

No: **43** Seascape Character Area Name: **Bristol Channel offshore**



**SCA43: Bristol Channel offshore**



Area over horizon from Pendine Sands in Carmarthen Bay- Rhossili Downs lies to east and Caldey Island to west



Area between coast and Lundy Island on the horizon [to the left] [View from Gower].

Summary Description
<p>The area is located in the middle of the Bristol Channel with a seabed of sand ridges and channels which are dredged. The area is a highly exposed marine environment with distant views to land.</p>
Key Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open sea in the middle of the Bristol Channel with medium depth water between 30 and 60m deep with a seabed of sand ridges and channels perpendicular to the east-west tidal currents.</li> <li>• Generally low wind stress and moderate tide speed.</li> <li>• Few wrecks.</li> <li>• Used for dredging with leisure sailing by larger boats and commercial craft may be visible to the south.</li> <li>• Sea with simple, open characteristics at a vast scale dominated by swell, waves and winds with a sense of remoteness.</li> <li>• The key visible coastal features are Rhossili Down and Lundy and the North Devon coast.</li> <li>• Tranquillity will be reduced by dredging activity.</li> </ul>
Physical Influences
<p>Medium depth water (30-60m), gently south sloping (&lt;1°) sand sea floor with topography of sand ridges/channels perpendicular to the east-west tidal currents of around 2-3knots. Seas exposed to low wave stress. Sediments cover bedrock of Triassic sandstones and halite, cut by east-west faults. Sediment transport in tidal currents, through suspension, traction.</p> <p>Species are mainly sand and bottom dwelling species such as whelks and pelagic species, interrupted by dredging operations. The Bristol Channel SAC grazes the north western edge of the area.</p>
Cultural influences
<p>The area is part of the channel that provides the sea-way to South Wales and to Cornwall and Devon, and that is fed by the Severn and the Avon. It has strong linkages with the maritime trade-routes of western Britain since Prehistory.</p> <p>There are no identified coastal or hinterland features, as within Carmarthen Bay, though the inundated palaeolandscapes of the Bristol Channel may yield evidence for the change from hunter-gatherer societies to communities of settled farmers. Four wrecks are recorded but their identities are uncertain. The Gloriosa fishing vessel sunk in 1917 is one with some degree of certainty.</p> <p>The cultural associations of this seascape character area are made up by the long history of sea-borne trade.</p> <p>Recreational cruising routes for sailing craft cross the area linking Wales [Tenby, Llanstephan and Burry Port] with the north coast of Devon and Cornwall and motor cruisers use the area.</p> <p>Fishing in the area comprises of whelk potting, long lines in patches, and potential for heavy beam and rockhopper trawling offshore and light otter trawling.</p> <p>Dredging licences cover much of the area. The western fringe forms the outer part of the Manorbier military practice and firing danger area.</p>
Aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities
<p>This area lies near the middle of the Bristol Channel, 15km south east of Caldey Island at its closest point, and so the land is only just apparent. The main features will be Rhossili Downs in the Gower to the north and Lundy Island and the North Devon coast to the south. The land will appear as a low single dimensional line on the horizon with simple colours.</p> <p>The sea has a simple, consistent and unified character at a vast scale and a sense of openness,</p>

isolation and exposure. Its qualities are determined entirely by the natural forces of water, through swell and waves, and wind. The area is 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 but there may be occasional views of commercial vessels including dredgers using the area. The use of the area for military exercises and training will severely disrupt tranquillity at times.

**Cultural benefits and services**

The area contributes significantly towards leisure and recreational services in the form of marine recreation ie sailing and motor cruising, to natural heritage in respect of its sense of wildness, and to cultural and spiritual services in the form of the mainly unspoilt sea visible from the sensitive coasts of the Gower and the National Park.

Forces for change								
Summary	Key forces for change							
Ongoing sediment deposition in the area.  Dredging modifying and disturbing seabed.	<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								
Simple, open, wild and remote character with views of South Wales coast and Lundy.  Forms part of the open setting for Carmarthen Bay overlooked by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the Gower AONB contributing to the sense of remoteness and wildness in these areas.  Pembrokeshire and Wales Coast Path as a sensitive receptor overlooking the area at a distance.  Lack of light pollution								

Presence of dredging use reducing tranquillity.