

Coastal Urban Fringe

Location

This sub type is found around Flookburgh, Ulverston, Walney and Millom in the south of the county and around Silloth and the coastal edge between Workington and Maryport in the north and west.

Key Characteristics

- Low lying flat land
- Urban influences linked to tourism development, derelict buildings and major transport routes
- Strong man-made landforms on coastal edges
- Mixed land cover of mown grass, pasture, scrub and semi natural grassland
- Weak field patterns.

Physical character

These are generally flat or gently undulating land largely based on fluvial drift, marine alluvium and undulating boulder clay on Triassic mudstones and sandstones. The land is up to 15m AOD.

Land cover and land use

The areas characterised by urban, industrial and leisure related development, derelict and unused buildings and transportation routes. In parts of the Duddon Estuary and Morecambe Bay the fringe areas are adjacent to coastal beaches and mudflats. These along with agricultural land, playing fields and recent man made landforms such as slag banks associated with former industrial sites provide an open character to the seascape.

Land cover is typically mixed; predominantly pasture, but sometimes mown grass or semi-natural grassland and scrub. Fields are small and patterns are weak. Field

division is often by hedges or fences. Hedges are sparse and gappy where they occur.

The areas along the coastal edges are usually hard and man-made characterised by roads, promenades, sea dykes and sea defences. Roads, railways, large scale wind turbines and pylons cut across the seascape around settlements. Holiday parks and redundant buildings and sites are frequently found, as are unmaintained fences and hedges. The urban characteristics of adjacent areas are increasing in this seascape with extension to business parks and leisure facilities, particularly around Carlisle and Barrow.

Ecology

This landscape supports a surprising wealth of wildlife, often, but not exclusively, associated with former industrial sites. Areas of iron slag are often colonised by herb-rich grasslands, which can support uncommon plants and wildlife. Previously developed land around Workington and Maryport support a significant population of small blue butterfly and purple broomrape. Great crested newts and natterjack toads are frequent in damp ground and pools within this landscape; and where it adjoins areas of saltmarsh and intertidal sand and mudflat areas can be used as a high tide roost by wintering and passage waders and wildfowl such as whooper swans, pink footed goose and barnacle goose. Hodbarrow Lagoon is of importance for breeding and wintering birds and scarce aquatic plants such as spiral tasselweed. Previously developed land also supports mosaic habitats of pen land, grassland, scrub, pools and heathland.

Historic and cultural character

There are rich Haematite deposits in Low Furness (Lindal), Millom (Hodbarrow), Egremont (Florence Mine) and west Cumbria. Monks of Furness Abbey first

exploited Furness Iron “industrially” in the 12th/13th century. There are rich coal deposits in west Cumbria. Further afield it was heavily involved in the slave trade between west Africa and the West Indies and American Colonies. From these it gained rum, sugar, cotton and tobacco. Cumberland rum butter, Kendal mint cake and Kendal snuff have all derived from this trade routed primarily through Whitehaven and Lancaster.

Whitehaven is important as the first classically planned new town in England, dating from the late 17th century, but there were others that came later along the west Cumbria coast in response to maritime trade and industry. These include Maryport, Harrington, Silloth, Askam, Barrow and Millom. Barrow-in-Furness is a Victorian model town, planned on grid pattern, utilising the natural harbour and local Haematite deposits for building steel ships. Iron-master, John Wilkinson built the first iron ship on the River Severn, having first experimented with a small version on Witherslack Mosses. He was a leading light of 18th century industrial revolution and was involved with Backbarrow Iron Furnace. Other features of John Wilkinson’s iron legacy can be found around Lindale and Castle Head House, which he built.

The cultural heritage of this zone is rich and highly variable from area to area. Near Silloth 20th century military remains are a significant feature in the landscape. Around Barrow the landscape is marked by former industrial manufacturing and mining sites. On Walney Island there is much below-ground evidence of prehistoric habitation and land use.

Perceptual character

This landscape is busy with many uses and a variety of land cover. It can have an air of neglect where buildings and land have become run down. It has a strong association both with the urban character of nearby villages, towns and cities and the open and undeveloped adjacent landscapes. Roads, railways, buildings and derelict sites detract from the unique attraction of sea views, beaches and water. Open and less developed parts provide an important link to interesting sea views and expansive skies. In these parts the time of day, seasons and weather can influence the character and experience of the landscape, especially when looking out to sea.

Sensitive characteristics or features

The high ecological value of some former industrial sites is sensitive to changes in land management and development. The views across adjacent landscapes to open sea and expansive skies are sensitive to development that would enclose or interrupt these views.

Vision

The qualities of this landscape and seascape will be enhanced, restored and improved as important settings for recreation. In order to foster strong local ownership and distinctiveness, improvements will be made regarding community involvement. The rural and natural qualities of these areas will be reinforced and there will be the development of a bold landscape structure to unify disparate uses. This will be achieved through the conservation of rural green areas and a reduction in the impact of development in prominent locations. Where possible, derelict and old industrial sites will be restored through positive development and management schemes, reflecting any historic or biodiversity value and landscape works will soften coastal edges, protect significant views and improve recreation facilities. In the farmed hinterlands hedgerows will be restored, natural grassland and scrub fringes will be conserved and extended and woodland will be created in more sheltered locations.

Changes in the Landscape

Over the next 10 – 20 years this landscape could be subject to the following changes or issues:

Climate Change and Coastal Processes

- Sea level rise and increased storminess may lead to pressure for further hard sea defence works to mitigate against flooding and other consequences.

Management Practices

- The farmed hinterland can sometimes suffer by neglect of agricultural management that may be a reaction to fragmentation of holdings or public access pressures.

- Mown grassland and large areas of concrete and tarmac weaken the natural distinctiveness provided by scrub woodland and grassland.

Development

- Fragmented and sporadic development has a negative influence on the character of this landscape. New housing and business development could reinforce a sporadic characteristic.
- The development of brownfield land could erode important habitats that have developed, particularly on sites that have been left vacant and neglected for some years.
- Farm diversification could lead to an increase in the use of farm land for horse grazing and equestrian uses could result in changes to field patterns and boundaries. An introduction of stables and ménages could cause incremental change the character of the farmed areas.
- The coastal edge is attractive to visitors and interest for recreational and tourism development is likely to continue in these areas.
- Energy infrastructure could be introduced and the national grid could be upgraded resulting in new, larger pylons and substations. This could affect the character of some of the less developed parts of the coastal urban fringe.

Access and Recreation

- Over the next decade the planned implementation of enhanced access to the whole of the English coast could result in some disturbance to wildlife in sensitive locations at certain times of the year.
- Coastal access will be improved to support the coastal open access programme. Space will be needed to allow the route to shift in this dynamic area and in response to any future coastal erosion.
- These areas provide good opportunities for large numbers of people to appreciate the surrounding landscapes and seascapes, particularly from promenades coastal roads. Interest in such activities is likely to continue to be popular.
- Recreation pressure on the coastal edge has led to an extension of mown grass areas or hard urban edges.

Guidelines

Climate Change and Coastal Processes

- Encourage Shoreline Management Plan responses to be sensitive to undeveloped nature of parts of the seascape and encourage coordinated policies for coastal protection that helps avoid piecemeal actions.
- Ensure that areas under threat from climate change have adequate defensive measures in place whether through managed retreat, soft 'accretion' solutions, re-wetting of the areas or hard defences if absolutely necessary.

Natural Features

- Conservation and management of coastal grassland by for example relaxing mowing regimes, managing public access, implementing restoration programmes and controlling scrub encroachment.
- Restore and reclaim derelict airfields, industrial sites and mining areas to remove eyesores, enhance open mosaic and semi-natural habitats and to make a positive contribution to the landscape.
- Encourage the protection and enhancement of habitat for the small blue butterfly along the coast between Workington and Maryport.

Cultural Features

- Retain and manage hedgerows in a traditional way encouraging restoration and maintenance of locally distinctive and historic boundary treatments such as cobblestone and turf hedge banks.
- Discourage introduction of fences to replace or 'gap-up' hedges and restore fenced boundaries to traditional hedgerows.
- Where a dilapidated pattern of fields may no longer function as part of a productive farm unit and their value in serving present day needs is questionable consideration should be given to removing some field boundaries to create open 'commons', and creating new woodlands that reflect topographic variation and help define public and private spaces.

Development

- Protect 'green' areas from sporadic and peripheral development. Support the retention and development of 'green gaps', green infrastructure and ecosystem services approaches in Local Development Frameworks where they would help maintain distinctive, undeveloped characteristics.

- Encourage new development on brownfield and vacant sites to protect and enhance habitats, such as those found in Workington and Maryport that support the small blue butterfly.
- Minimise the impact of new development by careful siting, design and high standards of landscape treatment particularly where public views are affected.
- Minimise the impact of major developments such as large scale wind energy, roads, pylons, masts and offshore infrastructure by careful siting in less sensitive areas, maximising screening from public view and following high standards of design and landscape treatment. Open and exposed sites and those that affect key views should be avoided, especially where development would become the dominant feature.
- Encourage horse grazing and equestrian uses to respect field boundaries and field patterns. Stables and other facilities should be sited sensitively with appropriate landscape mitigation to prevent the erosion of the pastoral farmland character.
- Establish new woodland belts or thick hedgerows along the edges of developments to soften their impact, provide a backcloth, define limits of urban expansion and integrate isolated development.
- Manage and restock existing woodland and hedgerow screens.
- Unify detailing such as street furniture, lighting and signing respecting any local distinctiveness and historic identity.
- Unify boundary treatments favouring locally distinctive elements such as cobblestone walls or stone and turf banked hedges.
- Upgrade existing rights of way and other paths with appropriate surfacing, waymarking, gates, gaps, bridges, planting, removal of eyesores and enhancement of views.

Access and Recreation

- Support the roll out of coastal access and encourage sensitively sited coastal access and recreational infrastructure. Coastal access footpaths, areas and facilities should be improved and developed to be compatible with the undeveloped and natural character of this sub type.
- In line with the Marine and Coastal Access Act consideration should be given to routing coastal access footpaths along appropriate sea defence structures.
- In areas where coastal access will introduce new routes appropriate access management may be needed in sensitive locations at certain times of the year to minimise disturbance to wildlife.
- Seek to improve the network and enjoyment of rights of way and other paths particularly circular and linking routes while protecting neighbouring land and sensitive habitats.
- Establish new planting to provide shelter, enclosure, interest and direct views.