

# Unlocking the Landscape of Sefton

Community Consultation Report | Little Crosby

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# Introduction

The Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership, as part of the evidence base for its Landscape Strategy, 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, 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).

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 Little Crosby workshop was held at West Lancashire Golf Club on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007. Twenty-seven people took part in event. The community members ranged from members of the West Lancashire Golf Club and Civic Societies, to farmers, residents groups, heritage centre managers, members of parish and borough councils, archaeologists and land managers. The consultees were divided into three groups of nine in each, working with a mind map and spatial 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 consultees 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 maps (Ordnance Survey, aerial photography and Landscape Character) enabled consultees to add a spatial component to their comments – for example, recording *where* their ideas should be implemented, or *where* problems are occurring. The maps are not published but were given to the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership to form part of the evidence base. The maps could provide a useful monitoring tool: if the consultation was repeated over fixed periods, then the mapping exercise could provide a way of measuring how well strategies and programmes have responded to the views of local stakeholders.

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

## Workshop Summary

The following summary will discuss the workshop findings under the different aspects of landscape used on the mind maps.

### Wildlife and Nature

The community members strongly valued the natural environment and associated species. There was a very strong recognition of the rarity of the local flora and fauna resource, including natterjack toad, red squirrel and wild orchids. Participants also commented on the wealth of bird species, particularly the wading birds along the coastline. One comment describes how the area supports a mix of bird species that is unique to the North West, whilst others comment on the breeding wading birds, the geese that visit in Autumn and the sound of bird song in Spring. The community members described the coastline as unspoilt and natural.

Climate change and consequential flooding were seen to be key threats to the wildlife resource, as was natural coastal erosion and inundation and the impact of incremental development. Concerns over incremental development were linked to another risk regarding the loss of the Green Belt. The loss of red squirrels through illness was highlighted as a risk to the future of the local species mix, as was a loss of dune wildlife and habitats. Pollution and a lack of funding were also seen as risks to the wildlife and nature of the Sefton landscape.

Future visions for wildlife and nature included education of children but also through expert-led walks and other activities, such as lifelong learning and the creation of a visitor centre. There was support for the creation of a local nature reserve at Hightown with similar comments such as 'more areas for wildlife' and the support of access restrictions, where appropriate, for the benefit of wildlife and habitats. There is also encouragement for non-intensive farming to reduce pressure and create opportunities for wildlife. Support for restrictions to access and the creation of nature reserves suggests a very strong local commitment to the natural environment and its future viability.

### History

People valued the local community history with reference made to the history of local landowners and estates, as well as the community more generally. Golf heritage was also commented on with the location of the workshop being the eighth oldest golf club in England. Local history was regarded as an important element of community life with individual incidences commented on such as the creation of Southport ice rink in response to people ice skating on the dune slacks during cold periods. The burial of Crosby promenade was commented on illustrating a wider interest in the history of natural processes along the coastline. The importance of the local area during World War II was mentioned here too.

People felt that there was a risk of losing local traditions and that there needed to be awareness-raising and training regarding the history and heritage of the local area.

Future visions included recording and monitoring sea level changes and the impact on pre-historic features, as well as the restoration of historic drainage patterns to control flooding. Increased and improved interpretation of the historical landscape was regarded as a future vision with the erection of a monument to Crosby lighthouse with interpretation given as an example.

## Activities

Golf was mentioned again here as the area has such a strong golfing association and was described by one of the participant as one of the best locations for golf worldwide. Other activities that are valued included walking and observing nature, bird watching on the Alt and power-kiting illustrating the mix of activities that can be carried out within a relatively small landscape. Sailing and fishing were commented on including the local yachting club. The landscape is also used for more intimate experiences such as 'escape' and solitude.

Loss of local knowledge and activities was a major concern here as was the impact of a lack of knowledge. It was commented that uninitiated visitors could have a negative impact on the landscape and that increased visitor pressure was changing the character of the local landscape through an overuse by people. Alternatively it was also commented that the lack of facilities was also a risk to the future of the area for activities. Dogs were also seen to be a problem, with one participant calling for the banning of dogs on the beach.

Future visions tended to be educationally focussed with a call for greater interpretation and a visitor centre to make people more aware of the local landscape and the provision of tourism/ employment-focussed training. The theme of education continued with a suggestion for night school or day courses in crafts and arts using the landscape for inspiration. An underwater barrage was also suggested as a future vision.

## Local Economy

The discussion of the local economy produced an interesting split of opinion within the community regarding tourism and tourist development into the future.

In terms of the landscape, it was felt that the uniqueness of the area was a strong value for the local economy and local pride was also mentioned as a strong economic value, as was the location adjacent to urban areas so that the local landscape offers a welcome alternative for urban dwellers. Local businesses and farming were seen to contribute to the local economy, along with shipping and energy provision. There was a clear divide of opinion between those who valued tourism and wished to see it expand as an economic force in the area, and those who felt that this would be inappropriate, seeing tourism as a 'de-valuer' of the local economy instead.

Development pressure was described as a threat to the local economy and this may be linked to the issue of the reduction in small scale farming in the area, which was also mentioned. Maintenance of original features and the coastal infrastructure were also seen as risks to the local economy along with the loss of old buildings. Not understanding the landscape resource was regarded as a risk and this reinforces the strong desire for better interpretation of the coastal landscape.

Future visions varied between capitalising on tourism and increasing interpretation and facilities along the coast for residents and visitors, to charging dog owners to bring their dogs into public spaces. Generally people were in favour of greater access and interpretation although this does not reflect the comments made as part of the values section, where a number of comments were made regarding limiting tourism and not encouraging its growth. A better coastal infrastructure in terms of footpaths and cycle routes was a strong future vision. Other visions included a marina for visiting yachts and better partnership working with farmers for conservation purposes.

## Experiences

The workshop participants described personal experiences that they valued. People enjoyed morning dog walks along the beach, the storms and high tides as well as views and the sunset. The openness of the landscape and its potential for providing 'escape' from urban areas were highly regarded, as were the Gormley statues and the calming nature of the landscape. People also valued the experiences of being part of the area, being involved in land management and the local interest in conservation.

It was felt that the experiences that the landscape can offer are at risk from beach cleanliness issues, as well as Sefton Council not taking advantage of the entire area. The lack of facilities, which was a recurring theme throughout the workshop, was also seen as a risk to the experiences of the landscape; as was creeping urbanisation.

People felt that in future there needed to be more encouragement shown to children to experience the landscape. Participants also felt that the landscape should be preserved and left as it is now. Greater interpretation along the coast was regarded as a future vision along with increased disabled access to Formby beach and increased visitor education.

## Patterns and Features

There was a mixture of responses here, including natural patterns and human influences. Participants valued the constantly changing patterns of the landscape; the juxtaposition of past and present landscape elements (the ruins in the dunes, the sands and the tides and further inland people valued the drainage patterns of the mosslands); the ditches and boundaries. Participants valued the uniqueness of landscape patterns locally and the open spaces and tranquillity. The seasonal patterns of the landscape were highly regarded, as were the effects of erosion. People also valued the

Gormley statues and wind turbines, as well as the human-made sand hills on the golf courses and the patterns that golf courses create in the landscape.

The participants described a range of risks to the patterns and features of the landscape, including coastal erosion, the impact of wind farms on the view and the presence of the Gormley statues: one person describing them as “horrible statues and scrap”. There was also concern, as described earlier, of the impact of visitors - it was felt that they may cause damage to the landscape. A participant described how the lack of vertical elements in the landscape meant that the presence of pylons and telephone masts can have a damaging impact on the overall landscape pattern. There was also concern regarding the erosion of prehistoric peat beds and the lack of public respect for the area.

People felt that there needed to be improved coastal management to conserve and enhance the dune habitat, and to make the seafront tidier and more appealing. Another future vision was to melt the Gormley statues and create one statue from the metal!

## Conclusions

During the workshop 272 comments were made: of these 148 described landscape values; 64 commented upon landscape visions and; 60 discussed landscape risks. The workshop participants were asked to discuss the mind map after each stage of the mapping process and through group discussion decide their top five values, visions and risks.

Four themes emerged from the different groups regarding their top landscape values, the first being history. People felt that history was an important element of the landscape, including the **community history** and the skills and local knowledge that contributed to the management of the landscape. All three groups commented on the **historic character** of the landscape. The character of the landscape was also a key theme that was put forward as a top five value by all three groups. People liked the **openness and unspoilt nature** of the landscape, the wide views and the large scale character of the coastline. The **habitats and wildlife** of the area was highly valued by two of the groups who felt that the diversity of habitats and species was important, as were the bird species associated with the area.

Future visions for the landscape highlighted two themes from the three groups. All three felt there needed to be an increase in education and interpretation for people who wish to use the landscape. This ranged from visitor education, to education of children and of adults using the **lifelong learning** facilities - this was a key theme throughout the workshop. It was also clear that there was a strong demand for increased **interpretation** and education facilities, although there were some people who felt that visitors should not be encouraged and more signage around the coast would be a negative addition. Greater **conservation and management of wildlife** was a second key theme. People not only wished to see more management of the coast but also greater **community involvement**.

The top risks identified two themes that prevailed between the different groups. Two groups commented on the **loss of traditional skills** within the landscape - this was associated with agriculture

mainly with a loss of the smaller scale farmland and generally with land management. The second theme that was commented on by all of the groups was that of erosion, which was deemed to be a significant risk to the landscape. The different groups gave different reasons and consequences including dredging and climate change, but all felt that **coastal erosion** was a significant threat to the local landscape.

There is significant community support for the creation of greater information exchange through both interpretation measures and a more significant educational approach. There is concern regarding the loss of traditional skills, activities and knowledge suggesting that some form of historical interpretation may be necessary as part of a wider interpretation and education programme. The community illustrated an enthusiasm for being involved with such projects and the knowledge and interest displayed during the workshop confirms this.

# Transcription of Little Crosby Workshop Mind-Map

Please note:

The following comments have not been prioritised and are listed in no particular order.

Key:

Comments in brown represent Landscape Values

Comments in green represent Landscape Visions

Comments in grey represent what is at risk in the landscape

## Group One

### Wildlife & Nature

Local wildlife and landscape  
Protection of the natural world  
Conservation of wildlife  
More emphasis on the natural landscape  
Squirrels  
Maintain open spaces  
Wildlife badly damaged by work on cycle tracks – no skylarks since 4/07

Conservation  
Extend wildlife and marshland area  
Education of children on country way of life  
Use money for education and life long learning  
To maintain what we have in a sympathetic and progressive way  
Use the money to improve the education of children in local areas

Coastal erosion  
Squirrels  
Green belt in peril  
Climate change, coastal erosion and river flooding  
Incremental development  
Sefton's natural coast and countryside  
Climate change on the coast  
Natural wildlife

## History

Development of life activities  
 This is the eighth oldest golf club in England!  
 Did our early humans protect/ use natural facilities  
 Events, tours, places of interest  
 How coast has interested people – human activities

Local traditions

## Activities

This area is probably the best in the world (literally) for golf  
 Coastal walks  
 Sailing club  
 Sunbathing and picnicking  
 Community  
 Community participation  
 Golf  
 Blundell Sands Sailing Club, Hightown  
 Walking and admiring plants, insects etc  
 Walks

Introduce small scale new activities...tourism and employment focussed training opportunities

Lost knowledge if not recorded, traditions etc

## Local Economy

Tourism, farming and local businesses  
 Funding  
 Farming  
 Is it affected by economy?  
 The coast as a whole and golf in particular bring many visitors here

Co-ordinated approach to promote the whole of the coastal area

Understanding by planners of use on old farm buildings etc  
 Small scale agricultural landscapes, traditional skills and activities  
 Development pressure  
 Loss of green belt

## Experiences

Isolation of part of area due to the shape of Sefton i.e. Maghull, Lydiate etc  
Things to do and see in the local area  
Enjoyed my daily walk with dogs on beach this morning  
Senses of openness – large sky  
Watching the ships  
Views  
Watch wildlife  
Access to the whole of the shoreline through a dedicated path  
The Gormleys

Encourage children to experience the local natural area

## Patterns and Features

Iron men  
Natural influences on activities etc  
Wind turbines  
Pinewoods  
Seaside  
The biggest sand hills on the golf course are all man made – 1972-3

Melt Gormley's down to one giant statue

Coastal erosion  
The view – wind farms, urgh!

## Landscape Values

- Preserving natural wildlife e.g. red squirrels
- Gormley Statues
- Open spaces and views
- Farming
- History

## Landscape Risks

- Coastal erosion/ climate change
- Development pressures

- Loss of green belt
- Farmland maintenance (traditional skills)
- Landscape maintenance
- Small scale agricultural landscapes, traditional skills and activities – asparagus/ cockling/ shrimping/ willow weaving

## Landscape Visions

- Lifelong learning education – encourage children
- Conservation – natural landscape and local wildlife
- Extend wildlife and marshland inland areas that cannot be farmed
- Make sites of special interest naturalist sites - Improve tourism/ local nature reserves
- Small scale projects – training and skill workshops would bring in tourism and employment
- Co-ordinated approach to whole coastal area: interpretation/ leaflets/ websites

## Group Two

### Wildlife & Nature

Rare flora and fauna Red squirrels Variety of wildlife Sand blow Farmland is a moving feature Bird life most important – species mix unique to the North West This is an area of very intense wildlife and flora
Visitor information centre for Nature Reserve and Coastal advice – site info Local Nature Reserve at Hightown More involvement with young children Ensure everybody is educated in all these ideas
Loss of special dune wildlife, needs conservation Wildlife Coast eroding – bomb clearance rubble on the beach Prevent vandalism Coastal walks

### History

History – wildlife Spectacular natural processes and changes in time – like Crosby promenade being buried in dunes Historic ice-skating at the slacks led to ice rink at Southport Strong local communities Most importantly – on the entrance to the Port, now renovating features from the past Little Crosby history is most useful area it affects most of the area from Hightown to the front
Recording and monitoring sea level changes and loss of prehistoric landscapes
Keep history alive Renovate and restore

## Activities

Walking and open space  
 An area which allows almost anything – busy city to solitude and nature  
 Footpath network  
 Birdwatching on the Alt  
 Solitude!  
 Boat access to sea moorings (safety)  
 Somewhere to escape for five minutes or an hour a day  
 Education of the visiting children

Organised activities  
 Run night school classes and daytime courses | arts, crafts etc relating to landscape  
 Information centre  
 Underwater barrage  
 More interpretation and education facilities  
 Ensure any development that reduces native habitat etc is compensated

Public toilets/ café etc  
 Local facilities – activities for young people: shops and communities  
 Dogs!! Ban them!!

## Local Economy

Uniqueness of the area  
 Liverpool and its environment is itself a unique experience  
 Must not encourage too many visitors  
 Local pride in region  
 Small, personal and easy to find your way around  
 Continuum Bootle – Southport competition for resources  
 Tourism – in moderation please  
 Shipping  
 Providing energy and power  
 The local economy in Little Crosby has increased greatly

Annual collection of litter

All coast and dockland development to have green roofs to provide habitat

Have audible commentary and posters on trains to explain the landscape/ wildlife along the route

Improved bicycle access through area with suitable paths and mobile phone masts

Develop sense of place, involve local people especially the young and the old

Marina for visiting yachts or island marina offshore

Charge dog owners to use public areas!!

A partnership between farming and conservation

Development of farmland

Lack of sea defence between Hall Road and Hightown

People not appreciating what they've got and spoiling it

Loss of link to traditional land management

## Experiences

### Space

Sounds of the sea and families playing on the dunes

Openness and flatness of journey south to North Crosby and Southport

Views and sunsets

Space – infinite views of sea and sky and feeling/ sound of the wind and waves

Calming nature

Storms and high tides

Just leave it the way it is!

Some more toilet facilities

More site information on location

Better facilities for visitors – both local and incomers e.g. toilets, information, café, events, exhibitions

### Litter

Sefton not taking advantage of it all

Loss of natural view

Creeping urbanisation – surfaced paths, signs etc

Lack of access and facilities (welfare), limited car parking

## Patterns and Features

Constantly changing  
 Past and present – ruins in the dunes, shifting sands, seasonal nature  
 Open landscape – views and vistas  
 Open empty sky and watching birds, kites, planes etc  
 Ability to move easily  
 Beach, sand dunes and tides  
 Sea coast and River Alt  
 Development of Blundellsands and Southport came from the landscape

### Tidy the seafront and make it more appealing

Maintain open space at any cost  
 Dunes  
 Access to sea limited by horrible statues and scrap  
 Lack of vertical elements in views – risk of phone masts and pylons spoiling space

## Landscape Values

- History – sense of history, sense of communities' history
- Open coast – vastness of scale, access, openness, vastness of sky, volume
- Wildlife – birds
- Recreation – well being, quality of life, sports, ease of access
- Uniqueness – nothing like it elsewhere, so much, huge space, special

## Landscape Risks

- Coast at risk from erosion and dredging; too much public access; River Alt management
- Loss of views – clutter e.g. phone masts, development and wind farms
- Wildlife at risk – bird nesting, red squirrels
- Sand dunes at risk – off road bikers etc, recreation, cyclepaths, disturbing wildlife and habitats
- Loss of traditional land management – changing ecology, changing land use, set aside loss – agriculture policy

## Landscape Visions

- Community involvement – litterfest days, Blooming Britain
- Sense of continuity
- Local nature reserve for Hightown – nature and access, green roofs

- Better access network – Little Crosby – Hightown footpath, roads are dangerous for young cyclists/walking
- Marketing – raise awareness, publish books, let people know, tourist souvenirs - t shirts, postcards etc, information centres

## Group Three

### Wildlife & Nature

<p>Flat landscape, big sky</p> <p>Green in autumn</p> <p>Red squirrels, natterjacks and wild orchids</p> <p>Numerous sights of breeding waders</p> <p>Spring birdsong</p> <p>Natural, unspoilt shoreline</p> <p>Native wildlife</p> <p>Wealth of wildlife</p> <p>Wildlife</p> <p>Tranquillity</p> <p>Ancient plantations</p> <p>River Alt estuary wildlife</p> <p>Geese in autumn</p>
<p>Support for wildlife</p> <p>More areas for wildlife – people kept out</p> <p>Encouragement of non-intensive farming (by subsidies) to maintain a wildlife rich environment</p> <p>Increase expert led walks to educate general public</p> <p>More restrictions on activities on the coast to protect wildlife and habitats</p> <p>Improve voluntary network links with the community</p>
<p>Habitats</p> <p>Native species</p> <p>Habitats – risk from over access</p> <p>Wildlife – particularly skylarks and cuckoos</p> <p>More funding needed for the protection of our coast</p> <p>Natural erosion of our beaches</p> <p>Farmland and green space by building</p> <p>Controversial large scale tree felling</p> <p>Threat to wildlife</p> <p>Pollution</p> <p>Easing of planning restrictions</p> <p>Coastal hinterland by erosion and inundation</p>

## History

Western approaches 1939-45

Historical continuity

Unspoilt

Great history of local villages and landowners

Historic villages

Crosby lighthouse monument and info point

Restore historic drainage patterns to assist in controlling flood

Increase and improve interpretation

Raise awareness of history and heritage

## Activities

Golf

Vast range of walks

Recreation in the natural environment

Golf course

Marine garden

Fantastic series of golf links

Power kite flying

Sailing and fishing

Sailing/ Hightown Yacht Club

Cycling and footpaths

Zoning

Improved access and landscape – Hall Road to Hightown

Improved infrastructure – more information points

Real time information

Provision for horse riding – there are horses everywhere

Safe visits

Safe cycleway through Highton through farms

Better information, teaching of the public

Uninitiated visitors

Change of character by visitor pressure

Over use by people

## Local Economy

Local business support  
 Moving towards tourism and leisure  
 Houses on or near the shore  
 Work  
 Tourism  
 The area is both special and unique  
 Juxtaposition of urban/ rural landscapes  
 Opportunities to escape from the pressures of city life

More facilities – Crosby front area  
 Properly constructed coastal path  
 Managed access  
 Increased understanding of the interaction between the human and natural landscape  
 Improved flood management  
 Improved management of infrastructure  
 Better dissemination of information to all ages of the community  
 More coastal rangers

New buildings  
 Insufficient local information about significant habitats/ history  
 Capitalise on tourism – make money  
 Maintenance of roads, paths and old buildings  
 Lack of funding to maintain original features

## Experiences

Escape from suburbia on the coast  
Peacefulness  
Personal involvement in working the land  
Seascape  
Gormley Statues  
Big open space  
Walking along the prom  
Keen interest locally in conservation  
Superb views  
Beaches  
Access is free  
Walks through quiet places  
Wonderful beach at Formby

Please no more notices  
More mixed tree and scrub planting  
Disabled access to Formby/ Freshfields beach  
Increased education for visitors to protect the coast

Beach cleanliness  
Lack of disturbance  
Too much public access

## Patterns and Features

Drainage and agriculture  
Dune movement  
Contrast between city and country  
Flat open spaces and tranquillity  
Vernacular buildings  
Danger beach safety  
Ditches and boundaries  
Uniqueness  
Erosion  
Sea and river merging

Improved coastal management  
Conserve and improve dune habitat

Crowds drawn to area damage the landscape  
Eroding prehistoric peat beds/ failure to monitor regularly  
Erosion of coast  
Lack of public respect

## Landscape Values

- Unspoilt coastal space
- Accessibility
- Diversity – habitats and species
- Historical context
- Diversity of recreational opportunities

## Landscape Risks

- Erosion/ flooding
- Damage due to over use – lack of management infrastructure
- Pollution from oil through to litter
- Interconflicts
- Nature/ habitats/ species

## Landscape Visions

- Visitor awareness (education)
- Improved management (environment)
- Encouraging greater community involvement
- Better wildlife protection
- Managing conflicts better
- Quietitude

## Ideas Bucket

- Need improved cycle/ footpath around Altcar Firing Range. Far too narrow in places and poor quality surface in places
- Controlled and limited access particularly for dogs on the coast where necessary to protect and improve wildlife
- Subsidies local farming for non intensive farming to improve and encourage wildlife – return to part methods e.g. spring sowing/ grazing