

# PENYRENGLYN LANDSLIDE RISK MANAGEMENT WORKS

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Project no. 4021526



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## 1. Introduction

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has commissioned Binnies UK Limited (BUKL) to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) to support a planning application for remedial works to the former Ynysfeio Colliery Spoil tip. There is no requirement for a statutory Environmental Statement or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the development; however, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) have requested an LVA.

The project site (the 'site') is situated on the southwestern slopes of Mynydd Ynysfeio along the eastern side of the Rhondda Fawr Valley (Figure 1-1). The site is located directly north of Penyreglyn, situated between the village of Treherbert to the east and the town of Treorchy to the west, in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf in south Wales.

The site comprises valley slopes on which coal spoil from the Ynysfeio Colliery had been placed, and part of a raised plateau at the base of the slopes which was created during mine closure. Following mine closure the slopes had been planted as conifer plantation which was felled in winter 2023/24 due to a statutory plant health notice. There is a retained band of wet woodland on the lower slopes. The purpose of the proposed project is to install positive drainage measures into slopes to reduce infiltration into the coal tip material, reducing the likelihood of material slips and mitigating future risk to public health and safety.

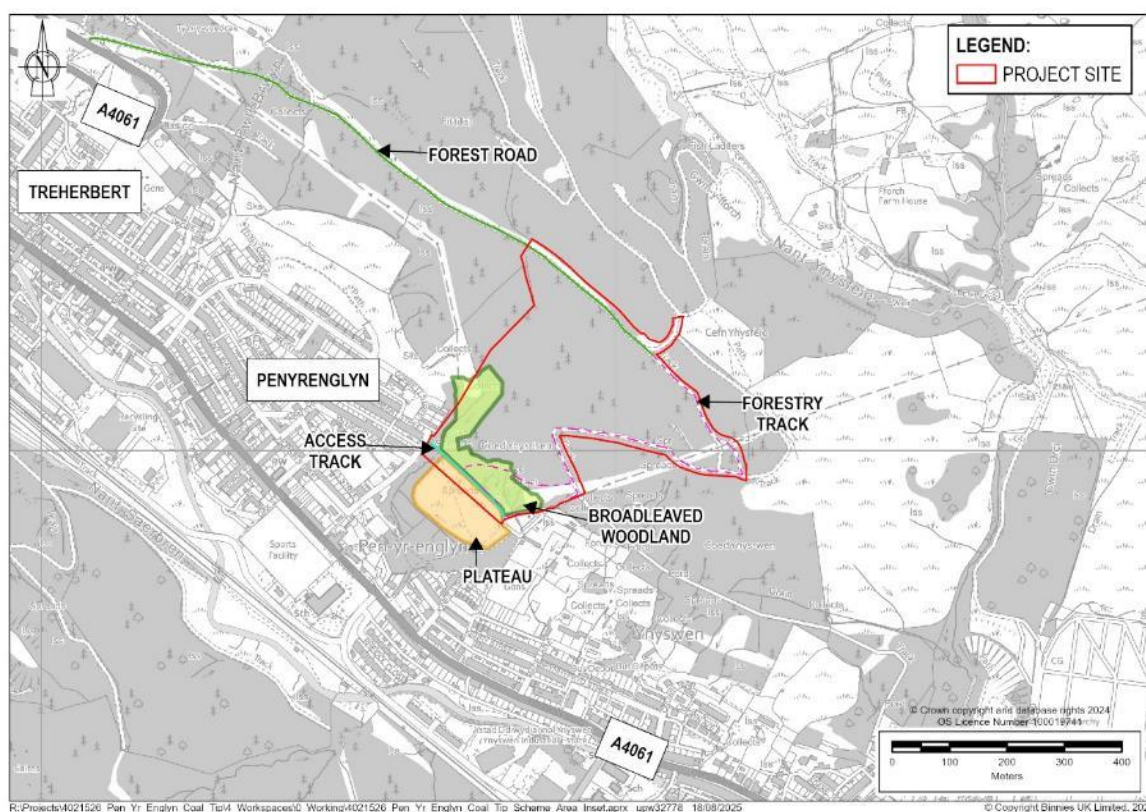


Figure 1-1 Site location plan.

The project is described in detail in the Project Environmental Report (PER) (Binnies UK Ltd, 2025a) (doc ref. 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-RP-EN-00001) and Drainage Strategy Report (Binnies UK Ltd, 2025b) (doc ref. 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-RP-FR-00001). It is illustrated on the Environmental



Masterplan (doc no. 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00015), Long Section (doc ref. 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00016 and Cross Section (doc ref 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00017).

In summary, the proposed works involve construction and operation of a drainage system at the former spoil tip, comprising

- Three new blockstone cascades running in a linear route down the cleared plantation slopes between the forest road and the retained wet woodland; the cascades are 115m, 100m and 105m in length respectively, and 1m deep. They will have a 1.5m wide channel set within a further 1.5m wide blockstone 'bank' either side (see detail on Cross Section, document reference 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00017). They will be visible on the surface of the slope during operation.
- A series of impermeable drainage ditches and lateral gravel drainage channels, each between 35m to 80m in length, will cross the cleared plantation slopes and connect to the blockstone cascades. These have been designed to follow the contours of the landscape. The impermeable ditches will be topsoiled and seeded. The lateral gravel channels will be 0.6m wide and filled with clean stone which will be visible during operation.
- Approximately 80 subsurface drains, each with an approximately 1m<sup>2</sup> natural stone headwall and concrete apron, will be installed within the cleared plantation slopes and within the retained wet woodland. During operation, the stone headwalls will be visible but not the subsurface pipes. A 3m wide, 95m long stoned access track will be laid to provide access for maintenance to the subsurface drain headwalls through the retained wet woodland.
- Approximately 420m of existing forestry track will be graded to remove ruts, and surfaced with crushed stone, and a bund of 0.3m height added on the downslope side of the forest track. 1.2m wide filter drains will be installed alongside the upslope side of the track; these will be sub-surface, topsoiled and seeded.
- A 270m<sup>3</sup> below ground water storage tank will be installed below the existing plateau access track off Herbert Street, with a below ground pipeline, concrete-bag headwall and apron to connect the water storage tank to an existing watercourse. Of these, only the headwall and apron will be visible during operation.
- New and replacement culverts will be installed beneath the east end of the forest road; beneath the lower section of existing forestry track; to connect to forestry track filter drains; and to maintain the flow of an existing watercourse under the plateau access track.
- Three 2.5m wide blockstone cross channels will be along the middle section of existing forestry track.
- A vehicle gate will be installed across the regraded forestry track at the Welsh Government's Woodland Estate boundary to prevent unwanted vehicle access and associated antisocial behaviour.
- Coppicing of a 6m wide corridor along the existing watercourse through wet woodland in the west of the site and removal of flow obstructions.
- Coppicing of one third of willow trees within the wet woodland on the lower slopes to allow space for natural regeneration and habitat diversity.
- Thinning of vegetation and removal of silt and flow obstructions from existing drainage watercourse (ditches) at the toe of the slopes.

- Areas of existing wet woodland lost to the footprint of new track and drainage assets will be mitigated by compensatory wet woodland planting in an area east of the existing wet woodland. Replacement tree planting is located to avoid the main spoil material area and the steepest slopes, and also to avoid a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) in order to allow space for PAWS species retained within the natural seed bank to re-establish, and avoid competition with manually added species. The compensatory planting lies between the retained wet woodland and the PAWS, and will provide habitat connectivity between these two woodlands.

The primary construction access into the site will be via the forest road at the top of the site, where the main construction compound will be sited in an area previously used as a compound for winter 2023/24 forestry clearance works and will be approximately 30m x 30m.

The secondary access to the site will be via Herbert Street onto the access track along the north edge of the plateau. A temporary working area on the plateau along and south of the access track will be needed to install the below ground tank, pipeline and outfall. The working area will accommodate a crane pad and crane movements, space for excavations and plant movement, and space for temporary storage of soils for reinstatement. The working area will be up to 25m wide and 150m long, and will require clearing stands of scrub vegetation that are encroaching onto the plateau grassland.

Most construction machinery will move between the main compound and working areas using exiting forestry tracks, or via residential streets to Herbert Street. It is expected that a spider excavator that is specialised for working on very steep slopes will need to be used for some assets, which will require anchor points and safety cables for it to work safely and securely, however the method of construction on the slopes will need to be determined by a detailed Construction Method Statement once a contractor is appointed. Working areas up to 10m wide along the full lengths of drainage assets will be needed to install drainage features on the slopes.

Areas disturbed on the plateau during construction will be allowed to naturally regenerate back to open mosaic habitat, with the key approach being to allow reinstated topsoil to naturally revegetate. The access track will be reinstated to existing condition.

The area of recently felled woodland on the slopes is being allowed to naturally regenerate into a habitat mosaic on coal spoil following previous clearance of forestry plantation in winter 2023/24.

During the operational phase, areas of recently felled woodland will be monitored on a three year cycle and self-set conifer growth removed. An approximately 2.4m wide strip on alternating sides of the forestry track through the site will be cut back each year to maintain a fuel break.

As part of drainage asset maintenance, vegetation will be cut back along and around the assets when needed, including regenerating shrubs and trees, resetting these areas back to a more open habitat structure as part of the mosaic. Vegetation will also be cut back to create access routes where needed beyond the forestry tracks to reach drainage assets for inspection and maintenance. The frequency of vegetation being cut back will be determined by maintenance identified as being needed during annual asset inspections.

The landscape design has influenced the project in the following ways:

- Whilst cascades are not a natural feature of the landscape, they are required due to the steepness of the site, and the need to manage flow velocities to avoid damage to the new drainage network. As cascades are required, consideration has been given to their setting in the landscape, by amending the design to use stone rather than concrete, likening them to similar cascades nearby on the western end of the forest road between

the site and the A4061, and on the north facing slope of the hillside above the Nant Ynysfeio.

- Drainage features have been designed to be sub-surface, topsoiled and seeded where possible to blend into the landscape, limiting their impact on landscape character and visual amenity during operation.
- Drainage features have been designed to follow the contours of the landscape where possible, to avoid slope regrading that could appear out of place, and to absorb the channels into the landscape.
- Drainage has been designed to maintain flows to the wet woodland, thereby maintaining the appearance of this woodland in the landscape.
- Replacement wet woodland planting has been sited to be consistent with the existing landscape character, extending the existing wet woodland block along the toe of the slopes.
- Tree clearance required for construction access will be by coppicing rather than felling wherever possible, to allow these trees to regenerate and woodlands to regain their existing appearance following the works.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Approach

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA) (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013) describes that 'The principles and process of LVIA can also be used to assist in the 'appraisal' of forms of land use change and development that fall outside the requirements of the EIA [Environmental Impact Assessment] directive and Regulations'. As such, the Penyrenghlyn LVA will follow the broad principles and process set out in GLVIA.

This is a 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal', and not 'Impact Assessment'. Therefore, in line with GLVIA, likely effects on landscape character and people's visual amenity as a result of the proposed development have been identified and described, but an assessment of their likely significance has not been undertaken. Assessments of receptor susceptibility, sensitivity and magnitude of change have therefore also not been undertaken.

Baseline conditions have been assessed using both desk based and field survey techniques. A site visit to inform the assessment was carried out between 18-22 April 2024 by a BUKL Chartered Landscape Architect. Any seasonal conditions or limitations found during the site visit which may have a bearing on either the baseline or appraisal of effects, including screening of views by trees in leaf if present, have been noted.

The Landscape Institute published the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19: Visual Representation of development proposals in September 2019 (under review from January 2024). TGN 06/19 has been used to inform this methodology, which provides guidance on appropriate photography and visualisation techniques for use within LVIA and LVA, and which itself accords with the principles of GLVIA. Both GLVIA and TGN 06/19 advocate a proportionate approach based on professional judgement.

Baseline photographs as well as Type 1 visualisations (annotated viewpoint photographs) have been used to inform the appraisal process. TGN 06/19 describes that Type 1 visualisations are

appropriate for use in LVA to show the extent and position of the site and features. It is not considered that photomontage visualisations (either Type 3 or 4) or 3D wireline/model (Type 2) are proportionate. This is due to the limited nature and scale of the proposed works, the fact that there is no statutory LVIA or EIA requirement for the development, and therefore the associated fact that it has already been agreed that no likely significant environmental effects are expected to result from the development.

A Panasonic DMC-G5 Compact System Camera with a 25mm fixed lens was used to take the baseline photographs. The DMC-G5 has a sensor size of 17.3 x 13.0mm, giving a horizontal field of view of 38.2° when the 25mm fixed lens is used. This gives a similar horizontal field of view to a full frame sensor camera with a 50mm lens (FFS+50mm). In line with a proportionate approach, TGN 06/19 advises that a FFS+50mm camera and lens combination are not required when taking photographs to be used in Type 1 annotated viewpoint photographs.

As recommended by TGN 06/19, single frame annotated images are presented on A3 sheets (one image per A3 sheet), see Appendix A. A location plan showing the viewpoint locations and direction of view is in Appendix B. The photographs are annotated with the locations of the proposed works to aid interpretation, and with key place names to aid location of the site within its setting.

In the interests of clarity, GLVIA recommends separating the effects on the landscape from effects on visual amenity and producing corresponding separate sections of the report on the likely effects of the proposed works.

## 2.2 Landscape

This is an assessment of the effect on the landscape as a resource in its own right. It considers the different elements that make up the landscape, its aesthetic and perceptual aspects, its distinctive character, and the key elements that contribute to this. These include defined landscape character areas, landscape quality, topography, watercourses, vegetation and tree cover, public open space, recreational areas, access routes, historic landscape and cultural heritage influences.

Baseline landscape character and features are described, along with an assessment of the value attached to the landscape by society. This judgement has been informed by several sources of information including LANDMAP aspect area evaluations, Special Landscape Area citations and areas or features recognised by statute or local planning policy. Those likely to be affected by the proposed development have been identified, and the effects described, including whether these effects are adverse, beneficial or neutral, temporary or long-term, and brief commentary on the scale and nature of the effect.

Landscape assessment considers the effects of development on landscape character, but in doing so, it recognises the influence of cultural heritage in defining that character. The LVA therefore refers to and considers the influence of cultural heritage designations and assets such as Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, but they are not assessed as heritage receptors in their own right.

In the absence of a published landscape character assessment at a local level, an assessment of landscape character area(s) which may be affected by the proposed works has been undertaken, based on a combination of the Landscape Architect's site walkover survey and desk top study of baseline data.

NRW guidance note 46 (GN46): Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (NRW, updated March 2023) has been used to inform the baseline and to identify the character areas or features on which effects of the proposed development are considered. All five aspect areas within LANDMAP have been used, along with other available information, to define landscape character areas which may be affected by the proposed works. The proposed development does not include tall structures (defined by GN46 as structures over 25m in height) and as such the search area was set at a 3km buffer from the perimeter of the proposed works footprint in line with GN46 (this buffer is shown on the drawings in Appendix B as 'site boundary 3km buffer'). During the search area stage of the assessment, the filters described in GN46 were used to identify the LANDMAP aspect areas to be used to define the character areas and inform the baseline and appraisal of effects. In line with a proportionate approach, the full use of GN46 aimed at detailed LVIA study has not been applied.

The South (Central) Wales Area Statement and National Landscape Character Assessments published by NRW were also used to inform the baseline but are considered to cover too broad an area on which to assess the likely effects of the proposed development as receptors in their own right.

## 2.3 Visual Amenity

This is an assessment of the effects on people who may experience changes to their views as a result of the proposed works. The baseline study firstly established where the proposed development may be visible from and identified the groups of people who may typically experience views of the proposed development. Representative viewpoints from which the development will be seen were identified, and photographs taken to record the baseline views experienced from these viewpoints; these are presented in Appendix A. Changes to these views as a result of the proposed development are described, including whether these effects are adverse, beneficial or neutral, temporary or long-term, and brief commentary on the scale and nature of the effect.

A key part of the visual amenity baseline was the establishment of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which shows the areas from which the site is theoretically visible, and therefore helps identify the 'visual receptors', i.e. the people who may have views of the proposed development. The ZTV was mapped digitally by application of Viewshed software on a 1m resolution Digital Surface Model dataset, which is a Lidar dataset that includes locations and heights of buildings and vegetation as well as landform. As the proposed development involves works of limited vertical elevation, the height of the development for the purposes of generating the ZTV was set at 0m above existing ground level. The ZTV therefore shows the areas from which the site itself (rather than any proposed works) is visible. The observer eye height was set at 1.5m, which is in line with recommendations in GLVIA3.

It should be noted however that the ZTV shows only whether the site will theoretically be visible; it does not show how easily noticeable or identifiable it is likely to be. In line with GLVIA, the ZTV was supplemented by a site visit by a Landscape Architect, in order to verify the ZTV and establish the extent of visibility.

The ZTV was used to identify the groups of people whose views may be affected by the proposed development, and to locate viewpoints to represent the visual amenity receptors. Photographs showing views from a number of representative viewpoints are used to aid the visual appraisal, and all photographic viewpoints are located within areas shown to have



visibility in the ZTV. Viewpoint locations were selected following production of the ZTV and desktop study exercises and refined through the site visit.

Viewpoints frequented by members of the public, such as from public rights of way (PRoW) or settlements, as well as viewpoints from which the proposed development is likely to be prominent, were favoured as there are likely to represent a greater concentration of potentially affected users. This includes, for example, PRoW in areas shown by the ZTV to have visibility of the site. There are no areas nationally designated specifically for landscape within the search area, although there are locally defined Special Landscape Areas. Viewpoints from these areas were also favoured.

For practical reasons, viewpoints were selected from publicly accessible locations and not from private land or property. It is accepted that views may differ from individual private property. However, in residential areas, efforts were made to select public locations that depict a view that represents a particular residential neighbourhood.

Viewpoints were agreed in advance with Natural Resources Wales' technical Landscape specialist and the Planning Officer at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

### 3. Baseline

#### 3.1 Landscape Designations

There are no designated landscapes of national importance (i.e. National Parks or National Landscapes) within the search area. The closest is Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park approximately 8km north of the site.

There are two Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) within the search area: Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes and Cwm Orci, although neither of these falls within the site (see Landscape and Visual Appraisal Baseline, drawing 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00003, Appendix B. SLAs are a non-statutory landscape designation applied by local authorities, but using a regionally agreed methodology for consistency between planning authorities and are defined to protect areas of high quality landscape. The character of the Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes and Cwm Orci SLAs are described in section 3.2.

There are multiple Ancient Semi-natural Woodland sites within the search area, the closest being 0.2km from the site to the north, along with multiple Restored Ancient Woodland Sites, the closest being 0.25km from the site to the southwest. There is a PAWS that falls within the eastern boundary of the site and another approximately 0.1km outside of the site to the north, along with several more within the 3km search area.

There is a Scheduled Monument site consisting of two parts in close proximity to the site: Incline Haulage Systems, Cefn Ynysfeio, Treherbert, approximately 0.1km to the north. Earthworks of the former tramway connecting to the Incline Haulage Systems Scheduled Monument are visible at the top of the slopes within the site although are not designated. There are also two further Scheduled Monuments within the search area: Mynydd Maendy Hillfort is located approximately 2.5km south; and Earthwork 360m NNE of Crug yr Avan is located approximately 2.5km north-east.

There are no Listed Buildings within the site, but there are several within the search area. The two nearest Listed Buildings are Brynfedwen House and Aion Welsh Baptist Chapel, located approximately 0.6km west and southeast of the site respectively (both Grade II Listed). There

are a further eight Grade II Listed Buildings in the search area and two Grade II\* Listed Buildings in the search area.

There is one Conservation Area within the search area, approximately 2.8km north-west of the site, and the site as well as a large portion of the search area falls within the Rhondda Historic Landscape on the Register of Historic Landscapes (Cadw, 2001).

## 3.2 Existing Landscape Character Assessments

### National Landscape Character Area 37

Landscape character assessments exist at various scales. At the largest scale, there are National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs). The entire search area is centrally located within NLCA 37: South Wales Valleys (NRW, 2014). The landscape in this area is summarised as deep, urbanised valleys which dissect an extensive upland area, combined with industrial heritage and the distinct identity of its people. Key characteristics of this landscape are:

- Extensive upland plateaux with heather and rough grassland and described as ‘wild and windswept’, with numerous steep-sided valleys shaped by glaciers;
- Ribbon urban and industrial areas and transport routes in valleys which contrasts with the quiet uplands;
- Extensive remains of heavy industry, notably of coal mining;
- Enclosed pastures on lower slopes with dense hawthorn hedges;
- Large blocks of coniferous plantation and deciduous woodland fringes covering many hillsides and hilltops.

As stated in the Methodology section 2.2, NLCAs are used to inform the baseline but are considered to cover too broad an area on which to assess the likely effects of the proposed development as receptors in their own right.

### LANDMAP

LANDMAP is a tool describing the Welsh landscape baseline, aimed at helping decision making and natural resource planning. LANDMAP is not a character assessment itself but is a collection of five aspect area datasets which describe the characteristics of the landscape at a local level, evaluate their importance and recommend locally appropriate management guidelines. The five datasets are: geological landscape; landscape habitats; visual and sensory; historic landscape; and cultural heritage, which together have been used to inform the baseline upon which this appraisal is based. As described in the Methodology section, GN46 (NRW, 2023) has been used to filter the LANDMAP aspect areas included within this baseline exercise. Table 3.1 lists the aspect areas filtered in, the reason for their inclusion and a description of the aspect area.

Table 3.1: LANDMAP aspect areas filtered in to the baseline exercise.

Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
Geological Landscape: Upper Rhondda Fawr East	Site entirely within aspect area	A glacial mountain valley with outstanding overall evaluation in particular for nationally important sites for Wesphalian stratigraphy, and in fair condition. The floor of the valley has been extensively modified by urban and

Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
ID: CYNONGL026		industrial development including disused colliery shafts & waste tips, whilst the upper parts retain upland character and forestry. Loss or damage to features of geological or geomorphological significance by development or forestry is noted as a potential threat.
Geological Landscape: Upper Rhondda Fawr West ID: CYNONGL027	Site visible from aspect area and outstanding overall evaluation	A glacial mountain valley with outstanding overall evaluation and in good condition. Predominantly upland area with plateau and hanging tributary valleys with exceptional glacial geomorphology in the form of well-preserved cirques. Extensive land slipping has occurred, and coal spoil tips and urban/industrial development are evident in the valley floor, although the upland area has received limited development pressure. Current land management practices are considered appropriate although loss or damage to features of geological or geomorphological significance by development or forestry is noted as a potential threat.
Geological Landscape: Mid Rhondda Fawr West ID: CYNONGL030	Site visible from aspect area and high overall evaluation	A glacial mountain valley with high overall evaluation and in fair condition. High level plateau with tributary valleys with degraded cirques, extensive landslips and disused sandstone quarries, colliery shafts and waste tips, although the upper slopes and ridge are generally undeveloped. Disused quarries may be of some scientific/ educational interest, including for geomorphology and structural geology.
Landscape Habitats: Coastal and Marine, Mosaic ID: CYNONLH070	Site partly within aspect area	High overall evaluation. Predominant habitat type is dry acid heath, with some wet woodland, upland heathland and purple moor grass & rush pastures. Bracken is present in the ffridd and dry heath and has the potential to spread into adjacent habitats causing degradation. The area has a good mosaic of habitats including some Priority Habitats, although there has been some decline due to conversion to forestry.
Landscape Habitats: Coniferous Woodland ID: CYNONLH057	Site partly within aspect area	Moderate overall evaluation. Aspect area made up of 74% planted coniferous woodland with limited of marshy grassland rides and mixed broadleaved woodland alongside streams. Coniferous plantation is of low value, but marshy grassland and broadleaved woodland add some value. There are also small amounts of blanket bog and purple moor grass & rush

Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
		pastures present, and the area supports several important species of flora and fauna. A change in management regime of coniferous plantation could increase the area's ecological value.
Landscape Habitats: Heathland Mosaic ID: CYNONLH065	Site visible from aspect area and high overall evaluation	High overall evaluation. Planted coniferous woodland, marshy grassland, bracken, dry acid heath and dry heath/acid grassland mosaic are the five most dominant habitats within this aspect area. The area supports important species and contains internationally important dry heath habitats, upland heathland and purple moor grass & rush pastures. The area contains a good variety of valuable habitats, particularly relic alpine flora. A change in management regime of coniferous plantation could increase the area's ecological value.
Landscape Habitats: Acid grassland ID: CYNONLH007	Site visible from aspect area and high overall evaluation	High overall evaluation. Largely unspoilt, unenclosed upland area dominated by the Priority Habitats of blanket bog, upland heathland and purple moor grass & rush pastures. Grazing intensification is a potential threat to the habitats within this area.
Cultural Landscape Services: Treherbert ID: CYNONCLS041	Site partly within aspect area	Urban area with attractive outward views. Light pollution in the area is substantial, sense of place/local distinctiveness is considered weak and scenic quality and character are evaluated as low. Disturbance is a mosaic of zone B (significant disturbance) and zone C (some disturbance).
Cultural Landscape Services: St Gwynno ID: CYNONCLS068	Site partly within aspect area	Wooded upland/plateau with attractive outward views. Sense of place/ local distinctiveness, scenic quality and character are evaluated as moderate. Disturbance is a mosaic of zone B (significant disturbance) and zone C (some disturbance). The area has recreational amenity value indicated by picnic sites, trails and carparking.
Cultural Landscape Services: Cwm Dar ID: CYNONCLS009	Site visible from aspect area	Open upland valleys with attractive views in and out. The area is noted as having 'wild' perceptual and sensory qualities with over 75% of the area in zone C (some disturbance) of the Tranquil Wales Area Assessment. There is a strong sense of place/ local distinctiveness, scenic quality is evaluated as moderate and character as high.

Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
Cultural Landscape Services: Cefn y Rhondda ID: CYNONCLS090	Site visible from aspect area	Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic with attractive outward views. Disturbance is mosaic of zones B, C, undisturbed and urban. Light pollution in the area is substantial, sense of place/local distinctiveness is considered weak and scenic quality and character are evaluated as low.
Cultural Landscape Services: Cefn y Rhondda ID: CYNONCLS091	Site visible from aspect area	Hillside & Scarp Slopes Mosaic with attractive outward views. Disturbance is mosaic of zones B, C, undisturbed and urban. Light pollution in the area is slight, and sense of place/local distinctiveness, scenic quality and character are evaluated as moderate.
Historic Landscape: Rhondda Settlement Corridor ID: CYNONHL378	Site partly within aspect area	A landscape of some importance as it forms the core of the Rhondda Historic Landscape on the Cadw/International Council of Monuments and Sites Register. The area is characterised by a tightly integrated industrial urban settlement and industrial/public transport system, together with remains of associated industrial features which are characteristic of the Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach. There are listed buildings and conservation areas within this area, though not located within the proposed development boundary. The area is evaluated as outstanding because it represents an historically important industrial landscape. Most of the collieries that gave rise to the development of this settlement corridor have been demolished but the extensive, visually striking remains of associated workers' settlements (characterised by terraced houses, chapels, churches and workingmen's institutes) remain the dominant feature within the area.
Historic Landscape: Rhondda Fawr Enclosed Valley Side ID: CYNONHL805	Site partly within aspect area	A landscape of some importance recognised by its inclusion within the Rhondda Historic Landscape on the Cadw/International Council of Monuments and Sites Register. The dominant land pattern is irregular upland fieldscape of medieval/ post-medieval enclosure, on the slopes to either side of the Rhondda Fawr, although extensive industrial exploitation of coal and stone has impinged on the character to some extent. Much of the area was afforested during the second half of the 20th century and has degraded some historical features such as the irregular field boundary dry stone walls. The area is evaluated as of outstanding importance as it is a rare example of a remarkably diverse, multi-period landscape



Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
		despite disturbance of the coherence of this landscape by industrial extractive activity.
Historic Landscape: Rhondda Uplands  ID: CYNONHL687	Site visible from aspect area	A grazing landscape dominated by unenclosed upland, though industrial quarrying and modern forestry have impinged on the coherence of this character. The landscape is evaluated as outstanding as it represents a remarkably well-preserved multi-period upland landscape, containing evidence of human activity dating back to the Mesolithic era.
Visual and Sensory: Treherbert  ID: CYNONVS337	Site partly within aspect area	An urbanised area within a relatively narrow valley dominated by housing and commercial/industrial development and urban area appears to lack a focus/central area. The area has an enclosed, elongated feel slightly relieved by the views up the valley sides. Background noise from surrounding roads are prominent and the lower Rhondda Fach bypass has added to movement in this part. Whilst there are attractive views out of this area towards upland valley sides and tops, the windfarm is prominent, which, combined with poorer urban areas, contributes to detractive views. Aesthetically this area is considered a coarse, angular and diverse landscape of medium scale. Human access is constant and landcover is predominantly developed with generally inappropriate construction materials. The area is considered to be of low value and declining.
Visual and Sensory: St Gwynno  ID: CYNONVS580	Site partly within aspect area	An upland landscape dominated by coniferous forest, interspersed with small areas of rough grazing and open land. Strongly defined undulating topography with ridges and valleys creates a multi-scaled landscape with a variety of spaces. There are limited views out to upland areas, and some car and refuse dumping acts as a visual detractor. Aesthetically this area is a mountainous, coarse and angular landscape of large scale. Landcover is predominantly woodland, and winter evergreen colour is noted as a point of seasonal interest. Human access is rare. The area is evaluated as being of moderate value. Recreational amenity value of the area is indicated by picnic sites, trails and carparking.
Visual and Sensory: Cwm Dar	Site visible from aspect area and	Open upland valleys with steep slopes, rock outcrops, scree, waterfalls, and isolated trees. This area is the head of a valley and has a

Aspect Area	Reason for inclusion	Description
ID: CYNONVS113	overall evaluation high	strong upland feel. The land use is grazing and there is some evidence of past industrial mining. The area is evaluated as being of high value.

### Special Landscape Areas

SLAs are defined at a local level by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council within their Local Development Plan, but using a regionally agreed methodology for consistency with other planning authorities. SLAs are designated specifically to protect areas of high-quality landscape at a local level, and are protected through planning Policies NSA (northern strategy area) 25: Special Landscape Areas; and SSA (southern strategy area) 23: Special Landscape Areas. The site falls within the northern strategy area.

There are two SLAs in the search area: Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes; and Cwm Orci. The Statements of Value in Rhondda Cynon Taf Proposals for Designation of Special Landscape Areas (Bronwen Thomas Landscape Architect, 2008) describes the reason for designation of these areas as follows.

Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes:

- Contains the best examples of glacial scenery in the valleys, with dramatic scenery and a series of well-defined steep glacial cirques;
- Spectacular long-range views from hilltops over the valley, particularly from the Bwlch and Rhigos Roads. Views of the uplands dwarf the settlements in the valley bottoms;
- Hilltop cairns and monuments provide evidence of early settlement, whilst other areas are wild and unchanged by industry and support rare, relic flora.

Cwm Orci:

- A small, self-contained part of the Rhondda Fawr Valley side overlooking Treorchy, which is open and remote in nature in contrast to the forestry to the west and east, and settlement to the south;
- An area of glacial origin containing a mosaic of steep scree, open ffridd and dry heath with marshy grassland in the valley bottom;
- Evidence of past industry in the form of unreclaimed tips which spill down the valley side, adding to the mosaic of valuable habitats and to visual variety.

### Historic Landscape Character

The site as well as a large portion of the search area falls within the Rhondda Historic Landscape on the Register of Historic Landscapes (Cadw, 2001), with the site within the Rhondda Fawr: Enclosed Valley Sides character area.

Pockets of ancient woodland within the area point to a previously wooded landscape, which was cleared for farmland in the medieval and post-medieval periods with relic small enclosure and pastoral features remaining. A key feature of the existing landscape character is the anthropogenic modification in the form of colliery and industrial development, with coal levels, pits and quarries commonplace, as well as conversion of land to forestry plantation.

### 3.3 Site observations

During the site visit, the site was found to fall into three distinct typologies: recently felled plantation woodland on the valley slopes; broadleaved wet woodland on the lower slopes; and improved grassland with scattered willow scrub on a southern lowland plateau.

Due to felling of forestry plantation on the site in winter 2023/24, the baseline as observed on site was different to the baseline as indicated by published desktop sources (e.g. the Cwm Orci SLA references forestry plantation immediately to its west, where the site lies).

At the time of the site visit, although the woodland was felled and timber cleared, many low level tree stumps remained as did brash, the ground was uneven and had not been cultivated (see image 1). The ground was predominantly bare, with only occasional bracken having germinated since the felling, and infrequent patches of moss. The felled woodland was dissected by forestry tracks which are steep in places and heavily rutted by forestry machinery. The PAWS had also been felled.

Note it is known that, since the site visit in April 2024, vegetation has begun to naturally regenerate and is developing into a habitat mosaic on coal spoil (Habitat Condition Assessment, Floristic Survey and INNS Survey Report, Binnies UK Ltd, 2024).



*Image 1: View within the site, of felled plantation and forestry track, taken April 2024.*



*Image 2: View southwest from the vehicular access track across the plateau. The wooded slopes of the opposite valley side can be seen in the background.*

The plateau at the southern edge of the site is predominantly improved grassland with some self-set scrub concentrated around the edges (see image 2). The grassland is short and tussocky. The plateau is crossed by informal tracks / desire lines, and there is a vehicle access track (although unsurfaced) between Herbert Street (west) and the allotments (east). The plateau is separated from the felled plantation by this access track, by a ditch which runs along the north side of the track, and by a band of wet woodland which is predominantly willow. Whilst the forestry tracks provide informal access from this plateau up through the woodland and onto the felled plantation area on the slopes, the woodland does provide a visual barrier between the plateau and the felled plantation.

Along the north-western boundary of the site there is a stark contrast between the felled plantation and the retained plantation immediately north-west of the site. Views west, in general are of forestry plantation on the upper slopes, with some wind turbines on the skyline (see image 3). Views east (see images 4 and 5) are instead predominantly of open upland and now that the plantation has been felled, the site feels as though it has a more coherent connection with this open land to the east than to the forestry land to the west. Other felled plantations could be seen to the east, demonstrating that this is a common practice within the landscape. Except when standing on the forest road, there were no views of the slopes to the north of the site due to the screening effect of steep topography; the felled plantation therefore appeared to form the skyline.





*Image 3: View west from Corbett Street, of wooded slopes with wind turbines on the skyline.*



*Image 4: View east with the open mosaic habitat of Cwm Orci visible beyond the allotments, and felled woodland on the left-hand side of the view.*





*Image 5: View east from the eastern site boundary, of the largely open character of the eastern slopes, with some plantation woodland and some felled plantation, but largely open grassland with bog and heath.*

There are long-reaching views from the site along the Rhondda Valley and to the hill slopes on the opposite side (see image 5). The settlements of Treorchy, Penyreglyn and Treherbert, which join together in a ribbon development in the valley bottom, can be seen. Views of the settlement include residential and recreational areas, commercial and industrial units, and transport routes. The railway line, associated infrastructure and surrounding industrial units are prominent in views, giving the settlement an industrial feel. On the lower slopes above the urban area of the settlement is a fairly continuous band of broadleaved woodland, above which the upper slopes and hilltops are populated by either forestry plantation (generally to the west) or open upland (generally to the east).

It was noted that there had been some recent felling along the lower edge of the forestry plantation immediately to the west of the site, to allow a clear easement for a small overhead service line, although this was hidden from view from the lower slopes by the band of broadleaved woodland.

Despite the proximity to, and views of the settlement in the valley bottom, the site itself has a feeling of peacefulness and tranquillity. The sounds of birdsong were noted, and there was very little traffic noise.

It was found that the character of the surrounding search area broadly matched that of NLCA37, demonstrating steep-sided valleys and upland plateaux, ribbon development in the valley bottom, evidence of coal mining, blocks of coniferous plantation and deciduous woodland fringes. Enclosed pastures and hedgerows however were not noted.

The split of forestry plantation on the western slopes and open upland on the eastern slopes has led to the definition of two distinct landscape character areas being defined on site. This is consistent with LANDMAP which identifies wooded upland plateaux to the west and hillside and scarp slopes mosaic to the east; and with the description of Cwm Orci SLA to the east.

There did appear a disconnect however between then the description of the Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes SLA and the site-based observations. The site visit did not include visibility of the whole area of this SLA, however the area that was visible was predominantly covered by forestry plantation and did not exhibit the open, wild scenery as described in the SLA description. Whilst this dramatic scenery as described in the SLA citation may be present, there was limited intervisibility noted between it and the site.

The western plantation slopes are broadly vegetated in character, mostly with plantation woodland. This plantation forms the skyline, although some wind turbines on Blaencwm are visible above this (see image 3). There are some open patches of land amongst the plantation, largely confined to the upper slopes. There is a band of deciduous woodland on the lower slopes, between the plantation woodland and the settlement in the valley bottom. Landform slopes steeply down to glacial valleys, which have been extensively modified with urban and industrial development in the valley bottoms, and evidence of past mining activity as well as forestry plantation on the slopes, which is consistent with LANDMAP descriptions. As described in section 3.2, the description in LANDMAP's Landscape Habitats: Coniferous Woodland area, in which the site partially falls and which extends to the west of the site, notes that coniferous plantation is of low value and a change in management regime could improve the ecological value of this area. The sense of place/ local distinctiveness, scenic quality and character to the west, which lie in the Cultural Landscape Services area of St Gwynno, are evaluated as moderate within LANDMAP, which is considered to be an appropriate evaluation for the western plantation slopes, which has some recreational and amenity value and attractive views, but also several detracting elements in the form of current and past industry.

The eastern slopes (see image 6) are open in character, with a mosaic of marshy grassland, bog, heath and scree. There are some pockets of plantation woodland remaining among the open slopes, as well as ribbons of broadleaved woodland in the valley bottoms which is consistent with descriptions in LANDMAP of a mosaic of open upland habitats and some wet woodland. The band of woodland above the urban area is less well defined than in the western plantation slopes, being less dense and more scattered. LANDMAP's Landscape Habitats: Coastal and Marine, Mosaic area, in which the site partially falls and which extends to the east of the site, states that there has been some decline in the area due to conversion to forestry. Settlement is largely confined to the valley bottoms although there is other evidence of industry on the slopes including wind turbines, a mast, and former colliery workings. The sense of place/ local distinctiveness, scenic quality and character to the east, which lie in the Cultural Landscape Services area of Cefn y Rhondda, are evaluated as weak and low within LANDMAP due to urban influences, extensive light pollution and the influence of wind turbines; however during the site walkover the area to the east appeared no less attractive, tranquil or urbanised than the western plantation slopes.



*Image 6: View towards the site from the south, showing the site in the context of its surroundings. The surrounding open upland can be seen, with ribbon development in valley bottoms and a band of intermediate trees and scrub. Plantation on the western slopes can be seen on the left of the view.*

### 3.4 Visual Amenity

The ZTV (drawing 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00002, Appendix B), indicates that the site is theoretically visible from distances of up to approximately 5km, however as described in the Methodology section, as the proposed works do not include tall structures the search area has been set at 3km from the perimeter of the proposed works footprint. The ZTV indicates the following general trends:

- The site is more visible from the opposite side of the valley from the site, in particular from high ground on hilltops or from upper slopes which face the site.
- The site is not visible, or only partially visible, from the north and east.
- There are views from within the valley bottom settlements of Trehebert, Penyrenghlyn and Treorchy but these are intermittent and only a small proportion of the site is visible.

As part of the visual amenity assessment, 15 viewpoints were selected for assessment, from areas shown to have visibility in the ZTV. Table 3.2 briefly describes the baseline views of the proposed site from the viewpoints selected. Photographs from each viewpoint are shown in Appendix A, and the locations of the viewpoints are shown on drawing 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00006, in Appendix B.

Table 3.2: viewpoint locations and description of view.

Viewpoint reference	Distance from site boundary	Location	Description of view
1	85 m	View north-east from Penyreglyn Project Centre on Corbett Street. X: 294626, Y:198126	Slopes with felled woodland in the foreground, partially limited by broadleaved woodland strip, mostly willow.
2	570 m	View east from junction of Bute Street and Brynfedwen Close. X: 294125, Y:198236	Upper slopes with felled woodland visible in the middle distance over the tops of the buildings along Bute Street, as are upper slopes of neighbouring land comprising conifer plantation to west and open mosaic to east.
3	340 m	View north-east from Penyreglyn Primary School on Cwmsaerbren Street. X: 294465, Y: 197691	Slopes with felled woodland prominent in the middle distance. Band of wet woodland visible on the lower slopes, but does not block view of felled woodland. Sharp contrast with plantation woodland to west.
4	0 m	View north from access track adjacent to allotments. X: 294828, Y:197851	Slopes with felled woodland in the foreground, partially limited by broadleaved woodland strip.
5	0 m	View south-east from access track near Herbert Street. X: 294674, Y:198020	Open view along access track with wet woodland strip to the left-hand side which blocks views of the felled woodland; and open plateau to the right. There are long-range views of slopes on the far side of the valley, including plantation woodland, open grassland and felled woodland, and a mast. These views are partially limited by some scrub on the plateau.
6	0 m	View north from permissive forestry track within the site boundary. X: 294885, Y:198044	From this viewpoint within the site, the felled woodland is prominent in the foreground, as are forestry tracks, and wet woodland along the lower slopes. There is a sharp contrast with plantation woodland to the west. There are long-range views along the valley and of the opposite slopes.
7	3.35 km	View north from viewpoint on Bwlch-y-Clawdd Road (A4061).	The felled woodland is visible in the far distance but is not prominent in the view. The retained wet

Viewpoint reference	Distance from site boundary	Location	Description of view
		X: 293942, Y:194614	woodland and plateau are blocked from view by intervening high ground. From this viewpoint the felled woodland does not form the skyline; other higher ground and wind turbines are visible beyond the site. Generally open land is visible on the surrounding slopes, with some plantation to the west and woodland and settlement within valley bottoms.
8	2.84 km	View north from public right of way 651/7. X: 294827, Y:194950	The felled woodland is visible in the far distance but is not prominent in the view. The retained wet woodland and plateau are blocked from view by intervening high ground. From this viewpoint the felled woodland does not form the skyline; other higher ground and wind turbines are visible beyond the site. Generally open land is visible on the surrounding slopes, with some plantation to the west and woodland and settlement within valley bottoms.
9	2.45 km	View north-west from Mynydd Maendy Hillfort (Scheduled Monument). X: 295765, Y:195541	The upper slopes of the felled woodland are visible over intervening woodland. From this viewpoint the felled woodland does not form the skyline; other higher ground and wind turbines are visible beyond the site. Generally open land is visible on the surrounding slopes, with some plantation to the west.
10	800 m	View west from Treorchy Cemetery. X: 295937, Y:197606	The site is blocked from view by intervening topography.
11	1.63 km	View north-west from Station Road. X: 295898, Y:196567	Slopes with felled woodland are visible in the middle distance over the tops of buildings, as are upper slopes of neighbouring land comprising conifer plantation to west and open mosaic to east. The treetops of the wet woodland can also be seen over the buildings.
12	1.10 km	View north-west from public right of way 802/14.	Slopes with felled woodland are barely visible in the distance on the



Viewpoint reference	Distance from site boundary	Location	Description of view
		X: 295335, Y:196841	other side of the valley over intervening vegetation.
13	950 m	View north-west from Bute Street near junction with Crichton Street. X: 295471, Y:197093	At intervals along Bute Street, the slopes with felled woodland and lower slopes with wet woodland are prominent in views. There is a sharp contrast with plantation to west.
14	1.28 km	View east from Miskin Street near junction with William Street. X: 293502, Y:198613	Upper slopes with felled woodland are visible in the middle distance over the tops of buildings, as are upper slopes of neighbouring land comprising conifer plantation to west and open mosaic to east.
15	2.45 km	View south-east from public right of way 797/8. X: 292458, Y:199201	Slopes with felled woodland are barely visible in the distance on the other side of the valley due to intervening landform and vegetation.

During the site visit, the general trends indicated by the ZTV were found to be correct. The site was visible from viewpoints 7, 8, 9 and 15 which were situated on higher ground on the opposite side of the valley, with the site being more highly visible from viewpoints 7 and 8 which offered direct views across the valley. The site was less highly visible in oblique views along the valley, as indicated by views from viewpoints 9 and 15, from which only part of the site was visible.

Viewpoint 10 from within Treorchy Cemetery represents the nature of views from the east, in which the site is barely visible due to the intervening landform. During the site visit it was found that the site was not visible from the north and therefore any preliminary viewpoints to the north of the site were removed and replaced with alternative viewpoints from which the site was visible.

The site was visible from viewpoints from within the settlement in the valley bottom, with varying levels of prominence and proportion of visibility, depending on orientation of view and intervening buildings. In view 13 for example the felled woodland on the site is highly prominent due to the direction of Bute Street facing directly towards the site at that point; whereas from view 2 on the same street only the upper slopes of the site were visible over intervening buildings. View 3 from Penyreglyn Primary School offered the greatest views of the site out of all viewpoints assessed, with direct views of the felled woodland, the wet woodland belt on the lower slopes, and the lower plateau. The wet woodland belt and lower plateau were not visible from many viewpoints due to the intervening landform (from viewpoints on higher ground) and buildings (from viewpoints within settlements).

From viewpoints over 1 km away from the site (viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 15), the site was less prominent in the view as it appeared in the context of the surrounding landscape. This surrounding landscape was comprised of a variety of land uses and typologies, with multiple evidences of human activity and industry, and therefore the felled woodland did not appear out

of context. The felled woodland was more prominent in closer views, notably from viewpoints 1, 3, 4 and 6, and without the context of the surrounding multiple land uses it appeared starker and more incongruous.

### 3.5 Value of the Landscape

The landscape of the site and surrounding area is not protected through the national designations which indicate landscapes of highest value (the National Landscape or National Park designation), however parts of the landscape immediately surrounding the site are defined as SLAs within the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan, indicating that this landscape is locally valuable.

The LANDMAP historic landscape and geological landscape aspect area evaluations are high to outstanding, indicating that the site and surrounding land within the search area are of national to county importance for historic and geological value; the landscape habitats aspect area evaluation indicates a county to local importance for habitats; the visual and sensory aspect area indicates a local to low importance; and the cultural landscape services aspect area describes the site and surrounding area as having a moderate to weak sense of place. Overall there is a range from low to outstanding evaluations for the five aspect areas.

The landscape does have a strong, coherent character, and the Cultural Landscape Services LANDMAP aspect for the St Gwynno area (in which the site falls) notes that the area has a recreational amenity value, indicated by picnic sites, trails and carparking. Whilst there are no PROWs through the site, the forestry tracks are known to be used by members of the public for walking, indicating that the site is locally valuable for recreation.

## 4. Landscape Appraisal

Effects on the landscape as a result of a development can occur during construction and operation, be temporary or long-term, and adverse, beneficial or neutral.

### 4.1 Effects during construction

Site wide, during the construction period the presence of construction machinery required for tree clearance, earthworks and drainage installation, increased traffic movements, earthworks, compounds, fencing and other construction elements will have an impact on local landscape character, albeit for a temporary period. The construction programme, including pre-works tree clearance, is anticipated to last for a duration of 12 months, with the main construction period lasting approximately 9 months. It should be noted that the site has been an active forestry site and there are other active forestry sites in the surrounding area; therefore, although machinery movements will be increased, they will not be a new element altogether. Other construction elements, for example material storage and fencing, will however appear as new features. No lighting is proposed during the construction period, with works planned to be carried out in daylight hours.

Drainage elements that upon completion will be sub-surface, will be apparent in the landscape whilst being installed. This includes the drainage elements themselves as well as the equipment used to install them, and storage of materials on site.

Site access is proposed along existing forest road and forestry tracks within and around the site and via residential roads to Herbert Steet. There are two compound locations proposed to

facilitate works which will be new features within the landscape; one at the northeast edge of the site within an area of existing forestry track and which has previously been used as a forestry compound, and a second within the working area on the plateau to install the below ground tank and associated pipeline and outfall.

The above elements and activities will have a direct effect on the landscape of the host character area (the eastern open slopes), by introducing new elements to the landscape, albeit on a small scale in the context of the overall host character area. The open character of the slopes, a key feature of the character area as described in section 3.3, will remain open during construction, with vegetation managed to facilitate construction access and to prevent fauna from establishing nests during the works. The steep landform will be retained; the drainage features have been designed to follow the contours of the landscape and not require significant earthworks. Construction machinery and activities will have an impact on tranquillity during the construction period, within the site itself and to a decreasing extent within the surrounding area.

It is not considered that there will be indirect effects on the adjacent western plantation slopes character area, as the nature of the plantation means that intervisibility is severely limited by tree planting. There could be an indirect effect on the key features of the Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes SLA as a key feature of the SLA is spectacular long-range views, in which new features of the landscape will be experienced during construction. This will be on a small scale in the context of the surrounding landscape however, and will also be temporary.

## 4.2 Effects during operation

The operational period begins on completion of the proposed development. Above ground drainage features are the three blockstone cascades, three impermeable ditches, six lateral gravel drainage channels, approximately 80 stone headwalls and aprons for the sub-surface drains, the headwall and apron for the storage tank outfall, filter drains alongside forestry tracks and culverts and blockstone channels across forestry tracks. The storage tank, pipeline connections to and from the storage tank, and the sub-surface drains will be below ground and will therefore not appear as new features once construction is complete.

The blockstone cascades are modelled based on other similar nearby cascade features, limiting their impact on landscape character, though their linear nature, required due to the steepness of the hill slopes, may appear incongruous. As the cascades are required, consideration of their setting in the landscape has been considered through use of stone rather than concrete, and likening them to similar cascades found nearby on the western end of the forest road between the site and the A4061, and on the north facing slope of the hillside above the Nant Ynysfeio. The lateral drainage channels will be smaller than the cascades and gravel filled giving a softer appearance, and as horizontal channels are more likely to be absorbed into their landscape setting and screened by landform and vegetation. The impermeable ditches are not likely to be noticeable as they will be vegetated. Headwalls will be new features and the large volume and regular arrangement of these may appear out of place in a landscape which appears relatively unmanaged and wild, though the use of natural stone will mitigate this somewhat.

LANDMAP aspect area descriptions (e.g. Geological Landscape: Upper Rhondda Fawr East) as well as the Rhondda Historic Landscape note that a key feature of the existing landscape character is the anthropogenic modification to the landscape in the form of colliery and industrial development, and that damage to these features would be seen as a threat. The project design seeks to retain intervisibility with the historic (non-designated) former tramway within the site, by avoiding screening of this feature and to avoid damage to the feature by

preventing construction access across the remnant tramway earthworks. The new drainage elements, the need for which is born from instability of the former colliery spoil tip, are in themselves inherently linked to the site's colliery past.

The nature and scale of proposed earthworks is minor and is not expected to have a noticeable effect on landscape character. Some tree felling and coppicing is proposed, partly to facilitate the drainage works and partly to improve the condition of existing wet woodland. Approximately 0.13ha of wet woodland will be lost overall to facilitate the drainage works. Approximately one third of trees within the retained area of wet woodland will be coppiced to improve the woodland's condition. It is not considered that this will have a noticeable effect on landscape character as the overall canopy extent will remain largely unaffected, and coppiced trees will regenerate following the works. New wet woodland compensatory planting is proposed to mitigate the loss of the 0.13ha of wet woodland lost to facilitate the drainage works. This compensatory planting, measuring 0.19ha in area, is proposed along the lower eastern slope, in a location outside of the coal seam and connected to the retained wet woodland area, improving its extent. The species to be planted within the compensatory wet woodland are not confirmed at the time of writing but will include a mix of tree and shrub species to provide structural diversity. This will be in keeping with the surrounding landscape character, which includes a notable band of broadleaved woodland between the urban valley floor and the upper slopes, as described within the Baseline section. The compensatory wet woodland planting will take time to establish and will not be as noticeable immediately following construction. It is expected that after approximately 15 years following construction, the compensatory woodland planting will have reached a level of establishment similar to the retained wet woodland.

As described in the Baseline section, the felled woodland area appeared out of place in the context of its immediate surroundings, although it was noted that since the site visit in April 2024, vegetation had begun to naturally regenerate (see Ecology Report, Binnies UK Ltd, 2025c). As natural regeneration continues, the area of felled woodland will continue to develop into a habitat mosaic on coal spoil, which in the short term is likely to appear as a mix of grassland and tall ruderal habitat with scattered scrub and trees. In the medium term the felled woodland area is likely to develop into a scrub mosaic and larger areas of broadleaved trees may also develop, although the poor soils of the coal tip area would likely mean growth of broadleaved trees would be slow (Binnies UK Ltd, 2025c).

As such during operation, it is considered that the site will appear as a transition between the existing broadleaved wet woodland band on the lower slopes which is distinctive of the area, and the open habitat on the slopes above the site. Although the resultant wooded area of trees and scrub will likely extend to a higher elevation than elsewhere in the eastern open slopes character area, the density and extent of this wooded band does vary throughout the character area, and will appear less obvious in the context of the heavily wooded slopes immediately to the west of the site. The key characteristics of the eastern open slopes, notably comprising steep slopes with urban ribbon settlement in valleys, a wooded band above settlements and open upland above, will be retained.

Limited vegetation management will be undertaken during the operational phase, limited to removal of conifer saplings, cutting back of vegetation along the forestry tracks to maintain a fuel break, and cutting back of vegetation to create pathways to enable drainage asset inspections. Although likely to be absorbed into the landscape as regenerating vegetation creates a screening function, both the drainage features as well as vegetation management will introduce linear features into the fabric of the landscape, affecting its character. The design

decision to site lateral drainage channels and impermeable ditches along existing contours, and the softening effect of regenerating vegetation over time, will mean that the effect on the landscape will be minor.

It is not considered that there will be an indirect effect on the adjacent western plantation slopes character area, or that the key features of the Rhondda Fawr Northern Cwms and Slopes SLA will be affected; even though a key feature of the SLA is spectacular long-range views, there will be little change in the views experienced during operation as the site will blend in with its surrounding landscape.

## 5. Visual Appraisal

Effects on people's visual amenity as a result of a development can occur during construction and operation, be temporary or long-term, and adverse, beneficial or neutral.

### 5.1 Effects during construction

Effects arising during construction will be temporary in nature and are likely to include the visual intrusion of construction machinery for tree and earthworks, and construction of drainage elements, increased traffic movements, fencing and compounds. As a former active forestry site, situated in a landscape where active forestry is a common occurrence, machinery and traffic will not be new elements in the view, and although during construction there will be an increase in frequency of machinery movement, this will not appear out of place in the context of the surrounding landscape use. Drainage elements that upon completion will be sub-surface, will be visible whilst being installed. This includes the drainage elements themselves as well as the equipment used to install them, and storage of materials on site.

The ZTV (see Appendix B) shows that there are no locations from which the entire site is theoretically visible; the maximum amount of the site that is visible from any one location is approximately 50%. This was verified on site by the Landscape Architect during the site visit; it was found that due to the effect of topographical variation, and to a lesser extent screening vegetation, that users would generally not experience views of the hill slopes as well as the lower plateau and upper track at the same time. It follows therefore that users will also not be able to see all of the proposed works which are spread out across the site from any one point.

Some construction elements will be intermittently visible to users of roads and footpaths within the settlements in the valley floor. These views will be transitional as users move along routes, and the nature and scale of effect will vary dependent on the direction of view (whether it is direct or oblique), distance from the proposed development and presence of intervening buildings and or vegetation. In some cases, for example looking north-west from Bute Street at approximately 1km from the site (see viewpoint 13, Appendix A), there are direct, open views of the hill slopes. Residents, workers, and users of open spaces such as parks or school grounds within the urban area could experience similar views of construction elements. The plateau, and hence the lower construction compound, material storage and fencing, would however be screened from view to most users. The only locations noted where the plateau and planned lower compound were visible was from within the site itself or from immediately adjacent the site boundary, i.e. from the allotments or Herbert Street (see viewpoint 5). As permissive footpaths within the site will be closed to the public during construction, this will reduce the number of viewpoints from which these works would be visible. Permissive paths on the plateau outside of the working area will remain accessible and users of these paths will experience views of construction elements on the plateau.



Visibility of the upper compound will vary depending on elevation and direction of view; some users within the valley bottom are likely to experience views of the compound where it breaks the skyline, for others, views of the compound will be blocked by the crest of the hill slope. To viewers from higher vantage points, it is likely to be visible but not break the skyline. From long-range viewpoints from higher ground, for example from PRoW 651/7 along which viewpoints 7 and 8 are located, users experience views of a greater proportion of the site area and therefore would experience a greater proportion of the proposed construction elements; however at this distance from the proposed development (3.25 km and 2.84 km respectively) construction elements would form a small part of a wider panoramic view and may not be readily noticeable.

## 5.2 Effects during operation

The operational period begins on completion of the proposed development. Table 5.1 briefly describes the likely changes to views during operation from each of the 15 assessed viewpoints.

Table 5.1: viewpoint locations and description of likely change to view during operation.

Viewpoint reference	Location	Description of likely change to view during operation
1	View north-east from Penynglyn Project Centre on Corbett Street.  X: 294626, Y:198126	The tree group in the foreground of this view will be retained, providing some screening. The felled woodland area will appear softer as natural regeneration occurs over time. The upper western blockstone cascade will be visible beyond the retained tree group but views of other drainage elements will be largely screened by topography and intervening vegetation.
2	View east from junction of Bute Street and Brynfydwyn Close.  X: 294125, Y:198236	Upper parts of drainage works will be visible including the upper blockstone cascades, although ditches and drains are not likely to be readily noticeable due to scale and distance. Visibility of lower works will remain blocked by houses in the foreground. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in better with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.
3	View north-east from Penynglyn Primary School on Cwmsaerbren Street.  X: 294465, Y: 197691	The majority of drainage works, including blockstone cascades and linear drainage channels will be visible beyond the retained wet woodland, although ditches and drains are not likely to be readily noticeable due to scale and distance. There may be a slight reduction in visible tree canopy due to coppicing of trees within the wet woodland, though this change will not likely be noticeable and will reduce as regeneration occurs over time. There is no clearance of trees in the foreground of this view on the banks of the plateau. Wet woodland compensatory planting will be visible to the east and blend in to the adjacent existing wet woodland. The felled woodland area will appear softer as natural regeneration occurs over time, also softening the

Viewpoint reference	Location	Description of likely change to view during operation
		edge of the stark plantation woodland to the west. Where formalising forestry tracks with imported stone, they are likely to stand out more within the view. Culverts and headwalls are not likely to be noticeable due to the screening effect of topography and vegetation, the scale of the works and distance of the view.
4	View north from access track adjacent to allotments.  X: 294828, Y:197851	The eastern drainage works including blockstone cascades will be visible, however works to the west will largely be screened by intervening vegetation and may be visible in winter only, especially once compensatory tree planting in the foreground establishes. Formalising forestry tracks with imported stone is likely to make them more visible. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.
5	View south-east from access track near Herbert Street.  X: 294674, Y:198020	The woodland to the left of the view will largely be retained. Scrub removed within the plateau for the construction working area will increase long range views along the valley in the shorter term. Immediately after construction, there will be a noticeable change to the northern quarter of the plateau adjacent the access track as a result of its use as a working area and site compound, though this will reduce as natural regeneration occurs following the works. The access track will be reinstated on completion of the works.
6	View north from permissive forestry track within the site boundary.  X: 294885, Y:198044	The cascades, lateral drainage and ditches will be visible. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time; the stark appearance of retained coniferous plantation will also appear softer over time. Drainage features will be more readily noticeable from this location which is in close proximity.
7	View north from viewpoint on Bwlch-y-Clawdd Road (A4061).  X: 293942, Y:194614	Upper parts of drainage works will be theoretically visible but less noticeable in the far distance. The felled woodland area will appear softer as natural regeneration occurs over time and blend in with the surrounding landscape which includes other grassland/scrub on valley slopes above urban areas.
8	View north from public right of way 651/7.	Drainage works will be theoretically visible but less noticeable in the far distance. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the

Viewpoint reference	Location	Description of likely change to view during operation
	X: 294827, Y:194950	surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.
9	View north-west from Mynydd Maendy Hillfort (Scheduled Monument).  X: 295765, Y:195541	Upper parts of drainage works will be theoretically visible in the distance. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.
10	View west from Treorchy Cemetery.  X: 295937, Y:197606	As the site is not visible from this viewpoint, there will be no change to the view.
11	View north-west from Station Road.  X: 295898, Y:196567	The majority of the drainage works will be visible, and formalising the of forestry tracks with stone may make them more noticeable. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time, and the stark appearance of the conifer plantation to the west will reduce over time as this regeneration occurs. The plateau and lower wooded slopes are blocked from view by buildings.
12	View north-west from public right of way 802/14.  X: 295335, Y:196841	As the site is barely visible from this viewpoint, any change experienced is not likely to be noticeable.
13	View north-west from Bute Street near junction with Crichton Street.  X: 295471, Y:197093	The majority of the drainage works will be visible, although limited to some extent by landform and vegetation once it regenerates and establishes; and formalising the forestry tracks with stone may make them more noticeable. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time, also reducing the stark appearance of retained conifer plantation to the west. Compensatory tree planting will be visible in the east of the site, extending the existing wet woodland.
14	View east from Miskin Street near junction with William Street.  X: 293502, Y:198613	Upper parts of eastern drainage works will be visible although not readily noticeable in the distance; the western part of the site is screened by the adjacent conifer plantation. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.

Viewpoint reference	Location	Description of likely change to view during operation
		The plateau and lower wooded slopes are blocked from view by buildings.
15	View south-east from public right of way 797/8.  X: 292458, Y:199201	Upper parts of drainage works may be visible although not readily noticeable in the far distance, and limited by vegetation in the immediate foreground. The felled woodland area will appear softer and blend in with the surrounding landscape as natural regeneration occurs over time.

Changes to the plateau comprising scrub removal and temporary disturbance from the site compound and working area are not likely to be visible to many receptors, except from within the site boundary, as the land where these will be situated is generally blocked from views by intervening landform or buildings. Removal or coppicing of trees within the wet woodland on the lower slopes to allow for construction access or improvement works is unlikely to be perceivable in the context of the remainder of the retained wet woodland, and the stone access track through the woodland will likely be hidden by tree canopies. Compensatory wet woodland planting will extend the existing wet woodland to the east, and limit views of drainage elements on the lower slopes. The compensatory woodland planting will take time to establish and will not be as noticeable immediately following construction. It is expected that after approximately 15 years following construction, the compensatory woodland planting will have reached a level of establishment similar to the retained wet woodland.

The two upper blockstone cascades are likely to be widely visible from many locations, particularly views looking directly towards the site such as from viewpoint 3. Views of the lower blockstone cascade will be screened from many locations by intervening landform, built form and woodland. Cascades, where visible, are likely to appear incongruous due to their straight form. Impermeable drainage ditches and gravel drainage channels will be better screened by landform than the cascades, as they run along rather than down the slope, and the impermeable ditches will become vegetated in the short term, further blending them into the landscape. The majority of the sub-surface drain headwalls are likely to be screened from view from most viewpoints, due to their location on the lower slopes meaning that the existing wet woodland will provide screening. Headwalls on the upper slopes will be visible immediately following construction but not likely to be readily noticeable due to their small scale, and will become absorbed within vegetation once regeneration occurs; culverts and cross channels are likely to be similarly unnoticeable. Formalised forestry tracks are likely to be visible, standing out within the landscape due to the crushed stone material used to surface them.

The effect of these new features will be long-term, although the nature and scale will be lessened by its situation in a landscape already full of evidence of human intervention and industrial activity. To receptors located on surrounding high ground where the view of the proposed works will be seen as part of a panoramic view in the context of the wider landscape, it is not considered likely that the proposed works will be incongruous, or readily apparent to a casual observer.

As natural regeneration occurs, the mosaic of habitats on coal spoil will continue to establish, with succession likely to move through a mix of grassland and tall ruderal habitat with scattered

scrub and trees in the short term, and development into a scrub mosaic with larger areas of broadleaved trees in the long term. The resulting mix of habitats is not dissimilar to grassland and scrub habitat typical of the valley sides above urban areas, and will blend in. As this regeneration occurs, views of all drainage features will become further limited by screening vegetation. Even the cascades will likely be screened from oblique views.

Limited vegetation management will be undertaken during the operational phase, to remove conifer saplings, cut back vegetation along forestry tracks to maintain a fuel break, and cut back vegetation to create pathways to enable drainage asset inspections. The cut back access routes and fuel breaks, as with the linear drainage elements, will be screened by intervening taller vegetation as scrub and trees naturally regenerate on the slopes.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

The landscape of the site and surrounding area is judged to be locally valuable due to presence of SLAs within the search area immediately adjacent the site, some high and outstanding LANDMAP evaluations, and use of the site permissively for recreation. In the absence of a published local landscape character assessment, two distinct character areas were identified within the search area by the Landscape Architect undertaking the site visit: the western plantation slopes; and the eastern open slopes, with the site lying on the boundary of the two. Whilst the character of the site itself will be affected by the introduction of linear elements, the scale is such that the impact on the host character area of the eastern open slopes will not be noticeable. The key defining features of the character area, notably steep slopes with urban ribbon settlement in valleys, an intermediate wooded band and open upland, will be retained. Drainage features have been designed to be discrete where possible, following the contours of the slopes, being topsoiled and seeded or sub-surface. The new blockstone cascades will be new features at a site-based level, and their angular nature may appear out of place. Their setting has however been considered through use of stone rather than concrete, and likening them to similar cascades found nearby. The drainage features could be seen as a reminder of the industrial heritage of the region; indeed, the description of the Rhondda Historic Landscape, and several LANDMAP aspect areas describe the presence of past mining activity as being integral to the character of the region. The Cwm Orci SLA Statement of Value describes a former tip as adding value to the SLA; for this reason, as well as the intended mosaic of habitats on coal spoil overlooking the valley settlements, the proposed works are not judged likely to detract from the key features the Cwm Orci SLA was defined for. It is not considered that there will be an indirect effect on the adjacent western plantation slopes character area.

The proposed works will be visible to people using publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area, including from within the nearby valley settlements of Penyrenglyn, Trehebert and Treorchy, as well as from PROWs on higher ground further afield. Views from within the settlements vary depending on screening by intervening buildings, trees and landform, but in some cases are direct and in close proximity to the site. In views experienced by people on surrounding high ground, the proposed works are less likely to be noticeable as they will be viewed at a distance and in the context of the surrounding landscape. Natural regeneration on the slopes will soften the appearance of the hill slopes and provide an increased level of screening of the proposed drainage works over time



## 7. References

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Photographic record







View 1: north-east from Penyreglyn Project Centre on Corbett Street.  
X: 294626, Y:198126





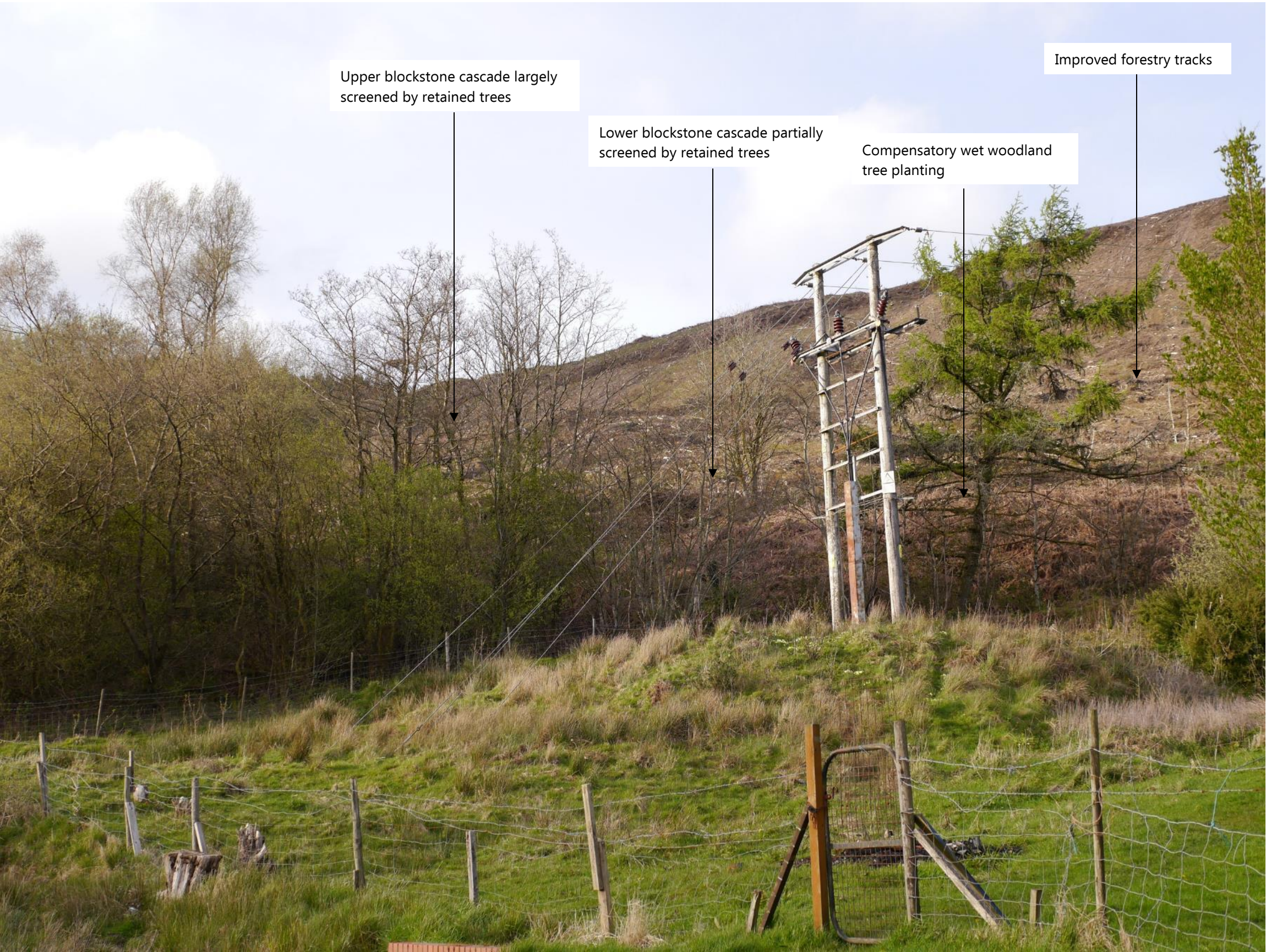
View 2: east from junction of Bute Street and Brynffedwen Close.  
X: 294125, Y:198236





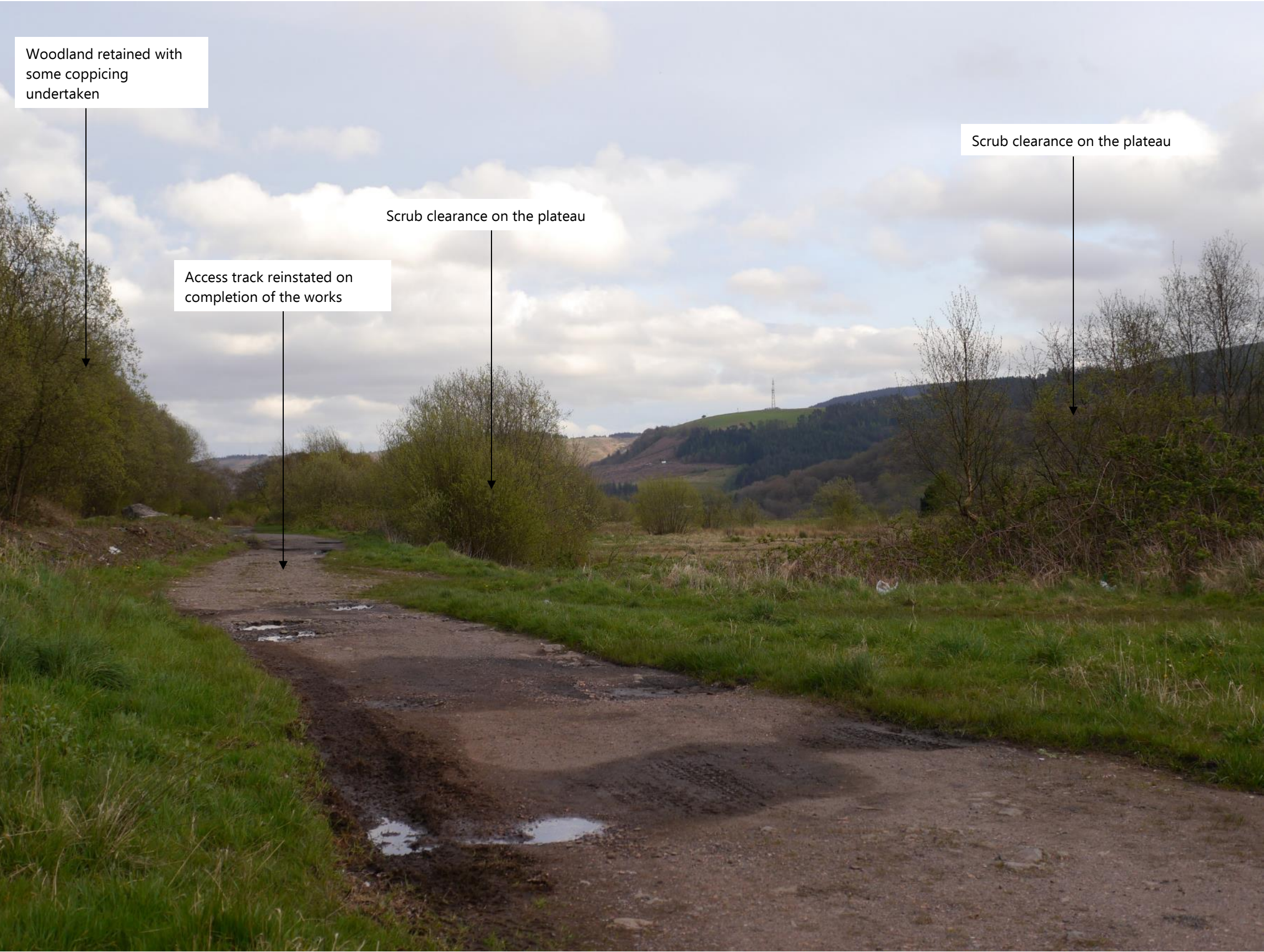
View 3: north-east from Penyreglyn Primary School on Cwmsaerbren Street.  
X: 294465, Y: 197691





View 4: north from access track adjacent to allotments.  
X: 294828, Y:197851





View 5: south-east from access track near Herbert Street.  
X: 294674, Y:198020





View 6: north from permissive forestry track within the site boundary.  
X: 294885, Y:198044





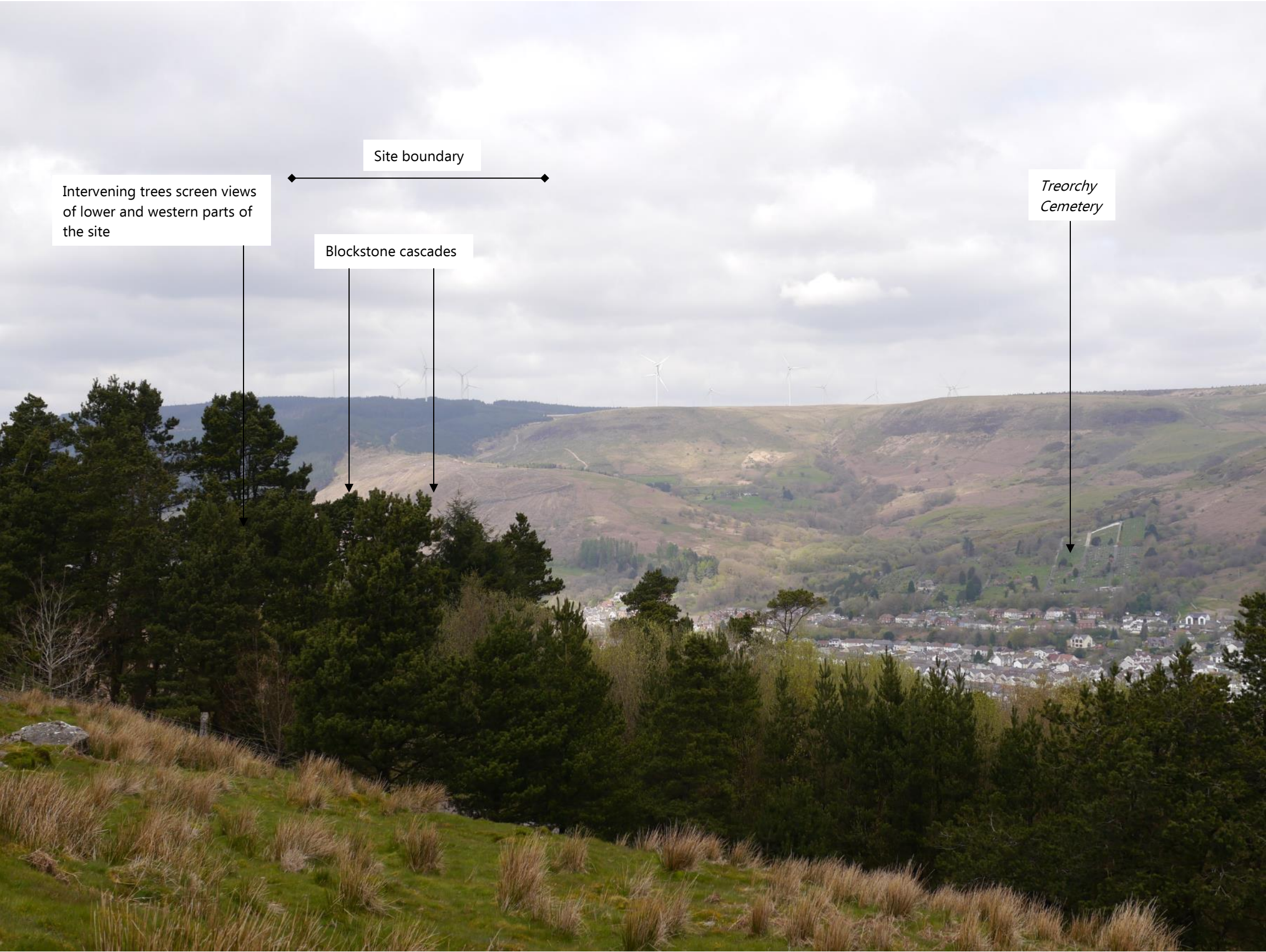
View 7: north from viewpoint on Bwlch-y-Clawdd Road (A4061).  
X: 293942, Y:194614





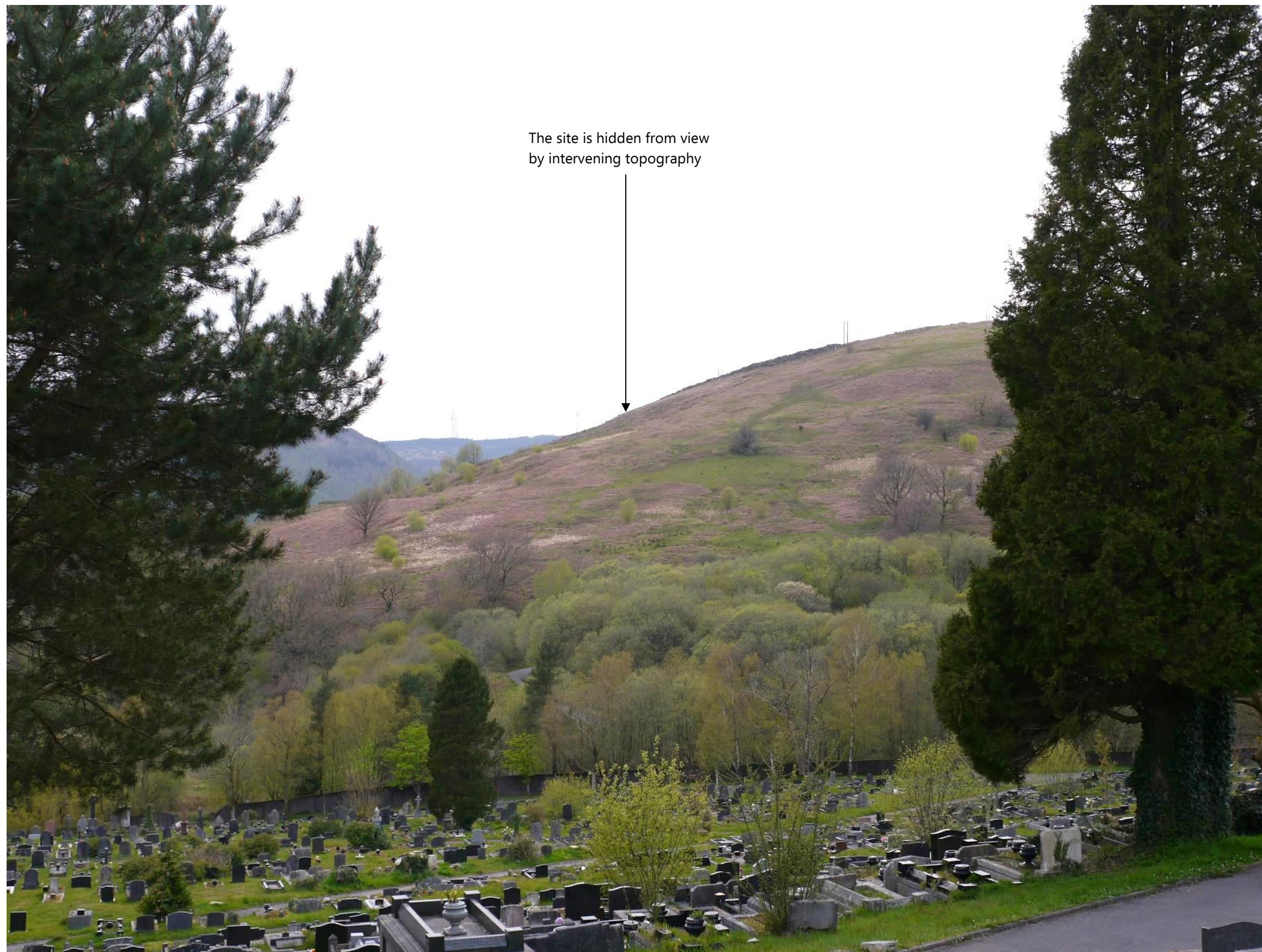
View 8: north from public right of way 651/7.  
X: 294827, Y:194950





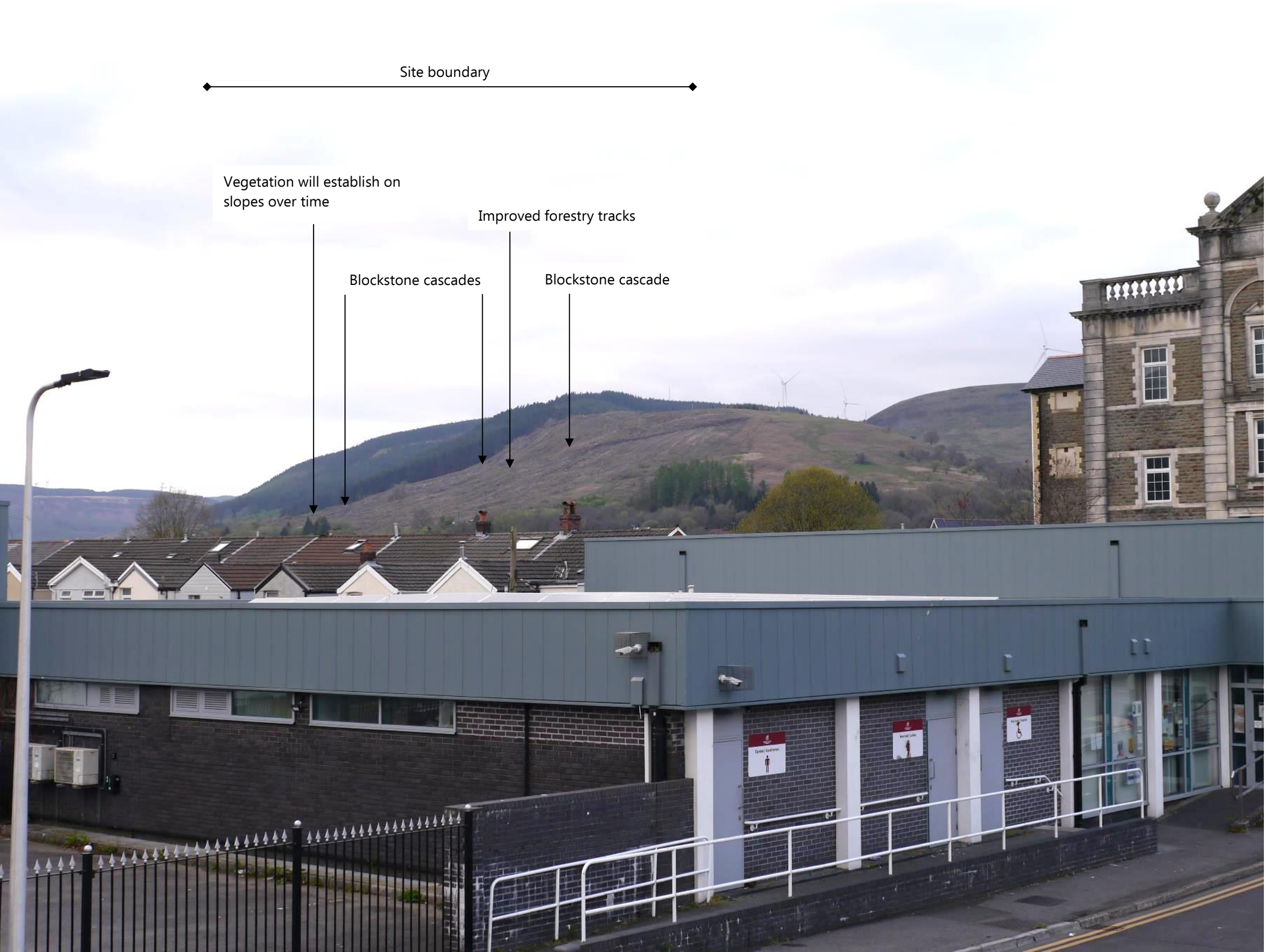
View 9: north-west from Mynydd Maendy Hillfort (Scheduled Monument).  
X: 295765, Y:195541





View 10: west from Treorchy Cemetery.  
X: 295937, Y:197606





View 11: north-west from Station Road.  
X: 295898, Y:196567





View 12: north-west from public right of way 802/14.  
X: 295335, Y:196841





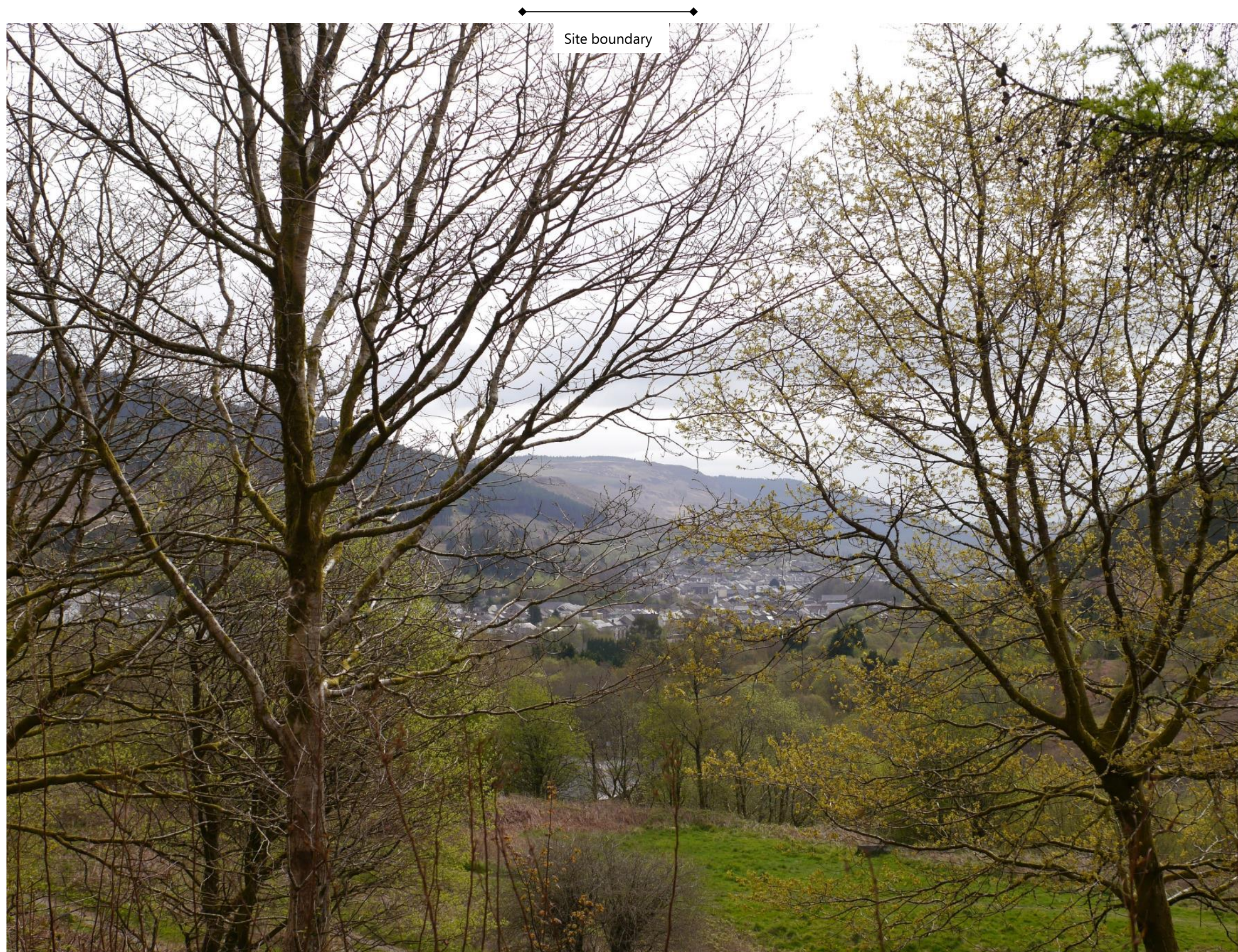
View 13: north-west from Bute Street near junction with Crichton Street.  
X: 295471, Y:197093





View 14: east from Miskin Street near junction with William Street.  
X: 293502, Y:198613





View 15: south-east from public right of way 797/8.  
X: 292458, Y:199201

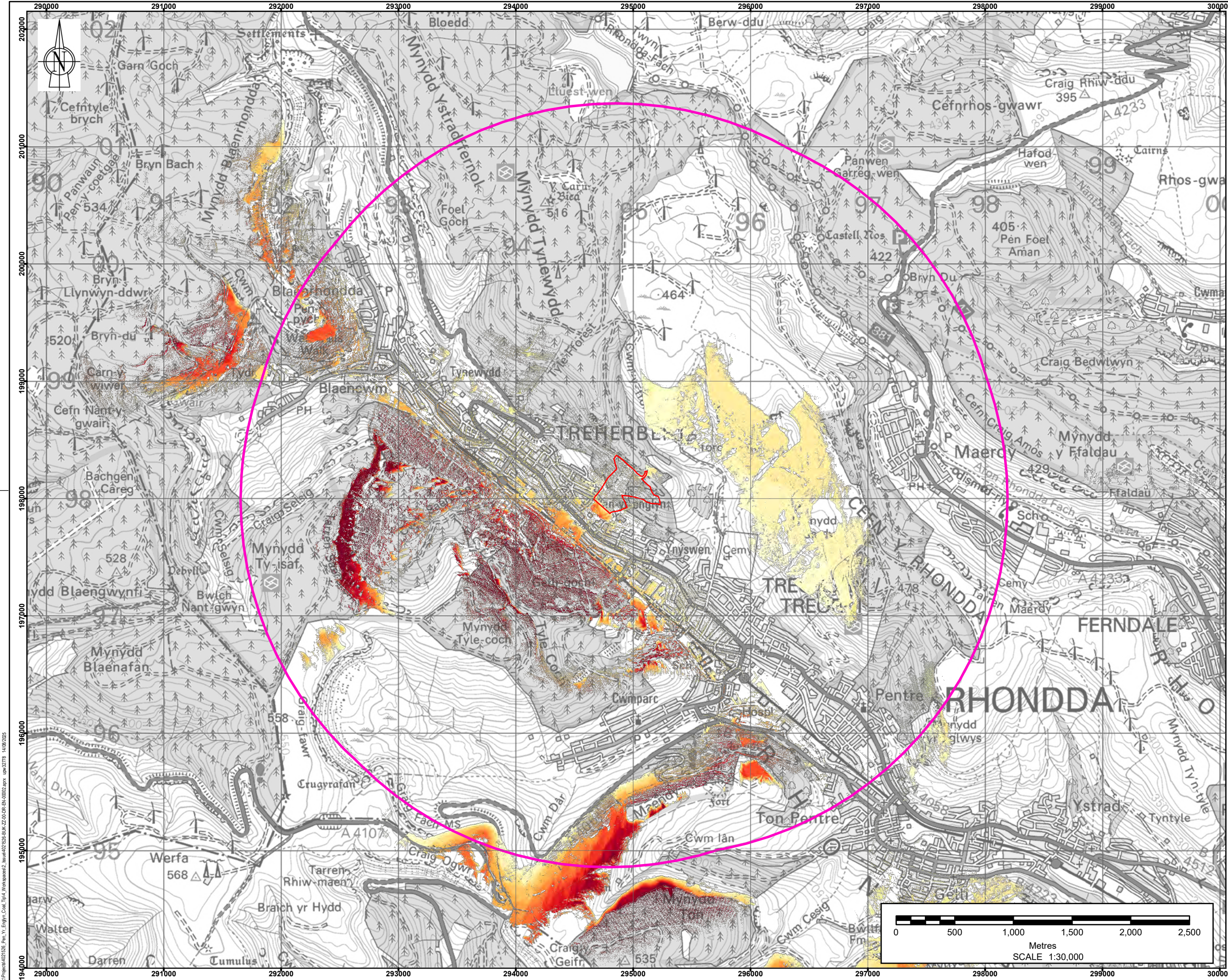




## Appendix B: Drawings

Drawing title	Drawing number
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00002
Landscape and Visual Appraisal Baseline	4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00003
Landscape and Visual Appraisal Viewpoint Locations	4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00006





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**LEGEND:**

PROJECT SITE

SITE BOUNDARY 3KM BUFFER

**ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV) WITHIN 5KM**

~50% OF THE SITE VISIBLE

~1% OF THE SITE VISIBLE

Note: Any colour present means that part of the site is visible from that location. The darker the shade the more of the site is visible from the location.

The ZTV was mapped by application of Viewshed software on a 1m resolution Digital Surface Model dataset, a Lidar dataset that includes locations and heights of buildings and vegetation as well as landform. As the proposed development involves works of limited vertical elevation, the height of the development for the purposes of generating the ZTV was set at 0m above existing ground level. The observer eye height was set at 1.5m.



SAFETY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION						
IN ADDITION TO THE HAZARDS OR RISKS NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPES OF WORK DETAILED ON THIS DRAWING, THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL RISKS SHOULD BE NOTED. FURTHER DETAILS ARE INCLUDED IN THE CDM DESIGN RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER						
CONSTRUCTION						
N/A						
MAINTENANCE / CLEARING / OPERATION						
N/A						
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION						
N/A						

P03	MU	HG	AB	AH	18/08/2025	FOR INFORMATION
P02	MU	HG	AB	AH	11/07/2025	FOR INFORMATION
P01	TW	HR	MB	AH	17/12/2024	FOR INFORMATION
Rev	Drawn	Chkd	Rvwd	Apprd	Date	Description

Designed by: TW Date: DEC 2024  
Status: S2  
Client:



Client Drawing No. Revision



Project: PENYRENGLYN LANDSLIDE RISK MANAGEMENT

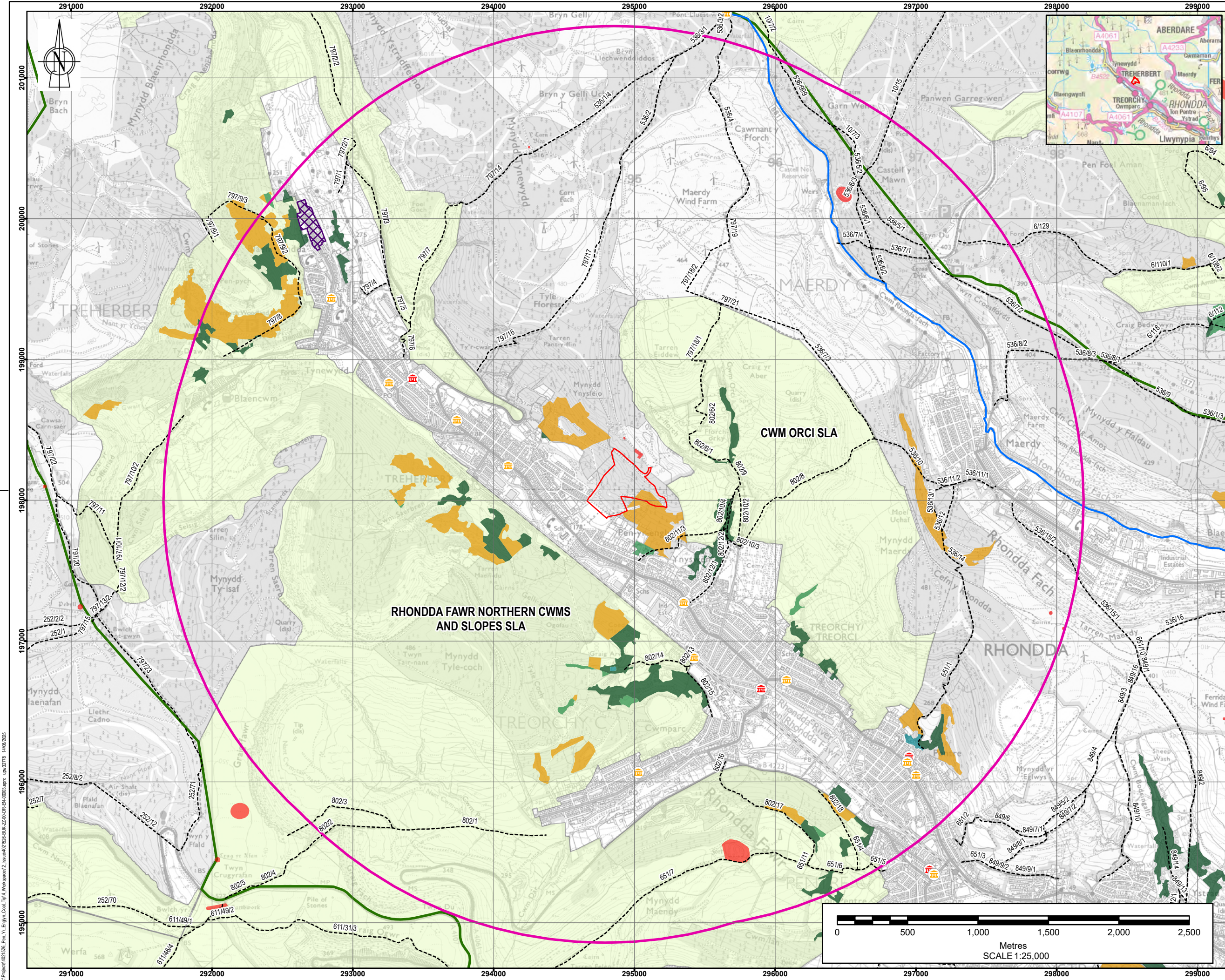
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**ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV)**

Drawing scale: 1:30,000 Sheet size: A3  
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**LEGEND:**

- PROJECT SITE
- SITE BOUNDARY 3KM BUFFER
- PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW)
- ANCIENT SEMI NATURAL WOODLAND
- ANCIENT WOODLAND SITE OF UNKNOWN CATEGORY
- PLANTATION ON ANCIENT WOODLAND SITE
- RESTORED ANCIENT WOODLAND SITE
- SCHEDULED MOUMENT
- CONSERVATION AREA
- RHONDDA REGISTERED HISTORIC LANDSCAPE
- SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS
- LISTED BUILDINGS
  - GRADE II LISTED BUILDING
  - GRADE II\* LISTED BUILDING
- NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES
  - ON ROAD
  - TRAFFIC FREE

**SAFETY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION**  
IN ADDITION TO THE HAZARDS OR RISKS NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPES OF WORK DETAILED ON THIS DRAWING, THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL RISKS SHOULD BE NOTED. FURTHER DETAILS ARE INCLUDED IN THE CDM DESIGN RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER

CONSTRUCTION
N/A
MAINTENANCE / CLEARING / OPERATION
N/A
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION
N/A

P03	MU	HG	AB	AH	18/08/2025	FOR INFORMATION
P02	MU	HG	AB	AH	11/07/2025	FOR INFORMATION
P01	TW	HR	MB	AH	17/12/2024	FOR INFORMATION
Rev	Drawn	Chkd	Rvwd	Appvd	Date	Description

Designed by: TW Date: DEC 2024  
Status: S2  
Client:



Client Drawing No.	Revision
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Registered Office  
Spring Lodge, 172 Chester Road, Helsby, Cheshire, WA6 6AR UK  
Tel: +44(0)1757 774155

Project: PENYREGLYN LANDSLIDE RISK MANAGEMENT

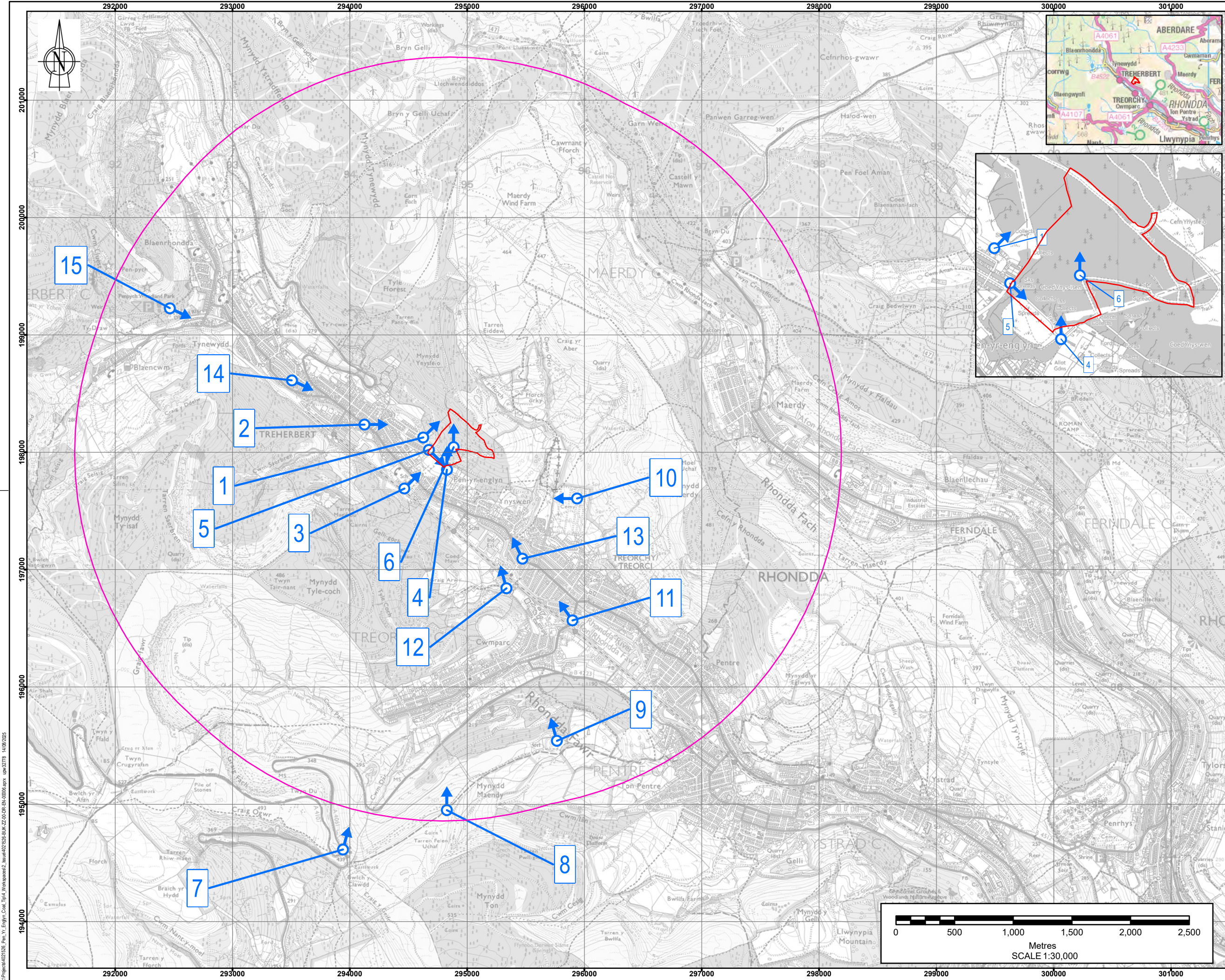
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- LEGEND:**
- PROJECT SITE
  - SITE BOUNDARY 3KM BUFFER
  - VIEW LOCATION AND ORIENTATION

SAFETY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION	
IN ADDITION TO THE HAZARDS OR RISKS NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPES OF WORK DETAILED ON THIS DRAWING, THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL RISKS SHOULD BE NOTED. FURTHER DETAILS ARE INCLUDED IN THE CDM DESIGN RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER	
CONSTRUCTION	
N/A	
MAINTENANCE / CLEARING / OPERATION	
N/A	
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION	
N/A	

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P02	MU	HG	AB	AH	11/07/2025	FOR INFORMATION
P01	TW	HR	MB	AH	06/12/2024	FOR INFORMATION
Rev	Drawn	Chkd	Rvwd	Apprvd	Date	Description

Designed by: TW Date: DEC 2024  
Status: S2  
Client:



Client Drawing No. Revision



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Tel: +44(0)1753 774155

Project: PENYRENGLYN LANDSLIDE RISK MANAGEMENT

Drawing title: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL VIEWPOINT LOCATIONS

Drawing scale: 1:30,000 Sheet size: A3  
Drawing no. 4021526-BUK-ZZ-00-DR-EN-00006 Revision: P03

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