

# Hoylake Beach Site Management Agreement



Josef Hanik  
Senior Ranger Wirral's Coast  
Parks and Countryside  
Technical Services Department  
0151 648 4371

September 2010

- 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
- 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**
- 3.0 WIRRAL'S SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN**
- 4.0 MERSEY WATERFRONT QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME**
- 5.0 OPERATIONS REQUIRING CONSENT FROM NATURAL ENGLAND**
- 6.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**
- 7.0 FUTURE LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.0 HOYLAKE BEACH USERS GROUP**
- 9.0 APPENDIX**
  - 9.1 Natural England Site Assessment and Map**
  - 9.2 Hoylake Beach Management Operations Test of Significance**
  - 9.3 Environment Agency Herbicide Licences at Hoylake Beach**
  - 9.4 Natural England Consent for Activities at Hoylake Beach**

## 1.0 Executive Summary

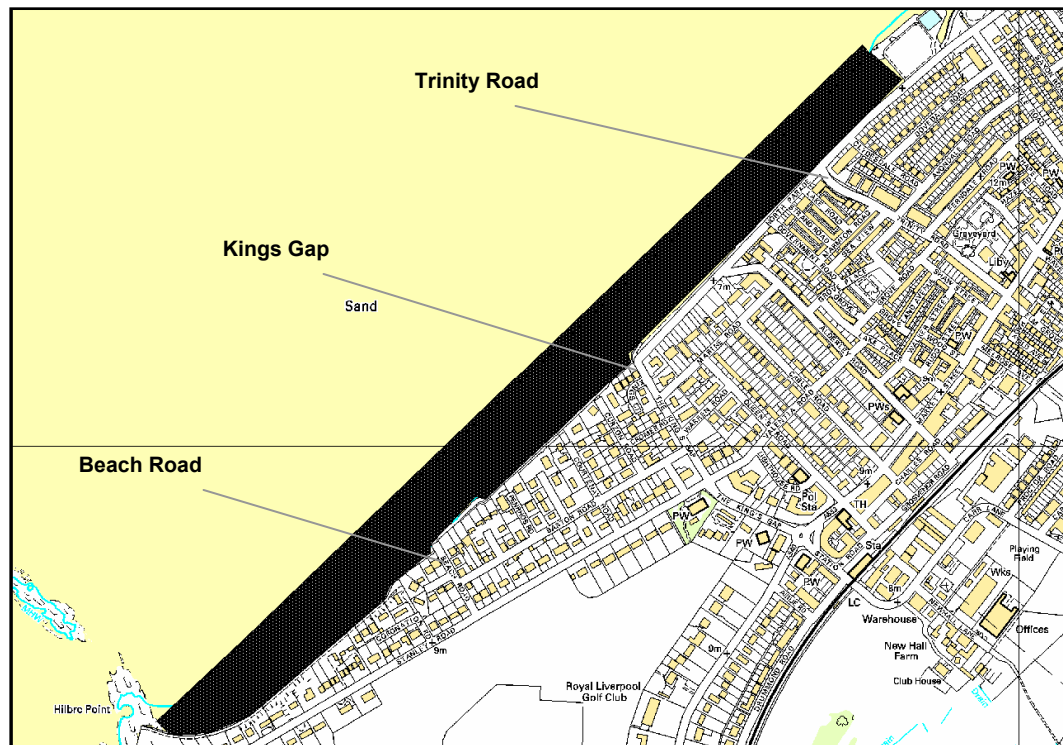
- 1.1 This Site Management Agreement has been written to provide details of management proposals for the next 5 years (2010 – 2015) at Hoylake Beach which is owned and managed by Wirral Council.
- 1.2 These proposals are submitted by Wirral Council as an agreed level of management required for the site and as identified by Wirral Council as part of the Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme and as part of the Wirral Council Corporate Objectives.
- 1.3 A Site Management Agreement has been requested by Natural England in order for them to provide consent for operations within the designated protected site. This format including photographs and additional information about the site is submitted in the hope that it will be a more 'user friendly' document and accessible to all interested groups and individuals rather than a more analytical scientific appraisal of the site.
- 1.4 This Site Management Agreement is also an agreement between Wirral Council and the local area constituents and will be presented at the local Area Forum and to Hoylake Beach user groups for approval.
- 1.5 Other Site Management Agreements will be available for Heswall Foreshore, Thurstaston Beach, West Kirby Bathing Beach, Meols Bathing Beach, Moreton Bathing Beach, Leasowe Bay, Wallasey Bathing Beach and New Brighton Beach.



**Fig. 1 Hoylake Amenity Beach and Foreshore**

## 2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 Hoylake Beach covers an area of approximately 50 acres from Red Rocks to the RNLI Station at Hoyle Road Slipway - a distance of 2 kilometres.
- 2.2 This area has been designated as the safe operational area for the machinery that is used to manage the beach. The area extends 120 metres out from the sea defence wall and is also the area identified in the previous report on Beach Management Projects submitted to English Nature in 2003 prepared by Dr A. Jemmett on behalf of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral.



**Fig. 2 Hoylake Beach**

- 2.3 Hoylake Beach is within the Dee Estuary Special Area of Conservation, which includes the Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest, Ramasr Site and Special Protection Area and the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is also within the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore (proposed) Special Protection Area and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore (proposed) Ramsar Site,
- 2.4 The area of Hoylake Beach (50 acres) is just less than 2% of the total area of Unit 1 of the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (1,065.47 hectares) and is just over 1% of the total area of the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (1,962.08 hectares). It is also 0.125% of the area covered by the Dee Estuary Special Area of Conservation (15,805 hectares).



- 2.5 The beach is not as popular for bathing or watersports as West Kirby or the other Environment Agency designated bathing beaches on Wirral (Meols, Moreton and Wallasey) although usage is increasing, possibly due to the overcrowding that occurs on sunny days at nearby West Kirby. Water Quality results (tested by Wirral Council at Red Rocks for 2009 recorded a Fail. The beach is popular with dog walkers and horse riders throughout the year and is being promoted by the Coastal Rangers as one of the best coastal birdwatching sites in the north west. The site is also being promoted by the Coastal Rangers and Tourism section as a place for outdoor events which have included the World Fire Fighter Games, beach rugby and beach volleyball. The annual Hoylake Lifeboat Open Day is one of the largest events of its kind in the north west region attracting an estimated 30,000 to the site in 2009.
- 2.6 The Wirral Sand Yacht Club operate outside the designated beach area under a licence agreement with Wirral Council and approved by Natural England. Although they operate outside the designated beach area a copy of the licence agreement has been included in the appendix of this report as users of the beach may be affected by the club's activities.



**Fig. 3 Hoylake Beach looking east to the RNLI Station**



**Fig. 4 Hoylake Beach looking east to Kings Gap**

- 2.7 There are open slipways for public pedestrian access at Beach Road (off Stanley Road), Kings Gap, the old lifeboat station, Trinity Road, the new lifeboat station and at Hoyle Road.
- 2.8 Areas of vegetation are found in front of the private sea walls and frontages between Kings Gap and Red Rocks and consist primarily of Glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*) also known as 'Marsh Samphire' and Common Saltmarsh Grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) with some Common Cord Grass (*Spartina anglica*). Intertidal vegetation is almost exclusively Common Cord Grass, concentrated at the most easterly end of the beach, and the upper shore with fewer periods of tidal inundation is mainly Common Saltmarsh Grass.
- 2.9 There is an area of wet mud and sand caused by either storm water run off or a freshwater spring adjacent to the new RNLI station. It extends some 20 metres west of the station slipway and provides a hazard for authorised vehicles using the foreshore including RNLI launch and recovery vehicles and for the machinery used for beach raking and spraying.
- 2.10 Accretion of sand over the entire site leads to a build up of windblown sand against the sea defence wall. Further wind action results in sand deposition over the designated highway and beyond into adjacent private residential housing. This causes a hazard to road users and an inconvenience to home owners.



**Fig. 5 One of the High Tide Birdwatching events organised by the Coastal Rangers**

### 3.0 Wirral's Shoreline Management Plan

- 3.1 The area is within Cell 11 Shoreline Management Plan SMP2 North West England and North Wales. An extract from Cell 11 is shown below:

**North West England and North Wales SMP2 Issues and Objectives Tables**

**COASTAL UNIT D – HILBRE POINT TO PERCH ROCK**

**Location/ feature Key issues and benefits** Hoylake Hoylake is a seaside town and a key destination for recreational water sports with a number of sailing and sand yachting clubs. It is also one of the premier sites for Sand Yachting in Britain with the town's beach, which reaches nearly a quarter mile of shore, being the venue for the European Sand Yacht Championships.

Hoylake is a largely residential area with an active nightlife in the town centre, located at the original village of Hoose.

Further the town supports one of the oldest permanent lifeboat stations in the country, manned by the RNLI.

**Objectives that apply**

- To avoid loss of property due to erosion and/or manage risk of flooding to people and property
- To avoid loss due to erosion of and manage risk of flooding to key community, recreational and amenity facilities
- To minimise the impact of policies on marine operations and activities

**Key Considerations**

The Wirral coastline is bounded by the Dee Estuary in the west and the Mersey Estuary in the east. Much of the frontage is low-lying and therefore has a high flood risk. The key controls on this coastline are the Mersey and Dee estuaries, which have strongly influenced the evolution of the coastline.

Development of the coastline is dependant on the offshore banks and activities in the Dee and to a lesser extent, the Mersey.

Sediment is transported from west to east along the frontage. Sediment is largely supplied to this frontage largely via littoral drift from the North Wales coastline. Littoral drift does not continue across the mouth of the Mersey Estuary. Instead, material is transported into the Mersey Estuary, which acts as a sink for material lost from the Wirral frontage. The area is highly defended and largely urbanised, with the settlements of Hoylake, Moreton and Birkenhead, and recreational facilities such as golf courses and the marine lake at Wallasey.

Potential conflict exists between the continued protection of the frontage whilst fulfilling requirements of the SPA, which is designated for the intertidal sand.



## 4.0 Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme

- 4.1 The Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme is a visitor focussed assessment tool, with the emphasis on recognising the impact the site will have on the visitor experience.
- 4.2 The area covered under the MWQAS for Hoylake differs in the area included for this report as it includes the area of pedestrian promenade, slipways and other facilities not within the designated protected site.
- 4.3 Details of the assessment have been included as part of this site agreement however as they provide a non-biased site description, assessment and aspirations for this coastal area, which are representative of the local authority, its employees, elected members and their constituents. Emphasis in the MWQAS has not been on the designated protected site or the features for which it is protected, which are however taken into account as a priority in other sections of this report.
- 4.4 The MWQAS will assist Wirral Council in deciding priority management of the site for visitors. It provides an opportunity for an honest appraisal of the site and to see shortcomings as opportunities for improvement.

***“Much of the Merseyside coastline is subject to nature conservation designations. The ecological value of these sites provides an opportunity for people to experience nature.....The benefits to the public in experiencing such sites however must be carefully balanced against the site’s ecological value and biodiversity needs”***  
Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme Final Report

***“Careful consideration should be given as to which sites may be promoted through the VAQAS scheme, particularly those with significant nature conservation value - increased visitor numbers can detrimentally impact the very feature that visitors come to see. The benefits of the award must be measured against any negative impacts that may occur as a result of increased marketing and promotion”***  
Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme Final Report



Fig. 6 Hoylake Beach and Promenade looking west towards Red Rocks



- 4.5 The first Site Assessment for Hoylake Beach and Promenade using the MWQAS Form was undertaken on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010 by the Senior Ranger for Wirral's Coast. The results are shown below:

<b>MWRP Typologies</b>			
Non-bathing		National Nature Designation	
International Nature Designation		Informal Recreation Space	
Promenade		Historic Cultural Landscape	
<b>Use</b>			
Local Provision		Tourism Destination	
<b>Primary Function</b>			
Sports		Passive Recreation	
Wildlife		Access	
Dog Friendly		Community Involvement	
Landscape			
<b>Desk Assessment</b>			
Pre-arrival Information	Score 1		<b>20%</b>
<b>Site Assessment</b>			
<b>1) Clean and Tidy</b>			
Litter	Score 4		
Dog Fouling	Score 2		
Anti-social behaviour	Score 4		
Condition	Score 4		<b>70%</b>
<b>2) Green</b>			
Biodiversity	Score 4		
Natural areas	Score 4		
Amenity Areas	Score 4		<b>80%</b>
<b>3) Unpolluted</b>			
Water Quality	Score 0		<b>0%</b>
<b>4) Secure</b>			
Personal Security	Score 4		<b>80%</b>
<b>5) Safe</b>			
Access	Score 5		
Facilities	Score 5		
Dog Control	Score 2		
Water Safety	Score 4		<b>80%</b>
<b>6) Accessible</b>			
Signage	Score 2		
Diverse facilities	Score 4		
Condition of Paths	Score 4		<b>66.7%</b>
<b>7) Socially Inclusive and Fulfilling</b>			
Welcoming	Score 4		<b>80%</b>
<b>8) Economically Viable and Vital</b>			
Marketing/Promotion	Score 3		<b>60%</b>
<b>9) Physically Attractive</b>			
Heritage/Culture	Score 2		
Visually Appealing	Score 4		<b>60%</b>
			<b>Overall Score 66.7%</b>

- 4.6 These initial results show a lack of pre-arrival information, an issue with dog fouling and dog control, poor signage and poor recognition of the heritage/cultural value of the site.
- 4.7 Clean and Tidy - Dog fouling was an issue raised through the 2009 Dog campaign with the Dog Wardens, Community Patrol and Rangers providing information and advice to dog owners at Hoylake during 2009. The Barber Surf Rake can mechanically rake 50 acres of sandy beach in 7 hours.
- 4.8 Green - The Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens have started to patrol areas of Hoylake Beach during the winter months each year to protect the high water wading bird roosts.
- 4.9 Unpolluted - Water quality measured at Red Rocks, adjacent to the amenity beach, in 2009 recorded a 'Fail'.
- 4.10 Accessible - £46,000 has been awarded to Wirral Council's Tourism section to replace Wirral's Slipway signs with updated information, maps and local coastal hazards. New signs will be positioned at Kings Gap, Trinity Road and Hoyle Road Slipways in 2010 and will include information about the protected site.



**Fig. 7 Old outdated and poor quality signage will be replaced with new signs at Kings Gap, Trinity Road and Hoyle Road Slipways**

**A map will show local hazards and text will include local environmental information about the designated protected site**

- 4.11 Socially Inclusive and Fulfilling - Management of the site is primarily as a resort destination which currently provides many of the requirements for visitors including a multi-use site as its 'Primary Function' where visitors feel Safe, Secure and Welcome.
- 4.12 Economically Viable and Vital - In 2006 a public meeting was held at the Kings Gap Court Hotel where 150 members of the public (most were local residents) met with council officers and where, after a presentation on the history, current status and management options available and their consequences, there was unanimous support from the public to remove all vegetation from the foreshore area and to maintain the area as an area of open sandy beach.
- 4.13 Physically Attractive - The Hoylake and Meols Promenade Masterplan prepared by Scott Wilson on behalf of Wirral Council in 2008 addresses some of the above issues including provision of heritage interpretation, new access and new facilities.
- 4.14 Wirral Council recognises the importance of the site both as a highly designated protected site but also as an important area of social activity and recreation and will continue to use the Mersey Waterfront Quality Assurance Scheme to assist in the management of the site.



**Fig. 8 Wirral Sand Yacht Club Regatta**

## 5.0 Operations Requiring Consent from Natural England

5.1 The following is a list of some of the day to day operations undertaken at Hoylake Beach which would **not** require consent from Natural England:

- Vehicle patrol by local authority employees in marked or permit holding vehicles
- Vehicle patrol by RNLI, Coastguard in marked vehicles
- Emergency services use in marked vehicles
- Launching and retrieval of the Hoylake Lifeboat
- Launching and retrieval of other rescue vessels by the RNLI
- Training by the RNLI or emergency services
- Retrieval of boats and moorings by Hoylake Sailing Club, Mersey Harbour Board or their appointed agents

5.2 However consent from Natural England is required in accordance with Section 281 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended) where operations may affect the designation of the site. An analysis of any Possible Effects on the Environment (Test of Significance) where operations are considered to have a significant effect on the site (see Appendix) has been completed for the following activities:

- Beach raking using a comb rake
- Beach raking using a Barber Surf Rake
- Spraying of vegetation
- Removal of accumulated sand

5.3 The Test of Significance undertaken for these operations shows that an Appropriate Assessment is not required for the activities as they have no 'significant effect' on the site for which it is designated. However, as the operations are not directly connected with the management of the site for nature conservation an Appropriate Assessment is required under Regulation (48)1. The Appropriate Assessments have been undertaken for:

- Control of all *Spartina anglica* within the designated amenity beach area
- Control of all other vegetation within the designated amenity beach area
- Removal of accumulated sand

5.4 In addition to these management operations there are activities that are undertaken at Hoylake that assist in the management of the protected area by allowing control through licence agreements or through the local authority's Outdoor Event Management Procedure. These currently include the following but will also include other events and activities.

- Wirral Sand Yacht Club Licence Agreement
- Annual Hoylake Lifeboat Open Day
- Annual Hoylake Sailing Club Beach Bonfire



Area	Frequency		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Heswall Foreshore	Once per week	1.5 hr		1.5					
West Kirby Beach	Whole beach twice per per week	2.5 hr	2.5				2.5		
	1/2 beach 4 times per week	1.5 hr		1.5		1.5		1.5	1.5
Red Rocks	Once a year	1 hr							
Hoylake Beach	Whole beach once per week	5 hr			5				
	1/2 beach twice per week	2.5 hr				2.5		2.5	
Leasowe Bay	Once per week	1.5 hr	1.5						
Wallasey Beach	Whole beach twice per week	2 hr		2			2		
Fort Perch Rock	Once per week	2 hr							2
Total Hours Per Day			4	5	5	4	4.5	4	3.5

**Fig. 9 Beach Surf Rake Operations Schedule for Wirral Beach and Foreshore Areas**



**Fig. 10 The Barber Surf Rake at Hoylake Beach**

## **6.0 Appropriate Assessment**

- 6.1 This Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken as a requirement of the Habitats Regulations 48 (5) to ascertain whether the operations (listed in paragraph 4.2 above) would have an adverse effect on the site for which it is designated.
- 6.2 The amenity beach area has been defined by the safe and practical limits for mechanical beach spraying, raking and sand removal. These limits are set by natural physical processes on the foreshore including mean high and low tide levels, siltation and landscape features of Red Rocks and the built environment of the RNL Station and sea defence wall. There are no proposals to extend this designated area and areas outside the amenity beach area will continue to be subject to the natural processes of sand accretion and succession without intervention until such time as a new Site Management Agreement is drawn up and accepted.
- 6.3 Whilst the mechanical beach raking is required to maintain an area of clean, litter free amenity beach the affect on the designated site is to inhibit the natural succession of saltmarsh development.

#### 6.4 The Appropriate Assessment for each operation is listed below:

##### **Control of all *Spartina anglica* affecting the designated amenity beach area**

The amount of *Spartina anglica* (Common Cord Grass) that will be lost through spraying in 2010 is approximately 1 acre. This is 2% of the amenity beach area. The Dee Estuary SAC is designated as having 16% saltmarsh vegetation. At 2,582 acres of saltmarsh vegetation 1 acre accounts for 0.004%

***'Common Cord Grass often produces extensive monoculture swards of much less intrinsic value to wildlife, and in many areas is considered to be a threat to bird feeding grounds on mudflats'***

UK Biodiversity Action Plan – Habitat Action Plan for Coastal Saltmarsh

It is unlikely that the current area of *Spartina* growth has any affect on the other existing flora and fauna communities however uncontrolled spread of the species may result in a loss of open habitat for the overwintering waders and for which the site is designated as a 'Wetland of International Importance'.

*Spartina anglica* is the subject of many reports and for the purposes of this Site Management Agreement the English Nature Research Report '*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*' has been used as a reference.

The Appropriate Assessment has to take into account the very small area of scattered *Spartina* growth that is to be controlled and the possible long-term and major impacts that a 'do nothing' policy would have on the designated protected site. Using information provided by the reference '*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*' and the fast colonization of areas of foreshore and associated issues with this species that makes it ***'possibly one of the most controversial species worldwide'*** the most obvious choice of management at Hoylake is to eradicate this species before it spreads any further.

The control techniques for *Spartina* include:

- a) Physical Removal - *'only to be effective for single plants and small clones and according to Dyke (1998) it is unlikely that all rhizomes are removed when clones are bigger than 15cms diameter.*

*Mechanical excavation has proved to be a more efficient tool, where access across the mudflat is possible.....but problems can arise from the liberation of sediment and rhizome material. Poorly controlled techniques will allow further colonization by the species as well as disturbance to associated habitats'*

*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*

- b) Rotoburying – *'It is considered to be a successful tool that does not require as much labour as digging, does not add any chemicals to the environment and does not lead to Spartina spread. (Personal comment P. Davey, NNR Site Manager)'*

*After the initial disturbance which led to some individuals being lost, a new niche was created that was colonized rapidly.'*

*The rotoburying technique macerates and buries plants but not necessarily seeds that can germinate leading to the regeneration of the sward. Another limitation identified by Denny and Anderson (1998) in a study at Lindisfarn NNR is that rotoburying cannot be used in soft sediments where Spartina is usually more extensive'*

*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*

- c) Smothering Techniques – *'...it is a labour-intensive technique g treatment over extended periods of time (6 months).....and the cover can be damaged by storms or vandalism creating navigation and conservation problems. As with the decomposition of buried Spartina, smothering may also produce organically enriched sediments and associated problems'*

*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*

- d) Grazing – *‘Despite being an efficient technique not all sites are suitable for grazing’.*  
*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*
- e) Burning – *‘Burning techniques have been used in Tasmania without success. It is a non-selective technique and does not appear to be efficient’.*  
*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*
- f) Herbicides – *‘Dalapon was used successfully to control the spread of Spartina on the amenity beaches of Southport in the Ribble Estuary, where two applications at concentrations of 57kg/ha were found to be the most cost effective method resulting in 91% mortality. It was concluded that the effectiveness of this method depends on the correct timing, matching the plant’s growth cycle to the prevailing tidal and weather conditions, and repeated applications at 3 or 4 yearly intervals may be required.*  
*At Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, the herbicide Roundup PRO, based on glyphosate, has been used as this herbicide translocates down into the Spartina rhizomes, has low toxicity and degrades into non-harmful by-products. Its application is therefore considered not to affect the estuarine ecosystem.*  
*In Wales a combination of Dalapon and Roundup was found to be more successful than the individual application of either herbicide. Furthermore, the use of herbicides was combined with mechanical disturbance by excavators in order to increase the success rates’*  
*Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management*

Previous management of *Spartina* at Hoylake Beach has included hand digging, mechanical excavation, rotoburying, and herbicide application. Whilst rotoburying may be an effective management method it is essential to realise that the technique applied at Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve was in an area of existing saltmarsh and that the area of *Spartina* that was rotoburied was rapidly colonised by other saltmarsh vegetation. Rotoburying is also not possible in areas of soft sediments – typically those found where *Spartina* is growing at Hoylake.

**Conclusion:**

Herbicide application seems to be the best option for managing *Spartina* at Hoylake where excavation of material may lead to further spread and where test digging undertaken here has shown that much of the rhizome is left behind; soft sediment does not allow rotoburying; smothering techniques and grazing are impractical and burning is ineffective.

As stated *‘the effectiveness of this method depends on the correct timing, matching the plant’s growth cycle to the prevailing tidal and weather conditions’.* Previous spraying of herbicide at Hoylake has not been as successful probably due to adverse conditions at the time of applications. Any consent and licensing for spraying of *Spartina* will need to non-date specific allowing the activity to take place at short notice when conditions are most favourable.

Rapid natural expansion of *Spartina* could occur where seeds are dispersed but remain dormant for several years until the substrate is disturbed or the tidal dynamics or microclimate changes and individual ‘clumps’ of *Spartina* develop over a wide area. This phenomenon has been referred to as ‘lurking’. In order to successfully eradicate this species there will also need to be control of *Spartina* outside the designated amenity beach area but not extending beyond a reasonable area from the designated amenity beach.

Spraying will only be undertaken by a registered sprayer using Roundup Pro-biactive and with approval from the Environment Agency. Consent for this operation will be required from Natural England for a period of not less than 5 years.



### Control of all other vegetation within the designated amenity beach area

Regular beach raking to provide a clean, litter free area of amenity beach will inhibit the growth of foreshore vegetation including Common Saltmarsh Grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) and the natural succession of unmanaged intertidal foreshore into saltmarsh. The Dee Estuary SAC is designated as having 16% saltmarsh vegetation. At 2,582 acres of saltmarsh vegetation 50 acres accounts for 1.9%

Regular beach raking will not be over the entire 50 acre site but limited to 40 acres in order that the Common Cord Grass (*Spartina anglica*) vegetation and seed bank is not disturbed and managed only by herbicide application. (See fig. 11).

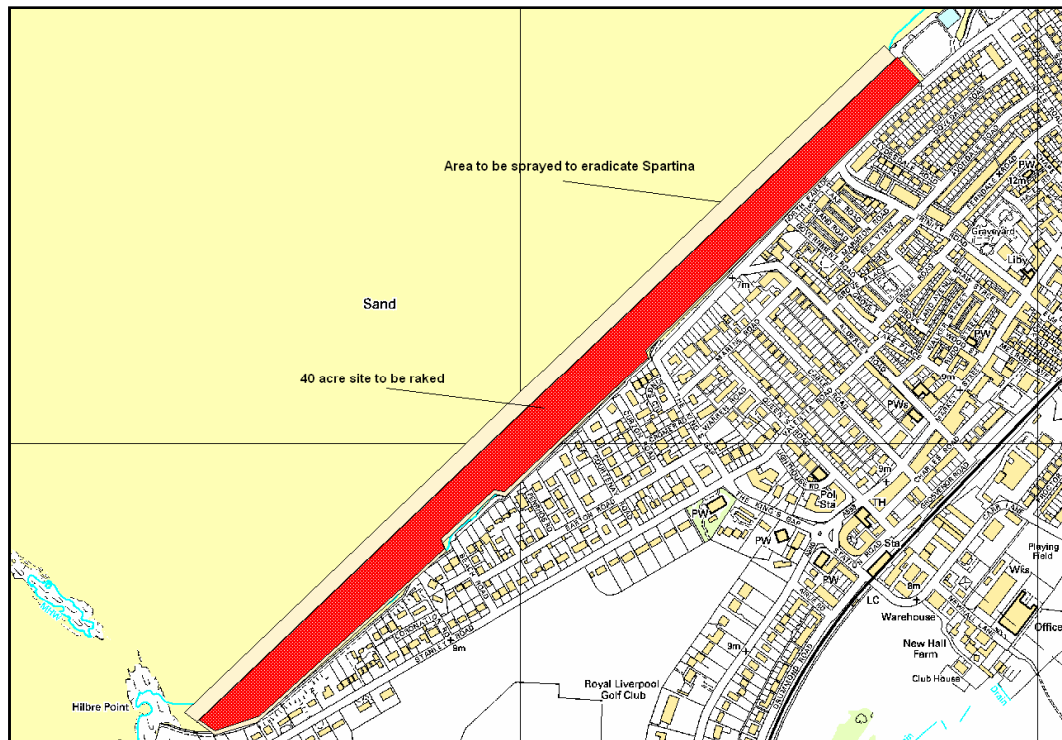
Initially spraying of *Puccinellia maritima* may be required at the beginning of each summer season followed by the use of a comb rake to remove vegetation within the designated amenity beach area before the Barber Surf Rake can be used.

The north Wirral foreshore is attracting an increasing number of overwintering waders and summer gulls and terns. This may be due to regular disturbance of roost sites in the adjacent Dee and Mersey Estuaries but may also be due to the areas of open intertidal mud and sand, free from vegetation and rich in invertebrates, attracting certain species such as the Bar-tailed Godwit that prefer unvegetated intertidal sand and mud as feeding grounds. Allowing the natural succession of all areas of foreshore into saltmarsh could therefore result in a loss of important feeding and roost sites and a reduction in the internationally important numbers of wading birds for which the site is a proposed Ramsar Site.

There is adjacent saltmarsh development from Red Rocks to West Kirby Beach within the Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest. *Spartina* clumps and spread of *Puccinellia* takes place with no vegetation management regime in place and provides a clearly defined area of naturally developing intertidal vegetation between two amenity beach areas.

#### **Conclusion:**

Establishing specific designated areas for amenity beach management provides a clear method of managing the foreshore within the protected site. Regular raking will inhibit vegetation growth and provide an area of open intertidal foreshore important for some bird species.



**Fig. 11 Spraying and Raking regimes at Hoylake Beach**

### **Removal of accumulated sand**

Sand that has been transported from the designated protected site to the adjacent highway will be deemed to have left the protected area and will be used to manage the dune system at West Kirby – part of the Red Rocks Site of Special Scientific Interest. Dune blow outs here are common due to visitor pressure and natural erosion. Adding sand that has left the adjacent protected North Wirral Foreshore SSSI will assist in the development of this important dune habitat.

Sand that has accumulated at the sea defence wall will be removed and transported to an area within the protected site where it will be 'recycled'. Removal of very small amounts of Glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*), Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris*) and other vegetation will result through periodic sand removal where areas of windblown sand against the sea defence wall have become vegetated.

#### **Conclusion:**

Windblown sand from the designated site will not have vegetation transported to the adjacent site as part of a dune maintenance programme. Sand from within the protected site that may have become vegetated will not be used for dune maintenance and vegetation will not be introduced.

## **7.0 Future Long Term Implications**

- **Development of *Spartina* clumps beyond an area of mechanical spraying**
- **Development of saltmarsh outside the designated amenity beach area**
- **Sediment deposition outside the area of sand raking and creation of a 'canalised' foreshore**
- **Change in public/local residents requirements**
- **Change in beach management policy**
- **Change in environmental factors/sea level rise**

## 8.0 Hoylake Beach Users Group

7.1 The following are groups that could be representative of local interest at the site and who should approve the contents of this Site Management Agreement:

- Hoylake Sailing Club  
Steve Stratton  
Beacon Road  
West Kirby
- Friends of Hoylake and Meols Parks and Open Spaces  
Elaine Whalley  
57A Cable Road  
Hoylake  
CH47 2AZ
- Wirral Sand Yacht Club  
Julian Priest (Secretary)
- RNLi  
John Curry (Operations Manager)  
Hoylake RNLi Station  
Hoylake Promenade  
Hoylake
- Hoylake Model Boat Club  
Mr Jeff Chequer (Secretary)  
20 Robin Way  
Upton  
CH49 7NA
- British Horse Society
- Hoylake Residents Committee
- Natural England  
Hannah Gay  
North West Region  
Electra Way,  
Crewe,  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ
- Environment Agency

## 9.0 Appendix

### 9.1 Natural England Site Assessment and Map

**Staff member  
responsible for  
SSSI unit:**

Hannah Gay

**Unit ID:**

1013417 (Unit 1)

**Unit area:**

1065.47 hectares

**Main habitat:**

Littoral sediment

**Condition:**

Favourable

**Latest  
assessment  
date:**

26 March 2004

**Condition  
assessment  
comment:**

Lower numbers of waders. Localised clumps of Spartina at SJ21898958. Site will be part of 2004 Biotope Survey which will also make condition assessment according to Common Standards Guidance. Current assessment based on overview of site using Liverpool Bay Coastal Group Aerials produced in 1999 and 2003 and site visit in March 2004. Extent appears to be unchanged.

**Staff member  
responsible for  
SSSI unit:**

Hannah Gay

**Unit ID:**

1013418 (Unit 2)

**Unit area:**

807.34 hectares



**Main habitat:** Littoral sediment

**Condition:** Favourable

**Latest assessment date:** 26 March 2004

**Condition assessment comment:** Good numbers of gulls and waders, mainly Redshank and Curlew observed at SJ27919294, SJ27189228 and SJ26519205. Wind blown sand on foreshore at SJ26789206. Report of cockle fishing by Paul in area around SJ26519205. Some low scale bait digging, but increased scale at SJ24189112 with car tyres and pipes on foreshore. Site will be part of 2004 Biotope Survey which will also make condition assessment according to Common Standards Guidance. Current assessment based on overview of site using Liverpool Bay Coastal Group Aerials produced in 1999 and 2003 and site visit in March 2004. Extent appears to be unchanged

**Staff member responsible for SSSI unit:** Hannah Gay

**Unit ID:** 1013419 (Unit 3)

**Unit area:** 89.27 hectares

**Main habitat:** Littoral sediment

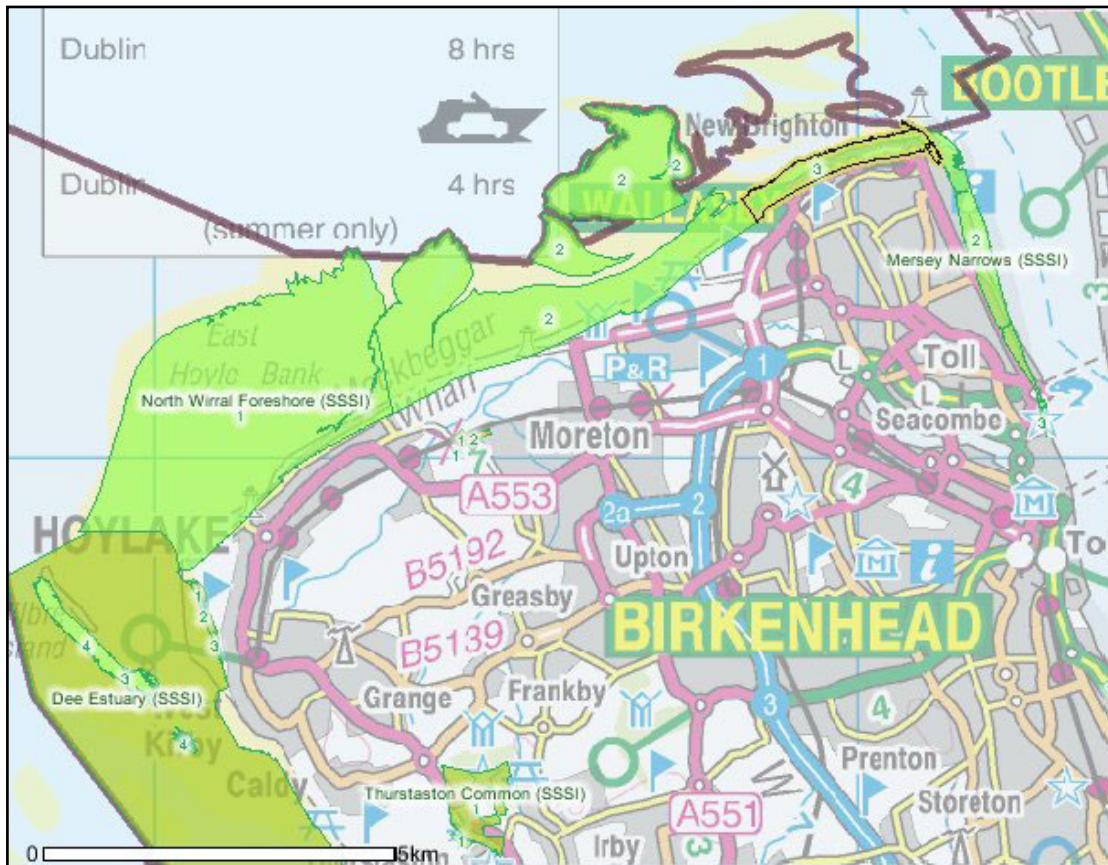
**Condition:** Favourable

**Latest assessment** 26 March 2004

**date:**

**Condition  
assessment  
comment:**

Good numbers of gulls and waders, mainly Redshank and Curlew observed at SJ30219430, SJ29659412 and SJ28799366. Occasional Oystercatcher. Some very low scale bait digging. Site will be part of 2004 Biotope Survey which will also make condition assessment according to Common Standards Guidance. Current assessment based on overview of site using Liverpool Bay Coastal Group Aerials produced in 1999 and 2003 and site visit in March 2004. Extent appears to be unchanged



## 9.2 Appropriate Assessment for Proposed Activities at Hoylake Beach

Activity	Designation feature likely to be affected	Effect of Activity	Considerations	Conclusions
<p>1) Beach Raking using comb rake</p>	<p>The area to be raked accounts for just over 1% of the North Wirral foreshore SSSI and is in an area where there is little existing vegetation, confined to areas outside any previous amenity beach management or close to the sea defense wall. Vegetation species found in these areas consists of common saltmarsh-grass (<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>), glasswort (<i>Salicornia europaea</i>) together with common cord grass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>). The operation of the Barber Surf Rake only differs in that of the comb rake in that it only penetrates the sand layer up to 120mm. Whilst this ensures that with regular raking vegetation does not become established it reduces the impact on sub-sand species that may be affected by long term scouring of the habitat.</p>	<p>a) A managed amenity beach area with no vegetation b) Possibly increased usage by members of the public - but taking pressure off other parts of the designated site including West Kirby saltmarsh and the adjacent Red Rocks SSSI. c) By having an obvious area for beach activities it will hopefully encourage better overall management of the site.</p>	<p>a) Previous consent has been given by Natural England (English Nature) for management of vegetation at this site. b) By maintaining a beach area within the SSSI requests for events and activities can be directed towards the use of the managed beach area and away from the more sensitive areas of the protected site c) The area is an important feeding ground for overwintering waders. Development of vegetation into saltmarsh may disperse this population. d) In more recent years the area has become increasingly popular as a summer roost for gull/tern spp. This may be due to displacement from West Kirby and West Kirby Bathing Beach. e) Rising beach levels and lower mean low and high tide water levels means that vegetation will ultimately gain a foothold especially in areas where machinery cannot reach. Management of vegetation is therefore only short term and not long term.</p>	<p>a) This part of the protected site could be regarded as the sacrificial area where beach events and activities are allowed to occur. This therefore allows managers to ensure that the greater part of the SSSI is protected. b) Wading birds, gulls and terns require areas of open sandy foreshore. Allowing saltmarsh vegetation to develop here could lead to a dispersal of the local populations and loss of an important wildlife habitat. c) Regular beach raking will ensure that the beach area is kept free from vegetation throughout the year also reducing the amount of spraying required to stop the spread of vegetation to within the amenity beach area. d) Beach raking should therefore be allowed to take place all year within the amenity beach area and undertaken at periods of low water to ensure that there is no conflict between this operation and the different user groups or at times of high water when wading birds or gulls/terns will be present.</p>
<p>2) Beach raking using Barber Surf Rake</p>	<p>Common saltmarsh-grass (<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>) and glasswort (<i>Salicornia europaea</i>) together with some common cord grass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) is sprayed within the amenity beach area.</p>	<p>a) eradication of any rooted vegetation within the amenity beach area.</p>	<p>a) Previous consent has been given by Natural England (English Nature) for management of vegetation at this site. b) By maintaining a beach area within the SSSI requests for events and activities can be directed towards the use of the managed beach area and away from the more sensitive areas of the protected site c) The area is an important feeding ground for overwintering waders. Development of vegetation into saltmarsh may disperse this population. d) In more recent years the area has become increasingly popular as a summer roost for gull/tern spp. This may be due to displacement from West Kirby and West Kirby Bathing Beach. e) Rising beach levels and lower mean low and high tide water levels means that vegetation will ultimately gain a foothold especially in areas where machinery cannot reach. Management of vegetation is therefore only short term and not long term.</p>	<p>a) This part of the protected site could be regarded as the sacrificial area where beach events and activities are allowed to occur. This therefore allows managers to ensure that the greater part of the SSSI is protected. b) Wading birds, gulls and terns require areas of open sandy foreshore. Allowing saltmarsh vegetation to develop here could lead to a dispersal of the local populations and loss of an important wildlife habitat. c) Occasional spraying will ensure that the beach area is kept free from vegetation throughout the year also reducing the amount of spraying required to stop the spread of vegetation to within the amenity beach area. d) Vegetation spraying should therefore be allowed to take place at any time of year within the amenity beach area and undertaken at periods of low water to ensure that there is no conflict between this operation and the different user groups or at times of high water when wading birds or gulls/terns will be present. e) Spraying of vegetation has been the most effective method of foreshore vegetation management and should be the favoured method of removal.</p>
<p>3) Spraying of vegetation</p>	<p>Sand accumulates as a result of tidal and wind action against the sea wall and slipways within the amenity beach area. Some vegetation may take root between periods of removal.</p>	<p>a) All sand removed from against the sea wall or slipways will be re-cycled within the designated protected site. Only sand which has left the designated protected site will be removed elsewhere. b) Work is undertaken by approved council contractors supervised by council officers ensuring only the agreed level of work is undertaken.</p>	<p>a) That sand removal is undertaken whenever levels become unacceptably high.</p>	<p>a) That sand removal is undertaken whenever levels become unacceptably high.</p>
<p>4) Removal of accumulated sand</p>	<p>Sand accumulates as a result of tidal and wind action against the sea wall and slipways within the amenity beach area. Some vegetation may take root between periods of removal.</p>	<p>a) All sand removed from against the sea wall or slipways will be re-cycled within the designated protected site. Only sand which has left the designated protected site will be removed elsewhere. b) Work is undertaken by approved council contractors supervised by council officers ensuring only the agreed level of work is undertaken.</p>	<p>a) That sand removal is undertaken whenever levels become unacceptably high.</p>	<p>a) That sand removal is undertaken whenever levels become unacceptably high.</p>

### 9.3 Environment Agency Herbicide Licences at Hoylake Beach

**Mr Josef Hanik  
Leasowe Lighthouse  
North Wirral Coastal Park  
(Off) Pasture Road  
Moreton  
Wirral  
CH46 4TA**

**Our ref: HERBC000694 &  
HERBC000746**

**Your ref:**

**Date: 16 August 2010**

Dear Mr Hanik,

**Food and Environment Protection Act 1995 (Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, as amended) – request for Environment Agency agreement to the use of herbicides to control the growth of weeds near to a water body – reference number: HERBC000694 & HERBC000746**

The Agency has no objection to you proceeding with the use of herbicides near water at Hoylake between national grid reference SJ 2150 8950 and SJ 2200 9000 which is near to the Dee Estuary between April & November 2010 – 2013 provided that:

- 1) The application proceeds as notified on form AqHerb01. If you change the way you propose to proceed you will need to resubmit your application for agreement.
- 2) The manufacturers' instructions and the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986 are complied with;
- 3) Spraying is carried out in the correct conditions and kept to a minimum;
- 4) No other product (i.e. an adjuvant) is used unless it is approved for use in or near water.
- 5) Care is taken to avoid the potential contamination of any nearby abstractions.
- 6) No other legal water interests are affected.
- 7) Spraying with Roundup BioActive Gold and mechanical raking may take place between April and November 2010 until 2015, at low water and avoiding times when large populations of bird are present at the site. Any spraying or raking outside of this time frame can only be undertaken with the prior agreement of Natural England.
- 8) The area to be sprayed and/or mechanically raked is maintained as a high water roost and any spraying activity reflects this protection by ceasing at high water when birds are present.

- 9) All spraying is undertaken by a qualified person and follows the protocols set down by the herbicide manufacturer and the Environment Agency as regards its use.

We know of no surface water abstractions within 500 m of the site.

Smaller private water supplies do not require an abstraction licence from us and we are therefore not able to provide details of these abstractions to you. The proposed operation however should not affect any other lawful water uses such as these.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

**Georgina Fellows**  
**Biodiversity Technical Specialist**

For telephone enquiries please ring: Becky McAllister 01772 714027

## 9.4 Natural England Consent for Activities at Hoylake Beach

10<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Josef Hanik  
Senior Ranger – Wirral's Coast  
North Wirral Coastal Park,  
Leasowe Lighthouse  
Pasture Road,  
Moreton,  
Wirral  
CH46 4TA



NATURAL  
ENGLAND

Wirral to Wyre Team  
North West Area  
Crewe Business  
Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 4651  
M 07795 316 922

### **By email – No hard copy to follow**

To Josef Hanik on behalf of Metropolitan Borough of Wirral,

### **The Dee Estuary SSSI, SAC, SPA & Ramsar site North Wirral Foreshore SSSI Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore pSPA & pRamsar**

### **Assent of Natural England under Section 28H of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**

Thank you for your notice dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010 regarding the proposed activities Wirral Council wish to undertake on the amenity beach stretching from the Hoyle Road Slipway to Hilbre Point as documented in the Hoylake Site Management Agreement. These activities, as listed in the Hoylake Site Management Agreement are to:

- spray both *Spartina anglica* and *Puccinellia maritima* using the approved herbicide Roundup BioActive Gold
- spraying of isolated *Spartina anglica* clumps using the approved herbicide Roundup BioActive Gold with hand held lance sprayer (as documented on supplementary map)
- mechanically rake the amenity beach using either a comb rake or a Barber Surf rake
- the removal of accumulated windblown sand and for it to be 'recycled' within the protected site

The proposed operations are within the Dee Estuary SSSI, SAC, SPA & Ramsar site, the North Wirral Foreshore SSSI and the Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore pSPA & pRamsar site. However, given the details within the documentation submitted alongside this request, including an Appropriate Assessment with respect to the international designations, it is the opinion of Natural England that the works will not significantly impact on any of these designated sites.

As such Natural England gives assent to the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral to undertake the proposals made in your notice of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010 under S28H of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) but with the following caveats:

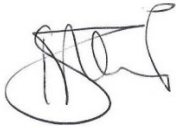


1. That spraying with Roundup BioActive Gold and mechanical raking may take place between April and November 2010 until 2015, at low water and avoiding times when large populations of bird are present at the site. Any spraying or raking outside of this time frame can only be undertaken with the prior agreement of Natural England.
2. That the area to be sprayed and/or mechanically raked is maintained as a high water roost and any spraying activity reflects this protection by ceasing at high water when birds are present.
3. That all spraying is undertaken by a qualified person and follows the protocols set down by the herbicide manufacturer and the Environment Agency as regards its use.

Natural England also brings to your attention that, as a S28G body of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), you are required to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of your functions to further the conservation and enhancement of the SSSI.

If you wish to change the proposed operation, or carry out additional operations for which assent has not yet been given, or if a time period given in your letter of date has expired, you are required to give further written notice to Natural England.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Mudie', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Kate Mudie

Marine Advisor  
Wirral to the Wyre  
Team