

Executive Summary

The Heysham Area Action Plan covers the Heysham peninsula, on the west coast of Lancashire. It includes Heysham nuclear power station, Heysham Port; the former ICI Trimpell works at Middleton, the ruins of St Patrick's Chapel and the Heysham Village and Overton conservation areas.

The main settlements of Heysham, Overton and Middleton are home to 12,000 people, representing about 10% of Lancaster districts population. These are relatively distinct villages separated by countryside and linked by Middleton Road. The villages are relatively self contained, each having children's play areas, pubs and a community centre. The area immediately to the north and west is predominantly residential, but also includes significant areas of open space.

Within the wider North West area Heysham offers significant employment opportunities, mainly in the skilled trade occupations. The regionally significant employers include the nuclear power station (1000, +300 contractors), the port (100, +400 working in associated haulage/warehouse workers), SRM in Middleton (100) and Hydrocarbons Resources Ltd (300). There is also the Environmental Knowledge Centre in nearby Lancaster, a world leader in environmental technology employing 300 academics, but working mainly with businesses outside of the County.

Morecambe and Heysham are suffering from a general decline in manufacturing industries, predicted to continue in the future and result in the loss of 1,200 jobs by 2015. However, there is growth in other sectors; office, ICT and health are predicted to experience a combined direct job growth of up to 5000 by 2015. The M6 link is expected to result in the creation of 300 new jobs (mainly in the transport sector), and would support the port's potential to at least double its freight capacity (resulting in 50 new port jobs and 800 new haulage jobs, 250 of which could be expected to be local). A nuclear power Centre of Excellence is proposed at Springfields in Preston and this would no doubt establish links with the reactors at Heysham.

The Area Action Plan has been prepared within the context of the Morecambe Bay Partnership's bid for Regional Park status of the coastline from Heysham north and west to Millom.

The preparation of the Area Action Plan commenced in February 2008 with extensive evidence gathering and consultation work to build an understanding of the area and identify issues affecting residents and visitors, culminating in the production of the Morecambe Bay Evidence Gathering Report in May.

Six objectives have been informed by the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuaries Regional Park objectives, and the findings of the evidence gathering report. They reflect the aspirations of the vision statement and set out what the Area Action Plan hopes to achieve:

1. Enhance peoples awareness of Heysham's natural, cultural and industrial assets
2. Deliver improvements sustainably and sensitively
3. To identify opportunities for diversification of the tourism offer
4. To improve links both within the Plan area and within the Regional Park and the Region as a whole
5. Ensure Heysham is attractive to businesses, both new and established

6. Identify opportunities for partnership working and synergies with neighbouring areas

The Area Action Plan translates and applies these objectives along with the vision into development proposals. These have emerged following the, and been tested by the, sustainability appraisal. The report illustrates the short listed concept projects; representing targeted regeneration efforts and quick win reinvigoration. These sites are outlined below.

Heysham Promenade

The current promenade is relatively modern having been re-modernised in early 2000 and this is evident to see however there are areas, which have not had the benefit of a “face lift”. The promenade is well laid out which has interesting decorative features especially towards Whinnysty Lane with attractive lights, benches and a climbing wall for the younger visitors to Heysham.

The proposed actions have been developed following the evidence gathering report and also what we see as the key issues to the site. In view of this it is proposed to create an alternative access to the promenade which consists of a ramp at a gradient not steeper than 1:4 and also the provision of non-slip steps to access the promenade, which have a greater depth to what is currently present. It is proposed that the existing grey concrete is replaced with a red macadam like the remainder of the promenade. This would also involve replacing the existing sea defences to use armour stone instead of the existing concrete sea defence’s currently used. This is feasibly possible and would aesthetically look more sympathetic to the coastline.

It is proposed that a small observatory tower to be constructed on the promenade, which would be a total of 5 metres high and would contain a telescope to look over the bay to look at such features such as the Walney Offshore Wind farm and over to Black Combe in Silecroft, and to the Cumbrian mountains. It is also proposed that a small scale bike hut is created on the front which would sell drinks and accessories for bikers including helmets, inner tubes, bike locks etc. In addition to this it is proposed that a café is created adjacent to the observatory tower with a further café located on hard standing of Lade End. This is a picturesque spot and could accommodate a café.

Heysham Village Car Park/Green

The car park is currently under used and whilst its capacity is in excess of 160 on visits to the site it rarely achieves more than 60 even during weekends in April and May. There is an adjacent grassed area to the west that is underused and used informally for recreation. There is scope for development on both pieces of land.

The grassed area is currently used informally for recreational purposes for the likes of dog walkers etc. It is one of first things people see when entering the village from the south and it is quite bland in nature. The car park is rarely used however there are plans to replace the existing dilapidated toilets with a new block on the west side of the existing car park and a planning application is to be submitted to Lancaster City Council in due course.

The proposed development consists of the creation of a community garden on the area adjacent to the existing car park to the west utilizing an area of land some 100 metres by 45 metres.

Heysham Village Conservation Area

The conservation area is a key asset of the Heysham area and encompasses St Patrick's Chapel, which dates from 750 AD as well as attractive small-scale fisherman's cottages, which are situated mainly off Main Street. There is a large-scale public car park within the conservation area that rarely fills. The proposal is of a branding and marketing exercise of the area and this would take the form of improved signage, which would direct people to the site and also through the local media.

Interactive Visitor Centre at Heysham Nuclear Power Station

Within Heysham, the most prominent feature is Heysham Power Station. It can be seen across the Bay from Barrow-in-Furness, from Fleetwood in the South and from the M6 motorway to the east. It provides a large source of employment, particularly for local people, but is seen by people from outside the area as a negative detractor from the area.

It is proposed that an interactive visitor centre should be developed on the site to encourage more visitors to Heysham and provide more information to people about nuclear power.

Potential Observatory

The observatory site within Heysham is located directly east of the nuclear power station. It is proposed that the site increases its attractiveness to tourists by incorporating the nature reserve with more cycling, walking and panoramic activities.

It is anticipated that a design competition for the local art community will be held and the winning design will be implemented. Along with being a viewing tower, the observatory will also need to house public toilets, café and information boards relating to what can be seen from the observation tower and within the site itself, for example, wildlife, along with advertising other attractions within the Heysham area, such as Heysham Village and the power station visitor centre.

Potts Corner Action and Adventure Area

The Potts Corner Site is on the western side of the Heysham Peninsula. Potts Corner is a coastal site consisting mostly of flat land facing on to a tidal beach. There is a large beach exposed twice a day during low tide, which lasts a considerable length of time, which makes the site ideal for activities. The Potts Corner site is very badly signposted and is only accessible through a small windy lane. Adjacent to the site there is a caravan park and a retirement village is being developed within a short walk.

The Potts Corner site will be developed as an action and adventure area. In its function as an action and adventure area it shall provide provision for activities such as kite land boarding, kite surfing, kite flying, adventure playground, skate park and BBQ pits.

The Potts corner site will also feature a kite activity clubhouse as well as improved parking facilities. Other important facilities will include better signposting for the area,

information boards and a green link, which will be the improvement of the footpath to the north of the site with other sites in the Area Action Plan.

Heysham Employment Area/ Middleton Woods

The employment area has an array of derelict industrial land to the south east of the port. This area once housed the old ICI works Trimpell works, whilst a vast amount of this land has already been developed as an industrial area a vast amount of land to the north of Middleton Village remains vacant.

Middleton wood is a site of 14 hectares on a former tip where a man made woodland has been planted in order to create an area of open space and recreation. This woodland within the industrial area of Heysham provides an area of relaxation and wildlife.

The proposed development is the creation of an eco-industrial park incorporating new incubator units for small new businesses to start up in the area. These units would incorporate such renewable energy schemes as solar panels and wind turbines. These will move businesses forward to generating zero carbon emissions.

The site is home to a former ammunitions building, which is listed by the Council and is also a site, which cannot be redeveloped for employment. The proposal here is to decontaminate this site and convert the existing building into a visitor centre along with the creation of signposted walks through the woodland with information boards.

Lades Marsh

The proposal here is the creation of a wildlife habitat area along and extending from the existing marsh. This are will also have a new sea wall and numerous bird hides in order for visitors to view the local wildlife.

There will also be linked walks around the lower Heysham area. These will be signposted walks taking in such sites as Sambo's Grave at Sunderland Point. These walks will link up to Potts corner up through Heysham Village and along the promenade linking Heysham to Morecambe.

It is important that the proposals within the Heysham Area Action Plan are both deliverable and viable within the timeframe of the plan. In addition, it is believed that the Heysham Area Action Plan should also act as a wider 'catalyst for change' and have a strong role to play in delivering a more cohesive community.

The planning and phasing of the Heysham Area Action Plan needs to be carefully managed and structured to minimise disruption to local businesses and residents. It also needs to follow the guiding principle that services, facilities and infrastructure will be provided at stages in the development process when the need for them is programmed to arise.