

**RHONDDA CYNON TAFF
PROPOSALS FOR DESIGNATION OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February 2007 Bronwen Thomas Landscape Architect was appointed by Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) to carry out a study of the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the county.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1.2 The objective of this study is to identify and justify a revised set of SLAs for use in the Local Development Plan (LDP). Current Planning Policy Wales (Section 5.3.11) states that SLAs should be based on assessment of nature conservation, landscape and geological value of the site, thereby advocating a more holistic approach than the previous assessment for SLAs.

1.3 The set of proposed SLAs put forward in this report therefore aims to be more balanced and more consistent throughout the county than has previously been the case with the current SLA designations.

PROPOSED SLA POLICY

1.3 The proposed SLAs are put forward on the premise that in the developing LDP:

- SLA policy is considered to be necessary over and above other designations and policies relating to the landscape, and that:
- the purpose of the SLA policy will reflect:
 - The need to **protect against inappropriate development** where it is likely that there will be particular pressures for development or change;
 - The need to **conserve and enhance existing distinctive and valued qualities and features** of the landscape to avoid unacceptable deterioration, change or development;
 - The need to **raise awareness** of these distinctive landscapes and thereby **raise standards of design** to bring about positive change.

2.0 CONTEXT

EXISTING SLAs AND THEIR ORIGINS

2.1 The existing SLAs in RCT's Unitary Development Plan were inherited from the Local Plans of the former Cynon Valley, Rhondda and Taff Ely district authorities that make up the current County. There are differences between the three authority areas in their SLA policies as well as in the extent and landscape types that make up these designations.

2.2 In the **Cynon Valley** Local Plan (adopted 2004) the relevant policy is:
ENVP1: No activity or development that would harm the landscape quality of areas defined on the proposals map as special landscape areas will be allowed.
The SLAs are primarily related to the un-forested valley sides.

2.3 In the **Rhondda** Local Plan (adopted 1998) the relevant policies are:
ENV2 – STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE AREAS: *Within the strategic landscape area, development proposals, where acceptable in principle must pay particular regard, in respect of their siting, scale and design, to the special landscape qualities of such areas.*

All the land outside the settlement boundaries is designated as Strategic Landscape Area.

ENV3 – LOCAL LANDSCAPE AREAS is a similar policy that identifies twenty-one smaller areas within the SLA where there are specific high quality landscapes which require particular attention and protection. These relate to semi-natural landscapes, river landscapes, and parkland landscapes.

2.4 In the **Taff Ely** Local Plan (adopted 2003) the relevant policy is:
En5 – Special landscape areas (SLA)
Proposed development that would unacceptably detract from the visual qualities of Special Landscape Areas, including the area of the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service, will not be permitted.

The SLAs here are more varied in landscape character and include, for instance, some, but not all, areas prominent from the M4 and the A470, and open hill tops.

2.5 These existing SLAs have served to assist in protecting against inappropriate development and conserving the landscape quality with particular regard to the visual qualities.

2.6 The methodology used for defining the existing SLAs used of the then Countryside Commission guidance (CCP243) that was accepted practice at the time, taking account of:

- Landscape as a resource
- Scenic quality
- Unspoilt character and integrity
- Sense of place
- Conservation interest and consensus

2.7 This made use of the landscape assessments current at the time, namely the Welsh Development Agency's 'Landscapes Working for Wales' documents, produced between 1995 and 2000. In RCT these documents remain as useful and mainly relevant background information today.

BACKGROUND TO *LANDMAP*

2.8 Since then, the *LANDMAP* Information System of landscape assessment, developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) over the past few years, has been adopted. This aims to provide a consistent database across Wales for the classification and evaluation of landscapes.

2.9 *LANDMAP* divides the landscape into component aspect layers of equal importance which are assessed against a standard set of criteria with regards to character and value. The aspect layers are:

- Geological landscapes
- Landscape habitats
- Visual and sensory landscapes
- Historic landscapes
- Cultural landscapes

2.10 Under each aspect the county is divided into discrete geographical units (aspect areas) which are classified, described and evaluated. All this information is stored on GIS and Collector file electronic databases and can be sorted and manipulated to provide a variety of forms of information.

2.11 One of *LANDMAP*'s uses is to support planning policy development such as SLA designation. This is now being put to the test in the current development of LDPs throughout the Principality, including SLA designation. This use within RCT is discussed in the following chapter.

REQUIRED CHANGES TO SLAs

2.12 It is apparent, therefore, that there have been considerable changes since the original designation of the existing SLAs, namely:

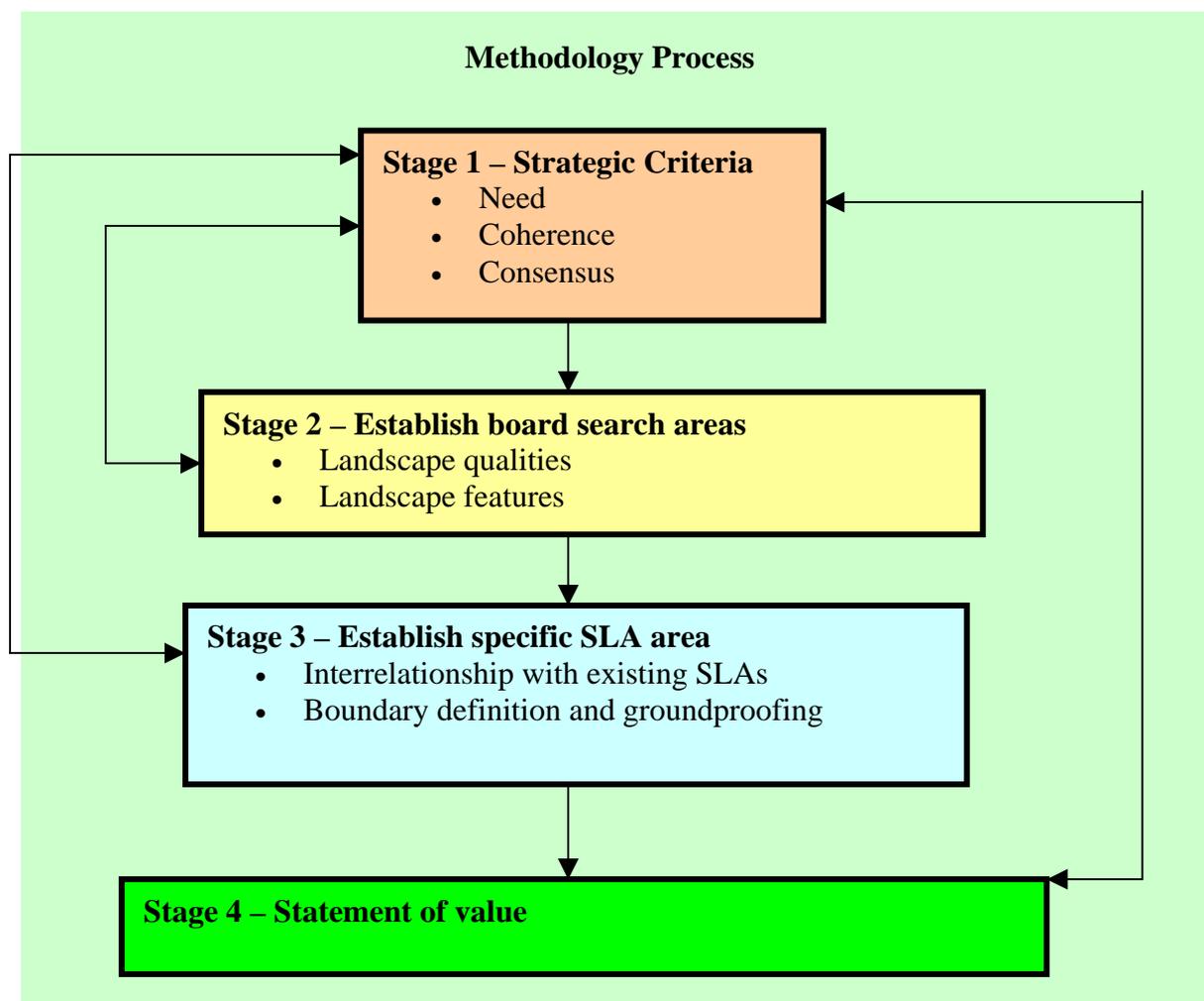
- landscape assessment methodology and therefore the criteria for SLA designation have changed;
- planning policy and local authorities have changed;
- various developments and other changes have taken place or been planned throughout the geographical area of RCT and therefore the need for protection and conservation has changed.

2.13 These factors must be borne in mind when comparing the previous SLAs with those proposed in this study because, in most cases, it is not the landscape itself that has changed.

3.0 DEFINING THE CRITERIA FOR SLAS IN RCT

DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY

3.1 Between March and July 2007 the South East Wales Local Authority consortium (including RCT) engaged consultants TACP to develop criteria for the designation of SLAs. That report (referred to here as the Development of Criteria report) proposed the following iterative model as the process for defining the proposed SLAs:



3.2 The use of *LANDMAP* information is integral to this process at all stages.

- At Stage 1 it is used to define the need for SLAs by reference to the evaluations and recommendations of each of the five aspects that make up the *LANDMAP* Information System (visual & sensory, historic landscapes, landscape habitats, geological landscapes and cultural landscapes).
- At Stage 2 the GIS-mapped evaluations provide the basis for establishing broad search areas. By overlaying of overall evaluations of all the aspect areas, it is intended that the resulting maps indicate where broad search areas occur.
- At Stage 3 a detailed interrogation of the *LANDMAP* information is used to help refine the areas for proposed SLAs.
- The Statement of Value, at Stage 4, uses information gleaned from all the aspects of the *LANDMAP* Information System.

3.3 The use simply of overall evaluations as the way of establishing broad search areas, means that the methodology in the Development of Criteria report may miss out on defining some locally important landscapes. Therefore CCW engaged Environment Systems to develop a more refined method of overlaying all the 35 evaluation criteria of the five aspect layers. The outcome has been digitised maps showing an aggregate of all aspects thereby providing an evaluation score to all areas. The resulting Landscape Value maps appear to give a more balanced overview as a basis to define broad search areas.

USE OF *LANDMAP* INFORMATION FOR SLA DESIGNATION IN RCT

3.4 Both the use of overall evaluations and of all 35 evaluations have been tested against the *LANDMAP* information for RCT. There are several discrepancies between the *LANDMAP* evaluations and previously designated SLAs. This is partly due to the use of *LANDMAP* data being a more holistic approach than previously. Also, the *LANDMAP* data does not identify some areas of important landscape throughout the county. There are, however, other reasons inherent in the *LANDMAP* information for RCT that make it not sufficient alone for providing the basis for identifying the proposed SLAs. These include the following facts:

- On the whole, because RCT formed part of the larger *LANDMAP* study area including Bridgend and Caerphilly, the RCT *LANDMAP* information tends to be too broad brush to provide the detail of information required for the SLA designations.
- The Historic Landscapes aspect was not evaluated except where there are existing non-statutory designations such as inclusion on the Register of Historic Parks & Gardens in Wales. Therefore this aspect makes little or no contribution to the *LANDMAP* methodology for defining broad search areas across RCT.
- It has been found that some large aspect areas (especially visual and sensory, geological landscapes and cultural landscapes) have evaluations relating only to small parts of that aspect area and therefore cannot be considered relevant to the definition of broad search areas.
- The *LANDMAP* evaluations mainly relate what is there now, and do not primarily address future planning needs in the way that SLA designation has to.

3.5 Notwithstanding the above points, the *LANDMAP* data for RCT undoubtedly provides a wealth of information. The evaluations, recommendations and descriptions of the aspect areas have been drawn on to assist in defining the need and extent of all the proposed SLAs. It has also been used as the basis for identifying special landscape features and qualities. Professional judgement and local knowledge has been used to decide on the relevance and tease out the appropriate proposals in these cases.

LOCAL CRITERIA FOR DEFINING NEED IN RCT

3.6 In addition to the *LANDMAP* data, the Development of Criteria report allows for other more specific or local needs to be identified at stage 1, and therefore included at all later stages. It is these specific and local needs that have been found to be the primary criteria for defining effective proposed SLAs in RCT, backed up and refined by the *LANDMAP* data.

3.7 In particular these local criteria are:

Local need criteria	Explanation
Prominence -major	<p>Major prominent hillsides and skylines that are in full view of the busiest parts of RCT are the most likely to provide an overall impression of the county, namely those seen from the main through routes. Arguably, the slopes throughout Taff Vale and adjacent ridges are some of the most important landscapes in Wales, forming for many people the main impression of ‘The Valleys’ when travelling to and from Cardiff. To a lesser extent, the east west ridge of hills in the south of the county, from Craig-yr-Allt in the east, through Llantrisant and to Mynydd Hugh in the west, are important parts of the scene when travelling west from Cardiff, while Hirwaun Common is prominent when viewed from the Heads of the Valleys road.</p>
Prominence - moderate	<p>As the settlements are mainly deep within the valleys, the valley sides, bluffs and ends of ridges that overlook these form a highly visible, ever-present backdrop to all the activities of the valleys. The main valley sides of the Rhondda valleys, and the Cynon valley are prominent, especially where the valleys area steep and narrow. At the junctions of the valleys, at Porth and Pontypridd for example, there are distinct hills overlooking the towns.</p> <p>The lower land near main transport routes is in the foreground for travellers, making it highly visible. Therefore any detrimental changes in these areas are conspicuous, especially where distant views are restricted. Most importantly this occurs on either side of the M4 in particular.</p>
Spectacle – dramatic topography	<p>The most dramatic landscapes relate to the extremes of topography within RCT. For instance, the steep cwms and cliffs, where glaciers have cut deep into the higher parts of the Coalfield, dwarf the settlements and reduce the significance and impact of the post-industrial scars. These are mainly in the north of the county where the plateau it at its highest between the heads of the Rhondda valleys and the Cynon valley.</p>
Spectacle - views	<p>Accessible and well-loved viewpoints, where wide views open up into the valleys and across the uplands into the Brecon Beacons, are as spectacular in RCT as anywhere in South Wales. These are best seen from the roads over the ridges, and from along these ridges, especially between the Cynon and the Rhondda Valleys, with the Graig road from Aberdare to Maerdy and the Rhigos road from Hirwaun to Blaenrhondda, while The Bwlch above Cwmparc offers fine views in all directions.</p>
‘Unspoilt’ areas: Pre-	<p>Areas of irregular fields, bounded by large mixed hedges or drystone walls indicate long-established patterns of farming and often support mosaics of valuable habitats. This type of landscape is most extensive in</p>

<p>industrial patterns of land use</p>	<p>the lower lands in the south of the County, where there has been less disturbance from extraction and industry.</p> <p>There are some large areas of open common land on plateau and ridges, which show a continuity of land management. Remnants of all periods of history, from Neolithic to recent, tend to be preserved on these open landscapes where they have not been disturbed by industrial processes..</p>
<p>‘Unspoilt’ areas: Remoteness & tranquillity</p>	<p>Although nowhere is truly remote within RCT, this is a relative term that can be applied to those areas that are away from the busy-ness of the main valleys even if not separated from them by any great distance. These contrasts between remoteness and busy-ness, in topography and in human activity, are made more poignant by their close proximity and add much to the special sense of place throughout the South Wales valleys.</p> <p>The high plateau and ridges provide extensive remote areas, where extensive views are of other empty uplands.</p> <p>Likewise there are ‘tucked away’ valleys, which are secluded from the activities of the main valleys. These occur to the north of Llantrisant, for instance, and around Ynysybwll.</p>
<p>Vulnerability & sensitivity to change</p>	<p>There is an added need to safeguard many aspects of the landscape where there are particular pressures for development. This not in order to prevent development but to ensure that the siting and design of developments do not have an unnecessarily adverse effect on the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>This occurs around areas of urban growth, especially related to the M4 corridor where buffer zones are proposed.</p> <p>The approaches and surrounds of major development sites throughout RCT are also vulnerable</p>
<p>Locally rare landscape</p>	<p>Those parts of RCT with lowland qualities are locally rare. The ‘Border Vale’, which is a transition zone between the gentle lowland of the Vale of Glamorgan and the harsher uplands of the Valleys, is unlike other landscapes in RCT.</p> <p>This occurs in the south of the county, and extending some way into Bridgend, on both sides of the M4.</p>
<p>Setting for special landscapes</p>	<p>Although boundaries are drawn around various special landscapes, in reality these places do not exist in isolation but are to a greater or lesser degree dependant on the surrounding landscape to enhance their special qualities. It is therefore important to safeguard these surrounding landscapes.</p> <p>The Brecon Beacons National Park covers the north of the county. The adjacent landscape forms a transition and buffer between the wilder land of the National Park and the more settled areas of the upper Cynon Valley</p> <p>Historic parkland usually developed to make the most of the surrounding</p>

	<p>landscape. Therefore the land that is in the main views from parkland and that relates to the approaches is important as setting for the continued appreciation of the historic value. These occur at Talygarn and at Miskin Manor in the south of RCT</p>
	<p>The setting for the Conservation Area of Llantrisant likewise is important to its strategic hilltop position.</p>

3.8 The following larger areas are considered to have no need for SLA designation, or to have a reduced likelihood of need, and therefore have been excluded from any broad search area unless there are other overriding factors.

Brecon Beacons National Park	This covers much of the countryside to the north of the A465 Heads of the Valleys road in the north of the county. SLA designation is not required as this would be duplication, and National Park status is overriding
Country Parks	These areas are currently managed for conservation and do not need additional protection. These occur at Dare Valley Country Park at Aberdare and Barry Sidings Country Park at Trehafod.
Forestry Commission land	There are Forest Plans in place for the management of all Forestry Commission land in RCT for the foreseeable future. Therefore major forestry blocks do not need SLA designation.
Green Wedges & other policies,	There are areas that are best served by other LDP policies that provide strong protective measures which may be more appropriate than SLA designation. For instance, Green Wedge policy where the need to ensure that there is no coalition of settlements is the only reason for retaining or protecting open space.
Current and recent extraction and industry	SLA designation is inappropriate where there are large areas such as working quarries, Tower Colliery (closed 28 th January 2008), and landfill sites, where restoration and other developments are required.
Major development sites	Where there are areas zoned as major development sites in the forthcoming LDP it is more appropriate to apply specific design guidance that SLA designation. This also applies to the Church Village bypass corridor

COHERENCE

3.9 The proposed SLAs need to be of sufficient size for the effective safeguarding, managing and promotion of the special attributes of the area concerned.

3.10 In RCT these proposed SLAs may be made up of differing landscape types, such as open hilltops and their surrounding slopes with fields and valleys. These, however, relate to each other to form a single landscape unit. Where policy and management issues are applicable to only part of an SLA, this is made clear in the Statement of Value. In some cases the proposed SLAs adjoin each other but are considered as separate SLAs due to key difference in need and therefore policy and management proposals.

CONSENSUS

3.11 *LANDMAP* has embedded in its methodology a considerable degree of consensus in its evaluations and recommendations. Further and more detailed agreement to the proposed SLAs will, however, relate to the LDP consultation process in due course. At this current stage consensus is judged by:

- Existing SLA designation – all these have been considered to see if there is sufficient need for continuing designation as SLA
- Areas that include sites with other conservation designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The presence of these designations increases the need for the more holistic SLA designation to safeguard the wider landscape
- Continuity with existing or proposed SLAs in adjoining counties.

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS IN ADJOINING COUNTIES

3.12 **Caerphilly** County Borough lies adjacent to the southern half of RCT's eastern boundary. Using the South East Wales Authorities current methodology, a recent study – 'Designation of Special Landscape Areas' produced by TACP - gives recommendations for SLAs. This has not yet been ratified by Caerphilly Council. Originally there were seventeen SLAs in Caerphilly, this has been reduced to seven, some of which are slightly larger than previous ones. Most of the boundary The Mynydd Eglwysilian SLA and the South Caerphilly SLA abut RCT. An additional designation of Visually Important Local Landscapes, relating specifically to the Visual & Sensory aspect data is currently being considered.

3.13 **Cardiff** City Council boundary is shared by the eastern half of RCT's southern boundary. Cardiff City Council has commissioned a similar study to Caerphilly's. It is expected that the two existing SLAs near or adjacent to RCT will remain as proposed SLAs. These are at Forest Fawr in the east and Garth Hill in the south.

3.14 **The Vale of Glamorgan** lies adjacent to the western half of RCT's southern boundary. The Ely Valley and Ridge Slopes SLAs, as put forward in the Special Landscape Areas Topic Paper in 2004, comes up to RCT's boundary, and the Upper Thaw Valley SLA reaches to within one field of the common boundary.

3.15 **Bridgend** County boundary is common with the southern half of RCT's western boundary. There are no SLAs in Bridgend. The Landscape Character Areas identified as an addition to the *LANDMAP* Information System is used to identify specific management requirements.

3.16 **Neath/Port Talbot** County boundary lies adjacent to the northern half of RCT's western boundary. There are no SLAs identified in Neath Port Talbot. The *LANDMAP* Information System is being used to identify specific landscape

management requirements, alongside other non-statutory designations such as Green Wedges, and countryside policies.

3.17 **Powys** lies to the north of RCT. As all this lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park, SLAs are not relevant.

3.18 **Merthyr Tydfil** County Borough Council lies adjacent to the northern half of RCT's eastern boundary. There are no plans to designate SLAs within Merthyr Tydfil.

4.0 PROPOSED SLAS IN RCT

PROCESS

4.1 The process of defining the set of proposed SLAs for RCT has taken place over an extended period. This has allowed for a carefully considered approach to be adopted. This takes account of the emerging methodologies and use of *LANDMAP* as shown in the Development of Criteria report and the Landscape Value maps. It has allowed for testing against local need criteria and against the application of the methodologies in adjoining local authority areas. While the basis of the iterative methodological process outlined in chart has been adopted for RCT, the emphasis has been given to local need criteria.

4.2 The following activities have informed the definition of the proposed SLAs:

- Review of existing SLAs;
- Attendance and involvement in meetings to review the Development of Criteria report methodology, the use of *LANDMAP* Information System and the Landscape Value mapping;
- Client team meetings and informal discussions at all stages;
- Site visits to gather overall impressions, to check specific issues and refine judgements;
- Mapping of information in a series of overlays showing existing SLAs, areas to be excluded, *LANDMAP* higher evaluated areas, Landscape Value mapping, and local need criteria;
- Careful scrutiny of all *LANDMAP* and other base information;
- Production of report, maps and Statements of Value for all proposed SLAs.

4.3 This process has shown synergies and deviations that have been put to the test. The outcome is that 20no. proposed SLAs are put forward in this study, as detailed in the following Statements of Value.

4.4 As there has not been a full evaluation of the Historic Landscapes aspect, the proposed SLAs will be reviewed by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) to ensure that due consideration is given to the overall historic value of the landscape. A complete *LANDMAP* evaluation of the Historic Landscapes aspect for RCT is not feasible within the timescale required for the LDP process.

STATEMENTS OF VALUE

4.5 The Statements of Value have been prepared using the format agreed in the Development of Criteria report. It is assumed that boundaries shown on the accompanying maps may require detailed refinement by the local authority as the LDP policy framework develops.

4.6 The accompanying notes with each Statement of Value are intended to elucidate the current situation and inform future decisions relating to the relevance or details of the proposed SLAs.

4.7 It must be understood that alterations may also be required when the proposed SLAs have been reviewed by GGAT to give a perspective on the Historic Landscapes.

LIST OF PROPOSED SLAs

1. LLANHARRY SURROUNDS
2. TALYGARN SURROUNDS
3. ELY VALLEY AT MISKIN
4. COED-YR-HENDY & MWYNDY
5. LLANTRISANT SURROUNDS
6. MYNYDD Y GLYN & NANT MUCHUDD BASIN
7. MYNYDD HUGH & LLANTRISANT FOREST
8. EFAIL ISAF, GARTH & NANTGARW WESTERN SLOPES
9. CRAIG YR ALLT
10. TAFF VALE EASTERN SLOPES
11. TREFOREST WESTERN SLOPES
12. MYNYDD Y CYMMER
13. MYNYDD TROS-Y-RHIW SLOPES
14. LLWYNCELYN SLOPES
15. CWM CLYDACH
16. CYNON VALLEY NORTHERN SLOPES
17. CWM ORCI
18. RHONDDA FAWR NORTHERN CWMS & SLOPES
19. HIRWAUN COMMON, CWM DARE & CWM AMAN
20. BRECON BEACONS EDGE AT LLWYDCOED

[Paper copies of maps have been sent separately.](#)
[Statements of Value to follow on separate file.](#)

LLANHARRY SURROUNDS

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In the south west corner of the county, bounded by the M4 and the edge of Llanharry to the south. This area stretches from Felindre in the west to development at Trecastell in the east. To the north there is Llanharan and the adjacent major development site on reclaimed land. The southern edge of Coed Trecastell forestry defines the north eastern boundary.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Eastern two-thirds = moderately high values Llanilid area = less important values
Prominence	Western part viewed from M4
'Unspoilt'	Mainly 'Border Vale' farmland in close proximity to settlement and restored land
Vulnerability	Adjacent to major development – film studios, and Felindre Road development Buffer zone to M4
Rarity	Part of 'Border Vale'

COHERENCE:

Continuous area of lowland farmland, bounded by development

CONSENSUS:

Untested

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES/FEATURES

- Part of Border Vale, with rolling lowland farmland with irregular shaped fields, bounded by hedges.
- Seen from M4, it appears as pleasant small scale rural character despite growing number of large scale developments nearby.
- Mainly improved grassland, but also containing mosaic of primary habitats – purple moorgrass, unimproved grassland, small areas of native broadleaf woodland, large mixed hedges with spindle and dogwood.
- Includes the remains of last iron ore mine in Wales at Llanharry, of geological, historic and cultural interest.
- Ringwork and adjacent church at Llanilid of historic interest

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Protect integrity of farmland from pressures for development on all sides, and piecemeal changes of use.
- Protect/enhance woodland screen around major development site, including for views from M4.
- Conserve integrity of Llanilid.
- Protect/conserves areas of priority habitats, encourage take up of Tir Gofel.
- Protect remains of iron ore mine for geological, historic and cultural value
- Conserve large mixed hedges

LLANHARRY SURROUNDS LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	572	All of SLA and wider	Mod
LH	101	Most of SLA	Mod
	093	Part around Trecastell	O/S
GL	049	South east part - part of more extensive area including hills to north	O/S
	050	West – Llanilid	Mod
	048	South part	Mod
HL	295	Throughout and wider	-
CL	025	All SLA and wider	High

TALYGARN SURROUNDS

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In the extreme south of RCT, with the M4 to the north and the County boundary to the south. It stretches from near Junction 32 in east to Forest Wood Quarry in west.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Talgarn = high value Remainder of area = moderately high value
Prominence	Viewed from M4
'Unspoilt'	Farmland and parkland mainly undisturbed by industrialisation
Vulnerability	Pressure for development from Brynsadler, at Talgarn and adjacent quarry. Buffer zone to M4
Rarity	'Border Vale' landscape
Setting	Includes designed landscape of Talgarn and its setting

COHERENCE:

All similar rolling 'Border Vale' farmland merging with Vale of Glamorgan to the south

CONSENSUS:

- Talgarn parkland is existing SLA
- Talgarn on Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES/FEATURES

- Part of Border Vale, with lowland farmland with irregular shaped fields, bounded by hedges.
- Seen from M4 as part of Vale of Glamorgan.
- Generally south-facing, falling away to small stream that forms county boundary.
- Small areas of native broadleaf woodland, large mixed hedges with spindle and dogwood.
- Southern part is significant fen, wet woodland and purple moorgrass habitats
- Talgarn mansion, now converted to housing, with its woodlands and parkland, are central to area.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Protect/conserves/restore woodlands and parkland features, vistas, entrances and approaches relating to Talgarn.
- Protect/conserves areas of priority habitats, encourage take up of Tir Gofel.
- Protect fen areas from drainage improvements
- Conserve large mixed hedges
- Ensure adjacent quarry and associated degraded land does not encroach.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Enlargement of existing SLA to include Talgarn setting, and land prominent from M4

TALYGARN SURROUNDS LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	572	All of SLA	Mod
LH	101	Most of SLA	Mod
	103	South part of SLA	Mod
GL	049	SLA is part of more extensive area including hills to north	O/S
HL	987	Talygarn	-
	295	Rest of SLA	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

ELY VALLEY AT MISKIN

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In the south of RCT, immediately north of M4, and west of A4119, bounded by the settlements of Pontyclun and Miskin to west and north west, and Miskin Quarry to the north.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Eastern part (Miskin Manor) = moderately high value Remainder of area = less important value
Prominence	Eastern part viewed from M4 Viewed from railway main line
‘Unspoilt’	Secluded river valley and contrasting with adjacent settlements and M4
Vulnerability	Vulnerable to encroachment of settlements. Heavily used locally for informal recreation
Rarity	Only area of ‘lowland’ river valley in RCT
Setting	Includes designed landscape of Miskin Manor and its setting

COHERENCE:

Ely river and valley floor and gentle sides

CONSENSUS:

Area is existing SLA

Miskin Manor is in Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Small-scale flat-bottomed river valley, with many meanders and variety.
- Wetlands on valley floor, and areas of woodland on slopes.
- Small areas of dry and wet woodland, and the river adds biodiversity value.
- Above the valley sides there are pockets of farmland with improved grassland
- Immediately adjacent to extensive areas of housing and forming attractive setting for Miskin
- Woodlands and riverside locally popular for walking and informal recreation.
- Main London railway line passes through, with pleasant views of area from trains
- Miskin Manor Hotel, with gardens and parkland, and river setting, in full view of M4

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Retain variety of woodland, wetland and farmland as buffer between settlements and M4
- Retain field buffer between Miskin and quarry
- Enhancement of access to woods and riverside
- Remove alien species along river corridor (Balsam and knotweed)
- Conserve parkland at Miskin Manor
- Potential for Marsh Fritillary butterflies habitat

OTHER COMMENTS:

Previous SLA extended to include hillside adjacent to Miskin Quarry as this is important to the setting and backdrop of Miskin.

ELY VALLEY AT MISKIN LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	572	Miskin Manor and further east (extensive area)	Mod
	999	All settlement and adjacent land extending northward	Low
LH	101	Most of SLA	Mod
	104	River and immediate surrounds	Mod
GL	049	SLA is part of more extensive area including hills to north	O/S
HL	751	Miskin Manor	-
	295	Rest of SLA	-
CL	056	Part of built-up area	High
	033	Miskin Manor	O/S

COED-YR-HENDY & MWYNDY

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In the south of RCT, to both west and east of A4119, and south of A473 Pontyclun bypass. Bounded by Y Pant school and industry to west and recent development at Miskin to south west

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	East of A4119 = Moderately high values West of A4119 = less important values
Prominence	Wooded hillside is moderately prominent from Llantrisant
'Unspoilt'	Mainly undisturbed fields and woods
Vulnerability	Vulnerable to spread of developments on Clun valley floor and over skyline from south.
Setting	Part of setting for Old Llantrisant (Conservation Area) and for views from the town

COHERENCE:

Two adjoining landscape types - north-facing slopes and valley floor

CONSENSUS:

Western part is existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Small-scale flat valley bottom, and north-facing slopes of River Clun.
- Areas of dry and wet woodland, including Coed-yr-Hendy.
- Immediately adjacent to areas of housing and busy roads, retail developments and industry.
- The area forms an attractive setting for Pontyclun and Talbot Green.
- Coed-yr-Hendy is important part of views south from Llantrisant
- Includes cemetery with green-winged orchid habitat
- River adds biodiversity value, plus rhos pasture habitats on valley floor

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Protect against development pressures on valley floor and from Mwyndy sites
- Retain as buffer between settlements, and as important part of view from Llantrisant
- Conserve/protect primary habitats relating to river, marshy grassland and wet woodlands
- Enhancement of pedestrian access to woods and riverside
- Remove alien species along river corridor (Balsam and knotweed)
- Potential for Marsh Fritillary butterflies habitat

OTHER COMMENTS:

Green Wedge may be more appropriate designation

COED-YR-HENDY & MWYNDY LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	572	East of A4119	Mod
	999	West of A4119 – settlement area	Low
LH	101	Slopes to south	Mod
	093	Woods and river valley	O/S
GL	049	Eastern part - part of more extensive area including hills to west	O/S
	032	Western part of SLA	Mod
HL	995	Throughout	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

LLANTRISANT SURROUNDS

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

North and east of Llantrisant, from edge of Llantrisant Business Park and edge of Llantrisant Common in the north, to the edge of Beddau in the east and Llantrisant in the south. Extending eastward to include ridge hills as far as Rhiwsaeson.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	North of Llantrisant = less important values Eastern ridge = moderately important values
Prominence	Ridge hills seen from M4
Spectacle	Fine viewpoints from ridge hilltops
'Unspoilt'	Traditionally managed commonland,
Vulnerability	Eastern part vulnerable to developments relating to Church Village bypass
Rarity	Lowland common
Setting	Setting for important Conservation Area of Llantrisant

COHERENCE:

Row interlinked landscapes types of ridge hills with fields and open common on lower land

CONSENSUS:

Mainly existing SLA

Partly Conservation Area and SSSI (Llantrisant Common) and Green Wedge

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Line of ridge hills on either side of Llantrisant, rising steeply from Ely and Clun valleys.
- Part of the east/west ridge that forms the border between Vale and Valleys.
- This ridge forms an important skyline feature from M4, including conspicuous hilltop town with church and castle, and well-preserved large hillfort on eastern hill.
- The Ridgway Walk crosses from west to east.
- The hills are mainly areas of irregular fields, large mixed hedges, with winding lanes alongside.
- Lower-lying Llantrisant Common to the north has important historic and cultural connections to Llantrisant
- Llantrisant Common and other sites are habitats for Marsh Fritillary butterfly

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Retain as buffer/separation zone for Llantrisant, with no additional developments
- Conserve skyline
- Management of Llantrisant Common to include primary habitat management
- Preserve/conservate hillfort
- Conserve field patterns and large mixed hedges

OTHER COMMENTS:

Llantrisant Conservation Area and SSSI may mean that west part of this SLA is considered unnecessary.

North east boundary relates to proposed Church Village bypass alignment

LLANTRISANT SURROUNDS LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	633	Llantrisant Common	Low
	572	Ridge to east	Mod
LH	093	Llantrisant Common	O/S
	101	Ridge to east	Mod
GL	032	SLA is part of more extensive area	Mod
HL	649	Llantrisant Common	-
	187	Ridge to east	-
CL	028	Llantrisant Common	High
	056	Ridge to east	High

MYNYDD GLYN AND NANT MUCHUDD BASIN

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

To the east of the upper Ely valley and south of the Rhondda. Bounded by the edge of Tonyrefail and roads of the Ely valley to the west, the edge of Porth and lower Rhondda settlements to the north, with Graig Road/Pen-y-Coedcae Road to the east and Llantrisant Business Park and Common to the south.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Open west part of Mynydd Glyn = moderately important values Remainder of area = less important values
Prominence	Mynydd Glyn is prominent backdrop to Lower Rhondda valley
‘Unspoilt’	Nant Muchudd basin is unspoilt by industrialisation, with old field patterns
Vulnerability	Vulnerable to incremental changes because currently undervalues
Rarity	Secluded ‘Border Vale’ landscape of Nant Muchudd basin
Setting	Nant Muchudd Basin is important for views and setting of Llantrisant (Conservation Area)

COHERENCE:

Two contrasting but inter-related landscape types of hill and basin

CONSENSUS:

Mynydd Glyn is existing SLA
Nant Muchudd basin - untested

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Largest area in RCT of un-industrialised lowland farmland rising to open and forested hill of Mynydd Glyn to north.
- In basin there is a very attractive network of narrow winding lanes, small irregular fields bounded by large mixed hedges and many trees, scattered farms, unlike any other part of RCT.
- This forms a major part of the wide views north from Llantrisant although secluded from all other areas
- The basin has many areas of unimproved grassland primary habitats – candidate SSSI
- Attractive north-flowing Nant Gelliwion valley leading into Pontypridd, with woodland SSSI.
- Stone walls and open grassland on higher slopes.
- Steep northern sides of Mynydd Glyn are the dominant backdrop to Porth, Trehafod and Pontypridd, with steep, wild rocky areas providing sharp contrasts to the settlements
- There are varied and extensive views from Mynydd Glyn to the Rhondda Valleys and across the coalfield plateau to the north, and south to the Llantrisant ridge
- Forestry with extensive felled areas and variety reaches down the eastern sides of Mynydd Glyn
- Traditional smallholdings and allotments on steep northern slopes overlooking Pontypridd and Trehafod

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Ensure no large-scale developments to spoil integrity and seclusion of basin and surrounding slopes
- Conserve primary habitats relating to unimproved grassland
- Conserve old patterns of farmland, with large hedges and many trees
- Conserve patterns of smallholdings and associated uses on the northern edges of Mynydd Glyn for cultural interest
- Continue to increase variety within forestry

OTHER COMMENTS:

Llantrisant Common and surrounds defined as separate but adjoining SLA because very different needs and character

MYNYDD GLYN AND NANT MUCHUDD BASIN LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	142	Mynydd Glyn and north part	Mod
	633	Valleys	Low
	966	Western part	Mod
LH	089	Mynydd Glyn open area	High
	095	Mynydd Glyn forestry	Low
	094	Most of SLA slopes	Mod
	093	Valley bottoms	O/S
GL	029	Mynydd Glyn	Mod
	032	Southern part of SLA	Mod
HL	648	Mynydd Glyn	-
	649	Rest of SLA	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

MYNYDD HUGH & LLANTRISANT FOREST

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

On the western edge of RCT, north of Llanharan and the A473, extending eastward to the lower slopes of the Ely valley between Talbot Green and Tonyrefail. The northern boundary is the edge of development land in the valley south of Gilfach Goch.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Western third = less important values Remainder of area = mix of moderate and moderately high values
Prominence	Prominent from M4, especially where windfarm is on skyline
Spectacle	Windfarm Fine viewpoints along ridge
Vulnerability	Encroachment of development sites on lower land to south, west and north
Rarity	Includes oldest area of Forestry Commission land in Wales
Setting	Includes Llanharan House parkland setting

COHERENCE:

All part of Vale/Valley border ridge

CONSENSUS:

Majority of area is existing SLA, except lower slopes to Llanharan and to Ely valley

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Prominent ridge of hills with extensive rounded tops, with forestry to the east, forming part of the east/west ridge that marks the border between Vale and Valleys
- Series of small more enclosed valleys to north and south.
- Historic features of Beacons and ruined church on ridge top.
- The windfarm is prominent feature on the skyline from both north and south.
- This ridge forms an important skyline feature from M4, and Vale of Glamorgan.
- Ridgeway walk passes west/east through area
- There are extensive and varied views from the ridge, over the Vale of Glamorgan and Bristol Channel to the south and over the coalfield plateau to the north
- Llantrisant Forest of historic interest as first Forestry Commission forest in Wales, with attractive age/species structure, popular for biking and walking
- Most of remainder of area is fields with hedges, with improved grassland on upper slopes and some rhos pasture on the northern slopes and valleys
- No roads through.
- Primary habitats relating to un-improved marshy grassland and rhos pasture, mainly in northern slopes and basins.
- Series of tips and reclaimed land in southern small valleys, becoming wooded.
- Llanharan House and grounds in the south are part of attractive lower slopes.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Conserve skyline
- Restrict encroachment of development from the Ely valley and Gilfach area

- Conserve/protect primary habitats, encourage Tir Gofal for grasslands
- Retain/enhance variety and historic interest of forestry
- Investigate lapwing habitat potential on open upper slopes

OTHER COMMENTS:

MYNYDD HUGH & LLANTRISANT FOREST LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	436	Most of SLA	High
	572	Valley at Brynna	Mod
LH	094	Tops and upper slopes	Mod
	100	Llantrisant Forest	High
	099	Valley at Llanharan	High
	028	Cwm Llanbad	High
GL	093	Llanilid valley	O/S
	032	Most of SLA	Mod
HL	042	Western part	Mod
	888	All SLA and some wider area	-
CL	025	All SLA and further south	High

EFAIL ISAF, GARTH AND NANTGARW WESTERN SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

On the southern edge of RCT, adjacent to Garth Hill, from the edge of Treforest Industrial Estate in the east to Efail Isaf in west. Line of proposed Church Village bypass defines the north east edge. Comprising two distinct parts – larger western part is rolling plateau, eastern part is Taff Vale sides and floor.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Taff valley floor and top of valleys sides = less important values Remainder of area = moderately important values
Prominence	Eastern part is prominent wooded valley slopes seen from A470 and backdrop to Treforest Industrial Estate.
'Unspoilt'	Western part is farmland generally undisturbed by industrialisation
Vulnerability	Western part is vulnerable to spread of development relating to Efail Isaf and Church Village bypass Buffer zone between Garth Hill ridge and Church Village/Efail Isaf
Setting	Western part is setting for prominent Garth Hill SLA (Cardiff)

COHERENCE:

Two inter-linked landscape types. Mainly rolling farmland of coherent character, plus distinct wooded slopes and valley floor to east.

CONSENSUS:

Includes existing SLA
Adjacent to proposed Garth Hill SLA (Cardiff)

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Attractive farmland on rolling plateau, with irregular fields mainly of improved grassland, large hedges, scattered farms and winding lanes
- This farmland forms the foreground in views from popular Garth Hill to the south
- Wooded slopes to Taff Vale are important part of views from A470 and Treforest Industrial Estate.
- These form part of the mainly wooded western sides of Taff Vale, all of which are very important to the overall impression of the Valleys from the major north/south route through Wales.
- Mix of broadleaf and coniferous woodlands

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Maintain farmland character of plateau
- Restrict spread of development around Efail Isaf
- Management to conserve wooded slopes
- Conserve hedges and small woods

OTHER COMMENTS:

Existing SLA has been extended to Church Village bypass to protect farmland from indiscriminate development, exact alignment to be confirmed.

EFAIL ISAF, GARTH AND NANTGARW WESTERN SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	572	All of SLA and wider	Mod
LH	101	Farmed plateau	Mod
	096	Wooded slopes of Taff	High
GL	032	Plateau	Mod
	015	Taff valley	Mod
HL	994	Throughout	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

CRAIG YR ALLT

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In the extreme south east corner of RCT, adjacent to boundary with Caerphilly to the east and Cardiff to the south east. Bounded by edge of Taff's Well to west and A468 Caerphilly Road to north.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Ridge tops and upper slopes = moderately high values Lower slopes and valley = High values
Prominence	Craig yr Allt prominent from A470, Gwaelod-y-Garth and Taff's Well
Spectacle	Fine views of Taff Vale from ridge top
'Unspoilt'	Open common and surrounding fields are unspoilt by industrialisation
Vulnerability	Eastern and northern parts are vulnerable to encroaching development along main roads

COHERENCE:

Well defined landscape of prominent ridges and valleys as continuation of Caerphilly Mountain ridges to east and south

CONSENSUS:

All area is existing SLA

Adjacent to proposed Forest Fawr SLA in Cardiff and Caerphilly South SLA in Caerphilly

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Craig-yr-Allt rises steeply from Taff Vale, forming prominent enclosing landform opposite Garth Hill
- The area is all part of the continuing series of ridges to east, and across the Taff valley to the west
- Craig-yr-Allt is open common, managed by RCT Countryside Service.
- Fine views into Taff Vale from Craig-yr-Allt
- Southern ridge is of limestone, with softer profile, and golf course on top
- In the intervening valleys and slopes there are relatively large areas of broadleaf woodland interspersed with fields
- Taff Trail cycleway passes through area, on lower slopes
- Small areas of tips along the valleys are now well integrated with woodland
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland
- Some piecemeal encroachment of development on edges of Taff's Well and from Caerphilly

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Continued management of Craig-yr-Allt for biodiversity and public access, co-ordinating with Caerphilly Mountain recreational areas in adjacent counties.
- Control bracken encroachment on Craig-yr-Allt and adjacent fields
- Investigate possible fritillary habitat
- Management of various areas of woodland
- Restrict development around edges

- Ensure no significant geomorphic features of the limestone lost to quarrying or development

OTHER COMMENTS:

Duffryn Frwyd Nursing Home north of A468 which was in previous SLA has been excluded – inappropriate designation and now housing development

CRAIG YR ALLT LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	271	All of SLA	Mod
LH	105	Craig-yr-Allt	Mod
	106	Valley and slopes	High
GL	013	Southern slopes	High
	014	North part of SLA	O/S
HL	596	All part of Caerphilly ridge to east and south	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

TAFF VALE EASTERN SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

Along eastern edge of RCT, from Nantgarw in the south to A472 in the north, with the edges of the settlements and roads in the Taff Vale forming the western boundary.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Open Cefn Eglwysilan = moderately important value Fields above Cilfynydd tips = moderately important value Remainder of area = less important value
Prominence	Hillsides and tops are prominent from A470, and all the settlements of Taff Vale Cilfynydd tips in north are particularly prominent from A470
'Unspoilt'	Mainly pre-industrial patterns of farmland and open tops, immediately adjacent to busy Taff Vale
Vulnerability	Incremental developments on edges of settlements Unsuitable recreational uses

COHERENCE:

Continuous stretch of main valley side plus hilltops.

CONSENSUS:

Includes three existing SLAs

Adjoins Caerphilly's proposed Mynydd Eglwysian SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Long stretch of rural hillsides in contrast to densely developed valley floor and valleys to west.
- All area plays important role in overall impression of the South Wales Valleys as gained from the A470, the major north/south route through Wales.
- Gradation of small-scale irregular fields and woods on lower slopes, to larger fields on shallower mid slopes, to open land on tops, linked by steep winding lanes.
- High point of Cefn Eglwysilan with prominent masts on skyline acting as landmarks.
- Various earthworks relating to historically important medieval estate of Senghenydd on ridge top
- Prominent Cilfynydd tips in north overlook Taff Vale. Unreclaimed and steep with sculptural forms, they are an important reminder of industrial past, now becoming attractively covered with gorse and heather.
- In places the upper edge of the valley settlements are starting to creep up the hillside intrusively.
- Taff Trail cycleway passes through lower part of the area

KEY POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT:

- Conserve skyline
- Protect/preserve/conservate historic features relating to Senghenydd

- Bracken control on open common land
- Introduction of Tir Gofal for conservation of grasslands
- Restrict edge of settlement developments, especially on steep sites
- Recreational and other rural developments to be in keeping with conspicuous hillside location.
- Conserve Cilfynydd tips in generally unreclaimed condition for historic/cultural and visual value.

TAFF VALE EASTERN SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	143	All slopes and extensive area eastward	Mod
	317	Mynydd Eglwysilian and eastward	High
LH	097	Lower slopes in north	Mod
	098	Lower slopes in south	Mod
	141	Mynydd Eglwysilian	High
	133	Higher slopes in north	High
GL	015	All Taff Vale	Mod
HL	448	Most of slopes	-
	878	Mynydd Eglwysilian	-
	290	Upper slopes in north	-
	977	Cilfynydd Tips	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

TREFOREST WESTERN SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

South of Pontypridd and north of Church Village, with the edge of Treforest and the railway to the east, and farmland to the west

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Taff valley side = moderately important value Remainder of area = less important value
Prominence	Eastern part prominent from A470, Treforest and Taff Vale forming backdrop to Treforest
‘Unspoilt’	Western part generally unspoilt farmland Slopes of native woodland
Vulnerability	Incremental extensions of settlement edge around University of Glamorgan Narrow bands of woodland vulnerable in south around Church Village bypass junction

COHERENCE:

Two inter-related parts

CONSENSUS:

Eastern part is existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Attractive farmland on rolling plateau, with irregular fields mainly of improved grassland, large hedges, and scattered farms
- Wooded slopes to Taff Vale are important part of views from A470 and Treforest.
- These form part of the mainly wooded western sides of Taff Vale, all of which are very important to the overall impression of the Valleys from the major north/south route through Wales.
- Mix of broadleaf woodlands and open common land on slopes
- Unclear edges with areas of derelict land around northern edge at Treforest

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Maintain farmland character of plateau
- Restrict spread of development around Ton-teg/Church Village
- Protection of woodland strips at Ton-teg relating to Church Village bypass development
- Management to conserve wooded and open slopes and skyline from Taff Vale
- Conserve hedges and small woods
- Improvements to public access from University of Glamorgan and Treforest edges.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Extent westward to be agreed. Needs to extend beyond immediate top of Taff Vale slopes to safeguard views along skyline.

TREFOREST WESTERN SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	142	Throughout	Mod
LH	096	Wooded slopes	High
	094	Farmed plateau	Mod
GL	015	Throughout	Mod
HL	649	Throughout	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

MYNYDD Y CYMMER

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

Immediately west of Porth, in the centre of the county, on the southern edge of the Rhondda fawr. Bounded all round by the settlements of Porth, Dinas, Willianstown and Trebanog.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	All area = less important value
Prominence	Overlooking Porth and prominent from surrounding valley settlements
'Unspoilt'	Wild craggy character, in contrast with valleys

COHERENCE:

Single isolated hill

CONSENSUS:

All existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Abrupt steep-sided hill with crags and scree slopes forming great contrasts to the settlements all around.
- Prominent from all round, located at turning/meeting point of several valleys, and forming wild backdrop to all the valley settlements.
- Open common land tops with very limited access.
- Areas of blanket bog on tops
- Allotments and smallholdings around base and conspicuous cross on hillside.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Retain as wild isolated area
- Conserve upland bog habitats

LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	738	All of SLA	Mod
LH	089	All of SLA	High
GL	029	All SLA and wider area to north and east	Mod
HL	999	All SLA	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

MYNYDD TROED-Y-RHIW SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

To north of Porth, slopes of Rhondda Fawr, merging with Rhondda Fach from Llwynypia round to Wattstown. Edge of settlements in lower boundary. Golf course and enclosed lands of ridge top is upper boundary.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	All area = moderately important values
Prominence	Overlooking Porth Prominent from surrounding valley settlements
Vulnerability	Encroachment of valley settlement edges up hillsides

COHERENCE:

Continuous hillside around Rhondda valleys confluence

CONSENSUS:

Part of wider existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Length of hillsides that are particularly prominent from approaches from down the valley, forming turning point and division of Rhondda valleys.
- Attractive mix of open common land and small fields on steep sides.
- Some good ffridd habitats of dry heath.
- Important pilgrim site of St Mary's Well on upper slopes to north
- Prominent cairn on Mynydd Brith-weunydd

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Retain as open hillsides and skylines
- Restrict encroachment of developments up hillsides
- Conserve historic sites
- Conserve priority habitats, including control of bracken.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Plateau top of golf course and improved grasslands not included in SLA

MYNYDD TROED-Y-RHIW SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	738	All of area and ridge between Rhondda valleys	Mod
LH	081	All slopes	High
GL	029	Western half of area	Mod
	025	Eastern half of area	Mod
HL	998	Mynydd Troed-y-rhiw slopes	-
	992	Mynydd Brith-wenydd	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

LLWYNCELYN SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

To east of Porth, eastern slopes of Rhondda Fach valley, from settlement edge at base to plateau top. Extending from Wattstown in north west to western end of Pontypridd in east.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	West facing slopes = moderately important value Trehafod slopes = moderately important value Llwyncelyn slopes – less important value
Prominence	Overlooking Porth Prominent from adjacent settlements
‘Unspoilt’	
Vulnerability	

COHERENCE:

Stretch of continuous hillside

CONSENSUS:

All part of existing extensive SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Length of steep hillsides at turning point in Rhondda valley, overlooking Porth.
- Backdrop to views from Porth, Rhondda Heritage Park and main valley road and new bypass.
- Attractive pattern of small fields with stone walls and hedges, accessed by winding lane
- Some areas of rhos pasture amongst improved grasslands
- Prominent masts and tanks on mid slopes.
- Areas of broadleaf woodland on steep side valley

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Conserve pattern of farmland, unspoilt by industrialisation.
- Conserve unimproved grassland and woodland habitats
- Ensure developments do not encroach up hillsides

LLWYNCELYN SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	141	Throughout	Mod
LH	083	Throughout most of SLA	Mod
	091	Wooded slopes of Taff Vale	High
GL	016	Throughout	High
HL	833	Throughout	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

CWM CLYDACH

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

Between main Rhondda and Cynon valleys, on slopes around Ynysybwl. Taff Vale to east and St. Gwynno Forest west

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Around Ynysybwl = moderately high value Remainder of area = moderate value
Prominence	Southern slopes are prominent part of Taff Vale sides, viewed from A470 and Pontypridd
'Unspoilt'	Extensive areas of pre-industrial farmland patterns. Secluded from main busy valleys
Rarity	Only large subsidiary valley in RCT

COHERENCE:

Slopes of Cwm Clydach, plus adjacent tops and wooded slopes to Taff

CONSENSUS:

Mainly existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES/FEATURES

- Most of the area consists of the valley sides around Ynysybwl, secluded and hidden from the surrounding main valleys .
- Pattern of quiet farmland with irregular fields, small woods, and streams, linked by winding lanes.
- Mixed hedges and stone walls on upper slopes.
- Wooded slopes to Taff Vale are important part of views from A470, and backdrop above Pontypridd, as well as partially screening quarry
- These form part of the mainly wooded western sides of Taff Vale, all of which are very important to the overall impression of the Valleys from the major north/south route through Wales.
- Mix of broadleaf woodlands on Taff slopes are nature reserve.
- Smaller areas of upper slopes and tops of Cynon valley with similar characteristics.
- Cairns overlooking Cynon valley are part of series of intervisible monuments along the valley tops, of historic value

KEY POLICIES/MANAGEMENT:

- Management to conserve wooded and slopes and skyline from Taff Vale
- Conserve hedges and small woods throughout
- Retain quiet secluded farmed character within valley
- Conservation of hilltop historic sites

OTHER COMMENTS:

Disturbed and reclaimed land to east of Ynysybwl not included

CWM CLYDACH LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	141	Unforested valley and adjacent Rhondda sides	Mod
	903	Upper cwm Clydach sides and Cynon valleys sides	Mod
LH	083	Western valley side	Mod
	091	Wooded slopes of Taff Vale	High
GL	016	Throughout	High
HL	833	Throughout	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

CYNON VALLEY NORTHERN SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

Along the eastern boundary of RCT, from Abercynon in the south east to Cwmbach in the north west. The A4059 and edges of settlements forming the boundary to the west.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Southern tip of ridge = moderate value Remainder of area = less important value
Prominence	Southern part very prominent from A470, distinctive end to narrow ridge All prominent and backdrop to Cynon Valley settlements
Spectacle	Some fine extensive views from upper slopes
'Unspoilt'	Extensive broadleaf woodland
Vulnerability	

COHERENCE:

Consistent slopes and minor valleys with variety of landuses

CONSENSUS:

Includes two existing SLAs

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Length of valley sides showing variety of characters, including open grassland and common, forestry, broadleaf woodland, fields of improved and unimproved grassland, reclaimed and planted tips and un-reclaimed tips.
- This variety provides contrasts and interest throughout, and a variety of habitats.
- All the valley side is prominent from the settlements on the lower slopes of the other side of the valley
- Southern two thirds of the area is half of the narrow ridge separating the Cynon from the upper part of the Taff valley.
- The south end of ridge is particularly prominent from the A470, with Mynydd Goetre-Coed overlooking the confluence of the valleys.
- The side valley of Nant Pennar is secluded from the main valley and has a hidden quality, with old coal workings, tips and inclines.
- From the upper slopes there are fine viewpoints giving extensive vistas up and down the Cynon

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Retain variety of land uses
- Management of broadleaf and coniferous woodlands, including more recent reclamation and natural regeneration.
- Protect skyline, seen from both Cynon and Taff valleys
- Keep development to the lower side of main road

OTHER COMMENTS:

Forestry blocks have been included where particularly prominent and are part of hill-sides, but not where part of less conspicuous upland plateau.
 Reclaimed slopes north of Mountain Ash are included because of prominence.

CYNON VALLEY NORTHERN SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	950	Most of SLA	Mod
	140	Cefnpennar and surrounds	Mod
LH	064	Upper open slopes	Mod
	074	Lower slopes	High
	087	Southern part	High
	075	Twyn Brynbychan forestry	Mod
	063	Forestry to north	Mod
GL	017	Throughout	Mod
HL	856	Top of ridge	-
	515	Slopes	-
	117	Reclaimed tips – part of valley settlements	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

CWM ORCI

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

A side valley north of Treorchy on slopes of Rhondda Fawr valley. Forestry to west and east, and settlement edge to south, extending up to ridge top in north

**STRATEGIC CRITERIA:
NEED:**

LANDMAP	Lower slopes and bottom = high values Upper slopes = moderately high values
Prominence	Edges of valley overlook Treorchy
'Unspoilt'	Tucked away from main valley

COHERENCE:

Small self-contained side valley

CONSENSUS:

Part of more extensive existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES/FEATURES

- Tucked way behind Treorchy (giving its name to the town), this is a typical small hanging valley of glacial origin
- Steep craggy sides with screes and open ffridd and dry heath
- Areas of unreclaimed tips spill down steep sides, adding to visual variety and habitats
- Tiny fields of marshy grassland in valley bottom, hidden from view

KEY POLICIES/MANAGEMENT:

- Retain hidden character and general air of remoteness despite proximity to Treorchy
- Conserve good mosaic of valuable habitats
- Ensure development of Treorchy outskirts to do not intrude into valley

CWM ORCI LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	738	Throughout and extending to all ridge to south east	Mod
LH	070	Slopes and valley bottom	High
	066	Upper slopes	Mod
GL	026	Throughout, and extending along northern slopes	O/S
HL	805	Slopes, and all Rhondda Fawr sides	-
	687	Tops and upper slopes	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

RHONDDA FAWR NORTHERN CWMS AND SLOPES

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In north west sector of RCT. From west side of Rhondda settlements north of Ton Pentre and north and eastern sides around Blaenrhondda. Western and northern edges relate to edge of major forestry blocks.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Blaencwm and top of Cwm Parc = most important value Blaenrhondda, Cwm Saerbren and Cwm Parc slopes = high value Forested slopes = moderately high value
Prominence	Very prominent from upper parts of Rhondda valley settlements
Spectacle	Spectacular cwm scenery Dramatic views from valley and from Bwlch and Rhigos roads
'Unspoilt'	Some open wild parts, unchanged by industry, particularly upper Cwm Parc
Vulnerability	Surrounds of Blaenrhondda development site
Rarity	Classic examples of glacial scenery, best in the Valleys

COHERENCE:

All part of series of cwms and interlinking slopes

CONSENSUS:

All part of existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- Series of well-defined steep glacial cirques at head of Rhondda Fawr
- Very dramatic scenery, dwarfing the small settlements in the valley bottoms
- Spectacular views from the Rhigos road to north and Bwlch over to Afan valley
- Blaenrhondda road cutting geological SSSI
- Rare relic alpine flora of particular significance on Pen-pych
- Cairns and other ancient monuments on tops are part of widespread evidence of early settlement

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Enhance views and access to this specially scenic part of the county
- Ensure that geomorphological features are not lost to developments and road building
- Conserve relic alpine flora
- Conserve skylines and views
- Ensure that major development site in valley bottom integrates with surrounding hillsides
- Management of forestry and woodlands to provide variety
- Control off-road access to forestry and plateau tops from roads over

OTHER COMMENTS:

Adjoins Hirwaun Common SLA to north

Boundary set back 100m into edge of forestry to safeguard skylines.

RHONDDA FAWR NORTHERN CWMS AND SLOPES LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	580	Plateau and upper slopes	Mod
	113	Cwms	High
LH	065	East-facing scarp slopes	High
	069	Cwm Parc	Mod
	067	Top slopes of Cwm Parc and wider plateau	High
	076	Forestry to south of Cwm Parc	Mod
GL	027	All of western part	O/S
	026	Eastern slope	O/S
HL	687	Cwm Parc and plateau	-
	805	Rest of SLA	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

HIRWAUN COMMON

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In north west of RCT, from county boundary south of Rhigos, extending eastward along tops and slopes of upper Cynon Valley and side valleys to Cwm Aman. Northern lower boundary is edge of open, undisturbed land. And edge of Aberdare and Cwmaman to east. Upper southern boundary is forestry edge.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Western forestry area = moderately important value Top of Hirwaun Common = most important value Mynydd Bwllfa = high value Cwm Dare to Cwm Aman = moderately high value
Prominence	Hillsides and tops of Hirwaun Common very prominent from A465 and BBNP
Spectacle	Very dramatic crags and steep high hillsides. Spectacular views from Rhigos road and Graig road
'Unspoilt'	Mainly traditional open commonland
Vulnerability	Vulnerable to skyline developments and erosion of wildness
Rarity	Some of highest points in heads of Valleys area, in scale and character with BBNP
Setting	Setting and intervisibility with BBNP

COHERENCE:

Extent of north and north east facing open slopes and tops

CONSENSUS:

Mainly existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES:

- High scarp along northern edge of coalfield
- Series of well-defined steep glacial cirques cut into scarp
- Very dramatic scenery, overlooking Heads of Valleys, and dwarfing the small settlement of Cwmaman in the valley bottom to south
- Spectacular views from the Rhigos road to north and Graig road over from Aberdare
- Important for intervisibility with peaks of Brecon Beacons National Park
- Edge of Craig-y-Llyn geological SSSI showing Westphalian stratigraphy
- Llyn Fawr is typical glacial lake
- Forestry on slopes below Llyn Fawr are being opened up and more in keeping with special scenery, and backdrop to Tower Colliery remains
- Steep slopes and tops are mainly open common land, with grassland and heath habitats
- Cairns and other ancient monuments on tops are part of widespread evidence of early settlement
- Coed Morgannwg Way passes through area, from Dare Country Park
- Areas of broadleaf woodland on lower slopes around Dare valley, blends with Country Park.

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Enhance views and access to this specially scenic part of the county
- Ensure that geomorphological features are not lost to developments and road building
- Conserve relic alpine flora
- Conservation of commons and associated habitats
- Conserve skylines and views
- Ensure that major development site in valley bottom integrates with surrounding hillsides
- Management of forestry and woodlands to provide variety
- Control off-road access to forestry and plateau tops from roads over

OTHER COMMENTS:

Adjoins Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes SLA to south
Boundary set back 100m into edge of forestry to safeguard skylines.

HIRWAUN COMMON LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	430	Hirwaun Common	High
	890	Penywaun slopes	Mod
	797	Dare Country Park	Mod
LH	058	Hirwaun Common and open upper slopes	High
	057	Forestry	Mod
	054	Lower slopes	High
	059	Cwm Dare	High
GL	028	Western cwm	O/S
	020	Hirwaun Common and Cwm Dare	High
	025	Ridge	Mod
HL	687	All SLA and wider	-
CL	041	Western part including Tower	High
	056	Central part – part of wider area	High
	047	Dare Country Park	High

BRECON BEACONS EDGE AT LLWYNCOED

LOCATION and BOUNDARIES:

In north eastern sector of RCT, immediately adjacent to BBNP boundary to north west. Penywaun and Llwydcoed forming edges to south and forestry to east.

STRATEGIC CRITERIA:

NEED:

LANDMAP	Throughout = mix of high and moderately high value
Prominence	North part in view from A465, with tanks forming conspicuous landmark for miles around
'Unspoilt'	Wooded valley of Nant y Gweddel
Vulnerability	Development along edges of settlements in valley bottom, and vicinity of A465 Buffer to BBNP and A465
Setting	Important as setting for National Park

COHERENCE:

Continuous slope up from River Cynon to hilltop at Baberstocks

CONSENSUS:

Includes existing SLA

PRIMARY LANDSCAPE QUALITIES & FEATURES

- South-facing gentle slopes and small side valleys of the head of the Cynon Valley.
- The upper north eastern part is bleak open land and forestry with storage tanks being very prominent features for miles around
- The A465 Heads of the Valleys road traverses the area, due for dualling in future
- Merges with Brecon Beacons National Park to north and west, forming buffer zone to settlements and industry
- Reclaimed land alongside Cynon and edge of Penywaun, now well-wooded.
- Areas of broadleaf ancient woodland on small valley sides

KEY POLICIES & MANAGEMENT:

- Safeguard edges of BBNP
- Safeguard land adjacent to A465
- Conserve and manage broadleaf woodland areas
- Seek opportunities to enhance storage tanks and surrounding land

OTHER COMMENTS:

Northern part included as it is very prominent

BRECON BEACONS EDGE AT LLWYNCOED LANDMAP DATA

Aspect	A.A. no.	Location/comments	Overall evaluation
VS	207	Upper parts of SLA	Mod
	833	Lower parts of SLA	Mod
LH	049	Upper parts	High
	051	Mid slopes	High
	050	Lower slopes to west	Mod
	055	Lower slopes to east	Mod
	061	Valley bottoms	High
GL	019	SLA is part of more extensive area	High
HL	580	Upper parts and into BBNP	-
	176	Valley sides	-
CL	056	All SLA and wider	High

