

Unlocking the Landscape of Sefton

Community Consultation Report | Formby High School

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Workshop Summary..... | 5 |
| Wildlife and Nature | 5 |
| History | 5 |
| Activities..... | 6 |
| Local Economy | 6 |
| Experiences | 7 |
| Patterns and Features | 7 |
| Conclusions | 8 |
| Transcription of Formby High School Workshop | 10 |
| Group One..... | 10 |
| Group Two | 13 |
| Group Three | 17 |
| Group Four..... | 21 |

Introduction

The Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership has carried out a series of stakeholder and community workshops along the Sefton Coast during 2007. The aim of the workshops was to help understand how the landscape, and landscape change, is perceived and valued by the local communities in terms of its development, management and future. Workshop participants were initially selected from the Sefton Coast Partnership contact database, represented both communities of place (ie. people who live and work in the landscape) and communities of interest (ie. organisations with a stake in the landscape). The Formby High School workshop was deliberately undertaken to help broaden the consultation base – ie. so as to engage the interests and aspirations of young people, and not *just* those of older community members (who typically comprise the majority of community and local interest groups).

A mind-mapping technique was used to encourage creative thinking and discussion between stakeholders. Countryside has developed these techniques and applied them successfully with stakeholder groups within Landscape Character Assessments, and as part of development work for CPRE's 'Unlocking the Landscape' initiative. Mind-mapping is a proven and widely accessible technique for collating information from a diverse group of stakeholders. It allows people to think freely, without immediate judgement and encourages everyone to share their views. This community engagement methodology is repeatable and could be used at 5 and 10 year intervals to monitor the impact of the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership in terms of community engagement and how it is meeting the aims of:

- Strengthening links between people and nature, by increasing opportunities for people to become involved in understanding their heritage and in thinking about the future
- Increasing the level of physical and intellectual access to the natural and cultural heritage values of the Sefton Coast.

The Formby High School workshop was held at the school on 30th January 2008. Twenty-two schoolchildren took part in the event (10 boys and 12 girls aged 12-13 years / Year 8). The participants were divided into four groups, each working with a mind-map to record their views on the landscape.

The mind-maps were divided into six branches to enable a structured process, the branches were:

- Wildlife and Nature
- History
- Activities
- Local Economy

- Experiences
- Patterns and Features

The participants used colour coded leaves to respond to three questions:

- Comments on brown leaves represented landscape values:
“What do you value most about the local landscape – what is important, unique, or special?”
- Comments on green leaves represented landscape visions:
“What are your visions for the future of the landscape? What needs be changed or protected; what new projects or ideas can you suggest?”
- Comments on grey leaves represented what is at risk in the landscape:
“What is at risk; what needs to be protected and what challenges do we face?”

The spatial mapping exercise (as used previously) was not included in the programme for Formby High School due to time constraints on the day.

The remainder of this document contains a summary of the workshop findings, along with a transcription of each mind-map.

Workshop Summary

Wildlife and Nature

There was a high level of agreement among participants in terms of what they value most about local wildlife and nature. It should also be noted that the majority of responses contained a strong local context, the most common themes being: red squirrels; natterjack toads; sand dunes/beach; marram grass and pinewoods. Discussion among participants suggested that the sand dunes/beach and pinewoods, in particular, were popular sources of fun and adventure for young people.

Likewise, in terms of perceived risks or problems regarding wildlife and nature, the red squirrels, sand dunes/beach and pinewoods rated most highly among participants' concerns. Common themes in this category included: threats to red squirrels (perceived as being grey squirrels and disease); potential impacts on the coastline from climate change (especially flooding); and the felling of pinewoods.

Future visions for local wildlife and nature once again focussed on a desire for "more trees" and protecting the red squirrel population. Other suggestions included a wildlife maze; a petting zoo or animal sanctuary; more flowers and "saving stranded jellyfish on the beach".

Facilitator's comment: virtually all of the children who took part in the workshop identified the red squirrels, sand dunes/beach and pinewoods as being important (or prominent) characteristics of the local landscape. There would appear to be good potential for further engaging young people in these areas, and perhaps also raising their awareness of other local flora and fauna.

History

There was a broad and varied response from participants in terms of what they value most about the history (or heritage) of the landscape. This included the built environment, in the form of churches and "old houses"; agricultural practice, such as asparagus farms; and also cultural heritage, ranging from village fetes to Viking settlers.

Interestingly, there were virtually no risks to the history of the landscape, as perceived by the participants – the only identified problem being "not enough of it!" (ie. a lack of interpretation, or a lack of opportunities for learning about or experiencing history). Ideas for better engaging young people in local history included a time-capsule project and a museum.

Facilitator's comment: when first presented with the topic of history, few participants related to it in terms of their local landscape. That is to say, their immediate impression of history was a more "textbook" definition of important people, events and dates. Given the age of the participants (12-13

years), it was particularly encouraging to see how the groups were quick to explore many different aspects of the landscape, once the definition of “local history” had been further discussed and explained. This response obviously cannot be taken as being indicative of all young people, but it suggests good potential for projects aiming to engage their understanding of how the local landscape has evolved (depending, it would seem, on how the topic of ‘history’ is presented).

Activities

Activities and recreational opportunities provided by the landscape were greatly valued by the majority of participants. Sports and sporting clubs rated highly among the responses, ranging from golf, cricket and hockey, to running, swimming, surfing, cycling and walking. Organised youth groups, such as Scouts and Guides, were also among the popular activities discussed. Individual responses included Farmer Ted’s (a children’s activity centre) and the RAF base at Wood Vale - both of which are outside of the study area, and could be taken to suggest the spatial extent of what is considered “local”.

Problems associated with local activities were largely split between a general lack of clubs and facilities for young people, coupled with antisocial behaviour, such as vandalism and fighting. During discussion, several participants commented on a lack of opportunities for young people to socialise and explore their interests outside of school. For example, one response reads: “Not enough art clubs – none in fact. I know lots of teens who love art...it’s not good”.

Ideas for improving activities for young people included more opportunities for sports and socialising, coupled with better retail and entertainment (ie. catering for young people). In particular, there were a number of ideas relating to use of the landscape for recreation. Suggestions included an orienteering club and a dirt track for bikes, as well as more activities on the beach, and in the pinewoods. One participant notes: “Make the pinewoods fun for children by adding treasure hunts and an obstacle course”. A cartoon character, dubbed “Sammy the Squirrel”, was suggested as a potential mascot for marketing activities in the pinewoods to younger children.

Local Economy

Given the age of the participants (12-13 years), it is understandable that they did not engage in issues of local economy in the same way as the previous groups consulted. The majority of responses form a list of the various shops and services found locally (eg. pubs, restaurants, banks and supermarkets), rather than features that are necessarily valued in the landscape. Comments such as “friendly people” suggest that young people’s experience of the local economy is a pleasant one; though the overall impression is that they ‘make do’ with the opportunities available to them locally, while saving up for shopping trips to neighbouring towns and cities.

This trend is again reflected in the participants’ perceived risks or problems in the local economy. During discussion, the overwhelming response was that there aren’t enough opportunities for young

people – primarily clothes shops, cafes, video game/DVD stores and youth clubs. Several participants commented on “too many charity shops”, which again supports the notion of young people feeling constrained by a lack of provision for their needs. Other issues included public transport (deemed too costly) and “expensive house prices” [in some areas], coupled with “abandoned houses” [in others].

Aspirations for the local economy included cheaper transport, more shops and entertainment (eg. youth clubs) and more jobs for young people. Individual suggestions include a shooting range, the reopening of Wacky Warehouse and more ice cream vans. Two comments specifically relate to the pinewoods: one calling for car parking, the other for more litterbins.

Experiences

A number of participants placed value on their personal experiences and relationship with the landscape. These loosely fall into two categories: those relating to experience of wildlife and nature (eg. walking the dog; birds in the morning; surfing; nice scenery), and those relating to a sense of community (eg. the village; Formby lights at Christmas; “Dickensian Day”). The overall impression was that young people found it a pleasant place to live, despite a number of perceived social constraints.

None of the participants’ most valued experiences were recorded as being at risk, though a number of problems relating to young people’s day-to-day experiences were noted. The most common of these include too much litter; busy streets/too many cars; dog mess and antisocial behaviour.

Suggestions for improving people’s experience of the landscape highlighted a number of possibilities, such as “outward bound” courses, tours and trails of Formby, and better health/recreation provision for young people.

Facilitator’s comment: several participants mentioned a lack of gyms for young people, as those available were either too expensive or not open to children. It was suggested that young people could use the surrounding countryside as a ‘green gym’, to the response that the countryside is often “too wet and cold!” Such reactions to outdoor recreation are not uncommon among people of all ages, and perhaps an indication that outdoor activities must be carefully designed and promoted if they are to capture the interest of a broad audience - including young people.

Patterns and Features

As is evident with features of ‘wildlife and nature’, the participants displayed a strong association with sand dunes/beaches, pinewoods and also parks as being important (or prominent) characteristics of the landscape. Several of the groups highlighted patterns resulting from agricultural practice (eg. farms and fields), while others commented on the importance of built features, such as the Civic Hall and Nazareth House (care home) in Formby. Many of the participants also perceived local conservation areas as being important features of the landscape. Interestingly, value was also placed

on a number of more cultural or experiential patterns and features, including “the waves” and the Gormley sculptures on the beach.

There were no risks to landscape patterns and features, as perceived by the participants. The only problem noted was “too many bins” – ie. while participants understood the need for these, some also believed them to be unsightly and overabundant (note: there would appear to be differences in opinion over the number of litter-bins required locally, and particularly in the pinewoods).

Similarly, there were few ideas for improving or protecting landscape patterns and features. One participant suggested more or better pathways; other ideas included a youth club and a zoo.

Facilitator’s comment: it was interesting to note how the majority of participants understood landscape in terms of “hilliness”, height (above sea level) or the general shape of the land. However, in contrast, the participants also had difficulty relating to the characteristic patterns and features of their local landscape. It should be noted that this response may have a lot to do with the terms “patterns” and “features” in light of the age group involved, as a variety of landscape patterns/features were recorded under other headings of the mind-map – ie. suggesting that such patterns/features are indeed valued, but not understood in such terms.

Conclusions

During the workshop 280 comments were made: of these 119 described landscape values, 104 commented on landscape visions and 57 discussed landscape risks. Each group of participants was asked to discuss their mind-map at the end of each session, and to reach a consensus on the “top five” landscape values, visions and risks.

From the results obtained, it would appear that what participants’ value most about their local landscape are **red squirrels; sand dunes/the beach; pinewoods;** and **sporting or recreation opportunities** (including clubs and societies).

Landscape elements believed to be most at risk include **red squirrels** (ie. a threatened species) and **pinewoods** (there was generally a negative reaction to tree felling among the participants). Problems within the landscape were largely perceived in terms of **litter and pollution**, a **lack of facilities for young people** (eg. shops, youth clubs) and **antisocial behaviour**. It should also be noted that **climate change** was identified as posing a threat to the Sefton coastline.

Ideas for the future can be summarised generally in terms of a desire for **more opportunities for young people**. Common themes include a perceived need for more (or better) **health and recreation activities** (including “making pinewoods fun for young people”); better opportunities for **socialising and furthering personal interests** outside of school (eg. youth clubs and activity groups); more

diverse **retail and entertainment** (ie. catering for young people); and better means of **interpreting or experiencing local wildlife and heritage**.

Transcription of Formby High School Workshop

Please note: the following comments have not been prioritised and are listed in no particular order.

Key:

Comments in brown represent landscape values | *“What do you value most about the local landscape – what is important, unique, or special?”*

Comments in green represent landscape visions | *“What are your visions for the future of the landscape? What needs be changed or protected; what new projects or ideas can you suggest?”*

Comments in grey represent what is at risk in the landscape | *“What is at risk; what needs to be protected and what challenges do we face?”*

Group One

Wildlife & Nature

Red squirrels (and grey squirrels)
Sand dunes
Plants

Save rabbits from being hunted
Save the squirrels (give them medication to fight disease)
Fox breeding programme
Save stranded jellyfish on the beach
Kill all jellyfish!
More trees
More birds

Beaches need cleaning - trapped fish
Fox breeding programmes
They're cutting down some of our pinewoods (natural disaster!)

History

Churches
Fire station
Old joke shops

None

Activities

Formby cricket club
 Good parks
 RAF base at Wood Vale
 Formby tennis club
 Formby golf club
 "Farmer Ted's" (children's activity centre)

More places for sport
 Water park in Formby swimming pool
 Shop that sells and rents video games, games consoles and DVDs
 Make the pinewoods fun for children by adding treasure hunts, a cartoon squirrel called "Sammy Squirrel" and an obstacle course
 Rollercoaster

Not enough parks
 Not enough youth groups
 Not enough places for kids and teens
 No video shop!

Local Economy

Transport
 Supermarkets
 Pubs and cafes
 Restaurants

Public shooting range
 More shops for young people
 Build a zoo in Formby
 Bring back the Wacky Warehouse
 Cinema

Abandoned houses
 Expensive houses
 Not enough shops for young people!
 Too many charity shops
 No variety of shops

Experiences

| |
|--------------------------------------|
| The village (Formby) Nice scenery |
| Feeding nuts to the squirrels |
| None |

Patterns and Features

| |
|------------------|
| Parks and fields |
| None |
| None |

“Top 5” Landscape Values

- Swimming pool / gym
- Sand dunes
- Cricket club / tennis club / hockey club
- The village (ie. Formby)
- RAF Base / pubs

“Top 5” Landscape Risks

- Not enough variety of shops - not enough shops for young people
- Too many charity shops
- Not enough youth clubs
- Global Video / Blockbuster Video (closed down?)
- Save the squirrels

“Top 5” Landscape Visions

- Shop selling video games, DVDs and videos
- Fox-breeding programme
- Make pinewoods fun for young people – eg. using a cartoon character, such as “Sammy Squirrel”
- Shooting range
- Save stranded jellyfish on the beach

Group Two

Wildlife & Nature

| |
|--|
| <p>Red squirrels</p> <p>Natural surroundings</p> <p>River Alt</p> <p>The beach</p> <p>Pinewoods</p> |
| <p>Plant more trees</p> <p>Funding for animal rescue reserves</p> <p>More charities for animals locally</p> <p>A wildlife maze</p> |
| <p>Red squirrels being threatened by grey squirrels</p> <p>Pollution</p> <p>Global warming</p> <p>Landscape flooding</p> |

History

| |
|--|
| <p>Victoria Hall</p> <p>Lifeboat centre</p> <p>Viking heritage</p> |
| <p>None</p> |
| <p>None</p> |

Activities

| |
|---|
| <p>Pleasure beach</p> <p>Formby swimming pool / LA Fitness</p> <p>Formby gym</p> <p>Crosby rugby fields</p> <p>Hockey club</p> <p>Scouts</p> <p>Pleasure Land</p> <p>National Trust</p> <p>Wildlife watch</p> <p>A lot of high schools (Merchants, St Marys, Sacred Heart, FHS)</p> |
|---|

More community fairs and events

More parks

Basketball courts

An extra science club

Arts centre(s)

Art clubs

Not enough parks

Not enough art clubs – none in fact. I know lots of teens who love art and with only one lesson a week it's not good!

Local Economy

Formby village

Local towns for shopping

Playgrounds and parks

Friendly people

Guild / Victoria Hall

Local sweet shops

Nice school for disabled training

More reserves and helplines

More youth clubs

Café Nero

A big library

Better library

More men's / boy's clothes shops

Get more police around the place

More public bins

More bins around and inside the pinewoods

More recycling points

More places to play sports

More ice cream vans

Park in pine woods

We need a local A&E
 Lack of shops
 Parking
 Vandalism
 No youth clubs – if we had a place to go, some might not cause trouble
 The police – I never see them around – where are they?

Experiences

“Dickensian Day”
 Birds in morning
 The Gormley “another place”

None.

Weapons in streets
 Hoodies and druggies
 Not enough trips
 There is too much litter on the streets

Patterns and Features

Sport Arts Centre
 Beaches and sand dunes
 Conservation areas
 Cubs/beavers/brownies/guides
 Pinewoods
 Nazareth House
 Key Park (Crosby)
 Civic Hall

Formby Zoo
 A youth club

None

“Top 5” Landscape Values

- The Gormley statues
- Wildlife and nature
- Civic Hall and Nazareth House
- Cubs, Beavers, Brownies, Guides, Scouts

- Local shops

“Top 5” Landscape Risks

- There is a lot of litter
- Pollution and not enough people taking part in the recycling project
- Not enough educational trips at school
- Police – I never see them around; where are they?
- Red squirrel problem!

“Top 5” Landscape Visions

- Better library
- Better policing
- Youth club!
- Better disabled facilities (in schools)
- Canoe club

Group Three

Wildlife & Nature

| |
|---|
| <p>Marram grass</p> <p>The beach</p> <p>The seaside</p> <p>The woods</p> <p>Pinewoods and pinecones</p> <p>Natajack toads</p> <p>The squirrels</p> <p>Rabbits</p> |
| <p>Donkey rides across beach</p> <p>Butterfly place at Ainsdale</p> <p>Petting zoos</p> <p>A pet shop</p> <p>Bear sanctuary</p> <p>More bright flowers</p> |
| <p>The red squirrels (under threat)</p> <p>Grey squirrels</p> <p>Pollution</p> <p>Litter</p> <p>Coastlines</p> <p>Seagulls</p> <p>Dog mess</p> |

History

| |
|---|
| <p>The lifeboat station</p> <p>The old houses</p> <p>Asparagus farms</p> |
| <p>A bowling alley in Ainsdale</p> <p>Time capsule</p> <p>Better school equipment</p> <p>Local Museum</p> |
| <p>None</p> |

Activities

Surfing
The fields and parks
Play groups
School
Running
Swimming
Social activities

More activities to do in Ainsdale
Places for families in Ainsdale
Parks in Ainsdale
Bowling alley
A theme park
Student social events
A cinema

Fights
Vandalism

Local Economy

Rescue centres
Restaurants
Formby pool
A better variety of shops – eg. video game shops
Cottages
Banks
Vets
Going to the shops
Supermarkets
Fast food places

Cinema in Ainsdale
 More places to eat and drink in Ainsdale
 Elderly facilities
 MacDonalds
 More clothes shops in Ainsdale
 Lower prices on buses
 A swimming pool in Ainsdale
 Lots of shops (clothes)
 Café Nero in Ainsdale
 Formby school bus
 A games shop in Ainsdale village

Trains
 The bus

Experiences

Walking the dog
 The village
 Community
 Haunted houses
 Badgers
 Care homes

Tours of Formby
 More protection from police to make you feel safe

Drunks
 Dog mess
 Too many cars
 Not enough crossing places
 Gangs
 Smokers

Patterns and Features

Farms
 The forest
 The dunes
 Waves

Something cool in Ainsdale
Paths

None

“Top 5” Landscape Values

- The beach
- The squirrels
- Formby Village
- Pinewoods
- The community

“Top 5” Landscape Risks

- Red squirrels
- Drunks
- Vandalism/fights/crime
- Dog mess
- Smokers

“Top 5” Landscape Visions

- Bowling alley
- Time capsule
- Elderly facilities
- Petting zoo
- Bio-dome

Group Four

Wildlife & Nature

| |
|---------------------|
| Trees |
| Pine woods |
| Beach |
| Grass |
| Nature reserve |
| Natterjack toads |
| Zoo |
| Skate park |
| Seagulls |
| Pollution |
| Flooding |
| Chopping down trees |

History

| |
|----------------------------|
| Old monuments |
| Village fetes |
| More [history] |
| Not enough of it [history] |

Activities

| |
|--------------------|
| Swimming |
| Cycling |
| Formby hockey club |
| Water sports |
| Walks |
| Cafes |

More activity leisure centres
Orienteering
Horse facilities
Play areas
Social events
Parks
Clubs
Dirt track
Less shops
Activities on the beach
More schools for disabled people
Paint ball arena
Shooting range
Not enough learning facilities
Cinemas
More parks
Scuba diving

Horse poo

Local Economy

Hair dresser / Shop owner / baker / employer / solicitor / bank management
Barbers
Village
Well employed people
Rich and poor
Jobs

More toy shops
Variety of shops
More jobs for younger people
Mall
Areas for kids

Money wasters

Experiences

| |
|---|
| Formby lights at Christmas Surfing Walks |
| Gyms that young people can use Outward bound courses |
| Thugs Snobs Busy streets Litter |

Patterns and Features

| |
|---|
| School Boats Art Sculptures Red Squirrels |
| None |
| Too many bins |

“Top 5” Landscape Values

- Unique coastline
- Well employed jobs
- Nature reserve
- Rare plants and animals
- Walks and pathways

“Top 5” Landscape Risks

- Not enough history (no history presented)
- Flooding
- Chopping down trees
- Litter
- Pollution

"Top 5" Landscape Visions

- Beach activities
- Outdoor activities
- Health and fitness facilities
- Youth clubs
- Cheaper transport