

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2016 – 2031)

BACKGROUND PAPER SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

June 2017

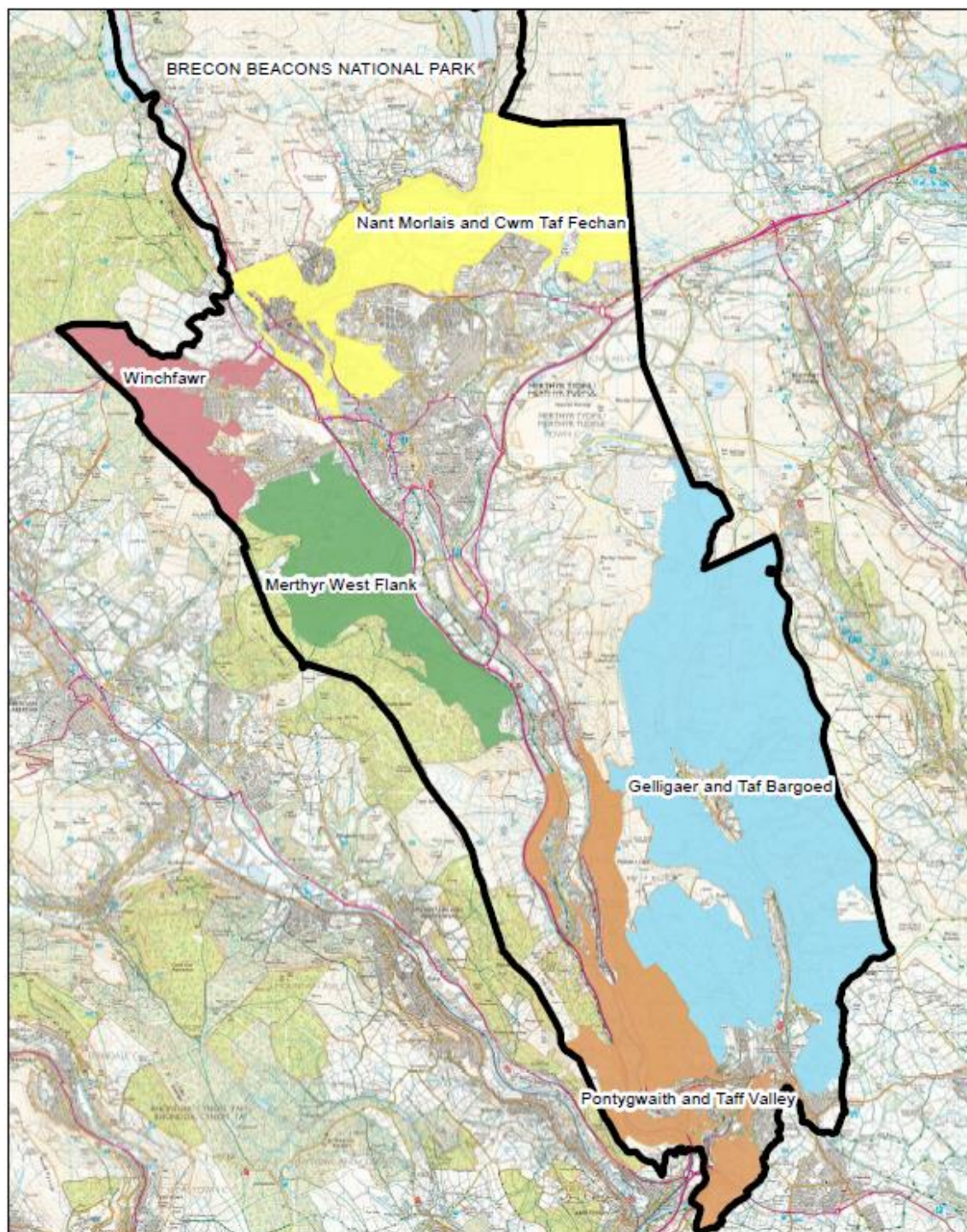




Miss J Jones
Head of Planning and Countryside
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Unit 5
Triangle Business Park
Pentrebach
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4TQ

Executive Summary

1. This report identifies Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) for designation in the First Replacement Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031. It forms part of a series of background papers prepared by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC).
2. Five Special Landscape areas are identified, based on the preferred methodology outlined in '*LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas 2016*' (Natural Resources Wales, 2016). The distribution of these areas across the County Borough is shown on Plan 1.
3. The Special Landscape Areas define areas of high landscape importance within the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Area, outside the Brecon Beacons National Park which is a nationally designated landscape and International Dark Sky Reserve. They will be known as:
 - ✿ SLA1: Nant Morlais and Cwm Taf Fechan
 - ✿ SLA2: Winchfawr
 - ✿ SLA 3: Merthyr West Flank
 - ✿ SLA4: Gelligaer and Taf Bargoed
 - ✿ SLA5: Pontygwaith and Taf Valley

PLAN 1: PROPOSED SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS



	GRADDFA / SCALE: NTS	<p>© Hawffrwyd y Goron a hawliau cronfa ddata 2017 Arolwg Ordnans 100025302 "Ni chaniateir i chwi gopio, tan-dwyddedu, dosbarthu neu werthu y data yma i unrhyw drydydd barti mewn unrhyw ffurf"</p> <p>© Crown copyright and database rights 2017 Ordnance Survey 100025302 "You are not permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form."</p>	 <p>Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol MERTHYR TYDFIL County Borough Council</p>
	DYDDIAD / DATE: 04/04/2017		
	ADRAN / DEPARTMENT: Planning		
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TEITL / TITLE: PROPOSED SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS			

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this study is to identify and justify Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) to be designated in the first Replacement Local Development Plan for Merthyr Tydfil 2016-2031. It forms part of a series of background papers prepared by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC). SLAs are a non-statutory designation applied by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to define areas of high landscape importance which may be unique, exceptional or distinctive within their administrative boundary.

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The use of non-statutory designations to protect the landscape, such as SLAs has long been a policy tool within the UK planning system. Such designations have been seen by local authorities as a means of protecting sensitive landscapes. At a local level they play an important role in developing an understanding and awareness of landscape features and character, the qualities that make an area distinctive and give communities a sense of place.
- 2.2 Within Wales the role and function of such areas is contained within Edition 9 of *Planning Policy Wales (PPW)* (Welsh Government, 2016). The key sections are contained in Chapter 5 *Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast* which relates to natural heritage as follows:-
- 2.3 *"5.3.11 **Non-statutory designations**, such as Special Landscape Areas or Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation, should be soundly based on a formal scientific assessment of the nature conservation, landscape or geological value of the site. Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values. Local planning authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. Such designations should not unduly restrict acceptable development."*
- 2.4 *"5.3.13 The LANDMAP information system methodology is an important information resource upon which local planning authorities can draw in making the landscape assessments needed to inform local policy, guidance and decision making in this field. LANDMAP describes and evaluates aspects of the landscape and provides the basis of a consistent Wales-wide approach to landscape assessment. LANDMAP assessments should be published. They can help to inform supplementary planning guidance on landscape assessment (covering, for example, local distinctiveness, special landscape areas and design)."*
- 2.5 *"5.4.4 Although non-statutory designations carry less weight than statutory designations, they should be given adequate protection in development plans. Where an assessment has identified that certain features or characteristics of the sites need to be conserved or enhanced, local planning authorities should state in their development plans what features or characteristics require this extra protection and why, and explain how the policies will achieve this protection. Policies for non-statutory sites should make it clear that such designations do not preclude appropriate socio-economic activities."*

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 In June 2001, White Consultants were commissioned by MTCBC, together with the then Groundwork Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taff and Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) to prepare a landscape assessment and strategy for the County Borough area utilising the GIS based LANDMAP system in use at that time. The aim of the study was to ascertain a clear understanding of the areas landscape resource and set out a strategy that could contribute to the economic and environmental development of the County Borough.
- 3.2 The Final Report ‘*Merthyr Tydfil LANDMAP*’ (White Consultants, 2002), comprised 4 Volumes as follows:
- ✿ Volume 1 - *Landscape Assessment*;
 - ✿ Volume 2 - *Landscape Strategy*;
 - ✿ Volume 3 - *Design Guidelines and*
 - ✿ Volume 4 - *Recommendations for Special Landscape Areas*.
- 3.3 Volume 4 covered the ‘*Merthyr Tydfil Local Countryside Designation Review: Special Landscape Areas*’ and included recommendations for the designation of three SLAs, attached at Appendices 1 -3, as part of the Unitary Development Plan which was under preparation at that time, as follows:
- ✿ Brecon Beacon Fringes - bordered by the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) to the north, the Nant Ffrwd and Taf Fawr to the west and the southern slopes of Cefn Cilsanws towards Vaynor Quarry to the south and east (Character Area 3 of the Landscape Assessment);
 - ✿ Taf Fechan Valley – covering the lower part of the Taf Fechan valley south of the Pontsticill Reservoir (Character Area 5 of the Landscape Assessment) and
 - ✿ Gelligaer Common – an area of exposed upland situated between the Bargoed Taf and Duran Valleys on the eastern edge of the County Borough adjacent to the Caerphilly County Borough boundary (Character Area 23 of the Landscape Assessment).
- 3.4 In 2007, TACP (UK) Ltd published ‘*Development of Criteria for Special Landscape Area designation for South East Wales Local Authorities*’ (TACP, Development Criteria for Special Landscape Area designation in South East Wales Local Authorities, 2007)’, which quoted Merthyr Tydfil County Borough’s definition of an SLA as:
- “Those landscapes which are of particularly high intrinsic value and which require special protections for their own sake as part of the landscape within the Plan area”,* derived from the Countryside Commissions’ (Countryside Commission, 1993) Landscape Assessment Guidance.
- 3.5 The former CCW published the first guidance note on the designation of SLAs ‘*LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: Guidance for Wales - LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas*’ (Countryside Council for Wales, 2008), drawing extensively on the contents of the TACP report (TACP, Development Criteria for Special Landscape Area designation in South East Wales Local Authorities, 2007).

- 3.6 The latest 2016 version (Natural Resources Wales, 2016) states, “*Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) may designate, at their discretion, areas of landscape importance within their administrative boundaries with a local landscape designation (usually referred to as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) – this term is therefore used in this guidance). SLAs may be included in an LPA’s Local Development Plan (LDP) or Unitary Development Plan (where LDPs have not yet been adopted) to identify areas where there is justification to apply an extra level of landscape protection through special landscape policies*” (Paragraph 4).

4. DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREPARATION

- 4.1 Work on the UDP for the County Borough area ceased in early 2005 and preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP) commenced in late 2006. At that time two landscape related designations were identified in the MTCB area. These were Landscapes of Historic Interest, included in the Register of Historic Landscapes in Wales, recognised of national importance but carrying no statutory protection, namely:

- ✿ Gelligaer Common - described as an increasingly rare survival of an area of high upland moor, rich in a diverse archaeological resource which displays a remarkable continuity of occupation and
- ✿ The main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil - described as the most significant Welsh town of the Industrial Revolution and probably the largest iron-making town in the world in existence in the early to mid-19th century which still retains its industrial landscape character.

- 4.2 The Merthyr Tydfil LDP 2006 – 2016 was adopted in May 2011 (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2011). During plan preparation it was decided that these designations would adequately protect the landscape of the County Borough. Moreover, paragraphs 4.4.6 and 4.4.7 of the adopted Plan, states:

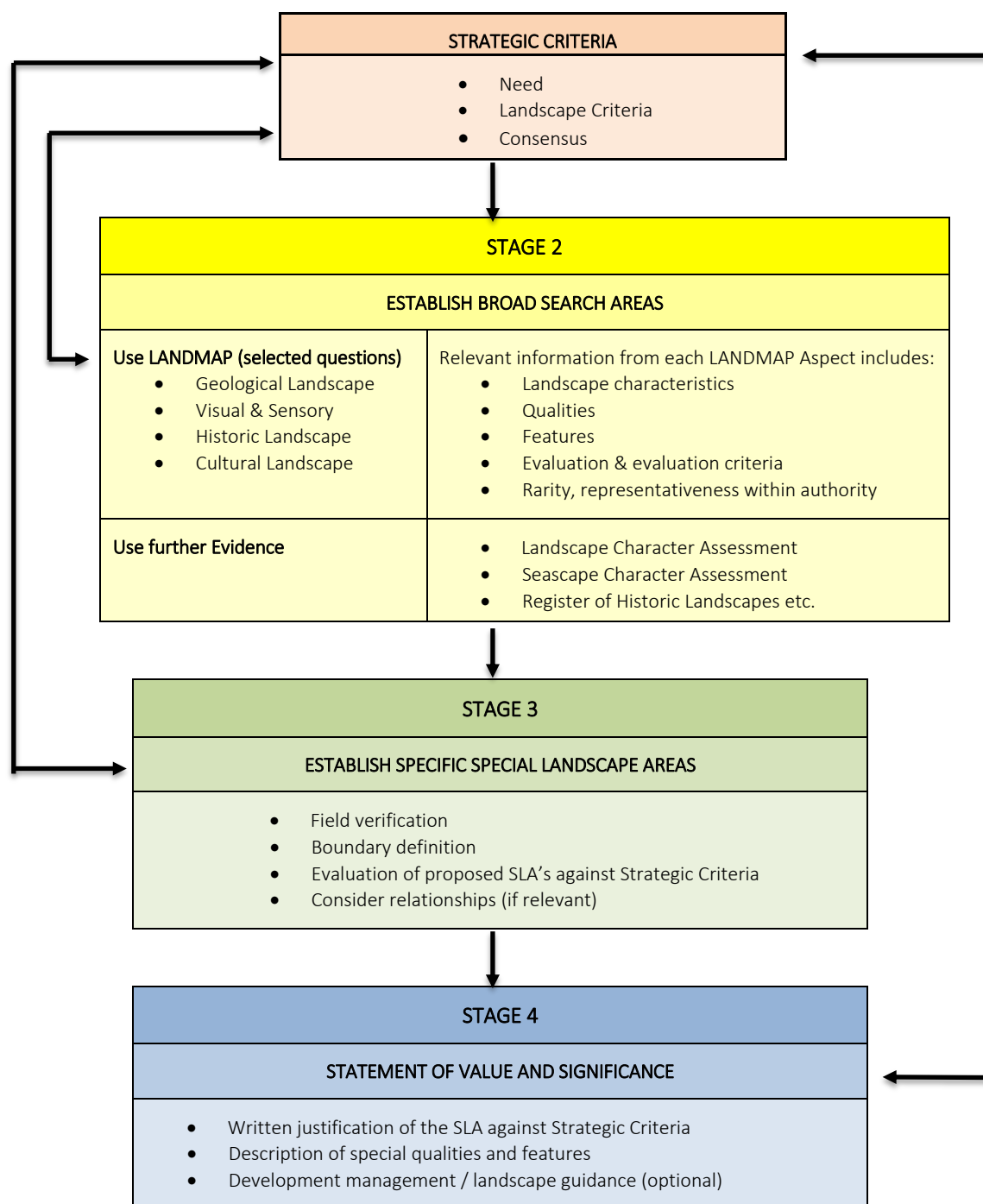
“Further local landscape designations were considered as part of the LDP process and extensive interrogation of LANDMAP data was undertaken to ascertain whether potential designations would bring practical benefits to the strategic planning process, and to what extent they could be taken forward as additional tools to influence/reinforce future decisions on planning applications. However, in comparison with the historic landscape designations, it was considered inappropriate to proceed with any further designations as the spatial priorities and settlement proposals of the LDP provide the required certainty on where development proposals will be favoured, and, the Plan’s design policies are sufficiently robust having regard to the pressures for development that are likely to arise elsewhere.

Whilst it is recognised that the above stance may not necessarily be adopted by other LDPs in the region, it is considered that this is the most appropriate way forward for Merthyr Tydfil given the results of the data interrogation process in line with a common agreed methodology and the fact that the context/threshold for making relevant and appropriate designations in the County Borough may vary from neighbouring authority areas.”

- 4.3 The LANDMAP system has been up-dated since the last LANDMAP interrogation and the LANDMAP assessment guidelines have been updated since Plan adoption, as such, it is considered prudent to re-interrogate LANDMAP and revisit the need for SLA designations within the authority’s administrative area.

5. PROPOSED DESIGNATION METHODOLOGY

Figure 1: Methodology Process¹



¹ Derived from the methodology proposed in the up-dated 'LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas 2016 (Natural Resources Wales, 2016).

6 STAGE ONE: STRATEGIC CRITERIA

- 6.1 Guidance recommends that SLAs should be designated where there is a good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection and where there is justification to apply an extra level of landscape protection through special landscape policies.

6.1.1 NEED - establishing the need and purpose of the SLA designation:

The criteria required here relate to establishing the need for SLA designation that are above and beyond existing policies for landscape management and protection. The LDP Annual Monitoring Reports² have not specifically monitored the effectiveness of Policy AS4 in relation to protecting, conserving or enhancing the historic landscape. In addition, although, the Review Report³ (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2016) reported that there were no concerns over Historic Environment or Natural Heritage related policies, it made no specific reference to Landscape. It is therefore considered that there are gaps and weaknesses in extant policy in relation to landscape management and protection within the adopted LDP as follows:

- ✿ **POLICY BW5: Natural Heritage** - *although this policy seeks to protect amongst other things the landscape character of the countryside, it is open to the widest interpretation and in particular omits any reference to evidenced based judgements on landscape quality;*
- ✿ **Policy BW7: Sustainable design and place making** –*this relates specifically to good quality design which includes landscape design, however it does not include any specific landscape guidelines to enable the fostering of appropriate development that could enhance local landscape character, distinctiveness and landscape quality;*
- ✿ **POLICY AS4: Historic Landscape** – *although this policy seeks to protect, conserve and enhance statutory historic heritage designations its provisions are inadequate to measure the impact that a development might have upon other aspects of Historic landscape character such as Visual and Sensory or Cultural characteristics which were not taken into account;*
- ✿ **POLICY AS5: Green Wedges** – *these were defined to prevent the coalescence of developed communities and maintain valuable open space and not aimed specifically at protecting the physical quality or recreational value of the landscape and*
- ✿ **POLICY AS6: Local nature conservation designations** – *these are based solely on ecological scientific criteria which excludes reference to other potentially supporting landscape characteristic data such as patterns of previous land use.*

Proposed criteria:

- To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?
- What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?

² The AMR is used amongst other things to assess the extent to which policies identified in the monitoring process are being implemented successfully.

³ In August 2016, a full review of the adopted LDP was undertaken culminating in a Review Report.

6.1.3 NEED – for integrity/cohesiveness in areas designated as SLA:

This criterion relates to the need for SLAs to be designated for their intrinsic value, cover more than an individual site or feature and form a recognisable and coherent area of landscape. These may include *small* parts of lower value landscape to create an integral area, which can be included if they are of similar topography and or comprise *minority* areas that can be enhanced or restored in the future. Conversely, areas that may be affected by existing planned new development or characterised by other detractors or damage can be excluded from the proposed SLA. However, the area designated must not be fragmented and large enough to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and planning.

In addition, the County Borough administrative boundary should not be used as an arbitrary boundary, in which case aligning with neighbouring authorities SLAs that reflect similar qualities can be taken into consideration.

Proposed criteria:

- Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?
- Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?
- Are any *small* areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?
- Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?
- Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?

6.1.4 LANDSCAPE CRITERIA – applying to areas deemed 'special' in terms of landscape character:

The criteria required here relates to reflecting the area being considered for designation uniqueness in terms of local distinctiveness, sense of place as well as its special landscape quality in its own right. With regard to landscape quality the area being considered for designation should include visual and landscape quality as well as comprise elements that are intact and in good condition, with the exception of *small* areas recognised as having the potential for enhancement or restoration.

Proposed criteria:

- Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?
- Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?
- Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?
- Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?
- Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities?

6.1.5 CONSENSUS – gaining consensus on the need for SLA designation:

Consensus on the need for the designations within the LPA's administrative boundary was gained and supported internally at the start of the process by a steering group comprising representatives from the Policy and Implementation Teams.

Agreement was also reached for the above criteria to be used to evaluate each area being considered for designation at Stage 3: *Establish specific SLAs* (see section 8) and to justify the proposed SLA designations at Stage 4: *Statement of Value and Significance* (see section 9).

Opportunities for engagement with the wider population and interested groups will be exploited throughout the replacement LDP preparation process, in particular through the established LDP Heritage, Countryside and Leisure Working Groups and consultation on the Preferred Strategy scheduled for summer 2017.

7. STAGE TWO: ESTABLISH BROAD SEARCH AREAS

7.1 The LANDMAP system has been utilised to define the Broad Search Areas because it provides the most detailed evaluated landscape resource for the identification of SLAs and their boundaries. It comprises an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated. It is essentially a tool to help natural resource planning and sustainable and transparent decision-making from the local to national level. All information including maps and survey material is accessible via interactive maps which can be downloaded to use in a GIS environment. It includes five, nationally consistent, quality assured spatial datasets⁴:

- Geological Landscape;
- Landscape Habitats;
- Visual and Sensory
- Historic Landscape and
- Cultural Landscape.

7.2 Additional guidance and information regarding each dataset is provided by Guidance Notes (GN) 2 – 6 namely, LANDMAP Methodology- Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic landscape and Cultural Landscape 2016 respectively. Each data set comprises information that:

- Maps and classifies landscapes from the unique perspective of each dataset;
- Describes their key characteristics, qualities and components;
- Evaluates their importance from a national to local scale;
- Recommends locally appropriate management guidelines and
- Identifies significant landscape change through monitoring of the baseline resource.

⁴ Up-dated in 2015-16

7.3 The Broad Search Areas were determined from these datasets and informed by the LANDMAP overall evaluation score and LANDMAP evaluation criteria for each LANDMAP layer. In LANDMAP each spatial layer in the County Borough is divided into discrete geographical units (polygons in GIS) known as 'Aspect Areas'. Each aspect area is distinctly defined by its unique landscape characters and qualities and comprises a unique survey record detailing:

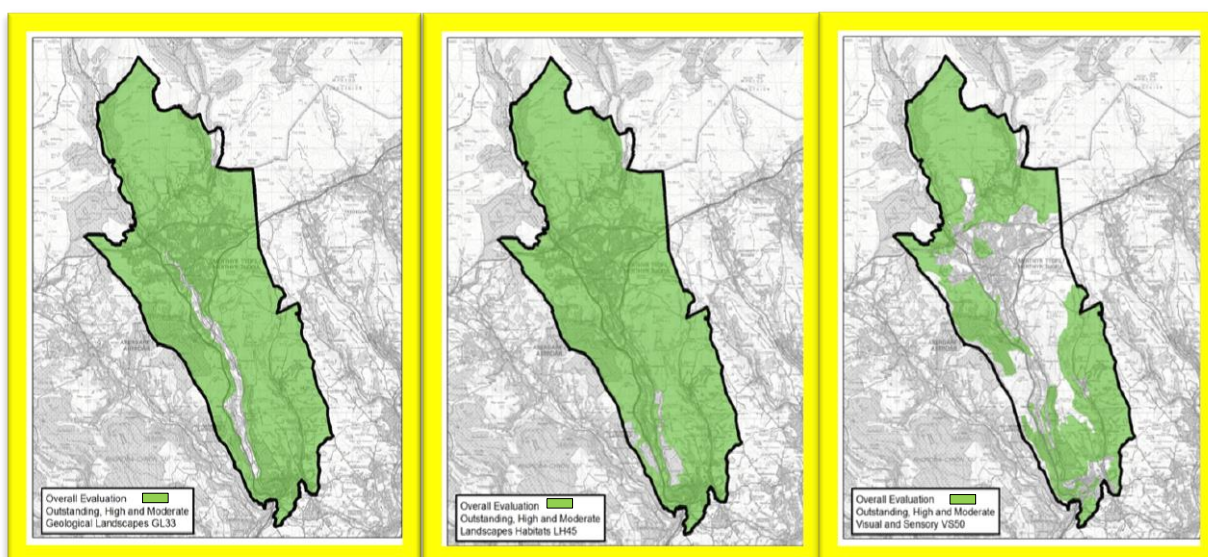
- The aspect areas classification;
- Important or dominant characteristics and qualities;
- Management recommendations and
- Evaluation.

7.4 Each aspect layer has a single evaluation score calibrated from a local to an international scale of importance as summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: LANDMAP Overall Evaluation Score

Overall evaluation score	Definition of importance to the LANDMAP layer
Outstanding	International or national
High	Regional or county
Moderate	Local
Low	Little or no importance

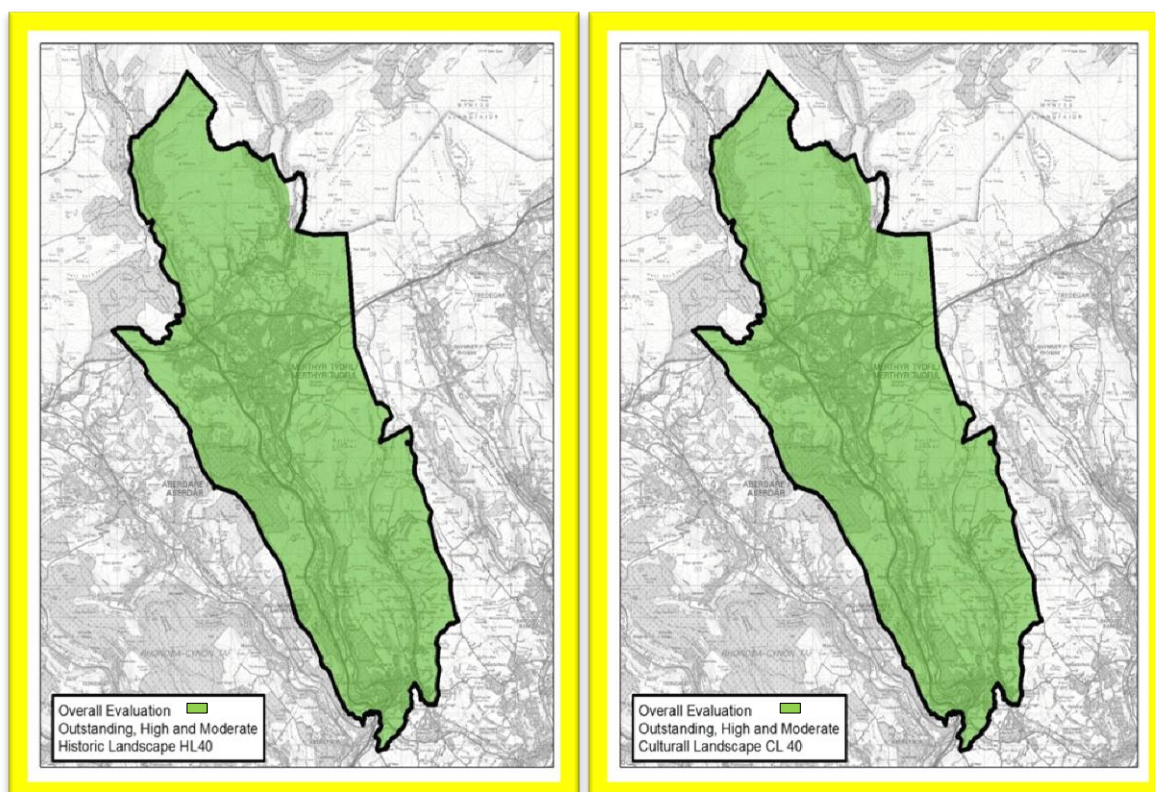
7.5 These evaluation score categories have been applied to each criterion to ensure National consistency. Plans 2 – 6 show the overall evaluation score for each aspect layer in the MTCB area, excluding areas with a 'low' evaluation score since these areas have little or no importance to the LANDMAP layer.



Plan 2:
Geological Landscapes GL33

Plan 3:
Landscape Habitats LH45

Plan 4:
Visual and Sensory VS50



Plan 5:
Historic Landscape HL40

Plan 6:
Cultural Landscape CL40

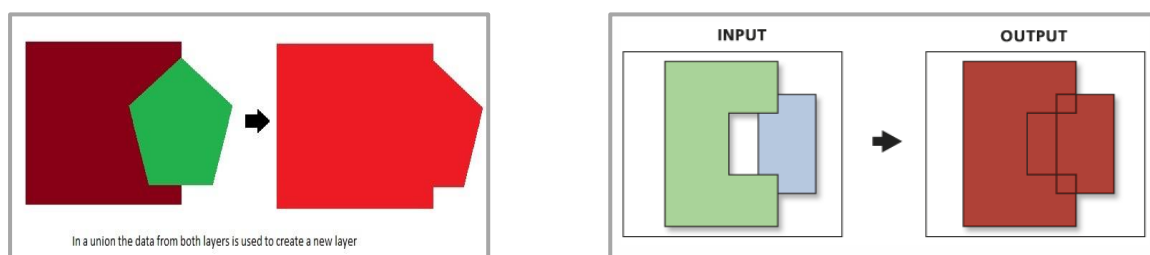
7.6 Table 2 below details the characteristics used (from a maximum of nine for each aspect), showing their unique survey record numbers, to inform the definition of a broad picture of areas that might warrant SLA designation using Outstanding, High and Moderate Overall evaluated scores for all five aspects.

Table 2: MTCB LANDMAP Evaluation Criteria – Outstanding, Moderate and High

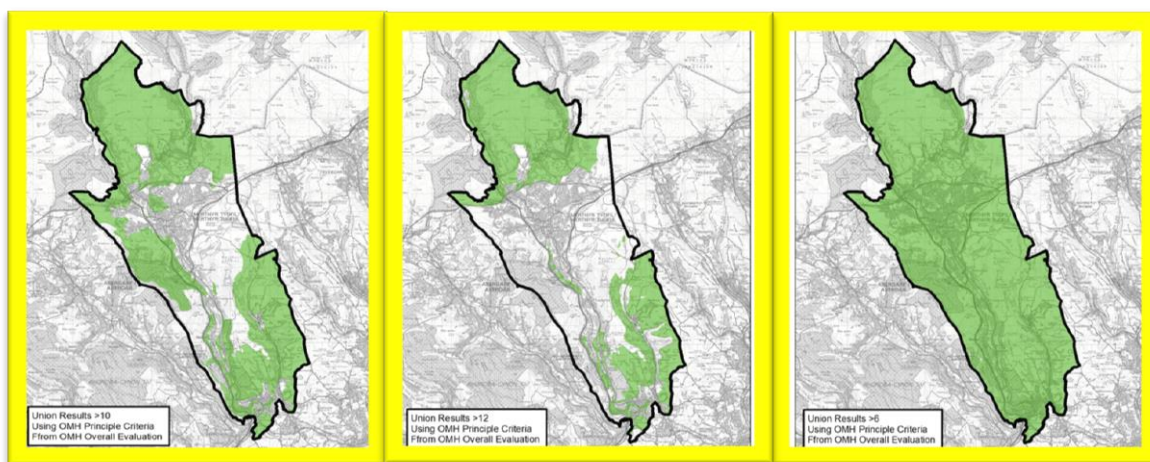
Landscape Habitats:	Historic Landscape:	Cultural Landscape:	Geological Landscape:	Visual and Sensory:
Priority habitats – LH37	Integrity – HL35	Recognition/transparency – CL31	Rarity/uniqueness – GL31	Scenic Quality – VS46
Significance – LH38	Survival – HL36	Rarity – CL33	Classic Example – GL32	Integrity – VS47
	Condition – HL37	Group Value – CL35		Character – VS48
	Rarity – HL38			Rarity – VS49

- 7.7 Due to the large area of coverage found in the County Borough area, GIS was employed to interrogate the classification, evaluation and landscape information for each aspect area to start the process of pinpointing the Broad Search Areas, utilising a process known as 'unionising'. All datasets shown in Table 2 above have been overlain whilst retaining all the features from all the original source GIS files, including boundary lines and attribute data. The total sum of the combined number of Outstanding, High and Moderate results from each characteristic in each LANDMAP aspect are unionised together. This union process, shown in figure 2 below, illustrates how new set of geographical units or polygon datasets are created.

Figure 2: Unionising process



- 7.8 The Union process in Figure 2 above combines features from two map layers into a single, composite layer, creating a new polygon. The first shows layers with one overlap from two features. The second is an example of the result of executing the process with the 'Gaps Allowed' parameter unchecked. A polygon feature is created that would otherwise be left empty. The "gap" features can be identified by doing an attribute query of all the input feature's FID fields that equal -1.
- 7.9 The process used includes the data from all five map layers, meaning that all the overlapping and non-overlapping attributes and areas and have been included in the new polygons. Any gaps were also identified and checked. Each layer was given a score as follows:
- ✿ Outstanding = 3
 - ✿ High = 2
 - ✿ Moderate = 1
 - ✿ Gaps = - 1
- 7.10 Plans 7 – 9 show the Union results scoring combined Outstanding, High and Moderate scores of 6, 10 and 12 or more across all five MTCBC aspects respectively. The plan showing Union results scoring 10 or more was chosen by the Steering Group to gain consensus on a good starting to pin-point Broad Search Areas.



Plan 7:
Union Results scoring 6 or more

Plan 8:
Union Results scoring 10 or more

Plan 9:
Union Results scoring 12 or more

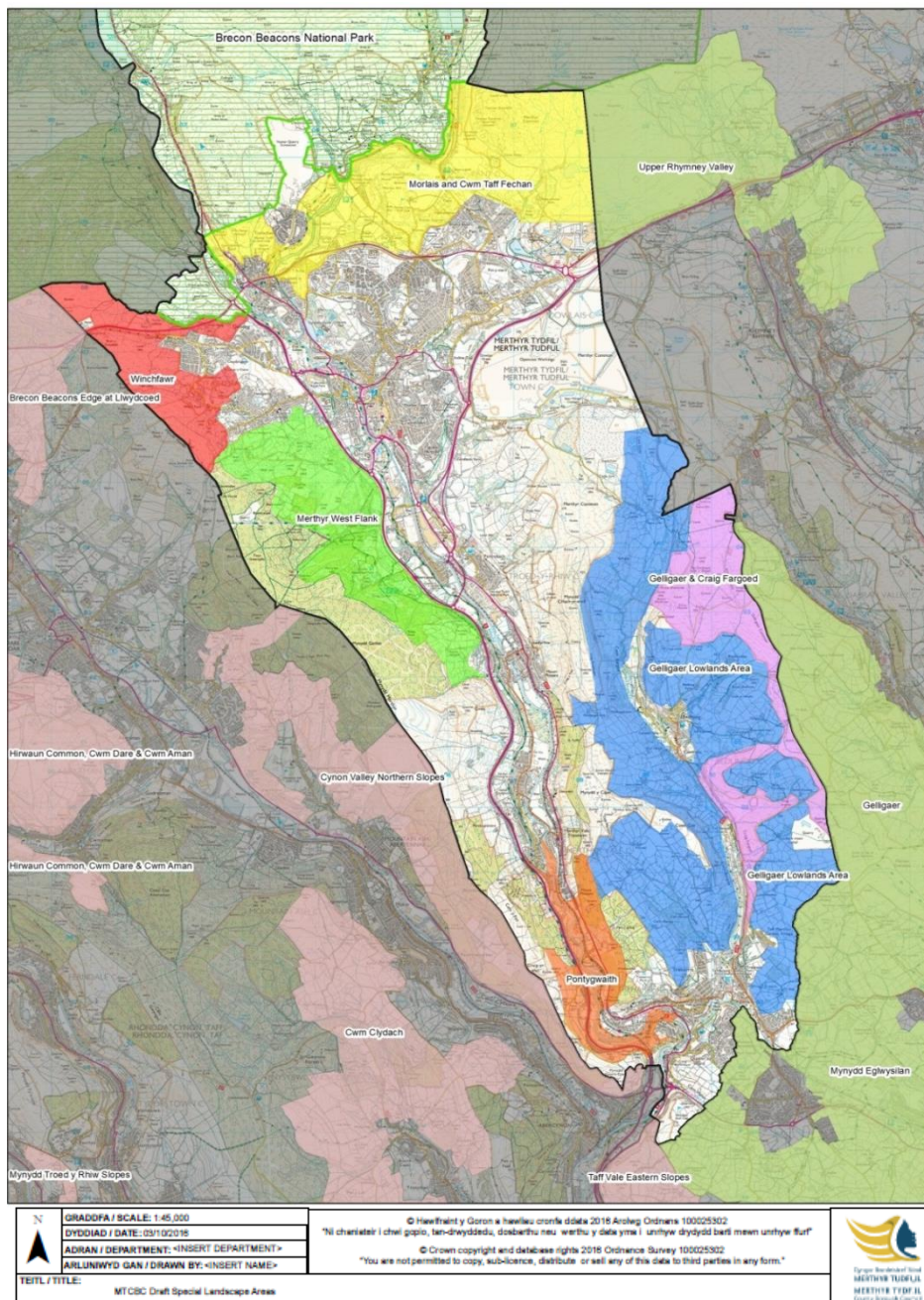
8. STAGE THREE: ESTABLISH SPECIFIC SLAS

8.1 Field verification

- 8.1.1 Homogeneity; within the character of the landscape under consideration, was sought using local knowledge and desk based examination of OS 1:25,000 Series. This enabled the candidate areas to be broadly defined within the unionised areas developed through the SLA process, as shown on Plan 10, which also shows, SLAs designated in neighbouring authorities' areas and the area covered by the BBNP which is outside of LPA control.
- 8.1.2 Closer examination of physical characteristics coupled with distillation of the essential character, as described and recorded by LANDMAP, within the five aspect areas situated in these candidate areas made it possible to unite geographic areas by more prescriptive means. Additional sources used to aid definition included SINC data; Historic Landscape Characterisation Data, the designation of SLAs within adjacent LPA areas, maps of rural tranquil areas in Wales⁵. Table 3 assesses each proposed SLA area against the agreed strategic evaluation criteria.

⁵ Tranquillity is measured in terms of unwanted intrusions and other factors contributing to how tranquil a place feels such as the presence of nature or visually pleasing surroundings.

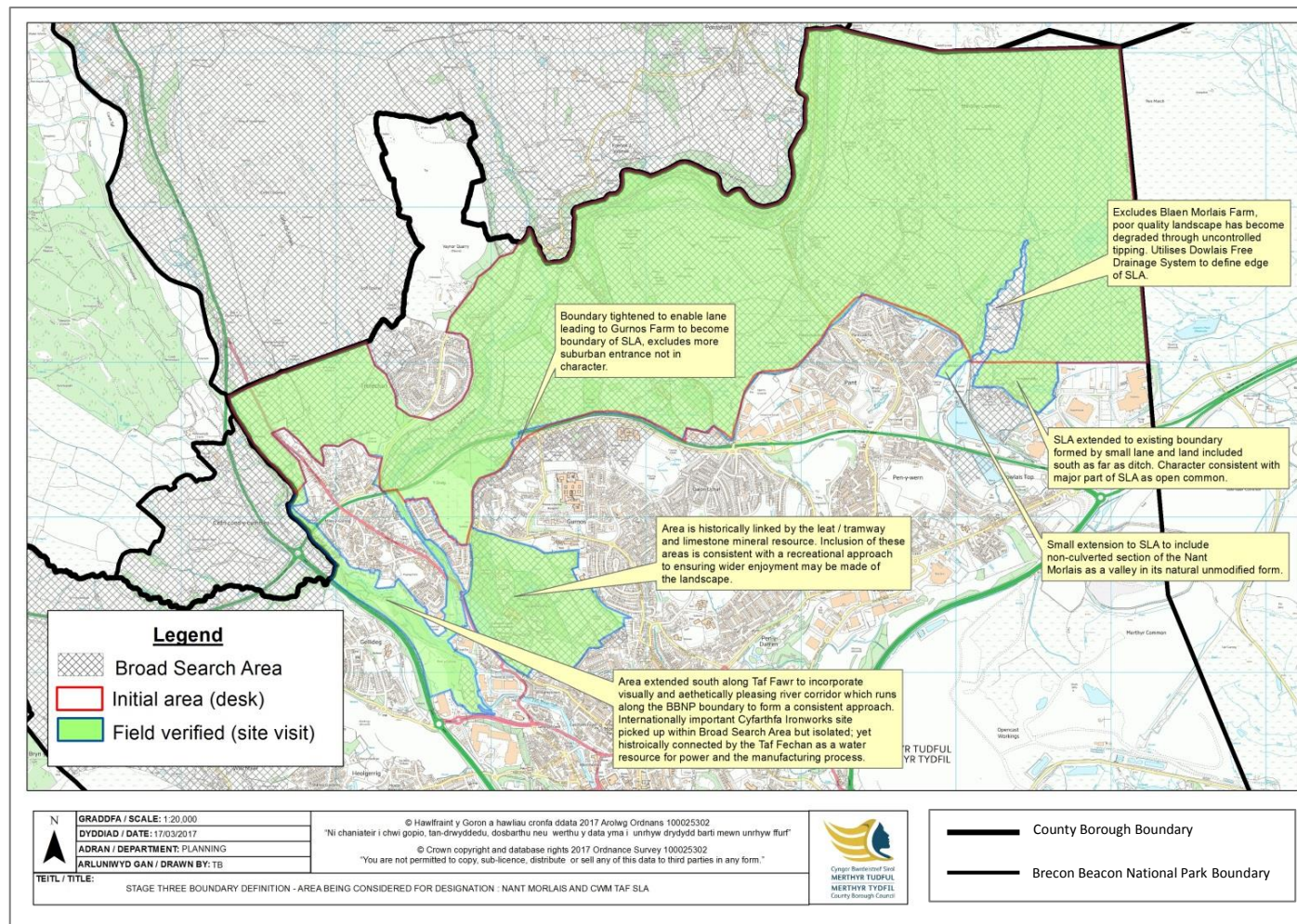
Plan 10: Desk Verified Proposed SLAs



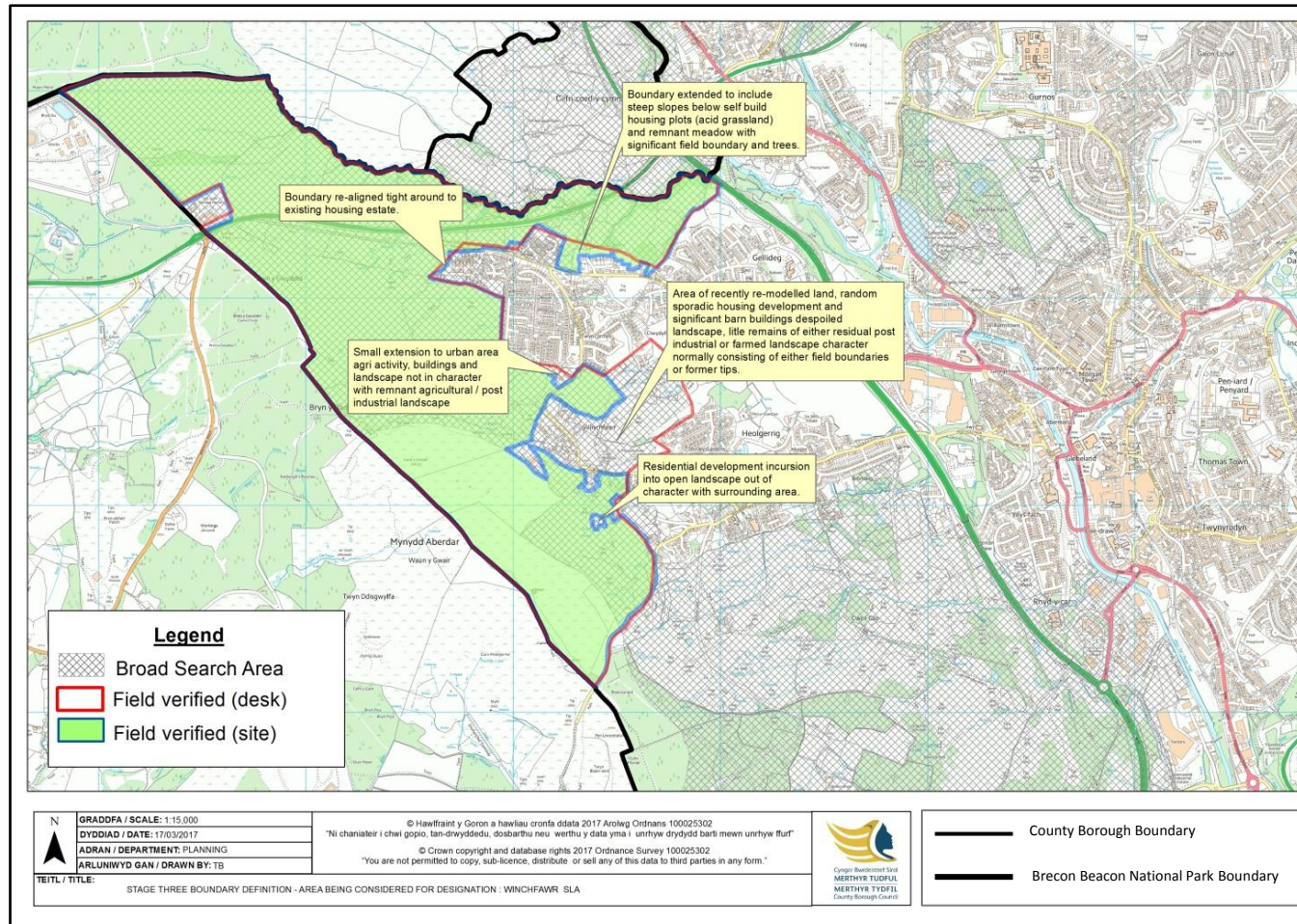
8.2 Boundary Definition

The desk verified boundaries shown on Plan 10 were redrawn following site visits. This process of site verification included using professional judgment to co-inside with permanent physical features identifiable on the ground and component LANDMAP aspect areas. Annotated site notes demonstrating this process, which comprised the inclusion of small additional areas with consistent characteristics, the exclusion of some areas that do not fully meet SLA status and the merging of areas owing to the continuity of land form to make more cohesive areas are illustrated on Plans 11 – 15. Boundary justifications are provided in Stage 4 - Section 9.

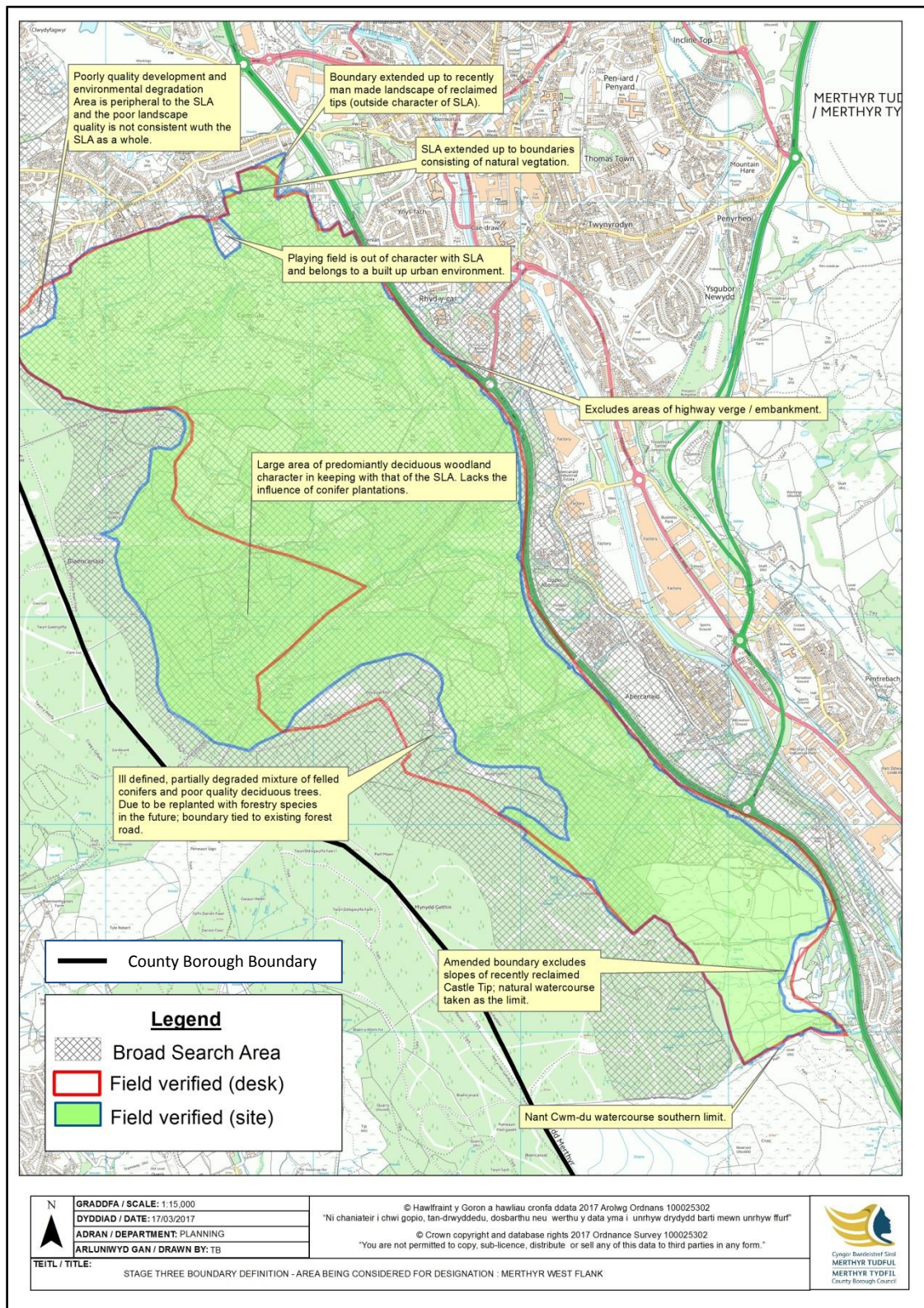
Boundary Definition - Plan 11: Nant Morlais and Cwm Taf Fechan proposed SLA



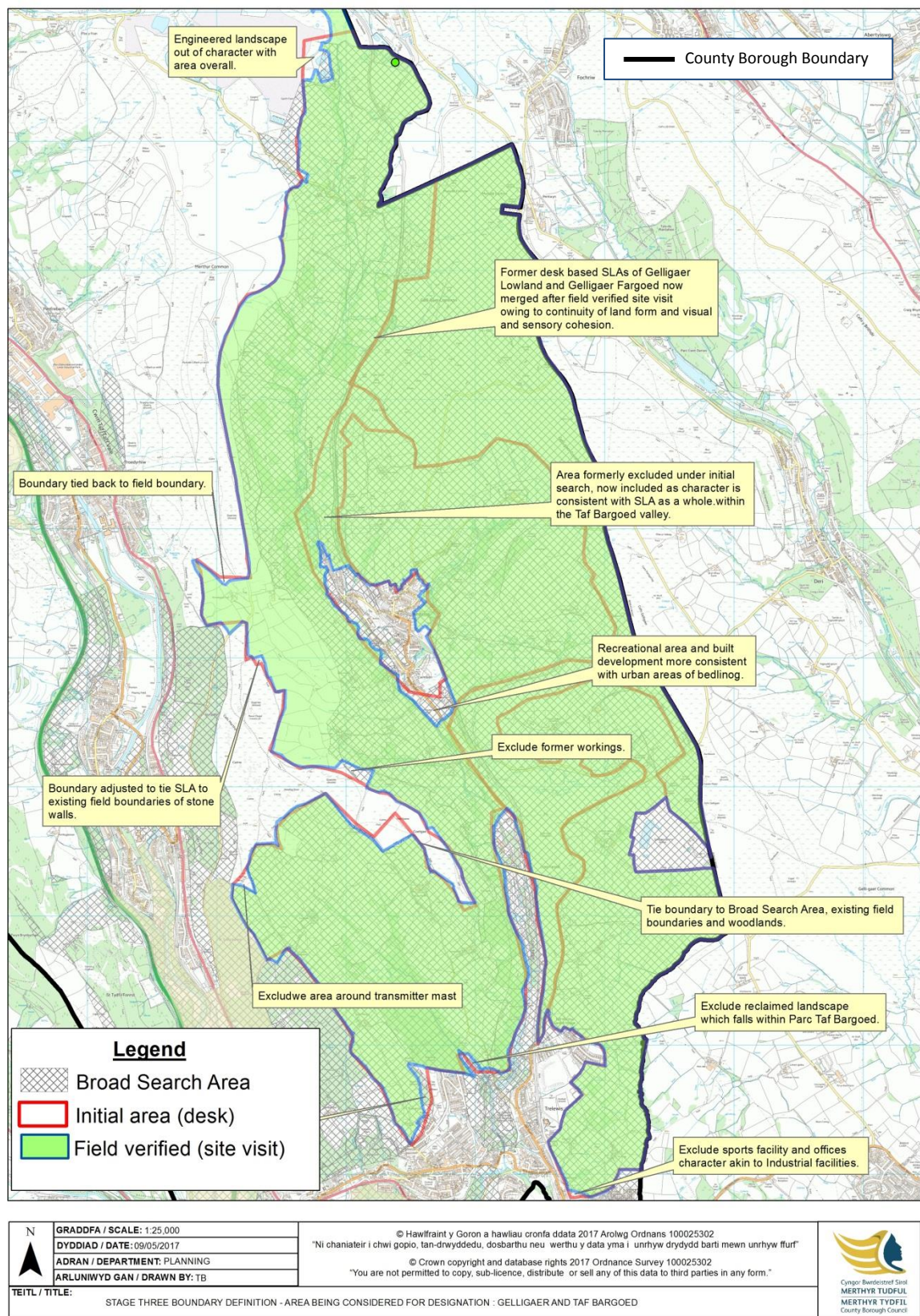
Boundary Definition - Plan 12: Winchfawr proposed SLA



Boundary Definition - Plan 13: - Merthyr West Flank proposed SLA



Boundary Definition- Plan 14: Gelligaer and Taf Bargoed proposed SLA



Boundary Definition - Plan 15: Pontygwaith and Taff Valley proposed SLA

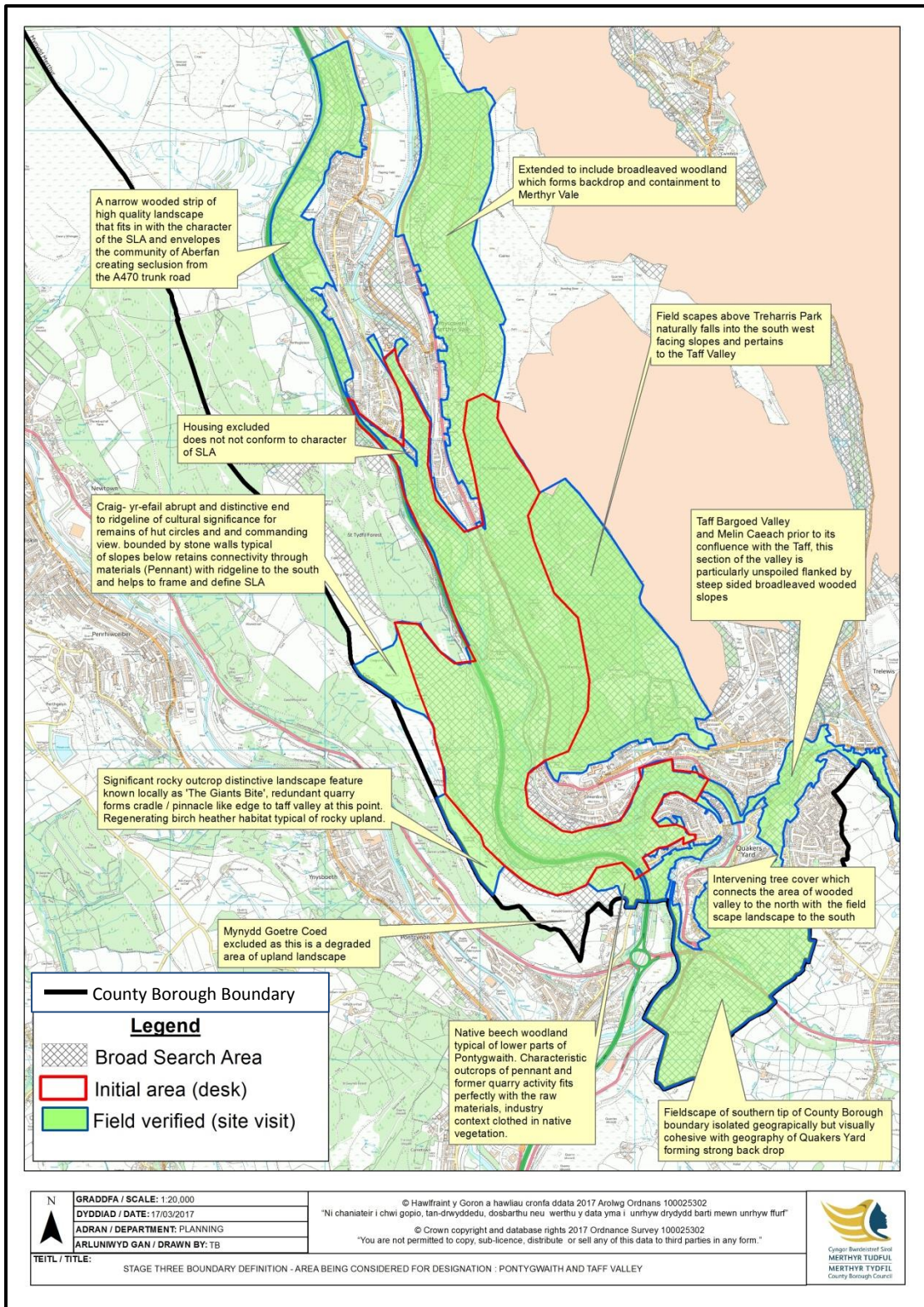


Table 3: Evaluation of Proposed SLAs against Strategic Criteria:

AREA BEING CONSIDERED FOR DESIGNATION: NANT MORLAIS AND CWM TAF FECHAN		
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - establishing need and purpose	RESPONSE	SOURCE
To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?	Designation will encourage good management practices in the future restoration of landscape features i.e. hedgerows, copses, hedgebanks flora, fauna and archaeological / industrial remains as an interface and buffer to the Brecon Beacons National Park. It will support the replacement LDP policy framework which will seek to improve environmental well-being through habitat improvement and protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Management Guidelines.
What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?	Designation will afford greater context and understanding, to existing designations whilst widening focus away from one aspect refined through contributions from evidence bases that inform areas. The replacement LDP will replace the existing framework which is considered to be advisory, general, and loose in nature and open to wide interpretation. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present and enable evidence based monitoring of targets and indicators.	On-going work on replacement LDP. SLAs Steering group.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - for integrity/cohesiveness	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?	The boundary to the north is formed entirely by the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) boundary formed by the Taf Fechan, to the south by settlement limits and the A465 road corridor.	Limits set by topography and physical barriers as shown on OS maps/GIS.
Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?	The area is a large extractive landscape with several homogenous features consisting of open access land comprised of acid grassland and former limestone outcrops and quarries linked to industrial processes. The remainder of the area is bounded by the steep sided gorge of the Taf Fechan below the quarries of Morlais Hill complete with native woodlands copses and fields that emerge from the edge of the gorge there are great opportunities for reinstatement and management of filed boundaries. The headwaters of the Nant Morlais emerge on open access land to the north east.	LANDMAP evaluations Field survey. SLAs Steering group.
Are any <i>small</i> areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	The area known as the Graig which sits to the south of the A465 is an important landscape forming a separation between the Gurnos and Cefn Coed. Its character is principally heath and bracken and is consistent with the open land around Trefechan.	On site-field survey.
Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	The land between the industrial estate at Pengarnddu and the residential areas of Pant is of such poor quality it is difficult to justify its inclusion. There seem to be few opportunities to improve this situation.	On-site field survey.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?	The SLAs within the adjacent Local Authority to the east adjoin the boundary with Caerphilly CBC which is a neighbouring designation.	Caerphilly CBC LDP. OS Data mapping / GIS.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
LANDSCAPE	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?	The area has a distinct and unique defensive character deriving from Morlais Castle, occupying an impressive, strategically important hilltop location which has been fortified since the Iron Age and which played an extremely important role in the Welsh Wars of the mid to late 13th century. Culturally significant because of the range and variety of human influence on the landscape: 13th century Morlais Castle obscuring the hillfort; radical landscape change due to minerals extraction such a mixed landscape use for contrasting purposes is rare. Morlais Castle and Quarries contain culturally significant and rich remains of man's influence on the landscape. These coalesce to enhance Vaynor's picturesque attractiveness of a high local value. The survival of extensive remains of the Dowlais Free Drainage System and other water-management features and quarries associated with the Dowlais Ironworks, together represent a significant concentration of 19th century industrial water-management features of considerable historical importance. A Karstic dip slope, incised valleys with caves, tufa, working and disused limestone quarries.	LANDMAP information Merthyr Tydfil Historic Landscape Characterisation. Field Survey.
Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?	The area is of exposed upland character with moorland rising to 530m. The visual and sensory character is generally bleak and open with long views. It is a complex area in which the variety of land uses over time have fragmented the appearance and changed the otherwise large scale upland. The unifying influence is the fact that these land uses have clearly altered the landscape. Morlais Hill and Castle form an important landmark which can be seen from the south side of Merthyr.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field survey.
Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?	Culturally significant because of the range and variety of human influence on the landscape: 13th century Morlais Castle obscuring the hillfort; radical landscape change due to minerals extraction a relict landscape illustrating sequential land use. Good example of a multi-period, multi-layered landscape whose cultural essence is mostly intact.	LANDMAP Cultural.
Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?	No	NA

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities	Remote but influenced by proximity to the town. The area is of exposed upland character with moorland rising to 530m. The visual and sensory character is generally bleak and open with long views.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. On-site field verification survey.
AREA BEING CONSIDERED FOR DESIGNATION: WINCHFAWR		
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - establishing need and purpose	RESPONSE	INFORMATION SOURCE
To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?	Designation will encourage appropriate management of water catchment for the Nant Cwm Ffrwd. This would maintain a consistent character with the adjoining BBNP. It will support the replacement LDP policy framework which will seek to improve environmental well-being through habitat improvement and protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present.	LANDMAP Management Guidelines.
What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?	Designation will afford greater context and understanding, to existing designations whilst widening focus away from one aspect refined through contributions from evidence bases that inform areas. The replacement LDP will replace the existing framework which is considered to be advisory, general, and loose in nature and open to wide interpretation. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present and enable evidence based monitoring of targets and indicators.	On-going work on replacement LDP. SLAs Steering group.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - for integrity/cohesiveness	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?	Continuous landscape character and boundaries consisting of stream bed (BBNP) to the north, settlement limits to the south and east and adjacent LPA boundary to the southwest.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site survey.
Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?	The area is large and lies between the town and the ridgeline and the limit of western settlement and consists chiefly of open access land. It is somewhat akin to a massive area of urban fringe in that the influence of the town is evident throughout yet it is still distinctly rural in overall character. It is a complex mosaic of now rare conical tips and mine sites intermingled with an upland pasture extractive landscape with several homogenous features consisting of open access land comprised of acid grassland. Land to the far north of the areas is consistent with the BBNP landscape character at this point.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site survey.
Are any <i>small</i> areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	No	NA

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	The land around the telecommunications mast and Carn-y-frwydr is of poor environmental quality and different in character to the rest of the proposed SLA.	Excluded as a consequence of field verification site survey.
Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?	The SLA does not align with the neighbouring authorities' designation although it does sit comfortably against the BBNP boundary consisting of broadly similar habitat.	Desk verification. OS Data mapping / GIS
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
LANDSCAPE	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?	The rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its specific historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features to the west of Winch Fawr, Upper Black Pins Levels. This is an area which is based on semi-uplands, colliery spoil and tips west of town contains very special habitat of marshy grassland, species-rich neutral grassland and lowland acid grassland.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape together with MT HLCAs.
Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?	The area is of exposed upland character with moorland rising to 530m. The visual and sensory character is generally bleak and open with long views. It is a complex area in which the variety of land uses over time have fragmented the appearance and changed the otherwise large scale upland. The unifying influence is the fact that these land uses have clearly altered the landscape.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site visits.
Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?	The presence of a series of conical tips on a bleak and exposed moorland display a character that is redolent of a forgotten landscape left standing after the mining activities had fallen silent. Strong cultural associations with the ironworks at Cyfarthfa and the extensive workings required to fuel them.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory /Cultural.
Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?	No.	NA
Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities	The landscape here is exposed and raw but still has a curious mix of scales as around Winch Fawr where small fields are adjacent to massive tipped areas. There is a large total area of disused sites yet the majority of them are becoming well integrated within the mosaic. This is less so at the northern end of the area where there are more tips and less woodland or evidence of field patterns	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

AREA BEING CONSIDERED FOR DESIGNATION: MERTHYR WEST FLANK		
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - establishing need and purpose	RESPONSE	SOURCE
To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?	Designation will encourage good management practices in the future restoration of landscape features physical, flora, fauna and archaeological remains. It will support the replacement LDP policy framework which will seek to improve environmental well-being through habitat improvement and protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present.	LANDMAP Management guidelines.
What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?	Designation will afford greater context and understanding, to existing designations whilst widening focus away from one aspect refined through contributions from evidence bases that inform areas. The replacement LDP will replace the existing framework which is considered to be advisory, general, and loose in nature and open to wide interpretation. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present and enable evidence based monitoring of targets and indicators.	On-going work on replacement LDP. SLAs Steering group.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - for integrity/cohesiveness	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?	Yes the boundary is clearly defined by strong physical features to the east of the A470 trunk road and topographical and land use features to the west consisting of coniferous plantations. Nant Cwm-du forms the boundary to the south.	Limits set by topography and physical barriers as shown on OS maps/GIS.
Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?	The area is large with a homogenous character of heath, copses, hedgerows individual trees and pasture. Former extractive industry tips dominate the northern section of the area and are scattered sporadically throughout the remainder; these tips are now re-vegetated and interspersed with ancient undisturbed grasslands. An SSSI to the north of the area defines the character and makes recommendations for its management. A series of Scheduled Ancient Monuments associated with the past industrial uses provide the basis for policies towards future management of the area. Remnant forestry plantings offer the opportunity to encourage the return to broadleaved native trees. Abandoned field boundaries offer opportunity for reinstatement and management.	LANDMAP V&S, Landscape Habitats, Historic Landscapes and Cultural Landscapes & Geological evaluations. Field survey including field verification site visits.
Are any <i>small</i> areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	The fields around Buarth-weunydd and Pen-rhiw-rhonen farms are more characteristic of the landscape to the north than to the south but require policies and activities to restore old field boundaries and the management of small copses. Areas of cleared forestry south west of Craig Gethin offer opportunities to restore broadleaved woodland. Fields woods and field boundaries around Blaen-canaid Farm.	Informed by aerial photography and verified site visits.
Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	Extensive areas of forestry plantings have been excluded as these run as far west as the ridgeline. The plantings may overlay earlier field boundaries although evidence of these is unlikely to be recovered and longer term policies for forestry foresee these areas are solely coniferous plantings.	Informed by aerial photography and Field verification site visits.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?	The SLAs within the adjacent Local Authority to the west do not adjoin the boundary.	OS maps and adjacent LA's LDPs.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
LANDSCAPE	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?	Several other areas of industrial/extractive activity survive within the Merthyr historic landscape however, the rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its specific historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features a number of priority habitats are found and important key species. This is an area which contains very special habitat of marshy grassland, species-rich neutral grassland and lowland acid grassland; it also contains native woodlands which add value also. Rotational periglacial landslip, eroded cirque; Pennant stratigraphy.	LANDMAP information together with HLCA, SAMs, Cwm Glo and Glyndyrus SSSI. Field Survey including field verification site visits.
Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?	The SLA is comprised of the lower slopes of the Mynydd Aberdar Mynydd Gethin and Mynydd Merthyr in the south. While the area does not form a distinctive geographic area it forms a back drop of wooded hills and greenspace to the town of Merthyr Tydfil.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site visits.
Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?	This area represents a complex, historically significant industrial/extractive landscape exploited by the Crawshays with extensive, reasonably well-preserved remains of 18th-20th century coal and ironstone workings and related features. The area reflects the historic importance of the Taff Valley as a key industrial transport corridor, evidenced by the survival of extensive remains of industrial communication features (canals, disused tram roads and railway lines). The area displays the reasonably intact condition of the upland pastoral fieldscape and the presence of substantial extant remains of mid -19th century extractive activity specifically associated with Robert and Lucy Thomas pioneers of the 'steam coal' industry.	LANDMAP Cultural.
Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?	Early Dissenters chapel remains on the site. Landscape painting associated with Cyfarthfa iron works by Penry Williams works inextricably linked to the historical uses and shaping of the area.	LANDMAP Historic Landscapes and Cultural. Cyfarthfa Museum and Art Geller at Cyfarthfa Caste records, Merthyr Tydfil HLCA.
Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities	A mosaic fabric of industrialised and remnant medieval landscape that has avoided the hand of open casting or land reclamation.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site visits.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities	Multi-system transport systems in a narrow valley at a place whose name evokes non-conformity	LANDMAP Historic Landscapes.
AREA BEING CONSIDERED FOR DESIGNATION: GELLIGAER AND TAF BARGOED		
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - establishing need and purpose	RESPONSE	SOURCE
To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?	Designation will enable future restoration and enhancement of areas of land within the area proposed for designation e.g. through preparation of guidance, management plans and or researching funding opportunities towards enhancement or mitigation. It will support the replacement LDP policy framework which will seek to improve environmental well-being through habitat improvement and protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present.	LANDMAP Management Guidelines
What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?	Designation will afford greater context and understanding, to existing designations whilst widening focus away from one aspect refined through contributions from evidence bases that inform areas. The replacement LDP will replace the existing framework which is considered to be advisory, general, and loose in nature and open to wide interpretation. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present and enable evidence based monitoring of targets and indicators.	On-going work on replacement LDP. SLAs Steering group.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		SOURCE
NEED - for integrity/cohesiveness	RESPONSE	
Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?	The upland landscapes of Gelligaer and Craig Fargoed Commons are distinctive in their openness, accessibility and vegetation type coverage with few trees, no habitation and lack of enclosure. All the land included is open access land. The boundaries are defined by the current limit of the unenclosed marginal upland commons. However they are also enveloped in a complex manner by the farmed landscapes of the Taf Bargoed, Nant Llwynog and Cwm Cothi. These valleys form a mosaic of stream side woodlands, tree and shrub cover, very few trees within a mosaic of farmland and bracken with hedged pasture giving way to distinctive stone walls which give some areas uniformity at higher levels. The area is distinguished as being non-urban and feels remote and has a backwater quality with a few individual dwellings / isolated farmsteads.	Combination of site visits, aerial photographs, broad search areas and OS maps.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?	The proposed SLA extends both in character and size for a significant length along the ridgeline upland above the Bargoed and Valleys. It is comprised of a homogenous matrix as described above, with sufficient landscape components and materials to develop appropriate policies.	LANDMAP V&S, Landscape Habitats, Historic Landscapes and Cultural Landscapes & Geological evaluations. Field survey.
Are any <i>small</i> areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	Operational quarry at Gelligaer, engineered landscape that forms part of Ffos y fran. Areas of former workings near Cefn Merthyr degraded urban fringe and areas of industrial units.	Aerial Photography.
Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	Exclusion of landscape covered by field boundaries to form subject of adjacent SLA.	Aerial Photography and OS data.
Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?	Yes there is an SLA in the neighbouring authority of Caerphilly CBC which adjoins the proposed SLA.	Caerphilly CBC LDP proposals map.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
LANDSCAPE	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?	Although there are other marginal upland areas in the Merthyr historic landscape this particular area is distinguished by the remarkable diversity of relict landscape features within it, attesting to continuous human activity since the Bronze Age. The Taf Bargoed valley and its tributaries form a locally recognised example of a relatively undisturbed farmed landscape that retains much of its character from the enclosures of the 19th Century despite having been subject to the attention of extractive industries within the valley floor.	LANDMAP information. Field Survey.
Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?	Yes the open nature of the common land and the upland ridge top character helps to define the area. The landscape tops the distinctive U shaped valley glaciated encompassing in one visual sweep high hills, mountains and valleys.	Combination of aerial photos, site visits and OS Mapping.
Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?	The overall value of outstanding assigned to this area reflects the remarkably intact character of this upland landscape and the exceptionally rich, multi-period quality of the archaeological resource, attesting to a remarkable continuity of occupation since the prehistoric era. The valley contains a mixed landscape use; of field systems and forestry and is a good example of a multi-period, multi-layered landscape whose cultural essence is mostly intact.	LANDMAP Historic Landscapes, Visual and Sensory, and Cultural.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?	No.	NA
Does the area being considered for designation display recognisable character with a strong sense of place and or scenic qualities	The upland parts of this landscape attractive panoramic views across the coalfield plateau and to the Brecon Beacons to the north.	LANDMAP Visual and Sensory. Field verification site visit.
AREA BEING CONSIDERED FOR DESIGNATION: PONTYGWAITH AND TAF VALLEY		
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - establishing need and purpose	RESPONSE	SOURCE
To what extent will the designation help the safeguarding, management and planning of the special attributes of the area being considered for designation?	Designation will enable future restoration and enhancement of areas of land within the area proposed for designation e.g. through preparation of guidance, management plans and or researching funding opportunities towards enhancement or mitigation. It will support the replacement LDP policy framework which will seek to improve environmental well-being through habitat improvement and protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present.	LANDMAP Management Guidelines.
What value will be added to existing designations and extant policy?	Designation will afford greater context and understanding, to existing designations whilst widening focus away from one aspect refined through contributions from evidence bases that inform areas. The replacement LDP will replace the existing framework which is considered to be advisory, general, and loose in nature and open to wide interpretation. It will also ensure that any development permitted within the SLA respects the landscape quality present and enable evidence based monitoring of targets and indicators.	SLA Steering Group.
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
NEED - for integrity/cohesiveness	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the boundary of the area being considered for designation recognisable, coherent and defensible?	Defined narrow steep sided and wooded valley with a dramatic enclosed character. Defined by coniferous forest to the east and open bracken slopes to the south west.	Aerial Photography.
Is the area being considered for designation of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, enhancement, management and planning?	The area is a linear space accommodating the Afon Taff as it meanders south towards Quakers yard. The area is chiefly comprised of flood plain and deciduous native woodland. The geographic unity, natural woodland and riverine habitat provides the basis for a cohesive policy towards broad management, environmental enhancement and planning goals.	LANDMAP V&S, Landscape Habitats, Historic Landscapes and Cultural Landscapes & Geological evaluations. Field survey.

BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Are any <i>small</i> areas of low value included in the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	Yes, the woodlands known as St. Tydfil's Forest while being of chiefly coniferous nature have been added as a continuation of the wooded valley slopes to a higher elevation in order to enable management policies to encourage the returning of these to broadleaved woodlands.	Aerial Photography and OS Data
Are any areas excluded from the area being considered for designation clearly justified?	Peripheral slips of land identified through the 'Unionising' process within LANDMAP were discounted as they do not logically sit within existing boundaries or landscape character associated with the proposed SLA.	Aerial Photography and OS Data
Does the area being considered for designation align with neighbouring authorities' existing Landscape designations?	The proposed SLA falls wholly within the County Borough boundary and does not interface with that of any adjacent authority.	LDPs for three County Borough boundaries RCT, MERTHYR and CAERPHILLY
STRATEGIC CRITERIA		
LANDSCAPE	RESPONSE	SOURCE
Is the landscape contained within the area being considered for designation unique, rare, exceptional or distinctive to the local context?	The narrow geography of the valley and its dramatic enclosed character is a rare feature both locally and nationally. The strong sense of place as a relatively peaceful area dominated by beech and oak woodland is a character that is not repeated elsewhere locally. Among the communications corridors within the Merthyr historic landscape the rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its associations with Richard Trevithick, who undertook the first recorded steam locomotive journey on rails along the Penydarren Tramroad in 1804. The rarity value of industrial transport corridors and nucleated industrial settlement are represented and enhanced by the survival of the impressive series of 19th century railway viaducts crossing the Afon Taff within the proposed SLA.	LANDMAP information. Field Survey.
Does the area being considered for designation form a distinct landform or topography that is discrete and recognisable in the local landscape?	The proposed SLA is comprised of the steep western slopes of the U shaped Afon Taff Valle and the incised V-shaped meander of Avon Taf at Quaker's Yard which dissect a high-level Pennant sandstone plateau. The meander of the Afon Taf displays where glacier ice moving down the Taf branched, one tongue flowing east into the high-level valley south of Treharris and joining with ice from the Taf Bargoed.	Aerial Photography and OS Data.
Does the area being considered for designation comprise a strong character linked to natural or cultural associations or factors which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or a strong degree of naturalness?	The area displays a strong degree of naturalness through the poetic movement of the Afon Taff in the secluded oak beech woodlands found within the valley. Unusual example of man's ingenuity overcoming topographical obstacles Outstanding as evidence of High Victorian engineering skills among large areas of connected woodlands, with numerous key species and ancient woodlands.	LANDMAP Historic Landscapes, Visual and Sensory and Cultural.
Does the area being considered for designation have any particular cultural associations with art, literature, music, language or folklore?	Quakers Yard - short-lived settlement for early Non-conformist sect Quakers Yard more obviously associated with Dissenting religion, but both it and Edwardsville are centred on complex river crossings crowded into a narrow steep sided valley Jimmy Wilde (boxer); Richard Trevithick, tramway engineer Early non-conformist beliefs / practices.	LANDMAP Cultural.

9. STAGE 4: STATEMENT OF VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The statement of value provides the information to justify the designation of an area as an SLA as reviewed in Stage 3. The format follows that suggested and developed within LANDMAP Guidance Note 1 (Natural Resources Wales, 2016).

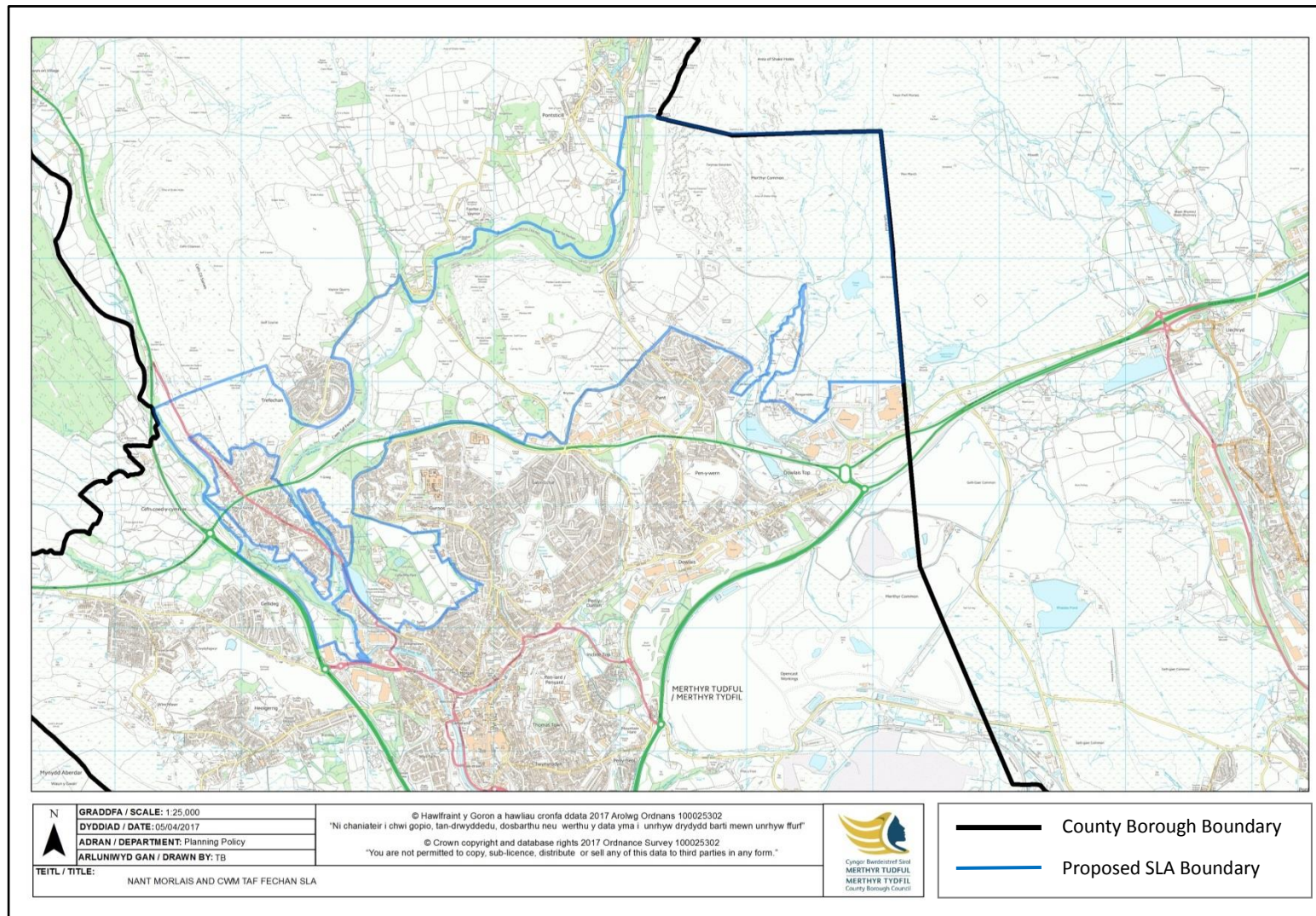
Since landscapes⁶ are defined by their interrelationships between people, place and resources, it further includes additional information relating to local-well-being goals developed for the emerging Local Well-being Plan.⁷


It is formatted to allow each statement to be used as a stand-alone document, hence the cross reference to the LANDMAP Information System being provided in each statement before the LANDMAP Matrix.

⁶ As expressed by Well-being of Future Generations Assessments of Local Well-being Common Data set-environment - landscape produced by Natural Resources Wales – August 2016

⁷ Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment Briefing Document: Environment – March 2017

SLA 1 NANT MORLAIS AND CWM TAF FECHAN – LOCATION PLAN:



TITLE	SLA1- NANT MORLAIS AND CWM TAF FECHAN
<p>Photograph</p>	
<p>Summary description - character</p>	<p>A large complex area situated on the fringes of the BBNP with a variety of land uses ranging from an exposed upland character to bleak and open areas remote from development in the north east with long views to BBNP to incised valleys and upland farmland in the south west. The area is influenced by its proximity to the town on its southern edge. Former industries are evident by the presence of the disused quarries of Morlais, Bryniau and Twynau Gwynion and the water management of the Dowlais Free Drainage System and Pitwellt Pond. Morlais Hill and Castle form an important landmark within the area while further west south of Taf Fechan larger fields, with a mosaic of woodlands and rough ground dominate. Within the Taf Fechan gorge the mature woodland is deciduous and there are many attractive intimate spaces. The watercourse is small scale with many large boulders and rock platforms which add to the sights and sounds of the river. Recreational attractions include walking, cycling and climbing the Taff Trail cycle route and the Brecon Mountain Railway. Pontsarn Viaduct and other smaller scale bridges provide focal points. At the far western end of the area The Taf Fawr possesses an impressive character below the open scree slopes of Cefn Cil-Sanws where it enters an enclosed wooded valley.</p>

Boundary justification	The Nant Morlais and Cwm Taf Fechan SLA is principally an historical landscape boundary determined by the presence of the BBNP boundary to the north as it follows the course of the Taf Fechan, further west the boundary skirts the southern edge of Vaynor Quarry and Trefechan returning to the BBNP Boundary. Southwards the boundary picks up the A470 and takes in Pontycfnau and the confluence of the Taf Fawr and Taf Fechan. Encompassing the historic tramway and leat (part of the Cyfarthfa estate); the boundary takes in Cyfarthfa Park, Y Graig and Gurnos Farm to the north. The boundary then skirts to the north of Pant Industrial Estate incorporating the limestone resource landscapes of Bryniau, the residual Dowlais Free Drainage System and Pengarnddu before re-joining the County Boundary with Caerphilly CBC and the BBNP to the north.
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	
Need	Designation will encourage good management practices in the future restoration of landscape features i.e. hedgerows, copses, hedgebanks flora, fauna and archaeological / industrial remains as an interface and buffer to the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP).
Landscape -	The area has a distinct and unique defensive character deriving from Morlais Castle, occupying an impressive, strategically important hilltop location which has been fortified since the Iron Age and which played an extremely important role in the Welsh Wars of the mid to late 13th century. Culturally significant because of the range and variety of human influence on the landscape: 13th century. Morlais Castle and Quarries coalesce to enhance Vaynor's picturesque attractiveness of a high local value.
Consensus	Agreed through Council Steering Group and subject to Local Development Plan (LDP) pre-deposit proposals public consultation process.
Special/Valued landscape Qualities and Features	
Summary description - landscape value and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A distinct and unique defensive character deriving from Morlais Castle, occupying an impressive, strategically important hilltop location which has been fortified since the Iron Age and which played an extremely important role in the Welsh Wars of the mid to late 13th century • Culturally significant because of the range and variety of human influence on the landscape: 13th century Morlais Castle obscuring the hillfort; radical landscape change due to minerals extraction; a rare culturally significant rich mixture of remains of man's influence on the landscape • Remote but influenced by proximity to the town. The area is of exposed upland character with moorland rising to 530m. The visual and sensory character is generally bleak and open with long views • The area is bounded by the steep sided gorge of the Taf Fechan below the quarries of Morlais Hill complete with native woodlands copses and fields that emerge from the edge of the gorge • Cyfarthfa Castle is a nationally important 19th century historic park and garden; a good example of an iron master's seat within its parkland setting, with important historic and artistic associations. The area is also characterised by its historical connectivity with the adjacent Cyfarthfa Ironworks and the wider extractive landscapes to the north. The castle and grounds are distinctive with a strong visual relationship with furnaces on other side of valley • The Taff Fechan valley is an enclosed wooded gorge with the mature deciduous woodland and many attractive intimate spaces. A small scale water course with many large boulders and rock platforms adding sights and sounds of the river. Important routes through include the Taff Trail. Focal points include the Pontsarn Viaduct and other smaller scale bridges. Disused quarries above the gorge add to the strong sense of place
Key Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain open moorland and rocky ridges and provide robust landscape framework at lower altitudes • Subtle reclamation required - retain landmarks while enhancing poor quality features • Maintain and enhance field pattern framework as buffer landscape between town and open areas • Maintain existing stone walls and hedge banks • Maintain robust linear landscape linking town with rural surroundings e.g. via an Active Travel Route

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and develop recreation routes and control access • Valley floor field pattern deteriorating • Creeping development along southern edge • Protect high quality gateway to the Brecon Beacons • Control development - appropriate design and materials for edge of National Park • Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats • Designate best semi-natural habitats as SINCs - Medium Term - Modify spoil reclamation method to enhance biodiversity opportunities • Designate best habitat areas as SINCs • Designation of unprotected areas of good habitat as SINCs • Protect elements of Dowlais Free Drainage System – e.g. by establishing an ‘Archaeologically Sensitive Area’ • Maintain current semi-rural character • Protect distinctive character of Vaynor and Pontsticill
Key Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban fringe clutter spoils potential as higher quality edge to settlement • Relocate/screen pockets of urban clutter • Establish wooded edge to settlement • Maintain field pattern • Maintain existing stone walls and hedge banks • Replace fences with stonewalls/hedge banks in priority locations • Limited planting of locally native tree species in field boundaries • Woodland management and access control needed to sustain high quality • Maintain robust linear landscape linking town with rural surroundings via an Active Travel Route • Manage and develop recreation routes and control access • Enhance variety through management of open areas • Enhance wooded/hedged mosaic as robust edge to settlement • Manage scree/scrub slopes to retain open qualities • Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats • Modify spoil reclamation method to enhance biodiversity opportunities • Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats • Restore semi-natural habitats in Vaynor Quarry • Instigate programme of upland survey throughout area • Enhance access to common areas • Maintain Morlais Hill as existing as principal historic landmark
Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help wildlife to thrive • Play a role in improving people’s health and well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space
Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help encourage local management of local areas to provide clean and safe environments • Help support the areas tourism offer for recreation, culture and heritage • Play a role in improving people’s physical and emotional well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space • Help wildlife to thrive • Help build resilience to climate change • Help to maintain and improve air-quality

**EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF VALUE EVALUATION VALIDATION
SLA 1 NANT MORLAIS AND CWM TAF FECHAN**

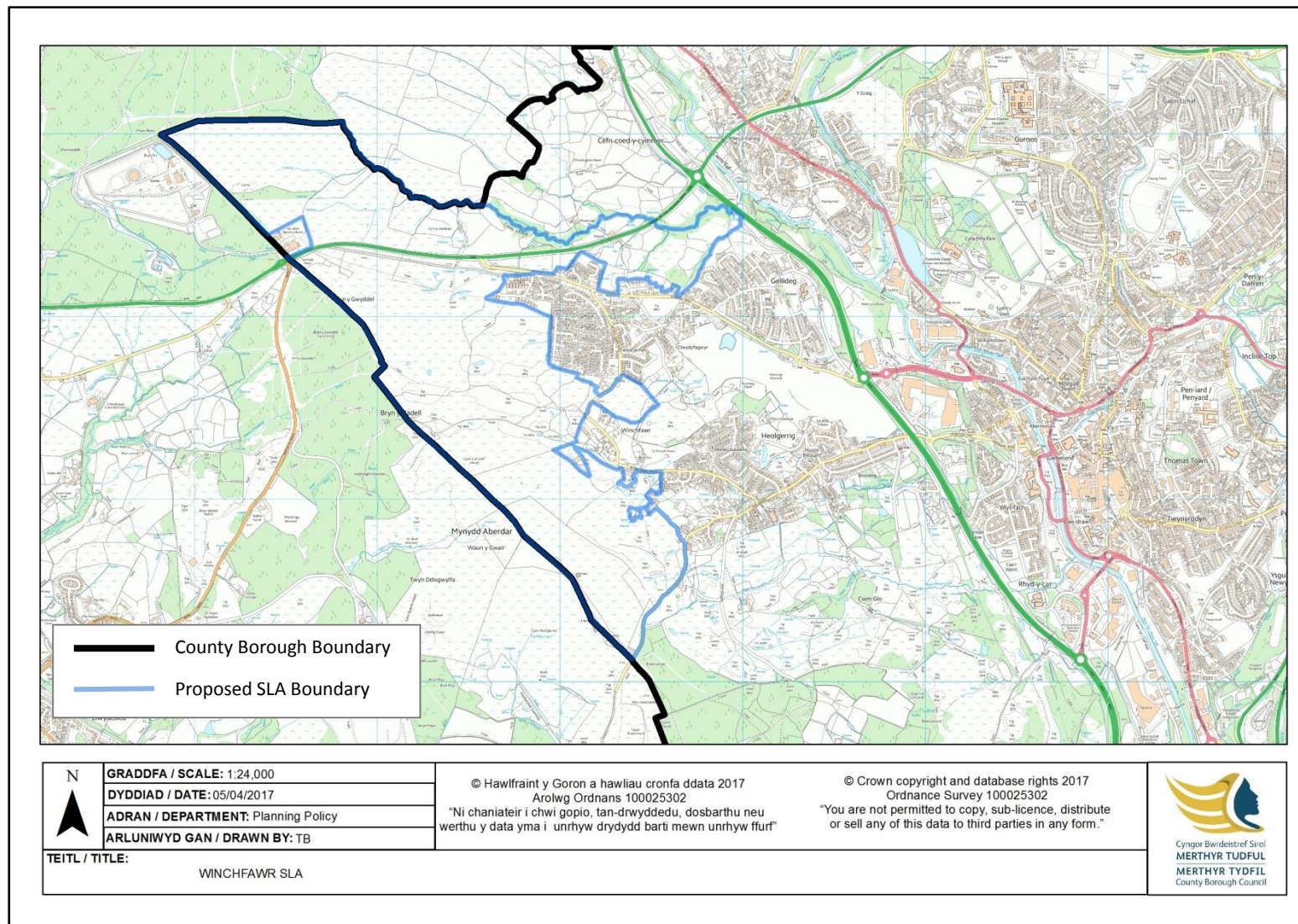
The validation of the SLA designations has been made against the criteria used to produce the evaluation level for each of the five evaluated aspect area topics. In all a maximum of nine criteria exist for any one aspect topic. Those used are shown on the evaluation matrix below:


Geological Landscapes	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscapes	Cultural Landscapes
Rarity/Uniqueness GL31	Priority Habitats LH37	Scenic Quality VS46	Integrity HL35	Recognition/Transparency CL31
Classic Example GL32	Significance LH38	Integrity vs47	Survival HL36	Rarity CL33
		Character vs48	Condition HL37	Group Value CL35
		Rarity VS49	Rarity HL38	

LANDMAP LAYER	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Evaluation Criteria and Score			
Geological			GL31	GL32		
	MRTHRGL011	Outstanding	O	O		
	MRTHRGL010	High	H	H		
	MRTHRGL009	Moderate	M	L		
	MRTHRGL008	Moderate	L	L		
	MRTHRGL007	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL001	Low	L	L		
Historic Landscape			HL35	HL36	HL37	HL38
	MRTHRHL009	High	H	H	H	M
	MRTHRHL019	High	O	H	H	M
	MRTHRHL003	High	H	H	M	M
	MRTHRHL021	High	O	H	H	M
	MRTHRHL004	Outstanding	O	H	H	H
	MRTHRHL005	Outstanding	H	O	H	H
	MRTHRHL018	Outstanding	O	H	H	O
	MRTHRHL001	Moderate	M	M	M	M
Landscape Habitats			LH37	LH38		
	MRTHRLH007	High	H	H		
	MRTHRLH006	High	H	H		
	MRTHRLH005	Outstanding	O	O		
	MRTHRLH001	High	M	H		
	MRTHRLH009	Moderate	L	M		

Visual and Sensory			VS46	VS47	VS48	VS49
	MRTHRVS313	Moderate	M	L	M	H
	MRTHRVS198	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRVS288	High	O	H	H	H
	MRTHRVS179	Low	L	L	L	M
	MRTHRVS393	High	H	H	H	H
	MRTHRVS387	High	H	H	H	H
	MRTHRVS122	Low	L	L	L	M
	MRTHRVS588	High	H	H	H	O
Cultural Landscape			CL31	CL33	CL35	
	MRTHRCL015	High	L	M	L	
	MRTHRCL007	Outstanding	L	H	H	
	MRTHRCL006	Outstanding	M	H	U	
	MRTHRCL011	High	M	L	U	
	MRTHRCL016	Outstanding	O	L	L	
	MRTHRCL018	Moderate	M	L	M	
	MRTHRCL005	High	M	L	M	
	MRTHRCL009	High	L	L	U	

SLA 2 WINCHFAWR - LOCATION MAP:



TITLE:	SLA 2 WINCHFAWR
Photograph	
Summary description – character	<p>The area is large and lies between the town and the ridgeline and the limit of western settlement and consists chiefly of open access land. It forms a continuous landscape character and boundaries consisting of stream bed (BBNP) to the north, settlement limits to the south and east and adjacent LPA boundary to the southwest. An agricultural landscape of traditional drystone and hedged bank boundaries and sheep pens; post-medieval farms with farm buildings; ancient woodland; historic association, an important industrial extractive landscape associated with the Cyfarthfa Ironworks and other minor industrial incursion. It is a complex mosaic of now rare conical tips and mine sites intermingled with an upland pasture extractive landscape with several homogenous features consisting of open access land comprised of acid grassland. It is somewhat akin to a massive area of urban fringe in that the influence of the town is evident throughout yet it is still distinctly rural in overall character. Land to the far north of the areas is consistent with the BBNP landscape character at this point.</p>
Boundary justification	<p>Winchfawr is a small SLA contained in the north-west corner of the County Borough contained in the south west and the north by the BBNP and County Borough administrative boundaries. The boundary encloses a peripheral post-industrial and pre-industrial landscape of former mineral waste finger tips and pre-industrial clawdd field boundaries. The SLA is contained on the eastern and southern boundary by the settlements of Upper Heolgerrig, Swansea Road and scattered random settlements of Winchfawr.</p>
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	
Need	<p>Designation will encourage appropriate management of water catchment for the Nant Cwm Ffrwd. This would maintain a consistent character with the adjoining BBNP.</p>
Landscape -	<p>The rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its specific historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features to the west of Winch Fawr, Upper Black Pins Levels.</p>
Consensus	<p>Agreed through Council Steering Group and subject to Local Development Plan pre-deposit proposals public consultation process.</p>
Special/valued landscape Qualities and Features	
Summary description - landscape value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A complex mosaic of now rare conical tips and mine sites intermingled with an upland pasture extractive landscape a character that is redolent of a forgotten landscape left standing after the mining activities had fallen silent; one homogenous feature is the open access land comprising of acid grassland

and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area has significant historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features to the west of Winch Fawr • The area contains very special habitat of marshy grassland, dry heath and acid grassland • Nant Cwm Ffrwd includes a Regionally Important Geological Site selected through the South Wales RIGS survey (2013) includes key geomorphological features as landscape components
Key Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve the diversity of vegetation and heritage features • Maintain open industrial character of the area and visible features • Protect older monuments • Safeguard RIGS • Limit expansion of development • Retain fieldscape areas as existing • Extend woodland framework while retaining mosaic character
Key Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce management plan for whole of west flank incorporating heritage features • Management of stock grazing • Retain diversity of mosaic through limited reclamation and vegetation management • Initiate schemes to enhance the visible aspect of the area, such as preventing fly tipping and increase public awareness of the historic character and the conservation needs of the area this could be linked to other environmental schemes • Develop a comprehensive threat-led heritage audit survey to ascertain the nature, extent and condition of the areas industrial remains • Produce a study into the area's development to inform future conservation programmes and management strategies • The built heritage (listed and otherwise) of the area should be included in a general historic buildings at risk survey of the Merthyr Tydfil area to inform on survival and condition with the aim of informing the emerging Built Heritage Strategy and future conservation programmes and management strategies. The survey should include a detailed architectural / historical study
Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help support the areas tourism offer for recreation, culture and heritage • Help encourage local management of local areas to provide clean and safe environments • Play a role in improving people's physical and emotional well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space • Help wildlife to thrive • Help build resilience to climate change • Help to maintain and improve air-quality

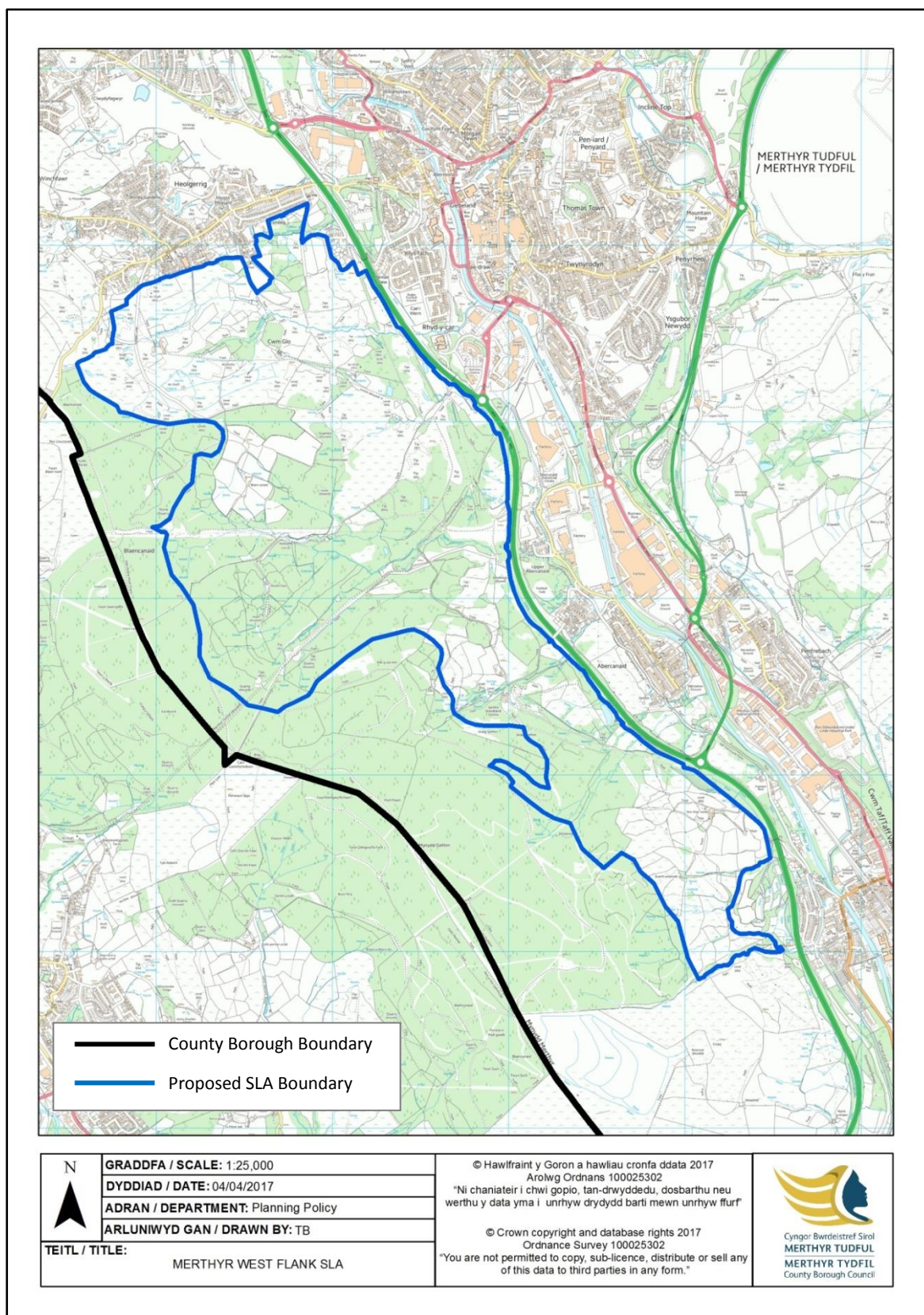
EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF VALUE EVALUATION VALIDATION SLA 2 WINCHFAWR


The validation of the SLA designations has been made against the criteria used to produce the evaluation level for each of the five evaluated aspect area topics. In all a maximum of nine criteria exist for any one aspect topic. Those used are shown on the evaluation matrix below:

Geological Landscapes	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscapes	Cultural Landscapes
Rarity/Uniqueness GL31	Priority Habitats LH37	Scenic Quality VS46	Integrity HL35	Recognition/Transparency CL31
Classic Example GL32	Significance LH38	Integrity VS47	Survival HL36	Rarity CL33
		Character VS48	Condition HL37	Group Value CL35
		Rarity VS49	Rarity HL38	

LANDMAP LAYER	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Evaluation Criteria and Score			
Geological			GL31	GL32		
	MRTHRGL007	Moderate	M	M		
Historic Landscape			HL35	HL36	HL37	HL38
	MRTHRHL001	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRHL006	Outstanding	O	O	M	H
Landscape Habitats			LH37	LH38		
	MTRHRLH008	High	H	H		
	MTRHRLH004	High	H	H		
Visual and Sensory			VS46	VS47	VS48	VS49
	MRTHRVS917	Moderate	M	L	H	M
	MRTHRVS729	Low	M	L	L	L
	MRTHRVS393	High	H	H	H	H
Cultural Landscape			CL31	CL33	CL35	
	MRTHRCL017	Moderate	L	L	U	

SLA 3 MERTHYR WEST FLANK - LOCATION MAP:



TITLE	SLA 3 MERTHYR WEST FLANK
<p>Photograph</p>	
<p>Summary description - character</p>	<p>This area lies between the town and the ridgeline and reaches right down to the A470 trunk road which cuts through the landscape and revealing at close hand the mix of industrial heritage, field pattern and woodland on this edge of Merthyr. The area forms a strongly dominant green flank to the town and is distinctly rural in character. It contains a complex mosaic of tips, transport features and mine sites intermingled with an upland pasture field pattern. There are areas of woodland and substantial natural regeneration, which look like natural habitats from a distance. The large numbers of disused sites are becoming well integrated within the mosaic. Further south the balance is in favour of the remnant field pattern and small blocks of woodland. The diversity and pattern of this landscape are distinctive and of high value. The naturally regenerated habitat mosaics are a particular feature of the Merthyr landscape and compare favourably visually with some of the sterile reclamation projects designed purely for industrial development or grazing. The character of the upland landscape is dominated by expansive coniferous woodland much of which has been felled more recently on the lower edges. As well as the main colliery sites, minor industrial features are also characteristic of the area, and include a number of quarries, airshafts, coal shafts, levels and coal tips. The northern section of the area has been declared as the Cwm Glo and Glyndurus Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).</p>
<p>Boundary justification -</p>	<p>The Merthyr West Flank SLA is limited on the eastern boundary by the length of the A470 trunk road south as far Plas y coed where it follows the Nant Cwm-du westwards before running northwards taking in enclosed fields and excluding the coniferous plantations to the</p>

	west. The boundary snakes its way north westwards excluding coniferous plantations to the south west and incorporating broadleaved woodland with intermittent conifers and former field boundaries to the north-east. The patchwork of former industrial activity and fields around Cwm Glo is included but limited by further coniferous plantations to the west before returning eastwards along the southern urban limit of the strung out linear extent of Heolgerrig; reconnecting with the A470 boundary at Brondeg.
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	
Need -	Designation will encourage good management practices in the future restoration of landscape features physical, flora, fauna and archaeological remains.
Landscape -	Several other areas of industrial/extractive activity survive within the Merthyr historic landscape however, the rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its specific historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features a number of priority habitats are found and important key species.
Consensus	Agreed through Council Steering Group and subject to Pre-deposit proposals public consultation process.
Special/Valued landscape Qualities and Features	
Summary description - landscape value and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its specific historic associations with the Crawshay family of Cyfarthfa and the substantial density of features across this landscape, including particularly significant concentrations of early extractive features a number of priority habitats are found and important key species • The area contains very special habitat of marshy grassland, species-rich neutral grassland and lowland acid grass land, it also contains native woodlands which adds value also • The area displays the reasonably intact condition of the upland pastoral fieldscape and the presence of substantial extant remains of mid -19th century extractive activity specifically associated with Robert and Lucy Thomas pioneers of the 'steam coal' industry
Key Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review planning policies to limit green field development • Restrict expansion of settlement fringe • Continue as now with no major physical development • Enhance presentation and access to transport links • Maintain intervening areas of fieldscape retain fieldscape areas as existing • Maintain industrial areas as visible features and protect older monuments • Maintain distinctive character of settlements • Manage status quo of existing mosaic • Arrest encroachment on cultural / visual character • Preserve integrity of cirque feature, and landslip
Key Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce management plan for whole of west flank incorporating heritage features • Retain diversity of mosaic through limited reclamation and vegetation management • Implement creative land reclamation for sites where natural regeneration alone is insufficient • Limit forestry expansion to existing sites • Extend woodland framework while retaining mosaic character • Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats • Prepare a detailed survey and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) strategy for great crested newt • Undertake a threat led heritage audit survey and consider establishing Archaeologically Sensitive Areas
Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help wildlife to thrive • Help support the areas tourism offer for recreation, culture and heritage • Help encourage local management of local areas to provide clean and safe environments • Help build resilience to climate change • Help to maintain and improve air-quality • Play a role in improving people's physical and emotional well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space

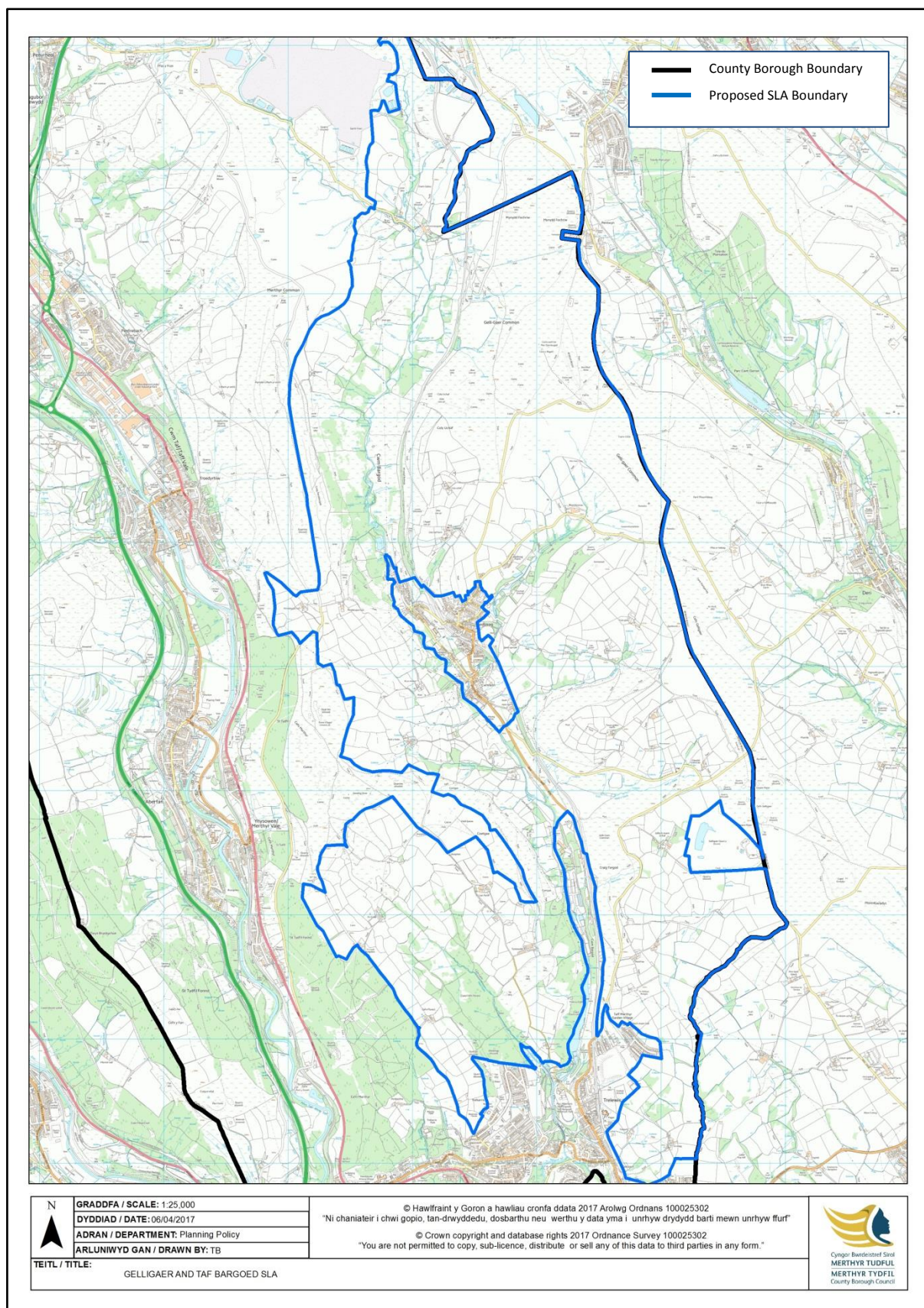
**EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF VALUE EVALUATION VALIDATION
SLA 3: MERTHYR WEST FLANK**


The validation of the SLA designations has been made against the criteria used to produce the evaluation level for each of the five evaluated aspect area topics. In all a maximum of nine criteria exist for any one aspect topic. These are shown on the evaluation matrix below:

Geological Landscapes	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscapes	Cultural Landscapes
Rarity/Uniqueness GL31	Priority Habitats LH37	Scenic Quality VS46	Integrity HL35	Recognition/Transparency CL31
Classic Example GL32	Significance LH38	Integrity VS47	Survival HL36	Rarity CL33
		Character VS48	Condition HL37	Group Value CL35
		Rarity VS49	Rarity HL38	

LANDMAP LAYER	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Evaluation Criteria and Score			
Geological			GL31	GL32		
	MRTHRGL007	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL005	High	H	H		
Historic Landscape			HL35	HL36	HL37	HL38
	MRTHRHL006	Outstanding	O	O	M	H
	MRTHRHL012	High	O	H	M	H
	MRTHRHL007	High	H	H	M	M
	MRTHRHL024	High	H	H	M	M
	MRTHRHL011	High	H	H	M	M
Landscape Habitats			LH37	LH38		
	MRTHRLH008	High	H	H		
	MRTHRLH010	Moderate	L	M		
	MRTHRLH011	Moderate	M	M		
Visual and Sensory			VS46	VS47	VS48	VS49
	MRTHRVS917	Moderate	M	L	H	M
	MRTHRVS487	Moderate	M	M	M	L
	MRTHRVS317	Low	M	L	L	L
Cultural Landscape			CL31	CL33	CL35	
	MRTHRCL017	Moderate	L	L	U	
	MRTHRCL019	Moderate	L	L	L	

SLA 4 GELLIGAER AND TAF BARGOED - LOCATION MAP:



TITLE	SLA 4 GELLIGAER AND TAF BARGOED
Photograph	
Summary description - character	<p>The area consists of the enclosed land within the Taf Bargoed Valley and areas of Gelligaer and Craig Fargoed on the western edge of Gelligaer Common. The common is remote and exposed with a simple ground cover making this area distinct from surrounding mosaics and contrasting it with the more diverse vegetation in the valleys themselves. Slopes are west facing with no settlement on the Common; farms are situated on the enclosed land below the ridges. Long views out across the coalfield plateau contrast with the enclosed nature of the adjacent valleys. The river and its tributaries are broadly defined by the current limit of the unenclosed marginal upland commons to the West and North East. The area reflects the remarkably intact character of this upland landscape and the exceptionally rich, multi-period quality of the archaeological resource, attesting to a remarkable continuity of occupation since the prehistoric era consisting of dry stone walls, relict-earthworks, relict-stone monuments and buried remains from the prehistoric, Roman and medieval (to 1536) periods. This is essentially an enclosed farmed landscape surrounding the Taf Bargoed, Nant Llwynog and Cwm Cothi watercourses. The area also contains a pattern of dispersed farmsteads which may be medieval in origin, mosaic of streams, small woodlands and hedged pastures giving way to distinctive stone walls at the higher levels. Hedgerow character varies from early enclosed fields of cloddiau variants to with more conventional hedgerows elsewhere. It also contains rounded summits above broad sweeps of grassland across the ridgelines which separate the U-shaped valleys below.</p>
Boundary justification -	<p>The Gelligaer and Taf Bargoed SLA boundary is contained by the County Borough administrative boundary on its eastern edge, interrupted briefly by the exclusion of Gelligaer sandstone quarry; and limited by the urban extent of Trelewis Parc Taf Bargoed, and Treharris to the south. The SLA incorporates the Coed cothi and Coed Cefn-fforest woodlands. The boundary excludes the predominantly coniferous woodland of Cefn Merthyr and St Tydfil Forest, taking in the fields around Tir Cook Farm. Further north the boundary runs on the eastern limit of the open access land of Cefn Merthyr taking in field boundaries to the east as far north as the upper catchment of the Nant Gyrawd at Cwm Golau omitting the open cast landscape before re-joining the County Borough boundary.</p>
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	
Need	<p>Designation will enable future restoration and enhancement of areas of land within the area proposed for designation e.g. through preparation of guidance, management plans and or researching funding opportunities towards enhancement or mitigation.</p>
Landscape	<p>The area is distinguished by the remarkable diversity of relict landscape features within it, attesting to continuous human activity since the Bronze Age. The Taf Bargoed valley and its tributaries form a locally recognised example of a relatively undisturbed farmed landscape that retains much of its character from the enclosures of the 19th Century despite having been subject to the attention of extractive industries within the valley floor.</p>

Consensus	Agreed through Council Steering Group and subject to Pre-deposit proposals public consultation process.
Special/Valued landscape Qualities and Features	
Summary description - landscape value and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The upland landscapes of Gelligaer and Craig Fargoed Commons are distinctive in their openness, accessibility and vegetation type coverage with few trees, no habitation and lack of enclosure The area is distinguished as being non-urban and feels remote and has a backwater quality with a few individual dwellings / isolated farmsteads Gelligaer Common is distinguished by the remarkable diversity of relict landscape features within it, attesting to continuous human activity since the Bronze Age The landscape tops the distinctive U shaped valley glaciated encompassing in one visual sweep high hills, mountains and valleys The valley contains a mixed landscape use; of field systems and woodlands and is a good example of a multi-period, multi-layered landscape whose cultural essence is mostly intact
Key Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control development to maintain open character Integrate existing and new development Restrict / contain development on fringes of the area. Control the threat of industrial exploitation in the north of the area. Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats through policies that encourage including heath protection and sward diversification Retain the strong character of the well-preserved irregular upland field scape and settlement pattern in this area (defined by a mixture of clawdd and dry-stone wall boundaries) Maintain and enhance field pattern framework of distinctive stone walls, the multi-period nature of the archaeological resource, with evidence of prehistoric and medieval settlement and ritual activity. Improve limited landscape connectivity between different valuable mosaic habitat e.g. through SINC designation Protect and enhance key elements of agricultural landscape Arrest the declining pastoral agriculture defined by field pattern which require on-going management to support diversification. Possible threat from grazing Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern in this area and respect the multi-period character of the archaeological resource. Define and establish 'Archaeological -Sensitive Areas and define them as 'pedestrian only' e.g. through creation of Public Rights of Way (PROW)
Key Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate programmes to control tipping, off road biking, horse riding, overstocking Enhance public parking and access points to minimise erosion of paths and roads Improve display and interpretation by Introducing promotion and interpretation of historic landscape and attractive panoramic views across the coalfield plateau including to the Brecon Beacons to the public Maintain stone walls on edge of common to arrest decline towards poor wall condition Engage with Commoners to reduce over grazing Initiate hedgerow management scheme to encourage land owners to gap up, replant or lay existing hedgerows and repair drystone walls thereby ensuring their longevity and survival as landscape features Implement further extensive survey work to establish evidence of further significant remains of prehistoric and medieval activity within this area (by means of aerial reconnaissance and field survey) with a view to establishing 'Archaeological Sensitive Areas' Explore the merits of further study/survey for the evidence of extensive industrial extractive features distributed within the area, represented by various pits and levels associated with 19th century industrial activity, namely water-management features and tram road alignments

Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help encourage local management of local areas to provide clean and safe environments • Help support the areas tourism offer for recreation, culture and heritage • Play a role in improving people's physical and emotional well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space • Help wildlife to thrive • Help build resilience to climate change • Help to maintain and improve air-quality
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EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF VALUE EVALUATION VALIDATION SLA 4 GELLIGAER AND TAF BARGOED

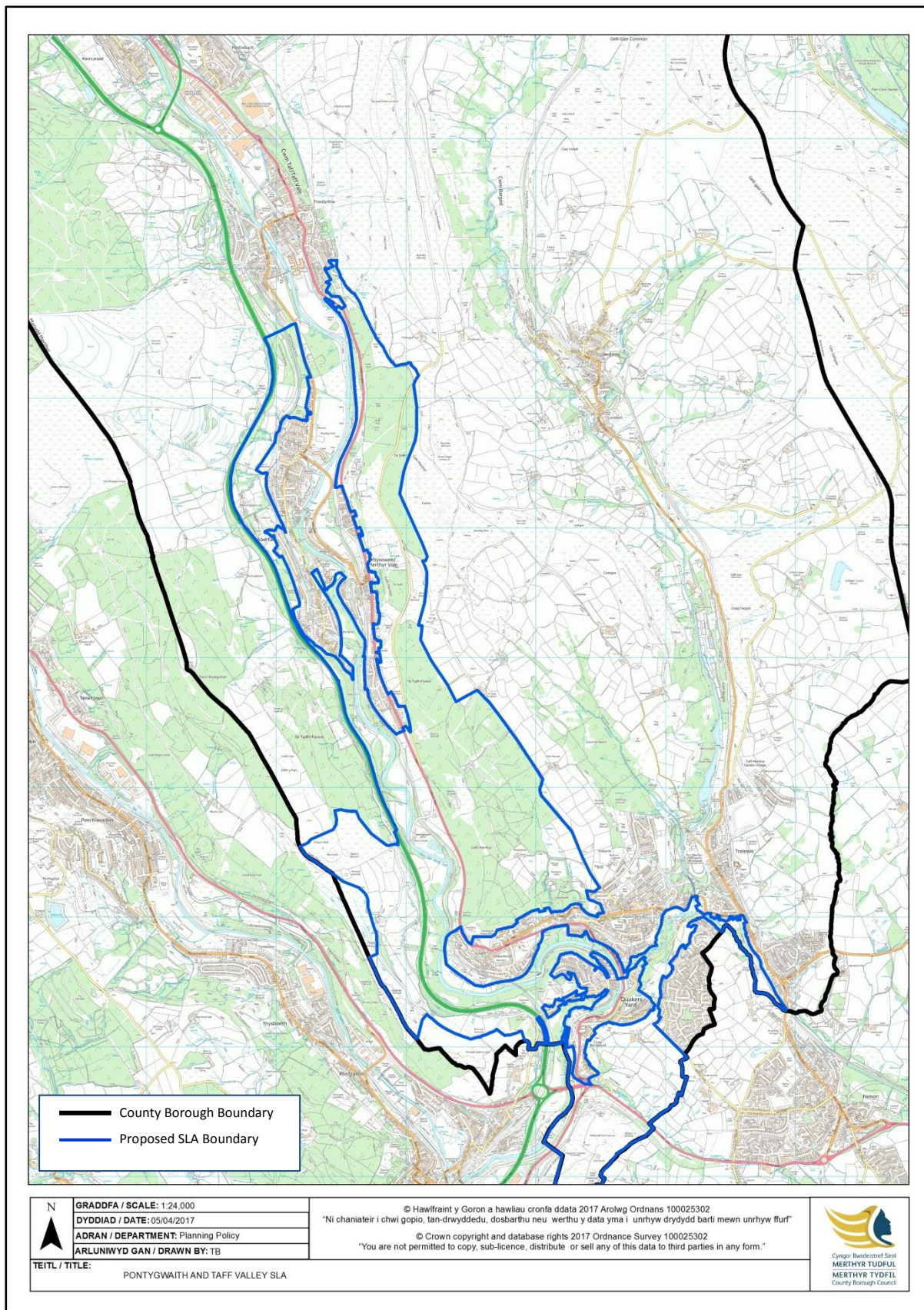
The validation of the SLA designations has been made against the criteria used to produce the evaluation level for each of the five evaluated aspect area topics. In all a maximum of nine criteria exist for any one aspect topic. Those used are shown on the evaluation matrix below:


Geological Landscapes	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscapes	Cultural Landscapes
Rarity/Uniqueness GL31	Priority Habitats LH37	Scenic Quality VS46	Integrity HL35	Recognition/Transparency CL31
Classic Example GL32	Significance LH38	Integrity VS47	Survival HL36	Rarity CL33
		Character VS48	Condition HL37	Group Value CL35
		Rarity VS49	Rarity HL38	

LANDMAP LAYER	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Evaluation Criteria and Score			
Geological	MRTHRGL018	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL017	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL019	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL015	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL016	Moderate	M	M		
Historic Landscape			HL35	HL36	HL37	HL38
	MRTHRHL026	High	H	H	M	L
	MRTHRHL015	Outstanding	O	O	H	H
	MRTHRHL016	High	H	H	H	L
	MRTHRHL022	High	H	H	M	M
	MRTHRHL013	High	H	H	H	M
Landscape Habitats			LH37	LH38		
	MRTHRHL007	High	H	H		
	MRTHRHL013	High	H	H		
	MRTHRHL015	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRHL016	Moderate	M	M		

Visual and Sensory			VS46	VS47	VS48	VS49
	MRTHRVS506	Moderate	M	M	M	L
	MRTHRVS858	High	H	M	H	L
	MRTHRVS101	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRVS452	Low	L	L	M	L
	MRTHRVS119	Moderate	M	M	H	M
	MRTHRVS377	Moderate	M	M	L	L
	MRTHRVS908	Moderate	M	M	M	M
Cultural Landscape			CL31	CL33	CL35	
	MRTHRCL015	High	L	M	L	
	MRTHRCL025	High	L	H	U	

TITLE: SLA 5 PONTYGWAITH AND TAF VALLEY - LOCATION MAP:



TITLE	SLA 5 PONTYGWAITH AND TAF VALLEY
Photograph	
Summary description – character	<p>The area is comprised of a distinct steep sided U shaped wooded valley consisting primarily of oak and beech dominated woodland with conifers increasing on the upper slopes. The valley is dramatic in places and imparts a positive image of the area. There are attractive views of the area from both sides of the valley with its woodlands and pleasant river corridor. The wooded section of the valley is a relatively peaceful area in which minor footpaths give access to river banks which seem much further from urban areas than they are. The rivers tortuous alignment is followed by roads revealing a succession of varying views over the adjacent settlements. Transport corridors consist of the trunk road which follows a more direct route up the Taf valley, while the railway and the Taff Trail (which follows an old tram road below the railway) offer more intimate and enclosed views. Post-industrial remnants, add to the richness of the area visually. The Taf is crossed by the Pont y Gwaith Bridge which feels further from the trunk road than it is along with the associated Pontygwaith Nature Reserve. Stone bridges are important elements contributing to the character of the area. Woodland cover dies away on the west side of valley towards the south and above the trunk road with a deteriorating field pattern and areas of reclaimed ground. The area is of historic importance as an industrial communications corridor, represented by the outstanding group of early to mid 19th century tram road and railroad viaducts crossing the Taff valley here and the development of nucleated, planned industrial settlements in the late 19th-early 20th century.</p>
Boundary justification	<p>The Pontygwaith and Taff Valley SLA is principally concerned with woodlands as the main characteristic and the complicated boundary reflects this. In the north the boundary takes in woodland to the south of Troedryhiw forming the lower part of the valley side and following the old Cardiff Road south as far as Mount Pleasant where it rises up the side of the valley to include St Tydfil forest and Cefn Merthyr. In a contorted and complicated fashion the boundary excludes Edwarsville following both sides of the Taff taking in the woodlands and confluence of Bargoed Taf, Afon Taf and Melin Caeach. The boundary encompasses the fields of Craig Berthllwyd but excludes the built up area of Quakers Yard and returns to the western flank of the Taff Valley rising to the ridge of Cefn Glas and incorporating the summit of Craig yr efall before dropping down to Pontygwaith. The parallel boundary runs northwards along the eastern edge of the A470 encompassing fingers of broadleaved woodland below which envelope the communities of Aberfan and Merthyr Vale.</p>
Relevance against Strategic Criteria	
Need	<p>Designation will enable future restoration and enhancement of areas of land within the area proposed for designation e.g. through preparation of guidance, management plans and or researching funding opportunities towards enhancement or mitigation.</p>
Landscape	<p>The narrow geography of the valley and its dramatic enclosed character is a rare feature both locally and nationally. The strong sense of place as a relatively peaceful area dominated by beech and oak woodland is a character that is not repeated elsewhere locally. Among the</p>

	communications corridors within the Merthyr historic landscape the rarity value of this area is significantly enhanced by its associations with Richard Trevithick, who undertook the first recorded steam locomotive journey on rails along the Penydarren Tramroad in 1804.
Consensus	Agreed through Council Steering Group and subject to Pre-deposit proposals public consultation process.
Special/Valued landscape Qualities and Features	
Summary description - landscape value and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrow geography of the valley and its dramatic enclosed character is a rare feature both locally and nationally • Among the communications corridors within this area is significantly enhanced by its associations with Richard Trevithick, who undertook the first recorded steam locomotive journey on rails along the Penydarren Tramroad in 1804 • The rarity value of industrial transport corridors and nucleated industrial settlement are represented and enhanced by the survival of the impressive series of 19th century railway viaducts crossing the Afon Taff • The area displays a strong degree of naturalness through the poetic movement of the Afon Taff in the secluded oak beech woodlands found within the valley • Unusual example of man's ingenuity overcoming topographical obstacles Outstanding as evidence of High Victorian engineering skills among large areas of connected woodlands, with numerous key species and ancient woodlands • Quakers Yard - short-lived settlement for early Non-conformist sect Quakers Yard more obviously associated with dissenting religion
Key Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitat areas designating the best habitat areas as SINC's • Use the woodlands to contribute to a sense of place for individual settlements by retaining the distinctive character of settlement cores • Ensure further development avoids sensitive sites e.g. Goitre Coed and respects and maintains woodland setting • Protect and enhance the river corridor and the wooded nature of this part of the valley • Maintain intervening areas of fieldscape
Key Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a conservation plan to protect and enhance presentation and access to river crossings / transport /communications routes through interpretation and preservation for their cultural significance • Protect and enhance woodland through the development of a management strategy for the entire area extending broadleaved woodland to incorporate former coniferous sites softening the edges of forest blocks • Support the implementation of the Pontygwaith Nature Reserve Management Plan • Arrest the deterioration of field patterns and extend heathland areas • Enhance interpretation of Quaker's Yard
Contribution to Local well-being goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help support the areas tourism offer for recreation, culture and heritage • Help encourage local management of local areas to provide clean and safe environments • Help wildlife to thrive • Play a role in improving people's physical and emotional well-being by contributing to accessible out-door space • Help build resilience to climate change • Help to maintain and improve air-quality

EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF VALUE EVALUATION VALIDATION SLA 5 PONTYGWAITH AND TAF VALLEY

The validation of the SLA designations has been made against the criteria used to produce the evaluation level for each of the five evaluated aspect area topics. In all a maximum of nine criteria exist for any one aspect topic. Those used are shown on the evaluation matrix overleaf:

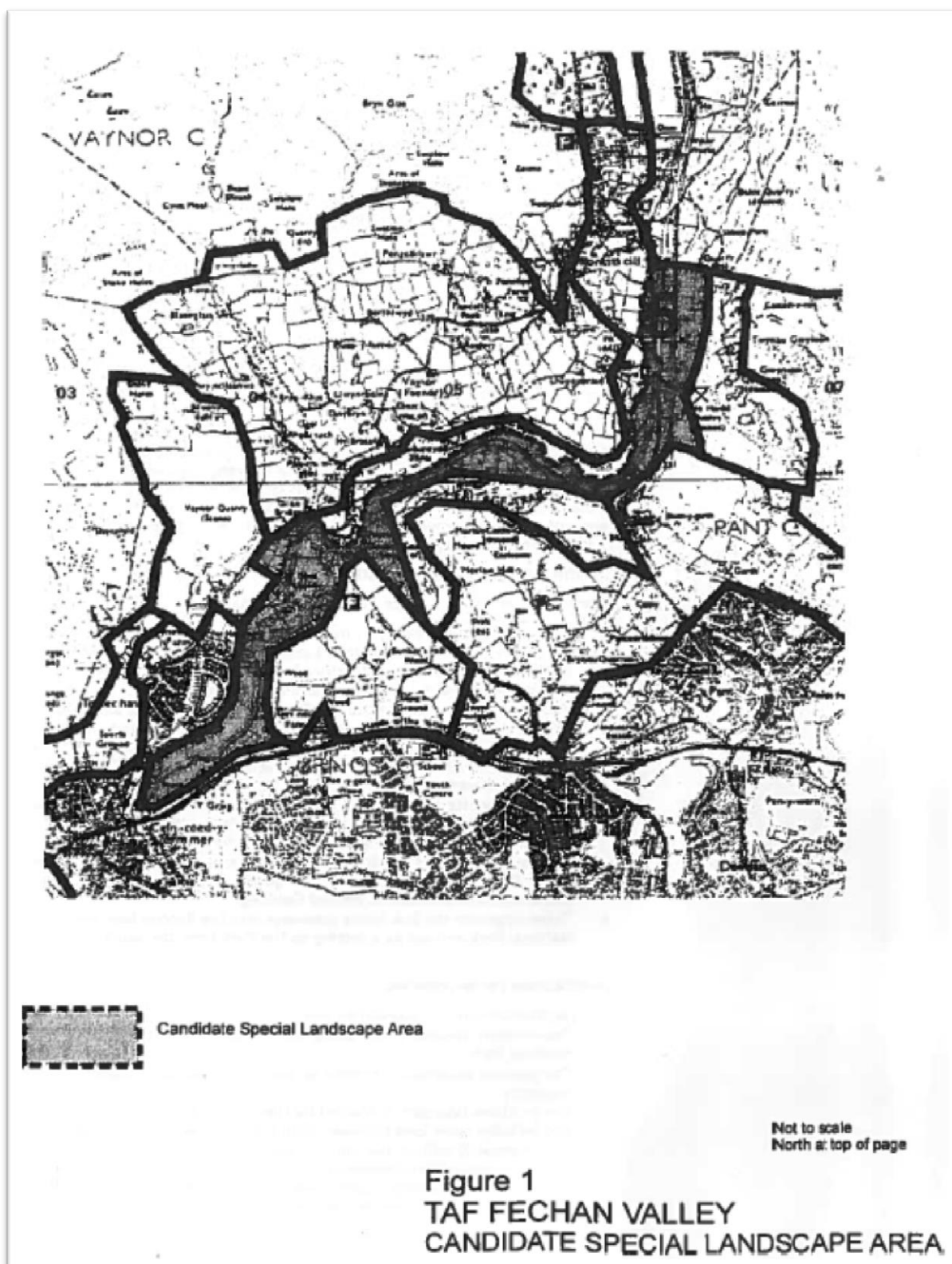
BACKGROUND PAPER: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Geological Landscapes	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscapes	Cultural Landscapes
Rarity/Uniqueness GL31	Priority Habitats LH37	Scenic Quality VS46	Integrity HL35	Recognition/Transparency CL31
Classic Example GL32	Significance LH38	Integrity VS47	Survival HL36	Rarity CL33
		Character VS48	Condition HL37	Group Value CL35
		Rarity VS49	Rarity HL38	

LANDMAP LAYER	Aspect Area Identifier	Overall Evaluation Score	Evaluation Criteria and Score			
Geological			GL31	GL32		
	MRTHRGL005	High	H	H		
	MRTHRGL001	Low	L	L		
	MRTHRGL006	High	H	H		
	MRTHRGL003	High	H	H		
	MRTHRGL016	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRGL004	Moderate	M	M		
Historic Landscape			HL35	HL36	HL37	HL38
	MRTHRHL023	Moderate	M	H	M	L
	MRTHRHL017	High	H	H	H	M
	MRTHRHL013	High	H	H	H	M
	MRTHRHL014	Outstanding	O	O	M	H
	MRTHRHL012	High	O	H	M	H
Landscape Habitats			LH37	LH38		
	MRTHRLH016	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRLH017	High	H	H		
	MRTHRLH011	Moderate	M	M		
	MRTHRLH012	Moderate	M	H		
	MRTHRLH014	Low	L	L		
Visual and Sensory			VS46	VS47	VS48	VS49
	MRTHRVS729	Low	M	L	L	L
	MRTHRVS706	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRVS908	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRVS767	High	H	M	H	H
	MRTHRVS310	Moderate	M	M	M	M
	MRTHRVS185	Moderate	M	M	L	M
	MRTHRVS840	Low	L	L	M	L
Cultural Landscape			CL31	CL33	CL35	
	MRTHRCL019	Moderate	L	L	L	
	MRTHRCL023	Outstanding	L	H	U	
	MRTHRCL022	Outstanding	O	O	O	
	MRTHRCL015	High	L	M	L	
	MRTHRCL026	High	L	M	U	
	MRTHRCL025	High	L	H	U	

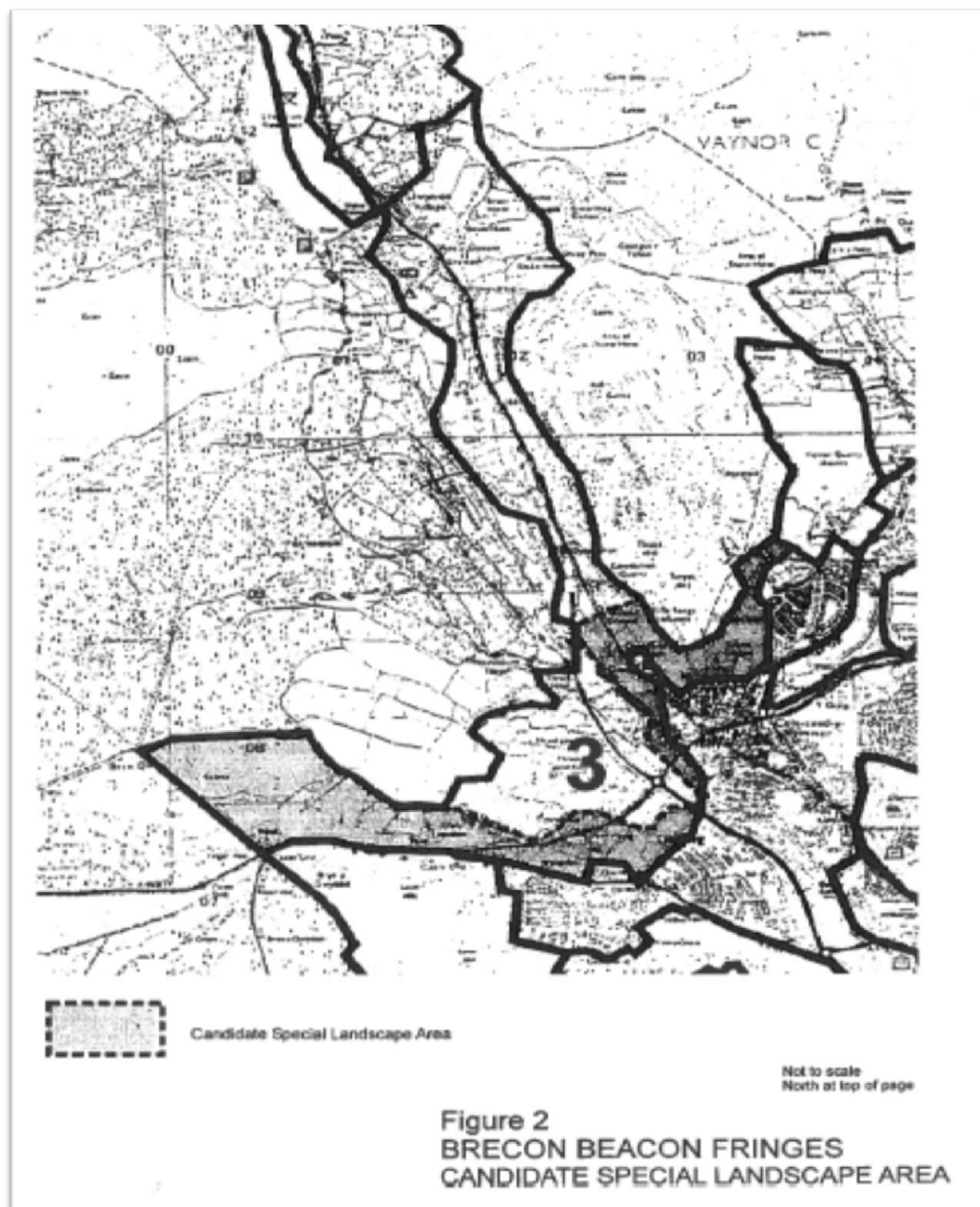
APPENDIX 1:

TAF FECHAN VALLEY – CANDIDATE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA (White Consultants, 2002)



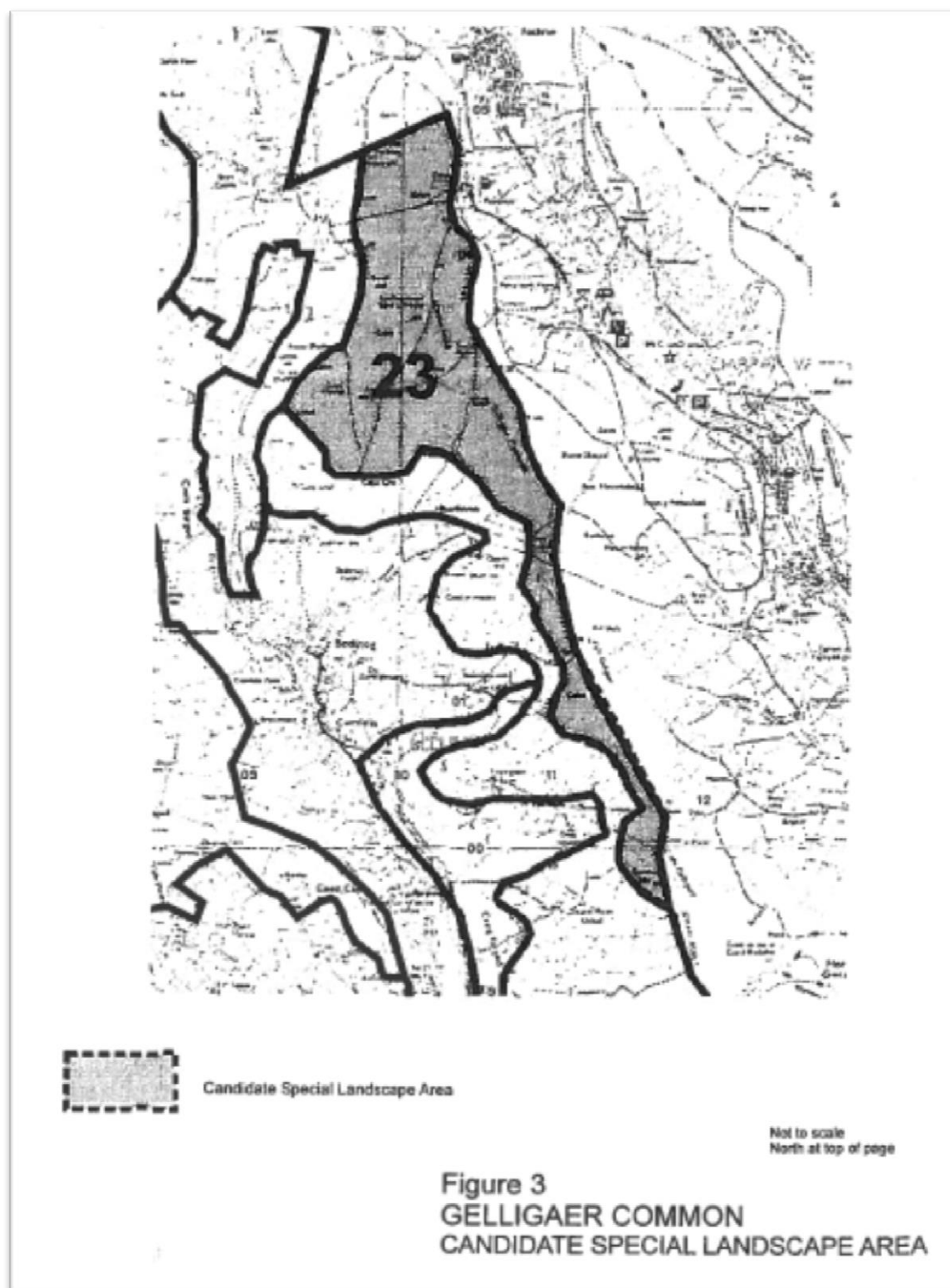
APPENDIX 2:

BRECON BEACON FRINGES – CANDIDATE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA (White Consultants, 2002)



APPENDIX 3:

GELLIGAER COMMON—CANDIDATE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA (White Consultants, 2002)



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