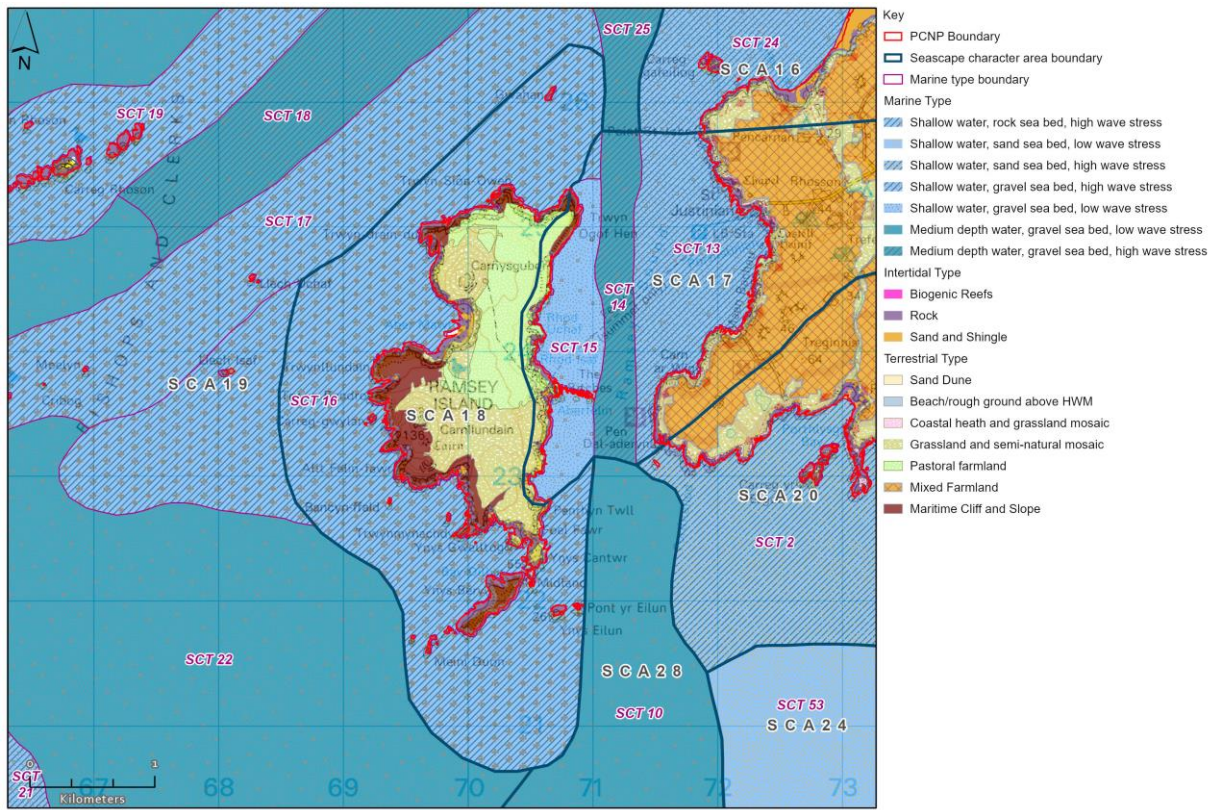


No: **18** Seascape Character Area Name: **Ramsey Island coastal waters**



SCA18: Ramsey Island coastal waters



Ramsey Island from the east

Summary Description
Ramsey Island is separated from the western end of St David’s Peninsula by Ramsey Sound. The area covers the Island, coast and waters adjacent outside the Sound. These are exposed to the open sea and the south westerlies. There is no settlement and the area is wild and remote with accompanying thriving wildlife as a nature reserve and superb maritime views. It is however used in season for wildlife trips and kayaks circumnavigating the island.
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ramsey Island is dominated by the outcrops of Carn Llundain and Carnysgubor and has mainly rocky coasts with jagged cliffs, caves, arches and islets with only one beach on its western side.</li> <li>The island is highly exposed to open sea and south westerlies and is separated from the mainland by a tidal sound and so has a strong sense of isolation and wildness.</li> </ul>

- The south of the island, outcrops and the rugged coastal edge are covered in heath, coastal grassland and bracken.
- There are limited irregular fields enclosed with stone walls.
- Built form limited to one farmstead managed by the RSPB, partly for a strictly managed number of visitors arriving at one landing stage.
- There is RHIB wildlife boat trips and kayaks travel around Ramsey in season reducing tranquillity.
- There is rich wildlife as a nature reserve including many seabirds such as razorbills, auks, fulmars as well as porpoises and seals.
- Magnificent views from the island are panoramic to the open sea, the Bishops and Clerks and to the mainland, such as to Carn Llidi.

### Physical Influences

The eastern coast of Ramsey Island is composed of a faulted Precambrian to Ordovician succession of volcanic tuffs, intrusions, sandstones and shales. Coastal headlands, dominated by Carn Llundain 134m aod and also Carnysgubor 95m aod and cliffs, represent the more resistant lithologies of intrusions and tuffs, some reaching 120m to the west, while the wide bay at Aber Mawr on the western coast is carved into mudstones. Submerged rocks and small islets fringe the coastline which also has caves. South from Ramsey a chain of small islets and arches formed of acid intrusive rocks extends north east-south west (Ynys Cantwr (52m aod), Midland, Ynys Bery (70m aod), Meini Duon), also Ynys Eilun 25m aod). The intertidal areas of the island and islets are exposed rocky shores (95%) with only small sandy coves. Wind and wave erosion takes place through abrasion, attrition and hydraulic action.

The shallow (<30m) sea floor of sandy gravel slopes moderately (1-10<sup>0</sup>) westwards. The seas are exposed to high wind and wave stress. Tidal currents are strong (3-5 knots), setting to north and south. Rough waters and eddies are found around the southern rocks and islets (Ynys Bery, Midland Gap).

The sea and intertidal areas are covered by the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. Ramsey Island is designated as a National Nature Reserve and SSSI. The cliffs, associated coastal heath and grassland are designated as the Ramsey Island and St David's Peninsula SPA and they are also an Important Bird Area as defined by RSPB. Ramsey Island is an important reserve owned by RSPB - puffins, choughs, auks, seals, dolphins and porpoises are all evident. Seals pup on the beach at Abermawr and use the sea caves.

The island is a mixture of heath and dry acid grassland along the cliff tops, south of the island and on outcrops such as Carn Llundain. The rest of the island is predominantly a mix of rush pasture fields which are grazed with cattle and sheep as part of the management to support wildlife eg choughs.

### Cultural influences

Historic routes and linkages are exemplified in the Prehistoric, Norse and Early Christian associations. Ramsey preserves evidence of human settlement dating back 4,000 years. Both Carn Llundain and Carn Ysgubor have cairns on their summits which appear to be lofty burial mounds of the Early Bronze Age. More spectacular burial sites, facing the gales of the Atlantic Ocean, are hard to imagine. The evidence suggests that fields may have been first laid out on Ramsey in the Early/Middle Bronze Age (c 2100BC-1500BC), supporting island communities based in small hamlets and farms. St Tyfanog's chapel is thought to have been located on the site of the Ramsey Island Farm complex; graves, stone coffins and headstones were noted, c 1811-1963, the only known example being a fragment bearing an incised cross and sundial. There are around seven recorded shipwrecks which lie on the south and south western coasts of the island. They include the Hungarian steamship, Szent Istvan en route from Oporto to Glasgow when she ran aground on the west side of the island in fog (1909). Parts of the ship including propeller are extant close to shore. To the south, the wreck of the steamship Graffoe lies submerged on rocks having lost steering in heavy seas en route from Glasgow to Montevideo (1903). A further wreck on the west coast is the Dutch trawler, the Gerard (1929).

This seascape character area falls partly within the St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island

Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. No scheduled monuments have been designated on the island.

Ramsey is thought to be either a personal Viking name, 'Hrafn's isle', or to mean simply 'wild garlic'. In Welsh, it is known as Ynys Dewi, St David's Island, and also Ynys Tyfanog. In legend Ramsey is the burial place of 20,000 saints.

The only settlement on the island is on the east coast- a farmstead, now used by the RSPB. The pasture fields are enclosed by irregular stone walls.

The waters are used by wildlife boat trip operators taking visitors on the coastal waters and some out to the island on a twice daily basis for unaccompanied and guided walks in season. The size of the boats limits the number of visitors. The waters are popular with motor and sailing cruisers, day boats and kayaks, with the waters generally safer within half a mile of the island than the Sound. Diving and sea angling from boats takes place off the north-east of Ramsey Island. As a wildlife reserve owned by RSPB, research takes place on the island.

Fishing in the area comprises of set nets, lobster and crab potting 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 scale of the Island and adjacent waters is large and open and the island is highly exposed to the south westerlies and open sea. It has a strong remote, tranquil, isolated and wild character especially on the semi-natural vegetated areas and coast. The magnificent views from the island are panoramic to the open sea, the Bishops and Clerks and to the mainland, such as to Carn Llidi. The visual foci at sea level are the jagged cliffs, islets and caves with rock formations like the Elephant's trunk creating interest. The rough textures of the cliffs and rocks are complemented by qualities of the water which can be rough in certain weather conditions. The diversity of the coastline is enhanced by sightings of grey seals, numerous seabirds and, occasionally, porpoises. Tranquillity is reduced to an extent by the RHIBs and other boats which circumnavigate the island. However, this use does not significantly diminish the natural beauty, unity and balanced composition of this stretch of water and coast.

#### **Cultural benefits and services**

The area contributes significantly towards leisure and recreational services in the form of marine recreation including wildlife trips, to natural heritage in the form of the national nature reserve with its animals and birds, and unspoilt coast, and to cultural and spiritual services in respect of its historic interest and features.

Forces for change									
Summary	Key forces for change								
<p>Coastal erosion of rocky islets. The shoreline management plan states ‘do nothing’.</p> <p>Increasing use by boat trip operators and other boat users, with effects on tranquillity and potentially on wildlife.</p> <p>Issue of management of fields and semi-natural areas to maintain biodiversity.</p>	Special Qualities	Natural processes/ climate change	Visitor pressure	Marine use- commercial and fishing	Offshore energy	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 factors to be taken into account when assessing sensitivity to change									
<p>Prominent and unspoilt outcrops of Carn Llundain and Carnysgubor and the island’s rocky coasts with jagged cliffs, caves, arches and islets.</p> <p>The island’s strong sense of isolation, remoteness, tranquillity and wildness with very limited access.</p> <p>The nature conservation value of the National Nature Reserve including birds, animals and heath, coastal grassland and bracken.</p> <p>The pattern of irregular fields enclosed with stone walls.</p> <p>The very limited built form ie one farmstead managed by the RSPB.</p> <p>Magnificent panoramic views to and from the island.</p> <p>Views from the Coast Path on the mainland.</p> <p>Biodiversity, historic and landscape designations.</p> <p>Presence of RHIB wildlife boat trips and kayaks travel around Ramsey in season reducing tranquillity.</p>									