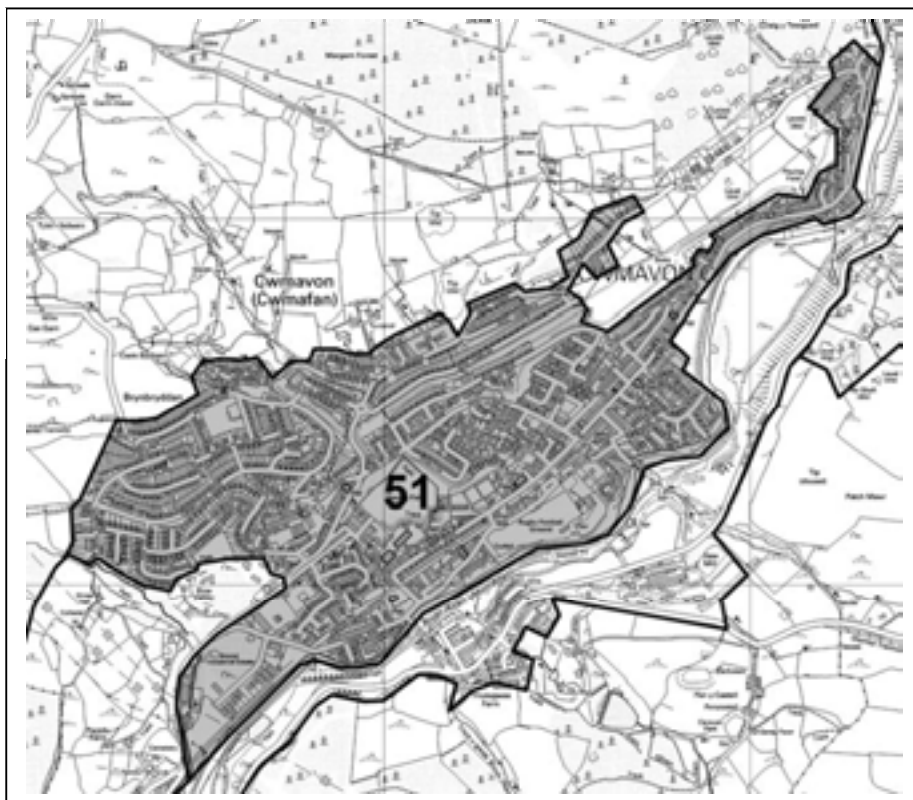
- Industrial area sited on coastal plain
- Dominance of steel works.
- Development of smaller commercial units.
- Docks constitute large expanse of water.

Evaluation

No	Character area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
50	Margam works	62 - m	33 - m	63 - m	6	4 - o

CHARACTER AREA 51

Cwmafan



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

The settlement is situated in the lower Afan Valley, focused on the valley floor with development extending up the northern flank, ranging from approx 30m AOD to approx 120m AOD.

The area lies within an east - west tract of South Wales pennant formation sandstone, dissected by the northeast - southwest U-shaped Afan valley. The valley floor is dominated by a broad floodplain in fluvioglacial gravels.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This area is a postindustrial settlement lying to the north of the River Afan in the lower reaches of the Afan Valley. The core sits in the base of the valley, while newer developments, often of poorer detailing and design, climb up the northern sides of the valley sides. The centre of the town is set back from the river, with a dispersed core. There is only minor vehicle disturbance as the A4107 [the main road up the Afan Valley] lies on the southern side of the river. Industrial development dominates the entrance to the town from the west, while the sprawling new estates have a significant impact when approaching the town from the south. The topography of the valley provides a strong sense of enclosure around the sprawling settlement.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

This area comprises a mosaic of houses, garden, light industrial and commercial developments, schools, and supporting infrastructure and areas of relic woodland. Although generally of comparatively low wildlife value, it is recognised that many once-common woodland and farmland birds now rely on gardens as food sources and for nesting, whilst minor features such as ponds may support a range of plants, invertebrates and amphibians.

Historic Characteristics

The settlement lies in an industrial corridor which follows the Afon Afan and former canal. Cwmavon is the largest settlement in the corridor, it has its origins in the later medieval period; certainly by 1660 the church of St Michael and All Angels existed. The Bryn Railroad was laid down 1839-40 to carry coal from the area around Bryn to the iron and copper works of the English Copper Co. in Cwmavon.

Cultural Associations

The community of Cwmavon is an example of a settlement that owe its development to 19th century industrial activity; as with other Valley communities Cwmavon is subject currently to regeneration in the form of non-traditional infill housing.

Key Characteristics

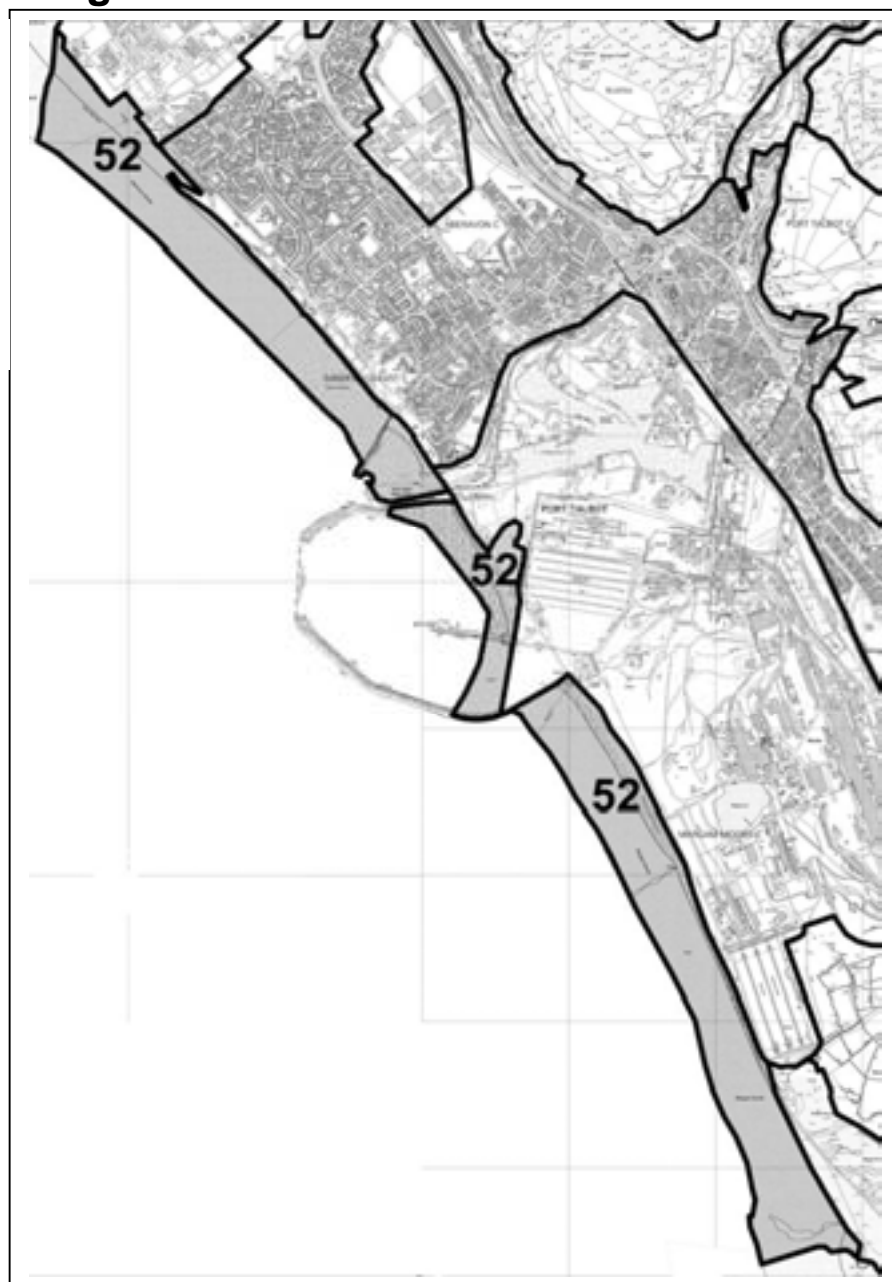
- Post industrial settlement lying predominantly on the northern flank of the Lower Afan Valley, ranging from approx 30m AOD to approx 120m AOD.
- Dispersed core of the settlement sits in the valley floor.
- Topography of valley creates sense of enclosure.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
51	Cwmavon	65 - l	26 - m	89 - l	13	06 - h

CHARACTER AREA 52

Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

Intertidal sandy beach between Swansea Bay and coastal plain.



Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This large sweeping sandy beach on the northern part of this coastal fringe, with promenade adjacent to the settlements of Sandfields and Port Talbot, is frequently accessed by the public and used as a recreation facility creating an active and settled nature. Dunes back the beach to the north, providing a buffer with the BP works, these are under pressure from over use. To the south the inaccessibility of the beach, adjacent to the heavy industry of Margam has an isolated feel.

View out are extensive seaward with the Swansea Bay curving in an elegant broad sweep towards the Mumbles to the west. The Somerset Coast can be seen in the distance across the Bristol Channel.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

The extensive sand dune and littoral habitats fringes the coast. The dune grasses and humid dune slack habitats which cover the less accessible area. These habitats provide suitable environments for a wide variety of flora and fauna including lapwing, brown hare and otter all recognised as priority species on the LBAP.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The main indicators of past human activity are generated by the recovery of find scatters; these include prehistoric Auroch bones (an ancient precursor to modern cattle), Bronze Age socketed axes, Roman quernstones and coins, medieval pins and a rare silver seal, this evidence is either indicative of buried sites and landscapes in the vicinity or washed up finds from shipwrecks found along the coast. Structural remains are limited and generally include modern industrial and military structures of concrete and brick, and several post-medieval shipwrecks. This stretch of coast was a notorious haunt for wreckers and looters during the 18th and 19th centuries. The beach here is also known as the traditional venue for the old game of Brandy, or Brando, played between rival parish teams until superseded by rugby during the 1870's (Roberts 2003b).

Key Characteristics

- Intertidal beach on Swansea Bay.
- Recreation use of Northern extent.
- Extensive views across Bristol Channel and Swansea Bay.
- Dunes under pressure.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
52	Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands	63 - h	33 - m	52 - o	02 57	

CHARACTER AREA 53

Neath Estuary Mouth



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

This estuarial area consists of the River Neath west of the M4 motorway and surrounding low-lying landscape. The geology is of a broad coastal strip of sand dunes; stabilised dunes forming hummocky ground surface and marine alluvium. The area lies below 10m AOD.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

The estuary mouth and adjacent areas are characterised by intertidal water and surrounding maritime landscape. The river opens out into the elegant broad sweep of Swansea Bay, providing superb views beyond this stretch of water, across the Bristol Channel to the Somerset Coast. The Training walls, to maintain the channel and prevent sanding, relate to commercial shipping and define the visual extension of the area out to sea.

Dunes, which abut the intertidal areas, create a harshly undulating landscape with coarse dune vegetation cover. There are no settlements through this area and only minimal access. Extensive views to the scarp slope and hills of the hinterland are facilitated from this area, yet the southern extent is dominated by the adjacent BP works.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

One of the last remaining sections of Swansea Bay coastline which has been unmodified by industrial development. The area consists of dune grassland and dune slack of international significance and is recognised as BAP priority habitats and a significant SSSI designation.

Species present in the area include *Matthiola sinuata*; *Juncus acuta*; *Equisetum variegatum*, *E. hymale*, *Lepidium latifolium*, *Limonium* spp, *Vulpia fasciculata*, *Euphorbia paralias*, *Orobanche minor*; waders, lapwing; brown hare, otter; small blue butterfly; moths, e.g. saltern ear, sand dart, white colon; beetles, e.g. *Eurynebria complanata*, *Cicindela maritime*.



Cockle beds are present to the west of the area.

Historic Characteristics & Cultural Associations

The main indicators of past human activity are generated by the recovery of find scatters from prehistoric bones through to medieval discoveries, this evidence is either indicative of buried sites and landscapes in the vicinity or washed up finds from shipwrecks found along the coast. Structural remains are limited and generally include modern industrial and military structures of concrete and brick, and several post-medieval shipwrecks. This coast has well-established historic associations; it was a notorious haunt for wreckers and looters during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today the waters are used for both leisure boats and commercial shipping.

Key Characteristics

- Intertidal and adjacent maritime landscape at the estuarial mouth of the River Neath.
- Dunes covered with simple, coarse dune vegetation.
- Significant SSSI designation.
- Minimal access.

Evaluation

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
53	Neath Estuary Mouth	2 - m 63 - h 64 - h	3 - h 32 - l	02 - m 13 - h 76 - l	29 41 53	8 - h 17 - h 48 - o

APPENDIX 1

CHARACTER AREA AND RELATED ASPECT AREA TABLES

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
1	Margam Marsh	1 - l Flat open lowland farmland 3 - m Lake	32 - l	73 - h 68 - h	1 56 58	3 - h 4 - h
2	Margam Burrows	2 - l Dunes	32 - l 33 - m	52 - o 63 - m 72 - h	57	3 - h
3	Margam Country Park	4 - m Mosaic rolling lowland	28 - m 29 - h 30 - m	67 - h	16	27 - o (2 - h)
4	Coedhirwaun	5 - m Mosaic rolling lowland	29 - h 30 - m	66 - m 71 - h 74 - l	52	27 - o (2 - h)
5	Coedhirwaun Scarp and open scarp tops	5 - m Mosaic rolling lowland 6 - m Upland grazing 7 - h Wooded hillside and scarp slope	28 - m	66 - m 69 - l	21 52	27 - o
6	Mynydd Bromil, Mynydd Emroch & Mynydd Dinas	6 - m Upland grazing 7 - h Wooded hillside and scarp slope 17 - h Hillside and scarp slopes mosaic	27 - m 28 - m	55 - m 58 - m 59 - l 64 - m 65 - l 66 - m 105 - m 107 - m	16 32 69 70	28 - o 46 - h
7	Mynydd Margam	8 - m Wooded upland and plateau	27 - m 28 - m	107 - m 108 - m	21 31 68	27 - o 28 - o 46 - h
8	Goytre Valley	9 - h Wooded upland valley	27 - m	60 - m 61 - m	31	28 - o
9	Cefn Cethin	10 - l Upland grazing 33 - l Villages	26 - m	61 - m	31 21	26 - m
10	Mynydd Bycham	11 - m Upland grazing	26 - m 27 - m	61 - m 106 - m	31 32	28 - o
11	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna	12 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley 20 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	23 - h 26 - m	38 - h 39 - m 43 - h 44 - m 45 - h 46 - m	13 45	29 - h 30 - h 31 - h 32 - h
12	Mynydd Penhydd	13 - m Wooded upland and plateau	23 - h	101 - m	31 45 60	28 - o
13	Foel Trawsant	14 - m Upland grazing	23 - h	47 - m	60	46 - h
14	Foel Fawr	15 - m Wooded upland and plateau	23 - m	100 - m	45 60 61	28 - h
15	Mynydd y Gelli	16 - h Upland grazing	23 - h	42 - m 44 - m	26	26 - o
16	Briton Ferry Woods	17 - h Hillside and scarp slopes mosaic	15 - h 17 - m 18 - l	37 - m 104 - m	32 50	46 - h

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
17	Feol Fynyddau	18 - m Mosaic upland and plateau	23 - h 24 - m	37 - m 38 - h 44 - m 56 - m 102 - m 103 - m	32 55	46 - h
18	Mynydd Resolfen, Craig-y-Llyn & Mynydd Ynyscorrwg	19 - m Wooded upland and plateau 21 - m Upland moorland 28 - m Open upland valley	21 - o 22 - m 23 - h 24 - m	98 - m 24 - h 27 - l 28 - o 32 - m 34 - h 40 - m 46 - m	26 39	46 - h 33 - h
19	Neath Valley	22 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley 24 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley 25 - l Road corridor 66 - l Urban	17 - m 18 - h 19 - o 20 - h 21 - o 22 - m	21 - o 24 - h 26 - h 31 - h 33 - h 36 - m 37 - m 81 - l 82 - l	39 42 43 72 74	15 - o 16 - o 34 - h 35 - h 36 - h 45 - h 46 - h 47 - o
20	Gnoll Park	24 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	23 - h	24 - h 37 - m 57 - m	17	13 - o
21	Hirfynydd	23 - m Wooded upland and plateau 43 - m Upland moorland	15 - h 17 - m 18 - h	18 - l 19 - m 20 - l 24 - h 31 - h 94 - m 95 - m 96 - m	27 72	26 - o 45 - h
22	Banwen Pyrddin	27 - m Upland grazing	18 - h 19 - o	21 - o 22 - h 23 - l	19	26 - o 45 - h
23	Head of Dulais Valley	29 - l Derelict / waste ground 30 - l Upland grazing 31 - m Upland moorland 33 - l Villages	16 - m 18 - h	15 - h 16 - m 17 - m 20 - l 22 - h 80 - l 95 - m	46 59 75 76	37 - o 45 - h
24	Dulais Valley	32 - h Open / wooded mosaic upland valley 24 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	8 - m 15 - h	15 - h 17 - m 36 - m	20 46 48 74 76	38 - o 45 - h
25	Mynydd Marchywel	34 - m Wooded upland and plateau 38 - h Upland moorland 43 - m Upland moorland	7 - m 8 - m	14 - m 30 - m 93 - m	28 40 74	45 - h
26	Swansea valley	35 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley 36 - l Urban 37 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	14 - h	11 - h 14 - m 78 - l	40 44	02 - h 15 - o 39 - h 42 - h 45 - h

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
27	Mynydd Allt y grug	38 - h Upland moorland	10 - h	5 - m 13 - h	63	44 - h
28	Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd & Cwm Egel	67 - h Open upland valley	9 - m 10 - h	06 - h 08 - h 13 - h 91 - m 92 - m	41	44 - h
29	Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth & Cefn Gwrhyd	39 - h Upland grazing	10 - h	3 - h 8 - h	29 64	44 - h
30	East Pit	40 - l Excavation	13 - m	1 - l	53	43 - h
31	Cwm Aman	33 - l Villages 41 - l Open upland valley	13 - m	02 - m 13 - h 76 - l	29 41 53	43 - h
32	Cwm Gors, Gwaun Cae Gurwen & Abernant	33 - m Villages 42 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	10 - h 13 - m	07 09 13 76	41	43 - h 44 - h
33	Cwm Twrch	44 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	13 - m	04 13	41	43 44
34	Nant Melyn & Bryn-chwyth	45 - m Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	11 - m	13 - h	41 73	44 - h
35	Bryn Mawr, Mynydd Carnllechart, Mynydd y Baran & Mynydd Gellionnen	46 - h Upland grazing	10 - h 11 - m	10 - h 12 - m 13 - h	65 66 67	44 - h
36	Upper Clydach River valley & Lower slopes of Mynydd Gellionnen	47 - h Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	10 - h	9 - h 13 - h	41	44 - h
37	Pontardawe, Rhos, Alltwn & Trebanos	48 - l Urban	5 - m 6 - m 14 - h	11 78 79	44	05 15 39 40
38	Mynydd Drumau	49 - m Wooded upland valley	5 - m	29 - h 36 - m 97 - m 99 - m	40	45 - h
39	Clydach valley, Cilybebyll & Cilffrew	50 - m Open Upland Valley	6 - m 7 - m	35 - m 36 - m 41 - m	25 40 74	41 - h 45 - h
40	Neath	51 - l Urban	2 - m 6 - m 20 - h 23 - h	86 - l 87 - l	18 51 54	02 - h 10 - h 11 - m 12 - m 14 - o 15 - o 20 - m 21 - o 22 - o 23 - m 24 - h
41	Neath Estuary	52 - l Flat lowland mosaic 53 - m River	4 - o 20 - h	26 - h 53 - o	3 7 33 34 35 54	1 - o 2 - h 15 - o 48 - o
42	Former Llandarcy Refinery	54 - m Derelict / waste ground	2 - m	49 - m 50 - l	5	19 - o

No	Character Area	Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
43	Jersey Marine	55 - h Mosaic rolling lowland	2 - m	51 - h	37	18 - o
44	Earlswood	55 - h Mosaic rolling lowland	4 - m	75 - h	37	18 - o
45	Crymlyn Bog	57 - h Lowland wetland	1 - m	48 - o	10 77	15 - o 18 - o
46	Cae'r Hendy	58 - l Mosaic rolling lowland	2 - m	36 - m	05 54	19 - o
47	Elba Crescent	57 - l Flat lowland mosaic	3 - h	49 - m	10 37	2 - h 17 - h 18 - o
48	Baglan Bay works	60 - l Urban	33 - m	52 - o 54 - h 87 - l	3 7	7 - h 8 - h
49	Port Talbot, Sandfields, Baglan & Margam	61 - l Urban	33 - m	87 - l	49 54	2 - h 5 - h 6 - h 7 - h
50	Port Talbot Docks & Margam works	62 - m Urban	33 - m	63 - m	6	4 - o
51	Cwmafan	65 - l Urban	26 - m	89 - l	13	06 - h
52	Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands	63 - h Intertidal	33 - m	52 - o	02 57	-
53	Neath Estuary Mouth	63 - h Intertidal 2 - l Dunes 53 - m River	3 - h 32 - l	2 - m 13 - h 76 - l	29 41 53	8 - h 17 - h 48 - o