

# The Solway Coastodians

SOLWAY COAST AND MARINE PROJECT 2024

# SNAPSHOT

This is an extract from the full report on the SCAMP engagement.  
Find links to both on the Facebook page: @solwaycoastandmarineproject

**The Solway Coast And Marine Project or SCAMP is a 10-15 year, £20 million coastal habitat restoration project in Dumfries & Galloway in Scotland's south west. This report captures the SCAMP Engagements, winter 2023/4.**

This report shares the process and outcomes of the 6 month SCAMP engagement from October 2023 to March 2024. Around 1,000 citizens across the region participated in different ways:

- Conversations
- Survey
- Explorations

SCAMP is one of 27 Scotland-wide projects exploring how citizen engagement can help the public sector shape 'natural capital' projects to attract private sector investment in the environment.

The main purpose of this engagement was to discover what local people considered might be Community Benefits of investment in the coastal environment and identify the key Assessment Criteria that might apply to projects in the future.

Report by Only Human Ltd  
[www.onlyhuman.co.uk](http://www.onlyhuman.co.uk)



cover image: *Mermaid's Purse*, charcoal drawing, Erinclare Scrutton  
photos opposite - Oysters: Stranraer Development Trust; Seagrass: Solway Firth Partnership; Saltmarsh: NatureScot; Woodlands: Only Human



This project is supported by NatureScot in collaboration with The Scottish Government and in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

# About SCAMP

SCAMP is engaging locals to save the Solway Coast. Here's why.

## WHY

**Nature is losing its balance. There's a pressing need to act.**

Europe has lost 90% of its seagrass meadows; 85% of the UK's saltmarsh has disappeared - a massive flood defence system and 'big bird restaurant'. Loch Ryan is Scotland's last wild native oyster fishery. Woodland has been lost over centuries. We are changing the climate. Climate change is affecting human life, wildlife and habitats.

## WHAT

**SCAMP aims to protect, improve and restore 4 key coastal habitats.**

Dumfries & Galloway Council is acting to protect the Solway Coast's marine and coastal environment with its unique habitats, wildlife, flora fauna, birds and species.

- Oyster beds (Loch Ryan is Scotland's last native/wild fished bed)
- Seagrass (potentially genetically unique underwater grass species)
- Saltmarsh (spongy, lumpy grassy 'merse' between sea and land)
- Woodlands (much loved, well walked, seaside green pockets).



**WHERE** 200 mile Solway Coast on Scotland's southern edge.  
The Solway coastline stretches all the way from Stranraer in the west to Gretna in the east.



**WHEN** Phase 1 engagement took place from October 2023 to March 2024. Nature's care and restoration is a long-term mission. The whole SCAMP project runs for 10-15 years. In future phases, the Council aims to offer opportunities to invest in 'natural capital': projects that enhance and protect the natural environment.

**HOW** Raising £20 million to invest in marine and coastal projects. This pre-development phase engaged local people to shape SCAMP principles. The Council will apply to the Heritage Lottery in 2024 for Phase 2. It aims to secure £10 million of public funding then £10 million matching funds from the private sector and community shareholders interested in investing in 'natural capital'.

**WHO** The SCAMP project is a partnership project.

- **Lead:** Dumfries & Galloway Council has kicked off SCAMP.
- **Partners:** Solway Firth Partnership, Southern Ayrshire & Galloway Biosphere, D&G Woodlands, Southern Uplands Partnership and Crichton Carbon Centre all deliver SCAMP activities for the Council.
- **Community engagement:** Only Human, a local consultancy, designed, facilitated and reported on Phase 1 of community engagement.
- **Funders:** Facility for Investment-Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS), National Lottery Heritage Fund, Scottish Government and NatureScot.
- **Learning collaborators:** 27 projects across Scotland are sharing learning from engagement.

Photo: Pete Robinson



no-one will care about what they have never experienced

## About SCAMP Phase 1

### Winter explorations and community engagement

- WHY** **No-one will care about what they have never experienced**  
“No-one will protect what they don’t care about,” said David Attenborough wisely, “and no-one will care about what they have never experienced”. So we designed an engagement programme to help local people experience and understand the Solway, coastal issues and current opportunities. The SCAMP Explorations specifically had experience at its heart. See more under Solway Lab 2038.
- WHAT** **Engagement: Launch, Conversations, Survey, Explorations**  
We designed a series of opportunities so locals could engage at various levels of interest. These activities gathered information about their connection to the coast, their values and their views on the environment and its challenges. They identified potential Community Benefits and Assessment Criteria that could be applied in future to proposals for activities and developments along the coast. The Council commissioned a local photographer and film-maker to share the SCAMP story.
- WHERE & WHEN** **Launch: Nov 23: Launch, Vision + Action Meeting, Stranraer + Zoom**  
We launched the SCAMP project, its aims and the upcoming workshop series at information sessions, piloting and testing a presentation and workshop material at a lively public meeting in Stranraer. We used Postcards from the Future to gather views on values and priorities. We launched SCAMP across the region in Zoom presentations.

### Conversations: Nov-Jan 23/4

We connected with 500 people directly and posed a set of questions to a sample of 26 individuals representing interest groups. Outputs from these conversations fed into the design of workshops.

### Survey: Nov-Jan 23/4

We shared a survey with our database and promoted it through DGWGO - a popular local Facebook page - on social media. We had 717 responses.

### Explorations: Dec-Jan 23/4

Walk-and-Talks with expert guide + Solway Lab 2038 workshops  
6 x 3 hour long events from 12-3pm. Maximum 24 participants.

#### Round 1

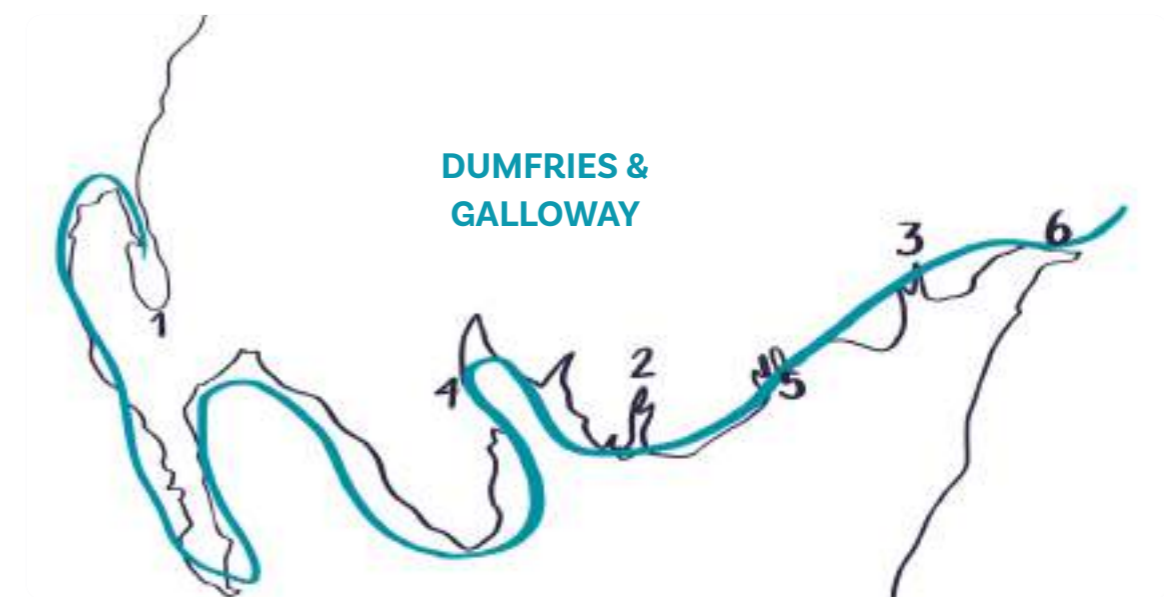
mid-December, weekdays

1. Stranraer
2. Kirkcudbright
3. Glencaple

#### Round 2

end January, long weekend

1. Wigtown
2. Kippford
3. Annan



### HOW

#### Reaching out. Digging deep. Aiming high.

Key connectors - community groups, activists and Ward Officers - helped us reach out across the region. Direct mail and social media promoted opportunities to participate. Workshops encouraged participants to dig deep into their values, experiences and hopes to envision solutions for the Solway. We gathered and shared models of best practice and innovation from Scotland and beyond to aim high and be ambitious for this treasured marine and coastal environment. We contacted the media and did interviews on TV and radio. The Council filmed engagements to tell the story of SCAMP at the end of the process.

# Explorations

Dec-Jan 23/4

We hosted 6 SCAMP EXPLORATIONS in well-used community centres, halls and hubs in Stranraer, Wigtown, Kirkcudbright, Glencaple, Kippford and Annan. Workshops ran 12-3pm in each location. The first half was designed to get people outdoors; a full-on experience of the focus of our exploration - nature itself. The second half was a workshop - the Solway Lab 2038.



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR COAST?  
HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR NATURAL ASSETS?

**SOLD OUT**

Where	When
1. Stranraer	Mon 11 Dec
2. Kirkcudbright	Tue 12 Dec
3. Glencaple	Wed 13 Dec
4. Wigtown	Sat 27 Jan
5. Rockcliffe	Sun 28 Jan
6. Annan	Mon 29 Jan

FREE TO ATTEND - BOOK ON EVENTBRITE!



## Explorations: Walk-and-Talks

Each Exploration kicked off with a Walk-and-Talk. Local experts offered fascinating insights to the coastal and marine environment. Their knowledge of habitats, species and wildlife stimulated discussion in the subsequent workshop - the immersive Solway Lab 2038 experience - at the time of the walk, not yet revealed to participants.



Top left photo: Pete Robinson

### Walk-and-Talk Experts

(left to right, top then bottom):

- Stranraer:** Nic Coombey, Solway Firth Partnership - seagrass, oyster beds, geology and more
- Kirkcudbright:** Nic Coombey shows off the elusive seagrass from the Solway
- Glencaple:** Dr Larry Griffin and Robbie Cowan Caerlaverock Estate - geese and Natterjack toads
- Wigtown:** Nic Coombey SFP and Andrew Bielinski, RSPB - birds and saltmarsh
- Kippford:** Mary Smith, National Trust Ranger - coastal woodland species
- Annan:** Alan Thomson, Annan Harbour Action Group- saltmarsh, farming and fishing.



The Solway Lab 2038 was the workshop element of the exploration.

Following the stimulating Walk-and-Talks with experts along the Solway Coast, participants enjoyed a quick heat-up and hearty soup indoors then were briefed on the workshop challenge... an immersive scenario where they were given active roles and goals.

**SCENARIO** YOU ARE A COASTODIAN OF THE SOLWAY COAST  
In 2038, Coastodians - local environmental caretakers - have replaced the Council.

**MISSION** Together, consider a range of 7 proposals for development along the Solway Coast and discuss which you would support. Rank the proposals.

**CHALLENGE** Reflect on how/why you made decisions on the 7 proposals to identify:

- Community Benefits
- Assessment Criteria
- Values
- Challenges

**VISION** Send us a Postcard from the Future to describe your vision for the coast.

**ACTION** Tell us what we need to do RIGHT NOW to protect the environment.

Coastodians Challenge

Participants at Solway Lab 2038 workshops were welcomed as the new Coastodians of the Solway Coast.



Welcome to the Future of Coastal Stewardship

You have been chosen to be a member of the Solway Firth Lab 2038.

As a member, you are now a part of a visionary community with power and funds, dedicated to the stewardship of the Solway Firth. We replaced the council in 2030.

Today, our collective action is more crucial than ever to ensure the health and vitality of our coastal ecosystem.

We are thrilled to have you on board!

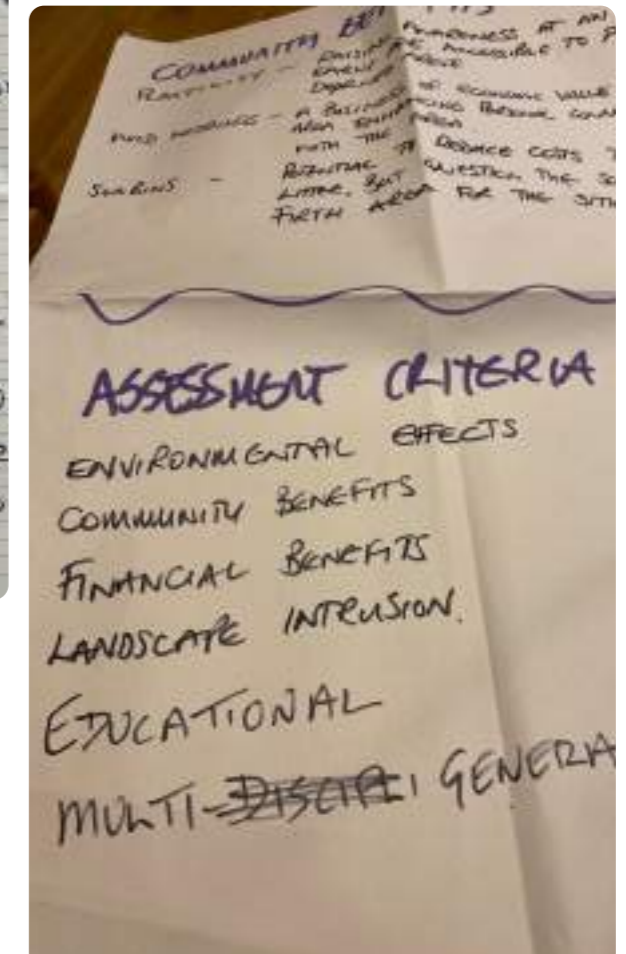
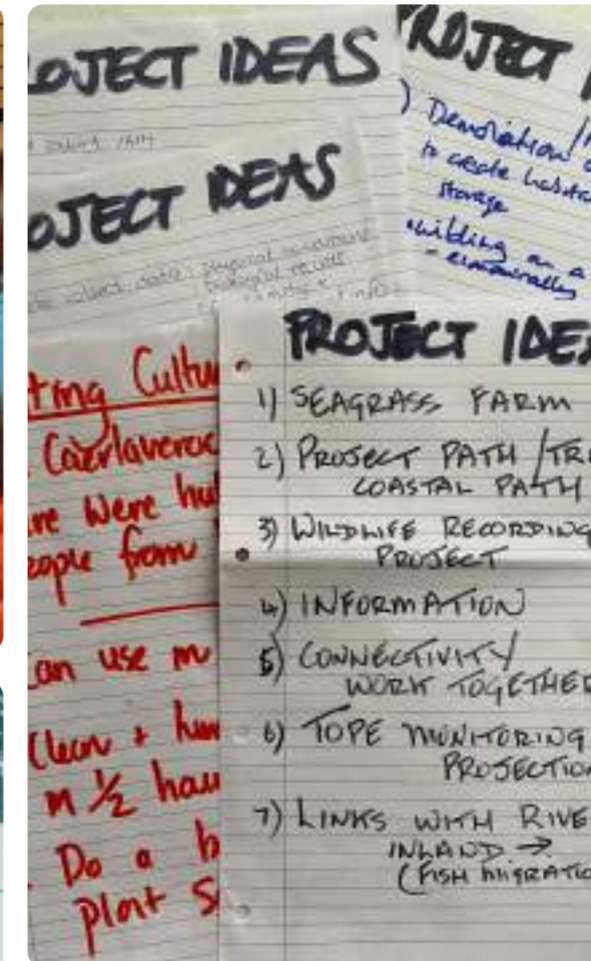


Photo: Pete Robinson

# Solway Lab 2038 Workshops

Solway Lab 2038 participants took their Mission seriously and engaged in deep and earnest discussion to consider what mattered to them about the Solway Coast.

This helped groups and individuals think about how we might improve the coast. They arrived at a shared understanding of priorities when seeking investment in natural capital in the next decade. There's a strong desire to ensure our actions encourage and support projects that best protect the coast for the long term. Many had ideas of how we can start to tackle the issues.



top left and right: photos by Pete Robinson





# Top findings

## What local people told us - at a glance

Merging data from all sources - the survey, Conversations and workshops - gave us clear direction on the values, ideas and preferences of local people:

### Top 5 themes

1. Ecosystem Restoration
2. Citizen Science - baseline, monitor, measure, map
3. Improve Access - Paths, Routes, Info, Green Tourism
4. 'Coastodians' Network - community activism
5. Awareness - connect people to nature

### Top 10 Community Benefits

Local people could imagine investment in natural capital bringing these community benefits:

1. Environmental improvement
2. Jobs, skills, training and opportunities
3. Access to the coast
4. Economic growth
5. Environmental education and awareness
6. Opportunities for young people
7. Family, child-friendly and intergenerational opportunities
8. Community building
9. Health & wellbeing
10. Fun, engagement and participation

### Top 10 Assessment Criteria

The criteria we would use in future to assess whether or not investment would help or hinder environment are:

1. Habitat/species support
2. Environmental benefit
3. Feasibility
4. Health & Wellbeing
5. Accessibility
6. Strategic fit
7. Region-wide benefit
8. Collaboration
9. Evidence Base
10. Sustainability

## Top 10 Goals

1. **Coastal activities** opportunities to engage with the coast
2. **Infrastructure** routes and paths, parking, waste management
3. **Accessibility** public transport, resting places, affordability
4. **Engagement** information, awareness, interpretation
5. **Jobs and skills** opportunities to learn, grow and work
6. **Evidence base** map, survey, base plans on evidence
7. **Social equity** share nature's gifts, land access, resources region-wide
8. **Environment** all change must fit with environmental impact measures
9. **Economy** coastal development should grow the region's prosperity
10. **Feasibility** we must be able to afford and deliver developments.

## Top 10 Actions

1. Be a flagship for careful coastal development
2. Use controls, regulation and monitoring to stop and reverse habitat decline
3. Harness nature for social connection, personal meaning, health and wellbeing
4. Enjoy access to the coast without detriment - it's all about balance
5. Harness local knowledge and passion
6. Collaborate: share community assets; grow a movement; avoid competition
7. Promote Citizen Science data collection and incentivise volunteering
8. Share good practice: hook to cook, growing, foraging, teaching the young
9. Adopt the *Just One Thing* approach to avoid overwhelm.
10. Combine quick wins and long term goals to plot a route to a positive green future.

## Top 5 Challenges

1. There's a lack of awareness of environmental issues and how to help
2. We lack community capacity: we rely on volunteers and short term funding
3. Consultation fatigue: too many projects ask too much of small communities
4. We need a careful balance of economic : environmental development of the coast
5. Beware privilege and financial advantage dominating decision-making.

## Top 5 Insights

1. People who live, work and play on the coast tend to be passionate about it
2. Passionate people are strong candidates to be eco-activists: Coastodians
3. Passion engages others - it's infectious; harness this to engage others
4. Engaging the disengaged takes more resources: focus on the interested first
5. Overwhelm is the enemy of activism: let's keep future calls-to-action doable.

# Next Steps

## Phase 1 reportback

To close the feedback loop on the Phase 1 engagement, the Council launched this report and the film about the engagement on 25 March 2024 at a public event online. By publishing this report and sharing the findings, participants see how their contribution is shaping thinking for the next phase.

The Solway Coast And Marine Project Facebook page remains very much alive as the hub for information on SCAMP and the report and film will be available there.

As a legacy of Phase 1, the Solway Lab 2038 workshop experience toolkit remains with Dumfries & Galloway Council and can be used again and shared with collaborators to adapt and use.

## Phase 2 plans

The outputs from SCAMP Phase 1 engagement are informing and shaping Phase 2. For Phase 2, there is potential to trial projects that build on Phase 1 findings and insights. These projects will deepen and focus engagement and continue to co-design ongoing phases:

- 1. Coastodians network:** one project built around a community of interest - environmental enthusiasts and citizen scientists
- 2. Two place-based projects:** focussing on two communities: Stranraer in the west and Annan in the east of the region, aligning with their Place Plans and connecting with their active community networks.
- 3. Unheard voices:** focus engagement on less engaged groups and in socially excluded communities.

Kippford Crab Apple, charcoal drawing, Erinclare Scrutton



# coastodians



Photo: Pete Robinson

## Phase 2: Coastodians network

In discussions after workshops, many participants expressed an interest in taking on a real Coastodian role - caretaking their beloved coast. This demonstrated positive potential to grow a network of activists in the future. This is already being acted upon and a field trip to Arran for April 2024 has recruited the first batch of **Coastodians**.

## Phase 2: Place-based projects

Pipeline projects in the west and east of the region offer a focus for future place-based SCAMP projects. In the west, Stranraer's multi-million pound *One Waterfront* development is key to its Place Plan. It features a marina expansion, new Watersports Centre, proposed Marine Research Centre and development ideas for the old ferry pier. At the Annan end of the region, the Harbour Development Trust has raised £12 million of *Levelling Up* Funding for the harbour area development.

# Keeping up momentum

Dumfries & Galloway Council is keeping up momentum following this series of engagements and before Phase 2 begins.

## Solway Coastodians

### ARRAN FIELD TRIP

Many models of good practice were cited at Solway Lab 2038 workshops, in the survey and during Conversations. Dumfries & Galloway Council is organising a Spring Go and See field trip to Arran for 16 Coastodians from across the region. They will hear the story behind the community organisation COAST who created a No-Take Zone at Lamlash Bay, visit the geopark, discovery centre and coastal walks to inspire thinking about the future role of the Solway Coastodians.

## Dumfries & Galloway Schools

### BEACH SCHOOLS

Teams within the Council are collaborating to run a Beach School trial in the inner Solway to reconnect communities and their young people to their coastal landscape... eg in Gretna, where locals don't necessarily think of their home as coastal.

In parallel with the SCAMP engagement, Dumfries & Galloway Council offered small grants to community groups for environmental initiatives and supported these projects across the region:

## Stoneykirk Community Council

### FRAGILE FORESHORE

Work with researchers to monitor and protect the fragile foreshore to "hold the line" and gain back some ground from the sea, supporting the natural return of flora and fauna to the uncut wilding area. Findings will be useful for future SCAMP coastal defence projects.

## Port William and District Community Council

### RETURN OF THE TIDAL POOL

Research to explore the potential role of reestablishing an historic tidal pool to connect people to their coastal and marine environment and collect evidence of the wellbeing impacts of wild sea water swimming.

## The Stove Artists Collective

### WILD GOOSE FESTIVAL

To help fund a Scientist in Residence to share information and input into the themes of the annual Wild Goose Festival in October 2024, working with Dr Larry Griffin, an expert in migratory birds and their habitats.

## Newton Stewart Sub Aqua Club

### SEAGRASS DIVING SURVEYS

Dozens of shipwrecks around the coast provide rich habitats for marine life. These diving surveys will plunder for treasure... seagrass. Divers will record findings in images and film, building a database for public and academic use.

## Caerlaverock Estate

### COASTAL RESTORATION FILMS

Caerlaverock Estate is working hard to restore the coast and preserve endangered species like the Natterjack Toad. This initiative will commission a filmmaker to create mini film clips to showcase and share the Estate's nature restoration work via QR codes across the estate.

## Powfoot Charity Group

### RETURN OF THE NATTERJACK

Powfoot Charity Group will undertake research with the community and experts to explore nature-based solutions that restore habitat and encourage the return of Natterjack toads to the foreshore and sandy embankment.



Stranraer Oyster, watercolour created with handmade pigment from foraged alder cones, Erinclare Scrutton

# Reflections

This SCAMP Phase 1 'sprint' was a short, focussed and energetic piece of work. We engaged with 1,000 participants - more than we had expected. People right across the region joined-in, in different ways. The quality of their contribution was rich. People who have moved to the region bring fresh ideas, energy and experience to the area. People who have lived here their whole lives brought a depth of understanding of place. All who engaged were clearly invested in making this region a great place to live.

We offered a range of ways to engage and small grants to support participation. Grants could be used to help with travel costs, childcare and pay individuals working in community development to attend. Despite prompting to some less well represented communities, the fund wasn't drawn upon as we'd intended. We're not sure whether that was because it was the wrong offer or the timing was too tight. We did find out during Conversations that it can be a struggle for local communities to keep on top of all the engagement and funds around. With this in mind, and to respond to the feedback from community groups, we refocussed the grant support as an opportunity to 'do things'. This worked. See the range of activities supported in *Afterword*. These community-led initiatives help keep up momentum in the SCAMP project, build local engagement and grow learning for future phases.

Public services are shrinking and there is a push to community-led initiatives. There is a risk that too much is asked of community groups, especially in small communities with limited capacity and resources. Participants in engagement commented that this risks shifting the balance of power from elected and accountable public servants to individuals. We're alert to the danger that this can give more voice, influence and control to people with more privilege: the time-rich, better educated, more articulate and confident. We will remain sensitive to these issues in future phases and look at different ways we can broaden and deepen engagement.



Seaweed, charcoal mark, Erinclare Scrutton



Another creative collaboration by Only Human Ltd:

Barbara Chalmers, Only Human  
Lorna Young, Indigo Words  
Gabby Morris, Feeldwork

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A POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE

IT'S 2053, YOU'RE ONE OF THE NEXT GENERATION



ING ON THE COAST...

ASTE THAT MAKES LIFE AMAZING

what we have

oments)

of vehicle (electronic)  
of livestock  
of plastic)



THE COAST...

Thank you for  
an interesting  
3 hour experience

Solway Lab  
2038

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