

FOREWORD

Morecambe Bay is a precious place. Vast areas of intertidal sand flats, extensive saltmarshes and surrounding fells create a dramatic land and seascape and provide habitats for one of the most important wildfowl and wader populations in the British Isles. Around the shores of the Bay over 166,000 people live and work, industries conduct their business and visitors come in large numbers for sport and recreation.

The image of the Bay is one of tranquillity but the mixing of an internationally important natural resource with a host of human activities could lead to a future which is far from tranquil if not appropriately managed.

The Morecambe Bay Strategy provides a framework for the sustainable management of the Bay to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Strategy's preparation has been co-ordinated by local authorities and English Nature, but its content has come largely from the hundred of organisations and individuals who have made contributions through meetings and working groups.

The publication of this Strategy marks the start of a new partnership between all those with an interest in Morecambe Bay. The Strategy has no statutory or mandatory force; it will require the continued effort and goodwill of everyone if its objectives are to be achieved.

We commend this Strategy for your support and active participation in its implementation.

Les Tuley
Chairman, Cumbria County Council

Lord Cranbrook
Chairman, English Nature

Don Yates
Chairman, Lancashire County Council

MORECAMBE BAY IS...

one of the most important features of the British coastline for a wide range of human activities, and for a diverse assembly of natural features.

THE MORECAMBE BAY STRATEGY IS...

the foundation of a partnership between the users and regulators of Morecambe Bay that will build understanding of the Bay and encourage wide participation in its future management.

THE AIM OF THE STRATEGY IS...

to build an economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable future for the communities, and the natural and man made features which make the Bay distinctive.

THE MORECAMBE BAY STRATEGY WILL...

provide a lead in sustaining the distinctive natural and man made features of Morecambe Bay for future generations;

promote the social and economic well being of the Bay's communities;

establish a framework to allow the many and varied interests in the Bay to share their expertise and knowledge; and

promote a process of local management by encouraging dialogue and minimising conflicts between the many and varied interests in the Bay.

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1 SUMMARY

1 The role of the Morecambe Bay Strategy
The Strategy is:

- a partnership which embraces interests all around the Bay;
- a framework which provides guidance to help sustain the quality of, and help to improve the Bay's economy, landscape, amenity value and environment; and
- a process that attempts to take account of all legitimate activities in the Bay.

The Strategy is not:

- a nature conservation plan, an economic development plan, a statutory document; or
- biased to favour any particular interest group.

2 The purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Strategy is to improve the way that the Bay is managed by:

- promoting integrated management by encouraging statutory bodies to work together and to consider the management of the Bay as a whole;
- promoting a new management framework that will bring users and regulators together to discuss and resolve issues at a local level.

3 Background to the Strategy

The Strategy has been prepared by local authorities and English Nature working with local people and organisations in accordance with Government guidance. The Morecambe Bay Strategy has involved over 1000 individuals and organisations in its preparation, seeking their views on issues, and advice on policies.

4 Guidance for the future

The Strategy offers a series of policies and objectives as guidance for the future use of the Bay. These proposals apply the aim of the Strategy to particular issues and concerns. Implementing these policies should guide the future use of the Bay in a way that benefits all interests.

5 Local involvement in the Strategy

The Strategy will continue to involve local people directly in the process of management. It will help to resolve problems by bringing interested parties together to negotiate their own solutions.

6 Principles into practice

The Strategy will be implemented through the partnership between users and regulators. Much of the implementation of the Strategy will be achieved through the management framework and management policies outlined here.

7 Update and review

The Strategy will be a process, involving many interests from around the Bay. The Strategy document will be regularly reviewed - it will be a living document that takes account of new developments and interests.

8 Future progress

This Strategy sets out a framework for the future management of Morecambe Bay. Wide participation will be the secret to the future progress of the Strategy.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Why the Morecambe Bay Strategy?

Work on the Morecambe Bay Strategy began in the autumn of 1992, when central and local government were coming to recognise the need for a new approach to the management of the coast. Central to this new approach were proposals for improving links between organisations; for promoting the environmentally sustainable use of the coast; and for management of the coast to be oriented towards coastal features rather than limited by administrative boundaries.

In response to these proposals a group was created incorporating all of the local authorities from around the Bay, together with English Nature. This group identified two main tasks: to identify the important features and uses of the Bay; and to suggest mechanisms and propose guidelines that would guide present and future activities.

2.2 The development of the Strategy

The development of the Strategy has been a gradual process that has involved over 1000 local people and organisations in extensive consultations at every stage. Several reports have been prepared during the development of the Strategy over the past 3 years.

During 1993 and 1994 the emphasis of the work lay in gathering together information describing the features of the Bay and the concerns of local people. Questionnaires and meetings with the individuals and organisations interested in the Bay informed this process, an exercise that involved over 1000 people from around the Bay. An 'Issues Report' that summarised the main concerns and problems around the Bay was published at the end of this phase of work in September 1994.

During 1995 work focused on identifying solutions to issues. A series of 'Working Groups' involving over 120 individuals and organisations were established in February 1995, and held several meetings during the early part of the year. The reports of these 'Working Groups' guided the preparation of the 'Draft Strategy' that was published for consultation in November 1995.

Many individuals and organisations made comments on the 'Draft Strategy'. These comments have been taken into account in the preparation of this report, the 'Morecambe Bay Strategy'.

2.3 Issues in Morecambe Bay

The Morecambe Bay Strategy is an issue - lead exercise; it is a tool for solving problems. The roots of the Strategy lie in an extensive consultation process that involved over 1000 people. Questionnaires and meetings provided a wealth of information about people's concerns that were summarised in the 'Issues Report' published in September 1994.

The meetings and questionnaires revealed a set of issues and concerns shared by many people and organisations. There are several common themes:

- Pollution - there is widespread concern about pollution from sewage and radioactive sources, shipping and the risk of pollution from the oil and gas industries. Worries about pollution and its effects were raised more frequently than any other issue.
- Management of the Bay is a great concern. In some circles there is a feeling that there is already too much regulation, while others want more legislation to support their interests. Most groups are keen to improve management by participating in the Strategy.
- Communication & interpretation of information about the Bay was felt by many to be inadequate. There is a great demand for information about the environment of the Bay, especially its water quality. There is also a need for better communications between groups of people that use or have an interest in the Bay; this was felt to be the key to solving many of the problems that arise.
- The local economy is in need of regeneration, in both rural and industrial sectors. There are many exciting development proposals in the area, but there are also concerns that these may damage the natural environment and landscape of the Bay. Harmonising these conflicting interests is a major issue that needs to be addressed.
- Rural tranquillity is the feature of the Bay that is most highly and widely valued. There is a distinctive relationship between the landscape, natural environment, and traditional activities that is unique to the area and is felt to be one of the Bay's greatest assets.

2.4 Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy is non-statutory; proposals arising from it will succeed if they are practical and popular; proposals that lack support will founder.

For the Strategy to succeed and endure it must be developed and implemented by many organisations and individuals from around Morecambe Bay. All interests need to work together in a partnership based on a clear management framework. This management framework will be based upon a new Morecambe Bay Standing Conference. Full details of this are given in section 4.

