



Morecambe Bay Conference
& Launch of European marine site management scheme

Friday 20 October 2000

Wyre Borough Council Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde

CONTENTS

PROGRAMME	1
LAUNCH OF THE MORECAMBE BAY EUROPEAN MARINE SITE MANAGEMENT SCHEME, HELEN JOHNSTON	2
MORECAMBE BAY MANAGEMENT PLAN - A RELEVANT AUTHORITY VIEWPOINT, ED MYCOCK	5
REPORT OF EUROPEAN MARINE SITE QUESTIONS	6
REPORT OF SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN	8
MORECAMBE BAY PARTNERSHIP - ASSURING OUR FUTURE BY RE-FORMING AS A CHARITABLE COMPANY, JOHN HETHERINGTON	10
NOTE OF MEETING	16
FEEDBACK	19

Programme

Morecambe Bay Conference

& Launch of European marine site management scheme

Friday 20 October 2000

Wyre Borough Council Civic Centre,
Poulton-le-Fylde.

Registration & coffee	from 9:20
Welcome and opening	10.00
European marine site launch	10.10
The new management scheme Helen Johnston, English Nature.....	10.10
The Bay's wildlife Dr. Mark Woombs, marine biologist.....	10.25
Relevant authorities viewpoint Ed Mycock, Environment Agency ..	10.45
Questions.....	10.55
Coffee	11.15
Shoreline Management Plan & questions	11.35
Morecambe Bay Partnership business meeting	12.25
Buffet lunch.....	13.00
A lively talk by Captain Graham Maclean , Heysham Port	14.20
Conclusion & thanks.....	15.10

Everyone is welcome

Contributions towards the cost of this event (~£5 on the day) would be appreciated, especially if you can claim these, but are not expected from voluntary groups or individuals.

Thank you to our sponsors

English Nature is the main sponsor for this event. Thanks also to the other relevant authorities for the European marine site who have helped with contributions:
Associated British Ports, Barrow Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, Heysham Port, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, South Lakeland District Council, MAFF, North West Water, NW&Nwales Sea Fisheries Committee and Wyre Borough Council

Launch of the Morecambe Bay European Marine Site Management Scheme



Presentation given by Helen Johnston, European Marine Site Project Officer, English Nature, Kendal

Today is important because it marks the start of an exciting programme of work to protect the wildlife of Morecambe Bay, which as we all know is very special.

At the last Standing Conference, the process that was gone through to produce the management scheme was explained, and so I will only touch briefly on that this morning. What I really want to tell you about are the actions that will come out of the management scheme and how they will affect you – the people who use the Bay the most.

The first question that is often asked is “what’s it all about?”. Morecambe Bay is so important for its wildlife that it deserves the highest protection we can give it. The management scheme aims to help provide this protection, and so in simple terms it’s all about caring for Morecambe Bay’s wildlife. But why is the wildlife so special?

To us, mudflats like those in the Leven estuary or saltmarshes like those on Walney may not seem that special, but these estuarine environments are quite rare in the rest of Europe. Along with other internationally important interest features, such as large shallow inlets and bays, intertidal sandflats, vegetated shingle, pioneer saltmarsh and birds, saltmarshes and mudflats are the reason why the Bay has been awarded the status of European marine site.

As the second biggest embayment in the UK, the Bay regularly supports as many as 200,000 wildfowl and waders during the winter months. Birds like oystercatchers and sights like large flocks of waders are commonplace in many areas.

Nationally important habitats can also be found around the Bay. These include eelgrass beds in the Walney Channel and vegetated shingle around both Walney and Foulney islands.

For those of us fortunate enough to live beside the Bay, it is easy to forget that the wildlife features it contains provide an exceptionally high quality environment in which to live and work. The whole Bay is beautiful and we are lucky to have such a huge diversity of important wildlife and habitats on our doorstep. Yet despite their close proximity to us we cannot always see what is close by and we don’t have a full understanding of how all the processes and activities interacting in the Bay affect them.

Because of this we need to find out which activities might affect the condition of the Bay’s features and with this in mind the relevant authorities came together to develop the management scheme. The overall aims of the scheme are to

1. Ensure Morecambe Bay remains an internationally important wildlife site
2. Promote sustainable use of the Bay
3. Identify gaps in existing management and address them

Of these aims, the central focus of the scheme is promoting the sustainable use of a living, working Bay.

What is exciting about this new scheme is that it sets out the actions which will achieve real results for Morecambe Bay, by detailing the actions to be taken by English Nature and other authorities, working in partnership with landowners, local communities and other users to achieve the more sustainable use of the Bay. An enormous variety of activities take place within the Bay – fishing, ferries, power generation, relaxation, sailing and tourism, to name but a few – and all have the potential to affect it in some way. English Nature and the relevant authorities, with public consultation, have reviewed the activities taking place to identify whether

any of these activities are likely to conflict with the wildlife interests. We have found a few that we think do conflict and others that might. Most, we think, are not likely to cause conflict.

As users of the Bay, it is important that you are aware of how these actions will affect you. Where we think activities are likely to have a significant effect on the wildlife features, we will work with all interested parties to identify how the impacts can be avoided or minimised. Where we have identified activities which might have a significant effect, but we are unsure, we will work with all the interested parties to assess or monitor them.

For most people, the scheme will make very little difference on a day-to-day basis. There is no intention to stop people using the Bay. What is important is that the scheme will conserve without dictating, but it will be strong enough to protect the wildlife features. Already a variety of work in key areas, highlighted by the management scheme, has been completed. This has all been supported by European funding, through the LIFE Nature Project. Examples include

- A bird map – essential information on bird breeding, feeding and roosting areas was gathered with the help of the Wetland Bird Survey and used to produce maps which can be used to give advice on and assess the possible risks from disturbance
- Movement of river channels – Lancaster City Council produced time series air photographs which show changes in the position of the River Kent. These can be used to study the changes in saltmarsh development and sediment build-up in areas like Grange and Arnside
- Eelgrass report – surveys and monitoring have been carried out on the eelgrass beds in the Walney Channel with the financial support of British Gas Hydrocarbon Resources. This has mapped the distribution of eelgrass beds and has established baselines to see whether the balance between eelgrass and Spartina is changing
- Regulation 33 map – joint projects with the Sea Fisheries Committee have used seabed mapping techniques to produce baseline maps of the important habitats within the Bay. These were included in the Regulation 33 advice package produced by English Nature, which contains the conservation objectives that were the starting point for the management scheme
- Good Practice Guidelines – guidelines for a range of activities including bait collection and ports/harbours operating within or adjacent to a European marine site have been produced. These provide practical advice to managers of coastal sites, bring together our understanding of the potential impacts of operations and identify practices where the potential for adverse effect exists and suggest means to avoid, minimise or address these impacts

Many other benefits from the management scheme are in the pipeline, including

- An investigative study to assess the environmental impact and inform the management of mussel fisheries in Morecambe Bay is being carried out jointly by the Sea Fisheries Committee and English Nature. This will pull together information on mussels in Morecambe Bay, looking at their exploitation by man and wildlife, and possible interactions. It will help identify and actions which may need to be taken to ensure the fishery is managed sustainably.
- Coast strategy plans for coastal defence proposals which may affect wider areas will be prepared, to ensure that coastal processes and the environment are safeguarded. Phase I of the strategy for the west coast of Walney Island has already been completed and coastal defences are being used to prevent areas of Walney tip eroding into the sea
- A study to identify and map areas of coastal grazing marsh within and adjacent to the European marine site which are important for maintaining bird numbers will be undertaken, and opportunities to encourage restoration of coastal grazing marsh will be sought

All this information is vital as it adds to our knowledge of how the Bay functions and gives us a better understanding of how we can protect it. We have started to identify the future work which is needed and to demonstrate how data can be put to best use in terms of coordinating projects and sharing information with partners.

In order to promote the sustainable use of the Bay, it is important to raise awareness of how the wildlife and natural features of the Bay contribute to the local economy and community well-being, as well as having high conservation value. As part of the scheme, a Wildlife Interpretation and Promotion Strategy will be developed. This will identify how awareness of the wildlife resources can be raised around the Bay, in a way which will

ensure they are safeguarded for us and future generations to enjoy, whilst delivering social and economic benefits for the area. The strategy will build on previous initiatives that have been designed to bring wildlife closer to people. Examples of such initiatives include

- Secrets of the Sands – this booklet brought the Bay into our living rooms, at the same time as showing how the different elements of the Bay interact through partnership
- Direct interpretation of the Bay's wildlife through visual displays and enjoyable experiences which are accessible to everyone – for example, the bird sculptures at Morecambe and the games, riddles and artwork that make up the Tern Project along Morecambe's stone jetty
- Ways of encouraging sustainable tourism and getting people actively involved with wildlife will be explored – for example, bird watching at Leighton Moss RSPB reserve or undertaking beach clean-ups
- Cross-bay walks – these are an excellent way to experience the magic and vastness of the Bay first-hand

All together the many projects, initiatives and research works that are proposed in the management scheme will ensure that we interact with the Bay's wildlife in a more sustainable way. So, to sum up the benefits of the scheme, they are

1. Maintain and restore the habitats and biodiversity of Morecambe Bay
2. Make people more aware of the rich wildlife within the Bay
3. Achieve greater recognition of the value of the natural environment to the local economy and social well-being
4. Gain a better understanding of our impacts on the Bay
5. Ensure that the Bay is in better condition for us and future generations to use and enjoy

The last, and probably most important point I want to make is that the agencies and relevant authorities can't protect the wildlife and habitats of Morecambe Bay on their own. We need your help and want to work in partnership with local communities to deliver the actions from the management scheme, because after all **Morecambe Bay is very special – lets work together to keep it that way.**

Morecambe Bay Management Plan - A Relevant Authority Viewpoint



Presented by Ed Mycock

Environment Agency, Lutra House, PO Box 519, Preston, PR5 8GD

The Environment Agency regulates discharges, water abstraction, engineering works and waste operations. A whole raft of legislation is relevant, including:

Key EU Directives

- Urban Wastewater Treatment
- Bathing Waters
- Habitats
- Birds

Key British laws

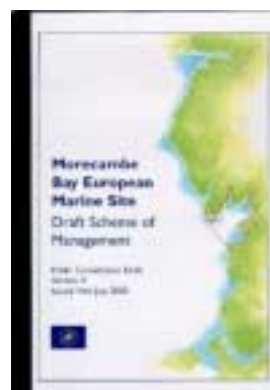
- Water Resources Act
- Environmental Protection Act
- Environment Act
- Radioactive Substances Act

All this legislation sets out the rules under which we operate. We have to ensure that we integrate and comply with all of them.

For European sites like Morecambe Bay we have agreed a national protocol with English Nature. When we receive an application there are 4 stages to go through:

- Stage 1: Is this near a European site?
- Stage 2: Is this likely to have a significant effect on the European site?
- Stage 3: What is the likely effect? Carry out an "appropriate assessment"
- Stage 4: Determine the application

While respective Head Offices were debating, English Nature at Kendal invited all the interested parties to get together. This was the beginning of the Morecambe Bay Management Group. The Group worked together to produce the Management Scheme.



Questions asked after the European marine site presentations

Dick White (Joint Groups Against Western Bypass) asked how the lobsters in Walney have avoided exploitation.

Mark Woombs answered that most of them are too small, but that occasionally they are exploited by a few divers.

Cllr Malcolm Alston (SLDC) raised the issue of changing sea levels and climate, and commented that 5 acres of saltmarsh has been lost at Arnside over the last 5 years.

Andy Fraser (Environment Agency) responded that Flood Defence were as concerned about this as English Nature and other conservationists. Saltmarsh is a natural barrier which removes energy from the sea. The losses at Arnside may be due to changes in the location of channels in Morecambe Bay and/or increased storminess. The Environment Agency and English Nature are working together on this issue.

Chris Lumb (English Nature) added that there was a process in place – the Shoreline Management Plan – to find out what is happening and how to manage the coast. Shoreline Management Plans are relevant for timescales of 50-100 years.

Captain Green (Chair) commented that the north-west seems to be rising and the south-east falling, and that storminess and tides do seem to have increased in the Bay.

Colin Hirst (Wyre Borough Council) asked about increases in the Bay's octopus population.

Mark Woombs replied that this is a UK phenomenon, not just a Morecambe Bay one, and that there have been significant increases over the last 7-8 years. No reason is known.

Cllr Gordon McCann (Wyre Borough Council) commented on the requirement for any village with a population of greater than 2000 people to have secondary sewage treatment facilities by 2005. Knott End has tertiary treatment facilities, but there are a large number of septic tanks on the fringe of the village dealing with waste from farms and isolated houses. Are there any plans to bring these into the sewerage system?

Alan Chester (North West Water) responded that it is difficult to bring private discharges into the public sewerage system. However, there are procedures in place whereby the Environment Agency or the village itself can raise concerns. These procedures have only been triggered in a few areas, and there is generally little support for bringing existing septic tank systems into the public sewerage system. Such moves are not part of the 2005 initiative for existing public systems.

Douglas Bulloch (Morecambe Bay Sailing Association) queried why the water on the south side of Morecambe Bay is dirty while that on the north side is clear. The tide drops at least 1 inch of sediment every time it comes up the Wyre estuary. Mark Woombs' talk had included many slides of underwater wildlife taken around Walney in clear water.

Ed Mycock (Environment Agency) replied that Walney is not an estuary, so the water there tends to be clearer. However, this is not always the case. Water in the Blackpool/Fleetwood area does not look clean because fine sediment is continuously stirred up by currents and wave action. A leaflet being produced about water quality on the Ribble Estuary will explain this to the public, and includes results from analysis of bathing water samples.

Daniel Weetman (Blackpool & Fylde College student) asked whether the different-coloured starfish observed in the Walney Channel and outside Walney Island were different subspecies, or whether the differences were due to pollution?

Mark Woombs replied that they are 2 subspecies.

Susannah Bleakley raised a question on behalf of **Brian Abbott** (Urswick Parish Council). Extensive use of the shore by microlights and trials bikes is disturbing birds – are there any powers available to control these activities?

Chris Lumb (English Nature) responded that a colleague from the North West, Jon Hickling, had been involved with similar types of problems in the 1990s. Microlights are disturbing because they apparently look like birds of prey! Chris thought that the only controls available were local authority byelaws, but that a lot of liaison was required if these are to be set up.

The Sea Fisheries Committee has voluntary codes of conduct for bikes and shore access.

Questions asked after the Shoreline Management Plan presentations

Fraser Smalley asked when the Shoreline Management Plan will be available on the web in a form that allows specific areas to be accessed.

Ron Eckersley (Lancaster City Council) answered that this will be resource-driven. There is already a website in existence (www.nwcoastline.org - choose Section C), with rudimentary versions of Plans covering the whole of Cell 11 from Wales to the Scottish border. The full plan for Morecambe Bay will hopefully be available on-line by Christmas, but it is currently available in paper format at local authority offices.

Cllr Malcolm Alston (SLDC) asked whether issues such as climate change and sea level rise should be dealt with as a central government priority rather than through the voluntary approach which has been adopted to date.

Dr Phil Barber (Shoreline Management Partnership) answered that the extent and complexity of the current arrangements should not be underestimated, and considers it essential for "best value" that there is a continuing local presence with authority. Centralising the management of coastal areas would not work.

Colin Hirst (Wyre Borough Council) praised the efforts involved in producing the Shoreline Management Plan - it has been a tremendous exercise, involving a lot of work by a lot of people. He asked what efforts would be undertaken to keep the Plan up to date.

Phil Barber responded that it is a well-known fact that most reports are out of date the day after they are issued! Government guidelines require that a first review occurs after 5 years, but subsequent reviews need not necessarily occur at 5 year intervals. Monitoring and study programmes are needed to improve the database for the Plan review, but these are not being undertaken as fast as we would like. Estimated economic costs of monitoring have been included in the Shoreline Management Plan for Morecambe Bay.

Ron Eckersley reported that Shoreline Management Plans have been completed for the whole of England and Wales. MAFF, the funding body, has undertaken a review of the best elements of the Plans that have been produced, and the Morecambe Bay plan falls within the top quartile of all the Plans. Approval has recently been given for a geomorphological study of England and Wales, and we need to continue to improve the information available in order to review the Plans. After the first review at 5 years, the timescale for reviews will be dependent on information availability for specific coastal management units.

Cllr John Mackie (Out Rawcliffe Council) asked how far up river estuaries the Shoreline Management Plan extends.

Ron Eckersley replied that the thinking when Shoreline Management Plans were set up was that they should include all land up to the Schedule 4 boundary, as defined in the Coast Protection Act. This is an arbitrary boundary. During development of the Shoreline Management Plan, some estuaries have been considered above this boundary.

Susannah Bleakley (Morecambe Bay Partnership) asked how decisions are made about whether to protect land. How do property values and the potential for loss work in practice? Are posh peoples' houses protected because they have high values while poor peoples' houses are not?

Phil Barber replied that there are project appraisal guidelines for public investment. There is an argument for the government to invest in loss of the coast, because it has an associated cost to the nation. For industry, either the direct cost or a substituted cost can be considered. For private property, it is the value of the property which is taken into consideration. Chances are that lower value houses are likely to be more densely built, and their value is therefore likely to exceed the value of less densely built but more valuable houses.

Susannah also asked what the government view on compensation is. Is it true that there is no compensation available for land lost as a result of erosion or sea level rise in Morecambe Bay? In other areas of the country people are looking at different ways of accessing compensation – for example, through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Phil Barber replied that there are no specific initiatives relating to compensation in the Morecambe Bay area, although some exist elsewhere. If shoreline realignment is seriously considered, great steps will need to be taken to find funding for the work. The position on compensation is currently not clear.

Morecambe Bay Partnership - Assuring our future by re-forming as a Charitable Company



Presented by John Hetherington

Community, Economy & Environment, Cumbria County Council, County Offices, Kendal, LA9 4RQ

Basically “business as usual”

The idea of reshaping Morecambe Bay Partnership as a Charitable Company has been evolving for many months, and has been carefully investigated by the Resources Group and Management Committee. Underpinning our thinking has been the view that the **“Agenda” for the Partnership** should continue largely on its current lines, with a focus on:

- Supporting integrated management for the Bay
- Facilitating co-ordinated action
- Encouraging greater “access” to the Bay, as appropriate
- Encouraging best practice
- Assisting with resolving issues

But, why be a charity?

Access to grants from bodies who only support charities – this is a very substantial group of organisations in relation to the wide environmental, economic and community remit of MBP.

Under the new regime for **easy charitable giving**, we can recover tax on virtually all giving to the Charity (this affects both individuals, where it replaces covenants and gift aid, and larger companies, where other taxes can be offset).

The structure of the Charity

- The status of MBP would be simplified by its **re-formation as a TRUST** with objects related to “enabling the sustainable management and development of Morecambe Bay”
- A **Charitable Company** would have broad representation from LA’s and other major partners. The best model is for a small number of trustees (meeting periodically), to act as an executive or **Management Committee** for the day to day running of the Trust
- Additional advisors could also provide support - by continuing the **Steering Group**
- An identified “membership” of the Charity would also need to be established, with arrangements made for an annual AGM – much like this **Standing Conference**

Company advantages, disadvantages and structure

- The primary advantage of the **Charitable Trust** also being registered as a **Company** is that it directly provides limitations on the liability of its Board
- There are also significant **limitations on who can be on a Company Board**, in particular local authorities (whether Members or Officers) cannot exceed 20% of the Board. This would limit LA’s representation on a Board of 10 to 2 (or to 1 if a smaller Board is preferred)

Firming up on agreements with partners, we will ...

- **Define relationships** between major public sector partners and MBP
- **Spell out (through a Business Plan) that MBP as a Charitable Company offers a new approach** to sustainable coastal management.
- **Clarify that the Morecambe Bay Partnership has a wide remit** to resolve cross sectoral issues related to:
 - ✓ sustainable coastal development,
 - ✓ recreation,
 - ✓ tourism,
 - ✓ access to coastal information,
 - ✓ and ensure practical coastal and countryside management measures
- **Confirm partners support** for the Partnership's aims (to help individuals and groups identify opportunities and problems, produce action plans and develop funding and implementation packages)

We propose that the Partnership would work through a Management Committee

...

The Management Committee would act as a **"board of directors"** (the "Charity Trustees") consisting of around 10 individuals representative of major public and private interests around the Bay.

The Management Committee would **oversee and influence** the outputs and direction of the charitable company, as agreed at board meetings.

The Management Committee will also have a direct line to **company staff** in terms of technical help and advice.

The directors will be **ultimately responsible** for output delivery through agreed partner funding.

... and would confirm continuation of the Steering Committee and Forum

Membership of Steering Committee

- **Virtually the present Steering Committee – thus not limited to one or two LA representatives**
- Will continue to **act as an advisory council to the Board**
- Its responsibility will be:
 - ✓ To **advise** the Morecambe Bay Partnership on matters of policy relating to operation of The Morecambe Bay Partnership
 - ✓ To **receive and agree quarterly reports** on budget and salary and project expenditure, advising charity trustees (the Management Committee) subsequently as required

Forum

Morecambe Bay Partnership will continue to hold an annual Forum (normally also acting as its AGM) open to all members of the charity (who may vote on matters such as election of Board officers) and the public

We would define the role of each major partner who would (for example) ...

- Provide a nominated **officer** representative for the Steering Committee
- Provide a nominated officer to act as adviser to the board of director
- Provide a percentage of **matching funds** for the salary costs of [named posts], together with such project costs as shall be agreed annually in advance
- **Liaise with and consult** the Partnership Manager on policy matters affecting Morecambe Bay
- Retain statutory responsibilities relating to
- **Delegate** [coastal zone management, sustainable development and other development work] (as defined) to the the Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Establish a **regular reporting** mechanism to inform relevant committees ..

... and also commit Morecambe Bay Partnership as a Charitable Company to (for example) :

- **Employ** a Partnership Manager and other agreed staff
- **Provide** quarterly budget and output **reports** to the funding partners
- Produce an **annual business plan** and end of year report
- **Arrange an annual site visit** and audio visual presentation for funding partners, directors and the Steering Committee
 - **Implement agreed policy** and Strategy and initiatives as appropriate
 - **Generate project and grant aid** in the overall Partnership area
 - **Liaise to secure practical management** within the Partnership area
 - Prepare, steer and **implement the Management Plan**
 - Provide a local first point of contact for information in the Bay area

So, how do we become a Charitable Company?

Charity no: ?

The Companies Acts 1985 and 1989:

MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF THE MORECAMBE BAY PARTNERSHIP

By agreeing a Memorandum and Articles of Association

1. Agree **WHO** the Charity Trustees are (Representative of the major partners)
2. List the **OBJECTS** of the Charity
3. Define **MEMBERSHIP**
4. Establish rules for **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS**
5. Define the **ROLES** of the Management Committee
6. And **HOW** the Management Committee will work
7. And the **POWERS** of the Management Committee
8. Set out how **RECORDS AND ACCOUNTS** are kept
9. Define (amongst other things) the **AREA OF INTEREST**

Supported by an Annual Report and Business Plan

- The Company will develop a Business Plan
- Prepared annually, with Annual Report for Charity Commission presented to the Standing Conference.
- Considered by the Management Committee with the advice of the Steering Group
- Will facilitate applications to other charities and support annual renewal of the SLA with public sector partners
 - Draft to be ready by early 2001 based on discussions with partners

Next Steps

Element	Target
<p>Complete consultation on the concept of change</p> <p>Notes of the last Management Committee meeting indicate how far some have got Please feedback responses to SB & JGH as soon as views available</p>	30 November 2000
<p>Service Level Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local authorities and other agencies - please consider the current outline draft of a SLA and send comments to JGH • JGH to combine the individual SLAs into a final document: to Resource Group to Management Committee 	<p>24 December 2000</p> <p>15 January 2001 14 February 2001</p>
<p>Business Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB, JGH & CL to draft Business Plan • send out for comment and development by partners - responses swiftly please by • 2nd draft Business Plan: to Resource Group to Management Committee • Company Board established (in shadow form) finalises Business Plan 	<p>1 December 2000</p> <p>24 December 2000</p> <p>15 January 2001 14 February 2001</p> <p>March 2001</p>
<p>Development of Charitable Company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Memorandum & Articles of Association – comments on initial draft by • Memorandum and Articles of Association agreed by Steering Group and discussed with Charity Commission • Agreement in principle from partners secured (reported through Steering Group) • Creation of company Board (in shadow form) - determines forward 3 year budget available • Staffing of new structure begins • Complete Charity and Company registration • New "Morecambe Bay Partnership" Company - fully operational 	<p>24 December 2000</p> <p>January 2001</p> <p>14 Feb 2001</p> <p>March 2001 from May 2001 target June 2001</p> <p>target July 2001</p>

Morecambe Bay Partnership Conference - 20 October 2000 Note of Meeting

1. Welcome and introductions

Chairman Captain John Green opened the meeting and welcomed delegates.

2. Note of last meeting (31 March 2000)

Copies of the note of the last meeting were handed round and returned to at the end of the business meeting. The note was accepted.

3. Morecambe Bay Partnership progress reports (Susannah Bleakley)

Baywatch newsletter

The last issue of Baywatch was produced in July 2000. We worked closely with English Nature on it, and the newsletter included a 4-page feature about the European marine site management scheme. It was the first time we had enough money to produce a colour newsletter (it cost around £3000, in comparison to £300 for black and white). We are currently discussing sponsorship for the next Baywatch, possibly a special issue on bathing waters (with North West Water and the Environment Agency). We will also be producing an issue on biodiversity and sustainability issues, again with English Nature early next year (2001).

New Partnership Assistant

We are very sad to see Louisa Wilkinson leave; she's moved to N Wales and is now Co-ordinator of the Greenhouse Centre in Bangor. Rona Arkle joined the Partnership in early October and has immediately fitted into the busy office, taking responsibility for organising this conference and mailing the European marine site management scheme summary for English Nature.

Continued development of website

The website was one of Louisa's projects, but its development will continue with approximately monthly updates. Rona has some web design experience. We are able to advertise events on our "What's on" page, so if anyone who is organizing an event wants it included please let us know. The website is also a good source of information for tides and various other subjects, through its links. Susannah enquired whether anyone has actually looked at the website, since there is little point in us putting time into developing it if it isn't used. A show of hands suggested that around 50 people had looked at it (more than half of the delegates).

PISCES/Blackpool Conference

PISCES (the Partnership of Irish Sea Coast & Estuary Strategies) brings together the coastal partnerships from the Dee to the Solway. PISCES has been lobbying regional government for more support for the coast, and has been active with responses to consultations on draft Regional Planning Guidance, the NW Development Agency's draft Strategy and the EU consultation on coastal issues.

PISCES were involved in the organisation of the Blackpool coastal conference on 22 May 2000. This was attended by 199 delegates and received significant media coverage.

NW Coastal Conference

Government Office for the North West have responded to the work of PISCES and are developing a North West Coastal Forum with a dedicated Project Officer.

Becoming a charity

Morecambe Bay Partnership is extremely grateful to all the companies, local authorities and agencies who support our work. Fundraising is a very time consuming part of our work and so we are looking to develop into a charity with the hope of forming a broader funding base.

We are seeking to match strong agreements with our funders against specific outputs in our work programme. This structured approach will be developed in the coming months and will be expanded on in our business plan to be prepared by early 2001.

Future work

Includes continued development of the Mermaid's Purse project and the possible development of a wildlife interpretation strategy with English Nature.

4. Local Government Association SIG (Richard Greenwood)

The Local Government Association Special Interest Group is relatively new. It has produced a useful Coastal Strategy document which will be launched nationally in December 2000. Its vision is to establish a Coastal Commission with ministerial direction, which will deal with a range of policies at the national and regional level. There is a useful model for this in the North-West (see item 3). It would also coordinate planning and coastal activities, and hopefully result in better funding opportunities for organisations like the Morecambe Bay Partnership.

5. Sport & Recreation User Group (Richard Greenwood)

This user group brings together dinghy anglers, sailors, Coastguard, ramblers and various others. It usually meets in Morecambe and has met twice since the last conference. People keep coming so it must be doing something right! Issues raised include access, funding and cross-bay walks. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for **6 February 2001**, and will consider how to get young people involved in sport and recreation: everyone is welcome to attend.

6. Tourism Working Group (Jim Trotman)

The Tourism Working Group aims to market the Bay as a whole, rather than as discrete sections. The Furness Line Guide is a good example of this strategy. The guide was published in June and was launched in July at Grange-over-Sands station. It covers the line from Barrow to Lancaster and highlights what can be seen from the train. The leaflet doesn't include timetable information, to ensure maximum life. Initially 10,000 copies were produced, but it is hoped that demand will eventually grow to 10 times this. However, there are problems associated with growth - pressure needs to be exerted on the train operators to use more appropriate train units.

7. Morecambe Bay Partnership Charity (John Hetherington)

John Hetherington gave a presentation on why we want to become a charity and what it may involve. He explained that it will be "business as usual" and that the Morecambe Bay Partnership will still be the same partnership we all know and love. Becoming a charity allows us to address pressure for funding in a slightly different way. We may be able to access money from certain Charitable Trusts and will be able to reclaim tax, which will provide significant benefits. We will retain the same structures, but will become a charity and then a limited company. The Management Committee will be the formal individuals on whom responsibility falls, but the Standing Conference will still be an advisory body. It will probably also act as the AGM. Service level agreements provide an opportunity to formalize agreements with partners, linking what comes in with what we can offer in return. Copies of John's presentation can be downloaded from our website.

8. Questions and comments

Chris Lumb (English Nature) commented that Susannah had already mentioned opportunities for linking funding with specific outcomes. English Nature are funding a project with the Morecambe Bay Partnership to promote sustainable development. Organisations such as English Nature are being pushed this way by their headquarters, and it may open up many new opportunities. He strongly supports the move to a charity.

Cllr Malcolm Alston (SLDC) raised the issue of compensation for land lost as a result of poorly planned coastal defences. He welcomed the Local Government Association SIG report on coastal issues mentioned by Richard Greenwood, and questioned whether any approach had been made to insurance companies since they are the ones who stand to lose. It was felt that issues as serious as this should be centrally funded, not the responsibility of charities or partnerships.

Captain Green responded that attendance at the conference showed how well the Morecambe Bay Partnership works for the Bay, but agreed that compensation should be centrally funded. This view was endorsed by the delegates.

Captain Maclean added that, as a representative of industry in the Bay, he is often asked to support things he feels should be centrally funded, including fire, police and school things.

Norman Parker (Morecambe Bay Fishermans Association) described a pollution incident at Ulverston on 8 September this year. He found dozens of dead fish in a pool into which Glaxo Wellcome and North West Water discharge effluent. He alerted the Environment Agency and Glaxo. Glaxo reduced their discharges, although they had been within their specified limits. More dead crabs, eels and 400 flounders were found the following day. Mr Parker said he had emailed Morecambe Bay Partnership and had hoped that the issue would be raised at the conference. He felt there was a tendency to present an image that all was well in the Bay, but that this is not necessarily the case: are any efforts made to point this out to industry? An earlier slide showed changes in the river channels in the Bay over the last 20 years, but discharges are still made to the same place.

John Pinder (Environment Agency) responded that this was a good example of how and why people in Morecambe Bay should work together. The problem was mitigated by the company, and restrictions were put in place requiring Glaxo and NWW to store effluent during low tides. Discussions on where to go from here are continuing. One good which comes from the Morecambe Bay Partnership is increased awareness of estuary processes: this encourages greater understanding of the potential problems, which should help resolve or prevent conflict in the future. The overall aim is to move forwards with environmental protection, but there are some intractable problems no-one can plan for, eg channel movement.

Chris Lumb (English Nature) felt that this problem highlighted the value of the Shoreline Management Plan, since it increases our understanding of coastal processes. It should enable Glaxo and NWW to decide whether they need to find an alternative method of discharging, or whether temporary measures are acceptable.

Jack Sheldon (Morecambe Bay Wader Group) stated that legislation to protect wildlife in the Bay was "shoulder deep". However, following the imposition of a speed limit on Windermere, certain councillors have proposed that a massive sea wall be built in Morecambe Bay to retain the tide so that an artificial lagoon is created for use by powerboats and water-skiers.

Other delegates were generally unaware of this proposal, but expressed concern. **Chris Lumb** (English Nature) responded that all statutory authorities around the Bay were working together, and that such a large scale project would need a very detailed assessment because it would have a major impact on the Bay.

9. Approval of move to charity status

The Standing Conference was asked to approve the move to charity status. Jack Sheldon (Morecambe Bay Wader Group) proposed the motion, seconded by Fraser Smalley. A show of hands indicated that the move was approved unanimously.

10. Date of next conference

Susannah Bleakley proposed that the next conference be held on **30 March 2001**. The venue will be confirmed and advertised.













Thanks

The Morecambe Bay Partnership would like to thank all who attended the conference. Special thanks to **Wyre Borough Council** for hosting the conference; **Jackie Glasgow** and **Colin Hirst** (Wyre Borough Council) for their help in organising the conference; **Joyce Holden** (Lancashire County Council) for her help with registration; Chairman **Captain John Green**; **Helen Johnston** for launching the European Marine Site management scheme; **Dr Mark Woombs** for an interesting presentation on the underwater wildlife and habitats of Morecambe Bay; **Ed Mycock** (Environment Agency) for presenting the relevant authorities viewpoint on the management scheme; **Ron Eckersley** (Lancaster City Council) and **Dr Phil Barber** (Shoreline Management Partnership) for presenting the Shoreline Management Plan; **Captain Graham Maclean** (Heysham Port Ltd) for his entertaining talk about life at sea; and all who contributed to the business meeting including **Richard Greenwood** (SLDC), **Jim Trotman** (Lancaster City Council Tourism Services) and **John Hetherington** (CCC).

Thanks also to our sponsors English Nature, Associated British Ports, Barrow Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, Heysham Port, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, South Lakeland District Council, MAFF, North West Water, NW & N Wales Sea Fisheries Committee and Wyre Borough Council.

Feedback from 9th Standing Conference

A total of 93 delegates attended the Morecambe Bay Conference on 20 October 2000 at Wyre Borough Council Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde. Of these, 44 people (47%) returned evaluation forms.

What did you think of the conference overall? (24)	 : 100%	 : 0%	 : 0%
Was it worthwhile? (44)	 : 91%	 : 9%	 : 0%
Was it interesting? (43)	 : 88%	 : 12%	 : 0%
Was it well organised? (43)	 : 98%	 : 2%	 : 0%

What would have made it better? (21)

Most comments related to problems with visual aids not being visible (9), the sound system (3), and the absence of fruit juice or decaffeinated drinks (2). It would be helpful for people who are asking or answering questions to clearly state their name and affiliation. We will aim to improve these aspects for the next conference.

There were several comments about the Shoreline Management Plan, including "I would have liked to know what it means for our coast. If *hold the line, do nothing or retreat* is proposed, then why?".

Other comments included "champagne and canapés", "Not having to speak" and "To have another conference next week"!

How did you hear about the conference? (44)	How did you get here? (44)
Mailing 69%	Car 64%
Baywatch 12%	Car (shared) 26%
Friends/contacts 12%	Train 10%
Website 2%	Bus 2%
Other 10%	Other 2% (walked)

Why did you come? (37)

This new question was included because one person scribbled why they had come on the evaluation form from the last conference and we thought it would be interesting to get you all to write it down! What really comes across is your enthusiasm for Morecambe Bay, with comments such as "We only have one Morecambe Bay" and "To share my interest in the Bay". Captain Green came "because Susannah told me to!".

Anything else you want to add (16)

Comments here included praise for the venue (which was excellent) and catering, and thanks to the sponsors and organisers. The speakers were "excellent", with Mark Woombs' presentation and the "red sea" slides getting special mention. A number of people indicated that they are looking forward to the next conference, which is encouraging (it will be our 10th one), and 3 also requested that we "keep up the good work"!