

## **DRAFT SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2005**

### **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 hindshore dune system, which once stretched unbroken northwards from the Mersey to the Ribble, where the sandy shore changes to the muds and salt marshes of the Ribble Estuary. All the coastal settlements – Bootle, Crosby, Hightown, Formby and Southport are built on the drier sand, avoiding the inland mosses.

Centuries of use has created a varied landscape complemented by the panorama of the Irish Sea with the far hills of Snowdonia and the Lakes visible on the horizon. This landscape falls into distinct units of which the dune coast is the largest. North of the busy dock estate at the Port of Liverpool is the urbanised coastal park at Crosby with good views of the shipping lanes. Beyond this lies the artificial shingle beach formed from 'the erosion' at Hall Road where building rubble was used in the 1940s 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 Rifle 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 Freshfield 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 Ravenmeols Hills.

Dunes are ideal for links-type golf, and the courses at Formby, Southport & Ainsdale, Hillside 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 Seafront 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 grassy 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.

### **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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Partnership Board is supported by a number of Task Groups. The chairs of these groups form a Partnership Working Group which meets more frequently than the Board to deal with the coordination of specific projects. The members of the Board and Task Groups are listed on page 33. The Partnership holds an annual Forum, usually in February each year, a public meeting which provides an opportunity to discuss coastal issues with a broader audience. The 2005 Forum was attended by 130 people. A summary of the proceedings of the Forum is available on the Partnership website.

The Sefton Coast Management Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Review) 1997 -2006 will be replaced with a new Sefton Coast Partnership (ICZM) Plan in 2006. The document will guide the SCP over the next five years, illustrating the headline activities of the task groups and land managers.

The Board 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](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk)) provides detailed information on the coast, with links to other key coastal sites.

***"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)

### **Events and developments during the year**

- **ENCAMS Quality Coast Award**: The ENCAMS Seaside Awards are currently under review and Sefton as member of the UK Beach Management Forum Executive continues to be involved in a working group with ENCAMS, British Resorts Association, DEFRA, NBSC, and National Trust to develop a new national award and Beach Management System – Quality Coast Award. The Sefton Coast Partnership may take part in a pilot in 2006.
- **Marine Spatial Planning and EU Marine Strategy**: work has progressed during the year on the Marine Spatial Planning Pilot based on the Irish Sea, promoted by DEFRA. (web ref?) . In October, the European Commission published proposals for a European Marine strategy, and a consultation on this has been circulated by DEFRA for response by March 06. Information on the strategy can be found on [www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/marine.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/marine.htm)
- **Mersey Waterfront Park**: [www.merseyside.org.uk](http://www.merseyside.org.uk) A number of MWRP-supported projects on the coast have been completed during the year, or are well under way. RSPB finished their bird pool excavation and Viewing Platform at Marshside, and Lancashire Wildlife Trust completed work at Freshfield Dune Heath. Following some initial delays, work is now well on with reconnecting the Sefton coast Footpath at Formby Point in a project sponsored by National Trust, the Progression Project at Crosby coastal Park (see Sefton Water Centre below) was also completed.

MWRP submitted their initial application for the succession programme for the next three years of the Waterfront project to NWDA. The initial application was accepted subject to conditions by NWDA late in 2005, and the final application for a programme of about £7m over three years is due to be submitted in March 06.

- **Coastal Gateways**: Spurred by the MWRP concept, a design brief for new visitor facilities at Ainsdale-on-Sea (the Lido), Freshfield, and Lifeboat Road was finalised and landscape architects Gillespies were appointed jointly by National Trust and Sefton Council in September 2005 to prepare outline designs which should be complete by March 2006.
- **Access Strategy**: The access strategy funded by MWRP was approved and work is under way to develop this into a practical programme of work.
- **Coastal Branding** – following completion of the Coastal Interpretation and Product Development (CIPD) project funded by MWRP, Sefton Tourism have progressed a branding exercise for the Sefton Coasts which will provide the basis for further work on interpretation, linking in to the Gateways and access projects noted above.
- **Ribble Estuary**: RSPB and Lancashire County Council continue to take the lead on the proposal. Funding has been obtained to enable the employment of a part time project officer, and Claudia Eckhardt has been appointed.

- Extension of Marshside: Agreement was reached between RSPB and Sefton Council on extending RSPB management to include the saltmarsh at Marshside and the car park to form a much larger RSPB reserve.
- Nature Conservation Strategy: Sefton Council has agreed with English Nature to sponsor a nature conservation strategy for the Sefton Coast, focusing on the Sefton Coast SAC. The strategy will be prepared by the Council on behalf of the Sefton Coast Partnership, working closely with all partners and local communities. A project officer has been appointed, working within the Council's Coast and Countryside Management Service.
- Coastal Practice Network (CoPraNet – see [www.coastalpractice.net](http://www.coastalpractice.net)):

This seminar forms part of a series of international workshops taking place as part of the CoPraNet project; an Interreg IIIC West-funded project running from January 2004 to December 2006. CoPraNet stands for 'Coastal Practice Network' and is based on integrated coastal zone management, in particular focussing on the themes of coastal erosion, sustainable tourism at the coast and beach management. The Planning, Implementation and Monitoring of Coastal Defences is the second workshop to be held by Sefton as part of the CoPraNet project and follows a successful workshop 'The Role of Regional Parks in Sustainable Tourism' which took place in October 2004.

The Planning, Implementation and Monitoring of Coastal Defences took place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2005 and was based in Southport, with study visits up and down the North West coast.

The aims of the event were:

- to examine key issues for the sustainable management of coastal erosion and flood defence using examples from the North West of England as a basis for discussion
- to review the national, regional, sub-regional and local approaches to monitoring for coastal erosion within the wider context of ICZM
- to demonstrate differing approaches to coastal defence and their implications for sustainable use and management of the coast
- to consider the type of research that needs to be undertaken in order to better inform coastal management

Participants were formally welcomed by Jeff Lang, Chairman of the North West Coastal Forum and by The Worshipful The Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, Councillor John F Walker at the conference dinner on the first evening. For local information on CoPraNet see also the North West Coastal Forum website [www.northwestcoast.org.uk](http://www.northwestcoast.org.uk)

- Visit by Dune Water Company of South Holland. The Dutch managers visited Ainsdale NNR on 20<sup>th</sup> October and went on to look at Ravenmeols, Newborough Warren and Sandscale Hawes.

- 'Another Place': Anthony Gormley's sculpture, "Another Place", was installed on Waterloo Beach in June 2005, and the installation was officially launched at a ceremony at the Crosby Baths. The sculpture comprises 100 life-size cast iron figures extending over the 3km expanse of Waterloo Beach. Some are almost immersed at high tide and revealed at low tide. The various consents needed to install the sculptures were obtained in record time by the South Sefton Development Trust, working with Liverpool Biennial. The installation has received national publicity, and has been well-received by residents and visitors, proving a very significant attraction.
- Offshore renewable energy National Wind Power's proposed Gwynt Y Mor wind farm has moved a stage further with the submission of the full Environmental Impact Statement in November 2005. The proposed installation is about 15 km off the N. Welsh coast and covers some 120 km<sup>2</sup>, comprising approximately 200 turbines. The EIS can be viewed at the Planning Department offices, Balliol house, Bootle.
- Beach Management: Ainsdale on Sea has been entered for the International Blue Flag in 2006.
- Sefton Water Centre and Crosby Coastal Park: The MWRP-funded 'Progression Project' has been completed at a cost of approximately £270,000. This included a risk assessment (carried out by ARUPs) of the feasibility study carried out in 2004, and site works (carried out by Sefton Leisure Services) comprising a new lakeside path and associated works. The ARUP work provided the basis for taking the project further, and the Council is developing a partnership with the Greenbank Sports Academy in Liverpool, a local centre of excellence providing sports facilities for people with disabilities. A design brief has been finalised and architects will be appointed in early 2005. Consultations with local groups are proceeding, and Mike Booth, chair of Friends of Crosby Coastal Park has agreed to sit on the project steering group.

While possible funding for the project is seen as the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme, the Council is working with Mersey Waterfront, Liverpool City and Wirral Council in a joint bid to the Big Lottery fund 'Living Landmarks' programme under the Waterfront banner. Initial bids will be submitted by 6 January 2006.

- Coastal Conference : The Geography Department at Edge hill College Ormskirk hosted its annual conference focussing on the Sefton Coast carried out by students during the year with contributions from a number of experts - see note on Research Task Group below.

#### **TV coverage:**

Natterjacks at Ainsdale NNR were filmed for BBC2's springwatch in 2005. There was further coverage of Formby Point in the BBC 'Coast' programme. The programme featured Gordon Roberts and Dr Ann Worsley talking about the prehistoric footprints on Formby Beach. Another item covered the worst disaster in the history of the RNLI when in 1886 twenty seven men lost their lives rescuing twelve aboard the Hamburg trading barque the 'Mexico' in distress off the Southport coast and led to the loss of the Southport and Lytham lifeboats.

## **Task Groups**

### **1) Access & Interpretation**

**Chair – Andrew Brockbank (Countryside Property Manager, National Trust)**

**Remit:** To review the contribution of the open coast to informal recreation, in particular through public access and interpretation, and to review the provision and management of strategic recreation routes, share best practice, and make proposals for new facilities where needed.

**Activities 2005:** Although the Task Group did not meet in 2005, significant progress has been made with improvements to access centred on the Sefton Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme at Formby Point. £35,000 of grant support was committed by Mersey Waterfront, £33,500 from the Mersey Forest through ICEP with a further £32,000 of match funding from Sefton Council's Technical Services and Planning and Environmental Regeneration Divisions and the National Trust.

The National Trust led the delivery of the project in two phases as follows: Phase 1, Fishermans Path to Victoria Road; A key issue was to secure access across the Formby Golf Club 'out of play' land which was secured through co-operation between the Formby Golf Club Council, Sefton's Technical Services Department and the National Trust. A fence was constructed to prevent walkers from straying onto the Golf Course and the line of the new path was created as a natural 'grassy' path between Fishermans Path and the north end of the National Trust property. The section from Freshfield Caravan Park and Victoria Road was upgraded to a stone path in July to improve access for all abilities.

Phase 2 of the improvement works started in November and will provide a stone surfaced path between Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road car park, with a branch path linking to path to Kirklake Road. Close to 2/3rds of this work was completed before Christmas and the remaining section near to Kirklake Road will be completed by Sefton's Coast and Countryside Service and trainees on the ILM team early in 2006.

A short link path, created through the involvement of Merseyfest volunteers in August 2005, will enable clients of St Josephs Adult Care Services to use the coastal path to visit Wicks Lake and to enjoy the dune landscape.

New fingerpost signs and waymarks will be produced and installed by the end of February 2006. The waymarks will include the new Sefton's Natural Coast brand and it is hoped that the signage system will be extended to the whole of the Sefton Coastal Path during 2006.

**Proposals 2006:** Completion of waymarking of the Sefton Coastal Path and preparing new walks guides and web-based information will be priorities in 2006.

Another key area will be to begin to integrate the findings of the Access Strategy for the Sefton Coast into the Gateway Study and other forward plans of the partners recognising that investment in high quality physical access is fundamental to meeting visitors expectations and needs as well as making the landscape more resilient.

## 2) History and Archaeology

### **Acting Chair – Dr Jen Lewis**

**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.

During the year there have been some changes in membership of the Group. Representation from Sefton Library Services has been particularly useful and we should like to thank Andrew Farthing for his help and advice over the last couple of years and to welcome Mark Sargant in his place. We are pleased also that Mike Downey of English Nature has joined the Group.

**Activities 2005:** Asparagus Project – The first ‘Asparagus Feast’ held on 20<sup>th</sup> May provided an opportunity to remember some old customs, beliefs and traditions associated with asparagus cultivation. An article by Reg Yorke appeared in the summer edition of *Coastlines* and a report is to appear in a book on English country traditions due for publication in May 2006. The National Trust and Formby Civic Society are developing a bid for funding from the Countryside Agency for a 2-3 year research and interpretation project. In this context a draft brief for a survey of the archaeological and historical evidence of asparagus cultivation has been prepared. During the autumn Liverpool University’s Centre for Lifelong Learning ran a course in field surveying. Directed by Dr Mark Adams of Liverpool Museum’s Archaeology Section, practical fieldwork focused on the surviving evidence for field systems at Freshfield.

Archaeological Survey – The Task Group has been pleased to advise and comment on archaeological briefs for a desk-based assessment and field evaluation of the archaeological remains on the coast separately commissioned by Sefton MBC and the National Trust. Liverpool Museum’s Archaeology Section has been commissioned to undertake both projects and these started in the autumn under the direction of Dr Mark Adams.

Freshfield Dune Heath - Members of the Task Group have contributed historical material for use in education packs for the Freshfield Dune Heath.

St Luke’s Churchyard, Formby - Ann Worsley has continued her analysis of environmental material recovered from a layer of peat buried 3 metres below blown sand to the west of St Luke’s Churchyard, Formby. The sample indicates that the deposit is suitable for radiocarbon dating and a short report is in preparation.

Task Group Web Site – The template for the Group’s Web site has been agreed. Work has started to update existing pages and to seek new contributions that will represent archaeological and historical interest from all parts of the coast. Members of the Task Group and other individuals, groups and societies are being asked to contribute.

During the summer the fifth episode of BBC television’s 12-week programme *Coast* included an excellent presentation featuring Gordon Roberts talking about the prehistoric footprints on Formby Beach. During the autumn the series has been repeated on day-time and evening television.

**Proposals 2006:** St Luke's Churchyard, Formby – The Group hopes that Ann Worsley will be able to develop the sampling programme. A detailed research design will be drawn up to collect uncontaminated samples for radiocarbon dating and to identify the spatial extent of the deposit. However, this is likely to be a long-term project and there are significant funding implications if the research is to be taken forward.

National Archaeology Week 2006 – The Group will be co-ordinating a series of archaeological and historical events throughout the coastal area during National Archaeology Week – 15<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> July 2006. It has hoped that Stakeholders, local groups and individuals will programme relevant activities into this week.

Asparagus - It is hoped to repeat the Asparagus Feast and combine this with a field day in May. The Group will support the National Trust and Formby Civic Society as they take forward their bid for funding for the 2-3 year project.

Conference proceedings – It is hoped that the publication of the proceedings of the Conference held in September 2004 will appear in 2006.

Heritage Coast submission - The Task Group will help to ensure that the archaeological and historical evidence is accurately presented with appeal to wide public interest.

Freshfield Dune Heath – There is potential for the survival of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century (and possibly much earlier) environmental evidence in soils buried beneath the field banks. The Task Group is in discussion with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust in regard to funding for a programme of sampling, analysis and interpretation.

Education – The Task Group will try to develop increased understanding of archaeology and history on Sefton's coast by discussing appropriate courses to be offered by The University of Liverpool's Centre for Lifelong Learning.

### **3) Sefton Coast Forest Plan**

**Chair: Nick Roche (Project Officer, Mersey Forest)**

**Remit:** This group – the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan Partnership Group - was originally established under the aegis of the Mersey Forest to assist the Forest Plan process. The group has developed into a Forest Plan management and monitoring group to review 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.

The chair was formally taken on by Nick Roche.

**Activities 2005:** This was the third operational year of the Forest Plan (having been approved for implementation in January 2003). The Plan provides a 20 year structure within which woodland management activities are scheduled over a 10 year period.

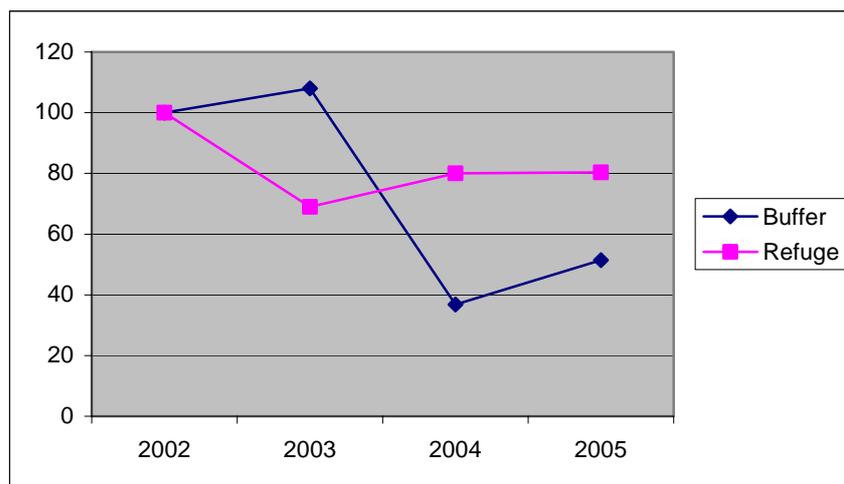
In total there are 21 owners associated with the Forest Plan which represents some 410 hectares out of a total of 420 hectares (or 1,037 acres) of woodland across the coastal area. The work carried out is summarised in the following table:

Year	Thinning		Coupe creation		Natural Regen.		Planting	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
2003	42.39	12.89	8.49	8.32	0	0	1.02	3.85
2004	18.36	6.67	3.32	3.00	2.20	0	8.80	6.33
2005	8.52	35.54	2.42	2.95	0	1.90	5.04	8.50

The main thrust of the Forest Plan has been to try to address the poor age structure of the bulk of the coastal woodlands as they are relatively even-aged, having been planted in the early 1900s. This means that there is very little young woodland coming up to replace the aging resource. Some 3 hectares of woodland have to be cleared and replanted every year to manage the 420 hectares on a sustainable basis. This very important target has been met each year. The underachievement is in the area of thinning the woodlands, which although an important silvicultural operation, is not essential to achieving the overall objectives of the Forest Plan. The reasons for underachievement lie in fact that this is a very expensive operation. With national timber prices so low, the resources for carrying out this work are very scarce.

However, the focus of this year has been to catch up with the previous years' under achievements and in nearly all aspects the Plan should be up to date by early 2006.

The Task Group was able to support the process of formalising the Buffer Zone to the Squirrel Reserve. The squirrel monitoring system within the both the Buffer Zone and the Squirrel Reserve suggests that the effects of woodland management within the woodlands have not had any negative consequences to date. The following graph is reproduced from a report by Fiona Robertson, Red Squirrel Officer, Lancashire Wildlife Trust:



**Proposals 2006:** The fourth year of the Plan will see the launch of a review that will feed into the second five year cycle of activities starting at the beginning of 2008. The review will not be looking at the overall objectives of the Plan, more at the short term objectives and activities to ensure that things are 'on track'. The

review will be launched at the Coastal Forum and will continue for about 12 to 14 months to ensure that any learning can be fed into the start of 2008 activities.

The following table provides the Forest Plan targets across the woodland area for 2006:

Year	Thinning	Coupe creation	Natural Regen.	Planting
2006	15.52	1.70	0.30	2.24

The targets are adjusted on an annual basis for any over or under-achievement in the previous years.

#### **4) Research Task Group**

***Chair – Dr Ann Worsley (Edge Hill College of Higher Education)***

**Remit:** To promote awareness of opportunities for research on the coast and facilitate collaborative research activities.

**Activities 2005:** A draft research strategy has been developed and the Sefton Coast Research Partnership involving members of the academic research community has met to discuss and amend this draft strategy. A research seminars for students at Edge Hill College focussed on the Sefton Coast has occurred.

#### **Proposals 2006:**

- a) Start implementation of research strategy,
- b) continue to promote research meetings,
- c) co-ordinate and promote research collaboration with regional HEIs
- d) continue to explore sources of funding for specific research projects in Sefton,

#### **5) Nature Conservation & Shoreline Management Task Group**

***Chair – Dave McAleavy (Head of Coast & Countryside, Sefton Leisure Services Department)***

**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 designated sites. In addition, it aims to increase general awareness of, and participation in conservation, including training for volunteers and staff.

**Activities 2005:** The commencement of the review of the Nature Conservation Strategy. Funding to appoint the SCP Biodiversity Project Officer was identified. Sub-Group of the main Task Group was established to guide the project. The Project is funded by Sefton Leisure Services, Sefton Planning & Regeneration Department and English Nature.

**Proposals 2006:** The preparation of the draft SCP Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan. An issues report will be presented to the SCP Board by February 2006 and presented at the Coastal Forum as a summary.

Issues groups are to be established as part of the consultation process.

The theme of the Coastal Forum in 2006 will be nature conservation.

## **6) Tourism & Communications**

**Chair: Ralph Gregson MBE (Birkdale Civic Society).**

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

**Activities 2005:** The Task Group held 5 meetings during the year and welcomed additional members representing Lancashire Wildlife Trust; Mersey Waterfront and Sefton Coast Partnership - History and Archaeology Task Group.

The Draft Tourism Strategy, which identifies all the Sefton Coast as a key signature project, was closely examined and several constructive observations were welcomed by the authors of the paper.

The Tourism Department have kept the Task Group briefed about the Communication, Interpretation and Product Development Study, which was commissioned in 2004. This work has led to a Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan.

Another main thrust of the Group's work was the National 'Sea Britain 2005' Project. This was a national maritime celebration depicting the ways in which the sea touches our lives. This group had worked with Sefton Tourism Department inviting organisation and groups through Sefton and who have a link with the sea to organise special events through the year. A special press release was issued inviting Sefton organisations to participate in a programme and the response was outstanding. With nearly 90 themed events.

A logo for the Partnership was 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 coordination of activities.

The Tourism and Communications Task Group will continue to review the role, editorial policy and content of Coastlines and SCP website and explore other communication methods. Examining and recommend to the board a volunteer award scheme .

### **Proposals 2006:**

- a) Invigorate a Sefton Coast Partnership award scheme which would acknowledge the tremendous voluntary support given by many people on our coastline in two categories:- adults and young persons.

- b) Support the implementation of the Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan, including brand development, signage, marketing, publications, events and visitor surveys.

**7) Lifelong Learning Task Group**

***Chair : Fiona Sunners (Community Ranger, Coast and Countryside Service, Sefton Leisure Services Department)***

**Remit:** The Lifelong Learning Task Group to develop effective partnership working across the whole spectrum of environmental education provision and community involvement on the Sefton Coast.

**Proposals 2005:** To continue the Lifelong Learning Task Group and complete an audit of current education provision on the Coast.

**Table 1 Performance against targets set for 2005**

Target	Progress	Comment
<b>Land Use &amp; Economic Development</b>		
Ensure Partnership responds to consultations on matters to do with coast	SCP members on Ribble Estuary Regional Park Steering Group	Proposals deferred by NWDA, but alternative funding options being explored. RSPB lead.
Ensure interests of SCP are represented in development of MWP	RSPB finished their bird pool excavation at Marshside, and Lancashire Wildlife Trust completed work at Freshfield Dune Heath. Following some initial delays, work is now well on with reconnecting the Sefton coast Footpath at Formby Point in a project sponsored by National Trust, the Progression Project at Crosby coastal Park was also completed.	Active discussion with MWP team on potential coastal projects – see Tourism section below
Ensure coordination of funding bids through various sources	Mainly MWP – see Tourism section	
Pursue possibility of Heritage Coast designation	History & Archaeology Task Group assembling information	To be taken forward if advised by Natural England
Produce Research Strategy	A research seminar for students at Edge Hill College focussed on the Sefton Coast	Start implementation of research strategy, continue to promote research meetings, co-ordinate and promote research collaboration with regional HEIs, continue to explore sources of funding for specific research projects in Sefton,
<b>Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management</b>		
Asparagus project	History & Archaeology Task Group – asparagus feast held; Liverpool University Centre for Lifelong Learning field course to teach basic survey techniques	Hope to repeat asparagus feast in 2006
Sefton's Coastal Heritage conference proceedings	History & Archaeology Task Group in discussion with Library staff	Continuing; target date for publication 2006
St Luke's Church, Formby – environmental sampling	Report to History & Archaeology Task Group	Funding source(s) for further sampling and analysis to be identified
Web pages	History & Archaeology Task Group - format and overall content agreed; start made on editing and compiling individual pages	Ongoing; pages will be posted to SCP's Web site as they become available
Forest Plan: 35.54 hectares thinning, 2.95 hectares restocking felling 8.50 hectares planting	Achieved: All owners working to targets with the view to ensuring 'catch up'. Grants applied for, base line for monitoring established.	High levels of owner participation continues with good communication maintained through the Task Group. Issues and problems being dealt with as they arise.
<b>LWT Targets</b>		
Continue scrub clearance on Freshfield Dune Heath	75% of planned clearance of birch and gorse completed	
Create access for use of part of Freshfield Dune Heath by Merseyside Riding for the Disabled Association	Completed	Now in use
Fence SSSI section of Freshfield Dune Heath and initiate grazing	Fencing complete. Grazed with Hebridean sheep in summer.	
Create wetland habitat at Freshfield Dune Heath	Part of Wham Dyke deculverted; small wetland created; Water Voles discovered on site.	Works carried out by Environment Agency.
Formally launch Sefton Coast Red Squirrel Refuge as part of series of	Launched in September 2005.	Formally launch Sefton Coast Red Squirrel Refuge as part of series of

national sites.		national sites.
Maintain monitoring of Red Squirrel population.	Number of monitoring transects walked by volunteers increased.	Results show Sefton Coast Red Squirrel population is stable.
Maintain control of Grey Squirrels in Red Squirrel Refuge and Buffer Zone.	Network of volunteers enlarged.	More than 200 sightings of Grey Squirrels were reported by members of the public.
<i>RSPB Targets</i>		
Introduce spawn to Natterjack Toad pools.	Not achieved	Shortage of spawn
Complete improvements to on-site signage to include an iconic sculpture.	Welcome signs erected on road verges. Interpretation panels erected. Sculpture cancelled	Sculpture cancelled as too costly Routed signs now also require replacing
Build a Viewing Platform to overlook Fairclough's Pool	Completed	Platform complete
Complete Management Plan for 2005-2010.	Plan now out for consultation	'Compact' version available in early 2006 for public issue
Plan and implement Japanese knotweed control	Part done	Further consultation with Sefton Council needed
Complete Integrated Visitor Access Strategy 2005-2010	Completed.	Consultation and validation early 2005
<i>English Nature</i>		
<b>Target for 2005</b>	<b>Progress during 2005</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Decide the way forward for Dune Restoration Programme	Working with Sefton Coast Partnership Biodiversity Officer on Nature Conservation	Strategy for all Sefton Coast
Remove sea buckthorn & thin other scrub in slack 13 area following consultation with Forestry Commission.		Awaiting decision from Forestry Commission
Work with National Trust to introduce winter Hebridean sheep trial	The grazing regime continued as usual at Cabin Hill and Ainsdale Reserves.  A trial with Hebridean sheep was started in Oct 2005, but not with National Trust and will continue into 2006	It is hoped that the Hebridean breed will increase scrub regeneration.
Let thinning/replanting contracts in rear woods as per Forest Plan to deliver key Red Squirrel targets.	Work on forest plan continues. Work will be completed in March 2006	Work not achieved in 2005 will roll over into 2006
Deliver access monitoring programme by installing a visitor counter	Counters installed during 2005	Due to technical difficulties not yet up and running
Continue to produce two newsletters and produce a year long walks programme	Eight guide walks have taken place in 2005 and two newsletters produced	continue to release two newsletters/year.
Monitor Sand Lizard reintroduction programme	Reintroduction successful, with males seen in breeding colours this year.	
Repair the boundary track following the negative results from Petalwort survey.	Not completed in 2005	
Continue slack re-profiling and mowing to maintain Natterjack breeding sites in favourable condition for their wildlife features.	New slack at Cabin Hill and slack 26 reprofiled.  Emergency slack management required at Cabin hill to remove invasive waterweed in waterbody 1a	
Maintain and bring all units of the Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR into favourable condition for their wildlife features	On going	
Carry out an assessment of disabled /less able access to the NNR and implement recommendations where possible	The access from the Coastal Road has been redesigned to enable easier access for disabled users	
<i>National Trust</i>		
Implementation of new Woodland	The National Trust is still working to	Major thinning programmed for early

Management Plan as per Forest Plan	catch up with delivery of the woodland programme. Grant support was secured from Forestry Commission in March 2005. Some thinning and 0.6 hectares of restocking felling has been completed but a major thinning contract will be implemented from January 2006. A new planting site of 0.27 hectares was established in October.	2006: 10.5 hectares of thinning and 0.7 hectares of restocking felling will be contracted out, and a further 4.0 hectares of thinning and 0.8 hectares of restocking felling will be undertaken by NT staff. 1.1 hectares of replanting to be completed in Spring 2005 and a further 0.24 hectares in Autumn 2006. A new planting site of 0.3 hectares will also be completed in Spring.
Sefton Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme Phases 1 and 2	National Trust led the implementation of the project which provides 4.75 kilometres of new footpath at Formby Point	Signs and waymarkers to be completed by end of February 2005
Fencing, scrub clearance and hedge planting at Larkhill Fields	0.7 hectares of gorse scrub was removed at Larkhill Fields as part of Countryside Stewardship Scheme supported by DEFRA. 11 Herdwick sheep were added to the Formby grazing flock.	
<i>Sefton Coast &amp; Countryside Service</i>		
Develop strategy for further development of Discovery Centre, Lido	Progressed as part of the SCP Gateway Study - to be completed by March 2006	Gateway Study will identify potential development of the Lido, toilets and former caravan site at Ainsdale on Sea.
Complete consultations on Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills LNR and Ravenmeols LNR Management Plans	Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review	Scoping to be undertaken under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations.
Implement Yr 1 & 2 of Forest Plan	Completed March 2005	
<i>Tourism Leisure &amp; Recreation</i>		
Enter Southport & Ainsdale beaches for Seaside awards	Three Seaside Awards entered for at Southport Ainsdale and Formby	Three Seaside Awards achieved at Lifeboat Road, Ainsdale & Southport.
Marshside – progress perimeter plan proposal and further develop visitor plan	Little Progress made pending completion of Management Plan	
Support MWP and develop projects	MWP will submit the final application for a programme of about £7m over three years in March 06.	Take forward opps for visitor gateway funding improvements following feasibility work to be concluded in May 2006
Develop implementation framework for physical access improvements	Being pursued by Planning & Economic Regen Dept on behalf of SCP	Implementation framework approved 2006
Develop programme for permanent interpretation facility in Pier Pavilion	Being followed up by Tourism Department in context of MWP	Needs to link with outcome of feasibility study
<i>Shoreline Management</i>		
Continue annual monitoring programme	Ongoing	Monitoring programme is being reviewed and developed. Including the digitisation and collation of historic data
Crosby/Formby strategy – start stage 2	Stage 1 completed, stage 2 commenced in 2003	Delay experienced, final report not expected until 2006
Maintain links with Liverpool Bay Coastal Group, LGASIG	Continued participation in LBCG and Cell 11.	
Continue coast protection works on Sefton Coast	Work continued	
Improved understanding of coastal evolution – commence revision of the Sefton Coast database	ongoing	Detailed work to be taken forward over the next three years
<i>Marine Environmental Management</i>		
Ensure SCP interest represented in response to DEFRA consultation on marine management and DTI consultation on off-shore wind proposals	Responses submitted. SCP represented at further DEFRA workshops	Stocktake continues in 2004
Engage with JNCC on Irish Sea Regional Seas pilot	Reported to SCP Forum 2003. JNCC reports now completed	
Respond as needed to further consultations	None relevant	

Public Health & Amenity		
Complete beach management review	Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review. Plan will require scoping under Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations	SEA Scoping required to follow Sefton guidelines when prepared.
Complete beach cleansing pilot and publish beach cleansing plan	Ongoing as part of Service Improvement Review	Additional project at Crosby Coastal Park added in 2005 - Part of Grounds Maintenance contract relating to sand clearance and litter collection.
Resolve responsibilities in oil spill plan and emergency response reviews	Sefton Emergency Planning Lead Officers Group is considering review linked to Civil Contingencies requirements.	Sub-group formed to coordinate preparation of revised Oil Pollution Contingency Plan.
Continue to represent SCP at NWCF with regard to bathing water issues	Represented through the North West Beach Management and Bathing Water Group.	Leisure Services and Environmental Protection.
Provide bathing water information on Sefton website	Basic page now on Sefton website,	Now available on Sefton website: <a href="http://www.sefton.gov.uk/page&amp;2872">www.sefton.gov.uk/page&amp;2872</a> Results will be updated after every sample Additional data to be added in 2006
Make data from Sefton EPD weather station available on website	New server installed in 2005, now needs additional software	Due to be completed in 2006
Implementation & Review		
Publish Coastlines, Annual Report and organise Forum	2 issues of Coastlines published. Forum held Feb 2005	Forum for 2006 in preparation
Keep website up to date; review design	Website being continuously updated on receipt of information from partners.	The area of the site dealing with history is currently under review
Establish research network	Research Partnership established Research strategy drafted Undergraduate conference December 2005	
Prepare final draft of SCP (ICZM) Plan	Final draft completed Dec 2005	Consultation and adoption of SCP (KZM) Plan 2006-2011 by March 2006

## **Progress In 2005 and Targets for 2006**

This section describes progress in 2005 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 2006 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 & 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 items previously under this heading are now dealt with either in the introduction, table or in the relevant sections below.

### **Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management**

*Aim: to conserve, protect & 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 2005 :**

Funding for a SCP Biodiversity Officer to progress a revised Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan was forthcoming from Sefton Council and English Nature.

#### **Lancashire Wildlife Trust**

##### **Red Squirrel Conservation**

The Sefton Coast Red Squirrel Refuge and Buffer Zone was formally designated and publicly launched in September 2005 as one of a series of priority national sites for red squirrel conservation in England.

Monitoring of red squirrel populations was stepped up and results show that overall numbers are stable.

Increased effort was applied to grey squirrel control in the buffer zone – work carried out largely by volunteers from the two local Red Alert Groups and members of the public.

##### **Freshfield Dune Heath**

Large areas of young birch scrub and gorse were cleared from the heath and some woodland management work undertaken.

A 2km circular path was created on the southern section of the site. Access for the Merseyside Riding for the Disabled Association was created and opened on the eastern section of the site.

Grazing enclosures were fenced and grazing by Hebridean sheep introduced to part of the southern section.

Habitat creation and improvement works for water voles was carried out by the Environment Agency.

### **RSPB (Marshside Reserve)**

The planned natterjack toad spawn introduction did not take place, there being a shortage of spawn and very dry conditions on the marsh at the appropriate time. One of the pools was deepened slightly to allow for this eventuality in the future and it is hoped to translocate some spawn to Marshside in 2006.

Access dams were installed on a number of the ditches to enable the Quad-bike and other machinery to navigate round the marsh more easily.

Parts of 'Polly's Pool' were deepened to make more of the pool 'drought-proof'.

A Viewing Platform was built to overlook Fairclough's Pool at Hesketh Road. The Platform is wheelchair-friendly and supports some interpretation showing the birds of the marsh. The Platform was funded by the **Mersey Waterfront Regional Park** and was part of a package of measures which also included interpretation at the other Marshside viewing facilities and some large 'Welcome' signs alerting passers-by to the presence of the Nature Reserve.

The third 5-year Management Plan was completed.

Some *Japanese knotweed* control was carried out but the problem is greater than anticipated and will require a concerted effort in 2006.

The *Aren't Birds Brilliant!* work continued with events being held on Southport Pier as well as at new locations including the Botanic Gardens and Hesketh Parks in Southport.

### **English Nature**

The grazing regime continued as usual with sheep at both Ainsdale and Cabin Hill Reserves.

A trial with Hebridean sheep was started in October and will continue into 2006, It is hoped that this primitive breed of sheep will graze more readily on scrub regeneration.

A new slack was excavated at Cabin Hill for Natterjack toads and slack 26 was reprofiled to ensure it dries out in the late summer.

Emergency slack management was required at Cabin Hill as the invasive waterweed *Crassula helmsii* was discovered in the large waterbody 1a.

A scrub plan has been written for the reserve and work is continuing to manage birch regeneration particularly in slack areas.

Work on the Forest Plan continued this year and we expect to catch up with work not done last year.

This was the year of our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of dedication as a National Nature Reserve. We celebrated with a double event on August the 10<sup>th</sup>. During the day we had a large family event where approximately 600 people attended and in the evening past wardens and people with an interest in the reserve can for an informal meal and tour of the reserve. During the year we also had 8 guided walks and released two newsletters and a celebratory leaflet for our 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

We are working with the Sefton Coast Partnership biodiversity on the production of a nature conservation strategy for the whole of the Sefton Coast.

### **National Trust**

The National Trust led the delivery of the Sefton Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme at Formby Point. The project partners include Mersey Waterfront, Mersey Forest (ICEP), Formby Golf Club and Sefton Council's Technical Services, Planning and Environmental Regeneration and Leisure Services departments

From Easter 2006, visitors will have full access to 4.75 kilometres of new coastal footpath. The path is a natural 'grassy' track between Fishermans Path and the National Trust property near Victoria Road. Between Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road and Kirklake Road, a stone path has been provided which will afford excellent opportunities for people of all abilities to enjoy the Sefton Coast Woodlands, the former asparagus landscape and parts of the open dune grasslands.

Implementation of the major thinning work in the Woodland Management Plan was delayed due to uncertainties over funding. Progress has been made by the Countryside Wardens and UPM/ Tilhill Forestry Ltd., are due to implement the main programme in January and February 2006.

The National Trust was pleased to work with Red Alert partners to launch the Sefton Coast Woodlands Red Squirrel Refuge in September. The frequency of grey squirrel sightings has been high in and around Formby during the Autumn and the trap loan scheme has been well used. More resources are needed to effectively deal with the ingress of grey squirrels.

250 tonnes of rubble was again removed from the beach area in May 2005. This is part of the Trust's continuing effort to manage the negative impact of old car parks and surfaces, which were overtaken by dune movements. The National Trust is working to secure funding to proactively remove part of the current car park, which is now disappearing under a moving sand dune. The wardens spent a lot of time during the year keeping the existing car park free of blown sand.

The National Trust worked with Sefton Council's Planning and Economic Regeneration Division and Leisure Services to commission the Gateway Study. This design project, led by landscape architects Gillespies, will lead to the preparation of detailed plans for the Formby property as one of three key Gateways to the natural coast at Formby and Ainsdale. There will be an opportunity for the local community to be involved in the shaping of the plans which will include the redesign of the car park and provision of improved visitor facilities, whilst providing for the long term conservation of the property.

A new Countryside Warden was appointed in March 2005 and a new part time Administrator in June. Two part time seasonal wardens helped to keep the property well presented during the summer which proved to be the busiest for years. Overall visitor numbers are estimated in the region of 360,000 in 2005, a figure vastly inflated by the large numbers of people visiting by train or parking outside the property on the many hot 'beach days' during the summer.

### **Sefton Coast & Countryside Service**

Monitoring of Natterjack Toad populations within the Sefton Council area continued, results passed to EN in support of the Natterjack Toad Report. The green beach at Birkdale - 'Smith's Slack' - is becoming established as a northern coast stronghold for this species.

The review of the Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills LNR Management Plan is ongoing as part of a Service Improvement Review and will be published for consultation following SEA Regulations scoping in 2006.

A strong partnership with Social Services was established – adults with learning disabilities take part in conservation work on coastal sites and in the Coast and Countryside estate workshops. The latter project was launched as a partnership project and was named 'Pinewood Workshops'.

The Woodland Plan was implemented with funding from the Forestry Commission and ICEP.

Grazing of Herdwick Sheep continues to take place on the Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills Local Nature Reserve.

The Friends of Crosby Coastal Park now takes an active part in the development of the coastline at Crosby and is a member of the WATER Centre Steering Group.

The Guided walks and events brochure was published.

The Biodiversity and Access Project Environmental ILM received a third year of grant from the South Sefton Partnership to continue its work.

The Biodiversity and Access Project Young Persons Programme was expanded with funding from the Behavioural improvement programme in addition to new funding from the Drug Action Team, Young Offenders Team, Children Services and Leisure Inclusion Service.

Improved boardwalk access on the Velvet Trail in partnership with the Birkdale Civic Society. Project supported by a Community Fund grant.

Coastal footpath improvements at Lifeboat Road.

The process to achieve Woodland Certification for Sefton Council owned woodlands commenced.

## Targets for 2006:

**General (in the general section Dave Mc has made just one change to this section.**

- Implementation of the third/fourth year of the Forest Plan **(ALL)**
- North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan actions are incorporated into relevant site work programmes. Carried forward from 2004. **(Nature Conservation Task Group and All Partners)**
- Proceed with restoration of Freshfield Dune Heath. **(LWT)**
- Proceed with management agreement on Montagu Road Triangle section of Freshfield Dune Heath. **(EN)**
- 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)**

## Lancashire Wildlife Trust targets

### Red Squirrel Conservation

- Secure funding to employ a part-time 'People and Wildlife' officer for red squirrel work in Sefton.
- Secure funding to create a new public red squirrel watchpoint at Lifeboat Road in collaboration with the Sefton Coast & Countryside Service.
- Continue red squirrel population monitoring and grey squirrel control.

### Freshfield Dune Heath

- Open southern section of the site for public access.
- Introduce sheep grazing to further sections of the site.
- Complete scrub control and woodland management works.

## RSPB Marshside targets

- Complete the new lease for the Marshside Reserve from Sefton Council to include the saltmarsh areas and car park at Marshside.
- Complete a Management Plan for the new reserve extensions in conjunction with Sefton Council.
- Write a Business Plan and secure funding for the Integrated Visitor Access Strategy.
- Implement Year 2 of current reserve Management Plan

- Continue *Aren't Birds Brilliant!* Project
- Plan and implement *Japanese knotweed* control
- Replace routed signs

#### **English Nature targets**

- Work with Sefton Coast Partnership Biodiversity Officer to produce a Nature conservation Strategy for the whole coast.
- Let thinning/replanting contracts in rear woods as per Forest Plan to deliver key Red Squirrel targets.
- Continue to produce two newsletters and produce a year long walks programme.
- Repair the boundary track following the negative results from Petalwort 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 NNR into favourable condition for their wildlife features. On going
- Undertake the 5 yearly fixed point photography
- Undertake monitoring for great crested newts.
- Look for sites to undertake controlled destabilisation.

#### **National Trust targets**

- Through the Gateway Study, develop detailed forward plans to secure sustainable access and improved visitor facilities at Victoria Road.
- Seek to secure funding and all consents to relocate the beach car park.
- Successfully complete current Phase of Woodland Programme at Formby including increasing marketability of timber and woodland products.
- Implement 2006 conservation programme set out in the National Trust Dune Heath and Dune Grassland Management Plan (2004-2007).
- Carry out a review of nature conservation plans at the property, in the context of the development of a Nature Conservation Strategy for the Sefton Coast.
- Continue efforts to secure a tenant who will re-establish asparagus farming at Sandfield Farm. Maintain the  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre demonstration plot in 2006.
- Maintain lead role with implementation of final stages of Sefton Coastal Footpath improvements at Formby Point including publicity and signage.

- Work with Sefton Council to promote visits to Formby using the new Sefton's Natural Coast Brand Guidelines.
- Work to deliver actions set out in the National Trust Property Learning and Interpretation Action Plan 2006 and Community Links Project.
- Support the Formby Civic Society and the History and Archaeology Task Group with delivery of the Formby Asparagus Project and work to establish the Asparagus Trail on the ground.

### **Sefton Coast & Countryside targets**

- Work with partners to identify improvements to the former Lido and seafront area at Ainsdale on Sea and the Lifeboat Road Field Centre through the SCP Gateway Study.
- Complete SEA Regulations scoping of the Ainsdale & Birkdale Hills LNR Management Plan and Beach Management Plan.
- Continue work with ENCAMS to develop the Quality Coast Award. Two possible pilots in 2006. Sefton Coastal footpath for the Quality Walking Coast and Quality Family Beach
- Investigate further habitat funding and for Ainsdale & Birkdale Hills LNR.
- Implement the fourth/fifth year of woodland management through Forest Plan. Plan and prepare programme for next two years.
- Continue the Biodiversity and Access Project through the Young Persons Programme and partnership with Social Services.
- Continue to take forward relevant recommendations in the Communications, Interpretation and Product Development Plan and Gateway Study.
- Continue to take forward relevant recommendations in the Physical Access Consultative Study.
- Renew licence for Extreme Kites outlet at Ainsdale on Sea.
- Review vehicular access permit for Fishermen – assess compliance.
- Expand the permit/insurance system for horse owners on the coast.
- Consolidate beach zoning and signage at Ainsdale on Sea for recreational activities.
- Consolidate permit and working arrangements with The Ainsdale on Sea Kitebeach Club (TASKC) and the Ainsdale on Sea Kite Surfing Club (AKSC).
- Continue to support Sand Lizard and Natterjack translocation programmes.
- Continue with schools/groups/events & environmental education programme.

- Review volunteer and community involvement.
- Support the preparation of the Nature Conservation Strategy and Delivery Plan that secures biodiversity delivery for the Sefton Coast. Continue funding support for project.
- Sefton Council, Leisure Services, Coast and Countryside to be a key partner in the establishment of the Red Squirrel Buffer and refuge.
- Investigate expanding the Pinewood Workshop partnership with Social Services.
- Investigate funding to expand the Social Services involvement in conservation activities on coastal sites
- Continue the Lifelong Learning Task Group as part of the Sefton Coast Partnership.
- Finalise the handover of management responsibility for the outer marsh at Marshside to the RSPB as an expansion of the Marshside Nature Reserve.
- Enter Ainsdale on Sea for the International Blue Flag
- Achieve FSC Woodland Certification for Sefton Council owned woodlands
- Acquire equipment to recover timber from woodlands for use on the coast
- Investigate in partnership with Technical services and the Mersey Forest, the potential to develop and support local initiatives in respect of biomass recovery from coastal sites.
- Continue scrub control programme.
- Carry out further management work in respect of Petalwort conservation.

## **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 value of the coast*

### **In 2005:**

See Tourism and Communications Task Group (page 11)

### **Targets for 2006:**

- A number of initiatives are now being implemented through the Sefton Destination Plan including brand development, signage, marketing publications, events and visitor surveys.
- Ainsdale, Southport and Lifeboat Road beaches have been entered into the Seaside Awards for 2006. Ainsdale has been entered for International Blue flag **(SCCS)**
- Take forward proposals to complete agreement with SMBC on the outer Marshes (including agreement on outline management plan). **(SMBC/RSPB)**
- Mersey Waterfront – continue discussions with MWP team on links between MWP and SCP aims and objectives.
- Prioritise some areas of the coast for access improvements to enhance the visitor offer **(SMBC)**
- Access & Interpretation – Lead on the implementation of the Sefton Coastal Footpath improvements between Fisherman's Path and Lifeboat Road. Facilitate co-ordinated funding applications to support priority access projects identified in the Physical Access Strategy for the Sefton Coast. **(A&ITG, and All Partners)**.
- Ribble Estuary Strategy – support RSPB and Steering Group as required in next stages of strategy development. **(All)**
- Continue measures to maintain the main beach at Southport free of saltmarsh vegetation. **(SCCS)**
- Complete consultancy study for the development of Gateway sites at Formby Point and Ainsdale Lido. **(SMBC)**

## **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 2005:**

HR Wallingford are continuing work on the Crosby to Formby Point strategy, this has been delayed due to the need to co-ordinate with the river Alt Strategy; it is necessary for us to know how the pumping station will be operated in the future to understand the implications of this for the foreshore.

The Regional Monitoring Strategy for the length of coastline from the Great Orme, Llandudno to the Solway Firth has been approved by DEFRA and officers are currently implementing the revised and enhanced monitoring regime. The information derived from this monitoring will assist in the understanding of the coast and the development of sustainable policies.

The revision of the Sefton Coast database has started in earnest; this project seeks to collate all the existing information relating to coastal processes for the Sefton Coast in an electronic form so that it will be easy to find, use and keep up to date. This historical information is important in informing our understanding of coastal change.

### **Targets for 2006:**

- Complete Stage 2 of the Crosby to Formby Point Study and commence Stage 3, compilation of the draft final report.

## **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.*

### **In 2005 :**

There has been a focus on general maintenance this year with the majority of the effort occurring at Crosby where the defences are older and the hand railing more vulnerable to damage. There has been some work carried out on the seawalls at Southport mainly to the joints in the concrete; these require occasional maintenance to ensure that they function properly when the concrete expands during the heat of summer.

### **Targets for 2006:**

- There will be continued maintenance of coastal defences focussing mainly on those areas that are most vulnerable or aspects that present a health and safety risk.

## **Dune and Saltmarsh Management for 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 2005:**

It has been agreed to provide sponsorship for a Ph.D. proposal examining the soils and hydrology of the sand dunes of the Sefton Coast. Whilst a somewhat technical aspect this is important to understanding how sand dunes work and how they might respond to climate change and will contribute to our management of this system both for its value to nature and recreation but also as a coastal defence.

Last year we said that "Officers have been researching and developing proposals for a review of future coastal evolution of the Sefton coast. The initial review will focus on a fifty year time horizon but will consider a one hundred year time horizon in order to identify the problems with providing a useful prediction for this timescale. This work will also consider the implications of this future coastal evolution on habitats along the coast." This project has been taken further on a regional scale and is now part of a wider

project looking at the North West and North Wales coast that will commence in 2006.

**Targets for 2006:**

- Work to develop a shared understanding of natural defence management and management of naturally driven threats (notably coastal squeeze and fragmentation of habitats) to the integrity of the Sefton Coast sand dune system amongst the partners.
- The Ph.D. examining sedimentation rates around the Marshside area will be being completed late this year; results will be disseminated to the Partners, Research Group and to the public via a variety of means such as coastlines, the partnership web site and presentations.

**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 2005:**

Work has progressed during the year on the Marine Spatial Planning Pilot based on the Irish Sea, promoted by DEFRA. ([www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)). Both the Sefton Coast Partnership and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service have attended a workshop with consultants employed by DEFRA. In October, the European Commission published proposals for a European Marine strategy, and a consultation on this has been circulated by DEFRA for response by March 06

Links with key organisations and membership of Eurosite and European Union Coastal Conservation (EUCC) have been maintained. The Partnership is represented on the North West Coastal Forum (NWCF).

**Targets for 2006:**

- Keep track of DEFRA ICZM stocktake process, and consider through the NWCF the potential for developing and ICZM approach at the regional level.
- Respond as appropriate on marine spatial planning proposals
- Continue to maintain a close watching brief on proposals for offshore aggregate extraction and sand winning off the Sefton coastline and make representations to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as appropriate.
- Maintain a close watching brief on offshore renewable energy development proposals and make timely representations as appropriate.

### **Targets for 2006:**

- Keep track of DEFRA ICZM stocktake process - we've been involved with the consultation on Marine Spatial Planning and are now waiting on Defra to produce the draft elements for the Marine Act.
- Respond as needed to further consultations.
- Consider SCP engagement in 'Year of the Sea' celebrations planned for 2005
- Maintain a close watching brief on proposals for offshore aggregate extraction and sand winning off the Sefton coastline and make representations to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as appropriate.  
- we have not been required to make any further comment on offshore applications this year but have been involved with commenting on the Sandwinning operation on the Horse Bank.
- Maintain a close watching brief on offshore renewable energy development proposals and make timely representations as appropriate.  
- nothing happened that I am aware of.

### **Public Health and Amenity**

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

#### **In 2005:**

A review of the Beach Management Plan was drafted by SCCS for consultation. Preparation of the Strategy was delayed to be able to include inputs from the 'Regulation 33' package for the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA published by EN during 2002, as well as the implications of the NMBAP. The Plan will now require scoping as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations and will be published in 2006.

A further review of the Oil Pollution Contingency Plan commenced, taking into account changes to emergency planning procedures caused by the Civil Contingencies Act. The plan should be finalised in 2006 following further discussions with partners.

Progress has been slow, but Bathing Water Quality test results are now available on the SMBC website ([www.sefton.gov.uk/page&2872](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/page&2872)) , and ways of putting them on coastal websites are being developed.

2005 was a good year for Sefton's bathing waters. For the third year running there were no 'poor' results recorded. Formby and Ainsdale repeated their performance of 2003 by passing the strict European Community (EC) 'guideline' standards on bacteriological parameters. Southport achieved its best ever result, passing two out of the three guideline standards, and only missing out achieving all three by one sample. Discharges from overloaded sewers, at times of heavy rain, remain as the most significant factor in the poorer water quality results.

Toxic blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) affected the waters of Crosby Marina again in 2005, leading to restrictions on its use. Sefton council is currently negotiating with environmental consultants on a baseline survey to better inform lake management for Crosby marina, and also Southport Marine Lake (where excessive weed growth has been restricting sailing). The surveys should be carried out in 2006.

A new development in 2005 has been the avian influenza epidemic, which currently represents a very low threat to human health in Britain, but does represent a potential threat to wild and domesticated birds. As part of the response, Sefton Council Coast and Countryside service, RSPB, BTO, and Lancashire Wildlife Trust have been asked to keep wild birds (especially migratory wildfowl) under surveillance, and report any unusual illness or deaths to DEFRA vets.

Sefton Council's Environmental Protection Dept. animal health inspectors have stepped up visits to farms and other premises with significant numbers of poultry.

#### **Targets for 2006**

- Complete SEA Regulations scoping of the Beach Management Plan.
- Complete Oil Pollution Contingency Plan review. **(SMBC)**
- Install small scale recycling 'bring' sites at Ainsdale on Sea. **(SMBC)**
- Make latest bathing water quality data available on the Sefton website **(SMBC)**
- Make data from Sefton Council's Environmental Protection Dept's electronic weather station (at Ainsdale) available on the Council website. **(SMBC)**
- Continue to represent SCP interests on NWCF with regard to bathing water issues. **(SMBC)**
- Continue involvement in the North West Beach Management and Bathing Water Group **(SCCS)**
- The revision of the EC bathing water directive, which has been under discussion for many years, was finally be adopted in January 2006. This will have implications for beach management. **(SCCS)**
- Carry out baseline survey of Crosby marina and Southport marine lake **(SMBC/Consultant)**
- Maintain surveillance for signs of avian influenza in wild bird populations **(All)**

## **Implementation and Review**

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

Note: monitoring for land management purposes is carried out by individual land managers, with coordination provided through the task groups for Nature Conservation, The Sefton Coast Forest Plan etc. The items discussed below are to do with communications (dealt with by the Tourism and Communications Task Group).

### **In 2005:**

The final drafting by the partnership of the SCP (ICZM) Plan 2006-2007 and Action Plan was completed in December 2005.

The SCP website ([www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk)) was kept up to date including posting of Board minutes, details of Task Groups and key documents.

The half-yearly editions of Coastlines (Summer and Winter) were produced.

The Research Task developed a draft research strategy and is developing an implementation plan.

### **Targets for 2006:**

- SCP Board approval sort for public consultation in March 2006. Adoption by mid 2006.
- Annual Report for 2006 will be based on the headline activities of the partnership and will address how the partnership is adding value in both qualitative and quantitative terms.
- Continue publishing Coastlines.
- Ensure website is kept up to date
- Support further development of Sefton Coast Research Partnership and develop links with relevant institutions and agencies. **(Board, through CTG)**

**Board Members – Sefton Coast Partnership**

Mr Richard Topley	Forestry Commission
Ms Anita Cogdell	Environment Agency
Mr Andrew Brockbank	National Trust
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 Laurence Rose	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Cllr David Tattersall	Sefton Council
D J Taylor	Formby Golf Club
Cllr Lord Ronnie Fearn	Sefton Council
Dr Ann Worsley	Edge Hill College
Dr Reg Yorke	Formby Civic Society

***Task Group Leaders***

- ***Nature Conservation and Shoreline Management*** (Mr Dave McAleavy)
- ***Access and Interpretation*** (Mr Andrew Brockbank)
- ***Research*** – (Dr Ann Worsley)
- ***Lifelong Learning*** – (Ms Fiona Sunners)
- ***Tourism and Communication*** – (Ralph Gregson)
- ***Forest Plan*** - (Mr Nick Roche)
- ***History and Archaeology*** - (Dr Jen Lewis, acting)