

THE 2014 NORTH WEST COASTAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE



A DETAILED REPORT OF THE WINNERS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the North West Coastal Forum (NWCF) established the North West Awards for Coastal Excellence (NW ACE). The awards scheme was organised to recognise and celebrate good practice and outstanding achievement in and contribution to the long-term sustainable management of our coasts and near-shore marine environments and to encourage and inspire professionals, volunteers, groups and organisations involved in coastal work by showcasing the work across the North West and beyond.

The overall arching goal behind NW ACE, is to spread the word about good coastal practice throughout the North West, by encouraging and inspiring professionals, volunteers, groups and organisations. By doing so, the coastal work carried out helps to meet the objectives of the NWCF:

- Well-integrated planning and management of the coastal zone
- The economic potential of the NW coast achieved in ways which safeguard, enhance, restore and sustainably use our natural and cultural assets.
- Improved well-being of coastal communities
- A high quality natural and built coastal environment able to adapt to climate and other change.
- Improved recreational opportunities and visitor experience
- Raised appreciation of the coast, its values and needs.

Nominations for the 3rd biennial NW ACE began on 21st May 2014 and included three categories; coastal champion, coastal community action and coastal best practice. The latter award included a sub-category focus, such as; adaptation to climate change, nature conservation, coastal leisure and tourism, and celebrating coastal culture and heritage. The winners of the NW ACE 2014 were announced on November 3rd at the Destination Coast! Conference in Grange-over-Sands. The awards were presented by Peter Hampson, CEO of British Destinations.

COASTAL CHAMPION AWARD

In order for nominations to qualify for the above award, individuals must have provided a significant contribution to sustainability, demonstrated great leadership skills, fit with the aim and one or more outcomes of the NWCF, and above all, inspired others. Furthermore, desirable criteria that the nominees could meet included:

- Innovative techniques
- Education/ skills building
- Communication of the work and its benefits to a wider audience than that involved in the work itself.
- Developments of effective working partnerships and integration across different disciplines
- Long-term benefits and legacy

Although it is tradition to award an individual in this category, three LOVEmyBEACH co-ordinators were nominated. Each have been vital in engaging communities, businesses and volunteers to support the successful campaign. Proving impossible to separate them, Jayne Foat, Annie Heslop and Emma McColm have been awarded as 'Coastal Champions 2014'.

All three LOVEmyBEACH co-ordinators understand the importance of bathing waters, not only to the local communities, but to the region as a whole. They engage with people at every level and are able to explain the bathing water challenges to a wide variety of audiences in a language they understand, and in a unique and inspiring way. Without the hard work and enthusiasm of the co-ordinators to bring the campaign alive, we wouldn't have secured a long and happy support network for North West bathing waters.

LOVEmyBEACH is a campaign with a huge challenge: to work together to keep local beaches and bathing water clean. With 30 bathing waters in the North West, water quality has dramatically increased over the last 20 years. In 1988 only 18% of North West bathing waters met minimum standards, the figure today stands at a great 100%. LOVEmyBEACH is not just about meeting standards – co-ordinators such as Jayne, Annie and Emma do all they can to make the North West an even better place to live, work and play.

I am very proud of all of our LOVEmyBEACH Coordinators as each in their own way makes a real difference to the NW coast. To my mind they each run innovative communication campaigns that are quirky and individual, yet synergistic.

At the heart of their LOVEmyBEACH roles is an edict to drive environmental quality improvements and safeguard and enhance the economic potential of our NW beaches and bathing waters.

They have each raised the appreciation of the coast, and have developed effective working partnerships that not only benefit our local communities, but enhance the visitor experience too.

- **Louise Maxwell, Environment Agency**

COASTAL CHAMPION: JAYNE FOAT

Jayne Foat co-ordinates LOVEmyBEACH for Sefton's three bathing waters of Formby, Ainsdale and Southport. Working closely with the Coast and Countryside team, Jayne has brought the campaign alive for Sefton. Jayne started with a survey about beaches and bathing waters in Sefton. With 381 survey respondents and 100 people signed up wanting to do more to help. The survey was a huge success, it identified that only half of the people surveyed said they were aware of the current water quality at Sefton's beaches and that 92% of respondents want to see Sefton's bathing waters achieve at least the minimum standard required by the EU Directive.

Working with local schools and Scouts, Jayne developed an education pack to teach children of the importance of looking after the beach and how they can make a difference. The pack is now complete and about to be rolled out across the region.

As well as engaging and educating through schools, Jayne chats about LOVEmyBEACH at events such as the Southport Food and Drink Festival and when out and about on the beach. She has engaged businesses from large corporations such as Carillion, who took part in a beach clean, to persuading the local co-op and dog grooming salon to support the LOVEmyBEACH campaign.

Through an innovative partnership with the press and media, Jayne has placed 36 weekly stories in the local newspaper and their websites, using engaging stories to inspire people to support the campaign. Jayne is truly passionate about the work of the campaign being sustainable and continuing long into the future.

Jayne is fun to work with and has a wonderfully down to earth and unassuming personality. Her passion for the coast shines through and cannot fail to touch the most hardened cynic.

Throughout her time as LOVEmyBEACH Coordinator Jayne has used this passion to great effect in inspiring community members, business owners and young people to care for their coastline and beaches.

Jayne's natural rapport with children has been integral to the development of our wonderful new LOVEmyBEACH Education Pack. Jayne has worked closely with education leaders and children to ensure that the pack is engaging educational and fun.

- **Louise Maxwell, Environment Agency**



Sefton survey results

Sefton has three bathing water beaches where people swim and paddle – Torrey Lighthouse Road, Ainsdale and Southport. In June, 867 people responded to our survey about beaches and bathing waters in Sefton. The main reasons people gave for visiting a beach are walking, enjoying the scenery, and peace and quiet. Water too hot to swim or paddle, 85% feel that a clean sea is important when deciding to visit the beach.

Only half of those surveyed said they were aware of the current water quality at Sefton's beaches. In fact all of Sefton's bathing waters passed the minimum European standards in 2016. More were able to identify sources of pollution in our sea water such as sewer overflow and this generally knew what this can do to




COASTAL CHAMPION: ANNIE HESLOP

Annie Heslop delivers the LOVEmyBEACH campaign in Flyde and has been part of the campaign team from the beginning, being instrumental to its success. Annie understands the challenges and innovatively converted them into a positive brand. She worked with a local design agency to create the campaign to community how people can support cleaner seas.

Annie has presented to the Blackpool Business Leaders Group, the Pleasure Beach Junior Board, councillors, staff and volunteers. Her approachable and friendly manner have helped build relationships with Blackpool and Fylde College and support the Coast Council to educate the next generation in looking after the sea. She has also developed a business pack, which has been used across the region and has continually secured funds to support the campaign.

Since 2012 Annie has set up 6 beach care groups, doing a total of 134 beach cleans, with 650 individual volunteers and collected over 1500 bags of litter. Having built a following of over 1000 supporters on Twitter, Annie understands the importance of making sure there is a network of people to keep delivering this work in the future.

Like Jayne, Annie is passionate about what she does, and is happy and comfortable in any setting as long as she's talking about Flyde's beautiful beaches.

Working with Annie is very enjoyable as her passion for both the coast and the Fylde area shines through. Annie's approachable down to earth style engenders trust and means she is readily embraced by community groups and business owners.

Annie thrives when working with community groups and volunteers and she works hard to support them and help them to make a real difference across the Fylde Coast.

Annie developed our fabulous LOVEmyBEACH Business Pack in conjunction with business groups and her hard work has delivered a product that not only serves to protect and improve our beaches and bathing waters but is also valued by communities and business leaders.

- **Louise Maxwell, Environment Agency**



COASTAL CHAMPION: EMMA MCCOLM

Emma works with the Morecambe Bay Partnership and has been delivering LOVEmyBEACH for the 5 local bathing waters for the past 12 months. Emma's huge smile and dedication to the campaign has helped her to secure some of the most successful businesses engagements yet, such as the prestigious Midland Hotel in Morecambe to the intimate Craigwell Hotel 10-bedroom guest house. Emma has guided these businesses to take action to help cleaner seas.

Emma has worked closely with Lancaster City Council and supported them to incorporate LOVEmyBEACH into their beach management plan, which has meant the campaign has reached council staff and wider networks, and promoted the key challenges and messages across the area.

One of the key challenges Morecambe area face, is with drains. Emma created the LOVEyourDRAINS materials to communicate how people can look after their drains to reduce pollution. On top of that, Emma has co-ordinated 20 beach cleans with 208 volunteers, shared stories with local press, and has built a Twitter following of over 1000 supporters.

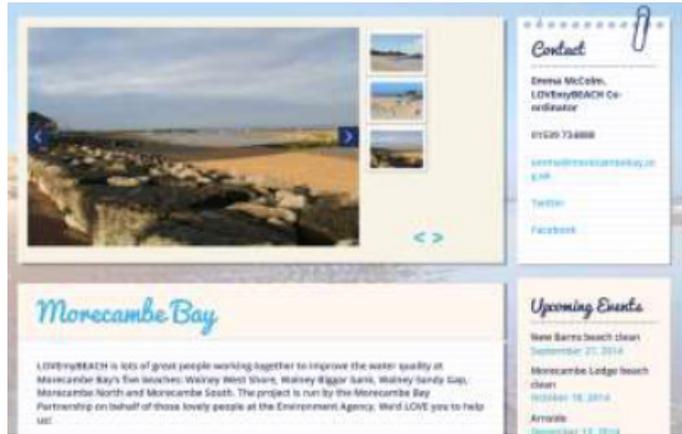
Emma is innovative with her support strategies and never misses an opportunity to embed the LOVEmyBEACH messages locally and also inputs constructively to the wider campaign, helping direction and steer.

Emma is a pleasure to work with and is a consummate professional. Emma is passionate about her local area; has an excellent understanding of her stakeholder's agendas and delivers outstanding results.

Emma is skilled at spotting opportunities and has wonderfully creative and innovative ideas that she sees through to delivery.

Emma never misses an opportunity to embed the LOVEmyBEACH messages locally and also inputs constructively to the wider campaign, helping with strategic direction and steer. Emma is tenacious and extremely capable and is always willing to go the extra mile.

- **Louise Maxwell, Environment Agency**



COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTION AWARD

This award was made to a community group in recognition of their significant contribution to the long term management of the North West coast. Nominations were open to resident, school or community volunteer groups who have carried out work on the North West coast within the last two years.

In order for nominations to qualify for the above award, groups must fit with the aim and one or more of the outcomes of the North West Coastal Forum, and provide a significant contribution to community benefit and the coast arising from the work carried out. Furthermore, desirable criteria that the nominees could meet included:

- effective teamwork and leadership
- encouragement of community, volunteer or school participation
- promotion of awareness and sharing of skills and knowledge within the local community
- awareness of wider coastal issues and how this work fits within the bigger picture
- key elements that made the work particularly successful
- ownership of the coast
- innovation
- education/ skills building
- communication of the work and its benefits to a wider audience that that involved in the work itself
- Development of effective working partnerships and integration across different disciplines
- Long-term benefits and legacy

The Fairhaven Coastal Care Group are a friendly group of volunteers who are passionate about caring for the coast. They have developed a strong sense of ownership of their coastal patch and are truly committed to the cause, heading out in all weathers each week.

It's great that their hard work is recognised by this award and I wish them all the success in the future.

- **Helen Waine, KBT**





HIGHLY COMMENDED: FAIRHAVEN COASTAL CARE GROUP

The Fairhaven Coastal Care Group meet every Wednesday at 10am to pick up litter which gets washed up on the beach, from Fairhaven Lake to Beach Terrace Cafe. The group were established to improve conservation status of the dunes and shingle. The groups work has allowed the council to be able to leave the tideline and the litter to be hand removed rather than being mechanically cleaned. The group are very proud of the difference this has made to the coastal vegetation as the vegetation now flourishes here.

The key to continued success and growth is a strong social core which has led to new members feeling welcome and many new friends being made. Jim and Jo are a couple in their 80s who come litter picking every week. Jim has dementia and is reliant on his wife Jo, they are both able to enjoy the weekly litter picking and Jims feels safe and happy in this routine. Unfortunately earlier this year, Jo suffered a stroke and was hospitalised. The group rallied round so Jim could continue his routine and enjoyment of litter picking whilst liaising with their wider family about the couples longer-term care. All of this was above and beyond.

The group has also developed members confidants and skills, and in particular helped a lady who was depressed after redundancy. They managed to find an activity worth getting out of bed for, which ultimately helped her back into the work place. She says: "When I first joined the group I was ill and had just been made redundant, everyone was so welcoming and enthusiastic that it quickly became the highlight of my week. We get fitter, the beach gets cleaner, and seeing the new plants begin to grow along the tideline is a great encouragement to keep up the great work".

Success is down to their 'no-commitment' and just 'turn-up' philosophy. Members aren't made to feel they have to come every week and they don't have to cancel or confirm their attendance – they aren't letting anyone down or made to feel as though they aren't committed. The group do not have an assigned leader but a leadership team of 4 who share the responsibilities. This allows for a flexible approach and activities to continue each week regardless of holidays or other commitments. Having a team of leaders has led to a relaxed democratic approach when making group decisions and is a key part of the groups success.

Fairhaven Care group are a fantastic group of local volunteers who come together every Wednesday morning come hail or shine, with the common aim of improving the condition and appearance of the foreshore & dunes between Fairhaven Lake and Beach Terrace Café at St Annes-on-the-sea .

They are a passionate bunch of volunteers brought together by Annie Heslop, the then Sand Dunes Officer for Fylde now working as Beach Care officer for the “Love My beach” initiative through Keep Britain Tidy.

The group do a fantastic job and Fylde Council greatly appreciate the work that these and other volunteer groups do to help keep our coast a clean and safe environment to visit.

- **Geoff Willetts, Senior Coast & Countryside Officer Fylde Council**

BEFORE



AFTER



WINNERS: ROSSALL BEACH RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY GROUP

The group was set up in 2008 as a response to anti-social behaviour, the condition of infrastructure and concern for beach cleanliness. The group won the prestigious Queens Award and now has charitable status, its aims to ‘educate the public and secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of natural history and of historic and public interest in Rossall Beach and the surrounding area’ and to ‘advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the area of benefit’.

The passionate group of like-minded community members has made a big difference to the coast. The group have worked closely with partner agencies and organisations to:

- Install information boards along the beach about the local history, landscape and beach ecology.
- Hold regular meetings with speakers, open to all with a wide agenda.
- Hold regular beach clean events and encourage the participation of local schools and businesses.
- Carried out various fun events to engage people and children, including collecting beach rubbish, washing it and making artworks.

- Support the Marine Conservation Society in their “Adopt-a-Beach” and BeachWatch initiatives.
- Collecting important data on litter and debris on their beach.
- Create an informative website and Facebook page to keep members and the community up to date on what they have been doing.
- Campaigning for beach users to pick up after their dog and take their rubbish away with them or use the bins.
- Set up the Beach Buddies Roadshow which educates schools and adults alike about marine litter and caring for the coastal environment, with a particular focus on the changing bathing water directive and how the actions of individuals at home can have an effect on the quality of bathing waters.
- Establish a Neighbourhood Watch and secure effective CCTV monitoring of an area which does attract ASB.
- Campaigned for beach access steps, handrails and better beach facilities.
- Had an original batch of benches refurbished and re-painted and now support a replacement ‘memorial bench scheme’.
- Acquired ‘No overnight parking’ signs and worked with police to maintain peace and order.
- Worked with street cleansing to resolve issues of litter and dog waste and suitable bins.

They have provided a local action group who don’t just campaign for a better built and natural environment, they actively raise funds and carry out projects which make a difference. Their success has been down to a combination of factors but good leadership and commitment from the committee has ensured everyone’s view is heard, and actions are implemented rather than just being spoken about.

The core group of members are valued and enjoy working together to achieve a common goal, and at the same time have fun and make friends. Their regular meetings are open to all and they seek to hear views from a spectrum of the community, organisations and experts. They have raised public understanding and support for their work to ensure that the wider community is aware of the role they play in helping to look after the coast. To ensure the groups successful continuation, New people are encouraged to get involved and new members are found through information events and stalls in local supermarkets, libraries, schools and other organisations.

COASTAL BEST PRACTICE AWARD

This award was made to an organisation in recognition of their significant contribution to the long term management of the North West coast. Nominations were open to businesses, local authorities, government agencies and NGOs which have carried out work on the North West coast within the last two years.

In order for nominations to qualify for the above award, practices must fit with the aim and one or more of the outcomes of the North West Coastal Forum, and provide significant benefits and long-term sustainability to the coast and marine environments. Furthermore, desirable criteria that the nominees could meet included:

- Effective teamwork and leadership
- Successful engagement with a wide range of coastal stakeholders, including where appropriate effective consultation and involvement in decision-making.
- Capacity building and awareness-raising both within the delivery team and within the wider coastal stakeholder community.
- Awareness of and alignment/integration with wider coastal issues/policy/plans/activity and contribution of this piece of work to the bigger picture.
- Effective integration of environmental, social and economic factors.
- Key elements that made the work particularly successful including clear methodology
- Innovation
- Communication of the work and its benefits to a wider audience than that involved in the work itself.
- Development of effective working partnerships and integration across different disciplines
- Long-term benefits and legacy

COASTAL BEST PRACTICE (LEISURE AND TOURISM WINNER): SHORE COTTAGE STUDIO

Located at the bottom of boulder clay cliffs in a Site of Specific Scientific Interest, on the Wirral, is the truly unique Shore Cottage Studio owned by the Barnes family. It offers friendly, family run courses in a comfortable beachfront studio, providing an individual experience in a relaxed atmosphere.

The studio runs a diverse range of creative courses, steering away from traditional tutoring in favour of a more experimental, collaborative approach. The courses are linked to nature, with a focus on finding inspiration from your surrounding and using new techniques, rather than producing indistinguishable products.

The Cottage itself has been sympathetically built with consideration for the local environment and wildlife. The exciting build was featured on Channel 4's George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. The footings are concrete free and made from recycled steel and plastic (jackpads) and the main structure is made from SIPS panels. With insulation that exceeds regulations, recycled furniture, fixtures and fittings and a customised reclaimed wooden floor, it really is an outstanding eco-friendly design.

As well as the careful environmental design, the Shore Cottage has contributed to the local economy by bringing people from far and wide who have never visited the region before, many of whom have returned and continue to return. Those visitors from further afield tend to stay in local hotels and eat in local restaurants, thus supporting other coastal businesses, especially in low season.

Their work with other organisations and the community has helped raise awareness of key issues and fosters appreciation and better stewardship of the coast. For example, hosting beach litter picks for the local Soroptomists group and getting involved with the Big Dee Day (Environment Agency, Wirral Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council) and the Living Seas Event (Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Chester Zoo, Wirral Country Park Rangers), at which over 70 families and individuals created flotsam weavings with beach combed litter and natural dyed recycled textiles in the studio.

Shore Cottage Studio has also brought a coastal element to other events such as the Wirral Open Studio Tour, allowing 300 visitors to the studio over one weekend, and have had work featured in the Bridewell Studios exhibitions in Liverpool, and the Oxjam charity auction event in West Kirby.



COASTAL BEST PRACTICE (ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE WINNER): HESKETH OUT MARSH EAST

In the early 1980s, the intertidal salt marsh habitat of Hesketh Out Marsh was reclaimed from the Ribble Estuary by erection of an outer flood embankment for use as farmland. This enclosure is separated from the land to the south, Hesketh New Marsh, by a well-established flood embankment, originally erected in the 1800s, but which is owned and maintained by the Environment Agency (EA). Ownership of the land within Hesketh Out Marsh divided this enclosure into two parcels of land: Hesketh Out Marsh West (HOMW) and Hesketh Out Marsh East (HOME).

In 2008 HOMW was reverted to intertidal saltmarsh when the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), in partnership with the EA, breached the outer flood embankment of the western half (HOMW). This breaching was possible by building a cross-embankment separating the two parcels of land. The works not only created 168 ha of habitat – a nature reserve, owned and managed since by the RSPB – but also realigned the coastal margin for a more natural, robust and sustainable line of coastal flood defence. The challenge was then to do the same on the east side (HOME).

From 2008, RSPB and the EA worked together to bring forward a further similarly managed realignment, for the east side of the Hesketh Out Marsh, which includes 8ha of National Nature Reserve (NNR) owned by Natural England (NE). In Spring 2014, after extensive partnership working between the EA, RSPB & NE, funding and planning permission were acquired which enabled works to begin in July 2014. Crucial to the scheme is the rebuilding of a stronger EA owned embankment. The works exploit surplus material excavated for landscaping within the Out Marsh. This includes forming lagoons which will serve to enhance habitat creation and promote biodiversity. The works at HOME are programmed over three seasons before the outer banks can be breached; likely sometime in 2016. Upon completion, the RSPB Hesketh Out Marsh Reserve will be altogether, at some 330 hectares, the largest site of its kind in the North of England.

This scheme constitutes climate change adaption and achieves coastal realignment by means of a retreated strengthened primary defence line fronted by energy dissipating recreated saltmarsh. Unlike hard defences, these elements work together as a sustainable flood defence system to protect the coast at a cost effective £2.3 million for the EA. The saltmarsh will not only serve important to conserve biodiversity but creates space for predicted sea level rise reducing the potential for ‘coastal squeeze’.

Regionally the scheme contributes valuably to the UK Biodiversity 2020 targets with an increase in 154ha ha of habitat for birds, marine invertebrates and saltmarsh flora. It further serves the economics of the case for protecting properties and the productive hinterland whilst affording recreational gains and regional food security in the long-term. The scheme has achieved great achievement through the development of an effective working partnership, successful consultations and decision-making, and alignment and integration with wider coastal policies, planning and activities.



CONCLUDING COMMENTS

We would like to congratulate the winners of the NW ACE 2014, and a huge thank you to all that took part. You are each doing your own bit in contributing to the long-term sustainable management of coastal and near-shore environments. It is hoped that professionals, volunteers, groups and organisations involved in coastal work have all been inspired by the projects presented above.

We look forward to the NW ACE 2016 to see what other outstanding work has been carried out that meets the aims and objectives of the NWCF.

For more information on the NWCF, or about previous award winners in 2010 and 2012, please visit: www.nwcoastalforum.org.uk