

**Sefton Coast Partnership  
Nature Conservation Strategy**

**Working Group: Integrated landscape management**

**4 May 2006**

Present:

Dave McAleavy	Sefton Council Leisure Services (chair)
Andrew Brockbank	National Trust (leader)
Rachel Northover	Sefton, Leisure Services (notes)
Janette Gazzard	English Nature
Philip Smith	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Rachael Parks	Red Alert
John Houston	Sefton Coast Partnership
Nick Roche	The Mersey Forest
John Gramauskas	Sefton Council, Leisure Services
Cathy Elwin	Mersey Waterfront
John Mulliner	Southport Shore Interest Group
Alan Burton	Formby Civic Society
Ken Lamb	Representing various groups
Chris Bennett	Merseyside EAS
Reg Yorke	Formby Civic Society
Jen Lewis	Archaeology and History Task Group, SCP
Ray Derricot	Formby Civic Society
Cynthia Johnson	Sefton Council, Councillor, Church Ward
Peter Cushion	Sefton Council, Planning
Reg Clappison	Sefton Council, Leisure Services

Main Issues discussed

**Will financial constraints limit the plan?**

A 20 to 50 year plan was welcomed.

It was felt by some that Mersey Waterfront Regional Park had not delivered the funding promised. This was rebuked but accepted that funding for infrastructure improvements is easier to access than for pure nature conservation projects which are regarded more as recurring management. Mersey Waterfront, however, is working on a spatial plan ( a strategic framework) which may look at these gaps and at the areas with no regular management, e.g. Hightown Meadows..

Also noted that funding streams generally require match – usually 50% and that some funding sources are coming to an end, e.g. Objective 1(ERDF) projects which need to be committed by December 2006.

Funding for nature is often aimed at the new, different or experimental, rather than for long term management. English Nature's future funding sources are unknown until the change to Natural England is completed.

There may be more funding in the future through agri-environment schemes. Environmental Stewardship is the main fund and land in Sefton has been registered as 'agricultural'. Nationally the Rural Development Service is looking at the eligibility of Local Authorities to join the 'higher level scheme' which targets conservation management.

#### Conclusions of discussion:

- Investment in nature is essential
- There is more likely to be opposition to new projects such as restoration projects
- Agricultural subsidies are becoming more important
- There is a need to look at resources, investment and contingency requirements over long periods (perhaps up to 50 years).

#### **Developing the objectives**

Organising the plan along the lines of the Forest Plan into short term objectives (achievable goals), working towards medium and long term objectives – more aspirational (vision), with 1-5 year management plans in place.

Coast Management Plan is the overarching document covering Access, Tourism and Nature Conservation Strategies. This will be regularly updated.

#### Conclusion of discussion:

- Proposed that the overall Coast Management Plan be deferred until the Nature Conservation Strategy is finalised. SCP Board, however, agreed to publish the Coast Management Plan as a web-based document subject to annual review. Additional information can be added in 2007.

#### **Archaeological, historical and cultural significance**

Calls for this to be strengthened within the principles. Nature Conservation activities may well impact on this. Nature conservation includes geomorphology and soils, therefore should be conserved for own sake, so this is not onerous to the Nature Conservation Strategy.

A good deal of knowledge rests with individuals. This needs to be captured for future generations.

#### Conclusion of discussion:

- An archaeological database is being developed, which should help managers identify potential conflicts.
- There needs to be further research into archaeology and ancient landscapes.

- Coherent data collection and archiving is required.

### **Tourism and increased recreation pressure**

Concern that this is a new factor in the mix – being promoted strongly through the tourism strategy. £40 000 is being invested in promoting the coast as a destination - this is not really new money, just a re-organisation of the marketing budget.

There is a shift in land use away from historical practices to recreation.

Recreation brings negative aspects such as dog fouling and erosion of peace and quiet. Dog fouling is mainly a local issue.

Public pressure is not necessarily bad for nature.

What is the carrying capacity of the coast? This is a data issue. New recreational uses are appearing all the time and this will always be the case. The question is of managing this actively.

Should limits be set on growth? Current tourism and access strategies are not looking to increase numbers just to change how they use the coast or alter the profile of users e.g. to include more disabled users. But improved accessibility will in itself attract more visitors without promotion.

The recreational experience itself for some visitors could suffer if some sites become busier.

Residents who have paid a premium to live in these areas may find their quality of life damaged by increased visitors.

Felt that recreation and amenity has to be built into nature conservation as a principle.

### Conclusion of discussions:

- Need to manage the recreational impact. Partly by linking to education. Requires support from the community.
- There is a responsibility on us to give everyone a chance to enjoy nature. Also the proven influence of contact with nature on health and well-being.
- Requires more monitoring and data collection. Ensure the linkages are in place to cross reference with access and tourism strategies and mechanisms to control marketing.
- Support for English Nature and Sefton Council for keeping tranquil sites. Also new opportunities such as Freshfield Dune Heath and Ribble / Alt estuaries.

### **Strengthening links with local communities and consultation**

Need to engage people in the more controversial issues such as climate change, roll-back, loss and gain, dynamic coast. Use of words should be considered carefully – ‘restoration’ – to what? Not necessarily the most appropriate word. ‘De-stabilisation’ – these terms need to be understood in the right context by the general public.

If the ‘gateways’ are successful these will require staffing and maintenance. Should local taxpayers fund these facilities?

Visitors need to be encouraged to part with money. Hence need to look at tourism to help support management. Also local politicians need to be convinced of the need to press for resources for nature conservation

Conclusion of discussions:

- Present plans visually– map based is most appropriate.
- Dissemination of information: portals / gateways where this can happen are being considered through Gateway Strategy.
- Look at ensuring income generated e.g. from car parks goes into nature conservation. However, remember, it is a statutory duty to manage the natural environment.

**Co-management of sites**

Suggestion that sites could be managed in a more integrated way amongst the partners e.g. Cabin Hill and Ravenmeols, Hightown beach and dunes / meadows. More sharing of resources, equipment.

There also needs to be greater trust in the land managers by the local community,

Conclusion of discussions:

- Sort out land ownership issues at Hightown.
- Ensure Local Nature Reserve extensions are progressed