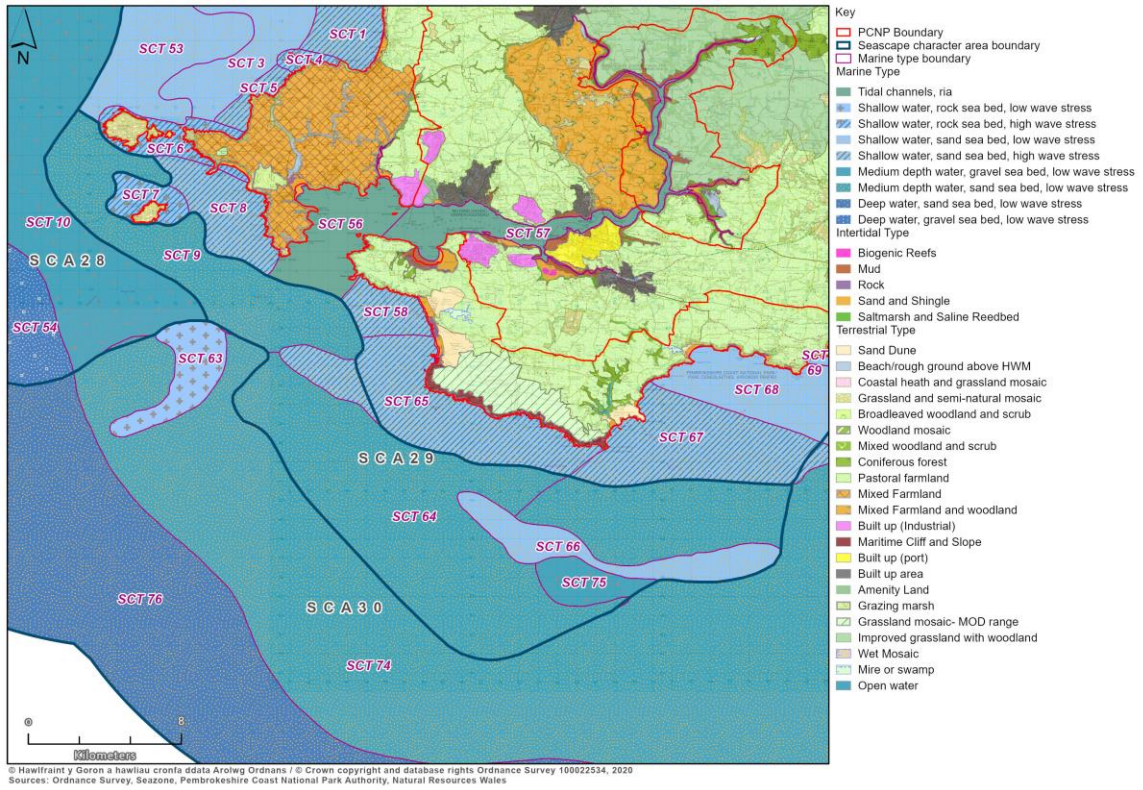


No: **29**

Seascape Character Area Name: **Southern inshore waters**



SCA29:Southern inshore waters



Area viewed between Skokholm and Skomer at sea



Area out to sea from Freshwater West (in SCA34)



Area out to sea from St Govan's Head (in SCA35)

Summary Description
<p>This area stretches off the south coast from Skomer to south of Lydstep Point, wrapping around the coastal seascape areas. It is mainly moderately deep except for St Gowan's Shoal to the east. The west forms the setting to the islands and also is busy as part of the approaches to Milford Haven. The east is used as part of the Castlemartin MOD range.</p>
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large area of sea, mainly 30-60m deep on gravelly sand bed with shallower waters over sand on St Gowan Shoals to east [10-30m deep].</li> <li>• Generally low wave stress although potential for steep seas south of St Ann's Head.</li> <li>• The majority of the area is within the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC.</li> <li>• There are numerous wrecks in the area, many focussed on the approaches to Milford Haven.</li> <li>• The area is used for ferries, commercial shipping and fishing, as well as a MOD practice range.</li> <li>• The area wraps around Skomer and Skokholm to the west forming an important part of their setting and the islands are strong features in this area's character.</li> <li>• The area forms part of the unspoilt view from the western and southern coast, including from the Pembrokeshire Coast Path.</li> <li>• Land would be less apparent to the east but still a feature.</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 primarily by the natural forces of water, through swell and waves, and wind.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>Medium depth (30-60m), gently southwest sloping (&lt;1°) sea floor of gravelly sand grading offshore into sand. A very shallow water (&lt;10-30m) east-west sand bar (ID66; St Gowan Shoals), flanked on its south edge by gravel (ID75), produces tidal rips. Tidal currents set north east and south west round St Govan's Head turn further west towards east and west. Generally seas are exposed to low wave stress. Sediments in the shoal waters are exposed to storm turbulence and transport. Sea floor sediments cover east-west striking Carboniferous bedrock.</p> <p>The majority of the area is part of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC with a small portion to the south west in the West Wales Marine SAC. The southern fringes of the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone lie the north west. The westernmost and centrally located waters form part of the Skomer, Skokholm and the seas off Pembrokeshire SPA- avoiding the Milford Haven approaches.</p>
Cultural influences
<p>The area is the inshore waters of the Bristol Channel that provides the sea-way to South Wales and to Cornwall and Devon, and as such with strong linkages with the maritime trade-routes of western Britain since Prehistory. The inundated palaeolandscapes of the Bristol Channel may yield evidence for the change from hunter-gatherer societies to communities of settled farmers.</p> <p>There are numerous wrecks including on the approaches to Milford Haven. These include the Meg Merrilies (sunk by air attack in 1941), Antonio (1945), Concha (sunk in 1958), the Boy Toby (1980) and Andraxia IV sailing boat, close to Skokholm (1995). LCG no.16 (1943) was a landing craft which, after sinking in heavy seas off St Ann's Head leading to significant loss of life, caused a change in design for future craft.</p> <p>The waters that run outside of Skokholm and inside Grassholm Islands are used by yachtsmen both out on a day-sail or in transit as well as coastal commercial fishing vessels. Fishing comprises of set nets inshore, whelk, lobster and crab potting, drift lining to south and</p>

potential for light otter trawling inshore.

The ferry route between Pembroke Dock and Rosslare crosses the western parts of the area. The St Gowan buoy is located in the area as an important navigational aid to shipping. The area is major part of the Castlemartin firing range and military practice area. There is also a large disused explosives dumping ground parallel to the coast. The area has previously been granted a Round 24 licence for oil and gas to the west of St Ann's Head and future applications may be made.

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

The western fringes of this area have been visited. The area lies between 1km from the coast out to around 12km. The area skirts Skomer and Skokholm close by. It would be expected that there would be a range of influence of landforms. The cliffs and adjacent landform would be apparent as strong elements dominating the view to the west at points decreasing to small elements or a thin line on the horizon only visible in good visibility to the south. The feeling to the west would be engaged with the coast, and with navigational aids around Milford Haven including on St Ann's Head and with the vessels which travel through the area. To the south and east the area would feel more like 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 significantly 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 likelihood of tranquillity and sense of wildness and remoteness in this open sea but this tranquillity will be modified to an extent by frequent views of ferries, commercial vessels and leisure craft to the west and by the MOD range to the east.

#### **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 cultural and spiritual services in respect of a sense of wildness and connectedness with nature, and to the wrecks which are of historical interest within the area.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
<p>The shallow sandy gravel to gravel bar may accrete or migrate through sediment drift.</p> <p>The waters around Skomer Island are designated as one of the new Marine Conservation Zones.</p> <p>The use by tankers has potentially adverse effects which could increase with increased traffic eg LNG.</p> <p>Use by MOD range.</p> <p>Existing and future licences/leases for floating wave energy and offshore wind respectively 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 is 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>The area wraps around Skomer and Skokholm to the west forming an important part of their setting.</p> <p>The area forms part of the unspoilt view from the western and southern coast, including from the Coast Path.</p> <p>Open sea area with unspoilt, simple, consistent and unified marine character at a vast scale and a significant sense of openness and remoteness.</p> <p>Biodiversity designations.</p> <p>Presence of ferries and commercial shipping.</p> <p>Presence of MOD practice range.</p>								