

North West Coastal Forum

Trustees' Annual Report

for the period 1st February 2024 to 5th April 2025

Introduction

This is the first annual report of the North West Coastal Forum and covers the period from inception on 1st February to 5th April 2025 so covers the first 14 months of activity. Future annual reports will be for a 12 month period from 6th April to 5th April each year.

Charity Administration Details

Charity name: North West Coastal Forum

Registered charity number: 1206825

Registered address: 65 Milner Road, Wirral, Merseyside CH60 5RU

Trustees

Stephen Jay (founding Trustee appointed 1st February 2024, resigned 15th August 2024)

David McAleavy (founding Trustee appointed 1st February 2024)

Caroline Salthouse (founding Trustee and Chair appointed 1st February 2024)

Hannah Jones (appointed 12th February 2024)

Jo Hayes (appointed 13th February 2024)

Niall Benson (appointed 3rd July 2024)

Staff

Linn Wiberg, North West Coastal Coordinator

Governance of the Charity

Charity structure

The North West Coastal Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with voting members other than its trustees (association model) and has a constitution.

Board of Trustees

Trustees are elected by the members at the annual general meeting, however Charity trustees can be appointed by the other Trustees at any point in the year. At the first annual general meeting all the trustees will retire and may stand, with any other candidates, for re-election. At future annual general meetings any trustees appointed during the year, together with a third of the other trustees, will retire and may stand for re-election. Charity trustees may stand for 3 consecutive terms of office.

Expert Advisory Committee

As well as the Board of Trustees the North West Coastal Forum has an Expert Advisory Committee to provide expert advice to the Board of Trustees to enable them to more effectively guide and govern the North West Coastal Forum to achieve its charitable objects. Full members of the Expert Advisory Committee form the voting members of the North West Coastal Forum. Additional members with 'observer status' may attend to provide expertise but have no voting rights.

The Trustees may delegate powers and functions to the Expert Advisory Committee as they see fit but will keep such delegated powers and functions under review.

North West Coastal Forum Charitable Objects

The objects of the North West Coastal Forum are to promote and advance, for the public benefit, the conservation protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in the coastal areas of North West England, including those under other national jurisdictions, and education in sustainable development by:

- The provision of conferences, workshops and other dissemination mechanisms;
- Providing information and advice to inform, for the public benefit, relevant policy, legislation, plans, strategies and projects;
- Facilitating and enabling coordination and collaboration between coastal and estuarine partnerships and other relevant bodies across the north west; in particular to encourage knowledge sharing and increase collective understanding of and competency in coastal management issues;
- Advancing scientific knowledge through the commissioning and carrying out of research on coastal management issues and participation in research initiated by other organisations, and by promoting the study of and research into relevant coastal management subjects, provided that the useful results of such studies are disseminated to the public at large,
- Initiating projects and participating in projects initiated by other organisations in order to advance public knowledge and understanding of coastal management and its benefits for long term sustainability;

Sustainable development means ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

North West England means the area of northern England from the Solway Firth – a cross border estuary with Scotland - to the Dee Estuary – a cross border estuary with Wales.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects

In making this statement, trustees have had regard to the guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission.

During this period such activity included:

1. Holding a regional conference ‘North West Coastal Habitat Restoration and Creation’; this was a widely publicised free event, open to anyone to attend. Over 65 people attended from a wide range of organisations across the North West and beyond. As well as informative presentations on projects and research on coastal habitat creation and restoration the conference also included participatory workshops on coastal habitat strategies and data and a site visit on the 2nd day with a coastal and estuary partnership – the Solway Firth Partnership - to learn about and get hands on experience of saltmarsh restoration in action.
2. Establishing a Regional Coastal Habitat Working Group to continue the collaboration and knowledge exchange started at the conference and to explore how best to take a strategic approach to coastal habitat work. This group is open to any interested parties and is free to join.
3. Updating the North West Coastal Forum website which is a coastal news-led site to provide information on relevant policy and strategy development pertaining to the full range of sustainability issues on the coast, and other associated content.
4. Circulating 2 e-newsletters to the Forum’s web subscribers – signing up for news updates is free and there are over 860 active subscriptions.
5. Holding an open-to-all round of the North West Awards for Coastal Excellence – these are awards given to organisations, voluntary groups and individuals who are carrying out coastal work that merits recognition and is worth sharing as an inspiration to others. The awards are free to apply to. This year 3 awards were given out: Coastal Best Practice for a seagrass restoration project in Morecambe Bay (Cumbria Wildlife Trust); Coastal Champion (Early Career) to Shovi Anjum recognising the value of the work she has done with communities while working for the Solway Firth Partnership, and Coastal Champion (Lifetime Achievement) to Susannah Bleakley recognising the lasting benefits to the communities of Morecambe Bay her work with Morecambe Bay Partnership achieved and her

continuing role in providing advice on coastal issues to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and through engagement work with the Our Future Coast project.

6. We have worked with the Environment Agency and Ocean and Coastal Futures to begin development of the North West Marine Ecosystems project; this aims to bring together citizen scientists, academics and other researchers into thematic groups where data for particular topics can be brought together and then presented at a regional conference and written up into a State of the Seas report. An invitation for people to collaborate went out with our e-newsletters and is on the website and over 70 people so far have signed up to share their interests and knowledge in a range of relevant topics. The first regional Steering Group meeting has also been held.
7. We have created updated and new resources to share relevant coastal information via the Forum's website. These include a new Natural Capital of the North West Coast page which explains the natural capital concept and provides links to resources, a new Data Hub page providing links to a huge range of coastal information and data sets and an updated 'What's Happening on the North West Coast' report to provide a quick reference guide bringing together strategic projects, research, plans, etc. pertaining to the North West coast. These are all freely available to view.

Volunteers

While the North West Coastal Forum does not currently have any volunteers as such most of our work relies on people volunteering their time to get involved – for example in meetings and events, or by providing information when asked - and without this input we would not be able to do what we do.

The trustees feel it is important to acknowledge the contribution people give in terms of time and effort to help us achieve our goals for the benefit of all.

Achievements and Performance

As this is our first 14 months of operation as a charity it has been a challenging but invigorating time. The key achievement has been to secure a funded post which has enabled all the activity listed above to go ahead and has firmly established the North West Coastal Forum as an initiative people see benefit from and want to get involved with but we have also carried out other activity as part of the establishment phase:

- We expanded the Board of Trustees from the founding 3 to 5.

- We have established and expanded the Expert Advisory Committee, which at the date of this report has 17 members and 1 government agency as a non-voting observer.
- We successfully applied for funding which enabled us to employ our first full time member of staff – Linn Wiberg – on a 6 month contract. Linn was recruited in November 2024 and started work in January 2025. The activities listed above have been the major output from Linn’s work and we are now actively seeking funding to extend her post beyond the initial 6 months we currently have funding for.
- We have undertaken a review of the Business Plan to ensure it meets our charitable objects and more clearly aligns with key strategies and plans within the region and nationally.
- We have established strong links/working relationships with other strategic projects/initiatives in the North West such as the Turning Tides Partnership (bathing water quality focus) and the North West and North Wales Coastal Group (flood and coastal erosion risk management focus), and Nature North (natural economy focused) as well as key government agencies such as the North West Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation.
- We have participated in the national Coastal Partnerships Network and its ongoing work on the National Framework for Coastal Collaboration, being part of the NFCC Leaders Group and a CPN member (CPN has recently become a charity).

Challenges

Our key challenge is funding to ensure a continuation of the full time post created in this first period. Funding takes time to apply for, funders often will not cover staff costs or overheads, funding deadlines are sporadic and, even if successful, funding is often paid retrospectively meaning a healthy reserve needs to be established to fund salary costs in the intervening period. As a very new charity we do not currently have much of a reserve which is why we were unable to advertise the post until late in 2024 and most of the activity has taken place in the 3 months from January to March 2025; even this was only possible with an ‘up front’ payment of some of the grant from our main funder.

We plan to address these challenges through our income policy and reserves policy as outlined in the financial review below.

Financial Review

The income for this first financial period is £38660.67 with expenditure at £18865.35 leaving a bank balance at the year end of £19795.32, however this includes an amount

of £9255.32 that was overpaid by a funder and will likely need to be repaid during 25-26 so the funding carried forward to 25-26 for expenditure is £10540.

Income policy

Although funding was obtained from four sources the bulk of the funding was just from one. The Trustees are aware that relying on one source of major funding is not ideal going forward as it can concentrate the activity of the charity too much on a single area of interest rather than the breadth of activity the Forum should be undertaking to meet our charitable objects and can also leave the charity very vulnerable to the effects of not obtaining that grant or the fund being withdrawn. We are therefore actively seeking new sources of funding for activities identified within the current Business Plan and as identified by the Expert Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees going forward.

Reserves policy

The Board of Trustees has agreed that a reserve needs to be built up of at least £5000 to cover any future funding gaps.

Accounting policy

The North West Coastal Forum's gross income is below £250,000 so the accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature:



Full name: Susan Caroline Salthouse

Position: Chair

Date: 3rd June 2025

North West Coastal Forum Accounts for the Period 1st February 2024 to 5th April 2025

	Notes to the accounts	Total £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £
Receipts				
Start up funds from North West Coastal Forum	1	1105	1105	
Government grants	2	27981		27981
Project grants from other sources	3	9375		9375
Fees	4	200	200	
Total Receipts for 01/02/24-05/04/25		38661	1305	37356
Payments				
Employee Salary	5	6311	140	6171
Employer's National Insurance costs		0	0	0
Employer's pension costs	5	96	3	93
Employee homeworking allowance		78	78	0
Employee travel and subsistence		353		353
Recruitment costs		216		216
Staff training and CPD		174		174
Trustee travel and subsistence		503		503
Other travel and subsistence		243		243
Equipment costs (purchase and hire)		1676	553	1123
Website and email		4750		4750
Advertising (conference)		216		216
Stationery and printing		174	21	153
Telephone		70	70	0
Software		323	138	185
Transport hire (conference)		400		400
Room hire and meeting/conference catering		2759		2759
Professional fees - accountancy		209	209	
Insurance		314	314	
20% of 55 days of salary costs charged as overheads for restricted funds project		0	(1275)	1275
Total Payments for 01/02/24-05/04/25		18865	251	18614
Nett total for receipts / (payments)		19796	1054	18742
Transfers between funds	6		900	(900)
Cash funds at last year end	1		-	-
Cash funds at 05/04/25		19796	1954	17842

Notes to the accounts

Note 1 Start up Funds

Start up funds are remnant funds built up by activities of the North West Coastal Forum prior to it becoming a charity. Prior to achieving charitable status in February 2024 the Forum had been hosted by various organisations who acted as the Forum's accountable body but when those hosting arrangements ended in 2017 the Forum was not able to get a bank account in its own right as it was not a legal entity. Surplus funds accruing from the Forum's work during the intervening period were held on the Forum's behalf by C Salthouse; these were transferred to the NWCF bank account as soon as charitable status was achieved and the charity's bank account was operational.

Note 2 Government Grants

The government grant is for Championing Coastal Coordination activity, administered by the Environment Agency. Due to an error the NWCF received an overpayment of £8122.81 which will need to be repaid. In addition, the final claim submitted on 7th March contained estimates of expenditure up to the 31st March. Not all the estimated expenditure was incurred so there is an additional amount of £1136.11 to pay back; this is normal for this funding source due to the need to claim in advance of expenditure to meet their reporting timeframes. In total a repayment of £9255.32 will need to be made in the next financial year.

Note 3 Project Grants from Other Sources

Source	Being	£
Coastal Partnerships Network (via their accountable body)	Regional input on transboundary and national coastal coordination work	8475
Ocean and Coastal Futures	Development of NW Marine Ecosystems communities of practice	900
Total Project Grants from Other Sources		9375

Note 4 Fees

Fees were levied for organisations exhibiting relevant project work at the Forum's Regional Coastal Habitat Restoration and Creation conference on 6th March. Some exhibitors were exempt as they are Expert Advisory Committee members, and some had project budget to pay for exhibition space so even though they were exempt were willing to make a contribution. Not all exhibitors were able to raise purchase orders in the timeframe so it is expected that an additional £150 will be received in the next financial year. None of the exhibitions were commercial exhibits; all provided relevant project-related or other relevant technical information to delegates.

Source	Being	£
Cumbria Wildlife Trust	Fee for exhibiting project work at the NWCF regional	50

	conference 6 th March 2025 (non-profit organisation rate)	
Scottish Government	Fee for exhibiting project work at the NWCF regional conference 6 th March 2025 (government rate)	150
Total Fees		200

Note 5 Salary and related costs

The salary and associated National Insurance, PAYE tax and pension costs were apportioned between time spent exclusively delivering a funded project (coming out of restricted funds) and time spent on other NWCF activity. The restricted expenditure time was 55 working days, leaving only a very small amount of activity needing to be funded from unrestricted funds. Time has been apportioned on the basis of 225 working days in the year. The project was the Championing Coastal Coordination-funded 'Developing a Regional Hub for Coastal Coordination' and was designed to build the Forum's capacity to deliver against our charitable objects as well as delivering specific and beneficial outputs such as the regional conference on coastal habitat restoration and creation.

Note 6 Transfers between funds

The income from 'project grants from other sources' is based on time input at agreed day rates which include overhead provision so although the funds are classed as restricted all income received supports salary and general running costs of the Forum. There is no direct cost element so the funds are transferred to unrestricted funds at the year end. In the 24-25 financial year the project completed was overseeing the NW Marine Ecosystems work for £900.

North West Coastal Forum

Independent Examiner's Report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the financial period ended 5th April 2025 as set out on pages 7 to 9.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report that, in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Susan Buckley FCA

20 June 2025

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