

No: **11** Seascape Character Area Name: **Strumble Head to Penbwchdy**



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Sources: Ordnance Survey, Seaside, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales

**SCA11:Strumble Head to Penbwchdy**



Carreg Onnen Bay with Strumble Head lighthouse



Penbwchdy from Garn Fawr

### Summary Description

A short stretch of rugged and remote coastline, including and south of Strumble Head. An area with very high cliffs in parts (140m at Penbwchdy) and rocky islands and seashore. A rolling rural pastoral coastal plateau lies behind the coast with the noticeable outcrop at Garn Fawr with associated hillfort. Very sparse rural settlement including remote farmsteads. The shore is virtually inaccessible so Strumble Head with its lighthouse is the main destination, partly for dolphin watching. Coast path walking, diving and climbing are the other recreational pursuits.

### Key Characteristics

- An indented west facing coastline with rugged cliffs rising to 140m AOD and headlands, interspersed with sharp indentations and inlets with offshore islands and rocky stacks.
- From the cliff tops the land rises gently to abrupt rocky volcanic outcrops.
- An exposed west-facing shoreline with a severe pattern of wave disturbance.
- Landcover comprises coastal heathland and bracken with pasture enclosed with hedgebanks and stone wall field boundaries and very few trees. Sea wildlife includes dolphins and seals.
- The area boasts many prehistoric remains including hillforts on Garn Fawr and promontory forts.
- Settlement is mainly widely dispersed farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes with a general lack of light pollution.
- The area feels remote, natural and exposed and wide views are possible from the coast and panoramic views from Garn Fawr.
- The inaccessibility of the shores mean that Strumble Head and its light house are the main attraction for visitors.
- The Coast Path extends around the cliff tops and there is climbing around Pwll Deri
- The sea is used for potting and diving and the Fishguard ferry passes nearby.
- Long views towards the west from the coast, and panoramic views from Garn Fawr.

### Physical Influences

This west-facing coastline of high, rugged, indented cliffs rises from 40m to the north to 90m and then 140m around Penbwchdy. Landform rises further inland to the outcrop at Garn Fawr (211m aod) and is composed of east-west striking Ordovician basic volcanics (gabbros) and intrusions among black shales (Fishguard Volcanic Group). The sheer cliffs fall to rocky shores, with tongues of rocks building out from the coast and small rocky islets and the larger island at Ynys Meicel where the Strumble Head lighthouse is situated. The intertidal areas are exposed rocky shores, with minor sand or shingle beaches in narrow coves. The coast is exposed to wind and wave erosion through abrasion and hydraulic action.

The shallow to moderate depth seafloor, where the Ordovician volcanic succession is covered by conglomerate, slopes offshore at a low to steep angle (<1° ->10°). The seas are exposed to high wind and wave stress. Tidal currents follow the northeast-southwest trend of the coastline, and there are rough waters. Tidal races form off Strumble Head on east and west flowing streams. There is a westerly counter eddy on the east stream between Strumble Head and Penbrush. Tidal flow is <2.5 knots.

The coast is covered by the St David's SAC, designated as the Strumble Head to Llechdafad SSSI and also noted as an important bird area- the Pembrokeshire Cliffs. Seals are often seen hauled out on the south side of Carreg Onnen. The area is a good spot for wildlife watching. Habitats include maritime cliffs, grassland, heathland and rocky shores. Rocky islets support breeding seabirds. Important species include grey seal, peregrine falcon and chough.

Around the sea cliff top edges and on Garn Fawr, is semi-natural heathland mosaic vegetation and bracken. The hinterland is predominantly pasture, with some arable. Field boundaries are generally low and scrubby hedgebanks or stone wall field boundaries.

#### Cultural influences

There are many prehistoric coastal forts here. The lighthouse emphasises the linkages to the shipping lane that is the Irish Sea and the need to protect shipping leaving and entering Fishguard.

The great hillfort of Garn Fawr, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (PE065) occupies a prominent craggy outcrop and dominates all approaches. A complex set of stony banks and ramparts formed of loose scree, attest to its long and complex history. Dinas Mawr is a nearby promontory fort (SAM - PE075). Garn Fechan is a smaller fort nearby (SAM - 471).

Scheduled monuments include:

- PE029 (promontory fort): community: Llanrhian
- PE036 (chambered tomb): community: Mathry
- PE038 (hillfort): community: Mathry
- PE065 (Garn Fawr hillfort): community: Pencaer
- PE075 (Dinas mawr promontory fort): community: Pencaer
- PE376 (mill): community: Llanrhian
- PE382 (industrial buildings): community: Llanrhian
- PE391 (promontory fort): community: St David's
- PE392 (promontory fort): community: St David's
- PE393 (promontory fort): community: Mathry
- PE471 (Garn fechan hillfort): community: Pencaer
- PE530 (radar station): community: Pencaer
- PE542 (promontory fort): community: Pencaer
- PE549 (promontory fort): community: Llanrhian

This area lies within the Pen Caer: Garn Fawr and Strumble Head Landscape of Special Historic Interest. Garn Fawr is notable in being one of the first British hillforts to be archaeologically surveyed, by Edward Lhuyd around 1700.

There are two wrecks noted in the area- the Dan Beard, an American ship, at the foot of the cliffs at Penbwchdy and probably the Canadian Calberga off March Mawr.

John Piper, the artist is associated with this area, having lived in a cottage by Garn Fawr. He painted the coast, including Garn Fawr, and the sea. There is a memorial to Dewi Emrys who wrote the poem 'Pwll Deri' at Pwll Deri.

The car park at Strumble Head is a popular visitor destination, including watching birds, whales and seals. There is a car park and viewpoint west of Garn Fawr, on the Coast Path and a car park to the east. Both these are only accessible by narrow winding roads. Apart from these two points the shoreline is fairly inaccessible although there is a path down to Pwll Deri. Cliff climbing takes place between Pwll Deri and Penbwchdy. There are two popular dive sites - just north of Pen Bach islet and around Ynys Melyn. It is a popular, rugged stretch of coast for walking and Garn Fawr has panoramic views.

Fishing in the area comprises of set nets, prawn, lobster and crab potting and there is potential for light otter trawling. A coastal cruising route links Fishguard to Milford Haven and points south and also across to Ireland. Carreg Onnen Bay can give protection and anchorage to sailing vessels in easterly winds. [The area has previously been granted a Round 24 Oil and Gas licence and future applications may be made.](#)

#### Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities

This is a rugged large scale seascape, focused on sea views with an open, exposed character and strong sense of place. The vertical or steeply sloping cliffs have rough and angular appearance, and very dramatic, particularly around Penbwchdy, with associated offshore small islands and islets. The coastal edge is highly unified with a backcloth of small scale treeless pastoral landscape rising to the imposing outcrop of Garn Fawr. On passage from Ireland Garn Fawr can

<p>be seen well before Strumble Head lighthouse.</p> <p>Whilst remote and tranquil, strong winds can make this a wild and exposed coastline especially to westerly winds. There is a general lack of light pollution.</p> <p>Long views to the west are possible from many points along the coastal path, as far as Carn Llidi on a clear day, with many visitors enjoying sea views and watching for seals, birds and whales from the car park at the lighthouse. Those climbing the hilltops have panoramic views to the south as well as north.</p>
<p><b>Cultural benefits and services</b></p>
<p>The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services in the form of remote places to walk and appreciate nature, to natural heritage in the form of the rugged unspoilt coastline, and to spiritual services in respect of the sense of spaciousness and connection to nature.</p>

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
	Natural processes/ climate change	Visitor pressure	Marine use- commercial and fishing	Offshore energy or minerals	Development pressure	Land management changes	MOD use	
<p>Slow erosion of hard coastal cliffs, more in the back of the bays. Shoreline management plan states ‘do nothing’.</p> <p>Strumble Head as a visitor attraction leads to congestion and wear of small lanes running through the area and car park at times.</p> <p>Wear and erosion to Coast Path, associated car parks and path upto Garn Fawr.</p> <p>Potential pressure for holiday accommodation and visitor facilities at villages.</p> <p>Reducing agricultural management/ grazing leading to loss of pasture, increasing areas of scrub and bracken, and reduced management of hedgebanks, leading to a change in character.</p> <p><u>Granting of oil and gas licences may lead to pressure for development in the future.</u></p>	<b>Special Qualities</b>							
	Coastal Splendour							
	Islands							
	Diversity of Landscape							
	Remoteness, Tranquillity and Wilderness							
	Diverse Geology							
	Richness of Habitats and Biodiversity							
	Rich Archaeology							
	Distinctive Settlement Character							
	Cultural Heritage							
	Accessing the Park							
	Space to Breathe							
	<b>Key</b>		Change occurring in the area affecting the selected special quality					
Key sensitivities								
Factors contributing to sensitivity				Factors detracting from sensitivity				
<p>Rugged, remote and natural character of the coastline, with sparse settlement.</p> <p>Rural pastoral character of the hinterland, with rocky outcrops and narrow winding</p>				<p>Car Park at Strumble Head.</p> <p>Passing ferries.</p>				

<p>lanes.</p> <p>Wide views westwards from coast and Garn Fawr.</p> <p>Pembrokeshire Coast Path as a sensitive receptor.</p> <p>General lack of light pollution.</p>	
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