tidelines

Issue 64 Spring / Summer 2026

newsletter of the Solway Firth Partnership

Between the Tides: Seagrass in the Solway

Page 16-17

Spotlight on Coastal Plants

Page 20-23

Step back in time at The Rum Story

Page 24-25

KIDS ACTIVITY PAGE INSIDE

Convenor's Column

Rupert Shaw MBE MA, SFP Convenor

The Solway Firth Partnership benefits from a clear purpose and very definite sense of place; all reinforced by a Staff and Board team firmly rooted in the community directly affected by its projects. I start this column in this way, as Jenna Cains our Partnership Manager, (more of her later in this edition) having 'hit the ground running', invited me to join a staff training day that sensibly started with a review of the SFP mission and purpose. I found it helpful to examine not only what we do, but sense check our alignment with need, think about what we the board and myself are for, and have to articulate it then and there – the answer: Advocacy. I am focused on that, but I want you all, our friends and readers to know you have a role in promoting the importance of the Solway – calling out issues of concern and celebrating successes – ever more critical as existing demands on our expanded, but still small, team dominate the weeks ahead. As a reminder, there are opportunities to get involved at Board level.

Inevitably celebrating our successes (there are so many) is the easy and fun part. It was great to be at the SOSE 5-year parliamentary session in Holyrood in January joining fellow guests from amongst others the Annan Harbour Action Group, The Galloway Distillery and Stranraer Oyster Festival; overt recognition of some of what's making a difference in communities on Scotland's side of the Firth. Annan Harbour Trusts' securing of £1.34 million to develop its historic harbour setting is a fantastic example of a well thought out project led with perseverance and passion.

Passion, I believe is the principal driver of success - when I gave up my first career, soldiering, to farm - many counselled heavily against the idea – some as heavily as they had against me joining up two decades before!! I couldn't be certain that passion alone could create a business rewarded with unexpected opportunities. Yet, only three weeks ago I was asked by the UK Space Agency to speak on behalf of all of UK Agriculture at Space-Comm Expo Europe's Space Investment Day in London. A personal highlight was meeting an Hungarian delegate who said "I've worked on a Solway Firth Partnership project – what a great organisation" (I'd proudly included my role as Convenor in my Bio – to be rewarded with 3rd party advocacy!)

Back home, I am hosting a project utilising Space enabled data here in Galloway. The detail of what satellites can confirm to a 30cm accuracy now is astonishing: from above ground carbon stocks to below ground hydrology, soil and types and condition. But I must confess, confirmation of our Solway birdlife has been for me the most mesmerising data. Bird species and times have been recorded on this coastal farm, all evidenced from 9 January to the start of spring. My confidence in this technology wobbled when for 3 days an Atlantic puffin was recorded - subsequent enquiries with ornithological experts have revealed that whilst rare, it is entirely possible as a result of fierce winter storms.

So as ever, with a whole two days of sunshine in a row keeping me outside, I'm very optimistic for a great spring and summer here on the Solway. There will of course be lots of great experiences advertised in our newsletter and Socials so do sign up – and don't forget our expanding archive on our YouTube channel.

My request to you as you read through the pages that follow – use them to be an advocate for our amazing Firth. It doesn't take many people to bring about change – from beach cleans to board meetings it won't matter how many are counted, just how many can be counted on.

Space Investment day, London

Contents

Photo Credits: Front Cover: Northern brown argus butterfly, Iain Leach

Page 2: UK Space Agency; Page 3: SFP except top right Silloth on Solway Golf Club and top left Nick Chisholm; Page 4: SFP; Page 5: Jenny Wright – SFP, Carla – Graham Marshall; Page 6: Solway Coast National Landscape; Page 7: Silloth on Solway Golf Club; Page8/9: Solway Coast National Landscape, unearthing new wall – Grampus Heritage and Training; Page 10/11: SFP; Page 12: Portraits Mike Bolam for SFP, other images SFP; Page 13/14/15: SFP except two top pics on Page 15 – Nick Chisholm (himself with Jenny & bucket of oysters); Page16: Mike Bolam for SFP; Page17: SFP; Page 18: Natterjack toad – Chris Dresh, butterfly – Iain Leach, scrape – Liam Templeton; Page19: Picnic, bat group and common rock rose – Jack Barton, almanac – Sarah Thomas, tadpole shrimp – Freya Saunders; Page 20: Irish sea–lavender – Michael Jeeves, close up, SFP; Page 21: Both images Michael Jeeves; Page 22: All images, SFP; Page 23: Both images, Chris Gibson/Rob Still, Wildguides; Page 24/25: The Rum Story; Page 26/27: SFP; Page 28: MAC–CAN; Page 30: Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Welcome to Our New Team Members

Since the last edition of Tidelines, SFP have welcomed new additions to the staff team...Jenna Cains as Solway Firth Partnership Manager, replacing Clair McFarlan who retired in December; Jenny Wright as SCAMP Innovation in Restoration Project Manager and Carla Marshall as SCAMP Administrator. Tidelines caught up with the new staff to find out how they are settling in...

Jenna beach cleaning

Hi! How long have you been in post now, and how is it going?

Jenna: I started in November just gone and worked alongside Clair until she retired at the start of December. It has been going really well so far, although getting to grips with a big role such as this was always going to be challenging. The staff team are great and super supportive of my endless requests for help!

Jenny: Hi, I'm Jenny Wright and I started as SCAMP Innovation in Restoration Project Manager with the Solway Firth Partnership in October 2025. It's been a really exciting start! There's already been a lot happening across the project, from building partnerships to getting out on the coast and planning restoration work. It feels like there's real momentum behind what we're trying to achieve, which is great to be part of.

Carla: I started as Project Administrator at the end of September 2025. The other members of my project team did not come into post until mid-October, which gave me time to begin getting the new office, in Stranraer, set up and ready for everyone.

It is going great. Everyone in Solway Firth Partnership and SCAMP associates have all been so welcoming and supportive.

What have been the biggest challenges and highlights of the job so far?

Jenna: The challenge has been a personal one...starting from fresh in a new role never gets easier and I long to be a year in post at least so I don't feel like the newbie any more! The highlights have been many though, from getting to know the Cumbrian Solway coast which, I must admit, I didn't know all that well compared to the Scottish Solway, and meeting new teams and colleagues.

Jenny: One of the biggest challenges has been getting to grips with such a large, multi-partner project that works across the whole Solway seascape, as well as settling into a new base in Stranraer. But that's also what makes the role so interesting.

The highlights have definitely been getting to know the local community and spending time out along the coast. There's a real passion for the Solway here, and it's been brilliant working with partner organisations, volunteers and the wider Solway Firth Partnership team - everyone has been really supportive.

Carla: I think the biggest challenge (frustration) has been trying to get broadband installed in the new office! But we managed and we are now up and running. Also, it was a steep learning curve for everyone at the start of the new project, but we are now on the way to making good things happen.

Highlights for me – being offered the role and the opportunity to be involved from the outset of the Innovation project. And, of course, working with such an amazing team.

Where were you working before joining SFP?

Jenna: I was part of the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere team for around four a half years before moving to SFP, having joined the Biosphere from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Jenny: Before moving back to Scotland, I was based in Cornwall with Cornwall Wildlife Trust, where I helped set up and coordinate a regional marine and coastal partnership. Prior to that, I spent time living and working on the west coast of Canada supporting local marine conservation projects.

I grew up in Glasgow, so it feels really special to now be back home, in Scotland, and working somewhere that still keeps me closely connected to the coast and marine environment.

Carla: Prior to starting with Solway Firth Partnership, I had worked for 14 years in the same role in Social Care with a Local Authority. Being in this new role is a complete contrast but, in a good way!

Jenny surveying seagrass

Carla on the Solway

What are you looking forward to in 2026?

Jenna: Probably settling fully into the role the most, and developing my knowledge on the beautiful Solway. When first in post I naively asked Nic (Coombey, SFP Project Officer; the man, the myth, the legend) if Solway really meant 'Path of the Sun' as I'd read, it seemed so mystical and other-worldly to me. Turns out no, it probably means 'muddy ford'. A lot still to learn, and a head for believing anything doesn't help.

2026 will see a lot of development within our various SCAMP project lines, that will definitely be exciting and open even more possibilities for us. I am also looking forward to taking on some of SFP's unique work, such as the marine invasive panels and of course, Tidelines!

Jenny: I'm really looking forward to an exciting field season, getting out to monitor habitats like seagrass, native oysters and saltmarsh, planning restoration work and spending more time on the Solway coast. I'm also looking forward to working more closely with local volunteers and partner organisations as the project develops. It feels like a big year ahead.

Carla: Seeing how the project progresses and what happens next, including the new research centre (and our new office) in the town. Looking forward to learning more about things I have always been interested in; the coast and the sea. Weekends, I can usually be spotted searching for sea glass, being on the water or in the water, or just taking photos of the water, wildlife, and the surrounding area.

Solway Coast National Landscape Management Plan

It's Management Planning time again! Every five years, the Solway Coast staff team and partnership carry out a full review of our statutory Management Plan for the Solway Coast National Landscape, and over the space of several months, work together to produce a new Plan for the next five year period, 2026 – 2031.

The Management Plan is an important document- it sets out the strategic direction for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Solway Coast. It focuses on landscape, nature, rocks and soils and built heritage, and addresses issues around how people can better explore, understand and enjoy this very special place.

Engagement sessions for the management plan

Management Plans are underpinned by UK legislation, in this case the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) which, in 2000, created legislation for better protection of AONBs, now renamed as National Landscapes. This new Act consolidated the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, reaffirming the purpose of the designation and confirming the powers of local authorities to take appropriate action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs. Section 89 creates a statutory responsibility for local authorities to prepare, publish and review a Management Plan for the designated landscape and we carry out this important piece of work on their behalf.

The Management Plan sets out the long-term vision for conserving and enhancing this

beautiful coastline and what the outcomes should look like. It explores what exactly makes the Solway Coast so significant and explains all the elements of natural beauty that make up this beautiful and unique place. Lastly, it examines the issues and forces for change and sets out action plans for how all the different organisations, groups, communities and individuals working across the landscape might contribute to this.

At the time of writing, we are finalising our first draft, thanks to the input of partners working across the area. This will soon go out to public consultation, where you can review the draft Plan and give us your views for the future conservation and enhancement of the Solway landscape. Keep up to date with the Management Plan consultation on our website at **www.solwaycoast-nl.org.uk**

Good news –

The Farming in Protected Landscape Programme has been extended!

Environment Secretary, Emma Reynolds MP, has announced the extension of the successful Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme for a further three years. This is great news for the Solway Coast National Landscape, who over the past four years have delivered the programme on the Solway Coast.

Farming in Protected Landscapes supports and provides funding for farmers and land managers in England's protected areas, National Parks and National Landscapes, to deliver projects that support nature recovery, enhance cultural heritage, improve public access, and help to mitigate climate change. The Solway Coast National Landscape have funded many innovative and highly effective projects via their FiPL programme and are thrilled to continue to do so until March 2029.

For more information about

Farming in Protected Landscapes or to make an application to the programme please visit the farming page on the Solway Coast National Landscape website (**www.solwaycoast-nl.org.uk**) or contact Farming Officer Graeme Westmorland at **farming@solwaycoast-nl.org.uk**

Silloth on Solway golf course

Keeping nature on course

Wind-shaped dunes and open sand, both things that we find along the ever-changing Solway coast. However, as we know, the beautiful landscapes around our coastline are slowly being taken over by dense scrub, and invasive species. One landowner trying to fight back against this is Silloth on Solway Golf Club.

Over the last 2 years they have had a real focus on improving and restoring much of the land it sits on. The work has been carried out to ensure the future of the site is bright, not just for golf, but also for the environment around it.

Golf clubs can get a bad press for their environmental impact, however, in most cases golf courses have a really positive impact. The club at Silloth have always tried hard to maintain the delicate ecology of the site, carrying out scrub removal and habitat restoration as often as possible.

Since 2024 the club has been able to remove a large amount of scrub, exposing open sand scrapes across the site. With this work, combined with a recent renovation of all the dune slacks on site, it is hopeful that the natterjack toad population on the course will soon thrive as it did in the 1980s.

With the site being a SSSI, any waste produced from scrub removal should go to landfill; however, the club have found new ways to recycle the waste. All woody materials such as gorse and goat willow are chipped and taken away for use as a biofuel, all soil is processed and used for repairs on the golf course and anything left is composted on site along with the grass clippings.

A recent project taken on by the club is grazing, with fences having now been installed, it is hoped that any day now belted Galloway cattle will be added to part of the dune system that is a little trickier to manage. With the ongoing advice of Natural England, it is hoped that the site will see success similar to Mawbray Banks with the introduction of grazing and associated management there. This new management regime on Golf Course land will hopefully allow for the opening up of new dune slacks along the coast within the grazing parcels.

Hopefully the site will continue to improve for golfers, walkers and natterjacks alike.

Drumburgh Discoveries!

The Solway Coast National Landscape has been somewhat of an archaeological hotspot recently. In autumn 2025 a spectacular discovery was made by Grampus Heritage and Training, when a very well-preserved section of Hadrian's Wall was unearthed at Drumburgh. The wall here stood five courses high and remained incredibly intact. This finding then triggered a further investigation into the direction of the wall across the marshes and the arrangement of the nearby fort of Congavata.

Grampus Heritage and Training successfully applied to the Solway Coast National Landscape for further funding through their Farming in Protected Landscapes programme to continue this investigation, with the support and interest of the landowner.

Fieldwork commenced in late January 2026, where the team at Grampus invited volunteers to help with geophysical surveying on the marshes, collecting huge quantities of data to help identify which direction Hadrian's Wall takes.

Grampus team and volunteers worked on the dig

A new trench was then opened to investigate a circular anomaly identified in a previous survey. This area is thought to be an extra-mural (outside the Wall) settlement associated with the fort of Congavata. During the excavation a cobbled area was uncovered as well as evidence of timber frame buildings. The dig also revealed many interesting artefacts that have been sent off for post-excavation assessment, including a roman quern stone.

The excavation has now finished, and samples have been sent for scientific evaluation. Grampus Heritage and Training will publish all findings in their official report which will be available on their website at **www.grampusheritage.co.uk**

Complete rim of a roman amphora, a type of storage pot

Unearthing an exciting new part of Hadrian's Wall

SCNL volunteer

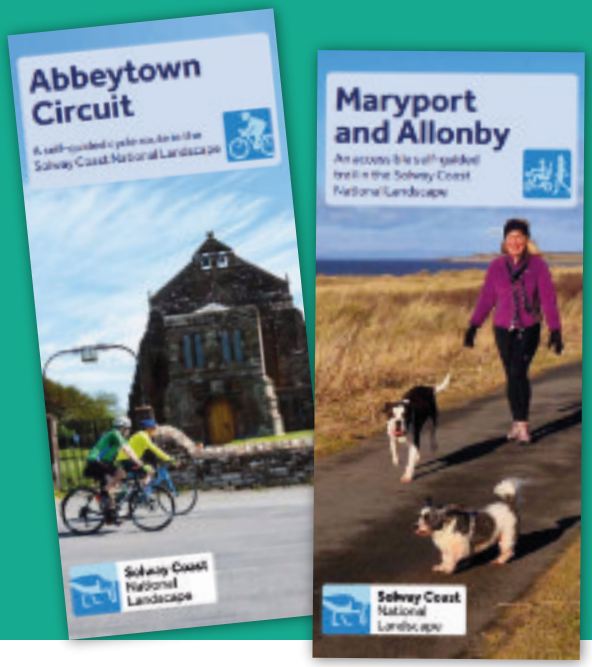
Amazing Volunteers

The Solway Coast National Landscape have a team of dedicated volunteers, who throughout the year help to manage various sites. The regular work party meets every two weeks, carrying out tasks that conserve and enhance the landscape while also improving access, allowing everyone to enjoy the special qualities of the Solway Coast. There are plenty of ways to get involved as a volunteer, the Solway Coast National Landscape also offer monthly beach cleans and one-off events such as bird ringing and recording sessions. The best way to stay informed is by signing up to the Volunteer Newsletter on their website (www.solwaycoast-nl.org.uk) or by following their social media pages on Facebook and Instagram.

The most recent volunteer work session has focused on water management at Crosscanonby Carr Nature Reserve, ensuring that the central beck is clear and flowing well. The adjacent meadow has been cut back and is ready to burst into life with wildflowers as we approach the summer season – why not pay this wildlife haven a visit?

New and Improved Visitor Materials

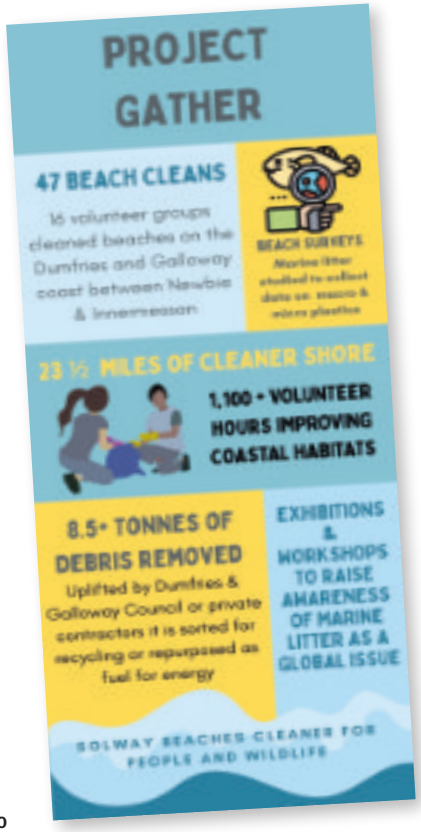
This year the Solway Coast National Landscape team have updated and expanded their range of visitor materials. The range includes a number of walking and cycling leaflets, a *Solway Heritage* booklet, an *Explore the Solway* booklet and a *Dog friendly Solway* guide. With summer just around the corner, the team have started to distribute these around the area. Local tourism and hospitality businesses are the perfect place for visitors and locals alike to pick up these handy guides. Packed with fascinating information, these materials are free and there to help everyone explore and enjoy the Solway Coast National Landscape. Online copies are available on the resources page of the Solway Coast National Landscape website (**www.solwaycoast-nl.org.uk**) or if you would like a selection of printed copies for your business or organisation please contact **laura.singleton@cumberland.gov.uk**



Project Gather Update

Marine litter in a SW facing bay

Project Gather Findings



The volunteer effort put into the 2025/2026 Project Gather has continued to remove marine litter washed up on the Scottish Solway shore with more than 8 tonnes removed by volunteers in beach clean groups.

Project Gather has recorded a fall in debris arriving at the beaches that are traditionally most susceptible to the accumulation of marine litter. Winter storms are the main factor contributing to litter build up and it is thought that an unusual change in prevailing winds from southwest to northeast during January and February has resulted in a diversion of floating items away from the Solway. More work needs to be done to try and understand the distribution of marine litter in the Solway but it appears to be more variable and complex than previously thought. While finding less plastic washed up on beaches is positive news it is likely that the return of prevailing westerly winds will once again drive the buoyant plastics in the Irish Sea on to our beaches.

Project Gather has also taken a closer look at the plastic problem by surveying beaches for drinks bottles, nurdles and retro rubbish to try and understand the different sea conditions that influence the arrival of buoyant plastics. The picture is unclear, but our observations suggest the following factors influence the distribution of marine litter:

- **Wind** - Prevailing winds distribute buoyant plastics from multiple sources onto our beaches. Originating mostly from rivers flowing into the sea, commercial fishing or shipping in and around the Irish Sea, marine litter can be traced to England, Wales, Ireland and the Isle of Man, but also from far flung places bordering the North Atlantic.
- **Coastal landform** - Marine litter is trapped in indented coastlines particularly pocket bays and gullies that face prevailing south westerly winds.
- **Spring tides** - High spring tides combined with low pressure and strong onshore winds result in

the formation of storm strandlines made up of marine litter that remain undisturbed for long periods.

- **Tidal currents** - Buoyant plastics deposited on all but the highest strandlines are likely to be redistributed by the tidal currents that generally move debris in a westerly direction.
- **Calm seas** - Micro plastics, including nurdles are usually deposited during very calm weather conditions. Once the micro plastics are stranded they are often blown into vegetation at the top of the beach.
- **Retro rubbish** - High rainfall and stormy weather causes erosion, releasing previously trapped plastics that have been preserved by being buried in river or marine sediment.

The Solway has unique characteristics that influence tides, currents and waves which interact to distribute marine litter on the Scottish Solway shore. Continued observation will help us understand where marine litter comes from, what drives it to our shores and the places we need to focus beach cleaning effort.

A storm strandline on the Machars

Beach cleans by individuals and groups play an important role in removing buoyant marine litter that has been gathered up by the Irish Sea and washed onto the Scottish Solway shore. Hand-picking marine litter is an effective way to remove plastic with sensitivity and target problem beaches to make the coastline a better place for people and wildlife. Working together volunteers can see the difference they make, build community spirit, and enjoy the well-being benefits of being outdoors by the sea.

The Search Continues!

In the last issue of Tidelines we asked for information that would lead to finding the author of a message in a bottle that was written in 1961 and found on Knockbrex shore. Written by 5-year-old George Grierson his message requested the finder to return the bottle to St Cuthbert's School in Kirkcudbright. With the help of Kirkcudbright History Society and Alan Crossan we can reveal George in a primary school photograph taken the following year (second row far right). George is thought to have left the area a few years later and so the search goes on!

Jools Cox with with her find

Kerry with Smartie lids

Finders Keepers

Project Gather celebrated volunteer beach cleaners and the wonderful work they do making the Solway coast cleaner for people and wildlife. Beach cleaning can be a disheartening task when faced with the seemingly unending amount of plastic washed up on the shore and many volunteers take delight in looking for items to treasure. Some of the plastics were discarded many decades ago and are often called retro rubbish. They may be instantly recognisable brands that trigger nostalgic feelings and become curios that are added to beach find collections.

Kerry is a lead member of a local beach cleaning group ONUS SW Scotland, which draws attention to the issues of marine litter and plastic pollution in our seas. Co-ordinating volunteers, often in remote and difficult to reach bays, means beach cleaning can be physically demanding but also very rewarding. For some long forgotten reason Kerry began to collect Smartie lids. Produced in eye-catching colours the lids are easy to spot, and they are a surprisingly common find despite being phased out in 2005. Featuring letters of the alphabet the changes to branding, means they can be reliably dated during the 45 years they were produced. Small enough to tuck into a pocket and intrigued by the history of a childhood sweetie, Kerry already has a complete alphabet but continues to collect any lids she finds. When will she stop? Only Smarties have the answer!

Dru is another member of the beach cleaning group, and she keeps an eye out for any weird and wonderful objects on the shore. Plastic toys are a frequent find, and so out of place on the strandline that they often raise a smile. However, inspired by the story of the bath toys lost in a container spillage and used to track ocean currents in the Pacific Ocean, it is the eye-catching plastic ducks that she collects. The ducks found on our shores are not from the famous container spillage but are almost all the result of escapees from charity duck races. Usually netted at the end of the race, they sometimes evade capture, are washed out to sea and eventually blown onto a beach. The origin of most of the ducks is untraceable, but text on ducks from a 2006 world record attempt in Dublin are still being found 20 years after their flight from the river.

Most plastics become brittle in sunlight and the action of the sea and break into smaller and smaller pieces becoming tiny micro plastics that are recognised as a serious environmental issue. However, retro rubbish has somehow avoided this fate, probably buried in sand or mud in a riverbank or beach before being exposed by erosion caused by heavy rainfall or stormy weather.

Visit the FINDERS KEEPERS EXHIBITION at the Mill on the Fleet, Gatehouse of Fleet between 11th July and 5th September 2026.

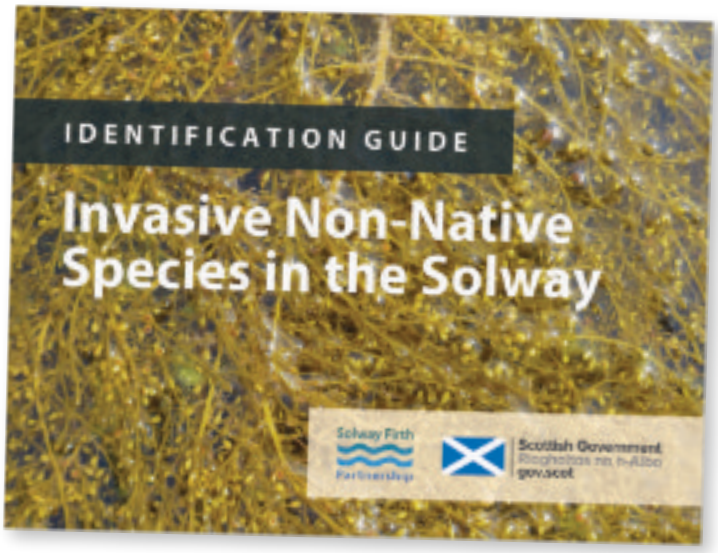
Dru with plastic ducks

Marine Invasive Non-Native Species Guide

A new pocket guide will assist you to identify selected marine Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) which are of concern in the Solway. The spread of Invasive Non-Native Species around the world is usually the result of human activities. Often arriving attached to ship hulls or in ballast water, they may be found in ports and harbours, on seashores, on boat hulls and on fishing gear and aquaculture equipment. Not all non-native species entering the UK will become established, but those that thrive may spread and can be incredibly harmful for the environment. They can become a problem when they outgrow, kill or out-compete local species and habitats which can impact on the food chain and biodiversity as well as lead to financial costs for fisheries, aquaculture, commercial and leisure marine users. A lesser-known consequence of the increase of floating marine litter arriving on our shores is the possibility of transporting invasive, non-native species. If you find strange marine life attached to marine litter send us a photograph and we will attempt to identify it.

The guide will enable you to identify invasive species to become part of the crucial early warning and reporting network across the Solway. There are currently three invasive non-native species already in the Solway that we are keen to monitor;

Trumpet tubeworm



Featuring Wireweed on the cover, the guide is available on the Solway Firth Partnership website or as a printed version

Trumpet tubeworm *(Ficopomactus enigmaticus)*
A reef building tubeworm, believed to be native to Australia and regions of the Indian Ocean. It is an aggressive species that dominates habitats, significantly altering water conditions and physical environments. Colonies of tubeworm have been found at Whitehaven and Maryport marinas. A species to look out for!

Wireweed *(Sargassum muticum)*
A type of brown seaweed originally from the Pacific Ocean. Growing in sheltered seas and rockpools, the tough fronds clog propellers and fishing equipment as well as competing with native species. It is found locally in Loch Ryan and is spreading along the Galloway coast.

Pacific oyster *(Magallana gigas)*
A type of oyster from Asia used in aquaculture in the UK. Warming seas has allowed spat from oyster farms to drift and settle to other locations. It has been found attached to rocks in the lower shore in several places on the Galloway shore.

Pacific oyster

Restoring the Solway: SCAMP Innovation in Restoration

The Solway Firth is a unique and dynamic coastal landscape, home to important habitats, wildlife, and communities that are deeply connected to the sea. But like many coastal areas, it faces growing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, and changing land and sea use.

That's where the Solway Coast and Marine Project, or SCAMP, comes in.

Seasearch diver training

What is SCAMP?

SCAMP is an ambitious, multi-partner programme focused on understanding, restoring, and enhancing the Solway's coastal and marine environment. It brings together organisations, communities, and stakeholders from across the region to deliver practical restoration, improve ecological resilience, and strengthen connections between people and the coast.

The programme looks across the whole system - from rivers to estuaries to the open coast - recognising that these environments are deeply interconnected. Alongside restoration, SCAMP is also about building knowledge, testing new approaches, and creating opportunities for people to get involved in caring for their local environment.

Innovation in Restoration: Turning ideas into action

As part of the SCAMP programme, the Solway Firth Partnership is leading on multiple aspects, one of which is the Innovation in Restoration project. This focuses on trialling and scaling up new restoration techniques and nature-based solutions across key coastal habitats: seagrass, native oysters, and saltmarsh.

This work is about more than restoring habitats, it's about understanding what works in the Solway, building the evidence base, and creating approaches that are sustainable and can be expanded in the future.

Seagrass: Building a clearer picture

Seagrass meadows are one of the most valuable habitats in our coastal waters. Here in the Solway, these meadows - sometimes visible at low tide - provide vital nursery habitat for fish and help keep our coastal waters clean and healthy. They support biodiversity, improve water quality, and help store carbon, but they are also sensitive and not yet fully understood, particularly in subtidal areas where their extent is less well mapped.

Over recent months, we have started seagrass condition assessments across the region to build a clearer picture of the health and extent of existing intertidal beds. Alongside this, we're exploring improved methods for mapping subtidal seagrass, as well as updating existing intertidal data.

Looking ahead, we're keen to involve local communities in this work. By developing a citizen science approach, we hope to build a longer-term picture of change while giving people the opportunity to play a hands-on role in marine conservation.

Native oysters: laying the groundwork for recovery

Native oysters were once abundant around Scotland, but have declined significantly over time. Their restoration is increasingly recognised as a priority, not only for biodiversity, but for the wider benefits they bring to water quality and ecosystem health.

Loch Ryan is a notable exception to this trend, supporting the largest remaining sustainable native oyster fishery in Scotland. This makes it an important site, both in its own right and as a foundation for understanding how oyster populations can be supported and enhanced across the wider Solway.

Through the SCAMP Innovation in Restoration project, we are working to build a clearer picture of the current state of the loch. This includes developing a robust baseline and exploring a range of trials to better understand larval distribution and settlement.

Alongside this, we are beginning to look beyond Loch Ryan, developing opportunity maps for native oyster restoration across the wider Solway. These will help identify where conditions may be suitable for future work, with the long-term aim of supporting active restoration in the years ahead.

Saltmarsh: creating space for nature

Saltmarsh is another vital habitat in the Solway, providing natural flood protection, carbon storage, and important wildlife habitat. However, like many coastal systems, it is under pressure.

We are currently working with landowners to explore opportunities for saltmarsh creation and enhancement in suitable locations. This involves detailed groundwork, including flood risk assessments and hydrological studies, to ensure that any interventions are both effective and sustainable.

These early stages are crucial in identifying where restoration can deliver the greatest benefits—for both nature and local communities.

Divers undertake Seasearch training

Top: Nick Chisholm and Jenny Wright Above: Native oysters

Working with communities

A key part of the SCAMP Innovation in Restoration project is connecting people with the work happening on their doorstep.

Over recent months, we've been running community events in Stranraer to showcase the project, share what we're learning, and start building a network of local volunteers. These events have been a great way to spark conversations, gather local knowledge, and encourage people to get involved.

As the project develops, there will be more opportunities for volunteers to take part, particularly through citizen science, monitoring, and hands-on restoration activities.

Looking ahead

The SCAMP Innovation in Restoration project is still in its early stages, but strong foundations are already being built. From testing new restoration techniques to strengthening partnerships and community involvement, the focus is on creating a long-term approach to coastal restoration in the Solway.

Over the coming months and years, we'll continue to learn, adapt, and grow this work; helping to ensure that the Solway Firth remains a healthy, productive, and resilient environment for both people and nature.

Intertidal seagrass, Rough Island

Between the Tides: Seagrass in the Solway

At low tide along parts of the Solway coast, you might notice patches of fine green leaves lying across the sand and mud. It's easy to overlook them, but these plants are part of one of Scotland's most important coastal habitats.

Seagrass meadows may not be as visible as dunes or saltmarsh, but beneath the surface they are quietly working to support marine life, improve water quality and help store carbon. They provide nursery grounds for fish, shelter for wildlife and play a role in keeping our coastal waters healthy.

Yet across Scotland, seagrass has experienced significant decline.

A changing picture across Scotland

A new national review published by NatureScot earlier this year (Review of Scottish Seagrass Declines 2026) has brought together historical records and recent

survey data to better understand how seagrass has changed over time.

The findings show that many Scottish seagrass beds were lost or reduced during the twentieth century. A combination of factors, including disease outbreaks, declining water quality, coastal development and physical disturbance, have all played a part.

In some areas, seagrass has never fully recovered. In others, however, there are signs of resilience. Where conditions are right and pressures have been reduced, seagrass can return and begin to expand once again.

This growing understanding is helping shape how organisations and coastal communities approach conservation and restoration today.

Why seagrass matters

Seagrass meadows are sometimes described as the 'unsung heroes' of the coast. Their long, flexible leaves slow wave energy and help stabilise sediments, while their roots trap nutrients and carbon in the seabed.

For wildlife, they provide vital habitat. Juvenile fish, shellfish and invertebrates all make use of the shelter they offer. In turn, this helps support the wider productivity and biodiversity of coastal ecosystems.

As awareness grows of the role nature can play in tackling climate change and supporting coastal resilience, seagrass is increasingly recognised as a habitat worth protecting and restoring.

The Solway story

The Solway Firth is an important area for seagrass in Scotland, particularly for intertidal beds. In several locations, these meadows have persisted despite historic pressures, offering valuable opportunities to learn more about how seagrass can survive and recover.

At the same time, there is still much we don't know. The full extent of subtidal seagrass in the Solway remains unclear, and understanding how these beds are changing over time is an important priority.

Building this knowledge will help guide future management and restoration efforts across the region.

Building knowledge for the future

Work to better understand seagrass in the Solway has been developing over several years. Through earlier pilot research linked to the Solway Coast and Marine Pilot Project (SCAMPP), surveys were carried out to map seagrass beds, explore propagation techniques and begin identifying opportunities for future habitat restoration.

This early evidence has helped lay the foundations for the current SCAMP Innovation in Restoration project (see page 14/15), which is now taking this work forward.

Current activity includes assessing the condition of known intertidal seagrass beds, improving understanding of subtidal distribution and exploring ways for local people to get involved through citizen science monitoring.

By building on previous research and continuing to gather new data, the aim is to develop a clearer long-term picture of seagrass across the Solway and to help guide future conservation and restoration efforts.

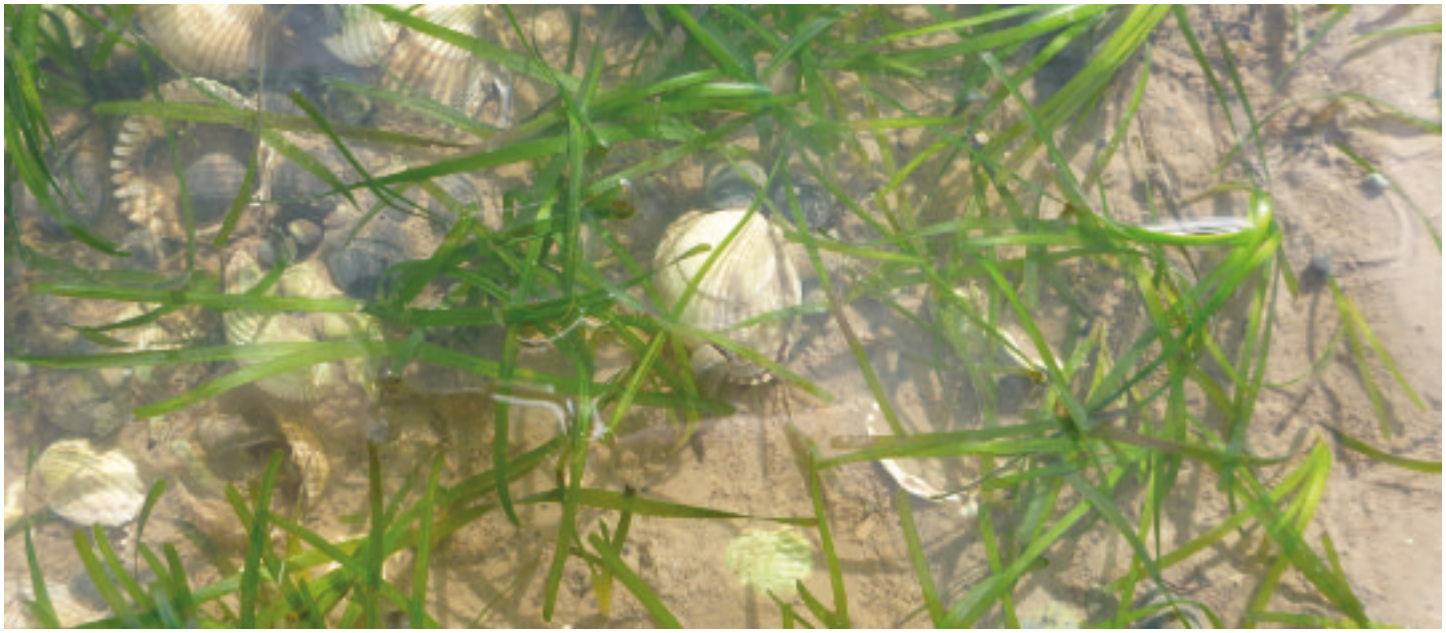
A hopeful future for seagrass meadows

The new national report highlights both the fragility and resilience of seagrass habitats. While historic declines have been significant, there is also real potential for recovery where the right conditions exist.

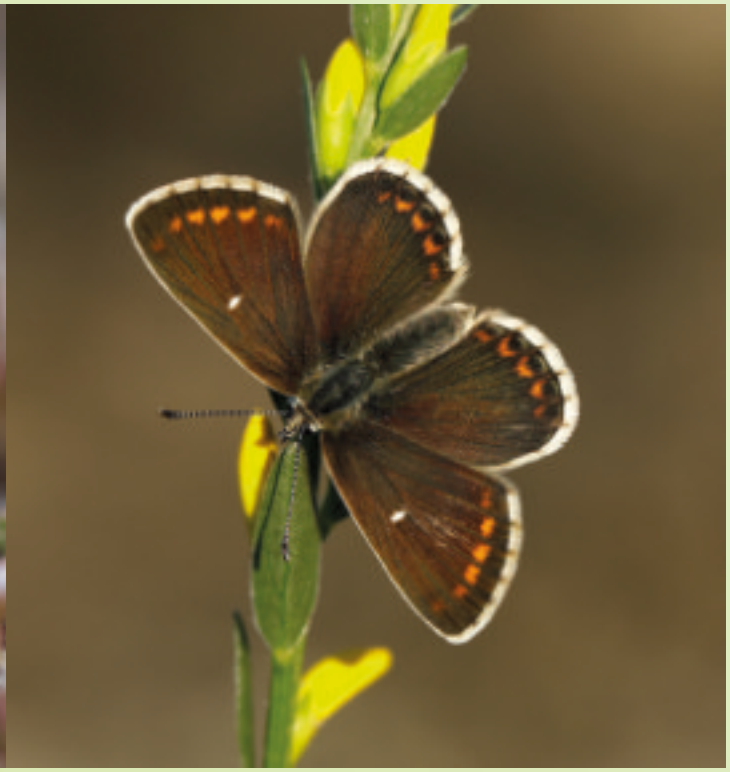
For the Solway, this presents an opportunity. With continued monitoring, partnership working and community involvement, seagrass meadows can remain a vital part of the region's coastal landscape.

Often hidden, sometimes revealed at low tide, these underwater meadows are a reminder that even the most modest-looking habitats can play an essential role in the health of our seas.

Seagrass



Natterjack toad



Northern brown argus butterfly

Saving Solway's Species on the Edge

Species on the Edge is a partnership programme of NatureScot and seven nature conservation charities, dedicated to protecting some of Scotland's rarest and most vulnerable coastal and island species. The four-year programme, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, has been running since 2023 and is in now in its final year of delivery. The Scottish Solway coast is one of seven project areas; we are delivering for 13 target species throughout the region, from Annan to Portpatrick. In this article, Species on the Edge Project Officer Jack Barton (RSPB) reflects on some of the highlights from the past three years.

The name 'Species on the Edge' reflects not only the crisis currently facing some of Scotland's biodiversity, but also the geographic importance of our 'edge' coastal habitats. On the Solway, this is perhaps particularly true for the natterjack toad which is being championed by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC). On the eastern Solway natterjack populations are being affected by the loss of its coastal habitat due to changes in land use, drought and sea level rise. But all is not lost. Evidence of breeding natterjacks was discovered on farmland a short distance from the Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve from which the species has been absent for over a decade. ARC have also been trialling using bioacoustic (audio) surveys to monitor the toads, as their distinctive breeding calls can travel long distances. Using novel methods, new habitats and hibernacula are being created and managed for the toads, providing more safe havens for the species.

Creating scrapes for natterjack toad

Perhaps the most intriguing species on the Solway is the tadpole shrimp. Unlike the name suggests, it is neither a tadpole nor shrimp, rather a relative of one of the oldest known animal species in the world, the horseshoe crab – dating back 220 million years. In recent decades, the tadpole shrimp had been reduced to only two locations in the UK: the New Forest in Hampshire and the Wildlife and Wetland Trust's (WWT) site at Caerlaverock. However, it can now again be found at RSPB Mersehead, having been lost from the site in 1948, following re-introductions of eggs in 2024 and

Volunteers take a well earned rest

Intertidal Almanac

2025, spearheaded by BugLife. Requiring rehydration before hatching, wet autumn weather on the Solway Coast finally allowed the eggs to hatch, with two adult Tadpole Shrimps spotted at the site last October.

Volunteer power has been at the heart of action for many of our species, and this has been particularly true for the northern brown argus butterfly. This butterfly lays its tiny eggs exclusively on common rock rose, often in coastal grassland sites. A skilled suite of volunteers has been trained to carry out detailed site surveys for Butterfly Conservation, looking for adults and eggs. We have led volunteer work parties at four of these sites to clear scrub, which can outcompete the foodplant. These work parties often involve being out in cold and wet conditions, cutting and handling prickly gorse. A big thank you goes to the volunteers, who have put in a tremendous effort, contributing well over 150 hours of their time to help make a difference.

The programme is just as much about people as it is about species. There are many community groups who, for various reasons, have experienced barriers to accessing experiences in the outdoors. With the help of external facilitators Lucy Lee and Sarah Thomas, we have hosted the first of four 'Intertidal Almanac' workshops with New Scots seeking refuge and asylum in Dumfries. Using materials foraged from the beach, these creative workshops will respond to the shoreline across the seasons and offer a unique opportunity to connect to nature for people who might not have easy access to the coast while elevating the voices of those who are seldom heard on issues of conservation. Participants were invited to write a message to the next group, which will be another marginalised community. This beautiful quote is from participant Nour, translated from Arabic: 'We love the sea because it resembles us: deep, mysterious and ever changing.'

With the programme ending in December 2026, we are aiming to pack a lot into the final months of the project. Even more new habitat will be created for our species, with works planned for terns and waders at the RSPB Crook of Baldoon. Local groups will continue to be supported, such as the Dumfries and Galloway Bat Group, who are benefiting from project funding to install new bat boxes and run bat events across the region. We will work with more landowners to share best practice land management, and will train up more volunteers to survey and monitor our species.

To find out more about Species on the Edge or to get involved, please contact **jack.barton@rspb.org.uk** or visit **speciesontheedge.co.uk**

Bat group

Common rock rose

Tadpole shrimp

Irish sea-lavender

Spotlight on Coastal Plants

The Botanical Society for Britain & Ireland County Recorders for Wigtownshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire take a look at some seaside specialists.

Irish sea-lavender

Wigtownshire sea-lavenders

The coastline of Wigtownshire is a riot of colour in early summer, but when most of the showy plants such as thrift, sea campion and kidney vetch have finished flowering, the sea-lavenders come into their own. In Britain and Ireland, sea-lavenders are found in many places around the coast, sometimes forming dazzling purple sheets that stretch as far as the eye can see.

There are three different sea-lavenders in Wigtownshire and at a casual glance they look very similar. Others are found elsewhere in our islands.

Common sea-lavender, *Limonium vulgare*, is not common in Wigtownshire and it is restricted here to a very few areas of ungrazed or lightly grazed merse (saltmarsh). Its flowers grow in dense, rather flat-topped inflorescences. Also on the merse can be found the much more common (here) Lax-flowered sea-lavender, *Limonium humile*, with more open heads of flowers. All of the small individual flowers contain a ring of stamens, the male reproductive part of a

Common sea-lavender

flowering plant. The tip of the stamen is called the anther and in the common sea-lavender the anthers are yellow and in the lax-flowered sea-lavender they are reddish. Both species can be seen on the narrow strip of merse at the top of the beach at Rigg Bay, a short walk from Garlieston village.

The third species is the Irish sea-lavender, *Limonium recurvum* subspecies *humile*. This particular sea-lavender is a rare plant belonging to the difficult to identify sea-lavender group that grow on rocks. It only occurs at a handful of locations in Britain and Ireland and nowhere else in the world. In Wigtownshire, Irish sea-lavender is only found on the precipitous cliffs at and near the Mull of Galloway. It is plentiful there, the fierce storms probably helping to keep at bay more vigorous plants that might otherwise overwhelm it.

Increasingly powerful storms are, however, a threat to the populations of sea-lavenders occurring on the merse. At Rigg Bay and along the shore path to Garlieston, storms have in recent years blown away parts of the sea wall and the merse is being eroded by the waves, leaving patches of sea-lavenders perched precariously on the top of small mounds. Heavy grazing by stock is another challenge that sea-lavenders face, which is probably why populations are largely restricted to patches of ungrazed merse, as in Rigg Bay.

Michael Jeeves

Lax-flowered sea-lavender

Glasswort

Golden samphire

Top: Rock samphire

The Three Samphires

We have three coastal plants commonly known as 'samphire', which are very different in their appearance and habitat. The name is thought to be a corruption of the French 'Saint Pierre' (St. Peter), the patron saint of fishermen, because these plants all grow close to the sea.

Possibly the most familiar is marsh samphire or glasswort *Salicornia agg.*, an aggregate of species which are tricky to identify. These are short annual plants with jointed fleshy stems that grow like tiny Christmas trees, dotted across the mud or merging to form dense carpets. They are pioneer species that grow in the wettest bare mud at the bottom edge of the merse (saltmarsh) or along the sides of muddy creeks. Marsh samphire occurs all around the coast of Britain, including the Solway, but is most common in the extensive coastal marshes of East Anglia where it has long been collected to eat as a vegetable. It is a succulent plant in which the concentration of sodium salts is so high that it was once used in glass making, hence its name. As temperatures drop in the Autumn, these plants are particularly noticeable as they turn crimson. The chemicals which cause this are betacyanins, the same ones that give beetroot its colour.

Rock samphire *Crithmum maritimum*, by contrast, is a perennial plant of rocky coasts, growing on cliffs and occasionally on manmade structures. It has no apparent preference for rock type, seeming equally at home on chalk, limestone, sandstone or granite. It has spiky, fleshy, dark green foliage and pale yellowish white flowers in flat-topped 'umbels', the characteristic flower structure of the carrot family of which it is a member.

It is typically a lowland plant, frequently found along rocky western and southern coasts of Britain as far as the Solway. Further north, its distribution thins out so that it is only very occasionally found on the west coast of the Highlands.

It is thought that this is the type of samphire that Shakespeare had in mind when, in a scene from King Lear near Dover, Edgar says to Gloucester: 'half way down hangs one who gathers Samphire, dreadful trade!' This quotation refers to the dangers of collecting samphire from the cliffs at a time that it was used for food.

The third samphire is golden samphire *Limbarda crithmoides* which is nationally scarce. This has yellow daisy-like flowers and is found on western cliffs, particularly chalk or limestone, and in south-eastern saltmarshes. It reaches its UK northern limit at the Mull of Galloway where it makes a showy display on the steep cliffs.

Sarah White

Plants of saltmarsh pans

Having the most extensive saltmarsh in Scotland, the Solway Firth is important for some specialist plants. In the mid and upper levels of the saltmarsh there are two plants growing in saltmarsh pans worth noting. Saltmarsh pans are areas that can either drain and dry out, or hold water to create permanent shallow pools. These open unshaded saltmarsh pans have constant salinity swings from high following tidal inundation becoming lower with freshwater dilution following heavy rain. In a few places such pools might support natterjack toadlets or tadpole shrimp because little else lives there. These are also challenging places for plants to grow and only a few specialist plants occur. The following two are worth looking for.

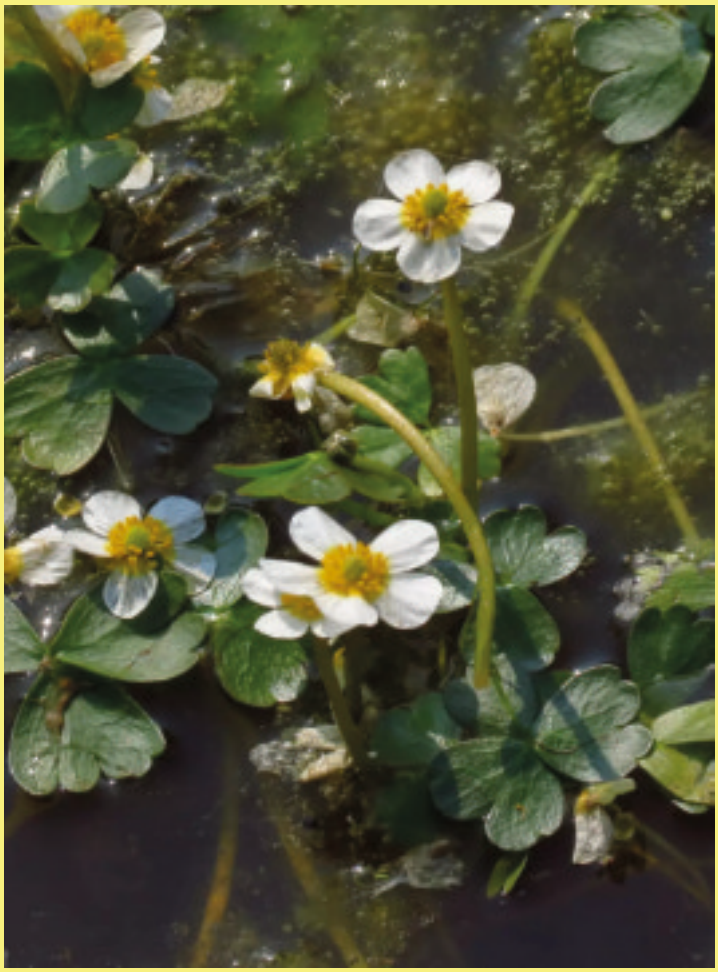
Brackish water-crowfoot *Ranunculus baudotii* is an annual or perennial white flowered buttercup of coastal water bodies, including saltmarsh pans. It is most frequent in water 0·5–1m deep but can grow in shallower water or as a dwarf terrestrial form on wet mud. The earliest records for this species that I can find are from 1958 on the Greenmerse in the Nith and 1961 at WWT Eastpark Centre. It was not found in Wigtownshire until 2022 at Crook of Baldoon. When in flower its white flowers are a lovely spectacle against the dark water. It has two kinds of leaves, those that look like buttercup float on the surface, and it has thread like leaves below the surface. Its fruit have a narrow wing.

Beaked tasselweed *Ruppia maritima* is a submerged, annual or perennial aquatic of brackish waters, growing in shallow water in saltmarsh pans. It is also found as a dwarf variant on tidal mud-flats. The earliest record I can find is from Loch Ryan in 1836 and from Kirkcudbright in 1842. Its first record from the Dumfries side of the Nith was in 1960 on Caerlaverock NNR. Two species are currently recognised in Britain. The more restricted Ruppia spiralis is not known from the Solway. It is easily overlooked as some kind of seaweed. It grows submerged with very narrow dark green leaves with a few tiny teeth near the end. It does not have showy flowers but produces small flask shaped fruit that become very long stalked.

Records of either would be welcomed by the county recorders.

Chris Miles

Brackish water-crowfoot



Beaked tasselweed

Part of the first-floor exhibition, which explores histories of enslavement, rum and the sea

The kinetic clock, fondly remembered by Cadaverous Black, who grew up in Whitehaven, as "The beating heart of The Rum Story"

Step back in time at The Rum Story

Have you visited The Rum Story? This immersive visitor attraction in Whitehaven is ideal for history lovers, tourists, locals, schools and families, and it's been making the news for all the right reasons recently.

From the outside, the Rum Story looks small and unassuming. But the moment you step through the doors, it opens around you, revealing galleries, hidden corners, art and displays that feel far bigger than the building should ever be able to hold. There's even a rainforest!

The smart Georgian building was originally the home of the Jeffersons, and the Rum Story is set in the original shop, cellars, bonded warehouse, courtyard and stables of their family business. Across three floors, you'll discover more about Whitehaven's connections with Africa and the Americas and about how the desire for sugar and rum changed the lives of millions – forever.

Mr Jefferson's Office, which people can visit for free

There's loads you can see and do without having to pay for entry:

- Explore the Georgian office of the thriving Jefferson family business, featured in the film "Miss Potter".
- Marvel at the huge kinetic clock that springs into life every 30 minutes and shows how Jefferson's Rum was made.
- Watch short films where historical characters come to life - speaking directly to you as if they've stepped out of the past.
- Stop for a cuppa in the dog-friendly, covered courtyard.
- Browse the two shops, selling rum, spirits, local products, gifts, toys and more.

Exciting, important improvements are under way as part of The Rum Story Re-Imagined partnership project, which has made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and delivered by Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners and Anti Racist Cumbria. The Rum Story wants to change how it tells histories of rum, the Jeffersons, Whitehaven and Britain's role in the trade of enslaved African people and the products they were forced to produce. It wants to tell the complete story and ensure that histories, people and voices that have been erased and ignored in the past are heard.

Some changes - based on learnings from consultation with 1,250 people - have already been made. Interpretation about enslavement, Africa and Antigua has been improved. There are more hands-on activities and films. Artworks, poems and murals exploring themes such as community, language, nature, exploitation, resistance, healing and freedom have been commissioned and installed. There is a space where you can sit, read and leave reflections about your visit on the feedback tree.

The exhibition contains content and history that may be distressing or triggering for some people. However, telling enslavement histories can be hopeful and healing when done with honesty and respect. By restoring the voices and identities of people whose experiences were silenced, these stories honour their resilience and dignity while helping communities acknowledge difficult truths. When visitors see not only the suffering but also the strength, creativity, and endurance of those who lived through enslavement, it inspires reflection, connection and a sense of collective responsibility.

Why not come and see what you think and share your thoughts?

You can get here by bus, car or by train on the spectacular Cumbrian Coastal Line. And after your visit, why not stroll along the historic harbour, go shopping, enjoy The Edge – Cumbria's Coastal Activities Centre, visit The Beacon or walk the stunning English Coastal Path?

The Rum Story is committed to being welcoming and accessible to all visitors. Check opening times, accessibility features and plan your visit at **rumstory.co.uk**.

The Rum Story is owned by Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners - a not-for-profit organisation that manages and maintains the town's historic Trust Port and its environs for the benefit of all. It also offers The Vault - a truly unique event space - a beautifully historic setting for weddings, baby showers, birthdays, and more. With a dedicated event co-ordinator and limitless possibilities, it promises an unforgettable experience every time.

Katy Haigh, Development Manager, The Rum Story

Top: Artist, Kayle Brandon, on the harbour, wearing the dreamcatcher from her *I Am The Dream They Dreamt* art installation, which is on display at The Rum Story

Above: Artist, Eileen Pun, running an upcycled terrarium workshop, linked to her Bound, Ligatures & Graft artwork on display in the exhibition

The Vault at The Rum Story – an atmospheric private event space for weddings, baby showers, birthdays, and more

Project lead Shovi with volunteers

CLEARcoasts Phase 4: Wrapping Up Restoration, Looking to the Future

For the past year, CLEARcoasts has been trialling nature-based solutions across the Cumbrian Solway, building on hydrodynamic data collected from Mini Buoy deployments between 2023 and 2024.

The trials use biodegradable lattice mats (BESE-elements®), originally developed in the Netherlands, to support saltmarsh establishment across several sites. As expected with early-stage trials in dynamic coastal environments, results have varied. Some installations were affected by cattle or storms and removed, while others have settled into the sediment, helping to stabilise soil and supporting small patches of vegetation.

All sites will now enter a long-term monitoring phase, where sediment will continue to accumulate naturally under tidal conditions and outcomes will become clearer over time. With Phase 4 complete, CLEARcoasts will focus on monitoring, knowledge sharing, and drawing together the lessons learned.

How do they work?

CLEARcoasts is grounded in working with natural processes. BESE-elements® provide a temporary structure to protect vulnerable plantlings while they establish, before carefully biodegrading and leaving no trace. Originally developed from repurposed potato waste from the Dutch fries industry, they offer a biobased alternative to traditional plastic structures. They are made of waste and designed as a 'circular' product, meaning materials are recovered, reused and returned safely to natural systems rather than persisting as waste.

Are they safe for the system?

The rate of biodegradation depends on local conditions, and in colder environments could take around ten years, by which time sediment builds and vegetation establishes, leaving a more naturally functioning marsh surface.

In the meantime, if installations are displaced by tides or grazing cattle, remaining materials are removed, as has already been done at one trial site. The BESE-elements are heavier than water and designed to sink rather than float, so they are unlikely to wash up on beaches and instead settle on the seabed where they gradually biodegrade. We aim to avoid risk through ongoing refinement, giving each trial the best chance of success.

Why 'restore' saltmarsh?

As with any restoration work, there is ongoing debate about intervention versus allowing nature to take its course. However, the UK has lost over 80% of its saltmarsh since the mid-1800s, prompting efforts to repair historic losses and build resilience to pressures such as sea-level rise. The Solway, while relatively healthy, provides an ideal test site due to its large tidal range and low industrial disturbance. Similar work is underway across the UK, including projects in Morecambe Bay, North Portsea, Southend-on-Sea and more.

The UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) highlights BESE-elements as a potential tool for small-scale saltmarsh restoration and future investment, while emphasising the need to consider how saltmarshes may evolve under future climate conditions, rather than restoring them to past reference states. Within this context, CLEARcoasts has taken small but practical steps in the Solway while the wider policy and scientific landscape continues to develop, helping to build up an evidence base for small-scale techniques in real marsh conditions.

Check out our latest 'banana plots' in action!

One of the newer techniques trialled during the final phase of CLEARcoasts was the installation of 'banana plots.' By capturing sediment, the plots can help support the establishment of saltmarsh plants. Their curved shape helps guide tidal flow while providing shelter, creating a more stable environment for vegetation to colonise.

'Banana plot'

'Banana plot' installation

How are they monitored?

Our long-term monitoring will track metrics including vegetation growth and sediment accretion. In partnership with Lancaster University, alongside ongoing work with Swansea University, we are also looking to assess factors such as water quality. As tidal systems, saltmarshes are influenced by multiple inputs including tides, rainfall and runoff, making them complex to measure. Through this work, the Solway Firth Partnership aims to build a more holistic understanding of the Solway's marshes. If you and/or your local group would be interested in getting involved in ongoing monitoring, contact SFP on **info@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk**

Explore Mini Buoys, previous CLEARcoasts phases, and more:

Parting message from Project Manager, Shovi

It has been a wonderful experience working on CLEARcoasts over the past 2.5 years. It has been a key step in my professional development and something I will look back on fondly.

I am beyond grateful to Dr Cai Ladd from Swansea University, who has supported me throughout the project, and to the wider team. A highlight has been the support of Clair, who retired last November, and Jenna, who has since taken on the role. I have been very lucky to work alongside such strong role models!

Metal stakes hold mats in place

Get Creative for Climate with MAC-CAN

Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network (MAC-CAN) is a Scottish registered charity whose purpose is to advance climate, biodiversity and environmental protection and/or improvement through positive, local education and practical action. We cover the DG8 region and are partners of the Dumfries and Galloway Climate Hub. We are involved in facilitating a few different proactive projects, like The Croft perennial growing space, based in Whithorn, as well as supporting other small local groups, like Machars Abundance.

There are quite a few creative people within the membership of MAC-CAN and some of our Trustees Rebecca and Nicola, along with our freelance Communications worker Lucy, came together to develop some opportunities for people to think about environmental issues within the framework of creative expression. This became two events; a four-day community Art Exhibition, hosted at Number 12 Port William, held in late January/early February; and a Beach Art event, also held in Port William, in the warmer months.

Beach Art wasn't new for us, having held an inaugural Beach Art exhibition back in September 2024, which kick started our 'Create for Climate' project. The idea is to encourage people of all ages to come along to the beach and use natural resources respectfully to create some temporary pieces of art. This showcased their creativity and offered a topic for discussion for anyone who would see it. We had stone stacking and people being imaginative with spades, rakes and other tools to form simple and complex shapes out of sand. Messages were created in the sand using seaweed too. Various climate action and awareness topics were covered as well as people making beautiful sculptures of animals and plants.

In 2025 we moved the event forward to capture some better weather, holding it at the same location of Second Sands, Port William in early August. This attracted more participants and we were again able to offer a thoughtful prize for the adult and young person chosen as creating the favourite piece. We were also able to offer an additional activity afterwards, to further provide opportunity for people to discuss the health of our seas, beaches and dangers of various kinds of marine litter. We had a local speaker who works for Fish Net Zero (and is also a local beach clean champion) for a Climate Conversation which was very thought provoking and informative; Fish Net Zero was a newly formed organisation at the time and we learned about their work removing ghost nets and discarded fishing industry waste.

We have chosen a few images from our Beach Art events to feature on our promotional postcards, and images have also been displayed at the community Art Exhibition. If you visit Number 12 Port William on a Sunday for their Open House, you may still get chance to view them! Creative pieces made from beach litter and marine flotsam have also been entered into our annual Art Exhibition.

Please keep an eye out for our 2026 Beach Art event - You can keep up to date with MAC-CAN via our social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram as well as via our website (**mac-can.org**). We look forward to seeing you at our next event... and what you will create!

Instagram:
macclimateactionnetwork
Facebook:
MacharsandCreeValleyCAN

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY PAGE

A-3, B-3, C-4, D-2, E-1

WORD SEARCH

Find these words about the Solway Firth!

FIRTH
MERSE
DUMFRIES
ANNAN
GEESE
CAERLAVEROCK
ALLONBY
MARYPORT

Q	L	V	R	A	C	A	E	R	L	A	V	E	R	O	C	K	W
M	Y	P	O	R	T	Z	B	Q	H	S	T	L	N	A	M	R	E
A	X	G	E	E	S	E	U	T	R	O	P	Y	R	A	M	C	D
N	N	A	N	A	J	L	O	B	F	R	I	E	S	M	A	D	P
B	Y	L	L	A	O	N	N	A	R	T	S	E	R	M	R	O	K
T	R	E	F	M	F	D	U	M	F	R	I	E	S	A	Y	H	T
C	O	P	Q	R	L	A	V	S	A	H	R	T	S	E	P	M	Y
H	S	E	G	N	A	E	N	A	M	R	E	S	E	Q	O	O	T
T	O	Y	R	A	M	X	C	A	E	R	L	A	V	E	R	O	C
R	L	A	L	L	O	N	B	Y	T	R	E	F	M	F	T	U	M
I	R	I	E	S	A	T	H	T	P	O	C	K	E	R	L	A	V
F	A	H	R	T	S	E	R	M	Y	B	O	L	L	A	M	E	R

Words may be hidden forwards, backwards, up, down, or diagonally.

SOLWAY QUIZ

A. What is the Solway Firth?

1. A mountain range
2. A forest full of owls
3. A wide estuary between Scotland and England
4. A large desert

B. Which birds are famous for visiting the Solway Firth in winter?

1. Penguins
2. Peacocks
3. Geese
4. Eagles

C. Which sea does the Solway Firth open out to?

1. The Caribbean sea
2. The Red sea
3. The North sea
4. The Irish sea

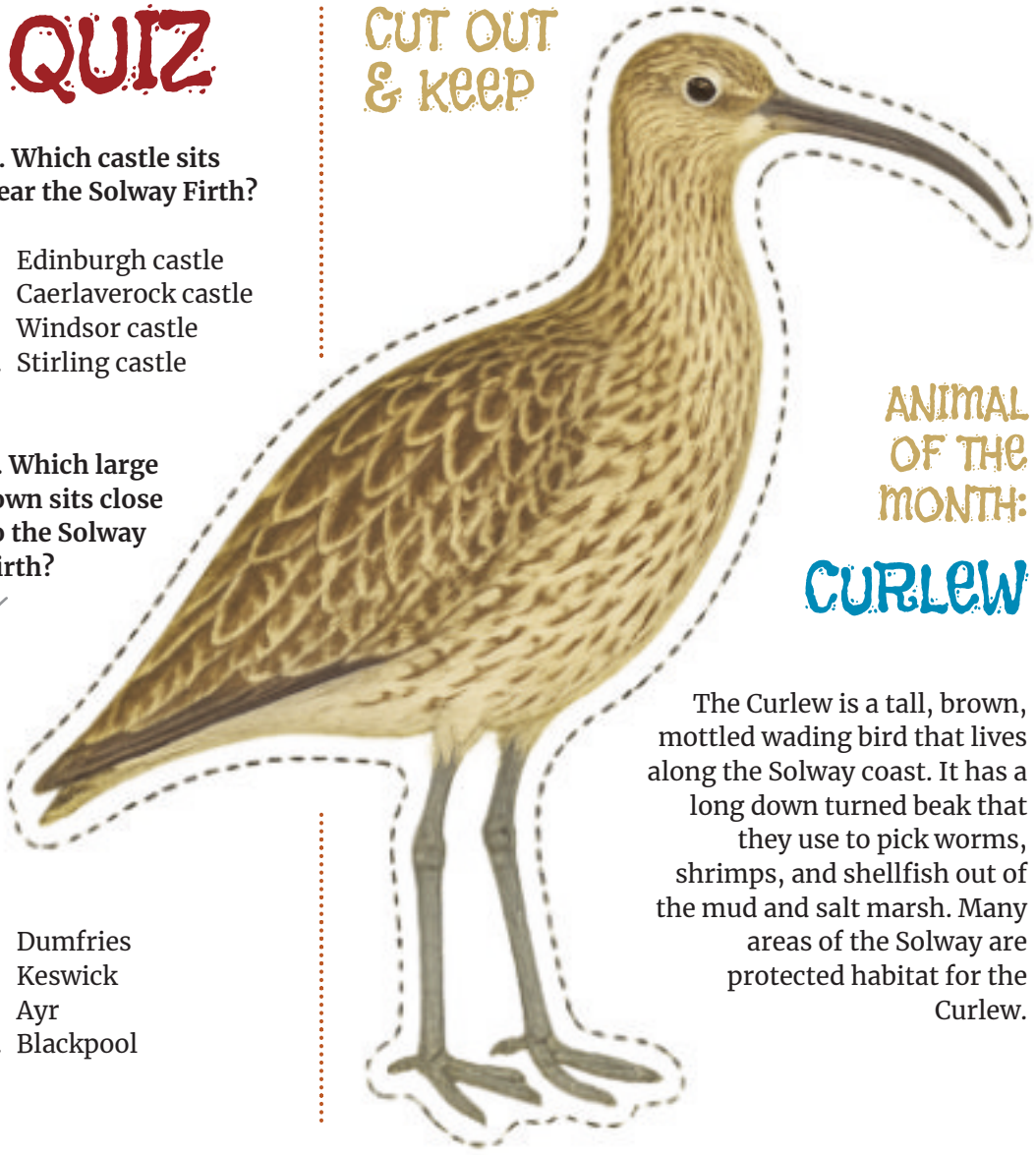
D. Which castle sits near the Solway Firth?

1. Edinburgh castle
2. Caerlaverock castle
3. Windsor castle
4. Stirling castle

E. Which large town sits close to the Solway Firth?

1. Dumfries
2. Keswick
3. Ayr
4. Blackpool

CUT OUT & KEEP



ANIMAL OF THE MONTH: CURLEW

The Curlew is a tall, brown, mottled wading bird that lives along the Solway coast. It has a long down turned beak that they use to pick worms, shrimps, and shellfish out of the mud and salt marsh. Many areas of the Solway are protected habitat for the Curlew.

Out and about with Joe

A catch up with Joe

Since June 2025 Joe Harper has been the Allonby Bay Engagement Officer for Cumbria Wildlife Trust, appointed to work with local communities and businesses to protect and highlight the marine life in England's first inshore Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA). His role involves boosting awareness of the site on the Solway Firth, and keen Tidelines readers will remember a feature article on the Allonby Bay HMPA and Joe himself in Tidelines Winter 2025. Here, we catch up with Joe as we head into spring!

Joe, what is special about Allonby Bay? – the wildlife that lives under the water is one of the most special aspects of the Bay. Allonby Bay is the best example of honeycomb worm reefs in the UK – these reefs can house up to 36 different species and are a crucial nursery for crustaceans and small fish species. On a very low tide you can even see them close to Dubh Mill point. But be careful in that environment – keep a close eye on the tide if you do go to look, and turn around as soon as the tide turns.

What have been some highlights of your job this year? – We have had lots of kids out on the beach, with three new 'wildlife watch' youth groups in the local area. The groups get out onto the beach, they go rock-pooling, have litter picks, art and even an aquarium visit, it's been great. We also have a new red squirrel officer who will do some red squirrel spotting with them too. These programmes are all run by some amazing volunteers.

We also have Young Volunteers west – a group for 11-17 year olds. They have been conducting bird and litter surveys once a month. They will meet on the last Saturday of every month. For more info check the Events page of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust website!

What's coming up Joe? – We have two festivals planned between spring and summer – one showcasing the wildlife, history and culture of Allonby on 30th May followed by the larger SeaFest in St Bees on 25th July, setting off National Marine Week. This big, marine themed day will include a sandcastle building competition, arts activities, fossil sand pit, water sports tasters, talks, stalls and much more. I am also working on three new pieces of interpretation signage for the Allonby Bay area to support better understanding of the Highly Protected Marine Area designation.

For more information on youth groups, upcoming beach cleans, and other opportunities to be involved, or the events above, head to **cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk**
joeh@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

Allonby Bay

Wildlife watch group

Get inspired in the kitchen

Our friends at Station House Cookery School share a top recipe. French Style Seabass on a bed of warm Puy Lentils and Cress.

- Zest and juice ½ orange
- 2 tsp clear honey
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 250g cooked warm puy lentils
- Rocket to taste
- Small bunch parsley, chopped

Mix together the orange zest, juice, honey, 1 tbsp olive oil and some salt. Massage gently into the fillets. Leave to marinade a few minutes if you can.

When the fish is cooked, mix the warm lentils with the juices from the papillote, the watercress, herbs and seasoning. Divide the lentils between 2 plates and top each with a sea bass fillet. Serve immediately.

Calling all food & drink start-ups... Jump Start is back!

Kicking off in April '26, up to eight D&G food and drink businesses will be selected to be part of this year's programme.

Selected start-ups will receive a range crucial supports around product development, marketing, funding applications and food safety amongst much more!

The programme culminates in a Dragons' Den, where you'll pitch your business to a panel of experts, with prizes up to £1000 per business.

Join us and take the first step towards cooking up a successful food or drink business!

Email **marketing@eatswscotland.org** for an application form.

The Coastal Forager – A Book Review

Many readers of Tidelines will be familiar with Mark Williams' website Galloway Wild Foods which is full of sound advice about foraging in southwest Scotland. Now Mark has published *The Coastal Forager*, which will inspire people on both sides of the North Atlantic to taste the delights of the seashore. With 272 pages packed with useful information his book defies classification. It is not a pocket guide to identify suitable species to sample but has beautiful, annotated illustrations for trouble free foraging. Neither is it a cookery book, yet it contains mouth-watering recipes for all the ingredients you might scavenge on a visit to the seaside. With beautiful photographs of the Galloway shore, *The Coastal Forager* might find a place on a coffee table, but wherever you keep it make sure it is in easy reach to be consulted before you set off on your next Solway adventure.

Find out more and order your copy: **https://gallowaywildfoods.com/product/the-coastal-forager-buy-the-book/**

Solway Firth Partnership

For further information, to submit an article or to join the SFP mailing list please contact:
Solway Firth Partnership, Campbell House, The Crichton, Bankend Road, Dumfries, DG1 4UQ
t: 07462 664384 e: info@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk
To subscribe to the Solway Firth Partnership Newsletter please visit: www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

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

Follow us on social media;

https://www.facebook.com/solwayfirthpartnership
@solwayfirthpartnership
@solwaytweets

Published by Solway Firth Partnership. Designed by Findlay Design.