

No: **15** Seascape Character Area Name: **St Davids Head**



SCA15: St Davids Head



St David's Head looking across Whitesands Bay from Carn Rhosson



View west from Carn Llidi showing World War 2 remains

Summary Description
Exposed rocky headland and northern shore on the western tip of St David's peninsula with Carn Llidi as a backcloth. Rock outcrops and semi-natural vegetation surround historic features. The area has a wild character and there are unspoilt panoramic views, popular with walkers. There is no easy access to the sea.
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prominent, exposed rocky headland of wild character with cliffs and rocky shores on the western tip of St David's peninsula backed by the highly prominent landform of Carn Llidi.</li> <li>• Exposed north and west facing seas.</li> <li>• Important wildlife in waters and coastal edge.</li> <li>• Rock outcrops, stone features between semi-natural dry and wet coastal heath and grassland with bracken encroaching in places.</li> <li>• Historic features including promontory fort, settlement remains, walls and ancient field boundaries.</li> <li>• The absence of settlement mean the area is dark with no light pollution.</li> <li>• Superb, unspoilt views to north to the open sea and west and south to islets and islands.</li> <li>• The view from Carn Llidi to Ramsey island is an iconic Park view.</li> <li>• Popular for walkers along Coast path and visitors to Whitesands Bay due to feeling of remoteness, and tranquillity.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>This prominent rugged rocky coastal headland runs north east-south west from Penllechwen (53m aod) to St David's Head (49m aod) and rises inland to the rocky summit of Carn Llidi (179m aod). The rocks are north east-south west striking Ordovician gabbros intruded into black shales, which are exposed in the high, jagged rocky cliffs indented by small coves. Intertidal areas are high energy rocky shores. The coast is highly exposed to wind and wave erosion through abrasion and hydraulic action.</p> <p>The bordering sea floor of sandy gravel covering the intrusive succession slopes moderately (1-10°) north westwards. The seas and cliffs are exposed to high wind and wave stress. Tidal currents are set north east and south west, with rough waters off the headland where an eddy forms. Tidal flow is &lt;3 knots.</p> <p>The sea and intertidal areas are covered by the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. The cliffs are designated as the Pembrokeshire Cliffs SSSI and they are also an Important Bird Area as defined by RSPB. The area is part of a Special Protection Area for Chough. Grey seals can be seen at the base of the cliffs and porpoises frequently swim through these waters.</p> <p>The headland itself is mainly bare rock due to the exposure but the rest of the peninsula and Carn Llidi are covered predominantly with semi-natural dry and wet coastal heath and grassland with bracken encroaching in places. The area supports chough, peregrine falcon, rare invertebrates and lichens. There are many rock outcrops and exposures.</p>
Cultural influences
<p>This headland forms one of the great landmarks of the Western Atlantic sea-ways known to classical antiquity. The area was identified as <i>Octapitarum promontorium</i> in Ptolemy's <i>Geography</i>, suggesting Roman familiarity with the area. Clawdd y Milwyr, rather than a small promontory fort, may be one component of a massive defended complex indicated by defensive walls inland enclosing about 25 ha of headland. The field systems date from Prehistory and may have survived in use into the Medieval period. There are a few wrecks recorded on the rocky coast including the Frederick, sunk in around 1832, the Nimrod in 1860 and the Glenisla in 1886. An aircraft, a Martin B-26 Marauder, crashed into the side of Carn Llidi in dense fog in 1943 and a memorial has been erected.</p> <p>Scheduled monuments include:</p>

- PE071 (Clawdd y Milwyr promontory fort): community: St David's (also partly in SCA16)
- PE093 (Penmaen Dewi field system): community: St David's (also partly in SCA16)
- PE042 (chambered tomb): community: St David's
- PE054 (Coetan Arthur chambered tomb): community: St David's

This area lies within the St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

Graham Sutherland, the artist, painted many pictures of the coves and other parts of St David's Head.

The whole area is semi-natural used for rough grazing for ponies, cattle and sheep. Remnant walls remain from buildings, field boundaries and fortifications. Cliff-top walking along the Pembrokeshire Coast Path is popular due to the proximity to Whitesands Bay and its carpark. Climbing and coastering are popular along the coast. Sea angling occurs off the rocks of St David's Headland. Cruising motor boats and yachts pass the headland if on passage through Ramsey Sound.

Fishing in the area comprises of set nets, lobster and crab potting [mainly] and potential for light otter trawling. [The area has previously been granted a Round 24 licence for oil and gas and future applications may be made.](#)

#### Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities

The peninsula is highly exposed jutting out into the sea with a wild character feeling large scale and open. The cliffs and rocky shores are dramatic, jagged and angular. There are strong sea smells and wind exposure in most places, with crashing noise of waves in rougher seas. The land has a rough, rich and diverse texture of rock outcrops and stone walls interspersed with heather, bracken and rough grasses. There are unspoilt panoramic and wide views out to open sea, to the Bishops and Clerks and across Whitesands Bay to Ramsey Island. The latter is an iconic Park view. Tranquillity can be reduced in summer by the number of walkers who traverse the Coast Path and other paths. However, overall there is a high degree of naturalness, remoteness and tranquillity along the coast.

#### Cultural benefits and services

The area contributes significantly towards leisure and recreational services in the form of wildlife watching and walking, to natural heritage in the form of the unspoilt coast, geological and nature conservation importance, and to cultural and spiritual services in respect of the diverse history and a strong sense of space and escape.

Forces for change									
Summary	Key forces for change								
<p>Slow erosion of resistant cliffs. The shoreline management plan states ‘do nothing’.</p> <p>Coasteering is subject to increased scrutiny for habitat impact.</p> <p>Walkers erode Coast Path and other footpaths.</p> <p>Tidal energy generation if implemented could significantly affect the character of the area.</p> <p><u>Future licences for oil and gas would change the character of the area if exploited.</u></p>	<b>Special Qualities</b>	Natural processes/ climate change	Visitor pressure	Marine use- commercial and fishing	Offshore energy or minerals	Development pressure	Land management changes	MOD use	
	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 that contribute to sensitivity				Factors that detract from sensitivity					
<p>Steep indented coastline with cliffs and coves forming a natural coastal edge.</p> <p>Semi-natural heath/grassland vegetation.</p> <p>Historic character and significance of the features including monuments and field boundaries/patterns.</p> <p>Pembrokeshire Coast Path is a sensitive receptor.</p> <p>Lack of light pollution.</p>				<p>Presence of visitors in season.</p>					