

coastLINES

SUMMER 2005



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, English Nature, The Wildlife Trusts, the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, RSPB, and local community and interest groups in a co-operative partnership.

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The National Trust 01704 878591
English Nature 01704 578774
RSPB 01704 536378
Wildlife Trust 0151 9203769

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www.seftoncoast.org.uk
www.merseyworld.com/sefton_coast
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
www.rspb.org.uk
www.english-nature.org.uk
www.visitsouthport.com
www.sefton.gov.uk

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with Ian's camera.

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Welcome to this summer's 2005 edition of Coastlines. 2005 is the year of Sea Britain, where we celebrate our links to the sea. A series of events are being run throughout the year to celebrate Sea Britain see below and opposite for further information on Sefton's events.

We've also included a butterfly guide to some of the commonly encountered species along the coast. One of the best ways to find out more is to join one of the guided walks offered by the site managers, check local press or contact them directly (see left panel)



The inspiration for SeaBritain 2005 is the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar and the death in action of Admiral Lord Nelson. So 2005 will be a special year for celebrating Britain's rich maritime heritage and our close links with the sea which has shaped our history and our culture. As a seafaring nation it has been our defence in time of war and our trading link with the world; a rich source of food and natural resources; a magnet for tourists and holiday makers; it has inspired our artists, musicians and writers and given us challenging sport or peaceful contemplation.



SeaBritain 2005 objectives are:

- to raise awareness of Britain's maritime and coastal heritage
- to encourage participation in maritime sport and leisure activities
- to promote the UK coast and its islands as a tourism destination and travel by sea for European visitors
- to promote an understanding and involvement with the marine environment and marine conservation
- to raise awareness of the contribution made by the sea and seafaring to the UK economy and culture
- to develop maritime learning materials designed specifically to link with the National Curriculum
- to leave a legacy in 2006 and beyond



Ralph Gregson MBE who chairs the partnership's Tourism and Communication Task Group stated that Sefton is participating in many ways in the celebrations. A varied programme of events have been organised to suit all tastes both young and old. Sefton's Coastline has strong links with the sea's activities and visitors and residents alike will enjoy these events. A selection of coastal events are listed opposite please call for further information and to book a place as many events have limited space (there maybe a charge for some events). For a complete list and further details of particular events can be obtained from the organising group or from Sefton's Tourism dept Sarah Carter 0151 934 2337.



Event	Location	Date	Time	Information	Contact	Contact Numbers
Dune Wildflowers and other Wildlife	Ainsdale	7th July	TBC	Another chance to see Sefton's best kept secrets a must for anyone who likes flowers.	English Nature	01704 578774
Beach Walk	Ainsdale	9th July	10 12noon	Join the beach staff for a walk along the beach, learning fascinating facts about the beach and our sea	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Flowers and other Wildlife	Ainsdale	10th July	2 3.30pm	Join us in the flower rich slack areas of Ainsdale to find out about the local wildlife as well as the flowers	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Pier Fun Day	Pier Pavillion	10th July	2 4pm	Environmentally themed fun games and activities down at the end of the pier	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Dune Wildflowers and other Wildlife	Ainsdale	24th July	TBC	Mmmm... the dunes will be vibrant with colour. We'll show you Sefton's best kept secrets a must for anyone who likes flowers.	English Nature	01704 578774
Sand Sculpting	Ainsdale	24th July	2 3.30pm	Use our fantastic beach to create an amazing sand sculpture simple sand castles to giant sea monsters	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Butterflies and Wildlife	Southport	24th July	11 12noon	A walk around the Queens Jubilee Trail, accessible for all	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Water Trail	Formby	27th July	10.30 12noon	Follow the watery clues, solve the puzzles as you go finding out fascinating facts about water	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Willow Wonders	Ainsdale	28th July	10 1pm	Come along and join the experts and help us create a sculpture for the middle of Sands Lake	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Pirate Parade	Ainsdale	2nd August	2.30 4pm	Transform yourself into a Pirate	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Pirate Adventures	Formby	3rd August	2 3.30pm	Forest Fever use the treasure map to find the treasure before the pirates do	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Dune Wildflowers and other Wildlife	Ainsdale	4th August	TBC	Mmmm... the dunes will be vibrant with colour. We'll show you Sefton's best kept secrets a must for anyone who likes flowers.	English Nature	01704 578774
Discover Crafts	Ainsdale	6th August	2 3.30pm	Discover Crafts with a seaside theme crabs, starfish or sea monsters from the deep!	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Summer Stroll	Formby	13th August	10 12noon	A relaxing stroll around the dunes and woodland	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Bringing Nature to People	Ainsdale	16th August	All Day	A celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Designation of Ainsdale National Nature Reserve	English Nature	01704 578774
Great Big Bug Ball	Ainsdale	17th August	10.30 12noon / 2 3.30pm	Bug Hunting in the morning catching crawlers and fliers, then make a hat to go to the ball	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Minibeast Meander	Formby	24th August	2 3.30pm	A gentle stroll searching for Minibeasts	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Mud Matters	Ainsdale	31st August	2 3.30pm	Lets take a closer look at what the birds are searching for down on the beach!	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Southport Airshow	Southport Beach	10th 11th September	†	This fantastic display of the latest military technology and aerobatic manoeuvres is one of the biggest Air Shows in the UK and is continuing to grow year on year.	SMBC Tourism	01704 533333
Land Rover Bird Safari	Ainsdale	17th September	9 11.30am	Take a closer look at the birds down on the beaches from the back of a landrover!	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
West Lancs 24 Hour Yacht Race	West Lancs Yacht Club	17th 18th September	†	Nationally recognised 24 hour dinghy race attracting entrants from all over the UK. Organised by West Lancashire Yacht Club	West Lancs Yacht Club	01704†530840
The National Trust Mega Beach Clean	Sefton Beaches	17th 18th September	†	Volunteer event with Sefton MBC Coast & Countryside and Altcar Training Camp	The National Trust	01704 878591
Ship Wrecks on the Coast	Ainsdale	22nd September	7pm	Martin Griffiths gives an illustrated talk on the many old wrecks scattered along the coast.	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Beach Walk	Ainsdale	15th October	10 12noon	Join the beach staff for a walk along the beach, learning fascinating facts about the beach and our sea	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Fungtastic Fungi	Formby	16th October	10 12noon	Learn the basics of Fungi identification gills, cap, stem, spores and much more	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Ship Wrecks on the Coast	Ainsdale	20th October	7pm	Martin Griffiths gives an illustrated talk on the many old wrecks scattered along the coast.	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Before there were Pinewoods	Formby	22nd October	11am 4pm	A celebration of the coastal pinewoods including the Big Draw Coastal style.	The National Trust	01704 878591
Winter Ramble	Crosby	12th November	11am	Hall Road to Hightown A healthy ramble along the coast	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Underwater World	Ainsdale	17th November	7pm	A guest speaker from the local diving group discusses what lurks in the depths of Ainsdale.	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967
Birdwatching for beginners Water birds	Marshside	20th November	8am 10am	Guided walk. From the two hides (one heated) and three viewing areas, you can watch the thousands of birds that visit RSPB Marshside nature reserve in the winter.	RSPB	01704 536378
The Footprints beneath our beaches	Ainsdale	8th December	7pm	An illustrated talk by the local expert Gordon Roberts, all about the 3000 year old footprints that are hidden beneath Ainsdale beach	SMBC Coast & Countryside	0151 934 2967

For further information on walks and events call the appropriate numbers shown next to the walk. Booking is essential on all walks/events, charges may apply.

Marine Way Bridge. ©Mersey Waterfront

Formby Coast. ©John Mills Photography Ltd.

mersey waterfront

Regenerating the Sefton Coastline

Sefton's coastline is benefiting from a range of improvements being co-ordinated by Mersey Waterfront, a programme set up to enhance and regenerate coastal sites stretching from Southport to Wirral, and sites along the estuary to Runcorn.

The Freshfield Sand Dunes, Formby Point and Marshside reserve are among the areas being looked at. Mersey Waterfront is also helping to fund major seafront improvements at Southport, which have already included the award-winning Marine Way Bridge.

Introducing Louise Hopkins

Director of Mersey Waterfront, Louise Hopkins, was brought up on Merseyside and lives with her family in Waterloo.

She can see first hand the work being done to regenerate the waterside: **"A quarter of a million pounds is being spent on landscaping at Crosby Marine Park. Proposals are also on the table for the Sefton Water Centre, which ultimately could become a national centre of excellence for watersports and outdoor recreation."**



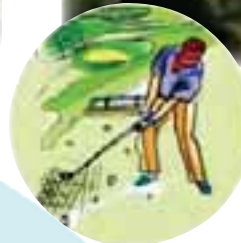
Improving Open Spaces

With local nature reserves and coastal parks along the length of the Sefton coastline, Mersey Waterfront is supporting a range of projects to improve open spaces through projects such as:

A new alternative route across **Formby Point**. This is part of a wider programme to improve accessibility to the coast and as part of a new North West Coastal Trail. Other improvements have ranged from enhancing the conservation value of the reserve, to increasing local community involvement.

A Physical Access Study, which will lead to the **Sefton Coastal Path** being upgraded. A key element of the Mersey Waterfront programme is its access strategy, and the promotion of access for all - from disabled users to parents with push chairs and toddlers.

New sites like **Freshfield Dune Heath** are being made more accessible. Freshfield was bought from the Ministry of Defence by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, and will soon be opened up to the public for the first time in over 60 years. Mersey Waterfront money will go



towards paths and fences, opening up new activities like riding for the disabled.

As part of the continued development of the RSPB's reserve at **Marshside**, Mersey Waterfront has funded a shallow pool for nesting birds. Money is also being spent on a viewing platform with pictures and background information on what people can see.

Focus on Southport

Southport's recently built ECO Centre is an important Mersey Waterfront project. A major addition to the town's seafront, it was built using the latest sustainable construction techniques and will provide environmental education to the general public as well as special interest groups.

The resort is also benefiting from major seafront improvements. This includes lighting and seating, the repair and cleaning of the Queen Victoria monument, plus enhanced setting for the Grade III listed Queen Victoria Baths. In addition, a study funded by Mersey Waterfront is being carried out to look at possible improvements to Southport Marine Lake and its immediate surroundings.

The Peoples Panel visit the
Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
©Mersey Waterfront



Sefton's Peoples Panel at
Crosby Marine Lake.
©Mersey Waterfront



Liverpool Waterfront
©John Eaude



Southport's Marine Way Bridge was recently hailed as an outstanding example of innovation and excellence and a 'lasting legacy for future generations visiting Southport' by the Institute of Civil Engineers. Thanks to Mersey Waterfront, lighting has been added to the under deck sections of the bridge. Mersey Waterfront money has also been used for extensive landscaping, plus improvements to link the bridge with Southport Pier.

Power to the People

People across Sefton are now being urged to help shape the future development of Mersey Waterfront.

The Waterfront team successfully launched a series of People's Panels last year, including a group of young people in South Sefton covering Crosby, Bootle and Waterloo.

The idea is based on the US International Citizens Jury scheme where groups of volunteers - representing different sections of the community - make recommendations about their local area.

Panel members are offered advice and training to help them understand how Mersey waterfront operates and works with its partner organisations. So far, dozens of local people have

What members of the South Sefton Panel have said about their involvement in Mersey Waterfront...

"How would I like to be involved in the future? I'd like to help make decisions about plans, do questionnaires, and so on. I'd like to be involved on a regular basis and do voluntary work." Rahila Ali, 19

"I'd like to start up an action group to tackle the main problems like crime, vandalism and litter. I want to let people know what's happening in their local area." Kevin Holloway, 28

been able to join debate and discussion about how areas of the river estuary in their neighbourhood can best be re-developed.

Director of Mersey Waterfront, Louise Hopkins says: **"Our People's Panels are the cornerstone of public involvement in developing ideas and canvassing feedback from residents. Our panel members have already made a huge contribution and their involvement is going to be even more important in the future."**

To register interest in People's Panels, volunteers can e-mail: waterfront@merseyside.org.uk or call James Cash at Mersey Waterfront: 0151 237 3945 to find out more.

Mersey Waterfront is an £8.8m, Northwest Regional Development Agency funded programme hosted by The Mersey Partnership and working with partners including Sefton Council.



Coastal news &

Coastal defence Crosby to Formby Point strategy

This study is seeking to improve our understanding of coastal processes in this area and develop a strategy for the management and development of coastal defences in this area.

The first stage of the study is available on the web site. The second stage of this study is well underway although there have been significant delays. The delays have arisen for two reasons; the first was the need to have lengthy discussions with the Consultant in relation to the limitations of what the modelling could tell us on this complex length of coast. The second has been awaiting the outputs from the River Alt study; we need to know what the flow of the Alt might be as it passes across the beach in order to understand how this area might respond to any proposed defences. An example of the type of output from the computer modelling showing the wave climate for a defined wave direction and tide height is shown. The third stage is the draft final report which is anticipated to be completed and ready for consultation by the end of this year.

Sefton Coast Database

Almost 25 years ago my predecessor (Tony

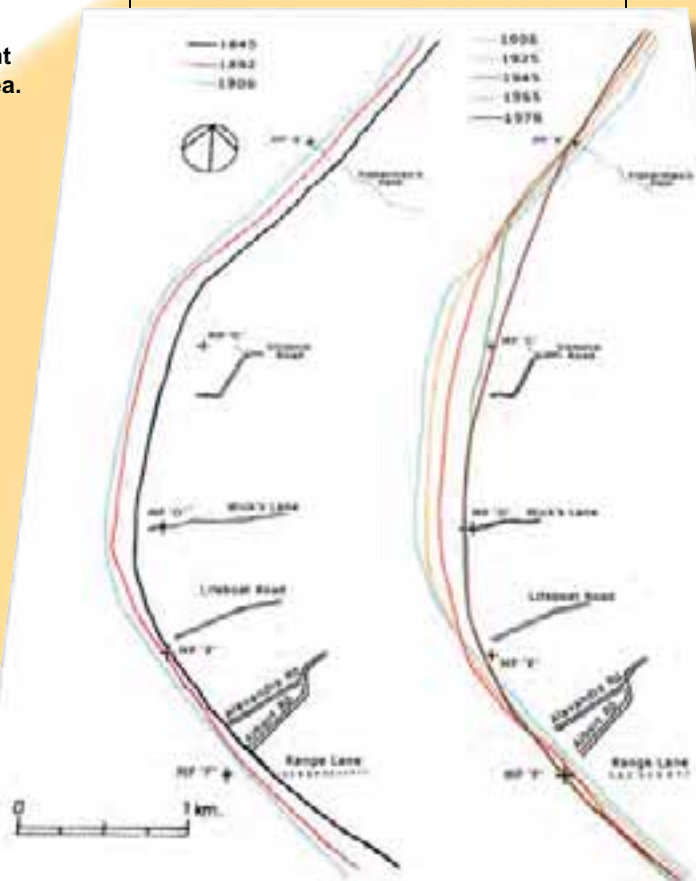
Smith) undertook a significant piece of work referred to as the Sefton Coast Database, this sought to bring together all the information relevant to understanding the coastal processes that have formed the Sefton Coast.

He carried out this work over a three year period in collaboration with

it will be easier for us to maintain in an up to date form and it will also be easier to make the information accessible to other users via the internet. This is still a significant piece of work and as such will take about three years for us to complete whilst still undertaking our other tasks but we will keep you informed as and when discrete elements become available.

Web site

Understanding the way the coast is formed is important when considering why certain decisions are taken and can also make walks on the coast more enjoyable when we understand more about what we see. For this reason we have developed the web site section that deals with coastal processes and coastal defence which can be found at www.seftoncoast.org.uk under Shoreline Management. We have also made a number of the policy and reference documents available via the web site (some are located on the Council web site www.sefton.gov.uk search for coast protection). We hope that you will find this information informative and useful but if you have any comments or feel that additional areas should be covered we would appreciate your feedback (contact details are on the web site).



Growth of Formby Point
1845-1906

Erosion of Formby Point
1906-1978

Historic positions of the coast illustrating its dynamic nature.



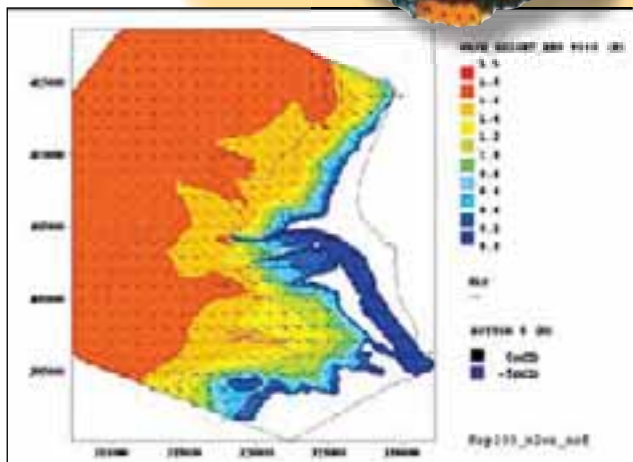
Liverpool University. One of the results of the work was the Guide to the Sefton Coast Database (this can be downloaded from the web site) which provided an interpretation of the material held within the database, an example from this is the plan showing the recent evolution of the coastline based upon historic maps. Whilst still useful as a reference it has remained static in time, so we are undertaking the task of bringing this up to date and developing it in a digital format. The advantage of the digital format is that

Sand dune study

We are just starting a detailed study to improve our understanding of the way in which sand dunes retreat on an eroding coast. In the first instance this will focus on the area around the National Trust car park, work will include measurement of the dunes in spring and summer and recording of management activity in the area. Outputs from this study should help to inform management decisions such that the health of the sand dunes both as a natural landscape and a coastal defence is optimised.

Graham Lymbery

*Project Leader
Coastal
Defence*



updates

Mascot takes centre stage

Southport's Eco Visitor-Centre is to get a new mascot to encourage youngsters to take an interest in environmental issues.

Beth Anderson, from Linaker Primary School, came up with the design for 'Sydney the Eco Skating Squirrel' following a competition.

Sefton Council was impressed with the 10-year-old's idea which judges picked from hundreds of entries. Julie Kirk, Eco Visitor-Centre teacher, said: "Beth's design was chosen because the mascot is cheerful, striking and very fitting with the 'eco' theme of pollution-free transport. Obviously Sydney is also a Sefton resident with lots of his friends and family living in Formby!"



Meet Sydney the Eco skating squirrel, designed by Southport schoolgirl Beth Anderson.

Animator Paul Hardman took Beth's design and turned it into a professional graphic.

Sydney will now be added to the centre's stationery, displays and educational materials. The new mascot was unveiled at the centre on Tuesday January 25.

Winner Beth and runners-up Hannah McDonald aged nine (Birkdale Primary School) and Joshua Henshaw age six (Linaker Primary School) were guests. They received prizes from Dr Alan Irving, Sefton Council's Schools and Young People's Director and Paul Hardman.

The Eco Visitor-Centre opened last summer. It has been built using environmentally sustainable materials. The facility welcomes around 250,000 commuters each year acting as a unique gateway for travel into Southport. It contains tourist information, visitor reception, exhibition space, facilities for school groups, Shopmobility service and lounge for coach and bus drivers.



Peter Scott and delegates at the Sefton Coast Forum 2005. ©Paul Lowry.

enhancing the marketing and interpretation of the Sefton Coast and improving and sustaining its visitor sites, facilities and services.

The final presentation of the morning by Laurence Rose, Regional Director of the RSPB, was on 'The Economic Benefits of Green Tourism'. This examined

successful examples of developing and encouraging green tourism on Britain's coastline by the RSPB. Further information can be found on the RSPB website.

www.rspb.org.uk/policy/economicdevelopment



Spot the Natterjack Toad on a nighttime walk. ©Paul Wisse

Sefton Coast Partnership Annual Forum 2005

The sixth Annual SCP Forum took place on the 5th February 2005 at the Gild Hall in Formby. Following the success of last year's full day event the 2005 Forum was again programmed for a full day.



The event was opened by the Mayor of Sefton, Councillor Clifford Mainey. The Mayor presented a Special Volunteer Award to Dr. Phil Smith in recognition of his outstanding contribution over many years towards the conservation objectives of the Sefton Coast. The Partnership Board have agreed that this special award will be the first in a SCP Volunteer Award Scheme.

The morning session comprised of a series of informative presentations. The first, presented by Ceri Jones, was on the Partnership's Annual Report. This included a review of the activities on the Sefton Coast and the work of the Partnership during the previous year.

Tony Corfield, Sefton Council's Head of Tourism, introduced Peter Scott who gave a two-part presentation entitled 'Enhancing the Coastal Visitor Product'. This was based on two studies that Peter Scott Planning Services are preparing for the SCP. The 'Access Strategy for the Sefton Coast' provides a strategic overview of physical access provision on the Sefton Coast and identifies a prioritised programme of improvements. The 'Sefton Coast Communication, Interpretation and Product Development Strategy' will provide a framework for

In the afternoon session there were a series of workshops where delegates were able to discuss the proposals for developing the visitor gateways on the Sefton Coast. The four workshops examined the proposals for the RSPB Marshside Nature Reserve, Formby Point (Victoria Road & Lifeboat Road), Ainsdale Lido Complex and Crosby Coastal Park. The feedback from the workshops will be included in the proceedings of the day, which will be published on the SCP website www.seftoncoast.org.uk

A great deal of issues were covered during the day and the overall response from those who attended was that it had been a worthwhile event. In the coming years we have an exiting challenge to address the issues discussed and deliver the proposals outlined during the day.

New Sefton Coast Partnership Task Group

This winter saw the restructuring of the Sefton Coast Partnership Research and Education Task Group to reflect the importance of each of its elements. The Research Task Group will continue to be chaired by Dr Anne Worsley from Edge Hill College. The newly developed Life Long Learning Task Group will be chaired by Fiona Sunners, Community Ranger, Sefton Coast and Countryside Service. Fiona has over 10 years experience of working in education on the Sefton Coast.

The task group will explore all aspects of formal and informal education. The group held its first meeting where a wide range of individuals and organisations were present to discuss education on the coast. One of the first tasks of the group was to produce an audit of current educational and learning activities across the coast.

Antony and friends

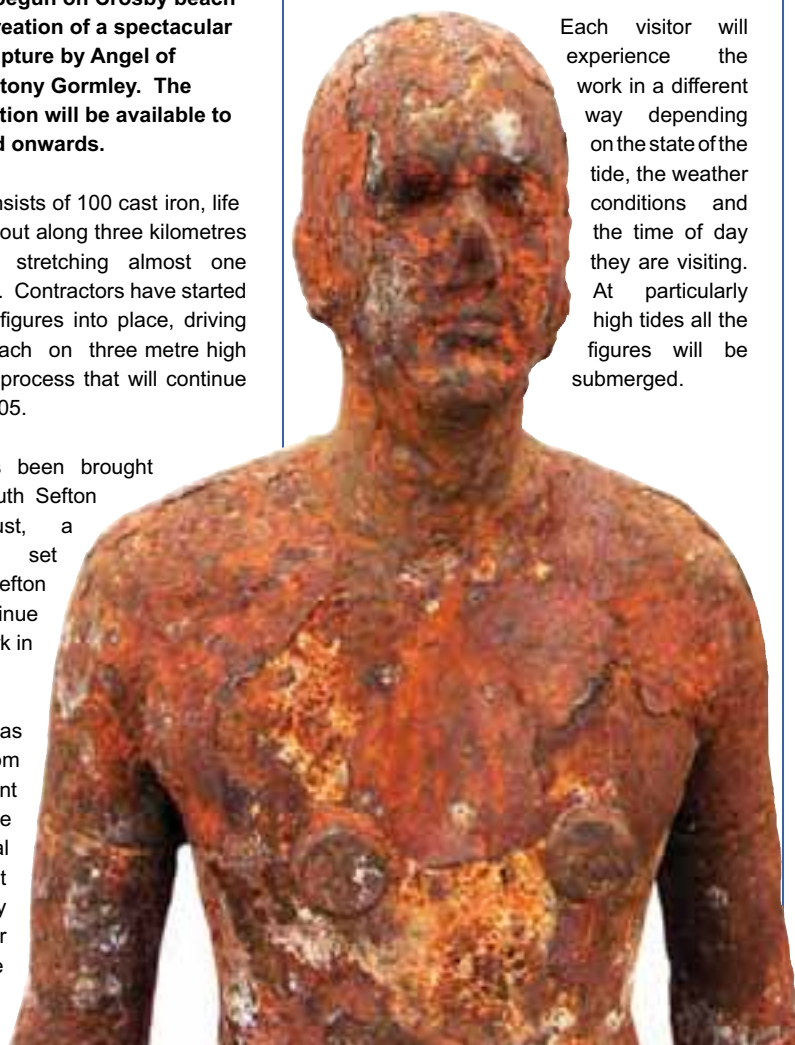


Work has begun on Crosby beach on the creation of a spectacular new sculpture by Angel of the North artist Antony Gormley. The completed installation will be available to view from July 2nd onwards.

Another Place consists of 100 cast iron, life size figures spread out along three kilometres of the foreshore, stretching almost one kilometre out to sea. Contractors have started work on lifting the figures into place, driving them into the beach on three metre high foundation piles, a process that will continue throughout June 2005.

The artwork has been brought to the area by South Sefton Development Trust, a new organisation set up by South Sefton Partnership to continue its regeneration work in the area.

The project has received support from the Mersey Waterfront programme, the Northwest Regional Development Agency, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and the Arts Council.



Each visitor will experience the work in a different way depending on the state of the tide, the weather conditions and the time of day they are visiting. At particularly high tides all the figures will be submerged.

Local people were given the chance to have their say on plans to bring Another Place to Sefton at a series of consultation events with formal responses being overwhelmingly in favour of the project going ahead. Expert studies also concluded that the impact of Another Place on the coastline and local wildlife will be minimal and also reversible.

For safety reasons, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has set up a restricted area to keep waterborne craft away from the installation site.

Visitors are also being advised that Crosby beach is a non bathing beach with areas of soft sand and mud and a risk of changing tides. For this reason visitors should stay within 50 metres of the promenade at all times and not attempt to walk out to the furthest statues.

South Sefton Development Trust Chair, Councillor Ian Moncur, commented: *"Bringing Another Place to Crosby beach is a real coup for Sefton and we are delighted that work has now started on the project. We believe that this unique piece of public art has the potential to capture the imagination of local people and to put the area on the cultural map."*

Louise Hopkins, Director of Mersey Waterfront, added: *"The sculptures are genuinely visionary and, because they have not been seen in the UK before, add a unique dimension to the foreshore. Securing this internationally important artwork,*



A day on the seaside:- pictures showing erection and several locals welcoming the new visitors.

The Another Place figures each one weighing 650 kilos are made from casts of the artist's own body and are shown at different stages of rising out of the sand, all of them looking out to sea, staring at the horizon in silent expectation.

The work is being exhibited in the UK for the first time. It has previously been seen in Cuxhaven in Germany, Stavanger in Norway and De Panne in Belgium. It is expected to move to New York following its installation in Sefton which ends in November 2006.

Another Place is expected to attract 600,000 extra visitors to Crosby beach over the next 18 months, generating additional revenue for local shops, cafes, pubs and hotels.

According to Antony Gormley, Another Place harnesses the ebb and flow of the tide to explore man's relationship with nature. He explained:

"The seaside is a good place to do this. Here time is tested by tide, architecture by the elements and the prevalence of sky seems to question the earth's substance. In this work human life is tested against planetary time. This sculpture exposes to light and time the nakedness of a particular and peculiar body. It is no hero, no ideal, just the industrially reproduced body of a middle-aged man trying to remain standing and trying to breathe, facing a horizon busy with ships moving materials and manufactured things around the planet."

appropriately in the Capital of Culture themed Year of the Sea, is inspiring not just for local residents but will encourage visitors from much further afield."

Another Place will be an integral part of the work being done right along the coastline. Mersey Waterfront recently confirmed a £200,000 package of improvements to Crosby Coastal Park including new footpaths, dune restoration and conservation of wetland habitat.

For further information visit the Partnership's web site - www.southsefton.co.uk



ANNUAL REPORT 2004 *Summary*

This summary is intended as a snap shot of the activities of the Sefton Coast Partnership in 2004. Click onto the Partnership website (www.seftoncoast.org.uk) to view the full annual report, plus other interesting information on the Sefton Coast, and links to key coastal sites.

"Our vision is for the Sefton Coast to be managed to ensure the conservation of one of the most important coastal areas in Europe for nature while being an asset to the local economy and providing a much needed area for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside".

Who we are

The Sefton Coast Partnership (SCP) guides the management of and helps to promote access to, the open (largely undeveloped) coast in Sefton. It is an informal association of land managers, land owners, community groups, agencies and relevant Council departments. All of the partners have an interest in the integrated management of Sefton's valuable coastal areas. The Partnership is steered by a Board comprising representatives of the various landowners and groups.

The Partnership holds an annual Forum, usually in February each year, a public meeting which provides an opportunity to discuss coastal issues with a broader audience - typically these are over subscribed.

The Board publishes 'Coastlines' twice a year which provides information about activities on the coast to local communities through a mailing list, and through schools and local libraries.

Events and developments during the year

The North West Beach Management and Bathing Water Group: has been established to assist in improving the beach and beach-based awards and bathing water results for all North West beaches. The ENCAMS Seaside Awards are currently under review and Sefton as member of the UK Beach Management Forum Executive are involved in a working group with ENCAMS,



Making Space for Water: The Government have consulted on policies for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England.



Crosby

Mersey Waterfront Park:

(www.merseyside.org.uk and go to the 'Mersey Waterfront' link) MWP is becoming an important supporter of projects on the Coast. Examples include support for a new bird pool at the RSPB Reserve and funding to the National Trust proposal to reconnect the Sefton Coast Footpath, where it has been eroded by the sea, in collaboration with Formby Golf Club. MWP is also supporting the next steps on the Sefton Water Centre at Crosby Marine Park, and is prepared to consider a joint approach from the Council and National Trust for visitor facilities at Ainsdale, Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road.



merseywaterfront

Coastal Practice Network:

Coastal Practice Network - (CoPraNet - www.coastalpractice.net). Sefton hosted a workshop, held over three days in October, which explored the theme of regional coastal parks. The event included visits to the Sefton Coast, Preston Docks and Lytham Discovery Centre, (Ribble Estuary) as well as Morecombe Bay. For local information on CoPraNet see also the North West Coastal Forum website www.northwestcoast.org.uk



New dunes forming at Birkdale.
Note the golden sands are still there.

Visit by Dune Water Company of South Holland 26 – 29 August:

Duinwaterberijf Zuid-Holland (www.dzh.nl) requested a visit to the Coast which took place on 26 August. DZH provides drinking water by using the dunes in South Holland as a natural filter and storage system. They have responsibility for managing the wildlife interest of the area they control (approximately 3000 ha of dunes).

Sefton Coast Partnership –

Task Groups	Nature Conservation & Shoreline Management
(2004) WHAT WE ACHIEVED	Nature Conservation & Biodiversity Strategy Proposal agreed
	National Vegetation Classification Survey of Coast complete
	Coastal defence repairs were completed at Crosby and Marshside
(2005) WHAT WE PLAN TO DO NEXT	Nature Conservation & Biodiversity Project Officer appointed
	Nature Conservation Strategy drafted by start of 2006
	Continued maintenance of coastal defences and understanding of natural processes

Visit of Korean archaeologists: Korean Research Group – 'Jeju Island Site' included Formby Point in its itinerary while visiting some key world sites earlier this year. Seven members of the research group headed by Prof. Jeong-Yul Kim visited Formby on 13 December. Since the late 1980s, semi-fossilised human and animal footprints have appeared in sediments at Formby which were laid down 5,000 to 7,000 years ago.



Gordon Roberts and Prof. Jeong-Yul Kim

Sefton Unitary Development Plan (UDP): The statutory land use planning framework for the Borough, now includes a 'Coastal Park' policy covering most of the open dune coast.

Angels on the beach : South Sefton Development Trust has secured the loan of the Anthony Gormley sculpture, 'Another Place', to be sited on Waterloo Beach from 2005 (Year of the Sea) to November 2006. Anthony Gormley is one of the UK's premier artists, with a world-class reputation for major sculptures in public places.



Annual Report 2004

'A Snap Shot'

Access & Interpretation	Research	Lifelong Learning	Tourism & Communication	Forest Plan	Archaeology/ Local History
Physical Access Study Completed	Sefton Coast Research Partnership established	N/A New task group for 2005	Council's Tourism Strategy approved – incl. Sefton Coast as a signature project	25 participating owners, representing 413.76 hectares 98 % of Forest area	Conference held on Sefton's Coastal Heritage
Funding secured for both Phases of the Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme at Formby			Communication, Interpretation and Product Development study completed	6 woodland owners completed yr 1 activities by winter 2004. Remaining 7 to complete Spring 2005	Land use history of the Freshfield Dune Heath.
Complete Coastal Path Enhancement Scheme at Formby	Develop a Research Strategy	Co-ordinate sharing of educational information and marketing of the Coast for educational visits	Complete study for Gateway Sites at Formby Point & Ainsdale	Grant funding applied for 11 properties	Survey of coastal asparagus cultivation, linked to interpretation trail at Formby. Pursue themed based leaflets
Agree an Access Implementation Action Plan	Continue to collaborate with regional HEIs	Teachers inset day	Continue to progress the Southport Seafront Action Plan	Implement the third/fourth year Forest Plan	Investigation into possible human settlement, St Lukes Churchyard, Formby
	Research Seminars and Conference proposed		Develop marketing and branding of the Sefton Coast		Publish Coastal Heritage Conference Proceedings
			Celebrate coastal events through 'Sea Britain 2005'		Consider a 'Sefton Coast at War' study

Offshore renewable energy : North Hoyle is the UK's largest off shore windfarm (owned by National Wind Power - NWP - www.natwindpower.co.uk), operational since November 2003. A second installation at Rhyl Flats has consent, and a third



(Burbo Bank - 10 km off Crosby) is going through the consent process. All these 'Round 1' windfarms are 30 turbines each. NWP has been allocated Gwynt Y Mor, a 'Round 2' site (one of 15 in the UK, of which three are in the Eastern Irish Sea), which are for much bigger installations.

Coastal Heritage Conference : A very successful conference on the History and Archaeology of the Coast was held at Formby Hall Golf Club, in September 2004. Proceedings will be published by Sefton Library Services in 2005.

Beach Management: Good quality results at Lifeboat Road, Formby during the year have indicated it may be possible to consider going for 'Blue Flag' status in the future if improvements are made as part of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park initiative.

Sefton Water Centre and Crosby Coastal Park: With funding support from Mersey Waterfront the feasibility study into the provision of a centre for watersports concentrating on



people with disabilities was completed by consultants Locum Destination Consulting in July 2004. The Council and the Mersey Waterfront Board endorsed the £12M project in principle, and MWP offered further funding for a 'Progression Project'. This will cover a risk assessment to determine the detailed financial viability of the project, together with initial environmental works in the Park to improve access, dune restoration and habitat works.

TV coverage : There has been interesting television coverage at Formby Point in Channel 4's 'The Seven Ages of Britain' (www.channel4.com) and Alan Titchmarsh's programme on BBC 'The Making of the British Isles' (www.bbc.co.uk) including a piece on Gordon Roberts taking a cast of a 'Formby Footprint'.



The Partners

The National Trust
Forestry Commission
Birkdale Civic Society
English Nature
The Wildlife Trust
Formby Civic Society
Reserve Forces
and Cadets Association
Royal Society
for the Protection of Birds
Environment Agency
Formby Golf Club
Edge Hill College
Sefton Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2004
Summary

Coast and Countryside News



Woodland Work

We are working on year 3 of the 20 year Forest Plan at present and have almost completed the work funded through Mersey Forest Integrated Countryside Environment Plan and Wood and Improvement Grant at Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeads. In total, 9,000 trees will have been planted across the woodlands this spring, with over 3km of fencing erected. Interpretation boards, leaflets and bird/bat/squirrel boxes are in production.



Charlie Parker and Duchess demonstrate snigging to local school children. ©Fiona Sunners, Coast and Countryside Service.

Behind St Luke's Church, the traditional craft of horse-logging or snigging has been employed to pull out some of the felled trees, carried out by Charlie Parker, whom you may have seen at past Woodland Fayres. These were fenced and replanted in spring 2005 as were the coupes felled in year 2 making a total of approximately 1.7ha of restock planting, with 70% Corsican Pine and 30% Scots Pine.

Planting

Two areas (2.63ha in total) were identified as suitable for new planting. The 'Pony Field' by the Kirk Lake Entrance (0.41ha) and fields near Range High School (1.45 of 2.22ha) have been fenced and planted with 50% Corsican Pine, 35% Scots Pine, 5% Birch, 5% Rowan, 2% Hawthorn, 2% Blackthorn and 1% Holly.

2005 Events Programme

This is out now and can be picked up at Libraries, Tourist Information and from the ADC. A version is available online at www.sefton.gov.uk/content-4743.

Sea Britain

Many of our events will also be included in a new Sea Britain brochure produced by the Council's Tourism Section. This year we have taken the sea and water in general as our theme so we hope you can come along and enjoy the fun! Remember our events can be adapted to suit your school or group, so please give Fiona Sunners a ring on 0150 934 2967 for more information.

Merseyfest

Merseyfest is a faith-based organisation that will be holding a festival event in Merseyside from 14th August to 21st



Any colour as long as it's festive. ©Steve Matthews

August 2005, based at Croxteth Park. The event aims to encourage Christians to demonstrate their faith by undertaking a wide range of projects across Merseyside and it is expected that around 4000 delegates will attend. The council is supporting this event and there are a number of projects planned on our sites.

North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plans

Herpetological Conservation Trust spent a week with the Rangers at LBR and Birkdale undertaking habitat improvements to benefit the Sand Lizard populations.

The annual Natterjack monitoring has been completed across the Coast. Over 100 people attended guided walks in April to see these national rarities at close quarters.

The work and work underway at Formby is partly designed to ensure suitable habitat for the Red Squirrels in the long term. We are working with Red Alert to achieve the targets for the Red Squirrel Species Action Plan.

Access Improvements

As part of the Crosby Coastal Park Masterplan (which was unveiled at the Forum in February) a new footpath is being constructed around the Marine Lake, with support from the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, which will allow better access to the lake side and an alternative circular route for visitors.

Lifeboat Road should see improvements on the Sefton Coastal Footpath with access for all as work to upgrade this is planned for this year.

We are working with Birkdale Civic Society to install a boardwalk across Smith's Slack to allow access to the beach. This will complement the Velvet Trail and give more options for visitors, who will be able to experience this exciting new habitat at first hand.

BHP rig off Ainsdale beach. ©Paul Wisse



Restocking

5 coupes were scheduled for felling over the winter. This has been achieved through the hard work of our BAP ILM Team plus help from volunteers and children on the BAP Young Persons' Programme.

Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature reserves is 40 this year.



It has long been recognised that the Sefton Coast is one of the best wildlife sites in Britain. The dunes at Ainsdale were first recognised as being of outstanding nature conservation value when in 1915 the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves published the survey of areas worthy of protection but that protection didn't come until 10 August 1965.

As the first reserve declared on the Sefton Coast, Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve has been protecting rare and endangered dune plants for 40 years. The National Trust purchased Formby Point in 1968, the Local Nature Reserves were established in the 1980's and Caberth National Nature reserve was declared in 1990.

Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR was the 112th National Nature Reserve to be declared by the forerunner of English Nature the Nature Conservancy. The reasons for its declaration were the wealth of sand dune habitats and to enable research into new ways of managing these fragile habitats.

When the reserve was first established the only access to the reserve was along the public right of way Fshermans path. Away from the right of way access was through a rigorous permit system where only scientists and naturalists could have one. Today things are very different, a series of colour-coded permits give routes around the reserve offer ways of different lengths and difficulties. Permits are now available to everyone (but we don't allow dogs away from the waymarked routes).

The wealth of wildlife which inhabits the reserve stimulates the fascination people and our guided walks are very popular. In spring natterjack toads can be heard at night calling during the breeding season and in the summer flowers abound.

Proactive management has seen the Lesser Centaury plant reappear after an absence of 70 years. Protection has led to an increase in the number of natterjacks on site and created new sand lizard habitat.

If you would like to learn more about the reserve why not come along to one of our guided walks or attend the Wildlife Extravaganza in August.

Mike Downey

Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR

we welcomed its new Assistant Site Manager, Mike Downey, to the team at the end of February. Mike grew up in Formby, and it was the local dunes and woodlands which inspired him at an early age to follow a career in conservation. University research projects brought him back to the Sefton coast to study Natterjack Toads and Red Squirrel populations, before he left the local area to travel in South America.

Mike, who has since worked for 5 years as a reserves warden in Dorset, said, ***'It's a real thrill for me to be back home and working on such a wonderful and important national nature reserve. I hope that I can help to conserve our unique local environment so that other people can be inspired to do the same in the future.'***

How can you help?

If you would like to help make a difference and conserve one of Britain's most important natural stretches of coastline, then why not join in with English Nature's volunteer group? We have regular practical work days throughout the year. No previous experience is necessary, and there are plenty of training opportunities for those who might want to improve their skills or are looking for a career in conservation.

We are also looking for volunteers to help out with other aspects of our work, such as site patrolling, survey work or administration and office help. If you would like to lend a hand or want further information, please call the Ainsdale Sand Dunes

National Nature Reserve
office on
01704
578774.



Clockwise:-
Basking male and female sand lizards.
Lesser Centaury. ©Phil Smith.
Lesser Centaury. ©English Nature.
Open dunes of Ainsdale and Birkdale in the 1920's.
Mating Tiger beetles ©Paul Wisse.
Natterjack Toad ©Paul Wisse.
Mike the manager.



WILDLIFE EXTRAVAGANZA

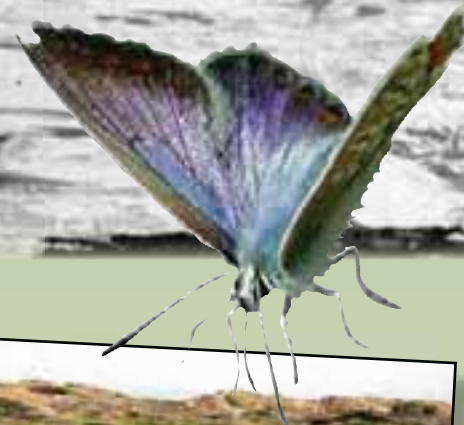
On Wednesday 10th August
10.30am - 3pm

To celebrate the 40th Anniversary of
Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature
Reserve

A family event where there will be something for everyone, including sheepdog demonstrations, landrover rides, crafts, story telling wildflower and butterfly walks, minibeast hunts, pond dipping, live captive sand lizards and natterjack toads. Food available on site.

Join us for fun in the outdoors. All activities are free of charge. For further information call Ainsdale NNR on:
01704 578 774

Please note: there are no car parking facilities on site, please make your way by public transport. A shuttle bus service will be available from Ainsdale Station and secure bike parking will be provided (just bring locks).



FORMBY TIMES
13th August 1965

Sand Dunes are a New Nature Reserve

Some 1,216 acres of sand dunes between Ainsdale and Formby lying within a green belt and partly within a coastal preservation zone have been purchased by the Nature Conservancy.

On Tuesday, the area was statutorily declared as the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve. It is Great Britain's 112th national nature reserve and the first to be established under the new Nature Conservancy Seal used on behalf of the Natural Environment Research Council, of which the conservancy became part when the Council was set up on June 1 last.

The new reserve includes foreshore, dunes and moist slacks, and a stretch of planted pinewood extending northwards. It is crossed by Fisherman's Path, a public footpath across the dunes from the railway lines to the sea just north of Freshfield.

The range of conditions in the dunes favours an unusually interesting and varied flora and fauna, providing excellent opportunities for research which the Conservancy will develop.

Unfortunately the former scientific interest has been much reduced in recent years, for example, the breeding colonies of sea birds have been driven away by disturbance. Studies in conservation will be of particular importance and will help the Conservancy in their primary duty of conserving and rehabilitating the reserve. This research will also provide valuable

information on the requirements for managing fragile dune habitats which are so susceptible to erosion.

The reserve will form a national base for studies and it is intended to establish a centre to take advantage of opportunities in environmental education discussed at the conference on education held at Keele University in March, 1965.

Locally, the reserve will provide educational facilities for field studies by Lancashire schools, a need for which has already been shown by the enthusiastic participation of teachers from Lancashire at meetings on field studies sponsored by the Conservancy.

There has also been an impressive response to an experimental nature trail organised during the last three summers by courtesy of the previous owners. The experience and information

gained by these activities at Ainsdale will be used in studies being undertaken by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and for the Council of Europe.

The establishment of this reserve will also contribute to the current campaign for the protection of a valuable part of Britain's dwindling stretches of undeveloped coastline and will protect a key section of the Lancashire green belt. The Conservancy are working here, as elsewhere, with the National Trust's "Enterprise Neptune."

Protection from fire and other damage is obviously vital to the reserve. The Conservancy will continue the previous policy of controlling access away from the shore and public footpath by means of a permit system in order to preserve the habitat and to safeguard scientific research.

10 YEARS OF MARSHSIDE RSPB RESERVE



EARLY DAYS

The RSPB took up its lease at the end of 1994 and came to Marshside at the end of that year. Those early days were great fun meeting lots of new people and keen volunteers and spending a lot of time watching and counting the birds.

Looking back at the first Management Plan for the reserve, our aims and objectives have not changed since that time. It was fortunate to start out with an internationally important site stuffed full of birds and the objective is to keep it that way. In most cases, we have even managed to increase our bird numbers.

SKY-HIGH BIRD NUMBERS?

Most species have increased over the ten-year period, though some have dropped back from very high peaks around 2000. A typical example is the black-tailed godwit, a species that the reserve has internationally important numbers of.

It's not all good news though. Pink-footed geese numbers have actually dropped and levelled out recently. This is because large numbers of geese now prefer Norfolk to Lancashire. Over there, they find the sickly-sweet sugar beet is much more attractive than the more natural saltmarsh grasses of the Ribble estuary.

The most striking increase has been in widgeon numbers. This attractive duck migrates south to the area in their thousands each year and the Ribble is the top site in the UK. Hardly surprising then that the numbers at Marshside have boomed since the reserve was created.

Some of these changes in bird numbers may be coincidental and have nothing to do with our management of the area, but in the case of the widgeon, I am sure that the overall increase in numbers can be attributed to a number of improvements we have made: reducing disturbance, increasing water areas and getting the grass in good condition.

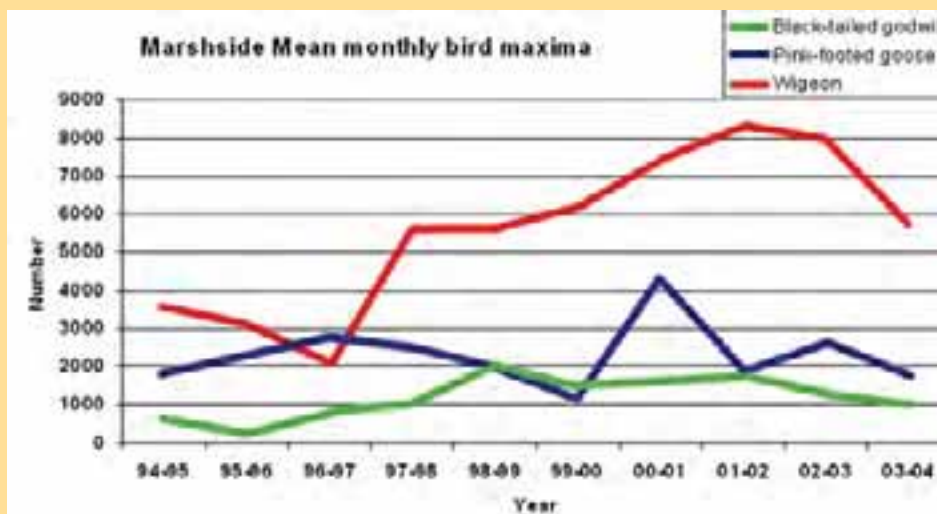


Pink Footed Goose. ©Andy Hay, RSPB Images.



Widgeon. ©Steve Young.

Black-tailed godwit in summer plumage. ©Steve Young



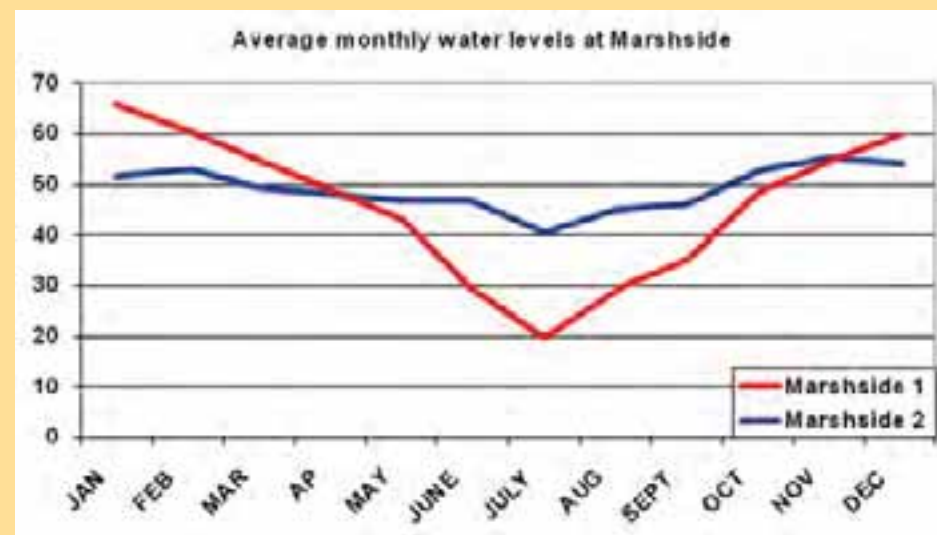
BALANCING THE NEEDS OF BIRDS AND PEOPLE

We want more and more people to come to Marshside to see the birds. But we need to make sure that the increasing numbers of people do not put the birds off. Over the years, we have gradually helped to reduce the disturbance people cause to the birds. Access out onto the marshes is restricted, and this means birds grow in confidence that the site is reserved for them. Visitors are encouraged to use regular paths so that the birds know where people will be. The visual impact of people has been reduced by the strategic planting of shrubs and the creation of some low banks. Two hides and three viewing screens enable people to get really close to the birds without frightening them. The best way to see how well this works is to visit the Sandgrounders' Hide where truly wild birds can be seen feeding and nesting within feet of the windows without the aid of artificial feeding.

DAMPING IT DOWN

Most of Marshside's birds are there because they like it wet, of course. But the marsh is built on sand and when the rain stops falling, it's surprising how quickly it dries out. We have been able to improve things a lot, especially for the nesting birds, by putting in water control structures. These stop the marsh completely drying out in the nesting season. As a result, our important populations of nesting waders are able to rear their young successfully.

The graph below shows that we can keep levels on Marshside 2 pretty stable, whereas on Marshside 1, the level drops dramatically in the summer. This is because Marshside 1 relies on rainfall alone and has no other water supply. To cope with this problem, we have dug several new shallow pools. These become life-lines for the baby birds when a drought hits us and can help the birds to rear some young in what would otherwise have been a disastrous year.



improving the water levels has helped a number of new species to nest since the reserve began. Scarce duck species like teal and gadwall have begun nesting regularly. We now have the spectacular avocets nesting every year. These beautiful birds first nested in 2002 and Marshside is now the most important site on the west coast of Britain for the emblem of the RSPB.



Avocet. ©M.McKavett.

DITCHES OR POOLS?

As well as pools we have dug a lot of new ditches and improved a lot of old ones too - more than 10 km of them in fact. You could see these ditches as simply very long pools - the birds do not mind what we call them. The ditches do several important jobs: they act as access routes for the ducks, they keep the soil moist, they distribute the water around the whole of the marsh, and they provide a feeding ground for many birds, and especially the wader chicks.

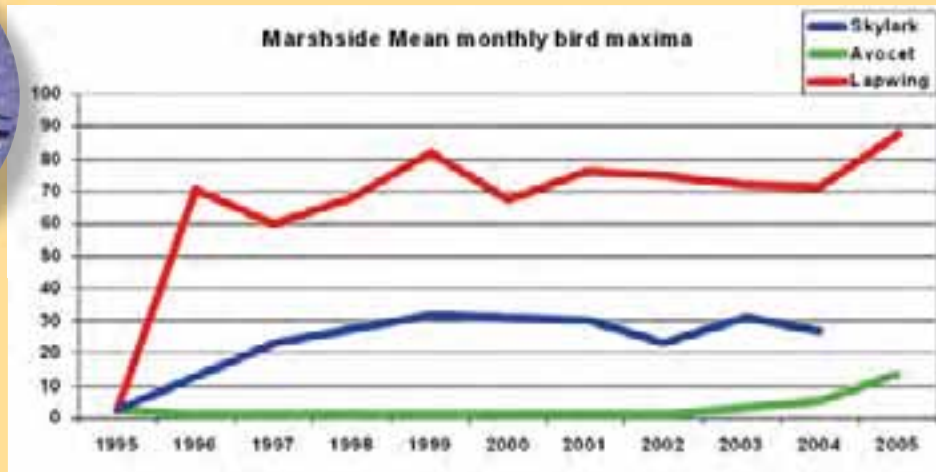
Our lapwings are doing very well, partly as a consequence of this work. This is quite an achievement when you consider that lapwings have declined by 50% across the rest of England during the same period.

CHEWING THE CUD

You cannot please all of the birds all of the time. We may have increased the numbers of nesting lapwing and wintering wigeon, but we are not so popular with the nesting redshank at the moment. The increase you can see in the graph for 2002 is because we suffered foot and mouth disease in that year. That meant fewer cows and that meant taller grass. As we can see that is what redshank like. To try and have the best of both worlds (and please our redshanks) we will be using electric fencing to create some cow-free areas for the redshanks in future years.

All of these improvements have been made to benefit our priority species: those of greatest conservation concern. Happily lots of other species have benefited too. Reed warblers have increased as the reed itself has spread, and stonechats and whitethroats enjoy the new shrubs. A greater variety of birds visit the reserve than ever before, and rarities are more frequently discovered among them. Examples range from the tiny yellow-browed warbler to the big white spoonbill. The spoonbill has now become an annual visitor, whilst other rarities like the white-winged

black tern are always going to be exceptional finds.

Teal.
©M.McKavett.

FUTURE PERFECT?

There is no reason to rest on our laurels - there's still so much to do. We have nice hides and more and more visitors to Marshside, but not everything is as it should be for visitors to the reserve. The car park has actually got worse over the ten years. We will be working towards a better range of facilities for visitors to the reserve and taking things forward within the new Access and Interpretation Strategies that are currently being produced for the Sefton Coast. We will strive to create even more opportunities for birds on the reserve's 110 hectares. We hope to increase the size of the reserve too, and negotiations are underway with the Council to achieve that end.

This year should see the first stage in our planned introduction of natterjack toads to Marshside. This will help this Sefton Coast speciality to increase its range. The 'Aren't Birds Brilliant' project will continue in conjunction with Sefton Council following its success at Southport Pier in 2004. This project is a great introduction to birds for lots of tourist visitors who can then go on to visit Marshside and the other great birdwatching sites along the coast.

Marshside still has room for improvement. It's a fantastic place for both birds and people, and with your help we can make it even better in the future.



Redshank. ©Tony Baker, RSPB.

Lapwing. ©Tony Baker, RSPB.

Stonechat.
©M.McKavett.Sedge Warbler.
©M.McKavett.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- *Marshside Nature Reserve is leased to the RSPB by Sefton Council.*
- *20,000 birds (of about 80 species) winter at Marshside.*
- *300 pairs of about 40 different species nest on the reserve.*
- *Brown hare numbers have increased since hare-coursing has been stopped.*
- *Amongst the many plant species, early marsh orchid, marsh arrow-grass, sea radish, parsley water-dropwort, few flowered spike-rush, marsh helleborine and common meadow-rue are among the most noteworthy.*
- *Site Manager Tony Baker has been in charge since the reserve began.*
- *Graham Clarkson, a native of Marshside, joined the staff this year as Aren't Birds Brilliant Officer.*
- *Over 40 volunteers help the reserve run smoothly.*
- *The hides at Marshside are open 365 days per year and are free of charge and one is heated!*
- *The reserve is currently supported by Mersey Waste Holdings Ltd through the Landfill Tax scheme, the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, DEFRA through the 'Countryside Stewardship' scheme, Ibstock Cory, William Rainford Ltd., RSPB Local Groups and our wonderful members and volunteers.*

Tony Baker, RSPB

The Formby asparagus project

Celebrating 2000 years of a special delicacy.

By **Reg Yorke**

This is a proposed joint project with National Trust, Sefton Coast Partnership, Formby Civic Society and other Community Groups for which an application for Heritage Lottery Initiative funding is about to be submitted. The project will be centred on the National Trust, Formby but will include other areas of Freshfield and Formby.

How did asparagus farming begin?

This coastal area was, until the mid-nineteenth century, regarded as a "sandy waste", useful mainly as rabbit warren. Following the construction of the Liverpool, Crosby and 'Southport Railway' in 1848, considerable supplies of fertilizer in the form of 'night-so' from Liverpool became available (A sewer system had not yet been completed). This enabled local farmers to "improve" and bring into cultivation the previously uncultivated rear-dune area, particularly suitable for the chosen crop - asparagus. This subsequently developed over some 200 acres and became a very important local product, the quality of which made Formby well known nationally. Cultivation decreased after WW2 and is now continued only on one small holding situated within the National Trust Property. There is a strong association between the NT Property and some of the well-known 'asparagus families', notably the Lowes, Andrews, Jennings and Brooks.

What will the project do?

The project will highlight an important aspect of the life of this local community in the past; the gradual exploitation and cultivation, by certain local families, of the barren and exposed rear-dune landscape not previously cultivated. It will also illustrate the way that the need for sewage disposal in mid 19th century Liverpool was used in a manner beneficial to the adjacent rural community, at a time before the development of the later methods of sewage disposal at sea. Formby Asparagus became, for a period, nationally renowned and won prestigious trophies at such centres of excellence as the Vase of Evesham. At antenners leaving Liverpool offered this regional delicacy to the passengers, during its 6 week season.

The over-aims of the project are to:

- preserve local knowledge of this interesting tradition
- find out more about its history
- record the surviving cultivation ridges and landscape of the area concerned
- produce a leaflet and DVD / Video on the tradition

- create an interpretive trail round an important part of the area.
- prepare a publication, detailing present knowledge of the asparagus tradition.
- run a programme of guided walks
- develop an 'extended' trail around some of the more distant asparagus locations and perhaps develop communication links with Merseyrail, etc.

The survey data and historical records will be of ongoing historical and archaeological significance. They will provide better understanding of the development, community history and culture of this coastal area and lead to greater public awareness of an almost forgotten aspect of our local heritage. The NT is willing to maintain access routes and associated on-site interpretation. The NT has a ready reintroduced a small area of asparagus cultivation as an experimental/demonstration project.

Local people will be informed and involved in the development of the project, through the NT Newsletter, the Civic Society Newsletter and Coastlines. About thirty local groups with possible interest have been identified by Sefton Council for Voluntary Services. At present there are about 320,000 visitors to the NT property each year who we hope will embrace our local heritage.

Other benefits.

It will help ensure preservation of the surviving cultivation ridges and 'peces', not at present recognised as field monuments. This project also highlights the historical human contribution of Thomas Fresh, who was central to the supply of 'night-so' from Liverpool. Fresh was one of the three original pioneers of sanitary reform in Liverpool following the Sanitary reform Act of 1849. The others, Dr. Duncan the first MOH and first City Engineer, James Newlands are better remembered but Thomas Fresh was the man, who promoting the establishment of Formby's second railway station, gave his name to the new 'Freshfield' and as its 'founder', we feel deserves to be commemorated. Particularly perhaps at the Freshfield Hotel with an Asparagus Supper!

...According to Gerard; (from 'Gerrard's Herbal' edited by Thomas Johnson 1636). Gerrard is thought to have belonged to the family of Gerrard of Ince in Lancashire and became a licensed Barber-Surgeon in the reign of Elizabeth 1st.





Left to right

- J.H. Lowe and Son receiving first prize for the largest and heaviest single bundle of asparagus.
- Asparagus field illustrating its characteristic furrows. ©Andrew Brockbank, National Trust.

Asparagus is not an easy crop to grow but it is particularly easy to eat!

Tasteless droopy asparagus is flown in from Chile, Peru and other far away places all the year round. The best value is by buying local asparagus in season, Early May to June.

ASPARAGUS BOILED. (*Asperges au Naturel*)

Recipe adapted from Mrs Beeton's, 'Household Management', New edition 1861

Ingredients; 1 bundle asparagus, salt, water, toast. (She assumed each bundle would contain about 100 spears or heads)

Method; Scrape the white part of the stems, beginning from the head, tie them into bundles of about 20 each, keeping all the heads in one direction. Cut the stalks evenly, and keep the asparagus in cold water, until it is time to cook it. Have ready a saucepan of boiling water, add a heaped teaspoon of salt to each quart of water, put in the asparagus and boil gently for about 20 minutes, or until tender. Dish on toast, and serve with Hollandaise, white, or other suitable sauce or, if preferred, oiled butter.

Time. About 20 minutes. Average Cost, (1861) from 2s. to 3s 6d per 100 heads.

Today; 20 spears of English Asparagus will cost about £2.

A simple but effective recipe for cooking asparagus.

The season for English asparagus lasts from mid April to Midsummer Day, 21st June. The thicker asparagus spears are best gently cooked and eaten as they are. Trim off the woody ends and put trimmed spears into a pan of boiling water. Simmer for six minutes or until tender; (try for tenderness with a skewer). Drain and serve on hot plates with melted butter or hollandaise sauce. Eat with your fingers dipping into the sauce. Napkins and/or finger bowls are useful!

Bundles of very thin spears or 'sprue' can be cooked and then used in a flan or quiche and served hot straight out of the oven for full flavour or added up to omelette. Owing to its full flavour a little asparagus can go a long way.

- Wild asparagus growing in the dunes.
- Asparagus harvesting involved all the family.



"The manured or garden Sperage, hath at his first rising out of the ground thick tender shoots very soft and brittle, of the thickness of the greatest swans quill, in taste like the green bean having at the top a certain scaly soft bud, which in time groweth to a branch of the height of two cubits, divided into divers other smaller branches, whereon are set many little leaves like hair, more fine than the leaves of Dandelion: amongst which come forth small mossy yellowish flowers which yield forth the fruit, green at the first, afterward as red as Coral, of the bignesse of a small pease; wherein is contained grosse black seed exceeding hard, which is the cause that it eth so long in the ground after his sowing, before it spring up: the roots are many thick soft and spongy strings hanging down from one head, and spread themselves a good way about, whereby it greatly increaseth".

From the diary of Nicholas Blundell; 1702-1728, Nicholas Blundell was the Lord of the Manor of Little Crosby.

20 March 1711; I planted the third Bed of Asparagus by the long Brick wall with Sets of one year old.

24 May 1727; I Mesur'd one Asparagus which was in Circumference 3 Insh & 1 1/8".

From Ministry of Food and Fish Bulletin (60) 1969; on asparagus cultivation at Formby.

"At all stages the soil consists of almost entirely of blown sand with a small amount of organic matter in the surface layer. The beds usually become exhausted after about 15 years. Weeds which often particularly troublesome are horsetails, thistles and bindweed. When a reclaimed area ceases to be profitable it is usually allowed to revert to its natural state.

At all stages of growth, wind and wind blown sand can cause severe damage to the crop. Pinewoods give protection on some holdings, and often the fern is left over a winter to check sand shifting; it disintegrates by spring and is worked into the soil. To protect small seedlings from sandblasting, low wind breaks are formed between rows of seedlings by laying leaves of Marram grass between rows of seedlings and forcing them into the sand with a spade so that the ends stand erect".



The cultivation of asparagus in the past.. according to Columella, ca AD 1. (*Columella (Lucius Iunius Moderatus)* of Gades

Cadiz, lived in the reigns of the first emperors to about AD 70. His 'On Agriculture' (*De Re Rustica*) is the most comprehensive, systematic and detailed of Roman agricultural works.

The seeds of garden asparagus and what the country folk call *corruda* (*wild asparagus*) take a most two years to prepare. When you have buried them after February 13th in a rich, well-manured place in such a way that you place in each little trench as much seed as your three fingers can hold, usually after the fortieth day the plants become intertwined and form a kind of spongy mass,

and the little roots thus attached and collected together the gardeners call sponges.' After twenty-four months they should be transplanted to a sunny, well-watered and manured spot. Furrows are then made a foot distant from one another and not more than three-quarters of a foot deep into which the little sponges are pressed

down so that they may easily spring up when the earth is put over them; but in dry places the seedlings must be placed in the bottom of the furrows, so that they remain as it were in the troughs. On the contrary, in swampy ground they must be placed on the topmost back of the ridge, so that they may not suffer from too much moisture.'



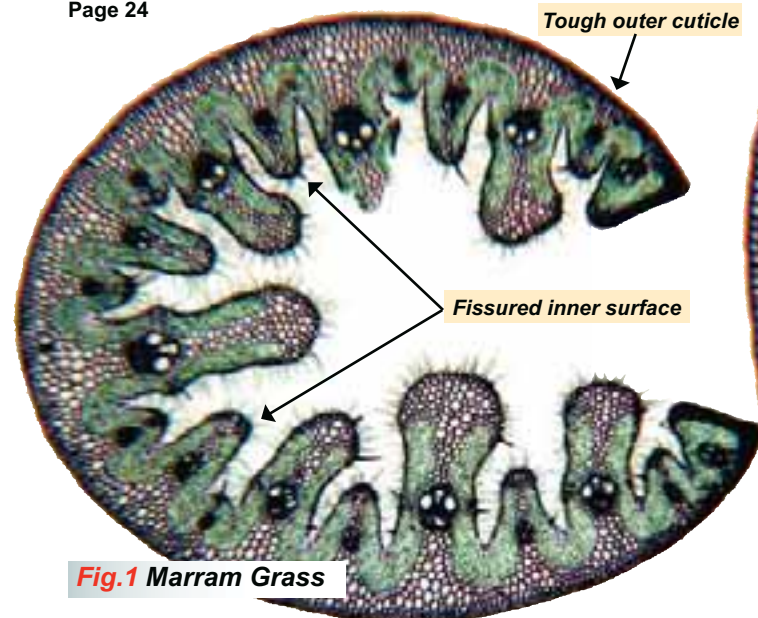


Fig.1 Marram Grass

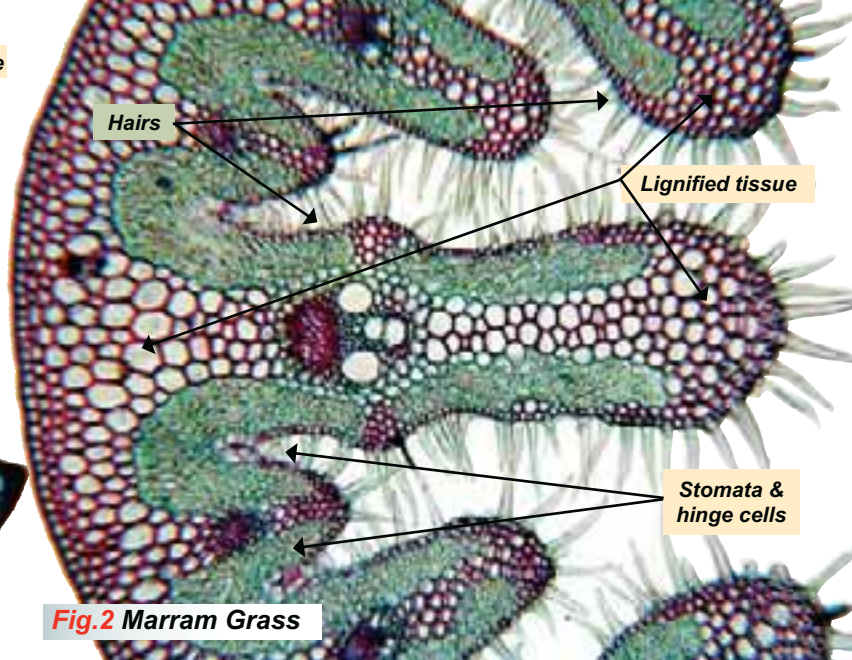


Fig.2 Marram Grass

Pioneer plant adaptations in dune

Any visitor to the local beaches and dune systems can't help but notice the way in which the vegetation changes from the strand line at the top of the beach, where almost nothing grows, to the first signs of a plant community as the dunes start to build. In considering this, it might help to give some thought to the problems facing such plants, pioneer species, in this fairly hostile environment. For plants in this environment, hoste means a shortage of fresh water, the chances of being regularly inundated with seawater and constant battering with wind and scouring effects of wind-blown sand particles. Add to this the fact that moving a row dehydrate a plant and a n a host e' fits the b . But, and this s mportant, there are no other plants to compete with you for whatever resources there are around.

The basic requirements needed for a plant to flourish are ght, carbon dioxide (CO_2) and water. No surrounding plants mean unimpeded radiation. The atmosphere has a the CO_2 that the plant needs, too much in fact if we are to heed the warnings of ncreasing greenhouse gases. This brings us to the need for fresh water. How to acquire it? And just as mportant, how to hold on to it? The pioneer plants we are talking about, Marram Grass and Lyme Grass, do not have deep reaching root systems but rely on condensat on from freshwater in the upper sand ayer to supply the r needs (Crawford, 1990).

At this point it's useful to look inside the plant leaves to try and identify those physical adaptations that enable them to exist where they do. In order to do this we prepare them in the following way.

The leaves are cut perpendicular to the longitudinal axis in sections 30 mm across thick. A mm across being a unit equivalent to one month of a meter. They are stained with two dyes one having an affinity with those tissues that are gnified and give mechanical strength to the plant, the red areas. The other, the green dye, goes to the thinner walled cells that are involved in photosynthesis and gaseous exchange.

Figure 1 is a cross section of Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), it shows a smooth, curved outer face with a thick cuticle to resist abrasion from wind-blown sand and a deeply fissured inner face. The whole section has an almost circular shape. The important parts of the plant anatomy are situated on the inner face, Figure 2. We can see in more detail the numerous pits lined with photosynthetic cells. We can also see the stomata, those organs concerned with the intake of carbon dioxide, the specialised hinge cells at the bottom of the pits and the numerous hairs that line the inner face of the plant leaf. The plant's strategy to deal with the where the collection and retention of fresh water is problematic



Inner surface hairs
Fig.3 Marram Grass

Fig.4 Lyme Grass

systems.

s to ro up n t mes of stress and ho d on to what t has acqu red. Th s s where the h nge ce s n **Figure 2** are used. They can be nflated and deflated thus fur ng and unfur ng the eaf. Fur ed, the h nge ce s are flacc d and the p ant ro s nto a cy nder. The flex b e ha rs nter ock and the movement of water mo ecu es from w th n the p ant through the stomata s v rtua y stopped. Unfur ed, w th turg d h nge ce s, the p ants can co ect carbon d ox de, photosynthes se and manufacture the r food that s needed for growth. Of course be ng ro ed up prevents photosynthes s but the h nge ce adaptat on s an evo ved tra t that enab es the p ant to ve successfu y where t does. It s an acceptab e trade-off and these two grasses benefit from t.

The ha rs are nvo ved n co ect ng water that evaporates from the sand. They prov de a surface upon wh ch the water vapour can condense. **Figure 3** shows how dense and flex b e these ha rs are. Th s s another adaptat on that he ps the p ant make best use of a scarce resource.

The red sta ned woody t ssue (gn fied) prov des the p ant w th the mechan ca strength to w thstand buffet ng n unprotected surround ngs. As can be seen th s t ssue forms g rders that connect the nner and outer faces of the p ant.

Lyme grass has s m ar adaptat ons, **Figure 4**. It has the th ck outer cut c e,

a p tted nner face w th h nge ce s, stomata and some ha rs. It has the ab ty to ro up but to a lesser extent and t a so has stomata on the outer eaf surface.

It s c ear that two separate p ant spec es have so ved the prob ems of v ng n a host e env ronment by us ng s m ar strateg es.

These are just two of the p ants that have evo ved over t me and deve oped adaptat ons that make them ab e to flour sh n areas where fe for a p ant can be d fficu t but where compet t on w th other p ants s not an ssue.

References.

Crawford, R.M.M. (1989). *Studies in plant survival: ecological case histories of plant adaptation to adversity*. Blackwell Scientific.

Colin Smith,
Edge Hill College





Freshfield Dune
Heath illustration.

This wonderful heathland landscape is how we hope Freshfield Dune Heath will look in years to come.

This vision was commissioned by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and is now used on two interpretation boards on site at the dune heath. This vision will be realised in the long term through a commitment to reducing scrub over the site, by carrying out wood and management work in line with the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan and by a long-term commitment to maintaining the heather heath and through mowing

and grazing. In April this year a flock of Hebridean sheep was introduced to the site to maintain the grass sward, to help reduce scrub and to increase the diversity within the hay meadow, if this year's flock are successful in the summer grazing we hope to extend the use of stock across much of the site.

The site is currently closed to the general public while we install footpaths and carry out necessary management work to bring the site in line with heath and safety regulations, we hope to have

the site open by summer 2006. However we would like to invite you to join us on a guided walk this summer on Friday 19th August at 14.00hrs or Tuesday 23rd August at 19.00hrs,

If you wish to come on either of the walks please ring Fiona Robertson on 0151 9203769 or e-mail at frobertson@lwlifetrust.co.uk to book and to get information on where to meet.



Red squirrel.
©Paul Wisse

The Sefton Coast Woodlands are to be designated a 'national red squirrel refuge.'

Red squirrel conservation experts across the country have agreed on a strategy to ensure the survival of the red squirrel in Britain through the establishment of refuges and buffer zones. Refuges have been selected in areas where red squirrels persist, where the habitat can be maintained to support a viable population and where an effective buffer zone can be managed as host squirrel habitat to minimise the possibility of grey squirrel incursions.

A total of 20 refuge sites have been proposed for designation in the north of England, including the north-west. The Sefton coast refuge and buffer zone is the only site proposed in Merseyside/West Lancashire. The Sefton coast woodlands have met all the criteria set out and the refuge and buffer zone proposal has received endorsement from the England Squirrel Forum.

The next stage is to seek the support of landowners, managers, statutory agencies and conservation bodies in this area, many of whom have already expressed their support and who are ready to carry out red squirrel conservation work on the refuge.

Red squirrel conservation is a key priority for both the Red Alert North West Regional Action



Plan and the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan and this national designation will have added weight to efforts to protect the red squirrel population of Sefton.

We hope to launch the 'Sefton Coast Refuge and Buffer Zone' during Red Squirrel Week in September 2005. If you want any further information about the refuge and buffer zone proposal or would like to get involved in red squirrel conservation please ring Fiona Robertson on 0151 920 3769 or e-mail at frobertson@lwlifetrust.co.uk



Coast and Countryside Service Biodiversity and Access Project ILM News

Woodland Management and Learning Development Reviews

Councilor Lord Fearn visited the newwoods at Formby recently to meet the coast team; some of whom were undergoing chainsaw training as part of the LDR process. The training is intensive and is organized through Myerscough College. Myerscough have for two years been working in partnership as part of the Coast and Countryside Biodiversity & Access Project ILM.

Biodiversity and Access Project ILM

The second year tranche of Environmental Trainees finished the training at the end of March. A have been offered seasonal posts with the Coast and Countryside Service to allow for six months experience working in the field. The Service was recently successful in its application for a third year of funding from the South Sefton Partnership ILM Team.

Since the BAP initiative began in 2003, sixteen people have achieved an NVQ in Environmental Conservation, chainsaw, wood chipping and herbicide training and have gained employment or have gone onto further education.



Sefton Coast Woodland Plan

The Sefton Coast Partnership have started implementing wood and work on the Sefton Coast as part of the Woodlands Forest Plan. The development of this plan is a significant event in the history of the coastal woodlands. This twenty year plan is compiled to provide a coherent, comprehensive and long-term view of the wood and management.

The implementation of the plan in Sefton Council's wood and has been achieved with the support of local trainees taking part in the Biodiversity and Access Project (BAP) Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) initiative, with volunteers, the BAP Young Persons programme and Social Services Adult with Disability Training programme. The BAP ILM helps unemployed people develop new skills by taking part in conservation and forestry work. Funded by the Neighbourhood Regeneration Programme, the South Sefton Partnership, and supported by Myerscough College, the BAP trainees are from the South Sefton Area and were formerly unemployed. The team have planted 9,000 trees since January 2005.

The Coast and Countryside Section is working with the Children's Services Department, Connexions and Positive Futures to expand the Biodiversity and Access Project Young Persons Programme; the funding is available through the Behaviour Improvement programme (BIP) and Positive Activities for Young People (PAY Connexions). The section already runs a successful partnership with the Drug Action Team, Youth Offending Team, Children's Services and LINC.



Photographs show ILM trainees and BAP young people erecting fences and planting new trees. Photography ©Coast and Countryside Service

Lord Fearn and Coast and Countryside staff receiving expert tuition in using chainsaws for woodland management.



1. RSPB Marshside P

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 T

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.



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

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

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.

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 would like to subscribe to the coastlines mailing list please send you name and address to Coastlines, Ainsdale Discovery Centre or email to:- coastlines@seftoncoast.org.uk

Name _____

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