

Solway Firth Partnership

Business Plan 2021 – 2024



**Working Together towards a sustainable Solway
Firth**

Solway Firth Partnership

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Picture – front page: Siddick Coast © SFP

Picture – page 4: Boats on the Solway © SFP

1. Executive Summary

This Business Plan sets out a framework for the activities of the Solway Firth

Partnership over the period 2021 – 2024. The Plan details the activities of the Partnership by identifying key actions and outlining the current management framework and delivery model by which aims will be achieved. As the delivery of the plan will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, its effect is discussed under the relevant sections of this plan. A breakdown of funding requirements is given together with an indication of where funds are to be sought.

Our annual report is published in conjunction with our accounts. All our governing and strategic documents are available on our website:
www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk



2. Organisation Details

Company Name: Solway Firth Partnership

Address: Campbell House, The Crichton, Bankend Road, Dumfries, DG1 4UQ

Telephone number: 01387 702161

E-mail: info@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

Website: www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

Legal Status: The Solway Firth Partnership is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without share capital under Company Number SC250012 and a Scottish Charity under Scottish Charity Number SCO34376.

The Registered office: Campbell House, The Crichton, Dumfries DG1 4UQ

Objects, as specified in Memorandum and Articles of Association:

- To promote and advance education of the public about working and living sustainably in the Solway Firth area of Southern Scotland and North West England.
- To preserve and protect, for the public benefit, the environment covering the land, coastal zones and waters of the Solway Firth area by seeking to guide, encourage and enhance the integration of environmental, social and economic policies including the sustainable management of pollution, waste, land reclamation, provision of public amenities and other related activities.
- To advance the conservation and preservation of the Solway Firth and to support marine development and planning for the protection of the wider seas; and to do so either independently and/or in association with Local Authorities, environment agencies, public bodies, conservation bodies, voluntary organisations, local communities and others.



Figure 1: Anemone in rockpool

3. Background

The Solway Firth Partnership is an independent Company Limited by Guarantee and acts as a voluntary coastal management mechanism. The Partnership was launched in 1994 as a response to formal support for integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) from the European Union, UK Government and agencies.

Our Vision

To support a vibrant and sustainable local economy while respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of our Solway marine and coastal area.

Our Mission

- To make a significant contribution to sustainable development and environmental protection through supporting whole coast, integrated marine and coastal planning and management.
- To provide a transparent, balanced and respected mechanism that supports objective, impartial and evidence-based decision making for the local marine and coastal area.
- To provide distinctive input to development of a cooperative network of relationships between those with an interest in the local marine and coastal area.
- To help coastal communities and businesses resulting in tangible local benefits.
- To promote greater recognition and understanding of the high-quality environment, culture and heritage of the local marine and coastal area.



Figure 2: Solway Walk with Robin Rigg in background ©SFP

4. COVID-19

During 2020/21 COVID-19 has had an impact on the work of Solway Firth Partnership (SFP). Staff have been working from home in line with Government guidance and rules and have been unable to carry out public facing work such as guided walks, talks and outdoor events. COVID-19 restrictions have also limited any travel between the Scottish and English side of the Solway unless essential. The situation is constantly evolving and at the start of this plan a national vaccination programme is being rolled out. SFP has been striving to adapt to running projects online and engaging more effectively with the public through webinars, videos, social media posts, website updates and e-newsletters. Staff will continue to work safely, following government guidelines. Where possible, SFP will seek appropriate funding to deliver new online projects until it is safe to get back to public facing activities.

5. Brexit

Leaving the EU has implications for different areas of SFP work. One of the major impacts is on future opportunities for funding projects.

The impact of Brexit is discussed in more detail under relevant sections of the plan.



Figure 3: Canoe on the Solway Coast ©Keith Kirk

6. Future Focus

Marine Planning

In recent years, marine legislation has been enacted throughout the UK introducing a new system of marine planning. The UK Marine and Coastal Access Act came into effect in 2009³ and the Marine (Scotland) Act was introduced in 2010⁴. Marine planning is a statutory requirement. These two pieces of legislation both govern marine planning for the Solway Firth, given its administrative boundary between the inshore waters of England and Scotland. The Solway lies close to the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland, which have separate systems of marine legislation and management. Wales and Ireland bring further administrative jurisdictions to the Irish Sea making this a particularly complex area.

Marine planning is a central means of achieving shared objectives through planning for the sustainable and appropriate placement of multiple marine activities in a coordinated and coherent way. This is in conjunction with other key measures including the creation of a marine protected areas network and the development of improved fisheries management. There are significant commitments to mitigate the effects of climate change and a need to find ways in which our local marine environment can contribute to these.

³ *(The UK Government, 2014) UK Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009*

⁴ *(The Scottish Government, 2015) Marine (Scotland) Act*

Scotland's National Marine Plan was adopted in 2015 and underwent a three-year review in 2018. It is the framework for all marine activity in Scottish waters (inshore and offshore), applying to the exercise of both reserved and devolved functions⁵. This National Marine Plan sets out strategic policies for the sustainable development of Scotland's marine resources out to 200 nautical miles.

The plan has to be compatible with the UK Marine Policy Statement and existing marine plans across the UK, particularly where there is interaction between England inshore and offshore marine plans and Northern Ireland Marine Plans. Following the Scottish Marine Regions Order 2015, the Solway became one of the 11 Scottish inshore planning regions (0-12 Nautical Miles NM). The Solway marine region coastline is entirely within the administrative boundary of Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The development of National Marine Plan interactive (NMPi)⁶, a web based Geographical Information System (GIS), provides the public with a wide range of spatial data including all the data from Scotland's Marine Atlas. Solway Firth Partnership will continue to gather data and make this available to the NMPi.

To date three Regional Marine Planning Partnerships have been formed. In due course, Scottish Ministers will direct the formation of a Marine Planning Partnership for the Solway to produce a regional marine plan under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.



Figure 4: Port Logan Beach ©SFP

⁵(The Scottish Government, 2014) National Marine Plan Online
⁶(The Scottish Government, 2014) Interactive Marine Planning

In June 2019, as part of its programme of work on the marine environment and nearly a decade on from the Act, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee agreed to explore issues arising from the review of the National Marine Plan. This included progress in the development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans.

The Committee published its interim report on 26 June 2020, setting out the work of the Committee to that date, summarising:

- the written evidence received from the call for views;
- the themes emerging from the fact-finding visits undertaken in November 2019; and
- the key outstanding questions to be addressed.

The inquiry culminated in the production of a final report in December 2020⁷. In the report, the Committee recommended that the Scottish Government publish a renewed vision statement.

‘This should include:

- Specific aims, objectives and outcomes for regional marine planning.
- Identification of priority regions for future rollout of regional marine planning and indicative timescales.
- Priority socioeconomic and environmental issues that should be considered in future Regional Marine Plans.
- Details of work to secure long-term finance for future implementation of regional marine planning

The Committee also recommended that the Scottish Government should do more to communicate the benefits of regional marine planning to coastal communities and other stakeholders across the nation.’⁷

The findings of the ECCLR Committee poses an opportunity for increased momentum and progress towards the development of regional marine planning. Solway Firth Partnership are continuing project and core work to facilitate the ongoing progress towards forming a regional marine planning partnership in the Solway and a regional marine plan.

In England, there is no ‘national’ marine plan. Instead marine planning is structured as regional marine plans for inshore and offshore waters, with 11 marine regions. The English side of the Solway Firth forms part of the North West Inshore marine region, which extends to the English border with Wales at the River Dee.

⁷(The Scottish Parliament, 2020) *Development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans in Scotland*

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has produced marine plans for all marine regions in England, with the North west marine plan set to be adopted in 2021. The Partnership has provided support to the MMO in their early stakeholder engagement for the North West Marine Plans and will continue to do so through the continued development of the Plans.

The MMO have also developed an interactive map based Marine Information System⁸. It presents information on all sectors and activities submitted to support the development of marine plans, including environmental, economic and social data. The Partnership will continue to gather and provide data for this system where possible.

Mechanisms for aligned planning in the Solway Firth that meet the requirements and aspirations of both Scottish and English marine planning systems must be developed. Solway Firth Partnership has an integral role to play in taking this forward in a way that supports environmental protection, economic development and community wellbeing across the local marine and coastal area throughout the Solway.

The three-year Solway Firth Partnership SMILE (Solway Marine Information Learning and Environment) Project has received support until the end of July 2021 from EMFF through Marine Scotland (extended from end Dec 2020 due to COVID-19). The project which employs a Project Officer aims to update the 1996 'State of the Solway Review', using innovative communication methods to gather pan-estuary information, learn from stakeholders including fishers and promote a better understanding of the Solway Firth ecosystem. The updated online Solway Review, launched in early 2021⁹, was required in the light of new demands made on the estuary's resources and in the context of marine planning.



Figure 5: SMILE Project Public Engagement Wordle, from Sept 2019

⁸ (GOV.UK, n.d.) Marine Activity Data

⁹ (Solway Firth Partnership, 2021) Solway Review

The Solway Area

The area covered by Solway Firth Partnership includes the marine and coastal zone of the Solway within the line from St Bees Head in Cumbria across to and including the Mull of Galloway and the Rhins up to the administrative boundary for Dumfries and Galloway. This includes Loch Ryan, see Figure 6: Area covered by Solway Firth Partnership (map for illustrative purposes only).

The Partnership's landward boundary has never been geographically defined. Defining the landward boundary of Solway Firth Partnership's work would potentially result in restricted involvement in land-based activities which are linked to the Solway's coastal and marine area. Involvement is dependent upon features and activities that have an integral relationship with the marine environment.



Figure 6: Area covered by Solway Firth Partnership

The Environment

The 25 Year Environment Plan¹⁰ sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first. The plan also aims to achieve good environmental status of our seas while allowing marine industries to thrive and complete the ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas (MPAs).

Areas of the inner Solway Firth are designated both as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive and a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive – collectively known as the Solway Firth European Marine Site (EMS)¹¹. The Solway Firth SAC designation reflects the importance of the site's marine and coastal habitats including merse (saltmarsh), mudflats and reefs. The Solway Firth SPA designation recognises the large bird populations that these habitats support, particularly in winter.

Important bird species present include Svalbard barnacle goose, pink-footed goose, whooper swan and pintail as well as waders such as bar-tailed godwit, golden plover, oystercatcher, dunlin, knot, curlew and redshank.

A cross-border extension to the SPA was approved in 2020¹². The qualifying bird species in the Solway Firth marine SPA include the Annex 1 species Red-throated diver; Migratory species common scoter and goosander; Migratory species from the 2001 SPA Review ringed plover, lapwing, cormorant, herring gull, common gull, and black-headed gull¹³.

Solway Firth Partnership continues to highlight the bird interest of the Solway and looks for opportunities to raise awareness of wading birds and the vulnerability of their high tide roosts to the public.

The estuary is also a Ramsar site¹⁴, as it is an important wetland for overwintering birds and the rare natterjack toad, which is found here at the most northerly point in its range.

The Solway Firth is important for the passage of migratory fish such as sea and river lamprey, as well as salmon and sea trout that the local angling economy depends upon¹⁵. The Solway also provides an important nursery area for species including skates and rays.

¹⁰ [\(DEFRA, 2018\) 25 Year Environment Plan](#)

¹¹ [\(JNCC, 2006\) Upper Solway Flats and Marshes – Standard Natura 2000 Data Form](#)

¹² [\(Scottish Government, 2020\) Solway Firth SPA](#)

¹³ [\(UK Government Press Release, 2020\) 125,000 seabirds to benefit from expansion of protected site](#)

¹⁴ [\(Ramsar, 2015\) Upper Solway Flats & Marshes – Ramsar Sites Information Services](#)

¹⁵ [\(The Scottish Government, 2013\) Scotland's National Marine Plan: Chapter 8: Wild Salmon & Diadromous fish.](#)

In December 2020, Marine Scotland produced Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 (SMA2020) which reports on the vision for the seas, '**clean, healthy, safe, productive, biologically diverse marine and coastal environments, managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people**'.

The SMA2020 portal¹⁶ is structured around the vision for the seas. In addition, there are separate sections on topics including climate change and pressures from activities. In all there are 183 components to SMA2020.

Most of the spatial data used in the assessments are available through the Marine Scotland Open Data Network (MS Data¹⁷, MS Information¹⁸, MS Maps NMPi) or other online portals.



Figure 7: Cyclists at Skinburness ©SFP

In English waters, there have been three tranches of designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) under the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Sites designated in the Solway are the Cumbria Coast MCZ¹⁹, an inshore site that stretches for approximately 27 km along the coast of Cumbria, extending from south of Whitehaven, around the cliffs at St Bees Head, to the mouth of the Ravenglass Estuary; Allonby Bay MCZ²⁰, including Dubmill Scar and the offshore area of Maryport Roads. The Bay contains some of the best examples of honeycomb worm reef in the UK; and the Solway Firth MCZ²¹ covering the inner English side of the Solway. It has been designated specifically for the protection of European smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*).

¹⁶ (The Scottish Government, 2020) *Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 Portal*

¹⁷ (The Scottish Government) *MS Data*

¹⁸ (The Scottish Government) *MS Information*

¹⁹ (DEFRA, JNCC and Natural England, 2013) *Marine conservation zone 2013 designation: Cumbria Coast.*

²⁰ (MMO, 2016) *Marine Conservation Zone 2016 designation: Allonby Bay.*

²¹ (DEFRA, 2019) *Solway Firth Marine Conservation Zone*

In Scottish inshore waters, the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network covers approximately 20% of the sea. Sites were designated for nature conservation, demonstration and research or historical reasons²². The only MPA site partially location within the Solway is the Clyde Sea Sill which stretches from the Mull of Kintyre to Corsewall Point on the Rhins of Galloway. This site is designated for black guillemot, circa littoral sand & coarse sediment communities, and fronts. Luce Bay and Sands SAC in the outer Solway Firth has been designated principally for its seabed and dune habitats and the species which depend on these places²³. The site was one of nine SACs in inshore waters which was the subject of public consultation by the Scottish Government in late 2014/early 2015²⁴ regarding new fishery management proposals. In February 2016, the Scottish Parliament passed spatial measures to regulate fishing in Luce Bay²⁵.

European Marine Sites (SPAs and SACs), MCZs and MPAs collectively are intended to form an ecologically coherent network of protected areas across all UK seas.

The Solway coastal lands are heavily influenced by maritime conditions, creating unique and nationally important landscapes. On the south side of the Solway an area is designated as the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)²⁶ and on the north side there are three National Scenic Areas (NSAs)²⁷ – the Nith Estuary, the East Stewarty Coast and the Fleet Valley.

Solway Firth Partnership will support work to ensure that MCZ and MPA projects are coordinated across the national boundary. Ways of doing this include provision of information to local stakeholders and cross border consultation on any proposed new sites or changes to the designations of existing sites.

²² *(The Scottish Government, 2015) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)*

²³ *(JNCC, 2015) Luce Bay and Sands*

²⁴ *(The Scottish Government, 2015) Protected Area G – Luce Bay & Sands SAC*

²⁵ *(The Scottish Government, 2015) The Inshore Fishing (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) (Luce Bay) Order 2015*

²⁶ *(Landscapes for Life , 2000)*

²⁷ *(Government, 2014)] Countryside and Landscape in Scotland – National Scenic Areas*

The Solway Firth is part of the Solway Tweed River Basin Management Planning unit for the purposes of implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD)²⁸.



Figure 8: Solway Tweed River Basin District

This placed a duty on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Environment Agency to jointly prepare the first River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the Solway in 2009 with the current, second plan having been produced in 2015 for the cycle 2015-2027²⁹. The process was supported by a Solway Area Advisory Group comprising partners from Scotland and England including Solway Firth Partnership. Solway Firth Partnership continues to provide input on marine and coastal issues to ensure integration between structures for delivering work on WFD and marine planning.

²⁸ (Environment Agency; Natural Scotland, 2015) *The river basin management plan for the Solway Tweed river basin district*

²⁹ (Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2015) *River basin Management planning: The Current Plans*

A small part of the Solway Firth Partnership area is covered by the North West River Basin District (south to St Bees Head) in Cumbria, see Figure 9: Map of the North West River Basin District. The plan cycle follows the same timescale as the Solway Tweed with a plan having been produced in 2015 for the second cycle.³⁰



Figure 9: Map of the North West River Basin District

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA),³¹ launched in 2010, embeds collaborative working at a river catchment scale, delivering a range of environmental, social and economic benefits and protecting our precious water environments for the benefit of us all. Catchment partnerships bring local knowledge and expertise and are active in each of the 100+ Water Framework Directive catchments across England, including those cross-border with Wales. In the past, management of the water environment has fallen to Government, to private companies and to landowners, often operating in isolation.

SFP is involved with the River Eden Catchment Partnership³² and the West Cumbria Catchment Partnership.³³

Following on from CaBA, a new Coastal Based Approach has been proposed by a network of coastal practitioners in England. CoBA³⁴ is a simple idea to establish partnerships covering the entire UK coast, see Figure 10 CaBA Diagram³⁴. It will support integrated, place-based delivery for coastal ecosystems and communities.

³⁰ (DEFRA; Environment Agency, 2015) *North West River Basin Management Plan*

³¹ (Catchment Based Approach, 2018)

³² (Eden Catchment Partnership, 2020) *The Eden River Catchment Plan*

³³ (West Cumbria Catchment Partnership) *Catchment Partnerships*

³⁴ (CoBA.) *Coastal Based Approach*

CoBA is currently asking the government to champion the launch and delivery of CoBA in 2021 as it did with CaBA in 2010; target investment to seed fund the development of CoBA; and to give policy priority to CoBA, enabling it to flourish and deliver. SFP supports CaBA and will explore opportunities of working within this network.

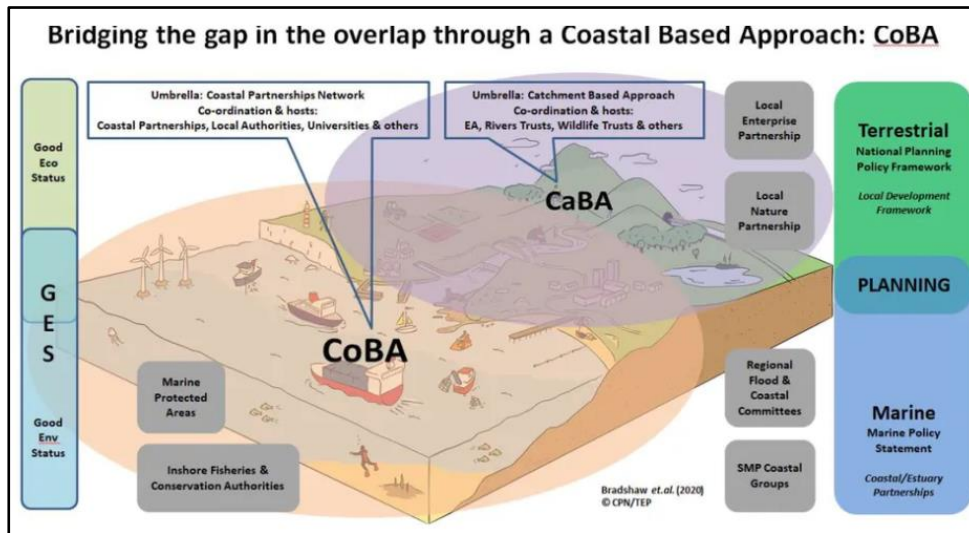


Figure 10 CaBA Diagram³⁴

Invasive non-native species, known as INNS, have increasingly become an issue in the marine environment, both nationally and locally³⁵. These are species which have been intentionally or accidentally released into an environment outside their native geographic range. Marine INNS can be transported in several ways, but the most significant method is through shipping by attachment to hulls and in ballast water. The results can be significant, not only in terms of ecological impact but also economically as aquaculture, recreation and fisheries can be adversely affected. It can be very expensive to control and eradicate INNS once they have become established. Therefore, it is more cost effective to concentrate efforts to prevent their arrival where possible³⁶. The presence of INNS can also impact on the status of the water environment and the condition of European Marine Sites, increasing the risk that these sites do not meet their favourable conservation target or the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

Solway Firth Partnership initially produced a biosecurity plan for the Solway in 2013 which highlighted the issues and sets out actions. The plan has been regularly reviewed and updated, currently at 2021-24 edition³⁷, and actions will continue to be delivered insofar as resources allow. Solway Firth Partnership conduct limited INNS monitoring through settlement panels placed in harbours and marinas

³⁵ (Natural England, 2016) *Investigating the Impacts of Marine Invasive Non-Native Species*

³⁶ (Williams, et al., 2010) *The Economic Cost of Invasive Non-Native Species on Great Britain*.

³⁷ (Solway Firth Partnership, 2021) *Marine Invasive Non-Native Species in the Solway*.

around the Solway Firth and will continue to use this method to spread awareness of INNS and good practice.

Marine litter is a global problem with millions of tonnes of litter ending up in the world's oceans every year. In response to the problem, Marine Scotland produced A Marine Litter Strategy for Scotland³⁸ in 2014 which highlighted measures and actions to try and tackle the issue. Scottish government committed to reviewing the Marine Litter Strategy in the 2019-2020 Programme for Government ³⁹ , increasing focus on litter removal alongside litter prevention.

Changes have come into force regarding microplastic nurdles with Scotland and England having banned the manufacturing and sale of rinse-off personal care products containing microbeads⁴⁰ to help reduce litter before it enters the marine environment.

There is progress in the UK towards banning single use plastic products. Scotland has a ban on selling plastic stemmed cotton buds, and England banned the supply of plastic straws and stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in October 2020 (the ban was delayed due to coronavirus). Scotland launched a consultation in 2020 on the ban of single use items in Scotland, including polystyrene food and beverage containers and single use plastic plates, straws, and cutlery.



Figure 11: Strandline litter © Nic Coombey, SFP

³⁸ (Scottish Government, 2014) *Marine Litter Strategy for Scotland*.

³⁹ (Scottish Government, 2019) *Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019 – 2020*.

⁴⁰ (The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (Scotland) Regulations, 2018)
(The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (England) Regulations, 2017)]

Solway Firth Partnership share the Scottish Government's vision of a litter-free Scotland⁴¹ and raise awareness of the issue whenever possible and are working with local organisations to develop an education project.

Fisheries

Sea fisheries include all commercial fishing activity within inshore waters such as trawling, dredging, pots/creeling, and diving.

Historically, commercial fishing in the Solway Firth was relatively diverse with Dover sole and herring being the primary catches. However, in recent decades, catches have been almost exclusively shellfish, in particular scallops and queen scallops, with a small number of whelks, razor clams, and lobsters. Fishing by the Solway fleet is primarily undertaken by scallop dredgers a combination of smaller local vessels and larger more nomadic dredgers. These are complimented by a smaller creel fishing boats catching lobsters, crabs, etc. Traditional haaf net fishing for salmon and trout also takes place around the Firth, however this has become a recreational/ heritage industry in recent years.

Whitehaven is the main landing port on the English Solway Coast, accounting for 79% of all landings by weight in 2018 and 70% by value⁴². Kirkcudbright is the main landing port in Dumfries & Galloway, accounting for 72% of all landings by weight in 2018, including 65% of scallops and 98% of queen scallops⁴².

Kirkcudbright is in the top twenty UK ports due to the quantity of shellfish, mainly scallops, landed. The main target fisheries for the larger commercial vessels, based out of Whitehaven and Maryport, is king scallops during the winter and prawns (with a fish by-catch) during the summer.



Figure 12: Scallops landed at Kirkcudbright Harbour ©Colin Tennant

⁴¹ (Scottish Government, 2014) *Towards a Litter Free Scotland: A Strategic Approach to Higher Quality Local Environments*.

⁴² (EKOS, 2020) [Socio-Economic Analysis of the English Solway \(2020\) EKOS](#).¹

There is also an inshore fishery for the smaller vessels potting for crab and lobster along the coast. Maryport and Silloth host vessels targeting brown shrimps in the Upper Solway and Whitehaven also provides a base for vessels potting for whelks in the Irish Sea.

The Solway is fished by boats from further afield including the Isle of Man, Ireland and larger ports to the north and south such as Girvan and Fleetwood. Additionally, cockles, mussels and winkles are collected from the Solway shores.

Fish processing is carried out around the Solway with processing businesses at Annan and Kirkcudbright, as well as smaller smokehouses on the Galloway coast. The fisheries sector is an important part of the rural economy for the communities of Dumfries and Galloway and Cumbria but is also a primary pressure on the marine environment.



Figure 13: Galloway Smokehouse ©Colin Tennant

The statutory Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) operate under the Marine and Coastal Access Act⁴³. The North Western (NW) IFCA jurisdiction extends north to the national boundary in the Solway; its responsibilities include making and enforcing byelaws for the management and conservation of fish and shellfish stocks and conserving the wider marine environment through a 'Set of Principles for Sustainable Fisheries' which were adopted in September 2011⁴⁴.

⁴³ (IFCA, 2015) DEFRA guidance to the IFCAs

⁴⁴ (North Western IFCA, 2011) Principles for Sustainable Fisheries

The NWIFCA has a governing Board and fishery officers, scientific staff and administrators work from coastal offices in Whitehaven and Carnforth. The MMO also has a local office in Whitehaven where staff are based.

Scottish Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFGs) are non-statutory bodies, set up as a pilot in 2013 as IFG's, that aim to improve the management of Scotland's inshore fisheries out to six nautical miles, and to give commercial inshore fishermen a strong voice in wider marine management developments⁴⁵. In April 2016, the revised format of five RIFGs were established in the North & East Coast, West Coast, Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland. The West Coast RIFG's Fisheries Management Plan had its first annual review in May 2018. Its overarching objectives remain consistent with those included in the management plans produced in 2012 by the then-pilot Inshore Fisheries Groups.

The current plan also takes cognisance of more recent developments such as the Scottish Inshore Fisheries Strategy⁴⁶, Future Fisheries Management⁴⁷, Marine Planning developments, and the issues or aims identified by members.

The West Coast RIFG leads on the fishing industry's Code of Conduct in the Solway. Solway Firth Partnership will continue to have active engagement with the West Coast RIFG contributing to consultations on management schemes and marine legislation thereby helping to ensure delivery of local fisheries policy in the north Solway is directly linked to marine planning.

The European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF) supported the implementation of the EU's maritime and fisheries policies for 2014-2020 with multiple streams of funding available through Marine Scotland⁴⁸ and the Marine Management Organisation⁴⁹ (MMO). These programmes are now closed for applications, but the situation will be monitored for any potential future funding for local fisheries projects.

⁴⁵ (RIFGs, 2018) *Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network*.

⁴⁶ (Scottish Government, 2015) *Scottish Inshore Fisheries Strategy*

⁴⁷ (Scottish Government, 2019) *Future of fisheries management in Scotland: national discussion paper*

⁴⁸ (Marine Scotland, 2018) *Grants*

⁴⁹ (MMO, 2018) *Funding*

Energy

The UK Climate Change Act (2008) set legally binding targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions: 100% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels⁵⁰. The UK Government produced an Energy White Paper⁵¹ in 2020 which highlights the need for net zero to combat climate change.

The Scottish Government has set the 'net zero emissions target' by 2045 through its Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009⁵². Work is being carried out by the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP). This group brings together scientists, government, agencies and NGOs to provide coordinated advice on climate change impacts, adaptation around our coast/seas.

The Scottish energy strategy published in December 2017⁵³ sets a 2030 target for the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied by renewable sources.

Robin Rigg Wind Farm which was operated by E-On Climate and

Renewables⁵⁴ (RWE since 2019) in the Solway Firth since 2010 was the first commercial offshore wind farm in Scottish waters⁵⁵. Solway Firth Partnership continues to provide a means of engagement between RWE and local communities through distribution of the RWE 'Round Robin newsletter' as an insert in Tidelines magazine twice yearly. The Partnership also provides administration for the Robin Rigg Community Fund on both sides of the Solway to 2022.



Figure 14: Robin Rigg Community Fund Update in Tidelines

⁵⁰ (Climate Change Act , 2008)

⁵¹(Energy White Paper - Powering our Net Zero Future , 2020)]

⁵² (Climate Change (Scotland) Act, 2009)

⁵³ (Scottish Government, 2017) The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish energy strategy

⁵⁴ (EON) Our Windfarm Legac]

⁵⁵ (RWE)_Robin Rigg East and West

The Partnership works to support a coherent approach across the national border and holistic assessment of Solway wide opportunities as well as potential cumulative impacts of renewable energy developments.

The Crown Estate's Leasing round 4 has an 'Irish Sea' bidding area which is partially located within the Solway Firth. On the Scottish side of the Solway, an area was highlighted as a Draft Plan Option (DPO) within the Draft Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy at south of Luce Bay and Sands SAC. This DPO was met with significant consultation feedback comparative to other sites and has not progressed to becoming a Plan Option (PO) site in the Sectoral Marine Plan. Solway Firth Partnership promoted consultation events and workshops to ensure engagement around the Solway Firth in the Draft Sectoral Marine Plan.

The Partnership continues to facilitate discussion on the development of other renewable energy projects in the Solway through meetings and conference workshops. SFP has also published webpages on Renewable Energy to provide the public with more information.⁵⁶



Figure 15: Robin Rigg Wind Farm ©Andrew Watret

⁵⁶ (Solway Firth Partnership, 2020) Energy

Awareness

Facilitating community engagement, increasing understanding of our natural and cultural heritage, celebrating and promoting the Solway Firth have always formed a core part of the Partnership's activities. The Partnership also encourages engagement in recreational activities such as sailing, kayaking, diving, wildlife watching and coastal walking in and around the Solway.

Good practice is supported by a range of means including promotion of activities and events in social media, E-newsletters and Tidelines magazine which is produced twice yearly and, COVID-19 allowing, distributed widely around the Solway and beyond.

Recreational sea angling is widely enjoyed on the Solway shores as well as from small boats with several charter boat businesses operating in the area. Solway Firth Partnership encourages sustainable sea angling and continues to provide updates on responsible sea angling practice and other local information.



Figure 16: Sea Angling from Silloth Harbour ©SFP

Haaf netting is a traditional and long-established method of fishing for salmon and sea trout in the Solway and is practised on both sides of the estuary, on the Rivers Nith and the Annan in Dumfries and Galloway and the River Eden in Cumbria. SFP supports haaf net fishing in line with government guidelines which dictate the annual catches of fish allowed on each river.

The Partnership provides advice and equipment to support community beach cleans and promotes the Marine Conservation Society Great British Beach Clean and Adopt-a-beach schemes; The Great Nurdle Hunt; Keep Scotland Beautiful Clean up Scotland campaign; and others as they develop. It is anticipated that a project will be developed and funded within the timescale of this business plan for Solway Firth Partnership to continue raising awareness of the issue of marine litter and plastics / micro plastics in the sea.

The LEADER D&G funded Solway Coastwise Project was completed in late 2019. The three years project that discovered coastal place names and the stories behind them left a legacy of electronic and printed media showcasing the stunning Dumfries and Galloway coastline. The project published an updated Good Beach Guide, a Wildlife Guide, a Caves and Graves guide, and a Tide Islands and Shifting Sands guide. A final publication, *Words & Places*, a guide to understanding the names along the Dumfries and Galloway Coast, was also produced. All the guides are available on the webpage.⁵⁷

The Kirkcudbright Bay Views Project is being supported by the Galloway Glens Scheme, a suite of projects being undertaken up and down the Ken/Dee Valley, connecting people to their heritage, driving economic activity and supporting sustainable communities. The Scheme is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is supported by a range of partners including Dumfries & Galloway Council and the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.

The Kirkcudbright Bay Views Project aims to enhance connections between people and place by improving paths and gathering local heritage knowledge to develop informed access to Kirkcudbright Bay. In 2019 volunteers were trained to survey heritage features including wrecks and viewpoints, led by experts from the SCAPE Trust (Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Coastal Erosion). In 2020 the Kirkcudbright Bay Views Paths Booklet was published and can be downloaded from the webpage⁵⁸. It provides the public with a self-guided tour of the stunning Kirkcudbright coastline including stories behind places of cultural interest. The Project will run until 2022.

In line with the objective of holding a conference every two years, a joint event with the Solway Coast AONB was planned for late 2020. However due to COVID-19 the conference was postponed until November 2021. Instead, webinars on local themes (e.g. Salt / Historic Farmsteads) were held in late 2020 and will continue to be held in winter 2021. The COVID-19 situation will be monitored and decisions made about holding a conference in due course.

⁵⁷ (Solway Firth Partnership, 2020) *Solway Coastwise*

⁵⁸ (Solway Firth Partnership, 2021) *Kirkcudbright Bay Views*

7. Action

The Partnership's core activities can be categorised into the following areas:

- Partnership
- Planning
- Environment
- Fisheries
- Energy
- Awareness

The Partnership will pursue its strategic aims and outcomes by taking the actions presented in the table below. Quarterly meetings of the Solway Firth Partnership Advisory Group and regular meetings of the Board of Trustees will review and assess achievements, priorities, developments and potential changes. Actions that are a condition of existing grants, funding applications or a constitutional requirement are shaded blue in the table below.

Activity	Action
Partnership	Maintain regular contact with all stakeholders to support networking especially cross-border
	Facilitate consultation on issues affecting the marine and coastal area and act as an intermediary in conflict resolution
	Hold a conference every two years
	Hold regular management group meetings in compliance with the Partnership's Memorandum and Articles of Association
	Maintain and update the Partnership database and website
	Provide partners with regular updates on key issues through website, E-newsletters and social media
	Attract additional funding to develop the Partnership's capacity
	Manage the Partnership's income and expenditure
	Maintain regular contact with the Coastal Partnership Network and explore opportunities for funded partnership working on national initiatives
Planning	Contribute to development of a Scottish Marine Planning Partnership for the Solway as required
	Gather pan-estuary information, learn from stakeholders and promote a better understanding of the Solway ecosystem

Activity	Action
Planning	Work with partners to develop mechanisms to deliver joint planning across national boundaries
	Continue to input to the NMPi with relevant data from the Solway
	Continue to deliver the three-year Solway Marine Information Learning and Environment (SMILE) Project culminating in the production of the 'State of the Solway' Review – extended to July 2021
	Maintain working relationships with marine planning bodies in the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland as well as England and Scotland
	Contribute to the Irish Sea Maritime Forum / Celtic Seas Initiatives
Environment	Contribute to ensuring that conservation objectives for European Marine Sites are recognised and addressed by relevant competent authorities
	Contribute to the conservation of features monitoring within the European Marine Site where resources allow
	Contribute to a review of the European Marine Site Management Scheme if resources allow
	Support integration of the MCZ and MPA programmes and promote understanding and stakeholder engagement with both
	Maintain and develop engagement with all marine recording schemes and centres including the Marine Conservation Society, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre
	Continue the analysis of coastal and marine biodiversity data availability, accessibility and identify knowledge gaps
	Raise awareness of marine non-native species and complete actions from the Solway Strategy where resources allow
	Raise awareness of the issue of marine litter through website, social media campaigns and participation in national campaigns
	Maintain input to the Solway Area Advisory Group of the Solway Tweed River Basin District and ensure integration with delivery structures for implementation of the Marine Acts
Fisheries	Support consultation on options for sustainable future management of the Solway cockle fishery
	Support cohesion between English, Scottish, Manx and Northern Irish fisheries management regimes
	Support the West Coast Regional Inshore Fishery Group as appropriate

Activity	Action
Fisheries	Contribute to litter initiatives as appropriate
	Explore possible funding for a Fishing Faces in Cumbria Project
Energy	Provide information on climate change and the need for sustainable energy through events and publications
	Provide a means of engagement between existing and prospective offshore renewable energy developers and the local community
	Distribute the RWE Round Robin newsletter
	Deliver the Robin Rigg Community Fund 2021 and 2022 (and in future as funding allows)
Awareness	Produce and distribute two issues of Tidelines annually
	Update the website regularly
	Produce and distribute regular E-newsletters
	Promote SFP and the Solway through social media
	Support the development of a Rhins of Galloway Coastal Trail, and delivery of an associated activity programme, promoting the regions rich coastal and marine heritage and biodiversity
	Promote good practice and publicise opportunities for marine and coastal recreation
	Promote World Oceans Day with appropriate events through funded projects
	Deliver the 'Kirkcudbright Bay Views' coastal project as part of the HLF funded Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme
	Issue regular press articles
	Support local action on beach cleans and surveys in line with Marine Conservation Society objectives including lending equipment
	Support opportunities that arise from relevant new initiatives

8. Delivery

Management Framework

The Partnership is constituted as an independent Scottish Charity Limited by Guarantee and operates to a Memorandum and Articles of Association⁵⁹ in compliance with the Companies Acts. The Partnership has an open membership policy, including corporate and individual members, and all are eligible for appointment to the Board of Trustees (Appendix 1: Board of Trustees at April 2020). The Board normally meets at least four times per year and directs the work of the Partnership with responsibility for financial matters. At the time of producing this plan the Board of Trustees meet quarterly online due to COVID-19 and will do so until it is safe to meet face to face.

The Partnership and Board are guided by an Advisory Group comprising representatives of Corporate Members of the Partnership at an Officer level (Appendix 2 – Corporate Members). The Advisory Group normally meets four times per year and focusses on key issues and developments. At the time of producing this plan the Advisory Group meet quarterly online due to COVID-19 and will do so until it is safe to meet face to face.

Solway Firth Partnership currently employs a Partnership Manager, Administrator/Finance Officer, Project Coordinator, Project Assistant and SMILE Project Officer. Staff work closely with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees (Appendix 3 – Meet the team).

Promotion and Advertising

Solway Firth Partnership communicates and engages with the wider community by regular e-newsletters, social media posts and website updates, Tidelines magazine, meetings, webinars, consultation events and the bi-annual conference. The Partnership manages a database of around 400 individuals and organisations around the Solway.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of progress on actions identified in this plan are carried out through the Partnership management structure. Minutes of all meetings are recorded. A review of progress on this Business Plan is carried out annually.



⁵⁹ (SFP, 2018) *Memorandum and Articles of Association*

Figure 17: Solway at Low Tide ©SFP

9. Funding

Resources to date

Solway Firth Partnership relies on core funding from Corporate Members who are local authorities or government agencies. The Partnership also benefits from private sector funding from RWE, specifically for publication and the distribution of their Round Robin newsletter within Tidelines. The Partnership is very grateful to all those who have provided funding support to date and without whose input the successes described herein would not have happened.

Core funding

Figures below are based on financial support to date and the best information currently available.

The Partnership carried forward £78,481 of core (unrestricted) funds at the end of financial year to 31 March 2020. Solway Firth Partnership's reserves policy is to maintain a sufficient level of resources to enable operating activities to be maintained, taking account of potential risks and contingencies that may arise from time to time such as:

- Shortfalls in income: when income does not reach expected levels as a result of reduced or withdrawn grant support;
- Unexpected expenditure: for example, when projects overrun or unplanned events occur.

The general reserve should represent at least six months' core expenditure, approximately £40,000, as agreed at the Board of Trustees meeting in September 2014. The Trustees review the policy and progress towards maintaining the target level of reserve annually.

Future funding sources

The Partnership will seek and welcome continued financial support for delivery of all actions from its Corporate Members. Marine Scotland continues to make a funding commitment and the Partnership has active engagement with several other partners such as the Solway Coast AONB, Natural England and Dumfries and Galloway Council about working together to deliver projects.

During the lifetime of the last plan, future sources of funding from the EU such as the European Maritime Fisheries Fund and the LEADER Programme D&G came to an end. The Partnership will continue to monitor the situation and seek funding from outside sources. National Lottery Heritage Fund and private trusts will continue to be a source of possible funding.

Brexit and Future Funding

Due to Brexit, there are unlikely to be opportunities to access European funding for the types of longer project that the Partnership has run over the past 10 years. There is likely to be alternative funding through UK / Scottish government programmes in the future but at present there are not yet available. SFP will continue to monitor the situation.

SFP Future Project Staffing

Over the term of the last business plan project staff were employed on longer projects e.g., Solway Coastwise / SMILE. However, now that Brexit precludes SFP from EU funding programmes, the Partnership is seeking funds from a range of grant providers. At the time of producing this business plan full funds are not in place to support the three project staff for the 2021/22 financial year and beyond although it is anticipated that funds will be secured.

At present, funds are secured for delivering the Rhins Activity Programme (DGC, Killgallioch Community Fund) and the Galloway Glens Kirkcudbright Bay Views Projects (National Lottery) and will cover the Project Officer costs of working 2 days/week. It is anticipated that the cost of the Project Assistant working 1.5 days/week for the year 2020/21 will be covered by various projects currently in development (Rhins Recording / Borderlands development). The Partnership will continue to seek further funding to keep these experienced staff in post to maintain the sustainability of the organisation.

The three-year SMILE Project has been extended and now runs until July 2021. An application for one year funding to carry out a Solway Shoreline Access & Infrastructure Asset Audit has been sought (South of Scotland Enterprise – SOSE and Marine Scotland). If successful, this project would follow on from the SMILE Project and employ the Project Officer for a further year. This would add useful data to the Solway Review and help fulfil the marine planning remit of SFP. It is hoped that SFP will be given direction to become a marine planning partnership in the next year so that the current marine planning staff can be maintained. However, if that decision is delayed SFP does not have funds to keep the full-time SMILE Project Officer in post and would lose the expertise gained over the term of this project. SFP staff will continue to liaise with Marine Scotland regarding the situation.

Income and Expenditure

INCOME	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Core Income			
Marine Scotland Planning & Policy Dept	38,000	38,000	38,000
RWE	8,000	8,000	8,000
Cumbria County Council	3,850	3,850	3,850
Allerdale Borough Council	1,000	1,000	1,000
Carlisle City Council	750	750	750
Misc Income	14,400	12,650	14,600
Total Core Income	66,000	64,250	66,200
Project Income			
Income/Recoveries for Project Staff & Overheads	21,700	21,700	21,700
TOTAL INCOME	£ 87,700	£ 85,950	£ 87,900

EXPENSES			
Core Expenses			
Staff Costs			
Salaries and employment costs for Partnership Manager & Admin	38,000	38,000	38,000
Training	500	500	500
Travel & Subsistence	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Staff Costs	40,000	40,000	40,000
Operating Costs			
Rent	9,800	9,800	9,800
Insurance	1,000	1,000	1,000
Telephone/Postage/Internet	1,000	1,000	1,000
Stationery & Equipment	500	500	500
IT Costs	2,500	2,500	2,500
Meetings and Seminars	500	600	500
Conference	2,000		2,000
Legal & Accountancy	2,150	2,150	2,150
Tidelines	6,150	6,300	6,350
Website	400	400	400
Total Operating Costs	26,000	24,250	26,200
Total Core Expenses	66,000	64,250	66,200
Project Expenses			
Salaries and Employment costs for Project Officer & Project Admin	17,500	17,500	17,500
Rent on Project Office	4,200	4,200	4,200
Total Project Expenses	21,700	21,700	21,700
Total Expenses	£ 87,700	£ 85,950	£ 87,900
Surplus/(Deficit)	£ 0	£ 0	£ 0

Project funding

A range of other outputs and activities are enabled by additional grant support for individual projects.

Solway Firth Partnership has a proven track record of maximising the value of core funds by drawing in additional project (restricted funding).

Projects currently being developed and/or delivered:

Project Title	Status
Solway Marine Information Learning & Environment Project (SMILE)	Being delivered
Galloway Glens – Kirkcudbright Bay Views	Being delivered
Rhins Coastal Footpath Activity Plan (led by DGC)	Being delivered
Rhins Revealed OnLine (archaeology project)	Being delivered
Various Solway natural and cultural heritage projects	In development
Marine Litter Project with Rotary Club	In development
Borderlands Marine Natural Capital Pilot Project	In development
Cumbria Coast / Solway Coast AONB Projects	In development

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11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Board of Trustees at April 2020

Member Name	Organisation	Type
Cllr Anthony Markley	Cumbria County Council	Corporate
Cllr John Cook	Allerdale Borough Council	Corporate
Cllr Malcolm Johnstone	Dumfries & Galloway Council	Corporate
Cllr John Collier	Carlisle City Council	Corporate
Michael Cowen	Maryport Harbour Authority	Corporate
Mr Rupert Shaw MBE	Independent	Ordinary
Mr Charles Edwards	Dumfries Cruising Club	Ordinary
Dr Ann Lackie	Independent	Ordinary
Mrs June Lochhead	Independent	Co-opted
Mr Alastair McNeill	Independent	Co-opted
Mr James Mitchell	Independent	Co-opted

Appendix 2: Corporate Members

Allerdale Borough Council

Annan District Salmon Fishery Board

Associated British Ports

Carlisle City Council

Copeland Borough Council

Crown Estate Scotland

Cumbria County Council

North West Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (formerly Cumbria Sea Fisheries Committee)

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Environment Agency

Marine Management Organisation (formerly Marine and Fisheries Agency)

Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency)

NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage)

Nith District Salmon Fishery Board

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Water

Appendix 3: Meet the team

Alastair McNeill

Solway Firth Partnership, Chair

Alastair McNeill became Chair of Solway Firth Partnership in 2014. He has been involved with the Partnership since its inception in 1994 and chaired the advisory group from 2003 before becoming a Board Director in 2010.

He had a 40-year career in environmental management, protection and regulation most recently with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency as the Manager for South West Scotland. He has published papers and articles on topics concerning environmental and sustainability issues.

Clair McFarlan

Solway Firth Partnership, Partnership Manager – 4 days/week

As Partnership Manager for the past six years and Project Officer with Solway Firth Partnership for the previous three years, Clair has been involved with a wide range of marine and coastal projects and been involved in stakeholder engagement on both sides of the Solway.

Clair represents Solway Firth Partnership on fora including the Solway Coast AONB Officer Steering Group, Solway Natural Partners, River Eden and West Cumbria Catchment Management Partnerships and the Northern Coastal Sub-Group.

Clair has worked in project management, conservation, countryside access, community engagement, environmental education and interpretation for over 30 years through positions with Solway Firth Partnership, Solway Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) and the Tree Register of the British Isles.

Paul Mackey

Solway Firth Partnership, Administrator/Finance Officer – 2 days/week

Paul, with previous experience as an accountant, manages the day-to-day finances of SFP, is the Company Secretary and prepares the accounts for the Independent Examination by a registered auditor or by the accountant.

Nic Coombey

Project Officer, Solway Firth Partnership - flexible 2 days/week

Nic, a Landscape Architect for over 30 years, has increasingly specialised in the management of heritage projects on the Solway coast. He spent 13 years as an employee of Solway Heritage nurturing and delivering community aspirations to enhance and conserve the built, natural and cultural landscapes of Dumfries and Galloway.

Morag Walker

Project Assistant, Solway Firth Partnership – flexible

Morag has worked as the Project Assistant at Solway Firth Partnership for over 4 years. Here she has been involved with a range of projects, with particular involvement in Solway Coastwise, Fishing Faces and Solway Coast is Clear. These projects involved looking at innovative ways to engage with both the public, stakeholders and interest groups.

Morag has worked in project and event management, conservation, wildlife management, community engagement, environmental education, tutoring, web development, IT support and interpretation for over 30 years through positions with Solway Firth Partnership, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Forest Industry Economics Unit (Edinburgh University), Field Studies Council and Nature Conservancy Council.

Georgina Reed

SMILE Project Officer - Full time

(Solway Marine, Information, Learning and Environment Project)

Georgina joined the team in 2019 as the SMILE Project Officer. Her background is in law and marine planning having studied in Canada and interned with the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Unit in Barbados focussing on socio-economic aspects of the Folkestone Marine Reserve prior to joining SFP.

Georgina is continuing with preliminary background work for non-statutory marine planning in the Solway by updating the 1996 'Solway Firth Review.' She has gathered information from a range of stakeholders and information sources to update this book into an online, updatable and interactive format.



Figure 18: Meet the SFP Staff Team ©SFP



CONTACT

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