

Morecambe Bay & Duddon Headland to Headspace

A prospectus — February 2009



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Morecambe Bay & Duddon
A prospectus

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Morecambe Bay and the Duddon Estuary stretches from Haverigg in the north to Fleetwood in the south, taking in towns like Barrow, Grange-over-Sands, Ulverston, Lancaster and of course Morecambe itself. Its register of assets is unprecedented, including wildlife habitats, historic promenades, hills and headlands, coastal trails, areas of industry and naturally, the ebb and flow of the tide. It is a space and place that demands an emotional response; it is valued and loved; and it offers a bold new opportunity for England's Northwest.

the future for the Bay stretches out ahead, as far as your heart can see.

The Bay is now the subject of a new partnership, a new venture, to explore the idea of creating a Bay wide programme of action that will develop collaborative projects, unlock investment, bring focus and management to those assets that need it and establish a strong and unified brand for this most special of places.

The Northwest is developing a new and integrated regional strategy. The government agencies responsible for funding regeneration are encouraging local authorities to work together in geographical groups, based on economic and cultural relationships, which can deliver joined up visions and mutually beneficial projects. The creation of a Bay-wide programme presents a tremendous opportunity for agencies, authorities and communities in Lancashire and Cumbria to work together to create a step change in regeneration success around Morecambe Bay and Duddon.

Joint working can also deliver a single brand; an improved image. The efforts will deliver successes that are much more than the sum of their parts. With the right vision and strategy to drive them forward, budgets and resources can be deployed more effectively, and new jobs and new opportunities for the local economy created. With a spectacular natural environment as its vital underpinning, Morecambe Bay and Duddon can build a more prosperous future.

The partnership has already started to sketch out the scale of this opportunity in a series of scoping studies. It has been estimated for example that there could be an increase in tourism and recreation jobs of up to a quarter. Across the seven local authority areas involved, there could be an economic boost of between £45-113 million per annum.

This prospectus for Morecambe Bay and Duddon sets the scene for the collaboration and action that lies ahead. On the pages that follow are laid out the economic opportunities, the quality of life benefits, the cultural and environmental programmes and the signature projects that could shape the regional park and reap major benefits for both Lancashire and Cumbria, as well as the wider region.

The vision is being crafted; the partnership assembled; the future for the Bay stretches out ahead, as far as your heart can see.

Park here for prosperity

Regional parks are not boundary-defined as are country parks or National Parks; but partnership-led initiatives built around programmes to regenerate broad areas, linked to protecting the environment, helping people access the countryside and improving open spaces.

There are strong links between regional parks and green infrastructure. Both have direct economic benefits and are not greening for its own sake: they seek to create more jobs and higher levels of enterprise, particularly through recreation and tourism. They can also help to improve an area's image, making it a more attractive prospect for tourism, investment or relocation.

Nine such park programmes were outlined in the Northwest's key economic and spatial strategies, of which Morecambe Bay and Duddon is one. Common to all are spatial strategies which guide co-ordinated delivery of new projects adding value to the local economy and community. Critical to their success are a strong concept,

good governance, the support of a broad base of partners and a keen eye on tangible economic outcomes.

Recreation and tourism already employ a significant number of people in the area. Excluding those involved in employment in the Lake District National Park these two sectors make up more than 10% of employment, placing the area slightly above both the national and regional average. These numbers are growing too: in the eight years to 2006, an additional 5,900 people were employed in these sectors, a jump of more than 30%.

The potential for economic growth as a result of a successful programme across Morecambe Bay and Duddon could be of both local and regional significance. A report by the consultants Genecon, suggested a possible 10 to 25% increase in employment, representing up to 6,200 new jobs or the equivalent of £45-113 million in additional economic activity (Gross Value Added).

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Morecambe Bay's proximity to the internationally popular Lake District is of economic importance too. Cumbria's tourism economy alone is worth well over £1 billion, centred in and around the National Park. The tourism patterns in the National Park are typified by longer stays and higher per capita spend. By improving and promoting the offer in and around the coastal areas of Morecambe Bay and Duddon, more could be made of this valuable market and more could be done to make tourism in the area follow the Lake District's higher income model.

If this 'bounce' in the tourism economy is to be achieved, then a dramatic shift has to occur in the quality and consistency

of tourist facilities and attractions. One early focus of the regional park could be projects that enhance the visitor experience, including improved walking and cycling routes and other investments that would help connect the Bay's attractions to create a singular – and satisfying – visitor experience.

Finally, the Bay programme would offer the chance to diversify the area's economy, in both rural and urban areas, while protecting the high quality environment. This could include creating the right environment to attract talent and those involved in creative or knowledge-based industries or simply improving the area's image to create a more promising setting for investment.

The potential for economic growth could be of both local and regional significance... representing up to 6,200 new jobs.



Jobs matter, regeneration matters, so too does improved health, stronger communities, a high quality environment and a sense of identity that builds local and regional pride. These are some of the driving forces that will shape a programme for Morecambe Bay and Duddon. While the projects being proposed as part of this programme will help to build the visitor economy, there are substantial quality of life benefits for local communities too.

For those partners focused on regeneration, the programme could bring new life to market town initiatives, to the arts and cultural sector, to rural crafts, to quality food producers and to specialists in sports or leisure activities such as sailing, cycling or walking. In areas that have suffered industrial decline, there could be new opportunities created, the regional park programme could help underpin existing work to provide new jobs, and importantly, through promotional activities the image of these areas can be enhanced. Existing initiatives like

the much-lauded Midland Hotel in Morecambe, waterfront regeneration in towns such as Barrow and new masterplan strategies such as Fleetwood's are of key importance.

Elsewhere regional park programmes have been built around the reclamation of brownfield sites which, when transformed into new, accessible areas for recreation or for employment, turn what was 'blight' into a treasured community asset. A good example of this is the plan for a new, expanded country park on the banks of the Wyre where a former chemical works once stood. Local communities also benefit from new promenades, coastal trails and recreational opportunities, which in turn can be promoted locally as a chance to increase levels of physical activity and good health. New connectivity – whether it be by bicycle, rail or ferry – gives local people the chance to access a wider range of employment, learning or recreational opportunities and here again the regional park could be a force for change.

The scope of the Bay programme also takes in cherishing and enhancing important community assets; the places, spaces and buildings that build pride and a sense of place. From built heritage such as Decimus Burton's lighthouses in Fleetwood to the wildlife habitats that are of European importance, a Bay wide programme offers the chance for partners and local authorities to work together to protect and invest in the things that make Morecambe Bay and Duddon a unique and wonderful place to live, work or play.

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Icons of amusement and distraction from the everyday will be fundamental. From the promotion of local artists to the creation of designer beach huts or new public art installations, culture will be key to the future of Morecambe Bay and Duddon.

“This place gives you headspace and is good for the soul.”

The headlands and promenades offer spectacular, elemental views; the hardy and adventurous can take a guided walk across the sands; each and everyone can look up across the intertidal sand and mud flats towards the majesty of the Lake District or the Bowland Fells.

“This place gives you headspace and is good for the soul.”

Already there are locations and installations that would reward any visitor. Eric Gill’s legacy can be found in the sculptures and paintings at the

Midland Hotel; Shane Johnstone’s Mother and Child sculpture at Scalestones Point is unexpected, wonderful and joyous; the ‘Escape to Light’ sculpture by Josefina de Vasconcellos at Haverigg calls across the water. There are murals on cottages, stone circles on hillsides, listed buildings, epic sunsets and of course Graham Ibbeson’s statue of Eric Morecambe, who took his stage name from his home town.

There is much to be built upon and added to in this area that will repay investment. Connecting art installations, cultural landscapes and the heritage of Morecambe Bay and Duddon through a new programme of promotion and celebration will be an early priority for the regional park programme. There are secrets to be shared too: the castle on Piel Island, the folklore and magic of Humphrey Head, the trip out to Sunderland Point.

Contemplation and escape may be one of the experiences offered by Morecambe Bay and Duddon with quiet places, cycle trails and hills to climb. But the Bay

programme could also offer a shot of adrenaline. There are facilities – and some embryonic improvement plans – for more watersports, from traditional sailing to powered-paragliding or even extreme kiting.

Whether it be heritage, art or sport, a partnership forged around a Bay programme can add a good deal of value over ‘business as usual’. There will be significant opportunities for shared or themed promotions of a particular kind of offer, right across the area; just as importantly there will be the opportunity to collaborate on the development of spatial plans that can bring visitor management into sharper focus. The appeal of the area can be broadened to new audience groups; the environmental impact of leisure and tourism can be better managed; and the economic benefit from the sector can be maximised, not least through an improved and consistent visitor experience.

One of the most powerful aspects of each of the Northwest's regional parks is that they uniquely build upon their own set of natural assets. Some offer a powerful and under-utilised coastal experience; some build on their industrial heritage; others are rich with wildlife habitats or unmissable areas of landscape character.

And so it is with Morecambe Bay and Duddon, a vast landscape and the largest intertidal area in the UK. In the north are hidden beaches, bird watching opportunities and even the chance to spot seals. The wildlife and wetlands continue through Arnside and Silverdale where Leighton Moss is situated. This is the RSPB's second most visited reserve in the country. The five spectacular estuaries are backed by Fells and Moors and fronted by wild open sands, stretching out to sea. There are numerous protected species, nature reserves and unspoiled islands.

Part of the Bay programme could help to protect the area; build on these assets and thus promote the area to a new generation of visitors as well as those

who know and love the Bay. There are challenges ahead – climate change not least – which a new partnership would be well placed to face together, working collaboratively, sharing information and joining up their strategies to keep Morecambe Bay and Duddon as special as it is today.

There are also opportunities for connecting and joining up these natural areas. 'Green infrastructure' could be recognised and connected to create new routes and trails for those who want to immerse themselves in a unique environment. There could be work to create a network of green sites, and where appropriate, improved collaboration on habitat creation, conservation, heritage and local authority working.

The Bay programme can also be marked by better interpretation of the natural environment, making the visitor experience more rewarding and offering significant educational opportunities for local people as well as for those

Morecambe Bay is the most elemental of places and it lies just a few miles from some of the region's most populated urban centres. It is a kaleidoscope of water and light; sea and sky; texture and colour.

from further afield. Infused with a strong brand and consistent messages, this interpretation can build the area's reputation and image; repaying those who come again and generating word-of-mouth endorsements.

Morecambe Bay is the most elemental of places and it lies just a few miles from some of the region's most populated urban centres. It is a kaleidoscope of water and light; sea and sky; texture and colour. Building on these elements and creating a setting for their celebration would be a powerful proposition for the new partnership.



To see what the future looks like

There is an economic case to be made for new investment and a new partnership to awake the 'sleeping giant' that is Morecambe Bay and Duddon. Collaboration will be a key feature of its future. There will be recreation and tourism benefits. There will be diversification opportunities for business and new platforms for investment. Nature can be both protected and promoted. There are wins to be had on all sides.

The purpose of a regional park for Morecambe Bay and the Duddon is to help create a unifying force that encourages sustainable development, founded on the Bay's outstanding natural environment as a place to live, work and visit. It will raise the Bay's profile and help create the conditions for attracting new investment and people.

There is also an opportunity for the first time to begin to plan without the constraints of artificial administrative boundaries and form a common vision for securing the future of the unique communities around the Bay.

Early priorities for action could be:

The promotion of access to and around the Bay, through sustainable transport and green routes;

Conservation and enhancement of the Bay's cultural heritage and natural environment;

Investment in public spaces in the Bay's towns and city;

The development of the Bay's economy by raising the quality and number of visitor destinations, encouraging longer stays and higher spend;

Working with and encouraging investment by the private sector to help strengthen the Bay's tourism and visitor infrastructure; and

A programme of strong, unified branding, promotion and marketing of the Bay.



A vision is emerging, a partnership is coming together and potential projects are being examined; what remains is the need to unlock investment.

There are a number of headline projects which have been identified by partners across Morecambe Bay and Duddon. Drawn from a wider pool of more than forty proposed schemes, the six ‘early wins’ proposed by Genecon are:

The Islands of Barrow:

An eco-tourism and heritage programme, creating a tourist attraction that capitalises on the outstanding natural environment around Walney, Roa, Piel and Sheep Islands. It would include investment to improve facilities and instigate seasonal boat tours to see seals, bird life and hard to reach gems such as Piel Castle.

Morecambe Bay Discovery centre:

A starting point that could lead on visitor interpretation, pulling together efforts and resources of existing visitor information centres around the Bay, built around an expanded facility in Morecambe.

Morecambe Bay Heritage Coast:

The establishment of heritage coast designation for Morecambe Bay, building a successful and easily understood designation, helpful for attracting tourism and investment.

Carnforth green transport hub:

Developing existing strong rail, bus, road and cycle facilities to create a transport hub for Arnsdale and Silverdale and coastal rail and walks, with the opportunity to expand Carnforth Steamtown.

Leighton Moss Visitor Hub:

Developing and expanding the Leighton Moss visitor centre for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), housing existing AONB staff; improving disabled access from Silverdale Station and including an interpretation centre.

The Morecambe Bay Way

(Arnsdale Viaduct): a linked programme of investments to create new access points for walkers across the network and investment in interpretation and visitor facilities.

A vision is emerging, a partnership is coming together and potential projects are being examined. The partnership needs support both in terms of financial resources but also in terms of partners simply agreeing to work together to make great things happen across Morecambe Bay and Duddon.

And what would the return be on this investment? As identified above there are thousands of potential jobs that could be created through an improved and higher quality visitor experience. The programme would also set the context for wider investment in a diversified economic base; it could also help local partners to attract the talented and the creative to relocate or stay in the area.

There would be tangible improvements on the ground. Transport connectivity across all modes could be improved - not least through filling in the gaps in the coastal trail and improvements to gateway sites. There could be a boost in what has been recognised by many as a ‘patchy’ level of quality for tourist facilities, generating more return visits, and unlocking greater levels of spend.

The above programme of improvement would be built around a shared strategy and spatial plan which would emphasise collaboration, as well as the protection and enhancement of this most unique suite of assets.





A new partnership for Morecambe Bay and Duddon

The Morecambe Bay Partnership has already engaged a wider stakeholder group of organisations, including local authorities, the Northwest Regional Development Agency and other relevant bodies in creating a draft vision and proposed programme of action. A smaller programme board of around 10-12 key individuals would be convened to support this wider group, with the Morecambe Bay Partnership acting as secretariat.

This prospectus is the starting point for a renewed phase of engagement and consultation; the drawing up of a costed plan of activity and a platform to bid for the resources and commitment to bring an exciting, and above all tangible, programme to life. By securing new funding, the partners could begin to deliver projects on the ground in the very near future.

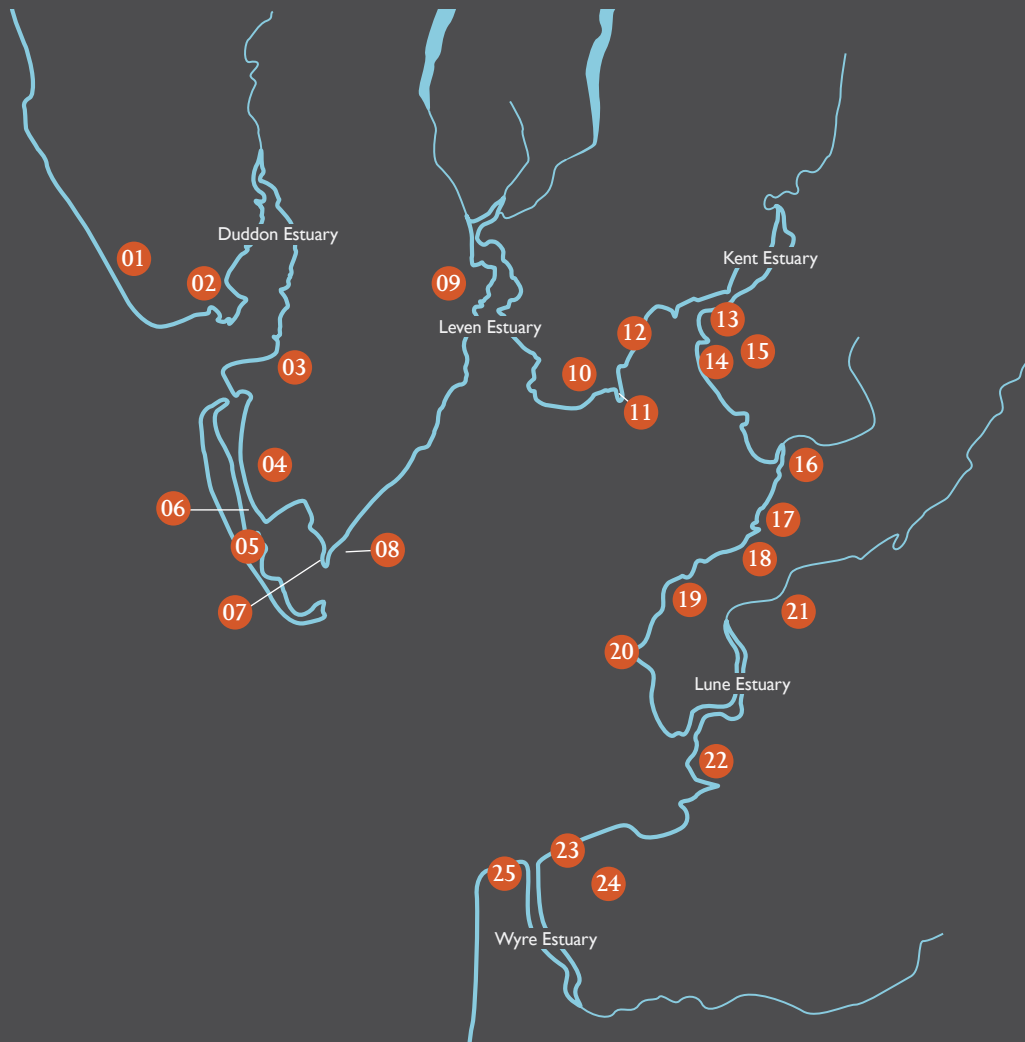
Much would rest with local authorities and other statutory bodies (such as infrastructure improvements) while other areas of activity could be delivered by the Morecambe Bay Partnership itself.

Partnership is crucial to this vision. The district councils of Copeland, Barrow, South Lakeland, Lancaster and Wyre as well as the county councils of Lancashire and Cumbria are of pivotal importance. West Lakes Renaissance and the two tourist boards of Cumbria and Lancashire will have a part to play, as will the Lancashire Economic Partnership and Cumbria Vision.

There will be an important role for the champions of the natural environment, such as Natural England, Natural Economy Northwest, the Environment Agency and RSPB. Finally the Bay programme must and should deliver against the new integrated regional strategy for England's Northwest, which is being crafted by the Northwest Regional Development Agency.

Is this a journey worth making? Most certainly. Can tangible benefits be realised in both the short and longer term? Absolutely. Is there appetite amongst partners for collaboration and action? Yes, there is. The future is here, today, for this most special of places.

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|-------------------|----|
| Haverigg | 1 |
| Millom | 2 |
| Askam-in-Furness | 3 |
| Barrow-in-Furness | 4 |
| Walney Island | 5 |
| Walney Channel | 6 |
| Roa Island | 7 |
| Foulney | 8 |
| Ulverston | 9 |
| Flookburgh | 10 |
| Humphrey Head | 11 |
| Grange-over-Sands | 12 |
| Arnside | 13 |
| Silverdale | 14 |
| Leighton Moss | 15 |
| Carnforth | 16 |
| Bolton-le-Sands | 17 |
| Hest Bank | 18 |
| Morecambe | 19 |
| Heysham | 20 |
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Photo Key:

- Inside cover: Warton Crag, looking towards
Heald Brow and the Kent Estuary.
Page 02: Humphrey Head.
Page 04: Furness Abbey.
Page 05: *Top:* Paraglider over the Bay,
with Coniston Fells in the distance.
Bottom: Rider on Pilling Sands.
Cross-Bay walkers.
Page 07: Stone circle on Birkrigg Common.
Page 08: Shane Johnstone's Mother and Child
Page 10: sculpture at Scalestones Point, Morecambe.
Channel Patterns.
Page 13: Stena Line ferry at Fleetwood.
Page 14: The Kent viaduct.
Page 16:

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