

Appendix 9C

Landscape and Visual Baseline

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C1 Baseline Environment - Landscape

Banwen Uplands LCA

A landscape defined by its broad upland valley landform and including areas of woodland, open upland and pastoral fields divided by hedgerows and linear woodlands.

The Inter Valley Road dissects the character area running north-west to south-east. Views outwards from the road are confined to the northern extent of the character area which results in stronger ties with the contextual landscape to the north which includes the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Settlement is limited to scattered houses focused along the A4109 Inter Valley Road and Roman Road / Camnant Road. A large solar farm is situated to the South of the character area.

Past mining operation is evident to the west of the character area where the pastoral field pattern is less complex, and boundaries clearly differ to the overgrown and well treed boundaries north-east of the Inter Valley Road.

The character area extends to the edge of the national park boundary to the north where the Afon Pyrddin lies. This is an important upland river and woodland system designated as the Caeau Ton-Y-Fildre biological SSSI. The area also contains BAP priority habitats.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Inter Valley Road
- Important habitats towards the northern boundary of the character area. Caeau Ton-Y-Fildre SSSI

The Banwen Uplands LCA's value is a result of its complex landscape pattern and important habitats to the north of the character area. Evidence of a landscape in a state of repair exists to the south of the Inter Valley Road but is not at the detriment to its overall character. The Inter Valley Road provides open, long-distance views to the north.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **High**

Black Mountain Southern Fringe LCA

A landscape defined by the sloping hillside running down from the Black Mountains. The area is characterised by a mix of open upland and small-scale pasture with dense, treed hedgerow boundaries lying between the Afon Twrch valley and the settlements around Cwmllynfell. The character area comprises the transition between the flatter lower lying landform near the settled areas in the valley and the mountainous Brecon Beacons to the north. The landscape pattern of small-medium scale pasture fields located nearest to the settlements on lower-lying ground directly contrasts with the open moorland to the north.

The wooded Afon Twrch valley lies to the south-east.

Past mining activity is evident within the LCA resulting in incongruous areas and the evident loss of landscape complexity.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Pattern formed by small-medium scale fields
- Transition landform

The Black Mountain Southern Fringe LCA's value is a result of its lack of complexity and evidence of previous mining activity.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Bryn Henllys Reclaimed Open Cast LCA

A landscape defined by its past use as an open cast mining site and current land use as grazed pasture.

A large number of public right of ways (PRoWs) cross the site and provide access to the adjacent national park from settlements on the valley floor.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Open character
- Public access due to large number of PRoWs
- Long-distance panoramic views available from higher ground

The Bryn Henllys Reclaimed Open Cast Site LCA's value is a result of its recreational access and access to the adjacent national park. Past mining activity is evident across the LCA and has resulted in areas that are distinguishable from the

surrounding landscape comprising more complex field patterns and mature vegetation.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Low**

Coelbren Settlement LCA

A settlement developed around the historic mining industry evident by the defunct railway junction of the Neath and Brecon Railway and Swansea Vale Railway.

The historic core of the settlement is along Station Road and The Prices Arms pub, which stood adjacent Coelbren Station, stands as a relic of the former industry. The village has expanded as linear development predominantly along Cefnbyrle Road and Heol Eglwys.

The LCA includes small-scale fields between Cefnbyrle Road and the disused Neath and Brecon Railway and Swansea Vale Railway junction.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Prices Arms pub, Coelbren Church
- Disused Neath and Brecon Railway and Swansea Vale Railway

The Coelbren Settlement LCA's value is a result of the historic and cultural associations. Beyond this it is a settlement typology that occurs frequently within the wider landscape.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Low**

Cwm Twrch LCA

A landscape defined by its upland valley landform and land use for grazing.

Fields are contained by overgrown hedgerows and deciduous tree cover. A belt of woodland runs along the north-eastern edge of the character area which contains Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and creates a buffer between the adjacent built

form. There is evidence of previous mining activity where the enclosed agricultural pattern becomes more open and larger in scale with significantly less vegetation along boundaries.

Views within the character area are confined by tree cover and topography.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Enclosed fields with overgrown hedges
- Valley landform
- Woodland belt along north-eastern edge including Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland

The Cwm Twrch LCA's value is a result of its importance as a buffer to the adjacent built form. Past mining activity is evident across the LCA and has scarred the landscape resulting in it being clearly distinguishable from the surrounding landscape.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Dulais Valley LCA

A landscape defined by the River Dulais and associated wooded valley landform. The land-use comprises predominantly post-medieval enclosed pastoral fields with treed field boundaries. The linear settlement of Crynant which stretches along the A4109 is situated on the valley floor at the centre of the character area. The Neath and Brecon railway runs along elevated topography on the eastern side of the valley.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Valley landform
- River Dulais
- Enclosed pastoral land with treed field boundaries.
- A4109
- Neath and Brecon Railway
- Crynant

The Dulais Valley LCA's value is a result of its recognition within Neath Port Talbot 'LDP Policy EN2: Special Landscape Areas' as 'SLA2 (EN2/2) Dulais Valley'. The SLA is identified as a high-quality landscape that comprises:

- wide, rolling, pastoral valley with significantly treed field boundaries;
- tranquillity as a key feature due to the undeveloped upper ridge areas;
- prehistory evidence such as: important Roman remains, open cast and forestry;
- examples of the importance of the mining industry in the area such as the Cefn Coed Colliery Museum.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **High**

Fforest Fawr LCA

A landscape defined by its upland open moorland used for grazing. The LCA contains some coniferous forestry blocks to the south.

Very few settlements contribute to the overall remoteness and tranquillity which is experienced away from the main roads that provide direct access to the LCA.

The LCA is largely covered by open access land allowing opportunities for recreational use and the Beacons Way runs through the south-western extent of the area.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Remoteness
- Peace and tranquillity
- Dark skies
- The Beacons Way
- High proportion of open access land

The Fforest Fawr LCA's value is a result of; its designated status as it falls within the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary; its special qualities; its remoteness; peace and tranquillity and recreational value.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **High**

Head of Dulais Valley LCA

Landscape defined by the linear mining settlements associated with mining industry of the Dulais Valley. The settlements include Seven Sisters, Onllwyn, Dyffryn Cellwen and Banwen following the A4109 along the Dulais river valley. Seven Sisters Miners Welfare and Onllwyn Welfare Hall are indicators of communities with strong connections to the mining industry.

The Neath and Brecon rail corridor also follows the valley and terminates at the coal washery at the north-eastern extent of the LCA. The low level of the railway line, sitting below the A4109, makes it barely perceptible.

The southern valley slope comprises restored surface coal mining which is now sparsely vegetated, open grasslands and narrow woodland belts associated with tributaries of the Dulais river. The river itself is perceptible only by its associated linear woodland.

Perception of the LCA is influenced by the views towards the surrounding landscapes of the Nant Helen opencast site, Brecon Beacons National Park and Hirfynydd.

Key Features/Characteristics

- A4109 along the Dulais river valley
- Sparsely vegetated, restored coal mine valley slope to the south
- Linear settlements typical of mining industry
- Neath and Brecon Railway corridor and washery
- Seven Sisters Miners Welfare and Onllwyn Welfare Hall

The Head of Dulais Valley LCA's value is a result of its strong connection to its industrial past and present.

Value: **Medium**

Future baseline:

The adjacent Nant Helen Opencast Site will have been restored, changing the context of the Head of Dulais Valley LCA and also a small area of the LCA itself, to the west of the coal washery.

Within the LCA, the restoration will include the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks, which will introduce an engineered embankment west of Onllwyn Road and north of the existing mineral railway line. The embankment will follow an existing track to the north-west, that forms the boundary of the LCA. Restoration works within the adjacent Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA will substantially change that LCA, including the reprofiling of the distinctive overburden mound. This will be re-graded to provide a less 'engineered' land form, however the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will introduce new engineered land forms around the overburden mound and deep

cuttings to the south-east. These earthworks will result in disturbance to the landscape adjacent to Head of Dulais Valley LCA, that will influence perception of the both this LCA and the Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA.

Future Key Features/Characteristics

There will be no change to the key features/characteristics of the LCA.

The restoration works will be a minor change to Head of Dulais Valley LCA, with the embankment earthworks being typical of the receiving landscape. The minor changes to the Head of Dulais Valley LCA and changes to its contextual landscape would not result in sufficient enhancement or degradation of its key features or characteristics to result in a change to the overall value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Hirfynydd LCA

A landscape is defined by the landform of Hirfynydd and the dominant land cover of coniferous woodland plantation. The area has a remote character due to the absence of dwellings or settlements. A Roman Road crosses the ridgeline that runs north-east to south-east and offers public access and long-distance views to the north and north-west by way of Byway 28/39.N.Hi/1. Wind turbines on the north-eastern edge are a notable feature of the landscape.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Roman Road that follows the ridgeline from north-east to south-west
- Wind Turbines on north-eastern edge.
- Large proportion of coniferous woodland plantation
- Elevated topography (Hirfynydd hill)

The Hirfynydd LCA's value is a result of its tranquillity and remoteness. Past and present human activity through mining is evident though not widely visible throughout the LCA. The western extent of the character area is formed by the Dulais Valley side which is recognised within Neath Port Talbot 'LDP Policy EN2: Special Landscape Areas' as 'SLA2 (EN2/2) Dulais Valley' as it reinforces the visual context of the SLA.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Mynydd Allt y Grug LCA

A landscape defined by its significant landform which rises above the Tawe valley, comprising exposed rock and scree, and heathland. The elevated landform forms a dominant feature from the surrounding landscape and is accessible by path to designated common land. The character area provides views across the Tawe Valley.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Exposed rock and scree cover
- Heathland
- Views across Tawe Valley

The Mynydd Allt y Grug LCA's value is a result of its prominence within the surrounding landscape and internationally important dry heath habitats.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Mynydd Marchywel LCA

A landscape defined by a high proportion of coniferous plantation on elevated topography. Much of the woodland along the eastern and western boundary of the character area is designated as Restored Ancient Woodland, Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland or Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site. A ridgeline runs north to south and forms the partitioning higher ground between the Dulais valley to the east and Swansea valley to the west.

There are a number of PRoWs that cross the character area and allow recreational users to take advantage of long-distance views. The character area also comprises large areas of open access land to the north and south.

The northern extent of the character area is formed by Varteg Hill which rises above the Swansea Valley forming a dominant feature within the surrounding landscape, pylons that cross the landform and a wireless mast that stands atop are highly visible due to their elevated position.

A lack of developments and roads gives the character area a remote and tranquil character.

Key Features/Characteristics

- High proportion of coniferous plantation

- Remoteness and tranquillity
- Elevated landform and distinctive Varteg Hill
- Pylons and wireless mast that are highly visible

Mynydd Marchywel LCA's value is a result of its dominance within the surrounding landscape and valued recreational routes with long distance views, and its remoteness and tranquillity.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **Medium**

Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd Garth & Cefn Gwrhyd LCA

A landscape defined by its plateau landform and land cover of rough grasses, which are managed by sheep grazing.

The area contains no settlements and is accessible by minor roads and tracks which contribute to its overall sense of remoteness. PRowS provide recreational access to the common land which offers panoramic views across the surrounding landscape.

The Gwrhyd Welsh Independent Church built in 1856 is a significant local landmark and cultural feature within the LCA.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Open character
- Common Land
- Panoramic views
- Grazed landcover
- Gwrhyd Welsh Independent Church

The Mynydd Uchaf, Mynydd garth & Cefn Gwrhyd LCAs value is a result of its important habitats and sense of remoteness as well as its opportunity for recreational and scenic qualities including panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and

introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Value: **High**

Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA

A landscape defined by past and present mining activity. Present mining activity dominates the north and eastern extents of the character area and there is evidence of previous mining activity to the south.

Areas of upland moorland with predominantly rough grassland and bracken landcover and further areas of marsh and grassland. Large areas are used for grazing.

The overburden mound associated with the mining activity stands as a prominent and evidently man-made feature visible from the wider landscape.

A number of PRoWs cross the character area, many of which are temporarily suspended through the mining site. Mining activity within the character area is a detractor from its use for recreational purposes.

Pylons run from east to west along the southern extent of the character area and contribute to the overall large-scale industrial character.

The Ystradgynlais Scheduled Monument Tramroad is further evidence of the industrial history of the character area and the importance of mining in the historical development of the wider landscape.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Past and present mining activity
- Overburden mound
- Open character
- Marsh and grassland landcover
- Tramroad at Ystradgynlais Scheduled Monument

The Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA's value is a result of detractors due to the current mining activity. Recreational opportunities are limited due to mining activity and routes that remain open are at the detriment of noise, and unattractive nature of the current mining activity. Features of this activity such as the overburden mound are incongruous with the surrounding landscape. The mining industry has been crucial to the development of the surrounding landscape and the Tramroad at Ystradgynlais stands as a relic of the local history of the area.

Value: **Low**

Future baseline:

The Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will directly affect the eastern half of the LCA.

The restoration includes the reprofiling of the distinctive overburden mound. This will be re-graded to provide a less 'engineered' land form and will reduce the height of the mound. The western opencast area will be reformed, with ponds and marshy grassland habitat created. The northern and eastern opencast areas will be restored to pasture with linear woodlands associated with watercourses. Elsewhere will be restored to the acid grassland currently on site.

The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will introduce new engineered landforms across the eastern extent of the LCA. This will include embankments to the north and south, deep cuttings to the east and a shallower cutting to the west. The southern embankment will cross the disused historic tram road (Scheduled Monument), severing the associated footpath. The earthworks will also cross numerous other PRow, restricting access across the LCA.

The restored Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA will remove adverse features of the existing landscape, particularly the engineered and dominating form of the overburden mound, however the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will introduce new engineered landforms.

Future Key Features/Characteristics

- Past mining activity
- Open character
- Established marsh and grassland landcover
- Newly restored marsh, acid grassland and enclosed pasture
- Tramroad at Ystradgynlais Scheduled Monument

The value of the Nant Helen Reclaimed LCA will not change as a result of future changes due to the Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks. It is anticipated that there would be the loss/degradation of some key features such as previously restored habitats, recreational access may be further limited due to the severance of PRow and engineered landforms would be present across the eastern extent of the LCA. However, the restoration would result in the loss of mining activity from the LCA and the reduction and reprofiling of the overburden mound to a more naturalistic appearance. The newly restored areas would not be sufficiently established within the first 3 years to increase the overall value of the LCA.

Value: **Low**

Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd & Cwm Egel LCA

A landscape defined by grazed pasture and deciduous tree cover along riparian corridors within the sheltered confines of the valley landform.

Grazed pasture fields boundaries are formed by hedgerows on lower ground and stone walls on higher ground.

The character area contains extensive areas of SSSI including Gwrhyd Meadows and Coed Cwm Du. The wooded valley of Cwm Du contains Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland with the largest areas to the south of the character area.

There is only one minor road which passes through the area providing access to the scattered farmsteads across the landscape. Limited access contributes to the sense of remoteness and tranquillity within this settled landscape.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Grazed pasture
- Field boundaries formed by hedgerow and stone walls
- Scattered farmsteads
- Remoteness and tranquillity
- SSSIs
- Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland

The Slopes of Cefn Gwrhyd & Cwm Egel LCAs value is a result of its important habitats, scenic rural character and its sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Swansea Valley LCA

A landscape defined by the Swansea Valley landform and the meandering River Tawe that runs through a mosaic of pasture and woodland. The southern valley side is predominantly covered with deciduous woodland. North of the river the area comprises pasture fields with well treed boundaries.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Meandering River Tawe.
- Deciduous woodland
- Mosaic of pasture fields

The Swansea Valley LCAs value is a result of its picturesque valley landform and function as a habitat corridor.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and

introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Swansea Valley Settlements LCA

An area defined by the Swansea Valley and linear settlements that have established along the valley, coinciding with the transport corridors of A4068, A4067 and B4599. The character area comprises the settlements of Ystalyfera, Gurnos, Ystradgynlais, Penrhos, Cwm-twrch Isaf, Cwmgiedd and Glan-rhyd. The boundaries of these settlements are difficult to define due to their linear integrated nature which is driven primarily by landform but also the transport corridors that have established over time. The older cores of these settlements are located above the floodplain while newer development spreads across the valley floor. Newer developments are generally built of materials that do not reflect the vernacular.

The settlements are nestled within the valley landform, with valley sides forming the backdrop and extent of available views outwards. There is a range of housing types across the settlements, but housing density is generally quite high and consist of many examples of rows of terraces.

The housing density and enclosed nature of the character area changes where the valley widens at the Afon Twch and River Tawe confluence. A culmination of sports centres, a rugby club and employment land use results in a more open, larger-scale character with more green space.

The Swansea canal provides a recreational route through the character area and persist as a relic of the industrial history of the area.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Linear settlements of Ystalyfera, Gurnos, Ystradgynlais, Penrhos, Cwm-twrch Isaf, Cwmgiedd and Glan-rhyd
- Transport corridors of A4067, A4068 and B4599
- Enclosed, relatively high density urban character
- Historic relics of the industrial history of the area such as Swansea Canal that is now used for recreation

Swansea Valley Settlements LCA's value is a result of its sense of place and community built around the industrial history of the area.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Upland Settlements LCA

A landscape defined by the settlements of Ystradowen and Cwmllynfell that are situated on the uplands above the Afon Cwch valley.

Settlements are linear in nature and strung out along the A4068. The key defining feature that defines these settlements as a separate character area from Swansea Valley Settlements is the more exposed character due to the location on elevated topography and views that are afforded as a result.

Key Features/Characteristics

- A4068
- Exposed character and views of surrounding landscape
- Linear settlements

The Upland Settlement LCA's value is a result of its sense of place and community that is a continuation of that within the Swansea Valley Settlements LCA. The LCA has a more exposed nature with residents afforded long-distance views.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Waterfall Country and Southern Valleys LCA

A landscape defined by its enclosed character comprising streams, spectacular waterfalls and ancient woodland.

The LCA includes the villages of Ystradfellte, Penderyn and Glyntawe which are located on the valley floor. Land use is predominantly pastoral agriculture with extensive areas of forestry to the south-east. Higher areas are more open and less complex in composition.

Southern part of the LCA have inter-visibility with land beyond the National Park boundary. Recreational opportunities include caving, canoeing cycling and walking and are mostly related to the rivers streams and waterfalls within the area. A number of PRowS re located on higher ground and offer views out from the LCA.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Recreational opportunities
- Complex geology
- Complex pastoral field patterns

- Rivers and multiple waterfalls
- Peace and tranquillity

The Waterfall and Southern Valleys LCA's value is a result of its designated status as it falls within the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary; its combination of rivers, waterfalls, woodland and complex textures due to historic pastoral field patterns and geology; and its special qualities including peace and tranquillity. The LCA also contains important natural heritage features and a strong sense of time-depth.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

Wooded Tawe Valley LCA

A landscape defined by the wooded River Tawe valley. The landscape comprises a high proportion of woodland cover and enclosed pastoral fields with dense, treed boundaries. Areas of Restored Ancient Woodland, Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites are scattered across the character area and contribute to the overall enclosed character of the LCA. A4067 and A4221 road corridors are also lined by woodland, reducing their influence on the LCA.

Settlements are predominantly associated with the road corridors and include Abercraf, Caehopkin and Caerbont. Abercraf is situated on the northern valley slope with views across the wooded valley. It is the largest settlement, containing multiple community resources. Caehopkin is situated on the opposite, southern valley slope and has a small-scale, enclosed character due to the surrounding topography and woodland cover which limits the distance of available views. Caerbont- lies on the valley floor, alongside the River Tawe, with residential development to the west of the A4067 and Caerbont Enterprise Park to the east.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Ancient woodlands
- River Tawe
- A4067 and A4221
- Settlements of Caerbont, Abercraf and Caehopkin
- Listed buildings at Gwaunclawdd

Wooded Tawe Valley LCA's value is a result of its distinctive, heavily wooded, valley landform. Development is relatively small-scale and surrounded by woodland that reduces its influence on the wider LCA. The River Tawe is well

vegetated throughout the character area and the dense vegetation alongside transport corridors compliments this.

Value: **Medium**

Future baseline:

The Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will directly affect an area of plantation woodland and pastoral fields bordered by mature hedgerows and belts of broadleaf woodland on the southern boundary of the LCA.

The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will introduce an embankment through a large area of the plantation woodland. Large areas of mature broadleaf woodland also removed for the embankment contribute to the LCA's woodland valley side character.

The embankment will also cross National Cycle Network Route 43 that connects to the Celtic Trail. The cycle route will be diverted through existing semi-mature woodland, c.80m north of the affected section of the route.

The Restoration of Nant Helen Opencast Site will include infilling of the opencast mining void and the reprofiling of the distinctive overburden mound to provide a less 'engineered' land form and reduced height. The infilled void will be restored to include ponds and marshy grassland habitat creation. The northern and eastern opencast areas will be restored to pasture with linear woodlands associated with watercourses.

The Restoration of Nant Helen Opencast Site will be beneficial to Wooded Tawe Valley LCA in removing detrimental features from the landscape adjacent to the LCA. However, the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will result in the loss of mature woodland that is the defining characteristic of the LCA. The loss of broadleaf woodland in Nant Helen Reclaimed Uplands LCA and the associated introduction of engineered landforms will be change to the landscape context.

Within the first year, mitigation planting proposed as part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will not be sufficiently established to reinstate the wooded character in the small area of the LCA affected by the development.

Future Key Features/Characteristics

There will be no change to the key features/characteristics of the LCA.

Changes to the LCA and adjacent LCA due to the Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will not alter the overall value of the character area.

Value: **Medium**

Y Mynydd Du LCA

A landscape defined by its open, exposed character with few trees or settlements. The character areas openness and lack of development contribute to its overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

The LCA is prominent in views from roads and settlements to the south of the national park. The edges of the LCA accommodate spectacular long-distance views across the surrounding lowlands.

Key Features/Characteristics

- Openness
- Peace and tranquillity
- Spectacular long-distance views to the south
- Recreational value and accessibility

The Y Mynydd Du LCA's value is a result of its designated status as it falls within the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary; its special qualities; its remoteness and tranquillity; ample opportunities for recreation for all and its scenic qualities and spectacular views outwards.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

The Implementation of Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration will result in the loss of some mining activity and introduction of engineered landform into the contextual landscape. The change will not alter the overall character or affect the value of the LCA.

C2 Baseline Environment – Visual

Viewpoint 1 - View from Ystradgynlais Bridleway 61

View south-east from Ystradgynlais Bridleway 61 within the Brecon Beacons National Park. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground is open grassland on the lower slopes of Cefn Mawr. Scrub and overgrown hedgerow boundaries filter the view of Cae-Mawr, beyond which is the linear woodland that follows the Afon Giedd.

In the middle ground to the north is the open, upper slopes of Dorwen ar Giedd. The Swansea valley is not visible to the south due to the topography but is visible to the north-east. The Nant Helen opencast mine site and Mynydd y Drum fills the middle ground, with the overburden mound breaking the horizon. The broadleaf

and plantation woodland of the southern valley side blend with the foreground woodland, and contrasts with the open grassland above. The active opencast site is clearly visible, with steep terraces and wide access tracks highlighted by the movement of multiple excavation vehicles. The wide access track to the summit is also visible.

The ridge line of Hirfynydd, c.8km away, forms the horizon, with a wind turbine near Nant Hir Colliery visible beyond the overburden mound.

The value of the view is a result of the presence of the opencast mine which is a large-scale detractor despite its distance from the viewpoint.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The restored Nant Helen opencast site and Mynydd y Drum will fill the middle ground. The broadleaf and plantation woodland of the southern valley side blend with the foreground woodland, and contrasts with the open grassland above. The restoration works will result in the reduced height of the overburden mound and create a similar land cover to that of the foreground of the view. The lower slopes of the site will include enclosed pasture, with linear broadleaf woodland planting associated with new field boundaries and watercourses. Large ponds and marshy grassland will be visible to the south-east above the tree line. The upper slopes will be restored to open grassland.

An engineered embankment that is part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible above the foreground trees and across open fields on the southern Swansea Valley side to the east. Shallow cuttings and a small embankment will be barely perceptible between the reprofiled overburden mound and the ponds.

The value of the view is a result of the restoration of the opencast mine to create landforms and land cover that complements the surrounding landscape pattern. The engineered gradient of the earthworks will be incongruous within the restored landscape but comprise a small proportion of the view and will be less intrusive than the previous mining activity.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 2 - View from Ystradgynlais Footpath 64

View south from Ystradgynlais Footpath 64 within the Brecon Beacons National Park. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors near the local high point, at c. 295m A.O.D.

Baseline Description

The foreground is open, rough, grazed land that drops steeply down the Swansea Valley side to the south. Small woodland copses c.200-350m away filter views east and west.

The floor of the Swansea Valley is visible to the south-east and south-west, the foreground topography slightly restricting the view directly south. Caehopkin and the A4221 lie to the east, with Caerbont and Ystradgynlais to the south-west. The surrounding mature woodlands screen the road and reduce the influence of the settlements, providing an overall semi-rural view.

The northern Swansea Valley slopes are a mix of pastoral fields with strongly wooded boundaries and broadleaf and plantation woodland.

Above the woodland, a restored area of former opencast mining forms a distinctive near horizon, crossed by a wide operational site access track near the summit. The upper terraces of the active opencast mine are visible just below this horizon, with plantation coniferous woodland screening part of the area.

Very long-distance views are available to the Brecon Beacons National Park to the east, Hirfynydd and Maesgwyn Wind Farm to the south, and along the Swansea Valley to the west. The densely wooded valley contrasts with the open hilltops on either side.

The value of the view is a result of its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value. In addition, despite the presence of the opencast mining site, the availability of very long-distance views across different landscape types (wooded valleys, national park, mountain ranges) contributes to the value of this viewpoint.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

To the south-east, an engineered embankment that is part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible crossing the open grassland on the southern valley side, the gradient contrasting with the surrounding hillside. The embankment will be screened by mature plantation woodland west of this. Newly planted belts of broadleaf woodland (following watercourses and forming new field boundaries) will be visible as part of the Nant Helen Restoration on higher slopes above the embankment. These newly planted areas will be noticeable from the surrounding established vegetation during the first three years.

A shallow cutting and smaller embankment will be just visible to the south-west due to the elevation of the viewpoint. Large ponds and marshy grassland habitat creation will be visible west of the cutting.

The near horizon will be formed by the restored opencast sites, with open grassland land cover much like the surrounding landscape.

The value of the view is a result of its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value. In addition, despite the presence of the engineered landforms, the availability of very long-distance views across different landscape types (wooded valleys, national park, mountain ranges) contributes to the value of this viewpoint.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 3 - View from Trig point on Cribarth

View south from the Trig Point on Cribarth. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises open grassland and exposed rock on the southern slopes of Cribarth, that drop steeply down to the Swansea Valley to the east and south.

The middle ground comprises the heavily wooded Swansea Valley and properties within Caehopkin and Coelbren are visible on the southern valley side, surrounded by mature woodlands. The valley side comprises a mix of small-scale pasture fields with well treed boundaries, and broadleaf and plantation woodland.

The distinctive, engineered form of the overburden mound from the opencast mining forms the backdrop to the plantation woodland to the south-west, and the area of active opencast mining is also visible.

Long-distance views are available to the south, with Hirfynydd and Mynydd Marchywel forming notable, well-wooded landforms.

The value of the view is a result of its location at the trig point that marks the highest point of the Cribarth ridge, within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

To the south-east, an engineered embankment that is part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible crossing the open grassland on the southern Swansea Valley side, the gradient contrasting with the surrounding hillside. The embankment will be partially screened by mature plantation woodland west of this. Newly planted belts of broadleaf woodland (following watercourses and forming new field boundaries) will be visible as part of the Nant Helen Restoration on higher slopes above the embankment. These newly planted areas will be noticeable from the surrounding established vegetation during the first three years.

A shallow cutting and smaller embankment will be just visible to the south-west due to the elevation of the viewpoint. Large ponds and marshy grassland habitat creation will be visible west of the cutting, partially screened by plantation woodland. To the south-east, another cutting will be perceptible close to the A4221.

The near horizon will be formed by the restored opencast sites, with open grassland land cover much like the surrounding landscape.

The value of the view is a result of its location at the trig point that marks the highest point of the Cribarth ridge, within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 4 - View from Ogof Ffynnon Ddu NNR

View south-west from dismantled Neath & Brecon Railway line (Open Country), within Ogof Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors. The Beacons Way is located to the north-east from this viewpoint however views are largely screened by topography.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the undulating rocky moorland within the nature reserve. Views south-west are slightly restricted by the adjacent topography. The view south includes woodland near Penycae.

The hillside slopes to the west and the middle ground comprises the north-eastern extent of the Nant Helen opencast site, lying between the Swansea Valley and the Nant Llech valley. Coelbren is visible to the south and Caehopkin to the south-west. Visible Site features include the broadleaf and plantation woodlands, and the open fields above Caehopkin on the northern edge, pastoral fields with mature hedgerow and tree boundaries above Coelbren, and the track from the main site access to the Site's main compound, visible on the horizon, passing behind properties along Heol Y Gwydde and Cefnbyrle Road. The western end of the washery site is also visible. The distinctive engineered gradient of the overburden mound is visible on the horizon.

Long distance views include Hirfynydd and turbines within Maesgwyn Wind Farm to the south, Mynydd Marchwel, Cribarth and Mynydd Allt-y-grug to the south-west.

The value of the view is a result of its multiple levels of recreational value, including being within Ogof Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve and the national park, and being a popular recreational destination for caving.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

Visible Site features will include the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks and Nant Helen Restoration. A large embankment will be visible above the plantation woodland and crossing the open fields above Caehopkin and the pastoral fields above Colebren to the south-west. The engineered gradient of this embankment will contrast with the surrounding landscape and cut through areas of mature woodland. The earthworks will transition to cutting behind Coelbren. A smaller embankment east of the washery will also be perceptible.

The value of the view is a result of its multiple levels of recreational value, including being within Ogof Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve and the national park, and being a popular recreational destination for caving. Whilst the engineered landform will detract from the scenic quality across a small section of the view, the overall value will not change.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 5 - View from western edge Ynyswen

View south from western edge of Ynyswen. This viewpoint represents views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the property boundaries of bungalows along Cribarth in Ynyswen, and two-storey properties off the A4067 on lower ground to the south-west. St David's Church Abercraf is visible above the roofline.

The topography falls to the south, to the wooded Swansea Valley. The valley is filtered by mature trees along the A4067 and associated street lighting is visible in front of this. The southern valley slope comprises small-scale pasture with mature field boundaries, and farmsteads on and below Heol Y Gwydde are scattered across the valley side. To the south-west, the open field and coniferous plantation and broadleaf woodlands above Caehopkin are visible on the southern Swansea Valley side.

The horizon is formed by restored opencast mining land, including the distinctive engineered gradient of the overburden mound. Active opencast mining activity is only perceptible at the top of the plantation woodland.

The value of the view is a result of detracting, modern features in the foreground. However, the viewpoint is within the Brecon Beacons National Park and predominantly attractive landscape features are visible from the Cribarth properties.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

Earthworks associated with the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible to the south and south-west. A large embankment with engineered gradients will be visible above broadleaf woodland on the southern Swansea Valley side, visible above the two-storey property in the foreground. The embankment will cross the fields above Caehopkin and the farmsteads on Heol Y Gwydde, partially screened by intervening topography and woodland. The earthworks transition to cutting directly south of the viewpoint, behind properties (the cluster of buildings visible above the foreground hedgerow) on Heol Y Gwydde. The restored land cover south of the earthworks will comprise enclosed pasture with newly planted belts of broadleaf woodland forming field boundaries.

The horizon will be formed by opencast mining land, partially reprofiled and restored to grassland.

Incongruous engineered landforms will detract from the overall scenic quality of the view. However, the viewpoint is within the Brecon Beacons National Park and predominantly attractive landscape features are visible from the Cribarth properties. The value is therefore Medium.

Value: **Medium**

Viewpoint 6 - View from Tanygarth, Abercraf

View south from Tanygarth, Abercraf. This viewpoint represents views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises two-storey and bungalow properties within an estate development in Abercraf.

The middle ground comprises dense woodland along the River Tawe and small-scale pasture fields with well treed mature field boundaries on the southern slope of the Swansea Valley. The valley side above this is covered by coniferous woodland plantation on the northern edge of the Nant Helen opencast site and breaks the horizon to the south-east.

To the south, the horizon is formed by the restored opencast mine landform. The engineered gradient of the overburden mound is visible to the south-east.

The value of the view is a result of its frequency within the surrounding landscape and visibility of housing and street lighting to which the elevated topography forms the backdrop.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

Valley side coniferous planting will partially screen an embankment that is part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks, which will just be visible at the eastern end of the plantation, where it crosses open fields.

To the south, the horizon will be formed by the restored opencast mine landform that comprises enclosed pasture with newly planted belts of linear broadleaf woodland creating new field boundaries or following watercourses. The horizon will be formed by open grassland.

The value of the view is a result of its frequency within the surrounding landscape and visibility of housing and street lighting to which the elevated topography and engineered landforms form the backdrop.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 7 - View from Pen-Rhiwfawr

View east from Gwrhyd Road, Pen-Rhiwfawr, on the north-eastern lower slopes of Mynydd Uchaf. This viewpoint represents views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the junction of Gwrhyd Road and Pen-Y-Rhiw. The landform rises steeply to the west and falls away to the east. A stone wall and a stone barn are attractive, rural features. To the south-east, some of the residential properties within Pen-Rhiwfawr are visible, some of which face south-east.

In the middle ground to the east, the view is across the densely wooded Afon Twrch and Nant Gwys valleys and small-scale fields with treed boundaries that lie between the valleys. The Celtic Minor Golf Club house is a recognisable feature but the course itself blends well with the surrounding landscape due to the mature trees. Properties on higher ground within Ystradgynlais and Penrhos are visible, whilst the majority of the settlements are screened due to the valley landform and intervening woodland belts.

In longer distance views, the distinctive engineered slopes of the overburden mound within Nant Helen Opencast Mining Site is visible directly east and breaks the horizon. The active opencast mine is clearly visible directly below this, with its terraced sides and excavation vehicle movements. The slopes of Mynydd y Drum lie to the south-east, crossed by a pylon line. To the north-east, the densely wooded lower slopes of the southern Swansea Valley side blends with woodland further along the valley. Cribarth forms the northern valley side. To the south-east, Hirfynydd and its transmitter, pylons and wind turbines, breaks the horizon, with the Brecon Beacons beyond.

Long distance views to the moorlands and large areas of forestry plantation within the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north-east.

The value is a result of the elevated, panoramic and long-distance views towards the national park that will be available to the residential receptors without the detracting roadside elements from the viewpoint location.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The opencast mine will be filled in and restored to include two large ponds surrounded by marshy grassland and heath which will be perceptible only at this distance. The overburden mound will be reduced in height and restored to a less 'engineered' landform. The summit will be restored to open grassland, with the lower slopes on the southern valley side restored to enclosed pasture with narrow belts of newly planted broadleaf woodland along watercourses. Coniferous plantation woodland towards the top of the Site will have been cleared for the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks. These earthworks will include a small embankment near the top of the existing opencast area but will otherwise be in cutting and therefore barely perceptible.

The value is a result of the elevated, panoramic and long-distance views towards the national park that will be available to the residential receptors without the detracting roadside elements from the viewpoint location. The changes to a small area within the distance will not affect the value.

Value: **Medium**

Viewpoint 8 - View from Ystradgynlais Footpath 4

View east from Ystradgynlais Footpath 4. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises grazed grassland on the lower Swansea Valley slopes that falls away from the viewpoint towards the valley floor. Mature trees on the edges of woodland to the east and south-east partially screen the valley floor.

The middle ground comprises the settlement of Ystradgynlais on the valley floor. The River Tawe is distinguishable by the dense woodland along its corridor that partially screens the housing. The wooded valley is visible to the north-east, with views south-east blocked by foreground boundary vegetation.

Long-distance views to the north-east include Cefn-garth and the distinctive Cribarth, the wooded Nant Cyw valley and extend beyond the coniferous Giedd Forest to the upland moorland within the Brecon Beacons National Park. To the east, Mynydd y Drum forms the horizon beyond Ystradgynlais, within wooded lower slopes and open moorland above, and pylons crossing near the summit. The terraces and excavation vehicle movements within Nant Helen Opencast mine are clearly visible to the east, partially screened by coniferous plantation woodland on the lower valley slopes, and the distinctive restored overburden mound forms the near horizon. Longer-distance views are available beyond Mynydd Drum towards Hirfynydd to the south-east.

The view's value is a result of the concentration of dense, modern development of Ystradgynlais along with the opencast mine and overburden mound at the centre of the view. While there are long, panoramic views towards the national park, these are commonplace within the surrounding landscape.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

The opencast mine will be partially filled in and restored to include two large ponds surrounded by marshy grassland and heath. The overburden mound will be reduced in height and restored to a less 'engineered' landform. The summit will be restored to open grassland, with the lower slopes on the southern valley side restored to enclosed pasture with newly planted narrow belts of broadleaf woodland planting along watercourses. It is not anticipated that the height difference will extend the length of views to the east. Coniferous plantation woodland towards the top of the site will have been cleared for the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks. These earthworks will include an embankment near the top of the existing opencast area but will otherwise be in cutting and therefore barely perceptible.

Whilst mining activity will be absent from the view. The view's value is also as a result of the concentration of dense, modern development of Ystradgynlais. While there are long, panoramic views towards the national park, these are commonplace within the surrounding landscape. The value will not change.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 9 - View from NCNR 43

View south from National Cycle Network Route 43 which largely follows the historic line of the Neath & Brecon Railway. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors.

Views from NCR43 are predominantly enclosed by dense, semi-mature vegetation along its route, south of Caehopkin. The view is from an open section of the NCR.

Baseline Description

The NCR runs north-south in the foreground, through a gated access. To the east and west, views are filtered by tall vegetation.

The bend in the cycleway route provides a gap in the vegetation that allows a view towards an area of restored opencast mine. in the middle ground. The land cover is open grassland with scattered scrub, with the edge of coniferous plantation woodland visible to the south-west. A watercourse that runs down the hillside is distinguishable by the dip in the land to the south.

The rising topography foreshortens the view to c. 600m, with the horizon at c.245m A.O.D. A large area of scrub including scattered coniferous trees covers the higher ground to the horizon.

The view is recognisably that of a restored landscape but reflects the character of the surrounding moorland landscapes.

The value of the view is a result of being on National Cycle Route 43 and being one of few locations on the route from which there are views to the surrounding landscape.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will cross the open grassland on embankment. The toe of the embankment will cross the cycleway route in the foreground, removing the majority of foreground vegetation beyond the gate. The cycleway will continue directly west following the toe of the embankment. An area of coniferous plantation woodland on the lower slopes to the south-west will also have been removed for the embankment. Above the embankment, the Nant Helen Restoration will change the scrub land cover to enclosed pasture and there will be belts of newly planted broadleaf woodland up the hillside to the south-east, following the watercourse.

The value of the view will be low as a result of it closely following engineered form and providing little scenic quality.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 10 - View from Station Road, Coelbren

View south-west from Station Road, Coelbren and western end of Tawe-Uchaf Footpath 1. This viewpoint represents views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises residential properties and The Prices Arms Pub on Station Road which have south facing windows. Pasture fields on the southern side of Station Road are bounded by post and wire fences. The Neath & Brecon Railway had a junction immediately south of the viewpoint (known as Coelbren Junction) and mature trees mark the boundaries of the northernmost line in the foreground, and the other branch is distinguishable by the curved fence line on the ground below.

In the middle ground to the south-east, properties at Dyffryn Cellwen are visible. The Coal Washery is visible, partially screened by trees and woodland that follows the A4221, with the house at Blaen-Y-Waun, on the edge of the disused railway line, visible beyond the roadside trees. Coniferous woodland alongside the A4221 screens long distance views across a section of the view to the south-west.

Hirfynydd forms the backdrop to the settlements and Coal Washery to the south and south-east. To the south-west, Mynydd Marchyw is visible, and pylons break the horizon. The distinctive engineered gradient of the overburden mound at the Nant Helen opencast site forms the horizon to the east, along with the restored eastern slopes of the site including hedgerow boundaries.

Despite the presence of heritage features and some long-distance views, the value of the view is a result of its frequency within the surrounding landscape and visibility of industrial scale features.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the Site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be just visible to the west, with a large embankment crossing the fields to the north-west. The earthworks then comprise two cuttings to the west, one closer to the horizon than the other. Due to the elevation of the viewpoint, the cuttings will be perceptible only as breaks in the land cover and landscape pattern, with views along the lower cutting screened by the coniferous woodland along the A4221. This woodland will also partially screen the minor embankment earthworks west of the Coal Washery.

There will be no change to the value of the view as a result of the Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 11 - View from Tawe-Uchaf Footpath 5

View south-west from Tawe-Uchaf Footpath 5. This viewpoint is representative of views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises fenced, grazed grassland and moorland. Mature field boundary trees partially filter views to the south-west and west.

The middle ground comprises coniferous plantation woodland south of Nant y Bryn to the south. Further away, the settlements of Banwen and Dyffryn Cellwen are visible, to the south, on the lower slopes of Hirfynydd, west of Roman Road. The coal washery, with large-scale buildings sitting on terraces, is visible to the south-west. These developed areas sit below open grassland and areas of predominantly coniferous plantation woodland on Hirfynydd, the ridgeline of which forms a near horizon and includes the Maesgwyn Wind Farm, with turbines breaking the horizon. Also to the south-west, closer properties within Coelbren, and Dol Henrhyd road, are visible below the level of the viewpoint and partially filtered by mature trees in the foreground. To the west, the landform falls away from the viewpoint towards mature woodland alongside Nant Llech.

To the west, a near horizon is formed by the Site and the distinctive landform of the overburden mound. Hedgerow enclosed pastures are visible below this, and buildings within the Site compound. An area of active opencast mining is perceptible, specifically the wide access tracks to the summit. A pylon line crosses the view between Hirfynydd and the Site, breaking the horizon to the south and south-west.

Long-distance views are available beyond the lower slopes of Hirfynydd to the south, to Mynydd Marchywel to the south-west, and to the Brecon Beacons to the west.

The value of the view is a result of its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the Site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. It is not anticipated that this will change the extent of the view. The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be just visible to the south-west, with large cuttings crossing the hedgerow-bound fields below the overburden mound. The lower cutting will be perceptible as a wide break in the land cover and landscape pattern, above the properties in Coelbren. Foreground trees will filter their visibility. Views along the lower cutting will be available to the south-west, above Dol Henrhyd. Foreground trees will screen earthworks between this and the Coal Washery.

The value of the view is a result of its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value. The value will not change due to the changes as a result of the Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration earthworks.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 12 - View from Ystradfellte Byway 74

View from Ystradfellte Restricted Byway 74. This viewpoint represents views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the byway that follows the Sarn Helen Roman Road and runs through grazed grassland and scrub.

The settlement of Banwen is visible to the south and Dyffyn Cellwen and the coal washery site are visible to the south-west across grazed pasture land. Coniferous woodland plantation limits the distance of available view to the west and north-west.

To the south, the view comprises Hirfynydd which is covered by woodland plantation and wind turbines that break the horizon. Long-distance views towards Mynydd Marchywel are available, with pylons breaking the horizon and overhead lines crossing the view. To the west, pylons break the horizon and the overburden mound at Nant Helen forms a prominent feature within the view due to its steep engineered form. Mining activity to the north of the overburden mound is perceptible, though mostly screened by coniferous woodland plantation within the middle ground.

The value of the view is a result of its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible to the south-west with cuttings crossing the hedgerow-bound fields below the overburden mound. The lower cutting will be perceptible as a wide break in the land cover and landscape pattern. Cutting and a small section of embankment will be perceptible further into the distance to the south of the reformed overburden mound.

The value will remain due to its location within the national park which is recognised for its recreational value.

Value: **High**

Viewpoint 13 - View from School Road, Ystalyfera

View north-east from School Road, Ystalyfera. This viewpoint is representative of views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the entrance to Ysgol Gynradd Y Wern Primary School on School Road and properties with east facing windows.

Beyond the gated entrance to a property off School Road, roofs of further properties with east facing windows are visible. To the south-east, Wernwood Road follows the landform to towards further properties within Ystalyfera, situated on the valley floor.

To the south-east, Varteg Hill forms the backdrop to the view. To the north-east, the overburden mound at the opencast mining site stands as a prominent feature that forms the horizon. Mining activity is perceptible, though partially filtered by intervening vegetation and woodland at the perimeter of the mining site.

The value of the view is a result of its frequency within the surrounding landscape and perceptibility of mining activity.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. The outer loop cutting of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be perceptible as well as loss of mining activity from the void which will be replaced by ponds and marshy grassland habitat creation.

The value will not change due to the changes being barely perceptible and having little impact on the overall scenic quality of the view. Similar views are commonplace within the surrounding landscape.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 14 - View from Ystradgynlais Footpath 10

View north-east from Ystradgynlais Footpath 10. This viewpoint is representative of views experienced by recreational receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises upland grazed grassland with a track that runs east to west.

The middle ground is dominated by the engineered form of the overburden mound from the opencast mining site which forms the horizon to the north-east. Opencast mining activity is visible within the void to the north. To the east, pylons and overhead lines are visible and break the horizon.

In the long distance to the north, the northern Dulais valley slope is formed by pasture fields with well treed boundaries, and the Black Mountain forms the backdrop. Long distance views are available to the east, beyond the pylons, towards large areas of woodland plantation. The wooded slopes of Hirfynydd are located to the south-west and limits the distance of the available view, with wind turbines breaking the horizon.

The value of the view is a result of its proximity to large-scale mining activity and features such as pylons. The viewpoint does provide long-distance panoramic views.

Value: **Medium**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. Shallow cuttings will be perceptible to the west of the reprofiled overburden mound as well as an embankment to the north of the reprofiled mound. The ground cover will be reinstated as acid grassland across the visible areas of the restoration. To the north, the void will be partially filled, and the visible areas will be replaced by acid grassland.

The value of the view will not change. Whilst mining activity will be absent from the view and the landform will appear less 'engineered'. The value assigned to the view is primarily based upon long-distance panoramic nature of the views available.

Value: **Medium**

Viewpoint 15 - View from Tawe-Uchaf Footpath 49

Viewpoint 15 was included as part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks LVIA. It is assumed that public access to this footpath/viewpoint will not be provided and it has therefore not been included in this assessment.

Viewpoint 16 - View from properties on A4109

View north / north-west from properties on the A1049. This viewpoint is representative of views experienced by residential receptors.

Baseline Description

The foreground is dominated by the road but a gap in roadside vegetation allows a clear view across the minor valley.

The middle ground comprises the northern valley slope of a minor watercourse that runs alongside the road. Residential properties of Tynewydd, surrounded by predominantly coniferous garden trees that partially screen the landscape beyond. Elsewhere, the landscape is open, rough grazing land, typical of the surrounding landscape, crossed east to west by two pylon lines that break the horizon.

The background is dominated by an overburden mound within the partially restored open cast mining landscape. Its engineered gradient landform contrasts with the surrounding, gentler slopes. The topography results in the horizon being relatively close to the viewpoint but there are much longer views towards hilltops within the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north-east and Mynydd

Marchywel to the south-west. A small area of open cast mining spoil is visible beyond the overburden mound to the north.

The value of the view is a result of its frequency within the surrounding landscape for residential receptors. The view contains large-scale industrial activity and smaller scale enclosed features.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. A small embankment, part of the Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks, will be visible to the north-west in front of the reprofiled overburden mound. The restoration works visible will comprise acid grassland visible across the view.

The changes as a result of the Nant Helen Restoration and Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will result in the landforms appearing slightly less engineered. The view remains frequent within the surrounding landscape and the value will therefore not change.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 17 - View from Onllwyn Cemetery

View west from Onllwyn, Cemetery. This viewpoint is representative of visitors to the cemetery.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the entrance road to the cemetery and grass verges with a bench located near the bus stop and commemorative stone to the north.

The A4109 Onllwyn Road runs east to west and is lined by vegetation on either side. Mature vegetation on the southern side of the road forms the boundary to the cemetery. Views to the south-west are filtered by mature vegetation. Pylons cross the view from south-east to north-west and break the horizon.

Longer-distance views are available to the east and comprise rising landform with grazed grassland cover. The distinctive tiered overburden mound forms a prominent landform within the view.

The value of the view is a result of its relatively enclosed nature due to overgrown vegetation.

Value: **Low**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform visible beyond the pylons. To the north-west, cuttings, part of the Nant Helen Complementary

Restoration Earthworks, will be perceptible as breaks in vegetation and acid grassland land cover.

The view will remain enclosed due to surrounding vegetation and will have noticeable industrial features and engineered landforms. Therefore, the value will not change.

Value: **Low**

Viewpoint 18 - View from Sarn Helen Roman Road

View north from Sarn Helen Roman Road and Byway 28/39.N.Hi/1, along the ridge of Hirfynydd. This viewpoint is representative of recreational users of the footpath.

Baseline Description

The foreground comprises the Sarn Helen Roman Road and coniferous woodland plantation on the slopes of Hirfynydd.

The landform falls away from the viewpoint to the Dulais Valley floor where properties at Seven Sisters are visible along the A4109. The Dulais Valley slope rises beyond Seven Sisters towards the prominent opencast overburden mound. Pylons are visible running east to west along the southern boundary of the mound and grassland with small areas of scrub forms the main land cover in this direction. Opencast mining works are visible at the northern edge of the overburden mound. To the north, the access track to the mining site compound buildings is visible. Coelbren is visible to the north-east across views of coniferous woodland plantation.

The viewpoint offers panoramic, long distance views to a horizon formed by the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The value of the view is a result of its location on the Sarn Helen Roman Road which follows a ridgeline, with panoramic, long distance views.

Value: **High**

Future Baseline:

Restoration of the site will include the reprofiling of the overburden mound to reduce its height and create a less 'engineered' landform. The Nant Helen Complementary Restoration Earthworks will be visible as a small embankment to the north-west and cuttings to the north. Cutting will be perceptible as breaks in scrubby vegetation but grassed slopes will integrate with the surrounding restored acid grassland land cover. Panoramic, long distance views will remain available from the Sarn Helen Roman Road and therefore the value of the view will not change.

Value: **High**