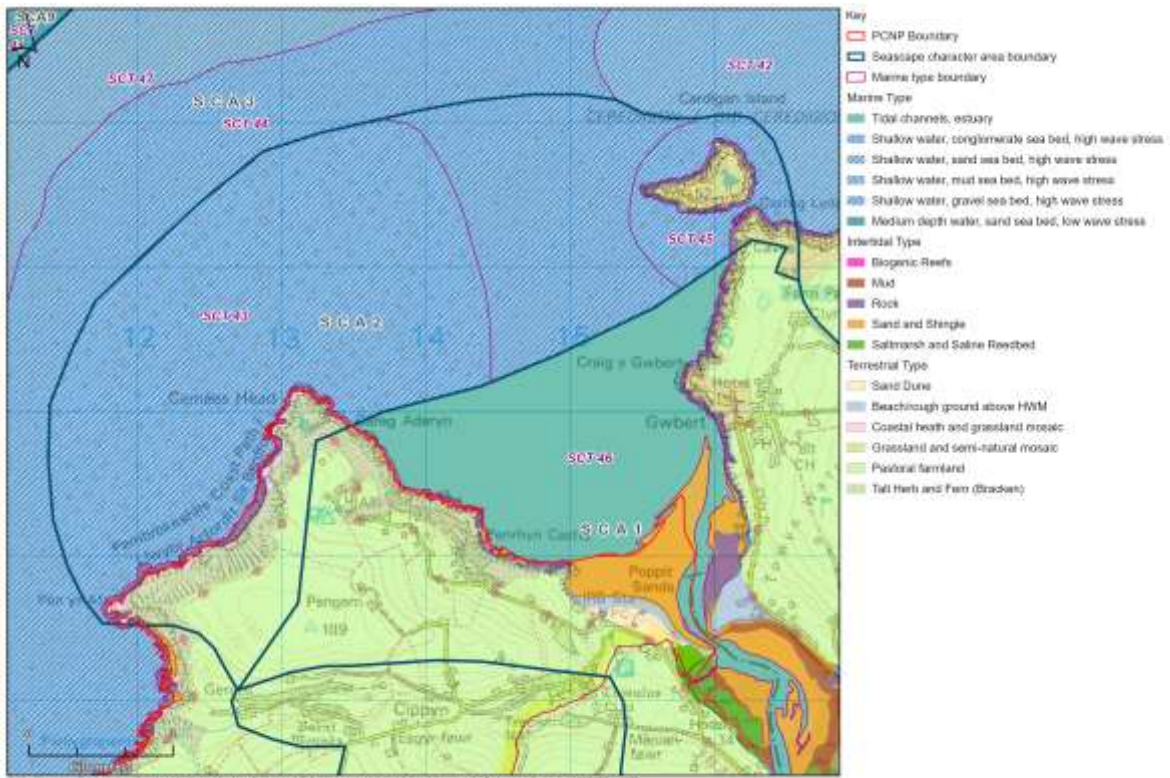


No: 2 Seascape Character Area Name: **Cardigan Island to Cemaes Head**



SCA2:Cardigan Island and Cemmaes Head



Looking across the bay to Cardigan Island



Looking west from Cemaes Head

Summary Description

The seaward edge of the Teifi Estuary and outer bay, marked by Cemaes Head to the west and Cardigan Island to the east. Cemaes Head is marked by steep but not vertical cliffs and large areas of heathland mosaic, with the land rising behind. Cardigan Island has low cliffs and steep edges with a bare grass dome. There are panoramic views from the headlands.

Key Characteristics

- The high sandstone and mudstone cliffs reaching 175mAOD cliffs on the headlands to the south. The landform is lower to the north and on Cardigan Island at around 50mAOD.
- The shallow sea is closely associated with the Teifi estuary, but more exposed to winds and swell from the west or north and with severe wave climate around Cemaes Head.
- Rural mainly pastoral landcover with no settlement with semi-natural coastal vegetation and heathland in places.
- The coastal path on Cemaes Head is slightly set back from the cliff edge but rejoins the cliff top to the west.
- Wildlife trips are taken to view dolphins around Cardigan Island and there is potting and some set nets.
- Panoramic views are possible from Cemaes Head and the area is remote and exposed.
- General lack of light pollution.

Physical Influences

These two prominent rocky headlands at the mouth of the Teifi valley are joined by steep but not vertical cliffs of north east- south west striking Ordovician sandstones and mudstones. The narrow strait of Cardigan Sound (<5m) separates Cardigan Island tidally which has lower cliffs (51m aod) and steep edges. The headland rises inland to 187m aod south of Cemaes Head. The coastline is indented by small coves, and rocks are strewn along the base of cliffs, and there is a cave near Cemaes Head. The intertidal zone comprises high energy rocky shores, flanked by shingle in coves. The coast is exposed to erosion through hydraulic action, abrasion and attrition.

The shallow (<30m), moderately sloping (1-10⁰) sea floor is formed by tongues of poorly sorted conglomerate that fan around the headlands of Cemaes Head and Cardigan Island. Gravelly sand forms the sea floor across the open estuary. The sediment covers the Ordovician sandstones and mudstones bedrock. The seas are exposed to high wind and wave stress. The east side of Cardigan Island is more sheltered, but the headlands are generally exposed. Tidal currents are set northeast and southwest. Tidal flow is low (<1 knot). The tidal range is 4.1m.

The area forms part of Cardigan Bay SAC. The coastal fringe is an SSSI- at Aberarth- Carreg Wylan. Cardigan Island is an Important Bird Area [RSPB] for breeding seabirds. Bottlenose dolphins, bass and mullet use these waters and a high energy littoral rock habitat lies on the shore. Above the foreshore the cliffs are in part vertical and craggy, and in part vegetated. Habitats on the cliff tops and coastal slopes include coastal cliff grassland and some heath. Permanent and improved pasture with low hedges lies on the gently rising land above. Above its cliffs, Cardigan Island is a gently domed area of area of open coastal grassland.

Cultural influences

The mouth of one of the great rivers of Wales, navigable up to Cilgerran, and which served the town of Cardigan, with its long-standing history of coastal and ocean-going trade. Historic marine use includes the export of timber wood and slate, and emigration.

As a marine area, there are few features. Only the wreck of the Herefordshire, which came to grief in 1934, offers visible testament to marine historical use, a steel-hulled cargo vessel built for the Bibby Line by Harland and Wolf, Belfast, in 1905. It remained fairly intact in the late 1960s, with the boilers and machinery in situ, but the exposed location suggests that the wreck is now likely to be well broken up.

A scheduled monument lies at CD280 (Picton Point promontory fort): community: y Ferwig

Yacht and motor cruising out of the Teifi is popular but somewhat restricted due to navigational challenges getting back over the bar at the entrance to the estuary. Sea angling from boats is popular as is diving. Small local fishing boats use nets and pots especially round rocky outcrops and the island.

Dolphin spotting is carried out inside of Cardigan Island from the shore and boat trips. Bird watching is possible from both Cemaes Head and the mainland opposite Cardigan Island. Walking along the Coast Path is also a popular activity. The beaches are inaccessible.

The area has a Round 24 licence for oil and gas in its outer waters and is part of the Aberporth firing range and military practice area.

Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities

These two headlands mark the entrance to the Teifi estuary, creating a dynamic frame to the bay. The scale is large and the textures vary from roughness of the cliffs especially to the south contrasting with the smoother and gentler pastoral farmland to the north.

From the heights of Cemaes Head which is the major orientational landmark, there are panoramic views across the bay and beyond, and long views back along the estuary. There are panoramic views over the open sea which is apparently featureless generally and along the coast to the south west. There is a sense of danger and exhilaration on the cliff edge, especially in strong winds but is tranquil on a calm day. There is no public access to Cardigan Island. There is a general lack of light pollution.

Waves crash onto the rocky shores. On the water, the protection of the headlands diminishes swiftly with exposure to the south westerlies, tidal currents and increasingly open sea further from the shore.

Cultural benefits and services

The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services particularly for walkers on the coastal path and form of remote headland with its panoramic views and some sailing, to natural heritage in the form of the rugged headlands and habitats for breeding birds and dolphins, and to cultural and spiritual services in respect of the sense of wildness and remoteness.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
<p>Slow coastal erosion of rocky cliffs. Shoreline management plan states ‘do nothing’.</p> <p>More intense use of the coastal path may lead to erosion.</p> <p>Agricultural activities such as small scale livestock raising may become unprofitable, which could lead to a loss of pasture and hedgerow management.</p> <p>Potential for disturbance of cetaceans.</p>	Special Qualities	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							
	Key		Change occurring in the area affecting the selected special quality					
Key sensitivities								
Factors contributing to sensitivity					Factors detracting from sensitivity			
Remote, unspoilt and wild character. Highly prominent headlands and open island. Wildlife including dolphins and seabirds. Pembrokeshire Coast Path as a sensitive receptor. General lack of light pollution.					Aberporth firing range and military practice area.			