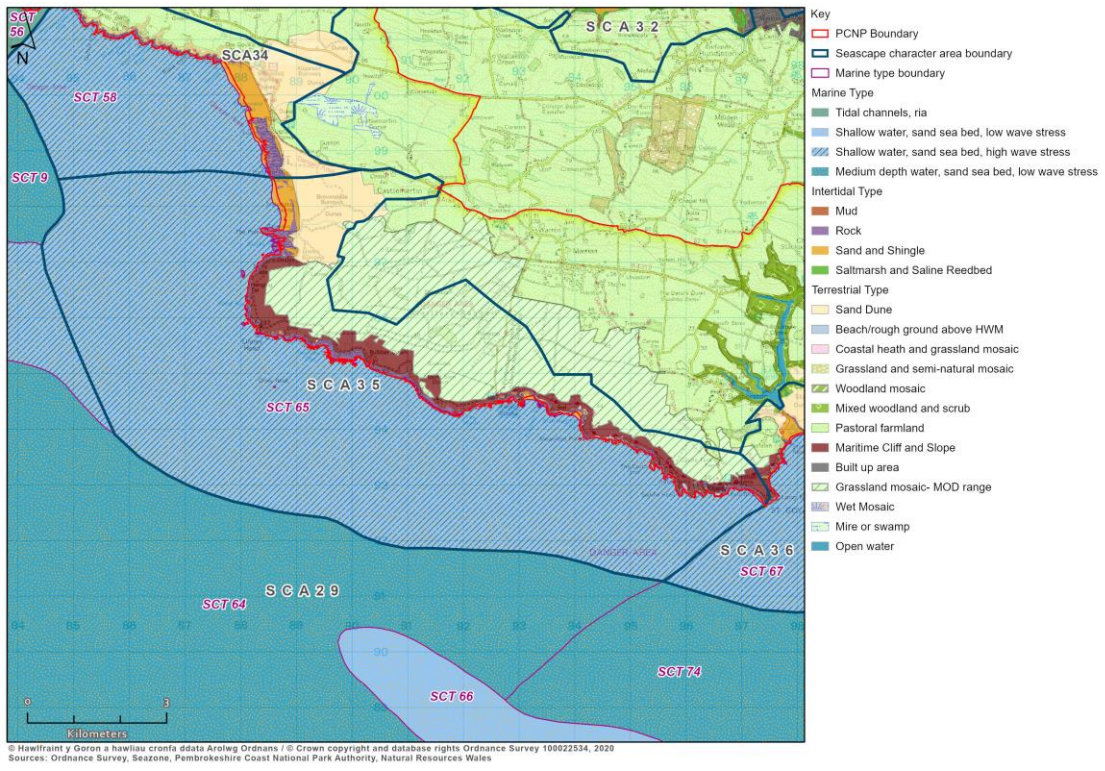


No: **35** Seascape Character Area Name: **Castlemartin coastal waters**



SCA35:Castlemartin coastal waters



St Govan's Head from the west



Looking west from St Govan's Head



St Govan's Chapel with channelled views out to sea



Rocks and arches under limestone cliffs

Summary Description

A remote, rugged coast of vertical limestone cliffs with arches and stacks, highly exposed and with shallow waters. The land area and sea are used as a military practice firing range which reduces tranquillity when in operation and restricts access to the coastal path which has panoramic sea views. The hinterland landform is a gently undulating coastal plateau around 50m AOD with large areas of semi-natural grassland.

Key Characteristics

- A rugged, rocky section of the limestone coast with steep cliffs, arches and stacks and shallow, sometimes treacherous waters.
- Gently undulating coastal plateau around 50m AOD with grassland on an exposed coastal plateau with military firing range
- No settlement
- Panoramic views from St Govan's Head; very wide sea views from other areas
- Access to coastal path and navigation limited by military activity
- Remote, dark, wild coast and tranquil when military range not functioning.
- Sailing and boating is restricted by MOD activity but there are views of tankers to the west

Physical Influences

Rocky headlands (40-50m aod) in east-west striking Carboniferous Limestone, with steep to vertical cliffs 30-40 m high. The south facing, moderately straight rugged coast in well-bedded limestones is indented by small coves (Flimston, Bullslaughter bays) between minor headlands. Spectacular erosional features, such as arches and sea stacks (e.g. Elegug), fringe the coast, and fallen rocks fringe the base of cliffs. The Limestone shows karstic weathering features such as kettle holes and fissures, e.g. at Linney Head. St Govan's Head is a distinctive protruding rectangular point at the southeast headland. Extensive dune fields overlie the Limestone inland of the west coast (Brownslade Burrows, Lipton Burrows). Intertidal areas are dominated by high energy rocky shores beneath limestone cliffs (71%), while inlets have sandy bays (29%). Wind and wave erosion act through corrasion, solution, attrition and hydraulic action.

Sea floor sediment of gravelly sand covers the Limestone, shelving gently to moderately (<10°) offshore in shallow (<30m) waters. Hazardous shallows surround small islets or submerged rocks in the zone <10m depth (e.g. the Toes). The seas are exposed to high wind and wave stress. The tidal stream set west and east can be strong (<4 knots), with rough waters off Crow Rock. The tidal range is 6.6m.

The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC covers the whole marine element of this area and the Skomer,

Skokholm and the seas off Pembrokeshire SPA covers the majority of the area except the north west. The coastal edge itself is covered by the Limestone Coast of South West Wales SAC, the Castlemartin Coast SPA and Castlemartin Cliffs and Dunes SSSI. Semi-natural habitats include dry heathland, sea cliff grassland, neutral grassland, lowland heathland, cliffs, rocky and sandy shores. The area supports numerous birds including peregrine falcon, chough and skylark. Other important species include grey seal, greater horseshoe bat, marsh fritillary, butterfly, and other rare invertebrates.

Management of the area as firing ranges has meant that it has never been subjected to intensive agriculture or development with lack of public access and so supports diverse species.

Cultural influences

A seascape that indicates historic links between early Christianity and the sea but which is also a landscape of military defence, from the promontory forts of the Iron Age to modern times.

Flimston Bay Camp is one of the most spectacular promontory forts of Pembrokeshire, with three lines of curving landward defence, 120m in length, cutting off the eroding and collapsing limestone headland of Flimston Castles. St Govan's chapel is a medieval rebuilding of an early Christian hermit's cell spectacularly located in a cleft between high coastal cliffs. In later medieval times this seascape area fell within the Marcher earldom of Pembroke; remnants of the farms and hamlets settled by French, English and Flemings are evident at Flimston and Pricaston.

Later defensive purposes are evident in the Castlemartin Range, an Army Training Estate established in 1938 and used until 1945 for tank training by the Royal Armoured Corps. It was re-acquired by the War Department in 1948 and pressed back into service due to the Korean War (1950-3). This use has aided archaeological conservation due to the lack of ploughing.

Scheduled monuments include:

PE166 (enclosure): community: Castlemartin

PE167 (promontory fort): community: Angle

PE316 (promontory fort): community: Castlemartin

PE318 (Flimston Bay promontory fort): community: Castlemartin

PE319 (Crocksydam Camp promontory fort): community: Castlemartin

PE320 (Buckspool Down Camp promontory fort): community: Stackpole

PE321 (St Govan's Chapel chapel): community: Stackpole

PE447 (farmstead): community: Castlemartin

PE451 (Pricaston farmstead): community: Castlemartin

PE467 (round barrow): community: Castlemartin

PE469 (deserted medieval village): community: Castlemartin

PE533 (firing range): community: Stackpole (this also falls partly into SCA36)

PE534 (coastal battery): community: Castlemartin

There are around wrecks off the coast, some dangerous, and one, the Ionian, with remnants including boilers, engines and steel plating apparent on the rocky shore. This steamship was sunk by German submarine UC51 in 1917. In 1946 the steamship Nicalaou Virginia was carrying a bulk cargo of grain from Bahia Blanca to Glasgow when it was driven ashore in fog.

This coastline has attracted early tourists and writers from the late 17th century, who were awed by the majestic scenery and ancient sites found along the sea-cliffs.

The coast is in military use at the Castlemartin practice firing range with rural uses to the east and no settlement. The Pembrokeshire Coast Path runs along the eastern half of the coast but access is denied when firing. Walking the Coast path continues to be a major activity. Climbing is a popular sport around the whole of the area's cliffs.

Oil tankers and other freight ships destined for the jetties, terminals and power station in Milford Haven may be visible passing offshore to the west. Sailing and leisure boating from the Haven including Dale may pass by when military operations allow. An anchorage lies at Bullslaughter Bay in the right winds. Kayaking, however, is found around all of this coast and diving is also popular in places.

Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities

This is a large scale, simple and unified landscape, with a rough texture of the cliffs contrasting with the undulating grassland and semi-natural vegetation of the plateau. The coast is highly exposed to south and westerly winds, and the landscape of the hinterland is somewhat bleak and featureless. There is an exhilaration and sense of danger at cliff edge especially when sea is crashing against rocks and stacks and a feeling of wildness.

Key views include from the Coast Path, especially around St Govan's Head and the nearby chapel and from the Elegug Stacks. Views are limited to along this stretch of coast and out to sea. Long views are available on a clear day to Lundy Island and the North Devon coast.

The periodic noise of heavy gunfire is discordant and intrusive but when absent, this feels like a remote, wild and rather tranquil area of the National Park.

Cultural benefits and services

The area contributes towards leisure and recreational services in the form of the coast path, to natural heritage in the form of the dramatic cliffs and nature conservation interest in the coast, sea and firing ranges, to spiritual services in respect of the sense of remoteness and St Govan's Chapel and exposed sea views to south, and to cultural services in respect of the firing range.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
<p>Slow coastal erosion of rocky cliffs. Shoreline management plan states 'Do Nothing'.</p> <p>Management of firing ranges has distinct effect on access and tranquillity of the area, but creates benefits to nature conservation and archaeology.</p> <p>Marine noise pollution from sonars etc.</p> <p>Marine pollution from rubbish.</p> <p>Existing and future licences/leases for floating wave energy and offshore wind respectively in offshore areas could change the character of the area.</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							
	Key		Change occurring in the area affecting the selected special quality					
Key factors to be taken into account when assessing sensitivity to change								
<p>Remote, wild, exposed coastline.</p> <p>Spectacular indented cliffs with numerous features such as arches, stacks and caves.</p> <p>Significant nature conservation and archaeological interest.</p> <p>Openness and sustained sea views, including views on clear day to Lundy Island.</p> <p>Coast Path is a sensitive receptor.</p> <p>Biodiversity, historic and landscape designations.</p> <p>Military range.</p> <p>Commercial shipping and ferries on route to Milford Haven to the west.</p>								