

Sefton Coast Management Plan

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Description of the Coast

The Sefton Coast (Map 1) which, for this plan, is taken to mean the length of coast lying within the Borough of Sefton is a sedimentary coastline lying between the Ribble and Mersey estuaries in north-west England. It forms part of the Liverpool Bay complex of low-lying coasts and estuaries and is divided itself by the Alt estuary. Although Sefton is an ancient name dating back to the 10th century, the Sefton Coast is a recent name based on the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, part of the former County of Merseyside and a Unitary Authority since 1986.

The Sefton Coast is a long, wide arc of sand, a hindshore dune system, which at one time would have stretched unbroken from the Mersey to the Ribble. Near Southport on the Ribble the transition between sandy shores and muddy shores is evident today but, in the case of the Mersey, centuries of port development and urbanisation have severed the natural link between the dune belt and estuary proper.

The southern conurbations of Bootle, Seaforth, Waterloo and Crosby are all built on sand and the modern coastal frontage is artificial forming docks and seawalls. The coastline is highly modified to the south of the river Alt and the remaining dune areas are isolated from the main system.

The Alt estuary is of international importance for waterfowl and much of the area is a natural sanctuary created by the Danger Area of the Altcar Rifle Ranges.

To the north of the Alt estuary, with its small area of saltmarsh, lies a continuous belt of sand-dunes, 17km long and over 3km at its widest point north of Freshfield. This is the famous Sefton sand dune area, which is the largest of its kind in the UK and is of European importance.

The Sefton beaches and dunes convey a special sense of wilderness with wide panoramic views, high mobile dunes and a maze of dune ridges and hollows. The dune system itself is rich in wildlife and is a classic example of a west coast calcareous (lime-rich) dune system. It is notable for numerous rare species, including four listed in the European Habitats Directive.

Human use and modification of the dune system over several centuries has created a dune landscape of great variety. Some dune areas, formerly managed as rabbit warrens, have survived almost in their original form whereas in other areas dunes were converted to fields or planted with trees. Pine plantations occupy a considerable proportion of the dune area. Other associated habitats are sandy fields, wet grassland, dune heath, scrub woodlands and saltmarsh. The towns of Hightown, Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale are also built on sand and now lie immediately inland of the open dunes.

The resort town of Southport lies on the transition between duneland and marshland and to the north of the town the Marshside area opens up a vista across the expanse of the Ribble estuary. Southport itself is undergoing a process of regeneration with new investment in the coastal zone. The northern boundary of Sefton lies just beyond the

channel of the River Crossens. The whole of the Sefton coastal area drains into the basins of the rivers Alt and Crossens which, by pump drainage, also control the water levels in the low-lying mossland inland of the coast.

The Ribble estuary is of international importance for 17 species of birds and is the most important waterfowl site in the UK, providing feeding grounds for 250,000 wading birds, ducks, swans and geese. In 1995 the coast from the Ribble estuary to the Alt estuary was declared a Special Protection Area (SPA) under European legislation.

The designation of the Special Protection Area along the Sefton Coast heads a list of international, European, national and local nature conservation designations making the Sefton Coast one of the most important wildlife areas in Europe.

The Sefton Coast is rich in history and wildlife, it is a very special place and it deserves careful management.

1.2 Management Experience

The Sefton Coast benefits from over 20 years of improving co-ordination of coastal management.

In the early 1970s duneland was still being lost to residential development , proposals were put forward for a regional park and golf course at Formby Point and conservation organisations were expressing increasing concern about the fragmentation and damage to dune habitats.

Local Government reorganisation in 1974 allowed the newly created Merseyside County Council to appraise the problems facing the Sefton Coast in the wider context of the developing Structure Plan for Merseyside.

The need for intervention through restoration schemes was apparent and, in discussions, the County Council, Sefton Borough Council and the Countryside Commission agreed that such schemes could only be successful if linked to long-term management. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme was developed and formally established in 1978 with the appointment of a Project Officer a year later.

The Management Scheme is based on a voluntary agreement between the various landowners and agencies to pursue common policies for the overall benefit of the coast.

In the eight year period from 1977 to 1985 the County Council's work concentrated on the stabilisation of eroded dunes at Formby, the improvement of car parking and access arrangements, the provision of recreation facilities and the management of woodlands.

Jointly the County Council and Sefton Borough Council developed the partnership approach to coastal management through the work of the Project Officer. A review of progress in each of the main subject areas is given as an introduction to the Sections in this Plan.

Initially the Management Scheme covered the dune coast north of the Alt. In 1983 it was extended to include the dune area to the south of the Alt and further extended in 1991 to cover the whole of the Sefton Coast including the beach area (with the exception of the docks and the Southport Seafront).

Since 1985 management has focused more on sustainability, especially on achieving a balance between the needs of visitors and local communities and the requirement for nature conservation. More effort and resources have been put into the establishment of the ranger service, environmental education and habitat management. The earlier work at Formby Point achieved the right level of controlled access to minimise damage and a similar approach has been successful on the beach areas.

The coastal partnership puts the coast in perspective and allows the development of coastwide projects such as the Sefton Coastal Footpath or the European funded 'Life' project for nature conservation. The partnership is successful because it achieves results.

The 1997 review of the Coast Management Plan continues the tradition of a voluntary approach to integrated coastal zone management.

1.3 Management Vision

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 a healthy local economy and providing a much needed area for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Specifically, we accept the joint responsibility to ensure that the integrity and natural value of the dune system and estuaries is protected in perpetuity as one of the series of European nature areas.

1.4 Management Aims

The vision for the Sefton Coast is elaborated by a number of management aims. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme partners will, where it falls within their responsibility;

1. Encourage and support appropriate land-use, sustainable economic development, investment and employment consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast.
2. Conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of the coast, including its characteristic terrestrial, littoral and marine flora and fauna, geomorphology, landscape and heritage features of architectural, historical, cultural and archaeological interest;
3. Facilitate and enhance the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the coast by improving and extending opportunities for appropriate recreation, education, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, the natural character and conservation value of the coast;

4. Support the need to protect life, property and habitats by appropriate coast defence strategies, and to maintain the sea defence function of the beaches, sand dunes and salt marshes, consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast;

5. Liaise with the competent agencies for the control of activities at sea to ensure that they are aware of the high amenity and conservation value of the Sefton Coast and the impact their activities may have on terrestrial sites, and to work with others to promote the conservation and management of marine resources.

6. Protect and enhance the environment by preventing and reducing pollution and promoting public health.

7. Adopt a systematic and open approach to the delivery and monitoring of Plan outputs in accordance with Local Agenda 21.

From these aims a set of objectives and policies have been derived. It is intended that the plan as a whole will be independently reviewed through a Strategic Environmental Appraisal to identify as far as possible its overall contribution to sustainability. The objectives and policies of the plan will be tested against indicators which will be derived from sets developed for this purpose by, for example, the Local Government Management Board, DoE and North West Regional Association Sustainable Development Working Group. The Appraisal will be separately written-up and its findings used to inform the final plan, together with results of the present consultation.

This review of the management plan will mark a change to a more systematic approach to monitoring the progress of the Management Scheme in order to ensure that the objectives of the plan are being achieved and that the management policies are delivering appropriate outcomes for the coast. Care has been taken to set out the Work Programme in a way which allows the various objectives and policies to be measured in terms of outputs as far as possible.

1.5 Key Principles

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme has evolved within the context of a growing interest in the environment and the desire to achieve a balance between future economic prosperity and maintaining environmental quality. The key principles of sustainable development, biodiversity and the precautionary principle proposed in the Government's coastal management advice note, *Towards Best Practice* help to underpin the aims of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme approach is also consistent with the principles of Local Agenda 21.

1.5.1 Sustainable Development

The principle of sustainable development seeks effective integration and balancing of the needs of the economy, society and environment. Sustainable development has been described by the *Brundtland Report for the World Commission on Environment and Development* as;

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

and this principle, with its implication that the long-term view should be taken, has been adapted by the UK Government in its Sustainable Development Strategy and supports the development of Local Agenda 21 strategies.

1.5.2 Biodiversity

Future generations are entitled to an environment no poorer in its variety of living species than at present. Biodiversity (biological diversity) encompasses the whole range of variation in living organisms; genetic variation, species variation and ecosystem variation. In other words - the variety of life. The overall goal of the *UK Biodiversity National Action Plan* is;

to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK, and to contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms.

The Convention on Biodiversity was an important product of the 1992 Earth Summit and was signed by the UK Government and the European Community. Under Article 6A of the Convention the UK Government has produced the *UK Biodiversity National Action Plan*, setting out what needs to be done to fulfill its commitment to global biodiversity. Biodiversity is part of sustainability; development cannot be regarded as sustainable unless biodiversity is conserved. Biodiversity objectives, therefore, are central to the development and implementation of the Sefton Coast Management Plan.

1.5.3 Precautionary Principle

Sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity require an awareness of long-term impacts on the environment. Where environmental damage appears to be occurring it is now realised that it is important to err on the side of caution, particularly in those situations where damage may be irreversible. The precautionary principle is about making decisions using the best scientific knowledge available. *Policy Guidelines for the Coast* define the precautionary principle as;

Where there are significant risks of damage to the environment, precautionary action should be taken to limit the use of potentially dangerous materials or the spread of potentially dangerous pollutants (or other forms of environmental damage) - even where scientific knowledge is not conclusive - if the balance of likely costs and benefits justifies it.

1.5.4 Local Agenda 21

At the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992 (The 'Earth Summit') national Governments adopted Agenda 21 "*an action plan for the 1990s and well into the 21st Century, elaborating strategies and integrated programme measures to hold and reverse the effects of environmental degradation and to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in all countries*" Agenda 21 encourages local authorities to undertake a consultative process with their population to agree a *Local*

Agenda 21. Sefton Council will coordinate this process covering a wide range of issues including the protection of the natural environment. The Sefton Coast Management Plan is part of this overall approach to balance the quality of life with environmental protection.

1.6 Boundaries

There can be no single definition of the coastal zone. For shoreline management purposes it may stretch from the sources of available off-shore sediment to the low lying areas protected by coastal defences. Planning legislation only extends to mean low water and a fairly narrow Coastal Planning Zone has been identified in Sefton's Unitary Development Plan. Non-statutory Estuary Management Plans do, however, cover the water areas. The Coast Management Scheme boundary which forms the basis of this plan should be determined by a pragmatic view. It is recommended that the boundary for management purposes has its seaward limit 1km from mean low water thus including all inter-tidal areas.

The seaward extension of 1 km relates to Sefton Council's powers as a local authority to create bye-laws for the better control of recreational activities in the near-shore zone. The landward component should be defined primarily on the basis of landscape, ecological and cultural interest and it is now proposed that the boundary be extended to include all land within the Coastal Planning Zone, the Southport Marine Lake area, outlying remnant dune areas (e.g. Kenilworth Road), all open land seaward of the railway at Formby, Woodvale Airfield and surrounding land, and the Dock estate (see Map 2).

There is also interest in sandy fields lying inland of this main dune belt, around Formby Hall and inland of Hightown and, if appropriate and after survey, these areas could be included in the coastal zone.

1.7 International Context.

The Sefton Coast has a strong international dimension in the areas of economic development and environmental protection.

In recent years the European Commission has become more involved in coastal issues. The EC intends to prepare a "comprehensive strategy on integrated management and planning of the Community coastal zones" but this will take time to come to fruition.

The main EC Directives relevant to coastal management are those for *Bathing Waters* (76 /160) (to be reviewed), *Conservation of Wild Birds* (79 / 409) (the Birds Directive), *Assessment of Environmental Effects* (85 / 337) (to be reviewed), *Urban Waste Water Treatment* (91 /271) and *Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (92 /43) (the Habitats Directive).

In the UK the EC Habitats Directive has been translated into the *UK Conservation (Habitats &)Regulations*. The Habitats Regulations are a key instrument for advising coastal management policy in Sefton.

Parts of the Sefton Coast are now formally designated as a European wildlife site within the Natura 2000 network and it needs to be recognised that whilst such designation is generally beneficial in protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural values of the coast it brings constraints on certain activities.

In 1995 the Scheme partners were awarded an EC grant under the European Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE) to prepare and implement a nature conservation strategy for the sand dunes of the Sefton Coast. The project is a component of the overall Coast Management Plan and will run from 1995 to 1999.

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme is a member of the Eurosite network and the European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC) and both organisations actively support the EC-funded LIFE project. Informal links have also developed over several years with dune managers in the Netherlands, Denmark and France. In 1993 the Sefton Coast Management Scheme was presented with a Eurosite Quality Award for good practice in European nature management.

In 1994 a three year project with the Sefton's twin authority, the City of Gdansk in Poland, was funded through the UK Know-How fund. The project is concerned with integrated coastal management and the Local Agenda 21 process.

1.8 National Context

The style of management on the Sefton Coast continues to be in line with the Countryside Commission's *Policy Statement on Heritage Coasts*, and recent Government Guidance, which endorses the multi-agency approach to coastal zone management. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme is a member of the UK Coastal Heritage Network which promotes good practice in coastal management.

The National Trust, English Nature, Countryside Commission and RSPB all have national coastal initiatives and campaigns. These all help to support policy and management work in Sefton.

The work of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme also features in national directories, case-studies and good practice guides produced by organisation such as the National Coasts and Estuaries Advisory Group.

Partners and individuals within the Sefton Coast Management Scheme are involved in a number of national working groups. Involvement in these initiatives helps to maintain the Sefton Coast at the forefront of coastal zone management initiatives. Groups include; National Coasts and Estuaries Advisory Group Coastal Forum (the UK Government Forum) European Union for Coastal Conservation-UK Coastal Heritage Network (CoastNET) Marine Forum MAFF Coastal Defence Forum Technical Advisers Group (MAFF) The Coastal Group Chairmen (a coastal defence grouping)

1.9 Regional and Local Context

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme is one of several coastal management initiatives in north-west England. The developing management plans for Morecambe

Bay and the Solway, Duddon, Dee, Mersey and Ribble estuaries and Shoreline Management Plans along with the Irish Sea Forum and several Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) all have some relevance to coastal work in Sefton.

Issues which would be difficult, or inappropriate, for the Sefton Coast Management Scheme to address alone, such as pollution, the management of sea fisheries in relation to nature conservation, navigation and safety, watersport provision and the protection of marine habitats, are best addressed at the estuary or regional level. Therefore mechanisms for the two-way flow of information between the plans must be established.

The Estuary Management Plans for the Mersey and Ribble support and widen the interests of coastal management in Sefton and Sefton Council will actively support the work of both projects.

Sefton MBC adjoins West Lancashire District Council and Liverpool City Council. Good dialogue is necessary between local authorities to share information and to liaise especially on the two estuary initiatives.

The Sefton Coast lies within the area of jurisdiction of the North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee. The Committee was established in 1890 to encourage, maintain and regulate sea fisheries, and it enforces national and EC legislation and local bye-laws throughout its district. The Sea Fisheries Committee has powers from the high water mark to 6 miles offshore. It is, in effect, the 'offshore' partner of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.

The Sefton Coast is within the area of the Mersey Basin Campaign and parts lie within the areas of The Mersey Forest and Groundwork St Helens, Knowsley and Sefton. Links will be maintained and improved with these initiatives to better coordinate the delivery of environmental improvements in the region.

Regional perspectives are given by the Irish Sea Forum, the Liverpool Bay and North Western Coastal Groups and the North West Regional Association. These all help to inform coastal management strategies in Sefton. The Irish Sea Forum gives a regional and international perspective on coastal issues. The Forum is science-based and will address topical issues and provide up-to-date scientific advice to local authorities. Proposed regional fora include a standing conference on oil and gas development and a local biodiversity framework.

Within Sefton the Coast Management Plan is one of several strategic documents. From a planning perspective they all advise and support the Unitary Development Plan.

The main linking strategies to the Coast Management Plan are the Countryside Recreation Strategy, Recreation Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Leisure and Parks Strategy, Southport Seafront Development Strategy and Nature Conservation Strategy (in preparation).

1.10 Co-ordination

The role of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme and that of the Coast Management Officer is to help co-ordinate action and resources of the differing agencies with responsibilities along the coast. The Coast Management Plan and its subsequent implementation should; co-ordinate policies, proposals and resources along the Sefton Coast. provide a framework that can be used as a basis for decision making. provide a consistent and long-term approach to management. continue to take the lead in co-ordinating the work of the land managers in relation to nature conservation and recreation. identify where there are gaps or deficiencies in information. assist with the capture of regional, national and EC funding for project work and research.

1.11 Review

Along with an increasing emphasis on the process and requirements of monitoring over the Plan period, greater effort will also be put into the review process. The state of the coast will be checked against a set of independent indicators which will help to give a general picture of the health of the coast, and if any changes, to the coast (due to natural forces, for example) require a corresponding change in management.

In identifying possible indicators for this type of monitoring account has been taken of the following factors: analytical soundness: how an indicator illustrates an impact; ie can the impact be measured (calculated or estimated), is it definite but not measurable, or speculative, whether there are reliable baseline data against which future data can be measured, and how reliable long term data capture it likely to be. whether indicators measure changes in the state of or pressure on the local environment. whether indicators are relevant to the management policies being considered whether there is a significant or useful management response possible to changes indicated. whether indicators can be adequately tracked within the resources available to the Management Scheme.

The indicators currently being considered are shown in Table I

Wherever possible reliable data already being collected by agencies for official purposes have been selected for indicators, where these are considered relevant to the coast. In addition indicators have been chosen where they may be useful in a broader context, regionally, nationally or at European level (for example to tie in with work being done at EC level for indicators in the "marine environment and coastal zone".

It is considered important to include social as well as physical indicators since a crucial aim of the Management Plan is that the coast is enjoyed and valued by people who use it. It is in this area in particular that most work will need to be done within the Management Scheme itself to collect appropriate data.

The collection and dissemination of such data in an annual report would be a contribution to the process of Local Agenda 21 in Sefton.

The Management Plan will be fully reviewed and republished within 10 years (i.e. 2006-2007). An annual review process will be introduced to provide updates to policies, as appropriate, linked to the recommendations of the Steering Group. The annual review

will report on indicators and targets, the implications of new legislation, progress with co-ordination and an update on key issues. It is proposed that the annual review follows the financial year and is presented each year at the July Steering Group meeting.

In addition there will be a mid-term review in 2001-2002 to update the prescriptive work programme (Section 9) and to consider, especially, the impact of external issues on the objectives of the Coast Management Plan.

1.12 External Issues

External issues are those issues that because of their geographical scale, complexity and political nature are outside the scope of the local Coast Management Plan yet they could have a major effect on the long term management response. Such issues include;

1.12.1 Predicted Global Climate Change.

1.12.1.1 Sea Level Rise

Predicted rates of sea level rise have been adopted by the Government in their advice to Local Coastal Protection Authorities. There is still, however, considerable uncertainty about the scale and rate of the predicted acceleration in sea level rise and links to other factors such as weather patterns, isostatic changes (geological movement) and sediment movement. Nevertheless it presents a background scenario that must be addressed at the international and national level. Sefton Council will continue to follow guidance and take a precautionary view on development proposals. Any future response to the threat of sea level rise or increased storminess would have to be taken at the regional or sub-regional level even though problems are local.

1.12.1.2 Ecological Change

Global warming will have consequences for the distribution of animal and plant species. The Sefton Coast is an area of prime biodiversity and contains a zone of overlap between many 'northern' and 'southern' species in the context of the UK. It is likely, therefore, that the ecological consequences of global warming will affect the conservation status of certain species on the Sefton Coast. The coast should be monitored as part of national and international studies and be used as an early warning station.

1.12.2 Atmospheric and Water Pollution

Increased nutrient loads and pollution in rainfall, runoff and seawater have ecological, economic and amenity consequences. Reductions in such loads will come from EC and national political decisions and long-term programmes although best practice at the local level also plays a part.

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme partners can, however, help to provide evidence of the damage by pollution. In particular habitats and species of European importance may be threatened by increased atmospheric pollution, groundwater enrichment and toxins.

1.12.3. Sea Use

Under current legislation the powers of a Local Authority are limited in the marine environment. Yet the marine perspective now needs to be addressed as part of the overall approach to Coastal Zone Management.

The proposed way forward in Sefton is to support the work of the Irish Sea Forum and to take an active part in the Management Plans for the Mersey and Ribble estuaries. Closer liaison with the North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee will also be established. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme process should ensure that concerns of partner organisations reach the appropriate forum for discussion.

1.12.4 Renewable Energy Projects

The north west coast of England is a region with a high tidal range, prevailing westerly wind direction and higher than national average sunshine hours. At the small scale developments in the coastal planning zone could make use of renewable energy sources such as solar power or wind turbines. Large projects have been considered from time to time and may be again in the future. Large and small scale wind or wave energy projects could impact on the geomorphology, ecology and amenity of the coast. Detailed Environmental Assessment would be required for any such developments.

1.12.5. Transport Futures

Predictions for the national growth in traffic volume should be assessed in relation to the Sefton Coast and proposals put forward to minimise or reduce impacts. The long-term sustainability of the landscape, wildlife and recreation value of the coast could be impaired if demand led to provision. New ways must be sought to manage vehicles on the coast through adequate provision at urban centres, car-free zones, support for public transport and car parking provision set back from sensitive zones.

The strategic planning of transport options for the coast is important. Changes may need to be gradual and will require public support. Positive action will be required including the better promotion of cycling and walking in the coastal zone.

1.12.6 Coast Protection Policy

Sefton's coast protection policy does have impacts outside the scope of this plan. Proposals such as works at Hightown now have to be addressed in the light of developing Shoreline Management Plans and the requirements of the UK Habitats Regulations. The Issue is linked to the national response to predicted sea level rise.

1.12.7 Review of the Unitary Development Plan

Sefton's Unitary Development Plan will be reviewed within the timescale of this Plan. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme will advise the Local Planning Authority on some of the constraints and opportunities in the coastal zone. Sefton Council will be required to review all its policies including Green Belt policy, the limits of the defined Coastal Planning Zone and all coastal policies.

1.12.8 Review of Sefton Boundary

A review of the Sefton boundary will be carried out in 1997. One proposal is to divide the current local authority in two. Such a move would have implications for the structure and mechanisms of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.

Section 2 Land Use And Economic Development

The development of improved planning control of activities, and the development of a vision for the Sefton Coast, since the formation of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974, has been of overall benefit to the coastal zone.

The initial proposals for the establishment of a management scheme focused on the need to '*secure the rehabilitation and conservation of the dune system*'. The Coast Management Plans prepared in 1983 and 1989 had a much greater emphasis on landscape renewal/restoration than the current Plan. This is a reflection of the effort that has been put into restoration schemes at Formby Point, Hightown, Ainsdale and Southport (Weld Road).

Since the first review of the Coast Management Plan in 1989;

Sefton Council has prepared and published a Unitary Development Plan, to be reviewed in 2001.

- the Green Belt designation has been extended.
- a Coastal Planning Zone has been established.
- a Southport Seafront Development Strategy has been prepared.
- more jobs have been created in coast and countryside management.

The economic value of the Sefton Coast in a regional context, linked to European Regional Development Fund support, is important and its value is likely to increase as enhancement work and new investment come on stream. The Sefton Coast is part of regional regeneration and these links will be further developed in the context of whole estuary management plans.

Targets for the Plan period; we will aim to;

- complete economic regeneration projects at Southport and Crosby.
- increase employment in the coastal zone from a 1997 baseline.

SECTION 2 LAND-USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Aim: To encourage and support appropriate land-use, sustainable economic development, investment and employment consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast.

2.1 Land-Use Planning

Objective: To promote only coast dependant and sustainable development within the coastal zone.

The Unitary Development Plan for Sefton contains a specific section on coastal planning, as well as numerous other policies relevant to the coastal area. Within the Plan there is a presumption against any development proposal which conflicts with the aims of the Council with regard to management of the coastal area. The UDP will be fully reviewed and republished by 2001.

The 'aims' are those of the Coast Management Plan. The 1997 review of the Coast Management Plan will replace the 1989 Plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance after a period of public consultation either separately or as part of the UDP review.

The Unitary Development Plan supports the development of a co-ordinated strategy for coastal zone management and recognises "that effective coastal management depends heavily on co-operation between a wide range of agencies, and that the forces acting on the coast do not respect administrative or legal boundaries."

Within the Coastal Planning Zone the Council will :-

(i) ensure that the natural conditions and processes are recognised and taken fully into account in any development proposals and will restrict development, where advisable, for physiographic reasons;

(ii) protect, conserve, restore and enhance natural resources, including mineral and marine resources, natural and semi-natural coastal fauna and flora and their habitats and the amenity values inherent in the coastal landscapes;

(iii) promote coastal dependent economic development and renewal, including the restoration and enhancement of unique coastal areas and structures.

This is a broad statement which underpins 17 specific Coastal Planning Zone policies (CPZ1-CPZ17). These are given in full in Appendix 1 and most are amplified by the Coast Management Plan.

Land uses on the Sefton Coast include inter-tidal fisheries, nature reserves, recreational open space, agriculture, forestry, golf courses, caravan sites, military training areas, sub-urban parks, docks and residential areas.

In considering the resources of the coastal zone, the value of existing development must not be ignored. The Bootle and Seaforth Docks and Southport Seafront are important generators of employment - some 4,500 jobs in 220 businesses are directly or indirectly linked to port activity in the Bootle City Challenge area and about 4,800 in the tourist industry at Southport (Data: Sefton MBC Economic Development Unit).

Sefton's approach to coastal zone management is echoed and supported by the Government's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 20, Coastal Planning*, published in 1992. PPG 20 is an important supporting document for coastal management in Sefton; it gives greater weight to many of the UDP coastal policies and helps to define 'material considerations' in assessing development proposals.

It also encourages co-operation and co-ordination between local authorities, and within local authorities, and supports the development of non-statutory coastal management plans of which this plan is a good example. *Regional Planning Guidance for the North West* also endorses the approach adopted by Sefton Council and partners.

Planning applications in the Coastal Planning Zone, or likely to affect the interests of coastal management, will be brought to the attention of the Coast Management Scheme partners through the Working Party mechanism. This would not affect the responsibilities of statutory consultees but would help to provide better non-statutory input into the planning process.

The Green Belt designation in Sefton is an important planning tool which safeguards the valuable areas of open coast. As well as being a restraining device, the Green Belt can also help to provide access to the coast and to enhance and improve amenities.

The UDP policies are tools which the Sefton Coast Management Scheme will refer to, as necessary, to support its management aims and objectives, to protect the coastal zone and to encourage the highest standards of built development, where appropriate.

A summary of environmental policies and other policies relevant to the coastal zone is given in Appendix 2.

Policy CMP1

Partners, as appropriate, will inform and advise the decision making process of the Local Planning Authority and will, where relevant, elaborate and support its policies relating to the Coastal Planning Zone

2.2 Local Transport Policy

In 1994 the five Merseyside Districts and Merseytravel agreed a common transport strategy and investment programme - the Merseyside Integrated Transport Strategy, or MERITS.

This strategy is used to support bids for Government funding. The main theme is the need to ensure that transport policies contribute to the overall objectives of sustainable development. It proposes an integrated package of measures at the centre of which are

policies to increase the relative attractiveness of public transport and non-motorised forms of transport as a means of moderating the upward trend in car use. The strategy gives a high priority to schemes which improve safety and protect the environment. It has attracted strong support from the Department of Transport and forms the basis for the annual bid for local transport funding.

In its annual Transport Policies and Programme document (TPP), Sefton Council sets out its local policies and schemes and relates these to the Merseyside strategy. Of particular significance in relation to the Coast Management Plan are :

- the integrated transport package for the "Northern Corridor" (Southport-Crosby-Bootle-Liverpool) which is currently at the consultations stage.
- the emerging Southport Transport Strategy due to go to public consultation during June/July 1997.
- the Sefton Cycling Strategy, approved by the Council and now being implemented in phases.

The Coast Management Plan will need to have regard to, the development of a number of emerging policies and proposals.

- improved park and ride facilities including facilities on the Northern Line.
- traffic calming and management to improve the pedestrian environment and safety.
- development of a core network of cycle routes including the coastal route to Southport and links to the Trans-Pennine Trail.
- promotion of bus and rail travel, including for leisure trips, by enhanced passenger facilities, improved services and better publicity.
- developing a public awareness programme to encourage alternatives to car travel.

2.3 Mineral Resources

Sefton Council is the Mineral Planning Authority within its area of jurisdiction. The main issues concerning the coast are the winning of special industrial sands and aggregates and the exploration for and extraction of offshore and onshore reserves of oil and gas.

2.3.1 Intertidal Special Industrial Sands and Aggregates

Much of the sand won from the Horse Bank off Southport is used for special industrial purposes, such as moulding sand in foundries and glass polishing. Sands suitable for such uses have a restricted distribution. A large proportion of the sand extracted is also used as aggregates sand.

However, given the sensitivity of the site the extraction of sand from this area predominantly for use as aggregate will not be permitted and the extraction is conditional on the operation not having an adverse impact upon the foreshore or sea defences. The sand winning operation also contributes to the level of commercial traffic on the coastal road.

The current planning permission expires in 1998. In any case, the current planning permission requires review under the Habitats Regulations and this will look at the effect of the operations on the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA. Sand extraction in the Ribble Estuary does not only potentially affect the Sefton coastline but also the estuary itself. The views of neighbouring Coast Protection Authorities must also be considered.

2.3.2 Oil and Gas Exploration

Oil and gas reserves in the Lennox field are to be exploited by BHP plc (formerly Hamilton Oil plc.) over the plan period and beyond up to about 2015. The Lennox field lies offshore from the Sefton Coast, near enough to have environmental implications (see Section 6.5).

Oil and gas from the Lennox field will be taken westwards to collection and pre-processing rigs before the gas is piped to the Point of Ayr terminal and the oil is loaded to tankers at offshore moorings.

Sefton Council will continue to press the Departments of Energy and Environment and relevant operators to take the value and sensitivity of the whole coast, including in-shore waters, fully into account in any deliberations.

In 1995 Sefton Council advised the Department of Trade and Industry that, due to the national and international nature conservation value of the coast and adjacent 'watery areas', as well as the tourist, recreational and amenity interests on the coast, all bids for exploration, appraisal and development licences in the Ribble and Mersey estuaries should be rejected.

In the subsequent 7th Round of Landward Oil and Gas Licensing (1996) no blocks lying below the mean low water mark have been licensed within Sefton. However, there is an extensive area of land within Sefton that falls within the area awarded to Independent Energy UK Ltd. The 7th Round Landward Licences were the first to be issued under *The Petroleum (Production) (Landward Areas) Regulations 1995*. The new Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences allow companies to obtain a single license covering all stages of activity and replace the separate exploration, appraisal and development licences.

The licenced blocks in Sefton lie above the mean low water mark and therefore will be subject to the Local Planning Authority planning regime.

2.4 Port related Activities

Objective : To encourage the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to support the aims of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.

The Port, including the Freeport, is a major feature of Sefton's economy, and is also of strategic significance to the economy of Merseyside and the North West. The Port is enjoying a period of success and has increased its trade and facilities in recent years.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) is a key partner in the City Challenge project in Bootle.

The Council has expressed concern about the environmental side effects of activities such as the bulk storage of coal and scrap. However, the role of the Local Planning Authority is limited. Within the Dock estate, the MDHC enjoy permitted development rights for operational land uses such as loading, storage and unloading of goods.

The Council could seek an Article 4 Direction for the suppression of permitted development rights, but prefers to adopt a more consultative and voluntary approach.

The Council will continue to press the MDHC and cargo handling companies within the Dock estate to find ways of reducing the problems of dust, noise, odour and traffic generation. Where it may be possible to extend planning control, works may require environmental assessment. The *General Permitted Development Order 1995* sets out which schemes now require planning permission.

The MDHC, in conducting their operations, should be aware of the impact that the Port facility has on the coast and adjacent residential areas and should adopt, as a matter of principle, the design criteria advocated in the UDP. These relate to the proper consideration of the best and most practicable design of buildings and infrastructure, taking into account drainage, control of pollution, opportunities for wildlife and visual impact.

In particular, the MDHC is asked to support and ensure full compliance with the *Merchant Shipping (Reception Facilities for Garbage) Regulations 1988* and to minimise the impact of the dock estate on the marine environment through good working practice (see Sections 6.1 & 6.2).

The MDHC will be encouraged to take a greater interest in the consultative forum offered by the Sefton Coast Management Scheme. The MDHC have given greater protection to the Seaforth Nature Reserve, managed by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, by formally recognising that part of the site forms a Site of Local Biological Interest.

Policy CMP2

Sefton Council and partners support the proposal by the Mersey Estuary Management Plan for an Environmental Code of Practice for the Mersey Estuary which will encourage port operators and users to improve environmental standards.

2.5 Economic Development

Objective : To retain coast-related employment, especially that related to policy areas in the Coast Management Plan

The work of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme has had and will continue to play an important role in the regeneration of Merseyside. Severe environmental damage at Formby Point in the early 1970s was addressed by Merseyside County Council as part

of an overall approach to urban regeneration. The Sefton Coast is one of the 'green lungs' of Merseyside and the improvements have helped to enhance the region as a whole.

Within the coastal zone there are three main employment sectors; the port, the tourism industry and the rural economy (including recreation, nature conservation, fishing, agriculture and forestry).

The Mersey Estuary Management Plan focuses on the economic development of port industries, and this is not a main area of work for the Management Scheme itself. Nor can the Plan play a direct role of the promotion of the tourist industry in Sefton. However, it benefits both sectors indirectly. Tourism is a major industry in Sefton. Visitor spending from an estimated 1.4 million staying visitors and 4.2 million day visitors to Southport is calculated as being worth £89 million and supports 4800 jobs (Data: Sefton MBC Economic Development Unit) The Sefton Coast Management Scheme can promote the contribution that the open coast makes to the economy of the Borough of Sefton. For a 'rural' area the coast supports many jobs in a relatively small area.

The Sefton Coast is one of the natural assets of Merseyside and it is worth investing in its management for the benefit of the region as a whole.

Policy CMP3

Partners will seek to protect the livelihoods of local people engaged in fishing, farming, and land management and promote new employment in the coastal area especially in the fields of nature conservation, sport and recreation, visitor management and tourism.

Section 3 Nature Conservation, Landscape and Land Management

Nature conservation, landscape and land management lie at the heart of the Coast Management Scheme. The whole approach to management is identified with 'the place'; the unique combination of features and wildlife which make the Sefton Coast special.

Over the years there has been a progressive improvement in our knowledge of, and management for, habitats and species. Resources, however, have been limited and only with the additional funding in 1995 from the EC Life Programme, have some of the proposed actions been taken forward.

Since the first review of the Coast Management Plan in 1989;

- a complete vegetation survey of the dune coast has been produced
- the Ribble Estuary National Nature Reserve has been extended
- European nature conservation designations have been confirmed (the foreshores) and proposed (the dunes).
- the Ravenmeols Dunes and Lifeboat Road site have been purchased by Sefton Council
- strategies and monitoring programmes for rare species have been developed.
- English Nature have implemented their 'open dune restoration project' at Ainsdale.
- the objectives for woodland management have been progressed
- The Sefton Coast Management Scheme has been awarded a Eurosite Quality label for habitat management.
- Sefton Council were the first national winner of the 'Council's for Wildlife' award.

Not all the proposals in the 1989 Plan have progressed as well, mainly for lack of resources. However, management as a process is able to respond to changing priorities. Proposals for the creation of new woodlands, for example, is now largely superseded by The Mersey Forest Initiative which will work closely with the Scheme partners in the identification for new planting areas.

Targets for the Plan period. We will aim to;

- complete the review of conservation designations and establish all nature reserves proposed in the Plan.
- return all 'priority habitats' and rare species to 'favourable conservation status' in accordance with EC Directives.
- complete a landscape assessment of the Sefton Coast.
- prepare a strategy to ensure the continuity of woodland cover on the coast.
- tackle remaining problems of visual amenity identified in the Plan.

SECTION 3 NATURE CONSERVATION, LANDSCAPE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Aim: To conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of the coast, including its characteristic terrestrial, littoral and marine flora and fauna, geology, geomorphology, landscape and heritage features of architectural, historical, cultural and archaeological interest.

3.1 Wildlife Conservation

Objective : To maintain and enhance all natural and semi-natural terrestrial habitats, including areas outside conservation designations, with particular emphasis on designated areas, protected species and rare and fragmented habitats and to conserve and enhance the littoral and marine zones.

3.1.1 Site Protection

The Sefton Coast is an area of prime biodiversity and is covered by several conservation designations (Maps 3 to 6). Foreshore and dune areas are designated under the Ramsar Convention on the conservation of wetlands, with foreshore areas also designated as a Special Protection Area under the *EC Birds Directive*. The dunes and part of the foreshore area are a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the *EC Habitats Directive*.

The primary aims of these instruments are different but, generally, they are used together. Both will form the Natura 2000 series of protected European sites.

Seven SSSIs have been notified under the provisions of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) which lie either entirely or partly within the boundary of Sefton.

These are sites which English Nature considers to be of national importance for nature conservation and are notified to Sefton Council as requiring special consideration when development applications are proposed which may affect them. English Nature may also identify 'consultation zones' around SSSIs, usually of up to 2km, where they would wish to be consulted on significant developments which may affect the value of the SSSI.

Ainsdale Sand Dunes (including part of three SSSIs) has been notified as a site of special geomorphological interest under English Nature's Geological Conservation Review. The designated sites give a good but incomplete protective coverage of the scientific interest of the Sefton Coast. English Nature will be undertaking a review of the SSSI series by 1998.

There are three National Nature Reserves on the coast; Ribble Estuary (of which only part is within Sefton), Ainsdale Sand Dunes and Cabin Hill. English Nature will also review NNR designations on the coast by 1998 to see if there are opportunities to extend the designation in the interests of nature conservation, whilst accommodating recreational activity consistent with the overall objectives of land management.

Two Local Nature Reserves have been established, Ravenmeols and Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills, and these are both owned by Sefton Council and managed by the

Director of Leisure Services. Both reserves could be extended and consolidated by taking in outlying dune areas including dunes at Oxford Road, Birkdale, dunes at Falklands Way and Kenilworth Road, Ainsdale and dunes at Ravenmeols, given the approval of English Nature.

Sefton Council allows public access to Local Nature Reserves and promotes their use as an educational resource.

Three further areas have been proposed for Local Nature Reserve designation (UDP policy: CPZ5):

Hightown Dunes and Meadows

The area is in multiple ownership and since 1983 has been managed by Sefton Council as a possible LNR. A formal management agreement will be sought with landowners and a management plan prepared.

Marshside and Crossens Marsh

Marshside marshes, owned by Sefton Council, were leased to the RSPB in 1994 for an initial period of 21 years. The privately owned Crossens marsh should also be brought within the overall management framework of the Marshside area through purchase, lease or agreement.

Freshfield Dune Heath

Part of the area is in private ownership, but open to the public; the remainder is owned by the MOD. Heathland management is an important component of the Coast Management Scheme and the designation of a heathland nature reserve will be given a high priority.

Other areas which could be considered for Local Nature Reserve status include the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail at Southport, Lifeboat Road dunes and parts of the Crosby dune system.

A database of wildlife resources in Sefton is held by the Joint Countryside Advisory Service. Borough-wide information is available for habitats based principally on botanical surveys. This is now being reviewed with the addition of information on faunal interest.

A series of Sites of Local Biological Interest have been identified, presented on UDP maps, and information on each is included in Supplementary Planning Guidance due to be revised in 1996.

The distribution of Sites of Local Biological Interest covers much of the coastal area already protected by SSSI designation and small but also already fragmented, sites which are remnants of the original open dune system.

The list of SLBIs will be reviewed as new survey work is completed. Crosby Marine Park and Southport Marine Lake are candidate SLBIs, principally for their ornithological interest.

A series of Regionally Important Geological/geomorphological Sites (RIGS) for Sefton is in preparation. The coastal dunes and intertidal areas are large elements of these.

The Sefton Coast Life Project will progress a nature conservation strategy for the sand dunes and foreshore areas. The project will develop a data-base for the coast, prepare management plans and assist with the SSSI review.

To protect designated sites planning policies take note of any harmful effects that could arise from development of adjacent land, such as pollution, alterations to drainage and hydrology, or increased disturbance. The Council is guided by *Planning Policy Guidance 9 (Nature Conservation)* and the *UK Habitats Regulations*. These are powerful tools which strengthen the environmental and coastal policies of the UDP.

Where it seems probable that adjacent development would adversely affect a nature conservation site there is a presumption against development. Opportunities to enhance/manage sites arising out of development proposals will be considered.

Policy CMP4

Partners support the need to strengthen and consolidate nature conservation designations on the Sefton Coast.

3.1.2 Habitat Management

Within the coastal zone the main habitats are benthic communities, inter-tidal sand and mud, mobile and fixed dunes, slacks, semi-natural and plantation woodland, scrub, grassland, open water and salt and freshwater marshes .

The sand dunes have been well studied and a research review *The Sand Dunes of the Sefton Coast* published. Attitudes to dune management have changed considerably over the past decade. There is now a greater understanding of the need to work with natural processes.

The dune areas have generally become over-stabilised and much habitat management activity is now directed at vegetation control by scrub cutting, grazing (including encouraging a certain level of rabbit grazing) and mowing. The aim is to establish a sustainable and economical management regime to maintain habitat and species diversity.

More is now known about the habitat requirements of key species. Conflicts between nature conservation interests and existing recreational interests have been reduced by good management.

The northern part of the Sefton coast extends into the Ribble estuary. The Marshside and Crossens enclosed marshes, along with the dune/saltmarsh transition seawards of

Marine Drive, are an important component of the coastal system. Most of the Ribble Estuary National Nature Reserve is grazed saltmarsh. Grazing by cattle maintains the short grassland favoured by pink-footed geese and wigeon. Conservation issues throughout the estuary are discussed by the Ribble Estuary Liaison Committee.

In Sefton, however, there is a good variety of estuarine habitats from grazed saltmarsh, coastal wet grassland, recently vegetated mudflats and reedbeds. This variety of habitats adds interest to the Sefton Coast and should be maintained and enhanced.

The southern part of the Sefton coast extends into the Mersey estuary and includes the small saltmarsh at the mouth of the River Alt. The importance of the marsh is recognised in both the Mersey Estuary Management Plan and the Alt 2000 initiative.

The intertidal and sub-tidal zones of the Sefton Coast are dominated by sandy and muddy habitats generally representative of the north west of England. Bait digging takes place and needs to be monitored by English Nature and SSSI managers to prevent over-exploitation.

New nature conservation initiatives over the next decade will look to beach management and to the outlying parts of the dune system, to fragmented and isolated habitats and to areas of undermanaged land. Through the Life initiative, initially English Nature, along with Sefton Council, the National Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and other partners, will seek ways to enhance nature conservation on areas such as golf courses, military training areas and other private land.

Key actions will include:

- The establishment of a dune heath initiative to set out management prescriptions for the fragmented, but important, areas of heath.
- Working with golf course managers to prepare and implement nature conservation management plans for the dune golf courses.
- Working with TAVRA and MOD on nature conservation initiatives at Altcar and Woodvale.
- Identifying opportunities for nature conservation management on areas of under-used land including, where necessary, land purchase.
- The preparation of an overall nature conservation strategy for the sand dunes and foreshore.

Policy CMP 5

The conservation value of the dunes, dune heath, estuaries and marshes will be maintained and enhanced wherever possible by positive and coordinated actions by partners.

3.1.3 Species conservation

The Sefton Coast supports a diverse flora and fauna; many of the species identified to date are rare and vulnerable. Species listed in Annex II of the *EC Habitats Directive* include Petalwort (a bryophyte) and Great Crested Newt. Other species include

Natterjack Toad, Sand Lizard and all bat species, protected by Annex IV of the *EC Habitats Directive* (species of community interest in need of strict protection) and the Common Tern, protected under Annex I of the *EC Birds Directive*. The Red Squirrel is protected under national legislation. Management strategies will be prepared for key species, principally through the Life project and/or English Nature. It is likely that the number of 'important' species will increase as Biodiversity Action Plans are developed. Management plans would have to be adjusted accordingly.

The Coast Management Scheme must seek a balance between the sometimes conflicting requirements of individual species. It does this by taking an international, national and coast-wide view of habitats, addressing potential conflicts and seeking consensus with partners.

The local Red Squirrel population, for example, has survived because of the 'island' nature of the area. Woodland management on the coast will pay particular attention to the requirements of this species. Similarly appropriate woodland management can help some species of bat.

Biodiversity is the term used to encompass all species from mammals to micro-organisms. The Sefton Coast, on the basis of the number of species already known to occur, is an area of prime biodiversity.

Biodiversity is defined in Section 1.5.2 and includes (i) diversity between and within ecosystems, (ii) diversity of species and (iii) genetic variation within individual species. Biodiversity is an important concept which will be addressed by the Scheme partners principally through the development of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan. This will not be exclusive to the coast but will help to maintain and maximise biodiversity and set the coast in a wider regional context. English Nature's Natural Area programme provides a framework for linking local and national priorities such as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan to targets.

The conservation of open dunes is and will continue to be given priority on all duneland nature reserves to protect species such as Natterjack Toad and Sand Lizard along with many highly specialised and nationally restricted animals, plants and fungi. Practical management includes the control of invasive grassland and scrub species, management by grazing and the creation of suitable new habitats where appropriate.

The Sefton Coast is part of an estuarine complex of international importance to migratory waterfowl. Because of the movement of birds between estuaries, the conservation of populations must be aided by monitoring on a national and regional scale, National bird counts, the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) are co-ordinated by the British Trust for Ornithology. Initiatives such as the Liverpool Bay Wader Study Group help to inform this process and give it local detail.

On the Sefton Coast, management practice, particularly the zoning of beaches, can help to protect birds from disturbance. Large numbers of birds visiting the Sefton Coast can lead to perceived competition with fisheries. Liaison between ornithological interests and fishery interests on the conservation of sustainable resources is best carried out at the level of the estuary management plans.

The coast is an important area for breeding birds. Several still-common species, such as Skylark and Reed Bunting, have declined throughout Britain and are 'red-listed' by conservation agencies.

The sustainability of breeding bird assemblages on the Sefton Coast will be addressed in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the nature conservation strategy for the cSAC.

Increasing recreation and disturbance, especially by dogs, is a major threat to bird populations. Disturbance is equally a threat to breeding, roosting and feeding birds. The introduction of beach zoning and wardening has reduced pressures on the foreshore but even light disturbance can affect potential breeding birds. The importance of sanctuary zones must be recognised and incorporated into overall zoning.

Policy CMP6

Partners will support the preparation, review and implementation of conservation strategies for key species.

Policy CMP7

Partners will support the production and implementation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.1.4 Marine Conservation

The term marine encompasses both littoral and sub-littoral habitats and the sea itself. The Sefton coast has a huge inter-tidal area, covering some 45km² and a gentle shelving near shore zone with a healthy benthic (sea-bed) community. The interests of marine nature conservation are not confined to the sea bed, but also include birds, fish, plankton, sea mammals and turtles. Grey Seals are regularly seen offshore from the Sefton Coast.

The inter-tidal zone of Sefton (with the exception of the dock frontage and part of Crosby beach) is a designated Ramsar site / SPA. The fauna of the littoral zone has been surveyed and, although much is estuarine in nature and not rare, there are zones of richer faunal assemblages.

Important populations of seabirds use the offshore part of the Sefton Coast and often shelter and feed on the marine lakes and dock pools. The Common Tern occurs in internationally important numbers and Cormorant, Common Scoter and Little Gull in nationally important numbers. The populations of seabirds are an indicator of the overall health of the marine environment.

None of the offshore areas adjacent to the Sefton coast are proposed for protective designation by English Nature, but this in no way devalues the marine resource, which must be protected from damage and be exploited only at sustainable levels. Initially, much can be done to make people more aware of the resource and its conservation importance.

Awareness will help in its protection. Issues should be addressed by Sefton Council, English Nature and the Sea Fisheries Committee at the estuary management level.

Policy CMP 8

Partners will seek to ensure that responsible agencies and individuals protect the marine resource from damage and over-exploitation, will interpret its value and will support users who adopt sustainable conservation management principles.

3.2 Earth Science Conservation

Objective : To conserve features of national geological/geomorphological interest and process and to identify and conserve features of regional and local interest.

The geological history of the Sefton coast is linked to the formation of the West Lancashire mossland. Most recent research suggests the formation of a low dune barrier island about 5,000 years ago, with the estuaries of the rivers Crossens and Alt lying between it and higher ground to the east.

The area has a well studied geological and geomorphological history and contains a number of features and formations of interest.

The importance of some of these features on a national or international scale will not be known until more work is carried out. English Nature has identified one site on the coast, centred on the Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR (but including parts of three SSSIs) in its Geological Conservation Review.

Several sites have been identified as possible Regionally Important Geological/geomorphological Sites (RIGS). Candidate RIGS are selected by the Merseyside RIGS group using standard assessment and notification given to the local planning authority. Planning policies for RIGS will be developed through the UDP review process.

The conservation of processes, including coastal processes, is fundamental to the healthy development of sedimentary coasts. Limitations are recognised, e.g. where the continuation of the process would endanger lives or threaten property but, generally, there is a move towards a 'dynamic' approach to coastal management.

The fragmented nature of the Sefton Coast puts a number of artificial constraints on such an approach so that the areas where minimal intervention management can take place are limited, but these must be protected. Key areas include Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale beaches, Ravenmeols dunes, Formby dunes, Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve and the Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills Local Nature Reserve.

Soil successional processes and hydrological processes are also conserved through the adoption of a dynamic approach to management.

Policy CMP 9

Partners will, as far as possible, protect designated sites of national, regional and local geological/geomorphological interest from damage and will interpret their value to the public.

3.3 The Coastal Landscape

Objective : To conserve the character and integrity of the present-day coastal landscape by direct action and to identify, enhance and protect landscapes and landscape features of special historic value and character.

The Sefton Coast carries no formal landscape designation such as the statutory Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the non-statutory Heritage Coast. The lack of a protective landscape designation, however, is compensated to some extent by international nature conservation designations which act indirectly to protect the landscape.

The Sefton Coast is a complex mix of landscape types. Landscape is a combination of physical and human factors which lead to cultural, historical and aesthetic associations. Landscape character can be eroded through the loss of distinctive features, through the disruption of landscape forming processes, or through inappropriate 'improvement'.

The distinctive landscape character of the Sefton Coast should be enhanced and protected through initiatives such as the Countryside Character approach, The Mersey Forest and Countryside Stewardship and through the direct action of landowners and land managers. Specific landscape elements may require special attention.

Several golf courses were established on duneland in the last century. The 'links' character of these courses is renowned and landscape assessment could give guidance to golf course managers on maintaining and, in some cases, returning the golfing landscape of Sefton to one which is in harmony with the main coastal landscape types.

Heritage landscapes are landscapes of cultural value which demonstrate a record of the interaction between people and land. On these criteria specific areas in Sefton have been identified as 'Heritage Landscape'.

The UDP recognises that 'the coastal landscape should be considered as a Heritage Landscape', but this has yet to be defined or identified.

The coast lacks any designation based principally on landscape, yet parts of the coast, such as the former asparagus fields, hedges and warrens are certainly of great historic and cultural value, preserving, in parts, a landscape thought to be unique and not comparable to other sites in the UK. A more detailed assessment of landscape quality and value may be able to put forward a case for, at least local, if not national designation. An archaeological assessment would form part of any landscape assessment.

The designation of appropriate parts of the coast as a Heritage Landscape would reinforce the application of Green Belt policies and help to focus resources on the

management of the heritage features. It would also be an important consideration for the Countryside Commission in their review of Heritage Coast designations.

Any Heritage Coast designation would not supercede the nature conservation designations and the value of the coast for wildlife in an international and national context.

English Nature and the Countryside Commission, with assistance from English Heritage, have produced a common framework for looking at the natural and cultural dimension of the landscape. With the integration of ecological and landscape characteristics in *The Character of England; landscape, wildlife and natural features* it will be possible to consider the issues affecting landscape and nature conservation in a single framework.

The character map is a context which will support and dovetail with local landscape assessments. The Sefton Coast is recognised as an area with unique character. The Sefton Coast character area also forms part of English Nature's Urban Mersey Basin Natural Area.

Policy CMP10

Partners will seek resources for a detailed landscape assessment of the Sefton Coast to identify landscape types, and, as appropriate, draw up policies and plans for enhancement.

Policy CMP11

Partners will include landscape considerations in site management plans and habitat strategies and will identify and enhance important landscape features only in accordance with other policies.

3.4 Water Conservation

Objective: To manage ground water levels in the dunes for conservation and to ensure adequate flows in the Rivers Alt and Crossens

The protection and improvement of the water environment is one of the prime functions of the Environment Agency. The statutory requirement to manage the water environment has created wide-ranging responsibilities for the EA and many of these have implications for the statutory planning process.

EA policies will help to support the aims of the Coast Management Scheme in protecting the water environment. Specifically, these policies will address:

- the protection of groundwater levels in sensitive areas by controlling and monitoring abstraction licences.
- the protection and enhancement of groundwater quality.
- improvements to the water quality of rivers and, hence, the sea.
- maintenance of river flows, especially in the Alt.

Local EA Plans (formerly Catchment Management Plans) are being introduced by the EA to guide its work and to form partnerships to ensure that all waters are protected and, where possible, improved for the benefit of present and future users.

Local EA Plans will be prepared for the Alt and Crossens, Douglas, Ribble and Mersey. Plans are based on the principles of sustainability and focus in particular on water quality, control of discharges, maintenance of flows, flood defence, conservation and migratory fish. The Local EA Plans for the Alt/Crossens drainage area is of particular relevance to the management of water resources in the dune area and Marshside.

The Alt 2000 campaign was launched in 1994 with the support of voluntary and statutory organisations and local authorities. In seeking to improve the water quality, habitat and environs of the Alt, it complements the work of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme. Close liaison will be maintained.

Water is an important resource on the Sefton Coast and one which must be managed in a way that ensures good drainage from agricultural and residential areas yet also maintains the duneland and marshland as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention of 1971.

The sand dunes are a 'minor' aquifer and the dune water level is dependant on rainfall. The dune water table, therefore, follows local patterns of rainfall with 'dry' years and 'wet' years as well as regular seasonal fluctuations. This natural fluctuation is vital for the conservation of dynamic dune processes, such as the formation of blow outs and wet slacks. The low nutrient status of the water in the dune aquifer is important for the conservation of characteristic water plants.

The dune water table can be reduced by the licenced abstraction for golf course irrigation, by drainage, coast erosion and the growth of trees, tall grasses and shrubs which intercept a considerable proportion of the rainfall.

English Nature are concerned about the impact of water abstraction on wetland SSSIs, including the Southport Sand Dunes and Foreshore SSSI, and will work with the Environment Agency and Sefton Council to take forward more detailed studies. When dealing with European designated areas the Environment Agency, as the 'competent authority' will work with English Nature to produce an appropriate assessment of any proposed development.

In preparing a nature conservation strategy for the sand dunes the Life project will address, with the Environment Agency and English Nature, the conservation and protection of the dune aquifer. Any 'water conservation plan ' would have to also address the Environment Agency's abstraction licence procedure and pollution (if any) of the groundwater. Alt 2000 would be a partner in such a strategy.

Water flows in the two smaller rivers, the Crossens and Alt, are controlled by pumping stations managed by the Environment Agency. It is important, however, to maintain flows to flush sediments from the river channels to maintain the drainage function of the rivers. The Blundellsands Sailing Club at Hightown also has an interest since its location depends on a sufficient depth of water in the Alt channel.

Policy CMP 12

A water conservation plan will be prepared and implemented by the partners.

3.5 Woodland and Scrub Management

Objective : To achieve an acceptable balance between woodland and open dunes, enhance the landward woodland and increase its value for nature conservation and amenity.

Partners in the Coast Management Scheme have agreed that an appropriate balance is necessary between woodland areas on the coast and the conservation of open dunes, marshland and farmland. Woodland communities include pine plantations, mixed woodland, deciduous woodlands (often of sycamore and alder) associated with former agricultural areas, sea buckthorn and birch thickets, white poplar and balsam poplar scrub and self sown pine and birch on heathlands and in clearings. From a landscape and nature conservation point of view, the coastal area also includes areas of low tree cover, such as the Alt floodplain, the dunes and dune heaths and the Ribble marshland.

3.5.1 Management Strategy

The Sefton Coast area is covered by a Working Plan for the woodlands prepared by the Joint Countryside Advisory Service and silvicultural management plans prepared by the National Trust, TAVRA and English Nature. The Working Plan will be revised in 1997 in the form of a strategy. It will be extended to give a coastwide view of woodland and scrub management and woodland biodiversity.

The management of scrub is as important as the silvicultural management of the woodlands. Although scrub is a natural component of a dune system only a small proportion of the scrub on the coast is the result of ecological succession by species native to this area. On open dune and heathland areas the encroachment of scrub needs to be controlled to retain the value of both the habitat and landscape. In some areas scrub is seen as an important element of the habitat and landscape and could be left to develop naturally.

Most of the woodland on the Sefton Coast lies within the area of The Mersey Forest. Sefton Council, as a partner in the Forest Plan, is aiming to increase tree cover in Sefton and, by encouraging woodland owners, to bring all existing woodlands into management. Only small areas of woodland on the Sefton coast are not in effective management.

3.5.2 Nature Conservation

Sefton Council and The Mersey Forest will seek no net loss of woodland cover in the Sefton area. For this reason the partners will generally resist any major removal of deciduous and coniferous woodlands, but recognise that where there is an over-riding nature conservation argument, the interests of nature should take precedence.

The removal of seaward pine plantations and scrub on the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve to recreate open dunes will be compensated to some extent by management of the rearward woodlands aimed, in part, to safeguard the habitat of the red squirrel.

The pinewoods of the Sefton coast support a healthy population of the Red Squirrel and efforts will be made, particularly by working with NPI Red Alert north west, to ensure the survival of a viable population. The needs of the red squirrel population will be addressed in the coastal woodland and scrub management strategy.

3.5.3 Long-term Management

The coastal woodlands are appreciated by local people and visitors for their historical, landscape, recreation and wildlife value. The shelter effect of the woodland belt does ameliorate the local climate at Formby and it is important that this shelter is maintained. The woodlands increase the holding capacity of the area for recreation and people's enjoyment of the woodland resource could be enhanced with greater access for recreation, especially in the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve. Forestry authority grant schemes will look at opportunities for enhancing access and biodiversity as part of normal woodland operations.

There needs to be a long-term vision for the coastal woods that goes beyond the short timescale of a management plan. This is also an integral component of The Mersey Forest Plan in those areas covered by the plan. Because of the artificial nature of the pine plantations and the long timescale for regeneration, it is important that management work is supported by research and monitoring to assess the results of early experiments and to prepare guidelines for techniques and choice of species.

The coastal woodlands are part of a wider economic base for forestry work in The Mersey Forest area. Land managers will be encouraged to prepare silvicultural management plans. Well managed woodlands can produce a sustainable flow of produce, offer employment, conserve habitat and preserve landscape amenity.

The Mersey Forest Initiative highlights the need for economic woodland management and, whilst commercial forestry is not currently the prime aim of any of the woodland plantations, they do represent a considerable resource.

3.5.4 Tree Planting

Continued dune erosion at Formby Point is forcing the tree line back and some of the more seaward plantations will have to be abandoned. The Territorial Army at Altcar have embarked on an extensive tree planting programme, concentrated on former agricultural land. Proposals for similar new tree planting sites in The Mersey Forest Plan also focus on areas immediately inland of the main dune system; at Hightown, Formby and Woodvale. These proposals will be subject to further landscape and ecological appraisal.

There are some concerns that additional woodland might benefit the Grey Squirrel and that low intensity farmland is, in many places, particularly important for several species

of birds of 'serious conservation concern'. The Forestry Authority recommend that a wider view should be taken with regard to being opportunistic in targetting suitable new planting in a zone inland from the coastal woods. If more woodland could be created inland it would help to relieve some of the competing conservation, amenity and recreation pressures on the coast.

Much of the earlier tree planting carried out through the Coast Management Scheme was for the purposes of screen planting. These projects, such as at Formby Point Caravan Park, Pontins and Southbeach Park, Ainsdale, were generally unsuccessful. Screen planting as a quick-fix solution is not practicable in the exposed coastal environment and should not be accepted as mitigation for intrusive development. New approaches to landscape design should be drawn up for the Crosby Marine Park and Southport Seafront area, to make the best use of windbreaks and appropriate planting.

Policy CMP 13

Partners, including The Mersey Forest Team, will prepare and implement a coastwide woodland and scrub management strategy.

Policy CMP 14

The strategy will ensure that the extent, protective function, landscape, ecology and amenity value of the existing landward woodland belt will be maintained.

Policy CMP 15

Areas of proposed new planting will be assessed against nature conservation, landscape and amenity criteria, and , if appropriate, implemented as part of The Mersey Forest initiative. The removal of substantial blocks of woodland will also be assessed against nature conservation, landscape and amenity criteria.

3.6 Agriculture

Objective : Where appropriate to encourage sustainable agricultural practice in the coastal zone.

The agricultural interests in the coastal zone include livestock grazing, asparagus farming on sandy soils and mixed arable on the richer soils of the Alt floodplain. Other land, usually near residential areas, is used as pasture for horse grazing. Sefton Council attaches considerable importance to the conservation of the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. Policy ENV 48 of the Unitary Development Plan sets out the Council's position. Although there is probably no Grade 1 or Grade 2 agricultural land and only small areas of Grade 3a within the coastal area agriculture is an important element of land management. Wherever appropriate, incentives such as Countryside Stewardship and the Farming 2000 initiative will be promoted to achieve sustainable management along with environmental and recreational benefits.

3.6.1 Asparagus Farming

Asparagus farming is part of the cultural landscape at Formby Point. Asparagus farming was a major land use in the 19th Century and the pattern of fields, surrounded by more recent pine plantations, creates a distinctive landscape. During the early 20th Century, the cultivation of asparagus occupied about 100 hectares, but this has declined to no more than 10 hectares, divided between a few farmers. The National Trust own the largest remaining area of asparagus fields. Consideration is needed of ways to support the industry and maintain livelihoods.

Policy CMP 16

Partners will encourage the continuation and enhancement of agricultural businesses and practices on the coast, where compatible with nature conservation interests.

3.6.2 Grazing

Grazing as an agricultural practice and habitat management operation is employed by English Nature on their three National Nature Reserves and also on the Crossens and Marshside marshes. The value of managed grazing for nature conservation is well known and these practices will be encouraged and sustained. Many of the more open dune areas are grazed by a large population of rabbits and this, in its own right, is a traditional land-use.

In the 19th Century, the parts of the dunes not used for asparagus farming were managed as commercial warrens. Conservation land managers wish to maintain rabbit populations at a level consistent with the primary aims of land management, but it is accepted that this view may not apply to all land managers and a resolution will be sought where there is conflict.

There are parts of the dune system where an extension of grazing with domestic livestock would be beneficial. A coastwide approach to the management of grazing would help share resources and make the seasonal grazing of small sites more cost effective. Grazing is just one of the techniques for habitat management employed on the coast, but it is the most sustainable and, therefore, in most areas is the preferred option.

Policy CMP 17

Partners will consider the use of grazing for nature conservation, where appropriate, and, resources permitting, will develop and establish a coastwide approach to the management of grazing.

3.6.3 Arable Farming

Arable farming is practised on soils of Grade 3 and better. The immediate hinterland of the coast is the West Lancashire mosslands, containing some of the finest agricultural soils in the country. Arable fields are an important part of the landscape of the coastal area and they are extensively used by wildfowl and waders for roosting and feeding.

The importance of conserving important numbers of birds in the coastal area, for example, Pink-footed Geese, Curlew and Golden Plover (listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive), depends also on there being inland areas which the birds can use.

Agricultural practices in the hinterland can affect the natural value of the coast and such issues can be addressed in wider studies such as Biodiversity Action Plans.

3.7 Archaeology

Objective : To identify, record, safeguard and encourage interpretation of known and potential archaeological sites, and other features of archaeological importance, in the terrestrial and marine areas.

The archaeology of the coastal zone consists of a finite and irreplaceable resource; often fragile and subject to natural and human forces. The coastal area encompasses an environment which offers high potential for the preservation in situ of the most important of archaeological sites, structures and remains. The majority of archaeological sites finds and features do not have any statutory protection; management of the archaeological resource in the coastal zone requires protection through existing planning legislation and guidelines and integration of archaeological interests within coastal management initiatives.

The British coast has been exploited by humans since the earliest prehistoric period. The coastal area is a dynamic and sensitive environment containing much evidence of past human activity in the terrestrial, intertidal and marine zones. Evidence relating to palaeo-environments; historic management of the coast; settlement, trade and transport industry and exploitation of marine resources indicate the breadth of activity in the coastal area. In addition to providing the principal means of examining past human activity in the coastal area, archaeology enables insight into the processes of coastal change and its causes.

The archaeology of the Sefton Coast (terrestrial and marine) has not been systematically identified or researched for integration with other management issues. Along with the likelihood that a considerable amount of archaeological evidence is buried in the intertidal and dune area, there are several prominent wreck sites which are more difficult to access and record.

The Sefton coastal zone is of proven archaeological potential and represents one of the richest areas for prehistoric settlement and activity in the lowland north west. For instance, the presence of human, animal footprints and artefacts in the intertidal Holocene deposits on the Formby and Hightown foreshores. Sefton Council, along with the National Trust and National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside will encourage and support these investigations.

More recent sites, are in need of attention to avoid further decay, include remains of the Formby Lifeboat Station, the original Formby promenade, Bootle docks and military structures such as WW2 bunkers.

Management of archaeology in the coastal zone relies on appropriate use of existing planning legislation and guidelines within the Local Planning Authority's jurisdiction alongside liaison with the variety of agencies which develop in the marine environment. For instance, land managers and co-ordinators of Shoreline Management Plans should consult and receive advice from the County Sites and Monuments Record Officer on archaeological evidence with guidance on the preparation of policies for their protection. Marine archaeological issues are most likely best addressed at the geographical level of Liverpool Bay as a whole.

Policy CMP 18

Partners will take account of archaeological interest in all management activity through the advice of the County Sites and Monuments Record Officer.

Policy CMP 19

Partners will promote and support archaeological surveys, recording and research along the Sefton Coast and will assist with interpretation.

3.8 Built Heritage

Objective : To highlight the value of the built heritage as part of the special nature of the coast.

The built heritage of the coast; the docks, promenades, piers, gardens and maritime architecture are all part of the Sefton Coast. The statutory functions of the local authority, however, regarding listed buildings, conservation areas and improvement grants are not an issue for this Plan. Rather, the Coast Management Scheme partners should help to celebrate and interpret the built heritage of the coast and try to bring history alive through events and education programmes. Listed buildings include Southport Pier, St. Lukes Church at Formby and Alt Grange Barn at Hightown.

Sefton has a remarkable association between the built heritage and the present day coast. The area has a well recorded recent history and examples of many ages of building and land-use patterns. Some parts of the coastal heritage have, in a way, become cut off from their original function. The terraces and gardens at Crosby, and the Promenade at Southport, were, at one time, at the edge of the sea; more recent reclamation has given them an inland location. The character of the Sefton Coast includes its structures, and planning guidance within the coastal planning zone encourages the best and most appropriate design for its location. Wherever possible, new uses will be found for redundant buildings of architectural interest.

Conservation Areas associated with the coastal zone are: Waterloo, Blundellsands Park, West Birkdale and Southport Promenade.

Policy CMP 20

Partners will promote the contribution that the built heritage makes to the character of the coast and will encourage its conservation.

3.9 Visual Improvement and Landscaping

Objective : To enhance the visual amenity of the coast.

Redundant buildings, poor screening of development, inappropriate 'improvements' and run down properties can all lead to a loss of visual amenity. The notion of 'eyesore' is subjective and not everything can or should be screened.

There are several target areas where schemes are required to enhance the visual amenity and quality of the coast. Areas include the northern boundary of the dock estate where landscaping work should be continued, the environs around Ainsdale-on-Sea where an overall approach is required involving several partners and the north and west shores of Southport Marine Lake. Such projects would require a partnership approach and a measure of external funding from the private sector and/or grants.

Policy CMP 21

Partners will seek to remove or repair derelict structures and to improve visual amenity where such removal or improvement does not conflict with the historical or nature conservation interest of the coast.

Section 4 Recreation, Leisure and Tourism

AIM : To facilitate and enhance the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the coast by improving and extending opportunities for quiet recreation, education, sporting and tourist activities that draw on, and are consistent with, the natural character and conservation value of the coast.

4.1 Access and Visitor Management

Objective : To safeguard and extend public access to the coast, controlling vehicular access and promoting the use of public transport and other means of sustainable transport.

4.1.1 General

People visit the coast for many reasons; perhaps to relax, to admire the landscape, to study nature, to walk or take part in leisure activities. Access arrangements on the Sefton Coast are generally good, but require careful balance. Traffic management, signposting, car parks, launching facilities, public transport, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways should all fit into a co-ordinated framework.

Decisions should be based on the capacity and character of sites, nature conservation constraints and on the recreational needs of local communities and visitors. Joint working and partnership between the various interests, and the guidance of the Management Plan should help to minimise any potential conflicts.

Proposed Policy CMP 22

Partners will prepare and implement a visitor and access management strategy.

4.1.2 Access - pedestrians

The coastal area is well served by a network of footpaths. The statutory footpath network (Public Rights of Way) has been reviewed and several additional ways are to be recorded. The currently recorded ways generally provide access across the dune belt to the beach rather than along the coast.

Proposed additions will include ways along the coast. The 22 mile long Sefton Coastal Footpath is a strategic footpath (although not all of it is a Right of Way) providing opportunities for long distance walks. It is linked to other strategic routes in Sefton and The Mersey Forest area and joins the Lancashire Coastal Path and Cheshire Lines / Trans-Pennine Trail routes. The TPT also forms part of a European long distance footpath, the E8, which runs from Southport to Istanbul. An Alt Path is proposed by the Alt 2000 initiative and this will link to the Sefton Coastal Footpath.

Negotiation with private landowners is necessary to make available and safeguard routes in parts of the coast. The co-operation of Sefton Council as Highway Authority, landowners and voluntary groups is essential for the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive network of well signposted paths.

Additional access or footpath provision which would add to the enjoyment of the coast may be considered where appropriate. Proposals include the re-establishment of a route through the dock estate, seeking greater access to the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve and new woodland routes at Formby Point to form a coastal 'woodland path'.

Links to inland and urban areas could be better developed in liaison with other organisations including Alt 2000 (the proposed footpath along the River Alt), Groundwork, The Mersey Forest, Merseytravel and Sefton Council's Technical Services Department.

One of the attractions of the Sefton Coast is the unrestricted access on foot to many areas. On Sefton Council and National Trust land there is open access to most areas and this freedom is an important principle. Well laid out paths encourage most visitors to use the routes provided.

Policy CMP23

Partners will promote, maintain and develop the coastal footpath network.

4.1.3 Public Transport

Visitors to the coast should be encouraged to use the public transport facilities. Links with Merseytravel have helped to promote the use of the Liverpool-Southport railway, particularly for access to coastal walks, and the coast is signposted from all nearby stations. Shuttle bus links should also be considered. More could be done to use the brand name of the Sefton Coast in tourist orientated promotion on trains and buses.

Better integration is required to link car parking to public transport opportunities, promote walking and cycling between stations and links between the rail and bus networks. Marketing should particularly target the urban areas within Sefton and the Liverpool conurbation and people who do not have access to private transport. The lack of good rail links to the east of Southport and poor interaction between bus and rail services reduces the effectiveness of overall public transport access to the coast.

Policy CMP 24

Partners will actively promote and seek ways to extend the use of public transport.

4.1.4 Cycling

It is likely that more people would use bicycles to visit coastal sites, and especially the beaches, if public transport facilities, safe routes and secure parking were provided. The Cheshire Lines route, for example, links the Maghull area with the coast at Ainsdale.

Beach management at Ainsdale could incorporate secure cycle parks, and cycle parks could be introduced at other sites, for example, the National Trust property at Formby and the Lifeboat Road dune area.

Policy CMP25

Partners will implement provision for cycles, cycling and cycle parking where sympathetic to the natural character and resources of the coast.

4.1.5 Car Parking

With beach parking at Ainsdale, the coast can accommodate large numbers of cars at peak periods with little additional impact on the dune system. This safety valve is useful and probably helps to avoid the worst problems of congestion. Other main car parking areas are at Crosby Marine Park, Formby Point and Southport. Car parking arrangements at Crosby will be reviewed as part of an overall plan for the area. At Formby Point, car parking provision is adequate although congestion does occur on busy weekends.

Demands and pressure should not influence provision; this should be determined by the overall character of the area. Any increase or reduction in car parking would have to be carefully considered.

Beach parking is guided by the Beach Management Plan. Consideration will be given to closing Weld Road as a beach entrance and the long term aim should also be to remove car parking from Southport beach. Such changes may need to be gradual. Unless suitable land became available beach car parking will still need to be accommodated at Ainsdale.

Car park management in Southport has considerable impact on the coast and needs to consider the aims and objectives of the Coast Management Plan and Seafront Development Strategy.

A series of small car parks and station car parks give access to the quieter parts of the coast, or provide links to public transport. It is important to balance the easily accessible coastal areas with more remote areas. In some areas car parking provision should be removed to encourage pedestrian access.

A coast-wide agreement on charging is recommended. Charging is a useful management tool to control visitor numbers if used in a structured form and linked to signposting, facilities and promotion. Provision for the needs of local people should be accommodated in any coast-wide approach to access.

Policy CMP26

Partners will prepare and implement a car parking strategy. Particular attention will be paid to (i) co-ordination between main areas, (ii) signposting, (iii) charging policy and (iv) the impact on local residents.

4.1.6 Access for All

People with disabilities should not be excluded from enjoying access to the coastal zone. The design of new built facilities should cater for all abilities and guidelines for

access drawn up by the Fieldfare Trust will be adopted in consultation with the Sefton Access Group. The use of surfaced paths, boardwalks, and sloping walkways helps to improve access to coastal areas.

It is difficult to provide surfaced routes in some of the nature reserve areas for nature conservation reasons but here novel solutions should be sought to provide access to all. The needs of disabled sportspeople (eg cyclists and horseriders) will also be considered.

Policy CMP 27

Partners will make provision for people with disabilities wherever possible.

4.1.7. Toilet Provision

The provision of good quality toilet facilities is important along the coast especially near popular beaches and tourist centres. Sefton Council keeps under review the provision of toilet facilities throughout the borough to ensure a cost effective service. The review of beach management identified that some of the older beach toilets were redundant and these have been removed; at main beaches however it is important to maintain and enhance facilities. The National Trust have provided facilities at Freshfield for public use. Consideration will be given to the need for additional facilities.

4.2 Provision for Sport and Recreation

Objective : To provide opportunities for sporting and recreational activities sympathetic to the nature conservation and amenity value of the coast.

The coastal area is of regional importance for informal recreation. The pressure on the coast for sport and active recreation will probably increase over the next decade.

Walking and cycling, for example, are two national growth activities and partners may need to consider provision for new activities. It is important to plan for use, rather than react to demand, based on resource capacity assessments made by coastal managers in close consultation with user groups and other landowners. The irreplaceable character of the coastal area for quiet recreation should not be jeopardised by over-crowding. The presence of field staff can assist with the effective zoning and monitoring of activities, consultation with users and the resolution of conflicts.

Sport and recreation includes formal and informal activities taking place in the vicinity of the coast, including shore, marine, land and air-borne activities. Consideration will be given to establishing a Recreational Users Group to improve the dialogue between recreational users and site managers along the coast. Similar groups are already in operation for both the marine lakes.

Specific interest groups may require special arrangements in accordance with the overall need to balance recreation and conservation and land-use and not all interest groups may be accommodated.

4.2.1 Walking

The most popular year-round activity on the Sefton Coast is walking. Considerable resources are required to maintain and improve routes, prevent damage to sensitive areas and provide waymarking. It is important that the needs of visitors are taken into account in providing a range of walks to suit all abilities.

The coastal footpath network provides many opportunities for developing and promoting walks. At Formby Point, English Nature, the National Trust and Sefton Council share a network of routes where a coordinated approach to waymarking and information is required to best serve the interests of local people and visitors.

Policy CMP 28

Partners will coordinate their actions to promote walking on the coast, to maintain and waymark the footpath network and to advise visitors of the sensitivity of the coastal area.

4.2.2 Cycling and Horseriding

Where appropriate, and where there is no conflict with nature conservation interests, provision should be made for cycling and horseriding.

For cycling, the long term aim is to provide a coastal cycle route in accordance with Sefton's cycling strategy with the co-operation of landowners. Such a cycle-route could link in to the regional and national initiatives being promoted by Sustrans. Priority is given to the sections from Waterloo to Hightown and from Ainsdale to Southport. The Ainsdale to Southport section constructed in 1996 forms part of the Trans-Pennine Trail cycleroute. English Nature may consider formalising an access route through the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve.

Encouragement will be given to projects such as 'Riding for the Disabled' and 'Wheels for All' which aim to make horseriding and cycling accessible to people with disabilities.

Mountain bike use can cause damage to soils and vegetation and provision will be encouraged outside the Coast Management Scheme area in liaison with The Mersey Forest initiative.

Facilities for horse riders includes a permissive bridlepath system at Formby Point, several bridleways and free access to most beach areas. The degree of control given by the permit system at Formby Point has been useful. It is recommended that the Formby Point bridlepath system be retained and expanded to include other tracks and lanes around Formby.

Horseriding on the beach is popular with visitors and includes racehorse training. There can be conflicts between horseriders and other users, disturbance to wildlife and dangers to riders and a Code of Conduct will be prepared in consultation with the British Horse Society.

Policy CMP 29

Partners will make provision for cycling and horseriding where opportunities permit in accordance with the visitor and access management strategy.

4.2.3 Zoning of Sport and Recreation

The Sefton Coast can accommodate a wide range of recreational pursuits. Priority should be given to the irreplaceable recreation opportunities which the coast has to offer, such as tidal sailing, sea fishing, beach recreation, peace and quiet and the wildlife experience with an emphasis on the quality of the experience. Compatible recreational pursuits can be promoted at the appropriate level determined by site conditions in order to ensure sustainable use, but some pursuits are inappropriate for concerns of noise, damage or danger to other users.

Sefton's beach management strategy has addressed in some detail the zoning of recreational activities on the foreshore, and policies will be reviewed as necessary. The beach area has previously made some provision for motorsports and this requires review under the Habitat Regulations. Sports and recreation interests are represented on the Scheme's Working Party through the North West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation.

Before the introduction of new sporting activities, there should be consultation with Scheme partners to ensure that there are no environmental side effects and that potential conflicts can be addressed. Planning permission and an assessment under the Habitats Regulations may also be required. The potential conflict between sport and nature conservation is recognised by the North West Council for Sport and Recreation who wish to "mitigate conflict between different activities and interests by the use of joint management plans, noise standards, codes of practice and zoning" (*Into Wild Country* : NWCSR 1992). The Coast Management Scheme provides a framework for such discussions on the Sefton Coast.

Policy CMP 30

Sport and recreation activity may be accommodated where they are compatible with the nature conservation and amenity value of the coast and where they do not conflict with other recreational interests. Priority will be given to activities which depend directly on the coast.

4.2.4 Water Sports

Sefton's two regionally important centres of watersports are the marine lakes at Crosby and Southport, catering between them for wind-surfing, water-skiing, jet-skiing, sailing, rowing and canoeing. There is also interest in offshore sailing and boat angling with some sea canoeing and wind-surfing at Formby Point. The other main use of the water is for sea bathing. With the development of management plans for Southport Marine Lake and Crosby Marine Park, the issue of provision for water sports becomes relevant to the Coast Management Scheme. There are not seen to be any serious or unresolvable conflicts between water sports interests and other interests.

A suitable balance must be found between water sports activity and the conservation value of the Marine Lakes and other water areas. Southport Marine Lake and Crosby Marine Park could qualify as Sites of Local Biological Interest.

To protect bathers from the potential danger posed by other activities, it is recommended that the sea-use byelaws currently in force at Southport be extended to all areas of the coast where sea bathing takes place. Additional facilities for launching may need to be considered. The provision for watersports has a regional dimension and it is important that changes in management measures or pressure do not have a knock-on impact on other coastal areas. The North West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation provides a regional overview. Water sports resources and issues are also addressed at the more strategic level through the Mersey and Ribble estuary management plans.

Good recreational water quality should be a pre-requisite for the promotion of contact sports. The issue should be addressed by a Recreational Water Quality Policy for Sefton to be developed by the Director of Planning, Environment and Consumer Protection which includes bathing waters, inland waters, boating lakes, marine lakes and canals.

Policy CMP 31

Partners will provide facilities and assistance to water sports users where appropriate. Conflicts between water sports users and other interests, where they occur, will be resolved by zoning, codes of conduct, education and the use of byelaws.

4.2.5. Crosby Marine Park

The seafront at Crosby is an important recreation area, also in the context of the Mersey estuary, the potential of which has yet to be fully developed. The area provides much needed open space for adjacent densely developed housing areas. It has considerable potential for landscape improvement, which could include enhancement of its value for nature conservation. Crosby Marine Park will be considered for designation as a Site of Local Biological Importance.

A site management plan will be produced by Sefton Council's Director of Leisure Services for the whole of the area from Waterloo to Hightown, including the foreshore, under the title of Crosby Coastal Park. The area is seen as a recreation and conservation unit with the potential to offer a wide range of leisure pursuits and interpretation in a natural setting and to reduce pressure to accommodate activities in SPA and candidate SAC areas. The development of such a plan will be able to address new opportunities for sport and recreation and can give consideration to the provision of new facilities such as boat launching.

Policy CMP 32

Sefton Council and partners will develop the recreational potential of the proposed Crosby Coastal Park through an overall strategy.

4.2.6 Recreation Improvement Areas.

A number of areas near or within the coastal zone have been identified as Recreation Improvement Areas in the UDP where resources will be directed to the improvement of the public open spaces. These include the gardens at Crosby which are part of the maritime history of Sefton and are a proposed Conservation Area, the remnant sand dunes at Thornbeck Avenue, Hightown (also a SLBI), Ashton's Lane, Formby, which links to the coastal area, and the dunes at Kenilworth Road, Ainsdale (also a SLBI). It is recommended that the dunes at Kenilworth Road be included in the Management Scheme and designated as an extension to the Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills LNR.

4.3 Tourism

Objective : To promote the development of sustainable tourism in a manner that will add to rather than detract from the quality of the Sefton Coast.

The two different but complementary aspects of coastal tourism in Sefton are the resort town of Southport with its associated bathing beaches and the wider countryside of pinewoods, dunes, marshes and quiet beaches. Southport is the second largest resort town in north-west England and appropriate investment and development is encouraged through planning policies. Tourism and the environment, however, are becoming increasingly interdependent and the tourism management of Southport is an essential component of tourism on the coast as a whole. Southport should act as a gateway to the wider coast and initiatives such as the development of the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail and the RSPB reserve at Marshside bring nature to the resort's doorstep.

On the other hand, tourism can bring problems. For the open coast the Government Task Force's principles for sustainable tourism will be adopted (*Maintaining the Balance 1991*). Sustainable tourism embraces the idea of striking a balance between the needs of visitors, the environment and the local community.

The open coast is a regional tourist facility with the potential for attracting more visitors and appropriate developments in keeping with the conservation policies of the plan should be supported by the Regional Tourist Board. The North West Tourist Board should be encouraged to give greater recognition to the Sefton Coast and promote its conservation value, but also help to protect the area from inappropriate development.

Policy CMP 33

Partners will adopt the principles for sustainable tourism in relation to tourism development in the coastal zone

4.3.1 Southport Seafront

The Southport Seafront area contains traditional seaside tourist attractions such as the Pier, funfair and gardens. The Marine Lake is a special feature of Southport and is used for a wide range of watersports as well as tourist activities. The Council has published a Southport Seafront Position Statement. Three areas are identified, the southern gardens

centred on Victoria Park, the central attractions area and the area to the north of the Marine Lake.

Plans for a 'Century Park' development submitted to the Millennium Commission did not receive funding but elements of the bid, including a coastal visitor centre may be developed as funding permits.

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme does not take the lead role within the Southport Seafront area, this is a function of the Council's Economic Development and Tourism Committee, but it adds an important environmental and access dimension to that work. Within the Seafront area, the work of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme can address:

- the routing and waymarking of the coastal footpath and other walks;
- the interpretation of history and architecture of Southport;
- improving links between the Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail, Victoria Park and Esplanade park and ride to maximise recreational opportunities;
- the co-ordination of the preparation of a management plan for the Marine Lake and surrounds;
- the integration of landscape and access in the Marshside area, including the Fairways park-and-ride site, the golf courses and nature reserves;
- promotion of appropriate landscaping in the coastal zone.

The North West Coastal Resorts Initiative found that a significant number of current visitors perceived the natural surroundings to be an asset to Southport.

Policy CMP 34

Partners will support the redevelopment of the Southport Seafront where appropriate with the existing natural resources of the coast.

4.3.2 Promoting Coastal Tourism

In preparing a tourism strategy for the Sefton Coast the Scheme partners should agree how sites should be advertised and what messages are appropriate. Some of these issues are addressed through the Interpretive Strategy for the Sefton Coast. Wider issues, such as the overall marketing of the Sefton Coast, will require agreement on basic principles.

The unique selling point of the coast is a mixture of peace and quiet, walks, nature and beaches. This could be over-exploited, but it is important that the open coast is more clearly identified with Southport, and that the Sefton Coast as a whole is considered in tourism strategies.

The balance between tourism and conservation should be guided by the Coast Management Scheme.

Areas where it would probably be appropriate to promote tourism, in addition to the Southport Seafront area, are:

- A range of activities at Crosby Marine Park
- Walking at Formby Point
- Beach recreation at Ainsdale
- Birdwatching at Marshside
- Woodland recreation at Formby and Ainsdale
- Camping and Caravanning

The possible development of green tourism on the Sefton Coast is in line with the North West Tourist Board's Strategy for Tourism. A more active dialogue with the NWTB will be encouraged.

Policy CMP 35

Appropriate areas and themes for tourism will be promoted. The level of promotion will be by agreement with partners.

4.3.3 Provision for Accommodation

Southport is the main focus for tourist accommodation in Sefton. The development of green tourism along the Sefton Coast should help to support hoteliers and other businesses. Outside of Southport, Pontin's Holiday Village at Ainsdale, accommodating about 2,000 people, is the largest holiday development in the area.

There are caravan sites at Southport, Ainsdale and Formby, but no camping facilities. The nearest site is several miles to the north of Southport. The lack of camping facilities or low budget accommodation encourages wild camping. Site managers would support the provision of camping pitches in existing caravan sites to cater for this demand. Routes such as the coastal footpath and Trans Pennine Trail would be likely to attract cyclists and backpackers if suitable accommodation such as campsites and Youth Hostels could be advertised. Conservation volunteers on residential working holidays with BTCV and the National Trust have the use of the Alt Centre at Hightown. Diversification of accommodation facilities could bring benefits to the rural economy.

Policy CMP 36

Partners will encourage a diversification of accommodation facilities serving the Sefton Coast, provided that any new facilities are in keeping with the overall aims of the Management Scheme.

4.4 Visitor Services and Safety

Objective : To increase people's understanding and enjoyment of the area, have regard to their safety and provide an integrated visitor management service

4.4.1 Site Staff

The proper management of land, and particularly the ability to deal with large numbers of visitors, is only possible through the appointment of field staff; the rangers, wardens and estate workers who carry out day-to-day maintenance, provide a service for visitors,

protect wildlife and enforce byelaws. Although there are differences in the remit of English Nature site managers, National Trust wardens and Sefton Council's ranger service they, and site managers of the RSPB and Lancashire Wildlife Trust form a co-ordinated management service for the Sefton Coast.

Through the Coast Management Scheme regular liaison is maintained with the emergency services and information passed to visitors.

Further specialist field staff may be required as policies for education and interpretation are developed. The permanent staff are only one element of the overall service; they are assisted by seasonal staff, contract staff, trainees and volunteers in carrying out their duties. A considerable proportion of the practical conservation volunteer support for the scheme area is co-ordinated by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers through their Sefton Field Officer.

Sefton Council's Coast and Countryside Management Service managed by the Director of Leisure Services (which includes the Ranger Service and Beach Patrol & Lifeguard Unit) is the main link between the 'coast' and the local community. This link will be strengthened by developing links with the Library & Arts and Tourist Information Services of the Council. The Ranger Service co-ordinates the coastal guided walks programme, which includes partners' events, and acts as the first point of contact for most visitors.

Staff resources are stretched and all agencies managing the coast rely on volunteers and the general public to act as 'eyes and ears' for sites by reporting incidents and informing visitors. The important role of volunteers is recognised through the establishment of a Sefton Coast volunteer network. The network will be supported and maintained by the Scheme partners.

Policy CMP 37

Partners will co-ordinate their work to employ and resource field staff and volunteers able to provide an integrated visitor management service.

4.4.2 Visitor Safety

General aspects of visitor safety are considered by the Management Scheme through a Ranger's and Warden's sub-group. Issues include warnings regarding military danger areas, unmanned level-crossings, management work in progress, soft sand and mud and pollution.

The Beach Patrol and Lifeguard Unit of Sefton Council have the responsibility for safety on Sefton Council owned and managed beaches and operates a full service at key locations from May to September. Staffing and resources will be reviewed, in line with the Beach Management Strategy and in consultation with partners, with the aim of providing coverage at all the main beach areas. The unit is also pro-active in disseminating safety advice to schools and visitors working alongside other safety organisations. The operation of the beach service by Sefton Council conforms to the guidelines set out in 'Safety on British Beaches' published by RLSS/ROSPA.

Policy CMP 38

Partners will inform visitors of potential dangers and have regard to their safety.

4.4.3 Interpretation

Visitors' enjoyment, appreciation and understanding is enhanced through interpretation. Co-ordination is provided by an Interpretive Strategy for the coast, which sets out the principles and targets for interpretation. The central feature of the programme is the establishment of an integrated series of small visitor centres for the coast. There is also an opportunity for the development of a larger centre associated with the Marshside area or linked to the Southport Seafront Development Strategy.

Funding will be sought for the development of an integrated interpretive programme. Priorities are for centres at Crosby, Ainsdale and Southport. A visitor centre at Formby Point, which could be developed by either Sefton Council, National Trust or jointly, would require considerable funding. No mechanism for such funding has been identified. Formby Point, however, is a key site for interpretation through guides, trails and the education programme.

Sefton Council has developed a partnership with the National Museums and Galleries of Merseyside and other local authorities to develop ideas for a Liverpool Bay project.

Visitor centres should primarily be aimed at current visitor numbers and should not in themselves be visitor attractions. Whilst a careful approach to promotion is necessary along most of the dune coast there is scope for increasing visitor numbers at Crosby, at Marshside and especially in the Southport Seafront area.

Visitor centres should be designed to meet environmental criteria and be good examples of low energy, low waste design.

Policy CMP 39

An interpretive programme for the coast will be developed and implemented. An integrated series of small visitor centres will be developed throughout the scheme area.

4.5 Art and the Coast

Objective: to encourage the use of art in all its forms to express the special character of the Sefton Coast.

Art encompasses a wide range of subjects and activities. In the context of the Sefton Coast it is taken to mean art in the broadest sense of the word : fine art, sculpture, craft, film and photography, performing art, music, literature, etc. Sefton Council and partners, principally through the work of Sefton's Library and Arts Service and initiatives such as Alt 2000 can do more to promote arts and the environment. The Sefton Coast is a living coast; art is part of that life and any celebration of the coast in art helps to reinforce its natural beauty and special character.

Arts projects will be developed, in particular, through The Mersey Forest Initiative and support should be given to the production of works of art and art trails. Consideration could also be given to the establishment of an open-air theatre

The Sefton Coast has inspired artists, writers and poets who have been attracted by the scenery, the wide open spaces and changing moods. More recently art in the environment has become a popular concept. Although appreciated by some and disliked by others, art does encourage people to look at the environment. Beach sculptures, tree-dressing and forest sculptures are examples of short-span artistic projects whereas the art projects in the Southport Seafront area are intended to be more permanent. Art can also become part of an interpretive programme, for example using theatre or multi-media to get over a conservation message.

Policy CMP40

Partners will be encouraged to support arts projects in keeping with the general character of the area.

4.6 Education

Objective : to develop and enhance the role of the coast as an educational resource for all and to provide an integrated education service.

The Sefton Coast Education Project was established in 1990 to co-ordinate and guide the educational use of the coast. In 1995, at the end of the project, a joint funded post of Environmental Education and Interpretation Ranger within the Coast and Countryside Management Service was secured. The post will develop resources in line with curriculum requirements, co-ordinate visits by schools, offer advice and training to teachers and site staff, maintain the *Sefton Coast-Guide for Schools* by annual updates of information and promote the development of a series of 'classrooms on the coast', integral to the programme of building visitor centres. The post forms part of a Sefton-wide approach to environmental education and Local Agenda 21 through the work of the Sefton Environmental Education Development Strategy (SEEDS) and associated Education Forum.

Scheme partners all have an interest in environmental education. The National Trust and RSPB in particular have local education officers and run their own programmes. The Alt 2000 initiative has produced a teachers' resource pack. These will be supported by Sefton Council's Director of Education as part of a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of environmental education in Sefton.

Policy CMP 41

Partners will support a co-ordinated approach to environmental education activity through the Sefton Environmental Education Development Strategy.

Section 5 Shoreline Management

The management of natural and artificial sea defences is part of the overall approach to coastal management. The need to maintain the dunes as a sea defence was seen in the early years of the scheme as an overriding factor. However as the understanding of nature conservation issues has been embraced by coastal engineers there is now much more of an integrated approach to shoreline management.

Considerable expertise has developed on the Sefton Coast in the management of sand dunes. This has helped to draw up strategies for coast defence that respect the dynamic nature and conservation importance of dunes.

Since the first review of the Coast Management Plan in 1989;

- Sefton Council has adopted a Coast Defence Strategy.
- dune accretion at Ainsdale has been encouraged.
- works to control sand-blow at Crosby have begun.
- work has started on the construction of a floodwall at Southport.

Monitoring of coastal change is essential. Sefton Council has an accurate record of erosion and accretion from 1959 and such data helps to inform the development of Shoreline Management Plans. There is now greater understanding of coastal dynamics and the need to monitor rather than rush into actions. Preserving mobility in the dune system is vital for biodiversity yet this must be at an appropriate scale for the landscape. The challenges for the future are associated with 'soft engineering options'.

Targets for the Plan period; we will aim to;

- see the completion of Shoreline Management Plans.
- manage the nuisance of sandblow in the Crosby area.
- decide on a Coast Protection scheme for the coast from Hall Road to Hightown.
- investigate options for erosion control at Formby Point.

SECTION 5 SHORELINE MANAGEMENT

Aim : To support the need to protect life, property and habitats by appropriate coast defence strategies, and to maintain the sea defence function of the beaches, sand dunes and saltmarshes, consistent with the natural character and conservation importance of the coast.

Coastal defence is an important component of coastal management in Sefton. Coastal defence is a term used to encompass both coast protection against erosion and sea defence against flooding. The development of an approach to shoreline management in Sefton is based on the *Sefton Coastal Defence Issues and Strategy*, adopted by Sefton Council in 1993. A series of objectives were identified in the strategy and these are repeated here and will be adopted by the Coast Management Scheme partners in working towards Shoreline Management Plans.

Shoreline Management Plans are being produced by the Liverpool Bay and North Western Coastal Groups with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. MAFF have published advice to managers and decision makers about coastal defence and the environment. A standard format, developed by the North Western Coastal Group, will be used for both plans.

5.1 Natural Processes

Objective : to continue to improve the understanding of natural processes and the response of the coastline to change so that sustainable management decisions can be made. *Sefton Coast Defence Issues and Strategy 1993*

The Sefton Coast is dominated by the effects of the two major estuaries of the Mersey and Ribble. Formby Point is the meeting zone of the two major estuarine regimes. Tidal streams converge offshore, with the result that a large inter-tidal sand spit, Taylor's Bank, has developed.

Taylor's Bank marks the division between the two sediment sub-cell plans being produced along the Sefton Coast. Although natural processes are large scale and dominating the coastal zone has been considerably influenced by the construction of training walls for the rivers Mersey and Ribble, dredging, land-claim and coastal defence works.

Shoreline management must be based on a good understanding of natural processes, an identification of issues and options for management. Sefton's coastal defence strategy is informed by the Sefton Coast Database. The database is a collation of all existing research, literature, plans and records relevant to the coastal hydrodynamics of the Sefton Coast. A numerical model of waves, tides and currents along the Sefton coast has been developed. A conceptual study of the sediment dynamics of the coastal zone will also be carried out. Sediment dynamics considerations will inform the development of the Shoreline Management Plans and will address issues of concern to coastal managers, landowners and the general public such as;

- The causes and trends of erosion at Formby Point with options for management.
- Changes in beach levels and sand banks.
- The movement of sand into Crosby bay.
- Continuing beach accretion and mud deposition at Southport.
- The development of saltmarsh and possible management options.

All partners agree to the need for responses to coastal defence issues based on an understanding of coastal processes. The concept of coastal cells, as advocated by MAFF, has been taken on board at a national and local level as the best structure for integrating the work of several operating authorities along stretches of coast. Land managers on the Sefton Coast will help to inform the shoreline management process.

5.1.1 Coastal Monitoring

Coastal monitoring builds up a library of data necessary for the development and assessment of new projects. The current programme of coastal monitoring should be expanded and a commitment made by partners to the collection of essential base-line data. An integrated monitoring programme for the whole coast would address changes in foreshore profiles, the position and condition of dunes, the condition and function of coastal defences, the changes in marsh growth and changes in river channels.

5.1.2 Climate Induced Change

The Sefton coastline also has to be considered in the light of the effect of possible climatic change on global sea levels and storm frequency. Recent climatological modelling work suggests a best guess rise in average sea level of 0.5 m over the next 75 years. In addition predicted increases in maximum wave height and meteorological surge effects during storm events have to be considered. There is virtually no change in sea level on the Sefton coast as a result of geological crustal movement (isostatic movement).

The accepted predictions for global warming and land level adjustment have formed the basis for MAFF's suggested allowances for the design of coastal defences. Operating authorities were advised by MAFF in 1991 to allow for a sea level rise of 4 mm/year in the north west of England. Guidance will be kept under review.

Policy CMP 42

Partners will support the development of Shoreline Management Plans for the Sefton Coast through liaison with the Coastal Groups, and through joint involvement in research, survey and monitoring.

5.2 Coastal Defence

Objective : To provide the regional level of Flood Defence to protect low lying areas of the Borough from flooding during high tides and storm events and to provide the required level of Coast Protection to protect vulnerable areas of the Sefton coastline from erosion. *Sefton Coast Defence Issues and Strategy 1993*

MAFF has overall responsibility for policy in respect of flood defence and coast protection under the *Coast Protection Act 1949*, *Land Drainage Act 1991* and *Water Resources Act 1991*. The Government's aim is 'to reduce risks to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding and coastal erosion by encouraging the provision of technically, environmentally and economically sound and sustainable defence measures'.

Sefton's approach to Coastal Defence issues is underpinned by MAFF's *Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales*. Maps of flood risk areas have been produced by the Environment Agency. Parts of the Sefton Coast near the rivers Alt and Crossens are at risk from flooding.

Maritime District Councils are the designated Coast Protection Authorities for the coastlines within their area. Flood and Sea Defence is supervised by the Environment Agency. Individual owners, including Sefton Council, have powers to undertake Flood and Sea Defence work, subject to the supervisory powers of the EA. Similarly Coast Protection works may be undertaken by other owners or agencies, subject to the consent of the Coast Protection Authority. Flood warning procedures are managed by the Environment Agency who provide the local operating authorities with flood warning information based on the Operation Neptune procedure. Sefton Council, as operating authority, will inform relevant coastal managers.

The Sefton Coastal Defence Issues and Strategy report gives a detailed review of coastal defences in Sefton. The five main sub-divisions are :

1. Sea walls maintained by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
2. Sea walls maintained by Sefton Council along Crosby Marine Park
3. An unprotected section of coastline from Hall Road to the Alt
4. The dune coastline from Altcar to Birkdale
5. Southport coastal defences

5.2.1 Coastal Protection Works

Coast protection works are considered necessary by Sefton Council along the Crosby to Hightown coastline. The coastline is dominated by the presence of the River Alt which tends to move eastwards, cutting into the coast. The protection of this vulnerable coastline will best be achieved by the management of the course of the river.

The construction of the Alt training bank in 1937, the Crosby Coast Protection works between 1970 and 1976 and the tipping of demolition waste from 1947 to 1974 have all been carried out in response to coast erosion. A scheme has been prepared, which will effectively control the River Alt from its emergence onto the shore at Altcar to its discharge into the Mersey.

An Environmental Assessment of the scheme and a planning application will be required. The Hightown to Crosby coast protection project is a key issue within the management scheme (see 1.12.6). The justification for the project must be weighed against other interests and it cannot be seen in isolation to policies for amenity, nature

conservation and geological conservation. Statutory Environmental Assessment and an assessment under the Habitats Regulations will be required.

Policy CMP 43

The need for, and effect of, coast protection works will be assessed in relation to the overall aims of the Coast Management Scheme.

5.2.2 Sea Defence Works

Sea defence works are necessary at Southport involving the construction of a new flood wall on Marine Drive and the strengthening of adjoining existing sections of defences along Marine Drive. A flood defence sea wall will be constructed in 1997 on the low-lying section of Marine Drive, between Pleasureland and the Pier, incorporating a high level walkway overlooking the beach area. The construction of the sea wall is integral to the plans for the Seafront area identified in the Southport Seafront Development Strategy.

Agreement to build the sea wall has involved discussions with English Nature, RSPB, EA, MAFF, Government Office on Merseyside and the European Commission since the construction entails an intrusion into the Ribble Estuary SPA area. However the loss of a small area of upper beach was deemed not to damage the integrity of the site and mitigation measures will be linked to the beach management strategy.

5.2.3 Protection of Infrastructure

An additional objective in the Sefton Coastal Defence Strategy is 'to provide protection to major highway and rail infrastructure in the coastal zone'. This objective has two distinct actions. The first relates to the use of sea walls to prevent the flooding or erosion of strategic coastal roads such as Marine Drive whereas the second relates to the control of sand-drift which poses a danger to roads or railways. The stabilisation of dunes conflicts with a modern view of ecological and dynamic dune management. This conflict is manifest along the Coastal Road between Ainsdale and Southport where mobile dunes advance into the highway zone. Any works to allieviate this problem would be subject to asesment under the Habitats Regulations.

5.3 Dune and saltmarsh management for coastal defence

Objective : To maintain and encourage the use of dune based sea defences in appropriate locations. *Sefton Coast Defence Issues and Strategy 1993*

5.3.1 Soft Sea Defences

The Sefton beaches, dunes and marshes together with other sea defences provide a barrier against the inundation of 77 km² of low-lying, mainly agricultural, hinterland. A breach of these defences, if allowed to proceed unchecked would result in flooding which would affect agriculture, infrastructure and development. Although this would constitute a very rare event of extreme severity, and emergency action could mitigate the damaging effect of any flooding, the threat does, nevertheless, exist.

A dune based sea defence is much preferable on the undeveloped coast to any man-made system. Artificial defences have a limited life span and are costly to construct. By their nature they are comparatively fragile and when they fail under storm conditions, the consequences can be sudden and catastrophic. In contrast the dunes, if carefully and sensitively managed, are often self-sustaining. If their condition is monitored, erosion and weaknesses can be better predicted. Three areas of dunes, at Crosby, Altcar and Formby are subject to Coast Protection Orders made under Section 18 of the *Coast Protection Act 1949*.

5.3.2 Dune Erosion and Accretion

The sometimes dramatic erosion witnessed at Formby Point has tended to overshadow a steady accretion along much of the coast with rising beach levels at Crosby and Southport. The long term management aim for accreting shores is to encourage natural dune growth. Dune growth will be enhanced only in areas where recreation pressure has disrupted foredune growth or to aid rapid recovery of sea defences after storm events. New dune formation on beach areas and against sea walls will be monitored. Only in situations where the build up of sand threatens roads, structures or amenities will intervention work be carried out. An experiment to stimulate the formation of vegetated dunes above mean high water on Crosby beach was initiated in 1993.

Coast erosion predominates at Formby Point and at Hightown. At Hightown remedial works are proposed as part of a coastal protection scheme. At Formby Point recent attempts to mitigate the effects of progressive coast erosion have been largely abandoned. Sefton Council, however, will continue with the programme of sand-trapping fencing at Lifeboat Road until further guidance is given through the Shoreline Management process. Erosion here is not too severe and it is a hinge-point between the eroding and accreting sections of coast. The work will be more closely monitored and its value assessed in terms of the wider area.

The division between accreting and eroding foreshores is somewhat arbitrary since the very nature of the coastline is one of constant change. An understanding of the coast as a whole is a pre-requisite to planning a co-ordinated approach to shoreline management. By trying to work with, and not against, nature much can be done to alleviate the negative impact of recreation pressure, to recognise and protect natural dune-building processes and to accept natural erosion but keep it within the scale of the landscape.

Scheme partners have different interests relating to the issue of coastal change. It is important that all views are taken into consideration through the Coast Management Scheme mechanism so that a strategy can be developed that is acceptable to all partners.

Policy CMP 44

The sea defence function of the soft shore will be considered as a whole by the adoption of an integrated approach to its management by landowners in consultation with the Coast Protection Authority.

5.4 Integration

Objectives : To integrate with other coast management policies to provide comprehensive Shoreline Management Plans and to provide for the needs of the coastal zone in terms of the environment, tourism, recreation and commerce.

To continue to actively participate in regional coastal groups and to develop the groups to consider wider coastal zone management issues. *Sefton Coast Defence Issues and Strategy 1993*

Shoreline Management is the integration of the physical management of the coast with other issues within the local area and within the wider coastal cell. In particular there are growing links between coastal planning and coastal engineering.

The UDP defines a Coastal Planning Zone and introduces policies intended to safeguard the coast as a natural sea defence, and to avoid unnecessary or unjustified costs arising from the need to protect new development against the sea. Planning policies also require environmental assessment on development proposals which, amongst others, may affect coastal processes or require new defences.

Sefton Council is represented on the Liverpool Bay and on the North Western Coastal Groups which comprises seven coastal authorities from the Great Orme to Fleetwood along with MAFF, EA, and others. The Liverpool Bay Coastal Group is preparing a Shoreline Management Strategy incorporating the two Shoreline Management Plans for the sections Great Orme - Formby Point and Formby Point - Fleetwood. Sefton Council has also been involved in the national Coastal Defence Forum.

Scheme partners will be involved in the preparation of the Shoreline Management Plans and a Shoreline Management Strategy for Sefton and a mechanism is required to maintain this level of co-ordination. Through the SCMS Sefton Council will report to partners on shoreline management issues and invite participation in discussion.

Policy CMP 45

A liaison mechanism will be established to inform partners in the Shoreline Management process and to coordinate the implementation of projects as appropriate.

Section 6 Marine Environmental Management

The issue of marine environmental management in the Plan reflects a national approach towards integrated coastal zone management. The initial Coast Management Scheme mechanism addressed only land based issues. As the geographical area of the Scheme has widened so has its concern with the offshore perspective. Pollution incidents focus the attention on how easily one domain can impinge on another. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme can now become more involved in marine issues because a supporting mechanism has developed at the regional level.

Since the first review of the Coast Management Plan in 1989;

- the UK Government has embraced the concept of integrated coastal zone management. Sefton Council presented evidence to the Select Committee.
- the Irish Sea Forum has been established to take an international perspective on coastal and sea issues.
- Sefton Council organised a national conference 'Planning and Management of the Coastal Heritage'.
- the North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee have been given greater powers.
- the Marine Safety Agency has established local Committees, involving local authorities.
- offshore oil and gas development in Liverpool Bay has begun production.
- waste from shipping has polluted the Sefton Coast.

Working with other initiatives, such as the estuary projects, and through fora such as the Irish Sea Forum, Sefton Council and partners can take part in the offshore debate.

Targets for the Plan period; we will aim to;

- achieve 'special area' status for the Irish Sea under MARPOL.
- achieve recognition of Liverpool Bay as a Marine Environmental High Risk Area.
- have all local shellfish beds open as a result of coastal clean-ups.

SECTION 6 MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Aim: To liaise with the competent agencies for the control of activities at sea to ensure that they are aware of the high amenity and conservation value of the Sefton coast, and the impact their activities may have on terrestrial sites, and to work with others to promote the conservation and -management of marine resources.

6.1 Development Control in the Marine Zone.

Sefton Council, as Local Planning Authority, has no jurisdiction over developments below the low water mark. Development in the marine environment is 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, under or over the seabed'. Such activities include construction projects inside and outside harbours, marine dredged minerals, navigation, pontoons and moorings, oil and gas exploration and production, submarine pipelines and cables and disposal at sea. Between high and low water mark, the planning system continues to have jurisdiction, but operates in tandem with a range of sectoral controls over marine development. The Government view is that the current sectoral approach to management in the offshore zone should continue, but with increased emphasis on public information and improved consultation with, amongst others, local authorities. A summary of mechanisms is given in the Government's *Policy Guidelines for the Coast*.

Sefton Council will therefore seek to establish dialogue and agree consultation procedures with agencies responsible for the management of the offshore zone. Where it would be useful to do so, Sefton Council will take part in liaison and information groups, e.g. the Irish Sea Forum. It is not envisaged that the Sefton Coast Management Scheme would take the lead in sea-use matters but the Scheme's mechanism can co-ordinate the views of its partners to strengthen its influence in other fora such as the estuaries initiatives.

In the marine environment, such uses as fishing, recreation and navigation are typically controlled or managed through a wide range of mechanisms, including international agreements, regulations and byelaws. Generally, all waters which are tidal are subject to a public right of navigation. The Department of Transport (DoT) has powers to control works in tidal waters for the specific purpose of safeguarding navigation. Navigational concerns apply both above and below the low water mark and the system of DoT navigational consents overlaps with the planning system up to high water mark. In common law, there is a public right to fish from the shore, subject to proprietary rights which exclude the public right in some areas. Under Part II of the Food and Environmental Protection Act 1985 (FEPA) the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the powers to control development in the marine environment.

It is the Government's view that 'the present sectoral organisation integrates control over marine development with broader policies on fishing, the marine environment and navigation and that for each sectoral interest there is a good co-ordination across the land-sea divide'.

6.2 Disposal at Sea

6.2.1 Navigational and other port-related dredging

Objective : to ensure that necessary dredging operations cause least interference to coastal processes affecting the Sefton Coast.

The dumping of industrial waste at sea has ceased and the dumping of sewage sludge will be phased out by the end of 1998. This will leave dredged material as the only category of waste for which there are long-term plans to continue dumping at sea. Dredging is necessary to 'support the continued well-being of the Mersey Estuary, together with port and port-related economic development'. To do this, navigation channels must be dredged and sediment removed from docks, and the material dumped offshore through MAFF licensing procedures.

Dredging and the maintenance of shipping channels has had and does have an effect on the sediment supply to the Sefton Coast.

Sefton Council will press for an environmental analysis of the impact of the dumping of dredged material on the coastal zone, and will work within the framework of the Mersey Estuary Management Plan to support a technical assessment of the impact of future dredging operations. In particular, the level of contaminants and disposal of fine material should be monitored. The impact of dredging is an important consideration in the preparation of Shoreline Management Plans. Information on dredging activities published by the Acting Conservator of the River Mersey Conservancy could be more widely circulated to interested bodies such as the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.

MAFF, in issuing any new licences for disposal at sea, must have regard to the need to protect the marine environment and human health and to prevent interference with other legitimate marine uses. In the context of Shoreline Management Plans MAFF should consider whether appropriate beneficial uses are available for the material e.g. beach replenishment.

Policy CMP 46

To urge the Port Authority to take account of the effects of, and options for beneficial uses of, the disposal of dredgings.

6.2.2 Waste from Shipping

Objective : to reduce the incidence of litter and pollution from shipping affecting the Sefton coast.

Prevention of pollution from vessels is regulated under the *International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973* (MARPOL). Under MARPOL it is also possible to designate a 'special' sea area. Special areas enjoy a higher level of protection under the *Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulations 1988*.

The adoption of the Irish Sea as a special area was recommended to the Government by Lord Donaldson in his report "*Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas*". Sefton Council can assist this process by working with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company on the provision of reception facilities for garbage, by informing all recreational boat users of the regulations and by voicing its concern through the Irish Sea Forum.

However, disposal of waste at sea by shipping, even within international regulations, is of increasing concern. The appropriate forum to deal with these issues is at the Irish Sea level. Sefton Council support the recommendations of the Donaldson report which looks at the whole operation of merchant shipping with regard to risk, safety and the environment.

Policy CMP 47

Sefton Council and its partners will be pro-active in raising issues of concern on the full implementation of the MARPOL convention.

6.3 Dredging of Marine Aggregates

Objective : to ensure that licensed dredging operations have no adverse affect on the Sefton Coast.

The dredging of marine aggregates, other than the extraction of sand at Southport (covered in Section 2.3.1), takes place in the offshore zone. The Government has reviewed its position on the licencing of dredging. The Department of the Environment will authorise dredging and will be responsible for enforcement. MAFF will be responsible for supervising monitoring work. The Government intends to issue policy guidelines on environmental criteria appropriate to the marine environment and dredging following public consultation. Until the new statutory system is introduced, the current non-statutory 'Government View' procedures will be adapted to reflect the proposed procedures. It should be noted that the Government is firmly committed to the principle of obtaining substantial aggregate production from marine dredging (*Minerals Planning Guidance 6*).

Policy CMP 48

The effects of marine aggregate extraction should be considered as part of the Shoreline Management process.

6.4 Marine Safety

Objective : to reduce the risk of shipping accidents in Liverpool Bay.

The Donaldson Report covered the issue of risk and sea safety. The incident of MV Braer in January 1993 and Sea Empress in February 1996 have brought the issue to the attention of the public. The issue of marine safety should be addressed by, in particular, the Mersey Estuary Management Plan which covers navigation. The risk of a serious incident in Liverpool Bay or the Mersey is high because of the concentration of shipping activity. Stricter inspections are now being carried out in the Mersey Ports and

unseaworthy ships impounded. However it is the amount of traffic, the nature of the traffic and the size of vessels which do not need the assistance of the Liverpool Pilot which are of concern to Sefton Council.

The Government has accepted the recommendation for drawing up a 'Seaway Code'. The code will be a concise guidance note on the main points ship's Masters are expected to observe in UK waters. It will be prepared by the Marine Safety Agency.

The response to incidents at sea is co-ordinated by the Coastguard Agency's local Marine Safety Committee and the Merseyside and Cheshire Search and Rescue Committee. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme is represented on both Committees.

Policy CMP 49

The Sefton Coast Management Scheme should continue to be represented on marine safety committees.

6.5 Oil and Gas Exploration and Production

Objective : to ensure that the offshore oil and gas industry gives highest regard to the sensitivity of the Sefton Coast.

The exploitation of oil and gas reserves in Liverpool Bay will provide the opportunity for boosting the local economy, especially in port-related areas. The Mersey Estuary Management Plan and Sefton Council supports the growing industry, subject to the protection of the natural environment of the coastal zone.

Related land-based development will also be encouraged where these are located in port-related employment areas. There is, however, the need to view this industry in a regional context and the proposal to establish a Standing Conference on Oil and Gas Development in Liverpool Bay is supported.

Liverpool Bay should arguably be regarded as a sensitive area and would, therefore, be subject to a proposed strengthening of consultation arrangements which would include a longer consultation period, monitoring licensees' environmental commitments and notifying prospective oil and gas companies of areas likely to be subject to special conditions.

The international importance of the Dee estuary to Morecambe Bay coastline for birds, the local inshore fishery and the presence of seals should rank Liverpool Bay as a special area. Important populations of Common Tern, Common Scoter, Cormorant and Little Gull occur in the Liverpool bay area. Less is known about marine turtles and small cetaceans which frequent the area and the precautionary principle should be applied. There should be more liaison between local authority Pollution Control Officers and oil and gas production managers, on concerns such as noise, odours and flaring. Sefton Council would wish to check that best practice was being followed in all actions.

Policy CMP 50

Sefton Council and partners will urge the Department of Trade and Industry to have regard for Liverpool Bay as a 'sensitive area' to ensure the highest environmental concern by the oil and gas industry.

6.6 Fishing

Objective : to ensure that fishing activity along the Sefton Coast is sustainable and has regard to the nature conservation value of the foreshores and inshore waters.

6.6.1 Sea Fishing Committee

Fishing within the coastal zone includes the activities of local fishermen harvesting cockles, shrimps and, to a lesser extent, fish. Bait-digging for lugworm, however, is not covered by legislation relating to fisheries. There is a long tradition of fishing on the Sefton Coast and the continuation of the industry is part of local culture. A sustainable fishery is a sign of a healthy coast and is fully consistent with international conservation designations.

The North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee is responsible for fisheries management in inshore waters up to six miles offshore of baselines. Under the 1966 Act it is required to manage, regulate and encourage sea fisheries within the District. The Sea Fisheries Committee is empowered to make byelaws regulating fishing methods and restricting or prohibiting any sea fishing, including recreational fishing, other than for salmon and trout, which is the responsibility of the EA. The Sea Fisheries Committee is also concerned with water quality and has a close working relationship with the EA and environmental health interests. The Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Act 1992 requires the Sea Fisheries Committee to take environmental matters into account when making decisions. Its powers were increased through the *Environment Act 1995* and it now has powers to restrict fishing activities for the purposes of environmental protection, such powers can also be used to give greater protection to marine archaeological sites. Their remit, however, does not affect the Common Law right of the public to fish from the foreshore, but they can enforce certain controls on anglers, such as minimum landing size of fish.

The Sea Fisheries Committee could play an important co-ordinating role, for partners, in the inter-tidal and nearshore zones. The North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee is the first in the UK to appoint a Marine Environment Liaison Officer.

Fisheries and fisheries issues extend beyond the boundary of Sefton. The estuary management plans for the Ribble, Mersey and Dee may be useful in helping to identify public concerns about fisheries issues. The Dee, for example, is a legally protected nursery area for Bass. Sefton Council will support an expansion of the powers of the Sea Fisheries Committee, and will report on fisheries and environmental issues to the Steering Group and the Policy and Resources Committee, recommending changes to the levy funding, as necessary, for new mechanisms to undertake the extended duties. A closer working relationship between the Council, the Sea Fisheries Committee, EA

and English Nature is envisaged. At ground level, greater liaison between field staff will be encouraged.

6.6.2 Liason with Fishermen

It is sometimes not easy to distinguish between commercial and recreational fishing. It would appear that, despite some attempts, the coast cannot support a regular net or line fishery. Sea anglers and commercial fishermen are an important source of information on the stocks, diversity and health of the sea area. Generally, more liaison with fishermen will be encouraged with the help of the Sea Fisheries Committee. The aim will be to maintain a sustainable commercial and sport fishery, by ensuring as far as possible protection for breeding and nursery areas, minimising the bycatch of fishing methods and encouraging good conservation management.

6.6.3 Environmetal Health

Sefton Council's Environment and Consumer Protection Division is responsible for the enforcement of legislation relating to Food Health and should be consulted on all health issues. There is a considerable amount of legislation relating to the harvesting, treatment and sale of fish (including shrimps) and shell fish. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food classify cockle beds in the area according to bacteriological criteria. The cockle beds at Crosby are provisionally classified as Class C. This means that the cockles must be treated according to an EC approved heat treatment process. The classification is reviewed annually. Sefton Council shares responsibility with the Mersey Port Health Authority and the Sea Fisheries Committee to sample water quality and to analyse the shellfish meat under EC and national legislation. Increased liaison with the Port Health Authority is necessary to better define these roles. Issues of hygiene are discussed at the local Shellfish Liaison Committee.

Policy CMP 51

Partners will work with the North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee and the Environment Agency to seek a sustainable local fishery, consistent with international legislation.

Section 7 Public Health and Amenity

A healthy environment supports biodiversity, the quality of life and economic development. The Sefton Coast's image is affected by poor water quality, contaminated shellfish beds, and other localised pollution problems. Clean bathing water and clean beaches are a benchmark of environmental quality and substantial progress has been made by both the water industry regulators and Sefton Council to tackle the issues. The Sefton Coast and the Merseyside region is now benefiting from the massive clean-ups prompted by the Mersey Basin Campaign.

Since the first review of the Coast Management Plan in 1989;

- the Mersey Estuary Pollution Alleviation Scheme (Phases 1 and 2) and the Southport Bathing Waters Improvement Scheme have been completed.
- Ainsdale beach has won resort beach awards in 1994 and 1996.
- the Alt 2000 campaign has been launched.
- the beach cleansing budget has been increased.
- oil spill guidelines have been produced.

The formation of the Environment Agency brings a more holistic approach to the environment. The Environment Agency's statutory duties support the aims of coastal management; the Agency can also decide its priorities based on strategies such as the Sefton Coast Management Plan.

Targets for the Plan period; we will aim to;

- achieve 'guideline' water quality at Ainsdale beach.
- complete the programme of removing foul discharges to the beach.
- reduce the incidence of local sewage derived debris.

SECTION 7 PUBLIC HEALTH AND AMENITY

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

7.1 Beach Litter

Objective: To maintain amenity beaches to the highest standards.

Beach litter and beach cleansing is covered in some detail in the Beach Management Strategy which forms a component of Sefton's overall approach to coastal management. Sefton Council has a statutory duty under *The Environmental Protection Act 1990* to ensure that 'all land in its direct control which is open to the air and to which the public have access is kept clear of litter and refuse, so far as is practicable'. Appropriate beaches have been identified as amenity beaches and standards of cleanliness, as set out in a Code of Practice, will be applied.

A coastwide approach to beach cleansing is to be adopted based on zoning and will encompass areas of private ownership identified as amenity beaches. Beach cleansing practice, equipment and resources will be kept under review. The sensitive nature of beach and foredune habitat will be taken into consideration in all work. A balance must be struck between those parts of the coast where it is important for tourism to aim for litter free beaches and those areas where the natural strandline is an integral component of the ecology and should be left substantially untouched. The issue will be further addressed as part of the development of a nature conservation strategy for the Sefton Coast.

Policy CMP 52

To introduce an integrated coastwide approach to beach cleansing in accordance with Beach Cleansing Guidelines.

Beach litter is derived from many sources; marine flotsam and jetsam, river and sewage derived litter, casual littering by visitors and fly-tipping. Regular inspection and monitoring is necessary to identify on a day-to-day basis which areas require cleansing but also to look at long-term trends in the quantity and composition of litter to see if pollution control programmes are effective.

Major sewerage projects, largely completed by 1996, have considerably reduced the incidence of sewage derived litter. The long term aim is to see a considerable reduction in the amount of beach litter through a combination of sewerage improvements, the enforcement of international and national regulations, and heightened public awareness of the problems of litter.

Surveys such as those carried out by the Marine Conservation Society and the Tidy Britain Group help to raise awareness of the problems and there is a need for such organisations to work with, and support, the aims of the Coast Management Scheme. Much of the litter found on British beaches is of international origin, either from disposal at sea or from rivers.

A more rigorous long term monitoring exercise should also be set up to provide comparable data to other UK sites. There should be increased contact with users to promote the clean use of the beach and marine environment and to support public awareness campaigns.

Policy CMP 53

Partners will support initiatives that campaign for cleaner beaches and will support survey and monitoring exercises.

7.2 Bathing Water Quality

Objective: The EA's target is for all bathing waters to meet mandatory water quality standards by 1996. Sefton Council's long-term aim is for Ainsdale to meet guideline water quality standards and for improvements to be consistent and sustained.

The Environment Agency samples bathing waters at designated beaches in accordance with the requirements of the *EC Bathing Waters Directive*, and report the results to the Department of Environment. In Sefton, Southport, Ainsdale and Formby are designated beaches. The two main objectives of the Directive are to improve or maintain the quality of bathing water for amenity reasons, and to protect public health. Although the EA implement the sampling programme it does not have any responsibilities for public health.

Sefton Council's Environment and Consumer Protection division works closely with the EA and carries out additional sampling on undesignated beaches such as Crosby. Sefton Council and the National Trust, in line with Government advice, display the results of water quality sampling. Non-compliance with the Directive's water quality criteria is assessed by the EA to determine action plans to improve the bathing water quality by, for example, changing the conditions of discharge consents. Work is implemented through 5 year Asset Management Plans agreed between the EA, North West Water plc and Ofwat. The level of expenditure to the year 2000 has been set for the North West Region and the target is to achieve the mandatory water quality standard by 1996.

However, ideally the target should be for the guideline standard. This is the aim that has been set by the Countryside Commission for Heritage Coasts in England and Wales in their policy document. This higher standard should be set for designated beaches, so that beach management improvement can be targeted towards the achievement of a European 'Blue Flag' award.

As important as actual water quality is consistency of water quality to build up visitor confidence.

There is an important link between media reports of dirty beaches and the health of the local tourism and fishing economy. It is important for Southport as a major coastal resort and Ainsdale as a regionally important beach to become synonymous with clean water.

Policy CMP54

Sefton Council will encourage the EA to set a long term target for guideline water quality standard at Ainsdale and to extend sampling to other beach areas and the marine lakes.

7.3 Public Protection

Objective : To protect the public from danger from the consumption of contaminated fish and shellfish, from pollution, noise and other health risks.

People working at the coast or visiting the coast must be protected from potential hazards, both long term and one-off. Sefton's Chief Environment and Consumer Protection Officer has certain statutory powers to protect the public from nuisance and would recommend the closure of beach areas or other parts of the coast where there is perceived to be a health risk or nuisance to users.

MAFF carry out a radiation monitoring programme and annual reports are presented to Sefton Council. The highest levels of radiation are found in the mud deposits of the Ribble and although risks are very low, advice will be given to people likely to be exposed to radiation for long periods.

Oil spills, chemical pollution or algae blooms can lead to problems on amenity beaches and in areas of high nature conservation value. Beach management guidelines and the Mersey Oil Spill Clean-up Guidelines require that amenity beaches are closed if there is any concern about health risks.

Policy CMP 55

Partners will coordinate their activities to share information on risks to the public, will follow appropriate guidelines and will inform the public as necessary.

7.4 Prevention of Pollution

Objective: to encourage responsible agencies, and partners, to address the effects of pollutants on the Sefton Coast.

Atmospheric and water pollution is one of the key issues identified in this plan (see 1.12.2). Whilst elements of atmospheric pollution, for example require national commitments to clean technology before improvements can be made there are many sources of pollution which can be tackled by the Local Authority, the Environment Agency, North West Water, industries, farmers and the general public.

Air and water pollution affect the intrinsic value of Sefton's internationally important wildlife sites. Any action to reduce sources of pollution will assist nature conservation and the environment for all. Prevention of pollution is far better than cleaning it up afterwards. In line with the aims of Local Agenda 21 the precautionary principle should be adopted where there is uncertainty about the effect of an operation. Public

awareness campaigns, such as 'Bag it and Bin it' will be supported by the scheme, and action will be taken to prevent fly tipping.

Sources of pollution which are of concern to Sefton's Council include;

- the bulk storage of dusty material within the Dock estate.
- the continued discharge of foul sewage onto some areas of the Sefton Coast, especially during storm periods.
- levels of sewage related bacteria and heavy metals in shellfish.
- levels of radioactivity in muds and silt and in tipped material.
- bacteria and viruses in sea water and other recreational waters.
- oil and other sources of pollution in the marine environment and inland waters.
- exhaust emissions and other pollution from traffic.

Within the Scheme area partners will ensure that their actions do not add to pollution of air, land or water and will be active in public awareness campaigns.

Policy CMP 56

Partners will adopt good environmental practice and will support local awareness campaigns to counter pollution of air, land and water.

Section 8 Structure, implementation and review

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

8.1 Structure

Government advice is that local authorities should take the lead and work closely with other agencies in order to achieve broader coastal objectives. Sefton Council is prepared to continue this role and will address the needs of an administrative structure where the existing framework forms a nucleus but is expanded. The management framework of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme currently follows a Steering Group and Working Party model (see Box).

The experience of coastal management in Sefton is reflected by the Countryside Commission's *Heritage Coast Policy Statement* which concludes that :

'Local Authorities need to ensure that each coast has a service and that responsibilities are clearly identified at all levels, including senior ones, so that the following principal tasks are effectively carried out :

The Coast is properly protected and funds are secured for its management;

A management plan is prepared for the area including the inter-tidal strand and adjacent inshore waters;

The Plan's implementation is overseen through the countryside management approach towards practical work, through liaison with all interests involved in the management and use of the coast and through statutory planning and environmental health actions and controls'.

The Sefton Coast Management Plan is therefore a coming together of current thinking on the Heritage Coast style of management and the wider concerns of integrated coastal zone management.

The scheme will continue to be based on partnership within the Sefton Coast area and through other coastal initiatives.

Sefton Council has several interests in coastal management; as a maritime local authority with powers, as a landowner, as a partner in wider initiatives and as the lead agency in the local partnership of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme. There is a need for a review of the organisational structure within Sefton. At Council level there is a case for better integration of the coastal work of several Committees, collectively guided by the Coast Management Plan. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme Steering Group is advised by the Working Party and its associated sub-groups and it, in turn, advises the relevant Committees of Sefton Council.

Council members and officers attend meetings of appropriate fora and committees.

Member and officer representation will be maintained on:

- The Irish Sea Forum
- The Mersey Forest
- Groundwork, St Helens, Knowsley and Sefton

Member representation will be maintained on:

- The North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
- The Mersey Estuary Plan
- Ribble Estuary Advisory Group
- The Port Health Authority
- Merseytravel
- Liverpool Bay Forum

Officer representation will be maintained on:

- Ribble Estuary Steering Committee
- Mersey Basin Campaign Estuary Project Group
- Merseyside and Cheshire Search and Rescue Committee
- Marine Safety Committee
- Ribble Estuary Liaison Committee
- Alt 2000 Initiative
- Liverpool Bay Coastal Group
- North Western Coastal Group
- British Resorts Association
- CoastNet

The treatment of coastal issues in Sefton has been improved by better linking the cycles of Working Party and Steering Group meetings with those of the Council. Steering Group meetings and Working Party meetings are held quarterly and strategic coastal issues are usually discussed within this framework before going to main Committees. This strengthens the strategic overview and partnership important for coastal zone management. For many coastal developments formal consultation is now statutory so the addition of an informal consultation mechanism through the Sefton Coast Management Scheme would not be an undue burden.

The Director of Planning, Environment and Consumer Protection will continue to employ the Coast Management Officer as overall co-ordinator and will provide the secretariat for the Management Scheme.

Coast management and strategic issues are discussed at a Working Party. As the work of this group has become wider and more strategic a number of sub-groups have been set up to address specific issues and areas where communication leads to good management. The sub-groups conduct their own business and report back through the Working Party mechanisms. Issues raised by the Steering Group or Working Party can be taken up by sub-groups and views reported back. Under the present structure certain issues are not addressed fully by the Steering Group and Working Party mechanism. These are the wider issues of coastal zone management such as sea-use, fisheries,

water quality, pollution, sea defence and coast protection. Most of these issues come under the remit of the Environmental and Licensing Committee and the role of this Committee should become more fully integrated with the Coast Management Scheme.

8.2 Communication

Sefton Council has set out a strong pro-active approach to coastal planning and management and will;

- Seek to persuade authorities and agencies dealing with sea defence, coast protection and marine pollution issues to take fully into account the scientific and amenity value of the Sefton Coast in carrying out their responsibilities.
- Seek to establish detailed and continuing working arrangements with North West Water plc and the Environment Agency in order that action to improve the quality of both sea bathing water and beaches is taken as expeditiously as possible in the interests of improving the amenity of the coastal area and securing the economy of Southport and other resorts.
- Seek to draw the attention of the appropriate regulatory agencies to the impact of all types of marine pollution on the quality of the beaches and resort areas in Sefton, and will support measures to control and reduce such pollution.
- Support as far as possible efforts to monitor coastal processes as well as further research which may lead to a better understanding of the coastal environment
- Continue to press for a better co-ordinated regional, national and international approach to coastal zone management, especially at UK Government and European Commission levels.
- Assist as far as possible the proper implementation of international directions on nature conservation and resource conservation relevant to the coastal zone.

Consultation within the Management Scheme, between the Scheme and other interests in Sefton and with other coastal initiatives are all important. It is fairly easy to improve consultation within the remit of the Scheme by agreement between partners.

The Sefton Environmental Resources Group is a specialised working group advising the Council on issues ranging from archaeology to access and can provide advice to the Coast Management Scheme. Groundwork St Helens, Knowsley and Sefton serve a Countryside Recreation Forum where similar issues can be discussed in a regional context.

Consultation mechanisms will also be developed with the Management Plans for the Mersey and Ribble estuaries as these are developed. Although consultation mechanisms are in place, the wider aspect of communication does need to be developed further within the Plan period and consideration will be given to establishing a Sefton Coast Forum.

All organisations with an interest in the coast would receive information and be invited to participate in such a Forum. Initially, resources permitting, it is agreed to convene an annual meeting of the Forum linked to the publication of the annual report.

The Scheme will develop other mechanisms, as appropriate and resources permitting, to improve communication with politicians, owners and occupiers in the coastal zone, users, voluntary groups and interested local residents.

8.3 Implementation

The Steering Group/Working Party structure co-ordinates coastal management policy in Sefton. Putting policy into action uses several mechanisms. In some cases it will remain primarily sectoral, as in the funding of coastal works; in others more through partnerships and links to incentives and opportunities.

ORGANISATION OF SEFTON COAST MANAGEMENT SCHEME

STEERING GROUP

Sefton Council (8 members, voting)

Others, non-voting, include :

English Nature
Countryside Commission
Forestry Authority
National Trust
North West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation
TAVRA (Territorial Army)
RSPB
Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Environment Agency

WORKING PARTY

Chair : Director of Planning, Environment and Consumer Protection

Sefton Council; Planning, Environment & Consumer Protection; Leisure Services; Tourism; Technical Services; JCAS; with English Nature, Countryside Commission, Territorial Army, National Trust, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Forestry Authority, North West Federation for Sport Recreation and Conservation and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

SUB-GROUPS

Land Management sub-group
Beach Management sub-group
Rangers and Wardens sub- group

A number of funding mechanisms are used to support coastal zone management in Sefton, emphasising the partnership approach to integrated management.

Contribution by Levy

Sefton Council contributes by levy to the North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, to support the Committee's work in the Region. This contribution, provides for the services of the Sea Fisheries Committee in the Sefton area, including the work of Fisheries Officers, conservation officer, patrol boat and biological survey. The role of the Sea Fisheries Committee in coastal management may widen.

Sefton Council also contributes by levy to the work of the Regional Flood Defence Committee. This contribution helps to provide the EA with the necessary funding to maintain and monitor the function of sea defences and flood defences in and around Sefton. Currently Sefton Council is not represented on the Committee.

Grant Aid for Coastal Works

Coastal works put forward by Sefton Council are eligible for grant-aid from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Details of the condition of grant-aid under the *Land Drainage Act 1991* and *Coast Protection Act 1949* are given in the Sefton Coastal Defence Issues and Strategy.

Grants range from 25% to 75% depending on the nature of the scheme and the capital burden to the local authority.

Merseyside Regional Conversion Plan 'Merseyside 2000'

Sefton falls within the European Regional Development Fund Objective 1 category area, Merseyside. The Regional Conversion Plan, '*Merseyside 2000*' will guide economic development in the region to the year 2000. The natural values of the Sefton Coast make it easy to forget that it lies within a metropolitan area, subject in part to severe economic and employment problems.

The important link between countryside management and urban needs was made clear in the Merseyside Structure Plan (1980) and this link is reinforced in Sefton's Unitary Development Plan. A healthy coastal environment, providing access and recreation, is fundamental to the health of the region as a whole.

Coast-related projects may be developed with the support of the European Regional Development Fund. Key projects include promoting public transport initiatives, establishing nature reserves and improving infrastructure and facilities.

Other European funding mechanisms

There are several other European Funding mechanisms which could be used to support coastal management work in Sefton. In the environmental sphere overall guidance is provided by EC Environmental Action Programmes. The Sefton Coast has benefited from funding through the Life-nature programme in 1995 to prepare a nature

conservation strategy for the sand dunes. There are several other EC funding mechanisms available for projects involving one or more partners in other EC countries and eastern Europe.

National Lottery funding

The National Lottery is a potential source of funding for projects, through any of its Commissions. Bids usually need to involve partnerships, a reasonable guarantee that the running costs will be met and public support. In the period of this plan lottery funding could provide an important boost for a number of coast related projects.

Employment Training

Sefton Council, the National Trust and Lancashire Wildlife Trust have all relied heavily on the support given by the various Government employment training initiatives since the inception of the Management Scheme. The restoration of Formby Point, for example, and its early maintenance could not have been achieved without such schemes. The success rate of trainees finding full-time employment in countryside management has also been good. Employment training is an important support mechanism for the work of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme partners and would be enhanced by plans for an integrated training centre for the coast.

Site Management Staff

There is no substitute for skilled site management staff. The conservation land management agencies all employ permanent staff to oversee site management. These staff work closely together, using a shared coastal radio network, and meet regularly, and formally, to discuss issues. As nature conservation management plans are drawn up for other areas of the coast it is likely that golf course greenkeepers, TAVRA estate management staff, and farmers will become more part of a whole approach to land management. It is important that the partner organisations maintain and resource site management staff at a level which meets the aims and objectives of the scheme.

Support for Management

The Scheme partners will seek to maximise the effectiveness of grant-aid and other incentives aimed at improving management for recreation, landscape or wildlife.

Support from the Countryside Commission

The Countryside Commission support the work of Sefton Council through annual work programmes identified in the Countryside Recreation Strategy.

The Commission also support the work of the National Trust on a regional basis.

Priority will be given to projects identified within The Mersey Forest and Groundwork areas, and one of the main targets until the year 2000 will be access. The Countryside Commission will use the Countryside Character approach for shaping objectives for the countryside, and for advising on the content of local plans and strategies.

Support from the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food

Countryside Stewardship (combined with the Hedgerow Incentive Scheme) is administered by MAFF. The National Trust, Royal Birkdale Golf Club and the RSPB had entered into Stewardship Agreements by 1997. Other areas of the Sefton Coast could benefit from Countryside Stewardship and new agreements will be encouraged.

Support from English Nature

English Nature north-west regional team directly support projects on the coast including interpretation and habitat management projects, the preparation of management plans for areas of private land and habitat monitoring .

English Nature can also offer support through;

(i) Species Recovery Programme

National programmes have been devised targeting, amongst others, the Natterjack Toad, Sand Lizard and Red Squirrel. Resources from these programmes can be of direct benefit to habitat management on the Sefton Coast. For agreed projects 100% funding is provided.

(ii) Management Agreements

Under section 16 of the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*, English Nature can enter into a management agreement with a local authority or other landowner for the purposes of protecting and enhancing the wildlife interest. Such agreements could be used more widely on the Sefton Coast, especially on Local Nature Reserves, beach areas and on marshland.

(iii) Wildlife Enhancement Scheme

Habitat management work in the Sefton Coast/Ribble Estuary area would benefit from incentive schemes to promote best practice. English Nature's Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) grants can be used to target certain habitats. On the Sefton Coast the heathland will be given priority.

Support from the Forestry Authority.

The Forestry Authority supports the woodland policies contained in this plan and the work of woodland owners through, in particular, the Woodland Grant Scheme. These grants encourage good silvicultural practice, enhancement of biodiversity, maintenance, re-planting and provision of access.

Support from Sefton Council

Sefton Council may, from time to time, also promote management activity through management agreements and incentive schemes. The Sefton Coast Life Project, for example, has coordinated incentive payments for habitat management work.

8.4 Working with Local Communities

Objective : To identify, inform, involve and support local communities along the coast through improved communication and by organising events and activities.

Community is a broad term used to encompass all local people who live, work, study, exercise and enjoy themselves on the coast. There are important obligations to local people which must come before the provision of facilities for tourists, such as protecting livelihoods, quiet open space, and local footpaths.

The Local agenda 21 process recommends that all initiatives need to respect local conditions and build on requirements, concern and commitment of local people.

It is important that over the plan period Sefton Council and the Sefton Coast Management Scheme partnership provides opportunities for Community Participation. Through consultation and consensus building the Scheme partners can ensure that their work is supported by local communities and involves them. Listening to the experience and interests of the Community (in its widest sense) will help the Scheme partners deliver an improved quality of service, project a caring image and tap into popular values.

Community participation can range from taking part in consultation exercises on policy documents, being active in environmental fora, taking part in environmental work and supporting the work of others. The partners in the Sefton Coast Management Scheme recognise that the level of community participation could be increased. Finding the additional resources to do so may be a gradual process but will follow the aims of the Local Agenda 21 process.

8.4.1 Informing Local Communities

Information is an important component of management. The Scheme partners can assist the process of providing information by using on-site display boards, leaflets, notices and through the 'Coastlines' magazine produced for local people. Sefton's Library Service is an important part of this process and it is recommended that 'Coastal Information Points' are set up in each library where most relevant material is provided.

A coastal resource centre, available for public use, will also be established as part of the Local Agenda 21 process. A coastwide mailing list will be maintained so that all individuals and organisations who wish to be informed of management proposals and opportunities for involvement can do so.

Policy CMP 57

Partners will inform the local community about management issues.

8.4.2 Involving Local Communities

It is important that local people identify with the coastal areas and feel that they can become involved, either through being able to put their views forward or by active participation in activities. People can become more involved in the work of the Scheme and its partners through the volunteer network and through the BTCV. The British Trust for Conservation volunteers can assist especially with practical nature conservation work.

A coastwide volunteer network was established in 1993 to improve communication between partner organisations and the many volunteers who help with site management duties, school groups and young naturalist's groups. The network should be retained and developed to better reach the local community and other interested groups.

A Sefton Coast young naturalist's club, the Natterjack Club was set up in Hightown in 1991 and, resources and volunteers permitting, other clubs will be established.

The Sefton Conservation Volunteers, a local group, affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, assist especially the Coast and Countryside Management Service with practical conservation tasks throughout the coast.

Many conservation volunteer groups also visit the coast with the Alt Centre at Hightown providing a residential base.

Policy CMP 58

Partners will encourage and develop opportunities for volunteering and will support volunteers with training and co-ordination.

8.4.3 Supporting Local Communities

The Scheme partners wish to encourage closer links between their sites and local people. Environmental societies and arts groups can all offer much to land managers and will be welcomed and encouraged. Local volunteers will be invited to act as 'coastal guides' to help local people and visitors to enjoy the coast. Areas with limited access such as the Altcar Rifle Range or parts of the National Nature Reserves can be made more accessible to organised local groups. A greater link between all sites and their local communities will be encouraged.

The Management Scheme partners will also take part in local shows and will disseminate interpretative material. Further opportunities should be developed to enable local people to be actively involved in the work of the Coast Management Scheme and consideration will be given to a 'Friends of the Sefton Coast' network.

Policy CMP 59

Partners will welcome and encourage liaison with the wider community.

8.5 Understanding and Monitoring

Objective : To maintain adequate information about the coast in a form available to all partners for management purposes and to integrate research effort with the aims of management.

The implementation of the Management Plan must be based on the best available knowledge. Without such knowledge and understanding of what is happening, and how, why and at what rate it is happening, management efforts may be misguided with unforeseen side-effects.

For this reason the management process must be informed and scientific knowledge must become better integrated with management.

8.5.1 Monitoring

The monitoring 'feed-back' loop of the management process has yet to be fully developed. The series of indicators identified in Section 1 will form the basis of an integrated monitoring programme. Actions will also be monitored.

The physical monitoring of the coastline is carried out by the Director of Technical Services in conjunction with the EA and partners in the Liverpool Bay Coastal Group. Studies include aerial survey (at low and high tides), contouring, beach profile measurements, and the direct measurement of erosion and accretion.

People's use of the coast is also monitored, although there is a need to develop a better resourced programme of visitor surveys. A coastwide recreational use and visitor profile survey would help to inform the management process.

Site-based 'project recording' is being standardised by the adoption of national guidelines for the production of site management plans linked to a standardised computer recording package. Site-based monitoring is principally limited by resources.

Environmental monitoring is important to assess the health of the coast zone. Water quality monitoring is carried out principally by the EA. Sefton's Director of Planning, Environment and Consumer Protection monitors air, water, and food health parameters in the coastal zone. These are of particular relevance for the beach zone where land and sea sources of pollution interact.

8.5.2 Research

Research work has tended to be sectoral, but more recently the need for integrated research has been recognised. Such integration of information is now common practice through the process of Environmental Assessment and the publication of environmental reviews.

However, basic data collection tends to remain sectoral, requiring skilled interpretation to link studies. A research seminar held in 1992 and subsequent published review '*The Sand Dunes of the Sefton Coast*' focused on the dune coast and much more is now generally known about the complex nature of this environment. A research strategy has been formed with the stated aim;

'to improve our overall understanding of this complex and changing environment, and to assist with the management decisions which are based on the best available knowledge at any given time'.

The objectives of the research strategy are :

- (i) to set the Sefton Coast in its regional, national and international context and to encourage links with other sites;
- (ii) to encourage multi-disciplinary studies to look at complex issues (e.g. the implications of climatic change);
- (iii) to encourage studies that look at the whole of the dune system and the wider coastal system;
- (iv) to enable the managing agencies to generate and support research work;
- (v) to maintain a register of research or monitoring projects suitable for school, undergraduate and post-graduate studies;
- (vi) to encourage research areas in proportion to their capacity to help achieve management objectives.

To achieve the objectives of the research strategy a Research Forum has been formed. The research forum brings together land and shoreline managers, University departments and Museum staff to share their knowledge and liaise on joint projects. Joint approaches, with national and international links, are favoured for European funding. The Forum will :

- prepare and review the research strategy
- prepare and update a bibliography register of researchers and list of projects.
- publish an annual synopsis and newsletter on research projects
- act as a local link with national and international research groups.

The Research Forum will report to the Working Party via the Land Management sub-group. There is a need to build up a comprehensive data base and to adopt standard survey and monitoring techniques. In the research strategy careful attention will be paid to the development of an integrated data-base which will include physical, biological and land-use data.

8.5.3 Sharing information

Elements from several regional and local databases will also be drawn together using GIS technology to provide a local coastal zone management database. This will need to be a collaborative venture between several agencies. There is a danger of repeating work and where existing data-sets are GIS compatible, such as much of the information from the UK Digital Marine Atlas Project (UKDMAP), West Coast Directory and National Vegetation Classification, these will be incorporated in the local data-base. The collaborative nature of the project lends itself well to joint-funding packages involving project partners, and sources such as EC Life funding. The sharing of information is important within the Scheme area and between coastal initiatives in north-west England.

Management decisions must be based on relevant, accurate and sufficient data. The sharing of information is encouraged through Government best practice guidance. A co-ordinated coastal data-base will be developed for the Sefton Coast, beginning initially with the co-ordination of information on the sand dunes through the work of the Life project.

8.5.4 Dissemination of Information

Much useful information on the Sefton Coast is included in national (e.g. the National Vegetation Classification) and regional (e.g. Survey of Flood Defences) data sets and it is important that this information is disseminated to appropriate audiences.

Some useful environmental reviews have already been published and the West Coast Directory Project has prepared a regional report for the north west. The regional report and directory will be compatible with the UKDMAP and will be a useful source of reference when integrated with other local data-sets. The Sefton Coast Management Scheme and its partners should support the dissemination of information to decision makers, other site managers and the public. The process of review and the publication of 'The Sand Dunes for the Sefton Coast' could be repeated for the Ribble Estuary. Research monographs should also be published, in association with the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, by the scheme and its partners. There are links in this approach to the general theme of education. An Internet homepage site for the Sefton Coast Management Scheme was set up in 1996 and will run on an experimental basis until 1999 with EC financial support.

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Partners will develop an information strategy for the Sefton Coast encompassing survey, research, monitoring and links to other coastal initiatives.

Section 9 Prescriptions and work programme 1997-2001

Implementation of the Coast Management Plan requires coordination, drive and long-term vision.

The Steering Group and Working Party meet at least four times a year and an Annual Review will be produced. With this structure it will be possible to assess progress against the target dates in the work programme.

Most actions require a cooperative approach and some form of joint funding. Therefore, however desirable a target, there may be delays if funding or staff resources are not available. Other actions will have to fit in with the business plans of organisations such as the Environment Agency or English Nature. Despite these constraints the Sefton Coast Management Scheme is the most appropriate mechanism for carrying forward action for the Sefton Coast.

The prescriptive section summaries and repeats the Aims, Objectives and Policies of the main body of the Plan and adds a series of Prescriptions. The Prescriptions are supported by additional information and identify main partners, a target date (usually for action, rather than completion) and an indication of the cost of the action.

It is the nature of the approach adopted in Sefton that most targets are low cost (less than £1,000; LOW in Work Programme) and can usually, be met from existing base-line resources. Medium cost projects (£1,000-£10,000; MED) would generally require a commitment by partners to additional funding requiring, for example, Committee approval.

Large scale projects (over £10,000; HIGH) are generally outside the work programme of the Scheme partners and such projects may come out of other initiatives such as Sefton's Transport Policies and Programme annual bid or, Single Regeneration Budget and European Regional Development Fund.

Large scale projects which could be developed over the period 1996-2000 include the development of;

- the RSPB Reserve at Marshside including works to highways, car parks, visitor centres etc.
- a Coastal Visitor Centre in Southport as part of the Seafront regeneration proposals.
- a series of small visitor centres, along the coast as part of a coordinated interpretive package.
- the coastal cycleway from Waterloo to Crossens.
- a master-plan for the regeneration of Crosby Coastal Park.
- new buildings and infrastructure for the National Trust at Formby.

Most of these large projects depend on outside sources of funding. The Work Programme presented with this Plan focuses on achievable targets, assuming current level of resources.

SECTION 9 ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPO	Chief Planning Officer
CoCo	Countryside Commission
CTAO	Chief Tourism and Attractions Officer
DLS	Director of Leisure Services
DoE	Department of the Environment
D of L	Duchy of Lancaster
DPECP	Director of Planning, Environment and Consumer Protection
DTS	Director of Technical Services
EA	Environmental Agency
ECP	Chief Environment and Consumer Protection Officer
EN	English Nature
FA	Forestry Authority
JCAS	Joint Countryside Advisory Service
LWT	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MDHC	Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
MEROC	Merseyside Orienteering Club
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NMGM	National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside
NT	National Trust
NWNWSFC	North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
NWTB	North West Tourist Board
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological/geomorphological Sites
ROSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
RLSS	Royal Life Saving Society
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
c.SAC	candidate Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SMBC	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
TAVRA	Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association
TPT	Trans Pennine Trail
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
YHA	Youth Hostels Association