

NEATH PORT TALBOT LANDMAP

Visual and Sensory Aspect

Technical Annex

for

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council &
The Countryside Council for Wales

February 2004

WHITE consultants
18-19, Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 1FL
Tel: 029 2064 0971
Fax: 029 2064 0973
Email: sw@whiteconsultants.co.uk
Website: www.whiteconsultants.co.uk

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1.0 CYFLWYNIAD

Cafodd asesiad LANDMAP o Gastell-nedd Port Talbot ei gomisiynu ym mis Rhagfyr 2002. Roedd y Grŵp Cleientiaid yn cynnwys Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot [NPTCBC] a Chyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru.

Atodiad technegol sy'n berthnasol i allbwn digidol o ran yr agwedd weledol a synhwyrdd yw'r ddogfen yma. Mae ardaloedd yr agweddau gweledol a synhwyrdd wedi cael eu mapio ar y GIS [mewn MapInfo] gyda chyswllt rhwng y wybodaeth yn y gronfa ddata â phob maes agwedd. [LANDMAP Collector].

Mae'r atodiad technegol yn cynnwys:

- disgrifiad byr o'r maes astudio o safbwynt ei rinweddau gweledol a synhwyrdd
- esboniad o'r fethodoleg a ddefnyddiwyd a'r ffyrdd y mae wedi'i haddasu i'r maes astudio penodol;
- materion allweddol a gododd wrth ddefnyddio'r broses LANDMAP yng Nghastell-nedd Port Talbot

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A LANDMAP assessment of Neath Port Talbot, was commissioned in December 2002. The Client Group comprised of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council [NPTCBC] and the Countryside Council for Wales.

This document forms the visual and sensory aspect technical annex relating to a digital output. The visual and sensory aspect areas have been mapped GIS [in MapInfo] and the information stored in the database is linked to each aspect area [LANDMAP Collector].

The technical annex provides a brief description of the study area in terms of its visual and sensory qualities, an explanation of the methodology employed and ways in which it has been adapted to the particular study area. Key issues which have arisen from the application of the LANDMAP process in Neath Port Talbot are also dealt with.

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The desk study for the project was carried out in September 2003 and the site survey work in mid October 2003 and mid January 2004. The method has been in line with the revised method June 2003 and has included the following tasks:

- Desk study of relevant documents including Neath Port Talbot, Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan 2003
- Review of adjacent study areas boundaries
- Candidate aspect areas mapping at 1:25,000
- Draft classification and definitions
- Site visit
- Site assessment sheets and photos
- Refinement of boundaries
- Final classification and definitions
- Entering data into LANDMAP Collector
- Digitising boundaries
- Final QA and client feedback

The site assessment forms have been on the fields required in LANDMAP collector.

Issues that have arisen in carrying out the assessment are as follows:

Adjoining authorities:

The adjoining authorities LANDMAP assessments have been studied and the following issues noted:

Bridgend - the grain of this area appears to be coarser than for Neath Port Talbot, although where boundaries are present they do match.

Swansea - the boundaries appear to match in all but one case

Brecknockshire - the boundaries match.

3.0 CLASSIFICATION, DEFINITIONS AND EVALUATION

3.1 Classification and Definitions

A classification has been developed for Neath Port Talbot. Figure 1 illustrates the relevant categories for the county borough. Figure 2 defines what each of the categories has been taken to mean. Both are extracts from the current LANDMAP manual. These are commented on subsequently.

**Figure 1 Visual & Sensory Aspect hierarchical classification system
Extract relating to Neath Port Talbot**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Upland	Exposed upland/plateau	Upland moorland
		Upland grazing
		Wooded upland & plateaux
		Mosaic upland & plateaux
	Upland valleys	Open upland valley
		Open/wooded mosaic upland valleys
		Wooded upland valleys
	Hills, lower plateau & scarp slopes	Wooded hills & scarp slopes
		Hillside & scarp slopes mosaic
	Lowland	Rolling lowlands
Flat/lowland levels		Flat open lowland farmland
		Flat lowland mosaic
		Lowland wetland
Coastal		Intertidal
Dunes		
Development	Built land	Village
		Urban
	Developed unbuilt land	Derelict / waste ground
		Excavation
		Road
Water	Inland water	Lake
		River
	Coastal waters	Sea

Figure 2 Definitions of Classification for Neath Port Talbot

Upland	Areas predominantly rising to over 300m (excluding Development and Water classes); also includes the lower slopes of higher areas rising from around 150m. 150m should not be used as a hard and fast differentiation between Upland and Lowland, it should be treated as broad distinction. Upland areas may extend below 150m in some instances where they are more widespread above this altitude. See also the definition of level 2 class Hills & scarp slopes below which can be seen as the intermediate class between Upland and Lowland. Further guidance might be gained from looking at land use patterns in the area. Upland land use tends to be marginal grazing, with more diverse land use in Lowland areas.
Exposed upland & plateau	Upland areas that are predominantly exposed; exposed does not necessarily equate to a lack of tree cover; exposed relates more to landform than land cover in this instance, in that it excludes upland areas which are sheltered by landform such as valleys.
Upland moorland	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly moorland (>50%)
Upland grazing	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly grazed grassland (>50%)
Wooded upland & plateaux	Exposed upland & plateau areas that are predominantly with significant woodland (>20% tree cover)
Mosaic upland & plateaux	Exposed upland & plateau areas which display a patchwork of small (<10ha) pockets of woodland (20-50% density)
Upland valleys	Upland areas that are predominantly (>50%) valleyed (with a valley floor to ridge height >50m approx.)
Open upland valleys	High valley areas that are predominantly unwooded (<20%)
Open/wooded mosaic upland valleys	High valley areas that are significantly wooded (>20%)
Wooded upland valleys	High valley areas that are significantly wooded (>20%)
Hills & scarp slopes	Upland areas which are predominantly (<50%) unvalleyed hills and scarp slopes. Hills and scarp slopes might be defined as the intermediate landform between Lowland and Upland, but this is extremely difficult to define accurately. So, for the purposes of LANDMAP Hills & scarp slopes forms its own class under the level 1 Upland class. It is defined by the presence of lower landform than other Upland classes, as will rarely extend much lower than about 100m or much higher than about 300m. However, it is more usefully defined as being the type of landform that falls comfortably into neither the Upland or Lowland classes. It will often form an intermediate band between the two. It may also be defined by having more Upland-type land use patterns, yet at a relatively low altitude. A scarp slope is defined as a slope linking lowland with a plateau, and having no significant facing slope.
Wooded hills & scarp slopes	Hills & scarp slope areas that are significantly sloped (>10°slope) and predominantly wooded (>50%)
Hillside & scarp slopes mosaic	Hills & scarp slope areas which are significantly sloped (>10°slope) and display a patchwork of woodland (20-50% density)

Lowland	Areas predominantly below 100m (excluding Development and Water classes); also includes the higher slopes of lower areas rising from around 150m. 150m should not be used as a hard and fast differentiation between Upland and Lowland; it should be treated as broad distinction. Lowland areas may extend above 150m in some instances where they are more widespread below this altitude. See also the definition of level 2 class Hills & scarp slopes below which can be seen as the intermediate class between Upland and Lowland. Further guidance might be gained from looking at land use patterns in the area. Upland land use tends to be marginal grazing, with more diverse land use in Lowland areas.
Rolling lowland	Lowland Areas which are predominantly, rhythmically, gently sloped (3-10° slope), although less so than Lowland valleys . Rolling lowland generally differs from Hills & scarp slopes in that there rarely a significant change in land use.
<i>Mosaic rolling lowland</i>	Rolling lowland areas that display a patchwork of small or scattered woodland (20-50% density); may also have high presence of hedgerow trees.
Flat lowland / levels	Lowland areas that are predominantly flat(<3° slope); mostly coastal and riverine levels, but also broad vales and valley bottoms.
<i>Flat open lowland farmland</i>	Flat lowland/levels areas that are insignificantly wooded (<20%) farmland
<i>Flat lowland mosaic</i>	Flat lowland/levels areas which display a patchwork of woodland (20-50% density)
<i>Lowland wetland</i>	Flat lowland/levels areas that are predominantly wetland (>50%)
Coastal	Lowland Areas absolutely associated with the coast (n.b. excludes <i>open water</i> and <i>Flat lowland/levels</i>)
<i>Intertidal</i>	Coastal areas which are found between low and high water lines on OS maps and their associated elements, such as beaches, mud and rocks. Note that admiralty charts are more accurate and would be used in Seascape assessments but this would not be expected for <i>LANDMAP</i> studies.
<i>Dunes and dune slack</i>	Coastal areas which face open sea and are predominantly dunes or dune slacks.
Development	Predominantly built or developed areas and open areas primarily, visually associated with these (>10Ha). Overrides other classes, so a coastal town will be Development and not Coastal.
Built land	Development areas which are predominantly (>50%) covered in manmade structures or hard-standing
<i>Village</i>	Built land areas that predominantly consists of rural communities and their associated elements, e.g. shops, small-scale workplaces, churches, schools, domestic gardens, roads etc. An upper size limit being defined by the presence of only a handful of commercial properties e.g. <5. A lower size limit being the presence of no commercial properties, church or school.
<i>Urban</i>	Built land areas that predominantly consists of larger, urban communities and their associated elements, e.g. extensive residential estates and streets, commercial, large-scale workplaces, churches, schools, domestic gardens, roads etc. An upper size limit being defined by the presence of only a handful of commercial properties e.g. <5. A lower size limit being the presence of no commercial properties, church or school.
Developed unbuilt	Land development areas which is not <i>Built land</i>
<i>Excavation</i>	Other developed land which shows overwhelming visual evidence of severe surface disruption (>100Ha), such as mines & landfill.

<i>Derelict / waste ground</i>	Other developed land which shows overwhelming visual evidence of neglect or disuse (>100Ha), such as disused industrial sites, mines and quarries.
<i>Road corridor</i>	Other developed land which is a major road corridor, significant in the landscape, usually a dual carriageway and larger with associated land managed with the road such as embankments and cuttings.
Water	Areas of still water (>10Ha) including open sea, or flowing water (> 20m across) and their immediate edge.
Coastal waters	Predominantly saltwater areas covering the sea and river mouths.
Sea	Open Water areas that are predominantly open sea beyond the OS map low water line.
Inland water <i>[including associated edge]</i>	Large expanses of generally freshwater, consisting of either of the classes below:
<i>River</i>	Inland Water areas that is a large river (perhaps >20m across).
<i>Lake</i>	Inland Water areas that is predominantly a large lake (>50ha).

Much of the area has generally been classified as Upland at Level 1, this includes valley bottoms, due to their character even though their elevation is at times below 60m-100m AOD.

3.2 Aspect Areas and Value

Figure 3 lists the aspect areas and sets out their classification and value.

Figure 3 Aspect areas, classification and value

Area No.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier in LANDMAP collector
1	Margam Marsh	Lowland	Flat lowland / levels	Flat open lowland farmland	L	NPTVS277
2	Coastal Dunes	Lowland	Coastal	Dunes	M	NPTVS274
3	Eglwy Nunydd reservoir	Water	Inland	Lake	M	NPTVS799
4	Margam Country Park	Lowland	Rolling lowland	Mosaic rolling lowland	H	NPTVS403
5	Coedhirwaun	Lowland	Rolling lowland	Mosaic rolling lowland	M	NPTVS543
6	Mynydd Bromil & Scarp tops	Upland	Exposed upland plateau	Upland grazing	M	NPTVS897
7	Margam Scarp	Upland	Hill lower plateau and scarp slopes	Wooded hillside and scarp slope	H	NPTVS811
8	Mynydd Margam	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	M	NPTVS927
9	Cwm Dyffryn	Upland	Upland valleys	Wooded upland valley	H	NPTVS916
10	Cefn Cethin	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	L	NPTVS448
11	Mynydd Emorch and Mynydd Bycham	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	M	NPTVS139
12	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS936
13	Mynydd Penhydd	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	M	NPTVS366
14	Foels Trawsant	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	M	NPTVS358
15	Foel Fawr	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	L	NPTVS465
16	Mynydd y Gelli	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	H	NPTVS547
17	Mynydd Dinas	Upland	Hills lower plateau and scarp slopes	Hillside and scarp slopes mosaic	H	NPTVS187
18	Mynydd y Gaer / Cefn Morfudd	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Mosaic upland and plateau	M	NPTVS703
19	Mynydd Nant y bar / Mynydd Blaenafan / Mynydd Resolfen	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	M	NPTVS962
20	Cwm Afan and Cwm Pelenna farmed sides	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS920
21	Carn caca	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland moorland	M	NPTVS624
22	Neath valley (bottom)	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS431
23	Hirfynydd	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	M	NPTSV357
24	Neath valley sides	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS422
25	A465 (T)	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Road corridor	L	NPTVS252
26	Gelliceibryn / Pont Walby	Upland	Upland valley	Wooded upland valley	M	NPTVS430
27	Banwen Pyrddin	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	M	NPTVS970
28	Mynydd Corrwyg Fechan & Mynydd Fforch dwm	Upland	Upland valleys	Open upland valley	M	NPTVS103
29	Dyffryn Cellwen	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Derelict / waste ground	L	NPTSV400
30	Head of Dulais Valley	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	L	NPTSV661
31	Mynydd y Drum	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland moorland	M	NPTVS640

Area No.	Area Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Value	Unique Identifier in LANDMAP collector
32	Dulais Valley	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	H	NPTVS846
33	Upland settlements	Development	Built land	Villages	L	NPTVS215
34	Crynant Forest	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Wooded upland and plateau	M	NPTVS359
35	Swansea Valley (bottom)	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS286
36	Swansea Valley (settlements)	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS184
37	Swansea Valley (south face)	Upland	Upland valleys	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS458
38	Mynydd Allt y grug & Varteg Hill	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland moorland	H	NPTVS581
39	Mynydd Uchaf / Mynydd Garth	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	H	NPTVS188
40	Gwauncaegurwen works	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Excavation	L	NPTVS226
41	Cwm Aman	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	L	NPTVS149
42	Cwm Gors	Upland	Upland valley	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS575
43	Dulais valley moorland	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland moorland	M	NPTVS751
44	Cwm Twrch	Upland	Upland valley	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS344
45	Nant Melyn & Brynchwyth	Upland	Upland valley	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	M	NPTVS485
46	Bryn Mawr - Mynydd Carnllechart	Upland	Exposed upland / plateau	Upland grazing	H	NPTVS951
47	Upper Clydach River valley	Upland	Upland valley	Open / wooded mosaic upland valley	H	NPTVS612
48	Pontardawe/Rhos	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS878
49	Mynydd Drumau	Upland	Upland Valley	Wooded upland valley	M	NPTVS658
50	Clydach valley	Upland	Upland Valley	Open Upland Valley	M	NPVVS340
51	Neath	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS720
52	Penrhiwtyn	Lowland	Flat lowland / levels	Flat lowland mosaic	L	NPTVS891
53	Neath River	Water	Inland water	River	M	NPTVS752
54	Gelli-bwch works	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Derelict / waste ground	M	NPTVS592
55	Gelli-bwch hills	Lowland	Rolling lowland	Mosaic rolling lowland	H	NPTVS229
56	Crymlyn Bog	Lowland	Flat/lowland levels	Lowland wetland	H	NPTVS944
57	Crymlyn	Lowland	Flat/lowland levels	Flat lowland mosaic	L	NPTVS518
58	Tal-y-fedw	Lowland	Rolling lowland	Mosaic rolling lowland	L	NPTVS902
59	M4	Development	Developed unbuilt land	Road	L	NPTVS397
60	Baglan Bay works	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS960
61	Port Talbot / Sandfields / Margam	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS587
62	Margam works	Development	Built land	Urban	M	NPTVS837
63	Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands	Lowland	Coastal	Intertidal	H	NPTVS697
64	Swansea Bay	Water	Coastal waters	Sea	H	NPTVS297
65	Cwmavon	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS841
66	Neath Valley settlements	Development	Built land	Urban	L	NPTVS967
67	Cefn Gwrhyd - enclosed	Upland	Upland valley	Open upland valley	H	NPTVS541

Discussion of aspect areas types

An analysis of the 67 aspect areas reveals the following breakdown:

- Upland moorland- 4
- Upland grazing- 9
- Wooded upland & plateaux - 6
- Mosaic upland & plateaux - 1
- Wooded upland valleys- 3
- Open/wooded mosaic upland valley - 11
- Open upland valley - 4
- Wooded hillside and scarp slope - 1
- Hillside and scarp slopes mosaic - 1
- Mosaic rolling lowland - 4
- Flat open lowland farmland - 1
- Flat lowland mosaic - 2
- Lowland wetland - 1
- Dunes - 1
- Intertidal - 1
- Lakes-1 [reservoir]
- Rivers- 1
- Settlements- 6
- Developed built non settlement - 2
- Roads - 2
- Excavations - 1
- Derelict / waste ground - 3
- Sea

Discussion of aspect area value

No areas are evaluated as being of outstanding value.

14 areas are evaluated as being of high value. These include smaller upland valleys, and upland common land.

35 areas are evaluated as being of moderate value. These include broad valleys and mosaic upland.

18 areas are evaluated as being of low value. These include, reclaimed and landfill land sites, development along the coastal plain and ex mining settlements.

The overall low value illustrates the predominantly industrial character of the western extent of the study area and the deteriorating and disturbed character of some parts of the landscape surrounding mining settlements to the north.

4.0 SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Neath Port Talbot study area covers approximately 442 sq km stretching from Swansea Bay and Margam in the south to Banwen, Ystalyfera and Gwaun Cae Gurwen in the North. The area rises from sea level at Swansea Bay to approximately 600m AOD at Craig y Llyn, above Glynneath.

Remaining below 10m AOD across much of the coastal plain, before dramatically rising to over 200m AOD at the scarp slope, the Coalfield Plateau ultimately rises to approximately 600m AOD.

The Plateau is deeply dissected by valleys, the two larger being the Neath and Tawe. The other two main valleys are the Afan and Dulais, all flowing west towards the Bay.

The landscape is diverse but has a strong upland character inland and a significant area of coniferous forestry which covers a third of the county borough.

Coastal Plain

The landscape to the south west of the county borough is the landscape of the coastal plain, stretching from Margam Burrows in the south to the border with Swansea along Swansea Bay. The dominance of the sea, large, open and exposed, has a strong impact on the character of this area. This is balanced by the dominant presence of the scarp slope, rising to the east. Although the plain varies in character along its length the scarps form strong visual continuity.

The area is the most heavily developed and settled part of the assessment area containing the settlements of Port Talbot, Baglan and Margam. This has filled the majority of the Plain overtime. The predominantly two storey residential built form is dominated by the heavy industry of the area, particularly the impressive and visually distinct form of the steel works to the south and Baglan Chemical works to the north. In addition there are numerous other commercial and industrial developments. The M4 is also a strong linear element sitting just below the scarp slope and running the length of the plain.

The rolling lowland to the south east of the county borough has more in common with the landscape further east than to the rest of Neath Port Talbot. Its mixed, productive agricultural landscape, close to the M4 is attractive to developers. Margam Park is a particularly important parkland landscape. This area is changing in character through residential and recreational development.

The wide River Neath estuary to the north is a significant area of lowland which shows the marks of agriculture, industrial and post industrial use.

The beach on the sweep of Swansea Bay constitutes a strong visual feature at low tide, which is an asset to the borough. The dune complex bordering the beach are impressive natural features but are used for recreation and are under pressure.

Valleys and Upland

The valleys of the Tawe, Neath, Afan and Dulais are separated by broad upland, much of which is coniferous plantation. To the north west, grazed common ground is a significant element on higher ground providing extensive views out to the surrounding valleys. While in the more settled southern areas there is a mosaic of enclosed upland grazing and woodland, providing views across to the coastal plain.

Although the base of the valleys is often less than 100m AOD the extensive coniferous plantation on higher slopes, areas of exposed rock and adjacent moorland provides them with a strong upland feel. The woodland spread alters in the valley floor with deciduous edges skirting the valley bottoms and riparian corridors.

Commercial forestry dominated by spruce, covers very large tracts of land, creating a significant visual impact and creating a distinct and consistent character, this can be monotonous in places. However the coniferous trees dramatise the perceived height of the valleys, particularly the Afan Valley. Although the forest is primarily destined for timber production it also serves as a major recreation attraction e.g. Afan Forest Park.

In places the abrupt boundaries of the forest against open landscape and large scale clear felling create unsightly tracts of landscape. This is mitigated by the presence of deciduous trees in some areas.

The Afan, Dulais and other small side valley bottoms have an enclosed, sheltered feel, with views restricted by both the topography and the significantly deciduous woodland cover. This combined with outgrown hedgerows are a symptom of reduced management input of upland farming, which nonetheless can create an attractive landscape.

The enclosed mosaic valleys form some of the most sheltered, settled and attractive landscapes in the study area. They contrast with the simpler landform and character of the upland plateau.

The valley floors also contain most of the development outside of the coastal plain, with predominantly linear settlements along their lengths. This is especially so along the Swansea Valley, where settlements form a ribbon of development along the north face of the lower valley. Other valleys such as the Afan exhibit the remnants of their industrial heritage, with dismantled railway lines and significant structures e.g. viaducts. The Neath and Swansea Valleys also contain canals providing cultural historic links and another visual interest within the valley. Much of the newer development has moved from the valley floor to encroach on to the higher valley sides.

There has been significant mineral extraction, predominantly on the northern fringes. This is dominated by open cast coal and deep mining. The former is still active while the latter is evident by reclaimed tips and plateau. These form a different grain to the surrounding undisturbed landscape.

Much of the agricultural landscape is deteriorating through reduced management input, allowing the encroachment of coarse grasses, scrub and bracken to grazed areas and a deterioration in the field pattern as stone walls crumble and hedges become outgrown.

5.0 KEY ISSUES

Issues highlighted by the LANDMAP assessment include the following:

- A large number of aspect areas exhibit a strong/moderate sense of place in the Neath Port Talbot area mainly through existing and past industrial activities. Management of such areas needs to preserve best aspects of this sense of place while enhancing detractors.
- The large-scale forest plantations are a major landscape feature but require sensitive replanting strategies to modify their edges and relationship with the landscape.
- The concentration of derelict and disturbed landscapes in the north of the assessment area require ongoing improved management.
- The deterioration of lowland landscapes and settlement edges through encroaching residential and recreational development requires improved control.
- The general deterioration of the landscape through reduced management input, resulting in bracken/scrub encroachment and boundary deterioration.
- Reduced management of hedges in valleys has developed more enclosed character.
- The coastal edge is an asset which requires positive management to protect and enhance its visual qualities
- The built form on the coastal plain requires ongoing environmental improvements and mitigation