



NORTH WEST COASTAL TRAIL

BRAND STRATEGY

JULY 2008

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Summary

- The North West Coastal Trail “product” is the project. In this we mean it is the activity currently underway to raise awareness and recruit support for the Trail among stakeholders, partners and potential funders. The “product” is the project management and partnership in place to make the concept happen and deliver the following benefits:
 - a. The socio-economic improvement to businesses and communities situated along the NW coast and its hinterland;
 - b. Recognition and enhancement of the region’s natural assets;
 - c. Increasing accessibility to the coast, thus encouraging more people to undertake healthy, outdoor activity; and
 - d. The delivery of regional and sub-regional strategic priorities and outcomes demonstrating value-added investment of public monies.

- The target audiences for the North West Coastal Trail brand are existing and potential partners, stakeholders and funders for the development and promotion of the Trail to an end-user audience. They predominantly operate within the public, voluntary / community and charitable sectors and their motivations for contributing to the project (funds or otherwise) are that the North West Coastal Trail will deliver against their own priorities / agenda. As a general rule the messages used to communicate the brand to its target audiences should be around two key areas; promoting benefits and alleviating risk.

- The brand values for the North West Coastal Trail are:
 - a. An economic, social and environmental asset for the region;
Key messages to strengthen the case for public investment in the North West Coastal Trail include the ability for the project to deliver significant and quantifiable economic, social and environmental outputs.
 - b. The North West Coastal Trail is a valuable and saleable tourism offer;
Key messages for this brand value are around the benefits the North West Coastal Trail will eventually deliver to end customers; healthy enjoyment by the sea, celebrating and promoting local identity, and informality, fun & accessibility.
 - c. Project management and united partnership to make it happen.
The key message behind this brand value is the North West Coastal Trail concept has been in existence for more than 6 years; it has a very strong and united partnership from across the region committed to its development and has the management infrastructure in place to see that key milestones are achieved.

- The new brand identity must be versatile and flexible enough to be used across various mediums whilst still maintaining a level of integrity to ensure a consistent image is communicated at all times.



- The new brand identity has been designed in this way because:
 - a. It is in keeping with the public sector environment in which it will be used;
 - b. Visually represents an uninterrupted trail along the entire North West Coast;
 - c. Circular disc format making a subtle link with way-marking discs commonly found along walking trails;
 - d. Strong, bold colours and clear typeface that allows the identity to be clearly reproduced at different sizes and as black & white and greyscale.

Introduction

The North West Coastal Trail has been recognised for some time as a potential tourism opportunity for the region. It is named as a Regional Park resource in both the Regional Economic Strategy and draft Regional Spatial Strategy and its concept launch in October 2003 received widespread support from a range of sub-regional and local partners as well as national organisations.

Following a lengthy concept and feasibility stage the North West Coastal Trail has now entered its development phase. The concept and project is being led by the North West Coastal Forum (NWCF), a partnership of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors working to promote and deliver integrated management for coastal areas to ensure their long term sustainability.

Having started delivery, the development programme now finds itself at an important point. The NWCF has identified that the Trail has the potential to provide significant value to the region by delivering economic, social and environmental prosperity through the sustainable use of natural resources. However; if the Trail is to eventually emerge as an important regional asset funding for infrastructure development and promotion must be secured from additional sources.

The NWCF has recognised that a strong and consistent brand identity is now required to help communicate the concept and implementation plan for the North West Coastal Trail project with the aim of recruiting potential funding and partner organisations.

The development of a brand strategy, brand identity and guidelines will create something tangible, giving substance to the North West Coastal Trail concept. It gives the stakeholder organisations (both lead and partners) something to hang their ideas upon and helps to articulate what the North West Coastal Trail stands for in an economic, social and environmental context.

This document sets out the brand strategy for the North West Coastal Trail and forms stage two of the Brand Guidelines Project. Stage one of the project was a marketing audit of existing coastal brands within the region. To augment and test the early findings from this analysis, two stakeholder workshops were also undertaken.

The key findings from stage one of the project are summarised in the following section and are used to provide a strong evidence base to support the rationale for the brand strategy and brand identity set out in the later sections.

The third and final stage of the project will be the production of brand guidelines for the North West Coastal Trail brand. These guidelines will set out the rules for the application of the identity.

Findings from Stage One

The following summarises the key findings of the marketing audit activity (full details included in Appendix 1):

1. The coast is widely recognised as a tourism asset within the North West, although this emphasis is a relatively new phenomenon;
2. Each individual coastal access brand is generally targeting similar markets;
3. There is an emphasis towards 'localisation' concerning the development of destination brands for the coast in the North West;
4. There is concern among partner and stakeholder organisations of 'logo overload'; and
5. There are varied levels of local, sub-regional and regional support for the North West Coastal Trail concept, however on the whole the response has been positive.

The North West Coastal Trail Concept Feasibility Study completed in 2003 made the following assessments that will have a direct relevance to the development of the brand identity:

1. The landscapes, topography and natural, cultural and built heritage of the North West's coast and coastal settlements are major strengths of the proposed Trail. However, it will pass through extensive urban areas, including some poorer quality environments;
2. Parts of the Trail will differ markedly from other coastal paths and are likely to appeal to different users than traditional long-distance walkers;
3. Market segments with strongest growth potential include recreational and holiday walking and cycling trips, club and group walking and cycling visits, educational visits and events;
4. It is essential that the proposed Trail is marketed honestly and realistically, stressing its positive attributes (e.g. landscapes, birdlife, heritage, visitor attractions) and opportunities to discover and enjoy the North West's coast, coastal settlements and heritage, rather than promoting it primarily as an end-to-end walking or cycling route;
5. National, regional and local trails will link to the Trail and enable circular walks or rides;
6. There is strong demand for coastal visits, including for walking and cycling. Such visitors contribute significantly to local economies; and
7. Sections of the Trail can cater for less mobile and disabled users and there is potential for walking and cycling links from, and to promote use by, disadvantaged communities.

Following the marketing audit it was agreed that the North West Coastal Trail brand would be primarily outwardly focused; targeting the end-users of the Trail.

These findings and proposed strategic focus were then taken to consultation with stakeholders. Two workshops were held during June 2008 with the key outcomes being (full summary is included in Appendix 2):

1. It was agreed that the brand strategy and identity would be inwardly focused towards funders, partners and stakeholders as the 'product' was not yet at a stage that could be credibly marketed to the public as a trail;
2. The brand name should remain "The North West Coastal Trail" as it clearly describes the ultimate goal of the project;
3. The North West Coastal Trail projects needs to demonstrate how it can integrate with the existing and planned activity of the relevant Tourist Boards and other Regional Parks.

As a result of the workshops the direction of the brand strategy changed from an outwardly facing brand, to one targeting stakeholders, partners and potential funders whose support is necessary to sustain the infrastructure development and promotion of the Trail.

Brand Strategy

A brand is something that customers attribute a value to. It exists in the customer's mind and is the link between their perception of the product and the organisation's marketing activities. Therefore it must communicate attributes that are important and valuable to the customer it is targeting.

A brand is much more than a logo; it is a set of messages that defines what the 'product' stands for in the context of its market. The logo or brand identity is the visual representation of the brand and must demonstrate a consistency to the values and personality that underpin the brand.

The Product

A key outcome of the stakeholder consultation activity was that the North West Coastal Trail is not yet at a stage to be marketed to visitors and local businesses as a credible tourism offer. This is because there are still significant gaps along the trail, it is not consistently way-marked, and potential tourism partners (Destination Marketing organisations) are currently implementing their own, stand-alone coastal tourism activity.

Therefore, at this point in time, the North West Coastal Trail "product" is the project development. In this we mean it is the activity currently underway to raise awareness and recruit support for the trail among stakeholders, partners and potential funders. The "product" is the project management and partnership in place to make the concept happen. It is also the eventual benefits that will be delivered through the implementation and subsequent promotion of the Trail. These benefits include:

- The socio-economic improvement to businesses and communities situated along the NW coast and its hinterland;
- Recognition and enhancement of the region's natural assets;
- Increasing accessibility to the coast, thus encouraging more people to undertake healthy, outdoor activity; and
- The delivery of regional and sub-regional strategic priorities and outcomes demonstrating value-added investment of public monies.

Target Audiences

The target audiences or 'customers' for the North West Coastal Trail brand are existing and potential partners, stakeholders and funders for the development and subsequent promotion of the trail to an end-user audience. They may or may not already be part of the North West Coastal Forum.

They predominantly operate within the public, voluntary / community and charitable sectors and their motivations for contributing to the project (funds or otherwise) is that the North West Coastal Trail will deliver against their own priorities / agenda.

Each organisation will have their own set of priorities that must be understood and tailored accordingly with specific and relevant messages. Appendix 3 lists organisations who we believe are the primary target audiences. It is recommended that this list is developed further and updated on a continual basis.

Relevant communication messages for these target audiences are explained in more detail in the Brand Values section below, however, as a general rule the messages used should be around two key areas; promoting benefits and alleviating risk.

This will be achieved through the consistent use of evidence to demonstrate what target audiences are likely to receive through their investment (e.g. increase in n jobs, n number of more community volunteers, n number of people partaking in healthy activity etc.).

As well as including relevant evidence, the messages also need to make clear, the likelihood of these benefits being achieved (e.g. a strong partnership and project management team in place, regular progress updates, case studies showing what has already been achieved etc.) so as to alleviate the potential perceived risk of funders 'wasting' their resources.

Brand Values

Brand values are a set of key messages that are defined by the 'product owner' and used to communicate how the owner wants the brand to be perceived by its target customers. Brand values should be about the benefits the product offers its target customers rather than the features of that product.

Brand values are used to explain what we believe the North West Coastal Trail brand stands for. This helps with internal communication with colleagues; when briefing designers and agency partners when implementing marketing communication activity; and when communicating directly to target audiences.

Our proposed brand values for the North West Coastal Trail are:

1. An economic and environmental asset for the region;
2. The North West Coastal Trail is a valuable and saleable tourism offer; and
3. Project management and united partnership to make it happen.

Each brand value is explained in more detail below.

1. An economic, social and environmental asset for the region

For the North West Coastal Trail concept to attract the significant levels of public investment and resource required for its implementation and promotion it is essential that it delivers a suitable return on investment.

Key messages to strengthen the case for public investment include the ability for the project to deliver the following:

- a. Economic outputs - increase in GVA, jobs created / safeguarded, businesses created;
- b. Social outputs - healthier lifestyles, community cohesion, increased capacity and volunteering; and
- c. Environmental outputs - promoting public access and understanding of the countryside, maintaining and enhancing landscape quality and character and contributing to climate change mitigation.

Some evidence exists from previous research to support these messages, however it is recommended that further evidence is gathered and recorded as part of future project development activity.

2. The North West Coastal Trail is a valuable and saleable tourism offer

As we have already mentioned, the regional and sub-regional Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO) will play a key role in promoting the Trail to end users. We know through our stakeholder consultation that the relevant DMOs generally regard the coast as a significant tourism asset. However; at the same time there was still some resistance (Mersey Partnership and NWDA) towards recognising the trail as a tourism product worthy of investment and support.

Key messages for this brand value are around the benefits the North West Coastal Trail will ultimately deliver to end-users. These include:

- a. Healthy enjoyment by the sea - It is widely recognised that the coast and the sea have an uplifting and invigorating effect on many people and they somehow feel healthier after a visit. The North West Coastal Trail delivers the vehicle / mechanism for which end-users can access and enjoy the coast.
- b. Celebrates and promotes local identity - The North West Coastal Trail will connect the many local tourism assets that exist along the North West coast. Whether they are coastal towns, the natural coastal environment or sites of historical & cultural significance the North West Coastal Trail brand will aim to give them a greater voice. Ultimately we hope the North West Coastal Trail will work to engender a sense of pride and identity for the region.

- c. Informality, fun & accessibility - The North West Coastal Trail will be a welcoming, friendly offer that opens up greater access to the coast and its numerous assets (environmental, cultural and historical) equally to all people.

3. Project management and united partnership to make it happen

The purpose of including this brand value will be to demonstrate to target audiences, the sustainability and longevity of the project. Our consultation uncovered a distinct lack of awareness among key target audiences in regards to the North West Coastal Trail project and the partnership in place to deliver it.

In reality, the concept has been in existence for more than 6 years; it has a very strong and united partnership from across the region committed to its development and has the management infrastructure in place to see that key milestones are achieved.

The very existence of a professionally designed brand identity will help to communicate this brand value and it is hoped that additional reinforcement is delivered through key messages as part of the communication activity.

Usage

The brand identity and messages to communicate the brand values of the North West Coastal Trail project are most likely to be used within a public, voluntary / community and charitable sector environment and in the following areas:

- Corporate stationery letterheads, business cards, compliments slips;
- Publications, literature and correspondence explaining / selling the project;
- Other reports and documents planned for the development programme;
- Signage to indicate any development work;
- Any future bids for funding;
- North West Coastal Trail website;
- In association with existing and future partners through their own marketing communications activity.

Brand Identity

The brand identity must be versatile and flexible enough to be used across various mediums whilst still maintaining a level of integrity to ensure a consistent image is communicated at all times.

The new brand identity for the North West Coastal Trail is featured in Figure 1 below and has been designed in this way because:

- It is in keeping with the environment in which it will be used (public, community / voluntary, charity sectors);
- Visually represents an uninterrupted trail along the entire North West Coast;
- The circular disc format makes a subtle link with way-marking discs commonly found along walking trails;
- Strong, bold colours and clear typeface that allows the identity to be clearly reproduced at different sizes and as black & white and greyscale.



Appendix 1 - The Marketing Audit Emerging Themes

1. The coast is widely recognised as a tourism asset

- The level of destination marketing activity along the NW Coast demonstrates its importance as a tourism asset within the region;
- However, this recognition tends to be only up to sub-regional level. Feedback from the NWDA suggests there is still a case to be made to demonstrate the tourism potential of the North West Coast at a regional / national asset;
- Specific coastal destination brands already established include; Wirral Peninsula, Sefton's Natural Coast and Lancashire's Coastal Contrasts. In addition there are a number of other destination brands that incorporate the coast within their offer such as the AONBs of the Solway Coast and Arnsdale & Silverdale;
- This focus towards the coast as a tourism asset is very much a new phenomenon. Lancashire and Cumbria's 'Coastal Ways' which have been in existence for a number of years are largely overlooked by the DMOs and have generally fallen into disrepair;
- The trend in the new coastal branding activity is to offer a range of visitor activities /attractions and use the relevant coast as an overarching theme.
- Generally, the type of activities promoted under each coastal brand is similar across the entire region - walking, cycling, bird watching, food & drink and visiting specific natural and cultural sites of significance;
- Walking trails are identified as one element of the coastal offer but the universal view of partners and stakeholders is that the coast can offer a great deal more to visitors than simply walking.

2. Similar target markets

- All partners / stakeholders that have done marketing / communication plans for their coastal branding activity have identified similar target markets;
- Their general characteristics are:
 - Residents within 90 minute drive-time;
 - Lovers of the outdoors - walking, cycling, water-sports etc.
 - Want to visit areas of natural / cultural importance (intellectual challenge);
 - Enjoy sampling food and drink during visit;
 - Generally families and older people (+55 yrs).
- Therefore, it is inevitable that several coastal brands (those that are geographically close to each other) will be competing for the same market. This potentially raises issues of possible tension / conflict between sub-regional DMOs;

- In the more advanced coastal marketing strategies the 'coast' as a brand is used to drive / disperse visitors along the various attractions positioned on or near to the coast. In the same way that coastal branding is being used to drive visitors to various destinations within a local area, it is recognised by some consultees that the North West Coastal Trail could play a similar role at a regional level.

3. Emphasis towards localisation

- In the majority of cases of coastal branding activity, the local brand is given primacy over all else e.g. Sefton, Wirral, Hadrian's Wall;
- The exception is LBTB's 'Coastal Contrasts' theme where the sub-regional brand is used as the lead brand in marketing communications with local brands such as Morecambe, Fleetwood and Lytham St. Annes playing a subordinate role;
- Destinal marketing delivery and investment has been disseminated to a sub-regional level. As a result some DMOs have expressed a reluctance to implement a regional coastal brand that would take the emphasis away from their local / sub-regional activity.

4. Concern over 'logo overload'

- There are a wide number of specific coastal brand identities already in use as well as existing brand identities that will require possible consideration in the development of the North West Coastal Trail brand identity. Figure 2 provides a sample of those collected;



- In addition to these brand identities there are also others yet to be developed including Ribble & Wetlands RP; Cumbria RP; Morecambe Bay RP and England's Solway Coast (in development);
- And in the case of Hadrian's Wall which is part of the National Trail network there will be the need to also consider the 'acorn' identity that is used on all National Trails;
- In the instances where specific consumer facing coastal brand identities have been recently developed (Sefton & Wirral), there is a reluctance to incorporate a further level of branding to an already complicated picture.

5. Varied levels of support for the North West Coastal Trail concept

- There has been a mixed response to the concept of the North West Coastal Trail, however on the whole it has been mostly positive;
- There is still some confusion and a lack of understanding of what the North West Coastal Trail is and how it will fit within the overall destination marketing offer within the North West;
- Encouragingly, the sub-regional DMOs for Lancashire and Cumbria who are likely to be responsible for implementing any consumer marketing activity for the North West Coastal Trail are supportive. Although they have indicated that they will use sub-regional coastal branding activity to lead any communications;
- There is still some resistance towards a brand identity for the North West Coastal Trail from Merseyside's DMO and its Regional Park who have already concentrated investment at a local level (Sefton & Wirral). Paradoxically, both Sefton and Wirral Local Authorities are fully supportive of the North West Coastal Trail;
- Perhaps the more worrying issue is the concern expressed by the NWDA towards the North West Coastal Trail. They are still yet to be convinced of the destination marketing potential of the Trail and as the likely funding source of any future consumer marketing activity it is important that this is dealt with as a matter of urgency.

Appendix 2 - Summary of Branding Strategy Consultation Workshops

20th May - Warrington & 21st May - Kendal

Format of the workshops:

- Background to the North West Coastal Trail project - Dave Perry
- Summary findings of the marketing audit and brand strategy - Michael Lough
- Consultee feedback on brand strategy - facilitated by Graham Barrow
- Design options and proposed brand architecture - Michael Lough
- Consultee feedback on design options - facilitated by Graham Barrow

Attendance at workshops

Warrington

Jan Tyson	United Utilities
Mike Garbutt	Wirral Council
Gloria Taylor	Ramblers Association
Keith Johns	Ramblers Association
Sally Jastrzebski-Lloyd	Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board
Sarah Heyes	Regional Parks Xchange
David Allen	Long Distance Walkers Association & Wigan LAF
Lesley Cryer	Action Ribble Estuary
Stephen Potter	Mersey Partnership

Kendal

Ian Henderson	Arnside / Silverdale AONB
Suzy Grindley	Lake District National Park Authority
Susannah Bleakley	Morecambe Bay Partnership
Kate Fox	Regional Parks Xchange
Andy Routledge	Regional Parks Xchange
Andrea Runkee	Cumbria Tourism

Warrington

Feedback on the Brand Strategy

The discussion started with the proposal to consider alternative brand names to "North West Coastal Trail", such as "Discover the North West Coast" or "Explore the North West Coast". Whilst people were open to the idea of a name change, many people were reluctant to drop

the term Trail, as it could lead to a loss of focus for the project and had the potential to drift away from the original concept of filling the gaps in existing access.

Retaining the term Trail keeps the focus on providing access, as part of the coastal offer, rather than on promoting the coast as a whole. When the term Trail is removed, there is the potential for conflict with other brands.

This point was reinforced by both tourist boards, who pointed out that a brand that focuses on promoting the coast would duplicate the work of the tourist boards, whereas the Trail has its own identity.

It was pointed out that a product needs to be in place before a consumer brand can be put in place and that the Trail should only be promoted once it is completed. The brand at the present time can only reflect aspirations.

The suggestion was made to brand the existing access routes as "North West Coastal Trails", to reflect the fact that there were several coastal paths at present, rather than one continuous route.

This led onto a discussion regarding who is the brand primarily aimed at. Is it for an "internal" audience of stakeholders, prospective partners and potential funders, or is it aimed at an "external" audience of users and the general public?

All of the regional park projects are facing the same branding issue. How are they to promote themselves: is it a place or is it a project?

When considering brand names, organisations or projects only ever get one chance to change their name, so it has to be right.

It was felt that there is a need to resolve what it is that we are promoting. As visiting the coast is already being promoted by the tourist boards, there was a strong view that the Trail itself needed to be promoted, primarily at this stage of its development to an internal audience, to obtain the support and funding to develop the infrastructure on the ground.

Feedback on concept designs

Several designs were presented for discussion, which received a mixed view overall. Different people favoured different designs.

Bird image: it could suggest or appeal to birdwatchers only, and so was less favoured.

Sunset image: mixed views - some thought it looked like Cumbria's logo, but others thought it suggested sunsets along the coast.

Bird footprints: mixed response for and against.

Coastal outline image: it needed to be more accurate, but does show where the Trail is on the coast.

For the primary internal audience, a version of the coastal outline was thought to work well as it is recognisable and keeps a focus on the coast.

Kendal

Feedback on the Brand Strategy

One of the findings of the marketing audit - the indication of target market demographics that suggested that many coastal visitors tended to be more affluent than average (ABC1) - was picked out for comment. The Trail should be focusing on access for all, and not on any exclusivity.

The discussion began over the alternative brand names that were being put forward. People generally liked the alternative suggestions, with their use of active words - discover, explore, enjoy, experience - though different people liked particular terms better than others, with no overall consensus.

There was a suggestion that not all social groups use the coast and that different terms might appeal more to some social groups than other: for example, discover and explore may appeal more to middle class audiences, whilst enjoy and experience are open to all.

It was suggested that the purpose of marketing the coast was to get people to have an adventure, to be out exploring and discovering places, rather than just be "trailing" along.

A contrary view was expressed by the tourist board, who argued that a bigger concept was needed to appeal to funders and partners. The Tourist board is already promoting the coast and coastal activity generally to consumers.

This led onto discussing whether to promote the brand to an internal audience of stakeholders, partners and funders or to an external audience of user groups and the general public and whether separate logos were required for each. The question was asked if we wanted to promote to both audiences at the present time, as there were still projects to implemented on the ground.

It was felt that the "active" brand names do not convey the purpose of the project and do not suggest the provision of access. Most people agreed that the term Trail needed to be retained in the title for promotion to an internal audience.

For an outward audience, why couldn't all of the active words be used interchangeably?

Feedback on concept designs

There were mixed views on all of the designs presented, with different images appealing to different people.

Coastal outline image: (view 1) would the public recognise the outline of the coast? (view 2) the outline is shown on the TV weather map every day (view 3) the shaded, block version of the outline worked better than the line drawing.

Bird image: mixed views for and against.

Sunset image: don't like the image, but like the concept.

Bird footprints: mixed views, "quirky".

In an attempt to try and decide between them, a show of hands favoured a version of the coastal outline as the choice to take forward for both an internal and external audience.

The question was raised as to whether an external brand was needed at the present time. The view was that only an internal one was needed at present.

The idea from the Warrington workshop of "North West Coastal Trails" was brought up and people generally liked it.

Conclusions

The discussions at both workshops produced a great diversity of views on several aspects of the branding strategy and on the concept designs. There was no clear consensus on many of the points debated.

However, there was a consistency in the issues raised and views expressed between the two workshops and from this; some broad conclusions can be drawn.

1. Whilst people were open to the option of a new brand name being devised for the North West Coastal Trail, there was a split in opinion between those who wanted to retain the term Trail and those who favoured a more active promotion of the coast.
2. Those favouring retaining the term Trail stressed the importance of keeping a focus on the original concept of developing and promoting access along the coast.
3. Interestingly, all of the tourist board representatives supported this view, as a brand that focused on promotion of the North West coast duplicates the work that the tourist boards are already doing and so risks creating the conflict that we are trying to avoid.
4. The issue of who the branding is aimed at was critical to the debate. Was it aimed at an "internal" audience - stakeholders, prospective partners and potential funders - or an "external" audience - user groups and the general public?
5. There was broad agreement that at the present time, the emphasis should be on promoting the North West Coastal Trail to partners and funders, to develop the capacity and means to implement the Trail on the ground, and therefore the name "North West Coastal Trail" should be retained for this internal branding.

6. Promotion to an external audience was felt to be premature at the present time, as so much of the Trail still needed to be developed, and any general promotion of the coast risked clashing with tourist board activity.
7. With regards to a logo design, an image showing the outline of the North West coast (three variations were considered) was favoured by the majority of consultees. From these variants, a precise design is still to be finalised.

Summary completed by Dave Perry, North West Coastal Trail Development Officer.

Appendix 3 - Target Audiences for the North West Coastal Trail

National

- RSPB
- Groundwork UK
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- United Utilities
- Big Lottery Fund
- Connexions

Regional

- North West Development Agency - Tourism and Rural Departments (RDPE)
- Natural Economy Northwest
- 4NW - the Regional Leaders Forum

Lancashire

- Local Authorities - Lancashire CC, West Lancashire DC, Fylde BC, Blackpool BC, Fleetwood TC, Wyre BC & Lancaster CC
- Lancashire and district Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)
- Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board
- Lancashire Economic Partnership
- Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Silverdale & Arnside AONB

Cumbria

- Local Authorities - Cumbria CC, Allerdale BC, Copeland BC, Barrow-in-Furness BC & South Lakeland DC
- Cumbria and District LSPs
- Lake District National Park
- Solway Coast AONB
- Cumbria Tourist Board
- West Lakes Renaissance
- Cumbria Vision
- Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency
- Hadrian's Wall Country

Merseyside

- Local Authorities - The Mersey Partnership, Sefton Metropolitan Council, Liverpool City Council, Wirral Metropolitan Council
- Mersey Waterfront

Cheshire

- Local Authorities - Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council
- Visit Chester and Cheshire
- Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance