



Interpretation & Marketing Strategy for Morecambe Bay

Audit Report

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January 2002

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Introduction

Interpretation is anything which helps people to understand and appreciate the cultural and natural heritage of an area. It can take many different forms, including informative display boards, guided walks, leaflets, public art, events and so on.

Morecambe Bay Partnership is developing an interpretation and marketing strategy for Morecambe Bay. The first stage of this project is an audit of existing interpretation around the Bay. We need to find out what exists already, and assess its effectiveness and condition, before we can propose any improvements or new interpretation.

This report summarises the results of the audit, which was carried out between October and December 2001.

Scope of this study

Geographical

Morecambe Bay stretches from Walney Island in the north to Fleetwood in the south. It includes the tidal estuaries of the Rivers Leven, Kent, Keer, Lune and Wyre and a vast area of intertidal sand and mudflats that form the Bay itself. The main settlements around the Bay are Barrow-in-Furness, Ulverston, Grange-over-Sands, Arnside, Silverdale, Morecambe, Lancaster and Fleetwood.



For the purposes of this study, the inland boundary of Morecambe Bay has been defined as approximately 1 mile from the coast. However, sites that are further inland but afford a good view of the Bay or demonstrate some other obvious connection have been included in the audit.

Thematic

Due to the limited time and resources available to complete this study, only interpretation with a coastal or marine theme, or heritage related to these themes, was included in the audit.

Methodology

Consultation

A number of key contacts (**Appendix A**) were asked to provide details of existing and planned interpretation in their locality. Consultees were also asked what they feel is missing in the way of interpretation in their area, and what they consider to be the main opportunities for additional interpretation.

Audit

A list of built facilities, sites around the Bay that had outdoor interpretation, publications and events was compiled. Visits to each facility or site were carried out between October and December 2001 by the Morecambe Bay Partnership staff.

An audit form (**Appendix B**) was completed for each item of interpretation. Information recorded included:

- Location
- Types of interpretation
- Topics interpreted
- Managing organisation
- Entry charges (if applicable)
- Opening times (if applicable)

For outdoor interpretation, a basic assessment of the quality of the interpretation was made. This considered whether the interpretation was well maintained and whether it was well written, sited and designed. A photograph was taken to record the condition of the item.

For each publication, an assessment of whether it was well written and designed was made. The quality of interpretation at built facilities and events was not assessed.

Existing interpretation around Morecambe Bay

Overview

Existing interpretation around Morecambe Bay includes:

- 12 **built facilities** – including museums, visitor centres, local heritage centres and an aquarium
- 52 items of **outdoor interpretation** – mainly display panels
- 34 **publications**
- a number of **events** programmes and festivals.

Not unexpectedly, **wildlife** is the most interpreted topic around Morecambe Bay. Just under a third (29%) of the wildlife interpretation is about **birds**, but it does not really highlight the international importance of the Bay's bird life.



Morecambe Bay – its wildlife value

This interpretation panel at **Hest Bank**, a **popular bird-watching site**, highlights the wildlife value of the Bay and includes some information on environmental management

There is a bias toward interpretation of terrestrial wildlife – perhaps understandable because it is the most visible. Sub-tidal wildlife is rarely mentioned, despite the fact that the Bay is one of the prime marine sites in Britain and has a diverse underwater flora and fauna.

Other common topics include **local history, transport and shipping, industry, geology and landscape**. **Fishing** was also relatively common. However, very little interpretation really celebrates the Bay as a place in its own right. For example, much of the landscape interpretation around the Bay

relates to views to the Lakeland Fells and fails even to mention the Bay despite its obvious presence.

Only a few items of interpretation deal with **current issues**, such as environmental management or pollution.

There are lots of enthusiastic, dedicated people working to provide interesting interpretation around Morecambe Bay. We found a total of **41 different organisations** involved in providing interpretation, primarily local authorities and voluntary organisations. Because each organisation promotes its own area and themes, there is **no coherent approach** to interpretation around the Bay.

Built facilities

Built facilities providing relevant interpretation around Morecambe Bay include **4 museums**, **4 visitor centres**, **2 small heritage centres**, a permanent **exhibition** and an **aquarium**. The location of these facilities is shown in the map (overleaf).

The built facilities – in particular the museums at Lancaster and Fleetwood – tend to utilise a large number of interpretive media and interpret a wide range of topics. **Table 1** (overleaf) summarises the topics interpreted at each facility, entry charges and the number of visitors per year. It is interesting to note that over half of the built facilities do not charge an entry fee.

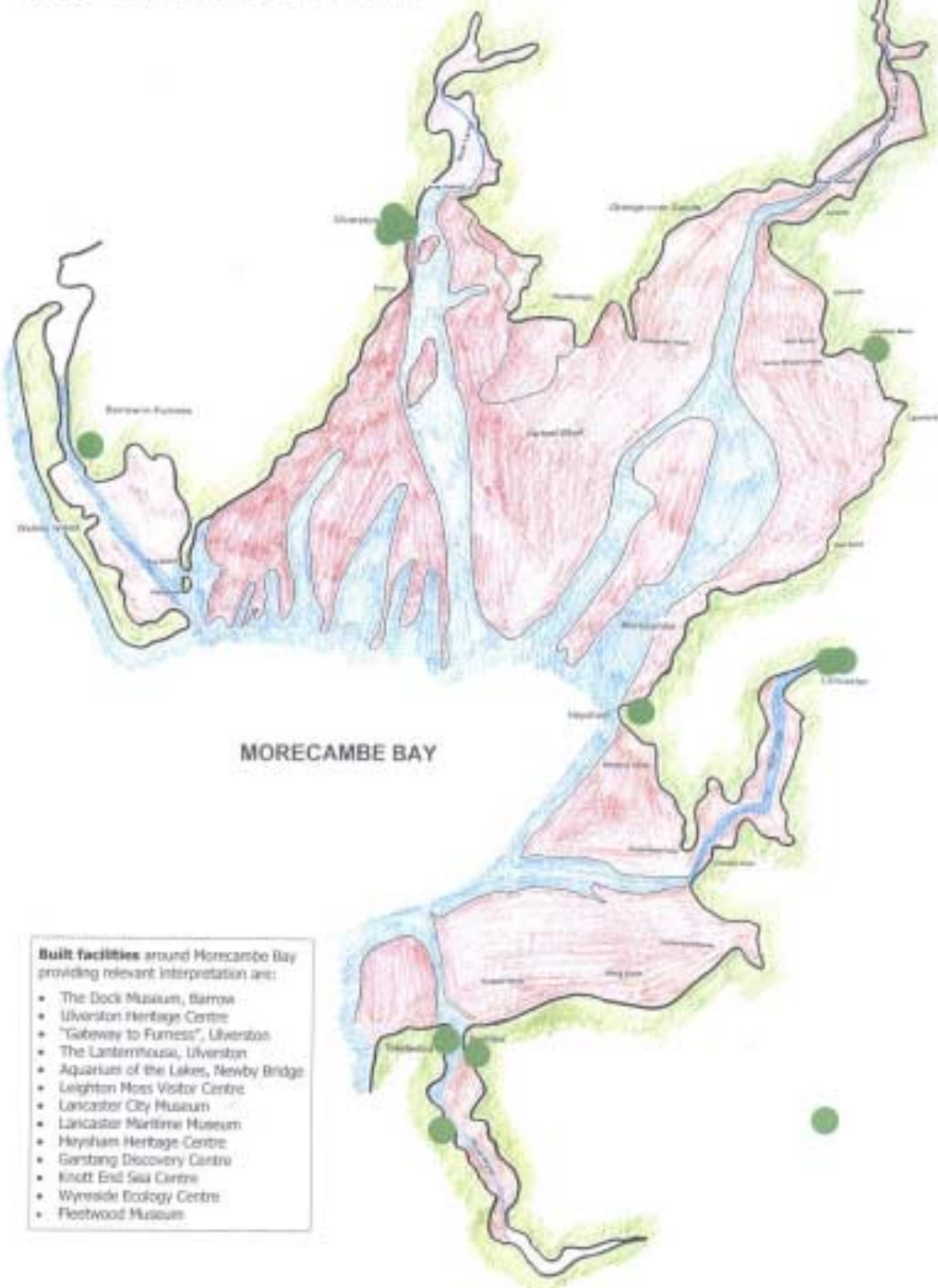


The **Aquarium of the Lakes** tells “the real life story of a Lakeland river **from mountain top to Morecambe Bay**”.

Interactive displays allow you to **make waves**, **explore rock pools** containing shrimps and sea anemones, and **come face to face with stingrays and sharks** that can be found in the Bay.

There are also examples of everyday objects like bottles, plastic yokes (from multi-packs of cans) and fishing gear which cause **marine litter** problems – the issue is tackled using humour but gets across a serious message, and is one of the few pieces of interpretation that addresses current issues.

LOCATION OF BUILT FACILITIES AROUND MORECAMBE BAY



Interpretive panels are the most common item of interpretation in built facilities around the Bay. **Less than a third of the facilities have exhibits that are more interactive**, such as demonstrations, mechanical interactive displays, information technology, historic re-enactments and object handling. Audio-visual interpretation is slightly more common, with some sound and vision present in half of the built facilities.

Where these more interactive items exist, they are generally quite unique. For example, **Fleetwood Museum** runs re-enactments of Victorian fishing, pirate events and demonstrations of net braiding and ships in bottles. It also has a new gallery, **“Netting the Bay”**, with 4 computer terminals.



www.nettingthebay.org.uk

A joint project between **Fleetwood Museum, Lancaster Maritime Museum** and the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside

Websites have not been included in the audit, but at least one site is worthy of special mention – **Netting the Bay**.

The site contains lots of information about **coastal, inshore and deep sea fishing** in and around Morecambe Bay, the Irish Sea and beyond. It uses **multi-media** – images, audio and video – so you can see the fishermen, their boats and equipment, and listen to their stories.

The site also looks at the natural history and ecology of the Bay, including its **marine life**.

Netting the Bay was launched in May 2001 and has had **14,000 hits** to date.

As part of its **“Shipbuilders to the World”** exhibition, **The Dock Museum** in Barrow has 3 computer terminals which provide access to thousands of photographs and several interactive scenarios – for example, tours of the liner Oriana and a submarine, or videos of people working in the shipyards. A separate gallery hosts the permanent exhibition, **“Reflections in the Dock”** – a series of 6 short films which explore the history of Barrow and the shipyards.

Over 80% of the built facilities have **staff** who can answer questions, and half offer **talks and lectures**.

Despite limited facilities and problems with vandalism at **Wyreside Ecology Centre**, the enthusiastic and dedicated team of staff deliver interpretation and education on an impressive range of topics.

The centre's displays incorporate artwork from local children and there is an evident commitment for **community involvement** and **environmental education**, both at the centre or through outreach talks in local schools. This work will be developed with the completion of a new education centre funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The centre also **caters well for disabled users** with Sony walkmans and knobby posts for use by the visually impaired on the trails, large print publications and free hand-cycles for those with mobility difficulties.



It is worth noting that one or two of the built facilities are closed over the winter, and others have restricted opening hours.

Three other built facilities exist, but have not been audited:

- **The Lanternhouse** in Ulverston is run by Welfare State International and is used as a base for community arts events
- **Garstang Discovery Centre** is run by Wyre Countryside Service and receives 16,000 visitors per year
- **Knott End Sea Centre** is run by Lancashire County Council as an outdoor education centre. It is not open to the general public, and is closed in winter.



Although most of the interpretation at **Leighton Moss** focuses on the reedbeds, there is one large interpretation panel about Morecambe Bay – an **engaging cartoon of Morecambe seafront**.

The **summer** half of this panel shows **lots of people** windsurfing, swimming, sunbathing and playing cricket on the beach – there's probably a bit of poetic licence here! There are a few birds flying overhead – gulls, swallows and a solitary oystercatcher. In summer, most of the birds go to breeding grounds further north.

The **winter** half of the panel shows a **varied flock of birds** (oystercatchers, redshanks, shelduck, knot, dunlin and curlew) looking for food. In winter, the birds migrate to estuaries like Morecambe Bay because there is lots of food – flaps attached to the panel swivel aside to reveal lugworms, ragworms and hydrobia in the mud.

Table 1 Built facilities providing interpretation around Morecambe Bay

Name & location	Topics	Entry fee (adult/child)	No. of visitors per year
The Dock Museum, Barrow-in-Furness	National history, local history, local communities, archaeology, religion, earth science, fishing, industry, transport & shipping (9)	Free	120,000 ^a
Ulverston Heritage Centre	Local history, religion, industry, transport & shipping, national history, local communities, archaeology (7)	£1.00 / £0.50	2,700 ^b
“Gateway to Furness” exhibition, Ulverston	Local history, local communities, industry, transport & shipping, landscape (5)	Free	
Aquarium of the Lakes, Lakeside, Newby Bridge	Wildlife (ST & IT), fishing, energy & pollution (3)	£5.50 / £3.75	140,000 ^c
Leighton Moss Visitor Centre, Silverdale	Arts & crafts, wildlife (B, IT & T), earth science, land use, fishing, weather & climate, environmental management, energy & pollution (8)	Free, but entry to the Reserve costs £4.00 / £1.00	65,000 ^d
Lancaster City Museum	National history, local history, local communities, archaeology, religion, arts & crafts, landscape, earth science, land use, fishing, industry, communications, transport & shipping, environmental management, other (military) (15)	Free	51,030 ^e
Lancaster Maritime Museum	National history, local history, local communities, archaeology, religion, arts & crafts, wildlife (ST, IT & T), landscape, earth science, land use, fishing, shoreline management & coastal defence, industry, communications, transport & shipping, weather & climate, environmental management, energy & pollution, other (tourism development of Morecambe) (19)	£2.00 / £1.00, but free to local residents	28,372 ^e
Heysham Heritage Centre	Local history, local communities, archaeology, religion, arts & crafts, landscape, fishing, industry, transport & shipping (9)	Free	17,500 ^f
Wyreside Ecology Centre, Stanah	Local history, local communities, arts & crafts, wildlife (B, IT & T), landscape, earth science, land use, fishing, shoreline management & coastal defence, industry, transport & shipping, weather & climate, environmental management, energy & pollution (14)	Free	15,000 ^g
Fleetwood Museum	National history, local history, local communities, wildlife (ST, IT & T), landscape, earth science, land use, fishing, industry, transport & shipping, weather & climate, other (lifeboats) (12)	£2.00 / £1.00	13,000 ^h

Sources: a Barrow Borough Council (2000-01) b Ulverston Heritage Centre (Jul-Sep 2001) c Aquarium of the Lakes (2001) d Egg the Bird Centre Morecambe (1995) e Lancaster City Museums (2000-01) f Heysham Heritage Association (2001) g Wyre Countryside Service (2000) h Fleetwood Museum (Apr-Nov 2001)

Outdoor interpretation

Over 50 sites around Morecambe Bay have some outdoor interpretation, and a total of 64 items were audited. **Interpretive panels** were the most common item (61%). Their distribution is shown in the map overleaf.

Furness Tourism Partnership has installed 4 interpretation panels at various locations around the Furness and Cartmel Peninsulas. These are **good examples** of interpretation panels – they tell a story without too much text, are well illustrated, and despite having been in place for 7 or 8 years remain relatively unaffected by the weather. They also show a consistent **branding** which is absent elsewhere around the Bay.

Three of the four panels deal with topics directly related to the Bay:



"Flowers and fishing" at Humphrey Head introduces local flora, throws in an interesting piece of local history and deals with current issues including coastal defence, fishing and water quality



"The Guides and transport across the Sands" at Canal Foot explains how walking or coaching across the sands used to be the main route into Furness, and describes the history of the Leven and Kent Guides



"Cargoes and ships", also at Canal Foot, includes a brief history of the Ulverston Canal (the shortest, straightest and deepest in the world) and mentions the variety of items that were traded historically in the area

Other types of outdoor interpretation include:

- **Site leaflets** for South Walney Nature Reserve, Leighton Moss and St Peter's Church at Heysham – these sites also have staff or volunteers available to answer questions
- A **self-guided trail** using an audio guide at Furness Abbey
- An **interactive toposcope** on Hampsfield Fell, above Grange
- **Public art** in Morecambe and Fleetwood, and at Wyreside Ecology Centre



The interactive toposcope on Hampsfield Fell, above Grange-over-Sands



A tongue twister from the **Tern Project** on Morecambe's Stone Jetty – other interpretation includes a maze, pavement games and many bird sculptures



The simple but moving **"Welcome Home"** statue on Fleetwood Promenade



A **cormorant** drying its outstretched wings at Wyreside Ecology Centre

Topics

The topics featured on outdoor interpretation around Morecambe Bay follow the general trend described in the overview – **wildlife dominates** (56%) but local history, transport and shipping, and landscape are also common topics. However, fishing was under-represented in the outdoor interpretation, only being mentioned on 3 items (5%).

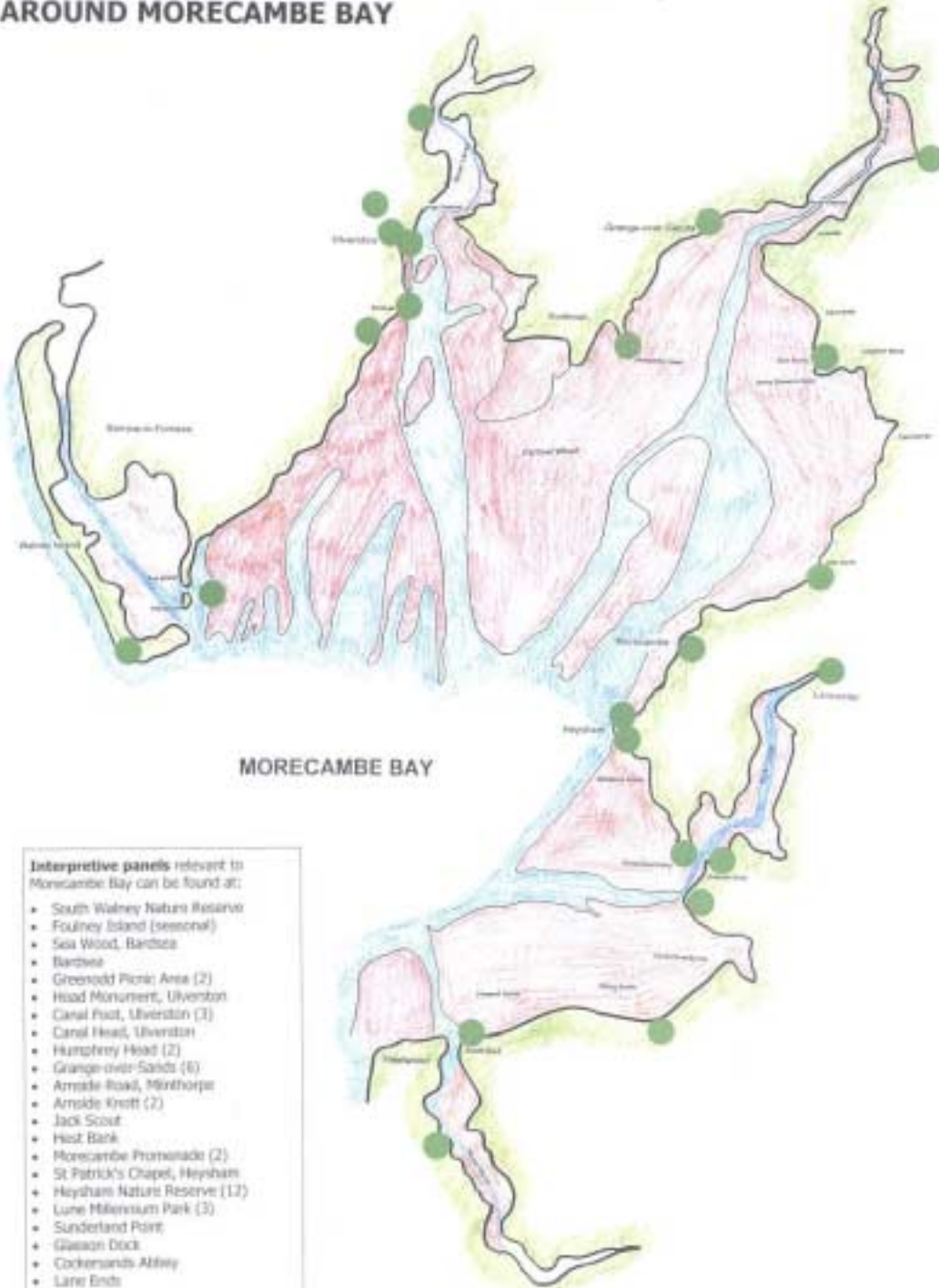
Quality of outdoor interpretation

The **quality** of outdoor interpretation was assessed by considering 2 aspects:

- is the item well maintained?
- is it well sited, written and designed?

Less than 20% of the outdoor interpretation was considered **good or very good** in both aspects. This included Furness Tourism Partnership's **panels** at Canal Foot and Humphrey Head, panels at Hest Bank and on Morecambe Promenade, and parts of the **Tern Project**.

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS AROUND MORECAMBE BAY



Unfortunately, the **majority** (61%) of the outdoor interpretation around the Bay is **poorly maintained**. Several panels are faded or otherwise affected as a result of exposure to the weather.



This panel can be found at the entrance to **Humphrey Head**, an unusual limestone headland that juts into the north of the Bay. **If the panel was less faded**, it would be an interesting introduction to the flora and fauna of the Joy Ketchen Nature Reserve



The **Lancashire Coastal Way** panel at **Knott End** is so faded it is almost illegible, and its equivalent at Rossall Point has been **washed away!** However, these panels are currently being updated and will be replaced soon.

Much of the outdoor interpretation could also be **better written or designed**, although most items are appropriately sited. For example, many of the existing panels contain far too much information for people to absorb.

Publications

A total of 34 publications were included in the audit. Although efforts were made to obtain as many publications as possible, it is likely that this does not represent an exhaustive set of publications relating to Morecambe Bay.

However, the publications audited include:

- 18 leaflets describing **self-guided walks** – ranging from town trails for Grange-over-Sands and Ulverston to long-distance walks like the Cumbria and Lancashire Coastal Ways
- 13 **general or site leaflets** – including guides to 3 nature reserves and the Wyre Estuary Country Park as well as more comprehensive booklets like “Secrets of the Sands” and “From Keer to Kent”
- 3 **topic leaflets** – including “Seagulls & Smugglers” (about South Walney Nature Reserve) and “Potted Tales” (recollections of Morecambe fishermen)
- a **souvenir guide** for South Walney Nature Reserve

Topics

The topics interpreted in publications follow the general trend, with wildlife again dominating. Local history, industry and transport are also popular.

Quality of publications

Most publications are well written and designed. Those assessed as poor quality inevitably contained a large amount of text with few or no illustrations. One or two publications were out of date.

Events

Relevant events around the Bay include guided walks, talks and a range of practical activities. There are also 4 annual festivals around the Bay with some maritime connection.

Guided walks

Approximately **90 guided walks** are held each year around or across the Bay, concentrated on the central area around Morecambe and Heysham. These include:

- 30 **cross-bay walks** from Arnside to Kent's Bank led by Cedric Robinson, the **Queen's Guide to the Kent Sands**. These attract around 10,000 walkers per year, and although they do not specifically offer any interpretation they are a **great way for people to experience the Bay**
- 35 guided walks around **Lancaster and its environs**, organised by Lancaster City Council – these include 16 heritage tours and walks in Lancaster, 6 "Discover Morecambe" walks, 8 walks in Heysham, 4 "Explore Glasson" walks and a half-day excursion to Sunderland Point
- 20 events as part of the "**Tern of Events**" programme in **Morecambe** – including 8 guided walks around the Tern Project and 11 "Explore the Shore" walks

Outside this central area, there are several other cross-bay walks. These are much less frequent, but include a crossing of the **Leven Estuary**, a walk from **Cockersands to Lane Ends** and a "**Wreck Trek**" from Fleetwood.

Events programmes

Several organisations around Morecambe Bay run events programmes throughout the year. Details of these programmes are summarised below.

- **RSPB** run an extensive events programme (around 100 events per year) from their Leighton Moss Reserve. This includes 3 "**High tide at Hest Bank**" and 2 "**What's that wader?**" birdwatching events
- RSPB also run the "**Tern of Events**" programme, which is based around the Tern Project in **Morecambe**. In 2001, a total of 84 events attracted over 1,000 people, including both visitors and locals
- **Wyre Countryside Service** also run an extensive events programme, with 100 events per year. Around 15 of these events are directly relevant to Morecambe Bay, including **bird watching walks**, **activity days** for children (topics in 2001 included coastal and marine ecology, starfish and shellfish, beach sculptures, rock pool fun, fish and fishing), and **sand dune and saltmarsh "saunters"**

Annual events

A number of one-off events are held during the year around the Bay:

- **Lancaster Maritime Festival** is held over Easter weekend each year. It is described as “a **celebration** of the City's Golden Age of maritime trade featuring a unique gathering of **sea-songsters and shantymen** with an array of maritime themed entertainments”
- Fleetwood Museum runs a **Maritime Heritage Weekend** in September each year
- The **Furness Festival of Traditions** is a series of events celebrating the cultural traditions and ancient crafts of the Furness Peninsula. It is held annually in July
- The **Lantern Procession** is held in Ulverston in September each year. The theme of the procession in 2001 was “Beside the Seaside”

Provision for disabled users & foreign visitors

Accessibility for disabled users

Relatively few items of interpretation around Morecambe Bay are accessible for disabled users. This is not unexpected given that much of the fixed interpretation is found in a rural setting.

Wheelchair access is most common, with 15 sites accessible including most of the built facilities, Grange Promenade and Morecambe Promenade (with the Tern Project).

The Dock Museum and Fleetwood Museum both have **induction loops**, and the Lancaster Museums have **large print publications** available.

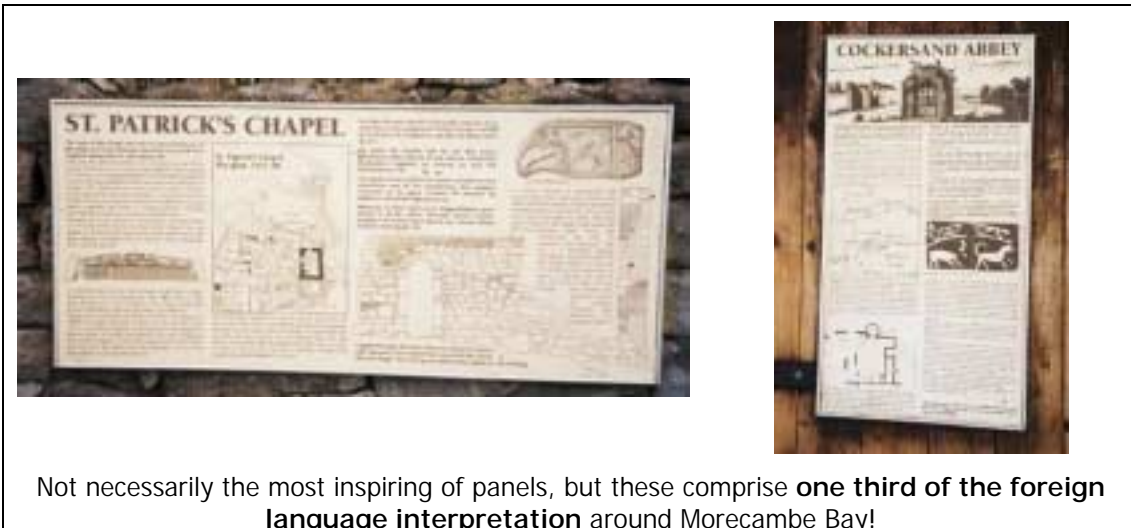
Wyreside Ecology Centre has the best overall provision for disabled users, and won an “**Access for All**” award in 1996.

The RSPB is planning Braille and embossed displays and improved wheelchair access along the trails at Leighton Moss Nature Reserve, and the Lancaster Museums hope to provide audio facilities in the near future.

Foreign language interpretation

Only 3 of the built facilities provide any information in foreign languages. Fish names are translated into French and German at the **Aquarium of the Lakes**, and some information at **Lancaster's City and Maritime Museums** is available in foreign languages.

Leaflets about St Peter's Church and St Patrick's Chapel and **panels** at St Patrick's Chapel and Cockersands Abbey are the only other items around the Bay with any foreign language interpretation.



French and German were the most common languages, although 3 items were also available in Spanish and 2 in Danish and one other language.

Planned interpretation

Several organisations have plans for more interpretation around Morecambe Bay. These are summarised in Table 2 and are described in more detail below.

Table 2 New interpretation planned around Morecambe Bay

Type of interpretation	No. of items
New interpretation panels	> 10
Replacement panels	4
New events	> 2
New publications	> 2

Furness

- Barrow Borough Council has included a **coastal renaissance** strand in its latest bid for Single Regeneration Budget funding. This will be used to improve the **facilities for access to water** and to provide some **coastal interpretation**
- More interpretation will be provided along the old Westfield Nature Trail between Rampside and Barrow and on Walney Island as a result of the **Furness Greenways** project
- Barrow Borough Council and South Lakeland District Council are involved in the development of the "**C2C South**" route (a coast-to-coast cycling route) from Barrow to Sunderland. The route will run along the coast road from Rampside to Bardsea

Grange-over-Sands

- Panels are currently being developed for **Grange Promenade** in conjunction with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Merlewood. The redevelopment of the old swimming pool site is also under discussion

Lancaster, Morecambe & Heysham

- RSPB have funding to run the "**Tern of Events**" programme for another 2 years. The "See Wall" will be incorporated into the programme for next year, and it will also include walks through old Poulton (the old fishing village from which Morecambe grew)
- Lancaster City Council is producing an interpretation panel for the **Poulton Hall** site in Morecambe
- Lancaster City Council and the Lancaster Museums have submitted a joint bid to fund **education work** based around the public art of the Tern Project and the River Lune Millenium Park
- Lancaster University is carrying out a survey on behalf of British Waterways to establish opportunities for increasing tourism in the **Glasson Dock** area. Potential enhancements could include historical and ecological information boards, a general leaflet about the area, a leaflet describing 3 self-guided walks, some new events including a Maritime Festival and possibly a local heritage centre
- The National Trust will be replacing panels at the entrance to the **Heysham Head** site and at St Peter's Church. There are also plans to install a new panel

Wyre

- Wyre Countryside Service will be installing **5 new interpretation panels**, funded by the "Awards for All" scheme. Three of the panels will be on the urban coast between Cleveleys and Fleetwood (strictly outside the Morecambe Bay area), including one on the **bird life**, one on **coastal defence and sand dune creation**, and one on **the Bay**). The other 2 panels will be located in the Wyre Estuary – one on the history of the old port at Wardleys, and one on the Bay and the bird life at Pilling
- Wyre Countryside Service has also been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for **coastal access and interpretation at Fleetwood**. This project will involve practical work to conserve and manage the **sand dunes** and shingle beach. Interpretation will aim to get people thinking more about their impact on the dunes, and to promote the natural heritage of the Bay
- A bid to **extend and develop Fleetwood Museum** will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2002. If it is successful, this will allow **more interactive displays** – eg information on tides, radar, radio – to be installed. It will also involve the **restoration of the "Harriet"**, a fishing smack that was built in the late 1800s

- Lancashire County Council is currently updating and replacing the **Lancashire Coastal Way** panels at Rossall Point and Knott End. An additional panel may be sited on the Coastal Way at Glasson Dock

Events

- **Irish Sea Marine Week** is being organised by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust in partnership with a range of other organisations throughout the North West of England. It will be held over the period 10-18 August 2002. It is described as “a week of public events and activities devoted to raising awareness of the diversity and importance of the marine wildlife of the Irish Sea”
- A **Festival of the Sea** is to be held in Barrow Docks on 17-18 August 2002

Gaps & opportunities

Places

Several places around Morecambe Bay have little interpretation or none at all. These include many places that are well used by local people and visitors:

- Walney Island (outside the nature reserves)
- Roa Island
- the coast road from Rampside to Bardsea (including Aldingham and Bardsea Country Park)
- Flookburgh
- Sandside
- St George’s Quay in Lancaster
- Sunderland Point
- Cockerham Sands
- Pilling Sands
- Rossall Point

Many other places that are adjacent to the Bay or which have **good views** over the Bay make no mention of it in their interpretation. These include the National Trust properties at Arnside Knott and Jack Scout, and the Arnside-Silverdale AONB.

Other places certainly have **potential for more interpretation**. Few people outside the Furness area are aware of what is there, so general profile-raising would enable more people to appreciate the attractions of the area. This is probably also true of Wyre.

Some sites are **difficult to find** – signposting to sites including Arnside Knott, Sunderland Point and Humphrey Head could be improved, although visitor management may be an issue at some of these sites.



Themes

Themes that are not widely interpreted include

- **Views** – the landscape of the Bay itself, including the vast area of intertidal sand and mudflats, the channels, the tides, the sunsets and so on
- **“Source to sea”** – making the links inland to the Lake District and the Bowland Fells. For example, birds use the Bay and the fells, and the 5 rivers rise in the fells and empty into the Bay. This type of approach may open up more opportunities for funding.
- **Fishing** – the whole tradition of fishing in the Morecambe Bay area, fishing baulks at Silverdale and Morecambe
- **Docks** – there is currently no interpretation at the docks in either Barrow or Heysham
- **Boat and ship-building** – boatbuilding history at Arnside, Milnthorpe, Greenodd
- **Current issues affecting the Bay** – *Spartina* colonisation at Grange, environmental management, water pollution and so on

Specific ideas

A number of ideas were put forward by the people who were consulted during the course of the audit.

Morecambe Bay Centre

A **Morecambe Bay Centre** was suggested, possibly located in Morecambe. This was described as an ideal location as it is central to the Bay, takes the same name and already has some established interpretation including the

Tern Project and the Tern of Events. A centre could provide a base for both Morecambe Bay Partnership and the Tern of Events.

It is worth noting that proposals have been considered in the past for a **Morecambe Bay Centre** on Grange Promenade (1995) and for **Egg the Bird Centre** on Morecambe Promenade (1997). Brief descriptions of each of these proposals are included in **Appendix C**. Neither of these centres was ever built.

Alternatively, a **Morecambe Bay Roadshow** or an annual **Bay Week** could be considered. Different places could host the roadshow or event each year, and different themes could be interpreted. Suggested themes include boats and ships, fishing, birds and global influences. This would help people to find out what exists locally and in other areas around the Bay.

Encouraging sustainable tourism

The **Furness Line** is an obvious way of getting people around the northern half of the Bay – as well as being a stunning railway journey in itself. This could be strongly marketed as a sustainable tourism opportunity.

The **Furness Greenways** project will provide several new routes for cycling and walking throughout the borough – possibly including a link between North Walney National Nature Reserve and South Walney Nature Reserve, and a revamped Westfield Nature Trail from Rampside to Barrow.

The North West Coastal Forum is also working on a proposal to develop a **coastal footpath**, known as the “Golden Thread”.

Themed trails

Themed trails, like the existing Cistercian Way, were suggested as a good way of getting people to move around the Bay. Possible topics include fishing, birds, and viewpoints.

More events

Wyre Countryside Service is very active and runs an extensive events programme. Based on their experience of different types of interpretation, they are keen to see more events about the Bay rather than more panels. If each local authority were to run 20 events about the Bay, we would have a vastly increased programme interpreting the Bay.

Joint marketing initiatives

There has been some effort at joint marketing in the past, with the Furness Line Guide being produced by Morecambe Bay Partnership’s Tourism Working Group, involving people from Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster.

Many organisations can see benefits in working together to promote Morecambe Bay and its attractions. In particular, Fleetwood Museum and Wyre Countryside Service are keen to see Wyre promoted as part of Morecambe Bay, and the Lancaster Museums are interested in producing joint leaflets.

Interpretation Working Group

It was suggested that Morecambe Bay Partnership consider setting up an Interpretation Working Group to take forward the interpretation and marketing strategy. This group should involve the people who are involved in providing interpretation as well as those involved in tourism development.

Conclusions

There is a considerable amount of interpretation around Morecambe Bay. This includes a number of built facilities, plenty of outdoor interpretation and publications, and several events programmes. However, **very little of the existing interpretation focuses on the Bay**, and none of it really celebrates the Bay – its size, landscape or the features people value, like the sunsets and space. Wildlife is relatively well interpreted, but without giving a sense of the international importance of the area. Local history, transport and industry are also common topics.

There are **plenty of opportunities** to improve interpretation and provide new interpretation about the Bay. Much of the existing interpretation could be improved. A number of key places that currently do not have any interpretation have been identified.

Around 40 different organisations are currently involved in providing interpretation around the Bay. This obviously results in a wide variation in content and quality of interpretation. There is certainly potential for a **more coherent approach** to interpretation around the Bay, and there was a great deal of **enthusiasm for the development of a Morecambe Bay identity** led by a Bay-wide interpretation and marketing strategy.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the people who were involved in this work, and who willingly contributed their knowledge, ideas and time.

Special thanks are due to Davina Stanford for her help in undertaking site visits and commenting on this report.

Thanks also to our sponsors English Nature, Cumbria County Council, Lancashire County Council, British Energy and British Gas.

All the photographs used in this report were taken by Davina Stanford and Rona Arkle.

Appendix A – Consultees

Name	Organisation
Ian Henderson	Arnside-Silverdale AONB
Bridget Turnbull-Brown	Barrow Borough Council
Debbie Lumb	British Waterways
Penny Watson	Cumbria Tourist Board
Mick Venters	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Helen Johnston	English Nature
Simon Hayhow	Fleetwood Museum
Angela Knowles	Furness Tourism Partnership
Judith Quighley	Lake District National Park Authority
Steve Partington	Lancashire Tourism Partnership
Jim Trotman	Lancaster City Council
Sue Ashworth	Lancaster City Museums
Tim Ashberry	National Trust
Steve Fowler	North West Tourist Board
Robin Horner & Maggy Lightfoot	RSPB Leighton Moss
Richard Greenwood	South Lakeland District Council
Alison Boden, Len Blacow & Jo Beaman	Wyre Countryside Service

Appendix B – Audit forms

Recording form for individual items of interpretation

This form should be used to record details of individual items of **outdoor** interpretation. Use a separate form for each individual item of interpretation. Interpretation provided within a visitor centre, museum, historic house or other built facility should be recorded on the built facilities form.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Site name and location | |
| | |
| 2. Date surveyed | |
| 3. Surveyor | |
| 4. Interpretive item | |
| 5. Topic/s interpreted
(please list all topics that
are interpreted) | |
| 6. Managing organisation | |
| 7. Date/s of provision (e.g.
for an event) | |
| 8. Charge (if applicable) | Charge per single adult £..... per single child
£..... |
| 9. Is any aspect of the
interpretation designed to
cater for disabled users? | Yes / No If yes, please indicate which of the following
is provided:
Braille / audio facilities / sign language / wheelchair
access / large print / other |
| 10. Is the interpretation
translated into any foreign
languages? | Yes / No If yes, please specify which:
French / German / Spanish / Dutch / Italian / Japanese
/
other |
| 11. Does the interpretation
look good? | Very good / good / OK / poor / very poor |
| 12. Is the interpretation
well sited, written and
designed? | Very good / good / OK / poor / very poor |

Recording form for built facilities

Please complete **one** of these forms for **each** visitor centre, museum, historic house or other built facility. All outdoor interpretation should be recorded on the individual items form, even if they are provided as part of a built facility.

1. Facility name and location
2. Date surveyed
3. Surveyor
4. Facility type:	visitor centre / museum / historic house / other built facility
5. Interpretive item/s (please list all interpretive media in the facility)
6. Topic/s (please list all topics that are interpreted)
6. Managing organisation
7. Opening times	All year / seasonal / weedays / weekends / other.....
8. Charge (if applicable)	Charge per single adult £..... per single child £.....
9. Is any aspect of the interpretation designed to cater for disabled users?	Yes / No If yes, please indicate which of the following is provided Braille / audio facilities / sign language / wheelchair access / large print / other
10. Is the interpretation translated into any foreign languages?	Yes / No If yes, please specify which French / German / Spanish / Dutch / Italian / Japanese / other

Interpretive items should be described as follows:	Topics should be described as follows:
GW Guided walk / tour	NH National history
SGP Self guided tour / trail using printed material	LH Local history
SGA Self guided tour using audio guide	LC Local communities
GL General site or facility leaflet	AR Archaeology
TL Topic-based leaflet	RE Religion
SGO Souvenir guide intended for use off site	AC Arts and crafts
EP Education pack	WL Wildlife / habitats (sub-categories: birds, terrestrial, inter-tidal, sub-tidal)
SPO Single panel	LS Landscape
DSP Display comprising several panels	ES Earth science
IP Information point / stand / marker	LU Landuse (including agriculture and forestry)
ED Enquiry desk	F Fisheries and fishing
FS Facility staff	CD Shoreline management & coastal defence
IT Computer / IT display	IN Industry
AV Audio-visual display	CO Communications
LP Listening post	TS Transport and shipping
MID Mechanical interactive display	WC Weather and climate
3D 3-D model / display	EM Environmental management
TD Temporary exhibition / display	EP Energy and pollution
LD Living display / aquaria	Other (please specify)
OO Display of original objects or artefacts	
RO Display of replica objects or artefacts	
AH Object or animal handling (eg touch tank)	
HR Historic re-enactment	
FE Festival	
TE Theatrical event	
AI Arts installation	
TA Talk / lecture	
DE Demonstration	
Other (please specify)	

Guidelines for answering questions 11 & 12

These guidelines relate to panels, displays and publications only and are used to provide a basic qualitative assessment of the interpretation.

Does the interpretation look well maintained?

This question attempts to assess the overall state of the interpretation. In answering this you should look for the following possible problems:

- Obvious signs of age, wear and tear
- Faded pictures and / or text (*eg* as a result of a panel bleaching in sunlight)
- Scratched or worn surfaces
- Graffiti
- Peeling edges
- Evidence of dampness
- Overgrown vegetation obscuring a panel
- A publication that has run out

Evidence of these problems will suggest a lower score.

Is the interpretation well sited, written and designed?

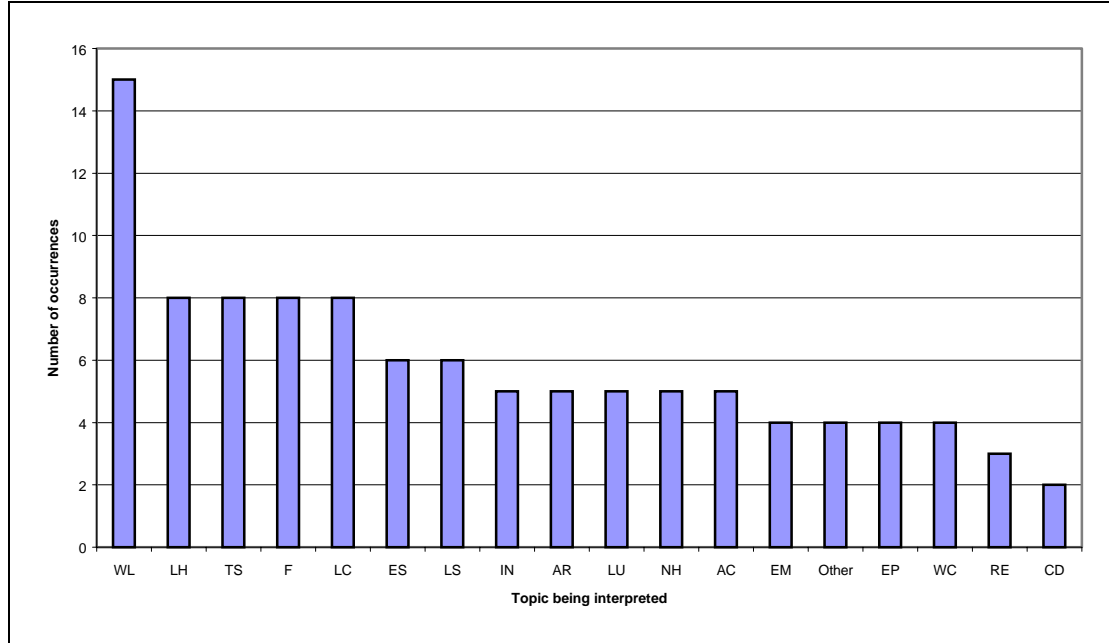
This question attempts to assess how effective the interpretation is. This is a difficult judgement to make without a detailed examination, but the following tests will indicate roughly how good something is:

- Are the contents clearly focused on a single or small number of related subjects?
- Is the text easy to read (*eg* is the print size big enough to read, and is the text brief and written in short sentences and paragraphs?)
- Is the language engaging (*eg* does the text bring the subject alive by telling a story, by using humour, or by using metaphors and comparisons?) Poorly written text will seem like a boring textbook.
- Are the illustrations interesting and informative? (*eg* do they look good and add to what the text is saying?)
- Do the text and pictures clearly relate to each other?
- Is the overall design attractive?
- For a panel, is it in the right place in relation to what it is interpreting?
- For a publication, is it being distributed in the right place/s?

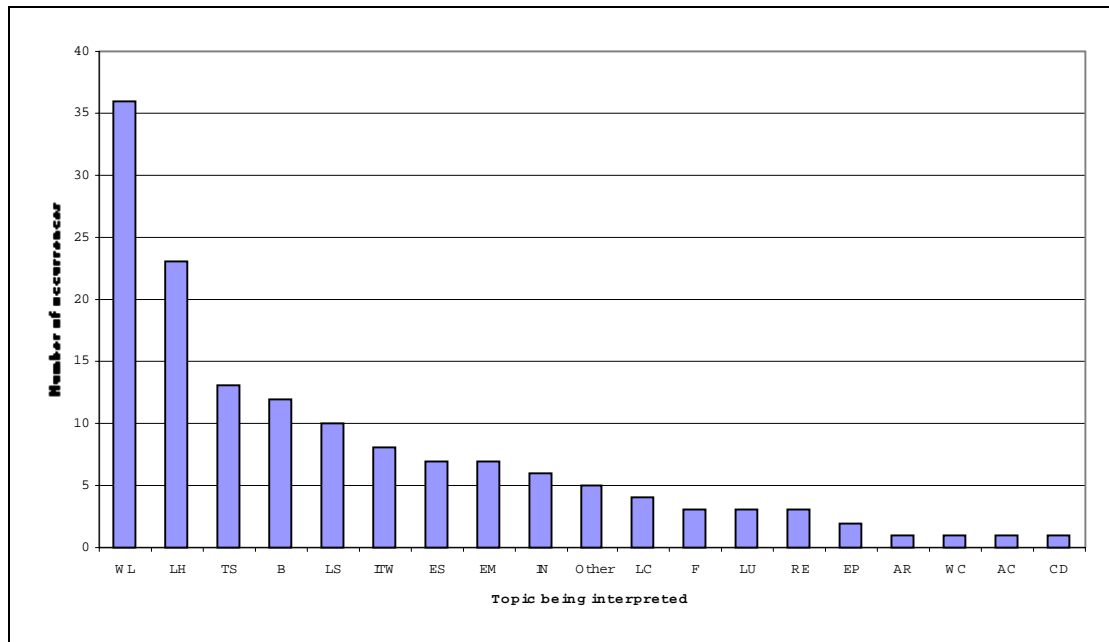
A **very good** piece of interpretation will pass all of these tests. A **good** piece will pass most of them. An **OK** piece will pass around half. A **poor** piece will fail most of them. A **very poor** piece will fail all of them.

Appendix C – Topics being interpreted

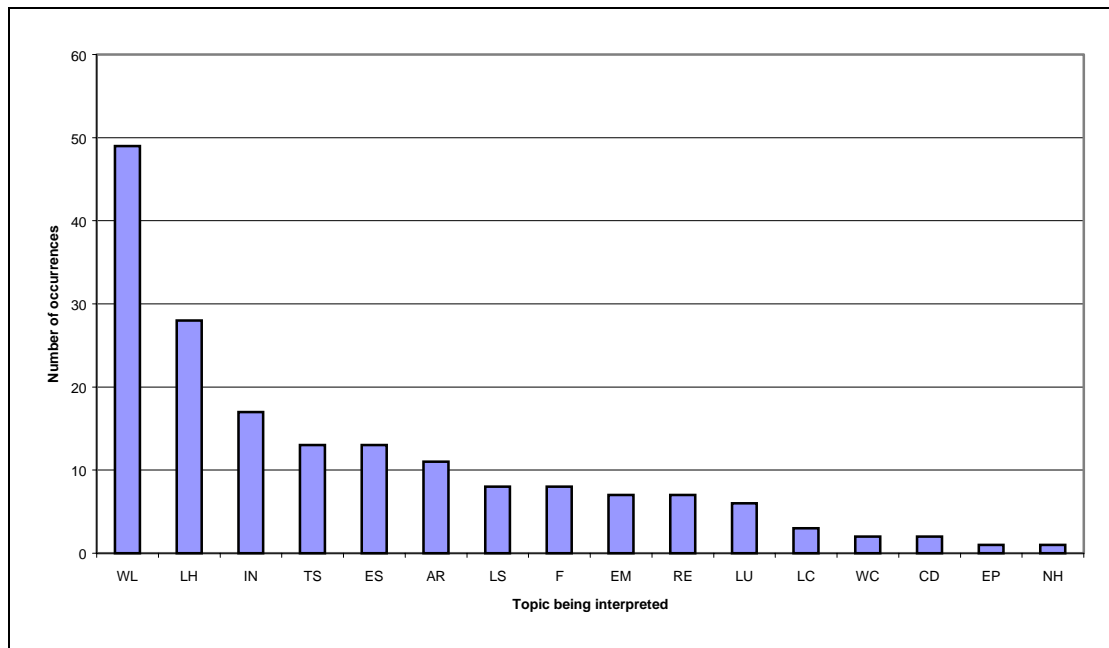
Built facilities



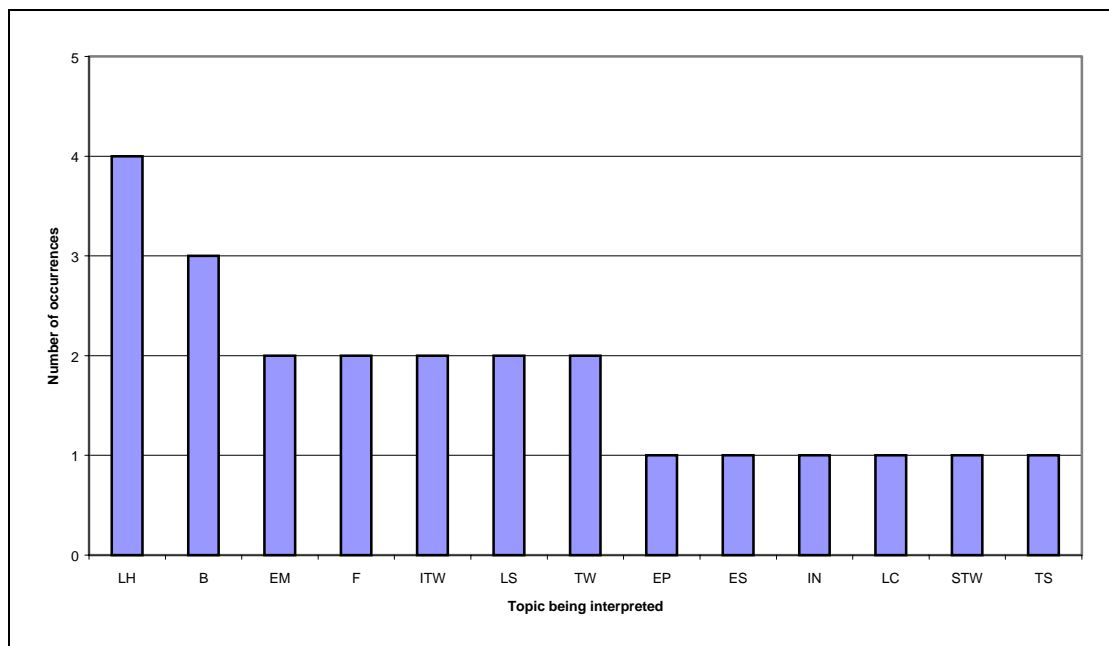
Outdoor interpretation



Publications

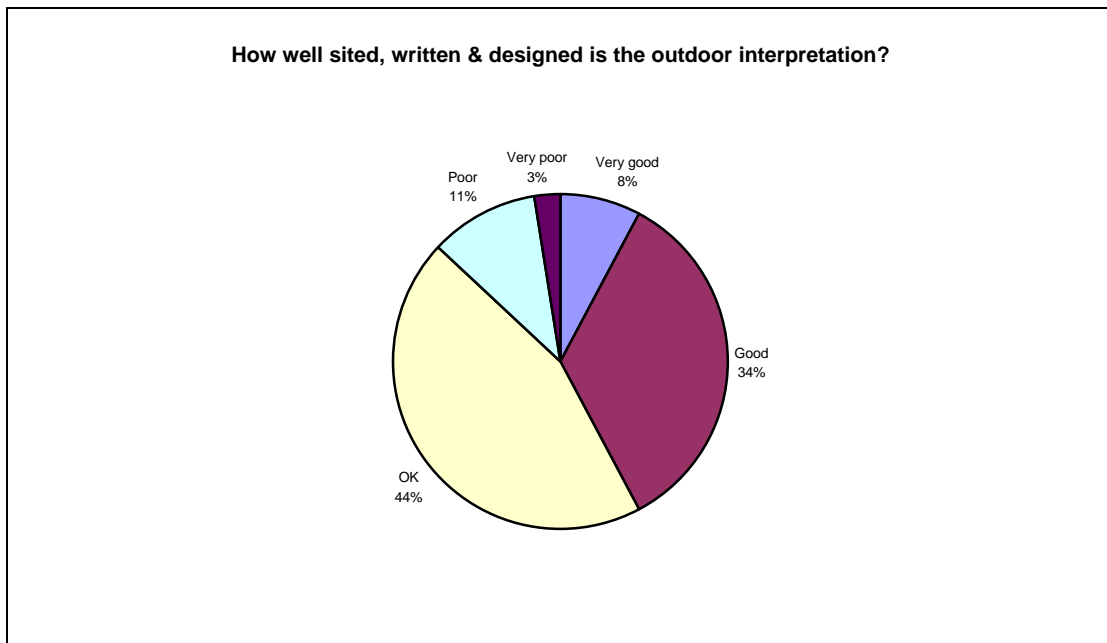
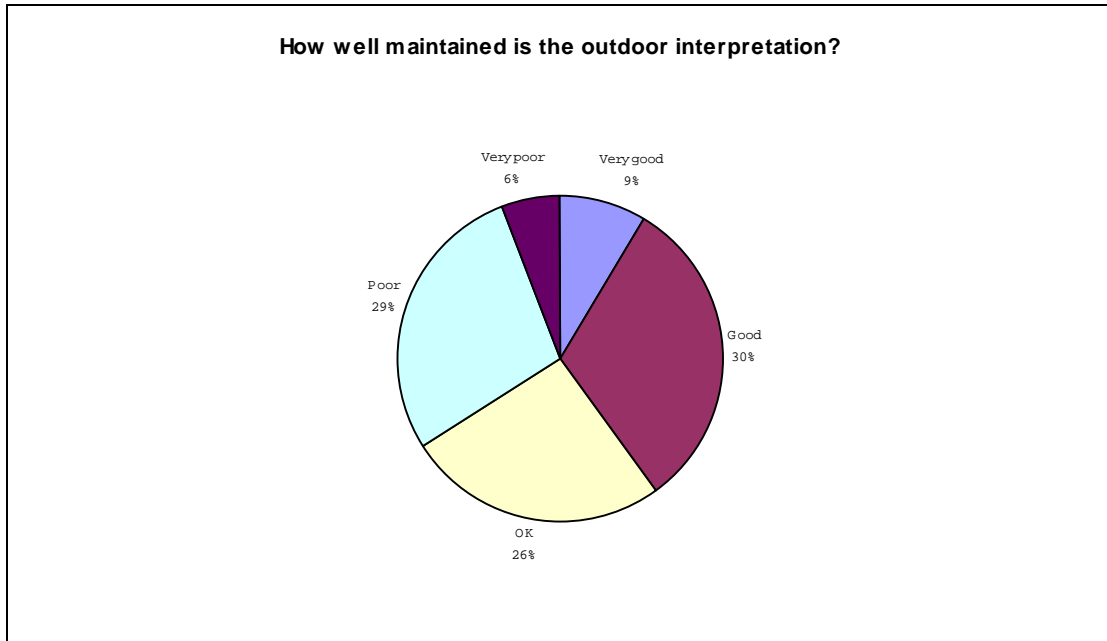


Events

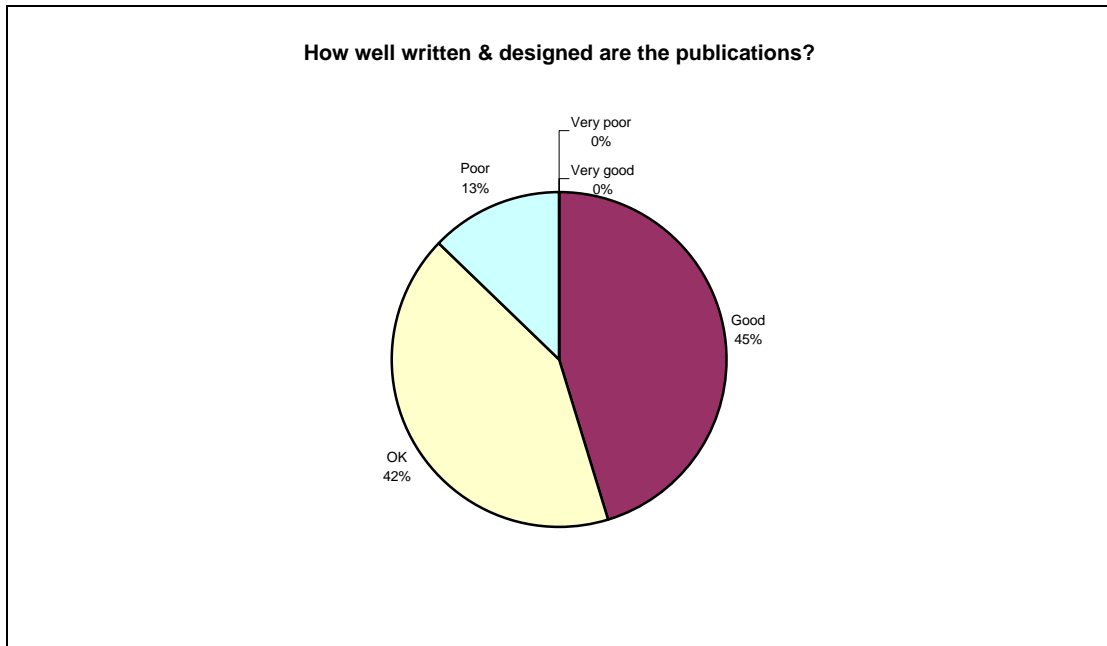


Appendix D – Quality of outdoor interpretation & publications

Outdoor interpretation



Publications



Appendix E – Morecambe Bay & Egg Centres

Morecambe Bay Centre, Grange

The Morecambe Bay Centre would “explain and bring to life Morecambe Bay as a natural resource and relate this to the thriving communities around it”. It would also act as an orientation point to other communities and attractions around the Bay.

Specific themes that were suggested for the Centre included:

- **natural history** – climate, geology and soils, the Bay, tides and shifting sands, fauna and flora
- **cultural history** – settlements, religious connections, Lancashire North of the Sands
- **traditional industries** – shrimping, stake-net fishing, boat-building, woodland industries
- **transport and communications** – crossing the sands, the development of the Furness Railway Line, 19th century pleasure cruises around the Bay
- **growth of tourism** – Grange as a resort, the open air swimming pool

It was envisaged that the Centre would be interactive and hands-on, educational but entertaining and enlightening.

Egg the Bird Centre, Morecambe

Egg the Bird Centre was conceived as a “focus for human interaction with Morecambe Bay”. Its purpose was to enhance the prospects for conservation of the Bay by increasing public awareness of the diversity of life it contains, the inter-relationships between life in the Bay and human activity, and the threats to the ecology of the Bay.

Proposed themes were:

- the origin of birds
- how birds work
- migration
- Morecambe Bay – bird’s eye view, food chain and changes through the year
- bird behaviour
- birds and people
- birds as a cultural influence.

Appendix F – Other interpretation audits

It was interesting to note that the National Trust and the recently-formed Glasson Dock Steering Group were both undertaking their own audits of existing interpretation at the same time as this work.

National Trust

The National Trust is currently looking at its own interpretation, and is renewing and updating much of it. Arnside-Silverdale is one of the pilot areas for this approach.

Appropriate themes will be identified for each site, although in general nature conservation tends to be the main feature. Panels will be more colourful and will display less text. They are moving towards more positive messages and away from the "don't do this" approach that has been used in the past. They are producing more maps that can be taken away, in preference to guided walks – the rationale is that it keeps it a bit less structured. They feel that interpretation should be "stimulating and surprising", and want to introduce interpretation that changes daily (*eg* wardens inserting laminated A4 sheets saying "fritillaries can be seen today") or seasonally to keep it fresh.

Glasson Dock

British Waterways has recently formed a Glasson Dock Steering Group. The group aims "to promote Glasson without changing its unique character". One of their first projects has been to undertake an audit of existing interpretation and facilities. The Group are very keen to promote the area for tourism. However, they were concerned that to become part of a Morecambe Bay Strategy would mean that they lose their local identity.