



Bayside Barrow:
Building a Better Future
Area Action Plan
Executive Summary

Bayside Barrow: *Building a Better Future*

Area Action Plan Executive Summary

Context

A proposal for a regional park in the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary (MB & DE) sub region, commissioned by the Morecambe Bay Partnership, resulted in the production of evidence gathering reports for the areas of Heysham, Morecambe, Arnside, Grange-Over-Sands, Ulverston, Barrow, Walney Island and Barrow Island and Millom. Area Action Plans based on these evidence gathering reports were subsequently produced. The concept of the regional park was identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the North West as way of using comprehensive large-scale projects to result in recreation and regeneration benefits. To this end the AAPs produced as part of the MB & DE regional park proposal must seek to bring about outcomes associated with these broad areas.

Each AAP faces a number of challenges unique to their area and in this respect Barrow is no different. Despite the locational advantage of its close proximity to the Lake District National Park, Barrow attracts a comparatively small number of visitors; an issue that must be rectified if it is to become a functioning part of the proposed MB & DE regional park. In addition to this, Barrow has a number of problems more associated with urban or problem areas, which also need addressing. These include a narrow economic

base, low aspirations, poor health and continued out-migration, especially among the younger demographic.

A SWOT analysis was conducted as part of the evidence gathering report in order to evaluate the existing conditions for Barrow which must be addressed in the creation of a regional park. The results of this helped inform the decision-making process and provided a framework within which ideas could be exchanged.



Overview of Strategy

The analysis of the context of the area, in combination with an approach intended to achieve the aims of the RES for the regional park concept, as well as the aims of the MB & DE Regional Park, resulted in the creation of a vision statement and a list of objectives for the Barrow AAP.

Encompassing a mainly urban area, the AAP for Barrow aims to integrate the area covered into the wider regional park by making improvements intended to conserve the natural environment and develop leisure and tourism facilities and events while also seeking to enhance and improve the town's economy and regenerate its existing assets.

The vision statement for the Barrow AAP, below, sets out to broadly outline what the AAP sets out to achieve:

*Barrow will establish itself as the Western gateway to the MB&DE Regional Park, offering exemplary sustainable transport links to the wider region. A successful visitor economy will be established through the enhancement and promotion of the built and natural environment, as well as active marketing and branding of the area. Through this, job diversification will be achieved, and the quality of life for local people will be raised, **Building a Better Future for Bayside Barrow.***

The objectives for the Barrow AAP, put in place in order to meet the vision statement, are as follows:

- *To develop Barrow as an integral part of the MB&DE Regional Park, providing urban facilities and services within the park.*
- *To improve accessibility and transportation in and around Barrow in a sustainable manner.*
- *To promote and use the industrial heritage of Barrow to attract people to the area.*
- *To realise the benefits of the built environment.*
- *To enhance and promote the natural environment.*
- *To improve leisure and recreation facilities.*
- *To develop a successful and thriving visitor economy, through the emergence of a large tourist market.*
- *To diversify the economic base.*
- *To improve the quality of life for the local residents and everyone involved with this area.*
- *To improve the public realm.*

Preferred Strategy

From examination of the wider policy context and the SWOT analysis undertaken, a number of alternative strategies were generated. From the vision and objectives outlined for the MB&DE Regional Park, the vision and objectives for this AAP and the results of the scoring appraisal undertaken for each alternative strategy, a few overarching themes emerged. These were centred on securing economic growth for Barrow, ensuring that new development and existing features and infrastructure would operate sustainably and adding a degree of iconic development to the town, which is felt necessary to successfully attract both visitors and inward investment.

The outcome of the selection of the preferred strategy was the adoption of five thematic areas around which proposals would be made and five key development sites, chosen on the basis that they would best fulfil the objectives of the AAP through the strategies selected.

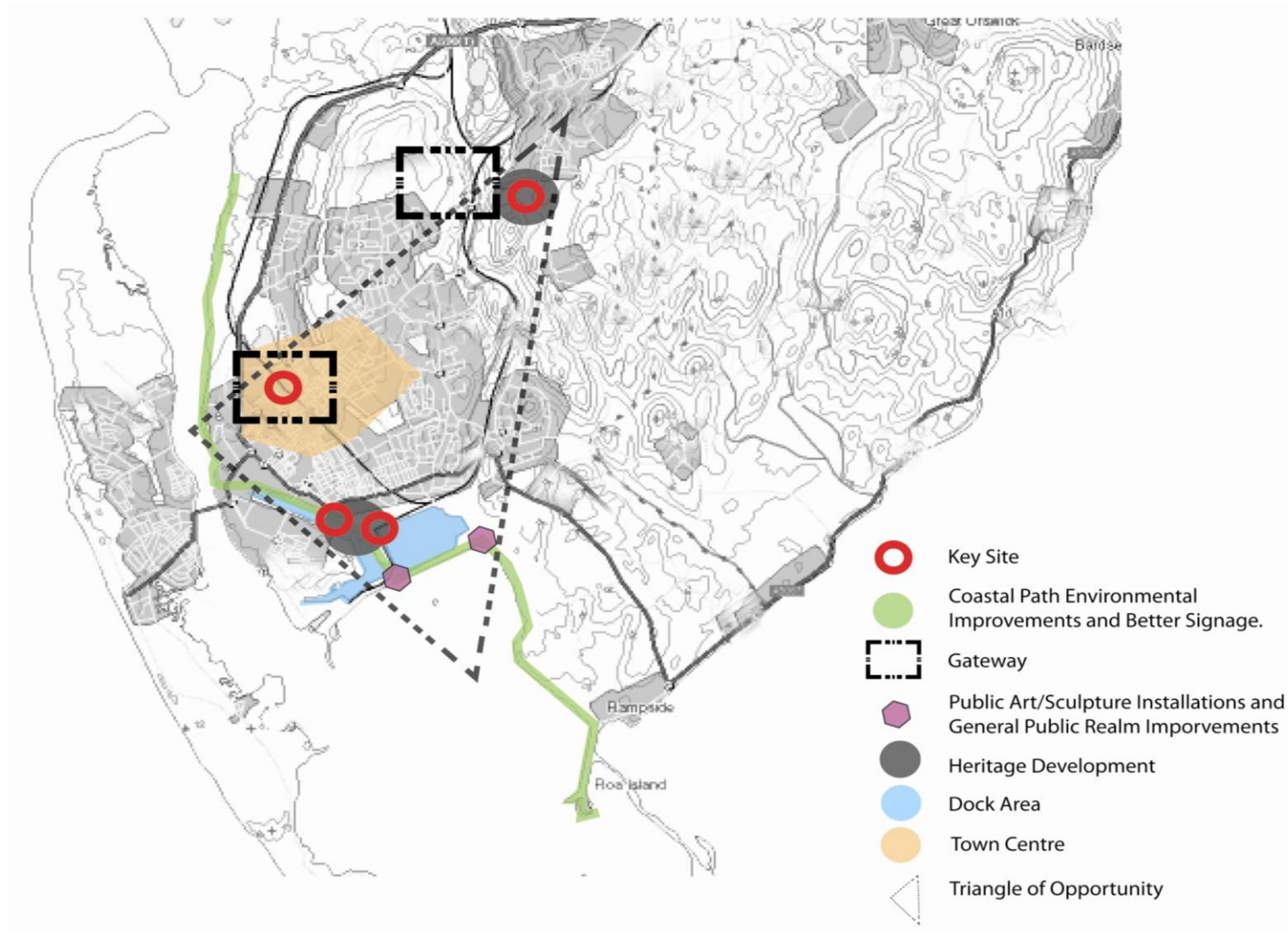
The thematic areas are:

- Transport
- Marketing and Tourism
- Built Environment
- Waterside Regeneration
- Community and Well-Being

The vision of each theme is to be achieved through the development of the five key sites:

- Cumbria Coastal Way
- Furness Abbey
- Cavendish Dock
- Buccleuch Dock
- Barrow Train Station

The overall strategy is expressed spatially by means of the key diagram, shown below:



The proposals made under each of the themes and at each of the key development sites are outlined below.

Key Themes

Accessibility and Transport

Transport is an important part of any strategy aimed at regeneration and increasing visitor numbers, and is in particular need of improvement in Barrow, as the largest urban centre within the MB & DE regional park area. If Barrow were to take on the status of being one of the gateways to the regional park, it would be important for its transport infrastructure to match the requirements of this role.

A reliable and sustainable transport infrastructure must be put in place for the regeneration of the town, for attracting the sort of inward investment that the town needs and to cope with the increase in visitor numbers that this AAP is designed to encourage.

Park and Ride

A park and ride scheme is thought necessary to cope with increased visitor flows, and successfully managing the movement of these without negatively affecting the quality of life in the town itself. Given its nearness to Furness Abbey, an increase in visitor numbers

there would be accommodated by parking space which would not harm the site of the Abbey, while other visitor attractions would be served by regular buses. Park and ride is seen as an effective way to cope with the expected increase in visitor numbers without exacerbating the existing problem of traffic congestion.

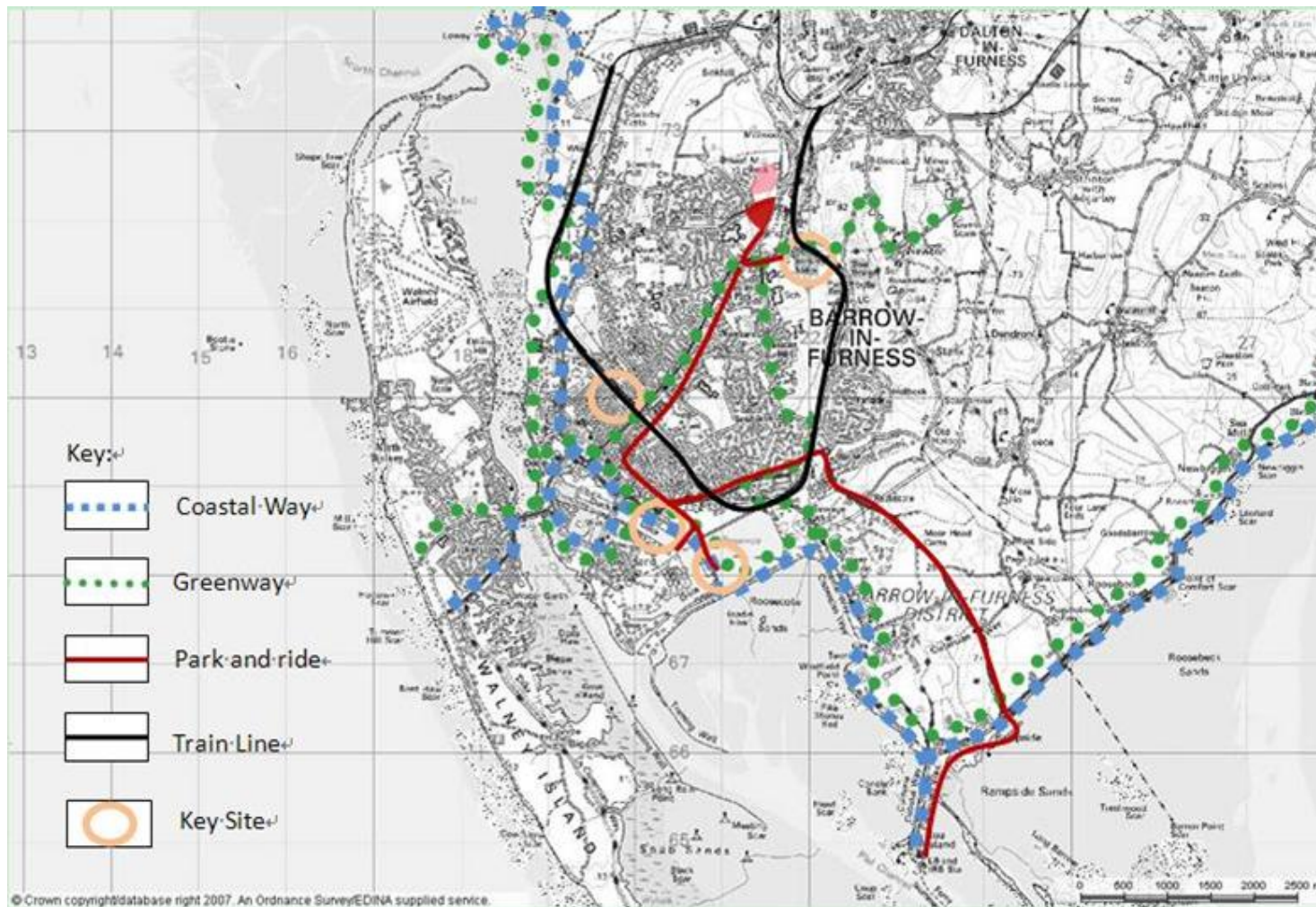
Train Line and Railway Stations

Barrow Train Station will be redeveloped as an impressive regional park gateway, in keeping with the sustainable aims of the regional park. This site will also provide a transport hub, with a park and ride pick-up point, bus stops, a taxi rank and bicycle racks. Roose Train Station will be promoted as a gateway to the Cumbria Coastal Way, while a substantial increase in visitor numbers at Furness Abbey will make it financially feasible to construct a new train station at this site, replacing the long-closed original.

Cumbria Coastal Way

The route of the Coastal Way will be altered to include Cavendish Dock and create a continuous coastal corridor. Improvements to the walking and cycling path will this a more accessible and visitor friendly attraction. The extension of the Greenway from Furness Abbey, through Roose Station to link up with the coastal way, will greatly improve access for sustainable transport.

The proposals map, below, shows the planned actions in improving accessibility and transport in Barrow:



Marketing and Tourism

In order to secure the success of the development sites, it is essential that effective marketing of Barrow's assets is undertaken, so that the town is seen as an attractive destination for tourists and investors. It is important to raise awareness of Barrow's distinctiveness as a place to live, work and play, while arresting the decline of the present population and presenting an appealing and amenable location.

Creation of a Transformational Marketing Strategy

The identification and subsequent targeting of user groups of the area, such as sports / recreational users and niche market tourists, is seen as being the most efficient and cost-effective method of delivering a brand and marketing structure. Wherever possible, cross-promotion between sites and events will be harnessed for maximum exposure.

Use of Media Facilities

Newspapers, television, websites, posters, leaflets and published guides for tourism and recreation will be taken advantage of both locally and nationally. International visitors to the Lake District National Park will be encouraged to visit Barrow's visitor attractions through advertising at key tourist sites. The current dearth of online material will be addressed, leading to the creation of a uniform tourism website for Barrow and for the MB & DE regional park as a whole. This is an inexpensive and accessible means of

providing valuable information about the town and the regional park.

Events Promotion

Securing major events can help elevate the status of a town or city in a relatively short space of time. With its attractive waterside location, dock system and excellent windsurfing conditions, Barrow must aim to secure events associated with water sports. The suspension of motorboat racing on Lake Windermere is an example of the sort of opportunity that should be capitalised on by Barrow. The medieval heritage of the Furness Peninsula could be used to promote events, and the linking of Furness Abbey to other sites of religious significance in the area is a further possibility.



A mock-up design of a homepage for the Barrow Tourism website.

Built Environment

Barrow's industrial heritage and its rich legacy of Victorian architecture give it a unique position in the Regional Park. The town's built environment is key to its identity and to the quality of life of its residents. As such, it should be protected and enhanced for the benefit of residents and visitors alike, just as new development must be in accordance with high design standards.

Introduce a Design Guide

This is necessary to ensure that the quality of architecture and urban design in future developments is of a standard and type that is preferred by the council. This is seen as a way of avoiding the kind of unsatisfactory development that can be seen in the 'big-box' retail units adjacent to the Walney Channel.

Open Up the Town to the Water

As a coastal town, Barrow's built environment must be orientated towards the water, thus making the most of this vitally important asset. Barrow Borough Council's efforts to purchase land between the town centre and the water will be furthered by encouraging new development between the A5087 and the docks to access to the waterfront, rather than obscuring it with car parking or orienting buildings in the opposite direction.

Encourage Utilisation of Existing Built Assets

Use of Barrow's existing buildings must be encouraged to ensure their survival and that their worth to the townscape is fully realised. This will be done by such schemes as Conservation Area Partnerships to help fund repairs and encouraging owners of vacant buildings to allow charities or artists' groups, to make sure that they remain in use.

Waterside Regeneration

One of Barrow's key geographical strengths is its waterside location. Barrow's extensive and historically significant dock system and its scenic coastline must not remain unused. The potential of Barrow's waterside will be unlocked through a series of initiatives.

Create a Bayside Design Guide

Expanding on the design guide for the town as a whole, a Bayside design guide will be produced to deal with development in a specified area adjacent to the water. Design must be inspirational, environmentally sensitive and contribute to the creation of a site for visitor attraction that is greater than the sum of its parts. Design competitions will be used where possible to attain a high standard of architecture and to create publicity for the area.

Creation of a Waterfront Partnership

In order to achieve a unified vision that protects and enhances the quality of Barrow's coastline it is imperative that local stakeholders are involved in the implementation, development and maintenance of the waterfront. The future economic vision for Bayside Barrow will also be partially shaped by this body.

Improve Access

An integrated public transport and park and ride system will bring visitors from outside of the town, as well as local residents, to the Bayside area. Physical improvements to the Coastal Way will create an accessible and amenable corridor for walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users. The Coastal Way will be linked into wider recreational activity sites in and around the town.



Improvements to the Coastal Way will result in greater diversity of users.

Community and Well-Being

Encouraging community development and well-being is a key aim of the sustainability agenda. The foundation of a more sustainable social and economic environment while building a substantial visitor economy need not be impossible. The actions put forward in this AAP are intended to benefit the local community directly, as well as by aiding the regeneration of Barrow.

Promote Barrow

As well as helping in the creation of a visitor economy, the promotion of Barrow would increase satisfaction and pride and imbue a sense of community into the area. The promotion of Barrow as a tourist destination and as a place to live and work would also have the effect of improving the sense of community and pride in the town.

Create Links with the Wider Region

The perception of Barrow as an inward-looking town must change. Improved transport links and better integration of the Coastal Way and Greenway network, as well as attracting inward investment and visitors will all help to further this integration.

Creating Visitor Destinations

Improvements to public realm, especially at Cavendish and Buccleuch Docks and along the Coastal Way, will harness the potential of these sites and provide much improved recreational space for local residents and visitors alike.

Key Development Sites

Cumbria Coastal Way

The Cumbria Coastal Way links two of England's great estuaries – Morecombe Bay and the Solway Firth. It runs alongside one of the UK's greatest areas of natural beauty – the Lake District National Park – and leads north towards the Scottish border. Although at present much of the stretch of the Coastal Way in the Barrow area is not fulfilling its potential, it is believed that the scenic views and heritage of this stretch can be utilised to make this a distinctive piece of the North West Coastal Trail.

Footpath Improvements

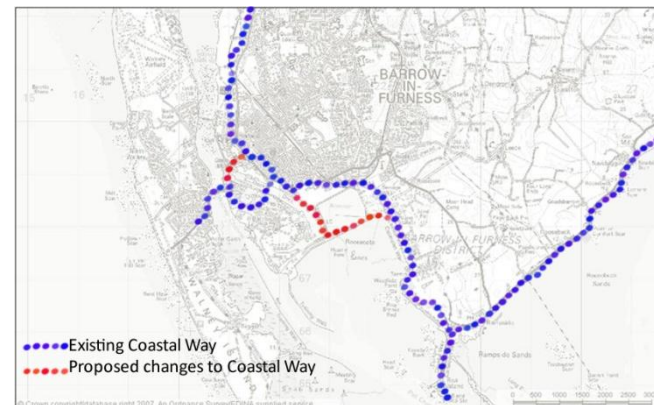
Much of the footpath is in great need of repair. Improvements made and resurfacing must acknowledge the varying setting of the Coastal Way and ensure that materials used for different sections of footpath are complementary to the surrounding landscape.

Access and Connection Improvements

The Coastal Way will be re-routed to skirt Cavendish Dock, and an additional footpath that provides a link to Walney Bridge will enable access to Walney Island from the Coastal Way. This is intended to provide a more integrated regional park. Access is currently impeded in parts of the walk by fences and gates that will be cleared to allow for the creation of a continuous, accessible coastal corridor.

Landscape and Street Furniture Upgrade

High quality landscaping and street furniture will complete the upgrade of the Coastal Way, creating an accessible and pleasurable walking and cycling environment. Fencing, street furniture such as seating and refuse bins, as well as lighting where appropriate, will create a more amenable stretch of public footpath. References to Barrow's past in public art will give this piece of the Coastal Way a unique and grounded feel.



Re-routing of the Coastal Way will improve access to Cavendish Dock.

Furness Abbey

Once the wealthiest Cistercian monastery in England, the importance of this historical gem is clear from the epic ruins that remain. Furness Abbey is currently underperforming by a great extent and it is the intention of this AAP to outline how its fortunes could be reversed. The Abbey will become a place of education and recreation in which the spectacular and historically important ruins can be seen by as many people as is deserved.

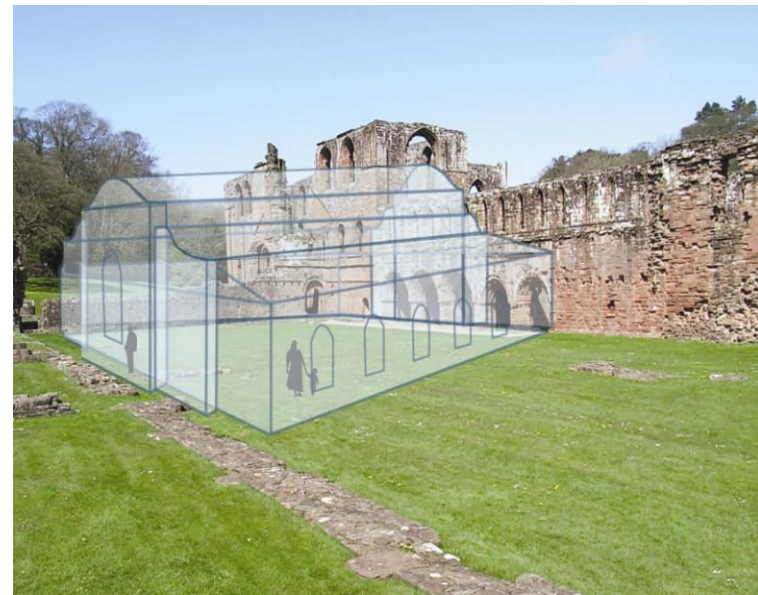
Creating an Integrated Transport Hub

Furness Abbey's location, close to the A590, means that it is easily accessible to visitors. A transport plan based around the creation of off-site parking space necessary to cope with a substantial increase in visitors allows for the site to remain free of cars while being easily accessible from nearby. This will be the site of the park and ride scheme, situating Furness Abbey as the first point of contact for visitors to Barrow. Once visitor numbers are great enough to make it financially feasible, and use of rail has increased in the longer term, a station will be constructed on near the site of the previous Furness Abbey Station, further aiding the sustainability of transport in Barrow.

Creating a New Visitor Attraction

Experience from elsewhere illustrates that ancient sites can be re-imagined in a way that increases visitor numbers without harming the integrity of the site itself. At present Furness Abbey has few

enclosed spaces and, given the nature of its history it is difficult to envisage how much of the structure stood and operated. Taking inspiration from a similar project at Whitby Abbey and consulting the plan layout of the Abbey a new 'Perspex Box' will be erected near the cloister section of the abbey. This will act as a visitor and education centre in the heart of the abbey ruins.



The construction of a transparent 'Perspex Box' will enable exhibitions and displays to be housed on-site without detriment to the ruins of the Abbey.

Creating Better Tourist Facilities

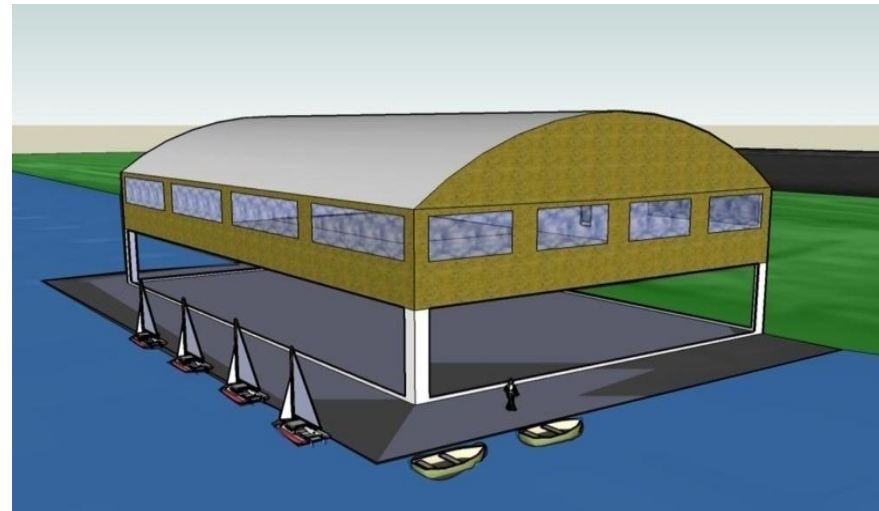
Accessibility is a problem at present, as much of the site is accessible only using the grass surrounding the Abbey. This is problematic in poor weather conditions and for Wheelchair users. A pathway that loops the site and inlets into some of the larger ruins will be laid out. In addition, the site is currently difficult to interpret and would benefit from the creation of a guided pathway that provides a given route and a degree of narrative to the visitor. Accommodation on the site will be improved by the upgrading of the existing hotel and restaurant building, providing a base for the exploration of the wider area.

Cavendish Dock

The range of wildlife and, especially, bird species that inhabit Cavendish Dock make it a special location and one that is subject to numerous conservation designations. This means that any development that takes place on the site must be sensitive to its importance in terms of nature and wildlife. Acknowledging this, and the fact that a site of such amenity so close to the town centre should, as far as possible, be put to the benefit of the local population, it is proposed that the dock be developed as a site of outdoor recreation and non-powered water sports.

Construct a Water Sports Centre in Cavendish Dock

The excellent wind conditions and the artificially warm water of Cavendish Dock make it an ideal location for non-powered water sports. These must interfere as little as possible with the wildlife population, and management and mitigation measures will ensure that, as far as possible, no such interference occurs. The intention is to provide a centre for water sports based on a floating structure in the dock. This would be for the benefit of the local community, ensured by means of a partnership between the local council and a charitable body, as well as being a way of increasing visitor numbers.



A suggested design for the water sports centre.

Building Flood Defences into the Dock Wall

The present outer dock wall is in need of repair and, given the increased flood risk as the pace of climate change quickens, it will be necessary to raise and reinforce the wall. This is essential for the protection of the town and for the safeguarding of the dock as a wildlife site and a recreation space.

Enhancement of the Public Realm

Landscaping will be used to clear away the light industrial detritus from the site. Fencing will be removed and long grass and weeds cleared, as well as cosmetic improvements being made to make Cavendish Dock a more appealing destination. Surfaces will be improved, street furniture added and lighting provided where appropriate.

Bucleuch Dock

Bucleuch Dock has been the subject of public realm improvements already as part of Barrow Borough Council's 'Promenade Project' and could be used to the further benefit of the town. Land at the dock will be used for the development of a naval-themed attraction, drawing tourists to the area, referencing its industrial and complementing the existing visitor attractions. Developments here will add to the creation of a visitor destination at Barrow Bayside.

Construct a Naval Museum

This is intended to emphasise and explain the history of the construction of naval vessels at Barrow Docks and provide the opportunity to come aboard vessels. Soon-to-be decommissioned naval vessels will be gained for use by the museum to add to the displays and exhibits given in the building itself. In addition, the building will be available as a conference and event centre, providing another possible funding stream.



A suggested design and layout for the Naval Museum.

Create Linkages with the Dock Museum

The existing nearby Dock museum is one of the biggest tourist draws in the area and dovetails into the proposed development effortlessly. Creating linkages (both physical and informational) will help consolidate the success of both sites. The local community will be able to become involved with both museums through the establishment of a community trust group similar to the one already present at the Dock Museum.

Creating an Iconic Development

The construction of the Naval Museum provides an opportunity to place an iconic development in the centre of Barrow's industrial heart. The aim in building an iconic development is to provide Barrow with a unique and appealing structure that is intrinsically associated with the town. The value in branding and increasing visitor numbers in an industrial town with a need to change its image can be most obviously seen in Bilbao, whose image and visitor economy have changed wholesale since the construction of the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum.

Barrow Train Station

As one of the principal gateways into Barrow for many locals and visitors, a trend which is set to increase in the future, Barrow train station represents a bleak first impression of the town. As such, it is important to reconstruct a station that infuses confidence and optimism for those coming to the town from the outset. The station will be transformed into an attractive and amenable gateway site to Barrow and to the regional park as a whole.

Redevelopment of Station Building

It is proposed that the current station building be replaced by a more impressive glass and steel structure that would adequately reflect the need to promote rail, given the challenges brought by climate change. A small office building will also be constructed on the site, both as a regeneration tool and to help pay for the degree of redevelopment required on this site. It is crucial that a more impressive and welcoming structure and surrounds be constructed to give a first impression worthy of a regenerated Barrow.

Creation of a Public Square

Barrow as a whole lacks an amenable and well-used public square and the view and linkages between the train station and the town centre are lacklustre and uninspiring. To counter these problems a public square will be built on the station site to create a vista between the station building and Emlyn Hughes House in the direction of the town centre.



A new layout for Barrow Train Station would provide a much-needed piece of public realm.

Creation of a Transport Interchange

Barrow Station lies at the edge of the town centre, on Abbey Road, one of the major roads running through the town and a designated Greenway. For this reason, it is in an ideal position to be the site of a transport interchange, where bus, rail and cycle can meet for changes in mode of transport or direction to be made most conveniently.



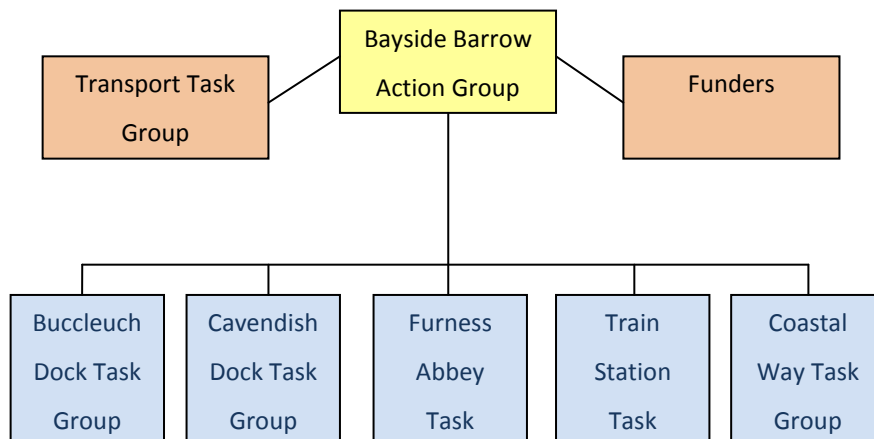
Emlyn Hughes House is an excellent addition to Barrow's townscape that could be better utilised by the addition of a public square on the site of the train station.

Implementation and Management

Management Structure

An efficient management structure will be necessary to effectively and inclusively implement the proposals outlined in the AAP. The management structure will approach the delivery of the proposals in a coordinated manner by encompassing various stakeholders with an interest in Barrow and will be flexible enough to change under dynamic, at times unstable, circumstances with regard to securing funding and delivering proposals.

Within the management structure for Barrow, the proposed Bayside Barrow Action Group would be organised as below:



Implementation Timeline

The implementation timetable creates an organised but flexible agenda within which the proposals can be delivered and risks can be mitigated against and adapted to where necessary. Phases for implementation have been grouped into 3 time schedules to demonstrate the phasing stages:

- **Phase 1 (1-3 years)**
 - Land Acquisition.
 - Cumbria Coastal Way landscape and signage improvements.
 - Seek expressions of interest.
 - Outline applications submitted to LPA.
 - Marketing and tourism strategy established.
 - Community focus groups created.
- **Phase 2 (3-7 years)**
 - Commence site specific developments.
 - Expand marketing and tourism strategy.
 - Respond to comments and design proposals of community groups.
- **Phase 3 (7+ years)**
 - Deliver major development proposals.
 - Establish wider tourism strategy with MB&DE Regional Park.
 - Access and Transport links ascertained with LDNP and Cumbrian region.