

Solway  
Coast  
Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty



# Solway Coast

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Management Plan 2020-25



SOLWAY FIRTH

SCOTLAND

A75

Gretna 45

A6071

Annan

Eastriggs

Bowness-on-Solway

Port Carlisle

Glasson

Drumburgh

Burgh-by-Sands

Rockcliffe

Solway Wetlands Centre

Bowness Common and Campfield Marsh Reserves

Cardurnock

Anthorn

Angerton

Kirkbride

Finglandrigg Wood Reserve

Little Bampton

Kirkbampton

Beaumont

Monkhill

Orton Moss Reserve

Watchtree Reserve

Great Orton

Skinburness

Silloth

Beckfoot

Mawbray

Allonby

Crosscanonby

Westnewton

Aspatria

Maryport

Dalston

Thursby

Wigton

Abbeytown

Holme Cultram Abbey

Wedholme Flow Reserve

Martin Tarn

Thurstonfield Lough

Boustead Hill

Rockcliffe Marsh

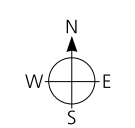
Burgh Marsh

Hadrian's Wall (course of)

CUMBRIA

Carlisle

	Motorway		Solway Coast
	A road (primary route)		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	A road (main road)		Built-up area
	B road		Nature reserve
	Minor road		Marsh
	Rail line / station		Wildlife site
	Hadrian's Wall (course of)		Visitor centre
	0 1 2 3 kilometres		Heritage site
	0 1 2 3 miles		Parking
			Site of natural or historical interest



Front cover image: Sunset over Dubmill



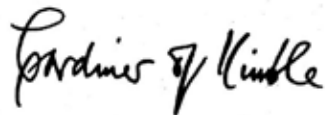
# Ministerial Foreword

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover – the first of its kind for generations – has made recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work in. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for the Solway Coast AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value the Solway Coast.

I would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.



**Lord Gardiner of Kimble,**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity



*“ In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work in.”*

# Chairman's Foreword

The Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a very special landscape, nationally designated for its natural beauty, including its wide range of habitats, rich historical legacy as well as its wide open views and real sense of tranquillity. Having been born and bred on the Solway Coast, I am proud to be a member of the community here and share with others this wonderful place.

As we step forward into a new phase and a new Management Plan period, I would like to both reflect on the past and look forward to the future. The Solway was first designated in 1964, and we have now worked to conserve and enhance it for over 50 years, action having been carried out by a hugely experienced staff team and partnership as well as longstanding communities who have cherished and looked after it. We are very grateful for the long historical legacy behind us and the impact that has had. We now enter into a new era, and recognise the opportunity that five more years brings to really make a difference to the way this landscape develops into the future. Many challenges lie ahead – the future of farming support, the impact of climate change, the resilience of the coastline to erosion and nature recovery being just a few of them. At the same time there are opportunities – better connections with communities and visitors, the ability of wild open spaces to heal and improve wellbeing and strong partnerships with a whole range of organisations, businesses and community groups amongst others. We are excited about the direction set by the recent national Designated Landscapes review and hope that this will help us achieve more for the Solway over the next five years.

Much work has gone into this new Management Plan which has been reviewed on behalf of Allerdale Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council with support from Defra as well as many others. The Plan has evolved through discussions, meetings and feedback from a wide cross section of people, from the public, partners, community groups and other organisations and we are extremely grateful for everyone's input.

We hope that you feel inspired and optimistic about this Plan, and above all, enthusiastic to play an active role helping to deliver it. By doing so we can all make a difference in looking after, enjoying and understanding this wonderful place.



**William (Bill) Jefferson, OBE**  
**Chairman, Solway Coast AONB**  
**Joint Advisory Committee**





# Our 2030 Vision

It is 2030. The Solway Coast is a more resilient landscape, richer in wildlife, with declines in biodiversity being reversed. Our saltmarshes and mudflats have stable populations of wildfowl and waders, benefiting from well-managed habitat, free from disturbance. Our sand dune systems are thriving, with a richer diversity of plants and animals.

The Solway Mosses have been restored, well-managed and better connected; surrounding land use is sympathetic to their conservation. They are valued by the public for their distinctive wildlife and as part of what makes the Solway special.

Our lowland farmland and marshy grasslands are richer in biodiversity than in 2020. High Nature Value farmers are rewarded properly for providing species-rich grassland, better-managed and connected kested hedgerows, and cleaner, more wildlife-rich watercourses.

Our historic environment, especially our legacy of traditional building styles and our rich historical legacy from the pre-Roman to the twentieth century, is better understood, conserved and celebrated. Our cultural heritage is widely recognised and valued and is continually evolving and growing richer.

Local communities have a strong sense of what's special about where they live, they celebrate their heritage together creatively and feel involved in its management. People increasingly value the Solway Coast's natural heritage for its own sake and for all that it provides for us.

The Solway Coast is a natural choice as a place to live, work, explore and enjoy. Well-managed, expertly interpreted and open to all, our natural and cultural assets underpin an increasingly environment-led local economy.

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# The nature and purpose of this plan



This is the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan (2020-2025). It is the statutory plan for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Solway Coast over the next five years. It focuses on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage which combine to create a sense of place; it also addresses issues around how people can better explore, enjoy and understand the landscape and in doing so support a nature and culture based economy. It is a plan for the area, not a work plan for the AONB staff team, and many organisations, individuals and communities have a role in implementing it.

## Different people will use it in different ways

**Local authorities:** one audience for the plan are the three local authorities of the Solway Coast, as it is upon them that the duty is placed to produce the Plan (and to conserve and enhance the AONB, a duty also placed on all public bodies). The AONB Joint Advisory Committee, led in this context by the Officer Steering Group and the AONB staff team, discharges the plan-making

function on the authorities' collective behalf. Planning and other policies of local authorities should support the implementation of the plan.

### **Government agencies, statutory undertakers, utilities and public**

**bodies:** another important audience, these bodies must, in accordance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), have regard to the purposes of AONB designation in the carrying out of their functions. The outcomes and actions in this Plan should guide them in the discharging of their duty under the Act.

**Conservation organisations:** the plan should play a leading role in setting their priorities in this area and should promote collaboration between organisations to meet shared objectives.

**Farmers and landowners:** this plan should help to guide the content and targeting of new locally-tailored agri-environment schemes and the elements of the proposed Land Management Plans for individual holdings in such schemes.





The plan sets out conservation priorities for the area and the public goods and services that can be delivered locally – farmers and landowners have the central role conserving our natural heritage and providing the benefits that flow to society from sound land management.

**Communities:** the content of the plan can help inspire and support community projects, providing a focus for activity.

**For everyone:** the plan highlights the area's special qualities, identifies actions that will bring about improvements and identifies where conservation priorities should lie. It should be used as evidence to support policy, strategy and action plan development, and, crucially to help justify the allocation of resources and applications for funding.

### **Not the plan for everything**

The Plan is not intended to be a panacea for all the perceived problems which

local communities might face, nor is it intended to duplicate or replace other statutory plans which affect the area. It is, however, the only document with a focus on the purpose of AONB designation – the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. In addition to this Plan, the Solway Basin National Character Area Profile, the production of which was led by Natural England, is a good source of baseline data and an excellent companion document to this plan, as is the Solway Coast AONB Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (2010).

### **Habitats Regulations**

It should be noted that individual proposals flowing from the Management Plan that may themselves be considered to be projects for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations may require individual assessment and will need to be permitted in accordance with those Regulations in order to be compliant with the Plan.



# Introduction



*Barnacle geese over the Solway*

**As part of developing this plan, people were consulted in meetings, at events and online, on what matters to them about the Solway Coast and about the things they were either concerned about and/or wanted to see looked after. This brief introduction to this special landscape builds on and amplifies some of the things people said as part of that consultation – where better to begin this document that sets out what makes the Solway special and how it can be conserved?**

At just 115km<sup>2</sup>, the Solway Coast, designated in December 1964, is one of the smallest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the country. Other places might be bigger, or better known than this narrow strip of coastline between Carlisle and Maryport, but the Solway is in some ways a well-kept secret. “Everyone knows about the Lakes but it’s surprising how many people outside the area have no idea what wonderful beaches and coastal areas there are.” It is understated in many ways, and what it lacks in relative size it makes up for in the beauty and wildness of the estuary, the mysterious feel of the mosses and the subtle nature of its farmed landscapes. As one resident said, “I love it. It’s so unspoilt, it feels like going back in time.”

The Solway Coast is perhaps most celebrated for its estuary landscapes – its saltmarshes, mudflats and dunes – that provide winter refuge for thousands of wintering wildfowl and waders. For many of us, the birdlife of the estuary provides “the natural soundscape” to the Solway. These are wide open



*“Everyone knows about the Lakes but it's surprising how many people outside the area have no idea what wonderful beaches and coastal areas there are.”*

*Dog walkers on Glasson Moss*



landscapes, with outstanding views into and out of the AONB. Nature and wide open spaces feature prominently in what people value, with one resident simply saying, “I love to watch the skies and the wildlife.”

If the estuary landscapes are wild and dramatic, the Solway Mosses are perhaps the most enigmatic part of the coast. They are easily dismissed as ‘wasteland’ and this can hamper their conservation, but they provide vital services to us all – carbon storage and sequestration in particular. They are also rich in wildlife, especially dragonflies, butterflies (notably the rare large heath), birds and specialist plants like sundews.

Set back from the coast, a gentle, rolling, pastoral landscape of improved and semi-improved grasslands is enclosed by ‘kested’ hedgerows and cut through by sunken lanes and narrow roads. Here, and on the grazing marshes, farming remains an important part of the life of the Solway, whilst in the estuary there is a rich heritage of harvesting the fruits of the sea. This is captured well by someone who sees this clearly as part of what makes the area special and that it should continue to be so: “The Solway Plain has a rich agricultural and marine heritage which should be encouraged.”

Settlements and the wider landscape have a complex mixture of vernacular buildings, reflecting a long history of occupation and include fortified houses and churches, longhouses, ‘clay dabbins’ and cruck-roofed buildings. In these buildings and structures, and in the field and settlement patterns, place names and archaeological features, the past is with us all the time.

*Hedgerows in winter*



*Meadow*





Local people and visitors love to walk and cycle through this landscape and to enjoy its natural wonders and its cultural heritage, feeling that the Solway Coast can provide “a more balanced way of life where everyone can benefit from slowing down and tuning into nature for wellbeing and appreciation.” A visitor to the area summed up the impact the Solway has on their health and well-being, saying simply, “I feel I breathe better there.”

People value “the sheer beauty and essentialness of this area” and want to see it conserved and enhanced where possible. But looking ahead, they are concerned about the future of our landscape and its wildlife and habitats, about climate change and for people’s continued ability to explore and enjoy the area sustainably and learn more about it. They are also concerned about a potential increase in development pressure; the possible loss of special views; the loss of traditional buildings; the potential decline of farming and fishing. They see an increase in fly-tipping and litter. And they want to make sure these concerns are not realised and that the area has a bright future.

Put simply, they want to, “ensure that the Solway Coast remains an area of outstanding natural beauty.” That is what this Management Plan is all about, and if everyone can get behind the kinds of actions it promotes, we can achieve the Vision outlined on page 3, together.

“*I feel I breathe better there.*”

*Horse riding on the beach*







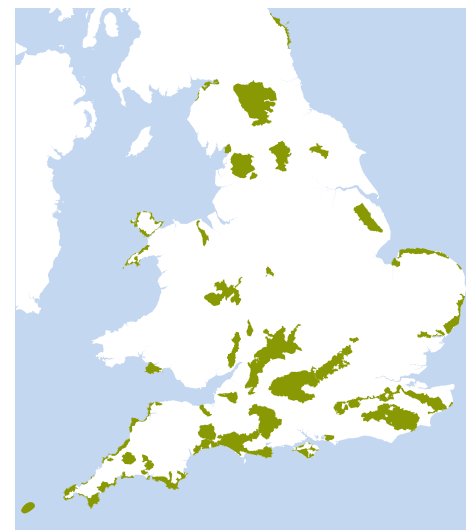


# Background to the plan

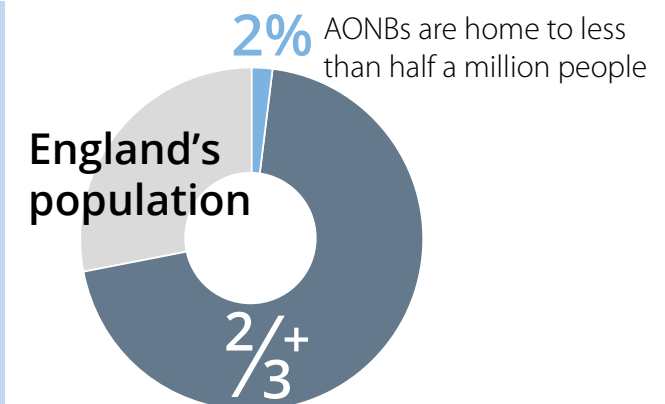


## Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 1/5th of the land surface. The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of the most special and cherished places in England. AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. Although home to less than half a million people (under 2% of England's population), over two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB and around 150m people visit English AONBs every year, spending in excess of £2bn.



The AONBs of England and Wales



Over two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB

[www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk](http://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk)



*View over the Cardurnock Peninsula*

Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our most outstanding landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character and natural beauty that they are recognised internationally as part of the global Protected Areas family to be managed in the interest of everyone – local residents, businesses, visitors, and the wider public – and protected for future generations.

## **The legal framework**

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War. It may be strengthened further as a result of the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes which reported in September 2019.

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act first established the AONB designation, provided AONBs with protection under planning law against

inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for ‘preserving and enhancing natural beauty’ in them (S.88).

The Countryside Act 1968 placed a responsibility on local authorities, the statutory conservation bodies, and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to ‘have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas’ (S.37). Within AONBs, this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate to promote, farming, forestry and the rural economy wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.

The Environment Act 1995 introduced the phrase ‘conserve and enhance’ in place of ‘protect and enhance’ in relation to duties of local authorities, the Environment Agency and other bodies. No statutory duties were placed on local authorities actively to manage AONBs in any particular way.





*Cows on Burgh Marsh*

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) subsumes and strengthens the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirms the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarifies the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management. In particular:

Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Section 83 establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England's duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement.

Section 84 confirms the powers of local authorities to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB, and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.

Section 85 places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of AONBs when coming to any decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. 'Relevant authorities' include all public bodies (including county, borough, district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.

Sections 86 to 88 allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation Boards have the additional but

secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. They also have an obligation to 'seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities' in co-operation with local authorities and other public bodies.

Sections 89 and 90 create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a Management Plan 'which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it', and thereafter to review adopted and published plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required to do this 'acting jointly'. Section 92 makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of 'flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.'

*Cycling along the edge of Burgh Marsh*



## The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Section 99 formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or 'any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape' does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes 'as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty).'

Schedule 7 asserts that an AONB joint committee of two or more local authorities, or a conservation board, can constitute a 'designated body' for the performance of functions allocated to Defra.

### Responsibility for AONBs

The formal legal responsibility for both development control and for management of AONBs (including the duty to prepare an AONB Management Plan) lies with the local authorities in whose area(s) the AONB exists, except in two instances (the Chilterns and the Cotswolds AONB) where this is the responsibility of a statutory Conservation Board.

In addition, the duty of all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' places an obligation on a wide range of organisations not just to consider any detrimental impacts of their policies and activities outside as well as within the boundaries of any AONB, but positively to consider how they might benefit the AONBs special qualities.

Statutory guidance for the production of AONB Management Plans is contained in former Countryside Agency guidance documents CA23 and CA221. These make it clear that preparation needs actively to engage and gain the support of all key stakeholders, who will assist in its delivery. The AONB Management Plan is a place-based plan derived through local consensus. It seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB through the application of local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. It is a plan not for the partnership but for the AONB as a whole.

## History of AONB designation and milestone documents

AONBs emerged from the mood of civic renewal which characterised the decades following the end of the Second World War – the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was one amongst many – including health, education, agriculture and development planning – which established the basis for a ‘new Britain’. The need to designate special areas of the countryside against inappropriate development, to celebrate and conserve their distinctive features, encourage sustainable agriculture and foster local economic wellbeing was recognised well before the Dower (1945) and Hobhouse (1947) reports which led to the establishment of AONBs and National Parks.

Since their establishment by the 1949 Act there has been continuous development in the policy and legislative context of AONBs, shaped by a number of key policy documents including:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Policy Statement (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, 1991)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Guide for Members of Joint Advisory Committees (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, 1994)
- Protecting our finest countryside: Advice to Government (Countryside Commission, 1998)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide (Countryside Agency, 2001)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A Guide for AONB partnership members (Countryside Agency, 2001)
- Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, 2006)
- Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (Natural England, 2011)
- Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Natural England Designations Strategy (Natural England, 2012)

Seventy years after the 1949 Act, the production and implementation of revised AONB Management Plans will help to ensure that AONBs are leaders in developing and promoting the intentions of the 1949 Act in a rapidly changing modern context.

## Planning and AONBs

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy the same levels of protection from development as those of UK National Parks. Responsibility for planning policy in AONBs lies with the relevant local authority (in National Parks it lies with the National Park Authority). This means that while AONB Management Plans themselves do not form part of any local development plan they are, nevertheless, vitally important documents in the planning system. They are:

- the basis for identifying the special qualities of the area, those aspects of the AONB which are critical in contributing to its natural beauty and potentially influential in development planning policy
- a ‘material consideration’ in the determination of individual planning applications and at appeal.

These special qualities cannot be seen in isolation from each other and are more than a bullet-point list, but include scenic beauty, a strong sense of relative wildness, remoteness and tranquillity of the Firth, wide-open skies, inland mosses and raised mires, a wealth of breeding wading birds, and the sights and sounds of the sea. All these qualities are amplified throughout this plan and in combination they produce a unique sense of place.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) states:

- The ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ at paragraph 11. Paragraph 11b(i) states that strategic policies should as a minimum provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and others uses, ... unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area. Footnote 6 states that the policies referred to are those in the NPPF relating to ... an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- NPPF paragraph 172 requires that in any decision great weight should be given to ‘conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty’ in AONBs which (together with National Parks) ‘have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.’ Paragraph 172 also states that ‘The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas’.



The intention is that the NPPF provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the local development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Local Plans provide more detailed policies in relation to the Solway Coast.

## North West Marine Plan

Further policy context for the AONB Management Plan can be found in the draft North West Marine Plan (due for publication in mid-2020). Marine Plans inform and guide decision makers in development matters affecting marine and coastal areas; there is an overlap with terrestrial plans which generally extend from the mean low water springs mark. Proposals that may have adverse impacts on the objectives of marine protected areas must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, avoid, minimise or mitigate such impacts. It is considered that the implementation of this Management Plan will support policies in the forthcoming inshore and offshore marine plans and vice versa. A duty to co-operate with the Marine Management Organisation (the plan-maker of the Marine Plans) is placed on relevant local authorities.

## Major development

Government policy (NPPF paragraph 172) states that 'planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'

NPPF paragraph 11 asserts a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'; however, this is limited where 'specific policies (including AONB Policies) indicate development should be restricted'

## AONB 'setting'

The term 'setting' is used to refer to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within an AONB. Its extent will vary

depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB. Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB, and Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) emphasises that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside the AONB boundary. Not all activities will be detrimental; conservation practices and economic ties outside the AONB can support the purpose of AONB designation.

## The international context

English AONBs are part of the international Protected Area Family. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, they have a special significance (together with UK National Parks) as being recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V – Protected Landscapes'.

Category V protected landscapes are defined by IUCN as: 'A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.' IUCN emphasises their importance as cultural landscapes – in distinction to Category I (Strict Nature Reserves and Wilderness Areas) and Category II National Parks (which for IUCN are large natural or near-natural areas, unlike UK national parks).

Until recently, the AONB designation was regarded (together with that of UK National Parks) as an anomaly in the international protected area system which prioritised 'naturalness' as a criterion of value. In the last quarter-century, however, they have come to be recognised, particularly within Europe, as leaders in the move towards area-based sustainable development. AONBs in particular, as 'working' landscapes, lead the way in pioneering new approaches to integrated countryside management based on voluntary partnerships engaging and working with local communities to secure common goals.

The new, multidisciplinary, multifunctional concept of landscape is encapsulated in the European Landscape Convention (ELC). Adopted by the Council of Europe in 2000 (it is not an EA directive and will remain unaffected by Brexit) it has been applicable to the UK since March 2007. ELC promotes a definition of landscape which usefully underpins the rationale for AONBs: 'An area, as perceived by

people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors', a rich concept that encompasses but goes beyond sectoral (geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, historical or aesthetic) approaches.

ELC makes it clear that people are at the heart of all landscapes (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the eminent) each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it. The ELC places obligations on signatory states to recognise landscape 'as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity.' Obligations include a requirement to identify the diversity and range of landscapes, the important features of each, and to engage with local communities, private bodies and public authorities in their planning and management. This includes raising awareness and understanding of the character, value and functions of landscape and the way these are changing. There is also a requirement to provide training in landscape-related skills. AONBs and their managing organisations are a very significant contributor to delivering on the UK's obligations under ELC.

## The NAAONB and the purpose of the AONB network

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Its objectives are to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs
- advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs
- promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other protected areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued.

It does this by taking a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals.

Charity members are involved in the planning and management of around 8,000 square miles of outstanding and cherished landscapes in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland. Membership includes most of the AONB partnerships, as well as some of those Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, together with a number of voluntary bodies, businesses, and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

The NAAONB's vision is that the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure. The charity's mission is to support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships with a strong collective voice. Through the NAAONB, the following high-level objectives have been adopted as the common national purpose of the AONB network:

- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future
- support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation
- value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being.



*Marsh fritillary*





# Core principles for this plan



**Nature Recovery:** The recovery of nature has to start now and it is at the heart of this Plan. Action which restores, enhances, expands and connects habitats and reverses the decline in biodiversity should be prioritised. This activity must take place on a landscape scale, rather than focused on 'sites' in isolation, and through a 'landscape approach' which works within the social and economic context of the area. There should be no decisions taken on the Solway Coast which lead to the net loss of biodiversity. The principle of net gain for biodiversity should be applied to all development decisions. This plan supports delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan

**Climate change:** Human-influenced climate change is real. Projects and initiatives arising from this Plan should have as small a carbon footprint as possible and maximise opportunities for carbon storage and sequestration. Projects which seek land management solutions to problems of a changing climate will be encouraged, as will research which helps us better understand our changing climate. Small-scale renewable energy schemes will be

encouraged and local people's effort to reduce the amount of energy and resources they use will be supported.

**An ecosystems approach:** Nature provides us with 'services' and benefits if we look after it – things which should be recognised in land management and development decisions. Maintaining these services and benefits is another powerful reason, if more were needed, to look after species and habitats and sustain natural processes.

**Landscape change:** Change in the landscape is inevitable, especially in a dynamic coastal environment, and is often to be welcomed, but that change needs to be managed carefully to ensure that what makes the Solway special and distinctive is not lost.

**Supporting sustainable land management together:** Strong and meaningful collaborations between farmers, landowners, conservation bodies, local authorities and local people are the only way to ensure that nature has





View over the Solway Firth at Mawbray Banks



Roe deer



Rowing a traditional wooden Solway skiff

another, e.g. new woodlands will not be planted on areas with existing biodiversity importance or historic significance, or wind turbines would not be erected where they would damage the character of the landscape.

**Economy and environment:** Nature and beauty and a strong sense of place are economic and social assets. In a nationally protected landscape in particular, development must be environmentally sustainable as well as economically and socially sustainable.

**Open to everyone:** There should be equality of opportunity for everyone to enjoy what this area has to offer – there are barriers to remove to make this possible, from limited public transport, to the need for better information or better infrastructure, and only some of these are within the scope of this Plan.

**Community and conservation:** Local people should be encouraged and supported to devise projects and initiatives that conserve and celebrate natural beauty, or become involved in those led by others.

**Learning and discovering:** Opportunities to enhance understanding of natural and cultural heritage should be taken whenever possible and costed into conservation projects; programmes of education and life-long learning are critical to the future well-being of nature – *people will not care about what they cannot enjoy and they cannot enjoy what they cannot experience.*

**Costs and benefits:** Conserving and enhancing natural beauty, helping people explore, enjoy and understand the Solway Coast and supporting land-based industries, is a public good – appropriate resources need to be found for it.

a bright future. A focus on outcomes, not prescriptions, will deliver more for nature than a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Cross-border collaboration:** There is always going to be merit in working across the border between England and Scotland on conservation, tourism and recreation activity and every effort should be made to foster this.

**Health and well-being:** Delivering this Plan should generate new opportunities for first hand experiences in nature, something that is proven to bring health and well-being benefits. Activity which promotes an emotional engagement with nature should be encouraged; this also enhances well-being and increases people's care for the world around them.

**Avoiding perverse outcomes:** There is an assumption in this Plan that actions will not bring about one environmental benefit at the expense of



Oystercatcher

# An ecosystems approach – what does nature do for us?

Nature does not 'owe us a living', yet it provides us with one all the same. So, as well as prioritising the conservation of nature for its own sake, it's vital to understand that our natural assets, properly cared for, provide services and benefits on which society is dependent.

## Natural Capital, Services and Benefits

'Natural capital' refers to the stock of physical and natural assets that support services and benefits for society. It includes biodiversity, habitats, landscapes, geological resources and natural processes. So, the Solway Mosses are a natural capital asset, that provide water storage services, that bring the benefit of flood risk mitigation. By conserving and restoring the mosses and other habitats locally, we are doing something intrinsically valuable for nature, but also supporting services and benefits for society. These services and benefits also depend on the wise use of economic and social capital, but at their root is the natural capital that makes their delivery possible.

These services include nutrient cycling, pollination, carbon storage, biomass, erosion protection and water purification; the benefits we derive from them include clean air and water, flood risk reduction, recreation, food, employment opportunities and a source of physical and spiritual well-being. We should never have to ask, 'What has nature ever done for us?'

Our natural capital has been seen as limitless and free, and something which has little or no value to business – and usually as a constraint. However, natural capital is clearly not limitless and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) acknowledged in 2012 that 40% of global gross domestic product (GDP) is dependent on it. We have failed to take account of our impacts on natural capital to the point where we may have depleted it beyond its capability to support us into the future. We are 'overdrawn at the bank of nature' and unless we start reinvesting quickly, significantly and in the right places, the declines will continue and the many services nature provides for us will be all but lost.



*Shaggy inkcap*



*Drumburgh Moss*

## Taking an ecosystems approach

This Plan highlights some of the services and benefits that flow from our natural assets and identifies desired outcomes and actions to secure their future. The plan takes an ecosystems approach:

- it is place-based, focusing on the whole Solway Coast (and where necessary beyond)
- it combines action for biodiversity and landscape conservation with an understanding of the public benefits this brings
- it is not focused on species, habitats and issues in isolation – rather it promotes an integrated approach to large-scale conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, seeking to understand the effects of management on nature and people. One can read through from issue to action to outcome and to the ecosystem services and benefits provided.

This approach attempts to understand, and work within, the acceptable limits of environmental change, in order to meet community need without compromising the natural assets that will support us in the future. It requires a joined-up commitment to delivering the Plan's Outcomes and Vision, to drive better and more integrated policy and action on the ground across local authorities, agencies, NGOs and the community.

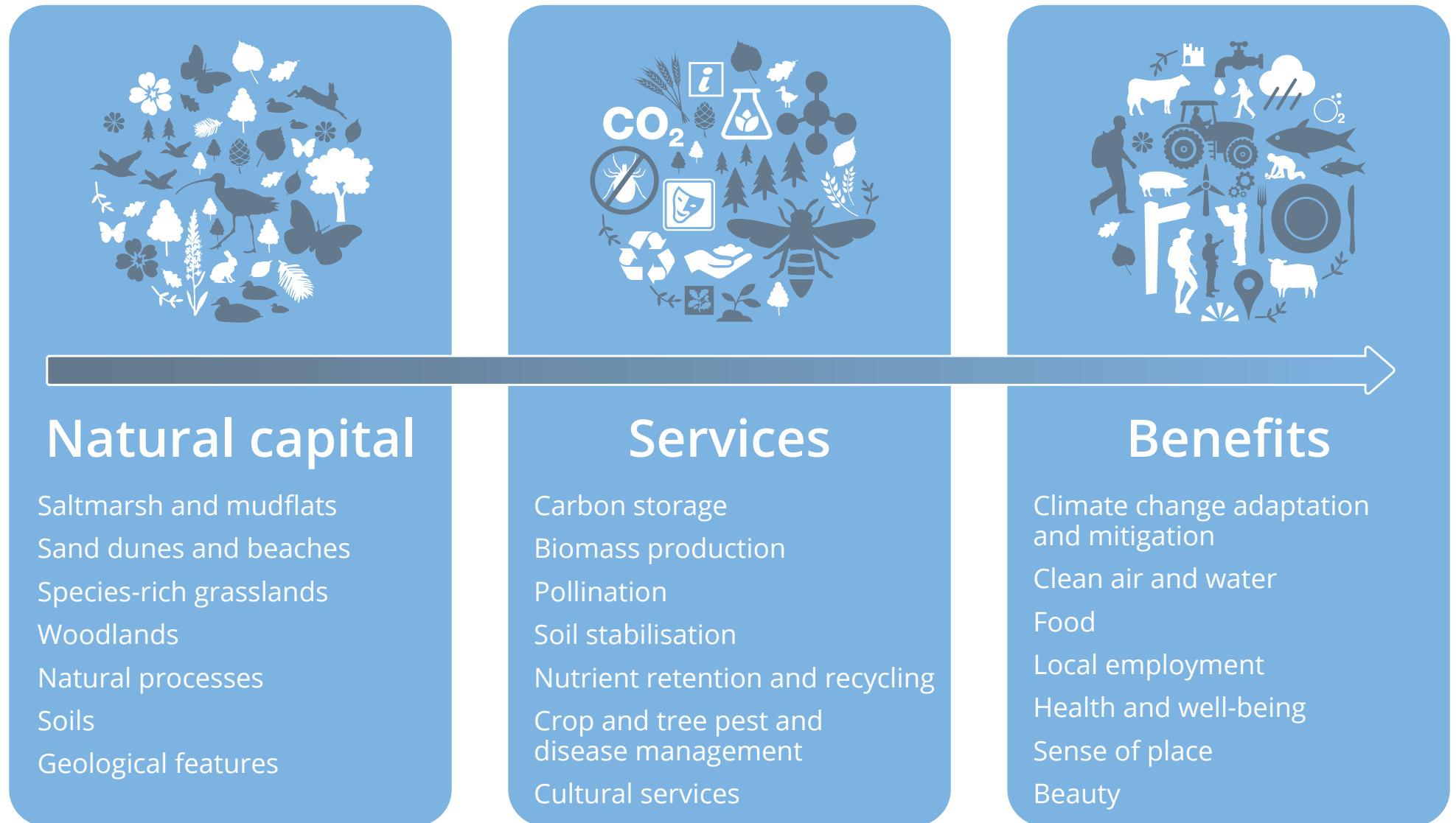


*Common spotted orchid*



# Natural Capital Assets, Services and Benefits on the Solway Coast

This diagram helps to illustrate the flows of services and benefits we get from looking after our natural assets. The matrix on the following page looks at this in a little more detail. It is not an exhaustive list.



# Priority Habitats, Services and Benefits



The table below highlights how conserving the area's Priority Habitats will help to sustain our **ecosystem services** and their **benefits** into the future. The greater the number of dots, the greater the contribution to delivering services and benefits. **The numbered ecosystem services are referred to in the action tables.**

Priority habitat	Key Services						
	1. Carbon storage/ sequestration and air quality management	2. Nutrient dispersal and cycling	3. Pollination	4. Agricultural and non-agricultural biomass production	5. Water storage and filtration	6. Erosion prevention/ hazard protection	7. Cultural services
	Climate change adaptation/mitigation, clean air, health and well-being	Ecosystem health and stability, including soil health, clean air and water	Food and agricultural products	Habitats, biodiversity, food, energy, raw materials, jobs	Flood risk management, clean water for people and wildlife	Soil health, flood risk mitigation, coastal protection, clean water, agriculture	Tourism, recreation, jobs, mental and physical health and wellbeing, tranquillity
Coastal saltmarsh	•••	•••	••	•••	••	•••	•••
Coastal floodplain grazing marsh	•••	••	••	•••	••	•••	•••
Coastal sand dunes	•	•	••	•••	•	•••	•••
Coastal vegetated shingle		•	•	••	•	•••	••
Maritime cliffs and slope						•••	•
Mudflats	•••	•••	•	•••	•	•••	•••
Deciduous woods	•••	•••	•	•••	••	••	•••
Lowland meadows	••	••	•••	•••	•	•	•••
Traditional orchards	••	••	•••	••	•	•	••
Lowland heathland	••	••	••	•••	••	••	••
Lowland dry acid grassland	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
Lowland raised bog	•••	•••	•	•••	•••	•••	••
Lowland fens	•••	••	•	••	•••	••	••



# Outcomes Framework

The **2030 Vision** for the Solway Coast, expressed on page 3, can be condensed into a concise **goal** for the area's natural and cultural heritage. In order to reach that goal, a series of particular short-term and medium-term **outcomes** are necessary. Any **actions** in support of this plan should lead to the achievement of the outcomes. We can then assess how well we are collectively working to look after and celebrate this special place and help people discover, enjoy and understand all it has to offer. This management plan will be monitored against how well the short-term outcomes are achieved.

Theme	Short-term Outcomes	Medium-term Outcomes	Goal
 <p><b>Nature Recovery and Landscape Character</b></p>	<p><b>1.</b> The management of land and water increasingly promotes natural processes, increased connectivity and greater resilience to the challenges of climate change and other pressures</p>	<p>A landscape richer in wildlife, with declines in biodiversity reversed, delivers more for nature, farmers and the public and is more resilient to climate change and other pressures</p> <p>Our cultural heritage is widely recognised and valued and continues to evolve and grow richer</p> <p>People increasingly value the Solway Coast's natural heritage for its own sake and for all that it provides for us</p> <p>Communities have a strong sense of what's special about where they live, and they celebrate their heritage together</p> <p>Well-managed natural and cultural assets underpin an increasingly environment-led local economy</p>	<p>The Solway Coast is better protected, more resilient to climate change, richer in natural and cultural heritage and increasingly valued by everyone as a place to live, work and visit</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> Priority habitats and key species are better conserved and enhanced</p>		
	<p><b>3.</b> Landscape quality and character is more effectively conserved and enhanced</p>		
	<p><b>4.</b> Farmers deliver a wide range of public goods and are appropriately rewarded for doing so</p>		
 <p><b>People and Place</b></p>	<p><b>5.</b> Built heritage and cultural assets are better understood, conserved and managed</p>		
	<p><b>6.</b> There are greater opportunities for people to increase their understanding of Solway's natural beauty</p>		
	<p><b>7.</b> More people, from a wider variety of backgrounds, can more easily and responsibly explore and enjoy the area.</p>		
	<p><b>8.</b> Skills and knowledge to conserve our natural beauty are increasing</p>		
	<p><b>9.</b> People conserving and enjoying natural beauty has an increasingly positive impact on local services and the economy</p>		





# Natural Beauty

Port Carlisle

*“Natural Beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries.”*



The term 'natural beauty' first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act, which gave legal status to the National Trust ('for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty'). It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in which, however, the term was not defined and it has not really been so since.

Government Guidance on AONBs in 2001 (Countryside Agency publication CA24) offers a useful non-technical definition, stating that "Natural Beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries." So natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value and is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything — 'natural' and human – that makes an area distinctive, including its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.

In the 1949 Act, 'natural beauty' replaced other phrases such as 'landscape beauty' and 'characteristic landscape beauty', providing a clue to the importance of landscape character and beauty as an aesthetic experience. Later the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty' too.

For AONBs, their natural beauty should have the potential to be 'outstanding,' both in terms of the quality of the components of character and the human aesthetic experience of the landscape.

Although our perception of landscape and its value may be driven by our background, our culture or the level of engagement and understanding we have, it is not enough to simply say that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.



Curlew

## The key role of planning authorities in conserving natural beauty

Local Planning Authorities, including Minerals Planning Authorities, should establish robust policies in their development plan documents, which support the purpose of designation and protect the special qualities of the Solway Coast. In particular these policies, and their application in decision making should:

- **support the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Solway Coast – see *Statement of Significance***
- **protect the Solway Coast and its setting from further visually intrusive development, especially large-scale vertical structures**
- **promote best practice in building design and energy efficiency**
- **ensure net gain for biodiversity and increased ecosystem service provision in policy making and development management**
- **promote the retention of traditional buildings styles**
- **respect the historic pattern of settlements along the coast**
- **protect heritage features**
- **reduce light and noise pollution and promote tranquillity**
- **encourage a visitor economy predicated on enjoying natural beauty**
- **Promote sustainable transport options, including improved public transport**
- **promote ease of living and working in the AONB without compromising its environmental qualities**

The above principles should also be followed in the production of any Neighbourhood Development Plans during the life of this management plan.

*For the purposes of this plan, natural beauty and the special qualities of the Solway Coast are defined by the Statement of Significance.*

In considering the proposed actions, the Top 10 Conservation Priorities on page 49 should also be noted.

# Statement of Significance – *what makes the Solway Coast special?*

## Description

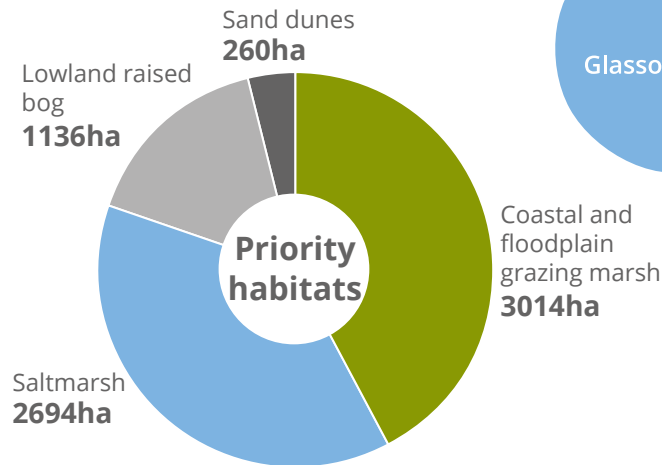
The Solway Coast AONB is a place of wide-open estuary views across into Scotland and south to the Lakeland Fells. The landscape is enriched by the influence of Britain's second largest tidal range, covering and exposing vast tracts of saltmarshes and mudflats, an internationally important refuge for thousands of waders and wildfowl. These estuarine landscapes can have a profound sense of wildness, remoteness and tranquillity, heavily influenced by the changing sky, and by the sights and sounds of the sea. A long narrow tract of sand dune and dune heath runs along the coast and supports rare species including the natterjack toad.

This is also a place of inland raised mires or 'Mosses' and their rich biodiversity; this contrasts with coastal marshy grasslands and with pastoral landscapes of beef, sheep and dairy farming, enclosed by hedges and 'kests'. Threaded through the inland landscape is a network of sunken lanes and narrow roads.

The experience of being in the whole of the Solway Coast AONB is strongly influenced by views out to the surrounding landscapes of the Lake District fells and across the Solway Firth to the hills of Dumfries and Galloway. This is enhanced by long interior views of across a landscape which has few vertical features beyond tree top height.

It is a frontier landscape, with a rich archaeological record, most celebrated in being part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. Buildings and settlements have risen in response to conflict and trade; vernacular building styles reflect a long history of occupation and include fortified dwellings and churches, longhouses, 'clay dabbins' and cruck-roofed buildings. It is both a living, working rural landscape, and a place to discover, explore, celebrate and enjoy.

## Facts and figures supporting the statement of significance



- Campfield Marsh (RSPB)
- Bowness on Solway (Cumbria Wildlife Trust)
- Bowness Common (NE)
- Glasson Moss (NE)
- Drumbrugh Moss (NE)





# The Solway Coast Marine Conservation Zone



## Internationally important birdlife

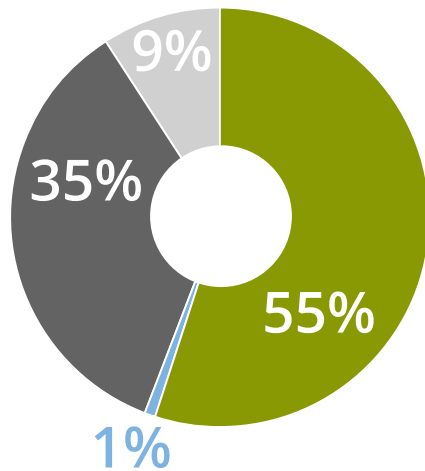
Over 140,000 overwintering wildfowl and waders. The entire global population of Svalbard barnacle geese overwinters.



UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Hadrian's Wall

**ProW** – 86km of public footpaths and bridleways plus 14km of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail

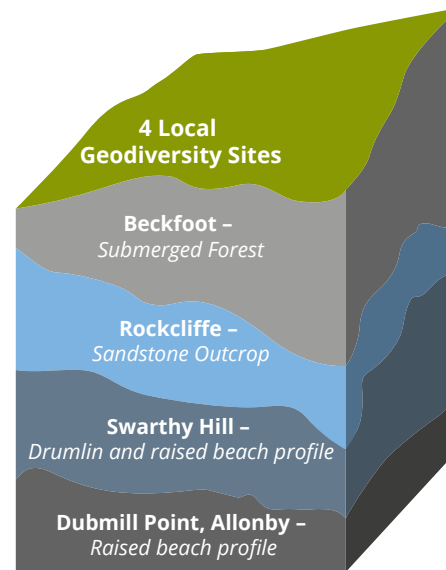
**28**  
Scheduled monuments



Rural land cover in the AONB (approx.)

- Farmland 55%
- Mosses 1%
- Saltmarsh, estuary, dunes, rivers and settlement 35%
- Other 9%

## 8 Pre-mediaeval churches



### 7 Conservation areas:

1. Allonby
2. Mawbray
3. Bowness-on-Solway
4. Port Carlisle
5. Boustead Hill
6. Dykesfield
7. Burgh by Sands

## The natural beauty of the Solway Coast comprises two main defining components, which themselves can be sub-divided into their characteristic elements:



*Wolsty Dunes and north across the Solway Firth*

### Seascapes and Intertidal Landscapes.

The seascapes comprise extensive areas of both the Inner and Outer Solway Firth – *Inner Firth intertidal flats and saltmarsh* and *Outer Firth beaches and dunes*.

The Solway Firth's designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) reflects the importance of the AONB's marine environment and coastal habitats. This dynamic and changing coastline includes flats, intertidal creeks, sands and saltmarshes, and is bounded in places by shingle bays, sand dune systems and low earth cliffs.

The Solway Firth Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is designated to protect European smelt, a fish species of conservation importance. It is also an important nursery ground for bass, pollack and some flatfish species.

The transition between land and sea is marked by beach and dune systems, generally along the west coast, and the mudflats and saltmarshes of the more sheltered northern areas of the Inner Firth.

These saltmarsh and intertidal landscapes have a strong sense of wildness and tranquillity.

The designation of the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) recognises the international importance of the area's waders and wildfowl population. The Solway Firth as a whole is the 6<sup>th</sup> most important site for waterbirds in the UK; the mean waders and wildfowl population between winter 2012/13 and winter 2017/18 was over 140,000 birds. It is internationally important for Svalbard Barnacle geese – supporting the entire population (43,000) over-winter, of which over 11,300 (itself an internationally important number) winter on the English side of the estuary. The estuary as a whole is nationally (1% UK population) or internationally (1% East Atlantic flyway population) important for 20 species (with the English Solway important for 14).

The few ungrazed marshes tend to support a high diversity of plant species. Collectively the European designations of the Solway Coast form the Solway Firth European Marine Site. The estuary is also a Ramsar site, designated primarily for overwintering birds and its natterjack toad population, which thrives in dune slacks and on some tightly grazed marshes.

The extent of the saltmarsh is generally increasing, most notably around Bowness on Solway, and especially Rockcliffe Marsh, which has risen and extended in response to deposition.

As well as being the most extensive priority habitat in the Solway basin, the intertidal and floodplain grazing marshes are important grazing land, supporting dairy and meat production. Summer livestock grazing provides inland grasslands to be managed for silage making. On the inner Solway saltmarshes, the grazing regime is important for maintaining the grass sward height for wintering wildfowl and breeding waders.

The marshes also perform an important role in providing coastal protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and food provision. Being out on the wilder parts of the marshes is to capture a significant part of the essence of the Solway Coast.





*View over Drumburgh Moss*

## Low-lying inland landscapes

Compared to the rest of lowland England, the Solway is unusual for its remaining and relatively intact lowland raised mires, or peatlands, (the Solway Mosses). This habitat supports a rich diversity of birdlife, invertebrates and flora, recognised in the South Solway Mosses SAC designation. The SAC comprise Bowness Common, Glasson Moss, Drumburgh Moss and Wedholme Flow (the latter being just outside the AONB). The Mosses contrast with a rolling, pastoral landscape of improved and semi-improved grasslands, enclosed by hedges and ‘kests’ (raised hedge banks).

The open expansive raised mires are often hidden behind a fringe of trees. In an otherwise flat, sea-level landscape, the gentle rises formed from the drumlins and mineral ridges left by the glaciers afford panoramic views over the semi-natural landscape.

There is rich historic and cultural heritage, closely linked to the Solway’s position

[www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk](http://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk)

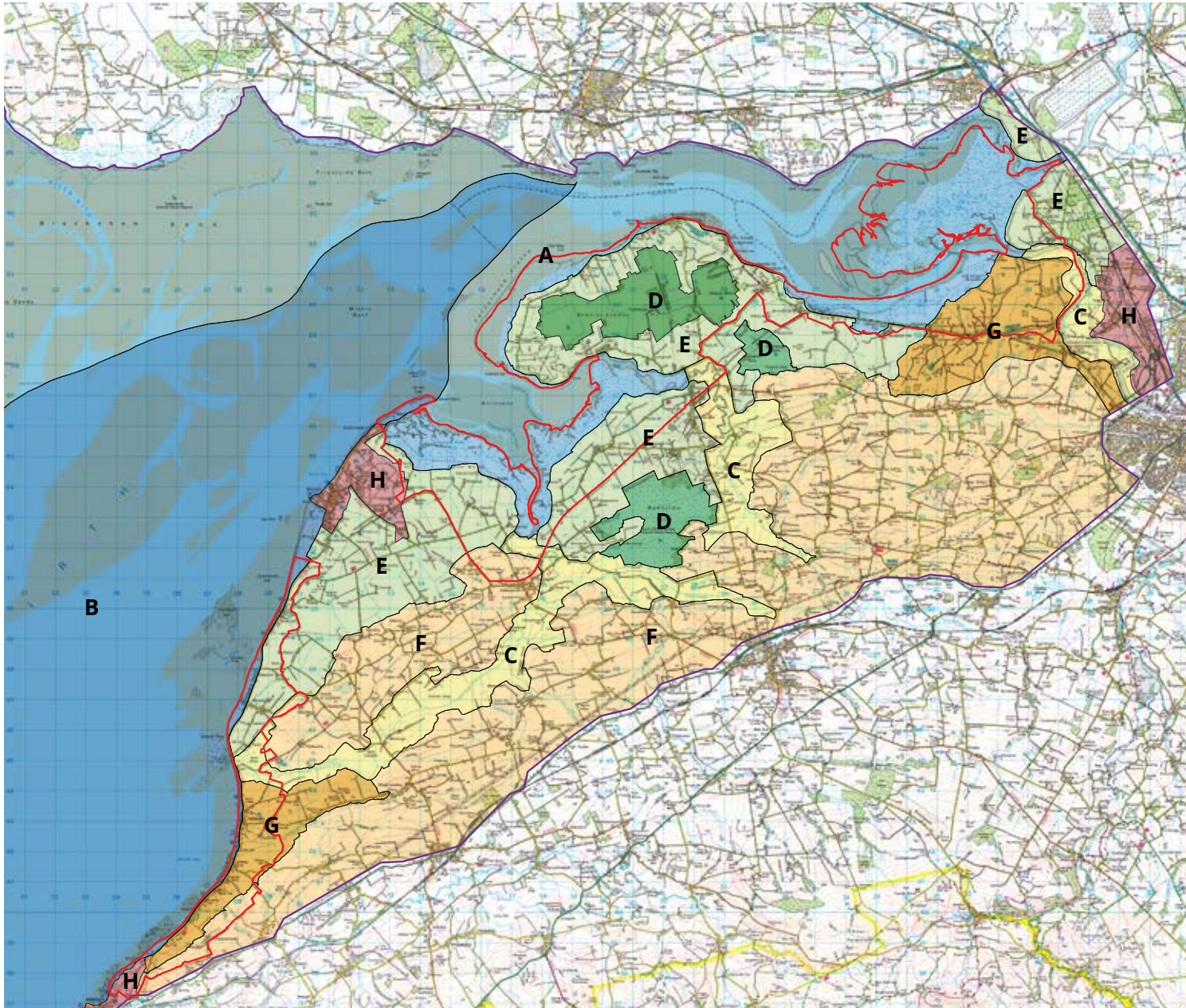
as a ‘frontier’ landscape on the border between Scotland and England. Evidence of a long and historic land use is seen in the field patterns, such as ridge and furrow on the grazed marshes, and the medieval pattern of ‘infield’ and ‘outfield’ farming linked to the agricultural improvements brought by the Cistercian monks of Holme Cultram Abbey.

Sunken lanes and narrow roads link settlements dotted along the coast. These settlements and the wider landscape have a complex mixture of vernacular buildings. Vernacular building styles reflect a long history of occupation and include fortified dwellings and churches, longhouses, ‘clay dabbins’ and cruck-roofed buildings.



Settlements on the Solway Coast are small and rural in nature and the character of the area as a whole is partly derived from the lack of development. This contributes to the area’s relative sense of wildness and tranquillity.



# Solway Coast AONB Landscape Character Types (LCT)





**Key**







-  Solway Coast AONB
-  Wider landscape context

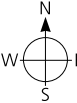
**Solway Coast AONB LCT**

**Seascapes and Intertidal Landscapes**

-  A: Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh
-  B: Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

**Low-lying Inland Landscapes**

-  C: River Floodplain and Marshy Grasslands
-  D: Coastal Mosses
-  E: Coastal Plain
-  F: Drumlinised Lowland Farmland
-  G: Undulating Coastal Farmland
-  H: Coastal Town and Urban Fringe

 0 1 2 3 4 kilometres  
0 1 2 3 miles



# Seascapes and intertidal landscapes

## Key components

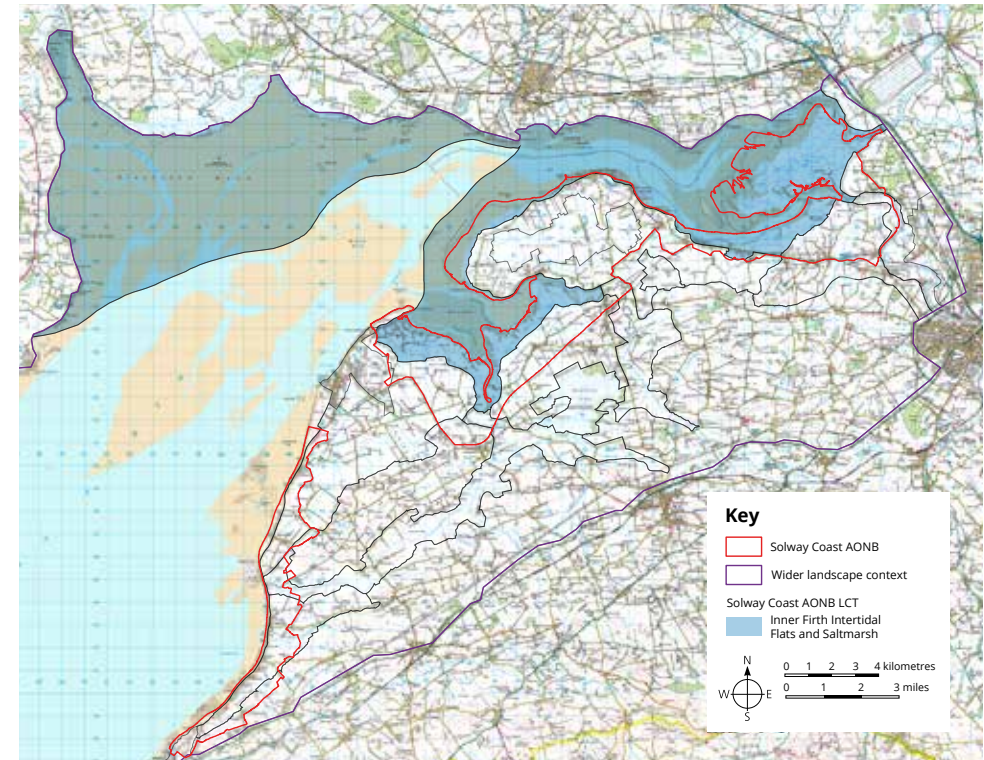
### Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh

These landscapes have a dynamic character, influenced by the state of the tide and changing with the longer-term cycle of erosion and deposition. Large expanses of fine sands and mudflats are dissected by dendritic creeks and channels. Open, flat expanses of saltmarsh, transition to the flat coastal plains, mosses and enclosed farmland of the inland areas. Saline tolerant plant species dominate, often grazed by sheep and cattle. The landscape we see today is largely a product of this grazing management, alongside the regular saltwater flooding from the tides.

*Grazing the saltmarsh*



© Countryside Agency, photo C. Healey



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 File: S:\4800\4808 Solway Coast AONB LCA\GIS\Themes\ArcGIS9\4808-01\_013\_Solway\_Coast\_AONB\_LCT\_A3\_v4.mxd



It is a large-scale landscape with expanses of tidal flats extending towards open sea and the skylines of Dumfries and Galloway. There is a sense of relative wildness, openness and tranquillity in much of these landscapes, filled with the sights and sounds of large numbers of waders and wildfowl, for which the area has multiple conservation designations and is internationally important. The rare natterjack toad also thrives in saltmarsh pools. The saltmarsh contains a unique mix of salt tolerant plants only found along the coast, such as sea milkwort, scurvy grass and thrift. Saltmarsh is also important as nursery grounds for fish, which utilise small creeks and pools.

The biodiversity of the marine environment is rich. It is important for the passage of migratory fish including lampreys and sea trout. It also provides important nursery areas for skates, shark species and thornback rays and supports salmon, sea bass, pollock, flat fish and especially European smelt, for which the Solway Firth Marine Conservation Zone is designated.

### Top 5 issues and forces for change

- **Conserving habitat for wildfowl and waders and reducing disturbance of overwintering birds.**
- **Conserving populations of key breeding and migratory fish species**
- **Preserving long views across and out of the AONB landscape**
- **Managing grazing pressure to support conservation**
- **Climate change and potential sea-level rise and the need for adaptive management / addressing coastal squeeze at intertidal areas**



## Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

### Inner Firth Intertidal flats and saltmarsh

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Ecosystem services supported
IF1. Use planning policy to protect the seascape and intertidal landscapes from further visually intrusive development	<b>LA</b>	3	7
IF2. Use Environmental Land Management Systems (ELMS) and other mechanisms to ensure grazing and sensitive management of saltmarshes delivers conservation outcomes	<b>NE</b> , F/L, CWT, RSPB	1-4	1-7
IF3. Use ELMS and other mechanisms to promote rewetting of degraded marshlands	<b>NE</b> , F/L, CWT, RSPB, EA	1-4	1-7
IF4. Promote sustainable fisheries and shell fisheries management to support species and habitat conservation	<b>NWIFCA</b> , NE, EA, SFP	1, 2, 9	1, 2, 4, 7
IF5. Act to reduce pollution and nutrient input from farmland and rivers	<b>EA</b> , NE, F/L	1, 2, 4	2, 4, 6
IF6. Develop a strategic approach to potential climate change-driven sea level rise, including identifying potential areas for adaptive coastal management	<b>LA</b> , EA, NE, F/L	1, 2, 4	6, 7
IF7. Restore targeted areas of reclaimed farmland to marshland	<b>NE</b> , F/L	1, 2, 3, 4	6, 7
IF8. Promote messages about reducing public disturbance of wintering birds	<b>RSPB</b> , SCAONB, NE, CWT, SFP	2, 6	7
IF9. Produce a strategy for managing recreational disturbance, to support species and habitat conservation	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, LA, RSPB	2, 6	7
IF10. Act to encourage natural development and erosion of saltmarsh	<b>NE</b> , CWT, LA, EA, SCAONB	1-4	1-7
IF11. Enhance natural features on the saltmarsh e.g. by increasing the number of pools and blocking drainage ditches	<b>CWT</b> , NE	1-4	1-7
<i>See also actions: OF 3, 6, 8; FL12-14</i>			

#### Measures of Success

- Area of restored habitat
- Reduced pollution and nutrient input to rivers
- Stable overwinter wildfowl and wader populations and increase in breeding waders
- No visually intrusive development significantly harming views across and out of the AONB

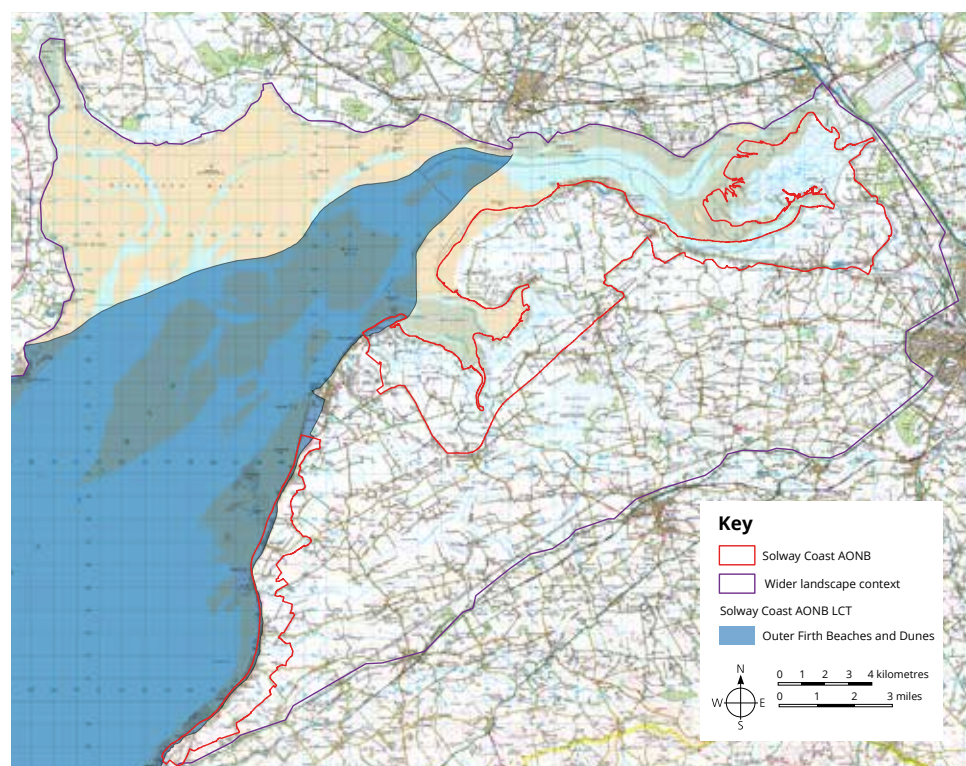
- SSSI condition
- Natterjack toad breeding success
- Deliverable proposals for adaptive coastal management

## Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

These landscapes occur throughout the open coastal area, the eastern section having more channels and finer deposits due to the low energy tidal regime characteristic of the inner estuary. The western section has open sea and is more characteristic of a traditional 'seaside' landscape with high wave and tidal energy providing movement of larger sediments such as gravels.

These are large-scale dramatic landscapes, with undeveloped flats and open water, open skylines and long views over the Solway Firth to the Scottish coastline and Criffel. The dynamic seascape is characterised by the sights and sounds of the sea, lapping water and large numbers of waders and wildfowl that feed on the flats.

Large and open expanses of intertidal sand flats open out to the sea; these are backed by shingle and pebble beaches and dune systems to the south and



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mudflats along more sheltered northern stretches of the coastal fringe. 'Scaurs' (post-glacial rock dumps) are distinctive along the beaches and support mussel beds and honeycomb worm reefs, providing important feeding grounds for wading birds. The biodiversity of the marine environment reflects that of the Inner Firth.

Small linear towns and villages are dotted along the coast, seven of which include designated Conservation Areas.

Much of the extensive coastal dune and heath system that fringes the outer Solway Firth is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as part of the Solway Firth SAC. Areas of acidic dune grassland and heath support a diversity of dune and maritime heath plant and animal communities. The SSSI and non-designated dune series here form one of only three similar dune systems in north and west Cumbria. In recent times declines or changes in coastal grazing have seen declines in habitat quality in some locations.

The dune system and saltmarsh absorb and dissipate wave energy, together forming an effective coastal defence system.

Coastal squeeze is significant in some locations, with the B5300 road creating an unnatural barrier that inhibits natural dune expansion inland. In places where erosion dominates, dunes are being lost completely and hard engineering has been deployed to protect the road from damage and flooding.

Dune systems are fragile and susceptible to damage from unmanaged access of various kinds.

### Top 5 issues and forces for change

- Conserving habitat for wildfowl and waders and reducing disturbance of overwintering birds and on fragile habitats
- Conserving populations of key breeding and migratory fish species
- Preserving long views across and out of the AONB landscape
- Coastal squeeze and its impacts on habitats and species, and how to deliver adaptive management which will protect the integrity of priority habitats
- Conserving vernacular architecture and the character of coastal settlements



## Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

### Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
OF1. Restore coastal processes, including dynamic dune systems, where these have been lost due to coastal squeeze	<b>NE</b> , EA, LA	1-4	1-4, 6, 7
OF2. Create more dynamic dune systems where grey dunes have developed, e.g. through controlled grazing by selected livestock	<b>EA</b> , NE, F/L	1-4	1-4, 6, 7
OF3. Restore degraded habitat at the interface of transitional zones between land and sea	<b>NE</b> , EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L	1-3	1-7
OF4. Promote the management of land to create space to adapt to sea level rise	<b>EA</b> , LA, NE, CWT, RSPB, F/L, SCAONB	1-3	4-7
OF5. Create pools, ponds and scrapes to support key species conservation	<b>NE</b> , EA, CWT, F/L	1-4	2, 4, 5, 7
OF6. Control invasive non-native plant and animal species	<b>NE</b> , EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L, SCAONB, NWIFCA, SEPA, SNH, SFP	2	6, 7
OF7. Implement fishery orders to effectively manage shell fishing activity from sand dunes and minimise impacts on habitats.	<b>NWIFCA</b> , LA, NE, EA	1, 2, 4, 9	4, 6, 7
OF8. Promote actions to reduce disturbance by people/dogs/vehicles in sensitive areas to protect fragile habitats and vulnerable species	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L	2, 6	7
OF9. Rationalise car parks to promote better management of disturbance and reduce habitat damage.	<b>LA</b> , SCAONB	2, 6	7
OF10. Provide visitor information to promote access which respects the fragile nature of the dunes and their wildlife	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, EA, CWT, RSPB	2, 6	7
OF11. Provide wardening, install fencing and undertake education programmes to support breeding little terns	<b>CWT</b> , EA, NE, SCAONB	2	4, 7
<i>See also actions: IF 1, 2, 4, 6, 8; FL12-14</i>			

#### Measures of Success

- Area of dune restored and under more positive management
- Measures in place to reduce the impacts of coastal squeeze
- Increase in natterjack toad population
- Stable overwinter bird populations and increase in breeding waders
- SSSI Condition



*"This is an open, flat landscape, contrasting with the undulating and rolling topography of the farmed lowland hills and drumlins surrounding it."*





# Low-lying inland landscapes

## Key components

- **River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland;**
- **Coastal Mosses;**
- **Coastal lowland farmed landscapes (including Coastal Plain, Drumlinised Lowland Farmland, Undulating Coastal Farmland) and their settlements.**

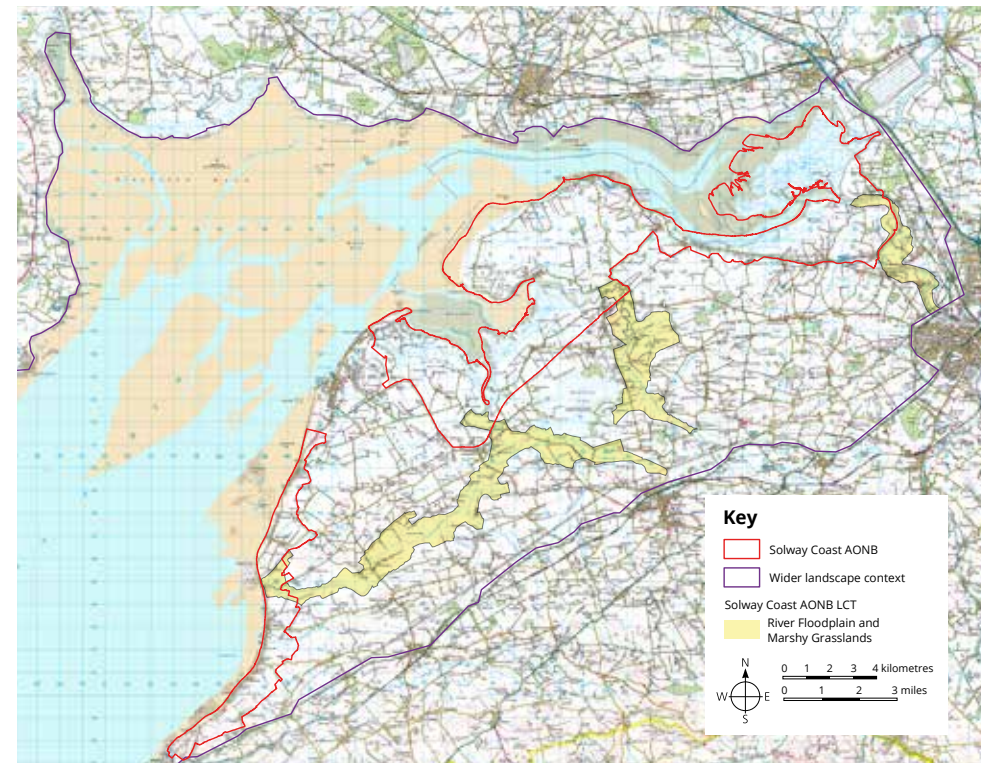
### River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

These landscapes are characterised by areas of low lying, flat floodplain, marshy grassland and improved pasture. They follow the watercourses of the rivers Waver, Wampool and Eden and the glacial basin of Black Dub, Holme Dub and Crummock Beck. These landscapes are dissected by a network of drainage ditches, channels and watercourses which drain into the Solway Firth.

This is an open, flat landscape, contrasting with the undulating and rolling topography of the farmed lowland hills and drumlins surrounding it. Enclosure is partial and irregular, with fencing and occasional, fragmented hedges, creating an open landscape with long views along flat river valleys.

The green marsh grass is grazed by sheep and cattle in some areas, whilst others are characterised by rough grazing, rushes and scrub. Fen peat soils are characteristic in the dubs and upper reaches of the broad and gentle river valleys.

A dense network of streams, ditches and creeks dissect the areas, usually intensively managed and with eroded river banks in places. The rivers themselves are not prominent features of the areas, and are not particularly visible from within the flat expanses of marshes.



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Development is confined to the outer fringes of the areas as the land rises above sea-level, where dispersed farmsteads are scattered.

These grasslands are traditionally grazed in spring and late summer and are cut for hay, a management regime that promotes biodiversity. The primary biodiversity interest of the river floodplains and marshy grasslands is in its birdlife, especially breeding waders such as curlew and lapwing, which rely on damp soils, open pools and muddy hollows for feeding and rearing their young. As well as being a key nesting habitat for curlew, the traditional management of these grasslands promotes wildflowers such as marsh orchids, marsh marigold and ragged robin, specialists of wet meadows.

### Top 5 issues and forces for change

- **Intensification of farming and resultant loss of biodiversity, set alongside opportunities for High Nature Value farming, changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and Environmental Land Management Schemes**
- **Eutrophication caused by agricultural run-off and atmospheric Nitrogen**
- **Flooding and its impacts on agriculture, property and conservation**
- **Declines in breeding bird productivity and disturbance to wader roosts**
- **Pumped draining and its potential impacts and opportunities for changes in land management**



## Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

### River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
RF1. Influence the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) to target grazing regimes which maximise benefit for biodiversity – e.g. light cattle grazing from spring to autumn, or a late summer hay cut – and reward farmers accordingly	<b>NE</b> , F/L	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF2. Negotiate winter inundation on an appropriate scale across the habitat, to provide refuge and feeding grounds for grazing and dabbling wildfowl such as the widgeon and teal	<b>F/L</b> , NE, EA	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF3. Negotiate agri-environment schemes and bespoke projects to create scrapes, ponds and pools to support wading birds.	<b>F/L</b> , NE, RSPB, CWT	1, 2, 4	2-7
RF4. Utilise ELMS and other mechanisms to improve soil condition and organic matter content, reduce atmospheric nitrogen emissions from agriculture, minimise soil and nutrient run-off into watercourses and promote less use of pesticides	<b>F/L</b> , NE	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF5. Restore land formerly under draining to biodiverse wet grassland	<b>NE</b> , F/L, EA, CWT, RSPB, WCRT	1-4	1-7
RF6. Reconnect becks and rivers to their floodplain and naturalise river courses	<b>EA</b> , F/L, NE	1-4	1-7
RF7. Promote and undertake research into causes of declines in bird productivity	<b>RSPB</b> , Uni	2, 6, 7	4, 7
RF8. Promote natural flood management through agri-environment schemes and bespoke projects	<b>EA</b> , NE, F/L, WCRT	1-4, 9	1-7
RF9. Explore options for adaptation to climate change, e.g. through coastal road rollback	<b>LA</b> , EA, NE	1-3	1, 5-7
RF10. Act to raise awareness of disturbance of high tide bird roosts	<b>RSPB</b> , NE, CWT, SCAONB, SFP	2, 6	7
<i>See also actions OF6; FL2, FL7, FL12-14</i>			

#### Measures of Success

- SSSI condition
- Increase in breeding wader numbers and productivity
- Area of land formerly under drainage and now restored
- Area of new wetland habitat created

# Coastal Mosses

The Mosses of the Solway Coast are low lying raised mires with a raised peat 'dome'. Now rare, these habitats have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), with parts of the SAC also designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

These are visually dynamic landscapes, with considerable seasonal change in colour, and are strongly affected by the state of the light and the weather. There are long views across to the seascape of the Solway Firth and the fells of the Lake District. Though modified by past peat extraction, the landscape has a feeling of naturalness, remoteness and tranquillity, further amplified by a relative absence of human-made structures and visual intrusion.

The Moss landscape comprises flat or slightly undulating hummock-hollow mosaics, including water pools, marsh, moss, reeds and fringing wet woodland; usually stands of birch heather and purple moor grass grow in the slightly drier areas. The characteristic Moss habitat is that of deep peat, over 10 metres in some places, with assemblages of sphagnum, cotton grasses and carnivorous plants, including the uncommon great sundew. These sites also support rare species such as large heath butterfly. Bird species of the mosses include skylark, snipe, marsh tit and willow tit.

*Glasson Moss*

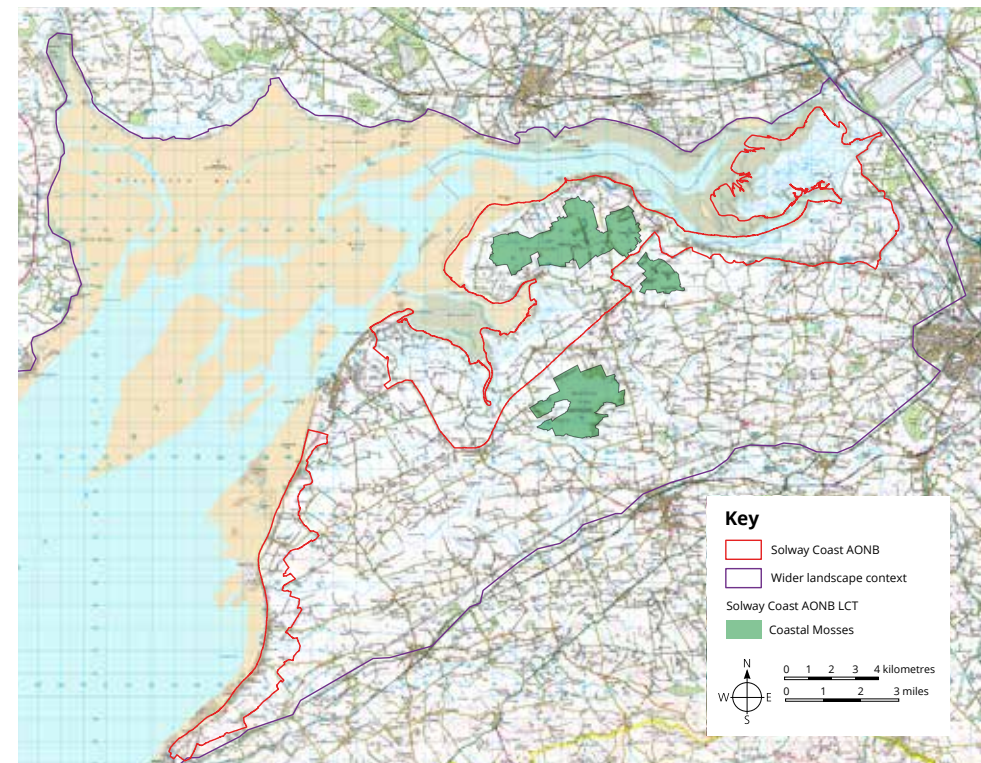


*Bog restoration work from above*



The Mosses are much less extensive than they were in the past. Draining, to improve them for pastureland, has caused a significant reduction in their extent and condition. Further such losses are through ploughing, landuse and subsequent erosion, and from the impacts of atmospheric nitrogen from local agriculture.

During the life of the last Management Plan, the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme brought together a range of organisations to continue the job of gradually restoring and celebrating the Mosses. This has brought about an improvement in the condition of this distinctive part of the landscape, but more work is still required. The overall condition of the SSSIs is that they are still recovering and this process takes time; there are still missing parts of the hydrological 'jigsaw' of the mosses, notably the transitional 'lagg' zone communities on the shallow peats.



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Pond on Bowness Common



Peat is our best natural store of carbon. When in good condition, the Solway Mosses not only store carbon, but also sequester it from the atmosphere. Conversely, if they remain unrestored, with active drains, they continue to release their stored carbon and contribute to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when exposed peat reacts with the oxygen in the air. Managing our Mosses as functioning wetland ecosystems is the most effective land-management based action to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In the past the Mosses were highly valued as a source of fuel for the home, a growing medium in the horticultural industry, and perhaps for other purposes such as grazing or hemp retting, as well as for recreation. Today their value is less obvious, until we appreciate their importance for society in terms of carbon storage, managing run-off after rainfall, and a record of our past, as well as for the rarity of the wildlife community and the landscape it creates.

Though the Mosses can be perceived as 'wasteland' or as unproductive, generally they are valued by local people as places to walk (often with their dogs) and to enjoy nature. Whilst this use of the Mosses is to be welcomed, access needs careful management and responsible visitor behaviour needs to be encouraged.



Snipe

### Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- **The need for restoration of peatland habitat to promote carbon storage/sequestration, flood risk mitigation and biodiversity**
- **Opportunities provided by new Environmental Land Management Schemes**
- **A need to create buffers between bogs and areas of more intensive land management, and better connectivity of more permeable habitat between bogs**
- **Impacts of nutrient enrichment and nitrogen deposition from air pollution and agriculture (e.g rising ammonia levels exceeding critical limits)**
- **A lack of understanding of how important peatlands are and that they should be managed as wetland ecosystems**



## Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

### Coastal Mosses

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
M1. Use planning policy and SSSI management agreements to ensure no further loss or degradation of habitat on the Solway Mosses	<b>LA/NE</b> , CWT, F/L	1-4	1-7
M2. Restore and enhance raised bog and lagg fen habitats towards 'favourable condition'	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	1-4	1-7
M3. Create lagg / edge habitat on reclaimed peat around existing Mosses	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	1-4	1-7
M4. Ensure new ELMS prioritises habitats of the Mosses and their restoration	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, SCAONB F/L	1-4	1-7
M5. Use ELMS to buffer and expand fringe habitats around bogs	<b>NE</b> , CWT, F/L	1-4	1-7
M6. Advocate for the value and importance of habitats of the Mosses and the need to prioritise their conservation	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, CWT, EA, F/L	1-4, 6	1-7
M7. Act to avoid erosion of organic matter into watercourses	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, F/L	1-4	1-7
M8. Promote sensitive access to the mosses to encourage enjoyment and understanding whilst reducing disturbance to species and habitats	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	2-6	7
M9. Provide support for farmers and land managers in order to facilitate improved management of land around Mosses – e.g. events, training, advocacy, demonstration farms	<b>NE</b> , CWT, EA, F/L	1-4, 6, 8	1-7
<i>See also actions FL12-14; RF4</i>			

#### Measures of Success

- Extent of restoration
- SSSI condition status (minimum 100% in 'unfavourable recovering' condition)
- Area of new lagg / edge habitat created
- Area of buffering of surrounding landscape
- Increase in key species

# Coastal lowland farmed landscapes and their settlements

These landscapes are a combination of individually distinctive character types: coastal plain, drumlinised lowland farmland and undulating lowland farmland.

The **Coastal Plain** is a landscape of flat or slightly undulating, low lying farmland. The field structure is largely based around the medieval enclosures with a pattern of narrow strip fields and larger 'outfields' around the villages, as well as the regular geometric pattern of parliamentary enclosures. Wind sculptured trees line the roadsides, including avenues of beech.

This is a landscape with a long history of occupation, reflected in the remains of Roman fortifications, the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, and the evidence of medieval cultivation and land use patterns. Later military and industrial heritage is also visible, including World War Two camps and Port Carlisle's canal and railway legacy.

Settlements provide a variety of architectural styles and building materials. Historic villages, such as Newton Arlosh, Kirkbride and Mawbray are clustered within coastal pasture and closely related to the pattern of the fields.

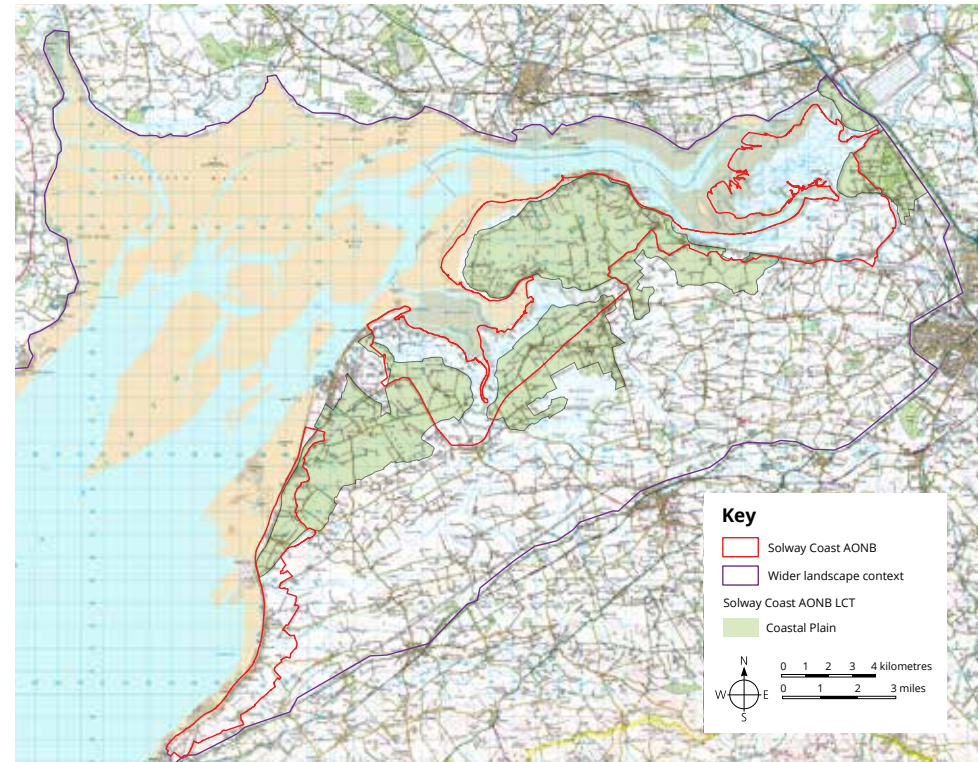
People value the open views across the Firth, intertidal flats and marshes to the north and northwest, with Criffel and the Scottish hills forming key focal points. Views inland across the higher areas of drumlinised farmland accentuate the flat and open character of the plains.



The dominant habitats are coastal pasture, enclosed by ditches and 'kested' hedgerows (planted on raised banks), with a distinctive pattern of small 'inner fields', and larger 'outer fields'. A mixture of winding lanes (often lined with wind-sculpted trees) and straight linear roads cross through the farmland, reflecting the localised pattern of fields and drainage ditches.

These flat landscapes contrast with the coastal margins of the marshes and dunes as well as the hills and drumlin landscape.

*A Roman ceramic head of a female found at Burgh-by-Sands*  
Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery Trust, Carlisle



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*St John's Church, Newton Arlosh*



*Beckfoot and the Solway Plain*





**Drumlinised Lowland Farmland** extends across much of the Solway Coast, stretching beyond the AONB boundary and playing an important role in defining its setting. The smooth skylines of the rolling green landform and low elongated drumlins are characteristic of views looking inland from many parts of the AONB.

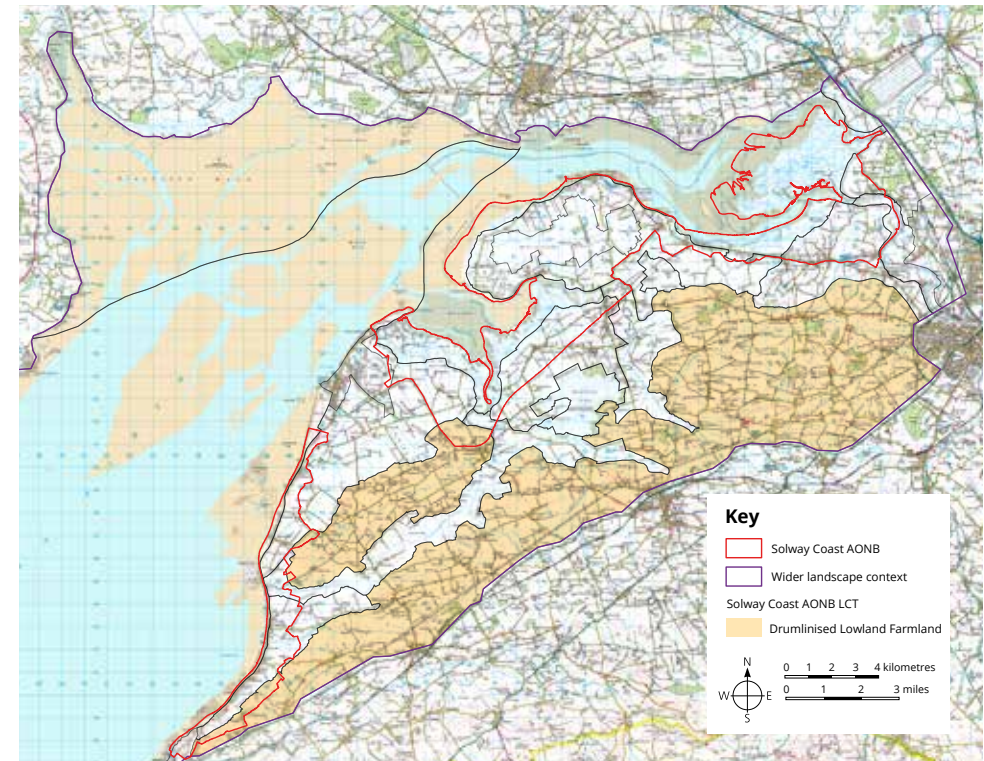
This is a tranquil agricultural landscape, less exposed and influenced by the coastal setting, and more enclosed than the adjacent coastal plains, with an attractive backdrop of upland hills. It is dominated by pasture land and occasional arable crops divided by hedges, draped over the rolling drumlin landforms. Hedgerow trees and small copses are distinctive features in the landscape.

The impact of parliamentary enclosures can be seen in large, regular, geometric fields; these are interspersed with older field enclosure patterns of medium sized irregular fields and long narrow strip fields.

The low relief drumlin landform creates wide views from along the tops of the low hills, and more sheltered and intimate landscapes contained by topography on the lower slopes, providing a sense of enclosure.

Distinctive wide and sunken lanes, that are former drove roads, rise up and down across the farmland, with clear edge profiles of ditches and raised banks topped with hedges, locally known as 'kests'. The pattern of rectilinear roads and winding lanes reflects both a rich mixture of field patterns and the orientation and profiles of the drumlin landform. Traditional finger post road and direction signs are widespread, some of which have been restored.

Scattered linear settlements, villages/small settlements such as Allerby, Westnewton, and Edderside, and farmsteads, comprising clusters of vernacular buildings, follow the orientation of the drumlins. There is a varied mixtures of architectural styles and building materials, with thatched roofs, 'cruck' barns, and long houses built of 'clay dabbin'.



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*Laying a kested hedgerow*



*Bowness Village*





Immediately inland from the coastal margins of the Solway Firth, along a stretch bounding the Inner Firth and along the western coast of the Outer Firth, is a tranquil landscape of low-lying **Undulating Coastal Farmland**. This landscape shares many of the characteristics of the Drumlinised Lowland Farmland, the principal differences being a lack of narrow strip fields, the winding becks that run through the area and the distinctive linear settlement pattern of villages such as Burgh-by-Sands and Beaumont in the northeast and Allonby and Crosscanonby in the southwest. These settlements comprise clusters of traditional and historic vernacular buildings, strongly influenced by their coastal setting.

Across the country, farmland biodiversity has been declining for decades. This is true of the Solway as much as anywhere else, though there are successes, where sensitive farming is sustaining hares, skylarks and grassland flora. However, the recovery of farmland biodiversity remains one of the biggest challenges for the area.

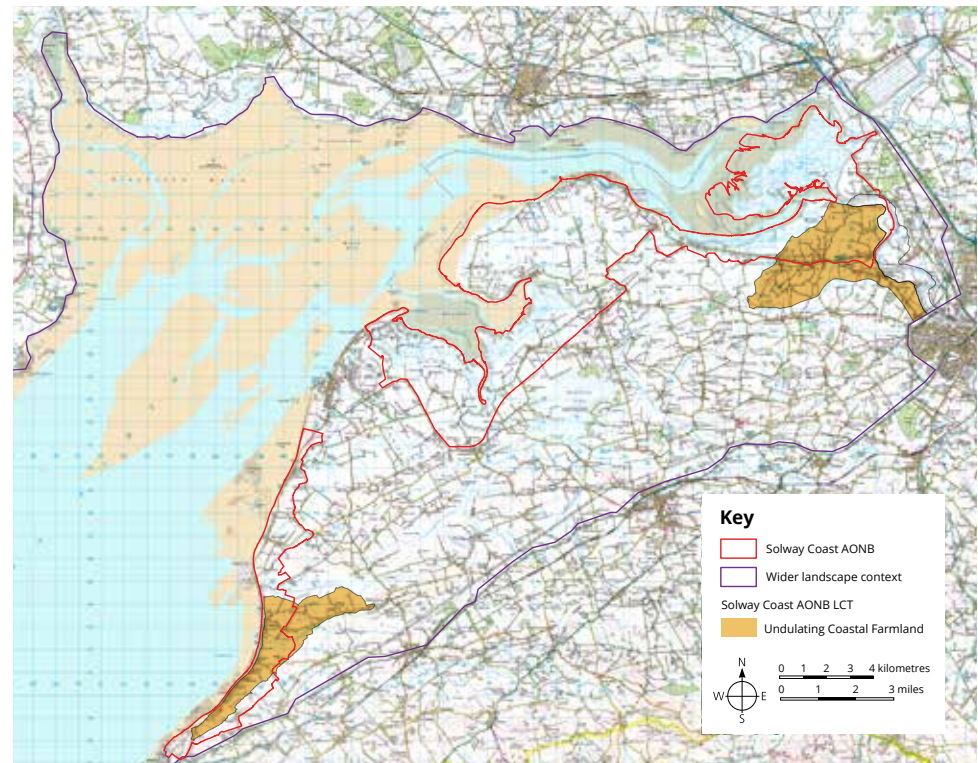
*View over Crosscanonby towards Allonby*



*Bowness-on-Solway*



*Fields at Mawbray with Criffel behind*



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*Looking over Raby Cote towards Skiddaw*

## Farm support over the life of this plan

Farmers know their land better than anyone else and the future of the farmed environment is of course tied to a viable economic future for farming. At the time of writing this plan, Britain is preparing to leave the EU; with that will come a revised method of providing Government support to farming and the farmed landscape. There is an opportunity to create new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) which are not prescription-led, but which are outcomes-focused, rewarding farmers for the public goods they produce – clean air and water, biodiversity, healthy soils etc.

On the Solway, ELMS need to be specially targeted to supporting the conservation priorities outlined in this plan. There should be encouragement, and reward, for collaboration across farm holdings aimed at maximising benefits for nature at a landscape scale. Experience from elsewhere suggests that this approach brings clear benefits for nature, farmers and the public; it is also clear that farmers need support and training to be able to help plan and monitor the works on their land under new ELMS; in turn conservation organisations need to learn from the experience and knowledge of farmers. Over the five years of this plan, the focus of work in this field will be on collaboration, improving trust and nature recovery, with an acknowledgment that any new financial system will support farmers to actively deliver what the public values and for which other markets do not readily exist.



## Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- **Addressing the twin challenges of biodiversity decline and the impacts of climate change on farmland**
- **Retaining uncluttered views across and out of the landscape**
- **Conserving traditional building styles and features and ensuring that new development is sympathetic to landscape character**
- **Developing an outcomes focused approach to agri-environment schemes which is compatible with the national and international designations within the AONB and which delivers more for nature, rewards farmers appropriately and provides goods and services the public value**
- **Supporting collaboration across farm holdings on a landscape scale, and between conservation bodies and farmers on skills training, ELMS delivery and monitoring**

## Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

### Coastal lowland farmed landscapes and their settlements

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
FL1. Promote the local development and local delivery of a results-based, outcome-focused approach to agri-environment payments, including the development of a ELMS pilot	<b>Defra</b> , NE, NFU	1-4, 9	1-7
FL2. Use ELMS and bespoke projects to support targeted reversal of old drainage	<b>NE</b> , EA, F/L	1-4	1-7
FL3. Promote cutting for hay rather than silage when the weather allows	<b>NE</b> , F/L	1-4	2-4, 7
FL4. Support sound conservation management of woodlands, kested hedgerows and field trees, connecting habitats across the landscape	<b>FC</b> , NE, F/L, SCAONB, CWT, RSPB	2,4-5	2-4, 7
FL5. Create a bespoke landscape-scale project to support farmland biodiversity over the life of this plan	<b>SCAONB</b> , F/L, CWT,RSPB, NE, FC, EA	1-4	2-4, 7
FL6. Develop targeted projects for key species, such as barn owl and breeding waders	<b>CWT</b> , RSPB, NE, SCAONB, EA, F/L	1-4	2-4, 7
FL7. Use ELMS to promote and reward good soil management, and promote Catchment Sensitive Farming, grants and initiative for soils, air and water quality	<b>NE</b> , F/L	2,4	1, 2, 4-6
FL8. Monitor and act on tree and plant diseases, notably Chalara and Phytopthera	<b>FC</b> , WT, NE, LA	1-3	1-4
FL9. Act to reduce run-off from roads and farmland to help improve the quality of watercourses	<b>EA</b> , F/L, NE	1, 2, 4	5, 6
FL10. Ensure that no sites or features of geological interest are lost to development or inappropriate management	<b>LA</b> , Cumbria RIGS, NE	2	7
FL11. Support and encourage measures which reduce visual intrusion such as re-routing or undergrounding of overhead wires	<b>LPAs</b> , ENW, SCAONB	3	7
FL12. Use planning policy and decision making to maintain undeveloped horizons, minimise the impact of vertical structures and retain views out of and across the landscape	<b>LPAs</b>	3	7
FL13. Use planning policy/decision making, and grant support to conserve traditional buildings and structures	<b>LPAs</b> , SCAONB	4, 5	7
FL14. Ensure net-gain for biodiversity in planning decisions; trial and use the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 or future versions	<b>LPAs</b> , NE, EA, SCAONB	1, 2	1-7
FL15. Act to reduce highway and roadside signage clutter	<b>HA</b> , LA, SCAONB	3	7
FL16. Replace high colour temperature, unshielded street lighting with low colour temperature lighting, and fully shield lighting and ensure it is only on when required.	<b>LA</b>	2, 3, 5	7
<i>See also actions: OF6; RF1, RF4; L7-10</i>			

#### Measures of Success

- Increase in farmland biodiversity
- Increasing numbers of farmers benefitting from receiving public money for delivering public goods
- No net loss of hedgerows, woodland or field trees / no loss of kests, veteran trees or ancient woodland

- Evidence of net gain for biodiversity in planning decisions
- No development takes place which significantly harms views out of and across the landscape
- Buildings and structures no longer at risk, due to conservation action



# Top 10 Priorities for Nature Recovery

The following are the top 10 priorities to aid nature recovery on the Solway Coast between 2020 and 2025. Wherever possible, local communities should have a role in delivering this action and will require support and resources to make this happen. Collaboration between farmers, fishermen and conservation organisations is central to any successful activity in support of these priorities

Priority	Action	Main Partners
<b>Landscape-scale connectivity and nature recovery</b>	Act on a landscape scale to conserve, enhance, expand and connect habitats and communities of species across the whole coast and beyond. Develop an AONB Nature Recovery Plan	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
<b>Understanding / responding to the likely impacts of climate change</b>	Provide the space for the expansion of key habitats such as saltmarsh and marshy grassland.	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, LA, F/L
<b>South Solway Mosses</b>	Restore and conserve peatland habitats through rewetting, buffering and creating lagg zones	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
<b>Saltmarsh</b>	Conserve and extend saltmarsh habitat for its wildlife and carbon storage/sequestration benefits and protect sensitive sites from disturbance and pollution	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, LA
<b>Mudflats</b>	Protect mudflats from development and pollution, and reduce disturbance to species using them as feeding grounds	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, Fishing community
<b>Dunes</b>	Create, restore and conserve dune habitat and protect sensitive sites from disturbance	NE, RSPB, CWT, SCAONB, LA

Priority	Action	Main Partners
<b>Species-led conservation</b>	Take action for specific species which may require bespoke effort during the life of the Plan e.g. breeding and over-wintering wildfowl and waders, little tern, marsh tit, willow tit, smelt, marsh fritillary, natterjack toad, mud shrimp, wrasse species, smallhound, bass, bell huss, thornback ray, Atlantic salmon, tope dogfish.	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB, Fishing community
<b>Non-native species management</b>	Reduce the impact of non-native species, such as Japanese rose and Himalayan balsam, on native flora and fauna	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
<b>Supporting HNV farming</b>	Promote advice, training, support and collaboration to advance High Nature Value farming; contribute to the development and subsequent delivery of ELMS that properly rewards farmers for delivering public goods	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
<b>Evidence and data</b>	Undertake research to improve collective understanding of the issues facing the conservation of the Solway Coast. Support Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre	Universities, NE, RSPB, EA, SCAONB



# People and Place

*Enjoying a walk on the beach*

*“People have made this landscape; to understand it properly it is important to see the human stories alongside, and as part of, those of nature.”*





## Introduction

The Solway Coast, like all of the AONBs and National Parks of the UK, is a living, working landscape. This plan does not address issues such as housing provision, transport and broadband provision, which are the proper subject of other strategic documents, e.g. the Allerdale and Carlisle Local Development Plans; instead the focus is on the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and helping people to understand, celebrate and enjoy the area's rich heritage. This section of the plan focuses on finding out more about, and celebrating the landscape and its cultural heritage, promoting community action for the environment, responsible tourism, education, training and skills. Some descriptions and actions which relate to farming and fishing, and to buildings and settlements feature in earlier parts of the plan.

## A cultural landscape

We can summarise the definition of 'natural beauty' as the coming together of landscape, wildlife and our built heritage; but landscape ought to be seen as much more than just the view. To see it most clearly we need to understand how the land has been used over time, how it has evolved, and to uncover the stories often hidden within it. Our appreciation of that landscape (and crucially in this context our desire to look after it) can be so much greater than when faced with a beautiful view without the time-depth of stories that may go with it.

The historian Simon Schama captured this well, saying,

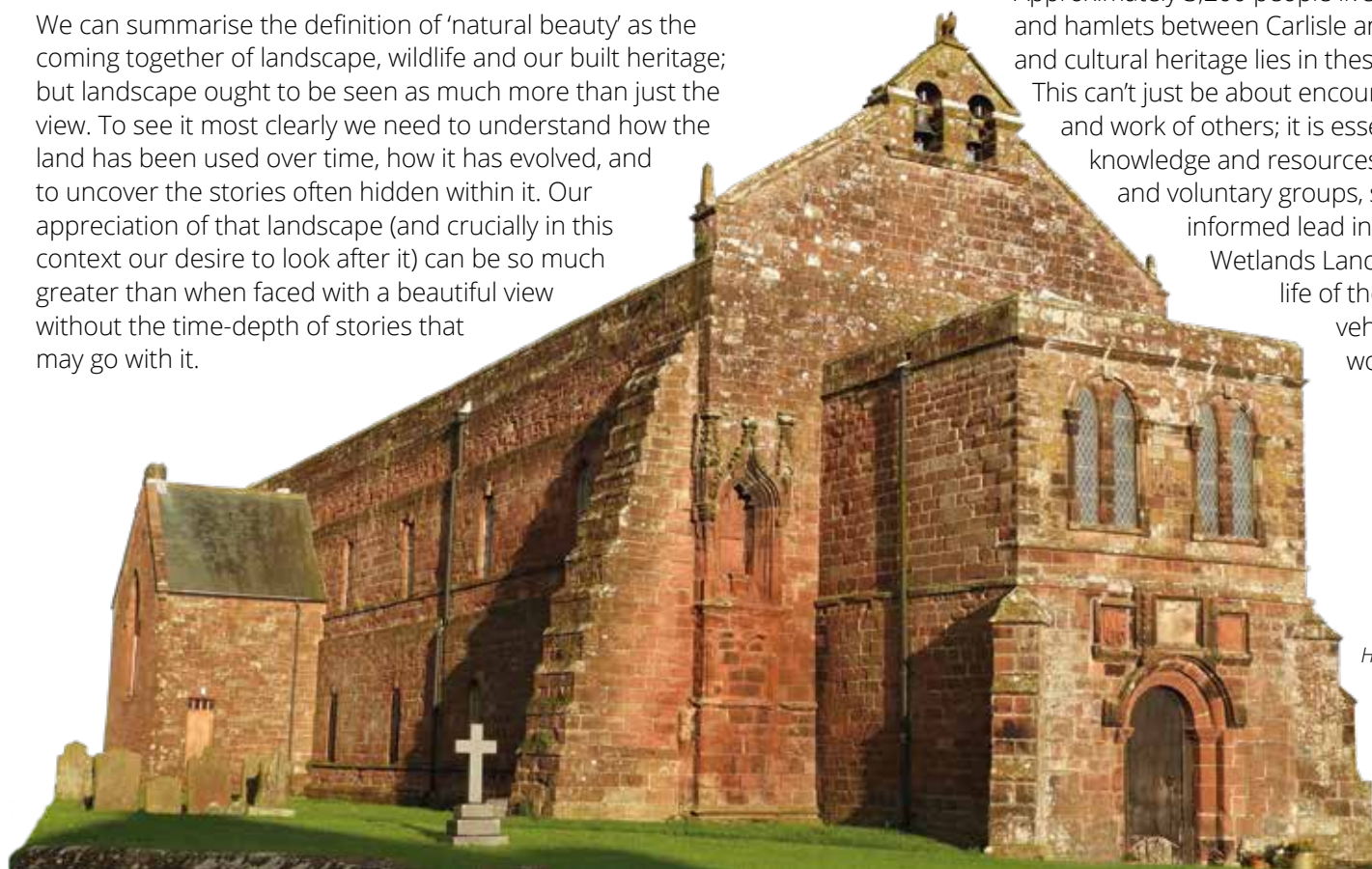
*"Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."*

This is a landscape full of memories and stories, and keeping those things alive as well as creating new stories is to many people as much a part of conserving this landscape as looking after our Mosses, mudflats and marshes.

People have made this landscape; to understand it properly it is important to see the human stories alongside, and as part of, those of nature. To conserve it properly, this conservation effort has to be at least in part rooted in the community.

Approximately 3,200 people live on the Solway Coast in the scattered villages and hamlets between Carlisle and Maryport. The long-term future for our natural and cultural heritage lies in these local people caring about it and caring for it.

This can't just be about encouraging local communities to engage in the plans and work of others; it is essential to promote the development of skills, knowledge and resources among community organisations, businesses and voluntary groups, so they can take an increasingly skilled and informed lead in aspects of heritage management. The Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme, delivered during the life of the last management plan, was an especially good vehicle for developing community capacity and more work of this kind is necessary.



Holme Cultram Abbey



*Lamonby Farm, Burgh-by-Sands, an example of 'clay dabbin'*

The area's rich historic environment has been referred to elsewhere in this plan in reference to particular landscapes, and the imprints of 5000 years of settlement, from the Bronze Age onwards, can be seen. Perhaps the most notable cultural heritage assets are associated with the Roman period and the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site; this includes Hadrian's Wall itself, and associated forts, milefortlets and earthworks. The Medieval influence is seen in a legacy of abbey ruins, fortified farmsteads, nucleated rural settlements and historic field patterns. More recent historic landscape features include World War Two airfields and the unusual and distinctive 'glider traps' on the marshes. Traditional building materials vary considerably and include red sandstone, limestone, cobbles, clay and slate. The most distinctive local building style is the cruck-roofed, clay-walled buildings known as 'clay dabbins' which can be found across the Solway Plain.

Some cultural practices have survived partly because they have a land management or economic purposes – haaf netting, with its Viking origins, equipment and terminology, is a prime example. However cultural associations with landscape and place are not just about the past; maintaining a living culture is about celebrating life on the Solway today, and in supporting new cultural practices to grow directly from the community.



*Traditional haaf netting*

© Countryside Agency photo C. Healey





# Action for cultural landscape and community

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
CC1. Build community capacity to take a lead on conserving their natural and cultural heritage	<b>LIG</b> , SCAONB, NE, LA, CWT, RSPB, SFP	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC2. Continue and expand the programme of conservation volunteering opportunities, including through the provision of training for volunteers	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, ACT, RSPB, NE, CWT	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC3. Develop opportunities for communities to engage in citizen science projects	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, NE, RSPB, CWT, SFP	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC4. Develop programmes which support local people to uncover and tell their stories about their landscape and heritage	<b>LIG</b> , SCAONB	6, 8	7
CC5. Develop and deliver oral history projects along the coast, with a focus on farming, fishing and conservation	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG	6, 8	7
CC6. Raise awareness of the cultural heritage of coastal margins, such as waths and haaf netting	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, SFP	5, 6, 8	7
CC7. Develop programmes and projects which support the conservation of historic buildings and structures, and tell their stories	<b>SCAONB</b> , HE, LIG, LA, F/L	5, 6, 8	7
CC8. Encourage further archaeological investigation of sites and features of interest, especially through developing new community archaeology projects	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, HE	5, 6, 8	7
CC9. Undertake research to increase our understanding of the area's historic buildings, structures, routeways and archaeological features	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, HE	5, 6, 8	7
CC10. Use the planning system to avoid the piecemeal erosion of the historic character of buildings and settlements	<b>LPA</b>	5	7
CC11. Use agri-environment schemes to conserve and enhance archaeological features and built heritage on private land and promote opportunities for public access to ad enjoyment of this aspect of our heritage	<b>F/L</b> , NE, HE	5	7
CC12. Promote sensitive new uses for historic buildings and structures	<b>LA</b> , LIG	5, 9	7
CC13. Promote community renewable energy schemes and other local activity on climate change, whilst ensuring the conservation of the area's special qualities	<b>LA</b> , LIG, SCAONB, SFP	1	1, 7
CL14. Act quickly to remove litter and fly-tipping and promote positive messages to encourage prevention and respect for the landscape and communities	<b>LA</b>	2, 3	7
<i>See also actions: L5-9</i>			

## Measures of Success

- More historic buildings and structures undergoing conservation and/or research work
- An increase in community-devised and led conservation and heritage projects

- Increased community participation in heritage conservation and celebration





## A natural place to explore and enjoy







Visiting Holme Cultram Abbey



Bogsploration on Drumburgh Moss



The Solway Coast is a stunning landscape, and the area's natural beauty, in all its forms, is attractive to people. Improving people's experiences in exploring, enjoying and understanding the Solway Coast is not just something that benefits visitors; local people are a crucial audience for the many 'things to see and do' linked to nature and culture that can be made more accessible and more engaging.

For visitors to the area, historically the offer was focused around Silloth and Allonby, for a more traditional 'seaside' holiday. Fitting with the context of this plan, the offer today, for visitors and for local people exploring their landscape, is now partly based on the area's natural and cultural assets and the products, attractions and activities that have developed from them; there is a strong focus on walking, cycling, birdwatching and visiting historic places.

Visitors to the Solway Coast come predominantly from relatively close-by: Carlisle and northern Cumbria, and Southern Scotland. The day visitor dominates the market, whilst overnight stays are focused on the more traditional seaside locations, including chalets and the area's nine caravan/ holiday parks. The vast majority of visitor economy activity takes places in the spring and summer months, which can lead to reduced services for local communities in the quieter months. There is a heavy reliance on the use of private transport to explore the Solway Coast.





Signpost on the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site



Regardless of whether one lives on the Solway or is coming to visit, to explore the landscape on foot and by bicycle requires good access infrastructure. 'Access highlights' on the coast include:

- nearly 90km public footpaths and bridleways
- nearly 22km<sup>2</sup> of open access land (19% of the area)
- part of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail and the England Coast Path (also due be confirmed as a National Trail)
- numerous promoted day walks including 11km of Easy Access walks
- excellent cycling opportunities, including: road, touring, mountain biking, part of the Hadrian's Wall Cycleway and the Cumbria Cycleway.

As a destination, the area, like the rest of Cumbria, is dominated by the Lake District. Whilst there is certainly scope for making the Solway Coast better known, recent years have seen a decline in resources to support destination management activities and maintenance of the public realm. There is also currently insufficient information and interpretation available to help people discover, explore and enjoy the Solway Coast. Even now, visitor pressure on some important wildlife sites can lead to conflict with conservation objectives.

### Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- **Limited current marketing of the area**
- **The need for improved pre-and post-arrival information**
- **Relatively limited offer of nature and culture-led 'things to see and do'**
- **The need for more/higher quality interpretation of the area's heritage**
- **Difficulty in exploring the area without a private car**





## Actions for exploring and enjoying the Solway Coast

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
EE1. Support the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable visitor economy based on, and sustaining, the special qualities of the Solway Coast. This should be through a positive and carefully applied planning policy framework, which supports tourism whilst protecting the environment, and through investment initiatives (eg. Growth Funds etc)	<b>LA</b> , CT, SCAONB, Businesses	6, 7, 9	7
EE2. Develop/expand shoulder season programming which supports the extension of the spring/summer season, focusing on themes such as winter birds, stargazing, geology and the historic environment	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, Businesses, RSPB, CWT, CT, LA	6, 7, 9	7
EE3. Ensure high standards of management of the Public Rights of Way network in the AONB, including an emphasis on promoting ease of access for all responsible and legal use	<b>HA</b>	6, 7	7
EE4. Promote the sustainable development and use of the England Coast Path, Hadrian's Wall National Trail and Hadrian's Cycleway	<b>HA</b> , NE, SCAONB, CT, LA	6, 9	7
EE5. Support the development of new (and enhancement of existing) walking and cycling products linked to public transport hubs and local settlements	<b>SCAONB</b> , LA, LIG	1, 6, 7, 9	7
EE6. Interpret key sites and features of heritage interest, utilising a variety of techniques	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, NE, RSPB, HE, CWT, LA, SFP	5, 6	7
EE7. Support activity which encourages a reduction in within-destination car travel e.g. improvements in public transport, car-free days and itineraries	<b>SCAONB</b> , LA	1, 7, 9	7
EE8. Develop opportunities for using the Solway Coast as a place to increase people's physical and mental well-being, including health walks, mindfulness activities and others	<b>SCAONB</b> , LIG, LA	6, 7, 9	7
EE9. Develop a programme to promote the nature and culture offer of the Solway Coast, supported by itineraries and high quality images and copy	<b>SCAONB</b> , CT, LA, SFP	5-7, 9	7
EE10. Explore the development of an ambassador programme with tourism businesses, focused on knowledge-based training on the special qualities of the area	<b>SCAONB</b> , businesses	6-9	7
EE11. Develop a tourism business toolkit, with key messages, images and copy, to help businesses promote themselves as being in the AONB	<b>SCAONB</b> , businesses	6-9	7
EE12. Generate AONB specific data on visitor numbers, motivations and activity	<b>CT</b> , LA	6	7
<i>See also actions: IF8; IF9; OF8-10; M8</i>			

### Measures of Success

- An increase in heritage related walking and cycling products / opportunities
- Increase in heritage-led shoulder season activity
- Successful delivery of joint projects between agencies and tourism businesses

- Improvement in condition of the Rights of Way, National/Regional routes
- Increased user satisfaction in surveys





## A landscape for learning





If we are to conserve our natural and cultural heritage, then it is essential that people have to the opportunity to understand how our natural systems function, can appreciate how the past has shaped the present and can engage with our living culture today. The Solway Coast has great potential to be a fascinating outdoor classroom, where schools, universities and the wider public can learn formally and informally about how nature works and how it can be better conserved, how farming can provide both food and public goods and how the area's rich culture has developed and will keep evolving.

## Formal education

There has never been a greater need to engage children, in particular, with nature than there is now, as even many children in rural areas appear to be losing a connection to the natural world that would have been stronger in the relatively recent past. The nature of the education system means that inspiring children about our natural and cultural heritage needs to meet objectives in the curriculum; thankfully this is usually possible and a wide variety of work has been done by many organisations with the schools in and immediately around the AONB. From the AONB team this has included a wide range of popular and successful activities through the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership; Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and Natural England also work with local schools to introduce children to nature, especially at reserves such as Campfield Marsh and Finglandrigg Wood. Partnerships with Tullie House Museum in Carlisle have also proved beneficial to helping school children learn about the Solway Coast.

Barriers to engagement with schools include the pressure of the curriculum, the cost of travel, and lack of awareness of the opportunities, allied to continued pressure on conservation organisation budgets. Despite this, there is considerable potential to build on the current offer and in particular to generate better understanding about where our food comes from and how land is farmed and managed.



*Working in partnership with Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and Tullie House Museum to help young people learn about the landscape*



## Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning on the Solway Coast takes many forms including conservation and other heritage skills training of the kind delivered by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the AONB team, as well as a variety of community archaeology workshops and courses.

These initiatives create a deeper pool of skills and knowledge in communities, actively supports conservation and serve to connect people and place. The barrier to such provision is usually a lack of resources to make it possible, though bodies such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, community organisations such as Action with Communities in Cumbria and conservation organisations have provided this support.

## Skills Training

The future conservation of the Solway will require skills and knowledge in land-based practices as diverse as farming, forestry, ecology and practical field work of all kinds. It is also vital to retain built heritage skills, such as those that will sustain clay dabbins and cruck-roof buildings. Training and skills in this field are well-supported by Askham Bryan College through its Newton Rigg campus and this has been augmented by the work of conservation bodies such as the AONB Partnership, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Natural England. This work actively supports improvements in conservation and increases people's environment sector employability locally. A clear area of need is to enable different sectors to learn from each other, especially farmers and conservation bodies.



*Volunteers learning clay dabbin construction skills*

*Hard working volunteers constructing a new visitor boardwalk at Wolsty Banks*







## Action for Learning, Training and Skills

Action	Lead	Outcomes supported	Services supported
L1. Support school visits to the Solway Coast, through developing projects and programmes linked to the curriculum	<b>SCAONB</b> , RSPB, NE, CWT, LA, Schools	5-7	7
L2. Provide school travel grants where resources allow and plan for this in project development	<b>All</b>	5-7	7
L3. Provide training and other activities with teachers, focused on delivering aspects of the curriculum on the Solway Coast	<b>SCAONB</b> , RSPB, NE, CWT, Schools	5-8	7
L4. Provide support to universities to encourage and enable fieldwork and research	<b>SCAONB</b> , RSPB, NE, CWT	5-8	7
L5. Support organisations to deliver programmes of lifelong learning on conservation and heritage themes, including practical and knowledge-based activity and outreach events in communities within and beyond the AONB	<b>SCAONB</b> , RSPB, NE, CWT, HE, LIG, SFP	5-8	7
L6. Support the work of youth groups by providing informal learning opportunities on the Solway Coast	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, RSPB, CWT,	5-8	7
L7. Provide land-based skills training on the Solway Coast	<b>SCAONB</b> , NE, RSPB, CWT, LIG, F/L	5-8	7
L8. Support an increase in professional and volunteer skills in conserving and restoring historic buildings and industrial heritage	<b>HE</b> , SCAONB, LA, LIG	5, 6, 8	7
L9. Identify the skills and knowledge gaps in the land-based sector in the area	<b>SCAONB</b>	8	7
L10. Support and deliver joint training and knowledge exchange between farmers and conservation bodies and encourage and support collaboration between all parties	<b>NE</b> , F/L , NFU, CWT, SCAONB	4, 6, 8	7
<i>See also actions: M9; CC1-5, CC8-9 and EE10, EE12</i>			

### Measures of Success

- More school children visiting the Solway Coast for curriculum activity
- More people taking part in nature-related lifelong learning
- Increase in heritage skills training opportunities
- Increase in well-supported collaborative training activity between farmers/land managers/conservationists

## Monitoring

The Solway Coast AONB team will be responsible for monitoring implementation of this plan on an annual basis. The AONB Unit will have an implementation plan, updated annually and linked to management plan outcomes, as a companion to the AONB Management Plan and setting out its work, with many partners, to conserve this special place.

Statutory agencies, NGOs, community organisations, farmers' groups and others will all be invited to add their voice to how they have all contributed to making the Solway Coast richer in natural and cultural heritage.

## Indicators

A Management Plan needs a set of indicators that can be monitored and that can show whether things are heading in the right direction. Ideally, indicators should:

- be able to tell us about more than just that one factor;
- be reliably measured;
- be monitored as a matter of course or at a modest cost.

They will have a baseline and a target.

*Allied to the 'measures of success' highlighted in this plan, indicators are currently being considered and will be developed during 2020.*

## Abbreviations

ACT	Action for Communities in Cumbria
CRoW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
CT	Cumbria Tourism
CWT	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
EA	Environment Agency
ELMS	Environmental Land Management Schemes
ENW	Electricity North West
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FC	Forestry Commission
F/L	Farmers and landowners
HA	Highway Authority
HE	Historic England
LA	Local Authorities (including Parish Councils where relevant)
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
LIG	Local Interest Groups (covering a wide range of interests and geographies)
MPA	Minerals Planning Authority
NE	Natural England
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWIFCA	North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
RIGS	Regionally important geological and geomorphological sites
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation (under the European Habitats Directive)
SCAONB	Solway Coast AONB Team
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SFP	Solway Firth Partnership
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Uni	Universities and colleges
WCRT	West Cumbria Rivers Trust
WT	Woodland Trust













Redshank





*Frosty morning on Glasson Moss*

Solway  
Coast

Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty



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