

Landscape, Seascape and Cultural Services

Shaped by nature and people over time, landscapes are the settings in which we live, work and experience life. All landscapes matter. They combine natural resources, culture and economy. Many environmental resilience and place-based planning challenges that shape our future wellbeing and prosperity are best addressed at a landscape-scale.

Landscape characteristics and qualities combine to create a distinct sense of place. Sense of place is key to understanding how we derive cultural inspiration and wellbeing from landscape. Understanding the contribution of landscape to cultural services is part of the natural resources approach.

www.naturalresources.wales/landscape

The South-West Wales Landscape

The area includes the coast, Preseli Hills and Cleddau valleys of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, rolling farmland of Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, Tywi Valley, extensive estuaries entering Carmarthen Bay, upland moorlands and forests extending to the Cambrian Mountains and the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Gower peninsula includes the AONB and lies to the south of the Swansea uplands. The City of Swansea enjoys the sweeping setting of the Bay. The historic industrial valleys are tranquil in places and the broad Neath floodplain provides the setting for the town. Steep scarps form the backdrop to the narrow coastal strip at and steel works at Port Talbot.

Distinctive landscapes and sense of place

The **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park** includes the steep, rugged coastal cliffs and headlands, wide sandy bays, small coves and remote rocky offshore islands of the coast; the open uplands of the Preseli Hills and upper reaches of the Cleddau rivers. There are spectacular sea views along the coast and a strong sense of place throughout. The whole area is important for tourism and includes the Heritage Coast and Wales Coast Path. Historic St David's, with its famous cathedral is a focal point for visitors.



Carreg Cennan Castle © John Briggs Ramsey Island from Carn Llidi © John Briggs Port Talbot Steel Works © NRW

The north coast is remote and tranquil, with distinctive rocky hills, islands, historic fishing villages and harbours. Historic landscapes at Newport and Carningli, Garn Fawr & Strumble Head, St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island, and Skomer reflect historic culture from the prehistoric to medieval times including cairns, forts and distinctive field patterns.

The south coast includes the historic seaside town of Tenby, Manorbier medieval field system and extensive dune systems backing sandy beaches, including the prehistoric landscape at Stackpole Warren.

The Preseli Hills are remote, exposed moorland with rocky summits and extensive views over farmland and to the coast. They have a strong sense of place and are important for recreation and as a historic landscape.

The Milford Haven Waterway is an expansive deep water ria and historic landscape, with heavy industry and the historic dock towns of Pembroke and Milford Haven. The Eastern and Western Cleddau rivers join the Haven and form broad, attractive, tranquil valleys featuring woodlands, historic castles and parks.

Inland **Pembrokeshire** is predominantly a rolling open farmland plateau and includes distinctive rocky hills, historic villages and market towns such as Haverfordwest. Upland wooded valleys lie to the west and north of the Preseli's, with the historic landscape of the Lower Teifi Valley forming the border with Ceredigion.

The undulating lowland farmland of **Carmarthenshire** is cut by tranquil rivers, with ridges of high ground and historic market towns such as Carmarthen on the Tywi. It extends from the Pembrokeshire border to the uplands to the east and north, which are incised by steep, narrow wooded valleys such as the Cothi. The historic landscape at Dolaucothi features Roman goldworkings and the narrow tributaries of the Teifi around Drefach and Felindre are noted for their historic woollen mills. The tranquil Teifi Valley forms the border with Ceredigion.

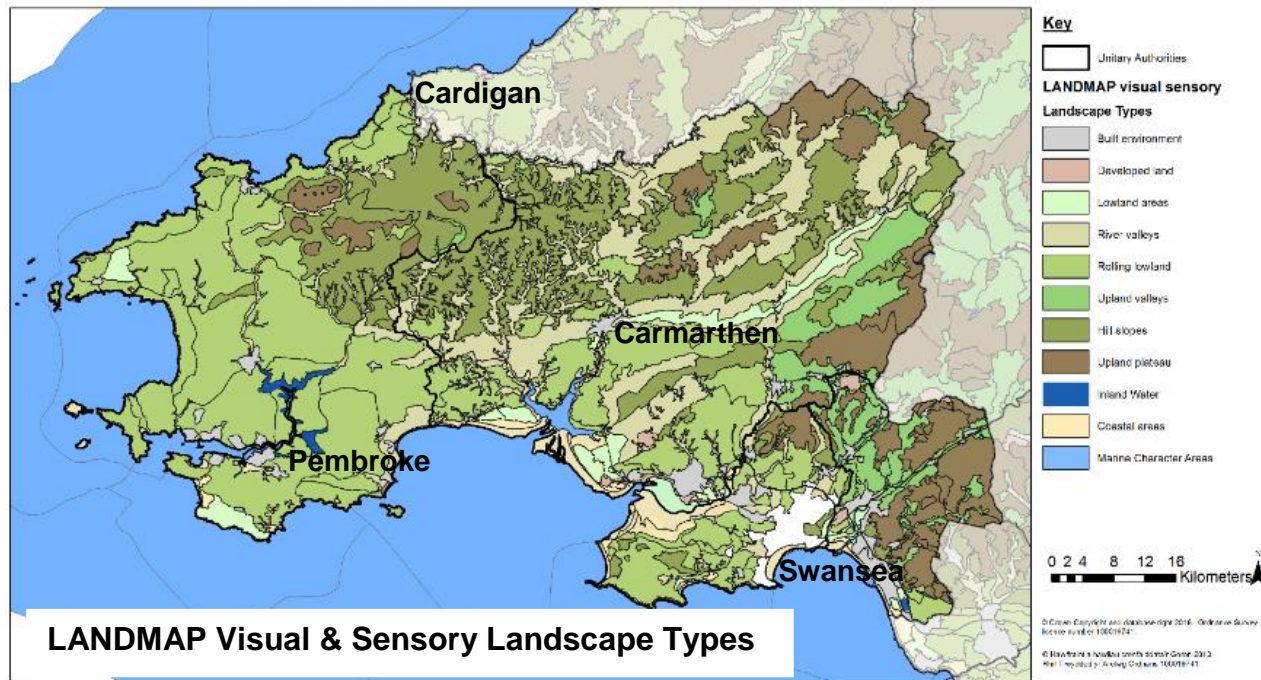
The extensive farmed and forested plateau in the north form the foothills of the Cambrian Mountains and includes Brechfa Forest, with its recreational trails and large wind farms.

The Tywi Valley is a scenic historic landscape, including the broad floodplain, meandering river and wooded slopes, with parklands and castles. There is a strong sense of place, including in the steeper, rocky, upper reaches.

The scenic Taf & Tywi, and Gwendraeth estuaries form a historic landscape, flanked by woodland and castles, as at Kidwelly and Laugharne, with views over Carmarthen Bay, saltmarshes and grazing levels. Spectacular long sandy beaches at Pendine and Pembrey are backed by dunes and recreational areas, and include forestry and military land at Pembrey.

The Black Mountain & Mynydd Myddfai form the western part of the **Brecon Beacons National Park** and a historic landscape that includes Roman forts and prehistoric cairns. The area includes remote, exposed moorland, summit crags and limestone country with panoramic views over the uplands and Tywi Valley.

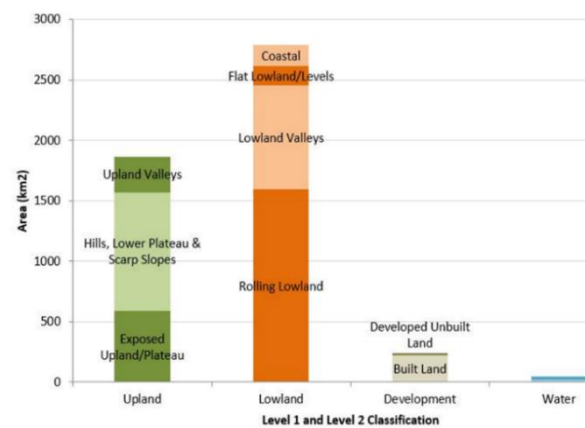
Open uplands to the south have views over the Aman and Loughor valleys and historic mining towns. The River Loughor forms an extensive estuary at the industrial towns of Llanelli and Burry Port, with fine views across to the Gower Peninsula.



LANDMAP Visual & Sensory Landscape Types

Headline Characteristics

- **Over 20% is within a Designated Landscape**, over 50% of the coastline is Heritage Coast
- There are 16 Registered Historic Landscapes
- Sandy beaches and historic seaside resorts on the south facing coasts, extensive dune systems by sandy beaches
- Rolling farmland, historic villages and market towns
- Milford Haven Waterway deep water ria and historic landscape, heavy industry and historic dock towns
- Tranquil pastoral and wooded valleys with historic castles parks
- Extensive estuaries with saltmarshes, grazing levels
- Large areas of remote open moorland and limestone country to the east. Upland moorland and forest, with narrow, wooded upland valleys to the north
- Swansea - Wales's second city lies on the sweep of Swansea Bay
- Forested and pastoral valleys with historic mining villages and infrastructure
- Steep scarps and narrow valleys form the backdrop to heavy industry at Port Talbot
- 5% of the landscape is classified as development (almost equal to the national average of 5.14%).
- Over half (56%) are lowland landscapes, 38% is associated with upland landscape characteristics



The **Gower AONB**, Britain's first AONB, covers much of the peninsula and is renowned for its scenic quality, particularly the coastline, much of which is Heritage Coast, and prominent hills such as Cefn Bryn.

The indented south coast features rocky cliffs, headlands and sandy bays, whilst the north coast is noted for its broad estuarine saltmarshes with expansive views. Inland, open rolling farmland with picturesque villages are tranquil. The Gower historic landscape includes the medieval field system of the Vile at Rhossilli and prehistoric features of the downs. The area has a strong sense of place and is important for tourism and recreation.

Mumbles Head and the sweep of Swansea Bay provide the setting to the City of **Swansea** and provide the focus for recreation. The River Tawe flows through the city and around the edges lie commons, wooded valleys and farmland. Crymlyn Bog is an important nature reserve. Away from the M4 corridor, these areas can be tranquil.

Open rolling hills and valleys dominate to the north, with extensive views over Carmarthenshire and the Black Mountain. The hills are often tranquil, whilst the valleys, with their historic mining villages include historic canals and disused railways, now used for recreation, as in the Tawe Valley.

The historic industrial valleys of the Tawe, Neath and Dulais are a feature of **Neath Port Talbot**, and are divided by ridges of high ground. Extensive uplands lie to the east and north-west, with the open moorlands of Mynydd y Garth dominating to the north west and conifer forest to the east. These uplands are important for recreation and include Sarn Helen Roman Road and views to the Black Mountain and Fforest Fawr of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Wind farms, opencast mines and numerous trails disturb the sense of remoteness.

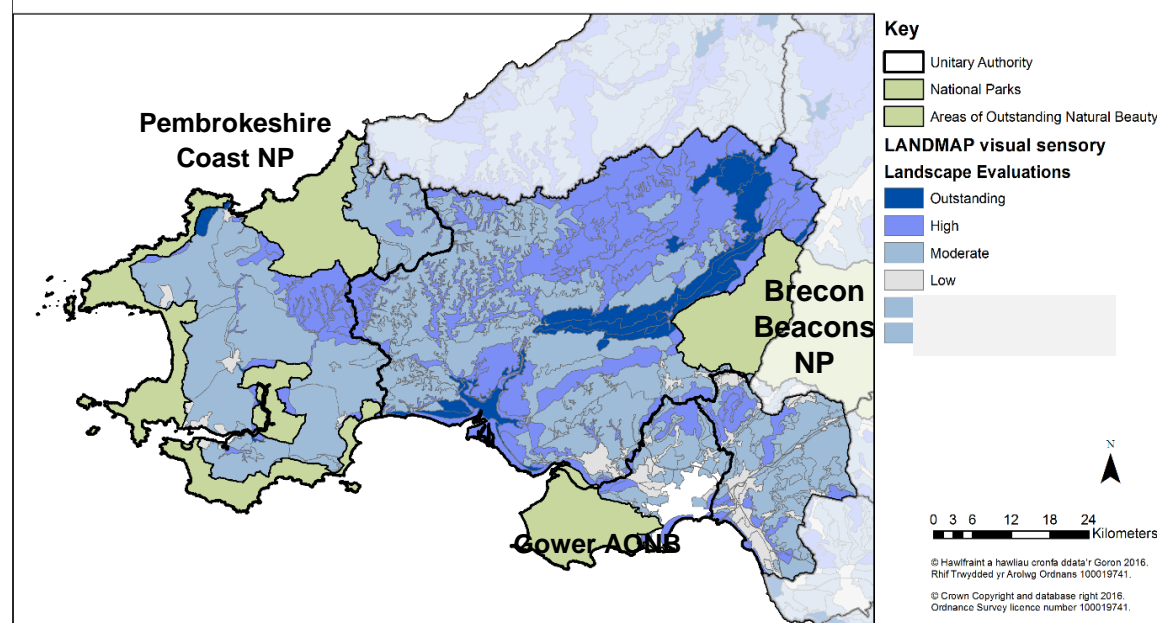
The wide floodplain of the Neath provides the setting for Neath town, its historic castle and abbey, and the estuary at Swansea Bay is framed by small hills and Crymlyn and Baglan Burrows.

The Afan Valley and its tributaries are narrow, steep-sided and dramatic, with conifers and historic industrial villages clinging to the sides and dramatic stone viaducts. There is a strong sense of place and the area is important for recreation.

Distinctive steep scarp slopes form the backdrop to Port Talbot and its steel works. The historic landscape of Mynydd Margam extends over the hills and Margam Park. The coastal lowland includes farmland and a reservoir to the east and the long sandy beach at Aberavon, backed by heavy industry and housing and with extensive views over Swansea Bay.

LANDMAP Visual & Sensory Landscape Evaluation

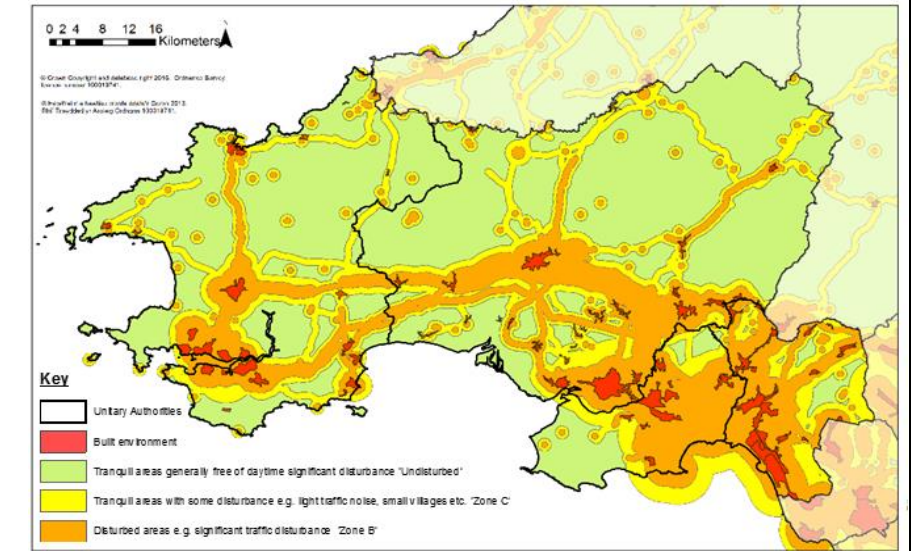
- 21% of the area lies within Designated Landscapes (17% National Park and 4% AONB)
- 10% (473km²) is evaluated as a **nationally outstanding** Visual & Sensory landscape, mostly lowland valleys. Outstanding landscapes are also linked to coastal qualities
- 37% (1,808km²) are evaluated as **high, regionally important** landscapes



- Developed landscapes are generally evaluated as low in Visual & Sensory terms
- As a general principle of landscape resource management, we should seek to conserve and enhance outstanding and high landscapes as these contain characteristics of national and county value.
- Qualities such as tranquillity, wildness, naturalness, built heritage and cultural identity, aesthetic appreciation and recreation, are cultural services of landscape that are also valued by people and can occur across many parts of the area
- Within landscapes of lower quality, the general principle is to enhance landscapes to contribute to wellbeing

Tranquillity

- Tranquil areas decreased by 8% over a 12-year period
- Over 2,500km² of tranquil landscapes remained in 2009, despite the loss of 234km² tranquil landscapes
- Neath Port Talbot, in contrast, lost 67% of its tranquil landscapes over the same 12-year period



Landscape Change

- Expansion of settlements is evident in all authorities, mostly housing infill in NPT and affecting towns and larger villages in southern Pembrokeshire, southern Carmarthenshire and near the M4 in Swansea
- Expansion of commercial development and industry along existing roads, the M4, A477, coast and Milford Haven. Large Agricultural developments noted in Carmarthenshire
- Landscape effects from extraction and development of colliery site. Decline of traditional industry in NPT. Restored land re-vegetating to a mosaic and adding green infrastructure.
- Increased visual impacts from single turbines, windfarms and solar developments. A large wind farm reduced the historic landscape evaluation at Mynydd y Betws
- Expansion of caravans and leisure developments in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire in both coastal areas and valleys
- Forestry felling and broadleaf planting changing character, felling due to Phytophthora has also changed the forest landscape
- Bracken encroachment on clifftops and increasing coastal dominance, also areas of significant reduction, some heathland losses. Vegetation productivity changing in parts of the National Park in Carmarthenshire

