

# coastLINES

Summer 2008

1988-2008





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

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## 30 years of coastal management

In 1978 the Steering Group of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme met for the first time. The initiative was a joint venture between Merseyside County Council, Sefton Council and the Countryside Commission. The structure and operation of the new coastal project was modelled on the Heritage Coast programme.

The focus of management was the restoration of the landscape at Formby Point where years of neglect and under-funding had left the National Trust and Sefton Council with an uphill struggle. Large scale restoration projects were run by Merseyside County Council and took almost ten years to complete.

A Project officer for the scheme was appointed in 1979. By 1983 the Sefton Coast Management Scheme had produced its first Coast Management Plan which set the agenda for the establishment of nature reserves, woodland management, recreation and interpretation. The scheme gained a national and international reputation through several awards.

In 2001 the Sefton Coast Partnership was formed to broaden the scope of the work and to include other landscape managers along the coast. The partnership now promotes a more coordinated approach to coastal management and follows best practice guidelines for Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

The first edition of Coastlines was published in 1987. Over the years Coastlines has reported on all the significant stories along the Sefton Coast. The Sefton Coast Partnership website [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk) holds most of the back issues and a wealth of other information on the Sefton Coast.

**Ceri Jones, Assistant Director for Planning & Economic Regeneration Department and adviser to the Sefton Coast Partnership retired from Sefton Council at the end of March.**

Ceri started working for the Council in 1979 during which time he has been a huge supporter of the Sefton Coast. He has worked tirelessly in the interest of the Sefton Coast and acted as a wonderful link between the Council and the many partners who work on the coast. Ceri has made a

real and constructive difference. His advice to myself as Chair has proved invaluable in steering the often tricky course between partners and the Council. The Partnership would like to express their thanks to Ceri for his very positive contribution to the work of the Board and wish him a long and happy retirement.

As a token of appreciation the Board presented to Ceri a wooden bench produced from timber felled from the coastal woodlands, and made in the workshop at the Ainsdale Discovery Centre. The presentation was made by Lord Fearn.

**Ted Jackson**  
Chair Sefton Coast Partnership



Take a seat  
Mr Jones



# A brief history of Natterjack toad management on Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR

Natterjack toads, Bootle organs and Southport nightingales, these sonorous amphibians are one of the flagship species for the Sefton coast. Their distinctive calls can be heard up and down the coast in spring when the males wait at the edge of the temporary pools in the sand dunes calling for a mate.

Natural England has been managing the habitat on the National Nature Reserve (NNR) to safeguard the future of these toads since it was declared in 1965.

Through the decades the management techniques have changed as new information is discovered. In the 1960's and 70's it wasn't known that common frogs and toads have an impact on the breeding success of Natterjacks. We now know that competition between Natterjacks, common toads and frogs suppresses the development of Natterjack tadpoles. This has led to management which aims to make the pools and surrounding habitat less suitable for common toads and frogs.

The habitat

Adult Natterjack toads spend the winter underground in sandy burrows they excavate themselves. They do not hibernate in the scientific sense but remain in a state of torpor coming out to feed if it becomes warm enough.

They have short back legs which are adapted for running through sand. They actively hunt small invertebrates, so do best in short vegetation or open sand where they spot the prey and run after it.

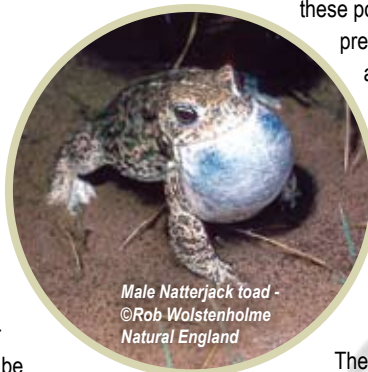
## The habitat

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Typical Natterjack habitat - ©Rob Wolstenholme Natural England



Male Natterjack toad - ©Rob Wolstenholme Natural England

Natterjacks breed well in shallow sandy bottomed pools which dry up in late summer. They do well in this environment because they can change from eggs through to tadpoles in as little as 4 weeks taking advantage of the transient nature of these pools. Because these pools dry up at the end of the summer, predatory invertebrates such as beetles and dragonfly larvae, which would normally eat the eggs and spawn do not survive. Natterjack tadpoles can feed on the algae which develops on their own droppings so do not need plants in the water to feed on.

## Management

The search for water:

Throughout the late 1960's and 70's low rainfall led to the drying of most of the natural slacks on the reserve. Concerns led to management focussed on providing breeding ponds. Natural slacks (hollows between the dunes where the wind has removed sand until the water-table is reached) were deepened and new water bodies were created. West end pond was excavated in 1971 and artificial lined pools were created near to the office. Spawn laid out on site was transferred to these pools to ensure successful metamorphosis each year.



Artificial concrete pools - ©Natural England

With our greater knowledge of the ecology of these toads we no longer rescue spawn strings. Natterjacks are a species of boom and bust needing only breed well once every 5 years or so to maintain their population.

We now understand that importance of transient pools and much of our modern work is to re-contour pools created in the 1970's to ensure they dry up after the breeding season and they have the shallow sides preferred by Natterjacks.



Re-contouring slack 5 - ©Rob Wolstenholme Natural England

## Invasion of scrub

Following the dry years woody plant species such as birch and sea buckthorn got a foothold in the slacks. Low rabbit numbers (caused by mixomatosis) meant that the small scrub was not removed through grazing. This ensured that the scrub managed to dominate in many of the previously important dune slacks.

Natterjack toad breeding was affected as this habitat was beneficial to the common amphibians.

The reduction in rabbit grazing also meant the short grass preferred by adult Natterjacks became scarce.

Since the 1980's we have reduced scrub through cutting and introduced grazing to supplement the natural grazing by rabbits. Livestock grazing is a sustainable management tool which brings significant benefits for the reserve.



Herdwick sheep - ©Rob Wolstenholme Natural England

Alice Kimpton Senior Site Manager  
Natural England

## The future

Managing habitats, which depend on the water table, is very complicated as the levels fluctuate from year to year. Predicting what will happen to this nationally and internationally important habitat in the face of global warming scenarios is very difficult.

I hope that through promoting better understanding of the processes which form our dune habitats we can ensure the natterjack toad and other amazing species will continue to thrive in the Sefton Dunes.



# Working with the sea - changing

**Graham Lymbery** *Project Leader - Coastal Defence*

In the past the engineer was almighty, taking on and controlling the forces of nature, or so we liked to believe. Now we have moved towards an acceptance that we can't control nature but only work with it. This, along with the threat of climate change and changing attitudes to how we value our coast has led to substantial changes over the last thirty to forty years in how we manage the risk from coastal flooding and erosion. Some of these changes are illustrated below using the examples of the hard defences that have been constructed at Crosby and Southport.



*Crosby*



*Southport*

## **Crosby**

The southern section of defences at Crosby near the docks was an opportunistic scheme; in the late 1960's the docks were being expanded so construction of the defences provided a disposal site for waste material from the docks. The Council benefited from this both in financial terms, charging for the tipping and receiving a contribution to the new defences and also gaining 170 acres (69 hectares) of public open space. The Crosby marine lake was constructed as part of this public space.

The northern section of defences at Crosby had an erosion problem that dated back to the early twentieth century where houses seawards of Burbo Bank Road had to be demolished as the sea encroached on the land.



*Crosby from the air*



*Effect of erosion on houses*

In 1930 to try to control the erosion slag was dumped on the top of the beach. This slag was continually replenished until in 1934 a severe storm caused considerable damage and it became apparent that a more permanent structure was needed. The defences in the southern part of this length were improved using greenheart piles with greenheart planks spanning between them and reclaimed more land from the sea which were later incorporated into the current defences.



*Sea defence*

*Bricks and hardcore on coast*



In 1942 bricks, rubble and general hardcore materials from bomb damaged buildings in Liverpool became available and were dumped at the Serpentine and Burbo Bank Road North to further protect the land from high tides and storms. In 1947/48 tipping of rubble began in a northerly direction from Hall Road West and in 1962 further tipping commenced at a lower level of Burbo Bank Road North to reclaim land and protect the coastline. The Council took the opportunity to charge for the disposal of material at this location.

As an example Crosby illustrates three key points: a short term and relatively ad-hoc approach to constructing defences, a strong desire to reclaim land from the sea and seeing this reclamation as an opportunity to dispose of waste material.

## **Southport**

In 1736 the coastline of Southport lay along what is now Lord Street and Southport was covered by sand dunes. As the sea began to retreat due to the accretion of the Ribble Estuary, land was drained and reclaimed upon which Southport was built. 'South Port' was developed as a bathing resort in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. A promenade was built in 1835 with a sea wall to



# attitudes to coastal defence

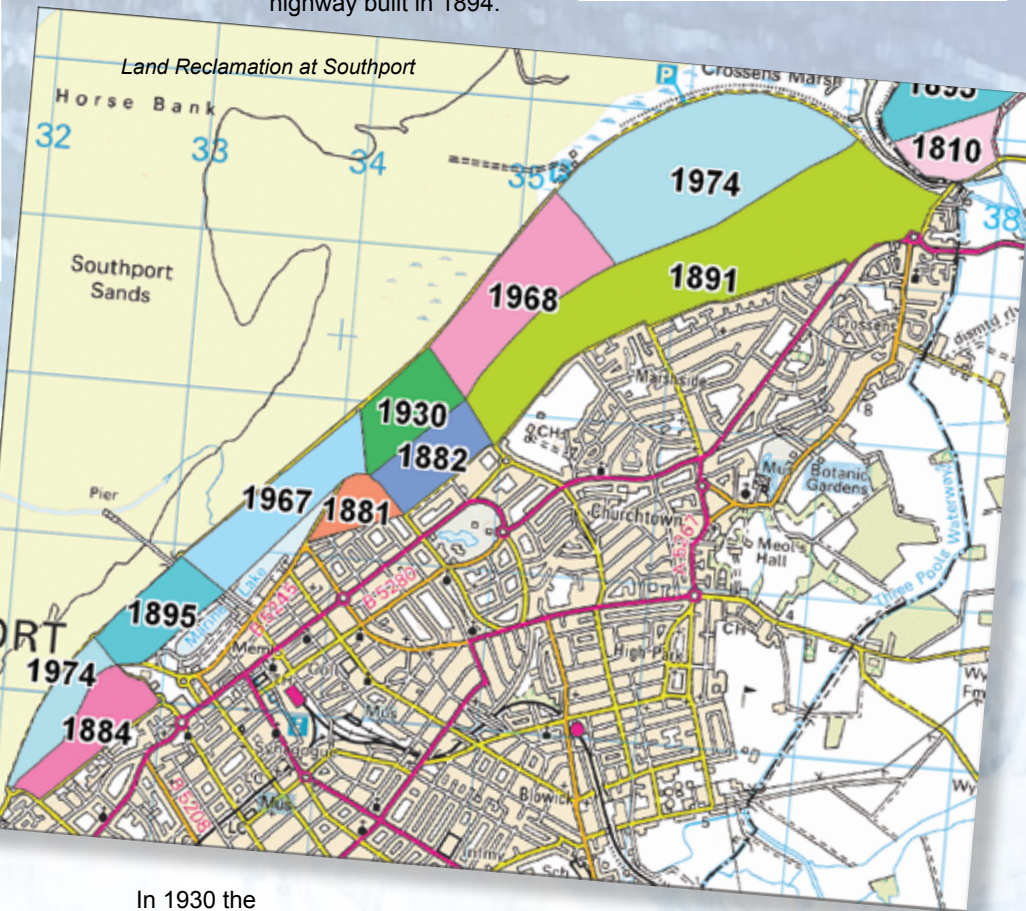
protect hotels from sand drift, tides and onshore gales. This promenade was extended further northwards from Nevill Street to Seabank Road but had to be re-built many times due to storm damage.

Land reclamation enabled further development of Southport's coast. In 1860 the pier was constructed followed by the construction of the southern Marine Lake in 1887. The lake was extended in 1892 with a northern section and was enclosed on its seaward edge by the Marine Drive highway built in 1894.

The final links in this length of the sea wall were constructed in 1968 and 1974 which extended the road north to Crossens and south to Weld Road.



next sixty years and it did not involve building on rubbish or waste material. It also gave serious consideration to its potential impact on coastal processes so that it did not create a negative effect elsewhere.



Am I saying that the way it was done in the past was bad and the way we do it now is right? Not necessarily. If we consider what was done in the light of today's attitudes then we might not so readily reclaim huge areas of land; what we would do is weigh up the benefits in relation to the economic and social value versus the environment damage and economic cost over a long period of time – say sixty years. Would we use waste material in the construction? Certainly not household rubbish but we might well use waste material such as that from the docks but only in a controlled manner so that we know it will 'work' in that situation. Would we do things in an unplanned manner? No; lack of planning means that we don't appreciate the implications of our actions, in particular over the long term. This means that mistakes occur and future generations will have to bear the cost.

In 1930 the embankment from Fairways to Hesketh Road was constructed and in the 1960's a further extension was added south of Fairways to Marine Parade. This section was built on household refuse and reclaimed 90 acres of land. The main bulk of the road, which is built on refuse, now forms the underlying structure of Marine Drive and is prone to continuous settlement caused by the slow biological degradation of their core materials. This is likely to continue for many years with the effect of the settlement being controlled by a rolling programme of highway resurfacing.

The central section of Marine Drive was often flooded causing great amounts of damage to Pleasureland and the leisure areas behind the road.

In 1998 construction began on a new sea wall and promenade which was completed in 2002. When comparing the construction of the new seawall to previous works it is apparent that there are some key differences; it did not seek to reclaim land, it was planned not only in terms of its construction but also in terms of how it would perform for the

In conclusion we are more aware of our limitations, the value of the environment and the potentially expensive legacy that we leave for future generations. Have we got it right? Maybe not, as there is always room for improvement, but we are working hard to achieve the optimum solution.





# A History of Ainsdale Sand Dunes

## Memories of Ainsdale Sand Dunes

Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve and the Sefton Coast have long been recognised as important for wildlife. The National Nature Reserve was established to protect the finest example of lime-rich (calcareous) sand dunes on the north-west coast of England.

An early picture of the dunes comes from Sir George Head's impressions of Southport in 1835.

*"It is with extreme pleasure that one then explores recesses where nothing but the sky is to be seen, and which seem as wild and solitary as an Arabian desert. Rabbits burrow here abundantly with little or nothing apparently to feed upon; and small green lizards of a colour beautifully vivid, are plentiful. A species of toad, not common, is also met with."*



Communications on the Reserve were a significant problem.

*"We tried various ingenious methods of communication: hand-launched maroons which could not be heard over the background of firing on the Altcar Rifle Range, a hand-cranked siren that was an invention of the devil because it made the operator sick, and a field telephone line which did not work. When eventually we got basic walkie-talkies we were the first National Nature Reserve to have radios"* (Neil Robinson, Warden Naturalist 1967 – 1972).

The 1970s saw concern for the natterjack toad due to particularly dry conditions. New scrapes or low areas were created in between the sand dunes to maintain the presence of seasonal pools or slacks vital to the lifecycle of the natterjack toad.

Throughout the 1980s woody species like birch and sea buckthorn got hold in the wet slacks. Much scrub removal was carried out by hand often with the help of volunteers. It was realised that a larger scale method of scrub removal was needed.

The 1990s saw the beginning of grazing at Ainsdale to control scrub. It started with 25 Herdwick sheep from Cumbria but now we have over 200 sheep. Next year we will be using a small number of cattle in addition to the current flock of sheep. The dune restoration project also began in the 1990s with phase 1 in 1992 and phase 2 in 1996. This work was very successful from a dune conservation perspective but there were public concerns over tree felling. We have listened to these concerns and are looking to take this area of work forward in a more sensitive way.



Ainsdale Sand Dunes featured in the short-list of potential reserves drawn up by Rothschild in 1915 for the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves. Rothschild described the sand dunes as:

*"a wild, little visited place, the haunt of fishermen, grazing tenants and rabbit catchers"*.

The sand dunes have retained a wilderness quality that people who visit the reserve enjoy today. In 1944, the Nature Reserves Committee placed Ainsdale in its list of the top twenty-two British Wildlife Sites.

The site was declared as a National Nature Reserve in 1965 to protect the wealth of dune flora and fauna including natterjack toads, sand lizards, orchids and invertebrates. This protection was vital. Over 46% of Sefton's dune habitat had already been lost to development. There had been a loss of rabbits, the natural grazers, due to myxomatosis and scrub was starting to take over areas of dune habitat.

In the early days of the reserve managing access was important and this was aided by a team of dedicated volunteer wardens. Another major early success was the development of an education programme linked to Liverpool Museum.





# Sand and Sea



*The formal publication launch took place on Monday 12th May at Formby Luncheon Club, courtesy of Tony Higginson of Pritchard's Book Shop Formby. Invited guests and members of the public met the authors who were present to sign the book. The book is on sale through Sefton Libraries and local bookshops; it will be also be available to purchase at the Sefton Coast Forum on 28th June 2008.*



## A new publication from Sefton Coast Partnership's Archaeology and History Task Group

Sand and Sea – Sefton's Coastal Heritage: archaeology, history and environment of a landscape in north-west England edited by Jennifer Lewis and Jennifer Stanistreet is a superb new book published by Sefton Libraries on behalf of Sefton Coast Partnership's Archaeology and History Task Group.

Sand and Sea brings together material originally delivered at a highly successful heritage conference organised by the Archaeology and History Task Group in 2004 – and expressly updated for this new book. It will appeal both to the general reader and those who have a specialist interest in the locality.

John Houston and Jen Lewis introduce readers to the background to the publication

and the archaeological and historical evidence for use of the coast. Gordon Roberts, Annie Worsley and Ron Cowell provide a fascinating insight into the evidence for the prehistoric men, women and children who exploited the marshy shoreline environment many thousands of years ago. Rob Philpott draws on the example of evidence from Meols on Wirral's north coast to suggest how evidence for prehistoric, Roman and later settlement in Sefton might be identified. With a particular emphasis on fishing and smuggling, Sylvia Harrop presents a lively picture of life on the coast in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries whilst Barbara and Reg Yorke tell of the hazardous nature of the coast and the measures taken to improve navigation. Barbara and Reg Yorke also examine the evidence for asparagus cultivation and woodland planting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, Sarah-Jane Farr reminds us that the key to successful management of the archaeological environment is in identifying, recording and reporting

discoveries of archaeological material so that it can be considered alongside competing activities such as nature conservation, economic considerations and public access.

**134 pages, fully illustrated. Cost: £15 (plus £3 postage and packing)  
ISBN 978-1-874516-16-3**

**The book is now on sale in Sefton Libraries and some local bookshops. It is also available by mail order from Crosby Library (Local History: Sand and Sea retail), Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 0LQ. Cheques should be made payable to 'Sefton Council'.**



Volunteers and the support of the local community have always been an important part of Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve but as the new millennium began this emphasis increased and a Community Officer was employed to strengthen involvement of the local community including volunteering, events, encouraging people to experience wildlife and understand this special place.

**If you would like a copy of our events list, have a question about the management we carry out, are interested in volunteering or booking a group for a guided walk please contact us on 01704 578774.**

**Nick Haigh, Natural England**  
(adapted from 'The First 40 Years', written by English Nature).



# Sand Dune Management-Experience from the Dutch Coast

Master of Science Degree in Environmental Management- Liverpool Hope University

**Michelle Newton** – Sefton Council Coastal Defence

**Thomas Dallimore** – Natural England Ainsdale National Nature Reserve

Michelle Newton and Thomas Dallimore ©Sarah Learoyd



Since graduating two years ago from university we were both fortunate to gain jobs on the Sefton Coast working for Sefton Council's Coastal Defence team and Natural

England's National Nature Reserve at Ainsdale. We were both then given the opportunity to develop our knowledge and experience by studying part time for a Master Of Science Degree in Environmental Management. As part of our course we had the opportunity to attend a week's field visit to the Dutch Coast for our sustainable coastal management module. The opportunity allowed us to broaden our knowledge and perspectives of coastal and sand dune management outside of Sefton

The dunes, together with the beach and the shore face offer a natural, sandy defence to the sea which is needed as 30% of the Netherlands lies below sea level which houses 60% of the Dutch population.

Coastal dunes are multifunctional, serving several, often conflicting functions such as nature conservation, recreation and coastal defence. Trying to combine these uses can be difficult but the negative impacts of these are now much less severe with dune management moving towards working with natural processes rather than against them. This is evident with large areas of dune restoration whereby fixed dunes are removed to expose bare sand to encourage wind blow and roll back of the dunes to improve their natural ability to act a sea defence and encourage biodiversity.

Large dune restoration project in the Netherlands ©Michelle Newton



Many sites on the Dutch Coast have been designated as nature reserves with large areas of the coast being changed by the extraction of drinking water from the dunes. 750 million m<sup>3</sup> of groundwater is extracted from the dune system per year to provide the 16 million population with fresh chlorine free drinking water

Extraction of Drinking water from the dunes in the Netherlands. ©Michelle Newton



There are also well defined pathways and zoned areas where permits are required to enter and in certain areas dog walking is strictly forbidden during the summer months.



Sign in the dunes reading 'No dogs allowed between April and October' ©Thomas Dallimore

A major difference we noticed was that the rangers in the Netherlands have far more power than the rangers in this country. They patrol sites with pistols; handcuffs and mace spray and have the power to arrest people and give on the spot fines.

The sheer difference in the scale of the dune systems between the two countries were greatly apparent from our trip and illustrated by the picture below. The average depth of the dunes in Sefton is about 1 to 2km and in Holland the depth can be as great as 5km.

Dutch Dune Landscape ©Thomas Dallimore



Our trip to the Dutch Coast was a great opportunity to enable us to interact and share experiences of coastal management within a European context.

## Background to the Dutch Coast

The Dutch Coastline extends over 350 km and is divided into 3 sections; The Delta Coast, The Holland Coast and The Wadden Coast. Approximately 290 km of the coast consists of dunes with 60 km protected by hard defence structures such as dykes and dams.

Recreation pressure is a big issue on the Dutch Coast. Certain areas of the dunes are out of bounds for public entry due to their importance as a sea defence and as a drinking water resource.



Signs on the frontal dunes reading 'No Entry – Sea Defences' ©Michelle Newton



# Mersey Observatory

Matthew Sutcliffe  
Mersey Basin Campaign

Artists impression

A 50m-high illuminated tower has won the international design competition for the proposed Mersey Observatory on Crosby beach. The design by Duggan Morris Architects emerged as the frontrunner in thousands of votes and comments from local people, and was the unanimous choice of the judging panel.

Ten thousand people voted in an online poll, with Duggan Morris Architects most popular on 47 per cent of the votes. The The Crosby Herald ran the poll on the five short listed designs.

The design by Duggan Morris is unlike anything else in the country and would be one of Merseyside's most recognisable landmarks. It beat four other short listed proposals following an international design competition that attracted over 90 entries from all over the world.

Duggan Morris will now begin to develop the next stage of detailed designs for the project.

Joe Morris, director of Duggan Morris Architects, said: ***"The setting for the Mersey Observatory is entirely unique both geographically and culturally. The challenge was to create something to complement the extraordinary setting as well as having sufficient gravitas to act as a 'beacon' in its own right."***

Unusually, the design calls for two complementary structures: a viewing tower and a separate café and exhibition centre. Duggan Morris calls them the 'lamp' and 'bowl'. The Observatory tower is designed to be illuminated from the inside and contains two viewing platforms giving stunning 360-degree views over Liverpool, Crosby beach and the River Mersey. A lift would carry people to an enclosed, all-weather viewing platform, and further up to an open-air viewing platform atop the tower.

The second, lower building contains the support facilities including reception, information point, exhibitions, restaurant, café and toilets, as well as a rooftop viewing 'amphitheatre' intended for closer views of the bird sanctuary.

Ian Hamilton Fazey, chair of the Waterloo Residents Association and also a member of the judging panel, said: ***"Anyone who has had the opportunity to go on to the roof of the existing radar tower knows that there is one single 'Wow! Factor' that it is impossible to miss"***.

***"It is simply the astonishing delight of emerging into the daylight and suddenly being confronted with an amazing 360-degree panorama of cityscape, waterscape, the mighty Mersey, Liverpool's hard-working dockland, a nature reserve teeming with birds, the Gormley statues on Crosby beach, and the view across the Wirral and Liverpool Bay to the Clwyd hills, the Great Orme's head at Llandudno, and Snowdonia"***.

***"The judging panel is convinced that Duggan Morris brings a balance of youth, enthusiasm and professional experience that will give us the best of all worlds – an innovative, 21<sup>st</sup>-century design with a professional team of all the talents capable of delivering it."***

Walter Menzies, chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign and chair of the judging panel, said: ***"The architects immediately grasped the extraordinary tourist and visitor potential of the location and their design would be a spectacular window on the waterfront and gateway to the Liverpool city region."***

***"We were all impressed by the professionalism and commitment of Duggan Morris and the sheer verve with which they conveyed their enthusiasm for the project. The judges were unanimous in their decision that the Duggan Morris entry should be the winner."***

The judging panel thanked local people for their comments and said that their continued support will be vital in securing funding.

Ian Hamilton Fazey said: ***"One interesting statistic from the public consultation is that 95 per cent of the people who commented supported the Observatory concept – less than five per cent attacked it per se. The vast majority of people realise that any public money for this project is simply not transferable: it is a case of "use it or lose it."***

Almost 300 comment cards, emails and letters were received on the five short listed designs, and over 300 people logged on to a live broadcast of one of the open forums held with members of the judging panel. Around 1,500 people visited the three exhibitions of the designs held in Crosby, Seacombe and Liverpool, or visited the website.

The announcement of Duggan Morris' winning design marks the end of the first phase of development for the Observatory project.

Walter Menzies said: ***"We're exactly where we wanted to be at this stage in the project – a fabulous design selected from a successful competition, and some hugely encouraging support and enthusiasm from local people."***

***"But now the real work begins. The architects must develop their preliminary designs to a much more detailed level, and crucially the team behind the project must put together the funding package that will make the Mersey Observatory a reality."***

The project is led by the Mersey Basin Campaign and backed by a strong partnership that includes the Northwest Regional Development Agency, Mersey Waterfront and Peel Holdings.

People can find out more by visiting website at [www.merseyobservatory.com](http://www.merseyobservatory.com)





# Botanical richness of coast recognised

Dr. Phil Smith



Crosby Sand Dunes. Despite its proximity to industry this area supports over 140 flowering plants.

**T**he Sefton Coast's extraordinary botanical richness has been further recognised by its recent listing as an Important Plant Area (IPA) by Plantlife International. There are only 155 such sites in the UK, part of a Europe-wide network. The criteria for selection are rigorous, one or more of the following being required:

- Holds significant populations of species of global or regional concern.
- Has exceptionally rich flora in a regional context or in relation to its biogeographic zone.
- An outstanding example of a habitat type of global or regional importance.

The Sefton Coast qualifies for IPA status on the basis of its habitats, vascular plants, bryophytes (mosses



Abundance of Grass of Parnissus at Cabin Hill

and liverworts) and stoneworts. The only other IPA in "Lancashire" is Stocks Reservoir, Bowland, which is included because of its bryophyte interest. For more information, visit the Plantlife International web-site at [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk).

IPA designation could be seen as a reward for the efforts of the many enthusiasts who have contributed records to The Inventory of the Vascular Plants for the Sefton Coast. This lists all the flowering plants, ferns and conifers that have been

identified in the coastal zone and the sand-dunes. After over 150 years of recording, you would think all the plants would have been found but, in fact, new ones are still being discovered.



Green Winged Orchids at Altcar Rifle Range

Field work in 2005/06 added 25 more, while another 18 were spotted in 2007. In addition, work on the New Flora of South Lancashire has contributed historical records of a further 47 plants previously overlooked. This brings the latest total of vascular plants to 1265, of which 1129 are found in the sand-dunes. This compares with about 600 vascular plants for the similar sized Newborough Warren sand-dunes, Anglesey, and around 500 at Braunton Burrows in Devon.

The full Inventory can be viewed on the Sefton Coast Partnership web-site at [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk).

## Managing for Wildflowers at Cabin Hill

Dr. Phil Smith & Alice Kimpton

Over a period of about 30 years, a wet-slack at Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve had become colonised by dense 4m-high willow scrub with the loss of a previously rich flora. A project was set up to remove the willow and monitor the effects on floral diversity.

In November/December 2005 larger bushes (mostly Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*) were cut down and stump-treated, whilst retaining the nationally rare hybrid *Salix x friesiana*.

Plant surveys were carried out in late summer of 2006 and 2007. In the first year, 108 flowering plants and ferns (vascular plants) were identified. About half of these were ruderals ('weed'



Guided wildflowers visit to Cabin Hill scrub cleared slack. August 2007

species) which are typically among the first colonisers of bare ground but which do not normally occur in dune slacks. They included four uncommon plants, Garden Orache (*Atriplex hortensis*), Cape Gooseberry (*Physalis peruviana*), Green Nightshade (*Solanum physalifolium*) and Angel's-trumpets (*Datura ferox*) which are new to the Sefton Coast, the last named also being a new record for South Lancashire.

The 2007 survey listed 111 vascular plants, but there had been a big

turnover of species, 31 being additional to those found the previous year, while 28 were not re-found. Most of the lost plants were ruderals which had been replaced by typical sand-dune species.

Overall, 139 different plants were recorded in the cleared slack, 11 of them being rarities listed as regionally or nationally notable. Twenty-eight are new to the reserve. This represents a major biodiversity gain compared with what was present before. It will be interesting to follow further changes in the years to come.

For more information visit the web-site [www.conservationevidence.com](http://www.conservationevidence.com) where this study is described in detail, including full species lists.

**We are grateful to Mike Wilcox and members of the Liverpool Botanical Group for recording assistance in 2006.**





# Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership

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**The Sefton Coast Partnership is hoping that all its hard work in preparing strategies for nature, access and interpretation may be about to turn into action.**

Last year we reported on plans to submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a community-based project under their Landscape Partnership programme. We meet the requirements in having a distinct area of landscape, a partnership approach and a desire to work with the community. To help us draw up an application the Heritage Lottery Fund grant-aided the appointment of a Planning Officer. After a fairly hectic six-months of consultations and planning we submitted our detailed application in March 2008. The total project bid is for £1.6 million over a three-year period so, as you can see, it would present a wonderful opportunity for the Sefton Coast Partnership. Our application is now being assessed and we will know the outcome by October 2008.



Formby workshop at St Lukes Church Meeting Room.

## The Sefton Coast Landscape

We know much about the physical, cultural and natural history of the Sefton Coast; but what makes it so special? The landscape partnership scheme begins to answer the question by listening to the views and values of local people. Local values can be summarised as a 'statement of significance'.

We held three community workshops in November 2007 and a workshop at Formby High School in January 2008. Expert facilitators led the workshops; from the workshops we could identify peoples' values and 'sense of place'. This approach adds to what we already now about the coast.

In our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund we have prepared a 'landscape character statement' showing that the Sefton Coast is special for its;

- ***Sand dunes, which shape local identity and provide a wild landscape to explore***
- ***Strong links between the community and the landscape***
- ***Landscape rich in cultural heritage***
- ***Internationally important sand dune habitats supporting rare species***
- ***Internationally important breeding, wintering and migratory habitat for bird species***
- ***Diverse land use history***
- ***Wide, open spaces for recreation***
- ***Agricultural landscapes which contrast with the wild landscapes of the coast***

The document 'Sefton Coast Landscape' can be downloaded from [www.seftoncoast.org.uk/landscape.html](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/landscape.html)



The community workshops are our starting point for the landscape partnership scheme. We invited a cross-section of the local community (land managers, farmers, interest groups, politicians, volunteers, civic societies, churches etc) to meetings in Crosby, Formby and Southport to take part in a 'mind-mapping' exercise.

At each workshop we asked participants three main questions; what did they value most about the local landscape, what were their visions for the future and what did they feel was at risk. We collected nearly a thousand comments in the four workshops; the full reports are also available on the website in the landscape section.

The key issues to emerge were support for local identity and community history, history and local heritage, conservation of habitats and wildlife, education and interpretation, community involvement, uniqueness and unspoilt character; but also concerns about loss of traditional skills, coast erosion, threats to the red squirrel population, climate change and the need for more opportunities for young people.

In developing our ideas for the coast we have listened to these views and all the projects in the overall landscape partnership scheme have a link to local people.

## What is a Landscape Partnership Scheme?

The Heritage Lottery Fund gives grants to partnerships for schemes of work that address their three strategic aims, which are;

- 1 To encourage more people to be involved in and make decisions about their heritage,**
- 2 To conserve and enhance our heritage, and;**
- 3 To make sure that everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage**

The Heritage Lottery Fund is very people-focused. Landscape partnership schemes must provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits for people by;

- ***Conserving or restoring the built and natural features that create the historic character of the landscape;***
- ***Conserving and celebrating the cultural associations and activities of the landscape area;***
- ***Encouraging more people to access, learn about, become involved in and make decisions on their landscape heritage; and***
- ***Improving understanding of local craft and other skills by providing training opportunities.***



This funding scheme gives the Sefton Coast Partnership an ideal opportunity to increase the level of our engagement with local communities and other audiences, to deliver some of the programmes of work we have already identified and to strengthen our overall partnership approach.



Example of a mind-map at the Formby workshop



The dune slacks of the Sefton Coast are important natural and landscape features. Ravenmeols, April 2008.



Work on the nature conservation strategy for the Sefton Coast led directly into thinking about the landscape. The article in the Summer 2007 edition of Coastlines ([http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/coast\\_magazine.html](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/coast_magazine.html)) developed this approach. We have now gone to the next stage with the application for the landscape partnership scheme.

The vision we have is for sustained management rather than short-lived investments. What we would like to see is that ***“within ten years there will be wide support for the work needed to conserve the landscape features, the skills to do so will have been secured, access will have been improved and broadened and there will be active interest in celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the Sefton Coast”***.

Crucial to much of this vision is communication, dialogue and stronger, more trusting partnerships. The landscape partnership scheme will give time for community engagement and will involve as many people as possible, of all ages and backgrounds, in activities and events over a three year period. The landscape partnership will contribute to other work being carried out on the coast and it will be a focus for partnership working.

### Our programmes

Landscape partnership schemes are based on thematic programmes, each with several discrete projects. For our submission we developed four programmes that we hope will capture the imagination and encourage people to get involved. We have given each programme a distinctive title.

### The projects

The landscape partnership scheme will provide the funding for extra staff to deliver the work on behalf of the Sefton Coast Partnership. The new staff will be based with the Sefton Coast and Countryside Service at the Ainsdale Discovery Centre; Sefton Council has offered to be lead partner for the scheme.

There are nineteen separate projects within the programmes. These include access projects, nature conservation projects, archaeology projects and interpretation and education projects. Old and new partners will lead most of the projects; the project staff will coordinate the coastwide projects for communication, interpretation and publications.



Formby health walk ©Stephanie Boote



©Ivan Gajos / Countryside

#### The changing coast

We want to develop greater understanding about the dynamic nature of the coast; how the landscape has evolved over time and how it may look in the future and to involve more local people in projects linked to the history of the landscape.

#### Tradition and land-use

We want to develop long-term approaches for the management of landscape character, priority habitats and species, based on improved knowledge of the evolution of landscape and natural features and of traditional management.

#### Coastal communities

We want to improve the levels of access and information offered to local communities and to increase local involvement in practical projects involving volunteering, learning and training.

#### Discovering the coastal heritage

We want to offer opportunities to a wide range of audiences to discover the heritage of the Sefton Coast through access and interpretation and to engage with local communities in learning about their landscapes.

National Museums Liverpool will lead on two exciting projects supporting coastal archaeology. The first seeks to recruit and train a number of volunteers to keep a watch on the changing coast and maintain a record of artefacts and other finds along the shore. The second is a community archaeology project that will hold a public event each year; project ideas include Sniggery Wood near Little Crosby, a search for the lost villages of the coast, a study of the impact of military activity of the landscape and making a record of the remains of the lifeboat station at Formby Point.

Liverpool University's Centre for Lifelong Learning will develop a full range of adult education courses from one-off evening lectures to accredited courses in regional studies. The opportunities to learn more about our local heritage will be offered to all through this project and other lifelong learning activities.

In parts of the coast there are still problems with access. One project, led by RSPB, will seek to improve access to the shore at Marshside Road. The route along Marshside Road will follow a time-line through the site and will celebrate cultural heritage and local history, including restoration of the 'fog-bell'. Another project sees an all-ability route under the busy coast road at Ainsdale to allow the local community safe access to the National Nature Reserve, an initiative that Ainsdale Civic Society fully supports.



Also at Ainsdale, Natural England will convert their old office building into a community resource centre and volunteer base. The project will also develop a new footpath and boardwalk feature around West End pond.

Sefton Coast and Countryside Service have developed project ideas mainly in the Ainsdale and Birkdale area to upgrade many of the dune paths and to improve access to, and across, the green beach at Birkdale. Nature conservation projects will address the problems of scrub-encroachment and lack of grazing on the Local Nature Reserve whilst also opening up new access routes and providing visitor facilities.

The cultural landscape is important too. At Formby Point the National Trust, working closely with Formby Civic Society, will develop an asparagus trail highlighting both the history and the present-day growing of the crop. The Trust is keen to see the growing of asparagus continuing on the site. At Freshfield dune heath the Lancashire Wildlife Trust will develop best practice in the management of the dune heath for wildlife and will also look into the history of the Sefton Coast heaths.

*Planting asparagus ©Formby Civic Society.*



The landscape partnership scheme will encourage discussion about our landscape and its evolution on a changing coast and with uncertainties about future climate. Schools throughout Sefton will take part in the project 'my coast, my future' coordinated by the North Sefton City Learning Centre. Clusters of primary and secondary schools will be offered challenges to investigate their environment and present their findings to the community.

The community will also be involved in developing plans for the next Forest Plan for the Sefton Coast. This will include a critical review of the current objectives and will invite local people, landowners and experts to help develop the vision for the coastal woodlands for another 20 years.

We want to see people getting out and enjoying the Sefton Coast. Not only local people, but also visitors, education groups and our trainees and volunteers. We hope to extend the successful health walks initiative to more sites, with longer walks, themed walks, and more walks leaders. The landscape partnership scheme will also promote cycling along the coast.

Linking almost all the projects is the Sefton Coastal Footpath. One of the projects will improve the waymarking and interpretation along the route and will carry out improvements to some of the sections.

So, taken together, this is an impressive list of projects, which we will aim to deliver over a three-year time frame but which are set in a longer-term vision. The landscape partnership scheme covers a ten-year period; at the end of which we will make a final assessment of its success.

Several reports and reviews were produced as part of the project planning stage. A description of the project and copies of most of the reports can be found on the Sefton Coast website. For more information on the Heritage Lottery Fund and landscape partnerships visit [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

**John Houston**  
Landscape Partnership Planning Officer  
Sefton Leisure Services Department



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# Save our Squirrels



**Red Alert North West and Red Alert North East joined forces in 2005 to become Red Alert North England (RANEng) and in 2006 successfully gained grant funding through The Heritage Lottery Fund – matched by a number of other organisations and individuals to create The Save our Squirrels Project (SoS).**

The SoS project employs seven members of staff throughout the North of England aimed at conserving Red Squirrels in sixteen National Red Squirrel Reserves in the North of England.

The Sefton Coast Woodlands are one of these Reserves (known as a Refuge in this area) with a Buffer Zone extending out to Southport, Ormskirk, Maghull and Crosby.

Sally Orritt, part time People and Wildlife Officer for the project for the Sefton Coast Woodlands Refuge and Buffer Zone is working to increase people's awareness of Red Squirrel conservation through education.

Fiona Whitfield, employed by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside co-ordinates Red Squirrel conservation work in this area. She works closely with the SoS project and all landowners and partners in the area.

The Red Alert partnership relies heavily on volunteers, with many of its members now having over ten years experience. It is unlikely that we would still have a Red Squirrel population in this area if it was not for the effort put in by these volunteers.

As you may be aware there is currently an outbreak of squirrel pox virus in the woodlands of Formby. The virus is carried by Grey Squirrels, and is transmitted from greys to reds, although greys do not 'suffer' from the virus. Once a Red Squirrel is contaminated it is likely to die within two weeks. It is often the effects of the virus that disable the squirrel before the virus takes hold; an infected animal will be lethargic and may feed less as a result. Once the virus takes hold, sores around the eyes, mouth and genitalia will make it even more difficult for the animal to feed, travel and keep safe. We believe that many 'poxed' Red Squirrels are predated due to the debilitating effects of the virus; where this is not the case starvation or malnutrition can be the cause of death. We also believe that many infected reds will

die in their dreys and as a result the infection may be spread further through the population.

There are many things that are simply not yet known about squirrel pox, but there is still a lot that we can do:

Many local volunteers are searching the woodlands at National Trust Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols. A rota has been set up to ensure that searches are regular across the area, volunteers are able to choose a time or day that suits them. Whilst searching, volunteers look for and record sightings of all squirrels; a Grey Squirrel has been sighted on several occasions around Lifeboat road and Shorrocks Hill but is seeming difficult to catch. Any healthy reds recorded are added to the national records. Sick red sightings are followed up immediately, when possible so that the animal might be caught and treated, and so that the infected animal is removed from the

environment where it may infect other reds.

The work is vital at this time of threat to our population of red squirrels.

Local residents also feed Red Squirrels in their gardens; this is part of the reason that the squirrels of Formby do so well. We have more squirrels per hectare than any other area. Due to the reliance of our reds on garden feeding we believe that feeding must continue through this squirrel pox outbreak. However there is a lot of evidence to suggest that the virus may be transmitted from greys to reds or from infected reds to healthy reds through saliva on feeding tables. Those of you who do feed are urged to thoroughly sterilise any such tables or feeding areas to minimise the possibility of infection. Where this is not possible, scatter feeding onto the ground is advised so as to avoid contaminated feeding spots.



Location of Red Squirrel Reserve and buffer zone in Sefton



Red Squirrel with Squirrel Pox  
©Ann-Marie MacMaster

Please do all you can to help stop the spread of the virus and tell others what they can do.

More information is available at [www.saveoursquirrels.org.uk](http://www.saveoursquirrels.org.uk) or, if you still have questions, you can speak to Sally or Fiona on 0151 920 3769 or e-mail at [fwhitfield@lancswt.org.uk](mailto:fwhitfield@lancswt.org.uk).

**Thank you for helping to save our squirrels.**

**Fiona Whitfield.**

Conservation Officer

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.



# Pressures and change - 30 Years of



## **Tobacco waste dump**

20 acres of land used for the tipping of de-nicotinised tobacco leaf between 1956 and 1975, was gifted to The National Trust by the British Nicotine Company Ltd in 1977.



## **Formby car park – mid 1980's**

By the mid 1980's, despite up to 415 cars parking in the dune car park and a further 60 near the Squirrel Reserve, the car park can be seen in a frontal dune landscape which was restored to a natural condition with a healthy mosaic of vegetation.



## **Ponies at Larkhill Fields**

1984/85 saw a further 31 acres added to the NT property including 21 acres at Larkhill Fields which was acquired from Ideal Homes (London) Ltd

In 1967, the coastal property centred upon Victoria Road Formby, became the first stretch of fine coastline to be acquired by The National Trust near to a major urban area in England. The National Trust recognised the importance of Formby as a seaside destination for day trippers from Liverpool and a wider part of Cheshire and Lancashire. Public benefit accrued from peoples' enjoyment of the dunes and wide sandy beaches, and through time, the Trust has been able to give more access to the varied landscape of pine woodlands and former asparagus fields.

At the time of acquisition, National Trust stewardship had much to do with protection of the 'natural' coastal landscape from further housing developments and other threats including tipping of waste and intensive leisure schemes. The more difficult task of conserving the coastal dunes gathered impetus around 30 years ago when the Sefton Coast Management Scheme was formed. The Merseyside County Structure Plan had already highlighted the fragility of the Sefton Coast Dunes and the damage resulting from intensive recreational pressure. A task force was established and trainee schemes funded by the Manpower Services Commission were established along the coast to repair damaged dunes and to provide boardwalks and paths to provide easier access to the beach and along the coast. The appointment of a Coast Management Officer by Sefton Council provided for co-ordination of the works and innovation in the way that the landscape was managed.

Traditional methods were used to reduce sand blow and to promote dune building amongst blow outs and vast sand sheets where there was hardly a blade of Marram grass. Following sand trapping, the planting of Marram became an important part of the remediation.

By 1980 significant work was underway at Victoria Road to rebuild a frontal dune ridge which provided a sheltered area within which the formerly extensive car park could be redesigned and rationalised. It was important to adapt to the changing conditions as the coastline, then as now, was retreating at around 4 metres each year. The Pine Trees Caravan Park was incongruously situated amongst the shifting sand, and relocating it 300 metres inland, significantly reduced trampling pressure.

By the mid 1980's, despite up to 415 cars parking in the dune car park and a further 60 near the Squirrel Reserve, the car park can be seen in a frontal dune landscape which was restored to a natural condition with a healthy mosaic of vegetation. But in the words of Robbie Burns, 'Nae man can tether time nor tide' and the tide has eroded away close to 100 metres from the front of the dunes at Victoria Road since 1985.



## **Removing rubble**

The National Trust removes up to 600 tonnes of rubble from the beach annually following spring tides. The rubble formed the base of a car park in the 1960's.



## **Brushwood fences**

Brushwood fences are being used again to reduce sand blow.



## **South boardwalk 2005**

Boardwalks still in use.



# Coastal Management 1978 to 2008



The National Trust is committed to working with naturally driven changes and recognises the importance of natural processes in constantly reshaping the dune landscape. The current position of the car park however, brings heavy visitor pressure directly into the frontal dunes and is increasingly causing the sort of damage and destabilisation which was so apparent in the 1970's. Whilst peak visitor numbers are at similar levels to the mid 1980's, the damage caused by footfall is much more difficult to mitigate due to the narrower width of the dunes in front of the car park. It is no longer possible within the current layout to maintain boardwalks or a viewing platform. The wardens are again using brushwood fences to reduce sand blow but this is not enough. The National Trust believes that the car park needs to be set back from the mobile dune belt and Sefton Council's predictions of coastline change for Formby Point, indicate that this may need to be by as much as 550 metres from the erosion line.



The challenge presented by climate change means that we will continue to need to adapt to the changing coastline, which will be affected by increasing frequency and intensity of storm events as well as greater demands for coastal visits in consequence of hotter drier summers. It is important that we build resilience of the landscape both at The National Trust and at other locations along the coast like the Lifeboat Road site and this will include investing in improved visitor facilities which can cope with high visitor demand.

An important improvement at The National Trust site was the provision of toilets in 1995 which, although fulfilling only a basic need, is a highly valued part of a visit to Formby. In 2005, the line of the Sefton Coastal Path was set back into the more wooded parts of the landscape. Working with partners and securing grant support from ERDF and latterly the Mersey Waterfront have been instrumental in taking these projects forward.

Adapting to change presents complex challenges in this highly valued and protected landscape but we need solutions which are robust and bring multiple benefits notably, securing access and enjoyment of this special stretch of coastline, enhancing conservation of the dune landscape and also enhancing facilities and sustaining income to support our long term conservation and access work.

**Andrew Brockbank**  
*Countryside Property Manager*  
*The National Trust*



## **Novel interpretation! – South boardwalk 2007**

*Information board retrieved from shifting sand dune!*



## **Learning about shifting sand dunes**

*School children learn about the shifting sand dunes with an Environmental Education Guide*



## **St Jeromes' Time Capsule**

*Taking a long term view – children from St Jeromes' primary school place a time capsule in the sand.*



**S**efton's Natural Coast has long been regarded as an area of great natural beauty and tranquillity rather than a focus of industry. Recent historical and landscape research has however revealed that it has in the past been of great industrial importance.

This almost forgotten side of our coastal heritage is now being revealed by the combined efforts of a team of local historians, (Alan Crosby and members of the Formby Civic Society History Group), an archaeologist, (Jen Lewis), a geo-morphologist, (Steve Suggitt) and an ecologist, (Phil Smith) assembled by Sefton Council for a project supported by Natural England through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

Sand has long been used by builders. Our soft sand is the finest grain of sand commonly available – the best kind to use in mortar mixes, whereas 'sharp' sand is classed as a coarse material most appropriate for concrete. Our high-silica sand has also been extensively required for foundry castings in the Midlands and bottle glass at Garston. It has also been used for glass-polishing at St Helens.

It is not known when sand extraction first started at Formby Point, (possibly even as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century), as it was at first entirely unregulated, unrecorded and simply a matter to be arranged between the manorial land-owner and a contractor. In former times there was no right of public access to the dunes and no control over the beach or dunes by the local authorities.

Certainly much sand-winning was already carried out in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century and OS maps of 1906 show the existence of delineated and measured areas which were probably areas of sand extraction. These areas are more numerous by 1928 and even more by 1955.

In the early days public complaints about the speed of sand-lorries were frequent but official records non-existent. One of the first of these was in 1928 when the landowner was first charged rates for the profit he was making from the sale of sand.

In 1939 much Formby sand was used for filling sand-bags and Liverpool buildings were protected by 8 million sandbags filled with 150,000 tons of sand brought from Formby.

By the 1950's powered machinery was available as shown in a photo in March 1951 of an excavator digging its way through at the sand drifts at the end of Lifeboat Rd.



## Sandwinning at Formby Point.

A light Railway was constructed by one contractor to convey a huge quantity of sand from the Cabin Hill area to the Liverpool – Southport railway sidings adjacent to the Formby Power Station, from whence it was removed by rail to the Midlands.

By 1951 sand-winning had resumed in the area between Lifeboat Road and Alexandra Road. This apparently went unnoticed by the Formby Urban District Council until on August 25th 1951 a map and article was published in the Formby Times from a 19 year old architecture student, Charles Rathbone, who lived close by. He was obviously supported by his father Paul who in turn wrote to the Urban District Council. This woke up the Council, then chaired by Mrs Peggy Beeston, Formby's first woman Councillor, who said "firms are gnawing away at Formby's sandhills" and promptly arranged for an official visit to the area between Lifeboat Rd and Range Lane. Nine of the twelve Councillors took part in this and were shocked by what



**High quality, high-silica - the stuff the Sefton Coast is made of and removed in huge quantities in the first half of the 20th Century, not only for building, foundry-cast making and bottle manufacture but also glass polishing. ©Dr. Reg Yorke**

they saw. Councillor Alderson is quoted as saying it had changed a lot since he was last there 50 years ago!

In December 1951 the Town Planning, Parks and Housing Committee received a report on unauthorised sandwinning at Seabank House, Albert Road and in May 1952 unauthorised sandwinning which had resulted in

a breach in the frontal dune ridge between Range Lane and Cabin Hill. Until then the Council had to rely on the Town and Country Planning powers which was a slow and inadequate process.

In June 1952 The UDC made conditions for sand removal.

1. An existing breach in sandhills adjacent to the foreshore was to be made good by building a sand barrier 23ft high and 10 yds wide.

2. Sandhills to be planted with Star grass and the area behind with suitable vegetation.

3. No further excavation below 25 ft and on completion of the work area to be left tidy.

There now began to be more control and interest in coastal conservation..

This became much easier after the passage of the Formby Coast Protection Order in 1958 under the provisions of the Coast Protection Act 1949. This gave extra power to the Council then considering an application for removal of sand from north of Lifeboat Road. Dr R. Kay Gresswell was then called as a expert witness.

Following this a 'de-limiting line' was drawn, west of which removal was not to be allowed. Further conditions were imposed in 1961. In 1964 a request was refused at Cabin Hill. The last successful application was in 1966 after a very long series of strongly contested hearings, sand was finally removed from areas near Lifeboat Road and adjacent to Wicks Lane – the latter finally landscaped to provide the 'Wicks Lane Lake' we know today.

The flattened dune landscape we are left with today is a very different one to that of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century but with increased ecological understanding ; its greater conservation protection and expert management by Sefton Council, we can make sure that the physical despoliation which so shocked young Charles Rathbone in 1951 can never ever happen again. – indeed in some ways we may even be able to take ecological advantage of the lower dune levels which mean that the water-table is now closer to the dune surface than it was 100 years ago – so recreating the special slack conditions for which the Sefton dunes were originally so famous.

**Dr R. A. Yorke**



## National Archaeology Events in July – August 2008

Dr. Jen Lewis *Chair of the Archaeology and History Task Force*

Once again a series of events as Sefton Coast's contribution to the Council for British Archaeology's National Archaeology Week will take place during the summer. Suitable for people of all ages (though some of the walks will be over uneven ground), most events are free but may require advance booking.



Ainsdale Discovery Centre will provide the focus of interest with a display of recent and on-going research together with hands-on activities showing how to find out more about Sefton's past. A talk on the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme will highlight the sort of archaeological objects that have been found in our area.

Elsewhere there will be guided walks exploring the history of Little Crosby's landscape, examining the prehistoric footprints on the beach at Formby, considering the evidence for sand extraction from the dune landscape at Ravenmeols and discovering a 17<sup>th</sup>-century boundary that marked the division of estates belonging to the Blundell and Formby families.

You are warmly invited to join us in discovering the fascinating archaeology and history of our coast.

Full details of the events can be found in Sefton's Natural Coast Events Programme for 2008 or by visiting the Council for British Archaeology's National Archaeology Week web page <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/naw>. The Council runs the Young Archaeologists Club for 8-16 year olds and has branches all over the country; check out the YAC web pages to discover more about your local group at <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/yac/>



## Operation Beachsafe.



Sefton Coastline attracts many visitors all year, with a vast increase during the summer.

Due to a rise in alcohol related disorder in Formby, an alcohol ban has been put in place covering large areas of the beach and the roads that lead to it. This allows alcohol to be seized, which it is hoped will deter anti-social behaviour, and the deposit of empty bottles and cans that are a blight on the natural beauty of the area, and which can cause injury to people of all ages.

Operation Beachsafe will commence on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2008, and run throughout the Summer, with additional staff being deployed to the coastline to ensure visitors do so in safety. These staff will also enforce the alcohol ban, and take action to deal robustly with anyone who would ruin the safe, family friendly environment that is the goal of the operation.

**Martin Melia** Inspector.

## Sefton's Dynamic Coast Conference

### Landform, Ecology and Management

1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 – Southport Theatre and Conference Centre

The conference will bring together our current understanding of the above issues which will be presented on the day and

subsequently produced as published proceedings.

There are currently places still available. To register to attend the above conference, we would advise you to book soon to avoid disappointment, as places are limited. For more information please visit:

[www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk) and look for the link to the conference or contact the event organisers at [coastaldefence@technical.sefton.gov.uk](mailto:coastaldefence@technical.sefton.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0151 934

2958.

For registration queries please contact Lorna Lander at [lorna.lander@planning.sefton.gov.uk](mailto:lorna.lander@planning.sefton.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0151 934 3605.

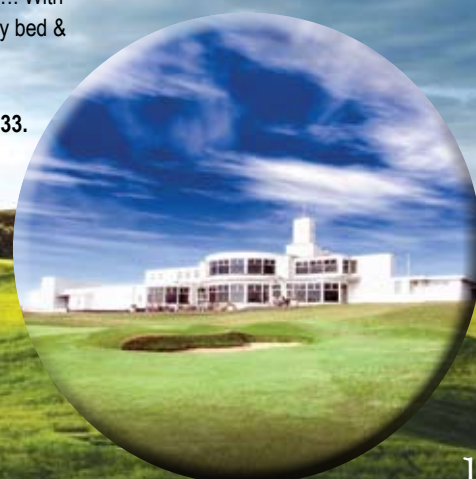
The price for attendance including lunch and a copy of the proceedings is £50 for attendees from organisations and £25 for members of the public.

## Open Golf Championship 2008

This summer around 200,000 golf fans will travel to Southport, England's Golf Capital for the 137<sup>th</sup> Open Championship, to be staged at Royal Birkdale on 17-20 July. It marks the 30<sup>th</sup> time a club situated within the boundaries of England's Golf Coast has hosted the world's oldest and most prestigious Championship and will offer visitors an ideal opportunity to sample not just the great golf, but also many of the other wonderful amenities and attractions found within one of the most enticing and invigorating areas of the United Kingdom.

As Southport is widely regarded as 'England's Golfing Capital' having no less than six championship courses in and around the town – including Royal Birkdale and is less than an hour's drive from two other Open Championship courses, Royal Liverpool and Royal Lytham & St. Annes the area is well worth a visit. All the golf clubs in Southport welcome private visitors and together with the quality golf courses the resort offers visitors luxury accommodation to a tee!.... With a superb choice from 5 star standard to quality bed & breakfasts.

For further information, please log on to [www.visitsouthport.com](http://www.visitsouthport.com) or Tel: 01704 533333.





# Coast and Countryside Service – the first twenty years

**The Coast and Countryside Service celebrated 20 years in October 2007 and I started my twentieth year in April 2008.**

In real terms Sefton was some way behind other local authorities in establishing a permanent ranger service to manage its countryside and coastal sites and up until late 1987, when the first permanent posts were established, coastal 'rangers' formed part of one of the early 'employment initiatives', as part of the Sefton Coast Management Scheme.

A lot of people, far too many to mention, have contributed to the success of this service over the last twenty years. Countless volunteers, trainee rangers, students and others have come along, spent a little bit of their life here and experienced everything that is so special about this coastline.



Stan Hughes and Maureen McEntie, Volunteer Rangers.  
©Dave McAleavy Images

Many stayed a short while, some went away and came back – a few never went away and are still here continuing the work that commenced, way back in 1978 when the original partnership was established. Many others have and continue to play an important role and without whose support it would very difficult for the Local Authority to manage the extensive coastal area that it owns. This support is wide ranging and includes volunteers, local naturalists, researchers, educational establishments, police, fire,

Coastguard, Ambulance, Mersey Forest, Natural England, Wildlife Trusts - the list could go on and we thank all past and present for your contribution.



Dave McAleavy, Head of Coast and Countryside. ©Dave McAleavy Images

There have been many challenges over the last twenty years and the service, initially a team of five rangers, managing Ainsdale, Birkdale, Formby and Ravenmeols, has expanded to include all coastal land owned by Sefton. The responsibility of the Coast and Countryside Service has increased considerably and by the late 1990's it was the only fully integrated Coast and Countryside Service in the UK.

The Service had evolved through numerous Council and Departmental restructures and now includes the rangers operating on coastal nature reserves, beach and countryside areas, beach safety through our Lifeguards, environmental education, beach cleansing, Biodiversity & Access Project and last but not least our Volunteers.

Lifeguards. ©Dave McAleavy Images



Coastal Assistant - Joe Fenerty. ©Dave McAleavy Images

There have been many challenges over the years and a number will still test the service for years to come. The service continues to press on with restoring dune habitats through the removal and management of scrub, acutely aware of the Council's responsibility and more importantly, its duty to conserve these important habitats & rare and protected wildlife for future generations. We have been catching up after many decades of neglect or misuse and I would hope we arrive at a point in ten years, when a target of favourable condition for all the sites is being effectively managed.

In recent years, we have been implementing the Sefton Coast Woodland Plan with considerable support from the Mersey Forest and generous grants from the Forestry Commission and Objective 1 through ICEP, already the considerable management work of the last five years is visibly adding to the maturing woodland work of the last thirty years.



Ranger Mark Sephton. ©Dave McAleavy Images

In 2007, the service became the only Local Authority to achieve UK Woodland Certification in recognition of our well-managed woodlands.

Beach management became a huge area of work following the transfer of the Council's foreshore operations over to the Leisure Services Department in April 1993. The work of the Coast and Countryside Service is recognised as best practise and Ainsdale Beach is the only beach in the North West to achieve the prestigious Blue Flag.





The Service continues to assist the Leisure Service Department and Council achieve its objectives. A Biodiversity and Access inclusion project ( BAP) that encourages involvement from groups usually excluded from taking part in active conservation management was established. Our partnership with adult services, through

New Directions, is thriving and adults with learning difficulties take part in site management or attend the Pinewood Workshops where timber countryside furniture and fittings are manufactured from wood recovered from the woodland work. The BAP also includes programmes for young persons, employment training and opportunities for volunteers.

The Service continues to operate a successful education service and many school children can learn about coast and countryside areas through the Community Rangers.



Although a coastal magazine, it is not possible to write about the Coast and Countryside Service without mentioning the work of the Rangers on the Rimrose Valley Country Park, whose work is equal to that of the coastal staff in all elements, but in an urban setting.

**Dave McAleavy**  
*Head of Coast and Countryside Leisure Services Department*



Ranger Pete Gahan with School Group 1989.  
©Coast and Countryside Service.



Cllr. Roberts, Rajan Paul and Cllr. Yieldman at Crosby.  
©Dave McAleavy Images



Ranger Billy Haizelden with School Group at Life Boat Road.  
©Coast and Countryside Service.

©Dave McAleavy Images



Fiona Sunners Community Ranger - Mini Beast Hunt. ©Coast and Countryside Service.





## The end of the road for Marshside's mountain?

As you head north along the coast road from Southport you notice what appears to be an enormous 'sand dune' stranded a mile or so on from the town's busy centre. This incongruous outcrop is of course artificial and is familiar to local residents as the site of the former Rainford's sand works. Sefton Council's planners insisted on its construction during sand-winning's heyday. It was seen as necessary to screen the 'industrial' buildings that grew up around the site. Now the sand-works is closed and the site is to be restored to something like its former natural glory. Since the site lies within both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Protection Area, the Aggregates Company and the Council will be consulting Natural England over what this restoration should leave behind. The

details of a Plan are yet to emerge but we believe that the days of Sefton's biggest artificial 'sand dune' may be numbered. Our visitors express mixed feelings. Many believe that the strange lump adds character to this stretch of desolate flatness. They enthuse over the dense shrubbery that has grown up on its bank and which attracts small birds for whom shelter is scarce along the shoreline. There is valuable habitat for some of our local wildlife specialities here and would this not make a fine new home for those coastal celebrities, the sand lizard and the natterjack toad?

Other folk will feel that it is a blot on an otherwise unspoilt landscape and should be removed in its entirety so that Sefton's 'Natural Coast' is entirely worthy of the name. We expect that a practical compromise may be reached and perhaps some of the mountain will remain to remind us of past human interaction with the coast. To some this will seem a regrettable scar, to others a valuable piece of 'heritage' for future generations.

Whatever is decided, we hope that the area will soon become part of the Marshside Nature Reserve. Our plans will include a Work Centre for our team of hard-working volunteers who strive to maintain this part of the coast for the benefit of all its visitors and who have done so for 14 years without the benefit of much in the way of facilities. It would be marvellous if we could provide some toilets for our visitors who are often in need of some relief too!

Breaking news as I write is that there is a plan to move some of the material from the site to landscape a former rubbish tip at Kew. This sounds like an elegant solution to the problem of finding a home for the material. As for its 'naturalness' or otherwise, it certainly won't be the first time that large quantities of sand have found their way some distance inland on the Sefton Coast!

©Chris Gomersall  
RSPB Images



## Travelling through time

**Despite its massive impact on the landscape of the area, the sand-works is not part of the 'Landscape Partnership' bid that the Coastal Partnership is putting forward for Heritage Lottery Funding.**

We have put forward an exciting project for the Marshside area in the bid though. The project aims to recreate pedestrian access to this part of the coast for the local community and to make the area safer and more attractive to our visitors too. Over the years the car has become the pre-eminent form of transport everywhere. As with so many other locations, this has progressed to the point where accessing the coast by any more environmentally sound way

has become something of a challenge. The project aims to redress this imbalance with the creation of a footpath and cycle way alongside Marshside Road. The route is one that was originally developed by the local community, who at the time derived their living almost exclusively from the sea; harvesting fish and waterfowl and grazing livestock on the shore grasses. As the landscape has altered dramatically through the centuries, the route provides a fascinating transect through time. A safe crossing of the increasingly busy and occasionally lethal Marine Drive is the other major output of the scheme. Much work remains to be done on the proposal and we will be seeking the views of locals and visitors over the coming months.

## Pied piper leads the way

**Wildlife waits for no man and whilst we humans deliberate over the potential options for the old sand works, a stunning black and white sandpiper has already staked its claim to the vacant territory.** The RSPB may be waiting to hear if it can add the area to the Nature Reserve, but these avocets moved in within just a few weeks of the sand works closing down. This was partly coincidental, as the birds were forced to move from their usual nesting areas on the Nature Reserve by the extraordinary drought last spring. This is not just any rare bird either, the avocet is the emblem of the RSPB and was one of the first species to be rescued from the threat of extinction in this country by the RSPB's first suite of nature reserves acquired in the 1950's. The bird is now well established, with over 2000 individuals visiting the UK in the summer months to nest on our coastal wetlands. Marshside has seen an astonishing rise in their numbers from none in 2001 to 62 individuals so far this year and it is now the most important site on the west coast of Britain for the species. All of this is sufficient cause for celebration but we will keep the bottle on ice and you will all be invited on the day the new, improved Marshside Nature Reserve is opened!

All 3 articles by Tony Baker  
RSPB Sites Manager





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Stephen Collins and Pamela Whaley. ©Sefton Council

# Sefton Coast Forum

The 8th Annual Sefton Coast Forum 'People, Places and Nature' took place on Saturday 7th July 2007 at the Floral Hall Southport. This was the first time this all day event had taken place in the summer. It was well attended and proved a great success. The event attracts interest beyond Sefton - we were pleased to welcome a party from the Czech Agricultural University in Prague and Stephen Collins and Pamela Whaley from Defra's Coastal Team. More information and proceedings can be downloaded by going to [www.seftoncoast.org.uk/](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk/)

From the nominations received for the Volunteer Award 2007 the Board agreed two awards should be made. In recognition of their outstanding contribution over many years the awards were presented to Dr Reg Yorke and Mr. Ted Marshall



Through the Formby Civic Society, Reg has sought recognition of Sefton's archaeology and history by his representation on the Board of the Sefton Coast Partnership and the creation of the History and Archaeology Task

Group. Although now retired from the group as chair Reg continues to work tirelessly to encourage interest in history on the coast and to place an understanding of the past into local affairs.

With his wife, Barbara, he also plays an active role in National Archaeology events, offering talks and guided walks to members of the public. He successfully initiated the History & Archaeology Sefton Coast Conference in 2004.

Reg works in conjunction with the National Trust, exploring, recording and developing interpretive material on the history of asparagus cultivation and worked with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, exploring the historical development of Freshfield's Dune Heath at Fisherman's Path.

Ted Marshall has been volunteer for over 30 years, has helped to patrol the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve as a volunteer warden. His role encompasses all manner of essential tasks that help to ensure the reserve is well managed, and well respected and understood by the public.



Not content with those commitments, he can be found most Saturday mornings at the RSPB hide at Marshside helping visitors differentiate between avocets and teal. He also assists the Lancashire Wildlife Trust as an active member of the Red Squirrel group, and is a member of the Ainsdale Civic Society.



*Presentation by the Mayor of Sefton Cllr Richard Hands to Dr Reg Yorke (left circle) and Mr Ted Marshall (right circle)*

*Vaclar Besant and Angela Hitchen with the Mayor of Sefton Cllr Richard Hands and Cllr Lord Ronnie Fearn.*

## My coast, my future

This year's Forum will again take place in the Summer on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at the Floral Hall, Southport. It will be based around the theme of Education and Lifelong Learning. Tying-in with Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, we are hoping to showcase some of the many events and activities which already occur along the Coast involving young people, schools, families, students and volunteers.

There are a huge array of opportunities already out there for people to learn about, understand and maybe influence the management of this restless coast. The title of the Forum, 'My Coast, My Future', indicates that the Sefton Coast is looking

forward to the future and hoping to bring our community - residents, visitors and academics alike - along on what is likely to prove a fascinating journey into a world affected by climate and coastal change!

At the time of going to press the programme is still in draft form. Please check out the Sefton Coast web site at [www.seftoncoast.org.uk](http://www.seftoncoast.org.uk) for the latest information.

Anyone who would like to attend should register their interest. This can be done by contacting Mrs Lorna Lander at [lander@planning.sefton.gov.uk](mailto:lander@planning.sefton.gov.uk) or alternatively telephone her on 0151 934 3605. This is a free all day event, places will be limited therefore registration is essential. Allocation will be on a first come first served basis.



### 1. RSPB Marshside Parking

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

### 2. Southport Pier Toilets

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

### 3. Southport Beach P

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

### 4. Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail and Velvet Trail

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

### 5. Sands Lake P

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

### 6. Ainsdale Beach P T

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

### 7. Ainsdale Discovery Centre and Ainsdale Local Nature Reserve P

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

### 8. Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve

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

### 9. Fisherman's Path/Freshfield Dune Heath

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

### 10. National Trust, Formby P T

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

### 11. Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols Local Nature Reserve P T

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

### 12. Hightown Dunes and Meadows

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

### 13. Hall Road and Beach P T

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

### 14. Crosby Marine Park and Beach P T

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



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

- Always check tide times if visiting the beach. Look out for advice on notice boards and warning flags especially if planning to swim. If in doubt speak to a lifeguard or the beach patrol.
- Dispose of litter correctly either putting it in the bin or taking it home.
- Clean up after your dog.
- Keep to paths.
- Don't forget the suntan lotion.
- Do not disturb the wildlife.
- Do not pick wild flowers leave them for others to enjoy.
- Keep dogs under control at all times.



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

Name

Address

email address

- ☐ Tick box for information sent out from other relevant organisations  
☐ Add me to email distribution list

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

Send to:

**coastlines**  
Ainsdale Discovery  
Centre Complex,  
The Promenade,  
Shore Road,  
Ainsdale-on-Sea,  
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