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Issue 63 Winter 2025

newsletter of the Solway Firth Partnership



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Convenor's Column

Rupert Shaw MBE MA, SFP Convenor



Change is upon us – change that's easy to feel as the nights get cooler and the leaves brown. Change can be unsettling. Change is however normal, inevitable. Many fear change, but if you're in that category, consider the salmon's life cycle – so significant that they're in a different form, different territories and named differently as they evolve from alevin to fry to parr to smolts to adult salmon!

The Partnership is undergoing significant change – an evolution not a revolution. We are seeing the results clearly from the support of National Lottery Heritage Fund and Dumfries and Galloway Council's work with SCAMP now making its presence felt (do look them up on YouTube and LinkedIn to see what's happening). From my perspective the creation and hiring of 3 staff posts is a welcome boost in particular. It has been a great privilege to be involved in some of the interviews and meet the successful candidates.

Throughout all this change there has been a very significant constant. Clair McFarlan our Partnership Manager, whose cheerfulness, enthusiasm and team spirited drive has made my own small interactions in the process an absolute pleasure. It is with mixed feelings that I write this frontispiece; the last with Clair at my shoulder – the last to her firm deadline! Clair is retiring after an impressive 14 years making a difference – in her own modest and self-effacing way she's written a small piece on the pages that follow. I embrace change, it is inevitable, and I am grateful that Clair has recruited an excellent replacement to be introduced in the next issue. The Board and the staff will make appropriate reference and mark the occasion of Clair's retiral on your behalf – not least at her final AGM in The Halston Hotel Carlisle on the 14th November, which will be another great event.

View across the Solway to Criffel

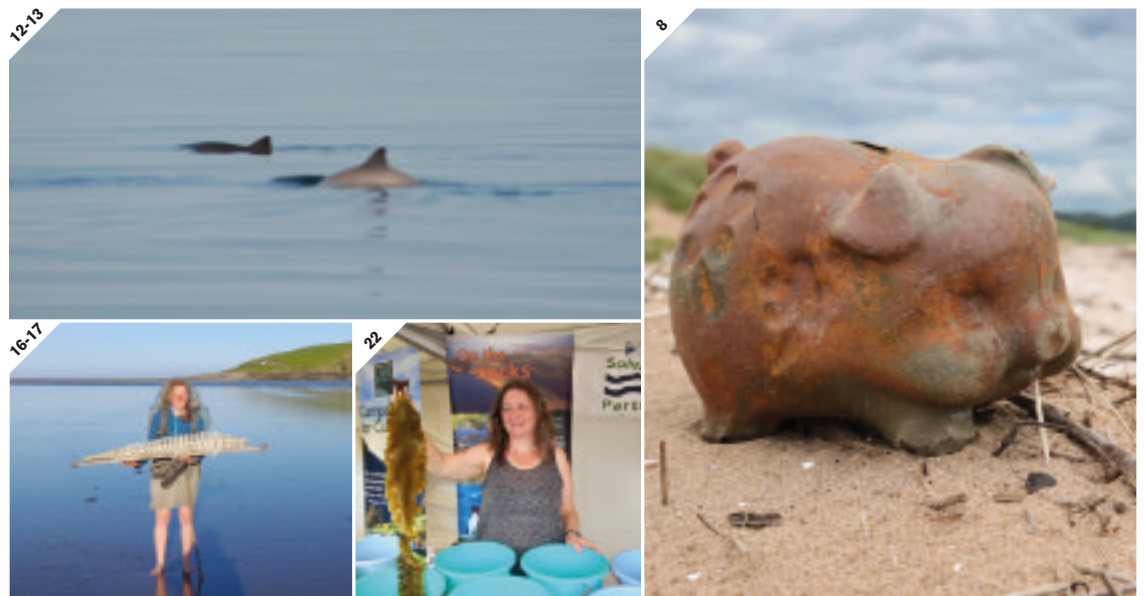


SFP Board Visit to Silloth, 2021

It's clear this is another frontispiece where something you loved witnessing or partaking in on The Solway this summer is not referenced. I'm fearful that even trying to list them is an impossible task. I do try to broadcast you, our supporters' great work. But with limited space I do want to highlight Stranraer Water Sports Association, rightly celebrating the success of SkiffieWorlds 2025. The world championships of St Ayles skiff coastal rowing reached a spectacular conclusion on the hottest day of the year, on the waters of Loch Ryan. The competition saw a record-breaking 78 clubs and more than 2,000 rowers participate from across four continents. The triennial world championship returned to Stranraer following the town's highly successful hosting debut in 2019, which generated up to £4 million for the local economy. Early indications suggest the 2025 event, with its increased participation, has delivered even greater economic benefits to the wider region. As part of the coming changes in funding and opportunity, of which your Partnership has been a key stakeholder, Stranraer will be home to a new £6.7 million Water Sports Hub, scheduled to open in summer 2026.

There has been so much achieved this year both sides of the Solway – so I'm taking the easy option: Thank you to our staff, partners, funders and you, our friends and residents, for a great summer of activity and progressing of projects on which to reflect. If in my ramble I've not convinced you that change can be positive, please look out and enjoy the iconic 1966 surf film *The Endless Summer*, with its premise that all you need is time and money and you can enjoy permanent summer – but the line that sticks in my head, when they're disappointed by the surfing in Australia, 'You should've been here yesterday'. Yesterday may often seem better – but we've a rewarding and worthwhile tomorrow here on the Solway. Enjoy.

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Photo Credits: Front Cover: Beach Clean Angling Lures, Nic Coombey, SFP

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**Solway Coast
National
Landscape**

Countryfile to the Coast

The Solway Coast has been in the spotlight! In early September, Solway Coast National Landscape staff team and partners welcomed the BBC Countryfile camera crew to some of the special sites across the National Landscape. Our featured site was Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve and we were lucky enough to welcome special guest, Howard Inns, vice chairman of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust.

SCNL volunteers being filmed



Sophie filming with BBC Countryfile

Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve is a thriving coastal dune system, which is carefully managed and provides an ideal habitat for the endangered Natterjack toads who call it home. The camera crew captured the hard work of National Landscape volunteers, discussed management techniques with staff and were even lucky enough to witness these elusive amphibians making the most of their sandy surroundings. Over a biscuit break, the camera crew chatted to some of our amazing volunteers, who give up their free time to help protect and enhance this site, and hearing their passion for Mawbray

Banks and the Solway Coast as a whole was wonderful. Having the BBC visit was an incredibly exciting experience for everyone involved; even our herd of belted Galloways wanted a taste of the limelight!

The episode aired on Sunday 21st September 2025 and you can catch up with it on BBC iPlayer. The team also filmed across the wider Solway area, featuring Natural England, Castletown Estate and RSPB, showcasing the special qualities that we are so lucky to have in our designated landscape and many of the activities that take place there.

Corporate Volunteering

In August we had a great day managing vegetation at Mawbray Banks. Our team of regular volunteers combined forces with volunteers from Natural England. A massive amount of work was completed, proving the age-old mantra of “many hands make light work” but most importantly everyone had a good time and lots of good discussion was had on protected species, land management and access for all.

Corporate volunteering is hugely beneficial for all involved; it builds a sense of achievement in teams, develops strong bonds between colleagues and overall raises staff morale. If your work place is interested in volunteering with the Solway Coast National Landscape then please contact info@solwaycoast-nl.org.uk for more information.



SCNL and Natural England staff clearing vegetation at Mawbray Banks

A Hello from Howard

It was a real treat to have Howard Inns, chairman of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, visit Mawbray Banks in September. As a specialist in amphibians and reptiles, Howard was able to confirm that this year our rare and highly protected Natterjack toads had an extremely successful breeding season at Mawbray Banks, which was music to our ears. He credited the habitat and the healthy sand dune systems that our staff and volunteers work hard to maintain.

Searching for Natterjack toads with Howard



Natterjack toad handled by Howard

Howard carries the correct licences to handle and film the highly protected Natterjack toads, giving staff, volunteers and the BBC camera crew a very rare opportunity to take a closer look at these amazing amphibians. Once Howard started looking for evidence of the toads, so many Natterjacks started to appear on the sand banks and in amongst the dune grasses. This really was a testament to just how well they have done this year, and we were all blown away by the sheer number of this lovely little coastal species.

Joint Advisory Committee Opportunities

Opportunities have opened to become part of our Joint Advisory Committee; we are looking for some representatives from the community sector. The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is a group which shapes the conservation of the landscape, shares information about local needs and provides a steer for the staff team and partnership. It oversees the development of the statutory Management Plan and offers advice and recommendations surrounding both

ongoing and future projects. The committee is made up of representatives from a whole range of organisations, agencies, charitable bodies and volunteer and community groups and meets three times a year.

We are looking for representatives from parish councils across the designated area, stretching from Beaumont in the east to Maryport in the west. If you would like to join the committee, please contact info@solwaycoast-nl.org.uk



Management planning with stakeholders

Shaping the Next Five Years

The Solway Coast National Landscape Management Plan.

Shaping the Next Five Years – The Solway Coast National Landscape Management Plan.

The process of renewing our next five-year Management Plan is well underway. This is a key document that will shape how all agencies work to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Solway Coast between 2025 to 2030. Our Management Plan is essential, not only providing strategic guidance for any work we undertake, but it also serves as a statutory document to shape the work of many other organisations who deliver projects within our designated area. A whole network of people and organisations come together to contribute and advise on the Plan, bringing a range of expertise from across the Solway. Once produced the Management Plan will be available as a physical copy but also as a downloadable PDF on our website.

Group discussion to plan the next 5 years





Fishing lures picked up from beach cleans

Lure of the lure

Lightweight and durable plastic revolutionised the design of fishing lures. With bright colours to shimmer in the water, blades to make the lure wiggle and wobble and internal ball bearings to create vibrations, there are numerous variations to collect. Most of these lures have been lost by sea anglers, although it is likely that some lures have washed out to sea from rivers.

Jonathon is a keen sea angler and a member of ONUS beach clean group, who began collecting lures to refurbish and reuse when out fishing on his boat. However, the collection of beach finds has become an obsession, and he now has over 60 lures of many shapes and sizes, carefully cleaned, re-hooked and displayed in separate compartments to prevent them becoming tangled up. His collection contains many more lures than he will ever need at sea and have become a thing of joy, restored objects that can be appreciated for beauty.

Jonathon with collected fishing lures





Tropical hitchhikers

The marine litter found on our beaches has a lower buoyancy than seawater, and when driven by wind and waves may journey vast distances before being washed up. Recent research has shown that when wildlife hitchhikes a lift on floating debris and survives the voyage it can colonise places where it didn't previously occur. While most non-native species we find have been transported on the hulls of ship and boats or unintentionally introduced by the movement of aquaculture stock, there is increasing evidence of animals that inhabit tropical waters on the other side of the Atlantic arriving on our shores. A plastic panel from a crab trap, with tropical shells attached, was found last May during a beach clean at Powmillmount. The corrugated jewel box clams attached were identified as a species that live in the Caribbean, a journey of over 4,000 miles!



Corrugated jewel box clam attached to plastic floating debris

To better understand this modern trend, we are keen to hear from any beach cleaners who find unusual creatures attached to debris washed up on Solway beaches. Send us photographs to info@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk and we will try and identify the creatures that have travelled great distances.



Karin with creel parts

More than old bones

Karin has been fascinated by wildlife since childhood and is a long time beach comber and collector of natural history, particularly skulls. As she saw beaches becoming more polluted by marine litter she has become a keen volunteer ONUS beach cleaner too. Commercial fishing is the source of some of the plastic washed up and Karin started collecting reusable items and returning them to local fishers. With the help of other beach cleaners she gathers creels and creel parts including hooks, spinners and escape panels and then takes them to local harbour masters to re-distribute. While bones remain her passion, Karin's initiative has been adopted by D&G Climate Hub as the "Lobster Pot Luck" scheme and is being replicated elsewhere.

Unidentified Author

We know that buoyant items can travel great distances but not everything we find on the beach has been on an epic journey.

A message in a bottle dropped into the sea in 1961 was found during a beach clean in 2014 by Jools Cox and has been saved as a treasured curio. The message inside was written by five year old George Grierson who launched the bottle at Knockbrev – the same beach where it was found more than fifty years later. It seems likely that the bottle floated straight back onto the beach and was buried in the sand and shingle until it was revealed by the action of winter storms. The message requested the finder to return the bottle to St Cuthbert's School which at that time stood next to the RC Church in Kirkcudbright. Despite a call out to find George he has not yet been traced. Do you know of a George Grierson who attended St Cuthbert's Primary School in 1961?

Jools with the message in a bottle





Piggy bank beach find

Piggy Bank Mystery

The sea keeps on giving us astonishing gifts on the shore that raise many questions for us to puzzle over. A recent find of a piggy bank by Lucy Thornton has sparked an international search to discover where it came from.

Washed up at Sandyhills, the little brown pig is embossed with a couple of flowers but has no other form of identification. Using the power of the world wide web there is evidence that it originated from the other side of the Atlantic, probably from a country along the Caribbean coast. For 25 years similar piggy banks have been washing up on Gulf State beaches of Texas, Georgia and the Carolinas but there is no conclusive evidence of their origins. Possible explanations for their arrival include shipping container loss, promotional giveaways or discarded old stock but the regular appearance of

piggybanks over many years hints that there may be another explanation.

Curtis Ebbesmeyer, the oceanographer who famously tracked plastic bath toys lost in a Pacific Ocean container spill, suggests that there may be a cultural reason behind the wandering pigs. When in Mexico he was told it is a local tradition to throw an emptied piggy bank into water for luck. Perhaps the piggy bank found on the beach at Sandyhills has floated down a Mexican river before being carried thousands of miles across the Atlantic! We have not been able to corroborate this account so there may be other fantastic stories to explain why the piggy bank ended up on the beach in SW Scotland. If you can help us track where this piggy bank originated we would love to hear your theories.

Lucy with piggy bank find





Finders Keepers

The wind and waves deliver many strange and spectacular finds onto the beaches of Dumfries and Galloway and a remarkable number of beach cleaners take pleasure in collecting their finds. Project GATHER celebrates volunteer beach cleaners and reveals the world of the collector, bringing together objects and exploring the collectors' habits, the pleasure of collecting and the hidden stories of stuff.

Volunteers are effective cleaners of our coast, targeting beaches that collect marine litter to make the marine environment better for people and nature. In the process of removing marine litter from the strandline many questions spring to mind – what is that object? – where did it come from? – how did it end up in the sea? – how old



Another plastic duck to add to a collection

is it? Seeking answers to these questions and searching for curiosities such as plastic ducks or smartie lids adds an extra dimension to the task of beach cleaning. It may be nostalgia for some items, the aesthetics of an object or the thrill of the hunt, but these incidental beach finds and the people who collect them all have a story to tell.

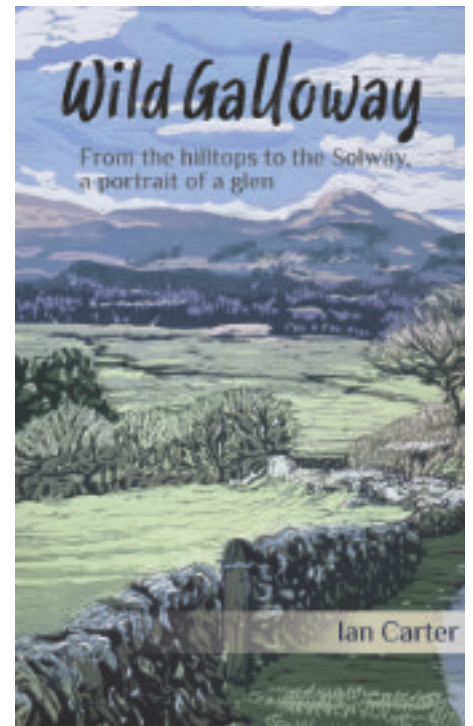
Mandy Barkers Penalty Photograph featuring beach litter footballs



SOUP: Mandy Barker

Gracefield Arts Centre 31 January – 7 March

SOUP is a description given by scientists to plastic debris suspended in the sea, and with particular reference to the mass accumulation that exists in an area of The North Pacific Ocean known as the Garbage Patch. Presented in association with Solway Firth Partnership, Mandy Barker is an International award-winning photographer creating awareness of marine plastic pollution through her stunning assemblage works.



Wild Galloway - A Book Review

Wild Galloway - From the hilltops to the Solway, a portrait of a glen by Ian Carter.

Ian Carter has always loved wildness and living in places where wildlife takes centre stage. His new home is tucked away between the high, heather-clad hills of Bengairn and the shining, silver Solway with its merse, mudflats and spectacular cliffs. Guarding the bay is whale-backed Hestan Island with its raucous seabird colonies. Here, once the tide moves back in across the causeway, there is only wildlife for company.

The book emphasises the unique richness of Galloway's wildlife, from the high tops to the Solway, and the author's time spent exploring this glen has been life affirming. It's a reminder that wildlife can enrich our lives and his book touches on some of the most important conservation issues currently facing Galloway's wildlife.

Find out more and order your copy: https://www.whittlespublishing.com/Wild_Galloway



Castle Point and Rough Island

NMP2 Winter 2025 update

Scotland's first National Marine Plan (NMP) was adopted and published in March 2015, setting out our vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas, managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people.

In the years since, there have been regular statutory reviews carried out, with the 2021 review concluding that although NMP remains effective, there have been significant developments which could impact the management of our seas. It was therefore decided by Scottish ministers that a new national marine plan for Scotland – National Marine Plan 2 (NMP2) – would be developed to help address the global climate and nature crises by carefully managing our shared marine space.

Since the NMP2 was announced in 2022, the NMP2 team have:

- Conducted an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement including 15 marine sector workshops with

over 100 organisations during Spring / Summer 2024 to gather feedback on draft high-level objectives and policy ideas

- Hosted two National Marine Planning Forums, the second and most recent in Autumn 2024 with around 90 delegates from a wide range of marine sectors and regions
- Published Planning Position Statement Autumn 2024, supported by an Explainer Video and Easy Read version to help stakeholders understand and engage on complex issues within the NMP2 and encourage greater participation

Planning Position Statement

On 5 November 2024 we published our Planning Position Statement (PPS). The PPS demonstrated our work to date on developing NMP2, including gathering stakeholder feedback and setting out the latest development of high level objectives and policy ideas for NMP2. The PPS consultation ran until 7



Stakeholder Engagement for NMP2

NMP2 Out on the Road

February 2025 and sought feedback on the objectives and policy ideas set out, and the early-stage work in the development of NMP2.

The consultation received 102 responses in total, from a wide range of individuals, stakeholder groups and decision-makers, representing the varied interest in how we use and protect our seas. On 29 August 2025 the NMP2 PPS Consultation Analysis Report was published, following thematic analysis of all consultation responses received.

To ensure NMP2 can provide the overarching planning framework for the sustainable development of our seas, it is essential that we fully consider the issues raised through our PPS consultation, while taking into account the outcomes from other consultations currently taking place across government.

Therefore, the decision to postpone the planned consultation on a draft NMP2 was made to allow time for further consideration of the feedback and our approach to NMP2.

Community Engagement

During the consultation period we conducted a series of engagement opportunities to encourage communities to give their views on the proposed policy ideas set out in the PPS. These included:

- an online Community Engagement Drop-in event in January 2025 with 46 participants attending from: Lothian, Highlands, Aberdeenshire, Isle of Canna, Orkney and Shetland
- three in-person community events with the Local Coastal Partnerships

To help consolidate and process the information collected from those events, contractors Howell Marine Consulting (HMC) produced the Analysis and Synthesis of Community Engagement Events for National Marine Plan 2 report, which provided valuable insights into the priorities and concerns of communities across Scotland.

The feedback gathered, underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration between the Marine Directorate, stakeholders, and communities in the development and implementation of NMP2.

We are using this feedback to inform our next steps in terms of engagement and development of NMP2.

Mud flats at the mouth of the Nith



Developing a new marine plan

In developing NMP2, we are keen to consider feedback from consultations that are currently underway or planned for the near future, such as the sectoral marine plan and offshore wind policy statement, and developing work to estimate the cumulative impact on fisheries from offshore wind development, cabling, marine protected area designations, and other relevant marine policies.

We are also committed to working collaboratively with other governments where it can accelerate progress towards Scotland's economic and net zero targets. This includes working with the UK Government, National Energy System's Operator and The Crown Estate on the spatial modelling and evidence for the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP). The SSEP provides an example of how cross-border governance can work, and we support the intention for the SSEP to provide a coherent and effective plan for energy infrastructure across Great Britain.

If you would like to get in touch with the NMP2 team, please contact us at: nationalmarineplanning@gov.scot



Harbour porpoises

The Protection of Allonby Bay

By Joe Harper, Allonby Bay Engagement Officer, Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Hanging Stone on the honeycomb worm reef, Dubmill



Honeycomb worm at Allonby Bay

Joe Harper



In summer of 2023 the beautiful Allonby Bay in Cumbria was designated by the Department of Environment Farming and Agriculture (DEFRA) as the first ever inshore Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA) in England, alongside two offshore HPMA's at 'Dolphin Head' in the English Channel and 'The North-East of Farnes Deep' off the Northumberland Coastline. HPMA's provide the highest level of protection, banning damaging activities such as fishing, anchoring, industrial development, and material removal. The hope for this new scheme is to protect and restore vital marine ecosystems for future generations, whilst rejuvenating the surrounding habitat via the overspill of these positive impacts.

For Allonby Bay, this means some changes to how the coastline is used. Activities such as angling, dropping anchor, or removing stones and shells are no longer permitted within the boundaries of the HPMA. But the beach remains very much a place for people - walking, swimming, water sports, sandcastles, and coastal enjoyment are still encouraged.

Allonby Bay is situated on the western edge of the Solway Firth and is considered to be a healthy stretch of coastline. It supports a wealth of biodiversity including cuttlefish, blue mussel reefs, numerous shark and ray species, and flocks of seabirds and shorebirds that make the bay a spectacular spot for wildlife watching. Perhaps one of the most remarkable species however, is the honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria*

alveolata) – a reef building species related to earthworms. They construct interlocking three-dimensional protective tubes from sand and shells, which they inhabit and filter feed from. These complex three-dimensional structures create a perfect habitat for juvenile fish, crustaceans, seaweeds, and many other flora and fauna. The reefs at Allonby are some of the best examples in the UK, hosting up to 36 species and creating large scale and highly complex reefs. If you intend on visiting these incredible habitats, it requires a very low spring tide. Please check tide times and make sure you are travelling back up the beach before the tide begins to turn.

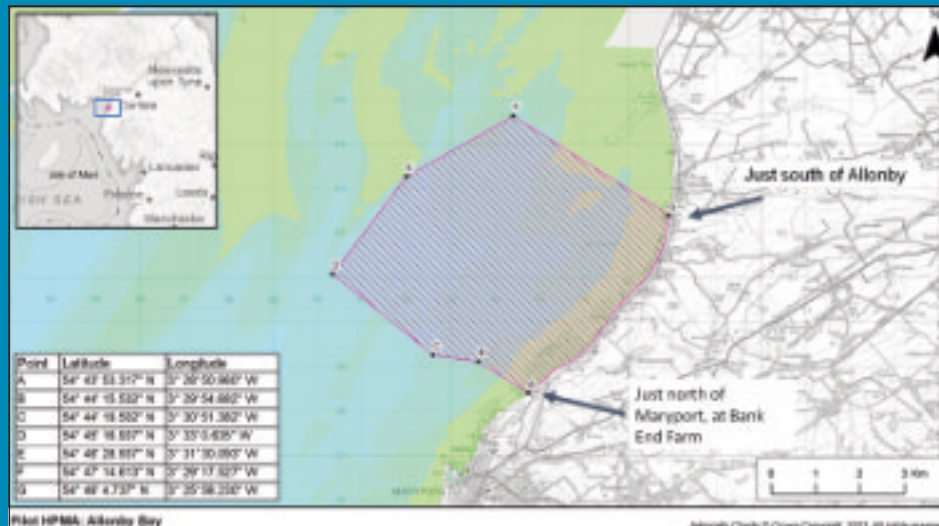
What makes Allonby Bay HPMA unique is its close connection with a community. Allonby itself is a small tight-knit village, and the designation has prompted much local debate. Following consultations led by the DEFRA, the boundaries of the HPMA were reduced to ensure angling grounds and navigation routes were not compromised. The final designation now stretches from just south of Allonby village to Maryport Golf Course, extending around three miles offshore.

As so often happens with new measures or initiatives, there



Telling people about Allonby Bay

Map of Allonby Bay HPMA



Thornback Ray



View across Allonby Bay at low tide

has been some confusion and misinformation that has surrounded the HPMA designation and what it means in practice. This is where Cumbria Wildlife Trust and myself have come in. I am Allonby Bay HPMA's new engagement officer with a history in marine biology and engagement. I hold a master's degree in Marine Environmental Protection and have worked with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and The Wild Oysters Project for 3 years engaging with communities and getting them excited about the marine space and its future! With

Dogfish



funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, I'll be working to engage, inform and support the community and the wider North West region over the next 2.5 years.

As a part of this, we will be creating signage to highlight HPMA boundaries, working with local businesses such as Cumberland Coastal School, The Laal Collective, and Tale Trails to deliver creative educational programmes that highlight the wonders of our coastline. We'll also be training new coastal champions to help protect and monitor this coastline and are committed to maintaining a visible presence within the community, ensuring people can ask questions and share concerns directly.

This project is extremely exciting! And I look forward to working with Allonby's community to ensure its success. We will be creating several volunteering opportunities over the next two years for the local community and hope to see you there! More information can be found on the Cumbria Wildlife Trust website and if you have any questions, or information on how best to promote the project, please don't hesitate to contact me at joeh@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk. If you would like to get involved please feel free to keep an eye on our 'What's On' guide.

CLEARcoasts: Where Science Meets Community

From Anthorn to Campfield Marsh, CLEARcoasts has been trialling coastal restoration using BESE-elements®, nicknamed 'potato mats'. They're made of starch biopolymers derived from potato waste, chosen in part due to the abundant potato waste from the French Fries industry! The mats fully biodegrade, providing a sustainable replacement to conventional plastic, and were originally invented to restore mussel beds in the Dutch Wadden Sea. BESE-elements® are now being tested in the Solway Firth following two years of tidal monitoring using data collected by 'Mini Buoys' between 2023 and 2024. Restoration is currently underway at Cardurnock, Campfield, and Anthorn.



Installing BESE-elements® at RSPB Campfield Marsh

How can Science and Community come together?

Sometimes, when you hear the words 'science' or 'scientific research', it can feel inaccessible - as if it is reserved for a particular kind of person with a specific background. This idea isn't just a feeling; it's rooted in a history where scientists have had their own language and operated separately from the wider community. However, being a scientist doesn't have to be complicated. All you need is a question you want to explore. Every perspective has validity, whether it's done in a specific way or not - because who writes those rules anyway?

With CLEARcoasts, the guiding questions have been: what are the conditions of saltmarsh, seagrass and reef habitats in the Cumbrian Solway Firth? How can we combine local knowledge with field surveys? What coastal restoration might benefit the area, and what approach will work for everyone involved? Whilst CLEARcoast's field surveys have been instrumental in answering some of those questions, the project has gained invaluable insights from those living in the Cumbrian Solway Firth; from observations of natural accretion and erosion cycles of the saltmarsh recorded over generations to diverse perspectives on what it means to 'steward the coast' (see CLEARcoasts Phase 2 Report).



As conservationists, we're often focusing on one piece at a time. It's a natural part of research: breaking complex things down into manageable parts so we can investigate, measure, and understand them. Trying to factor in everything all at once would be overwhelming! But after two years of working on CLEARcoasts, it's evident that the 'good work' we're aiming for has the greatest impact when we coordinate our efforts together and start thinking about how all the pieces of the puzzle come together.

Having transitioned from a project initially focused on coastal monitoring with the aim of restoration, to one now striving to deliver tangible positive outcomes, CLEARcoasts has highlighted several key lessons. The most important is that coastal restoration works best when scientists, organisations and communities share knowledge. Central to this is thoughtful communication and proactive listening to ensure that everyone is heard - because each piece of the puzzle is valid.

This phase aims to take a more holistic approach to the ecosystem by gathering a variety of data alongside the installation of BESE-elements® to understand the saltmarsh better. If you and/or your local group would be interested in getting involved as citizen scientists and share your insights, contact SFP on info@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

Phase 4 of CLEARcoasts Project is funded through the Environment Agencies, Water Environment Improvement Fund.



Putting out minibuoys

THE MINI BUOY

The low-cost and home-made tides, currents, and waves sensor

Data Logger
Detects movement.

Wire Loops/Tether
For free movement.

Floral Foam
Keeps it secure.

Steel Shot
Increases sensitivity.

Set up the Data Logger:
Use the MSR software to set the logger to record data every few seconds along the y-axis.

Get Your Mini Buoy Ready:

- Place the logger in the tube, held firm with floral foam.
- Seal the lid of the tube using silicone sealant.

Deploy in the Field:

- Place a stake in the ground, attach the Mini Buoy using cable ties, and ensure the swivels can move freely.
- Retrieve the Mini Buoy ideally after 15 days or more to capture a full Spring-Neap cycle.

Download and Analyse:
Download the data using the MSR software and analyse it using the Mini Buoy App.

By monitoring potential sites for coastal habitat restoration, the Mini Buoy supports healthier, more resilient coastal ecosystems.



Rosemary Thomas with the dolphin skeleton when it was discovered at Heston Island

Would You Like a Dolphin Skeleton?

By Judith Hewitt, Museums Curator, Dumfries and Galloway Council

I remember the day we got the phone call at Dumfries Museum, the question was ‘Would we like a dolphin skeleton?’ It took my colleague and I about two seconds to decide that, yes, we would indeed like a dolphin skeleton. We hadn’t really thought about what we would do with it or how smelly it would be when it arrived but we knew we had to have it to continue the important work of natural history collecting that has been part of the museum’s DNA since its inception in 1836.

We are always being offered items at Dumfries Museum but this was an unusual donation – because of its size and nature but also because of what it symbolised – a wonderful specimen of an incredible creature. I was largely unaware that there were dolphins in the Solway but this material evidence was indisputable and provided us with an opportunity to learn more.

We have two Roman objects in our museum collection that feature dolphins. One is a small bronze statue of a dolphin. The other is a large and impressive Roman altar, dedicated to

Roman dolphin figurine



the Goddess Minerva. It was found at Birrens, a fort, not far from the Solway. The Romans regarded dolphins as symbols of the underworld (they go above the sea and then below it) and also of friendship. Two of the dolphins on the Altar to Minerva are almost kissing! The existence of dolphin imagery on ancient objects within our collection is a reminder of the importance of the sea in Dumfries and Galloway’s history and also how different peoples at different times have responded to, and represented, the natural world.

There is a legend that St Cuthbert (634-687AD) landed on the Solway. The Venerable Bede recorded that he was visiting

Dolphin skeleton in place at Dumfries Museum





Altar to Minerva featuring dolphins



Dolphin finders with museum curator Judith Hewitt

the 'Picts of Nithsdale' when he was washed ashore during a storm. God heard Cuthbert's prayers and miraculously 'three peces of porpas' (dolphin flesh) appeared. St Cuthbert ate this, survived and continued his missionary work.

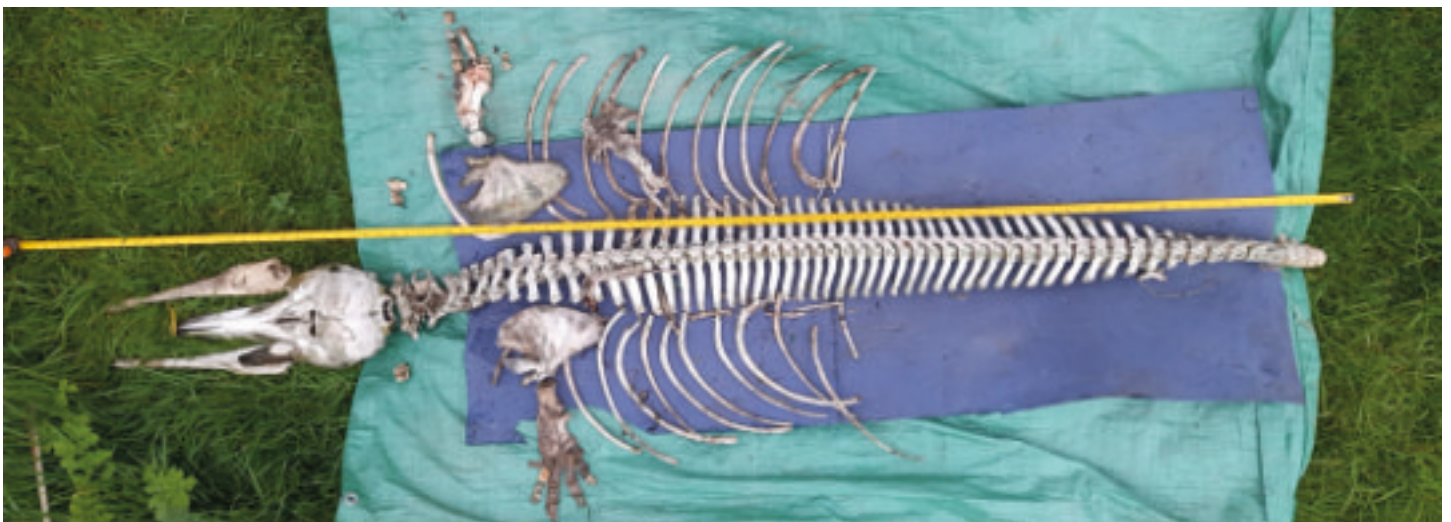
One of the most remarkable things about this dolphin skeleton is the care that was taken by its finders in March 2024. Rosemary Thomas, who found the dolphin remembers:

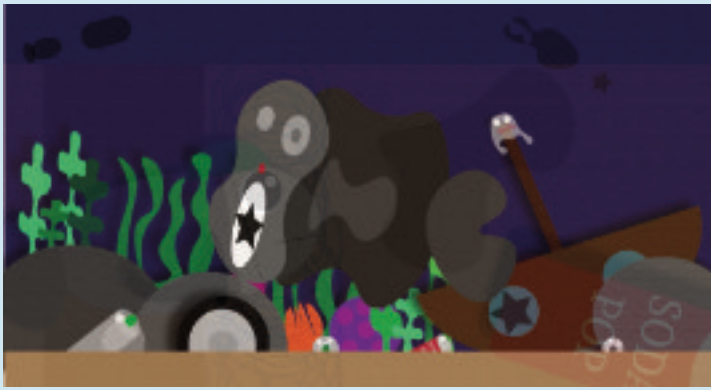
'From the moment our friend spotted 'Hester' the Common dolphin's skeleton on the shores of Hestan Island we have felt very honoured to be able to be a part in preserving and celebrating this wonderful creature. We rushed up to the island on the next tide to retrieve the skeleton to above the high water mark to ensure it didn't get washed away. We had to be very careful with the timing as it's a complicated crossing involving walking for an hour out across the bay and having a clear knowledge of the tide times and specific height of the tide to make sure it is safe. We spent time initially cleaning and recording the bones and pressing the many hand (flipper) bones into clay to preserve the order of them. It's a rare situation to find a complete skeleton as usually the bones would be separated by the action of the sea. We hope that everyone who gets to see her will share our awe in the intricately designed skeleton which enables these beautiful creatures to glide so effortlessly through the water.'

The dolphin skeleton reached the museum with appropriate licenses in place and was then transported to a skeleton conservation specialist. Over a period of months, he worked to stabilise the skeleton, create replacement pieces of bone and to facilitate a method of display. Museum staff collected the skeleton and then worked with local joiners to create a fitting display within our 'Ever Changing, Changeless Sea' exhibition where it really was the star object. Visitors enjoyed looking closely at this beautiful creature with many assuming that it was an aquatic dinosaur of some sort!

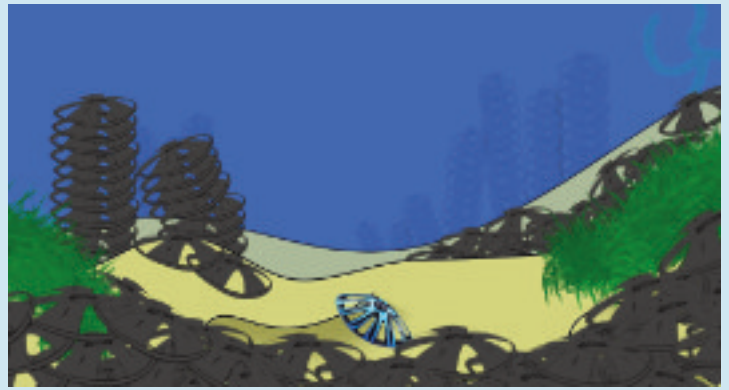
After several months on display in Dumfries Museum, the dolphin has now journeyed to its new home – Annan Museum – which is currently closed as we work on a major redisplay. The dolphin will feature, alongwith other historical and natural historical objects, in a display on the Sea and the Solway. I look forward to seeing how this develops. One thing that always sticks in my mind as a Museum Curator is how we transform something from a 'found or everyday object' into a museum object. This dolphin, one of many in the Solway, is now a part of the region's history – it is THE museum dolphin, to be treasured for years to come and I'm so pleased that our team, working with members of our local community were able to achieve this together.

Dolphin skeleton as found





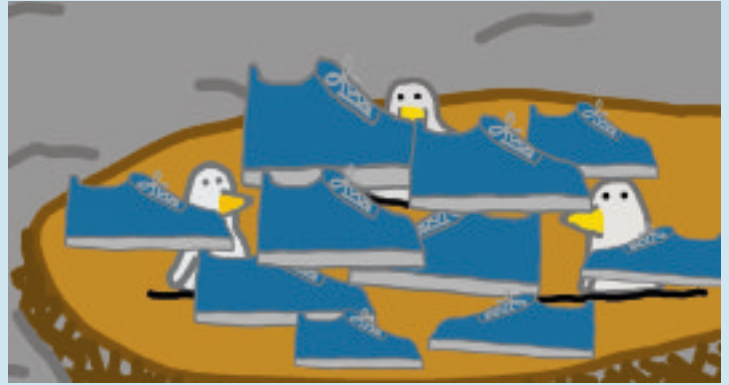
War of the Seas by David McLaren



Wheel Trim by Munro Coltart



The Devil Wears ... by Andrew Harris



Think About the Future by Lewis Fuller

Getting animated about marine litter

Anna Wilson, University of Glasgow

Long-time readers of Tidelines and followers of the Solway Firth Partnership’s local activities may remember Positive Action for a Cleaner Solway (PACS), the Marine Fund Scotland-supported project carried out in collaboration with Museums of the Future Now and the Waste Stories team at the University of Glasgow that led to the Solway Hoard exhibition back in 2022/3.

The impact of projects such as this can continue to unfold for quite a while after the funding period has ended, and sometimes a long way from the Solway itself: PACS is a good example.

As part of the project, in early 2023, SFP, Waste Stories and Devorgilla Rotary acted as clients for students on D&G College’s Visual Communication programme, providing a “client brief” for a short animation on the topic of marine litter. The brief invited students to let their imaginations run free and come up with a short animated story that would engage people with the problem of marine litter in the Solway by prompting them to look at it from new and strange angles – perhaps from the perspective of the future, or by taking a sideways look at the present.

And so it was that students from the College spent a freezing January morning picking up rubbish from the beach at Newbie Shore. What they found will be familiar to any beach cleaner: broken buoys, lighters, plastic bottles, shoes, crisp packets, plastic flowers, bits of rope, a piece of wheel trim... Each student selected one or two items to use in their story, then spent the rest of the term coming up with story ideas, creating visual resources and finally putting together their

animation. The resulting animations can all be watched on the Waste Stories website: <https://wastestories.org.uk/read-waste-stories/dumfries-and-galloway-college-students-animations/>

You might think that would have been the end of things, with the PACS project over and the students’ assessment completed. But that’s not the case. First, the animations had their World Premiere at an exhibition in the University of Glasgow’s Advanced Research Centre in June 2023. Then, in autumn 2024, I used them in projects with two other Scottish Colleges – Forth Valley and New College Lanarkshire – as both models and inspirations for their own creative story-making about waste in their local environments. At the same time, I was thinking about what the animations showed us about how and what people learn by taking part in a project like this.

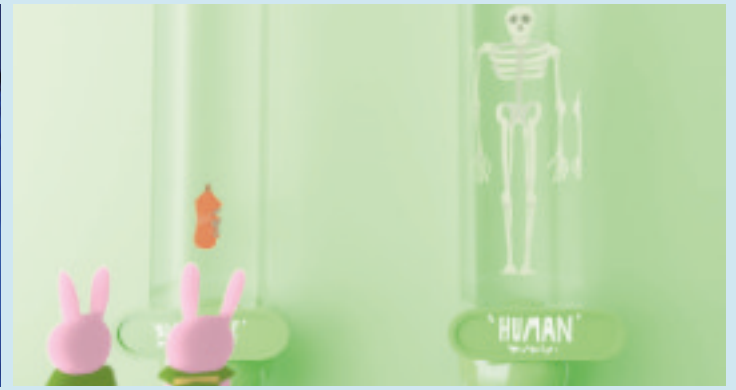
What was striking was how some of the animations told stories about cleaning up the waste and increasing recycling, while others told stories about the short or long term environmental consequences of plastic entering the marine environment, and still others told stories that grappled with the madness of producing and consuming so much stuff in the first place.

For example, Ethan Dunlop’s future flotilla of recycling pirates, Elias Keir’s Bottle Bob finding his own way to the recycling plant and Connor Slogget’s story of a beach-cleaning robot, all demonstrated the value of cleaning up our beaches and valuing what we currently gets called “rubbish”.

Munro Colthart, Lewis Fuller and David McLaren all dealt with the accumulation of large amounts of waste and its impact



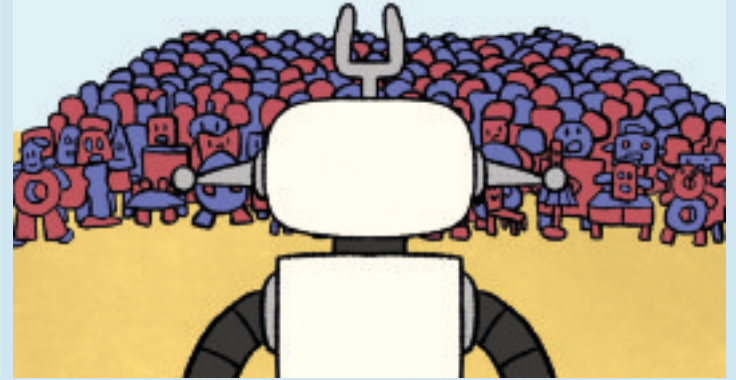
Breaking News by Leon Craig



Bunnies Planet by Stan Bennett



Bottle Bill by Elias Keir



The Robot Who Saved Earth by Connor Sloggett

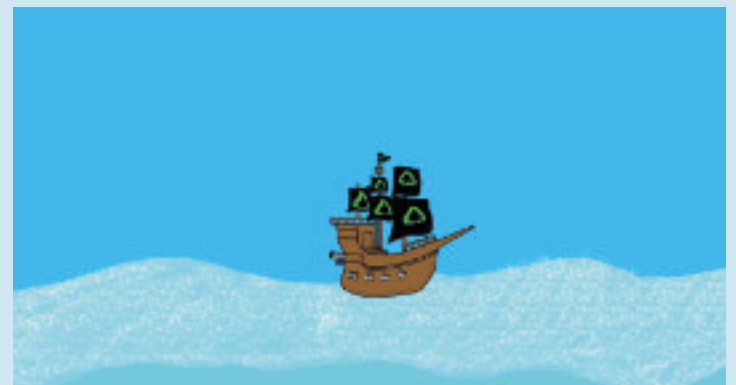
on marine life. Munro had a build-up of bits of wheel trim covering the sea floor; Lewis had a seagull edging her own chicks out of the nest by obsessively collecting shoes; and David's marine litter came to life and literally went to war with the fish. Andrew Harris addressed our addiction to fashion through his story, *The Devil Wears ... Plastic*, and Leon Craig used a vision of an imagined future to tell a story of a moment's decision about whether to buy bottled water or not. Stan Bennett's vision of a future in which humans and plastic only exist as fossilised remains to be displayed in museums run by the bunny-like inhabitants that now rule the earth was another wry take on what the future might hold. Heather Sloggett's story raised the possibility that if we continue as we are, some of the things we take for granted now, like disposable lighters, might one day become so rare and precious as to be rationed. And finally, Lindsay Henderson's story of the life and disposal of a domestic bleach bottle asked its audience to face up to the fact that much of what is now washing up on our shores was created with the aim of reducing drudgery and freeing people up to do more "advanced" or creative work.

Lighters by Heather Sloggett



Almost exactly a year after the animations were completed, they were the stars of the show at an international conference on education held in Valetta on the Mediterranean island of Malta. And yes, the wheels of academic work might grind slowly, but finally the animations and the stories they tell are the subject of a book chapter that will be published by the publisher Springer on Christmas Day (!) 2025 in the new book *Narratives of Hope in Times of Change*.

Recycling Pirates by Ethan Dunlop



Bleach Bottle by Lindsay Henderson





Saltmarsh at Lots Wife

Solway Coast and Marine Project

Innovation in Restoration is up and running!

The Project

The Solway Coast and Marine Project - Innovation in Restoration, led by Dumfries and Galloway Council, delivered by Solway Firth Partnership (SFP), recognises the untapped economic and social potential of our coasts and seas.

The project will undertake key strategic interventions to restore and expand coastal, intertidal and marine habitats (saltmarsh, seagrass and native oysters) in support of key economic fishery species, water quality, key coastal tourism locations, climate mitigation, adaptation & carbon sequestration.

Seagrass

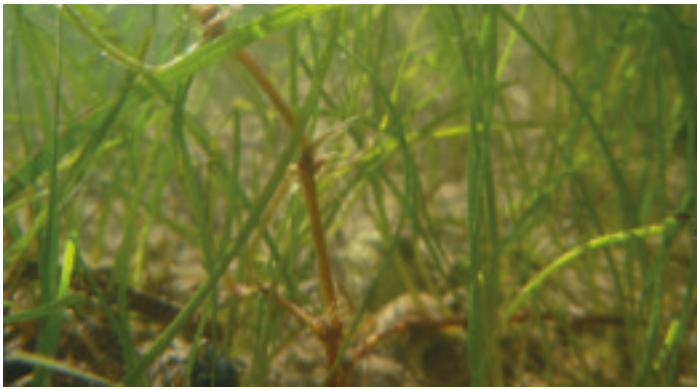


Development work undertaken so far includes baseline mapping of intertidal seagrass, *Zostera spp.* beds; coastal hydrodynamic research; saltmarsh opportunity mapping to identify suitable potential locations for inland expansion; and in vitro propagation trials of *Zostera spp.* for potential seagrass restoration at University of Edinburgh.

SFP is working to share knowledge with academics, charities, and industry, providing demonstrations of new procedures and technologies allowing further rollout of successful interventions at scale. Our ambition is to see the Solway Firth as a thriving healthy sustainable ecosystem, where healthy natural capital provides ecosystem services that support sustainable communities, builds the Wellbeing Economy, contributes to Community Wealth Building and the Just Transition to Net Zero, by working with our local communities and partners.

The Staff

SFP staff have been working hard, behind the scenes to get the SCAMP Innovation in Restoration Project up and running. That has included recruiting the staff to run the project over the next 5 years, and hopefully a further 5 years through the Landscape Connections Project, see box opposite. The newly appointed team – Manager, Jenny Wright; Project Officer, Marcelina Lekawska; and Administrator, Carla Marshall are only just in post. Between them they bring a wealth of experience in working on our natural capital habitats such as seagrass and native oysters enabled by being boat handlers



Seagrass

and divers! You will be introduced to them properly in the next issue of Tidelines where they will be able to share some insights into their first six months of work on the project.

The Habitats

Seagrass

An intertidal seagrass survey has been undertaken in conjunction with NatureScot which was the first comprehensive spatial and conditions survey ever undertaken in the Solway and the first locational check in over 20 years.

Saltmarsh

Dumfries and Galloway has 25% of Scotland's saltmarsh. Through early development work the significance of the Solway's saltmarsh and the potential impact of climate change on this vital habitat has been highlighted. If no opportunities are created for inland migration of saltmarsh a substantial portion of the Solway saltmarsh could be lost over the next 50–100 years with the subsequent impact on wildlife and the security of our coastal communities. A 'Saltmarsh Opportunity Mapping Report' was produced which has outlined where the natural landform gives the best opportunity to address this coastal squeeze.

Intertidal seagrass beds at Rough Island



Native oysters

Native oysters

The significance of the unique Loch Ryan oyster beds is clear, together with the cultural significance to the community of Stranraer. To better understand the health of the oyster beds and the associated habitat and biodiversity they foster, Heriot Watt University was commissioned to undertake a stock assessment and biodiversity audit of Loch Ryan. Sub tidal seagrass surveying by drone was also trialled but the turbid waters of the Solway were not conducive to this method.

In summer 2024, an underwater camera survey was trialled to identify and map sub tidal seagrass beds and to look for remnants of the once vast oyster beds in the Solway, fished out in the 19th century. This work has provided a better understanding of some of the most challenging habitats to evaluate but also identified the need for further baseline data and the need to repeat surveys in order to understand trends and impact of interventions or threats.

Solway Coast and Marine Project, Innovation in Restoration is part of the wider Landscape Connections Project. SCAMP is an ambitious coastal and marine nature restoration project that seeks to restore the coastal and shallow sea habitats of the North Solway, covering the entire Dumfries and Galloway coastline from Gretna around to the Rhins of Galloway, working with local people, sustaining the economy and delivering health and wellbeing outcome. With lead funding from the Heritage Fund and consisting of partners: The Solway Firth Partnership, Galloway Fisheries Trust, D&G Woodlands, Crichton Carbon Centre, RSPB, Southern Upland Partnership and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.

SCAMP is restoring the Solway's coastal and marine habitats for the wellbeing of nature, people and climate.

SCAMP launch





Farewell to SFP

A Few Words from Clair

After working for 14 years at Solway Firth Partnership, 3 as a Project Officer and then 11 as Manager, I'm retiring at the end of 2025 and starting a new chapter of my life. While I'm obviously sad to be leaving colleagues that have formed a tight knit team for the past 10+ years and lots of great partners, I am also excited to be retiring at an age when I am young enough to (hopefully) enjoy an active time both as a volunteer for various causes and to be able to travel. The first trip will be to Australia and New Zealand for 2 months, where I've wanted to visit since leaving university. Back then I just couldn't afford to go!

Looking back over my time at SFP, as with any job, there have been achievements and knock backs. I'm most proud of having brought in funding for a wide range of projects, small and large, with the help of the team. These have ranged from European funded projects such as Solway Coastwise (<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/community/solway-coastwise/>), the SMILE Project resulting in the Solway Review (<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/solway-review/>) and Fishing Faces; many marine litter initiatives funded through Marine Fund Scotland; Marine Invasive Non-Native Species Monitoring (<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/environment/invasive-non-native-species/>) (ID guide initially funded through the Environment Agency and Scottish Government); and our Cumbrian CLEARcoasts Project (<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/environment/3-cs-project-marine-natural-capital-development-in-the-cumbrian-solway/>) (several phases) funded through the Environment Agency; to our latest £1.23million Solway Coast And Marine Project

(<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/environment/marine-natural-capital-dumfries-and-galloway/>) (Innovation in Restoration) looking at innovative ways to tackle habitat restoration on seagrass, saltmarsh and native oysters which will run until 2030. The organisation is in a good financial position going forward into 2026 and beyond.

The other legacy of my time at SFP has been mentoring young people who have worked with the team. As a small organisation we haven't been able to take on many undergraduate / graduate Project Officers but the people we've worked with have gone on to greater things, getting good degrees, forging careers with Defra and Scottish Government, and winning awards! We like to think we gave them a good start in their careers!

I must also mention the many partners that SFP works with. They are invaluable to us for carrying out not only our core work but also the numerous projects we're involved in. I'd like to give a huge thanks to all the partners I've worked with especially the people who organise meetings with traybakes and working lunches – you know who you are!!

A big thanks to the staff – Nic Coombey, Paul Mackey, Morag Walker and Shovi Anjum along with the SFP Board who have supported me and the organisation over the years. My first Chair was Alastair McNeil who sadly passed in July 2021. He has been greatly missed for his wide knowledge around fisheries and his support to all the staff. Rupert Shaw followed as Convenor and has proved to be as supportive as well as instrumental in helping with organisational branding and initiating staff pay reviews for which we are grateful.

I hope you have the opportunity to meet the new SFP Manager and SCAMP (Solway Coast and Marine Project) Innovation in Restoration staff at the SFP / Solway Coast National Conference on Friday 14 November at the Halston Hotel in Carlisle. But if not, then you will be introduced to them in the Spring / Summer 2026 edition of Tidelines.

SFP Accounts to March 2025

Clair McFarlan: Partnership Manager, Solway Firth Partnership

Solway Firth Partnership aims to undertake activities in line with our mission statement:

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

Our accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2025 show a total income (Restricted & Unrestricted) of £207,361 (£253,233 in 2023/24). During the year SFP generated an Unrestricted surplus of £8,853 (£23,945 in 2023/24). At the end of the year, Unrestricted Reserves stand at £177,146.

Projects that continued to run (or ran) throughout this financial year included:

- Solway Coast and Marine Pilot Project Development (now known as SCAMP Innovation in Restoration)
- Solway Shore Action Project
- Galloway Seaweed Search Project; and
- Solway Carbon Project; and
- CLEARcoasts Project Phase 3.

Projects completed this year include:

- the Solway Shore Action Project which ran from May 2024 to March 2025, funded through Marine Fund Scotland
- the Galloway Seaweed Search project with outputs including: production of an identification guide; guided walks and production of an exhibition which was displayed at Logan Botanic Garden and Stranraer Museum; and
- the Solway Carbon Project, run from July to September 2024, in partnership with the University of Swansea, carried out an assessment of saltmarsh carbon stocks in the Solway Coast National Landscape
- the CLEARCoasts Project (Phase 3) which ran from October 2024 to March 2025, funded by the Environment Agency's 3Cs (Championing Coastal Coordination) Fund.

All the outputs from these projects are available on the SFP website

www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

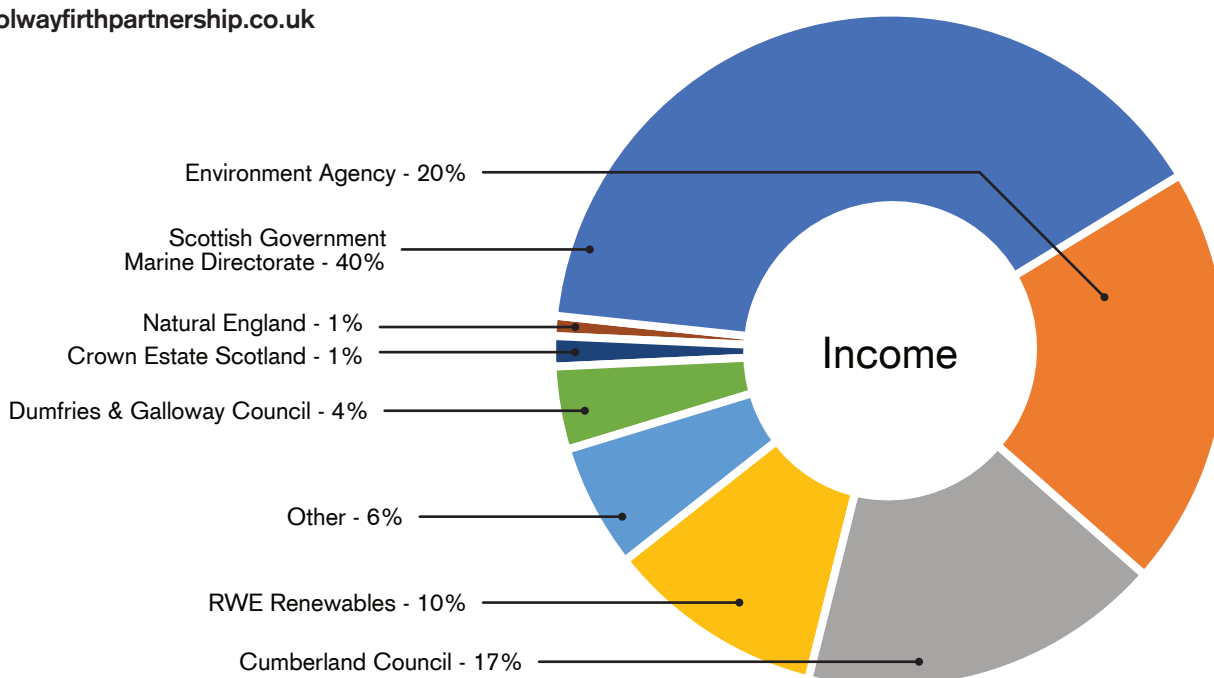
Our thanks go to the staff team who have worked hard to make the projects a success during this busy year.

We are very grateful to all the organisations that have provided funding in the last financial year: Scottish Government Marine Directorate, RWE, Cumberland Council, Natural England, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Marine Fund Scotland (through SG Marine Directorate), Kilgallioch Wind Farm, Crown Estate Scotland and the Environment Agency.

We would also like to thank all the people who have given in-kind support in many ways, thereby enabling our core activities to continue as well as allowing a wide range of projects to go ahead. We appreciate that Solway Firth Partnership relies on the goodwill and expertise of many people and organisations in order to be able to carry out the work we do.

Our full accounts for the last financial year are available on our website:

www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk






Solway Firth Partnership

For further information, to submit an article or to join the SFP mailing list please contact:
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