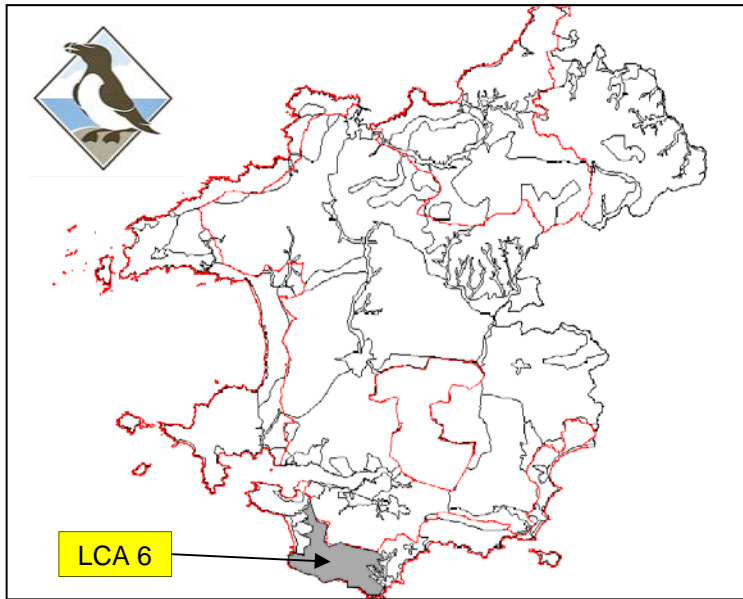


Pembrokeshire Coast National Park LCA 6 - CASTLEMARTIN/MERRION RANGES



Location, Context and Physical Characteristics

A very exposed broad expanse of rolling lowland with associated coastal cliffs. The area is largely occupied by the Ministry of Defence for national defence purposes for both life fire and dry military training.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

This area is gently undulating grassland on an exposed coastal plateau on the southern tip of Pembrokeshire. The area has a low level of built development, yet is characterised by evidence of former quarries and scattered villages and a strong military influence on range areas to the north and west of the Aspect Area. There is a series of rocky cliffs and steep slopes with some small sheltered coves on the south coast. The cliffs contain fewer sharp indentations than cliffs elsewhere in the National Park and feature high levels of cliff-top coastal grassland.

Vegetation and Habitat Characteristics

Semi natural habitats include dry heathland, sea cliff grassland, neutral grassland, lowland heathland, cliffs, rocky and sandy shores. The area supports numerous birds including peregrine falcon, chough and skylark. Other important species include grey seal, greater horseshoe bat, marsh fritillary, butterfly, and other rare invertebrates, rare lichen and the biggest sea bird colonies on the mainland of S.W. Britain.





Geological Characteristics

Distinctive coastal platform averaging 50m above sea-level and developed on Carboniferous limestone. Some shallow valley systems present and karstic features significant, including dolines. Extensive areas modified by military ranges. Bounded by coast to the S and Old Red Sandstone escarpment to the N, both with a WNW-ESE orientation. High limestone cliffs are characteristic (up to around 40m) and include a range of classic geomorphological features including caves, stacks and arches. Very little foreshore area. The cliff line has a characteristic WNW-ESE orientation.

Historic and Cultural Characteristics

There are prehistoric monuments, Iron Age hill forts, medieval and post-mediaeval buildings and sites, all of national significance including Brownslade, Flimston a Pricaston. Castlemartin Range was established in 1938 and is the single largest element in the Defence Training Estate Pembrokeshire. It is used by Regular and Territorial Army, Cadet Forces, other services, some overseas forces, and (uniquely in the UK) by armoured fighting vehicle units for direct-fire live gunnery exercises, with both on-land impact areas and a large offshore safety area. During non-firing periods there is public access to the coastal path. Very small areas of the Stackpole Warren Landscape of Special Historic Importance in Wales and the Milford Haven Waterway Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales lie within this LCA.

Map Notation:

-  National Park Boundary
-  Boundary
-  LCA Boundary
-  LCA Boundary defined by the National Park Boundary

Evaluation & Recommendations

LCA No.	Character Area	Visual & Sensory Aspect Areas	Geological Landscape Aspect Areas	Landscape Habitats Aspect Areas	Historic Landscape Aspect Areas	Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas
6	Castlemartin/ Merrion Ranges	61 - Moderate 63 - Moderate 80 - Outstanding	38-Moderate 238-Outstanding	146- Outstanding 359 - High 608 - Moderate 765- Outstanding	46173-High 46186-High 46187-High 46189-High 46190-High	003-Outstanding 819-High 852-high

LANDMAP Aspect Evaluation Terms:

Outstanding: Of International or National Importance
 High: Of Regional or County Importance
 Moderate: Of Local Importance
 Low: Of Little or No Importance

(The reference numbers in the table refer to the discrete Aspect Areas identified)

Special Qualities (Key Landscape Characteristics)

- This large tract of exposed open coastal grassland landscape has a settled feel with strong coastal character. There are extensive views of the open sea from much of the higher ground and along the coast from the coastal path
- The prominent line of church towers and spires along the ridgeline villages of Warren, St. Twynells and St. Petrox are locally distinctive features which still dominate the horizon, in spite of the siting of military range observation towers at intervals along parts of the same ridge
- The periodic noise of heavy gunfire is discordant and intrusive but when absent, this is a highly exposed, wild and rather tranquil area of the National Park
- There are habitats of international importance here and areas are of outstanding ecological value as a consequence
- Some of the limestone cliff coast has fine examples of rock formations, notably at Elegug Stacks, underlining the outstanding geological landscape value in parts of the area
- The recorded historical and archaeological features are of national significance, justifying the high value attributed to the historical landscape, of which the churches are the most obvious elements
- The long-established military training area and ranges co-exist with the National Park status, but contribute to wildlife conservation by reducing human disturbance, and public access along the coastal path is permitted when live-firing is not in progress. An alternative route is also available via the Range trail which provides uninterrupted access along the inland perimeter of the Castlemartin Range.

Discernible Landscape Trends

- The use of parts of the area for military dry training (using blank ammunition and pyrotechnics) and armoured fighting vehicle live-firing leads to relatively low levels of management in these areas, resulting in a rather neglected appearance. However, the lack of general human disturbance and by dogs will have benefited the wildlife species in the area. The Countryside Council for Wales has recently notified the Castlemartin Range SSSI.
- The exclusive effects of military use have prevented damage to many archaeological sites except at a very localised level, since there has been no deep ploughing, sub-soiling or land drainage work. Active consolidation and management means that many features are improving.

Management Guidance

- Retain coastal character with low levels of built development and maintenance of traditional field boundaries. Ensure that any new agricultural buildings respect the historical and cultural significance of the landscape in terms of their siting, layout, form and construction materials
- Walls and hedges that have suffered neglect should be restored with appropriate management including regular cutting hedges
- Encourage landowners to participate in agri-environmental schemes, with particular emphasis on promotion of the restoration or rehabilitation of traditional field boundary hedgebanks and stone walls at key visual locations
- Monitor the spread of bracken to prevent extending into heathland areas. Do not allow agriculturally improved land to extend into heathland areas, sea cliff grassland or neutral grassland.
- Ensure that as far as possible ancient monuments and remains are not lost or damaged. Support the continued management of the listed building complexes of Brownslade, Flimston and Pricaston between the MoD and National Park Authority.
- Support the continued management of the Castlemartin Ranges, recognising that development approval may be required to support defence operational requirements, and encourage the removal of any assets once they are declared redundant.