

Sea Fisheries

The sea fishery industry on the English Solway Coast primarily lands shellfish, with whelks, scallops and nephrops being the common species landed. The overall tonnage of fish landed has declined by around a third since 2013 driven by large falls in the scallop, queen scallop and nephrops catch, but offset by a rise in the whelks catch. Whitehaven is by far the largest landing port in the region, accounting for 79% of landings.

Other fisheries activity on the English Solway coast includes salmon and trout fishing, particularly traditional haaf net fishing. However, the overall salmon and trout catch has fallen by 56% over the last ten years, and haaf net fishing is now a heritage and recreational activity rather than a viable commercial fishery. This likely understates the fall in the catch as the figures make no distinction between retained and released fish, and it is likely that the retained catch has suffered a significantly larger fall. Cockle beds on the English Solway sands are currently closed to commercial harvesting due to sustainability concerns. Various studies have been conducted since the closure, but none have concluded that the cockle beds are yet ready for commercial harvesting.

Seafood Processing

Fish processing employment has fallen by 60% from its 2011 peak largely due to the closure of the two Cumbrian Seafood sites in Maryport and Whitehaven. The main area of fish processing activity in the region is Harbourside Products in Maryport which primarily processes smoked salmon before exporting to Europe.

Shipping and Transport

The contribution of the shipping and transport sector in a large part relates to the freight ports at Silloth, operated by Associated British Ports, and Workington, operated by Cumbria County Council. The total tonnage handled by each port fluctuates from year to year – in 2018, the combined volume was 513,000 tonnes. Nearly all of the freight handled by the two ports is inward, primarily goods and raw materials for use by local industry. The volume therefore reflects the level of demand from manufacturers, the agricultural sector, etc.

Energy, Aggregates, Subsea Cables and Pipelines

The most notable energy asset on the English Solway Coast is the Robin Rigg Wind Farm, with a total of 60 wind turbines, 58 of which are currently operational. The turbines have an installed combined generating capacity of 180MW. The operation base for Robin Rigg Wind Farm is located in Workington. There are no publicly available plans to develop further offshore wind sites in the Solway Firth. However, The Crown Estate are currently holding a leasing round for new offshore wind sites with part of the English Solway Coast included in the Northern Wales and Irish Sea region of the leasing round.

The other notable development is the planned Woodhouse Colliery, a subsea coking coal mine which is scheduled to start operating in 2022. There are a number of plans for tidal power generation but these are at the very early stages of development and still require all necessary consents.

Sport, Recreation and Tourism

The Cumbria and Lake District region received around 47 million visitors in both 2017 and 2018, the vast majority of which are day trips. The environment of the Solway Firth supports a range of marine and coastal recreational activities, and helps contribute to the region's tourism offer. The available data indicates that most visitors (89%) to the Solway coast are from the local area, travelling less than 20 miles, with the most popular activity being walking. Key locations include the popular beaches at Allonby and St Bees, which are also the two currently (2019) designated bathing water sites on the English Solway coast, and a number of wildlife and nature reserves run by the RSPB, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Natural England, and the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Other coastal and marine recreational activities include sailing, with marinas in Maryport and Whitehaven, and sea angling. A Cumbria Coastal Activities Centre is being developed in Whitehaven.

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage

The Solway region has a rich maritime history, in a large part linked to its position as a gateway between England, Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man. The historical and cultural assets in the region make a notable contribution to its visitor and tourism offer, and provide an educational resource and contribute to the sense of place. This includes local history museums in Silloth, Maryport, Workington and Whitehaven, while the Solway Military Trail promotes the region's military history, particularly

related to the Second World War. Hadrian's Wall, one of the most important Roman sites in Britain, also runs to Bowness-on-Solway on the Solway coast.

Marine Management and Education

Maritime management includes the statutory bodies that have responsibility for the management, operation, and conservation of England's seas and coastlines for leisure, commercial and other uses. This includes the Marine Management Organisation and the North West Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. At the regional level, Solway Firth Partnership plays a pivotal role in furthering the integrated and sustainable management of the Solway's environmental, economic and community resources. The Partnership works on both sides of the border. There are separate marine planning regimes for Scotland and England (albeit sharing common aims).

Education includes research and training related to the coast and marine environment and economy. Specific education and training courses within the Solway region that relate to its marine environment are fairly limited. Research on the Solway's natural and historic marine and coastal environment is undertaken by a range of agencies and organisations, although largely based outside of the area.