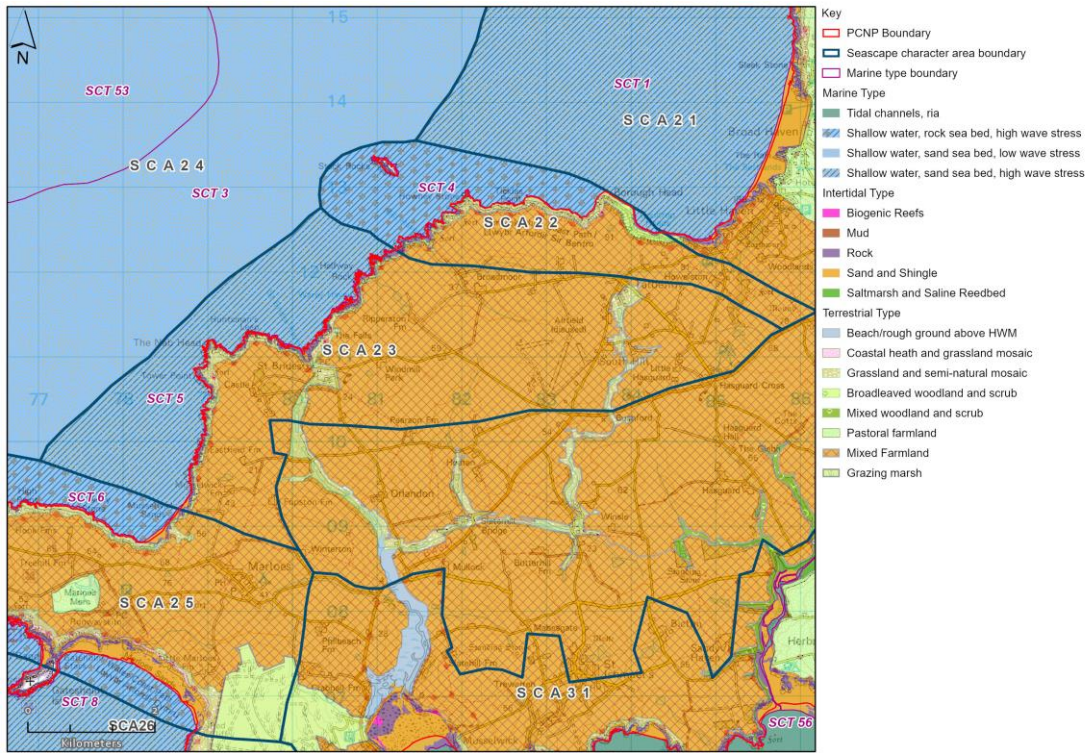


No: **23** Seascape Character Area Name: **St Brides Bay coastal waters south - The Nab Head**



**SCA23:St Brides Bay south coastal waters - The Nab Head**



*St Brides Haven, Stack Rocks offshore in distance*



*West towards Huntsman's Leap*

Summary Description
<p>A west facing red mudstone and sandstone coastline on the southern edge of St Brides Bay with generally low cliffs with a broken and jagged rocky shoreline and small beaches at St Brides Haven and Musselwick Sands. This open coast of mixed farming is generally sparsely settled and remote with key buildings being a small Norman parish church and St Bride's Castle, now a hotel.</p>
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jagged and broken low mudstone and sandstone cliffs</li> <li>• Inland plateau with rectilinear fields of pasture and arable</li> <li>• No good anchorages, but kayak launch point and diving location at St Brides Haven</li> <li>• The coastal path runs along the cliff edge but otherwise the coast is fairly inaccessible.</li> <li>• A remote seascape with a few farmsteads and a hotel.</li> <li>• Wide views out to sea and westwards to Skomer Island and to tankers anchored in St Bride's Bay.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>This coastal headland in east-west striking Devonian (Raglan Formation and St Maughan's Formation) is composed of crumbling red mudstones and sandstones. Submerged rocks and rocky fingers flank the low coastal cliffs which average 20m in height although in one place rises to 50m. The intertidal areas are predominantly exposed rocky shores (93%), with caves and minor sandy beaches, the main one of which is St Bride's Haven and Musselwick to the south. Wind and wave erosion take place through abrasion, attrition and hydraulic action.</p> <p>A shallow (&lt;20m, gently northwest sloping (&lt;1°) sandy sea floor covers the red beds. Seas are exposed to high wave stress. The main tidal currents set north and south across the outer St Brides Bay and an eddy creates a tidal stream that runs west from Goulthrop Roads to St Brides Haven for over 9 hours. The tidal range is ~6m.</p> <p>The sea forms part of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC and, to the south there is the Skomer, Skokholm and the seas off Pembrokeshire SPA. The coast is part of the St Bride's Bay south SSSI. The cliff edge vegetation is semi-natural with coastal grasses and bracken but is of limited width, with fields coming close to the cliff edge. Inland is a gently rolling landscape, rising to 60m AOD, which is both pasture and arable, including potato cropping. The field pattern tends to be formal/rectilinear near the coast with hedgebanks and few trees. There are some stream courses and ponds with associated natural vegetation, and a belt of mature deciduous woodland associated with the historic landscape of St Brides.</p>
Cultural influences
<p>Mesolithic and possibly later material has been recovered from Nab Head. There are several defended coastal sites within this character area, such as Tower Point rath, which consists of triple banks with intermediate ditches, having a central causewayed entrance, defining a cliff-top promontory.</p> <p>The True Bess wooden sloop was wrecked on the coast in a violent storm in 1859 carrying culm from Broad Haven to St David's. The wreck of the Englishman wooden schooner is visible in the shallows of St Bride's Bay. It ran ashore near Musselwick on 5 May 1933. Talbenny airfield opened on 1 May 1942 as 19 Group Coastal Command station and is still apparent, though unused.</p> <p>Scheduled monuments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE281 (Tower Point rath promontory fort): community: Marloes and St Brides</li> <li>• PE537 (Castle Head promontory fort): community: Marloes and St Brides</li> </ul> <p>The name St Bride's Bay indicates a link with St Bridget of Kildare. The artist, John Piper painted 'St Brides Bay' from St Brides.</p> <p>Kayaking is popular around the coast as is angling from both the shore and boat, especially close</p>

to nearby Stack Rocks and the Hen & Chicks. There is a beach and slipway with adjacent car park at St Bride's with a church behind and St Bride's Castle close by. This is the only vehicular access to the coast. Musselwick Sands are accessed from the Coast Path with steps cut into the rock. The clear water in the area means it is a good diving spot, with divers, kayakers and stand up paddle boarders launching from St Brides Haven. There is no good anchorage. 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 Oil and Gas licence and future applications may be made.

A limited amount of coasteering and climbing is carried out along parts of the coast. The Coast Path runs along the top of the cliff edge.

#### **Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities**

A unified stretch of jagged low cliffs and wild coastline, contrasting with the somewhat bleak and open farmed landscape of rectilinear fields and low hedgebanks. The sea edge is very exposed to northerly or westerly winds, and affords wide views north and west and over the bay from the cliff edge. The coast and sea is very tranquil and feels remote with very little settlement and light pollution apart from the prominent St Brides Castle Hotel. Anchored tankers in the bay are also apparent reducing the sense of wildness of the sea. At St Brides Haven there is a sense of a historic landscape with church, stone walls, woodland belt and country house.

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

The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services in the form of the coastal path and kayaking or diving opportunities, and to natural heritage in the form of the unspoilt and dramatic cliffs and rocky coast. The church and country house offer at St Brides Haven creates a sense of time depth and there is a strong connectedness to nature and spaciousness of the sea environment.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
<p>Generally low erosion of rocky cliffs. Shoreline management plan states ‘do nothing’.</p> <p>Intensification of agriculture could lead to changes in field pattern and field boundaries.</p> <p>Car park at St Brides Haven may enable intensification of visitor use.</p> <p>Future licences for oil and gas would change the character of the area if exploited.</p>	<b>Special Qualities</b>	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>Natural character and wildness of sea edge.</p> <p>Sensitivity to further light pollution.</p> <p>Historic setting at St Brides Haven.</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>More intensive agriculture.</p>								