

South Walney Cumbria Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve

The October 2015 meeting of the Cumbria Local Access Forum involved a visit to Cumbria Wildlife Trust's South Walney Nature Reserve. Walney Island was recently announced as Stretch 4 of the England Coast Path. Three members of Natural England's Coastal Access Team joined the group, to hear about some of the issues faced in deciding the exact location of the coastal path around Walney Island. The nature reserve is of international importance for many protected bird species, which have been able to use the reserve for breeding, feeding and resting since 1963. Visitors are encouraged to stay on the marked trails, to keep off the beaches and no dogs are allowed, in order to reduce disturbance to ground nesting birds and to seals. CWT is keen to encourage more visitors, and has commissioned Art Gene to produce a plan for improved access, particularly near the reserve entrance, where a new fully accessible hide is planned overlooking Gate Pool. It was a very short walk from the east to west side of Walney, where at a very high tide breaking waves showed the rapid coastal erosion occurring here.



The formal afternoon meeting was held in the fine former Technical College offices of Art Gene in Barrow-in-Furness. A short presentation gave a flavour of Art Gene's plans for imaginative bird hides at South Walney, including renovation of the old search light emplacement. A new project called Allotment Soup was introduced, where local people are encouraged to grow their own food, and experiments may ensue to grow wheat. Historical evidence shows that Walney was the bread basket for Furness Abbey.

The afternoon meeting heard about

the many meetings attended by the Chair, and members raised many issues of news and concern. Recurrent issues were the progress towards funding for an Arnside estuary crossing and procedures for footpath diversions, while the legal status of the bridge at Greenodd was discussed. News announced last week about the approved extensions to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks may reopen discussions of a Cumbria wide Local Access Forum. The next meeting will be held in Carlisle on 19th January 2016.



October 2015