Galileo 03 Ltd.

Mynydd Ty-talwyn Energy Park - Environmental Statement Volume III

Appendix 8.5 Special Landscape Areas Preliminary Assessment

Project Reference: 663870

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APPENDIX 8.5 – SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

8.1 Filtering Exercise

8.1.1 Within the detailed 20 km LVIA study area there are 42 Special Landscape Areas (SLA), as shown on **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.8: Landscape Designations within 20 km**.

8.1.2 **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** shows the landscape designations within 20 km of the Site and the visibility of the Proposed Development. Beyond 10 km from the Site boundary, theoretical visibility from the SLAs is generally limited to small intermittent parts of the SLAs, where elevated areas allow views towards the Site. For those SLAs beyond 10 km where theoretical visibility is more extensive, the distance from the Site and the nature of the intervening landscape would mean that any indirect effects on available views would not be considered significant.

8.1.3 As such, the filtering exercise undertaken has focussed on SLAs within 10 km of the Site to identify which have the potential to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development.

8.1.4 The intention has been to ensure that the level of assessment given to each receptor is proportionate to the likelihood of significant effects arising. **Table 1** below lists the SLAs within 10 km which have the potential to experience significant effects and therefore required detailed assessment.

Table 1 Preliminary Assessment of Special Landscape Areas

SLA	Local Authority	Distance and Direction from the Site boundary
SLA 3 Western Uplands (Host SLA)	Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC)	The majority of the Proposed development (other than T01 is located in this SLA.
SLA 4 Margam (Host SLA)	Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC)	T01 is located within this SLA.
SLA 4 Bryngarw Country Park	BCBC	Approximately 4 km to the east
SLA 7 Laleston	BCBC	Approximately 4 km to the south
SLA 6 Kenfig Burrows	BCBC	Approximately 5 km to the south-west

SLA	Local Authority	Distance and Direction from the Site boundary
SLA 2 Northern Uplands	BCBC	Approximately 5 km to the north-east
SLA 9 Merthyr Mawr Warren	BCBC	Approximately 8 km to the south
SLA 6 Foel y Dyffryn	BCBC	Approximately 6 km to the north
SLA 5 Mynydd y Gaer	BCBC	Approximately 5 km to the east
SLA 5 Mynydd y Gelli	NPTC	Approximately 8 km to the north
SLA 6 Foel Trawsnant	NPTC	Approximately 7 km to the north

8.2 Effects on Special Landscape Areas

8.2.1 BCBC's 'Designation of Special Landscape Areas Study' (2010) provides criteria for designation, primary landscape qualities and features, key policy and management issues and justification for the boundary of the designated areas which were then taken forward within the adopted boundaries of the Local Plan (2018-33).

Effects on the Western Uplands SLA 3- Host SLA (BCBC)

8.2.2 The SLA covers the Site as well as the areas to the east within the Lynfi Valley and areas to the north around Maesteg and its immediate setting up to 4 km from the Site.

8.2.3 The Western Uplands SLA is a distinctive agricultural landscape located on the western flank of BCBC's jurisdiction area, between Maesteg and Aberkenfig. It rises up to 200 m above sea level and is historically and culturally significant. The area is characterised by north-eastern facing slopes, typically covered with rough grazing land, and includes several plantations and small woodlands that contribute to its overall character and quality.

8.2.4 Key features of the Western Uplands SLA include:

- *Evidence of glaciation, with classic U-shaped valleys and truncated side valleys.*
- *A largely rural, agricultural character despite the presence of coal measures and stone quarrying.*
- *Important historic and cultural associations, including the settlement of Llangynwyd and its hinterland.*

- *Visual detractors at the interface with the southern edge of Maesteg, Pont Rhyd-y-cyff, Aberkenfig, and Cwmfelin.*
- *Key policy and management issues for the area include maintaining the broadleaf mix of forestry, limiting forestry plantations, controlling urban development up slopes, and managing intrusive vertical elements.*

8.2.5 The boundaries of the Western Uplands SLA are defined by the local authority boundary to the west, forestry and urban edge to the north, dismantled railway and urban edge to the east, and a B road (New Road) to the south.

8.2.6 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** and **Figure 8.30: Screened ZTV Solar and Substation Elements**, as well as **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint photomontages Viewpoints 3, 4 and 5, and the additional photomontages at **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.12: Photomontages Viewpoints 16, 18, and 19**, lie within the designated SLA boundary, theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines extends across the entire SLA, which is to be expected given it would host the Proposed Development and covers the majority of its immediate visual envelope. Similarly, large areas of the SLA would also have some visibility of the solar and substation development, albeit to a much more limited degree than that of the turbines. In terms of the visual qualities of the SLA, the proposed turbines, solar and substation development would introduce built form on high ground across the central and southern part of the SLA. The turbines would form large scale features that would become new focal points in the landscape and skyline views as evidenced in viewpoint photomontages (**ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15** Viewpoints 3, 4, and 5).

8.2.7 With reference to Viewpoint 7, the more enclosed wooded tributary valleys of the adjoining Lynfi Valley (LANDMAP reference CYNONVS884 - Lynfi Valley), which are of medium visual sensory value and host transport infrastructure and settlement within the valley bottom, are less susceptible. This adjoining landscape, partly within the east side of the SLA, is a mosaic area with a variety of enclosed wooded valley and more open elevated valley side and equivalent upland areas to that of the site. Overall, the visual effects of the Proposed Development in this east/northeast portion of the SLA, particularly in the CYNONVS884 - Lynfi Valley LANDMAP area (see **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.15: LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Classification within 20 km**), would be reduced somewhat when compared with the upland in which the turbines would be located. Nevertheless, and particularly within 5 km of the Site, the turbines would remain prominent features where visible and of a perceptible scale that would remain large and significant. However, it is considered these visual effects would not prevent appreciation of the underlying landscape of the SLA or be overbearing for the majority of visual receptors such as settlements and residents of the immediate surrounding area.

8.2.8 There would also remain many opportunities for views that take in extensive panoramas, inclusive of both varied and more complex landscapes, the majority of

which are of medium value within the wider context. Views from elevated areas of the SLA which take in high and outstanding value coastal landscapes to the south and far west of the study area are inclusive of wind farms and energy infrastructure over equivalent upland areas to that of the Site, as well as some intervening rolling lowlands. The combined effects of the Proposed Development and wind turbines in the SLA is assessed within the inter-project cumulative assessment reported in **ES Volume II, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual, Section 8.12**. With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.30: Screened ZTV Solar and Substation Elements** and viewpoint photomontages both within the Site and at locations within the Site's immediate context (at **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.12: Photomontages Viewpoints 16, 18, and 19**), the degree of visibility and visual envelope of this lower level element of the Proposed Development is shown to vary across the SLA according to the corresponding height and position with the Site. The effects on the visual qualities are again of a larger scale and higher magnitude within the Site and publicly accessible areas in close proximity, in particular in more open areas to the north and east, but generally away from settlement and valley infrastructure corridors. These effects would also be notably reduced at Year 15 once the mitigation planting shown on **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.57: Landscape Mitigation Plan** had begun to mature.

8.2.9 The location of the substation, to the south side of the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk, means infrastructure is concentrated on one side of this recreational route rather than both sides, resulting in a localised visual effect for users.

8.2.10 The southern end of the Site and immediate areas to the south only have visibility of the southern solar compartments and, where visible, the arrays are well assimilated with existing landscape structure. They closely follow the rolling upland landform of the Site, over areas which can be readily mitigated through the addition of the proposed woodland planting blocks and the retention and enhancement of existing field boundaries (hedgerows and stone walls) such that by Year 15 effects would be notably reduced.

8.2.11 The substation and remaining solar compartments are generally only fully appreciated from more open areas to the east, although the level of effect varies according to woodland and topographic enclosure. The solar compartments, which are concentrated on south-facing slopes, have minimal visibility from the lower valley areas to the north and northeast due to the screening effect of intervening topography and vegetation. Adverse visual effects from the ground-level infrastructure are more often experienced from less sensitive areas beyond settlement extents, and outside of the more sensitive valley locations, which are afforded greater vegetative screening as well as benefitting from the mitigating effect of bands of horizontal woodland which frame the Site and interlocking valley sides. This existing retained landscape structure, particularly coniferous plantation woodland over adjoining upland to the west, also limits the geographic extent over which these lower-level elements of the Proposed Development are experienced.

8.2.12 Within the Site itself and immediately adjoining areas (up to approximately 1 km), the magnitude of change from the turbines would be **very high** to **high**, given the

introduction of prominent vertical features that would greatly alter the character of this part of the SLA.

8.2.13 Within the SLA between approximately 1-2 km from the Site, the magnitude of change would be **high** to **medium**, as the turbines would remain prominent and large-scale features that substantially alter the character of available views.

8.2.14 Within the SLA between approximately 2-4 km from the Site, particularly in areas to the north and elevated areas to the east/northeast, the magnitude of change would be **medium**, as the turbines would remain clearly visible as significant features in the landscape, though appearing more moderate in scale.

8.2.15 Within the Site and up to approximately 1 km, the magnitude of change from the solar arrays and substation would be **medium** to **high** in more open areas to the north and east, reducing to **low** to **medium** in areas with greater topographic and vegetative screening.

8.2.16 Beyond approximately 2 km within the SLA, the magnitude of change from the solar and substation elements would be **very low** to **low**, as these lower-level elements would become difficult to discern and would not substantially affect the landscape character.

8.2.17 Overall, during all phases of the development, there would be significant effects on the SLA over the Site and areas to the north (up to 4 km) and raised areas to the east/northeast. The magnitude of change would range from **very high** to **high** within the confines of the Site, reducing to **high** to **medium** in surrounding areas up to 1-2 km away, before reducing further to **medium** in more distant parts of the SLA (2-4 km away). These magnitudes of change, when combined with the **high** sensitivity of the SLA, would result in effects ranging from a **major** effect which is **significant** within the Site itself, to a **major** to **moderate** effect (1-2 km) or **moderate effect** which would also remain **significant** in surrounding areas. The greater part of the effect would be as a result of the turbines, particularly by Year 15, following the implementation of the mitigation planting which would notably further screen the lower level elements of the Proposed Development. This is to be expected within upland areas proposed to host energy park developments. The contribution to these effects of the solar and substation development would greatly reduce beyond 2 km, and whilst noticeable from some isolated elevated areas further afield, would not substantially alter the landscape character of the SLA in their own right, or diminish a sense of place given the complexity of views available over wide and varied landscape areas.

Effects on Margam SLA 4 (NPTC)

8.2.18 Special landscape areas in NPTC are covered by Policy EN2 which states that "*developments within SLAs will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the features and characteristics for which the SLA has been designated*."

8.2.19 SLA 4 Margam is a broad, low-lying plateau characterised by northeast dipping Productive Coal Formation mudstones and coals. It is situated between the South

Wales Pennant Formation escarpment and the east-west Millstone Grit ridge to the south, and is dissected by shallow, alluvium-filled valleys, including the main Cynfig valley. The area includes mine workings and a proposed deep mine.

8.2.20 The boundaries and extent of the SLA closely follow LCA 7 Mynydd Margam (NPTC LANDMAP Landscape Assessment, 2004), particularly alongside the Site's western boundary formed of the conifer plantation enclosing it from the adjoining Margam uplands (BCBC) with very limited intervisibility between them.

8.2.21 The NPTC assessment describes the area as follows:

> *"This area is a large block of unenclosed upland, much of which is under modern forestry. It is situated on the southwest fringe of the Glamorgan Blaenau that visually dominates the coastal plain. The boundary of the area is defined by the extent of enclosure into this upland and to the east by the County Borough boundary. The area ranges from 100m AOD in Cwm Dyffryn to Approximately 350m, predominantly across a geology dominated by a north facing, broad upland plateau of sandstones with coals of South Wales pennant formation."*

8.2.22 NPTC also provides additional commentary on visual and sensory characteristics of relevance to its local SLA designation including the fact the area's extensive coniferous plantation and elevation *"means it provides the skyline to views from the south and west. Within the forest there is a tranquil quality and its extent allows a sense of isolation to develop. This is enhanced by the absence of development and only minimal access along forestry tracks. The woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground to the south and north but enhances the upland character of adjacent valleys."*

8.2.23 Culturally, the landscape showcases evidence of prehistoric and later agricultural practices, rural settlements, and contemporary forestry activities. It is an evolved landscape with multi-period cultural expressions, largely untrammelled by industrial exploitation. The area contains extensive archaeological evidence of land husbandry, now largely given over to forestry interspersed with small farms, making it a rare example of a surviving relict landscape.

8.2.24 The SLA includes Margam Park, known for its exceptional architecture, its history as a major Cistercian Abbey, and its wider monastic landholdings. This area offers a combination of high-grade historic visitor attractions and multi-period pleasure grounds, with cultural elements dating from pre-history to the 21st century.

8.2.25 The forested upland areas within the SLA are significant to the historical context and could be managed to enhance the landscape quality of the wider area. The associated historic landscape designated area Margam Mountain, which is designated on Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales (CADW). The historic landscape of Margam Mountain (HLW 2 Mynydd Margam) encompasses evidence of human activity spanning several millennia. Notable features include Bronze Age cairns, medieval ecclesiastical sites and post-medieval industrial developments. The area demonstrates particular value for its preserved medieval granges associated with Margam Abbey, and its later development as part of the

Margam Estate parkland. The spatial overlap between the SLA and these designations is illustrated on **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints.**

8.2.26 The high value (special) cultural significance of the area is assessed in **ES Volume II, Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage** but it is evident the scenic landscape quality of the area is further enhanced by the historic buildings of the Park and the backdrop of the scarp, creating a sheltered setting that visually links and provides integrity to the whole area. The sense of place for Margam Park is initially prompted by boundary walls and entrance features. As a result of the values placed on the landscape within the SLA, a **high** sensitivity has been assigned to Margam SLA 4.

8.2.27 T01 is located within this SLA. Solar Parcel E, located in the adjacent SLA 3 Western Uplands on the lower eastern slopes of Mynydd Margam, would have limited visibility from very localised elevated areas on Mynydd Margam within SLA 4 to the west.

8.2.28 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** as well as Viewpoints 1 and 2 at **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, the locations of which lie within the designated SLA boundary and Margam Park, theoretical visibility is very limited within both the Park and wider SLA. The viewpoint photomontages (Viewpoint 1) demonstrate there is only partial visibility to the blades of two of the six turbines and one nacelle at distances of 3-4.6 km+ which represents a worst-case scenario for the SLA as a whole. This reduces the perception of them forming large scale features within the landscape. Otherwise, the upland coniferous plantation areas would have very limited opportunities for views out looking eastwards towards the site and, if glimpsed, the turbines would not be seen together and only partial glimpses of one or two turbines would be possible, as evidenced by the ZTV.

8.2.29 There are some limited open areas at the southern end of the SLA, either side of minor roads serving farms to the immediate west of the Site and to the southwest such as along minor road Heol-Y-Clo to the north of Kenfig Hill, with theoretical visibility towards the solar development as well as to all of the turbines. However, the screening does not include roadside hedgerows and individual trees which largely prevent ground level views of the Site. Effects from the solar and substation development, if perceptible, would form small scale features and a low level of change. The turbines would continue to form large scale skyline features where visible but from a limited geographical area (low) of the SLA looking northeast that would not prevent appreciation of the underlying character of the wider upland area of which the Site is a substantial part of.

8.2.30 Overall, whilst it is acknowledged there would be some significant visual effects (from turbines only) on views experienced at the southern end of the SLA, the effects would not be of such a scale as to prevent an understanding or appreciation of the underlying character of the SLA. The majority of the SLA is well screened from the Site and views looking south/southwest over lower lying

landscapes towards the higher value coastal landscapes would be largely unaffected.

8.2.31 The introduction of turbines would equate to a **low** magnitude of change on the SLA and result in a **minor-moderate** level of effect, which is a **not significant** effect. During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**very low**) resulting in a **minor** level of effect which is **not significant**, given construction activities such as the building of access tracks would not be noticeable.

8.2.32 The visual qualities and settings of coastal SLA's Kenfig Burrows, Porthcawl Coast and Merthyr Mawr Warren to which the SLA bears a close visual relationship are considered separately below.

Effects on the Bryngarw Country Park SLA 4 (BCBC)

8.2.33 SLA 4 Bryngarw Country Park lies 1.5 km to the east of the Site from the closest point of its boundary. The Bryngarw Country Park SLA is a designated SLA based on the Registered Historic Park of Bryngarw House and its surrounding valley woodland habitat. The Country Park area is managed by the Council and includes a range of high value riparian woodlands, some designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Site is included in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. The spatial relationship between the Registered Historic Park and the SLA is illustrated on **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints**.

8.2.34 The SLA boundary extends beyond the Registered Historic Country Park to include areas of high habitat value. The A4064 forms a strong eastern boundary. The A4065 provides a southern boundary, and the Ogwr Valley Walk provides the north and north-west boundary. A **high** sensitivity has been assigned to Bryngarw Country Park SLA 4.

8.2.35 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints**, theoretical visibility from the SLA is shown to be limited to the boundaries of the Registered Country Park with the well wooded interior areas well screened. There is some potential for theoretical glimpsed views to the tips of turbines from the outer west facing edges of the Registered Country Park and within the minor roads bounding its southern end and towards its northern tip along the A4064. However, for the most part, these routes are well wooded and also afforded topographic screening, such that very limited opportunities would occur to view the turbines and the dense woodland of the Registered Country Park, reducing any perceived presence. The sensitive interior and location of Bryngarw House are inward facing and fully enclosed by the woodland setting. There may be very small, glimpsed views to blade tips of turbines at the east side of the Site due to the wooded clearing at the southeastern corner of the Registered Country Park, but the casual viewer is unlikely to notice when set close to woodland, which may well prevent any views out.

8.2.36 There would be some small areas of the Registered Country Park affected if glimpsed views of turbines are possible over the enclosing woodland of the park but these would be a small change over a small geographic extent of the SLA.

8.2.37 The presence of the turbines, if perceptible from within the Registered Country Park, would represent a **very low** magnitude of change and would not give rise to an effect that would alter visitors appreciation or enjoyment of being within the Country Park (as most users would likely be unaware of them). Therefore, the impact, for all phases of development, would result in at most, a **minor** effect on the character of the Country Park and SLA as and so overall are judged to be **not significant.**

8.2.38 The solar and substation would not be visible from the SLA as illustrated with reference to **Figure 8.30: Screened ZTV Solar and Substation Elements**.

Effects on the Laleston SLA 7 (BCBC)

8.2.39 Laleston SLA is an open agricultural landscape adjacent to Bridgend, characterised by its distinct plateau rising to 100 m above sea level. The area is a mixed farmland with fields enclosed by hedgerow boundaries. It includes the Cefn Cribwr Grasslands Special Area of Conservation.

8.2.40 The area is dissected by the M48, A48(T) road, and the Swansea-Paddington railway line, creating local corridors of visual and sensory detraction and faces potential pressure for further development to the west of Bridgend.

8.2.41 The underlying geology is of national value, reflected in the designation of a SSSI.

8.2.42 The western boundary abuts the former Newton Down airfield, used for karting and industrial units, providing further local zones of visual and sensory detraction. The southern boundary includes the village of Tythegston and Tythegston Court, a historic house and parkland included in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. A **medium** sensitivity has been assigned to Laleston SLA 7.

8.2.43 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints**, theoretical visibility of all the turbines is shown over most of the agricultural landscape, except for some small woodland blocks and the areas set to the south of the small village settlement. The village of Laleston is afforded a high degree of screening from woodland bounding the settlement, as well as immediate field boundaries to the north of the settlement. It is anticipated there would be, at most, small theoretical glimpsed views to the tips of turbines from the settlement and for residents at the northern edges of the village, although for the majority of receptors, no views towards the site are most likely. For the open areas of the farmed landscape, the turbines will be clearly visible, but appear of a more moderate scale than from close range situations.

8.2.44 In terms of the effects on the visual qualities of the SLA, views towards the rising ground of the Site are often already inclusive of turbines at Newton Down Wind Farm and Haregrove Farm. As a result, views of the Proposed Development's

turbines, whilst forming new skyline features in the middle distance over elevated ground, would not form a complete change in character of the SLA, which is already influenced by similar infrastructure and the strong presence of the M4 and A48 within lower lying areas.

8.2.45 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.30: Screened ZTV Solar and Substation Elements** it is only the solar compartments of the lower-level development at the southern end of the Site that would theoretically be visible from the northern part of the SLA outside of settlement areas. Given these are middle distance views from the SLA at 3+ km, the combined arrays would appear as a change in colouration and landscape cover/pattern at ground level, rather than any individual rows of arrays being discerned. As such, they would appear to closely follow the rolling elevated landform of the Site set within the existing retained field pattern. Furthermore, there is an existing solar scheme north of Court Coleman Road which would draw the attention of viewers from the east side of the SLA.

8.2.46 There would be the potential for effects on views over small, dispersed areas of the SLA, particularly on PRoW to the north of Laleston and south of the M4; although this would likely be for short sections of footpath routes once outside the settlement (Lalestone) and away from woodland blocks and taller hedgerow field boundaries within fields, which would offer further screening of views towards the Site. For road users, views are mainly focused towards the coast, and roadside vegetation would screen the majority of views looking north for those passing through the lowland landscape, in particular where woodland blocks screen views over intervening areas to the north between the SLA and the Site. The magnitude of change would be no greater than **medium** and the resulting potential for effects on the SLA overall therefore is no greater than **moderate** and **not significant**. During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**low**) resulting in a **minor-moderate** level of effect which is **not significant**.

Effects on the Kenfig Burrows SLA 6 (BCBC)

8.2.47 Kenfig Burrows SLA is a distinctive landscape, characterised by its coastal sand dune deposits and related vegetation. It includes several statutory designations such as a SAC (Natura 2000 site), SSSI, National and Local Nature Reserve, and is listed on the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.

8.2.48 The SLA's Primary Landscape Qualities and Features are as follows:

- Extensive dune system overlaying Upper Carboniferous Limestone;
- Intertidal zone between mean low and high-water lines, with storm gravels on the wave-cut platform;
- Kenfig Pool, a significant water body within the dune system;
- Unique foreground setting to industrial and transport corridors (M4 motorway and Swansea-London railway line); and
- Important besanded landscape with historical significance.

8.2.49 The boundary follows the local authority boundary to the north and west, and roads and footpaths to the east and south. It comprises Sker beach, and moving inland, sand dunes within the Kenfig National Nature Reserve (NNR), all of which are to the immediate west of the M4 as the motorway heads north towards Port Talbot.

8.2.50 In terms of importance *"The Kenfig Burrows SLA is a vital landscape unit that provides significant ecological, historical, and visual value to the region.*" (BCBC, SLA 2010). A **high** sensitivity has been assigned to Kenfig Burrows SLA 6.

8.2.51 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** and **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 10 (Kenfig Burrows), theoretical visibility of all the turbines is shown on the ridgeline of the Site at a distance of 7.1 km. The view towards the Proposed Development from within the NNR looks over the village of Kenfig which forms the mid ground of views towards the Site and its elevated upland surroundings. Due to the distance, the views available from the SLA are long range views and the rolling landform of the Site results in the visible portion of each turbine varying. The three southern turbines appear larger in scale (c.50% of tower visible) than the northern turbines, which appear smaller, and the two turbines to the east side of the Site appear smaller still. Nevertheless, the turbines would be clearly noticeable whilst clustered within the upland ridge area hosting them, albeit appearing as of moderate scale in comparison to closer range views.

8.2.52 Whilst a noticeable change to the character of views looking north, it is evident that looking south and west/northwest within the SLA coastal landscape and away from the Site itself, the appreciation of the underlying character, and enjoyment of the lower lying coastal landscapes, would not be substantially altered. Given the area around the SLA has major transport routes, infrastructure (M4 corridor, A48, rail line, overhead lines and telecommunications masts) and industrial sites both in close proximity (Kenfig Industrial Estate) and in nearby Port Talbot, it is already heavily influenced by other landscape detractors. Furthermore, there are other windfarms within the intervening lowland landscape between the SLA and the Site.

8.2.53 The solar and substation are not intervisible with the SLA so will have no additional effect on the character of the SLA.

8.2.54 Overall, the introduction of the turbines would equate to a small-medium scale and medium geographic extent, but one which has a more limited effect on the visual qualities of the SLA, focused on its coastal attributes rather than views back towards upland areas inland.

8.2.55 The magnitude of change overall is therefore **low** which equates to a minor loss or alteration of character, but not one that will alter the underlying important characteristics of the SLA. The level of effect is therefore **minor-moderate** and **not significant**. During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**very low**) resulting in a **minor** level of effect which is **not significant**, given construction activities such as the building of access tracks would not be noticeable.

Effects on the Northern Uplands SLA 2 (BCBC)

8.2.56 Northern Uplands SLA is an open upland ridge landscape surrounding the Ogmore Valley, characterised by its largely intact natural features but influenced by urban, wind farm, and forestry elements. The summits of Mynydd Llangeinwyr and Mynydd Maes-teg offer regionally important views in terms of the SLA's visual qualities, as referenced in the LANDMAP aspect area, which assessed these as being of high visual sensory value.

8.2.57 The SLA's Primary Landscape Qualities and Features are as follows:

- Elevation ranges from approximately 250 m to 550 m AOD;
- Unenclosed uplands with easterly and westerly facing slopes of relatively narrow valleys;
- Classic glaciation characteristics in the Upper Ogmore Valley, including U-shaped valleys and hanging side valleys;
- Panoramic and dramatic views over upland and adjoining valleys;
- Predominant land cover includes rough grazing, bracken, rock outcrops, acid grassland, heath, and internationally important blanket bog habitats;
- Includes Cwm Cyffog SSSI and Aber Woods Ancient Woodland SINC; and
- Visual and sensory detractors such as the A4064 road and pylons.

8.2.58 The boundaries use the local authority boundary to the north and east, urban edge to the west, and the A4093 and forestry edge to the south.

8.2.59 In terms of importance *"the Northern Uplands SLA is a significant landscape unit that provides important ecological, visual, and sensory value, contributing to the overall character and quality of the region"* (BCBC, SLA 2010). A **high** sensitivity has been assigned to Northern Uplands SLA 2.With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** and **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 13 (Pen Y Foel Trig Point) theoretical visibility of all the turbines is shown on the elevated rolling upland area of the Site at a distance of 8.7 km. From locations such as this, within the Northern Uplands, its summits often have vantage over the Site and adjoining upland areas surrounding it with those to the immediate west (Mynyyd Margam), forming an undulating exposed grassland backdrop. Therefore, looking west over the Site, the turbines appear within the mid distance and are well grounded, seen beyond the tops of valley woodlands within the SLA, with views then extending in a south westerly direction over mixed lowland landscape areas towards the coastal landscapes of NPTC and BCBC. Views are also inclusive of further wind farms and transmission lines within the extensive panoramas available.

8.2.60 The introduction of turbines at the Site, whilst forming new focal points and skyline features, would not overly affect the appreciation of the underlying qualities of the exposed upland grassland landscape, where views of wind farms are already well established. The turbines would, at this distance, appear of a medium scale and effect a moderate proportion of the SLA. The more enclosed incised wooded

valleys, where views are much more enclosed as evidenced by the ZTV, offer more secluded areas over the exposed plateaus. The main focus and experience for receptors remains the extensive views to distant coastal landscapes, some of which are of outstanding value.

8.2.61 Overall, the introduction of the turbines would equate to a **medium** to **low** magnitude of change, resulting in a **moderate** to **minor-moderate** and **not significant** effect on the SLA. During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**low**) resulting in a **minor-moderate** level of effect which is **not significant**.

Effects on the SLA 9 Merthyr Mawr Warren (BCBC)

8.2.62 Merthyr Mawr Warren SLA is a distinctive landscape in BCBC area, comprising two interrelated units: Merthyr Mawr Warren Historic Landscape and the historic parkland associated with Merthyr Mawr House.

8.2.63 The SLA's Primary Landscape Qualities and Features are as follows:

- Extensive area of littoral windblown sand deposits, rising up to 80 m AOD;
- Dominates views of the estuary and immediate hinterland around Merthyr Mawr;
- Includes the foreshore down to the mean low water level;
- Small spinneys within the dune system create intimate spaces;
- Views across the Severn Estuary provide a distinct sense of place, though somewhat compromised by proximity to urban areas like Newton and Trecco Bay;
- Historic house and parkland (Grade II) laid out in the early nineteenth century, added to in 1900, included on the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales;
- Culturally and historically significant, containing Merthyr Mawr House, estate village, and remains of medieval castles/fortified houses; and
- Layers of former landscapes dating back to the Neolithic due to besandment.

8.2.64 The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the local authority boundary. The SLA extends up the River Ogmore to the northeast, following footpaths and minor roads here and along its north boundary. It includes areas of woodland that are of high habitat evaluation but not presently covered by any other designation.

8.2.65 In terms of importance: *"Merthyr Mawr Warren SLA is an important landscape unit that provides significant ecological, historical, and visual value, enhancing the coherence of management policies and contributing to the overall character and quality of the region"* (BCBC,2010).

8.2.66 The SLA is located to the south of Laleston and south/southwest of Bridgend urban extents, set below the A48 which passes to the immediate north beyond intervening farmland. A **medium** sensitivity has been assigned to Methyr Mawr Warren SLA.

8.2.67 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** and **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 11 (Ogmore-by-Sea), just outside the SLA there is theoretically visibility covering the inland parts of the SLA, with Newton Beach at the edge of the Newtonand/Porthcawl settlement and the adjoining coastline areas lying outside the ZTV.

8.2.68 **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 11, to the immediate south on the Wales Coast Path at Ogmore-by-Sea, shows existing wind turbines are visible in the intervening lowland area at Newton Down Wind Farm, with other individual turbines also present in the adjoining areas. This has some effect on the appreciation of inland landscape views, but settlement areas and other detractors also exist in this stretch of coastline, such that the underlying visual qualities of coastline landscape can still be appreciated, and turbines are considered an established component of the locality.

8.2.69 There are likely to be small areas within the inland dune systems and footpaths crossing the area where the turbines may be viewed. At this distance they would form small-medium scale features. On key routes (Wales Coast Path), where the primary focus is mainly away from the Site, they would not affect key visual qualities of the SLA, such as the views across the Severn Estuary which would be unaffected. The other lower lying elements of the Proposed Development would largely be imperceptible.

8.2.70 During operation, the magnitude of change from the introduction of the Proposed Development would be **low**, resulting in a **minor-moderate** and **not significant** effect**.** During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**very low**) resulting in a **minor** level of effect which is **not significant**.

Effects on the SLA 6 Foel y Dyffryn (BCBC)

8.2.71 Foel y Dyffryn SLA is a relatively small upland landscape area located west of Dyffryn and Caerau, providing an important visual backdrop to the urban area.

8.2.72 The SLA's Primary Landscape Qualities and Features are as follows:

- Elevation ranges from 120 m to 350 m AOD, generally north-east facing;
- Vegetation cover includes rough grassland, mainly upland heath, interspersed with wetland and boggy areas, which are local Biodiversity Action Plan target habitats;
- Includes populations of marsh fritillary butterfly;
- Proximity to the urban edge introduces visual and sensory detractors, typified by urban fringe management issues such as fly-tipping, illegal biking, and conflicts with landowners and farmers; and
- Borrowed views to the Brecon Beacons to the north enhance its upland qualities and character.

8.2.73 The SLA boundary follows the local authority boundary to the west, forestry edge to the north, the urban edge to the east, and Garn Wen woodland edge to the south.

8.2.74 In terms of importance: *"the Foel y Dyffryn SLA is a distinct upland landscape unit that provides significant ecological, visual, and sensory value, contributing to the overall character and quality of the region"* (BCBC, SLA 2010). A **medium** sensitivity has been assigned.

8.2.75 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** there is theoretical visibility to all six turbines from the SLA. The substation would not be visible from this area and whilst only the outer edges of south facing solar compartments within exposed ridgeline areas are theoretically visible, they would be very difficult to discern at this distance so would not give rise to any significant effects. The introduction of turbines would likely be visible from the more elevated parts of the SLA, set above Dyffryn and overlooking the adjoining town of Maesteg.

8.2.76 The closest turbine would be c.6 km from the southern edge of the SLA and, where visible, turbines would form small to medium scale features with the lowland valley areas seen beyond the Site, containing many of the aforementioned visual detractors. The views looking north to the Brecon Beacons, which enhance its special qualities, will be unaffected.

8.2.77 During operation the magnitude of change would be **low**, resulting in an at most **minor-moderate** and **not significant** effect on the special visual qualities of the SLA. During construction the magnitude of change would be less (**very low**) resulting in a **minor** level of effect which is **not significant**.

Effects on the SLA 5 Mynydd y Gaer (BCBC)

8.2.78 SLA 5 Mynydd y Gaer SLA is located to the east of the Site. It occupies an upland area between the Llynfi Valley to the west and the Ogmore Valley to the east within BCBC. The SLA is situated approximately 2-5 km from the Site, with the Llynfi Valley forming the visible intervening landscape between them. The adjoining lowland Cym Ogwr lies at the foot of western slopes and nearby Bryngarw Country Park, which lies further to the west, are largely out of view within the valley below when looking from elevated areas of the SLA (**ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 12).

8.2.79 The SLA's primary landscape qualities and features are as follows:

- Distinctive upland ridgeline landform with elevations ranging between approximately 75 m AOD at its southeastern extent to 295 m AOD at its highest point, forming an important visual backdrop to surrounding valleys;
- Open, exposed character predominantly consisting of unenclosed moorland, rough grassland, and heathland vegetation with minimal tree cover;
- Significant westward views across the Llynfi Valley toward the proposed development site and beyond to more distant landscapes, including coastal views in clear conditions;

- Strong sense of elevation, exposure, and relative remoteness despite proximity to valley settlements;
- Cultural heritage significance including prehistoric monuments, ancient trackways, and historical land management patterns;
- Ecological value represented by upland habitats including acid grassland and heathland supporting specialized flora and fauna; and
- Important contribution to the landscape setting and visual containment of adjacent valley landscapes and settlements.

8.2.80 The boundaries of Mynydd y Gaer SLA are defined by topographical features that distinguish its upland character. The western boundary generally follows the transition between the elevated plateau and the upper slopes descending toward the Llynfi Valley. The eastern boundary follows the ridgeline before descending toward the Ogmore Valley. The northern extent connects with adjacent upland areas, while the southern boundary follows topographical features marking the transition to lower-lying landscapes at approximately 75 m AOD. A **medium** sensitivity has been assigned.

8.2.81 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints** there would be extensive theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the Mynydd y Gaer SLA. The ZTV indicates that most of the western-facing slopes and ridgeline areas of the SLA would have visibility of five to six turbines.

8.2.82 The proximity of the SLA to the Site (approximately 2-5 km) means that the turbines would be prominently visible as substantial vertical elements detracting from much of the SLA's more elevated and open areas. At this relatively close range, the turbines would appear as prominent features within westward views across the Llynfi Valley, introducing large-scale modern infrastructure to what is currently a predominantly undeveloped upland landscape setting.

8.2.83 **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.10: Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 to 15**, Viewpoint 12 (Ogwr Ridgeway Walk at Waun Wen), located within the SLA at approximately 257 m AOD, demonstrates the elevated, open views that would be available from similar positions within Mynydd y Gaer. From such vantage points, the proposed turbines would be clearly visible as prominent skyline features, creating new focal points that would draw attention and noticeably alter the character of westward views.

8.2.84 The visual relationship between Mynydd y Gaer SLA 5 and the Site is characterised by their positions on opposing sides of the Llynfi Valley, creating a direct visual interrelationship with limited intervening screening. From the open ridgeline and western slopes of the SLA, the turbines would be seen in the middle distance, appearing as prominent vertical elements breaking the skyline of the opposite valley side. This would partially alter the character of the westward views that form one of the key experiential qualities of the SLA, yet would not form an obstruction to distant views looking in a south to south westerly direction towards the more sensitive coastal landscapes which would still remain appreciable.

8.2.85 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.30: Screened ZTV Solar and Substation Elements**, the lower-level components of the development would be much less visually intrusive than the turbines. Following iterative scheme design changes, whilst these lower-level solar and substation elements remain theoretically visible from areas to the east within the SLA, in most situations they would be screened by topographic and vegetative screening. This includes woodland bands forming incised tributary valleys that intersect with the Site's undulating landform, which in most situations prevents any views of the lower lying northeastern solar compartment (E).

8.2.86 The prominent topography, undulating landform and exposed ridgelines running across the Site also largely preclude views of the southern solar arrays from the SLA. The substation, located to the south of the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk, would be screened from all but the highest points such as that represented by Viewpoint 12. Even from these elevated locations, the substation is unlikely to be noticeable given its a small scale feature set against the coniferous woodland backdrop of Craig Y Aber Forest. Consequently, even if visible, these lower-level elements would appear well contained within the Site's still legible hedge-lined field pattern and often viewed against the wooded backdrop west of the SLA 4 Margam, greatly reducing their prominence and assisting with their assimilation within wider landscape views. Furthermore, following the introduction of the mitigation planting illustrated on **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.57: Landscape Mitigation Plan**, there would be further reduction in the visibility of the lower lying elements of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would impact to some degree one of the key characteristics of the SLA, its expansive westward views across a predominantly undeveloped upland landscape. While the SLA itself would remain physically unaltered, the visual context and perceived character would be impacted to some degree by the introduction of large-scale energy infrastructure as a feature in views from much of the designated area.

8.2.87 Given the proximity and direct visual relationship between Mynydd y Gaer SLA and the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change on the SLA from the introduction of turbines, and during the construction phase, would be **medium**, affecting a moderate geographic extent of the area and partially altering the character of westward views inclusive of the Site. Overall, there would be a **moderate** level of effect on the SLA, primarily its westward visual experience, which is **not significant**.

Effects on the SLA 5 Mynydd y Gelli (NPTC)

8.2.88 SLA 5 Mynydd y Gelli lies approximately 8 km to the north of the Site. With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints**, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the SLA is very limited, with the majority of the SLA lying outside the ZTV due to the intervening topography and woodland cover across Mynydd Margam.

8.2.89 The SLA is characterised by upland topography with established renewable energy infrastructure already present within its landscape context. The existing

Llynfi Afan Renewable Energy Park, comprising a 12 turbine wind farm, is located within the SLA itself, while the consented Upper Ogmore wind farm lies immediately to the south of the SLA boundary. These existing and consented developments have already established renewable energy as a characteristic feature within and around this landscape designation. A **medium** sensitivity has been assigned.

8.2.90 Given the combination of very limited theoretical visibility from the SLA (with most of the designated area having no visibility of the Proposed Development), the separation distance of approximately 8 km, and the established baseline context of renewable energy development, both within and immediately adjacent to the SLA, there would be no perceptible change to the landscape character or visual amenity of this designation. The magnitude of change during operation would be **low** and the effects on SLA5 Mynydd y Gelli as a whole would be **minor-moderate** and **not significant**. During construction, the magnitude of change would be reduced to v**ery low**, resulting in a **minor** and **not significant** effect.

Effects on SLA 6 Foel Trawsnant (NPTC)

8.2.91 SLA 6 Foel Trawsnant lies over the adjoining ridge to the north of SLA 1 Foel y Dyffryn, located approximately 7 km to the north of the Site. The SLA has been assigned a **medium** sensitivity, balanced against the existing renewable energy context in the wider landscape including the operational Llynfi Afan Renewable Energy Park and consented Upper Ogmore wind farm in the surrounding area.

8.2.92 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 8.9: Landscape Designations within 20 km with Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints**, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is highly restricted, limited to a very small area close to the southern extent of the SLA. This limited extent of visibility is due to the combination of intervening topography and the ridgeline separating this SLA from the Site area.

8.2.93 Given the separation distance from the Site of over 7 km, only the proposed turbines would be visible to any notable degree from those small areas where visibility occurs. The lower lying solar panels and substation would be barely perceptible or entirely screened at this distance. The small area from which visibility is theoretically possible is at a slightly greater elevation than the Site; however, the extensive intervening woodland areas across the eastern side of Margam Mountain would soften views in the midground and would help screen the lower sections of some of the visible turbines, further reducing their prominence.

8.2.94 The key visual characteristics of the SLA, including its views to the coast, would continue to be readily appreciated. The turbines at the Site would be seen in the context of other existing wind farms in the wider landscape setting, including the operational Llynfi Afan Renewable Energy Park, and would not appear uncharacteristic of the established baseline conditions in the wider upland landscape.

8.2.95 Overall, noting the highly limited geographical extent of any visibility of the Proposed Development across the SLA (confined to a very small area at the southern margin), the separation distance from the Site of over 7 km, the

screening effect of intervening woodland, and the established context of renewable energy in the wider landscape, the magnitude of change during operation would be **low** and all other phases would be **very low**.

8.2.96 During the operational phase, the effects on SLA 6 Foel Trawsnant as a whole would be **minor-moderate** and **not significant**. During construction, when activities would be temporary and of shorter duration, the level of effect would be reduced to **minor** which is **not significant**.