

LAURENCE ROSE
NORTHWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR
RSPB

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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