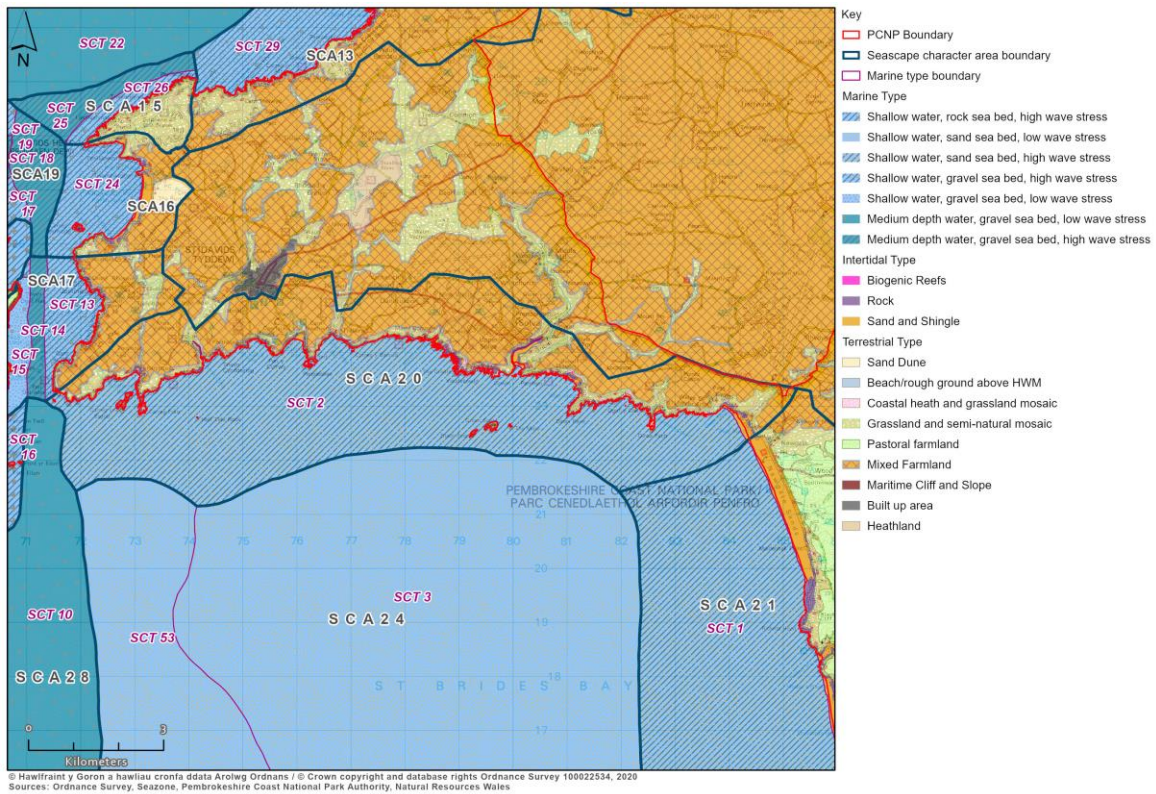


No: **20** Seascape Character Area Name: **St Brides Bay coastal waters north**



SCA20:St Brides Bay coastal waters north



Looking west from near Caerfai to Ramsey Island in distance



East from Caerfai Bay



East from near Dinas Fach



Solva harbour

Summary Description
<p>The north coast of St Brides Bay has a coastline of jagged cliffs and promontories and small sheltered bays and inlets with some offshore islands and rocks. There are panoramic views from many headlands, contrasting with the narrow sheltered wooded valleys and inlets and the gentle pastoral plateau hinterland. The sea area is relatively exposed to southerly winds but there is shelter in several locations. It includes visitor honeypots such as Solva and lies close to the cathedral city of St David's.</p>
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indented jagged cliffs, small promontory headlands, islets, and bays with narrow inlets with semi-natural heathland and coastal grass vegetation with a series of national nature conservation designations.</li> <li>• Gently sloping plateau hinterland with incised valleys and farmland of mainly pasture with some arable.</li> <li>• Dispersed farmsteads with popular traditional village of Solva in a wooded steep sided inlet but new development extends up onto the plateau.</li> <li>• Caravan parks are visible near the coast in several locations. The A487 runs close to and parallel with the coast.</li> <li>• The sea is relatively exposed to southerly winds, with some wave disturbance near the coastal edge, but affords shelter to northerlies. Drying or submerged rocks are shipping hazards.</li> <li>• Marine activity is focussed on Solva which is a honeypot for visitors with sail cruising routes and slipways for other craft. Porthclais also has a small harbour. Fishing is mainly potting.</li> <li>• The Coast path is particularly well used, especially near St David's and Solva and allows access all along the sea edge and around the indented inlets.</li> <li>• Views are panoramic from several high viewpoints, and narrowly channelled in inlets. The view from around Newgale is one of Pembrokeshire's iconic views.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>The northern coastline of St Brides Bay is composed of an east-north east -west-south west striking, faulted Precambrian to Cambrian succession of tuffs, sandstones and mudstones. The south facing coastal plateau averages 30 to 80m AOD, with cliffs generally 30 to 50m high although reaching 85m. The rocky headlands have steep cliffs and indented bays with rock boulders and tidally exposed rocks. There are small rocky promontories like Dinas Fawr and Dinas Fach, stacks, arches, caves and drying rocks. The narrow, steep incised valleys of the Solva and Alun provide small, sheltered harbours where they meet the coast. Intertidal areas are dominated by rocky shores (76%), with minor sandy coves. Wind and wave erosion take place through abrasion, attrition and hydraulic action.</p> <p>The shallow (&lt;20m), sand to gravelly sand sea floor overlying tuffs, sandstones and mudstones shelves gently (&lt;1°), with some exposed islets (e.g. Green Scar 33m aod, Black Scar, The Mare) and areas of shallows over submerged bedrock. The seas are exposed to high wind and wave stress. Tidal currents in the outer bay set north and south. In the bay, small tidal flows set east and west along the coast. Tidal range &lt;6.5m.</p> <p>The sea forms part of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC and the coast is part of the St David's SCA, the Ramsey and St David's Peninsula SPA and the St David's Peninsula Coast SSSI. The cliffs are also an Important Bird Area. The coastal strip of semi-natural heathland and coastal grass vegetation and rough grazing extends in places to promontories such as Pen Dinas. There are a number of disused quarries along the coastal edge. Priority species include chough, peregrine falcon, rare lichens and invertebrates.</p> <p>The hinterland is predominantly pasture, with some arable. The field pattern varies from medium sized and more rectilinear to smaller organic shaped fields, with low hedgerows and some areas of deciduous woodland, especially associated with the narrow, short, steep sided</p>

stream valleys.

### Cultural influences

St David's cathedral just to the north was established on the great seaway of the early Christian church in Wales and Ireland. It is a historic landscape containing extensive and well-preserved evidence of land use and intense ritual and religious activity from the prehistoric period onwards. The area includes Neolithic chambered tombs and settlement; Iron Age forts and field systems; and St David's Cathedral and city and their settings nearby which are of continuing supreme cultural significance and importance in Wales as Dewisland. Promontory forts such as Gribin and Porth y Rhaw indicate the need to defend this coastal area in prehistory.

Scheduled monuments include:

- PE013 (St Non's chapel): community: St David's
- PE043 (chambered tomb): community: Solva
- PE272 (motte): community: Brawdy
- PE273 (Porth y Rhaw promontory fort): community: Solva
- PE294 (Caerfai promontory fort): community: St David's
- PE378 (kiln): community: Solva
- PE395 (farmstead): community: Solva
- PE410 (Gribin promontory fort): community: Solva
- PE429 (mill): community: St David's
- PE480 (enclosure): community: Solva
- PE539 (Dinas Fach promontory fort): community: Brawdy
- PE540 (enclosure): community: Brawdy
- PE548 (promontory fort): community: Solva

The Gribin ridge fort is yet to be scheduled. The western part of this area lies within the St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

The associations of the area are above all with the history of the church at St David's and its marine links. St Non's Chapel is reputedly built on the site where St Non gave birth to St David. St Bride's Bay takes its name from St Brigit of Kildare, who was venerated throughout Europe. Graham Sutherland painted along the coast such as around Port Clais eg 'Welsh landscape with roads'. A current artist, John Knapp Fisher, has painted scenes including Solva.

Wrecks are clustered around Portllysgi Bay at the western end of the area (7) and around Solva (4). In the former area the wrecks include the Prince Cadwgan, an iron hulled steamship carrying iron petroleum from Bristol to Aberaeron in 1876, the Portland, a sailing ketch carrying a cargo of stone from Porthgain to Pembroke (1927) and the St George, and the Lewis and Whiteplain further offshore. The Vernicos Alexia, Vernicos Barbara IV and Vernicos Giorgis all lie west of Solva. These were tugs on their delivery voyage in 1981 when the towing tug broke down and the towing cable then fouled the other tugs' propellers. They drifted onshore and their hulls remain on the seabed covered in kelp.

The main settlement is Solva, which has a traditional character with small cottages although 20c estate development has expanded onto the plateau to the west. Static caravan parks and camping sites are located close to the coast at Caerfai and Porthclais. The popular A487 linking St Davids with points east runs close to the coast but does not generally impinge on tranquillity at the sea edge.

Solva has a small natural harbour with approx.50 swinging moorings for recreational boat owners and inshore fishermen located up the waterway which dries out at low water. There is a yacht club at the seaward end of the village with a car park. Dinghy sailing and motorised day boats come out of Solva. There is a coastal cruising route linking Milford/Skomer with Solva and points north across St Brides Bay and beyond Ramsey Sound and sailing yachts use this and other anchorages along this stretch of coastline. Porth Clais is a small tidal inlet with a small seawall offering protection for a few inshore fishing boats. There are slipways at Porth Clais and Solva which are used for launching kayaks, day boats, sailing dinghies and a few jet skis. Sea angling off boats and the rocks is popular along all this coastal area, as is diving and snorkelling. Porthllysgi Bay is a good anchorage before going north through Ramsey Sound. Dinas Fawr also affords shelter to boats from N and E winds, and Dinas Fach from W and N.

Caerfai Bay offers a small, but the only moderately accessible beach along this coast. The Coast Path runs along the top of the cliff edge and is popular and accessible on this stretch due to the attractions of St Davids and Solva, linking roads and carparking nearby.

Fishing in the area comprises of beach seining and beach nets, set nets, lobster and crab potting using the rocky shoreline and there is potential for light otter trawling. The area has previously been granted a Round 24 Oil and Gas licence and future applications may be made.

**Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities**

The area is large scale in terms of the views across St Bride’s Bay, with a contrast between the open exposed cliff edge and headlands, and the confined inlets with narrow channelled views. One of the Pembrokeshire coast’s iconic views is from around Newgale looking west with dramatic rocks and features. The textures at the sea edge are rough and angular, with strong verticals then the undulating plateau behind.

It is a highly unified and balanced landscape, with exposure and drama at the cliff edge, again contrasting with the safety and enclosure of the inlets, which have more diversity and strong colours. In Solva and other inlets there is a strong sea or estuarine smell.

There is naturalness in the coastal vegetation and tranquillity is high in most places, although at Solva, close to the A487 and around caravan parks this tranquillity reduces due to visual intrusion, road noise, visitor activity and night-time lighting.

**Cultural benefits and services**

The area contributes significantly towards leisure and recreational services in the form of marine recreation, beach activities and recreation, galleries, and visitor facilities opportunities at Solva village, to natural heritage in the form of the unspoilt coast and inlets, and to cultural and spiritual services in respect of the rich history and artistic associations and connection with sense of remoteness, tranquillity and connection with nature.

**Forces for change**

Summary	Key forces for change						
	Natural processes/ climate change	Visitor pressure	Marine use- commercial and fishing	Offshore energy	Development pressure	Land management changes	MOD use
<p>Generally slow coastal erosion of cliff headlands, more in back of bays. Shoreline management plan states mostly ‘do nothing’, and locally ‘hold the line’ at Solva and Porth Clais.</p> <p>Development pressure and visitor activity, especially at at Solva and Caerfai affect the historic character of the former, scenic quality and tranquillity of the seascape.</p> <p>Seaweed and shellfish farms</p> <p>The coastal path is worn in places due to its popularity in the area and there is an eroding slope adjacent to the beach access path at Caerfai Bay.</p> <p>Litter and pollution at Solva affects the habitats and scenic quality of the inlet.</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							

<p>Effect of recreational activity on important fish spawning area at Solva.</p> <p>Future licences for oil and gas would change the character of the area if exploited.</p> <p>Development of individual coastal houses- reducing the tranquillity and sparsely settled nature of the coast.</p>	Space to Breathe						
	Key						Change occurring in the area affecting the selected special quality
<b>Key factors to be taken into account when assessing sensitivity to change</b>							
<p>Unspoilt rural character of sea edge with highly indented, rocky character with cliffs and features.</p> <p>Wide views across St Bride’s Bay and west offshore.</p> <p>Historic character of Solva and St David’s Conservation Areas and other historic features.</p> <p>Coast Path as a receptor.</p> <p>Biodiversity, historic and landscape designations.</p> <p>Housing development, visitor activity and recreational use at Solva and Caerfai, and caravan parks.</p> <p>Noise and movement on the A487.</p>							