

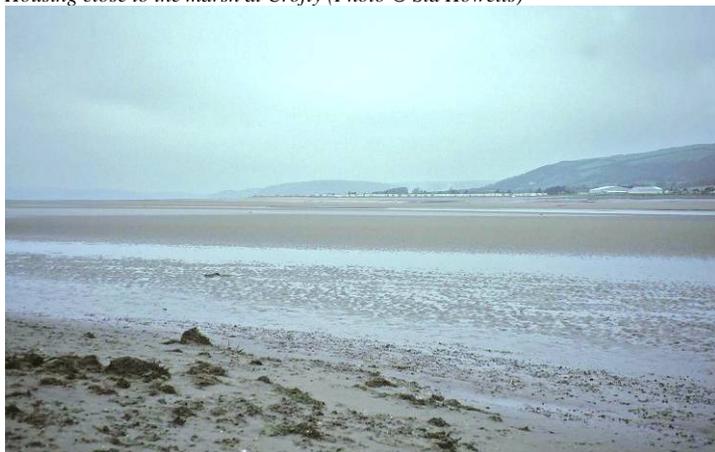
Burry Port (Photo © www.pixaerial.co.uk)



Housing close to the marsh at Crofty (Photo © Sid Howells)



Coastal management works at Burry Port (Photo © www.pixaerial.co.uk)



Looking across the Loughor Estuary to Burry Port (Photo © Natasha Lough, CCW)

Loughor Estuary

Seascape Types: ESLR

Seascape types key		
Sea	T	Tidal
	L	Tidal current- lateral
	E	Enclosed estuary or ria
Surface Geology	H	Hard rock coastline- cliffs etc
	S	Soft coastline- deposition, levels etc
Height	I	High- + 100mAOD, 250m inland
	M	Medium- 25-100mAOD, 250m inland
	L	Low- < 25mAOD 250m inland
Land Use	R	Rural, including wild land
	U	Urban Settlement
	D	Dunes

Key Characteristics

Low lying estuary with extensive mud and sand at low water backed by large distinctive areas of grazing saltmarsh, particularly to the south.

Enclosed by landform with steep slopes to the south and north west with higher coal field plateau landform to the north east.

Urban settlement with industry to the north and east and rural settlements to the south, some right on the coastal edge.

Exposed to westerly winds.

Positive views across to the Gower from the north coast and from major transport routes and some views from sensitive viewpoints on the Gower.

Key cultural associations: Mixed cultural expressions in the west around Llanelli and Burry Ports, regenerative activity, essentially pastoral and residential in the east. Large historic landscape (to west) covering both land and sea, extensive SSSIs

Physical Characteristics

Geology

Coalfield plateau with sandstone hills and millstone grit and limestone to the south west. Alluvium lies alongside the estuary with boulder clay on higher ground.

Coastal landform

Low lying estuary with extensive salt marsh (south) or reclaimed marsh (north) and low lying land backed by low hills with some steep slopes [dissected plateau] rising to around 100m AOD to the south and north west. Higher coalfield plateau landform lies to the north east rising to over 200m AOD.

Coastal landcover

Grazing salt marsh, pasture, wetlands centre to the north, urban settlements of Loughor and Burry Port and Llanelli with associated industry, disused docks and rural settlements, including Penclawdd and Crofty.

Intertidal area

Predominantly extensive mud and sand with some sand to the south west by Berges Island.

Characteristics of sea

Estuary with strong tidal flow and high suspended solids content. There is only a series of very narrow channels left at low tide. Due to orientation the estuary is exposed to prevailing winds from the west.

Hinterland landform

Low hills [dissected plateau] rising to around 100m AOD to the south reaching a high point at Cefn Bryn in the Gower and north west rising to around 200m AOD at Mynydd Pen-bre. Higher dissected coalfield plateau landform lies to the north east rising to over 276m AOD at Graig Fawr.

Hinterland landcover

Pastoral fields with scattered rural settlement interspersed with urban industrial based settlement related to coalfield plateau. Llanelli is the main urban settlement with Burry Port, Gorseinon, Loughor, Pontardulais as secondary settlements all lying either close to the coast or on the low valley floor/sides.

Lighting

The main focus of lighting is associated with the industrial settlements. Lighting intensity reduces significantly on the north coast of the Gower although there is some related to the rural/coastal clustered settlements.

Use

Land/coast uses

Coast is used for agricultural, residential, wildlife management and education, industry, leisure (Burry Port, the coastal villages of north Gower, and the 20km Millennium Coast Park) and informal recreation via a discontinuous coastal path.

Sea uses

Limited use for leisure boating.

Visual and sensory qualities

How the seascape unit is experienced

Millennium Coast Park ; Llanelli Water park; roads [including M4 at very northern end]; main railway line between Swansea and Carmarthen; settlements such as Crofty and Penclawdd on north Gower. Open panoramic views from the Gower’s downlands.

Degree of intervisibility of land and sea

Visibility of the sea is limited by landform on the north coast of the Gower but the gentler more broken slopes to the north allow wider views of estuary. The seaward element is most visible from the west coast of the Gower and Pembrey Sands.

Key views to sea and along the coast

Millennium Coast Park; Llanelli Water park; roads such as the A484 and the B4295; main railway line between Swansea and Carmarthen; settlements such as Crofty and Penclawdd;

	<i>Key views to land</i>	Weobley Castle and The Bulwark and other high points in the Gower AONB.
	<i>Tranquillity/remoteness/wildness</i>	Views very limited from occasional leisure craft. The salt marshes, particularly to the south west (Llanrhidian Marsh), are remote and tranquil. Elsewhere closer to urban settlements the tranquillity is reduced.
	<i>Sense of scale</i>	Medium as the landform around the estuary provides some enclosure.
	<i>Openness/enclosure</i>	Moderately open
	<i>Diversity</i>	Diverse
	<i>Exposure</i>	Although exposed to prevailing winds, this is a sheltered estuary environment
Key cultural associations		In addition to the contemporary cultural phenomenon of the broad waterway of the estuary and the adjacency of Llanelli and Burry Port, the seascape of Carmarthen Bay is extensively designated as a Ramsar site in the Burry Inlet SSSI – highly important, though invisible, designations and contemporary cultural expressions. Mixed cultural expressions in the west around the former industrial towns of Llanelli and Burry Port’s regenerative activity, essentially pastoral and residential in the east. Long seaward views from the archaeologically rich ridge of Cefn Bryn.
Forces for change	<i>Land/coast</i>	Development pressures around the settlements especially those with a sea view. Wind farm and other industrial development on land by north shore, and associated issues to do with coastal defences. Farming economics on agricultural land. Exposure of low lying land to flooding from the sea, as has already occurred on the Millennium Coast Park, and consequent pressure for coastal defence works.
	<i>Sea</i>	-
Designations and sensitive features	<i>National Park</i>	-
	<i>AONB</i>	Gower AONB to south and west
	<i>Heritage Coast</i>	Gower Heritage Coast on south western part
	<i>Long-distance coastal footpath/National Trail</i>	-
	<i>Outstanding and special historic landscapes</i>	Gower on south western edge Taf and Tywi Estuary on north western edge
	<i>Historic gardens and parks</i>	Stradey Castle Parc Howard Fairyhill Stout Hall
	<i>Key scheduled ancient monuments</i>	The Bulwark Hillfort SS4492 Cilifor Top Hillfort SS 5092 Weobley Castle (also Guardianship site) SS 4792
	<i>Country Parks</i>	Pembrey Country Park
	<i>Open access land</i>	-

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Regional Seascape Unit
Name:**Loughor Estuary**

Headline criteria	Sub-criteria	Increases sensitivity	Decreases sensitivity
Overall character and qualities	Summary of key factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural, tranquil character of much of the Gower peninsula to the south with saltmarshes and traditional coastal settlements such as Penclawdd. To the north east of Loughor, a more rural, small scale, inland estuary character. Land either side of the estuary focuses open sea views from the estuary to a limited arc to the west 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the north, reclaimed marsh and low lying coniferous forest plantations Urban, well lit settlements such as Llanelli, Burry Port and Loughor The A484 and railway crossing to the east Modern urban parks. Wider open sea views are screened by land either side of the estuary

Seascape sensitivity levels for different forms of offshore development (derived from criteria above)

Modelled scenario	Generic form of development	Sensitivity	Comments
Offshore wind sensitivity	Tall structures 13km offshore	High	The wind energy scenario would not fit within the estuary. If tall structures were placed within the estuary, then they would dominate views.
Wave energy units sensitivity	Broad flat structures on the sea surface	High	The wave energy scenario would not fit within in the estuary itself, as a development of broad flat structures within the estuary would be highly visible from elevated viewing locations on Gower.
Tidal energy units sensitivity	Developments placed only a short distance offshore.	Moderate	Development close to the coast in the estuary would be most appropriately located on the north side, where it would be seen in association with existing land based development.