“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 2002. It is a summary of the key achievements of the past year and sets targets for the coming year. Performance against targets set for 2002 is set out in Table 1 with comments.

The Sefton Coast Management Plan (Second 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.

The working arrangements of the Sefton Coast Partnership (SCP) are now in place, Board members are now finalised, and Task Groups have set to work. Board membership and chairs of Task Groups are set out with a diagram of structure - see pages 24/25.

There have been significant developments in coastal policy at all levels – from European Union to local (EU) - which are described in more detail in the Land Use & Economic Development Section. Suffice it to say here that these issues will have a major impact on the work of the Partnership in due course. Equally, the Partnership is well-placed to make constructive inputs to much of this policy development, as it has done in the past.

2002 has been a year of consolidation and general progress for the Partnership and the work of individual partners, though perhaps not as fast as many would like. References to the need for funding in this report illustrate the point that progress is often limited by the availability of funds at the right time.

A major breakthrough has been the opening of negotiations between Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT) for the purchase by LWT of the Freshfield Dune Heath, and in parallel productive discussion between English Nature (EN) and the owners of the Freshfield Dune Heath triangle at Montagu Avenue. Mersey Waterfront Regional Park has been approved and a similar exercise is now underway on the Ribble. North West Development Agency and Government Office for the North West are cooperating on investigation of a North West coastal trail, and progress has been made on the coastal resorts initiative. All this illustrates a lot of activity at the coast which ought to begin having a real impact in the next few years. It is essential Sefton Coast Partnership maximises these opportunities.

There have been significant developments in offshore renewables with the proposals in the Eastern Irish Sea a step nearer to realisation. As with hydrocarbons, this area is a significant national energy source.
The Government's commitment to offshore renewables, together with EU legislation and the EU Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) has led to a major initiative on marine environmental management with a number of national reviews in progress. This will inevitably impact on coastal work and it is important to keep abreast of this process.

There have been local successes in beach and bathing water quality with the Sefton beaches doing best out of all North West (NW) beaches. However, new legislation likely to emerge from the EU review of the Bathing Waters Directive, together with implementation of the Water Framework Directive will have a significant impact in coming years.

Sefton MBC may take on a regional monitoring role for shoreline management in the NW, underlining the lead role coast partners play.

The rejection of the Quality of Coastal Towns follow-on project for funding through the Interreg Programme was a big disappointment, but the search for new funding from other sources continues.

The Pier re-opened (semi-officially) in 2002, marking a consolidation of a range of projects in the Seafront Area and signalling a revival of the resort's ambitions. Approval of funding through the Objective 1 Programme for the Seafront Action Plan marks the next stage of this process which ultimately will be of benefit to the whole coast.
**Table 1 Performance against targets set for 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use and Economic Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Partnership responds to consultations on matters to do with coast.</td>
<td>“Seas of Change” (DEFRA) has been the only relevant consultation this year (November 02). The deadline is 28 February 2003.</td>
<td>Note approval of EU Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management May 2002.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute as needed to development of Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MWRP).</td>
<td>Partners have commented individually on the UDP proposals for the coast.</td>
<td>MWRP programme to start 2003. Some members of Sefton Coast Partnership likely to be on Technical Advisory Groups when formally set up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate bids to Objective 1.</td>
<td>No progress.</td>
<td>Awaiting MWRP outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start first stages of Forest Plan. Keep Communities informed of progress.</td>
<td>EN approval to year I of forest operations winter 2002/3.</td>
<td>Approval delayed due to requirement for additional work to complete appropriate assessment (needed because of SAC status to comply with Habitats Regs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify action needed in SCP area to support North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (NMBAP).</td>
<td>No progress.</td>
<td>Biodiversity Task Group to take forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish policy for funding purchase of Freshfield Dune Heath.</td>
<td>LWT now negotiating purchase of main area with MoD. EN negotiating management agreement with privately-owned section outside Woodvale.</td>
<td>Major breakthrough. LWT hopeful of completing purchase from MoD in 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Local History Task Group.</td>
<td>Task Group meeting (Chair Dr Yorke).</td>
<td>See SCP website <a href="http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk">www.seftoncoast.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish status of Regional Important Geographical Sites (RIGS).</td>
<td>RIGS identified as Local Wildlife Sites in Sefton UDP (review now on deposit) and in draft Supplementary Planning Guidance.</td>
<td>See website <a href="http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning/udp/index.html">www.sefton.gov.uk/planning/udp/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RSPB Targets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct sluice and restore culvert, Marshside 1 plus additional sluice Marshside 2.</td>
<td>Additional sluice installed Marshside 2. Sluice for Marshside 1 delayed pending solution to drainage problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restore and enhance 40m of ditches.</td>
<td>550m of ditches improved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install new display material in hides.</td>
<td>Displays installed in Sandgrounder Hide.</td>
<td>Joint displays also at Pier Pavilion with EN and Sefton Coast and Countryside Service (SCCS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce visitor strategy.</td>
<td>Strategy drafted</td>
<td>Available for comment early 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 1 Performance against targets set for 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Nature Targets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue planned grazing and trial pygmy goats.</td>
<td>Six pygmy goats were trialled in slack 16s between July and October 2002. Grazing from January to May on Ainsdale NNR with 40 ewes (produced over 30 lambs). Grazing from October 2002 with 48 sheep at Cabin Hill and 227 at Ainsdale.</td>
<td>Student project re preferential food plants available from NNR office. Sheep grazing for the first quarter very light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue/completed stump removal Phase 1</td>
<td>Stump removal completed in Phase 1. Stump cutting began in Phase 2. Marram planting continued in Phase 1.</td>
<td>Volunteers provided over 20 person days towards this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing to Phase 2 site, bury fire sites and complete tidy-up.</td>
<td>Fencing in Phase 2 completed. Fire sites buried and area tidied.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove sea buckthorn and white poplar in slacks 8,9,13, and Massam’s Slack and frontal dunes.</td>
<td>All planned scrub was removed and disposed of.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open 2 new permissive paths on Reserve.</td>
<td>Both paths opened, West End Walk and Old Fisherman’s Path way - marked and cut back.</td>
<td>West End Walk is a dog free path. Total length of new paths 2km.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake surveys (Sand Lizard, Petalwort, Great Crested Newt (Ph2), Dune Helleborine, flora surveys of Dune Restoration Project).</td>
<td>Results from the Helleborine survey are available from NNR office.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let thinning/replanting contracts in rear woods as per Forest Plan.</td>
<td>Contracts to begin in January 2003.</td>
<td>Herbicide treatment of the replanting coupes has been undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two newsletters and continue community work.</td>
<td>Two newsletters, management leaflet and new site leaflet produced. English Nature Chair met local community and interested parties. Sand Lizards were reintroduced to the Dune Restoration Project area in partnership with Herpetological Conservation Trust. Improved Red Squirrel monitoring system introduced in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust.</td>
<td>11 guided walks and three local shows were attended in 2002. Additional – Sand Lizard reintroduction. Additional – Red Squirrel monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Trust Targets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove sandbanks Sandfield Farm.</td>
<td>Not yet progressed.</td>
<td>Still attempting to secure supporting funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-establish asparagus cultivation (ADAS report).</td>
<td>Field layout prepared and small area to be planted March 2003.</td>
<td>Intention to progress ‘Asparagus Trail’ with Formby Civic Society subject to funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with residents on Larkhill Fields Conservation Plan and open dunes management.</td>
<td>Open Days, Formby Point’s newsletter and Coaselines used to raise awareness.</td>
<td>Fencing of dune heath, hedge planting and scrub clearance programmed for Winter, grazing in Summer 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue beach bus link to Freshfield; explore extension of pilot with other partners.</td>
<td>Project discontinued pending improvements to access road.</td>
<td>Need to address congestion and parking on approach road (Victoria Road).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 Performance against targets set for 2002

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<th>Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sefton Coast and Countryside Service Targets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support publication of Natterjack Toad and Sand Lizard strategies.</td>
<td>Natterjack Toad monitoring carried out and passed to English Nature.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) for Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR.</td>
<td>WES ongoing.</td>
<td>Investigating Countryside Stewardship for site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR.</td>
<td>Being considered in context of Management Plan Review. (see above).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement Year 1 of Forest Plan</td>
<td>Plan approval delayed (see above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism, Leisure and Recreation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Seaside Awards.</td>
<td>National Resort Survey ‘A’ grades achieved at Southport and Ainsdale allowing these beaches to be entered for Seaside Award.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop visitor potential Marshside.</td>
<td>See RSPB Targets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit Qualety of Coastal Towns (Interreg 11c) Proposals.</td>
<td>Proposal submitted but declared ineligible for grant.</td>
<td>Extremely disappointing outcome following intensive work by partners and North Holland lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support MWRP proposals.</td>
<td>See Land Use and Economic Development Targets. Marine Parade Bridge in Southport (early flagship project) under construction.</td>
<td>Discussion with Director on several projects including Crosby Marine Park, Ainsdale Lido and Formby (SMBC and NT).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out access and infrastructure survey to support detailed funding bids.</td>
<td>Access Task Group establishing programme of work.</td>
<td>Will need to source funding to develop detailed proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shoreline Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collate data from Formby Point.</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>Monitoring programme is being reviewed and developed. Including the digitisation and collation of historic data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue annual monitoring programme.</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>Monitoring programme is being reviewed and developed. Including the digitisation and collation of historic data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby/Formby strategy – start draft final report.</td>
<td>Stage 1 completed, stage 2 to commence in 2003.</td>
<td>Final report should be completed by the end of 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain links with Liverpool Bay Coastal Group (LBCG), Local Government Association Special interest Group (LGASIG).</td>
<td>Continued participation in LBCG and a developing role within Cell 11. Links with LGASIG re-established.</td>
<td>The Technical Services revenue budget has been increased which will enable more coast protection works on the Sefton Coast to be undertaken in conjunction with Leisure Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue coast protection works on Sefton Coast.</td>
<td>Leisure Services have continued their management work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 Performance against targets set for 2002

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marine Environmental Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider participation in NWCF Interreg Project.</td>
<td>Project on hold at present.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain links with other initiatives and report regularly.</td>
<td>Active participation in NWCF.</td>
<td>See NWCF website <a href="http://www.northwestcoast.org.uk">www.northwestcoast.org.uk</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Health and Amenity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish Beach Management Strategy.</td>
<td>In hand – final consultation March 2003.</td>
<td>Delayed to be able to include Regulation 33 Advice and NMBAP. Publish Summer 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete oil spill response review.</td>
<td>No progress.</td>
<td>Responsibilities to be resolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete review of coast-wide emergency response procedures.</td>
<td>No progress.</td>
<td>Responsibilities to be resolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Bathing Water Quality results on websites.</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation and Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep website up to date; review design.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Consider updating design and review management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish/review communications strategy.</td>
<td>In progress through Communications Task Group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress in 2002 and Targets for 2003

This section describes progress in 2002 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 2003 are set out for each topic area. The topic headings and aims are those set out in the Sefton Coast Management Plan 1997 – 2006.

**Land Use and Economic Development**

*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 2002:

- The EU approved a Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management1. This arises from the findings of the Demonstration Programme on ICZM. The recommendation requires member states to take stock of their arrangements for coastal management and to report back to the Commission on this by 2006. As a result of this, the Department of Environment for Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is taking the lead in the UK stocktake on behalf of the devolved administrations. A conference was held in London in November at which the outline programme and context of their stocktake was explained. At the same conference a consultation document ‘Seas of Change’ was launched setting out proposals for management of the marine environment. As part of this, the Irish Sea Regional Seas Pilot Project is underway to explore the requirements of extending the Habitats Regulations over the marine areas.

This activity marks a major shift in national and EU policy towards marine and coastal management which is likely to take effect over the next few years.

- Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) was published in March 2003 and contains a number of policies for coastal planning and management in RPG. Indeed, at the conference mentioned above, a report produced by World Wildlife Fund and the Wildlife Trusts 2 showed that the North West is well in front in terms of proactive coastal policy.

- The North West Coastal Forum (NWCF), set up by GONW in 2001, is now chaired by Laurence Rose (Regional Director RSPB) who is also a member of the SCP Board. The GONW secretarial function has been transferred to the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) who are providing an officer to assist the Forum on a part time basis. Many of the agencies represented on the NWCF Board are also members of the SCP Board.

- At the subregional level, an interim director has been appointed for the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MWRP). The governance arrangements for the MWRP have been put in place in anticipation of final approval of the proposal by North West Development Agency (NWDA) and Central Government. A feasibility study for a similar proposal on the Ribble Estuary has been initiated by RSPB with NWDA support.

- The Consultation Draft of the Sefton UDP was published in July and included policies for the coast. A number of representations have been received regarding the proposed Coastal Park, and the redefined Coastal Planning zone.

- Completion of Southport Pier and approval of the Seafront Action Plan is dealt with under the ‘Tourism, Leisure and Recreation’ heading.

**Targets for 2003:**

- Ensure the Partnership responds to consultations on matters to do with the coast, in particular the ‘Seas of Change’ consultation from DEFRA and the ‘Future Offshore’ report from Department of Trade and Industry (DIT) (early 2003). (Board)

- Consider the need for representation at the Public Inquiry into the UDP in October. (Board)

- Ensure the interests of the SCP are represented in the development of the MWRP, in particular the proposals under the Estuary Management Theme of the MWRP programme. (Board and all Partners)

- Ensure the coordination of bids for funding through appropriate funding mechanisms such as MWRP and others. (Board and all Partners)

- Pursue the possibility of the ‘Heritage Coast’ designation raised by the History and Archaeology Task Group. (H&ATG and SMBC)

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1 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe. EC/2002/413/EC

2 “Just Coasting – an assessment of the commitment of the devolved administrations and English regions to Integrated Coastal Management” November 2002

3 This approval was in fact received at the end of January 2003
Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management

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

In 2002:

- The Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan was submitted to the Forestry Commission for approval in late 2001 with the expectation that approval would be given by March 2002. However, the plan does impact upon the conservation status of the Sefton Coast SAC, and therefore an ‘appropriate assessment’ of this impact was required under the Habitat Regulations. This took much longer than expected due to the requirement for investigation of the hydrological impact of woodlands on the coast. This work was carried out by the Environment Agency. It is hoped that approval will be forthcoming soon in 2003.

- The implementation of the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (NMBAP) through the Partnership remains to be clarified. This is a key piece of work for the Biodiversity Task Group.

- A key database for the NMBAP work on the coast is an up to date botanical survey, this will be provided by the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey which was due to start this year but had to be delayed due to lack of staff resources. However, a brief has now been drawn up and consultants will be appointed in March with the aim of completing the survey in 2003.
• Freshfield Dune Heath is a valuable coastal habitat, and after many years negotiation, LWT have reached an agreement to purchase with MoD (who own the majority of the heath). In parallel English Nature have received a positive response to a management agreement proposal from the owners of the remainder of the heath (the Fisherman's Path triangle). Thus a longstanding conservation issue on the coast appears to be moving towards a positive outcome.

• Dr Yorke's acceptance of an invitation to join the SCP Board triggered the establishment of the Local History and Archaeology Task Group. An understanding of local history and archaeology is an important element in land management as well as supporting interpretation of the coast.

• Regional Important Geological Sites (RIGS) - no progress was made on the RIGS issue, however the protection of RIGS (including coastal RIGS) has been confirmed in the UDP review which was issued for consultation during 2002.

RSPB (Marshside Reserve)

There was a shortfall of grazing following the effects of foot and mouth disease in 2001 and numbers were around 33% below the norm. Cattle grazing on Marshside 2 remained up until Christmas largely making up for the grazing deficit on that marsh. Some topping of the sward was also carried out using pedestrian mowers.

An additional sluice was installed to improve drainage of Marshside 2 during periods of prolonged high rainfall.

The proposed drainage sluice for Marshside 1 was not installed pending further discussions over the most effective solution to the ongoing problem of draining this enclosed marsh.

550 metres of ditch were restored and enhanced to improve conditions for breeding wading birds and wintering wildfowl.

An NVC Survey was carried out by an RSPB Reserve ecologist for comparison with the previous survey carried out in 1994. This will highlight any changes that may have occurred in the vegetation structure since RSPB management began in 1995.

English Nature

At Ainsdale the planned grazing was continued and the proposed trial of pygmy goats was carried out in slack 16s between July and October. This proved moderately successful, with the goats contained by the existing fencing and eating creeping willows but not wild flowers. However being pygmies, their appetite seemed small although they stayed in good condition. The results of a student project identifying preferential food plants from these trials is Seaside centaury likely to be covered in the botanical survey Lynne Collins, English Nature ©
available. Ponies are now being considered for a future trial. The main grazing was with 40 ewes at Ainsdale, which produced over 30 lambs; the grazing for the first quarter was very light. Grazing continued at Ainsdale from October with 227 sheep, and 48 sheep at Cabin Hill.

In the dune restoration project area at Ainsdale stump removal was completed in the Phase 1 area, and stump cutting started in Phase 2 with substantial volunteer help. Marram planting continued in Phase 1. Fencing of Phase 2 continued and fire sites buried and the whole area tidied.

A planned programme of scrub removal (sea buckthorn and white poplar) was carried out and the cuttings disposed of.

Two new permissive paths totalling 2km in length were opened and West End Walk and Fisherman’s Path way-marked and vegetation cut back. West End Walk is a dog free path.

A number of surveys were carried out; the results of the Dune Helleborine survey are available from the NNR office. Natterjack Toad monitoring continued, with good spawn string counts indicating a healthy adult population. The dune restoration area contained nearly a quarter of the total number of spawn strings for the Sefton Coast as a whole.
Woodland management has been delayed pending approvals of the Forest Plan. However some essential management work (thinning and replanting) in the rear woodlands is set to go ahead in January to March 2003. Herbicide treatment of existing replanting coupes has been carried out.

Continuing contact with the community is an important element of work, with the production of two newsletters and 11 guided walks as well as meetings with local groups, attendance at local shows and visits by interested parties, including an event and site visit attended by the Chair of English Nature.

Communication was continued through open days, the Formby Point Newsletter and through Coastlines. A major issue was the question of the future management of the Larkhill Fields area.

The Education service welcomed 23,500 children during the year. Over half of these benefited from one or more of the National Trust’s guided educational activities.

A new Woodland Management Plan in accordance with the Forest Plan was submitted to Forestry Commission and Mersey Forest for approval.

Communication was continued through open days, the Formby Point Newsletter and through Coastlines. A major issue was the question of the future management of the Larkhill Fields area.

The Property Management Plan, which was due to be completed in 2002, was rescheduled to 2003 following a general NT priority review.

A new Woodland Management Plan was prepared for the reintroduction of asparagus farming with a view to planting in early 2003.

New ‘welcome’ leaflets were produced for the site together with a new information panel.

The Education service welcomed 23,500 children during the year. Over half of these benefited from one or more of the National Trust’s guided educational activities.

A new Woodland Management Plan in accordance with the Forest Plan was submitted to Forestry Commission and Mersey Forest for approval.

Communication was continued through open days, the Formby Point Newsletter and through Coastlines. A major issue was the question of the future management of the Larkhill Fields area.

The Property Management Plan, which was due to be completed in 2002, was rescheduled to 2003 following a general NT priority review.

The field layout was prepared for the reintroduction of asparagus farming with a view to planting in early 2003.

National Trust

Monitoring of natterjack toad populations within the SMBC area was carried out and results passed to EN in support of the natterjack toad strategy.

Review of the Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR management plans were carried out and initial consultations undertaken.

A Wildlife Enhancement Scheme for the LNRs was established through agreement with and will continue for a further two years.

Targets for 2003:

General

- Ensure early approval of Forest Plan. (EN and Forestry Commission)
- Identify action needed to support North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan and ensure actions are incorporated into relevant site work programmes. Carried forward from 2002. (Biodiversity Task Groups and all Partners)
- Complete NVC Survey. (Consultants managed by EAS)
- Proceed with purchase of Freshfield Dune Heath and management agreement on privately owned section. (LWT and EN)
• Finalise Landscape Character Assessment Survey and Guidance for coastal areas (part of Borough-wide survey) and agree with Partners. (Sefton Planning)

• Develop options for external funding of land management proposals through, for example Mersey Waterfront, Integrated Countryside Environment Programme, Countryside Stewardship and other relevant regimes. (All Partners)

• Reinstate eroded section of Coast Footpath at Formby Point subject to agreement with Formby Golf Course. (NT, EN, FGC, SMBC)

• Resolve coastal RIGS status. (SMBC & EN)

RSPB Marshside targets

• Carry out further 1000m of ditch restoration and enhancement.

• Install drainage pipe for Marshside 1 (carried forward from 2002)

• Install two Natterjack toad spawning pools.

• Install 0.5 ha Godwit feeding pool.

• Install bird display in Nel’s Hide.

• Achieve LNR status for Marshside.

• Begin implementation of new visitor strategy.

English Nature targets

• For the Dune Restoration Project, independent contractors will be carrying out a full Environmental Impact Assessment and public consultation in 2003. By September this will have delivered its findings and a way forward for the management of the NNR will have been identified.

• Complete revision of NNR management plan.

• Complete stump removal Phase 2 dune restoration and marram planting / seeding trial.

• Establish base line monitoring in frontal woodlands for rare dune slack species.

• Remove sea buckthorn and thin other scrub in slack 13 area.

• Fence slack 13 area and introduce livestock grazing.

• Fence along seaward end of ‘Old Fisherman’s Path’ to protect Colletes nesting site.

• Let thinning/replanting contracts in rear woods as per Forest Plan to deliver key Red Squirrel targets.

• Deliver access monitoring programme by installing a visitor counter.

• Expand delivery area for the two newsletters and produce a year long walks programme.

• Follow up Sand Lizard reintroduction programme.

• Repair the boundary track following the negative results from Petalwort survey.

National Trust targets

• Continue re-establishment of asparagus farming with plantings in 2003.

• Continue to try and secure funding for removal of rubble banks on Sandfield Farm.

• Secure funding to be able to progress ‘Asparagus Trail’ with Formby Civic Society.

• Commence first year of new woodland management programme as per Forest Plan subject to approval of Plan.

• Review access and parking arrangements on site approach at Victoria Road. Repair and resurface main access road.

• Carry out programme of fencing, scrub clearances and hedge planting in the Larkhill Fields area.

• Complete Property Management Plan October 2003.

• Renew footpath trail signage and waymarks.

Sefton Coast and Countryside targets

• Develop strategy for further development of Discovery Centre and associated facilities at Ainsdale-on-Sea.

• Complete consultation on Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR management plans and finalise plans by May 2003, including possible extensions to LNRs.

• Investigate and submit Countryside Stewardship bid for Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNRs.

• Carry out first year of woodland management, subject to approval 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, sporting and tourism activities that draw on and are consistent with the natural character and conservation value of the coast

In 2002:

- National Resort Survey ‘A’ grades were achieved at Southport and Ainsdale which will allow these beaches to be entered for the Seaside Awards.
- An additional hide and improved visitor access was provided by RSPB at Marshside.
- Quality of Coastal Towns 2 – a new application with the same partnership as the first QCT project was submitted in July under the Interreg IIIB North West Europe Programme. Following consideration and referral back by the NWE Secretariat, the project was revised and resubmitted in October. It was finally rejected in November. This was a very disappointing outcome for all concerned. No further action is to be taken on this.
- Mersey Waterfront – the MWRP proposal was submitted to the NWDA for approval in September. Funding for the proposal has been taken forward into 2003/4. Preparatory work on a number of coast-related projects has been undertaken (e.g. Crosby Marine Park). Work on the land management aspects will begin in earnest in 2003. In the Southport area the MWRP proposals are based on the Seafront Action Plan (see below). It should be noted that the coast as a whole is now clearly regarded as part of the tourism “offer” in Sefton. The pros and cons of this need to be fully taken into account in land management policies.
- Access Strategy – the Access and Interpretation Task Group (A&ITG) has begun to tackle the issue of access arrangements on the coast. The work of this group will link closely to work likely to emerge from the Mersey Waterfront, as well as the Ribble proposal and the NW Coastal Trail (see below). As always, funding is a significant constraint and part of the work of the group will be to source and target funding options. An immediate issue is to find a way of maintaining the continuity of the Sefton Coastal Footpath in the face of erosion at Formby Point which has actually cut the path off in the region of the Formby Golf Course.
- NW Coast Trail - GONW and NWDA have commissioned a study of the potential for a NWCT from an independent consultant. Information on how the SCP could become part of the NWCT has been passed to the consultant. A NW group chaired by GONW has been formed to take the proposal forward. SCP is represented on the group.
- Seafront Action Plan – proposals for the Southport Seafront were submitted to the Merseyside Objective 1 Executive and approved in September. The plan envisages projects totalling £20m over a four-year programme and includes proposals for improvement of the Marine Lake, and further development of the Pier interpretation centre. Plans for the eco-visitor centre on the Esplanade Park and Ride site have been finalised and work will start early in 2003.
- Ribble Estuary Regional Park – RSPB, with funding from NWDA and others (including SMBC and EN) has commissioned a feasibility study into establishing a regional park based on the Ribble estuary. A number of SCP season and clocked up over 250,000 visitors. A temporary exhibition on the coast mounted jointly by EN, SCCS and RSPB has been installed in the pavilion.
Partners are represented on the Steering Group for the study, and have participated in workshops to discuss and make proposals. If successful the proposal could, like the Mersey Waterfront, provide a vehicle for carrying forward a number of Coast Management Plan (CMP) aims.

Targets for 2003:

- Ainsdale and Southport beaches will be entered into the Seaside Awards for 2004. (SCCS)
- Marshside (see also Ribble Regional Park) – progress perimeter plan proposals and further development of visitor plan. (RSPB and SMBC)
- Mersey Waterfront – continue to support proposal and develop projects as appropriate, especially Pier Pavilion (interpretation), Coast management project under estuary management theme, Crosby Marine Park. (Refer MWRP action programme). (All)
- Access and Interpretation – A&ITG to continue working to provide a framework for action and funding of access projects. Key target is to find a new route for the missing section of the path at Formby Point. Continue to support NWCT proposal, providing input as needed. (A&ITG, and All partners)
- Pier Pavilion – develop programme for installation of permanent interpretation facility. (SMBC Tourism)
- Seafront Action Plan – ensure aims of CMP are built in to opportunities offered by development of projects through this plan – e.g. Marine Lake, Pier, access, etc. (SMBC)
- Ribble – support development of Ribble Regional Park proposals, including work at Marshside, and especially the potential for development of a major ‘centre of excellence’ celebrating the estuary in Southport. (All)
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.

Natural Processes
Objective: to continue improving the understanding of natural processes and the response of the coastline to change so that sustainable management decisions can be made.

In 2002:
The first year of the enhanced monitoring programme has been completed and a report compiled. This report has formed the basis of discussions with the Shoreline Management Task Group where partners are trying to establish the best way of communicating the information and identifying more clearly what information is relevant to partners when making management decisions. Discussions have begun in relation to a number of regional studies with a view to submitting them for grant aid from DEFRA.

HR Wallingford have completed the first stage of the Crosby to Formby Point Strategy Study which aims to inform the coastal defence management decisions for this length of coast. The first stage has recommended several items of work to be carried out in stage two which will fill some of the gaps in information that currently exist so that the final report can be more comprehensive. These include boreholes, wave modelling, an archaeological survey and sediment sampling.

In 2003:
• Continue to carry out monitoring but improve the analysis, presentation and dissemination of information to all partners. Identify potential research opportunities through the Partnership Task Group for Education and Communication.
• In the interests of taking the Shoreline Management Plans forward look at undertaking a co-ordinating role for Cell 11 (Llandudno to Solway Firth) in relation to monitoring, this would be subject to grant aid from DEFRA.
• Identify and digitise important coastal data so that it is easier to disseminate and utilise, the first item to be the Sefton Coast Database that was compiled in 1980.
• Use the latest climate change predictions to inform our decisions on important areas to monitor and revise our predictions for the future evolution of the coast.

Coastal Defence
Objective: to provide the regional level of flood defence to protect low lying areas of Sefton from flooding during high tides and storm events and to provide the required level of coast protection to protect vulnerable areas of the Sefton coastline from erosion.

In 2002:
The third and final phase of the Marine Drive Floodwall in Southport was completed with the compound being left behind for use by the shrimpers. There have been debris left behind on the beach as a result of the works but the contractor will be returning early in 2003 to clear this up.

Due to an increase in the revenue budget it has been possible to carry out more maintenance works. Works have been carried out on the primary and secondary flood defences at Marshside. A substantial amount of work has been carried out at Crosby mainly on hand railing and access steps as these are exposed to continuous damage from the elements.

In 2003:
There will be continued maintenance works carried out on the primary defences to the north of the sand winning plant and to the defences at Hall Road West which have been subjected to storm damage in the past few years. Leisure Services will be carrying out work on sand dunes, particularly at Crosby to attempt to control the encroachment of sand onto the promenade.

Dune and saltmarsh management for coastal defence
Objective: to maintain and encourage the use of dune based sea defences in appropriate locations.

This work ties in closely with the understanding of natural processes, which informs any management decision relating to the use of dunes and saltmarsh as a coastal defence.
In 2002:

Work was carried out to collate existing information on the saltmarsh within Sefton's boundaries; this reinforced the need to monitor the saltmarsh and identified the need to treat the saltmarsh in the Ribble estuary as a whole rather than working to political boundaries.

Monitoring of the beach and sand dunes has continued, there has been an initial review of the data and methods of analysis currently being used that has identified some shortcomings that need to be addressed.

In 2003:

Technical Services and Leisure Services to work together on a review of the saltmarsh and present the results to the Beach Management Group.

Monitoring of the beach and sand dunes to be reviewed and developed so that it better informs management decisions.
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 2002:

• Off shore wind: consent was granted to develop the Rhyl and North Hoyle wind farms Celtic Offshore Wind Ltd. (COWL). Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Burbo Bank (Seascape) was submitted and consents applied for. SMBC response to Seascape’s EIA was to request installation be moved further from Sefton shore. SCP has not formally commented on the application, though individual partners have done so.

• A national consultation on wind energy has been published by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). SCP partners and will respond by deadline of 28 February 2003.

• NWCF Interreg project is on hold subject to identifying transnational partners. No further action required by SCP at this stage.

Public Heath and Amenity

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

In 2002:

• A pilot cleansing programme has been in operation during the year and the conclusion of this will be reported to Sefton cabinet members in 2003 with a view to producing the Beach Cleansing Plan. Cleansing of the promenade and associated sand blow was included as part of this pilot.

• Little progress has been made on a proposed review of the oil spill response plan, or a similar review of coast-wide emergency response procedures.

• Bathing water quality test results are being put on the SMBC website, and ways of putting them on coastal websites are being developed.

• The board is represented on the North West Bathing Waters Forum (NWBWFP) through SMBC (and other partners). The
NWBWF has recently merged with the NWCF. A review of the Bathing Waters Directive by the EC is under way. This may have the effect of introducing even stricter standards for water quality.

Targets for 2003:

- Complete beach management review. (SCCS)
- Complete Beach Cleansing pilot and publish Beach Cleansing Plan. (SCCS)
- Resolve oil spill review and emergency response review responsibilities and progress reviews. (All)
- Continue to represent SCP interests on NWCF with regard to bathing water issues. (SMBC)

Implementation and Review

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

In 2002:

- The SCP website (www.seftoncoast.org.uk) was kept up to date including posting of Board minutes, details of task groups and key documents. Proposals for a review of the website were agreed by the Board, and will be pursued, given resources, in 2003.
- The two annual editions of Coastlines (Summer and Winter) were produced. (Winter in early 2003)
- The Communication and Research Task Group (CTG) began its review of both communications and research strategy. On the research side, an Irish Sea Forum seminar on Coastal Modelling organised by Andy Plater of Liverpool University raised the issue of the need for better connection between academic research and management. Ann Worsely from Edge Hill College, a SCP Board member, is working with Andy Plater to develop a research strategy for the coast. This will be taken further during 2003.
- Communications and Research although connected, have different agendas, and it is likely that there will be separate subgroups working on each topic. The research issue has also been raised at the NWCF.

Targets for 2003:

- Proceed with website redesign, subject to contributions from partners. (SMBC on behalf of Board)
- Continue review of communications strategy, including sourcing of funds to support outreach work. (Board, through CTG)
- Continue with establishment of research network develop links with NWCF to this end. (Board, through CTG)
- The current Coast Management plan is now more than half-way through its ‘term’ and should be reviewed with the intention of publishing a new Plan in 2004/5. The review must be initiated during 2003 with a view to consulting on a new plan in 2004. (SMBC Planning on behalf of Board)
- As part of this process, the indicators set out in the CMP should be assessed and reviewed. (SMBC Planning on behalf of Board)
STRUCTURE OF SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP
Board Members
Sefton Coast Partnership

Mr Gordon Adam  Forestry Commission
Mr Ian Broad  Environment Agency
Mr Steve Fowler  North West Tourist Board
Mr Paul Green  English Nature
Mr Ralph Gregson MBE  Birkdale Civic Society
Major Bill Hunter  Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
Mr Ted Jackson (Chair)  Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Mr David Knowles  Southport Pier Trust
Cllr Ian Moncur  Sefton Council
Mr David Porter  National Trust
Mr Laurence Rose  Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Cllr David Tattersall  Sefton Council
Cllr Syd Whitby  Sefton Council
Dr Ann Worsley  Edge Hill College
Dr Reg Yorke  Formby Civic Society

Task Group Leaders

1. Nature Conservation - (Mr Dave McAleavey)
2. Shoreline Management - (Mr Graham Lymbery)
3. Access and Interpretation (Mr Andrew Brockbank)
4. Communication (including Research and Education) - (Cllr David Tattersall & Dr Ann Worsley)
5. Tourism - (Mr David Knowles)
6. Forest Plan - (Mr Paul Nolan)
7. Local History / Archaeology - (Dr Reg Yorke)
Map showing location of principle land managers/ownerships
For further information on the contents of the annual report and the Sefton Coast Partnership please contact:

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