



# **Future of Formby 2018: Public Consultation Report**

**July-September 2018**

**Date of issue: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

## **FUTURE OF FORMBY PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT 2018**

**This report summarises the results of public consultation activities carried out in Formby and the surrounding areas between July and September 2018. It has been produced by the National Trust Future of Formby Project team as a record of residents' views on three key questions. A full transcript of written comments received is available on request by contacting [TalkingFormby@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:TalkingFormby@nationaltrust.org.uk)**

If you have any comments or queries regarding this summary report please contact:

Fiona Matthews, Community Involvement and Participation officer

E-mail: [TalkingFormby@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:TalkingFormby@nationaltrust.org.uk)

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Community Involvement at Formby</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.1 Public Consultations</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1.1 Development of the Future of Formby Booklet	
3.1.2 Consultation process	
3.1.3 Consultation events	
3.1.4 Reach and Community response	
<b>3.2 The 'Future of Formby' Proposals</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Summary of findings</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.1 Improving nature conservation</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1.1 Proposal: Work with coastal processes and embrace natural change	
4.1.2 Proposal: Enhance and connect habitats along the coast in our care	
4.1.3 Proposal: Protect the remote character of the areas to the North and South	
4.1.4 Proposal: Ensure that heavily used visitor routes are robust, and divert 'busy day' visitors from vulnerable areas	
4.1.5 Other comments around conservation and care of the site	

<b>4.2 Working more closely with the Formby community</b>	<b>13</b>
4.2.1 Proposal: Create opportunities for public involvement in caring for the Formby coast	
4.2.2 Proposal: Develop new traffic and parking strategies and communicate better at busy times	
4.2.3 Proposal: Identify ways to work more closely with Formby’s business community	
<b>4.3 Improving the experience of those who visit National Trust Formby</b>	<b>16</b>
4.3.1 Proposal: Provide catering, toilets and a place for people to meet at Lifeboat Road.	
4.3.2 Proposal: Offer people opportunities to enjoy the site in their own way, all year round.	
4.3.3 Proposal: Maintain parking across the site and replace parking spaces lost to erosion.	
<b>4.4 Other frequently raised topics</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. Conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.1 Stay updated</b>	<b>22</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

The National Trust at Formby is developing strategies for the future care of the Formby coast. The involvement of stakeholders and the local community will maximise benefits for the natural environment, wildlife, local people and visitors. This document summarises results of a consultation programme carried out between May and September 2018, on broad proposals which aim to improve nature conservation and benefit visitors and the local community.

Proposals were outlined in the 'Future of Formby' booklet and discussed at meetings of a key stakeholder group and a community involvement panel. The wider community were consulted through a series of locally publicised events within Formby and the local area. Over 250 conversations were held across these meetings and events, and 41 detailed written submissions were received.

Proposals focused on three main areas, and responses to these are summarised below:

- **Improving nature conservation**
  - There was support for the National Trust's record of caring for the coast while embracing natural change, but some concern that 'uncontrolled' erosion could threaten the natural and built environment.
  - There was support for protecting the rare dune species and habitats. Some respondents expressed concerns around tree removal.
  - There was strong support for maintaining parts of the site as 'quieter' areas and diverting the main flow of visitors away from fragile areas at busy times.
  
- **Working more closely with the local community**
  - There was a desire for more opportunities for local people, and especially young people, to participate in caring for the Formby coast.
  - The management of traffic and queues at busy times presented problems for some local residents, and there was concern that any new facilities at Lifeboat road could exacerbate this problem.
  - There was support for building partnerships with local businesses, and encouraging coastal visitors to support the Formby village economy.
  
- **Improving the experience of visitors to the coast**
  - Almost all respondents approved of the provision of toilets at Lifeboat Road. Many also supported new catering facilities although there was concern that this could attract more visitors to the area.
  - It was felt that developments should be in keeping with the character of the coast and environmentally sustainable.
  - A wide range of suggestions were made for improving traffic congestion at busy times. Some respondents called for more car parking spaces on site, while others felt that this would damage the environment and could attract more visitors.
  - There was support for providing a varied and inclusive experience for visitors although some people expressed concern around potential misuse of the site and facilities.

## 2. Background

The coast at Formby is much loved by local people and visitors from further afield for its expanse of beach, rolling dunes and pine woodland. These habitats are key to the conservation of species such as natterjack toads, red squirrels and sand lizards, and Formby's importance has been recognised with its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The National Trust has a commitment to care for the coast for the benefit of wildlife and the people that love it. There are both challenges and opportunities arising from this commitment (see Box 1) and the Formby point project has been set up to develop a strategy for caring for the site into the future. We are committed to involving local people in the development of solutions that can balance the needs of nature conservation, the Formby community and visitors to the site. Changes in the way the site is cared for have an impact within the community, and the National Trust has developed a programme of community engagement and consultation to ensure that residents, businesses and other stakeholders are able to contribute to shaping Formby's future.

### **Box 1. Key challenges and opportunities for Formby**

- Formby provides a thriving habitat for native wildlife. The sand dunes are recognised as an internationally important site for rare dune species, the beach provides a resting place for migrating and overwintering seabirds, and the woods are home to a thriving population of nationally endangered red squirrels.
- Formby is much-loved by residents and visitors: many people contribute to caring for the landscape through volunteering, and thousands of people come to Formby every year to enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape. However, busy days put huge pressure on the environment and local community, and at times visitor facilities struggle to meet demand.
- Much of the coast at Formby is changing as the frontal dunes roll back; in some places by 3-4 m per year. This leads to 'coastal squeeze' as the dune habitat between the beach and developed land of Formby village narrows.
- This coastal change also puts pressure on visitor facilities. The capacity of Victoria Road carpark is reducing as it is reclaimed by the natural movement of the dunes. Rubble which originally formed the base of the car park is exposed and deposited on the beach.
- In 2017 the National Trust took on the care of an additional 204 hectares of land at Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols Local Nature Reserve, previously managed by Sefton council. This area is less subject to coastal erosion than the original site at Victoria Road. It is rich in rare wildlife, and requires careful management to balance nature conservation and public access.
- Caring for Formby into the future will require increased resources, and there is a need to develop sustainable sources of income for the property to support an ambitious programme of conservation and access works.

### 3. Community involvement at Formby

Since 2017 a programme of community involvement and consultation has been running at Formby and a range of structures have been put in place to ensure good communication and collaboration with our neighbours and all those who wish to be involved in plans for the future:

- A **Community Involvement Panel** has been established, made up of 10-12 local people with an interest in the coast. The panel act as a 'critical friend' to the National Trust team, meeting every 6-8 weeks to discuss early stage proposals, provide feedback and contribute ideas.
- A **Key Stakeholder group** has been formed comprised of individuals and representatives of organisations with particular interest or involvement in the Formby coast. The group includes representatives of environmental organisations, head teachers, local politicians and representatives of community groups. Meetings have been held approximately every two–three months, in response to need to feed back or consult stakeholders on developments in the project.
- **Public consultation events** have been held during two main consultation phases in summer 2017 and summer 2018. These included pre-publicised drop-in events at central Formby locations, and NT stands at local events. There have also been pop-up events on the National Trust site to reach frequent visitors. All of these events have been open to all. They have included both formal and informal approaches, ranging from intensive, pre-bookable workshops, to opportunistic conversations with visitors to the site.

#### 3.1 Public consultation approach

The approach to community consultation aims to build awareness and involvement in among local people and to publicise the ways in which stakeholders could contribute to plans for the future. In 2017 the National Trust sought perspectives on the way the site was managed, and people's hopes and aspirations for the future. A report of the consultation methodology and results was published in November 2017 (available at the National Trust Formby website).

Results from this report contributed to the development of a document: '***The Future of Formby: proposals for the care of the coast***'. This booklet outlined broad proposals in three key areas: nature conservation, working with the local community, and improving the experience of visitors. It was put out to consultation in the community of Formby and the surrounding area during the summer of 2018.

**3.1.1 Development of the 'Future of Formby' booklet** The document was designed to be an attractive and user-friendly outline of the challenges and opportunities facing the Formby coast, and broad proposals for how these could be addressed.

Proposed approaches were presented under three topics:

- Improving nature conservation
- Building relationships and working more closely with the Formby community, and
- Improving the experience of those who visit the site.

The booklet can be downloaded from the 'Get Involved' section of the National Trust Formby website.

**3.1.2 Consultation process** The consultation was publicised locally through multiple channels:

- **Print Media:** Formby Visiter / Champion
- **Social Media:** Formby Bubble, NT Formby Facebook and Twitter
- **Staff on site raising awareness** at entrances
- **Leafleting** homes in the immediate vicinity
- **Posters** on site and on Community notice boards in Formby
- **Emails** to those on volunteer and information request lists

People were invited to learn more and make a contribution at the drop-in consultation events, and to access a copy of Future of Formby booklet from the website, any event or from the staff at site entrances. Copies of the booklet were also distributed to waiting rooms of healthcare providers and local businesses across Formby. Each copy of the booklet contained a questionnaire seeking responses to the proposals that could be returned in paper or electronic form, or completed online.

**3.1.3 Consultation events** The proposals were introduced to the two principal consultation panels, the Key stakeholder group (8<sup>th</sup> May 2018) and the Community Involvement panel (25<sup>th</sup> July) for detailed discussions. In addition to this, pre-publicised drop-in events were held at community events and central locations where people could meet National Trust staff, ask questions and make contributions. These included:

- **Formby Festival** (20-22<sup>nd</sup> July)
- **Formby Library** (2 events: Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September ),
- **Formby Pool and Gym** (2 events: Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September, Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September)
- **Formby village market** (Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September)

On request staff also went out to attend community group meetings and gatherings, including Southport and Formby National Trust Association (11<sup>th</sup> September), Formby Probus group (24<sup>th</sup> September), Coastwatch (19<sup>th</sup> September) the Beach Litter Angels (Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September) and NT Formby volunteers' gathering (Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September).

**3.1.4 Reach and community response** Approximately 800 booklets were distributed, in addition to copies downloaded from the website. Across the consultation events, an estimated 250 conversations were held. Notes were made regarding the content of conversations. During the events, people were invited to submit their views using an online or paper survey, or by email. A total of 41 detailed written responses were received. These were transcribed and themes analysed for this report.

### 3.2 The 'Future of Formby' proposals

The 'Future of Formby' document set out aspirations in the key areas of: nature conservation, working with the local community and improving the experience of visitors. Within each of these areas views on a number of proposed approaches were sought.

1. We wish to **improve nature conservation at Formby** by:
  - Working with natural processes of coastal change.
  - Enhancing and connecting up rare dune habitats.
  - Protecting the wild, remote character of quieter areas
  - Ensure that heavily used visitor routes are robust, and divert 'busy day' visitors from vulnerable areas
  
2. We wish to **work more closely with the Formby community** by:
  - Creating opportunities for public involvement in caring for the Formby coast.
  - Developing new traffic and parking strategies and communicating better at busy times.
  - Identifying ways to work more closely with Formby's business community.
  
3. We wish to **improve the experience of those who visit National Trust Formby** by:
  - Providing catering, toilets and a place for people to meet at Lifeboat Road.
  - Offering people opportunities to enjoy the site in their own way, all year round.
  - Maintaining parking across the site and replacing parking spaces lost to erosion.

For each proposal, the main emerging themes of responses and contributions are outlined below.

## 4. Summary of findings

### 4.1 Improving nature conservation

There was strong recognition that nature conservation is a core responsibility of the National Trust. In response to this theme more than any other, many respondents wrote general comments expressing support for the proposed approaches.

#### **Box 4.1 Responses: Support for nature conservation goals<sup>1</sup>**

*I commend your stated goals.*

*Obviously improving nature conservation has to be a priority.*

*Consider those aims to be very positive.*

*All of the above sounds good.*

In line with the 2017 consultation findings there was a generally high level of trust in how the National Trust manages its environmental responsibilities at Formby, although some concerns were raised in relation to specific issues highlighted below.

#### **4.1.1 Proposal: Working with coastal processes and embracing natural change**

Many people were supportive of an approach to care of the coast that worked in harmony with natural processes, but there was also a commonly expressed concern about 'uncontrolled' erosion. This was perceived by some as a threat to the dunes or woodland, and by others as a threat to the built environment of Formby. Some comments highlighted that many people are uncomfortable with the concept of a naturally changing landscape.

This may reflect strong affection for the status quo as well as discomfort with the uncertainty implied by a natural, uncontrollable process. More open discussion about the likely effects and timescale of coastal change might help to address some of these concerns.

##### **Box 4.1.1 Responses: Working with coastal processes and embracing natural change<sup>1</sup>**

*We like plans to manage natural dune development*

*Yes I agree that it is ideal to work with natural processes of coastal change and caring for, improving and connecting up dune habitats*

*Is the NT going to provide/allow protective action against erosion?*

*...coastal erosion [can lead] to loss of embryo/mobile dunes and narrowing of the zone between open dunes and plantations ("coastal squeeze")*

*I'm concerned about 'natural processes of coastal change'. The erosion of the sand dunes at Lifeboat road and heading towards Victoria Road...There are no sea defences in this stretch of coast (apart from Christmas trees)*

*Local people get concerned that the first two of the above mean doing nothing to stop coastal erosion and perhaps even make it worse! We worry about what might happen to our property / the value of our property in the future if the dunes are not stabilised*

*Working with natural processes can sound a bit scary if it means allowing erosion and deposition to go unchecked*

#### **4.1.2 Proposal: Enhance and connect habitats along the coast in our care**

A relatively small proportion of responses directly addressed this aim, but for some respondents the improvement of rare habitats was the primary concern. Most of these comments appeared to be from individuals with an in-depth knowledge of dune habitats and coastal management. In general, few comments made direct reference to the dunes,

and the majority of contributions on the subject of habitat improvement referred to the woodlands. There were a number of critical comments relating to care of the pine woods, including a sense among some that the woodlands were neglected or overlooked in favour of the sand dunes. Tree (and even scrub) removal is a matter of concern to some.

#### **4.1.2 Responses: Enhance and connect up habitats along the coast in our care<sup>1</sup>**

*Vegetation overgrowth and reduced dynamism [is] leading to loss of bare sand and a low rate of slack formation /Non-native scrub invasion....Nature conservation management should prioritise: Removal/control of non-native invasive species, such as Sea Buckthorn, Japanese Rose, White/Grey/Balsam Poplars. Sand-patching to create bare sand, especially on south-facing slopes. Creation of new slacks/scrapes, e.g. where scrub has been removed.*

*I worry that Pine trees may not be replaced at landwards point of site. Whilst not natural in strictest sense, Formby is a mix of human / natural elements and squirrels and pines have their place.*

*There seems to have been a fall off in conservation work, including renewing pine woods.*

*The whole acreage is in desperate need of someone to care and look after the trees.*

*[The pine woods] could be improved in the long run if a more wild approach was sought... where balance and diversity is encouraged. There are many different sections of trees but ... some of these are a complete mono culture with only one species of vegetation (Scots pine). Formby Pinewoods is a nature reserve and yet the biodiversity present in some places is less than that of most urban areas!*

The pine woodlands are hugely loved and valued by many, despite their relative lack of biodiversity. There appeared to be little awareness of the role of woodland management plans or the principles and constraints around the woodland management that takes place at Formby.

There may also be a lack of knowledge and recognition of the rarity and fragility of the dune environment. For many local visitors the most salient features of the site are the woods and the beach with the dunes a place to pass through on the route from one to the other. Taking steps to build awareness and to develop local interest in the dunes may be of value.

#### **4.1.3 Proposal: Protect the wild and remote character of the areas to the North and South**

This statement elicited responses which demonstrate the huge affection that many people have for the site, and the intense pleasure that it brings to those who get to know it well and venture beyond the main visitor routes. The aim met with universal approval, albeit one

respondent disagreed with use of the term 'remote' to describe even the quietest parts of the coast. There was a perception that these areas too are under threat from over use.

**Box 4.1.3 Responses: Protect the wild and remote character of areas to the North and South<sup>1</sup>**

*The areas beyond the Ravenmeols woods are a joy –the profusion of wild flowers in the summer is amazing and it is so peaceful. Even on the busiest of days when Lifeboat Road and beach are manic it is normal to walk this quiet place without seeing a soul – amazing (let's keep it a secret).*

*Local residents value these areas but with the increasing number of visitors fear they will be lost.*

*It is essential to have the quieter areas but they are not 'remote'. The coast everywhere sees hundreds of dog walkers.*

**4.1.4 Proposal: Ensure that heavily used visitor routes are robust, and divert 'busy day' visitors from vulnerable areas**

There was substantial overlap in the responses to this proposition and the previous one; encouraging visitors to keep to the central areas at busy times was perceived to be a key part of protecting the character of quieter areas. However, there was also concern that visitors should not lose the opportunity to roam freely. Some people were unsure about what was meant by 'robust' routes and feared this would entail widespread hard path creation, which could affect the character of the site.

Positive suggestions around this proposition included increasing waymarking and signage to encourage people to stick to paths, and explaining the impact of visitors on the dunes. A few wanted the protection of vulnerable areas to go further, suggesting fencing off areas for wildlife.

**Box 4.1.4 Responses: Ensure that heavily used visitor routes are robust, and divert 'busy day' visitors from vulnerable areas<sup>1</sup>**

*What does 'robust' mean? Will it entail creating... hardcore routes throughout the dunes? I am thinking how awful the Ravenmeols reserve will look if it was opened up in this way."*

*I assume the robust visitor routes you would create for busy days would all be to the beach, as it would be a shame to lose the 'free to roam' feel that we have in Formby. It is part of its uniqueness.*

*Make it clear where the 'Sensitive' areas are with regards to habitat – or where erosion is a concern*

*I agree with conserving the natural habitat and creating appropriate visitor routes around the dunes and promoting these. Make visitors aware of the consequences to the dune environment of not sticking to these routes.*

*The sands often have thousands even tens of thousands of seabirds from July through to late May. Notices advising if not requiring people to avoid the flocks and to keep animals under strict control should be sited where visitors access the coast.*

*Improved signposting/ maintenance of dune paths - especially any cycle routes, some of these are deteriorating, and some paths need more signposts to help keep people on 'robust routes'.*

*Don't just divert visitors from vulnerable areas at busy times, but at most times so that flora, fauna have much less disturbance and people learn to recognise the boundaries of vulnerable areas. Sites where rare birds used to breed and roost were abandoned long ago because of disturbance... largely because of dog walkers and their animals roaming freely. More of the area could be fenced giving birds a chance to return.*

Concerns around the 'robust routes' seem to revolve around the idea that new and possibly highly engineered paths may threaten the natural character of the site and curtail the freedom to roam more widely. There is a need to ensure effective communication around the range of characteristics that will contribute to a route being 'robust' (e.g the role of siting routes through more stable and resilient areas).

## **4.2 Work more closely with the Formby community by:**

### **4.2.1 Proposal: Creating opportunities for public involvement in caring for the Formby coast**

The vast majority of comments on this topic were supportive with just one respondent suggesting that it is 'unfair' for the National Trust to seek support and involvement from the local community. Many people expressed an interest in volunteering or other forms of involvement, and those who were already volunteering on the site made it clear that they felt their work made a valuable contribution. There were many calls for an expansion of volunteering opportunities, particularly for young people, and making use of less traditional approaches to involvement and participation. There were calls for better communication of the opportunities that are available, and some respondents were unaware of involvement possibilities that already exist.

Several people at drop-in events and returning the surveys expressed appreciation of the increased level of engagement with the local community they had observed in recent years. This appreciation even extended to those with substantial criticisms of the National Trust's approaches. Cynicism about the consultation and engagement process was a rarity.

**Box 4.2.1 Responses: Creating opportunities for public involvement in caring for the Formby coast<sup>1</sup>**

*I would welcome more information about public involvement / volunteering*

*There is great potential for public involvement, such as volunteering for active conservation projects and citizen science research. Such activities, on a much larger scale than currently, could make significant inroads into the management deficit ... and also help to counter the lack of understanding of coastal processes and duneland conservation values in the local community.*

*Recent expansion of volunteer scheme is very welcome.*

*Have regularly attended the Tuesday or Thursday litter-picking group and feel we have made a big difference. [I] agree with the bin removal from the beach however I think the signs should have said 'Thank You for removing your rubbish and taking it home'.*

*It would be good to encourage schools to become engaged and allow young people to volunteer to help.*

*Allowing some members of the Formby Public to attend meetings that involve community*

*Involve school children with construction and placements of boxes to be placed in the dunes to encourage the return of wheatears to breed / Encourage people to become voluntary wardens to help reduce litter.*

*It seems unfair to expect local residents to be responsible for removing rubbish left by visitors.*

**4.2.2 Proposal: Developing new traffic and parking strategies and communicating better at busy times**

There was support for the development of new approaches to traffic management at Formby; the issue of busy day queues and parking problems was of substantial concern to Formby residents. Both in written contributions and at face to face events, dissatisfaction with the traffic generated by visitors to the National Trust site emerged frequently, and for our immediate neighbours these problems were at times the source of considerable anger and disruption.

Many written responses were critical of the National Trust due to the perception that the area was being promoted as a destination at busy times of year, while facilities, including access and parking were unable to meet demand. Respondents produced a wide range of suggested approaches to improving the traffic situation at busy times. These included the idea of a park and ride service, new on-site car parks, promoting public transport, and provision of matrix signs on the bypass to indicate when the car parks were full. There was a perception among many people that the National Trust is seeking to maximise revenue by attracting more visitors at busy times. A few

respondents recognised that efforts are made to inform visitors at times when there are queues, for example through social media, but these measures were perceived to be inadequate for the scale of the problem.

Some comments demonstrated an awareness that there are limits to the National Trust's powers outside the site boundaries while other comments made suggestions for measures such as issuing parking tickets, closing roads and implementing one-way systems that are not within the powers of the National Trust. There was strong support for working more closely with Sefton council on this issue.

Another recurring theme of comments around traffic and parking was the concern that development at Lifeboat road could lead to increases in traffic problems in that area.

**Box 4.2.2 Responses: Developing new traffic and parking strategies and communicating better at busy times<sup>1</sup>**

*If you are to promote... an area with a view to attracting more visitors and raising revenues... then you cannot do that blindly, ignoring the impact of traffic and people flows in to the area. It is clear that the car parking facility alone is insufficient for need and that will only get worse as the National Trust continues to market Formby far and wide thus generating demand but not having the infrastructure to support demand. The National Trust through this policy is completely ignoring the impact on the local residents of generating this demand. This is unacceptable.*

*I often find my driveway blocked without room to manoeuvre out due to double parking on both pavements... More parking spaces away from the shoreline would not work, some visitors would drive onto the beach if they could.*

*Our magnificent summer weather has brought with it increased traffic problems on Victoria Road and other roads in the vicinity of the entrance to the reserve. As a resident of Badgers Rake there are times when I am effectively prohibited from taking my car out. There are major problems in trying to return home before the end of the day. The car parking delays on busy days seem to be the things that cause most problems for residents and visitors.*

*The Trust still seems oblivious to the fact that where the front of the queue is, is the cause of the congestion! Increasing car parking capacity will only have a limited effect as the entrances can't cope with the density.*

*Make nearby school playgrounds available for weekend parking. Have a system to transport people from them to beach car parks. Have electronic displays on the bypass to show the beach car parks are full.*

*Shuttle bus from Freshfield/Formby? Park and ride facilities would limit amount of traffic and is a greener alternative.*

*Traffic one way system. Joint working with the council*

*Lifeboat Road is narrow and now becoming clogged in the same way. People who have caravans at the caravan park cannot get to their caravans. /*

*I am concerned about the increase in traffic down Bushbys Lane towards the Lifeboat Road car park. At busy times, this route is very congested already with visitors double parking on the highway and on single and double yellow lines with little regard to local residents. Communicating via the website and Twitter is clearly not reaching the visitor audience sufficiently.*

#### **4.2.3 Proposal: Identifying ways to work more closely with Formby's business community**

There was strong support for this proposition and a general feeling that there was a missed opportunity for working more closely with community and business groups in the village of Formby. Many respondents commented that Formby village did not benefit from the large numbers of visitors who pass through the town on their way to the coast.

#### **Box 4.2.3. Responses Identifying ways to work more closely with Formby's business community<sup>1</sup>**

*Long overdue... all these visitors don't bring benefits to the village, the majority of them drive straight home*

*It's a shame Formby town centre is not better used by visitors*

*Parking should be restricted on site and integrated with strategy of better supporting local amenities in town. Is there a way of developing modest parking and supporting the economy of Formby village.*

*Perhaps work with local authorities to encourage modest parking in town and some use of local amenities to benefit local economy and visitors*

### **4.3 We wish to improve the experience of those who visit National Trust Formby**

#### **4.3.1 Proposal: Providing catering, toilets and a place for people to meet at Lifeboat Road.**

Reactions to the proposal for new visitor facilities at Lifeboat Road were mixed. There was almost universal approval of the idea of providing toilets. The introduction of catering was welcomed by some and strongly opposed by others. Concerns about developing a catering offer revolved around potential increases in visitor numbers having an impact on nature conservation or on traffic in the lifeboat Road area. Some people commented that at present the vehicle access to Lifeboat road is inadequate to support any increase in visitor numbers that might result from provision of a visitor hub. There

was also concern about the visual or environmental impact of any buildings on the site with several people offering qualified support provided that the building was 'in keeping' or 'eco-friendly'.

**Box 4.3.1 Responses: Providing catering, toilets and a place for people to meet at Lifeboat Road<sup>1</sup>**

*What an excellent idea. Toilets, catering and a meeting place at Lifeboat Road*

*Catering and toilets definitely welcome*

*Meeting and educational centre so that children and adults can learn to appreciate Natural beauty that is around them. Somewhere for schools to visit.*

*I believe strongly that the introduction of a café would be a dangerous step towards further increasing the traffic in Formby and the litter problem. Please NO café!*

*I am concerned that increasing facilities e.g. a café, visitor centre etc will definitely attract even more visitors who will be attracted 'off season' and the whole aura / aspect / atmosphere will change.*

*I am in favour of NO Café. Here's why. Word spreads – if people come in the summer / have food at a café and go and tell their friends about their wonderful experience then their friends may fancy coming for a burger by the beach off season too.*

*Good but the improvement in facilities may increase the foot fall and then increase erosion and impact, self perpetuating further and accelerated erosion*

*Road needs widening at Lifeboat Road to have 2 proper lanes and enable emergency services better access.*

*You mean a visitor centre and café? Think this area of coast has needed one for a long time and the lack of any toilets on the Lifeboat road side has always been a disgrace. Something eco friendly and cutting edge would be good.*

*I agree there should be more toilet facilities at both sites as at busy times the current amenities are not fit for purpose. You can't expect people to pay for a day's car parking at Lifeboat Road and not provide basic amenities - this just causes anger and frustration for visitors. Catering facilities should be in keeping with the environment - Burger vans are not suitable or in keeping with the National Trust's brand identity and messaging.*

*It is great that people want to visit Formby but agree that facilities are limited. Any expansion to facilities toilets / refreshments / parking etc needs to be eco-friendly, sustainable and fit in with the character of the area.*

#### **4.3.2. Proposal: Offering people opportunities to enjoy the site in their own way, all year round.**

This aim was widely misinterpreted as an indication that the National Trust was aiming to relax monitoring of 'undesirable' behaviours and there was concern that this could lead to increased antisocial activity on the site. Communication about what is an appropriate use of the site was seen to be important.

This proposal may need to be framed differently in future consultation phases to ensure that it is clearly communicated as an aim to increase opportunities for people from diverse demographic backgrounds with diverse interests to benefit from coming to Formby, and to provide a year-round programme of events and activities. There was also concern about whether this would increase pressure on the site by extending the period of time that the site is busy. Several people raised the issue of maintaining and improving access for people with disabilities or other limits to their mobility.

##### **Box 4.3.2 Responses: Offering people opportunities to enjoy the site in their own way, all year round<sup>1</sup>**

*Fine but allowing visitors a free hand to "enjoy the site in their own way" risks a whole raft of undesirable activities, from drinking parties and barbecues to irresponsible dog use. There need to be clear guidelines on what is and is not acceptable and on-site staff to liaise with the public.*

*We welcome improvement to the lifeboat road facilities, but hope it includes basic security to avoid abuse by people using the site as a playground for off-road motorcycling or camping (and lighting fires in the woods).*

*Although the brochure shows exercises taking place on the beach, groups have also been observed exercising in the picnic area using benches and tables to step on. Surely this is an improper use of facilities.*

*To talk about varied opportunities being offered makes me very suspicious of your aims. If the site is quiet in winter then it is having the chance to restore. Other than walking what do you think people can do in poor weather so what do you have in mind, I shudder to think. You are guardians of a very special place, please remember this.*

*Keep it disabled friendly please*

#### **4.3.3 Proposal: Maintaining parking across the site and replacing parking spaces lost to erosion.**

There was recognition that the Victoria Road carpark was under increasing pressure, but mixed views as to the best response to the loss of spaces. A small number of respondents were in favour of allowing on-site parking to decrease as a measure to enhance conservation or to deter visitors. Some people were keen to replace or increase parking spaces.

Larkhill field was mentioned several times as a possible site for new parking, although others were strongly opposed to this.

**Box 4.3.3 Proposal: Maintaining parking across the site and replacing parking spaces lost to erosion<sup>1</sup>**

*Car parking spaces need to be curtailed, not replaced. We should discourage driving to the coast and residential areas adjacent to it.*

*Parking is the biggest problem. Please seriously consider finding more parking spaces*

*Parking is hopeless. Park and Ride? Park on Larkhill field?*

*NOT if this means a car park on Larkhill Lane Field.*

*The main [Victoria Road] parking area will have to move. The only logical flat open area away from the dunes are the areas currently fenced off for grazing to the south of the car park. The rear area to be used to future proof as much as possible from dune creep with vegetation planted on the seaward edge to reduce blown sand. If the rear area is too small then the old field at the rear of the Trusts offices/compound could be used.*

*The car parking at lifeboat road should not be increased any further.*

*Re Lifeboat road area. The access road is narrow, difficult for traffic counter-flow to and from the car park.*

#### **4.4 Other frequently raised topics**

In the course of the consultations many people contributed thoughts and suggestions which did not relate directly to the propositions outlined in the 'Future of Formby' document. Where a theme emerged repeatedly, reflecting a widespread concern, these have been outlined below.

One request that emerged repeatedly was for renovation of the 'Wicks Lake' area. This is clearly a much loved feature for local people, albeit not a natural one. Several people drew attention to the overgrowth of trees and scrub around the lake and the low water level at many times of the year. Infrastructure around the lake was also perceived to be in need of attention, and there were several offers of help to work on the lake. This may be an area in which participative approaches, harnessing practical assistance from the community, can contribute to supporting the care of an area which does not fall into any of the National Trusts priorities for nature conservation, but which is important to local users of the site.

#### **Box 4.4.1 Wicks Lake restoration<sup>1</sup>**

*The popular Wicks Lake area needs significant restoration of the lake and the boardwalk.*

*...the overgrown condition of the Wicks lane pond(s) and the dangerous boardwalk across and the southern part of the fencing that has rotted and is now close to falling down. This was once an area of natural beauty with ducks & pond life this is now virtually dry and extensively overgrown.*

*Wicks Lake is not only an eyesore the bridge looks decidedly unsafe. This once beautiful lake needs to be cleared and rebuilt from scratch*

*I do hope that in future you can restore Wicks Lake to its former glory!! When there was no pond growth – no trees around it and happy ducks coots and moorhens.*

*We would encourage increased management of the large pond ringed by trees – these trees need to be somewhat controlled as they exacerbate the issue of low water table.*

A large number of suggestions were made around the subject of litter, bins and waste management. Some people continue to call for more bins or bins on the beach but there was also appreciation of the complexities around this and understanding of the reasons for National Trust Formby's policy of providing bins at central locations. There were also frequent references to a lack of recycling of the waste collected on site. It appears important for the National Trust to continue to engage with these suggestions and criticisms. Open discussion of the decisions made around litter and waste management seems important, as it remains an issue which is very salient to locals and regular visitors.

#### **Box 4.4.2 Litter, bins and waste management**

*At Lifeboat Road many of the litter bins have been removed and replaced by large litter bins by the car park. Most day trippers will not carry their litter from the beach to the car park.*

*Bins need to be removed or restricted...Discourage people from bringing litter... [they should] take away more.*

*Bins – why do you keep removing them?*

*Agree with bins being removed from beach however should be proper recycling banks so not going to landfill*

Both face to face at consultation events and in written comments many people referred to dogs on site. This topic polarised opinion, with some people requesting more facilities for dogs and dog walkers, and others expressing a concern about the effects of uncontrolled dogs on wildlife.

#### **Box 4.4.3 Dogs and dog walking on site<sup>1</sup>**

*Uncontrolled dogs (impacts on ground-nesting birds, shorebird roosts, etc.). / Seek co-operation with dog-walkers to minimise impacts on wildlife (and other users).*

*The coast everywhere sees hundreds of dog walkers who let their dogs roam off lead. Sites where rare birds used to breed and roost were abandoned long ago because of disturbance e.g. whinchats used to breed at Cabin Hill, Tree pipits would roost there on passage. Ringed plovers and Wheatears used to breed nearby – all have gone largely because of dog walkers and their animals roaming freely. Dog owners and people in general should not think they have an inalienable right to roam at will or cause disturbance.*

*More bins for dog walkers needed*

*Our children are forced to play 'spot the dog dirt'. We would prefer they were spotting other things!*

*...be good to provide stand pipe and tap for water for dogs. Amazing how many people in summer don't bring water for their dogs even on a hot sunny day*

*A designated place, gated, to walk young dogs would be wonderful*

## **5 Conclusions**

Many comments demonstrated that some local people have an inherent suspicion of change to a much-loved place.

*'People in the region and beyond just love the place and the freedom it provides for walking relaxing playing and watching the ships go by. Second and third generations enjoy the same pleasures their parents had. In a rapidly changing world to go back year after year happy to see nothing has changed is wonderful.'*

It is essential that these sensitivities are recognised and respected where changes are being made. There was a broadly positive response to the proposals put forward in the 'Future of Formby' document, but some areas require close working with the community to determine how best to move forward.

Many people expressed appreciation of the opportunity for involvement in future plans, and there was a clear appetite for dialogue, co-operation and participation. Several people called for a greater flow of information about the work that takes place at Formby:

*'I don't believe that the community really understand the extent of the work the Trust do at Formby point. Maybe the Champion would run a regular column to convey news... point - Squirrels, dune work, education, challenges and so on?'*

*'Perhaps the notice boards at LBR/VR could have a news section about conservation work - it would help explain the £6.50 cost by outlining the cost and work at the reserve?'*

It was striking that throughout the consultation local people consistently wanted to engage with us to find out more. Fewer wanted to have their say in writing. An emphasis on 'listening' should not lead to underestimating the value of sharing information and knowledge.

### **5.1 Stay updated**

As the Formby Point project develops, and we move into the development of more detailed plans, the National Trust is committed to continuing to consult with all stakeholders, including National Trust staff, volunteers and the local community. Project updates and details of future consultations will be made available on the National Trust Formby website, and ways to become involved will be publicised locally.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Comments are illustrative and not comprehensive. A full transcript of written responses is available on request.