Description of the
Sefton Coast

The Sefton Coast is a lowland sedimentary coastline at the edge of the West Lancashire plain extending between the Mersey and Ribble Estuaries. This well-defined stretch of coast falls entirely within the Borough of Sefton, part of the County of Merseyside, but it also forms part of a complex of low-lying coasts and estuaries around Liverpool Bay in England’s North West Region.

The coast is a long wide arc of sand, a bird-shore dune system, which once stretched northwards from the Mersey to the Ribble, where the sandy shore changes to the mud and salt marches of the Ribble Estuary. All the coastal settlements – Bootle, Crosby, Hightown, Formby and Southport are built on the drift sand, avoiding the inland mosses.

Centuries of use has created a varied landscape complemented by the panoramas of the Irish Sea with the far hills of Snowdonia and the Lakes visible on the horizon. This landscape falls into distinct areas of which the dune coast is the largest. North of the busy dock estate at the Port of Liverpool the urbanised coastal park at Crosby with good views of the shipping lanes. Beyond this lies the artificial dune beach formed from the ‘erosion’ of Hall Road where building rubble was used in the 1940’s to protect the coast against constant erosion by the River Alt. A vestigial dune landscape remains at Hightown, cut off from natural sand supply by the small estuary of the Alt. Just north of the Alt is ‘Wignall’s Bank’ formed by trapping sand in the eighteenth century and now part of the Altcar Riffs Range. This marks the start of the dune coast which extends north for 17 km around Formby Point to Southport.

The beaches and dunes convey a special sense of wilderness with high mobile dunes and a maze of dune ridges and hollows. The dune system itself, the largest of its kind in the UK, is rich in wildlife and is a classic example of a west coast calcareous (lime-rich) dune system notable for rare species of plants and animals. Some dune areas, formerly managed as rabbit warrens, have survived almost in their original form, whereas other areas were converted to fields (for asparagus farming, for instance) or planted with trees. The majority of this area is in public ownership with good access. There are two national nature reserves (Cabin Hill and Ainsdale Sand Dunes) owned and managed by English Nature. The National Trust property at Redshfield is well-known for its Red Squirrels. Adjacent is the Lifeboat Road Area owned by Sefton Council which also has three local nature reserves at Ainsdale, Birkdale and Ravensmoor Hills.

Dunes are ideal for links-type golf, and the courses at Formby, Southport & Ainsdale, Hesketh, Hightown, Southport (Municipal) and Royal Birkdale form an important part of the landscape.

The dunes at Formby Point are eroding, while new dunes are building at Crosby and from Ainsdale-on-Sea to Birkdale. The dunes are key sea defences. Changes in the coast are marked by the foundations of the old Lifeboat Station, once well back in the dunes, but now exposed to the action of waves on the beach. The erosion is also gradually exposing remarkable animal and human footprints in silt deposits over 4000 years old.

At Southport areas of beach have been progressively claimed over the last 150 years to create the Seaford and its Marine Lake. The Pier marks the zone of transition to estuarine marsh. To the north of the town there are broad vistas across the sandy expanse of the Ribble Estuary to Blackpool and Lytham St Annes, RSPB’s Marshside Reserve confirms the value of the whole coast for birds.

The value of the Sefton Coast for nature conservation is recognised by the local, national and international designations which apply to the area. It is also a locally valued area for outdoor recreation, and attracts visitors from across the region. The Sefton Coast is rich in history and wildlife; it is a very special place and deserves careful management.

Management of the coast is the direct responsibility of individual landowners, but is strengthened by a voluntary partnership, originally the Sefton Coast Management Scheme, but now known as the Sefton Coast Partnership (SCP). The Partnership covers mainly the open (undeveloped) coast, where the objective is to ensure the natural heritage is protected and enhanced to the benefit of local communities and visitors. The Partnership’s vision for the coast is set out below.

“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 “(Vision Statement 1997)
This report covers the period January to December 2003. It is a summary of the key achievements and associated performance targets set for the coming year. Performance against targets set for 2003 is set out in Table 1 with comments.

* The Partnership

The Sefton Coast Partnership (SCP) guides the management of the open coast in Sefton. It is an informal association of land managers, land owners, community groups and other agencies, all of whom have an interest in the integrated management of Sefton’s valuable coastal areas. The Partnership is steered by a Board comprising representatives of the various landowners and groups.

The Board works within the framework of the Sefton Coast Management Plan (2nd Review) towards sustainable management of the coast. The plan encourages partnership working and is intended to guide landowners and managers.

The Coast Management Plan covers the 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 Sefton.

The Board is supported by a number of Task Groups, and an annual public forum provides the opportunity to discuss coastal issues with a broader audience. The Partnership structure and the Board and Task Group members are shown in a diagram structure – see page 25.

The Partnership publishes ‘Coastlines’ twice a year which provides information about activities on the coast to local communities through a mailing list, and through schools and local libraries. The Partnership website www.seftoncoast.org.uk provides detailed information on the coast, with links to other key coastal sites.

* National and Regional events relevant to the Partnership

Stocktake of coastal partnerships: Following the EU Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in May 2002, Member states are required to do a national stocktake of ICM. As part of this process, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) commissioned consultants (W & Atkins) to carry out an assessment of coastal partnerships. Information has been provided to the consultants by the SCP and the Chair has attended workshops organised to discuss the recommendations and identify the role of coastal partnerships.

Regional Planning Guidance was published in July 2003, containing, as expected, a coastal chapter with a series of policies for coastal planning and management.

Mersey Waterfront Regional Park: The Mersey Waterfront Park (as it is now known) was given the go-ahead early in 2003 and a number of projects have been supported. Information on The Mersey Waterfront Park (MWP) is available on-line at www.merseyside.org.uk. The MWP has three main themes – Mersey Maritime (the port and associated marine industries on Merseyside), Leisure and Recreation (self explanatory), and Environmental Development and Management (EDM). Through this theme MWP intended to support projects which enhance the natural environment and open spaces along the waterfront. It is therefore very important to the SCP. The Access and Interpretation Task Group has been discussing proposals with MWP staff during the year. MWP has identified a coastal trail as a concept linking the great variety of projects around the Mersey Coast, and a brief for a study of access on the Sefton Coast has been developed (see note on the Access Task Group). Other projects supported as part of MWP in Sefton are the Marine Parade Bridge in Southport, provision of a team for Southport Pier, and the Crosby Marine Park WATER Centre feasibility study.

Ribble Estuary Strategy: Work started on a proposal for another Regional Park based around the Ribble Estuary, initiated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and supported by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and local authorities including Sefton. Consultants were appointed to prepare a Strategy which was completed in July 2003.

Shoreline Management: The Coastal Practice Network: This network, including the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (NWCF), was established to share best practice in the coastal zone and support projects which enhance the natural environment and open spaces along the coastline. The network is being coordinated through the Coastal Practice Network.

Irish Sea Regional Seas Pilot Study: This pilot study looked at the implications of extending the habitats regulations into marine areas, using the western Irish Sea as a test case. Chris Lamb of the Joint Nature Conservation Council described the initial findings at the Sefton Coast Forum in October. The study has now been completed and all reports can be found on www.jncc.gsi.gov.uk/marine/ irishsa_pilot/default.htm

Coastal Practice Network: Following the disappointment at the rejection of the follow-on Quality of Coastal Zones project by DEFRA a similar HLB proposal was submitted. The QCT partners made a proposal for a network project under the Interreg IIIA programme for which approval was received in December. The project is for a network of partners (21 in all) sharing best practice in coordinated coastal management, coastal tourism and coastal defence. Sefton is working with the North West Water Centre on this network and will assist others in bringing together groups from the other partners.

North West Coastal Trail: The feasibility study into the potential for establishing a coastal path from Chester to Caernarfon on the SCP and the Chair has attended workshops organised to discuss the recommendations and identify the role of coastal partnerships.

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Offshore renewable energy: Generation of electricity started towards the end of the year from the North Hoyle off-shore wind farm (National Power – 3 turbines). Work has started on a second wind-farm at Rhyl Flats on the North Welsh Coast. The Burbo Bank proposal by Swancap Ltd offshore from Crosby is still awaiting approval. During the year DTI invited applications for a second round of proposals Assessing on these – Thames Estuary, The Wash and Liverpool Bay. These projects will be much larger than the first round proposals. Towards the end of 2003 DTI announced the Gwynt y Mor off-shore windfarm project had been offered to National Power, with development planned 2007-9. This will be for 200 turbines producing 750 Mw. It is likely other major windfarms will be announced in the Liverpool Bay area.

Sefton Coast Forest Plan: The Plan was approved by the Forestry Commission in December 2002. The Task Group began implementation in January 2003 and the Plan was publicly launched by the Mayor in May at Formby High School – see Forest Plan Task Group notes.

David Knowles: The death of David Knowles was a sad loss to the Partnership. David chaired the Tourism Task Group, and was a member of the SCP Board.

Ainsdale National Nature Reserve: English Nature commissioned an Environmental Impact Assessment of the Dunse Restoration Project at Ainsdale. Dunes National Nature Reserve. This is now due to deliver the final report in March 2004 which will determine the future management of a significant area of the Reserve.

Redshill Dune Heath: Purchase of the heath by Lancashire Wildlife Trust has progressed well. Although land purchases of this type are always complex, and some details remain to be sorted out, the Trust is already consulting locally on the future management of the heath.

WATER Centre, Crosby Coastal Park: Approval was given by Mersey Waterfront Park for a feasibility study on the potential for establishing a watersports centre catering specifically for coastal, particularly the Crosby area. Consultants (Lucem Destination Consulting) were appointed in October and the study is due for completion in April 2004. A number of discussions have been held with local communities and interest groups on the proposals.

Crosby Coastal Park: the coastline from Southport to the River Alt, is being identified for improvements. If it comes to fruition, the revitalised Crosby Coastal Park (which hopefully include Potters Barn) and WATER Centre will act as a southern gateway to the Sefton Coast, and the Coastal Path. It also has the potential to be used for coastal tourism. For further information contact Dave McAusley.
2. Local History & Archaeology
Chair – Dr Roy Task
(Chair, Formby Historical Society)

Remit: To gather information on, and raise awareness of, the history and archaeology of the coast, and to advise partners on its historical aspects and how they might influence land management.

Activities 2003: The group has developed a proposal for designation of a Sefton Heritage Coast and has opened discussions with the Countryside Agency to prepare a submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to develop an interpretative 'Asparagus trail'. The Group is also updating the Sefton Coastal Chronology on the Partnership website.

Proposals 2004: a) Submit bid to HLF, b) Organise conferences on Sefton Coastal History and Archaeology September 2004, c) Continue preparation of Heritage Coast proposal, d) Promote research and recording of further coastal sites e.g. Ravenmeols tide-mill, military remains, North Meols seabanks.

3. Sefton Coast Forest Plan
Chair – Paul Nolan (Director, Mersey Forest)

Remit: This group is different from the others in that it is a pre-existing group which was specifically established under the aegis of the Mersey Forest to assist the Forest Plan process – the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Partnership Group. The group continues to provide a forum for reviewing the performance and implementation of the Forest Plan. It includes all the woodland owners signed up to the Forest Plan. The group is also open to ownerships and issues currently outside the Forest Plan.

Activities 2003: The Forest Plan itself was formally approved by the Forestry Commission in December 2002 and the Task Group began implementation at the beginning of 2003. The Group assisted with the public launch in May 2003 at Formby High School. Activities have concentrated on coordinating individual landowners in carrying out operations (for example some 16,000 trees have been planted in the rear woodlands at Ainsdale NNR). Investigation of the impact of felling and replanting on the hydrology of the dunes is being carried out by EA and Forestry Commission. The Appropriate Assessment of the Forest Plan required under the Habitats Regulations has been completed by the Forestry Commission and given a time-limited acceptance by English Nature. The group has been successful in obtaining Objective 1 support for the Forest Plan through the Integrated Countryside Environment Programme.

Proposals 2004: a) Continue monitoring under the terms of the Appropriate Assessment to ensure its continued acceptability or need for amendment. Maintain efforts to engage with all landowners, seek funding for and coordinate woodland operations planned for 2004. Monitor overall progress of the Forest Plan.

4. Research & Education
Chair – Ann Worsley (Edge Hill College)
David Tattersall (Sefton Council/Research & Education)

Remit: To promote awareness of the coast through better communications at all levels, including scientific research.

Activities 2003: A research strategy is in development, and a Sefton Coast Research Partnership involving members of the academic research community has been established. Two research seminars for students at Edge Hill College have focused on the Sefton Coast. A logo for the Partnership has been agreed and is now in use e.g. as a letterhead on SCP correspondence. Following suggestions from the group a regular meeting of Task Group Chairs is now held to improve co-ordination of activities.

Proposals 2004: a) continue to develop research strategy, b) review role, editorial policy etc of Coastlines and SCP website and explore other communication methods, c) continue to promote research meetings.

5. Nature Conservation
Chair – Dave McAleary
(Seal, Sefton Coast & Countryside Service)

Remit: The group’s main role is to facilitate the monitoring and dissemination of information on nature conservation issues. It aims to coordinate activities towards achieving general conservation targets and favourable conservation status for the coastal area. It will develop a Sefton Coast Research Partnership with academic universities to produce a Sefton Coast Research report by the end of the year and incorporate the findings into the Strategic Action Plan. It will also continue to advise on the preparation of 'position statements' (e.g. the ‘green beach’ issue) on key topics for endorsement by Board to guide actions by relevant managers.

Activities 2003: For obvious reasons this group has not been active during the year.

Proposals 2004: With the emphasis on the Sefton Coast in the Council’s Draft Tourism Strategy it is intended to ensure there is close liaison between the Task Group and the Council’s Tourism Department.

6. Tourism & Communication
Chair – Ralph Gregson (Birkdale Civic Society)
took over as Chair in December.
(Chair, Formby Historical Society)

Remit: To coordinate land management and maximise opportunities for sustainable tourism, encourage professional interpretation, and assist marketing of the Sefton Coast.

Activities 2003: For obvious reasons this group has not been active during the year.

Proposals 2004: With the emphasis on the Sefton Coast in the Council’s Draft Tourism Strategy it is intended to ensure there is close liaison between the Task Group and the Council’s Tourism Department.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use &amp; Economic Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure Partnership responds to consultations on matters to do with coast</td>
<td>Response to “Seas of Change” (DEFRA) consultation submitted, and to DTI consultation on second round off-shore renewables</td>
<td>awaiting outcome of survey commissioned by DEFRA from W S Atkins in 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in DEFRA stocktake of coastal partnerships</td>
<td>SCP members involved in discussions with NW Coastal Forum and consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North West Coastal Trail launched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure interests of SCP are represented in development of MWP, especially Edsley Development &amp; Management theme</td>
<td>MWP approved. SCP members involved at various levels. Bids for funding of projects submitted</td>
<td>Active discussion with MWP team on potential coastal projects – see Tourism section below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure coordination of funding bids through various sources</td>
<td>Mainly MWP – see Tourism section</td>
<td>To be taken forward after 2004 seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue possibility of Heritage Coast designation</td>
<td>History &amp; Archaeology Task Group assembling information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start first stages of Forest Plan. 44 hectares of thinning and 8½ hectares of re-stocking/felling. Keep communities informed of progress</td>
<td>FC/EN Approval to year 1 of forest operations 2003. Estimated thinning 11½ hectares and 6 hectares re-stocking/felling Website information made available Information boards erected</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></td>
<td>Identify action needed in SCP area to support North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan</td>
<td>No progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tender for National Vegetation Classification Survey of Coast</td>
<td>Brief for tender in preparation. (EAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish policy for funding purchase of Freshfield Dune Health</td>
<td>LWT now negotiating purchase of main area with MoD. EN negotiating management agreement with privately-owned section outside Woodvale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Local History Task Group</td>
<td>Task Group meeting (Chair Dr Yorke)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish status of Regionally 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>
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**RSPB Targets**

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<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carry out further 1000m ditch restoration</td>
<td>800m restored, including anti cat ditch</td>
<td>Addresses problem of cat predation of e.g. lapwing chicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install drainage pipe for Marshside 1</td>
<td>Feasibility study completed and consultation begun on hydrological link Marshside Road</td>
<td>Will enable control of flood levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install 2 Natterjack toad spawning pools</td>
<td>3 pools excavated, one with mains water supply</td>
<td>To extend range of species; spawn to be introduced in 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install 0.5 ha Godwit feeding pool</td>
<td>Shallow pool 0.5 ha excavated (M2)</td>
<td>To provide feeding areas for breeding waders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase lapwing numbers and monitor chick survival</td>
<td>Lapwing monitoring: 10% increase in nesting pairs</td>
<td>59 chicks colour-ringed; good survival rate recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install bird display in Nel’s hide</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled for early 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve LNR status for Marshside</td>
<td>No progress</td>
<td>Need to agree action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin implementation of new visitor strategy</td>
<td>Draft completed and consultation begun</td>
<td>Further evaluation required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continue planned pony grazing and prepare to extend grazing programme into Long Slack area

- Grazing from October 2003 with 48 sheep at Cabin Hill and 227 at Ainsdale. Fence line cleared for Long Slack enclosure, new fence installed, scrub thinning partly completed.
- Sheep grazing as planned. Pony grazing to begin in May 2004.

Continue/complete stump removal Phase 1 & 2 dune restoration and marram planting

- Stump removal completed in Phase 2 Volunteers provided over 20 person days towards this project.

Dune slack management

- New Ryetec mower and Lamborghini tractor with low ground pressure tyres allowed close mowing / scarifying of 3 slacks, and a further 2 were relined with clean sand.
- This work will allow Natterjack Toads to again breed successfully in these pools.

Continue to remove sea buckthorn and white poplar in slacks 8,9,13 & Massam’s Slack and frontal dunes

- All planned scrub was removed and disposed of.

Dune Restoration Project – Environmental Impact Assessment

- To be completed March 2003
- English Nature to consider findings, carry out any follow on studies, and identify appropriate way forward for Project.

Natterjack Survey Coastal Natterjack Report

- Completed March 2003
- Report coordinated and completed on behalf of Sefton Coast Partnership

Let thinning/replanting contracts in rear woods as per Forest Plan

- Around 5000 new trees planted as part of project to maintain and improve Red Squirrel habitat Second years work has started and more trees will be planted in early 2004.
- 1 newsletter
- 8 guided walks and 3 local shows were attended in 2003

Begin revision of Cabin Hill management plan

- Revision completed

Monitor Sand Lizard introduction

- Sand Lizard monitoring by volunteer and staff showed survival over the first winter.
- Improved Red Squirrel monitoring system maintained in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Second Sand Lizard release planned for 2004

Review access and arrangements on site approach and resurface access road

- Repairs to access road complete with new signs and traffic calming
- Further work to re-surface with chippings due in May 2004

Fencing, scrub clearance and hedge planting in Larkhill Rd area

- All works completed as part of Countryside Stewardship Scheme supported by DEFRA

Renew footpath signage and waymarks

- Some improvements made
- Work ongoing

Complete property management plan October 2003

- Draft plan completed
- Consultation to be undertaken in 2004

Sefton Coast & Countryside Service

Develop strategy for further development of Discovery Centre, Lido

- Ongoing
- Included in Mersey Waterfront Park proposals

Complete consultations on Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR and Ravenmeols LNR Management Plans; May 2004 incl possible LNR extensions

- Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review
- Complete consultation May 2004

Submit Countryside Stewardship schemes for Ainsdale and Birkdale LNRs

- WES scheme complete investigating further funding – Ongoing
- Consider for 2005

Implement Yr 1 of Forest Plan

- Ongoing
- Completed April 2004
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism Leisure &amp; Recreation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter Southport &amp; Ainsdale beaches for Seaside awards</td>
<td>Three Seaside Awards achieved at Southport Ainsdale and Formby</td>
<td>Entered for 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshside – progress perimeter lan</td>
<td>Discussions progressing with Sefton Council regarding possibility of traffic calming on Coast Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support MWP and develop projects for Pier Pavilion, Coast management and Crosby Marine Park</td>
<td>Pier Tram application approved. Feasibility study for Crosby Marine Park WATER Centre approved. Brief for Access and Interpretation feasibility study developed</td>
<td>Discussions with MWP team on Coast Management projects to be submitted under Estuary Development &amp; Management theme in 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop framework for action on Access &amp; Interpretation</td>
<td>Being pursued by Access &amp; Interpretation Task Group through MWP (see above)</td>
<td>Bid to be submitted early 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop programme for permanent interpretation facility in Pier Pavilion</td>
<td>Being followed up by Tourism Department in context of MWP</td>
<td>Needs to link with outcome of feasibility study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure aims of SCP are built into Seafront Action Plan</td>
<td>Masterplan completed, recognises role of Sefton Coast Path. Eco-visitor Centre under construction (interpretation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Ribble Estuary Regional Park proposals</td>
<td>Feasibility study completed. Strategy launched</td>
<td>To be endorsed by Council and SCP early 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shoreline Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<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 stage 2</td>
<td>Stage 1 completed, stage 2 commenced in 2003</td>
<td>Final report should be completed by mid 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain links with Liverpool Bay Coastal Group, LGASIG (Local Government Association of Special Interest Group)</td>
<td>Continued participation in LBCG (Liverpool Bay Coastal Group) and a developing role within Cell 11. Links with LGASIG re-established</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue coast protection works on Sefton Coast</td>
<td>Leisure Services have continued their management work of sand dunes on behalf of Technical Services</td>
<td>The Technical Services revenue budget has been increased which will enable more coast protection works on the Sefton Coast to be undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marine Environmental Management</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure SCP interest represented in response to DEFRA consultation on marine management and DTI consultation on off-shore wind proposals</td>
<td>Responses submitted, SCP represented at further DEFRA workshops</td>
<td>Stocktake continues in 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with JNCC on Irish Sea Regional Seas pilot</td>
<td>Reported to SCP Forum 2003. JNCC reports now completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond as needed to further consultations</td>
<td>None relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Health &amp; Amenity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete beach management review</td>
<td>Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review</td>
<td>Complete 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete beach cleansing pilot and publish beach cleansing plan</td>
<td>Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review</td>
<td>Complete 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve oil spill review and emergency response review responsibilities</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Work with key agencies to review procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to represent SCP at NWCF with regard to bathing water issues</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation &amp; Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep website up to date, review design</td>
<td>Website being continuously updated on receipt of information from partners.</td>
<td>Current design considered adequate for time being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish/review communications strategy</td>
<td>Under consideration by Task Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin review of Coast Management Plan</td>
<td>No progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Indicators in CMP</td>
<td>No progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish research network</td>
<td>Research Partnership established Research strategy in preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress in 2003 and Targets for 2004

This section describes progress in 2003 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 2004 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.

The issues presently under this heading are now dealt with either in the introduction or in the relevant sections below.

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 fauna, geology, geomorphology, landscape and heritage features of architectural historical cultural and archaeological interest.

In 2003:

- 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, although approval in late 2001 was expected due to the requirement for detailed archaeological assessment. A ‘Marshside Integrated Visitor Access Strategy’ is being developed and will aim to form part of the coast-wide ‘Access and Interpretation Strategy’. The aim is to create a major wild bird visitor attraction at Marshside.
- A new 5-year Management Plan for the Reserve will be drafted this year and the emerging Visitor Strategy will form an important element of the new Plan.
- Further ditching work is planned for 2004 and will include a major trans-march ditch on Marshside 1. This will connect-up with a planned 0.5 ha. shallow pool at the Hesketh Road end of the site and further enhance the marsh for breeding waders and wildfowl. It is hoped that the hydrological link between Marshside 1 and Marshside 2 will also be achieved in 2004.

RSPB (Marshside Reserve)

A further 800 metres of ditches provides further habitat for ducks and waders whilst also helping to deter local cats from visiting the marshes and killing young birds before they are able to fly. These ponds dug in the higher ‘dune’ marsh to provide suitable conditions for the introduction of Natterjack Toad spawn. This will take place in 2004. If successful this will increase the range of the toads and could allow them to colonise the Ribble Marshes beyond Marshside.

Increasing the amount of wet ‘features’, (ditches and pools), appears to be helping a larger number of lapwings to nest and is probably improving their productivity too. 59 lapwing chicks were colour-ringed in 2003 and it is hoped this work will continue in future years and aid our understanding of what factors are important to the success of the species.

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English Nature

At Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve the planned grazing regime with 230 Herdwick sheep from Wraydale in Cumbria continued until April, and resumed in October. This maintains a short sward with some longer areas, suitable for Natterjack Toads and a wide range of wildflowers. The fence line for a new grazing enclosure around the Long Slack area has been cleared ready for erection of the new enclosure early in 2004. The new fenceline will incorporate stiles and kissing gates for access.

All stumps have now been removed from the Dune Restoration Project area, and transported to a shady location in the rear woods where they will continue to rot down. A planned programme of scrub removal (sea buckthorn and white poplar) was carried out and the cuttings disposed of.

A number of surveys were carried out. Natterjack Toad monitoring continued, with good spawn string counts indicating a healthy adult population. The dune restoration area again contained nearly a quarter of the total number of spawn strings for the Sefton Coast as a whole.

Woodland management has resumed after an enforced break of several years. Management has been delayed pending approvals of the Forest Plan. However some essential management work (chiming and replanting) in the rear woodlands has gone ahead in January to March and in October and November 2003. Herdwick treatment of existing replanting copses has been carried out.

Continuing contact with the community is an important element of work, with the production of two newsletters and 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. Sand Lizards were re-introduced to the dune restoration project area in a joint project with the Herpetological Conservation Trust last summer. Monitoring of the re-introduction site by a dedicated volunteer has confirmed survival of the lizards into their first full summer in the wild. With luck, these could breed next year, though it would be more usual for breeding to take place for the first time in their third summer (c. 2005).

Re-profiling and close mowing of several key Natterjack breeding slacks was carried out in the autumn, and we hope that given sufficient rainfall, these will provide very suitable sites for spawning next spring.

English Nature is in the process of identifying the best way to manage part of the seaward area at Ainsdale Sand Dunes NHS in the future. In order to determine the best option for future management of the consultation area, and to meet legislative requirements, the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of proposed options has been identified. This assessment is now being carried out by Atkins, who will produce a final Environmental Statement in February 2004. This work is supported by an Landscape Assessment carried out by CASS Associates of Liverpool, and both the EIA and the Landscape work have incorporated a considerable amount of public consultation.
National Trust

Funding was secured to clean and restore the asparagus fields at Sandfield Farm. This work is due to be completed in January 2004. A demonstration plot (1/4 acre) of asparagus was planted at Blundell Avenue in March 2003 and a further 1/4 acre will be planted in 2004. The National Trust is working to re-establish asparagus cultivation through a business tenancy on part of Sandfield Farm.

The Trust continued to work with the Formby Civic Society to develop proposals for an Asparagus Trail which will interpret the 'Freshfield' story.

The learning staff and volunteers welcomed over 25,000 children during the year. Over half of these benefited from one or more of the National Trust's guided educational activities. An increasing proportion of schools benefited from Education Group Membership of the National Trust. The Formby property is a flagship property for formal education visits accounting for nearly half of all such visits to NT properties in the NW Region.

The implementation of the Woodland Management Plan was delayed for operational reasons. The work programme is now scheduled to commence in February 2004.

The small dune heath field at Larkhill was fenced in readiness for grazing. Access was maintained through the provision of kissing gates and a hedge planted alongside Larkhill Lane. Conservation grazing was extended to two further fields at Sandfield Farm and at Brooks Field.

A draft Property Management Plan was prepared and consultation will follow on key proposals during 2004. The Trust continues to work closely with Sefton Coast & Countryside Services in relation to opportunities to improve visitor facilities at Formby.

Sefton Coast & Countryside Service

Monitoring of Natterjack Toad populations within the SMBC area was carried out and results passed to EN in support of the Natterjack Toad Strategy.

The review of the Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills LNR Management Plan is ongoing and will be completed by May 2004.

The Wildlife Enhancement Scheme for the LNR’s was established through agreement with English Nature and will be completed in 2004.

The Woodland Plan was implemented with funding from the Forestry Commission and ICEP including a machinery grant.

Targets for 2004:

General

- Implementation of the next year of the Forest Plan, including 16.8 hectares of thinning and 2.4 hectares of restocking in addition to any rollover from the previous year’s targets.
- Appropriate Assessment continues to be acceptable whilst hydrological aspects are investigated by Forestry Commission/English Nature.
- Identify action needed to support North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan and ensure actions are incorporated into relevant site work programmes.
- Carried forward from 2003. (Nature Conservation Task Group and All Partners)
- Complete NVC survey. (Consultants managed by Environmental Advisory Service)
- Proceed with purchase of Freshfield Dune Heath and management agreement on privately owned section. (SMBC and EN)
- Develop options for external funding of land management proposals through, for example Mersey Waterfront, Integrated Countryside Environment Programmes, Countryside Stewardship and other relevant regimes. (All Partners)
- Reinstates eroded section of Coast Footpath at Formby Point subject to agreement with Formby Golf Course. (NT, EN, FGC, SMBC)
- Resolve coastal RBSG status. (SMBC & EN)
- RSPB Marchwood targets.
- Carry out further 1500m of ditch restoration and enhancement.
- Install hydrological link across Marchwood Road for Marchwood 1, following completion of construction.
- Introduce sown to Natterjack Toad squelching pools.
- Improve on-site signage.
- Carry out preparatory work for Visitor Strategy and make funding application.
- For the Dune Restoration Project, independent contractors are carrying out a full Environmental Impact Assessment and public consultation in 2003. By March 2004 this will have delivered its findings and a way forward will have been identified.
- Complete revision of Cabin Hill INF Management Plan.
- Remove old buckthorn & thin other scrub in slack 13 area.
- Fence slack 13 area and introduce livestock grazing.
- Let thinning/planting contracts in near woods as per Forest Plan to deliver key Red Squirrel targets.
- Deliver access monitoring programme by installing a visitor counter.
- Continue to produce two newsletters and produce a year long walks programme.
- Follow up Sand Lizard reintroduction programme.
- Repair the boundary track following the negative results from Petrelcort survey.
- Continue slack re-profiling and mowing to maintain Natterjack breeding sites in favourable condition.
- Maintain and bring all units of the Ainsdale Sand Dunes NR into favourable condition for their wildlife features.
- Carry out an assessment of disabled/less able access to the NR and implement recommendations where possible.
- Continue to support Sand Lizard and Natterjack translocation programmes.
- Continue to work with volunteers to establish Friends of Groups.
**Tourism, Leisure & 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 values of the coast.

In 2003:

- National Resort Survey 'A' grades were achieved at Southport and Ainsdale, because of both beaches achieved Seaside Awards, along with Lifeboat Road, Formby Point.
- Mersey Waterfront Council joined with North West Coastal Forum in a proposal for a transnational network on Coastal Practice fronted by the European Union of Coastal Conservation, and submitted through the Interreg III E/ North West programme. The application was successful and the three-year project is expected to kick off in March 2004. It will involve exchange visits with practitioners from other partner areas (21 in all).
- Mersey Waterfront Council – The MWP programme got under way during 2003 with commitments to fund several projects in the Southport Sefton area. Funding was also provided for a feasibility study into the provision of a watersports centre for people with disabilities in Crosby Marine Park. This study was started in October and is due to report in March/April 2004. Discussions were held between the MWP team and partners on the potential to develop coastal projects under the MWP External Development & Management theme.
- Access Strategy – the Access & Interpretation Task Group has developed a draft brief for a research seminar on Coastal Change and the Sefton Coast. The aim was to inform the coastal management decisions for this length of coast.
- An assessment of site suitability for interpretation of the coast has been undertaken.
- The Sefton Coast database is in the process of completion during 2004. The Pier and the pavilion are now well-established as visitor facilities. A masterplan for the Sefton Front was completed and launched during the year.
- The Ribble Estuary Regional Park – the feasibility study into establishing a regional park based on the Ribble Estuary promoted by RSPB with funding from NNDA and others (including SMBC and EN) was completed and the proposal was published on 21st October. A number of SCP Partners were represented on the Steering Group. A study was commissioned by Sefton’s Tourism Director, the Ribble Estuary Regional Park – the feasibility study into establishing a regional park based on the Ribble Estuary promoted by RSPB with funding from NNDA and others (including SMBC and EN) was completed and the proposal was published on 21st October. A number of SCP Partners were represented on the Steering Group. A study was commissioned by Sefton’s Tourism Director, the Ribble Estuary Regional Park – the feasibility study into establishing a regional park based on the Ribble Estuary promoted by RSPB with funding from NNDA and others (including SMBC and EN) was completed and the proposal was published on 21st October. A number of SCP Partners were represented on the Steering Group. A study was commissioned by Sefton’s Tourism Director 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 values of the coast.
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**Targets for 2004:**

- Ainsdale, Southport and Formby beaches have been entered into the Seaside Awards for 2004 (SCCS).
- Ainsdale and Beach to achieve A or B in the National Resort Survey (SCCS).
- Establish the Co-ordinators post for the ‘Southport Aren’t Shiny Brillant!’ project. (RSPB + SCCS).
- Marcheside (see also Ribble Regional Park) – progress perimeter plan proposals and further development of visitor plan. (RSPB and SMBC).
- Access & Interpretation – continue discussions with MWP on issues relating to MWP and SCP aims and objectives. (All). The Ribble Estuary Regional Park – the feasibility study into establishing a regional park based on the Ribble Estuary promoted by RSPB with funding from NNDA and others (including SMBC and EN) was completed and the proposal was published on 21st October. A number of SCP Partners were represented on the Steering Group. A study was commissioned by Sefton’s Tourism Director 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 values of the coast.

**Shoreline Management**

**Aim:** To support the need to protect life, property and habitats by appropriate coastal 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 2003:

- The second year of the enhanced monitoring programme has been completed and a report is being compiled. Following on from discussions about last year’s report with Partners and a workshop at last year’s Forum, a different approach is being adopted for the reporting and presentation of coastal defence and coastal process information. The report will be made up of an overall summary with individual summaries for different areas; these summaries will indicate what has gone on in the past, what is happening now and what may happen in the future. Supporting information will be placed on the Sefton Coastal Partnership website and will include brief descriptions of the coastal processes which may be referred to and information on the more detailed analysis for those who wish to go into more detail. As part of this process the results of the Sefton Coast database in the process of being digitised and updated so that it can be accessed on the web site.
- HR Wallingford had 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 areas of work to be carried out in stages two which will fill some of the gaps in information that currently exist so that the final report can be more comprehensive.
- These include borehole, wave modelling, an archaeological survey and sediment sampling. Unfortunately, gaining approval for grant aid for these studies has taken longer than expected because there were a number of technical quarters that needed to be resolved prior to commencement. This has resulted in the programme for this scheme being delayed by approximately 8 months.
- A workshop was held to discuss a research strategy for coastal processes, this was attended by those with a technical interest in the coast including academics and practitioners. Following on from the workshop a strategy is being drawn up which will detail work being undertaken, areas where we would like to improve our understanding and a general overview of why we need to improve our understanding of this topic.

**Targets for 2004:**

- Seek feedback from Partners and the public on the revised format for the reporting of coastal process and coastal defence in order to identify shortcomings and rectify where possible.
- Complete the draft report for the Crosby to Formby Point study and undertake comprehensive consultation. When the consultation is completed and relevant comments fed back into the report it will be finalised and an appropriate action plan drawn up based on any recommendations arising from the report.

**“Shoreline Management Plans are the vehicle for long term sustainable management of the coast.”**
Coastal Defence

Objective: to provide the regional level of flood defence to protect low-lying areas of the borough 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.

Dune and Saltmarsh Management for Defence

Objective: to maintain and encourage the use of dune and saltmarsh as a coastal defence.

Marine Environmental Management

Objective: to operate 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.

Public Heath and Amenity

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

In 2003:

- The contractors for the third phase of the Floodwall in Southport have returned on a number of occasions to clear debris that was left on the beach as a result of the works. The majority of this debris has now been cleared.

The defences at Hall Road West have been strengthened with 700 tonnes of rock armour in the area of transition between the formal defences. This area had been the subject of storm damage on a number of occasions in recent years.

Targets for 2004:

- To maintain and encourage the use of dune and saltmarsh as a coastal defence.

The 2003 Annual Forum was well-attended and feedback from delegates indicated a full-day forum would be preferable to allow fuller discussion of topics. This will take place 7 February 2004.

The Communication and Research Task Group began its review of both Community and Research Strategy. On the research side, an Irish Sea Forum seminar on Coastal Modelling organised by Andy Rafter from Edge Hill University raised the issue of the need for increased 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 2003:

- SCF responded to the E71 consultation on wind energy in February 2003.
- SCF responded to DEFFRA's consultation document “Seas of Change” and various workshops organised by Construct on behalf of DEFFRA have been attended.
- The Irish Sea Regional Seas pilot study on the extension of Habitats Regulations into marine areas was reported to the SCF Forum in February by Chris Lamb of the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee. This study has now been completed.

Targets for 2004:

- Complete Beach Management Review (SCSs)
- Complete Beach Cleansing pilot and publish Beach Cleansing Plan (SCSs)
- Resolve oil spill review and emergency response reviews responsibilities and progress reviews (Carried forward) (AIL)
- Continue to represent SCP interests on NWCF with regard to bathing water issues. (SMBC)

In 2003:

- Following a proposal from Edge Hill College it has been agreed to provide sponsorship for a PhD that is examining the sediment dynamics of the north Sefton coast. This will study aim to provide an understanding of the past evolution of this area with a view to being able to improve our predictions of future evolution.
- Officers have provided comment on recent research commissioned by DEFFRA examining the management of sand-dunes for their coastal defence function. This has provided a starting point for revisiting the monitoring of the sand-dune system and assessing its condition, and this is closely linked to the monitoring programme and the development of an appropriate monitoring regime.

In 2003:

- Monitoring of the beach and sand dunes will be reviewed and developed to improve understanding. This can then be discussed with Partners in order to identify any improvements that can be made to the integrated management and monitoring of the beach and sand dunes.

In addition, the Sefton Coast Forest Plan was drafted by SCCS for consultation. A review of the Beach Management Strategy was drafted by SCCS for consultation. Preparation of the Strategy was delayed to allow more than one month's consultation was completed.

The Communication and Research Task Group completed.

The Irish Sea Regional Seas pilot study on the extension of Habitats Regulations into marine areas was reported to the SCF Forum in February by Chris Lamb of the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee. This study has now been completed.

In 2003:

- Respond as needed to further consultations.
- Consider SCP engagement in “Hour of the Sea” celebrations planned for 2005.

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Map showing location of principle land managers/ownerships

Board Members
Sefton Coast Partnership

Mr Gordon Adam
Forestry Commission

Mr Ian Broad
Environment Agency

Mr Andrew Brockbank
National Trust

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

Cllr Ian Moncur
Sefton Council

Mr Lawrence Rose
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Cllr David Tattersall
Sefton Council

D J Taylor
Formby Golf Club

Cllr Syd Whithby
Sefton Council

Dr Ann Worsley
Edge Hill College

Dr Reg Yorks
The Formby Civic Society

Task Group Leaders

- Nature Conservation and Shoreline Management
  (Mr Dave McAleavy)

- Access and Interpretation
  (Mr Andrew Brockbank)

- Research and Education
  (Dr Ann Worsley)

- Tourism and Communication
  (Ralph Gregson)

- Forest Plan
  (Mr Paul Nolan)

- Archaeology/Local History
  (Dr Reg Yorks)
Design by the graphic section, within planning and economic regeneration.