

# Making the Most of the North West Coast Research Project

Executive Summary  
July 2006





## **Executive Summary**

Making the Most of the North West Coast (MMNWC) is a large and strategic programme, with the aim of delivering local projects which could deliver significant economic and wider social benefits whilst contributing to the protection and enhancement of the region's natural environment and biodiversity.

Co-ordinated by the North West Coastal Forum (NWCF), and delivered by Local Coastal Partnerships and other partners, MMNWC was originally submitted to the North West Development Agency led 'Economic and Regenerative Value of the Natural Environment' (ERVNE) study, where it was recognised as having significant potential for generating economic, social and natural environment benefits.

This paper presents the results of the next stage of the MMNWC programme: the creation of the first evaluated and justified Projects Portfolio. This Projects Portfolio will present those regional, sub-regional and local coastal projects that have shown potential for delivering a range of social, economic and environmental benefits that contribute and relate to the wider strategic vision and objectives of the North West. The Portfolio will be reviewed as a rolling programme, bringing forward new project ideas as these current projects move into delivery.

### **MMNWC: Benefits**

Improving and promoting awareness of our coastal assets will contribute to the region's economy directly through its potential tourism offer, and indirectly by improving the image and outside perceptions of the region. Socially, MMNWC can deliver against quality of life, sustainable communities and health agendas, and contribute to community cohesion and capacity building through training and voluntary activities. The continued protection and enhancement of coastal environments, landscapes, habitats and species through MMNWC will continue to protect and enhance the huge environmental value of the North West Coast.

The MMNWC Projects Portfolio will collectively deliver:

- Almost 30km of new access routes, and improvements to 5km of existing routes
- Over 500 ha of valuable habitats actively and sustainably managed
- Over 1000 voluntary opportunities
- 60 communities actively involved in coastal projects and activities
- Economic benefits through marketing, branding and processing of coastal 'products'
- New and improved tourism and visitor facilities and experiences
- Opportunities for improving the health of local communities through outdoor pursuits (particularly cycling)
- Protection of vulnerable and valuable species and habitats

### **MMNWC: Strategic Relevance**

MMNWC has a strong focus on its strategic value and viability. The programme's wide strategic relevance is demonstrated through its links with the key themes and objectives of all of the Region's key economic and other strategies.

This includes the Regional Economic Strategy<sup>1</sup> (RES), the Regional Spatial Strategy<sup>2</sup> (RSS) and major regional projects and programmes, including the existing and proposed Regional Parks (Mersey Waterfront, the Ribble Estuary and the North West Coastal Trail). It also meets objectives within the Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest<sup>3</sup>, and reflects the findings of the recent Marketing of the Natural Environment Report<sup>4</sup>.

Clearly, these high level regional strategies recognise the potential benefits the coast can bring to the North West – and MMNWC, as a regional portfolio of projects, can help to contribute to the social, economic and natural environment in the North West.

### **The Nature of the North West Coast**

The wildlife importance of the North West Coast is nationally and internationally renowned. Its biodiversity value includes many regionally and nationally important species and a wide range of habitats. The coast attracts visitors from across the UK, supporting a significant tourist industry, and provides a major recreational resource for the region, with a catchment that includes some of the most deprived areas in the country.

Early coastal projects and partnerships in the North West developed into PISCES - the Partnership of Irish Sea Coast and Estuary Strategies – an association that has played a key role in lobbying for policies and resources to support Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM or ICM) in North West England. In 2000 the North West Coastal Forum was formed. This is a multi-sector partnership bringing together stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors and established with the support of Government Office for the North West (GONW), now hosted by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) and independently chaired.

PISCES now forms a sub-group of NWCF and continues to act as a co-ordinating body for the region's 8 Local Coastal Partnerships, which in turn bring together a wide range of interests and encourage information sharing whilst working to common goals. As such, they are an essential component of ICZM as they have a strong focus on communication, coordination and community participation.

The North West is recognised nationally as a regional leader in the promotion and delivery of ICZM in the UK, and through the MMNWC Projects Portfolio the NWCF is now demonstrating how a strategic portfolio of ICZM projects can be delivered across a region.

### **The MMNWC Evaluation Process**

Local Coastal Partnerships and other key coastal partnership organisations were invited by the NWCF to submit project proformas which were then taken through a detailed evaluation to assess their strategic relevance, potential economic, social and environmental outputs, and deliverability.

There were 3 stages to the MMNWC evaluation process:

- *Pre-evaluation*: an initial review of all projects in terms of their suitability for inclusion in MMNWC and to identify where more information was needed;

---

<sup>1</sup> Northwest Regional Economic Strategy (2006) NWDA

<sup>2</sup> The North West Plan: Submitted Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England (2006) NWRA

<sup>3</sup> Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest (2003) NWDA,

<sup>4</sup> Marketing of the Natural Environment of the Northwest (2006) TEAM for NWDA & English Nature

- *Proposers Workshop: providing assistance and guidance to project proposers on the key regional strategies and the potential range of social, economic and environmental outcomes projects might deliver, as well as giving specific feedback on each of the proformas submitted;*
- *Full Evaluation: using an extensive set of evaluation criteria<sup>5</sup>, projects to be assessed according to their quality and coherence (strategic links, relevance to NWCF objectives, and links to other projects), value (potential outcomes and benefits) and achievability (likely costs, timescales and general project feasibility).*

In line with the aim of MMNWC to develop a portfolio of medium-sized projects, only those projects with estimated costs over £10,000 and under £100,000<sup>6</sup> were fully evaluated. However, in recognition of the possible large scale impact of the >£100,000 projects, and the high local relevance of the <£10,000 projects, these projects were instead informally reviewed.

### **Projects Portfolio**

Of the 59 projects submitted for evaluation:

- 9 projects were above the £100,000 upper limit;
- 8 were below the £10,000 lower limit;
- 30 projects – with a total value in excess of £1.9m over a 2 year period - met the evaluation criteria and are included as MMNWC Projects.

Projects in the MMNWC portfolio are a celebration of the diversity and values of the North West Coast, and are spread across the entire NW coastal area, with each LCP area having at least one project progressing.

To encourage integration and co-operation across projects, and to allow closer interpretation of strategic values and outputs, they are grouped into thematic tranches (although many projects deliver under several themes): **access, community, conservation, education, tourism.**

### **Access Projects**

The 'Access' theme includes those projects which focus on providing new or improved access to residents and visitors to sites along and areas of the North West Coast, including the provision of (particularly sustainable) transport facilities. Five 'Access' projects were felt to be suitable for taking forward:

- **Miles Without Stiles** (*Ravenglass*);
- **River Esk Footway and Cycleway Crossing** (*Ravenglass*);
- **Morecambe Promenade: Improvements to Permit Cycling** (*Morecambe Bay*);
- **North West Coastal Trail / National Cycle Network: Cockerham Marsh** (*Ribble Estuary*);
- **Sefton Coast Way: Hightown to Formby Access Improvements** (*Sefton Coast*).

The combined cost of these 5 MMNWC Access projects is £340,000 (with £30,000 already secured, leaving a funding gap of £310,000), and they will cumulatively deliver:

---

<sup>5</sup> The Evaluation Form is included in Appendix 3

<sup>6</sup> Including those projects with annual costs or distinct phases of activity of <£100,000,

- 6 new access routes (over 25 km)
- 4 improved access routes (over 4.5 km)
- Improved visitor experience in 2 key tourism areas
- Economic contributions to local communities via use of local suppliers / trades, increased visitor numbers, use / establishment of Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) scheme
- New links between at least 10 communities
- New opportunities for healthy lifestyles through new cycling provisions
- Extended opportunities for local volunteers

### ***Community Projects***

The MMNWC 'Community' Projects have a clear purpose of involving local communities in coastal activities, and have results that would impact directly on the well being and quality of life of local communities (and visitors). There are 3 MMNWC community projects included in this portfolio:

- ***Northwest Regional Beach Litter Initiative*** (*Regional*)
- ***Ravenglass High Tide Routes*** (*Ravenglass*)
- ***Poetry in the Duddon*** (*Duddon Estuary*)

The total cost for delivering these projects and their range of benefits is £200,000 (£12,000 secured, with a funding gap of £188,000), and cumulatively these projects will deliver a range of quantitative and qualitative benefits:

- Over 800 voluntary opportunities – with associated training opportunities
- More than 50 community groups actively engaged with delivery
- Up to 10 events for communities, schools and volunteers
- Creation of 1.5km of new access
- Creation of new community and visitor facilities, with associated economic benefits
- Enabling and encouraging community cohesion, empowerment and ownership (capacity building)

### ***Conservation Projects***

The North West Coast is nationally and internationally significant in terms of its habitats, species and biodiversity, and the MMNWC projects submitted under the Conservation theme reflect the diversity of our coastal environment. 5 conservation projects demonstrated through the evaluation a good potential for delivery:

- ***Solway Environmental Recording and Hammond Archive Development*** (*Solway Firth*)
- ***Lobster V-Notching Trial*** (*Solway Firth*)
- ***Sea Buckthorn Eradication*** (*Ravenglass*)
- ***Sefton Coast Woodlands Management Plan*** (*Sefton Coast*)
- ***Sefton Coast Grazing Animals Project*** (*Sefton Coast*)

The total cost of implementing these projects is £447,480. More than £100,000 has already been secured, leaving a balance of £346,680. In combination, the MMNWC conservation projects would deliver:

- Protection and enhancement of vulnerable and valuable habitats and species (including pine woodlands, dune habitats, Natterjack Toad, Great Crested Newts and Red Squirrels);

- A Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation brought into favourable condition status;
- Up to 450 ha of coastal habitats brought into management;
- Support of local traditional industries and practices;
- Contribution to the local economy through sustainable management and farming, and marketing / branding of local products;
- 500+ voluntary and community involvement opportunities.

### ***Education Projects***

The natural environment is a significant educational resource – both formally across all key stages of the National Curriculum and informally through general awareness raising and volunteering opportunities. 6 education projects were identified for taking forward in this portfolio:

- ***Turning Tides (Irish Sea)***
- ***Morecambe Bay Heritage Network (Morecambe Bay)***
- ***Interpretation: Ribble Estuary Regional Park (Ribble Estuary)***
- ***Safety Along the Coast (Dee Estuary)***
- ***Way-marking the Coast (Dee Estuary)***

The total combined cost for these projects is £305,000. With £5,750 already secured, a funding gap of £299,250 remains. Together, the five MMNWC education projects will deliver:

- A series of co-ordinated field trips and events for visitors, schools and specialist groups;
- A range of publications covering a variety of coastal issues (natural environment, social and economic uses, renewable energy, heritage, safety);
- A range of training opportunities for volunteers and local communities;
- Improved signage and interpretation to inform visitors and increase local knowledge of their environment;
- Improved image and sense of place.

### ***Tourism Projects***

The tourism theme featured particularly strongly in the submitted proformas, reflecting the value of the North West Coast as a significant tourism destination and recreational resource for the region. In all, 10 projects are included as MMNWC tourism projects:

- ***Solway Fish Project: Marketing Plan (Solway Firth)***
- ***Solway Heritage Fisheries Study and Development Plan (Solway Firth)***
- ***Solway Recreational Angling Guide (Solway Firth)***
- ***Pilot Boat Project (Ravenglass)***
- ***Morecambe Bay Harbour for Cross Bay Walkers (Morecambe Bay)***
- ***Improving Visitor Access at RSPB Leighton Moss (Morecambe Bay)***
- ***Cumbria Coast Clean Up, Count Up, Join Up (Morecambe Bay)***
- ***RSPB Marshside: Improving Parking Facilities (Ribble Estuary)***
- ***Red Squirrel Viewing Site, Lifeboat Road, Formby (Sefton Coast)***
- ***Making the Most of the Mersey (Mersey Estuary)***

## Making The Most Of The North West Coast

The total combined value of these projects is £640,500 – although with over £138,000 already secured, the actual funding gap is £501,800. Together, these 10 projects will:

- Encourage over 30,000 new visits to the North West Coast;
- Provide new visitor facilities in 4 locations;
- Creation of new access routes;
- Development of new interpretation and educational materials;
- Increase visitor spend, thus contributing to local economic development;
- Develop new and niche tourism markets;
- Improve the visitor experience.

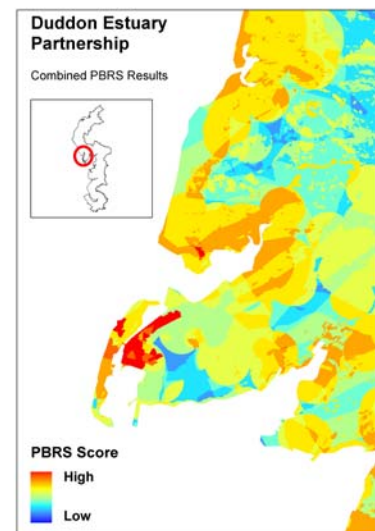
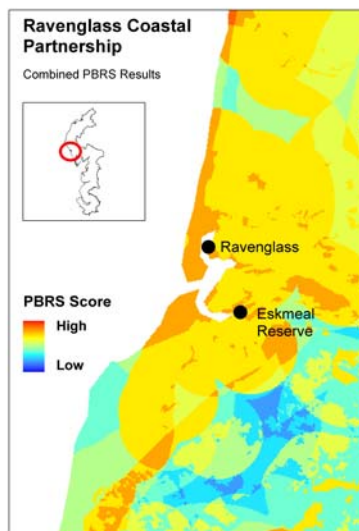
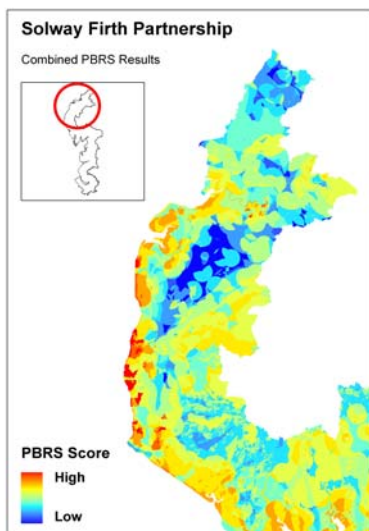
### Large & Small Projects

Because of the focus on reasonable implementation times, and a need for achievable, strategically relevant and valuable results, it was felt that only those projects falling within a £10-100,000 cost band and with a maximum timescale of 3 years should be included in the MMNWC portfolio. However, recognising the local value of the smaller scale projects, and the particular impact of the larger projects, these have also been reviewed, resulting in 4 smaller (less than £10,000) projects and 7 large scale (over £100,000) projects meeting MMNWC's general objectives.

### MMNWC & the Public Benefit Recording System

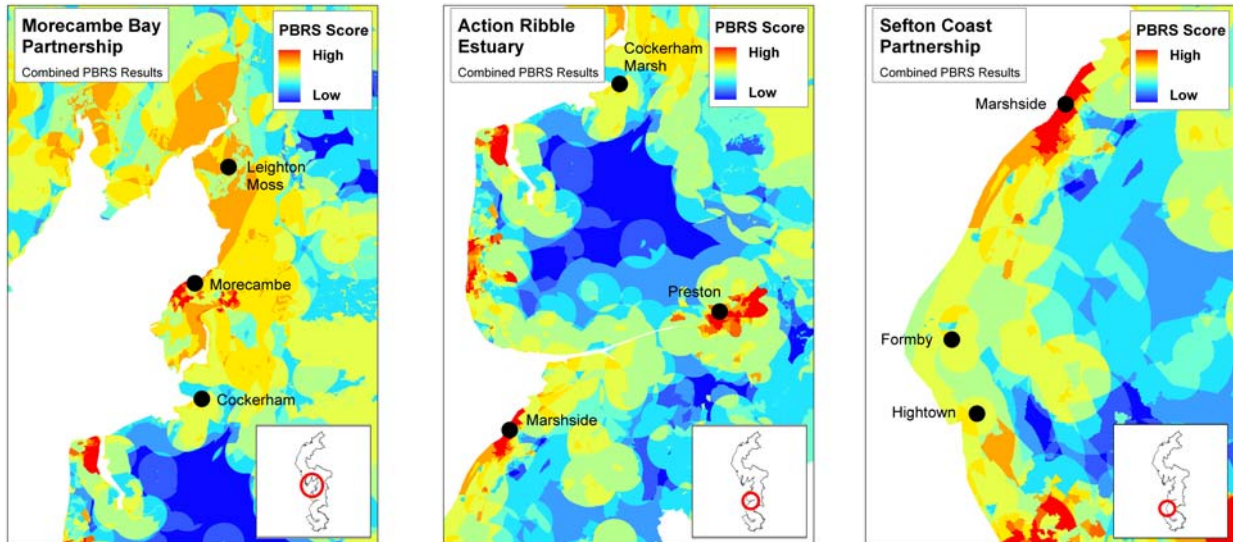
The range and depth of the benefits of MMNWC and its projects can be assessed using the Public Benefit Recording System (PBRs): a strategic planning and decision making tool, considering social, economic and environmental attributes to spatially illustrate those areas with the greatest public benefit potential.

The PBRs illustrates how the **Solway Firth** projects contribute to the socio-economic and environmental well being of the coastal area, as well as having a great potential to deliver MMNWC specific benefits. For the **Ravenglass** partnership area, although the socio-economic result is average, the area's high environmental value and strong MMNWC relevance results in a higher than average potential for delivering combined public benefits through the MMNWC projects. The single **Duddon Estuary** project has no specific location, but could be tailored to meet particular areas within the coastal partnership that show highest levels of public benefit potential.

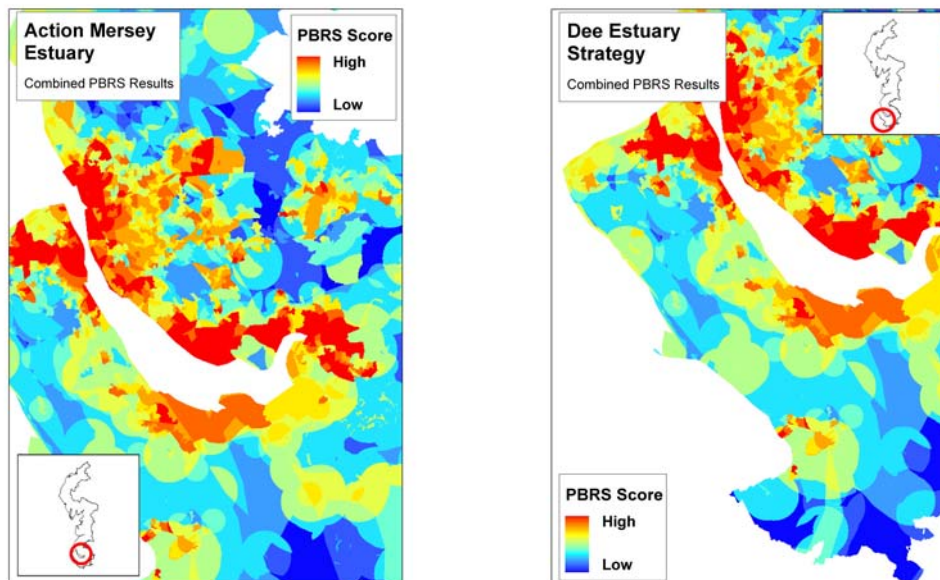


## Making The Most Of The North West Coast

**Morecambe Bay** has pockets of particularly high potential, with areas of particularly high socio-economic needs, while potential benefits range from high to medium in environmental terms and the MMNWC benefits are strongly reflected. If these highest potential areas are considered within the wider Morecambe Bay catchment area, it is clear that the MMNWC projects will be delivering where outputs and outcomes can make a real difference. Like the other partnership areas, the **Ribble Estuary** has a range of potential public benefit results, but probably shows the lowest values overall. Although the **Sefton Coast** itself does not generally show particularly high public benefit potential, the area's catchment has the biggest concentration of highest scoring areas in the North West (the Mersey Belt), and benefits of the projects are likely to be felt there as well as in the actual Sefton Coast area itself.



As described previously, Merseyside has the highest concentration of areas with high public benefits potential, and the **Action Mersey Estuary** project is likely to deliver benefits in many of these highest priority areas. Similarly to Sefton, the **Dee Estuary** has limited area of high public benefit potential but does have a catchment that includes the high priority Merseyside area.



This PBRs assessment clearly demonstrates that MMNWC can deliver its range of possible outputs and outcomes where the potential is greatest, with the MMNWC projects impacting on those areas demonstrating the highest levels of public benefit potential when considering the catchment of the project and the origin of potential beneficiaries.

**MMNWC: Recommendations**

This MMNWC Projects Portfolio illustrates how the high value, number and variety of coastal projects in the North West can deliver against key regional strategic objectives, resulting in a wide range of outputs and outcomes.

However, the nature of short-term project funding and the need to raise core funding from within each Local Coastal Partnership, and the lack of capacity (due to resourcing issues) within the North West Coastal Forum and PISCES, significantly restricts any ability to co-ordinate, and within LCPs to deliver, the range of projects and activities outlined here without additional resources. Further, it is recognised that there are a range of projects that are in development at the present time or will be developed in future that could make a significant contribution to the North West's coast and the region as a whole.

It is with these considerations in mind it is recommended that:

- A Programme Manager be put into place: to manage the MMNWC rolling programme, liaise with LCPs, facilitate delivery and seek funding for MMNWC;
- MMNWC becomes a rolling programme: looking to encourage and include new projects and ideas on an on-going basis;
- A small projects fund be established: to allow those localised, small scale projects of significant value to local communities and environments to be implemented more efficiently and effectively.

Should these recommendations be actioned, MMNWC can begin – and continue – to deliver the huge range and depth of social, economic and environmental benefits that are outlined in this portfolio, making a significant strategic impact on the quality of life of all those enjoying the beauty and variety of the North West's Coast.