

# The Sefton Coast Partnership 2006 Annual Report



# The Sefton Coast Partnership 2006 Annual Report – Contents

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<b>LANDSCAPE AND NATURE</b>	Nature conservation & Biodiversity Strategy	H	✓	✓	✓	H	7
	Sefton Red Squirrel Refuge & Buffer Zone	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Beach Management	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
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<b>HISTORY &amp; ARCHAEOLOGY</b>	History & Archaeology Week	H	✓	✓	✓	H	11
	Sefton Coast Conference publication	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Themed Based leaflets	L		✓	✓	L	
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<b>LIFE LONG LEARNING</b>	Relaunched end of 2006						12
<b>RESEARCH</b>	Develop newsletter and circulation list Document relevant research and monitoring through web development and newsletter		✓	✓	✓		12
	Develop Sefton Coast database,		✓	✓	✓		
	Disseminate and promote good practice through papers, conferences, research meetings and/or exchange visits.		✓	✓	✓		
<b>TOURISM (COMMUNICATION &amp; INTERPRETATION)</b>	Coastal Brand & Communications	H	✓	✓	✓	H	12
	Coastal Interpretation & Signage	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Marketing, Coastal Publications, Website	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Visitor Market Research	M	✓	✓	✓	M	
<b>ACCESS</b>	Crosby Coastal Park	H	✓	✓	✓	H	13
	Formby Point & Ainsdale-on-Sea	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
	Sefton Coastal Path	H	✓	✓	✓	H	
<b>MAJOR LANDOWNER ACTIVITIES</b>	The RSPB: Marshside Nature Reserve The Wildlife Trust (North Merseyside): Seaforth Nature Reserve, Freshfield Dune Heath Natural England: Ainsdale Sand Dunes, Cabin Hill, Ribble Estuary Golf Clubs: Sefton Coast & Countryside Service: Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (NW RFCA) Rifle Range, Hightown						15



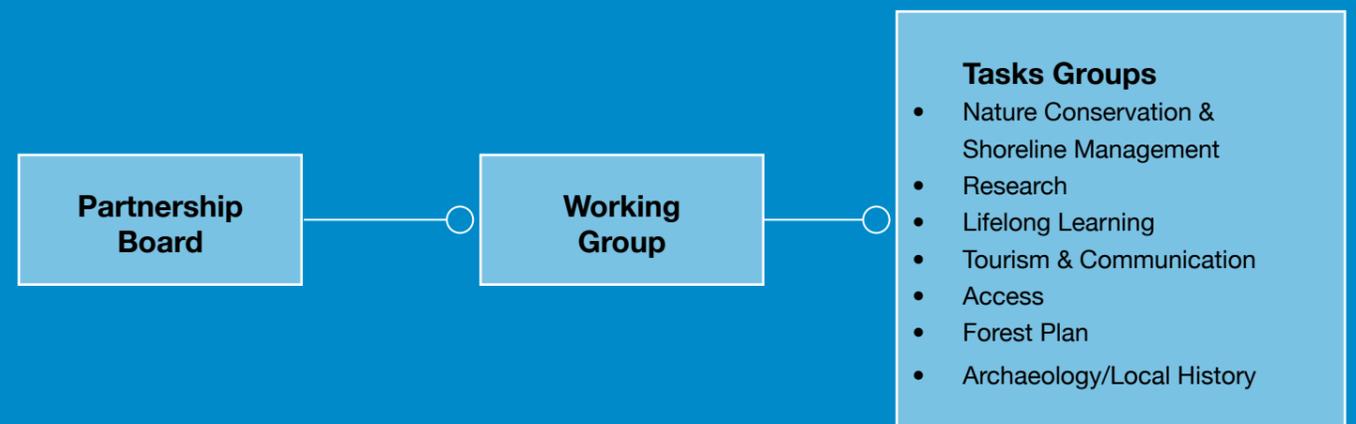
## Introduction

### The Sefton Coast Partnership

The Sefton Coast Partnership (SCP) works together on conservation and to promote sustainable benefits for access, people and the economy, predominantly in the interest of the undeveloped coast in Sefton. It is an informal association of land managers, land owners, community groups, agencies and the Council.



### SCP Structure



### Vision

*“Our vision is to manage and promote conservation and access to the coast, which ensures the protection of one of the most important coastal areas in Europe for nature, whilst providing sustainable benefits for people and the economy.*

*- 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.”*

*(Sefton Coast Partnership (ICZM) Plan - Vision Statement 2006)*

This annual report is a response to the activities agreed in the action plan of the partnership’s umbrella document, the 2006-2011 Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan [www.seftoncoast.org.uk/pdf/iczmplan20062011.pdf](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/pdf/iczmplan20062011.pdf)

The report process provides us with an opportunity to monitor and review progress, refresh the action plan as well as the main body of the ICZM Plan.

The annual report also aims to illustrate the added value of having a Sefton Coast Partnership in delivering activities set out in the ICZM Plan. This includes benefits around communication, information and collaboration.

## Events and Developments during the year

The Sefton Coast Partnership's Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan 2006-2011 was adopted by both the Partnership and the Council in 2006. The annual reporting of activities is the mechanism for reviewing the actions of this management plan.

The 7th Annual Coastal Forum was held at The Floral Hall, Southport in February. The theme in 2006 was Nature Conservation. For more information, the proceedings can be downloaded by going to [www.seftoncoast.org.uk/pdf/proceedingsforum2006.pdf](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/pdf/proceedingsforum2006.pdf)

The volunteer award was presented to Gordon Roberts an enthusiastic volunteer for both the National Trust and the Sefton Coast and Countryside Service. Since 1989 he has carved a particular position for himself as the Sefton Coast's Neolithic footprint expert. He has written papers, appeared on TV, lectured at conferences and given innumerable talks to the local community.

Led by researchers at Manchester University, the Sefton Coast was selected as a case study to look at the potential implications of climate change on this regionally important amenity area. Changes to climate and visitor behaviour may bring new opportunities to Sefton, but conversely lead to severe ecological challenges to the biodiversity of the dune system. A summary document is available for download by going to [www.snw.org.uk/tourism/down\\_research.html](http://www.snw.org.uk/tourism/down_research.html). This work potentially provides the Sefton Coast Partnership with the opportunity to become involved in demonstration projects for anticipating and managing the response to a changing climate.

Monday the 7th August saw the return of the Fox Moth on Birkdale Beach, one of the original de Havilland passenger carrying biplanes, which flew pleasure flights off Birkdale Sands many years ago. The occasion was the filming by the BBC for a third series of 'Coast' which looks at the history of aviation.

The SCP has become a member of the National Sand Dune and Shingle Conservation Management network launched by Liverpool Hope University. [www.hope.ac.uk/coast/pages/resources.html](http://www.hope.ac.uk/coast/pages/resources.html)

In September the Mersey Forest with the Council and members of the Sefton Coast Partnership, held a ceremonial tree planting event to celebrate the one millionth tree to be planted in Sefton in just over a decade. This took place at Lifeboat Road Woodlands, part of the coastal pine woodlands in Formby.

In October 2006 the SCP Board approved the targets for enhancing the coast in the Local Area Agreement.

The SCP along with the North West Coastal Forum, submitted a response to the DEFRA consultation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management ICZM.

### North West Coastal Forum

Sefton staff have been active once more in the North West Coastal Forum Management Board and activities to develop an ICZM leaflet for the North West. Involvement also includes ongoing development of a regional beach litter project in conjunction with the North West Coastal Forum and coastal partnerships on the NW coast.

The rerouting of the Sefton Coast path and the development of the 'Sefton's Natural Coast' brand were featured in a short film created for the North West Coastal Forum's biennial regional coastal conference, in September 2006.

The North West Coastal Forum has participated in the European Coastal Practice Network, which concluded in 2006. Its aim has been to develop a network of coastal stakeholders to exchange information and best practice on coastal management. At exchange events the NWCFs work on beach management issues have used case studies from Sefton as examples (Beach Management Consultation Group, Sefton's beach police, recreational zoning, the Sefton Coast Partnership and a case study supplied by Sefton on Shoreline Management Planning in England).

Sefton Council has been awarded, in recognition of their contribution to the Quality Coast label development, a Quality Coast flag and certificate which is now being displayed along the coast.

Finally, Sefton and the North West Coastal Forum are continuing to work together to develop further Interreg projects. This is likely to involve further work on Quality Coast and work on climate change and tourism.

## Landscape and Nature

### Landscape Partnership Scheme

#### 2006:

Pre-Application advice was sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in September 2006, with regard to a possible bid for a Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS). A significant proportion of the work programme for the Sefton Coast Partnership identified in the access, interpretation and nature conservation strategies and in the work of the history and archaeology task group (see below) could be delivered through this scheme.

A Landscape Partnership Scheme could help to support the work of the Sefton Coast Partnership over a 3-4 year period through a series of programmes and projects brought together under an overall Landscape Strategy. HLF representatives visited the Sefton Coast on 17 October 2006 and encouraged SCP to submit an application for a Planning Grant by 1 March 2007.

#### Added Value:

A successful bid for a Landscape Partnership Scheme would be a major step for the Sefton Coast Partnership. The total value of the project could be in the region of £1 million over 3 years and would cover access, nature conservation, heritage, interpretation and training with a strong focus on local communities. An application can only be put forward by a partnership. The Working Group and Task Group structure of the current SCP, will be used to develop programmes.

#### Action 2007:

The Planning Grant application (for c. £50,000) was submitted by 1 March 2007. HLF will again visit the coast on 9 May 2007 to assess the overall aims of the project and the specific elements of the Planning Grant submission. If HLF support the project to the next stage (which itself carries no guarantee of further support) the period September 2007- March 2008 would be used to draw up a number of essential background documents, develop a 'landscape strategy' and begin to identify the programmes and projects. All members of the Sefton Coast Partnership and several other bodies would be involved in this preparatory work.

### Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan

#### 2006:

Sefton Council took the lead for the development of the strategy. The initial work on the nature conservation strategy was reported at the SCP Forum meeting in February 2006. Subsequent to this meeting a number of working groups helped to develop a draft strategy for wider consultation in 2007. The project has been taken forward in a series of stages, the first being the adoption of a set of principles by the SCP Board in June 2006. The second, after the

working groups had completed their business, was general agreement on the 'features' that make the Sefton Coast special: the collaborative approach results in a strategy which can address both the natural and priority habitats and species of the coast alongside those of more cultural origin and local value.

#### Added Value:

Both the 'Sefton Coast' and the 'Ribble and Alt Estuaries' are European natural areas, part of the Natura 2000 network of protected sites. It is better to address conservation issues across the whole of a site and this does require a level of coordination and cooperation which can be supported by the SCP. Whilst Natural England has statutory responsibilities towards the protection and conservation of all national and international sites the SCP can assist by promoting site-to-site cooperation over similar management issues and practice. The Nature Conservation and Shoreline Management Task Group of the SCP supports coordination and encourages dialogue and dissemination of good practice.

#### Action 2007:

The Nature Conservation Strategy will be completed by April 2008 to take into account the revision of the targets relevant to the coast in the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan, the development of statutory Conservation Objectives (for features of SSSIs) by Natural England and the development of the Merseyside BioBank initiative.

The delivery of the strategy will be coordinated through the Nature Conservation and Shoreline Management Task Group with the following key actions for 2007:

- Further dialogue with Natural England on the setting of conservation objectives, site monitoring and conservation actions required to meet the Government targets for the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The target is that 95% of the SSSI series will be in 'favourable' condition by 2010: this is a target that the SCP has offered to deliver as a component of Sefton's Local Area Agreement.
- The development of coastwide nature conservation initiatives including discussions on a 'local grazing network', a heathland initiative, scrub management (control, management and conservation), supporting conservation action by golf clubs and site monitoring. Some of these may form projects within the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- The development of a more standardised approach to management plans and project recording by taking examples of good practice from partners and using the information already required in reporting to statutory and funding bodies.



- To assist the Merseyside Biodiversity Group in the revision of the targets contained in the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan.
- To work closely with the Woodlands Task Group and the Merseyside Biodiversity Group to develop specific proposals for the conservation of wet woodland, deciduous 'dune' woodland and scrub.
- To reinforce the links between nature conservation and landscape, access and tourism through, for example, the promotion of the Natura 2000 designation within the 'Quality Coast' label.
- To continue to seek funding for projects concerned with landscape and biodiversity. An application has been made to the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) for a project to record the history of sand extraction at Formby Point.
- To deliver a workshop on Natura 2000 as part of the Eurosite Natura 2000 Networking Programme.
- To complete analysis of current information on the dune wetlands of the Sefton Coast through an agreement between Sefton Council and Natural England.

#### Sefton Red Squirrel Refuge and Buffer Zone Policy:

##### 2006:

The monitoring of Red Squirrel population along with the control of grey squirrels in the buffer zone continued in 2006, largely through volunteers. The Monitoring of the Squirrel Pox Virus outbreak at Ainsdale NNR was carried out. This critical aspect of Red Squirrel conservation remains drastically underfunded and its scope is insufficient to guarantee survival of Red Squirrels on the Sefton Coast.

A Network of organisations, including Liverpool University and RSPCA, established in NW England to share best practice and data on Squirrel Pox Virus and rehabilitation of diseased Red Squirrels. A part-time Red Squirrel People and Wildlife Officer for Sefton was appointed by Save Our Squirrels Project. Funding has also been obtained from both the Heritage Lottery Fund and Mersey Waterfront and work begun on the creation of a new Red Squirrel viewing

site at Lifeboat Road in partnership with Sefton Coast and Countryside Service.

##### Added Value:

The Red Squirrel conservation would be impossible without partnership working. Although led by the Wildlife Trust through Red Alert North of England, all Sefton Coast landowners (and others) are actively involved. Red Squirrel conservation lies within the remit of the SCP's Nature Conservation and Forest Plan Task Groups, and the North Merseyside BAP Red Squirrel Action Group.

##### Action 2007:

Monitoring of the Red Squirrel population for disease will continue during 2007. The sourcing of funds to research the health of the Red Squirrel population within the Refuge and BufferZone and to increase grey squirrel control in the Buffer Zone will take place.

The Red Squirrel viewing site will be completed at Lifeboat Road and then opened to the public. Red Squirrel conservation will be promoted through the year through environmental education.

#### Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan:

##### 2006:

This was the fourth 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. The woodland owners have demonstrated an enormous commitment to working within the partnership and the results achieved within the remit of the Forest Plan for the Sefton Coast Woodlands are significant. The Task Group has played a valuable role in monitoring and coordinating progress.

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 main focus is on managing the mature woodlands through thinning, restructuring the age profile through the creation of coupes and regeneration.

The work carried out is summarised in the following table:

Year	Thinning		Coupe creation		Natural Regen		Planning	
	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
2006	15.52	10.66	1.70	2.69	0.30	0	2.24	3.64

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

##### Added Value:

Through the medium of the Woodlands Task Group the work of the management plan has been monitored and coordinated – the Task Group met three times through the year (minutes available on the SCP website [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk)).

Owners of sites that were vulnerable to fire over the dry summer were able to liaise with the Merseyside fire service to develop a coordinated fire plan for the woodlands.

A set of screens promoting the Forest Plan were developed for use by all woodland owners / site managers at public events and venues.

The Woodland owners began the process of collating information for a formal review of the progress of the Forest Plan to date – this is looking at whether the activities are helping achieve the short term objectives. The Review will be carried out throughout 2007.

The Task Group was able to support the work of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Red Alert in its efforts to counter the outbreak of squirrel pox virus in the Red Squirrel population.

The Task Group was kept informed of developments in the Sefton Coast Nature Conservation Strategy to ensure that linkage is maintained with the Woodland Forest Plan.

##### Action 2007:

The owners will be working to report to the public on the progress which has taken place in the first 5 year cycle of implementation. The review will not look at the overall objectives of the Plan, more at the short term objectives and activities to ensure that things are 'on track'. The start of the review will be launched at the 2007 Coastal Forum and will continue for several months to ensure that any learning can be fed into 2008 activities.

##### 2007 (Year 5)

Thinning Target	22.62 ha
Coupe creation Target	2.35 ha
Planting Target	2.95 ha
Natural Regeneration Target	0.10 ha

#### Beach Management Plan:

##### 2006:

The Beach Management Plan continues to guide Sefton Council in the management of its foreshore for beach based recreation and nature conservation, especially where it relates to the interface with the dunes. Elements of the plan relating to nature conservation and the Special Protection Area will be included in the emerging Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan.

The Council convene three meetings of the Sefton Beach Consultation Group annually – the group is made up of landowners, external agencies and local community representatives. The Beach Consultation Group will be consulted on the Nature Conservation Strategy and the Beach Management Plan will be reviewed as required.

No partners applied for entry in the ENCAMS Quality Coast Awards in 2006. Sefton Council has been involved in the development of the new award for a number of years and has concerns as to how it can be applied to its beaches, due to the local bathing water issues and how the award is marketed to the public.

Sefton Council's Head of Coast and Countryside continues his involvement in the UK Beach Management Forum (UKBMF) and related national groups discussing the revised Bathing Water Directive.

The Leisure Services Department through the Coast and Countryside Service was involved in the Coastal Practise Network (CoPraNet) and development of the Sefton Quality Coast label EUCC pilot report which concluded in 2006.

The Environment Agency monitors Sefton's three bathing waters (Southport, Ainsdale and Formby) for compliance with the European Community Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC).

The table below shows the overall annual classification for 2006

Bathing Water	Classification
Southport	Good
Ainsdale	Good
Formby	Good

The Environment Agency forwarded their results to Sefton's Environmental Protection department, the results are classified and entered onto a bathing water poster for display at the bathing beaches, Tourist Information Centre and Sefton Council web site.



Tables 2 & 3 show the compliance of the 2006 data with the Directive's mandatory and guideline standards respectively

Table 2 Mandatory Standards pass rate		
2006 results in bold, 2005 results in italic		
Bathing water	Total Coliforms	Faecal Coliforms
Southport	100% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>	95% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>
Ainsdale	100% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>	100% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>
Formby	100% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>	100% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>

Table 3 Guideline Standards pass rate			
2006 results in bold, 2005 results in italic			
Bathing water	Total Coliforms	Faecal Coliforms	Faecal Streptococci
Southport	80% (Pass) <i>90% (Pass)</i>	65% (Fail) <i>75% (Fail)</i>	65% (Fail) <i>100% (Pass)</i>
Ainsdale	86% (Pass) <i>95% (Pass)</i>	57% (Fail) <i>80% (Pass)</i>	95% (Pass) <i>95% (Pass)</i>
Formby	90% (Pass) <i>95% (Pass)</i>	75% (Fail) <i>80% (Pass)</i>	95% (Pass) <i>100% (Pass)</i>

### Summary

*Worst results since 2001/2002*

*No bathing water reached guideline standard*

*No Blue Flags for any Sefton beach in 2007*

*First 'Poor' result since 2002*

All three of Sefton's bathing waters failed to meet the guideline faecal coliform standard, a marked deterioration compared to previous years. The poorer results that contributed to Sefton's adverse results all followed periods of rainfall, especially after heavy rain at the end of May and August, and during September 2006.

Regionally the results were apparently very good for the North West: there were no failures of the mandatory standard for the whole year, the first time that there has been complete compliance in the North West (there were 2 failures in 2005). The compliance with the Guideline standard showed a slight improvement over 2005, 24% of the bathing waters in the North West passed the standard in 2006, compared to 21% in 2005. However the North West is lagging behind the rest of the country in compliance with the guideline standard.

### Added Value:

The Beach Consultation Group supports the partnership and enables all the organisations to discuss issues, inform and involve local people. The group also supports the exchange of information with external agencies.

CoPraNet and QualityCoast Label allow for effective networking and bench marking.

The Special Protection Area will be included in the emerging Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan.

### Action 2007:

Planning consent for Another Place (Gormley Statues) on Crosby Beach was agreed in March 2007 and the sculpture is now on permanent display. A number of statues have been relocated as part of a review of the health and safety requirements.



Ainsdale beach 'Kitezone' is now becoming well established as a key venue for extreme kite enthusiasts in the North West. A permit system is now in place to regulate this activity. A Licence for a Kite school has been issued to assist in the development of extreme kite safety management. Review the objectives and publish plan. Continue to develop coastal permits systems. Continue Sefton Beach Consultation Group.

### Shoreline Management

#### 2006:

The Shoreline Management Plan is currently being promoted through the Coastal Group covering the North West of England and North Wales but we are still trying to get all the funding in place. At this stage the Sefton Coast Partnership is not involved but will have a major part to play when the Plan is being developed as a forum for consultation. In preparation for the Shoreline Management Plan we have been working to improve our understanding of the coast and produce materials that will help to communicate this understanding to others. One of the interesting elements of this is working on predictions for possible coastal evolution over the next hundred years taking in to account sea level rise, this will be reported next year.

The Study for the area from Crosby to Formby is progressing but has been delayed for a range of reasons but we should be in a position to consult on it in 2007.

#### Added Value:

The Partnership enables us to access a wide range of Partners through an already established forum, this is not only useful in terms of undertaking consultation for our management plans but also allows us to have a better understanding of Partners needs so that we can produce advice that will assist them in their decision making.

#### Action 2007:

Consult on the Crosby to Formby Point Strategy. Start the development of the Shoreline Management Plans subject to funding being available. Report on future Coastal evolution scenarios for Formby Further develop our understanding of coastal processes on the Sefton Coast.

marketing arrangements and submission of papers in order that the Heritage Coast Conference Proceeding may be published in 2007. Editing and administrative support is being provided by Sefton Library Service.

#### Action 2007:

Work will continue to bring the papers to publication and it is intended that the publication will appear in the late summer/ autumn 2007. Authors' agreements sought by Sefton Library Service. Publication launch to be arranged.

The Task Group will be able to progress work on coast wide themed based leaflets (prehistoric footprints 2007), Sefton at War, Coastal Asparagus cultivation (feast to be held in summer) and generate more involvement with community interest groups, where funding can be independently identified. These areas of expertise and support to the partnership will be significantly developed should the Sefton Coast Partnership application to HLF for a Landscape Partnership Scheme succeed. Stage 1 development work could start in Autumn 2007.

Progress with Community Interest Groups to share and participate lie mainly through the Library Service's network, via the creation of web pages, the History and Archaeology week. Again this area would be expected to be significantly developed if the Landscape Partnership Scheme succeeds.

### National Archaeology Week:

#### 2006:

The History & Archaeology Task Group co-ordinated a series of archaeological and historical events throughout the coastal area during National Archaeology Week – 15th-23rd July 2006. This is the first time the event has been held with 18 organisations (Universities of Edge Hill and Liverpool, Liverpool Museum, the Merseyside Archaeological Service, the Portable Antiquities Scheme and volunteer groups such as Formby Civic Society, Ince Blundell Local History Group and Little Crosby Museum), participating across 12 locations. There were 19 events which were supported by around 470 members of the public, plus ongoing Egyptology exhibition at the Atkinson Art Gallery and activities at the Botanic Gardens Museum.

#### Added Value:

Although each individual organisation and group devised, managed and most funded their own event, the SCP was essential to the concept of offering a wide range of archaeological and historical activities focused on a single week of the year. Local publicity could not have been handled without the involvement of Sefton's Tourism Department.

#### Action 2007:

Following the success of last year the Task Group have decided to hold events over a 4 week period in July with the 2007 Forum providing a launch opportunity.

## History and Archaeology

### Supporting interpretation on the Coast (Sefton Coast conference proceedings, Landscape Partnership Scheme):

#### 2006:

The Task Group has made progress in regard to agreeing a financial commitment towards the cost of publication,

# Life Long Learning

## 2006:

The Task Group was re-launched in November 2006 and has started to collate information for the 2007 summer events programme.

The SoS People and Wildlife Officer, with Sefton's Coast and Countryside Service began the development of the 'Squirrel Trail' at Lifeboat Road due to be officially opened in June 2007. The project includes a squirrel viewing area, upgraded footpaths site interpretation and a trail leaflet.

## Added Value:

The Education and Lifelong Learning Task Group is in its infancy but already it can be seen to be providing a networking opportunity for the various organisations interested in the Coast and is essentially cross-cutting, picking up on a number of themes being developed by the other Task Groups.

## Action 2007:

The Task Group will develop Sefton Capital of Culture 'Living with the Coast' Programme in 2007 in preparation for 2008. This includes a schools project linked to the wildflowers of the dunes, in conjunction with The National Wildflower Centre and feeding into Southport Flower Show.

The Task Group is supporting an Audio Guide pilot, which is to be implemented at Formby (NT Victoria Road and SCCS Lifeboat Road).

In addition to inviting representation from school groups to the 2007 Forum, the central theme for the 2008 Forum will be life long learning, as part of the City of Culture Celebrations for Sefton. Preparation for this will therefore commence in 2007.

The group has agreed to looking at a coast-wide approach to collating information on numbers and types of visit for use in eg. Mersey Forest and LAA monitoring.

A coast wide approach to annual inset days for teachers, educational resource packs for schools, on-line web information and opportunities for young people will aim to be developed in 2007.

# Research

## 2006:

Task Group activity has involved a mini-conference that has contributed to the dissemination of information on research and to the Nature Conservation Strategy. There has been a report of the conference written and an action started to build a research network with the focus on improving communication within this particular area. An associated action is the review and further development of the Sefton Coast Database which is well underway.

## Added Value:

The Partnership has facilitated this work through the links and good working relationships that it has established. It will further facilitate this work in terms of communicating it to a wider audience through its web site, Coastlines and forums. A key aspect of this activity is the promotion of links between practitioners and researchers in order to support evidence based policy making, The Partnership is a key mechanism for this.

## Action 2007:

The Research Task Group will continue to identify beneficial research areas, and the Research element of the SCP website will be improved in order to document relevant research and monitoring through the web. A newsletter is also to be developed in 2007 and the Sefton Coast Database updated. The dissemination and promotion of good practice through papers, conferences, research meetings and/or exchange visits will continue. There exists ambition to publish a new edition of 'Sands of Time'.

# Tourism (Communication and Interpretation)

## 2006:

The priorities set out within the Sefton Coast Tourism Development Plan (TDP) formed the basis for all work of the Tourism Department in 2006. Developed for the period 2005 – 2008, the plan was written to implement some of the key recommendations contained within the Communication, Interpretation and Product Development Strategy prepared by Peter Scott Planning Associates in 2005. The main activities undertaken during 2006 were as follows:-

Coastal Brand and Communications: In conjunction with the Sefton Coast Partnership and Mersey Waterfront, Creative Concern (Manchester based marketing consultants) were appointed to develop a 'consumer brand' for the entire Sefton Coast that could be used on all communications materials including marketing literature, web site and coastal signage. The process involved a 3-month consultation period with 1000 'non' visitors as a means of developing the core brand attributes of the coast that should be incorporated into the new brand. In January 2006, the new 'Sefton's Natural Coast' brand identity was agreed by the Sefton Coast Partnership and its land managers and now forms the basis of all coastal related tourism marketing activity undertaken by the Tourism Department.

Coastal Interpretation and Signage: The Sefton Coast Audio Guide project has been developed in conjunction with Mersey Waterfront to develop an innovative method of visitor interpretation at Lifeboat Road and Victoria Road, Formby. Developed in partnership with Sefton Coast & Countryside, the National Trust and Sefton Tourism Department, 40 hand held audio guides will be purchased and programmed to provide detailed visitor information on specific aspects of the natural environment including the Formby asparagus trail, red squirrels and the history of Formby lifeboat station.

Scheduled for completion in May 2007, the guides will be a valuable addition to the visitor offer and it is anticipated that the project will be rolled out to cover other areas of the Sefton Coast in future years.

Working in conjunction with Merseytravel, Mersey Waterfront and Wirral Borough Council, the Tourism Department secured funding to develop a programme of signage at all the main railway stations along Sefton's Natural Coast. The project included the installation of 8 signage units that will be used to display coastal information relative to the location of each station. Whilst it is anticipated that the lifetime of the units is expected to be approximately 10 years, the signage/information contained within the units can now be easily updated and at relatively low cost using the new SNC guidelines.

Marketing, Coastal Publications and Website: Following agreement of the brand guidelines for Sefton's Natural Coast, the Tourism Department, in conjunction with the Sefton Coast Partnership developed a Tourism Marketing Plan for the Coast in February 2006 lasting until May 2007. The core focus of the plan was to position Sefton's Natural Coast within the sub region (Manchester & Greater Merseyside) as a unique destination for leisure, recreational and niche/natural tourism by 2007 as well as increasing the number of 'non' Sefton visits to the coast. Through research work undertaken as part of the brand development process (see above) and visitor attitudinal information gathered in 2005, the plan was used to commission three specific visitor guides – Walking & Cycling, a generic day visitor guide and an events guide. In addition, a dedicated website for the Sefton Coast was also commissioned - seftonsnaturalcoast.com with significant levels of PR coverage also being secured through national newspapers (Sunday Telegraph etc) thanks to the ongoing support of The Mersey Partnership.

Visitor Market Research: Following the adoption of the Sefton Coast Research Action Plan in 2005, annual attitudinal research has been conducted as a means of 'filling the gaps in coastal tourism market intelligence. In summary, the 2006 survey revealed that a larger percentage of visitors came from outside Sefton in comparison with the 2005 baseline with significantly more tourism day visitors (those visiting the coast whilst on a short break to the region) attracted to the coast than in previous years. As a result there was also a higher level of expenditure per capita, evidencing the impact of the targeted marketing activity developed through the SNC Tourism Marketing Plan.

## Added Value:

The Sefton Coast Partnership has been an essential element in coordinating tourism initiatives for Sefton's Natural Coast. The support offered by all land managers and stakeholders to developing the CIPD strategy allowed a clear baseline position to be established from which the aforementioned coastal tourism activity could be developed on a consensus basis.

## Action 2007:

The Tourism Task Group will further develop and enhance the seftonsnaturalcoast.com website. With the support of the Council the group will source funding and support product development initiatives – particularly marketing, coastal signage, access and interpretation projects. Sefton's Natural Coast marketing strategy will also be reviewed during 2007.

Support for the land managers/stakeholders will continue regarding the development of the SNC events programme for Capital of Culture in 2008 – including development of the Sefton 'Meadow' Project. Qualitative coastal research and work with land managers to develop mechanisms of accurately quantifying coastal visitor numbers will be implemented.

# Access (Sefton Coastal Path and Gateway Improvements)

## Crosby Coastal Park:

### 2006:

There are four key projects in the Crosby Coastal Park outlined below. Taken together they offer the chance of significant improvement of the Crosby Coastal Park area.

The Water Centre: Development work for a £6m watersports facility, designed to a standard suitable to allow full use by people with a disability continued in 2006. The proposal includes accommodation for visiting teams, training and meeting rooms, a café/restaurant to serve the centre and the park, and space for existing users. Linked to the development of the buildings are plans to consider how to improve the lake water quality in respect of the regularly occurring algae problems. An outline planning application has recently been submitted.

Another Place: The company formed to try and secure the installation (Another Place Limited) has been successful in obtaining offers of funding for purchasing the installation. The sculpture comprises 100 life-size cast iron figures extending over the 3km expanse of Crosby Beach. They will be submitting an application for a permanent installation in 2007. Discussions have been held with objectors to mitigate their concerns. Their views will be taken into account in the planning application that will be submitted. Ideas are being developed for minor infrastructure improvements to cater for additional visitors, including a small visitor centre and other



visitor facilities at or near the Coastguard Station, River Alt. It will be important to make proper provision for management and maintenance of the beaches and promenade as a result of increase usage due to visitors, and to improve the area for the local community.

**The Masterplan:** The landscape masterplan for Crosby Coastal Park, provides a broad context for the overall improvement of the area. As such it will be an essential component of future funding bids. The plan is based on extensive local consultation. It includes proposals for new paths, landscaping, lighting and other facilities for the whole park from Hall Road to the Marine Lake, and could be developed as a phased programme of work. The proposals include repair of Potters Barn, a listed building, which provides an important gateway to the Coastal Park.

**Radar Tower:** The tower provides spectacular views of the estuary and surroundings, and is potentially an important visitor attraction. However there could be significant costs in refurbishment/conversion for public use, and the issue of maintenance/operation needs to be addressed. With the agreement of the owner's Peel Holdings, a feasibility study has been commissioned on behalf of the Mersey Basin Campaign, funded by the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, with a small contribution from the Council.

#### **Added Value:**

The SCP provides an existing network of stakeholders, some of which will have a keen interest in the future of Crosby Coastal Park. The SCP can expect to be consulted on proposals as they develop.

#### **Action 2007:**

This will include securing funding from agencies towards the costs of the Water Centre including Sport England, ERDF and Mersey Waterfront. A report on further phasing of the Crosby Coastal Park Masterplan will be developed, along with decisions about securing permanent installation of 'Another Place' and whether to proceed with the Radar Tower 'project'.

#### **Formby Point and Ainsdale-On-Sea Gateway Visitor Study:**

#### **2006:**

The National Trust and Sefton Council have been working with landscape consultants Gillespies to develop proposals for the sustainable development of three coastal gateway sites, notably the Ainsdale Lido complex, Lifeboat Road and the National Trust's Victoria Road site. The Sefton Coast Visitor Gateways Study will provide the basis for consultation and engagement with the local community and other stakeholders about the future of these valued coastal facilities. The study is 85% complete.

#### **Added Value:**

In regard to Formby Point where there are two sites, it has been important to collaborate in taking forward proposals for improvements to these visitor gateways.

#### **Action 2007:**

Following completion of the Gateway Study commission due March 2007:

The National Trust will aim to commence in 2007 a programme of engagement with stakeholders and the wider community on the Victoria Road proposals.

The Council shall report on the findings of the study and make decisions on how to proceed with improvements at Ainsdale-on-Sea and Lifeboat Road, Formby. This will include making a decision on priorities and identifying possible funding opportunities.

#### **Sefton Coastal Path:**

#### **2006:**

Early 2006 saw the £100,000 Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme at Formby Point completed. This partnership project was managed by the National Trust and was delivered in two phases.

Phase 1 Fishermans Path to Victoria Road, which secured access along an unsurfaced path across the Formby Golf Club and an upgraded stone path between Freshfield Caravan Park and Victoria Road was completed by July 2005.

Phase 2 provided a stone surfaced path between Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road car park. A branch path linking to Kirklake Road, was completed by Sefton's Coast and Countryside Service Biodiversity and Access Team early in 2006.

New fingerpost signs and waymarks were produced and installed by the end of February 2006. The waymarks included 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 in the future.

#### **Added Value:**

The Sefton Coastal Path is in the ownership of several landowners therefore the SCP enabled a structured approach towards the planning and funding of improvements to the path.

#### **Action 2007:**

The Council is in the process of implementing a new stretch of the coastal path between Hall Road and Hightown. The £200,000 scheme funded through Sustrans, Mersey Waterfront and the Council is to be completed by 2008. The first phase between Hall Road and the start of the SSSI will be complete by the end of March 2007.

A plan for practical improvements of the coastal path and circular walks remains to be developed in 2007 by the Access Task Group, based on the Access Strategy for the coast. Therefore it is proposed that an 'Access Technical' group convenes in 2007 to take this forward.

## Major Landowners and Activities

### **The RSPB: Marshside Nature Reserve**

#### **2006:**

The Management Plan for Marshside RSPB Nature Reserve has been written in accordance with the Nature Conservation & Biodiversity Strategy. The plan has been submitted and approved by Sefton Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the RSPB.

A draft Management Plan for a proposed extension of the Marshside Reserve to include the saltmarshes surrounding the Rainfords sand works was written and posted for public consultation on the Sefton Coast website. Hard copies were also placed in Southport and Churchtown libraries.

Avocets bred at Marshside again, 24 pairs fledging 38 young, making the Marshside Avocet colony the largest and most successful in NW England. 30 pairs of Redshank and 74 pairs of Lapwing bred on the Reserve, both species continuing to do well on Sefton's biggest tract of lowland wet grassland.

A reintroduction programme for Natterjack Toads began at Marshside in 2006. Excellent support from both Ainsdale NNR (Natural England) & LNR (Sefton Coast and Countryside) ensured that 2500 tadpoles were released at Marshside.

Lancashire Wildlife Trust donated some Water Vole/American Mink recording rafts that will help inform us as to the presence of either species on the Reserve and help with deciding what to do next for Water Voles at Marshside.

Rainford's sand processing plant closed in January. This leaves a unique opportunity to develop visitor facilities next to the current RSPB Reserve. Sefton Council are working closely with Rainford's and Natural England to finalise a restoration plan for the site. RSPB are looking forward to some high quality partnership working with Sefton Council officers in order to include the site into an enlarged RSPB reserve and convert part of the site into a visitor facility for us all to be proud of.

#### **Added Value:**

Partnership working continues on a coast wide strategy allowing the partners to build consensus on habitat and biodiversity issues, manage conflicting views and involve the public through visiting sites and volunteering.

RSPB was able to widen the appeal of Marshside RSPB Nature Reserve to locals, day-trippers and tourists, through inclusion in the Sefton's Natural Coast Visitor Guide, Coastlines, Events Guide and Walking and Cycling Guide.

#### **Action 2007:**

A Management Plan for Marshside RSPB Nature Reserve proposed extension (possibly to include the former Rainford's sand processing plant) will be written and submitted in accordance with Nature Conservation & Biodiversity Strategy.

### **The Wildlife Trust (North Merseyside): Seaforth Nature Reserve, Freshfield Dune Heath**

#### **2006:**

The Wildlife Trust on Merseyside have completed restoration works to dune heath, acid grassland and woodland. The site was formally opened in 2006 to members of the public. A new channel and large pond was created on Wham Dyke. Sheep grazing has continued and cattle were introduced on the site for the first time.

#### **Added Value:**

Restoration work has been made possible through partnerships with other landowners and managers. The Forest Plan Task Group as part of the Sefton Coast Woodland Forest Plan monitors Woodland. Activities on site have been advertised through Coastlines and Events Guide. Activities were carried out as part of National Archaeology Week through the History and Archaeology Task Group.

#### **Action 2007**

The Wildlife Trust will continue to manage Freshfield Dune Heath as part of the SAC and create new wetland habitats.

### **Natural England: Ainsdale Sand Dunes, Cabin Hill, Ribble Estuary**

#### **2006:**

This year saw English Nature merge with the Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service to form Natural England. This led to a difficult year within the organisation. Due to a shortfall in financial expenditure within DEFRA and subsequently the Natural England budget was significantly reduced. English Nature has worked closely with the Biodiversity Officer on the production of the draft Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy.

The events programme was fully utilised but due to funding issues the newsletters were not produced. The biannual Great Crested Newt monitoring took place showing that



newts are still present over the whole site (Ainsdale Sand Dunes) but due to lower water table levels not every slack was wet. Work under the Forest Plan proceeded with thinning and coupe felling being completed in 2006. Slack 15 was mown to maintain the Natterjack Toad breeding area and fixed point photography was undertaken but needs reviewing.

**Added Value:**

Having a coast wide events leaflet helped our events reach a wider audience.

Working with the partnership on a coast wide strategy enables all the organisations to build consensus on issues, manage conflicting views and involve the public.

Our involvement in the Forum in February provided opportunities to engage with the public.

**Action 2007:**

Natural England will continue to undertake work within the Forest Plan and contribute to the emerging Conservation SCP to deliver a Biodiversity Strategy. Also grazing on Natural England land, including the possibility of using larger herbivores. It will run its annual events programme in conjunction with the coast wide publication. Other aspects of land management will include, looking for sites for controlled destabilisation, monitor slack flora assemblages, Natterjack Toads and implement conservation works as per Management Plan.

**National Trust: Victoria Road, Formby Point**

**2006:**

Major woodland thinning and coupe felling was carried out by Tilhill Forestry Ltd in early 2006. A tree baler was used to convert all lop and top into round 'bales' which were forwarded and sold as biofuel to be utilised at the Shotton paper mill on Deeside. This was the first time that this type of machinery had been used in a thinning contract in England.

Progress was made with the dune heath and dune grassland management plan with gorse cleared from Larkhill Fields and scrub removed from areas within the open dunes, whilst new Herdwick sheep improved the effectiveness of the small conservation grazing flock.

The Sefton Coastal Path Enhancement Project was completed early in 2006.

Progress with the Sefton Coast Visitor Gateways Study was slower than anticipated and we look forward to completion of the consultant's report in the early part of 2007.

**Added Value:**

The National Trust was able to widen the appeal of the coastal property through supporting the Seftons Natural Coast Visitor Guide, Events Guide and Walking and Cycling Guide.

Benefits accrued to the National Trust and to visitors to the Sefton Coast from the completion of the Sefton Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme which was led by the National Trust. 7 partners helped to deliver the project and major supporting funding was received from Mersey Waterfront, The Mersey Forest and Sefton Council's Planning and Technical Services Departments.

The National Trust actively supported the Woodland, Tourism and Communications and Nature Conservation Task Groups in 2006 deriving benefit in terms of community consultation and enhanced participation in walks and activities.

The Formby and Ainsdale Neighbourhood, Multi-Agency Group, provided a valuable focus to address issues of youth disorder, traffic congestion and emergency access and safety at the Victoria Road site.

**Action 2007:**

In 2007 we will improve the layout of the main dune car park to enable improved maintenance including removal of blown sand. Site information boards will be refreshed to show recent adaptation of access routes and the car park. Acousticguide, audio guides will be introduced in June 2007 featuring a range of topics of general interest across Formby Point. We will report on the findings of the Sefton Coast Visitor Gateways Study and commence a programme of community engagement with the project.

The Management Plan for the property will be reviewed in 2007 including the conservation plan for dune heath and dune grasslands.

**Sefton Coast & Countryside Service coastal sites: Southport and Birkdale beaches, Ainsdale-on-Sea/Ainsdale & Birkdale Sandhills LNR, Lifeboat Road Recreation Area and Beach - Formby Point, Ravenmeols Dunes and Woodlands LNR, Crosby Coastal Park (Crosby Marine Lake to Hightown Dunes and Foreshore), Queens Jubilee Nature Trail, Marshside Outer Marsh – Ribble Estuary, Kenilworth Road Dunes - Ainsdale**

**2006:**

The Sefton Leisure Services Department Coast and Countryside Service continues to implement the Forest Plan with support from the Mersey Forest and funding from the Forestry Commission and the Integrated Countryside and Environment Programme (ICEP). Along with site staff the Biodiversity and Access Team played a major role in this implementing the plan, including the Adult Services 'Chance to be Included Project' and young people through funding from the Drug Action Team (DAT), Behavioural Improvement Programme (BIP) and Sefton Council Children's Services.

The Pinewood Workshops at Ainsdale is now operated five days a week in conjunction with Sefton Council Adult Services. The workshop is now manufacturing countryside furniture from timber sourced from the woodlands on the coast. The timber was processed using a Woodmizer portable sawmill.

The Alt Centre at Hightown was improved and utilised as an Autism Centre by Sefton Council Adult Services.

A successful application for funding from the ICEP was made through the Mersey Forest to support the purchase of a Woodmizer portable sawmill and additional machinery for The Pinewood Workshop. The Woodmizer will be delivered in 2007.

The Coast and Countryside Service continues to Chair the Nature Conservation Task Group and provides the core funding for the Sefton Coast Partnership Biodiversity Officer. Natural England and the Planning & Regeneration Department also provide funding for the post in place to develop the Sefton Coast Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan.

The Sefton Coast and Countryside Service achieved the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (Woodland Certification FSC) for sustainable management of woodlands.

**Added Value:**

Having an integrated service and working in partnership with other Council departments to increase access to the natural coast to excluded groups.

The development of The Pinewood Workshops and ICEP grant for wood working machinery creates opportunities for greater use of local materials and effective sustainable management of the woodlands.

Being involved in the partnership across a considerable number of main areas of work enables all the organisations to build consensus on issues, manage conflicting views and involve the local people.

**Action 2007:**

Increase the level of timber sourced from the pinewoods.

Complete the first phase of the Lifeboat Road Squirrel Trail with financial support from Save our Squirrels (SoS) HLF and Mersey Waterfront Regional Park funding.

Support the development of a second workshop providing countryside furniture in the south of Sefton initially in the Sefton Adult Services Brooklea Day Centre. Consider the development of a social enterprise to provide improved facilities and biomass outlet.

Support the consultation for the Sefton Coast Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Delivery Plan.

Consider the implications of Higher Level Stewardship not being available to support the Council meeting nature conservation targets.

Continue the Sefton Beach Consultation Group.

Take an active part in supporting the developments on the Crosby Coastal Park in respect of the WATER Centre and Another Place.

Continue to develop additional opportunities for Lifelong Learning and training.

Support the application for the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme.

**North West Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (NW RFCA) Rifle Range, Hightown**

**2006:**

2006 has seen a major thinning of the woodlands as directed by Mersey Forest; this has been carried out by the Altcar Estate Staff. Area 24N has seen extensive thinning carried out by Scottish Power Manweb, this was necessary due to the proximity to the overhead power cables. It had been agreed with Scottish Power Manweb that they will replace and infill trees removed, this is due to take place in November 2007.

This year Altcar Estate was also visited by Dr Jen Lewis from the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology from the University of Liverpool. This visit was to establish the origins of a possible inner harbour wall dating back to 1800. This exploration will continue in July 2007.

**Added Value:**

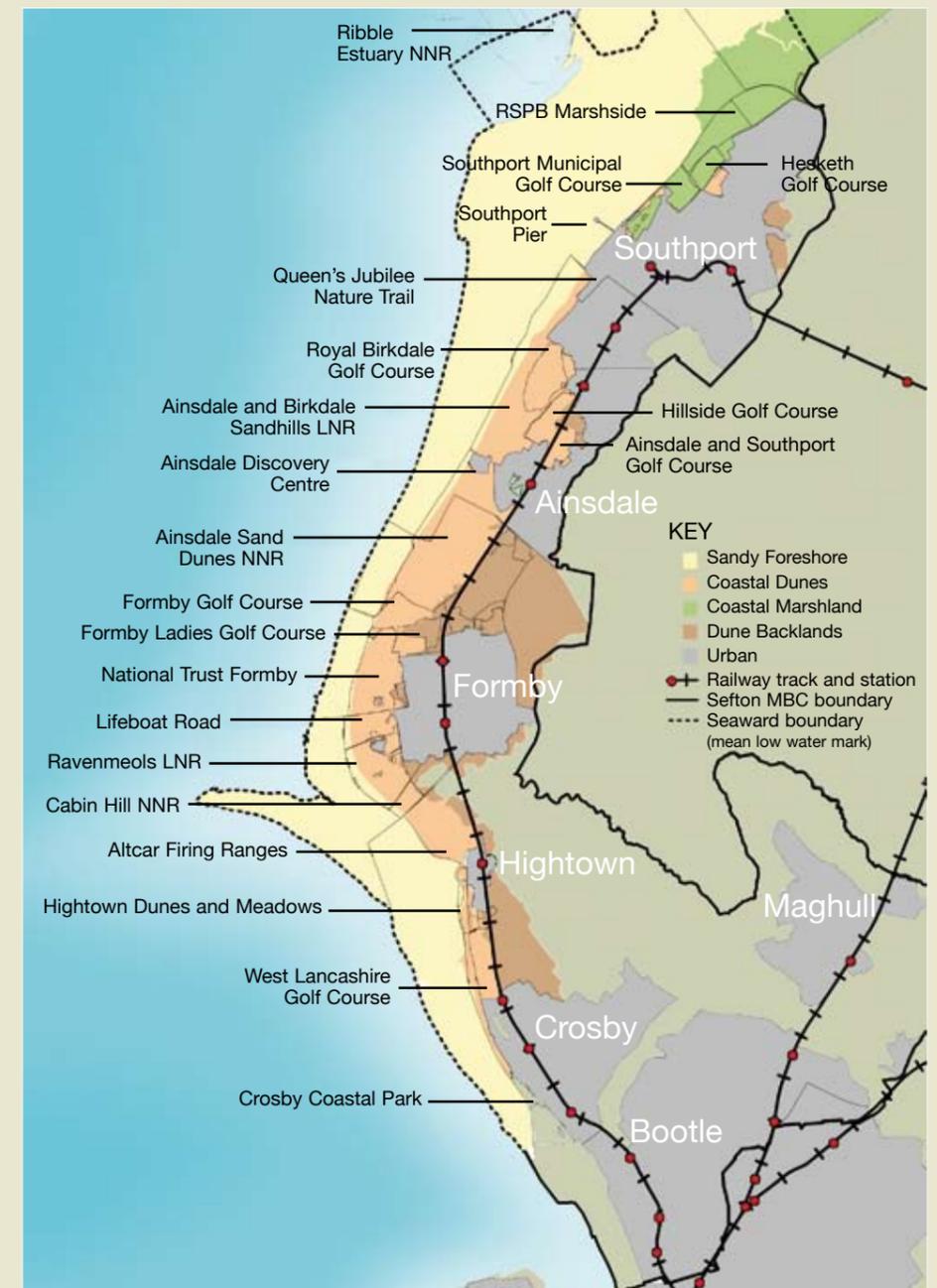
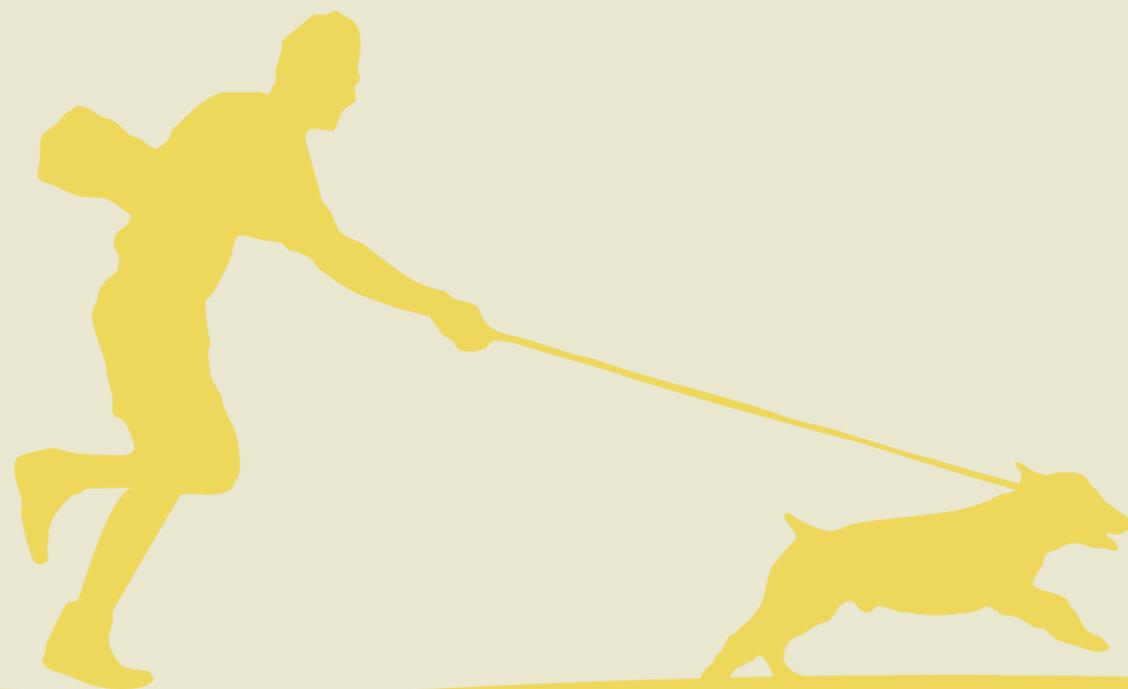
There has been a major increase in the Red Squirrel population on the Altcar Estate due to the rigorous vermin control and management by the Staff and Gamekeepers. The annual bird count and ringing process carried out by the Conservation Group has been extremely successful shown in the increased number and variety of birds ringed. This shows the Estate Woodlands are providing an excellent habitat for the wild bird population.

A series of walks have been organised by the Conservation Group for the general public to visit the Estate. This has generated an interest in the vast conservation works undertaken at Altcar. Popular sights on the estate include, Green Winged Orchids, Evening Primrose, Sand Lizard, Natterjack Toad, Red Squirrels and Barn Owls to name but a few.

**Action 2007:**

2007 will see new Woodland being planted to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the Reserve Forces. In addition the thinning of the Woodlands will continue and the monitoring and promotion of the wildlife and flora and fauna will continue with the support of the Conservation Group.





For further information on the contents of the annual report and the Sefton Coast Partnership please contact:

Sefton Coast Partnership,  
 c/o The Planning Department,  
 Magdalen House,  
 Trinity Road,  
 Bootle L20 3NJ  
 Email: [info@seftoncoast.org.uk](mailto:info@seftoncoast.org.uk),  
 Web Sites: [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk)



THE NATIONAL TRUST



Forestry Commission

