

# source<sup>NW</sup>

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY



## CRITICAL COASTLINES

the crowds have flown to Spain and industry is suffering: what does the future hold for the Northwest's coastal towns and resorts?

## BATHING BEAUTIES

bathing waters have improved immensely in the Northwest: will £6.5 million of EU cash keep the clean-up going?

## SEA POWER

with plans in progress for the UK's biggest wind farm off the coast of Cumbria, can the Northwest take the lead in renewable energy?



# Supplying life's essentials

United Utilities has helped breathe new life into the Mersey Estuary, playing its part in transforming it from a river renowned as one of the most polluted in Europe to a watercourse the region can be proud of.

Thanks to a decade of improvements – including investment of more than £1 billion spent upstream and £500 million in the estuary itself – the estuary is now cleaner than at any time since the beginning of the industrial revolution, benefiting wildlife and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.



[www.unitedutilities.com](http://www.unitedutilities.com)

Welcome to the first issue of Source Northwest, the new magazine from the Mersey Basin Campaign that will be both a forum and a catalyst for debate on water quality, regeneration, sustainability and the environment in the Northwest.

Twenty years ago, of Britain's many polluted rivers, only the Mersey was so lifeless it needed its own campaign to help resurrect it. Today, as the Northwest reinvents itself, much of the region's trend-setting building and regeneration work is on the waterside. Luxury loft apartments line canals that not long ago were all but forgotten. The Lowry and the Imperial War Museum North face each other across the Manchester Ship Canal. Liverpool's fourth grace will add a new face to its renowned waterfront for the first time in almost a century. All have been made possible in part by dramatic improvements in the quality of water in the region's rivers and canals.

Like transport and energy, water quality is a basic concern that cuts across issues and demands a fashionably joined up approach. Local and national government, business and the voluntary sector have all played a part. Source Northwest addresses both the issues and the players - this issue's coastal theme provides a way to draw them all together.

We know from feedback that the predecessor to Source Northwest, Campaigner, was increasingly well received. But as the region turns more and more to the question of how to keep the regeneration momentum going, it's time to take the debate to the next level.

Finally, in creating the magazine it's been a pleasure to work with a talented group of the region's finest writers, photographers and designers. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I've enjoyed editing it.

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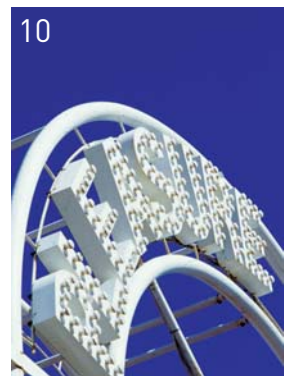
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## Think local, act global

Charles Secrett, one of the environmental movement's leading thinkers, has called for the movement to make the transition from issues of nature conservation, protection and clean-up to ones of environmental justice. Mr Secrett was speaking to representatives of some of the Northwest's leading voluntary organisations at the Voluntary Sector Forum, held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

Mr Secrett is the former executive director of Friends of the Earth and a member of the government's Sustainable Development Commission. According to a survey by the Observer, he holds the distinction of being the country's thirty-sixth most influential person.

Charting the rise of the environmental movement from its early days in the 1960s, past landmarks such as the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, Mr Secrett listed a string of successes. But although the environmental movement has won periodic impressive victories, he said, the challenge now is to "build critical mass to the point where we can influence politics in a sustained way, not a sporadic way."

Indeed, the central theme of a typically far ranging and provocative presentation was the insistence that the environmental movement needs more political clout. According to Mr Secrett, the movement's biggest weakness has been its failure to understand the power of democracy.

The evening took a turn towards the radical when Mr Secrett discussed the growing threat of armed insurrection over issues of environmental and social injustice and inequality around the globe. However, he offered hope that such eventualities would be avoided as the environmental movement continues to drive the pace of change.

Joe Dwek, chairman of the Mersey Basin Campaign, which organised the event, ended the evening by thanking Mr Secrett for what he called "an erudite and controversial" presentation.

A project has been put forward to upgrade towpaths, bridges, access, lighting and security along all 65km of the **Bridgewater Canal**, Britain's first purpose built commercial canal. The canal's owner, Peel Holdings, is working with the Mersey Basin Campaign, the Northwest Development Agency and others to establish the feasibility of the project. With a potential budget of around £8.5 million it promises to restore a unique landmark and at the same time offer a way to regenerate a considerable amount of underused and undervalued land.

A £1 million operations centre has opened its doors to visitors at the fully restored **Anderton boat lift** in Cheshire, offering boat trips and interactive exhibitions. A marvel of nineteenth century engineering, the hydraulically operated boat lift joins the river Weaver with the Trent and Mersey Canal.

[www.andertonboatlift.co.uk](http://www.andertonboatlift.co.uk)



ISLINGTON WHARF  
BY THE ASHTON  
CANAL

MORE INFORMATION:  
[www.isis.gb.com](http://www.isis.gb.com)

## Gateway to East Manchester

A new project under the auspices of waterside regeneration specialists Isis is set to be the latest driver in the reinvention of East Manchester, which received its biggest boost so far with the success of the Commonwealth Games last year. The project, currently known as Islington Wharf, will be a 3.3 acre site with a mixture of sustainable residential and commercial developments.

Isis is a partnership involving British Waterways, AMEC and Morley Fund Management's Igloo Regeneration Fund, set up to develop Britain's 2000 mile waterway network. Working with Manchester City Council and urban development group New East Manchester, the new £50 million development will transform disused land straddling the Ashton Canal. It is also hoped that, with the inclusion of a metro stop, the wharf will act as a gateway to New

Islington, the third designated Millennium Community initiative. Will Alsop Architects, part of the team designing Liverpool's so-called fourth grace, are developing the masterplan for the wharf.

The area, formerly known as the Cardroom estate, has a troubled past, and less than half of its 204 homes are currently occupied. Those backing the project see it as a catalyst for regeneration in New Islington. Loft apartment pioneers Urban Splash have acquired the disused Ancoats Hospital for conversion into residential flats and as many as 12,500 homes may ultimately be created.

**Environment Agency** experts say climate change could threaten the future of fresh water fishing, according to a report in the Times. Reduced summer rainfall will lead to severe water shortages, while higher winter rainfall is expected to raise water levels at the same time as fish are spawning, causing smaller fish to be washed away in heavy water flows. Angling is a £3 billion-a-year industry and one of Britain's favourite pastimes, but climate changes could damage fish stocks, putting the sport at risk.

The Environment Agency could gain new powers to manage licensing in environmental interests and ensure that updated drought plans are kept by water companies. The powers are included in a new **Water Bill** that would simplify abstraction licensing while promoting a greater focus on water conservation and resource management by water companies. The aim is to give fresh impetus to water conservation while reducing the regulatory burden. [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld200203/ldbills/036/2003036.htm](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld200203/ldbills/036/2003036.htm)

Four new voluntary sector members have been voted onto the **Council** of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The announcement was made at the Campaign-sponsored Voluntary Sector Forum on May 13th and completes the formation of the Council, an important step in streamlining the Campaign's corporate governance. Among those elected was Margaret Fletcher, chairman and founder member of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Society, who has been a major driving force behind the canal's resurrection for over a decade.

## River Ribble to influence Europe



The results will feed into action on some of Europe's largest rivers, such as the Danube and the Rhine.

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
**WATER AND DRAINAGE SUPPLEMENT,**  
**NEW CIVIL ENGINEER,**  
**MAY 22, 2003.**

**CONTACT:**  
[c.riley@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:c.riley@merseybasin.org.uk)

The River Ribble is to play a key role in plans to improve water quality across Europe. It has been selected as the England and Wales pilot project for the European Water Framework Directive, the legislation that will guide water management in the EU until at least 2027.

The Water Framework Directive draws together a number of key existing EU Directives on water. It is due to become part of UK law by the end of 2003, and an important phase of research and organisation is already underway. Each EU member country has chosen one river on which to test the guidance for its implementation, with the Ribble as the choice for England and Wales.

The Ribble pilot project, under the leadership of the Environment Agency, will test two key aspects of the Directive's guidance material - planning and public participation. The results will guide the implementation of later stages of the Directive not only in England and Wales, but also across all EU states, feeding into action on some of Europe's largest and most complex river catchments, such as the Danube and the Rhine.

Legislation at the European level is increasingly in the driving seat in terms of water quality in the UK. In fact, much improvement has been made over the last 20 years, driven initially by tougher UK legislation, together with the privatisation of the water utilities, which has resulted in massive investment in the water infrastructure.

As a first step to looking at public participation, the Mersey Basin Campaign's policy advisor, Caroline Riley, is busy drawing up a stakeholder map. According to Ms Riley, "The Campaign has long experience working on water quality in the Northwest, and it has local co-ordinators actually in the Ribble catchment, so it's ideally placed to work with the Environment Agency on the pilot project."

The Ribble pilot is due to report its findings back to the EU commission in July 2004.

**United Utilities** is currently developing a draft business plan, a key move in setting the prices the region's businesses and consumers will pay for water and sewerage services after April 2005. This will form the basis of discussions with Ofwat over the next 12 months, as environmental and legislative concerns are balanced with pressures to keep prices low. Ofwat is due to give a final response to the draft plan in November 2004.  
[www.uu plc.co.uk](http://www.uu plc.co.uk) [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)

**Otters** are returning to parts of England they had abandoned. The National Otter Survey of England, the work of the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trusts, shows that the area in which otters live has increased by 527% since the late 1970s. Otters are an important indicator species, and their return suggests significant improvements in water quality.

**British Waterways** has received a £393,000 grant from the Northwest Development Agency to complete a final study into the Liverpool Canal Link. Current plans suggest that the 700m link will join the north and south docks with a new section of canal across the Pier Head. Perhaps the link's most impressive feature is the idea that boats will pass beneath "The Cloud", the winning Fourth Grace design for Liverpool waterfront. Work should begin in 2004, and boats could be sailing from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal into Albert Dock by 2005.  
[www.british-waterways.co.uk/news](http://www.british-waterways.co.uk/news)

Biodiversity information gatherers **reCORD** are calling for volunteers to help detail life in the Mersey after a porpoise was spotted swimming in the river. Onlookers watched as the animal swam between Cammel Laids and the Customs and Excise building on Liverpool's well-known King's Dock, providing further evidence of dramatically improved water quality. The sighting follows the return of salmon to the estuary two years ago after an absence of a hundred years.  
[l.iam.fisher@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:l.iam.fisher@english-nature.org.uk)

A route has been chosen for the new **Mersey crossing** to reduce strain on the existing Silver Jubilee bridge. The route stretches from Runcorn's Central Expressway to Ditton roundabout, a quarter of a mile east of the existing bridge. It is hoped the new bridge will attract 90% of the traffic now using the old bridge. The Silver Jubilee bridge is currently the only Mersey crossing between the Mersey tunnels and Warrington, and at its peak carries as many as 90,000 vehicles per day.  
[www.mersecrossing.co.uk](http://www.mersecrossing.co.uk)

Over 70 **scientists, researchers** and **consultants**, along with experts from the Environment Agency, NGOs and United Utilities, attended a one-day workshop on the research implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. The Directive came into force in December 2000 and takes an interdisciplinary view on water management. Bringing their combined wisdom to bear on its implementation in the Mersey and Ribble catchments were specialists ranging from fluvial geomorphologists to experts in public participation. The workshop, held on April 8th, was organised by the Mersey Basin Campaign and sponsored by United Utilities.  
Contact: [a.wright@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:a.wright@merseybasin.org.uk)

## Environmental justice



Manchester's gleaming celebration of all things urban, Urbis, will host an event examining issues of environmental justice on the evening of Monday June 30th, beginning at 6pm. Amongst other topics to be debated with a panel of experts is the question "Why are the most polluting factories often based in the poorest communities?" The event is supported by Capacity Global and the UK Sustainable Development Commission. Maria Adebowale, director of Capacity and a member of the commission, will lead the event along with Walter Menzies, chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign. Venue: Urbis, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester, Telephone: 0161 605 8200, Contact: faye@urbis.org.uk

## Canal facelift key for regeneration

The Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal is to undergo an ambitious £32 million facelift under a new British Waterways scheme. An independent study suggests that the restoration of the canal would attract new investment along the 12 mile stretch earmarked for regeneration.

The Northwest Development Agency has provided a £150,000 grant for the initial site investigation, starting a restoration project which is scheduled to take four years to complete. The findings of a study by DTZ Pieda suggest that 6000 new jobs and training opportunities will be generated by the scheme, and the area could attract around £180 million in private investment. Findings also indicate the scope for 1,300 new homes, as well as the regeneration of around 40 hectares of brownfield land. Work is expected to start this year.

New leisure facilities are a key feature of the redevelopment. Plans include a visitor centre, trip and restaurant boats and improved fishing. For boating enthusiasts, 200 moorings and new

basins will improve links with other waterways. These facilities could bring around £5.6 million to the local economy every year.

Margaret Fletcher, chairman of the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal Society, said "We are delighted that, following our 14 years of campaigning, the canal is now to be restored." The canal includes 12 Grade II listed structures along its length, including 2 aqueducts over the River Irwell.

The first step on the road to regeneration came when an extra £300,000 funding was made available by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. This allowed a tunnel to be built under the Manchester and Salford relief road, without which the route would have been cut off from other waterways. More information: [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk) [www.british-waterways.co.uk/news](http://www.british-waterways.co.uk/news)

## Awards to recognise local volunteers

Nominations are being invited for the annual Unilever Dragonfly Awards, which recognise outstanding voluntary contributions to the health of the Northwest's rivers, canals and waterside environments. The awards are aimed at those volunteers who have achieved the most to help with local, on-the-ground projects.

This year's awards were kicked off by leading environmental campaigner Charles Secrett at the Voluntary Sector Forum on May 13th at Merseyside Maritime Museum. Categories include groups, individuals, schools and an overall winner, with

winners receiving a trophy, certificate and a cash prize towards the river improvement project of their choice. The awards are sponsored by Unilever and run by the Mersey Basin Campaign. Winners will be announced in a ceremony at the Campaign's conference on November 24th. Contact: Bev Mitchell, Mersey Basin Campaign, 0161 242 8212 or [b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk)

## MCS Good Beach Guide 2003

The Good Beach Guide is the sixteenth annual booklet on the state of Britain's coastal waters from The Marine Conservation Society (MCS), a marine environment and wildlife charity.

This year's offering, free for the second year running, recommends a record number of British beaches. Of the 812 sampled in the guide, 421 passed the stringent MCS guidelines for recommendation, with only 53 failing the minimum European Commission (EC) guidelines.

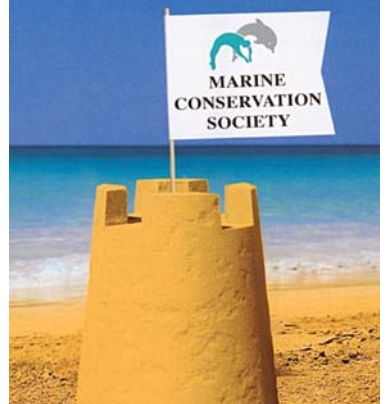
Information on the beaches is conveniently presented in a series of tables, grouped in regional sections, and includes the MCS verdict on water quality, as well as details on a number of associated considerations. Along with a list of contact details, the scientific basis of the guide is outlined at the back of the booklet, plus some unpleasant facts about sewage pollution.

But despite the overwhelmingly positive news of the nation's best ever year, the Northwest fails to come away smelling of roses (Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man are similarly highlighted). While only one Northwest beach has failed to meet the EC mandatory standard, only two were good enough to be recommended in the guide, down from four last year. According to the Environment Agency, however, that fact on its own fails to do justice to progress in the region, with most long-term trends showing steady improvement.

Either way, The Good Beach Guide is an eye-opening booklet, indispensable for beach goers. It can be ordered free on the MCS website, [www.goodbeachguide.co.uk](http://www.goodbeachguide.co.uk)

### Good Beach Guide 2003

The ultimate independent guide to bathing water quality



13th - 16th June 2003  
Mersey River Festival  
See article left.

25th June 2003  
Sustainable Water Management Conference - Foresight Initiative  
A high profile conference looking at the findings of the Sustainable Water Management initiative, identifying opportunities and challenges for the water sector to assist companies and organisations in future planning.  
Venue: Manchester Conference Centre  
Contact: Erica Hammon, Terence Dalton Ltd: 01787 249290  
erica@lavenhamgroup.co.uk  
www.waterforesight.com

8th - 12th September 2003  
The BA Festival of Science 2003  
The BA Festival of Science, sponsored by the Northwest Development Agency, is one of the UK's biggest science festivals. Featuring a discussion on sustainable development, the festival attracts 400 of the best scientists from around the world to talk about the latest research developments, with programmes for all ages and scientific interests.  
Venue: University of Salford, Manchester  
www.the-ba.net/festivalofscience

3rd August - 26th October 2003  
River Journeys exhibition  
The Lowry is developing a three month-long series of exhibitions inspired by its striking location on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal, as well as the heritage of the River Irwell. River Journeys will feature photographic exhibitions, community projects, sculptures and boat trips.  
Venue: The Lowry, Salford Quays, Salford  
Contact: 0870 787 5780  
www.thelowry.com

9th - 11th September 2003  
British Ecological Society AGM  
Lectures and sessions on ecological issues, including aquatic ecology, plus a discussion of wetland ecology and climate change.  
Venue: Manchester Metropolitan University  
Contact: British Ecological Society: 020 8871 9797  
meetings@britishecologicalsociety.org  
www.britishecologicalsociety.org

4th - 12th October 2003  
MWH Mersey Basin Week  
The twelfth annual Mersey Basin Week - a week of fun and activities, involving thousands of children and volunteers in water-themed activities across the Northwest.  
Contact: Bev Mitchell, Mersey Basin Campaign: 0161 242 8212 or email b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

7th October 2003  
"Sustainable Development - who cares?"  
A lecture by Jonathon Porritt, chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, organised as part of the MWH Mersey Basin Week.  
Venue: The Lowry, Salford Quays, Salford  
Contact: Julie Mullen, Mersey Basin Campaign: 0161 242 8205 or email j.mullen@merseybasin.org.uk

24th November 2003  
Mersey Basin Campaign Conference  
Speakers include Elliot Morley MP, parliamentary under-secretary for fisheries, water and nature protection, and Sir John Harman, chairman of the Environment Agency.  
Venue: The Investment Centre, Wigan  
Contact: Julie Mullen, Mersey Basin Campaign: 0161 242 8205 or email j.mullen@merseybasin.org.uk

## Mersey River Festival

The Mersey River Festival begins on June 13th, setting the scene for four days of music, displays, boats and water related fun. The festival, organised by Liverpool City Council, is in its twenty-third year and attracts over 200,000 visitors in a celebration of the Mersey.

A fleet of tall ships will be in Liverpool docks throughout the festival and open to the public. A wide variety of other boats, including HMS Charger, will be there, along with an illuminated narrow boat parade.

The armed forces will be getting involved too, with a parachute display from the RAF Falcons and a dramatic Royal Marines demonstration on the river, as well as unarmed combat displays and the Battle of Britain memorial flight.

Joining the giant seagulls and giant lobsters in the entertainment stakes are the Giant Beatles, a tribute act who literally tower above the rest. Performances on a special floating stage include an African brass band.

Albert Dock will host the Mersey International Shanty Festival, featuring live performers from around the world shivering their timbers in the 'spiritual home' of the shanty.

There are free canoe lessons, canoe polo and a rowing regatta among other events taking place across Liverpool's docklands and riverside over the four days. A photography competition will record life on the river.

More information: [www.merseyriverfestival.co.uk](http://www.merseyriverfestival.co.uk)

## Waterways Oscars

John Craven OBE, presenter of television's Countryfile, was the host as The Waterways Trust and the British Urban Regeneration Association announced the winners of The Waterways Renaissance Awards.

The awards ceremony, dubbed the 'Waterways Oscars', produced two winners from the Northwest: the Millenium Ribble Link, winner of the Partnership award, and the Anderton Boat Lift, which received the Conservation and Heritage award. The Mersey Basin Campaign was also commended by the judges in the Partnership category.

The awards, held at Madame Tussaud's in London, are the biggest night in the waterways calendar. Waterways minister Alun Michael MP was the guest speaker, and over 250 people attended the prestigious event. Mr Michael singled out the achievements of the Northwest: "2002 was another excellent year for waterway restoration and regeneration. The reopening of the Anderton Boat Lift and the completion of the Millenium Ribble Link were special milestones and I would like to congratulate The Waterways Trust and all the other bodies who worked so hard to bring them to completion."

The awards recognise best practice in the regeneration of Britain's waterways and received more than 180 nominations from the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as community groups.

## Frequently Answered Questions

Walter Menzies is chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign and sits on the UK Sustainable Development Commission. In the first of a series of opinion pieces, he answers the questions that won't go away.

Contact: [w.menzies@mersybasin.org.uk](mailto:w.menzies@mersybasin.org.uk)

[mersybasin.org.uk](http://mersybasin.org.uk)

**"Now is the season of our discount tents" is the sign outside a camping shop in Warrington. I'm amazed how many people know about it. Originality, imagination and wit get the message across. Being worthy, correct and boring is not enough. That's why we've improved our magazine. Its forerunner, Campaigner, was welcomed and appreciated by many of our friends and partners and of course they continue to be vital within the Campaign. But we are determined to reach out beyond 'the usual suspects' as well. So, welcome to Source Northwest.**

**Q** Isn't it true that business doesn't really give a damn about the environment and the only way to get them to do anything is stronger regulation?

**A** Of course there are cowboys and good regulation is vital. That's why we need the Environment Agency. But on the other side of the coin are the innovative companies (including the seventy who entered our Business Environment Awards this year) who see the environment as a business opportunity, not a threat.

**Q** Do academics care about anything other than publishing in obscure journals read only by a handful of other academics? Shouldn't they get out more?

**A** Well, the sixty who contributed to our Research Group workshop on the Water Framework Directive are most definitely interested in connecting. And they generated some provocative ideas.

**Q** The voluntary sector always seems to get sidelined. What is the Campaign doing about this?

**A** A lot. For instance Charles Secrett, one of this country's leading and most inspiring campaigners, spoke to our Voluntary Sector Forum in May. We have an expert voluntary sector advisory group. Our nineteen River Valley Initiatives work day in, day out with local volunteers and community organisations.

**Q** Aren't you wasting your time with the public? People just don't care any more about their local environments. Look at the vandalism, litter, graffiti and dereliction!

**A** Many surveys and our own experience show that people are extremely concerned about their neighbourhoods. And increasing numbers of them do something about it - a record 160 groups in last year's Mersey Basin Week, for example.

**Q** We have quite enough empty tin sheds on greenfield sites already, thank you. Why isn't the Northwest Development Agency more serious about the environment?

**A** The new regional economic strategy launched in March makes it crystal clear that sustainable development is at its heart. And its new chief executive, Steve Broomhead, told 200 of us at our business awards that it was moving up the agenda.

**Q** OK, but what actually is this sustainable development then? You keep going on about it.

**A** Easy. Not sending a bill to future generations, and leaving our region in a better state than we inherited it.

**Q** Yes, but give us a real example, something practical.

**A** Oxygenation of the Manchester Ship Canal at Salford Quays (environmental improvement) enabled brownfield site development (economic development), creating jobs and amenities for local people (social benefits). It's win-win-win. Take the Metrolink to the Lowry and the stunning new Imperial War Museum and see it for yourself.



### Campaign gains new specialist

Caroline Riley, an environment and community manager from United Utilities, has joined the Mersey Basin Campaign on secondment. She will work on the Ribble pilot project, a key contribution to the European Water Framework Directive, based on the River Ribble. The Directive will guide improvements in water quality for at least the next two decades and is vitally important to both United Utilities and the Campaign. As a first step, Caroline will develop a stakeholder map for public participation in the pilot project. She trained as a physicist and worked for British Aerospace before moving onto United Utilities, where she was in charge of corporate social responsibility at Vertex, the customer management wing of United Utilities.

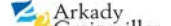
Contact: [c.riley@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:c.riley@merseybasin.org.uk)

### Going, going...

The Mersey Basin Campaign's flamboyant chairman, Joe Dwek CBE, is to step down in January after five energetic years at the helm during which he has helped revitalise the organisation. Amongst the Northwest's best-known and most charismatic business leaders, Mr Dwek has shown a notable flair for raising the Campaign's profile among the region's business community. The chairmanship is a Secretary of State appointed position and the Government Office North West is currently identifying a replacement. Interested parties should contact Peter Wilson, GONW, Cunard Building, Pier Head, Liverpool, L3 1QB or call 0151 224 6300.



### The Mersey Basin Campaign is sponsored by



## New chair for Irwell initiative

Stephen Jenkinson, head of Greater Manchester Waste Ltd, has been appointed chair of the Irwell River Valley Initiative (RVI).

The Irwell RVI was established to promote the use of the River Irwell and raise awareness of its development potential. The Irwell corridor links the cities of Salford and Manchester through areas that have seen major waterside development in recent years, but the corridor itself has been overlooked. It suffers from poor water quality and people are unwilling to visit the area because they feel it is unsafe, especially in the most neglected areas.

The success of the various regeneration projects in Manchester and Salford have pushed the Irwell back onto the agenda. Ideas being touted include a waterbus between Manchester city centre and Salford Quays, a heritage trail to highlight the history of the river and improvements in pedestrian access so local residents will be encouraged to use the area.

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
see page 22,  
*Irwell corridor sparks gem of an idea*

**CONTACT:**  
l.williams@merseybasin.org.uk

**TELEPHONE:**  
Louise Williams,  
0161 242 8218



## Sindsley Brook clean up

A Groundwork team has removed over 60 tyres, parts of a 4x4 truck, gas canisters and other debris as they helped local businesses clean up Sindsley Brook in Salford. The tiny brook had been the victim of mass fly-tipping, leaving the area so badly affected that the water could not be seen. Groundwork also installed fencing in the area to prevent future dumping. It is hoped that local residents will help complete the project.

**CONTACT:** h.lord@merseybasin.org.uk  
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## Dual art show opens country's longest sculpture trail



**MORE INFORMATION:**  
[www.getoutguide.co.uk/outdoors/outdoors/sculpture\\_trail.htm](http://www.getoutguide.co.uk/outdoors/outdoors/sculpture_trail.htm)

The completion of the country's longest sculpture trail is to be marked with a specially commissioned art exhibition on show at both the Lowry centre in Salford and Bury art gallery this summer. As If I Were A River by Hong Kong-born artist Dinu Li includes a new video installation incorporating a huge tank of water, along with a meditative series of photographs. Different parts of the exhibition will be shown simultaneously at both venues to encourage people to walk stretches of the trail.

The 30 mile River Irwell sculpture trail forms part of £4.2 million regeneration scheme for the Irwell valley and consists of 28 lottery-funded sculptures lining the length of the river from rural Lancashire to the Manchester Ship Canal. It began life in 1987 as the Irwell Valley Way, with Ian Hunter's Willow Tree maze as the first sculpture. As well as art works the lottery funding has been ploughed into flood defences and country parks.

The creation of the trail has given rise to a new public art commissioning and advisory agency, Commissions in the Environment (CITE). The agency plans to continue commissioning site specific and outdoor art works, building on its experience in the Northwest. It will focus on rural and urban regeneration, community involvement and environmental improvement.

## School river study goes digital

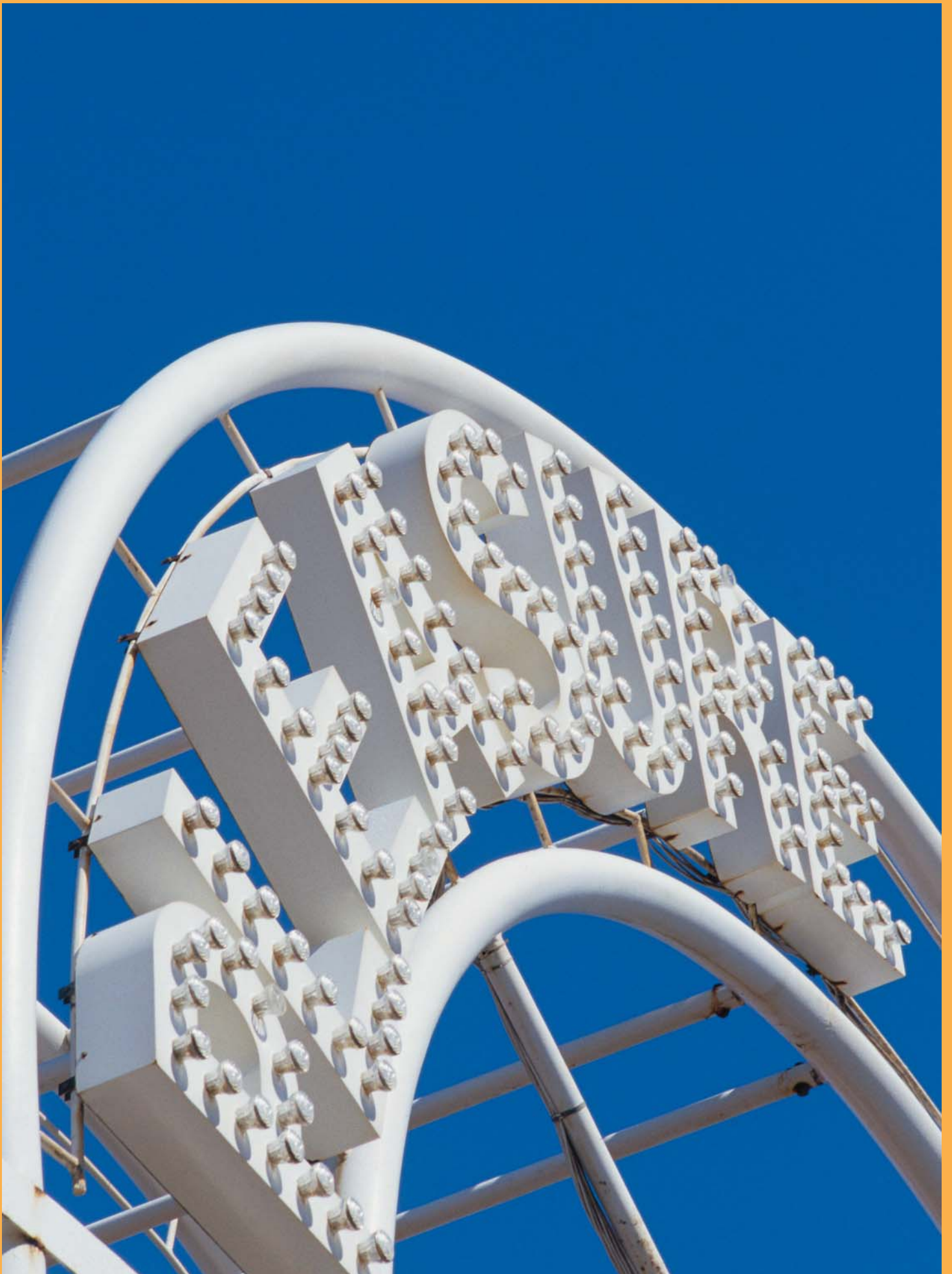
**CONTACT:**  
Riva2005@paul009.fsnet.co.uk

**TELEPHONE:**  
Paul Corner, 0151 343 9869

Paul Corner, River Valley Initiative (RVI) co-ordinator for the Wirral, has designed and produced an interactive guide to river study sites across his area. The CD was developed with help from Giles Moorcroft, a third year student at Chester College, after consultation with the local education authority showed the need for a guide that covered all aspects of a school river study.

The RiVa 2005 Educational CD-Rom has been designed in line with the national curriculum to help teachers and key stage two pupils (seven to eleven years old) investigate and identify the main attributes of a river or stream, using cross-curricular learning. The CD-Rom also includes interactive maps, images and sounds, as well as information on local history, wildlife and habitats. Many images were provided by Peter Miller of the Wirral Ranger Service.

The Wirral RVI is part of the Mersey Basin Campaign and this is its first foray into the world of educational materials - the response from teachers to the first draft has been very positive. The design can be adapted to all RVI areas by collecting local maps and information on specific sites. Hazel Lord, RVI co-ordinator for the Worsley Brooks Partnership, has already begun the process of adapting the CD-Rom for her catchment. It is hoped that it can be adapted by all RVIs in the Mersey Basin Campaign area.



A delicate balancing act lies ahead for the Northwest's coastal towns.

Words Steve Connor. Photograph Jan Chlebik.

# CRITICAL COASTLINES

It was the Swinging Sixties. Millions of us flocked to our coastal resorts to indulge in a heady cocktail of comedy hats, candy floss and B&B fry-ups. Business was booming in Blackpool and Morecambe as three quarters of the British public chose to spend their domestic holidays by the sea. In the Northwest's other coastal towns such as Barrow or Birkenhead shipbuilding, offshore operations and heavy engineering kept local economies afloat.

Fast-forward to the nineties and things had changed, dramatically. The percentage of domestic holidays spent by the coast had been slashed from 75% to just 20%. As low-cost carriers whisked cost-conscious holidaymakers off to Mediterranean destinations, the traditional tourism market for our coastal towns imploded.

Take a stroll down the promenade today, and you'll see an ageing clientele spending little and returning less. In their place, the more hard-pushed hotels and B&Bs are taking in hard-luck cases from the social services, adding areas of 'multi-deprivation' to the challenge facing the region's coastal towns. Beyond the resorts, the areas relying on industry - and in particular our shipyards - have fared no better.

As the new century - the new millennium - takes shape, a major challenge confronts the region: how to create a fresh and prosperous future for the coastal towns of England's Northwest.

On Morecambe seafront, expectant eyes look to the art deco splendour of the Midland Hotel for a sign of new beginnings. Having passed through a series of owners, the Grade II building has just been bought by those doyens of regeneration, Urban Splash. "I have known the building for years and watched its gradual decline with sadness," said Urban Splash chairman, Tom Bloxham. "When I heard that the latest restoration scheme had fallen through I decided to buy the building. It is a fantastic building, I hope we will be able to restore it back as a hotel and restaurant, but it will be very difficult, expensive and will no doubt take several years."

The Midland Hotel's renaissance will rely in no small part on the wider action plan for renewal in Morecambe. Its strategic objectives include a need to change perceptions, broaden the resort's appeal, achieve a year-round tourism business and develop a 'niche' approach to marketing Morecambe as a 'spa' resort and 'eco' tourism destination. Specific actions will include major redevelopments for the promenade and the Victoria Pavilion as well as campaigns for better shopping, better service and better food.

A short hop south, past Cleveleys and Fleetwood, and Blackpool is developing similarly bold plans for its rebirth. Boasting some significant assets but facing major challenges including some areas of severe deprivation, Blackpool Borough Council has unveiled a £1 billion initiative to establish the town as a 'world class' resort for the twenty-first century. The town's new 20 year masterplan will, it is hoped, create more than 20,000 jobs and usher in a major programme of regeneration. There will be plans to revive landmarks such as the promenade and Pleasure Beach and to introduce new attractions such as a new entertainment complex, four casino hotels and a new conference facility.

The town has also been given its own 'tourism tsar', Peter Moore, who has overseen the success of major attractions like Centre Parcs and Alton Towers.

Moore stresses quality and modernity as he sets out his vision for Blackpool's future. "Like virtually every British resort, it has become a prisoner of the past," he says. "It is constrained by infrastructure that is tired - by unfettered expansion over decades and by lack of investment and innovation. But, critically, in Blackpool's case, this harsh reality has been recognised and we have begun to diagnose realistically and understand the causes of this deterioration. A route to recovery is being actively sought."

That route to recovery does not rely exclusively on tourism or the previously-touted transformation of the town into a new 'Las Vegas'. The masterplan embraces social change, environmental conservation and a need to build a Blackpool that is also a good place to live and work, as well as visit.

These broader aims - that see tourism as just one part of the solution - are reflected in the Northwest Development Agency's report 'A New Vision for Northwest Coastal Resorts'. The report spells out the case for a broad economic renaissance that plays on the strengths of individual locations. The vision positions Grange-over-Sands, for example, as a 'classic resort'; it plays on Morecambe as a 'beautiful place'; Fleetwood and Cleveleys as centres for retail and shopping; Southport as a stylish, sophisticated, upmarket destination.

Laurence Rose, chair of the Northwest Coastal Forum, thinks this broader, more holistic approach could well hold the key to success. "Tourism itself will not be the answer," he says. "These towns have to be interesting and pleasant places to live and work. If we can pull that off then maybe the tourism will come back, but first let's look at the quality of the housing stock, at business opportunities, and the natural environment."

As the revival of coastal towns is masterplanned and debated, one theme does recur time and again: the natural environment. From improvements in the quality of bathing waters - the subject of a major new programme soon to be launched by the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Environment Agency - to climate change, sea level rise and the push for more renewable energy, environmental issues are an omnipresent pressure point and opportunity for the Northwest coast and its towns. On Merseyside, the Mersey Waterfront Park will see sustainable regeneration fused with economic development, including a new 'eco-visitor centre' at Southport and a coastal reservation at Speke Garston. For Birkenhead, Barrow and Workington, a raft of new, clean energy offshore wind farms could hold the key to new jobs through manufacturing, construction and servicing of wind turbines in the Irish Sea.

And that's the balancing act that may well hold the key to any long-lasting prosperity. A coastal renaissance will rely squarely on the conservation of sensitive environments, a savvy approach to business growth and a quality-led rejuvenation of our cultural assets. The heyday of 'Kiss Me Quick' may have passed - we have to strive now for something more stylish, and more sustainable.

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
**BLACKPOOL CHALLENGE PARTNERSHIP**  
[www.bcp-ltd.co.uk](http://www.bcp-ltd.co.uk)  
**MORECAMBE ACTION PLAN**  
[www.lancaster.gov.uk](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk)  
**NORTHWEST COASTAL FORUM**  
[www.nwcoastalforum.co.uk](http://www.nwcoastalforum.co.uk)  
**NORTHWEST DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
[www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)  
**NORTHWEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**  
[www.nwra.gov.uk](http://www.nwra.gov.uk)  
**URBAN SPLASH**  
[www.urbansplash.co.uk](http://www.urbansplash.co.uk)



It's not just the kids returning to the Northwest's recreational waters.

Words Ian Herbert. Photographs Len Grant.

# BATHING BEAUTIES

Michael Meacher's blue trunks matched his goose pimples when he kept a four-year old promise and ventured across Blackpool beach to brave the Irish Sea during the Labour Party conference last autumn.

'Taking the plunge' hardly describes the 200 yard paddle and the brief period of splashing that ensued after Mr Meacher's complete immersion. "It was a lot better than I thought it was going to be," spluttered the environment minister as he emerged from the swell. "It is not pleasurable. I did take a few mouthfuls, not deliberately, but I have to say I am hoping to stay healthy."

A small step for the minister was a seismic one for Blackpool, whose tourism efforts were not exactly helped by Mr Meacher's insistence, when

Labour last ventured to the Fylde coast for its conference four years ago, that the resort's beaches were filthy. He would swim, he told them, only when Blackpool's beaches met European cleanliness standards - a target eventually attained in 2001.

The strides the Northwest is taking to enhance its bathing waters - and make them contribute to sustainable economic development - make a brief stunt in the Irish Sea pale into insignificance.

Everybody knows that Blackpool remains one of the Northwest's economic jewels - but it's only a part of the rich, eclectic range of bathing waters offered by the region's estuaries and coastlines. Formby and West Kirby are the real jewels, Merseysiders will tell you. Cumbria loves Seascale. And in west Lancashire, they're especially fond of Ainsdale.

Problem is, we've not been shouting about some of our best bathing waters. Many fine waters are not even able to seek out the famous, coveted world standard blue flag which can help pull tourists in. That's because none was among the list of 34 coastal and three lakeside sites designated for regular checks by the EU, when a safe bathing waters monitoring regime was set up in the late 1970s. Many of the emerging popular spots remain relatively unsung as a result.





It is now widely accepted that the list of designated bathing waters is outdated. As well as omitting some important destinations, it includes some that are barely used.

It is an issue that has been exercising the Environment Agency (EA) for some time and now, in partnership with the Mersey Basin Campaign (MBC), it is using a key €8.6 million European grant to undertake a complete reappraisal of which bathing waters should have designation. It is an exciting project, part of Interreg, the European Community initiative designed to stimulate interregional cooperation by awarding funds to projects which involve a number of European partners. For this initiative, the Northwest is partnering up with Portugal, also examining its own designation system.

The complex, potentially contentious three-year project is destined to bring choppy waters of its own, but the aim is clear: establish where people want to bathe and help those locations to develop.

“We want to survey the coasts and inland waters,” says MBC development manager Iain Taylor, the project leader. “We need to determine where people are going and if those places are safe. If they are, then let’s promote them. Let’s maximise the potential for renewal, economic regeneration and urban renewal. We’ve a lot of ground to cover - at the moment we don’t even know which places people are using.”

Re-designation will not happen overnight, Taylor admits. “Identifying them will be a challenge,” he says. “We’ll do flyovers of the coasts on busy days and literally work out where they are. Inland waters are more tricky. We’ll survey places which are busy on warm, summer days, talk to people in those places. The whole process is about community engagement - identifying the key stakeholders. If we establish that a site is really rock-and-roll, then we will rank it highly.”

A proposed list of designated beaches will be submitted within two years to the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which has indicated that it is prepared to look at a re-designation, in time for an overhaul of the entire designation criteria, which is currently under active discussion in Europe.

Even before work begins, though, the MBC has made it quite clear that it’s not just interested in places where tourists want a dip in the sea. The overall Interreg project - of which re-designation comprises only one part - is called Improving Coastal and Recreational Waters. It’s important to distinguish between the two.

Recreational waters encompass all the emerging kinds of recreation that might involve being in the water, from kite

## 60-second expert

- eight Northwest beaches have Seaside Award yellow flags - Ainsdale, Haverigg, Lifeboat Road in Formby, Seascale, Silecroft, Southport, St Bees, West Kirby, Walney Island at Biggar Bank
- among the yellow flag criteria, resorts have to pass water quality tests, prohibit dogs on beaches, have bins every 25 metres or so, have lifeguard equipment to hand, phone boxes within five minutes and toilets
- the Northwest’s big breakthrough in beach cleanliness came in 2001, when Blackpool’s water quality passed the EU basic mandatory test. The Northwest shot up from a pass rate of 68% to 82%. This is a measure of lower grade sewage contamination as well as oil and chemical pollutants.
- Blue Flag status, marked in guidebooks and on beach billboards, is awarded after stringent tests on faecal streptococci bacteria. No Northwest beaches pass this test yet
- the Mersey Basin Campaign and Environment Agency have secured €8.6 million to establish which beaches and water courses should be designated as bathing waters. This is part of a wider EU project to improve bathing waters, bringing together five EU members - Britain, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and France

surfing and water-skiing to sailing. Those activities might take place inland or on coasts.

Sale Water Park near Manchester and Manley Lake, the hugely popular lake near Chester are both examples of the sustainable economic benefits offered by such waters - even if being thrown from a jet-ski at high speed doesn't fit the Edwardian concept of 'taking the waters'.

The potential of these locations to develop has been enhanced by vastly improved inland water quality.

As the MBC secured its grant, in April, the EA was preparing to publish monitoring data showing how, for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, oxygen levels are now high enough to support fish along the entire Mersey estuary. It's another triumph for the MBC's mission - and it is going to mean more of the regular angling matches already held in the estuary, not to mention sailing regattas, canoeing, rowing and windsurfing - all of which are increasingly popular.

Improved river quality also means improved coastal waters. An indication of just how much better our seas have become is provided by the Seaside Awards, the ten-year-old scheme operated by Wigan-based Encams (Environmental Campaigns), to highlight excellence among those locations (many of them small secluded coves and beaches in rural locations) for which the resort-dominated Blue Flag scheme is out of reach.

When the Seaside Awards were established in 1992, just 92 beaches were listed nationwide. Now a total of 332 qualify for the Encams Seaside Award yellow flag, by providing a good beach environment and waters to slightly less demanding

which, for obvious reasons, create untold bacterial pollution), or from cattle and sheep grazing beside a river.

The Ribble and Fylde coasts have particular pollution problems, owing to the proximity of major towns like Preston, Wigan and Southport and the use of the Ribble salt marshes for grazing and by birds. The EA has already undertaken a major study with Defra and Brighton University to identify where bacteria has come from. Another part of the Interreg project is examining the same issue.

For Blackpool, the renewed focus on bathing waters offers a sustainable development potential which has been overshadowed by the national headlines accompanying the town's deliberations over whether to metamorphose into a "Vegas of the North."

Plans for a £1 billion development, centred on a 200 hectare site at the centre of the resort and potentially creating 20,000 jobs over 15 to 20 years, were announced in the spring. They would capitalise on a possible liberalisation of gaming laws in the UK.

But the town, which has 5.1% unemployment in winter and a more marked seasonal variation in employment than any other resort in Britain, is only beginning to discover the true value of its finest commodity of all - water.

Examine the example of the Blackpool Light Craft Club. When established in the 1950s, it was for people who had small boats. In the last three years, it has transmogrified into a watersports club, complete with its Californian-style beach house on the Blackpool sandhills. Renamed BLCC, it provides jet-skiing, wake boarding and kite surfing - a formidably

## the aim is clear: establish where people want to bathe and help those locations to develop

standard than the Blue Flag scheme, which Encams also administers in the UK.

The Northwest list of yellow flag destinations includes Ainsdale, West Kirby and Formby, but the region is hardly afloat with them - we have just eight listed. "There's a lot more work to do - but our awards have established the degree of hitherto 'unsung' bathing waters - particularly the rural Cumbrian ones," said Ian Cole, who manages the Encams awards scheme.

Of course, there's a lot more to getting our bathing waters right than re-designation. Water quality issues still provide a myriad of problems, despite the exhaustive efforts of the EA to monitor bathing waters by taking weekly samples throughout the summer season.

"What we have been trying to do for some time is identify the cause and effect [of water pollution]," says the EA's strategic environmental planning manager in the Northwest, Clive Gaskell. "If you have poor conditions on the beach, where does it come from?"

Much effort has been put in at sewage treatment works, but there are other sources of bacteria in rivers and seas. Sewage bacteria can come from a large bird population (like the population of 100,000 starlings on Blackpool's North Pier

exciting sport in which participants are pulled along by huge kites that are tied to surfboards. Membership has tripled to 150.

"We seemed to have forgotten that the Irish Sea is there for us to have a good time," said organiser Brian Crombleholme. "I've fallen off my jet-skis many a time and got a mouthful of sea. It's just fine. There's more and more to do out there - some of the local sailors have been out two or three miles and seen sea lions of late. So we're going to get out this summer to see them. It's all part of what we can offer."

Renowned kite surfer Mark Connelly backs up the view. "Eighteen months ago I'd never have gone in the water," he said.

And nearby, mum Catherine Matthew, swimming in the sea with her children, said: "Five years ago there was no way I'd have let the kids in the water but the improvement has been fantastic."

Having secured the European cleanliness target for its water, another Blackpool target must be one of those famous blue flags - that means establishing a beach environment to match its clean waters. After that, who knows? Perhaps the entire Labour cabinet, kite surfing in full view of the prom.

### MORE INFORMATION:

#### ENCAMS

[www.encams.org](http://www.encams.org)

#### BLUE FLAG AWARDS

[www.seasideawards.org.uk](http://www.seasideawards.org.uk)

#### ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

#### MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN

[www.merseybasin.org.uk](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

# THE DATING AGENCY



## TURNING POINTS

**1977**

Arrived at Lancaster University to study Biological Sciences

**1980**

Left Lancaster before completing degree to become a management trainee in manufacturing, leading to a position as production manager at Hornsea Pottery Ltd.

**1983**

Joined the RSPB as development officer

**1988**

Promoted to head of European programmes

**1999**

Appointed regional director for the Northwest

If his early career is anything to go by, Laurence Rose is a man with an impatient streak. He quit his course in biological sciences at Lancaster University to become a management trainee. At the same time, he's never less than personable and has clearly found his role in life - he's worked in a number of contrasting roles at the RSPB for the last twenty years.

Now, as regional director for the Northwest, he is responsible for the society's actions across ten counties - or 20% of England. He became involved with the Northwest Coastal Forum when it was set up two years ago. As its chairman, he plays a pivotal role in shaping its growing influence in the region.

"We've proved to be a useful sounding board for issues such as how regional planning guidance can help promote an integrated approach to coastal issues. We've also run flagship projects like the feasibility study for the Northwest coastal trail." If it gets the go-ahead, the trail will follow the coastline all the way from Scotland to Wales.

Rose is clear on the problems confronting the region's coast. "New business and economic opportunities are needed to reorient, or perhaps replace, coastal industries that have suffered long-term decline, such as fisheries and seaside tourism." But he's equally clear on its strengths. "The special assets of the coastal environment - the superb landscapes and biodiversity - will be part of the solution, and enhancing these while developing and regenerating the coast will need an integrated approach."

That is where the Northwest Coastal Forum comes in. "Few regions in the world have succeeded in adopting an integrated approach to coastal planning and management," Rose points out. "But at least here in Northwest England there is an active dialogue between all the players."

Those players include local authorities, statutory agencies, the Northwest Development agency, Northwest

Regional Assembly, Government Office Northwest, the Mersey Basin Campaign, industry and the voluntary sector. Representatives from each sit on the forum's board and there is a biennial conference that draws together a wider audience. The next one is in Southport on June 12th.

The conference helps to promote a concept known as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). It's one that Rose feels strongly will be central to a successful future for the coast. In essence, ICZM simply asks who is responsible for the coast - to which the answer is that lots of people have an interest in it, but no one has overall responsibility.

"What's needed is a two way-street between the people with statutory powers, like the Environment Agency, and those with wider interests." Rose would like to see a flexible framework in place, with a strong lead from the government balanced with local responsibility.

**"On the coast there is potential for conflict, most of which is not inherent but a consequence of so many cooks using different recipe books."**

He doesn't delude himself that the forum is the answer, but he does see it as an important early step in the right direction.

But the Northwest Coastal Forum itself has no statutory powers. So one challenge is to build its influence. Rose understands that a valuable part of its function is to act as a dating agency, bringing organisations together to develop the common ground between them. It also needs to become an "intelligent talking shop" able to offer regional expertise on specific coastal issues, such as offshore renewable energy.

On balance, Rose is optimistic for the future. "There are still a few dinosaurs out there who think the environment is either a luxury, or that it is basically about planting trees around your tin shack." But he also acknowledges that the value of the environment is more appreciated now than ever before and the old polarised view of economy versus environment is no longer valid. "It all depends on how quickly old development thinking is replaced by modern economic concepts."

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WORDS: CHRIS DESSENT

# BUNNY LOVE CONSPIRACY TAKES OVER NORTHWEST BUSINESS

It seems conspirators are at work in the Northwest. The bunny loving, environmentally crazed, tree-hugging brigade have taken it upon themselves to brainwash decent, law abiding businesses into going green. And the methods are getting extreme.

I kid you not. The latest manifestation of the propaganda war is a marketing campaign featuring two middle aged businessmen, leaping for joy as they run naked down a grassy hillside buttocks to the camera. The advert is supported by the line 'Environmental business training. It's good for your bottom line'. Bottom line benefits from the environment, pull the other one. The mantra of profiting from the environment may be gaining momentum, but for my money, it still sounds more like good PR than sound business sense. In my experience, doing the right thing always costs you more and is never quite as much fun as being bad. The time is right to investigate and put an end to the hype.

First stop is BSN Medical of Nelson, Lancashire one of the recent winners of the Northwest Business Environment Awards, organised by the Mersey Basin Campaign. Surely winning awards is more about good PR than acknowledging business success. I asked health, safety and environment manager, Craig Holdsworth, to explain: "Business is cynical about the environment. It's seen to be about tree hugging,

## Our recycling and environmental measures are paying for two or three full time jobs..

the birds and the bees, a hippy thing. But we look at the environment as a business tool. If we manage the business properly and reduce our use of raw materials and pollution, then the environment will also benefit. It's about being a smarter, leaner business." But doesn't reducing your environmental impact take a lot of time and money? "You need to demonstrate a cost saving to gain commitment from within the company. It's just good business sense. One of our biggest impacts was production waste and waste to landfill. We've worked hard on this and the outcomes are now measured by our accountants, in terms of reduced bills and taxes. By taking simple low cost and no cost measures, we are saving £105,000 each year." BSN Medical has also reduced its water bill by almost £12,000 and saved 50 tonnes of water each year by using rain water for all cleaning operations. But does all this add up to much in terms of commercial success? "Our recycling and environmental measures are paying for two or three full time jobs and we are still coming out with a profit. And the wider business group is now saving a combined total of somewhere in the region of £2.5 million each year."

An impressive track record and real results, but maybe the propaganda machine had primed them before my interview. Still not convinced, I decided to talk to HMG Paints Ltd of Manchester, a seventy year-old manufacturing company, specialising in industrial and transport coatings. Alison Patterson, Marketing Manager explained their approach:



"Corporate social responsibility is increasingly important, customers want to be involved in a green partnership so it makes business sense. What it says to our customers is that we are going to be around for a while and we are planning for the future." But what is the motivation for HMG Paints, why would you do it, surely you are looking for substantial payback? "For HMG Paints, we wanted to put something back into the community. Our employees live locally and our environmental work benefits our workforce directly. Our work is something to be proud of." The River Irk runs through the HMG Paints site and the company has recently won a Waterside Regeneration award for their work. The company has purchased and landscaped an area of derelict land adjacent to the river bank, planted some 1,800 trees, established a pond and created an outdoor classroom for use by local schools. And they still find the time to run a successful business. It seems the goals of business and the needs of the environment are not always poles apart, as Alison explains: "It's a virtuous circle that serves to lift the morale of our staff and encourages them to stay with the company, helping us to build a better business."

Maybe a conspiracy isn't afoot after all. The Northwest has clearly entered a brave new world where business people hug trees and stroke rabbits, while clocking up the savings and environmentalists wear Armani and carry briefcases. The world's clearly gone mad and maybe that's a good thing. And now it's time to get my kit off and run up the nearest hillside. Resistance, it seems, is futile.

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PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL  
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**THE NORTHWEST BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT AWARDS ARE  
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AND ENVIROLINK NORTHWEST,  
AND ORGANISED BY THE MERSEY  
BASIN CAMPAIGN.**

**TO READ ABOUT THE  
WINNERS VISIT:**  
[www.watersnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.watersnorthwest.org.uk)  
**MORE INFORMATION:**  
[www.enworks.com](http://www.enworks.com)  
[www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk](http://www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk)  
[www.groundwork.org.uk/business](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/business)

# WE HAVE THE POWER

When it comes to manufacturing, England's great, industrial Northwest has been there and done the lot. But 100 metre steel towers, edged and profiled to stand in fierce winds out in the Irish Sea? That's definitely something entirely different.

Manufactured to harness the southwesterlies that make the Northwest Europe's richest potential wind power resource, the steel for the towers is cut, shaped and edged by Robert Smith Steel in Birkenhead, one of the beneficiaries of the region's fledgling wind energy industry.

In fact, wind energy creates more jobs per unit of electricity than any other form of power generation. Watt-for-watt, it generates 66% more employment than coal power. At the end of 1995 there were already 1,300 people directly employed in wind energy in the UK.

But it's still only a drop in the ocean. Despite possessing the greatest supplies of wind and wave energy in Europe, the UK has been lamentably slow to convert it to power, generating just 0.38% of its energy by renewable means. That compares with 18% in Denmark, which is busy demonstrating the sustainable economic development that

## ...jobs will go to countries like Denmark and Germany if our region does not put real investment and political support into this vital new area of industry

accompanies green energy. Not content with merely building their own wind turbines, the Danes have also sold 100 to the UK - virtually our entire complement to date. Their wind energy industry employs 14,000 people - more than the entire British coal industry.

The recent Energy White Paper ought to have been another wake up call of the kind delivered by the Kyoto treaty six years ago. But its aspiration that renewable energy (RE) should supply 10% of the country's energy by 2010 is already being dismissed as too ambitious by some ministers and industry experts.

Julian Carter also has his doubts. He is general manager of Renewables Northwest, an organisation established last year by the Northwest Development Agency and United Utilities to help the region meet its renewable energy targets and potential.

Carter has much to go at: the Irish Sea's suitability for offshore wind, with its good wind resource and relatively shallow, shelly sea bed, resulted in eight of the 18 first tranche of licences for offshore wind being granted to the Northwest two years ago, and has made it one of three designated strategic areas for development in the second round. The private sector has shown keen interest in second round licences.

But Britain's apparent pathological hate for the sight of onshore and offshore wind turbines is constraining Carter. Public opposition and the parochialism of some town hall planners are ever-present barriers. Of the 50 proposals for Cumbrian wind farms lodged between 1990 and 2002, only 12 were accepted. As a result, the past 12 months have

seen Carter in places like Oldham, Bacup and Burnley, engaged in the intricate task of enlightening planners and the public about wind turbines.

"We're addressing the perception of what the (planning committee) decision makers think the public think," he says. "They're wondering 'what do the people who've voted me in think of this.' Their perception can be skewed by the 'antis,' who make more noise and provide more objections, but they can often be in the minority."

Another giant slice of the offshore potential is on hold because of the Ministry of Defence's opposition to three large wind farms close to Blackpool and another off Southport. The MoD is "reluctance to engage" on its reasoning, according to Carter. But as a result, the Southport license has been handed back and the government has struggled to reissue it.

If the battles can be won, the opportunities open to Envirolink Northwest - another major player, established to nurture RE business opportunities - will multiply. Its business development manager, Chris Shearlock, is seeking to ensure that the contracts accrued are won by Northwest companies and to secure the inward investment that means Northwest workforces like Robert Smith Steel will be helping build the Danish-designed turbines. German and Danish firms have been given introductions to Barrow and Workington Docks and Liverpool - all obvious sources of technically experienced and skilled labour.

There have been seminars for Northwest companies to help open up opportunities for them. Bendalls Engineering in Carlisle, which is working on new technology spin-offs, is also among those firms already cashing in.

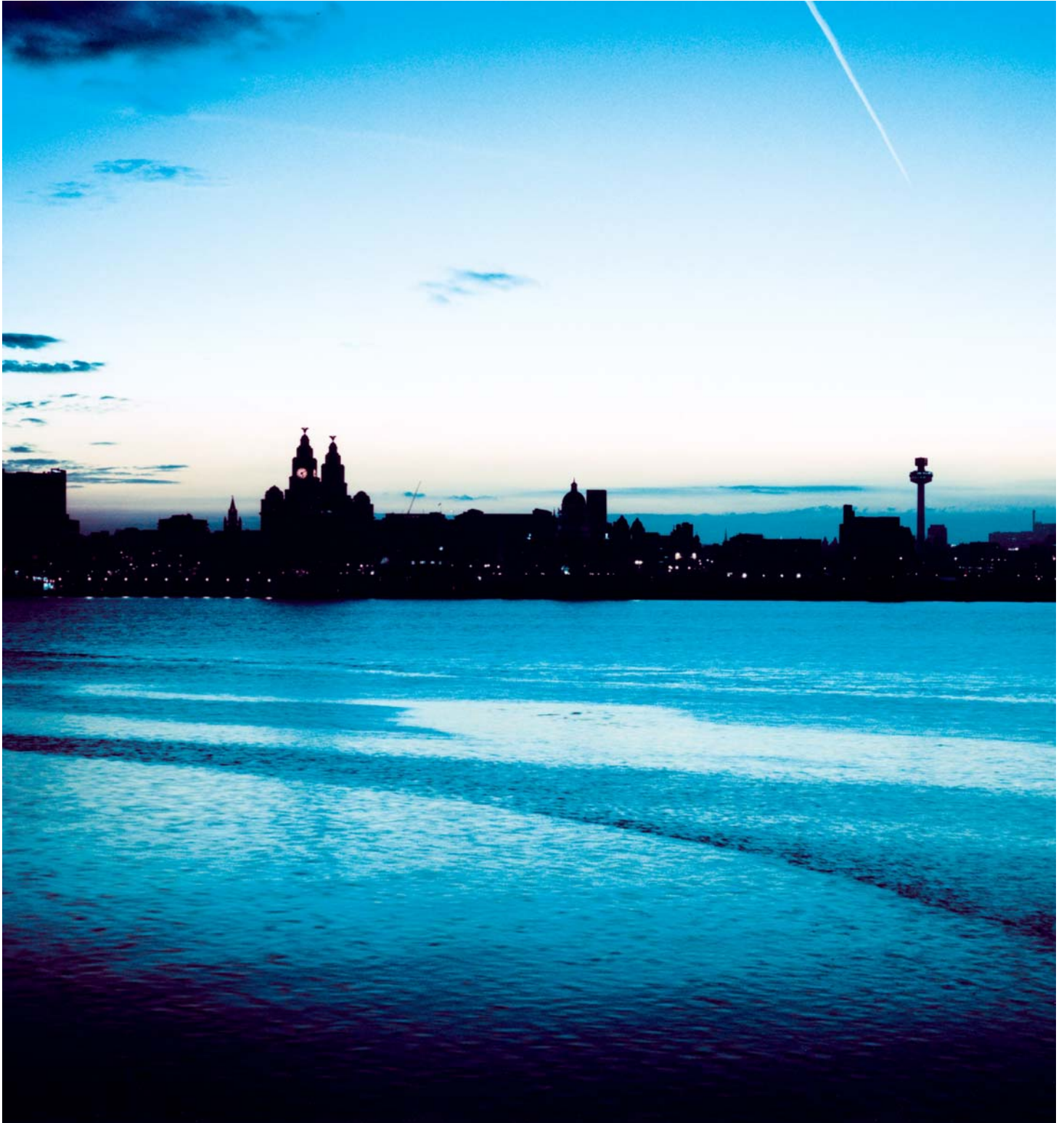
With a readiness to contribute £250 million to RE through its own green energy business over the next five to 10 years, United Utilities (UU) is also making a major contribution. It is already one of the top five renewable energy generators in the country and has a license for one of the UK's first offshore wind projects (in South Wales). "Planning issues are something we do need to address," says UU chief executive John Roberts. "It's not a question of being given carte blanche but looking at the planning guidance. The White Paper has been a great step forward - we need to develop things now."

Some factors augur well, not least the imminent prospect of a revision of the PPG22 planning guidelines, which relate to wind farms.

But there is no mistaking the size of the mission. "For each of the eight major wind farms being planned off the Northwest coast, there are literally thousands of jobs and dozens of potential new businesses in component manufacturing, engineering and servicing," said Julian Carter, in his opening address to the recent second annual Northwest renewables conference, staged in Blackpool. "At present, most of those jobs will go to countries like Denmark and Germany and not England's Northwest if our region does not put real investment and political support into this vital new area of industry."



# ON THE



Tin shed factories are out - quality is the name of the regeneration game.

Words David Ward. Photograph Jan Chlebik.

# WATERFRONT

If, by a bit of a stretch of the imagination and some bending of metaphors, you can see the Mersey as a cake, then the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park exists to put the icing on it.

The Mersey Basin Campaign has been successfully cleaning up the region's mucky waters for 18 years. Now it's time to do something about the edges of those waters, to begin to exploit their significance as an asset for both business and pleasure.

Of course, many know and admire the Liverpool waterfront, with its three splendidly contrasting architectural landmarks, known as the three graces (and with a fourth on the way). But there is much more to the Mersey than that.

The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MWRP) has been established to create a framework for the renaissance of the wider, 70-mile long waterfront and make the rest of Britain, and much of the world beyond, realise its quality and value.

The initial brief runs until 2005 and the vision is clear (if ambitious): "To transform, energise and connect Mersey Waterfront and all its assets in producing a unique sense of place which acts as a key attractor of people to live, work, visit and invest in Merseyside."

Louise Hopkins, deputy chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, was brought in as the MWRP's director a year ago to turn this vision into reality.

"Our waterfront is one of the great assets that we have on Merseyside, the one thing that sets us apart from any other city or region," she says. "We need to build on those assets and shout from the rafters about them, to use the whole waterfront to celebrate the modern Mersey region."

She already has £8.75 million from the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) and that will help lever in an extra £50 million from public and private investors. But she is not in the business of sticking up tin shed factories which create a few new jobs with watery views.

The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park is a long-term initiative designed to raise expectations and ambitions, to bellow from those rafters that Merseyside no longer has to accept the workaday and the ordinary. Its message is that a great waterfront deserves better than that.

"We are there to make projects extra special rather than average. We are starting to raise the ambition, the quality and the collaborative effort rather than treat things on a site-by-site basis. We want to celebrate the whole of the Merseyside coast and use that to re-position Merseyside."

The MWRP has looked round the world for the best ideas. "We have to look at international benchmarks and find who are the world leaders in the kind of thing we are trying to do. There is no one region that can teach us everything. So we have drawn on examples from Toronto, San Francisco and Bilbao."

All this is a sign of the growing confidence of Merseyside as it emerges from its years as a Sleeping Beauty who has dozed for far too long but woken up in time to bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Ms Hopkins and her team will have an input into the fourth grace (she is an unapologetic supporter of Will Alsop's controversial Cloud, which prompted howls of protest in the Liverpool Daily Post). But much of the MWRP's cash will be spent on giving regional or national significance to projects already in the pipeline or boosting the quality of design several notches up the scale.

So Southport is going to have its new Marine Parade bridge. But the extra cash available from the MWRP has ensured that a bold architectural statement has been created rather than just a utilitarian crossing with no aesthetic value.

Up the Mersey in Speke, the MWRP will embrace a Mersey Basin Campaign scheme to create a park from derelict land near the airport now used for fly-tipping and burning cars.

At the same time, studies are looking at the scope for regional parks in other parts of the Northwest. These include parks located on both the River Weaver in Cheshire and the Ribble estuary in Lancashire.

The partnership at Speke involves the NWDA, which has given £540,000 for preliminary work, Peel Holdings, which has given the 65 hectares of land, Liverpool City Council, the National Trust (Speke Hall is close by) and Liverpool Sailing Club, whose former clubhouse lies decaying and roofless on the site following an arson attack.

An application has been submitted for £500,000 from a European partnership project and that cash will be matched by £500,000 from the NWDA.

"It's a tremendous site," says Iain Taylor, development manager with the Mersey Basin Campaign. "The view across the estuary is fantastic. The place really means something to local people who grew up in the area. They really miss it as an area where they used to play as children and where they would like to wander now."

"The river's improved water quality creates a valuable asset. So now it's a question of taking that asset and doing something with it. It's the logical next step. Let's turn our attention to the water, not have our backs to it as we used to."

But the MWRP does not exist simply to be an umbrella for projects. It has a strategic role and will ensure that local councils work together on complementary schemes rather than duplicating good ideas because they do not know what anyone else is up to.

A key function will be marketing. "So we will add resources to the Mersey River Festival to help it bring in more attractions and then help market it outside Merseyside," added Ms Hopkins. "We will be advertising the festival to places within a two-hour drive of Liverpool."

Whatever the project, a bridge, a park, a billboard, quality will be the priority.

"It's a very simple approach. If you think about it, it's absolutely common sense. But I think it is important that it should be recognised that this is a long-term initiative. It does not stop in 2005."

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## Irwell corridor sparks gem of an idea

Located between the cities of Salford and Manchester is an overlooked length of the River Irwell. Stretching from Salford Quays at one end to Manchester cathedral at the other, it links two areas that have witnessed major regeneration in recent years. Such vibrancy is notably lacking along what is known as the River Irwell Corridor itself, however. It remains an under-utilised and polluted section of river that suffered devastating decline when it was abandoned by traditional industries in the 1950s and 1960s.

But according to Helen Charlesworth, "This area is a gem waiting to be regenerated. It is swimming with potential, and with the right design concept, it could be transformed from a tired industrial waterway to a vibrant, intrinsic link between Manchester city centre, Salford and Trafford."

Helen is a Masters student in landscape planning and management at the University of Manchester who recently completed a two month study into exactly what the area has to offer. Her research highlights seven ideas for breathing new life into the corridor as part of a visioning document that focuses on its unique heritage. All take into account existing planning permission and restrictions, land ownership and policy guidelines.

Helen's research grew out of the work of the local Irwell River Valley Initiative (RVI). The most recent of the Mersey Basin Campaign's local river-based initiatives, it was established with the goal of maximising the Irwell corridor's potential. Louise Williams, the Irwell RVI co-ordinator, hopes to use the research as a catalyst for renewed interest in the corridor.

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**BRIDGES SUCH AS THE PRINCE'S ROAD BRIDGE COULD BE ILLUMINATED AS PART OF A HERITAGE TOUR.**

The seven key ideas to come from Helen Charlesworth's research:

- Improved pedestrian access along the whole corridor, with the provision of suspended walkways where access is restricted, and new footbridges at strategic locations.
- The creation of a large mixed use 'urban village' at Pomona Docks.
- The creation of a waterbus system, connecting Manchester city centre with Salford Quays.
- The development of an illuminated heritage tour including all bridges and heritage assets such as listed buildings.
- Ongoing improvements in the water quality, building on the work accomplished in water quality within Salford Quays.
- New links to the nearby communities of Ordsall and St. Georges via footbridges.
- Environmental and landscape improvements.

## Saving our cities

As evidence for climate change continues to mount, its impact on our towns and cities remains largely uncharted. Existing research suggests that developed economies such as the UK will suffer a host of problems worthy of the Old Testament. They include flooding, landslides, rising sea levels, heat waves, water shortages, windstorms, air pollution and intensification of heat islands.

Now, a major new research project, Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in the Urban Environment (ASCCUE), aims to tackle the issue by anticipating the changes that are likely to be caused by climate change and planning responses to them. It will be based on two case studies, one of Lewes in Sussex and one of Greater Manchester, chosen to represent both the neighbourhood scale and the city scale.

The multi-disciplinary project brings together researchers from the University of Manchester, University of Southampton, University College of Wales, Cardiff and Oxford Brookes University. Leading it is Professor John Handley from the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology at the University of Manchester.

It is one of six projects being funded by a major new research initiative, Building Knowledge for a Changing Climate,

launched jointly by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the UK Climate Impacts Programme. The initiative focuses on urban drainage, urban environments and planning, energy and telecoms, buildings, transport and the built heritage.

The ASCCUE project develops the urban environments and planning theme, focusing on the vulnerability of towns and cities to climate change and the development of adaptation strategies in the urban environment. It will develop and test tools for assessing vulnerability based upon urban green spaces, building integrity and human comfort. This will be followed by assessment of the adaptation to change through planning and the design process.

Initiated in April 2003, the study runs for three years and has four principal aims. As well as an improved understanding of the impact of climate change on urban areas, it will also explore policy options for urban planning in response to climate change. It will produce a toolkit for climate conscious planning and design at various scales from neighbourhoods to cities. And it will initiate a number of projects that demonstrate how urban areas cope with climate change through planning and management.

More information: [www.art.man.ac.uk/PLANNING/cure/ASCCUE.htm](http://www.art.man.ac.uk/PLANNING/cure/ASCCUE.htm)

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# THE ART OF WIND



Words: Michael Taylor

Michael Taylor is the editor of North West Business Insider magazine.

Successful politics is the mastery of the perceptions. To conquer an argument and kill the idea, the master tactician has to adopt the language and emotions of the opponent.

Is this the essence of Sun Tzu's 2,000 year old masterpiece, The Art of War? I don't know; I've got far better things to do with my time than adopt a pseudo philosophical cloak in order to sound like a clever dick, and not just a nasty bastard. Well actually I'm neither, and maybe it's a Lancashire trait, but you can't beat a bit of plain speaking - something that would benefit the current debate on renewable energy.

Bill Clinton, something of a master tactician himself, built his presidency on the concept of "triangulation," a kind of Art of War for the twenty-first century. On one level the idea was as simple as getting his betrayals in early (something the British Labour Party activists secretly knew about Tony Blair when they elected him as leader in 1995).

On another level, Clinton was the master of using stunts and events to create a diversion. As Christopher Hitchens described in his devastating essay, No One Left To Lie To, Clinton launched missiles into the Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq for only one tangible political purpose, to - as Hitchens puts it - "distract attention from his filthy lunge at a beret-wearing cupcake."

But truly successful triangulation contains something more. Clinton adopted the language of one lobby, usually the liberal wing of his own Democratic party, in order to reassure them that the White House was 'on message' with the rest of the party. Behind the scenes and largely unnoticed, the west wing would then quietly get on with the unpleasant business of politics as usual. It would deliver deforestation initiatives, or sign the death warrant of a retarded black man - later milking the

applause when Nobel Prize winning writer Toni Morrison hailed Clinton as the "first black president". No sniggering at the back, please.

In the more direct, high stakes game of single issue politics - in the UK as well as the US - the tactic employed by lobbyists seems to be to adopt the opposition's language with even more colour. So a National Trust paper entitled A Call For The Wild is an impassioned plea for rethinking the development of wind turbines in areas of outstanding natural beauty and to protect "wild places". In a tone of voice that requires accompaniment by the playing of soft music you would only buy in shops that also sell crystals, the report pleases: "There are few places where it is possible to see the stars at night without interference from the background glow

**...one tangible political purpose of distracting attention from his filthy lunge at a beret-wearing cupcake...**

of urban and highway illumination. We need to respect silence and darkness in a world increasingly dominated by perpetual sound and light."

And so, in almost equal measure, the forceful arguments in favour of sustainable energy increasingly adopt the tone of their likely opponents. They become opportunities for industrial advancement or economic growth, for job creation or the development of indigenous technology for the twenty-first century. In the Northwest, the arguments in favour of wind energy in different corners of Cumbria are a case in point. In Barrow it's jobs, in Penrith it's green fields.

My old friend John Flint had another argument altogether. I don't like them, he'd say, they're a blot on the landscape. I didn't totally agree, they can be majestic and no more intrusive than pylons and roads, but at least we Lancashire lads tell it like it is.

# Meeting the everyday needs of people everywhere



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