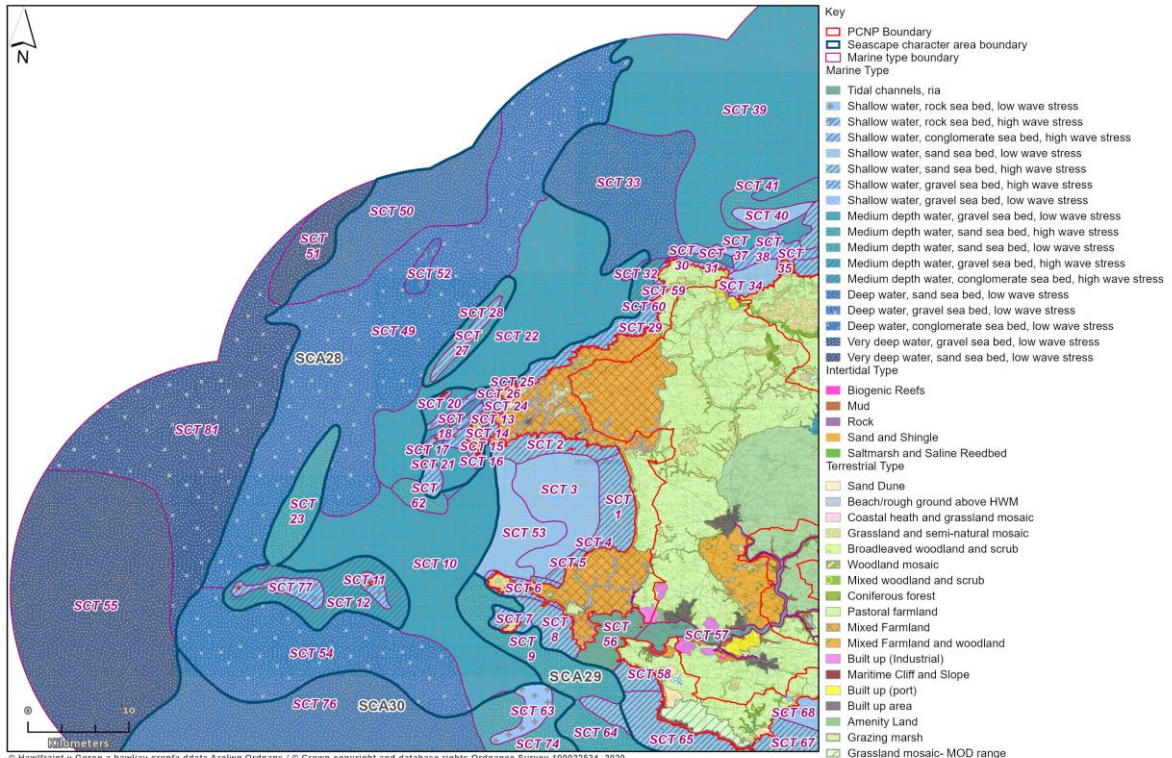


No: **28**

Seascape Character Area Name: **West open sea**



SCA28:West open sea



View of northern component of area from Carn Llidi with SCA 13 in middle ground



View of area at Sea north east of Skomer

Summary Description
<p>This large marine area is located west of Strumble Head stretching south to west of St Anne's Head. It has a sandy gravel sea floor 30-100m deep with low wave stress, exposed to the south westerlies. It is open sea used by commercial vessels, ferries and a few cruising leisure boats.</p>
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very large area of sea, 30-100m deep on gravelly sand seabed with low wave stress.</li> <li>• There are numerous wrecks in the area.</li> <li>• Part in the West Wales Marine and Pembrokeshire Marine SACs.</li> <li>• The area is used for fishing, ferries and commercial shipping.</li> <li>• Land would be apparent to the east and forms part of the unspoilt view from the western coast, including from the Pembrokeshire Coast Path.</li> <li>• Open sea area with unspoilt, simple, consistent and unified marine character at a vast scale and a significant sense of openness, remoteness and exposure.</li> <li>• The area's qualities are determined almost entirely by the natural forces of water, through swell and waves, and wind.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>Medium to deep water (30-100m), gently (&lt;1°) west sloping sandy gravel to gravel sea floor, with seas exposed to low wave stress. West of the very shallow sandy gravel bar of SCA 14 (ID27, 28), the gravel sea floor has a coarse tongue of conglomerate (ID52). Sea floor sediments overlie east-west striking Lower and Upper Palaeozoic bedrock as exposed along the coast, replaced offshore towards the northwest by younger, north east-south west striking Mesozoic to Cenozoic bedrock. Tidal currents are set parallel to the coast.</p> <p>The majority of the area is within the West Wales Marine SAC (except the western margins) but the southern part is within the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. The area surrounds Grassholm and its environs and its associated gannetry (see SCA 27).</p>
Cultural influences
<p>Historically this area was part of the Western trade routes from prehistory to the present day. The principal cultural associations are with Wales' long history of trade and maritime endeavour. Any shipwrecks are at a considerable depth and their location is in many cases uncertain. However, they include a number of vessels sunk as a result of enemy action in the more open waters, as distinct from those wrecked by bad weather or difficult sea conditions nearer the shore. Among them may be mentioned the Emily Millington, scuttled by German submariners, HMS Arbutus, a flower class sloop from 1917, and the Boston City, both torpedoed by U-boats, two liberty ships from World War 2, the Dan Beard and the Jonas Lie, and the Kingstown, attacked by German aircraft in 1941. A more recent loss is the Concha in 1958, a ship registered in Costa Rica.</p> <p>The ferry routes between Fishguard and Pembroke Dock to Rosslare cross the area. Recreational cruising routes for sailing craft also sail through its waters linking South Wales with North Wales, such as Holyhead, and Ireland. Inshore there is the heavily used coastal cruising route linking Milford and points east to Cardigan Bay. The body of water is also crossed by wildlife appreciation and dive boats out of Milford and St Justinians visiting Grassholm Island and The Smalls.</p> <p>Fishing in the area comprises of set nets inshore, whelk, lobster and crab potting, drift lining to south, and potential for light otter trawling inshore and heavy beam and rockhopper trawling offshore.</p> <p>There is a caution area between the Smalls and Skomer. The area has a previously been granted a Round 24 licence for oil and gas and future applications may be made. The area is part of the Aberporth firing range and military practice area to the north east and is part of the Castlemartin firing range and military practice area to the south. There is also a disused</p>

explosives dumping ground the south.

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

This area has not been visited. The area lies between 1km from the coast out to around 22km. It would be expected that there would be a range of influence of the coast. Higher hills such as Carn Llidi and cliffs would be apparent as strong elements dominating the view at points decreasing to small elements or a very thin line on the horizon only visible in good visibility. The feeling in the majority of the area would be open sea away from the influence of land, other than this visual connection.

The sea has a simple, consistent and unified character at a vast scale and a significant sense of openness, isolation and exposure. Its qualities are determined entirely by the natural forces of water, through swell and waves, and wind. The areas are exposed to the south westerlies and in poor weather conditions the sea is likely to feel threatening. There is a strong likelihood of tranquillity and sense of wildness and remoteness in this open sea.

The number of leisure craft will be limited away from the coast but there will be occasional views of ferries, and commercial vessels using the shipping ways or at anchor around St Bride's Bay.

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

The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services in the form of marine recreation, to natural heritage in the form of an unspoilt marine area of sea visible from the sensitive coasts of the National Park, and to spiritual services in respect of a sense of wildness and connectedness with nature.

Forces for change									
Summary	Key forces for change								
<p>Limited forces for change in deeper marine settings.</p> <p>The waters around Skomer Island are designated as a Marine Conservation Zones. The MCZ is adjacent to this area.</p> <p>The use by tankers has potentially adverse effects which could increase with increased traffic eg LNG.</p> <p>Future licences for floating offshore wind in surrounding areas would change the character of the area.</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>Open sea area with unspoilt, simple, consistent and unified marine character at a vast scale and a significant sense of openness, tranquillity and remoteness.</p> <p>Forming part of the unspoilt view from the western coast with Coast Path as a receptor.</p> <p>Part in the West Wales Marine and Pembrokeshire Marine SACs.</p> <p>Presence of ferries and commercial shipping.</p>									