

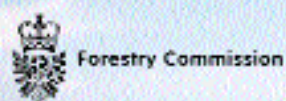


**SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP  
SEFTON COAST MANAGEMENT SCHEME**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2001**

Design by the Graphics Unit within Sefton Planning  
0988 9 02

Southport Pier Trust



Birkdale Civic Society  
In partnership with The Civic Trust for the North West



Selton Council 

# SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP

## SEFTON COAST MANAGEMENT SCHEME

### ANNUAL REPORT 2001

*“Our vision is for the Sefton Coast to be managed to ensure the conservation of one of the most important coastal areas in Europe for nature while being an asset to the local economy and providing a much needed area for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Specifically, we accept the joint responsibility to ensure that the integrity and natural value of the dune system and estuaries is protected in perpetuity as one of the series of European nature sites.”*  
(Coast Management Plan Vision Statement 1997)

# INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period January to December 2001. It is a summary of the key achievements of the past year and sets targets for the coming year. Performance against targets set for 2001 is set out in Table 1 with comments.

The Sefton Coast Management Plan (2nd review) is the framework within which the Board works towards sustainable management of the coast. The plan encourages partnership working and is a non-statutory plan which is intended to guide rather than constrain landowners and managers. The Plan contains a detailed work programme with objectives and outputs. The Annual Report is set within the framework of this work programme.

The Coast Management Plan covers the coastline within Sefton, including beaches and intertidal areas and inland to the fringes of the dune belt and marshland, that is, the majority of the open coastal area.

In 2001 the Sefton Coast Partnership took over formally from the Sefton Coast Management Scheme after the Forum in January 2001. New partners who "signed up" at that Forum have joined, providing a broader base for the Partnership, and the mechanics of setting up the new Board and Task Groups.

Through its membership of PISCES (Partnership of Irish Seas Coast and Estuary Strategies) the Partnership has contributed to coastal policy in Regional Planning Guidance. The Coast Management Scheme has guided policies in the review of Sefton's Unitary Development Plan which will be published for consultation in 2002. The Quality of Coastal Towns project, completed in April 2001, influenced the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park concept<sup>1</sup>. Thus work on the Sefton coast has had an effect beyond the Sefton boundary.

The review of coastal nature conservation sites in Sefton concluded with the formal designation of the Sefton Coast SSSI, expansion of the Sefton Coast cSAC and Mersey Narrows SSSI. Consideration is now being

given to expanding the Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA and Ramsar site to match the SSSI boundaries, and the "Regulation 33 Package"<sup>2</sup> for the SPA was published (June 2001). The North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan was launched in September 2001.

A seminar – "Waves of Change" - was hosted by Liverpool Hope College on 15 June to provide a forum for discussion of coastal research. The presentation on coastal archaeology at this seminar underlined the need for an event devoted specifically to this subject. As a result of the seminar the Sefton Coast Research Network has been set up. Its first tasks are to establish a profile of academic interests in the coast, and produce an annual research newsletter.

Positive investment was made to establish new work facilities for coastal land managers. The National Trust moved into a new Countryside Workbase at Blundell Avenue, while Sefton's Coast and Countryside Service have moved into their new workshop, garage and mess facility behind Toad Hall at Ainsdale-on-Sea, and new offices in the refurbished wing of the old Lido building next to the Discovery Centre. The Planning Department's Coastal Strategy Unit is now based in the same building.

Off-shore wind energy emerged as a major issue in 2001 with licenses being granted to several major operators to investigate the potential of the eastern Irish Sea. There are likely to be two developments not far off the Sefton Coast – one west of Burbo Bank off the North Wirral coast, and another west of Southport. Initial presentations on the Burbo Bank proposal were made by Seascape Limited (the developers) in Sefton during the year.

The Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan was submitted to the Forestry Commission in October 2001, thanks to Nick Roche and the Mersey Forest Team, following two final public "feedback" sessions in Formby in September. The outcome of the Commission's consideration is awaited.

<sup>1</sup> Set out in the 'Action Plan for the City Region' developed by The Mersey Partnership on behalf of the Greater Merseyside Local Authorities (JULY 2001)

<sup>2</sup> A "Reg 33 Package" provides English Nature's advice to relevant authorities on the conservation objectives of European Marine sites, and provides a framework for producing schemes of management for such sites

The Foot & Mouth epidemic had an impact, although the coast was never an infected area. Precautionary measures were taken with many footpaths closed and the cooperation of local users was a great help. The usual Herdwicks from Cumbria used for grazing were not available for obvious reasons and it was difficult to find alternatives. At Marshside the absence of the visiting herd meant that the local cattle were left with the job of keeping the grass under control.

Watertable levels on the coast have been at their highest since records began in 1970 - to the benefit of Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*). An event of note was the finding of a Lesser Centaury plant (*Centaureum pulchellum*), not seen on the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve since 1930, in the dune restoration area on the Reserve.

Nearly ten years after the implementation of the Beach Management Plan the Coast and Countryside Service can now claim to be the only fully integrated service in the country following the inclusion of the cleansing operation in 2001. The Service now comprises the Coast and Countryside Ranger Service and Voluntary Rangers, Beach Patrol and Lifeguard Unit, Estate Team/Environment Task Force and Beach Cleansing.



High water level in Ravenmeols LNR © John Houston

Cleaner beaches and quiet areas of recreation for the public, new dune and slack habitat and effective management for shorebirds show that the Council's beach management policies have been successful for both wildlife and people. The considerable investment by United Utilities is showing obvious results and the next ten years of beach management will hopefully see improvements to the infrastructure for visitor facilities.

Consultants H R Wallingford Ltd were appointed by Sefton Council to carry out a Strategy Study of the coast between Crosby and Formby Point. This study will identify the most appropriate way of protecting land in this area from flooding and erosion by the sea. In Southport, Phase Three of the Floodwall (Weld Road to Esplanade) is well under way.

Crosby Marine Park was included in the Atlantic Gateway "Strategic Investment Area"<sup>3</sup> and funding was secured for a feasibility study to develop a project for funding through the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme.



Crosby Coastal Park looking South, Bootle Docks © John Mills Photography

<sup>3</sup>These are areas in which European funding through the Objective 1 Programme will be focussed. Atlantic Gateway extends from Switch Island at the end of the M57/58 motorways to just north of Liverpool City Centre.

## SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT 2001

Table 1 - TARGETS 2001

Target	Progress	Comment
<i>Land Use &amp; Economic Development</i>		
Complete draft planning policies for nature conservation and coast for UDP Review	Completed	
Survey employment in coastal zone	No action	Await outcome of discussions on Waterfront Park
Submit bid to Objective 1 Programme for visitor facilities under "Sands of Time" banner	No action. Justification provided by results of QCT project.	Approach needs to be reconsidered in light of Waterfront Park proposals, but bid(s) should be submitted during 2002. (see 2002 targets)
<i>Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management</i>		
Submit Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan to Forestry Commission	Completed	
Complete 2nd tranche Habitat & Species Plans and Launch North Merseyside BAP	Completed	
Complete NVC Survey of dunes	No action	Programmed for 2003 (see 2002 targets)
Revise Natterjack Toad and Sand Lizard strategies	Largely completed	Programmed for publication 2002 (see 2002 targets)
Review Archaeological interest of coast	Included in "Waves of Change" Seminar June 2001. Local History Task Group agreed as part of Partnership structure.	See 2002 targets
Establish Nature Trail at Sands Lake	First phase complete	Trail round lake for wheel chair access opened– supported by Ainsdale Civic Society
<i>National Trust Targets</i>		
Develop new operational base	Completed	Occupied November 2001
2.75 ha new woodland planting	Completed	
Commission study of asparagus farming (reintroduction)	Completed	
Explore green transport link with Freshfield Station	Achieved	Pilot service operated in summer 2001
Prepare proposals for upgrading visitor facilities Victoria Road	Further work needed	
Complete property management plan	Further work needed	

Target	Progress	Comment
<i>English Nature Targets</i>		
Consult on findings of CMACS review of dune restoration project	Completed	
Review communications aspects of NNR	Completed	
Enhance communication with local communities	Achieved (on-going)	
Commission Great Crested Newt survey	Completed	
Begin stump removal in dune restoration area	Achieved (on going)	
Commission hydrological monitoring study	Ongoing	Borehole network to be extended in 2002.
<i>Tourism, Leisure and Recreation</i>		
Crosby Marine Park masterplan	Draft plan completed	Feasibility study started for Objective 1 bid Visitor and Watersports Centre (see targets 2002)
Beach Management Strategy	ongoing	Delayed to include Reg 33 guidelines, NMBAP/Best Value targets. Publish 2002
Go for three Seaside awards and target A score for Ainsdale and Southport in TBG National Resort Survey	Awards achieved. Two A scores in TBG Survey – Southport “most improved beach” in Survey.	
Complete Interreg IIc Quality of Coastal Towns project and develop follow-on project	QCT1 completed. Proposal for QCT 2 submitted to North Holland	see targets 2002
Prepare draft Access Strategy	No action	Proposal in preparation by Partnership Task Groups (see targets 2002)
Coordinate Partners' views for inclusion in Council's revised Tourism Strategy	Strategy on hold, therefore no action	
<i>Shoreline Management</i>		
Council to respond to DEFRA (MAFF) High Level Targets	Completed	
Complete Phase Three of Southport Floodwall	Construction nearly complete	Completion date March 2002
Continue to monitor coastal change at specified survey lines	Achieved (on-going)	
Develop Strategy for dunes as sea defence	See next	
Progress Hall Road to Hightown coast protection study	Consultants commissioned, scoping studies under way	Now Crosby to Formby Point. On-going



Target	Progress	Comment
Marine Environmental Management		
Continue to work with relevant initiatives and forums (PISCES, NWCF etc)	Achieved	Formal agreement by Board to continue links established under Sefton Coast Management Scheme
Public Health and Amenity		
Introduce a revised oil-spill response plan for the Sefton Coast	Ongoing	To be completed 2002 (see targets 2002)
Review coast-wide emergency procedures	Ongoing	To be completed 2002 (see targets 2002)
Review beach cleansing operations	Completed	Cleansing specification being revised
Implementation and Review		
Establish SCP website	Completed	
Review service provided by Council's CCMS website	Achieved (on-going)	
Co-host research seminar with Liverpool Hope College	Completed	
Publish Annual Report	Drafted	Publication following Forum in February 2002

# PROGRESS 2001 AND TARGETS FOR 2002

## Land Use and Economic Development

This section describes progress in 2001 in more detail than Table 1 where needed, as well as issues in which the Partnership may not have a direct role but which are relevant to the coast. The Partners' targets for the coming year (2002) are set out for each topic area. The topics and aims are those set out in the Sefton Coast Management Plan.

*Aim: to encourage and support appropriate land use, sustainable economic development, investment and employment consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast.*

In 2001:

- The consultation on the North West Regional Assembly's Draft Regional Planning Guidance "People, Places and Prosperity" (published in July 2000) culminated in the Public Examination held in Manchester in February 2001. Coastal planning policy was one of the matters debated at the Examination, and the changes proposed by PISCES<sup>4</sup> Partnership of Irish Sea Coast and Estuary Strategies and supported by English Nature were accepted in the Panel Report published in July. These policies provide a regional context for coastal planning and management in the North West.
- A workshop on the future of NW coastal resorts was hosted by the NWDA in Southport in June, and Sefton Council is leading a NW resorts group tasked with developing a strategy to guide NWDA investment.
- The Mersey Partnership published the Action Plan for the City Region ([www.makeitmerseyside.org/actionplan.html](http://www.makeitmerseyside.org/actionplan.html)) in response to the NWDA's request for guidance on regional investment. The Action Plan put forward the concept of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park – using Merseyside's coastal and waterfront assets as a major

driver for regeneration. An outline business plan is being prepared and will be published early in 2002. The Partnership could make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of the Waterfront idea.

- Sefton's draft Unitary Development Plan (First Review) was submitted to committees in preparation for publication of the Consultation Draft later in 2002. The Review carries forward coastal policies in the current plan, and proposes that the area covered by the Sefton Coast Management Plan be identified formally as a "coastal park".
- The Planning Inquiry into the proposal to extend the period of operation of the Sandwinning Plant at Marshside was held during July 2001 and the outcome is expected in early 2002. The outcome of the Inquiry will be important in establishing case law for developments within a SPA, and will be of direct relevance to coastal planning and management in Sefton.
- Proposals relevant to the coast have been identified in the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme (Integrated Countryside Environment Programme, Measure 23 Strategy for Natural and Built Environment, Atlantic Gateway SIA). It is important these funding opportunities are maximised.
- All the above show that there is much going on in and around Sefton which could have a direct impact on the Sefton Coast. This regional and sub-regional activity occurs in all the other topic areas as well, and needs to be taken increasingly into account in the work of the Partnership.

<sup>4</sup> Partnership of the Irish Sea Coast and Estuary Strategies

Targets for 2002:

- Ensure the Partnership responds to consultations on matters to do with the coast. **(Board)**
- Contribute as needed to development of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park concept. Partners may be participating in a variety of ways in different capacities and it is important that intelligence on emerging proposals is used to the benefit of the Sefton Coast. **(Board and all Partners)**
- Partners to coordinate joint or individual bids to the Objective 1 Programme to make best use of resources available. It is important that all bids are submitted during 2002 in order to secure the funds remaining in the Programme. This should be a priority action for 2002. **(Board and all Partners)**

# Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management

*Aim: to conserve protect and enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of the coast including the characteristic terrestrial, littoral and marine flora and fauna, geology, geomorphology, landscape and heritage features of architectural, historical, cultural and archaeological interest.*

In 2001:

- The **Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan** was completed after extensive public consultation and submitted to the Forestry Commission. The work was carried out by Nick Roche of the Mersey Forest Team. The plan covers the 400 ha of mainly pine woodlands and sets out proposals for improving the health of the woodlands through restock felling, thinning and coppicing. Approval of the Commission (expected by March 2002) will ensure grant aid for forestry work over a ten-year period. The Plan now forms part of the suite of management plans which guide management of the coast. (The full plan is available on CD- Rom from Mersey Forest\* if required)



Sefton Coast Forest Woodland. © John Mills Photography

- The investigation of the dune restoration project on Ainsdale NNR, commissioned by English Nature from **CMACS**<sup>5</sup> was completed and included feedback from consultations (copies available on request from English Nature\*). Many of the recommendations of the study were implemented during 2001.

- The **North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan** was launched (copies available from Environmental Advisory Service\*). The plan covers Liverpool, Sefton, Knowlsey and St. Helens. Many of the species and habitat action plans within the NMBAP are of direct relevance to the coast.
- At **RSPB's Marshside Nature Reserve**, although Foot & Mouth disease reduced the number of stock available by 66%, the deficit was made up by late grazing and mowing. The Reserve received some 15,000 visitors during the year. Management progress included:



Nel's Hide at RSPB Marshside © Paul Wisse

- Construction of a shingle island in front of the Sandgrounders' Hide to provide nest sites for plovers.
- Improvement of 600m of ditches.
- Control of ragwort by cutting across most of site.
- Completion of the Nel's Hide project with construction of 550m disabled access path and shrub planting on the screen bank along the Coast Road.
- The Council re-fenced the car park and added a footpath verge to Marshside Road.
- The Marshside Perimeter Plan was reviewed, second Management Plan

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies, Liverpool University

\*Contact addresses at back of this document

(2002-2005) completed and Water Level Management Plan consultations undertaken.

- **At Ainsdale NNR** similar problems occurred with sheep grazing as at Marshside due to the Foot & Mouth disease and the grazing season had to be extended. Reserve staff attended the Ainsdale Show with stand and displays. 230 people attended the guided walks programme. There were site visits with Sefton Coastwatch as well as individual and special interest visits. Two Reserve news letters were distributed. Presentations were made to Formby and Ainsdale Area Committees of Sefton Council.

- Substantial progress was made in addressing the concerns of some sectors of the local community about the Dune Restoration Project, and the recommendations of the CMACS review as follows:

- Great Crested Newt survey which confirmed breeding over whole NNR in almost all waterbodies.

- Contribution to the development of the Forest Plan.

- An assessment of the coast protection and sea defence issues on the Reserve was carried out jointly with Sefton Council.

- A programme of stump removal in the dune restoration area was begun, accompanied by marram grass planting to address landscape concerns.

- Investigation of the reserve hydrology continued.

- Success of the project communicated to a wider audience.

- Other surveys included distribution of yellow bartsia and smooth cats-ear, updating of vascular plant and fungi lists, continued fungi recording and a site pH survey.

- As the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation, **English Nature** carried out a national review of SSSIs in 2000, and most of the sites notified on the Sefton Coast were confirmed in 2001, in particular the Sefton Coast SSSI and the related extensions to the cSAC. Extensions to the Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA and Ramsar site resulting from the new Sefton Coast SSSI were notified during the year and are likely to be confirmed early in 2002. The Mersey Narrows SSSI which includes the Seaforth Lagoons was also confirmed.

- English Nature published the Regulation 33 Package for the Ribble & Alt Estuary SPA following consultation with relevant authorities. This sets out the conservation objectives for the SPA and provides key guidance for any scheme of management which may be developed for the SPA under the Habitats Regulations.

- The **National Trust** continued to consolidate its presence at Freshfield, Formby through completing the new Countryside Office and Workbase at Blundell Avenue.



Countryside Office and Workbase at Blundell Avenue © National Trust

- The Trust is trying to find ways of reviving asparagus cultivation on former agricultural land within its ownership and has carried out a study jointly with ADAS which is due to be published shortly.
- As part of its programme to improve visitor access to Freshfield, the Trust, in partnership with Merseytravel, piloted a weekend bus link between the Victoria Road entrance and Freshfield Station during the main summer holiday period.
- New tree planting covering 2.75 ha was carried out, and beating-up to replace losses is continuing.
- A review of visitor facilities, access and infrastructure has been undertaken with a view to inclusion in proposals for the follow-on QCT project and/or Mersey Waterfront Regional Park proposals.
- **The Coast & Countryside Service** (Sefton Leisure) established their new base at Ainsdale-on-Sea. This comprises a storage building and estate training workshop behind Toad Hall, and new offices in the refurbished wing of the old Lido Building. The adjacent Discovery Centre is increasingly well-used. The Formby Rangers are now located at Formby Library.
- As on the NNR, grazing regimes on the Ainsdale LNR by the visiting Herdwick sheep were disrupted by Foot & Mouth, and were compensated by longer grazing periods and other management methods.
- Revised strategies for Sand Lizards and Natterjack Toads have been developed jointly with English Nature and the Herpetological Conservation Trust and will be published shortly.
- The first phase of the proposed nature trail at the Sands Lake was constructed.
- There were 168 education visits as part of the education programme which continues to be successful, this is approx. 5,040 pupils with 13 student placements, 8 from local schools and 5 from colleges/universities. 285 people joined walks and events and there were 2,400 visitors to the Discovery Centre. 32 community groups have been met, this includes 12 Natterjack Club meetings.
- Bird counts carried out at Crosby Marine Park jointly with LWT on the Seaforth Reserve showed that the waterbody is a key bird site on the coast.
- The Coastal Strategy Unit (Sefton Planning and Technical Services) has also moved into the refurbished offices at the Lido. The Unit helped with the co-ordination of the Waves of Change seminar at Liverpool Hope College. The seminar provided a useful update on research and survey work on the coast.
- A new nature trail has been established at Birkdale in partnership with the Birkdale Civic Society. The trail incorporates the developing dunes on the foreshore as a focal point taking into account the history of how Southport and especially Lord Street developed from a similar natural development in history. The project is called the Velvet Trail after one of the early nineteenth century tourist attractions (a nature ramble) called the 'Velvet Walk' which would have taken a similar southerly route through the dunes further inland where housing has taken over the dunes. Information boards and a leaflet are planned.



Top. Snow Bunting  
Bottom. Goldeneye male  
© Steve Young

#### Targets for 2002:

- Start first stages of Forest Plan implementation following Forestry Commission approval (expected March 2002). Keep local communities informed of progress.  
**(All Partners and Mersey Forest Team)**
- Identify action required within SCP area to support NMBAP and ensure that action not already within existing site and coast-wide management proposals is incorporated into work programmes.  
**(Biodiversity Task Group [lead] and all Partners)**
- Prepare briefs and call for tenders for a National Vegetation Classification survey of the SCP area to be carried out in 2003 to assess change from 1989 survey. Survey to be coordinated by Coastal Strategy Unit and EAS (Sefton Planning) with support from Partners. **(Sefton Planning)**  
[Note: this target is carried forward from 2001]
- Establish policy and funding for purchase of areas of dune heath east of railway within Freshfield Dune Heath SSSI, Formby. This important habitat has been under threat from lack of management for some time. Ownership is fragmented; owners have not responded to suggestions of management agreements. Purchase of the sites and management by an appropriate body is the best solution.  
**(Sefton Planning in cooperation with Lancashire Wildlife Trust and English Nature)**
- Establish local history task group to promote local history and archaeological interest of the coast. **(Board)**
- Establish status of RIGS<sup>6</sup> within coastal area and ensure they are taken into account in management operations.  
**(Board)**

#### RSPB targets

- Construct sluice and restore culvert for Marshside 1 to improve drainage control, following consultation with partners and adjacent landowners [carried forward from 2001]. Construct additional sluice for Marshside 2
- Restore and enhance 400m ditches
- Install new display materials in Hides
- Produce a visitor strategy – this will require working jointly with Sefton Council in order to consider links with Southport and management of areas adjacent to Marshside. [This target is also relevant to the Tourism, Leisure and Recreation section].

#### English Nature targets (Ainsdale)

- Continue planned grazing regime April – October; trial pygmy goats.
- Continue/complete tree stump removal on dune restoration Phase1, including marram grass planting.
- Install new fencing to control grazing on Phase 2 site; bury old fire sites and complete tidy-up.
- Remove sea buckthorn and white poplar scrub to maintain dune and slack flora in Slacks 8, 9,13, Massams Slack, and frontal dunes.
- Open two new permissive paths on the Reserve.
- Undertake the following surveys:

Sand Lizard, Petalwort, Great Crested Newt (Phase 2), Dune Helleborine, fixed point photo surveys, and flora surveys of dune restoration project.

<sup>6</sup> Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites

- In the rear pinewoods let contracts for felling, replanting and thinning autumn 2002 as per Forest Plan and plan future management in context of Plan.
- Continue production of newsletter (2 in 2002) and community relations work programme.

**National Trust targets:**

- Develop project (subject to funding) to remove unsightly banks of sand and rubble and restore the typical landscape of Sandfield Farm.
- Begin re-establishment of asparagus cultivation as per ADAS report (expected January 2002) under the terms of a farm business tenancy.
- Improve on-site information and signage at Victoria Road and explore potential for "Asparagus Trail" with Formby Civic Society.
- Embark on new woodland management programme as per Forest Plan.
- Carry out consultations on proposals for improved management of Larkhill Fields and the open dune landscape at the Formby property.
- Continue, jointly with Merseytravel, the beach bus link to Freshfield station and explore extension of pilot with other partners.
- Finalise property management plan [carried forward from 2001].

**Sefton Coast and Countryside Service targets:**

- Support publication of the Natterjack and Sand Lizard strategies.
- Review Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR and Ravenmeols LNR Management Plans.
- Establish Wildlife Enhancement Scheme covering Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills LNR.
- Extend Ainsdale Hills, Birkdale Hills and Ravenmeols Hills LNRs.
- Implement first year of Forest Plan.



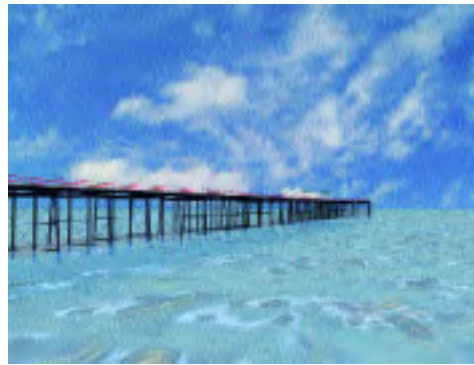
## Tourism Leisure and Recreation

*Aim: to facilitate and enhance the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the coast by improving and extending opportunities for quiet recreation, education and sporting and tourism activities that draw on, and are consistent with the natural character and conservation value of the coast.*

In 2001:

- The **Quality of Coastal Towns** project was completed on time and within budget. The final report was favourably reviewed by the Secretariat of the North West Metropolitan Area Programme (Interreg IIc). The report of the Merseyside partners is available on the SCP website at [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk). This report provides an assessment of current visitor use of the main sites on the open coast around Merseyside. It also looks at quality of visitor provision, access, potential for improvements and the potential visitor market which might justify further investment. The hierarchy of sites identified in the report is being used as a template for the "Estuary Management" element of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park business planning exercise. The nine QCT partners are preparing a follow-on proposal as a bid under the continuation Interreg IIIB NW Europe Programme, and an outline project was submitted to the lead Dutch partner (North Holland) for consideration. The final bid will be submitted in spring 2002.
- A draft masterplan for **Crosby Marine Park** has been completed by Sefton's Leisure Services. Development of Crosby Marine Park, a major element of the masterplan, was included in the Atlantic Gateway SIA through which Objective 1 funding will be focussed. The SIA was given the go-ahead in March 2001. Funding for a feasibility study was provided in the SIA programme and will be commissioned early in 2002 with a view to submitting a bid for funding later in 2002.

- Targets set for improving Sefton's beach facilities were met and exceeded with three **Seaside Awards**, two "A" scores in the Tidy Britain Group Resort Survey and Southport noted as the "most improved beach" in the national resort survey.
- **Southport Pier** restoration was completed and includes a new pavilion which has been identified as an interpretation facility. The pavilion is a completely new element of the restored historic Pier and provides a unique opportunity for developing coastal interpretation.



Artists impression of Southport Pier © Sefton Council

- **The National Trust** is developing proposals to improve infrastructure, address issues of coastline change and provide improved visitor facilities including an education and interpretation base at Victoria Road.
- **RSPB** has begun talks with Sefton Council on plans to improve the attractiveness of the Marshside Reserve for visitors and make better links with Southport and the remainder of the Ribble Estuary. These ideas coincide with the **birdwatching initiative** developed by Sefton Council (Leisure Services and Tourism) through the Sefton Integrated Marketing Initiative.

Targets for 2002:

- Further Seaside Awards at Formby and Southport have been targeted by Sefton Leisure Services, as well as "A" grades for Southport and Ainsdale in the TBG Resort Survey. To support this the Beach Cleansing Plan will be established.  
**(Sefton Leisure Services)**
- RSPB and Sefton Council will develop specific proposals for increasing the visitor potential of **Marshside**. Proposals will include improving the surroundings of Marshside and visitor access to the Reserve, and will explore the potential of better links with Southport. Options for securing additional resources will be considered.
- The QCT2 proposals will be finalised and forwarded for inclusion in the bid to be submitted by North Holland (subject to agreement by North Holland on the overall project). **(Sefton Council Planning)**
- Support the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park where there are clearly common objectives and engage actively with the MWRP Steering Group to ensure proposals are developed which benefit the Sefton coast and promote the Regional Park concept. Agree "early hit" projects relevant to the SCP and ensure these projects are kept to programme. **(Board and all Partners)**
- Carry out a detailed access and infrastructure evaluation of coastal facilities to support detailed funding bids associated with the above targets – target date for completion May 2002  
**(Sustainable Tourism Task Group)** [Note: this target partly carries forward the Access Strategy target from 2001]

## Shoreline Management

**Aim:** to support the need to protect life, property and habitats by appropriate coast defence strategies, and to maintain the sea defence function of the beaches, sand dunes and salt marshes consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast

In 2001:

- The initial response to DEFRA<sup>7</sup> Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (formerly MAFF) High Level Targets was completed but there are a number of targets on which it will be necessary to report annually.
- Marine Drive Floodwall – construction of the third phase started in October 2001 and is due to be complete by March 2002. This will complete the work required in Southport for the foreseeable future other than maintenance.



Southport Seawall - Phase 1 © Graham Lymbery

- A substantial programme of monitoring is being undertaken on the Sefton Coast and will be repeated annually. In addition a number of regional and national studies are being undertaken that will be of relevance to coast management in Sefton. As and when information becomes available it will be provided to partners.
  - H R Wallingford Ltd have been commissioned to carry out a Strategy Study from which a coast defence strategy for the coast from Crosby to Formby Point will be developed. A scoping study involving main stakeholders was carried out as the first part of this study, which is due for completion in 2003. When completed the study will detail actions for this length of coast, if found to be required, as well as the appropriate timescales. It will also form the basis of any future grant applications.
- Targets 2002:**
- Collate data from monitoring and strategy study on Formby Point and analyse to inform management of the sand dunes as a coastal defence. This data to be shared with partners. **(Technical Services)**
  - Continue annual monitoring programme (in particular vegetation monitoring Ainsdale to Marshside, and beach levels at standard survey lines) and reporting on High Level Targets. Contribute to the NVC Survey which is due to be carried out this year; collate existing saltmarsh data and where appropriate put data into electronic format so that it is easier to share with partners. A summary report detailing monitoring results to be produced. **(Technical Services)**
  - The Crosby to Formby Strategy study will continue with site investigations and modelling being carried out in the early part of the year and the draft final report being started towards the end of the year. **(Technical Services)**
  - Maintain links with Liverpool Bay Coastal Group, LGA Coastal Special Interest Group on behalf of Board. **(Technical Services)**
  - Continue coast protection works on the soft coast such as uniposting, beach barriers, access works and marram grass planting. **(Leisure Services)**

<sup>7</sup> Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

# Marine Environmental Management

**Aim:** to liaise with competent agencies for the control of activities at sea to ensure that they are aware of the high amenity and conservation value of the Sefton Coast, and the impact their activities may have on terrestrial sites, and to work with others to promote the conservation and management of marine resources.

In 2001:

- Licenses to exploit wind energy potential in the Eastern Irish Sea were granted to a number of operators for sites in Liverpool Bay and Morecambe Bay. Seascope Limited held initial consultation meetings on their Burbo Bank proposal in Sefton.



Existing offshore wind turbines at Blyth

- The Northwest Coastal Forum (NWCF) (chaired by Eira Hughes of the Government Office for the North West) held a seminar of off-shore wind energy "Throwing Caution to the Winds".
- PISCES contributed to a workshop and consultation coordinated by the British Wind Energy Association to develop best practice guidelines for consultation on off-shore wind energy proposals.
- NWCF prepared an outline proposal for an Interreg IIIB project to develop an integrated management plan for the Eastern Irish Sea.

- The SCP Board agreed formally to continue links with other coastal initiatives as follows:
  - Mersey and Ribble Estuary Strategies
  - PISCES
  - Irish Sea Forum
  - NWCF
  - European Union For Coastal Conservation
  - Eurosite (via English Nature)
  - North West Bathing Water Forum

Links are maintained through membership of the above forums by a number of partners including Sefton Council, English Nature, RSPB, National Trust and Environment Agency.

Targets for 2002:

- Ensure that the interests of the SCP are protected in consultations on off-shore wind energy proposals. **(Board and all Partners)**
- Consider participation if appropriate in NWCF Interreg Project. **(Board or individual Partners)**
- Maintain links with other initiatives and report regularly on activities relevant to the SCP. **(Board and all Partners)**

**Aim:** to protect and enhance the environment by reducing pollution and promoting public health.

In 2001:

- Beach Cleansing operations were reviewed under the Council's "Best Value" procedures. The outcome was that the Beach Cleansing operation was transferred from Environmental Protection Director to Leisure Director.
- The oil spill response plan for Sefton's coast is now under review.



Oil spill on a Sefton Beach © Dave McAleavy

- Promenade cleansing and sandblow to be included in revised beach cleansing operation. **(Leisure Services)**
- Completion of oil spill response review. **(Environmental Protection Services)**
- Completion of review of coast-wide emergency response procedures. **(Environmental Protection Services)**
- 2002 Bathing Water Quality results to be placed on Sefton Coast and Countryside Management Service website and Sefton Environmental Protection Department "Breathing Space" website. Historical bathing water data to be added. **(Environmental Protection Services)**
- Coast wide emergency response review was started.
- Bathing water quality records reported to Council committees.

Targets for 2002:

- Publication of Beach Management Strategy. **(Leisure Services)**
- Beach Cleansing Plan and Sensitivity Map to be produced for summer 2002. **(Leisure Services)**

## Implementation and Review

***Aim:** to adopt a systematic and open approach to the delivery and monitoring of the outputs*

In 2001:

- The SCP website ([www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk)) was fully launched. Most SCP documents are now available through the site, together with general information of the Partnership.
- The service provided by the Sefton Leisure (SCCS) website ([www.merseyworld.com/sefton\\_coast/](http://www.merseyworld.com/sefton_coast/)) was reviewed and improved.
- The Sefton Coast Information Centre has moved with the Coast Strategy Unit to the Ainsdale Lido office and continues to be available to users.
- The Annual Report was published, following the January Sefton Coast Forum, in March 2001
- Two issues of Coastlines were produced on behalf of the Partnership

Targets for 2002

- Continue publishing Coastlines, the Annual Report and organising the Forum as part of the core communications.  
**(Sefton Council Planning on behalf of Board)**
- Keep the websites up to date; review the design of the SCP website. **(Board)**
- Establish/review communications strategy  
**(Communication Task Group)**
- Establish Research network  
**(Communication Task Group)**

## Sefton Coast Partnership Board Members

Mr Ralph Gregson  
Birkdale Civic Society

Dr Ann Worsley  
Edge Hill College

Mr Paul Glading  
English Nature

Mr Ian Broad  
Environment Agency

Mr Gordon Adam  
Forestry Commission

Dr Reg Yorke  
Formby Civic Society

Mr Ted Jackson (Chair)  
Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Mr Dave Porter  
National Trust

Mr Steve Fowler  
North West Tourist Board

Major Bill Hunter  
Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Mr Lawrence Rose  
RSPB

Cllr Ian G Moncur  
Sefton Council

Cllr David Tattersall  
Sefton Council

Cllr Syd C Whitby  
Sefton Council

Mr David Knowles  
Southport Pier Trust

## Copies of the following documents can be obtained from:

- i. Sefton Coast Woodland Forest Plan  
The Mersey Forest Offices,  
Risley Moss  
Ordnance Avenue  
Birchwood  
WARRINGTON WA3 6QX
- ii. Review of Dune Restoration Project  
English Nature  
Pier House  
Wallgate  
WIGAN WN5 4AL
- iii. North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan  
Environmental Advisory Service  
Bryant House  
Liverpool Road North  
Maghull  
LIVERPOOL L31 2PA

# Map showing location of principle land managers / ownerships

