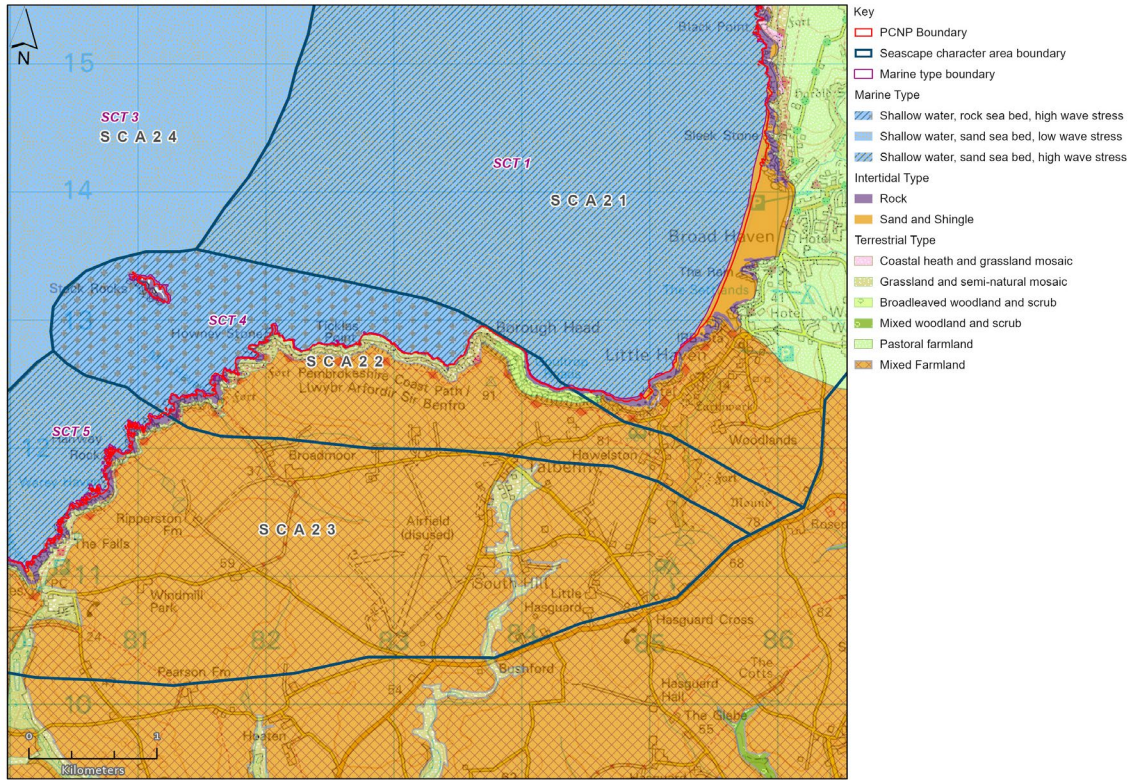


No: **22** Seascape Character Area Name: **St Brides Bay coastal waters south - Borough Head**



SCA22: St Brides Bay coastal waters south - Borough Head



Looking west towards Borough Head

Summary Description

A short stretch of north facing coast and coastal waters on the southern edge of St Brides Bay, west of Little Haven. The high, steep, scrub covered cliffs culminate in Borough Head backed by a high plateau with wild rocky shoreline with no beaches. A promontory fort lies at Howney

Stone. Stack Rocks, just offshore, are popular for angling, potting and diving and there is a good anchorage at Goultrop Roads in south westerly winds.

Key Characteristics

- Steeply sloping wild, vegetated cliffs culminating in Borough Head which dominates the coastal waters.
- High plateau with rectilinear fields of pasture and arable and very few farmsteads and one static caravan park to the east.
- The Coast Path runs along the cliff edge.
- The sea offers a good anchorage at Goultrop Roads, with Stack Rocks a hazard off Howney Stone point but popular for angling, potting and diving.
- Wide views across St Brides Bay and along the beaches and bays of the east coast.
- Tranquil and wild towards the west.

Physical Influences

The coastal headland (88m aod), Howney stones (Hen and Chicks) and the islet of Stack Rocks (23m aod) are composed of resistant, east-west striking acid intrusive rocks. Small headlands 50m high are indented with secluded coves. Steep, deeply indented cliffs form Borough Head at 70m high. The intertidal areas are almost entirely exposed rocky shores (98%). Wind and wave erosion take place through abrasion, attrition and hydraulic action.

A shallow (<20m) gently north-sloping (<1°) sandy sea floor covers the resistant igneous rocks in this southern edge of St Brides Bay. The Howney stones become tidally exposed at low water. Seas are exposed to wave stress, but protected from southerly winds. The main tidal currents set north and south across the outer bay. Tidal flow set west and east is generally low. Tidal range ~5.6m.

The plateau rises to 91m AOD and falls gently to the cliffs. On the eastern edge a small steep sided valley runs northwards to Little Haven, and on the west a shallow valley runs from Lower Broadmoor to Mill Haven.

The sea forms part of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC and the coast is part of the St Bride's Bay south SSSI. Seals are often seen on the north side of Stack Rocks. Semi natural vegetation of scrub and stunted trees cover the steep cliff sides, with deciduous woodland in the narrow valleys. The plateau is predominantly pasture or arable with a quite rectilinear field pattern.

Cultural influences

Historic sites and features indicate the need for defence of this area from Prehistory and in the Second World War. Howney Stone rath at the westernmost point of this seascape character area consists of a rampart and ditch cut off a tapering, cliff-top promontory enclosure; the natural terracing of the interior, trending down towards the west, has suggested building platforms.

Scheduled monuments include:

- PE158 (round barrow): community: the Havens
- PE191 (rath): community: the Havens
- PE282 (Howney Stone rath promontory fort): community: the Havens
- PE283 (promontory fort): community: the Havens
- PE538 (promontory fort): community: the Havens

The name St Bride's Bay indicates a link with St Bridget of Kildare.

Settlement is scattered and rural in pastoral farmland with one caravan and camping park to the east.

Dinghy sailing, kayaking, snorkelling, swimming and sea rowing emanate from Little Haven nearby and would be at least visible from the area. The waters are also popular for sea angling from boats around Stack Rocks and headlands and the rocky shoreline is populated with lobster pots. The clear water around Stack Rocks also make this a good diving spot. Motor and sailing cruisers anchor inside Borough Head at Goultrop Roads in south west winds, although there can

be a swell. Commercial vessels are visible waiting to enter Milford Docks often on the skyline or further inshore depending on the weather conditions. The Coast Path runs along the top of the cliff edge with spectacular views across the Bay and wildlife such as diving gannets to be seen. The area has previously been granted a Round 24 Oil and Gas licence and future applications could be made.

Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities

A unified stretch of rugged steep sided, wild coastline, contrasting with the rectilinear farmed fields which mostly reach right to the cliff's edge.

The area is exposed to northerly winds and there are wide views north and east and over the bay from the cliff edge. Boat users in Goultrop Roads would be dominated and sheltered by the high cliffs adjacent. Landmarks viewed from the sea would include Borough Head and the chapel at Talbenny.

The coast feels moderately tranquil with a sense of danger at the cliff edge, but the naturalness of the sea edge is tempered by the farming, caravan park and view to settlements and beach activities to the east. Tranquillity increases to the west although there are views of tankers at anchor in the bay.

Cultural benefits and services

The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services in the form of the coastal path and sailing or diving opportunities, and to natural heritage in the form of the unspoilt and dramatic cliff edge and offshore islets, and spiritual services in respect of the sense of spaciousness and interaction with nature.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
<p>Low erosion of resistant cliffs and little net longshore drift of sediment.</p> <p>Direct impact of walkers on coastal path with some erosion.</p> <p>Intensification of agriculture.</p> <p>Increase in commercial traffic into Milford Waterway with associated anchorage offshore in St Bride’s Bay.</p> <p>Future licences for oil and gas would change the character of the area if exploited.</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 factors to be taken into account when assessing sensitivity to change								
Factors contributing to potentially higher susceptibility and value					Factors contributing to potentially lower susceptibility and value			
<p>Indented character and rocky, wild character of the coastal edge and islets.</p> <p>Lack of light pollution.</p> <p>Open views to and from the bay and out to sea, and to the cliffs and cliff top.</p> <p>Coast Path as a sensitive receptor.</p> <p>Biodiversity, historic and landscape designations.</p>					<p>Caravan Park.</p> <p>More intensive agriculture.</p> <p>Large ships at anchor in the bay.</p>			