

coastLINES

SUMMER 2009



Coastlines is the newsletter of the Sefton Coast Partnership. Coastlines aims to provide information to local people and visitors about the natural value of the coastline, the current policies for conservation management and other topical issues. The Sefton Coast Partnership includes Sefton Council, The National Trust, Natural England, The Wildlife Trust, North West Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, RSPB and local community and interest groups in a co-operative partnership.

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www.nationaltrust.org.uk
www.rspb.org.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk
www.visitsouthport.com
www.sefton.gov.uk

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General view of Cabin Hill NNR in 1981, showing flood barrier bank and a particular high water-level.

Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve

Philip H. Smith & Alice Kimpton

Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve has been gifted to Natural England, having previously been leased from a private land-owner. This 30ha area of calcareous sand-dunes, near Formby on the Sefton Coast north of Liverpool was leased by the former Nature Conservancy Council in 1983 and formally declared as a NNR in 1991.

The site has a chequered history, being severely damaged by sand-

winning during the 1940s and early 1950s, which removed the largest sand-dune and land-mark on this part of the coast down to the water-table. A perceived threat to coastal defence led to the then Mersey & Weaver River Authority building a 780m-long flood barrier bank across the site in 1970/71. Sand to create the bank was excavated from large borrow-pits in the former sand-quarry, resulting in extensive, shallow, seasonally-flooded wetlands (slacks), which were then colonised by dune-slack flora and fauna. In the late 1970s, the site was proposed for inclusion within

a large golf-course development. This was eventually successfully resisted and was one incentive for the establishment of the NNR.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the borrow-pits became one of the largest Natterjack Toad (*Bufo calamita*) breeding sites in Britain with up to 250 spawn strings counted annually. Unfortunately, despite management efforts, this population subsequently declined as vegetation maturation and invasion by Common Toads (*Bufo bufo*) made the area less suitable for the rarer amphibian.

Welcome to the Spring edition of **Coastlines**, bringing you all the latest news about work happening on Sefton's changing coast.

In this edition find out how the dune slacks were created at Cabin Hill Nature Reserve and celebrate the news that this 30 hectare area has recently and very generously been gifted to Natural England.

Sefton Coast has also become a bit of a celebrity with recent appearances on the ONE SHOW and another appearance on COAST scheduled for the Autumn.

As climate change is the single most important issue facing all of us, and not least Sefton's Coastal Defence Team in this edition we feature articles on Adaptation to Climate Change, Hightide on the Ribble, and Loft Insulation nature's way.

As the new Sefton Water Sports Centre at Crosby Marine Park nears completion we are able to bring you some of the latest images of this innovative building.

Congratulations go to the Coast and Countryside Service, who has received numerous prestigious awards for their work along the coast

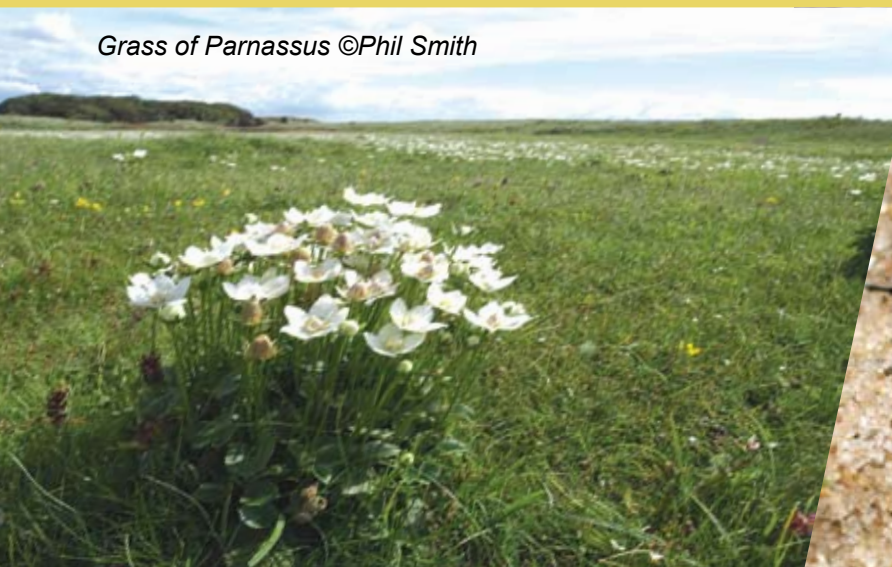
Also, read about the many family fun events and activities that have taken place and which will continue throughout the coming year.

Plus lots more fascinating information, and look out for the new beefy recruits at Ainsdale, see if you can guess what they might be.

Inside this issue is a newsletter which gives an update on the progress of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

We are now able to send your copy of **Coastlines** via email, please see the back page for details ●

Grass of Parnassus ©Phil Smith



Northern Dune Beetle ©Phil Smith



The borrow-pits have become extremely rich in plant species, over 350 different kinds having been recorded on the reserve. They include a large colony of the nationally declining Flat-sedge (*Blysmus compressus*), sizeable numbers of marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*, *D. praetermissa*, *D. purpurella* and various hybrids) and the best display of Grass-of-Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) on the Sefton dunes. In winter, the slacks attract large numbers of Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and Jack Snipe (*Lymanotypedes minima*).

Other parts of the sand-extracted areas have been colonised by fixed-dune and damp-slack vegetation, including extensive stands of Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*),

together with rare willow hybrids, these including over 100 bushes of *S. x friesiana* and a few of *S. x subsericia*, *S. x doniana* and, perhaps, *S. x angusensis*.

Less disturbed fixed, mobile and embryo dunes extend westwards to the shore. These are floristically diverse, including a spectacular population of Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), estimated at about 5000 spikes in 2008. There are also flourishing colonies of the endangered Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and Biodiversity Action Plan invertebrates such as Northern Dune Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela hybrida*), Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*), Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*) and Vernal Bee (*Colletes cunicularius*).

Recent management of the reserve has included winter-grazing by Herdwick sheep from the Cumbrian fells, excavation of small scrapes for Natterjacks and scrub control, including the removal of mainly Grey Willow (*S. cinerea*) from a 1ha wet-slack, with significant biodiversity benefits (Smith & Kimpton 2008) ●

Reference

Smith, P.H. & Kimpton, A. (2008). *Effects of grey willow Salix cinerea removal on the floristic diversity of a wet dune-slack at Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve on the Sefton Coast, Merseyside, England. Conservation Evidence* 5: 6-11.

The star of the show

No it's not me – it's the National Nature Reserves of the Sefton Coast!!

In August the BBC television programme **COAST** came to the reserve to take a sideways look at some of the creatures which live on the Reserves. Paul Rooney (Senior Lecturer at Liverpool Hope University and Director of the UK Sand Dune and Shingle Network) was featured talking to Miranda Krestovnikoff (a zoologist and presenter of **COAST**).

The programme takes a journey through the dunes looking at some of the small creatures which inhabit these inhospitable places. On the beach Paul and Miranda discover sand hoppers and a specialist sound recordist listened to the sounds made as they moved around the strandline.

It was such a windy day that it was perfect for the programme to focus on how sand dunes are made as you could watch the sand grains moving up the beach. The programme is due to air this summer so look out for it.

April 2009 saw the return of Mike Dilger, making a wildlife feature for the ONE SHOW, trying to talk to

Natterjacks! During the day the film crew were out in Ainsdale village with Mike trying to mimic the call of the male Natterjack toad and then asked passersby if they could guess what made the noise. I am not sure how successful Mike's toad call was.

And its not just wildlife that brings filmmakers to the reserve – we have had a request for a zombie movie to be made on location here..... no that's not me either! ●

Alice Kimpton – Natural England Senior Reserves Manager Ainsdale and Cabin Hill National Nature Reserves

Miranda and Paul at Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR.



Mike Dilger and the TV crew look for natterjacks



Miranda and the sound recordist looking for sand hoppers.

LOFT INSULATION—NATURE'S WAY

The benefits of good loft and wall insulation are obvious: the resultant reduction in energy expenditure in keeping a building warm leads to a corresponding reduction in carbon emissions as well as in lower fuel bills. It's a winner all round – it

helps save the environment as well as the pound in the pocket, and it cannot be denied that both are important considerations in these days of climate change and credit crunch. During the winter, Natural England replaced the loft insulation at its office at Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve, but instead of opting for the more usual fibreglass insulation, they went with a natural choice – sheep's fleeces from the flock of Herdwicks which spend the winter on the Reserve.

Sheep's wool is an admirable choice for insulation – it is after all designed by Nature to keep sheep

Herdwick ewe
©Natural England



NEW RECRUITS AT AINSDALE

The delicate sand dunes habitat, as found along the Sefton Coast, is threatened throughout the UK and Europe - and unfortunately the sand dunes system of Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve is no exception. A combination of factors, including afforestation, a drop in water table levels and undergrazing has led to an invasion of scrub and rank grasses, at the expense of much of the loose, bare sands, temporary ponds and shorter grasses - all conditions required by exceptionally rare species like the Natterjack toad and Great Crested Newt to survive.

Amongst the steps taken to restore the sand dunes habitat to what it should be was the introduction of a grazing regime. In the past, the main form of vegetation management on the Reserve was rabbit grazing, but the introduction of myxomatosis in order to control their numbers had a devastating effect on the rabbit population as a whole, and their numbers fluctuate even now because of it. It was therefore deemed necessary to supplement rabbit grazing by introducing livestock onto the Reserve during the winter.

The main livestock used have been sheep, predominantly Herdwick sheep, which are ideally suited to overwintering outdoors in harsh conditions such as those on the Sefton Coast. Unfortunately sheep grazing alone has not delivered the desired results in that their way of grazing and their physical body weight is not great enough to bring about sufficient disturbance to create the required bare sand patches. It was therefore decided to introduce cattle grazing onto the Reserve, in the hope that their heavier frame and their habit of browsing - intensely grazing in some areas while leaving



Shetland cattle
©Natural England

other areas untouched - will bring about the necessary changes.

The cattle - in the form of 5 Shetland heifers - arrived during November 2008, and have just completed their first winter at the Reserve. Shetland Cattle are a rare and ancient breed of small cattle thought to have been introduced to the British Isles by the Vikings. Like the Herdwicks, they are ideally suited to surviving in harsh winter conditions. The monitoring focus for this first season has been to determine if they could indeed manage the Sefton Coast winter. They have done so, and it has therefore been decided to put the cattle along with 15 Herdwick sheep in one of the enclosures on the Reserve for a trial lasting 3 to 5 years ●

Val Walmsley Project Support Officer, Natural England



Shrub ©Natural England

warm and dry during the winter. This is particularly true when the wool is that of the extremely hardy Herdwick sheep, which is used to overwintering outside in the especially harsh conditions of the Cumbria fells – or indeed the Sefton Coast.

The wool fibres trap air to retain warmth, and when wool gets wet it absorbs the moisture and actually emits energy to create heat – which, when used as insulation, helps prevent condensation. Wool is also naturally fire retardant, emits no toxic gases and not a scrap of it is wasted during preparation and

installation. Used properly, wool can last for centuries without losing its resilience, and when it does reach the end of its long shelf life it is 100% biodegradable.

If you want to know more, a useful website to visit is www.blackmountaininsulation.com. Black Mountain Insulation is a sales company of wool insulation rather than an independent information organisation, but the site is very informative nonetheless.

The difference to the office temperature was immediately noticeable. One particular office

in the building was so cold that the officer who used it was more likely to put an extra coat on than to take one off. The officer reported that after the insulation was installed, the room felt “positively tropical”, and she is now monitoring the NNR heating bills to see if the change in them is as astounding as the change in temperature ●

Val Walmsley
Project
Support
Officer,
Natural
England



Adaptation to climate change on the Sefton Coast

Michelle Newton

Coastal Officer,
Coastal Defence Team

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

The earth's climate is constantly changing; however, some of the changes seen during the latter part of the twentieth century cannot be

explained by natural variations alone. It is now thought that human influences are a major cause of our changing climate. Increasing urbanisation, deforestation and burning of fossil fuels are drastically increasing the Green House Gas effect. Climate change increases land and sea temperatures which in turn alters precipitation quantities and patterns, increasing global sea levels, increasing risk of coastal erosion and expected increases in the number of natural disasters. These changes can lead to major threats to our food supply, health,

industry, transport and ecosystems. It is these threats which our population today have to address by mitigating Green House Gas emissions and adapting to unavoidable impacts.

WHAT IS ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION?

Adaptation along with mitigation is essential to addressing the challenges faced and opportunities associated with our changing climate. Adaptation constitutes ways of protecting society from nature whereas mitigation represents activities to protect nature from society.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE SEFTON COAST?

The coast is changing -always has, always will. In the past we have learnt to adapt to changes environmentally, socially and economically. Historically, as a result of changing coastal process we have been opportunistic on the Sefton Coast and reclaimed land from the sea at Southport, **figure 1** but we have also unfortunately lost land to the sea at Formby where since the 1900's as a result of changing conditions erosion has ensued, **figure 2**. Erosion of our coastline is likely to be accentuated in the future with the threat of increasing sea levels as a direct result of climate change. **Figure 3** shows the potential threat of rising

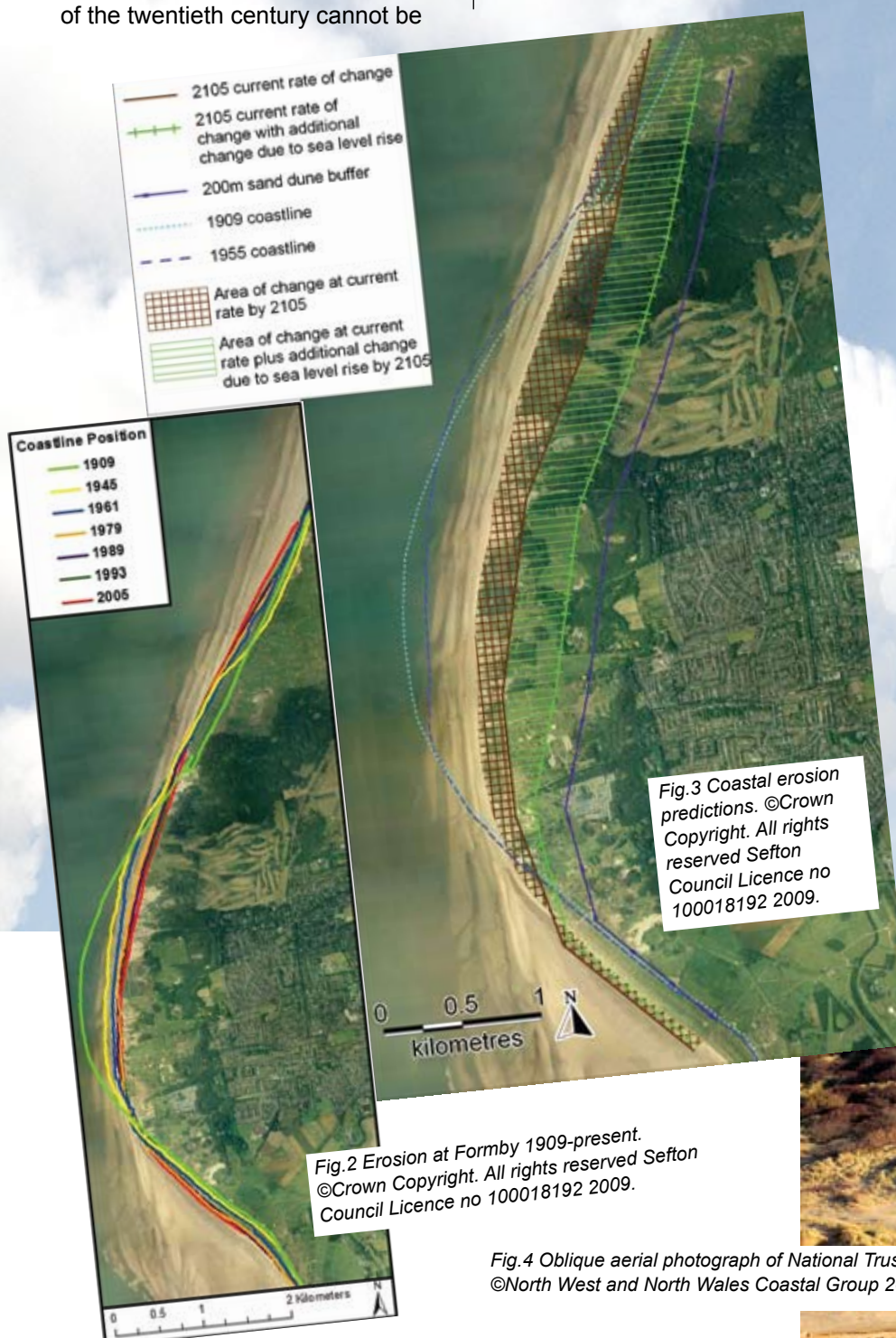


Fig.3 Coastal erosion predictions. ©Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Sefton Council Licence no 100018192 2009.

Fig.4 Oblique aerial photograph of National Trust Formby.
©North West and North Wales Coastal Group 2009.

sea levels on the central eroding section of the Sefton Coast.

Sea level is not however the only major threat to the Sefton Coast. Other climatic changes such as increasing storminess, changes in rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures and increasing humidity could also have potentially significant implications. The knock on effects of these potential changes could see the Sefton Coast alter dramatically for better and worse.

For example: increasing temperatures could lead to increasing numbers of tourists to our coast. This could have economic benefits to our region but it could also have negative impacts. Increasing visitor numbers to our already fragile dune system **figure 4** could lead to over-trampling of vegetation which helps trap sand to build up the dunes, allowing them to act as a natural sea defence, therefore, increasing the risk of flooding and erosion.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THREATS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE SEFTON COAST?

Increased monitoring and surveillance of the coast (figure 5). Monitoring is integral to an adaptive management approach and provides the key to learning from experience and responding to emerging trends. Monitoring and surveillance involves understanding responses of systems

to climate change; providing data for use in model development and testing to improve capacity to predict future change; and assess the effectiveness of policy and management responses.

Developing our evidence base of change on the coast

It is important that adaptation to climate change is carried out on the basis of evidence. As well as scientific monitoring of change it is important to improve our understanding of the processes that drive change and develop capacity to forecast future change. Development of theory is needed to improve our understanding to:

- *Quantify climate change impacts*
- *Understand interactions*
- *Provide adaptation advice*

Research can improve adaptation by providing more reliable information about climate change and its impacts, but also by developing and testing improved adaptation options and technologies.

Knowledge transfer and communication

Knowledge and communication are essential to the implementation of adaptation. Specialist knowledge needs to be made accessible for all to increase our

understanding of climate change, coastal change and how we can best adapt.

TAKING A FORWARD LOOKING APPROACH

Climate change is happening and we need to adapt to potential impacts and prioritise risks. To aid the implementation of adaptation, efforts must be focused on increasing; monitoring and surveillance, development of an evidence base, knowledge transfer and communication. Without development of these, communities at local, national, and international scales will not be able to successfully adapt to projected impacts and threats.

At a local level within Sefton it is therefore important that we are aware of risks, threats and ways in which we can mitigate the effects of climate change but, most importantly, be in a position to be able to adapt sooner rather than later. We therefore need to be forward thinking in our decision making to enhance our capacity to adapt, minimise risks or take advantage of the consequences of climatic change ●

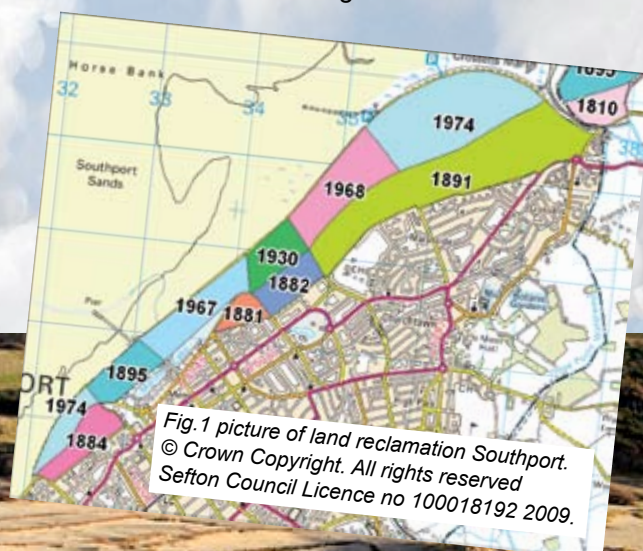


Fig.1 picture of land reclamation Southport.
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Fig. 5 Surveying the coastline position. ©Sefton Council Coastal Defence.

High tide on the Ribble – the Hesketh Out Marsh Project

Work to restore an important part of the Ribble estuary to its former glory is nearing completion at the RSPB's new Hesketh Out Marsh Reserve in West Lancashire. The Project aims to create new homes for wildlife and at the same time help protect the homes of local people from rising sea levels and the danger of flooding.

The Environment Agency have worked together with the RSPB to create the new

Reserve. A team of diggers and dumpers have worked for two years to enlarge the sea defence banks with soil taken from the fifteen kilometres of restored creeks and eleven new saline lagoons. Four breaches have now been made in the old, private, outer bank and the sea can now enter the site at high tide and cover parts of the new marsh in salt water again for the first time in almost thirty years.

A new sluice and some flood storage ponds have also been built to take rainwater away from the fields inland. This work will benefit local farmers and will be appreciated by the water voles and kingfishers that have been seen locally.

You might think that punching four holes in the

outer bank would increase the risk of flooding, but you would be wrong. Not only has the work made the inner sea defence wall bigger and better to give greater protection in the future, but giving the water two square kilometres of new saltmarsh to cover will absorb a lot of the energy of the high tides and provide a buffer against the winter storms.

Heron, little egrets and redshanks are some of the birds that are already enjoying the new saltmarsh (and the fish!), and an amazing number of brown hares (up to 40) have also been counted. Over the winter months, there have been many sightings of hen and marsh harriers and barn and short-eared owls. Avocets have returned to the site again this year

having already nested on the Reserve in 2008.

This will be a 'wild' (and windswept!) Reserve for visitors who enjoy plenty of fresh air and the chance of seeing some of the spectacular wildlife of the estuary. We are busy building a Viewing Platform and a small car park and we plan to officially 'open' the Reserve in the autumn. There will not be many 'facilities' at the Reserve but we hope that you will enjoy visiting this unique site and watching it develop as a new home for estuary wildlife. Walkers along the Ribble Coastal Footpath are sure to appreciate the change of scenery from wheat field to new saltmarsh ●

Tony Baker
Ribble Site Manager, RSPB



Marshside - high tide on the Ribble



A new Local Biodiversity Manager, Paul Corner, has been appointed at Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service.

Paul has worked in conservation for over 15 years. He studied for a BSc in Countryside Management at Liverpool John Moores University. After leaving University Paul worked as a Volunteer Officer for BTCV at Chester, where he supervised volunteer groups on practical conservation projects. This led to full time employment at BTCV as Project Officer on Merseyside. In 2001 Paul started work for the Mersey Basin

Campaign as Project Coordinator for Action Wirral Rivers. The main focus of this was project development and funding.

Paul's specialism is wetland restoration projects and Water Vole Conservation. Paul represented Mersey Basin Campaign on the the Local Biodiversity Partnerships, writing and leading on the Water Vole BAP for the Wirral. Over the last couple of years he has developed an interest in Otter Conservation and for a short time, he was Chair of the Cheshire Otter BAP Group.

With regards to the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan, one of Paul's first priorities has been to continue the review of the Local Habitat and Species Action Plans (HAPs & SAPs) that was started by Richard Burkmar in 2008. As part of this we have reviewed the Sand Dune HAP and a number of related species such as, the Dune Tiger Beetle and the Vernal Mining Bee. These

reviews take into account any changes in the status of any habitats and species, as well as updating any objectives and targets and the actions which help to meet them.

We are updating the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) against the new national Biodiversity Action Plans & Targets which contain 100's of new species and habitats. As a result of this comparison we will decide if we need to produce any new HAPs or SAPs. This review will only include national BAP Habitats and Species and will not affect our locally important species and habitats, many of which are found along the coast ●

Information on the North Merseyside BAP is available on our website at: <http://www.merseysidebiodiversity.org.uk/index.asp>

Paul Corner,
North Merseyside Biodiversity Manager.



Sefton Water Sports Centre

making a new wave this summer



The main construction of Sefton Water Sports Centre, at Crosby

Marine Park, in Waterloo, was mostly completed in March 2009, some weeks ahead of programme. The new centre, which is 100% publicly funded, has been developed by Sefton Council over a number of years from a consultants report, which originally identified the shortage of high quality facilities for watersports enthusiasts with disabilities within the North West.

A model was developed, which identified the need for accommodation, classroom facilities, a restaurant and a fitness suite, in addition to the clubrooms, changing facilities and storage required for watersports equipment. This model has been used throughout the building and a high emphasis has been

placed on using natural materials in the design so that the building blends into the surrounding park, and provides a catalyst for further high quality improvements. The building is located on the edge of Crosby Marine Lake and incorporates timber and glass in its construction with cedar cladding, gabion walls and a grassed roof. The concept design was completed by Building Design Partnership, with Owen Ellis architects completing the detailed design

Sefton Council has contributed towards the project as well as securing funding from the European Regional Development Fund, Mersey Water Front and Sport England.

Mansell Construction have completed the building work through a contract with Sefton Council and further funding may also be available from the Learning Skills Council, which supports the educational opportunities the building offers.

Greenbank Academy, a Social Enterprise Scheme based in Liverpool, who specialise in disability sport and education will lease and manage the facility on behalf of Sefton Council. Further work to fit out the building is necessary before the Centre can become operational. This work will shortly be completed and the Centre is looking forward to holding an opening ceremony this Summer.

The building will provide opportunities for new and existing sailing groups, local school children as well as National Olympic and Paralympics Water Sports teams. Some national teams have already visited the facility with the view of making it a base during the 2012 Olympic Games.

A complementary project to install a bio-filtration scheme for the lake is also underway. This involves building two new pumping and filtration stations, which will be hidden within the landscape. One will be near the Radar Tower and one near the edge of the Marine Lake. These stations will maintain the level and salinity of the lake. Mussels will be introduced within the lake to remove the nutrients on which the potentially dangerous blue-green algae thrive. The filtration scheme will ensure clean water in the lake for all users all year round ●

Andrew Dunsmore
Strategic Investment Area
Project Manager Sefton
Council

FOREST PLAN REVIEW

Five years after the initial approval of the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan, the recent review has

updated some aspects of the Plan. When the 20-year Plan was approved the owners agreed to a framework for reviewing and revising the Plan. The framework suggested a 5-year review followed by a more detailed 10-year re-assessment of progress.

- **410 hectares managed (out of 420), 21 owners involved, 290 certified as sustainably managed;**
- **4 key activities (thinning, planting, coupe creation and regeneration) are averaging about 90% achievement against targets;**
- **Huge range of activities on many sites from education to habitat creation and maintenance;**
- **Monitoring system is up and running and effective;**
- **160 Formby school children involved in Review see www.pinewoods-project.org.uk;**
- **'Blog spot' active for interested people to contribute to discussions on management.**

The 5-year review was conducted by The Mersey Forest Team and led by Nick Roche. The scope of the 5-year review was to assess whether the actions being



Year 6 pupils from Redgate Primary School in Formby

taken were helping to deliver the Plan Objectives, the review did not set out to re-write the overall objectives.

In order to get input into the review process we used

- **Public meetings – including the Sefton Coast Forum,**
- **Blog – www.forestplan5yearreview.blogspot.com/.**
- **Sefton Coast Partnership – through the board meetings.**
- **Civic Groups, e.g. Formby Horticultural Society, Formby Civic Society.**

Feedback was generally positive, although there were some who wanted to change the objectives. The issue of the frontal woodlands was also raised as they are the most controversial area of woodland on the coast.

The review has meant that some changes to the Forest Plan have been made

- 1) *Some details of the work programme for some of the woodland owners have been changed to reflect*

available resources, new priorities for action etc, but overall the level of activity, thinning, restocking and clearing remains broadly similar to the original plan

- 2) *The wording describing the intention for the activity "clearing" has been clarified. The original wording was felt to be open to interpretation. The new wording is based on the UK Forest Standard wording.*

There was no hiatus whilst the review was undertaken. Work to improve the age, structure and health of the woodlands as a resource for recreation and as a habitat for red squirrels has continued. The squirrel monitoring over 5 years showed that there was no negative impact on squirrel numbers from the woodland management.

The more recent reduction in squirrel numbers due to Parapox is obviously of great concern as one of the key objectives for the Plan is to enable the woodlands to continue to provide habitat and food for the red squirrels.

The successes of the first 5 years are due to the great commitment of the woodland owners, the coordination of activity, the support of local people and organisations such as Forestry Commission.

The next milestone is the wider ranging review in 2013 – it may seem a long way away but ●

Paul Nolan
Director The Mersey Forest

New updated audio guides at Formby!

The popular Audio Guides facility at Formby Point has been updated with new content extending the range of fascinating themes on offer. These guides are hand held devices that allow

visitors to enjoy a guided tour at their own pace. The introduction of audio guides has complemented interest in Sefton's Natural Coast and added significantly to the quality of visitor experience at the Formby destinations. The guides will appeal to curious minds and are accessible to a wider audience including people with visual impairment or those not able to read other formats.

Formby is a key gateway to the Sefton Coast and the location is rich with history and stories. The tour includes narrative from local specialists and includes fascinating facts on dune wildlife, Formby asparagus and the changing coastline...

Audio guides can be hired daily from the National Trust entrance kiosk at Victoria Road between 9am and 3pm

during the summer months (9am to 1.30pm during the winter).

Daily hire charge is £2.00 which includes a high quality trail guide/map ●

Sarah Carter,
Tourism Dept. Sefton Council
Andrew Brockbank
Countryside Property Manager, The National Trust

Asparagus – of plough shares and spears

April 2009 - two acres of a sandy field at the National Trust's Sandfield Farm, Formby has been carefully prepared ready for planting asparagus.

From the mid 19th century, large areas of the Formby dunes were levelled for asparagus cultivation by successive generations of tenants of the Formby and Blundell Estates. At it's zenith, some 200 acres of dune land grew asparagus though this has now dwindled to less than 10 acres. Cheap imports, competition for land, high labour costs and continuing coastal erosion have all played their part in the decline of asparagus locally.

Bucking the trend is Formby asparagus farmer David Brooks who is working to sustain this novel crop through new planting on the National Trust's Sandfield Farm, Freshfield. David's family have grown asparagus for three generations at nearby Larkhill Farm, but there is currently no fallow land for planting a new crop.

Asparagus cultivation has had a long and distinguished history in the Formby area and the National Trust is pleased to support it's renaissance in a small way. At Sandfield Farm, there is a unique opportunity to establish a new asparagus crop. The project will be developed to celebrate local food heritage and to encourage people to eat local, seasonal produce.

The field itself required careful preparation using a special deep plough capable of turning over the top one yard of soil. The plough was used to bury the turf and bring clean sand to the surface.



Asparagus spears ©The National Trust

The plough - which belongs to the wildflower charity Landlife is more typically used to invert soil on derelict or disused ground, in readiness for seeding with native wildflower mixes or even for creating heathland habitat in suitable locations.

To prepare the asparagus field the plough was attached to a 200hp tractor belonging to local contractor Jonathan Kaye. David Brooks then harrowed and levelled up the sandy field, before forming up ridges with two separate ridger ploughs. A good dressing of farmyard manure was thrown into the drills, providing nutrients and moisture for the young asparagus plants.

From the Easter weekend, members of David Brooks' family and their helpers spent long hours planting some 16,000 asparagus crowns. David comments:

'The crowns will need careful tending for three years before they can be fully cropped but we're all looking forward to some good results'.

David is delighted to be involved in continuing the tradition of growing asparagus on the sand at Formby - Fresh asparagus is on sale from the Brooks' main farm, Larkhill Farm, Formby from the end of April and remains in season until 21 June. Cutting always stops on the Summer Solstice, after which the spears are allowed to grow to fern for the rest of the summer.

This ensures that the crowns remain vigorous for the following season.

Andrew Brockbank
Countryside Property
Manager, The National
Trust



Jonathan Kaye with deep plough
©The National Trust

Preparing fields
©The National Trust



David Brooks in bunching shed at Larkhill Farm
©The National Trust

Taking shape - the future of the Formby Coastline

On 30th September 2008 the National Trust hosted two well attended workshops at the Formby Gild Hall. Representatives of public and voluntary sector organisations joined with local residents to discuss key issues relating to the National Trust coastline at Formby under the following broad themes:

- **Climate Change, sea level rise, increased storminess** – *Managing the impact of coastal change on the National Trust Formby property and the surrounding area*
- **Cultural heritage, a place for people & nature, conservation**

– *A proposal to re-site a car park, improve visitor facilities at the property and enhance conservation*

- **Coastal access, popularity of coastal visits, tourism** – *Traffic and transport issues, environmental footprint and the relationship to other visitor gateway sites on Sefton's Natural Coast*

A summary of the workshop discussions can be viewed by visiting <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-formby> and following the Taking Shape link.

A first meeting of a stakeholder group has been delayed pending the appointment of a new lead warden and administrator at Formby. Andrew Brockbank is now confident that the consultative group,

consisting of a cross section of people who attended the workshops, will be able to meet in June this year. The aim will be to help the National Trust and its partners to prioritise and progress some of the issues raised by participants ●

Dramatic change on Formby Dunes



*Sand trap fences at Formby.
©The National Trust*



*Formby coastline 2009
©The National Trust*



A tribute to Dave Williams

Dave Williams was well known to many people on the Sefton Coast.

Sadly, Dave passed away in September 2008 aged 58, having been diagnosed with cancer six months earlier. As lead warden at Formby, Dave was the longest serving member of the small team of National Trust staff. He always presented a strong and inspiring role model to his fellow wardens, trainees and volunteers.

Dave first worked at Formby as an Employment Training supervisor, based in the corrugated steel compound, 'Fort Formby' which stood just north of the dune car park. Dave instructed his trainees in estate management skills including path and board walk construction, chainsaw work, tree planting, dune protection and fencing. Dave then took on the role of lead warden in 1995.

Dave always saw a large part of his role as reactive and was ready for the challenges of working on a dynamic stretch of coastline like Formby. Dave was a calm and



patient man, always ready to take the lead in difficult times, whether it was in response to an oil spill, or after severe storms sent trees crashing to the ground throughout the woodlands.

And when the car parks were full and visitors poured in from the train on hot summer days, Dave was always there to help people to enjoy the coast.... and at the same time he took a firm stance in keeping the lid on anti-social behaviour. And from time to time, when things got 'out of hand', Dave's excellent liaison with the emergency services, in particular Merseyside Police, ensured that help would quickly be on the way!

Dave was a great trainer and mentor and he helped scores of long

term volunteers, trainees and staff to develop their skills and confidence. He always gave time to help others and encouraged people to focus on solutions – problems were there to be solved and issues to be worked through.

Dave was creative too with an artistic flair which showed in the high quality models and props which he made for special events, clear 'free-hand' timber signs and an interest in simple woodland sculptures. Dave was able to fabricate in wood and in steel but he felt that his lasting legacy was to be seen in the coastal landscape, in the woodland plantations and fields which he worked to maintain.

Dave also had an alter ego, maybe not something which everyone knew, but in Flokki Valdarsen, Dave had a strong Viking spirit which longed for the freedom of the sea. Dave loved the sea and occasionally struck fear into the hearts of less accustomed sailors when he'd bounce from wave crest to wave crest in his RHIB off Anglesey in high seas. A sociable man, Dave enjoyed lively company and yet he was happiest in the quiet solitude of being on watch at the helm of a racing yacht which he crewed back to the South Americas or the Caribbean on three occasions.

So it was fitting that Dave's family, friends and work colleagues gathered for a special occasion on Formby beach on 21st April to release his ashes to the tide and set that spirit free.

What more fitting tribute could there be than an incredible model of a Viking dragon boat long ship built by Dave's colleagues and friends. An adventurous spirit set free to the elements which he loved so dearly! We miss you greatly Dave, though each one of us has so much to remember you by.

*Pages 12- 13 Andrew Brokebank
Countryside Property Manager
The National Trust*



Coast and Countryside Service

The coming years are likely to see many changes and improvements to Sefton's Coast and Countryside sites. After many years of uncertainty, there is finally a Water Centre at Crosby Coastal Park. The Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership Scheme promises to deliver some major heritage benefits, including much needed conservation action, access improvements and opportunities for lifelong learning. Add in the global recession and climate change predictions, with associated forecasts of increasing numbers of people visiting Britain's coastal areas and the continued good management of the coastal zone for people and wildlife becomes even more of an imperative.

Coast and Countryside contribute towards this through our day to day work. Part of our success is through working in partnership with other council departments and organisations including our partners in the Sefton Coast Partnership and beyond, as illustrated in the following pieces.

Awards and all!

Once again, we have achieved national standards in coast and countryside management. In 2008, we were awarded Quality Coast Awards for the beaches at Ainsdale and Southport, continuing the long tradition of Seaside Awards for Sefton's beaches. We retained our UK Woodland Assurance Certification from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for well-managed woodlands and also retained the Green Flag Award for Ainsdale and Birkdale Local Nature Reserve, administered by the Civic Trust / Tidy Britain Group. In 2009

we are hoping to add Crosby Beach to the tally of awards.

Take a bough!

In 2008, Sefton Council's Leisure Service's Coast and Countryside Service were proclaimed "best of the best" by judges of a touring exhibition showcasing the cream of the Northwest's sustainable timber industry.

The "Take a Bough" roadshow celebrated the beauty of local wood, with all of the exhibition's pieces - from coffee tables to sculptures - made from timber from The Mersey Forest, the network of community woodlands stretching across Merseyside and North Cheshire. The roadshow visited Croxteth Country Park, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Frodsham Castle Park Arts Centre.

The Coast and Countryside Service showcased a whole range of outdoor furniture in the exhibition ranging from gates, fingerposts, way-markers, nestboxes to benches and much more, all produced using Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) sustainable timber from the Council's woodlands, felled as part of the woodland management plan.

All of the products are made in the Biodiversity and Access Projects (B.A.P.) Pinewood workshop at Ainsdale by 'The Workshop Rangers,' adults with learning disabilities who are part of the successful inclusion initiative with New Directions, with the fruits of their labour winning a £300 prize, which was presented by David Hunter of the Northwest Regional Development Agency.

Rachel Northover

Principal Coast and Countryside Officer



1. Minibeasts.
2. Timber products on display.
3. Flagmaking at Sandbrook Resource Centre.
4. Minibeast hunt "Oh no the bee flew away".
5. Lantern making.
6. Martyn Griffiths shrimper.
7. Craft activities.





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Family Fun & Events

Coast and Countryside arrange a whole variety of events throughout the year – designed for everyone! They range from getting sticky making your own lantern to outdoor activities collecting minibeasts.

Lantern making is great fun, starting with a bit of willow and tissue paper you can end up with a fantastic creation that will light your way with a candle or small torch inside. They are great for Halloween, or just as a decoration!

Look out for our lantern events in the 2009 events programme – Halloween Fun, on 29th October, then, why not join us on our lantern parade on 21st November.

What creatures live in the seas along our shore? Many found out when we went shrimping with Martyn Griffiths at Ainsdale – everybody had a go at catching shrimps, followed by a close look at the catch – shrimps, hermit crab and flat fish were in the net! Several lucky specimens were then taken back to the Discovery Centre for the public to see in our fish tank – hermit crabs and shrimps were the favourites! As well as catching the creatures, many events are followed up by craft activities, making masks or models of the wildlife, such as crabs, butterflies and bees.

Last year to celebrate the coast, the Coast and Countryside Service's young persons group, The Natterjack Club along with adults with learning disabilities from New Directions Sandbrook Resource Centre in Ainsdale helped make a series of flags. They designed the flags in paper with images that reminded them of the coast, which were then transformed onto fabric by an artist, and are now displayed at the Discovery Centre and also used at last year's Forum. This year we will be holding several more events making flags, for an even bigger display.

Many of our events aim to encourage people to get out and about into the countryside, whether it's at Rimrose Valley Country Park or one of our many coastal sites. This summer we will be holding several events encouraging natural play – look out for the story telling and den making events 11th-13th August at Lifeboat Road.

Forest Schools

Forest Schools encourages the use of the outdoors as a classroom. It is a method of learning that has taken place in Scandinavia for many years, with classes there spending a huge proportion of their time out at their Forest School site. The practical nature of the activities covers many aspects of the curriculum, whilst getting away from paper based learning – ideal for those not academically minded! Participants develop an appreciation for the environment and are taught to look after and respect it, all this helps to develop independent learning, raises self esteem and confidence.

Activities include, exploration, map making, environmental art, teamwork, shelter building, stories, games, using tools as well as looking at and learning about the wildlife. The overall aim is to make it a fun experience so they'll want to do again and again! In the near future we will be developing a programme of forest school activities for schools at several of our sites ●

2009 -10 events programme is available from Sefton libraries and on line www.sefton.gov.uk

Fiona Sunners

Community Ranger



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A snap success



Over 18 winner- **Paul Sutton**



12-17 winner • **Kieron Mooney**

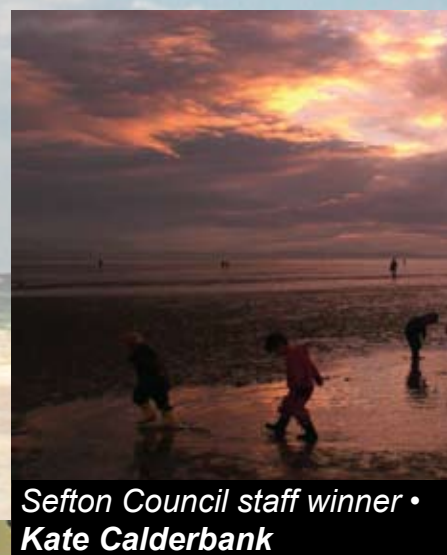


Under 12 winner • **Bethany Harper**

To celebrate Antony Gormley's 'Another Place' artwork on Crosby Beach being made permanent, Sefton Council ran a photography competition over the Christmas period. The competition was open to all across three age categories. In addition to this a separate competition just for Sefton Council employees ran alongside it. The theme of the competition was 'A Visit to Another Place' and judges were looking for the most interesting and unique photographs that captured the spirit of the visit.

The competition was promoted across Greater Merseyside region and advertised on the Web to encourage people from far and wide to visit Crosby Beach. Entries came flooding in and by the closing date in January we had received over 300 entries including team efforts from schools and even an entry from India.

We were especially keen in getting young children involved in the competition; so all primary schools in the Greater Merseyside area were



Sefton Council staff winner • **Kate Calderbank**

Freshfield Primary
School Formby



invited to register for a workshop with a professional photographer. These workshops proved very popular with over 20 held throughout December 2008. The workshops gave an opportunity for children to discuss their ideas and pick up expert tips from the professionals. As an added bonus, children who took part in the workshops received a disposable camera with free processing, to encourage them to get involved with the competition.

The competition was generously funded by Mersey Waterfront, with Capita Symonds and arvato government services providing the prize money for the photographic vouchers, enabling the winners and runners up to buy a range of photographic equipment and products.

In April 2009 the winners and runners up were invited along to celebrate at Sefton Council offices in Bootle to receive their prizes and meet with each other and see all the winning entries.

Dominique Tilly

Assistant Planner Sefton Council

All the winning entries can be viewed at our competition webpage, why not have a look www.sefton.gov.uk/anotherplacephotocomp



Over 18 runner up • Andy Reade



12-17 runner up • Nicole Clayton



Under 12 runner up • Nathan Davies



*St. Michael's Catholic
Primary School Widnes*

Sefton Coast Partnership Forum 2008

The 9th Annual Coast Forum took place at Southport Theatre and Convention Centre.

The theme was Education and Lifelong Learning, and the Mayor of Sefton Cllr Paul Tweed opened the event and presented the Sefton Coast Partnership Volunteer Award. Dr Annie Worlsey, from Edge Hill University, gave a keynote address with presentations from John Houston on the Landscape Partnership, Dave McAleavy – Biodiversity and Access Project, Nick Roch - Forest Plan Review, David Bill - Pinewoods Project and Jessica Smith and Imogen Free, students from Range High School, on Climate Change. Interactive displays took place during the lunch break and Question Time in the afternoon. The event was well attended and proved a successful day. More information regarding the event can be found on the website www.seftoncoast.org.uk



Sefton Coast Forum 2009

This year's SCP Forum will be based around the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership Scheme. The scheme includes a number of improvement projects along the coast and the forum will give people the opportunity to become more involved, visit the site projects and where appropriate consult about them.

The projects are varied and include

- Constructing and improving paths and cycle routes
- Restoration of various landscapes and habitats
- Training and learning courses, events and materials
- Publications about the coast
- Investigation of historical and archaeological features on the coast

The Forum will also provide the opportunity and venue for partners to inform about current activities by holding workshops and presentations.

The event takes place on Saturday 27th June at Southport Theatre and Convention Centre. It is a free all day event, places will be limited therefore registration is essential

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. If you would like to attend then please register by contacting Mrs Lorna Lander on lorna.lander@planning.sefton.gov.uk or alternatively 0151 934 3605.



The Volunteer Award for 2008 went to Maureen McEntee and Stan Hudson. They work together as a team at Lifeboat Road in Formby and have for the last 30 years given wholeheartedly of their time to caring for this site. They have helped the Sefton Coast and Countryside Rangers in general day to day maintenance, patrolling, enforcing byelaws, helping visitors, providing information, in fact just about everything over the years.



Stan Hudson and Maureen McEntee with the Mayor of Sefton Cllr. Paul Tweed.

FESTIVAL OF BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY 2009 – ON THE SEFTON COAST

National Archaeology Events in
June - August 2009

Dr Jen Lewis Chair - SCP History
and Archaeology Task Group

As Sefton Coast's contribution, to the Festival of British Archaeology, a series of events will take place during the summer. You are warmly invited to join us in discovering the fascinating archaeology and history of our coast on the following dates:-

Sunday 21st June - Formby's Prehistoric Footprints

Gordon Roberts on behalf of the
National Trust
*Advance booking is essential,
telephone 01704 878591*

Saturday 4th July - Historical Hightown

Sefton Coast and Countryside
Service Rangers
*Booking is essential, telephone 0151
934 2967*

Saturday 4th July - Shipwrecks of our Coast

Join Sefton Coast and Countryside
Service Rangers and Martyn Griffith
*Booking is essential, telephone 0151
934 2967*

Wednesday 8th July - Formby's Prehistoric Footprints

Gordon Roberts on behalf of the
National Trust
*Booking is essential, telephone
01704 878591*

Friday 17th July - Discovering the history and archaeology of Altcar Rifle Range

Join John Houston and Jen Lewis of
the Altcar Rifle Range Conservation
Advisory Group
*Booking is essential, telephone
01704 870455*

18th July to 2nd August - Ainsdale Discovery Centre

Visit Ainsdale Discovery Centre
to find out about the archaeology
and history of our coast. Displays
include the abandoned enterprise
at 'Formby-by-the-Sea', old Birkdale
in photographs, the search for
prehistoric remains and historical
material held by Sefton Libraries.

Sunday 19th July - Formby-by-the-Sea

Dr Reg Yorke, Formby Civic Society
in association with Sefton Coast
Partnership, History and Archaeology
Task Group
*Pre-booking is essential; telephone
01704 872187 Email* yorke@
briardale.co.uk*

Tuesday 21st July - Southport Lord Street Architectural Amble

Mark Sargent, Sefton Libraries
*Booking is essential - contact
Southport Library (Reference Dept)
0151 934 2119.*

Sunday 26th July - Historical Hightown

Sefton Coast and Countryside
Service Rangers
*Booking is essential, telephone 0151
934 2967*

Tuesday 28th July - Footprints

Sefton Coast and Countryside
Service Rangers
Make your own plaster cast footprints
to take home
*Booking is essential, telephone 0151
934 2967*

*Suitable for people of all ages
(though some of the walks will
be over uneven ground), most
events are free but some incur a
small charge and most will require
advance booking.*

*Full details of the events can be
found in Sefton's Natural Coast
Events Programme for 2009 or on
the Sefton Coast Partnership web
page [http://www.seftoncoast.org.
uk/hist_events.html](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/hist_events.html)*

For information about other Festival
of British Archaeology events contact
the Council for British Archaeology at
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/naw>.

The Council runs the Young
Archaeologists Club for 8-16 year
olds and has branches all over the
country; check out the YAC web
pages to discover more about your
local group at [http://www.britarch.
ac.uk/yac/](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/yac/)



Shoreline Management Plan - Public Consultation

Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) provide a large-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal processes and present a long term policy framework to reduce these risks to people and the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner.

An SMP is a high level document that forms an important element of the strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management. They also develop coastal defence policies for the coastline.

These SMPs are currently being revised and will be going to public consultation for 12 weeks from October to December 2009. This is

your opportunity to comment on the plans and options defined in them. Further details of the consultation will be available nearer the time in local press and at www.sefton.gov.uk. To register to be kept up to date with the consultation process please email: coastaldefence@sefton.gov.uk

**Paul Wisse, Senior Officer Coastal
Defence Sefton Council**

1. RSPB Marshside Parking

Enjoy bird watching from one of two comfortable hides overlooking the wet grasslands, or take a stroll along the footpaths to take in the views over the saltmarsh and foreshore.

2. Southport Pier Toilets

Take a pleasant stroll down the recently refurbished pier, complete with a new modern pavilion which homes a cafe and interpretation centre for the coast.

3. Southport Beach P

One of Sefton's award winning beaches provides a popular location for visitors to take the sea air. On a clear day to the north you can see Blackpool Tower and the mountains of the Lake District.

4. Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail and Velvet Trail

The QJNT meanders through a small area of dunes. The trails are well laid out and information boards detail species present. The recently restored Velvet Trail runs through the Birkdale Hills Local Nature Reserve.

5. Sands Lake P

A pleasant area for accessing Birkdale Local Nature Reserve with a new boardwalk around the lake allowing for easy access. A jetty provides a feeding area for the birds that congregate on the lake.

6. Ainsdale Beach P T

A quieter beach than Southport, which provides visitors with a view of the start to Sefton's sand dune system. A popular starting point for those who wish to explore the remoter areas of the coast.

7. Ainsdale Discovery Centre and Ainsdale Local Nature Reserve P

Come and visit the centre for an informative displays and interpretation about local facilities, wildlife and history. The LNR is an excellent example of open dune habitat with mobile dunes and wet slacks.



8. Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve

A peaceful nature reserve, which is home to some of the best sand dune wildlife in Britain. The pine woodland also supports a healthy population of red squirrels. Several pathways go through the site; the main hard path is suitable for disabled and cycling by permit. Tel: 01704 578774.

9. Fisherman's Path/Freshfield Dune Heath

A relaxing walk from Freshfield Station to the beach through a mixture of tranquil woodland and open dunes where a variety of flora and fauna can be seen. The newly reopened Old Fisherman's Path provides for an alternative route to the beach. The main entrance point for a circular walk on the Wildlife Trust's Freshfield Dune Heath Reserve begins at the start of Fisherman's Path.

10. National Trust, Formby P T

Famous for the Red Squirrels and the pine woodlands, the reserve also offers access to the beach and has a variety of paths to explore the dunes, woodland and old asparagus fields.

11. Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols Local Nature Reserve P T

The popular Lifeboat Road area provides access to the beach as well as local dunes and woodland. For those looking for a quieter spot walk through the extensive dune system at Ravenmeols and see the Devils hole blowout.

12. Hightown Dunes and Meadows

An unusual area fronted by an informal rubble defence, which was formed from demolition arising from bomb damaged areas in Liverpool. It now provides wonderful meadows full of flowers and insects, and a small coastal dune system. Bird watching can be rewarding along the River Alt.

13. Hall Road and Beach P T

Ideal area for walkers of all abilities either along the promenade or into the Hightown Dunes and Meadows. Those not so energetic can relax on the beach or recreational grasslands.

14. Crosby Marine Park and Beach P T

A popular area for sun bathing and recreation with views over the Mersey Estuary to the Wirral and North Welsh Coast. Dunes are rapidly accreting along this stretch of coast.

If you are planning to visit the sites please remember to look after the environment and yourselves.

- Always check tide times if visiting the beach. Look out for advice on notice boards and warning flags especially if planning to swim. If in doubt speak to a lifeguard or the beach patrol.

- Dispose of litter correctly either putting it in the bin or taking it home.
- Clean up after your dog.
- Keep to paths.
- Don't forget the suntan lotion.

- Do not disturb the wildlife.
- Do not pick wild flowers leave them for others to enjoy.
- Keep dogs under control at all times.

IN ORDER TO UPDATE OUR RECORDS PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN



I would prefer to receive my copy of Coastlines via post
Please complete and return to Ainsdale Discovery Centre



I would prefer to receive my copy of Coastlines via email
Please send your name and email address to info@seftoncoast.org.uk

If you would like to subscribe to Coastlines please send your name and address/email address to either the address at Ainsdale Discovery Centre or by email to info@seftoncoast.org.uk

Name _____

Address _____

email _____

Coastlines is available throughout Sefton Libraries and can be downloaded from the website at www.seftoncoast.org.uk

NB: ANY INFORMATION SUPPLIED WILL BE PROGRAMMED INTO A COMPUTER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 1998 COMPUTER DATA PROTECTION ACT



Send to:

coastlines
Ainsdale Discovery
Centre Complex,
The Promenade,
Shore Road,
Ainsdale-on-Sea,
Southport
PR8 2QB