



SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP

RESPONSE FROM THE BOARD TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE ISSUES REPORT FOR THE NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

JUNE 2006

The Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership is preparing a Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan for the Sefton Coast. Work commenced on the development of the strategy in October 2005 and a new document and rolling delivery plan will be prepared by April 2007.

The work follows a step-by-step approach based on best practice throughout Europe for the management planning of protected areas. The main change in these approaches in recent years has been the genuine involvement of a wide range of 'stakeholders' in the management planning process. And also the recognition that people are part of nature and are not apart from it. The Sefton Coast Partnership fully supports the involvement of a wider group of people, including those 'outside' nature conservation, in the development of the coastwide nature conservation strategy.

The strategy will be developed through a participatory process. Although a coordinator has been identified for the work he must ensure that at the end of the process a written strategy and delivery plan has been prepared and is widely owned and shared by stakeholders in as open a way as possible –with no hidden agendas.

A common complaint from those outside the detail of nature conservation policy, but affected by decisions on management, is the use of jargon and scientific language. The Sefton Coast Partnership is aware of these 'gaps' and of the need to be as clear as possible. From the initial consultation we know that we have to outline what we mean by principles, objectives and actions.

However, it must also be remembered that the conservation of nature, as with other aspects of the environment, is covered by national and European policy and legislation and that the UK Government has set targets for the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (the main UK conservation designation) to be reached by 2010. These are challenges which cannot be put to one side and which have to be addressed by individual landowners and by the Sefton Coast Partnership.

The nature conservation strategy will be an easily understood set of principles, in an accessible form, by which the land within the area of the Sefton Coast Partnership can be managed.

Stakeholders are people who are interested in or are affected by the management of the area of the Sefton Coast for which the strategy is being prepared.

The work on the revised strategy was launched with the presentation of an 'Issues Report' at the Sefton Coast Partnership Forum in February 2006. This gave a background to the importance of the coast for nature, the status of protected sites along the coast and the key issues and concerns of conservation land managers. The document (and all others linked to the consultation) is published on the website www.seftoncoast.org.uk/index_consultnature.html

The summary report included a response form. Comments received by 31 March 2006 were collated and presented to the Sefton Coast Partnership Board Meeting of 6 June 2006. The report aggregated the responses to a set of seven questions but added no comment. The Board welcomed the time that people had given to submitting their views and will ensure that the comments are considered in the development of the strategy.

The Board has prepared this response to show how the issues will be addressed in the development of the strategy. The main points raised by individual respondents are presented in Appendix 1 together with a response on how these will be treated in the draft strategy.

The consultation process has also involved a series of Working Groups –on coastal processes, water resources, habitats and species and integrated landscape management. Information on these discussions is also available on the Sefton Coast website. The first phase of consultation will be completed by the end of September 2006 and the results will be reported to the SCP Board at their meeting of 3 October 2006. Progress reports will also be given to Area Committees of Sefton Coast, other relevant Committees and the Cabinet. Following this a draft conservation strategy will be prepared for further stakeholder and public consultation.

In developing management objectives a first step is to establish a degree of rapport amongst stakeholders through sharing information and values about the area. The annual Forum meetings are a useful way of keeping in touch with a wide range of interests. A survey carried out this year (from questionnaires distributed at the Forum) showed that the majority of delegates had been to previous meetings and kept up to date through the Coastlines magazine. These help to provide a sound basis for consultation.

The first set of questions we asked related to perceptions, understanding and concerns.

Q1. What makes the coast important for nature?

The responses emphasised diversity and the special quality of the coastal area;

“Natural habitat, nationally rare habitat, variety of habitats, variety of flora and fauna, wonderful habitat, biodiversity, ideal habitat for coastal sand dune and woodland animals, a safe refuge for the Red Squirrel, the dune system, coniferous

woodlands, beaches and outer marshes providing diverse habitat for species, sea birds, squirrels, sand lizards and natterjack toads etc”

Some response also identified the dynamic nature of the coast;

“The landscape, the changing flora and fungi in the autumn, the dynamic littoral zone, the huge intertidal zone, the channels across the sands, its position, facing west, giving a microclimate that is mild, the distance to the horizon etc.”

The third strand identified the human dimension;

“Access and guardianship, its unique offer –scientific and recreational, appreciated by all, very attractive to humans, the beach and dunes for children, the trees providing safe, shady, walking, shells on the sea shore, birds both on the shore and in the dunes and woods, human cultural influences, an important ‘lung’ for Merseyside, a place for human delight and enjoyment, beautiful woodlands etc.”

The views show that we can to reach some agreement on the natural value of the coast, and the values we place on diversity, the changing aspects of the coast and the pleasure and enjoyment that the natural resources can provide.

Q2. How has the history of land use created the present day coast?

Some responses were detailed and knowledgeable and all recognise that the coastal area has been influenced by management practice and development.

The ‘classic’ influences include;

“Rabbit warrening, fishing, asparagus farming, grazing, tree planting and forestry, development of golf courses, establishment of nature reserves, construction of the docks, building of roads, houses and railway tracks, the development of Southport and tourism, reclaiming of land at Altcar Rifle Range, the alteration of the Alt Mouth, the dredging of the Mersey, sand –winning, tobacco-dumping, the embankments on the Ribble etc.”

There are particular views about the role and value of ‘dune stabilisation’ and the role of both marram grass and trees and scrub in this process. Whilst there is good evidence (quoted in Smith 1999 –The Sands of Time) that dunes would have been present in the area for over 5000 years there is opinion that the dunes are about 200-300 years old, ‘created’ to protect crops and homes. Can both views be right? Yes, in a way, as we know of a long association between local communities and dune management, either to reduce sand-blow or to build out the shoreline (e.g. at Massams Slack).

Comments on this subject include;

“ the most significant event has been the planting of trees to build up the coast and stop wind-blown sand, faggots were used to build up the coast, the dunes are our only sea defence, they are man-made, created by our wise forebears, they planted marram grass and tree shelter belts, the dunes must be preserved and stabilised etc.”

There are a number of views expressed here which would benefit from more focused discussion. For example, whilst we recognise the amenity value of the woodlands and the diversity of scrub habitats are trees any better at fixing sand than marram grass? Do they have a positive effect on the sea defences of the coast?

Other relevant comments on the subject included;

“Many species of flora and fauna are introductions, it is possible that human activities may have contributed to the severe erosion in the Middle Ages, development has raised awareness of the precious nature of the coast, the coast will continue to change, pressures are still on and protection is still required, hard coastal defences are becoming a thing of the past –nature should be allowed to realign itself etc.”

Taken together the comments from respondents show a good local understanding of the history and development of the coastline. One key issue for further discussion would be the history of sand-blow problems on the coast, leading to active dune management policies, the links between this and the later tree planting and the position today.

Q3. What do you think are the opportunities, issues, threats, problems which we should address?

A wide range of topics were suggested by respondents. In the first two questions we were pleased to find much in common in people’s appreciation of the coastal area and in their knowledge of how the present day coast has come about. In Question 3 we asked for specific views and ideas.

In our response the comments are broken down into the key areas of concerns about;

- Climate change, global warming and coastal change (erosion and accretion)
- Access and people’s use of the coast
- Woodland management
- Tourism
- Communication, networking and trust

Climate change, global warming and coastal change

Some felt that such issues are inevitable, that man is not in overall control and nature will decide things for us in the end. Some expressed concern but believe in a technological 'fix' e.g. "coastal erosion is obviously a threat in the future but ongoing research will hopefully address problems before they become too severe". Some want more immediate action e.g. "allowing sand dunes to roll inland is not an option".

The approach proposed to be taken by the Sefton Coast Partnership is to continue to support the monitoring of coastal change, to take advice from national and regional climate change models and to adopt a flexible approach to allow for any future need for adaptation. The current proposal by the National Trust at Formby Point to relocate the seaward car park before it succumbs to predicted erosion is a good example of how one partner can take action to reduce problems in the future. This type of pragmatic approach is not new –Formby Golf Club relocated a number of holes in the early 1970s in advance of erosion.

Access and people's use of the coast

The pattern of landownership on the Sefton Coast creates a useful series of zones from the busy 'gateway' sites, to quieter nature reserves and restricted access areas. In general there is support for the current situation and some concern about the potential to over-exploit the coastal zone.

Comments were "that some areas of the coast should remain no-go areas for the public to protect the flora and fauna, on nature reserves dogs should be restrained (and that dog-fouling is awful), increased tourism could be an opportunity as well as a threat, the extensive publicity given to the Red Squirrel at Victoria Road has put enormous pressure on the area, concerns about increased traffic, the challenges of conservation and access need to be met, there is a need for Field Studies/ Visitor Centres."

Management of the Sefton Coast is primarily an issue of balancing access and conservation. This has been at the heart of the work of the partnership since its inception in the late 1970s and will continue to be a focus of our work. When the balance is set well and maintained there can be opportunities for the promotion of eco-tourism initiatives.

Woodland Management

The Sefton Coast Partnership inherited long-term objectives for the conservation and regeneration of the woodland resources of the Sefton Coast. With the assistance of the Mersey Forest team and the Forestry Commission the current Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan was developed to coordinate the management of the woodlands. The plan involves 23 landowners in a programme of thinning, felling and replanting to ensure the continuity of woodland cover especially as a habitat for Red Squirrel.

Woodland issues have been sensitive in the local community as a consequence of English Nature's decision to remove some 22.4 ha of 'frontal woodland' on the Ainsdale Sand

Dunes NNR (within an area of 44.5 ha). A number of comments specifically oppose this action.

Some comments are sceptical of the ‘management’ of woodlands: “more and more trees are being cut down. Where are new trees being planted to increase the size of the woodland habitat for a , hopefully, increasing Red Squirrel population?”. Although a number of respondents show their concern about “the destruction of the pinewoods” and “a lack of trees and scrubs” there are other opinions which support “the removal of pine woods to dune restoration through to broad-leaved woodland climax community to allow natural succession”.

The balance between woodlands and open habitat on the Sefton Coast will be addressed through the principles of nature conservation strategy working closely with all interests. As well as the priorities within the Forest Plan for the conservation of the Red Squirrel (favoured through the planting of pines) we have to consider the natural succession of dune scrub to dune woodland and other important woodland habitat such as wet woodland. We need to develop a better understanding of what scrub and woodland types would be natural to the Sefton Coast and ensure that examples of such habitats are conserved.

Tourism

Although partly covered under access there is an important difference in that tourism is an activity which benefits from both the natural value of the coast and also the access infrastructure. There are mixed views about the potential positive and negative aspects of tourism. One comment showed concern that a ‘nature programme’ may be irrelevant to larger economic and social programmes, especially national programmes.

The encouragement of visitors to the coast need not be detrimental to the natural value of the area and can bring economic benefits to Southport and the Borough as a whole. The Sefton Coast Partnership has considered aspects of tourism through its Communications, Interpretation and Product Development (CIPD) Strategy and linkages between this and the nature conservation strategy will be identified.

Communication, networking and trust

There is good support for networking, an increasing role for communities and for supporting the public’s interest in nature. However, on the other side, there are suspicions about the intentions of nature conservation managers, especially English Nature, following public disquiet over tree-removal at Ainsdale. Communication is important and there is support for what is done –although more could be done through the local press, workshops and field visits.

The Sefton Coast Partnership will continue to listen to concerns about communication, networking and trust and will seek the support of local communities in developing the best responses.

Principles

The second section of the questionnaire asked for comments on the set of six principles outlined at the Forum and in the reports. The response from the Sefton Coast Partnership Board is given under each paragraph.

The six principles were presented as;

1. A coastwide approach: To adopt an ‘ecosystems approach’ to nature conservation – looking at the beaches, saltmarshes and dunes and the processes acting on them as a system rather than a set of individual habitats and species. To understand the issues and threats by looking at this system in its wider regional, national and international context.

2. Working with nature-adaptability: To work with the grain of nature, allowing nature to take its course wherever possible and desirable and to manage positively for this. To manage for the long term, in the context of predicted climate change and other environmental influences. To accept that, in some cases, habitats and species will be lost, changed or replaced over time.

3. Working with coastal processes –a dynamic approach: To conserve active processes by non-intervention as far as possible, accepting coastal change and providing space for natural adaptation. We recognise that some constraints to this approach may be set by conservation objectives where priority habitats and species require in-situ conservation or by over-riding socio-economic needs.

4. Active management –continuity: To conserve the important habitats of the coast through active, adaptive and sustainable management of the marshes, heaths, fixed dunes and woodlands. To understand the cultural value of semi-natural habitats.

5. Restoration: To identify opportunities for the restoration of processes, natural hydrology, habitats and species, acting to reduce the impacts of fragmentation and providing corridors for the movement of habitats and species.

6. Involvement: To involve local communities in developing solutions to conservation challenges. To share information on the state of nature. To support partners’ in the dissemination of information about their coastal policies. To promote nature as a source of inspiration, enjoyment and learning for local people, visitors and wildlife specialists.

Q4. Do you think our set of principles about right?

Most respondents agreed. There is a good level of support for working coastwide, networking, communication and use of forums. There is also support for countering the problems of fragmentation. But less understanding of what may be meant by ‘restoration’. The following additional comments were made;

“managing the coast is becoming too bureaucratic and involving too many people”
“the public will not tolerate any further dune restoration”
“too much emphasis on species and habitats and confused messages ‘allowing nature to take its course’ and ‘manage for the long term’”
“you should stop using jargon ..and publish in all local papers”
“a coastwide approach may...be right provided that English Nature ..is not allowed to take control of the whole coastal policy”
“the opportunities for discussion and consultation are inadequate”
“there should be a balance between tourism and conservation”

Response from the Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership

The Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership confirmed its support for the ‘principles’ at its meeting on 6 June 2006. These are good building blocks for the strategy but it is also recognised that we have to be clear in developing our objectives based on these principles.

The Sefton Coast Partnership promotes a coastwide approach to all matters affecting the use and management of the area. With the large number of land-owners and interests involved it is difficult not to appear ‘bureaucratic’ at times. The Partnership, however, is a voluntary organisation and accepts a wide range of views –it is not proposing that there be a single management body for the coast.

English Nature is the Government adviser on nature conservation and is responsible for assessing the condition of statutory sites (against nationally determined criteria) , and for providing advice and guidance to landowners on nature conservation matters. It is also a landowning body with three National Nature Reserves wholly or partly within the Sefton Coast area. Whilst English Nature can advise on management issues it does not ‘take control’ of the nature conservation strategy –but will support the preparation and delivery of coastwide conservation programmes. English Nature, for example, is only one of several ‘relevant authorities’ (others include Sefton Council, Environment Agency and North West Water) which have statutory responsibilities for nature conservation across the Ribble and Alt Estuaries European marine site.

Aspects of eco-tourism will be addressed in the nature conservation strategy.

As part of the developing nature conservation strategy we will address the need to improve communication and means to involve local communities. This will help to address the perception of ‘confused messages’ by expanding what we mean under the principles using clear language.

There are several aspects of conservation management which cannot avoid using ‘jargon’ –but most of this can be dealt with by the land managers who have to understand their duties under legislation etc. Public communication will try to avoid jargon –but will allow access to the detailed information through, e.g. the website.

Q5. Do you think we have missed anything?

About half the respondents felt that most issues had been covered. The main ‘omissions’ which will be addressed in the draft strategy are public access and tourism.

There is some feeling that the nature conservation strategy is about ‘privileged access only’ rather than allowing people ‘to see for themselves’.

There are questions raised by the term ‘restoration’. “Restoration to what?”. Suggested that “it would be better to identify the need/targets (e.g. of SSSI) and the principle should be to prioritise and direct work towards optimisation of these goals.”

There is also concern that the principles do not refer to the stabilisation of the dunes as a sea defence and the role played by marram grass, scrub and woodland.

Response from the Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership

Links will be developed between the coastwide strategies for nature, access and tourism. There is no question of ‘privilege’ in access to nature –but we recognise that the Sefton Coast appeals to a wide range of people interested in ‘nature’ from specialists to bird watchers, rambblers to botanists. Some of the eco-tourism initiatives will target these groups. But we also respect the simple joy of being in natural surroundings without pressure. Visitors can ‘see for themselves’. Nature is not just for ‘experts’ but we also want to encourage people with such skills to help with recording work on the coast.

There is a perception, which we will have to support with evidence, that the dune system is becoming more stable than, e.g. 20-30 years ago, and, in the long term, this could be detrimental to biodiversity. It may be possible to allow more mobile dunes on the coast but not in a way which would threaten coastal defences. The Sefton Coast Partnership has combined its discussion on nature conservation with those on coast defence (shoreline management) so that we keep a close link between ‘nature’ and ‘sea defence’. The value of scrub and woodlands in sea defence will be further studied.

The points raised about restoration are valid and the Sefton Coast Partnership will encourage landowners to follow a step-by-step approach for any restoration projects. These should identify the problem (e.g. failure to meet condition of SSSI), assess reasons and select management options linked to monitoring so that we can check in e.g. 5 years whether the assumptions were correct.

Q6. Please give us your views on the principles

A wide range of views were given. Some are already covered, such as;

- Support for a coastwide approach

- Ensuring that nature is accessible to all –not a perceived as for an exclusive minority
- Ensuring sufficient controls to identify and manage any problems with over-use for recreation
- Making links between nature and tourism
- Involving the community in any major changes
- Importance of long term effects such as global warming and sea level rise

There are elements of the principles which will need more discussion and clarification – this will be a focus of development of the strategy.

More information is required on the use of terms such as ‘adaptation’, ‘non-intervention’, ‘active management’ and ‘restoration’. Actions to restore habitats or recover the populations of species need to well explained. There is also a question as to whether some restoration is feasible, e.g. restoration of natural hydrological processes.

There is a need, in particular, for more discussion on coastal processes, bare sand, management of mobile dunes, sea defence etc.

Response from the Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership

The principles are useful concepts to help guide discussion. They help to break down the strategy into a number of components, each of which can be elaborated and developed as new information is added.

Actions for nature conservation should follow the broad guidance of the principles. The principles, themselves, will also have a degree of flexibility. For example, our need to allow for (or to plan for) adaptation in the face of predicted climate change is still uncertain and is based on research and modelling. We do not know, for example, whether these changes may reduce or increase the biodiversity of the coast –but it is important to consider potential long term changes.

An area of particular need for communication is information on coastal processes. This was also brought out in the Working Group discussions. The Sefton Coast Partnership and Sefton Council Technical Services Department, are already collating such information with a view to providing regular reports.

The strategy will make the distinction between management for nature which aims to establish and maintain long term actions such as grazing and those which require short term interventions through restoration action. Guidelines for the development of future restoration projects will be included in the strategy.

Q7. Outcomes

The ‘outcomes’ proposed in our consultation were;

- The delivery of a coordinated programme of action for biodiversity for the Sefton Coast, which will,
- Confirm and meet relevant national and local targets for habitat and species conservation;
- A stronger partnership with an agreed, and widely understood, set of principles for nature conservation;
- A set of clear objectives for nature conservation –supporting a rolling delivery plan;
- Greater public interest and involvement in nature conservation issues; and
- Better support to a nature conservation ‘community of interest’ –the amateur naturalists, specialists and scientists

There was generally support for these proposed outcomes with additional comments;

“Nature conservation integrated at the earliest opportunity into other development proposals, e.g. transport, industry and housing”

“That the environment is always put first”

“Reference to access strategy”

“Grants to be channelled into the private sector”

“Very limited thinning of the woods and not clear felling”

“Important that nature conservation does not detract from other leisure uses and vice versa”

“Areas of woodland and dune to be maintained and increased by positive intervention to prevent a continual retreat”

“Evidence for procuring strategic funding for nature conservation”

Response from the Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership

The outcomes for the nature conservation strategy will be developed in partnership with members of the Sefton Coast Partnership and community interests. Outcomes are a partnership activity and their success will depend on cooperative working within the partnership, at site level and within the community.

Part of the process of developing the strategy will be to confirm the relevant national and local targets for habitat and species conservation. Landowners on the Sefton Coast do not have a free hand in their management activity –most of this land lies within the Sefton Coast and Ribble Estuary Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Guidance on the quality of habitat (what is ‘good’ and what is ‘unfavourable’) is derived from UK scientific advice. This is delivered in England through English Nature who set ‘conservation objectives’ for the special sites. Understanding our responsibilities for nature is an important aspect of the strategy.

Beyond this, however, are many opportunities to enhance conservation value, to work with local communities and volunteers and to work outside the main designated sites.

Conservation designations present a challenge for land managers but do not stop other land uses such as golf, military activity, recreation etc. Opportunities to support private landowners through grants etc will be pursued through the delivery plan.

The nature conservation strategy will be integrated with Sefton’s Community Strategy and the Sefton Coast Partnership Business Plan. Links will be made to other ‘development’ plans including land use, access and tourism.

The nature conservation strategy embraces certain aspects of the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan. The woodlands and woodland management are part of nature and the long term planning for continuity of woodland habitat will be integrated with that for dunes and heaths.

Overall summary of response to consultation (individual responses are given in Appendix 1)

Issue raised in consultation	How this will be addressed in the preparation of the strategy
Importance of access	The nature conservation strategy will be linked to the coastwide access strategy. The links will be explained in the draft strategy and in future consultation. In particular the nature conservation strategy will address ‘accessible nature’ supporting other access work linked to Gateway projects and long-distance paths.
Value of tourism	The nature conservation strategy will be linked to the Communication, Interpretation and Product Development Strategy. It will develop the particular theme of ‘eco-tourism’ and advise on the marketing of the natural values of the coast. Concerns about potential over-use of some areas of the coast will be addressed through monitoring.
Communication	Communication will be a key element of the strategy. Proposals for improving communication and the dissemination of information will be developed following discussions with local community groups, volunteers and land managers. There are no formal proposals at present.
Need for information and knowledge	There will be an ongoing process of collecting and analysing knowledge from science and practical experience. We will

	identify subject areas of particular concern to local communities, e.g. coastal change, and ensure that there is good opportunity for discussion.
Definition of terms such as 'restoration'	The terms used in the draft principles will be elaborated in the draft strategy to give a clearer definition of their subject and scope, using examples.
Avoiding the use of jargon	We will endeavour to avoid technical terms wherever possible in the main strategy. There are issues, however, concerning statutory duties and Government targets which affect landowners which are technical by nature. Such information will be presented either in annexes or be available on the website.
Funding opportunities	The draft strategy and delivery plan will outline some of the potential funding for conservation bodies and private landowners.

Appendix 1: Summary of individual comments and SCP response

<p>Respondent: Pauline Michell</p> <p>Summary of comments: Supportive of draft principles. Issues to be addressed include dog fouling on nature reserves. Supports control of grey squirrels but also removal of pinewoods and restoration of dunes and succession to broad-leaved woodland. Supportive of proposed outcomes.</p> <p>How these will be addressed in draft strategy: Strategy will encourage access to nature but will recognise the problems that can be caused by dog-fouling, disturbance and overuse The strategy will support the elements of the work programme of the Forest Plan which focus on the conservation of the red squirrel, recognising that this must be in addition to effective control of grey squirrel and cannot succeed on its own The strategy will encourage the conservation of all elements of the natural dune landscape, from open dunes, through dune scrub and native woodland. The identification of areas of 'dune woodland' will be considered.</p>
<p>Respondent: Mr D Willis</p> <p>Summary of comments: Supportive of principles, especially the ecosystems approach and involvement of people, but suggests that 'restoration' be more clearly defined. Concerned that nature conservation may be adversely affected by socio-economic programmes, such as tourism and housing needs. Wants to see nature conservation incorporated into other development proposals.</p> <p>How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The nature conservation strategy will be supported by the Sefton Community Strategy, and will be linked to key elements of Sefton's Corporate Plan. Links will be addressed. Guidelines for restoration projects will be developed in the strategy. Objectives for restoration must be based on the identification of a problem and an analysis of the possible reasons.</p>
<p>Respondent: Rachael Parks</p> <p>Summary of comments: Supportive of principles, especially taking a coastwide approach, and allowing nature to play its part in shaping the coast. Recognising that management is necessary in certain areas to maintain the variety of habitats. Community involvement is vital. Some areas of the coast should remain restricted to visitors to protect wildlife, and to reduce disturbance by dogs. Coast erosion may be a future problem.</p> <p>How these will be addressed in draft strategy: Strategy will encourage access to nature but will recognise the problems that can be caused by dog-fouling, disturbance and overuse. Zoning of recreational use is important. The draft strategy will outline proposals for improving communication about nature and the involvement of local communities in discussions about conservation management The strategy will use predicted coastal changes (erosion and accretion) to assess the broad consequences for habitats and species. The economic, social and environmental implications of coastal change are addressed through Shoreline Management Plan which sets out the coast defence policy for the period of the plan. SMPs are reviewed at regular intervals.</p>
<p>Respondent: Zoë Freeman</p> <p>Summary of comments: Supportive of principles. Concerned about long term effects of sea-level rise. Networking with other coastal groups is important. The use of the environment must be sustainable.</p>

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The strategy will take into consideration advice from the UK Climate Impacts Programme on the potential consequences of sea level rise and global warming. The engineering response to this information will be through the Shoreline Management Process.

Networking between a range of interests (from resource planners to naturalists) is important and will be encouraged. Potential funding sources will be identified.

Respondent: Alan Hollway –Sefton Coastwatch

Summary of comments: Supportive of coastal approach, working with nature and countering fragmentation but not the English Nature dune restoration project. Considers that coastal management is becoming too bureaucratic. Argues need to retain Sea Buckthorn on 'front line of coast' for dune stabilisation and additional food for Red Squirrel. There needs also to be more involvement with the public. Considers that it is vital to retain the trees and shrubs in the frontal woods, particularly on eroding sections. Allowing sand dunes to roll inland is not an option due to high value of hinterland. Considers that more woodland is necessary to secure a genetically sound population of Red Squirrels. Would like to see English Nature's criteria for monitoring the condition of protected sites.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The issue concerning the value of scrub and woodland in coastal protection has been identified and will be addressed through further discussion with local communities.

The draft strategy will outline proposals for improving communication about nature and the involvement of local communities in discussions about conservation management

English Nature's criteria for monitoring condition and setting conservation objectives will be confirmed and referenced in the strategy

The Sefton Coast Partnership does aim to simplify communication between partners and the strategy is not intended to create additional work for individual landowners.

The strategy will continue the core and buffer zone approach as set out in the 1999 Nature Conservation Strategy. To try to meet the desire for more dune and woodland habitat it may be necessary to look outside the protected sites (i.e. inland of the current coastal zone)

Respondent: Arthur Bowling

Summary of comments: Supportive of principles, especially the involvement of volunteers, community and networking. Argues for stronger partnerships, to include education links, public interest and volunteers

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The draft strategy will outline proposals for improving communication about nature and the involvement of local communities in discussions about conservation management. Lifelong learning opportunities will also be considered.

Respondent: Councillor Tony Brough –Sefton Council /Ainsdale Civic Society

Summary of comments: Considers that there is too much emphasis on species and habitat and confused messages about management. Argues that the strategy should reflect the wider interest of the public and that there should be greater access for the public –not privileged access.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The strategy will elaborate on the principles to describe what is meant by management and non-intervention

The interest of the general public will be central to the strategy –for information, access and enjoyment. A layman's guide to the strategy will be produced to explain the main objectives.

Clear links will be made to the coastal access strategy through objectives for 'accessible nature' and there will also be support for eco-tourism initiatives such as Sefton's Natural Coast.

Respondent: Peter Thornton

Summary of comments: Asks whether we can address problems such as climate change, global warming and erosion – and considers that nature will determine the outcome. Considers that funding should be channelled to private landowners and farmers. Considers that the cost of preparing strategies and plans is not justified and that they are not useful.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: Possible adaptations to the inevitable consequences of some natural processes will be considered in the strategy and the principle of doing so will be established.

The strategy will seek to identify potential funding to private landowners and farmers principally through the Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment schemes.

The strategy will be a means of coordinating action and funding projects. It is not intended to be a desk-exercise with no planned delivery.

Respondent: Les Jarvis

Summary of comments: Supports principles as described. Concerned about sand-winning.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The strategy will not take a lead on the issue of sand-winning. This will be addressed through the Shoreline Management Plan process involving Sefton Council's Technical Services Department.

Respondent: Ginny Willis

Summary of comments: Supportive of principles. Concerned about increasing tourism –a potential opportunity but also a potential threat. Questions whether it would be possible to restore natural hydrology and processes.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The strategy will address the links between tourism and the natural value of the coast. It will give particular attention to eco-tourism, whilst being aware of the need to ensure that the use of the coast does not damage its intrinsic value. The restoration of hydrology or dune-forming processes may be difficult –the strategy will propose an approach which tries to understand the reasons for problems (e.g. drainage) before developing solutions.

Respondent: Shirley Childs

Summary of comments: Does not agree with the set of principles. Requests that communication be free of 'jargon', clear and simple and published regularly in local papers. Considers that there should be public access to Sefton Coast Partnership meetings (as was case with Steering Group of former Sefton Coast Management Scheme) and that annual Forum is simply public relations and a waste of public taxes. Suspicious of the operation of the SCP in developing plans 'in private'. Considers that SCP is in 'cahoots' with English Nature and also strongly opposes 'clear felling' of woods.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The main strategy will be presented in clear language –supported by technical information as required. The SCP is aware of the need to increase its activities on communication –the views of local community interests are being canvassed as part of the current work.

The Sefton Coast Partnership evolved from the Council-led Sefton Coast Management Scheme to a broader partnership of interests. The annual Forum and Coastlines magazine are generally well-received as means of keeping a wide range of people informed. The strategy will consider options for improving consultation on nature conservation issues (perhaps in a way similar to the Beach Consultation Group).

Plans are not developed in private –the views of a wide range of stakeholders help to develop the

objectives.

The strategy will provide a framework for the future protection and management of the nature of the Sefton Coast. The statutory duties of English Nature (as the Government's adviser on nature conservation) will be explained in the strategy as will the responsibilities of Sefton Council and other landowners. English Nature, as a landowner, should set any future dune restoration proposals in the context of the coast as a whole.

Respondent: Peter Lucas

Summary of comments: Generally agrees with principles. Notes that 'principles' have been described differently in summary report and hand-out for Forum (and prefers latter). Some concern expressed about amount of 'bare sand' and the need to retain scrub for its landscape value. Supports the zoning of access and visitor pressure and considers that some areas (National Trust) are under enormous pressure. Questions the term 'restoration' –restoration to what? Argues that it is important that the 'general public' are given access to nature –and does not want to see the exclusivity of the National Nature Reserve extended. Argues for need for a genuine integration of nature with other uses of the area.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The additional information on 'principles' was included in the Forum notes to elaborate rather than replace the principles. It is recognised, however, that people want to see an interpretation of the principles, e.g. restoration, and terms more clearly explained. This will be included in the strategy.

Nature conservation will be closely linked to access and zoning –and the links shown in the strategy.

The strategy will not make nature 'exclusive'. Quite the opposite –it will identify the opportunities for people to experience more nature, without pressure. The strategy will also seek to encourage more involvement by people in nature conservation –through practical actions, recording etc.

Respondent: Dr R A Yorke and Mrs B Yorke MBE Formby Civic Society

Summary of comments: Supportive of the principles. Comment that the frontal dunes also need active management linked to the potential effects of increasing visitor numbers. Propose that there is a need for a better understanding of hydrology and the conservation of wet slacks. Suggest that there is a need for a field centre / visitor centre where information can be assembled.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The need for more information and discussion on dune management has been identified –this will be included in the strategy.

The strategy will identify the information and research required to improve our understanding of the dune aquifer and the conservation of wet slacks (40% of the England total area).

The nature conservation strategy, when linked to the strategies for access and interpretation should help to develop a case for venues where visitors can find out more about coastal wildlife.

Respondent: Rev Derek Bowker

Summary of comments: Would support a coastwide approach provided that English Nature does not take control of the whole coastal policy. Strongly opposed to further removal of trees at Ainsdale NNR and argues that the woods, along with scrub, stabilise the dunes (which are the sea defence). Argues for an increase in woodland cover and an increase in of dunes by positive intervention. Suggests that stabilisation of the dunes should be a high priority linked to no further sand-winning. Suspicious of consultation process, fearing that decisions may already have been made, and that SCP is a 'front organisation' for English Nature.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The strategy will be developed by the Sefton Coast Partnership and will take a long-term view of the steps necessary to maintain the nature conservation value of the coast. It will include the policies to maintain the value of coastal

woodlands especially as a habitat for Red Squirrel but will recognise, accepting coastal change predictions to 2050, that part of the frontal woodland habitat will become unsuitable. Long-term woodland management must also look landwards of the 'rear' woodlands.

The history of dune management and an assessment of the role of woodland and scrub in stabilisation and sea defence will be identified as an area for further discussion.

Decisions on the strategy have not already been made and the SCP is engaging in a genuine consultation process –many of the issues raised in consultation will be addressed in the strategy.

Respondent: John Mulliner –Southport Shore Interest Group

Summary of comments: Generally supportive but considers that the opportunities for discussion and consultation have been inadequate –suggests greater involvement of the media, workshops, field visits, Coastlines magazine. Argues that there needs to be a balance between tourism and conservation. Asks that terms used, e.g. non-intervention' be better explained. Concerned about increasing pressures –from traffic, housing, demands for water.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The SCP Board welcomes suggestions for improving communication and will further develop these at the next consultation phase.

The strategy will develop links between nature conservation and tourism –especially how to support eco-tourism through initiatives such as Sefton's Natural Coast.

Terminology will be better explained in the strategy, with reference to examples.

Increasing pressures are a concern –some of these will be identified in the 50 year vision, but others remain generally outside the influence of the SCP

Respondent: Andrew Hall –Sefton Planning Department

Summary of comments: Supportive of principles-suggests a bolder approach to promote public access and interpretation in harmony with nature conservation (this may come about partly with change from English Nature to Natural England).

Considers that key issues are developing links with stakeholders, adaptable management plans (for e.g. climate change), securing funding, and developing monitoring systems.

How these will be addressed in draft strategy: The change from English Nature (conservation) to Natural England (conservation, access, agri-environment) in October 2006 will be significant for the strategy and by publishing a strategy in March 2007 the changes can be included.

The strategy will be linked to the networks within Sefton which support stakeholder involvement (e.g. Community Strategy)

The strategy will identify the most appropriate funding streams for elements of the work and will assist land managers and communities with applications.