

# Mersey Waterfront, Liverpool City Region

**Date: 2002 to 2010**

## **Background:**

The Liverpool City Region has a unique assemblage of waterfront assets extending around 135km of diverse coastline, which collectively distinguish the sub-region from any other in the UK and beyond. As part of a far-reaching and long term programme of investment, influencing and co-ordination, Mersey Waterfront capitalised on the potential of the City Region's waterfront assets. Developed and managed in a coherent, consistent and sustainable manner, the Waterfront has the potential to enhance significantly the image and perception of the City Region, to attract new investment and skilled/talent people, and support key sectors such as tourism – all of which will help further strengthen the economic competitiveness of the Liverpool City Region by creating a more attractive proposition for potential investors. It will also recognise and enhance the built and natural assets of the coastline, improve existing environmental resources and enhance the quality of life and opportunities for residents

Mersey Waterfront was one of the “big idea” priorities that emerged from *Action Plan for the City Region 2002 – 2005*. Partners believed that making the connection between the Waterfront and the concept of a Regional Park offered enormous potential to secure new economic momentum throughout Merseyside and the region.

## **Vision:**

To transform, energise and connect the Mersey Waterfront and all of its assets, to create a unique sense of place which attracts people to live, work, invest and visit.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

The primary objective of the Programme is to firmly embed Mersey Waterfront as a key component in the Liverpool City Region's Premier Destination offer by generating greater awareness, use and ownership of the Mersey Waterfront as an exceptional coastal amenity for residents, tourists and businesses alike. The following sub-objectives contribute to this overarching aim and enhance positive perceptions of the Liverpool City Region, amongst both residents and investors.

- To grow the City Region tourism sector. Enhance the built and natural assets of the coastline and improve existing environmental resources.
- Engender a greater sense of pride and awareness of the Waterfront.
- Contribute to an enhanced Quality of Life offer within the City Region
- To provide new and enhanced opportunities for formal and informal leisure and recreation.
- To ensure that partners focus on the quality of aspects of MW;
- To provide an opportunity for Liverpool City Region-wide collaboration.
- to promote MW as a coherent product – in a manner that raises awareness for residents as well as others considering Merseyside as a destination to work, visit, or invest in;

- to increase the number of visitors and tourists to MW, extend the length of their stay and maximise their spending;
- to sponsor and support investment by partners in MW that do not require direct funding but that add to its attractiveness.
- To ensure that MW elevates and distinguishes the Liverpool City Region against competing international locations;

Mersey Waterfront (MW) is defined as a Regional Park which spans the River Mersey, its estuary and parts of its two adjoining smaller estuaries – the Dee and the Ribble. This includes some 135km of coastline and riverside from Southport to beyond Runcorn and around the whole of the Wirral coastal area.

The programme ran from 2003 to 2010 and was split into 2 funding phases: Phase1 - the commencement programme running from 2003 to 2007 and the Succession Programme running from 2007 to 2010.

Both programmes were supported by an Executive Team based at the Mersey Partnership in Liverpool. These officers brought together a wide selection of partners, many of whom would otherwise not have become engaged, to discuss coastal issues and the wider strategic importance of the estuaries, coast and riverside as a unique asset within the Liverpool City Region. The team also developed, coordinated and delivered projects; facilitated applications for funding, managed programmes and carried out monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Wirral MBC acted as the programme Accountable Body

## The project:

The Commencement Programme was the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of investment from the Northwest Regional Development Agency that centred around the following core areas:

- **Major projects:** *Investment in large scale projects that made a significant contribution to the future economic prospects of an area. These included the upgrade in the design of the new Marine Parade Bridge in Southport; a contribution to the Cruise liner facility at princes Dock (funding helping with feasibility and riverbed survey work); the creation of a Masterplan for Woodside – a strategically important waterfront site.*
- **Estuary development & management:** a major investment in education, interpretation and IT facilities; improvements to access & visitor facilities, community engagement, art such as Another place at Crosby.
- **Tourism, sport & leisure:** new visitor attractions such as a landmark structure at the mouth of the estuary – Mersey Observatory; the promotion of a new major golf festival; and enlarging the scope and range of the Mersey River Festival; River of Light feasibility;
- **Commerce:** promoting new port and maritime activity and industry and developing new international trade links; improved strategic freight access and a new collaborative training through Mersey Maritime.
- **Maintenance:** Working with partners to ascertain how maintenance standards across the board could be raised so that the whole waterfront could be seen as

a world class area. A pilot project was created with Halton BC to run a small maintenance team. This was piloted for 2 years and was highly successful.

There were two supporting programmes covering:-

- **Marketing Programme:** to show that the Mersey Waterfront gives Merseyside and the region a platform to develop new product offers for the region to exploit.
- **Community Engagement:** To raise civic pride and engage the local and wider community in some of the decision making for the waterfront, helping to direct where funding should be invested and highlight what, for them, were the key elements that they wanted to get from their waterfront. This was done through a series of Peoples Panels which were based on the innovative American juries model where the sessions were advertised locally and groups of individual were brought together for 3 days to look at the waterfront, potential projects and listen to speakers and then write a report highlighting their feelings and thoughts about how they would like to see the area develop.

In all the Commencement Programme funding was invested in 60 projects of varying size and scale that made either direct improvements to the coast and riverside or that undertook ground and feasibility works that then allowed projects to be taken forward in both the commencement and succession programmes. A number of research projects were also undertaken to gain a baseline of the existing assets and highlight where investment was needed in the future.

The Succession Programme (2006-2010) is the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of investment in the Regional Park, and provided the necessary resources to develop and deliver a discrete number of exciting and transformational projects which complemented other investments in the positioning of the Liverpool City Region as a premier destination for people to live, work, visit and invest in. In particular, the Succession Programme supported activities to develop the Liverpool Attack Brand, Classic Resort brand for Southport, connect waterfront communities and assets across the districts of Sefton, Liverpool, Halton, north Cheshire and Wirral and work towards the creation of an internationally acclaimed waterfront that would be able to compete with cities such as Sydney, Toronto and San Francisco.

The Succession Programme developed and delivered projects that capitalised on existing assets and met gaps in the provision or quality of the Liverpool City Region offer based around 5 key themes

**Strategic Places:** a discrete suite of large scale projects selected to transform key locations around the coast including Brand New Brighton Phase 1 & 2 (the largest single project within the programme), Sefton Water Centre, Pier Head Ferry Terminal, Liverpool Riverlands (former garden festival site) and the Mersey Observatory.

**Animating Waterspaces:** Development of the River of light project and delivery with partners of the Pool of Light project – a small scale temporary version of the programme linked to an international lighting conference;

**Pride in our Promenades;** a strategic approach to enhancing public access to the Mersey Waterfront through a partnership of land owners. Capital schemes were undertaken on Otterspool Promenade and Dingle Esplanade; The Leeds and Liverpool Canal (existing sections in Sefton and Liverpool) and Egremont Promenade.

**Coastal Spaces and Places:** Building on work undertaken in the Estuary Development and management elements of the commencement programme. This theme looked at

the open spaces around the coast and helped fund the retention of the Anthony Gormley 'Another Place' art installation at Crosby, Sefton

**Promoting the Place and Engaging People.** The continuation of marketing the Mersey Waterfront and presenting the area to a wider audience through marketing, delivery with partners of the Waterfront Expo conference, signage and interpretation of the area and developing and disseminating the Strategic Framework. This theme also continued to build on work done in the commencement programme and deliver peoples panel events and a suite of community related events and activities.

As part of the ongoing evolution of Mersey Waterfront, the vision and longer-term investment and intervention priorities were refined further by the MW Strategic Spatial Plan which was completed in 2007. This spatial plan clearly defined the waterfront zone and highlights potential locations for future work and investment. These hubs of activity, also known as the 'windows on the waterfront' will help landowners and potential investors to focus on significant areas around the coast. The framework also looked at the partnerships aspiration to maintain and if possible increase the quality of the spaces and places around the waterfront. This led to an additional application to NWDA for some funding to develop a Quality Assurance Scheme for the programme.

The Quality Assurance Scheme (QAS) was created to assist partners and landowners to improve/maintain the quality of the coastal assets right along the Mersey Waterfront to a level that was most suited to that piece of coast land. This meant that when they were used/ visited they were 'fit for purpose'. As the programme had a limited life span and through consultation with partners, landowners and the local authorities this allowed individual landowners and site managers to create a baseline for a site - to create a snapshot of the current status and then create actions that would help to lift the quality of the site over time. It was also felt that there was a need for some sites to continue to strive for green flag and blue flag/quality Coast award standards as well.

The NWDA funded Succession Programme activities form just one part of a wider range of waterfront investments. Over and above the delivery of core activities funded by ERDF and NWDA, the Mersey Waterfront Team also sought to steer and guide a much broader range of investment activities on the Waterfront. The scale of this wider investment continues to grow – as such the role of the Board and Executive Team as **influencer and guider** of other investment activity was even more important in the Succession Programme than in the earlier Commencement phase.

MW was required to help the Liverpool City Region and the North West compete on this international stage. Without a doubt Mersey Waterfront's activity to date has helped to strengthen and add value to projects, planned and underway, managed by MW partners across the region, the overall gain adding to the regions competitiveness. By promoting the City Region's unique coastline as a collective asset, significant value has been added to the visitor offer of the sub region, which can help to give the area competitor advantage and establish the Liverpool City Region as a Premier Destination.

The diverse and surprising Mersey Waterfront offers incredible opportunity and potential.

The primary beneficiaries of the Mersey Waterfront Succession Programme include:

**Visitors** - Visitors to the Liverpool City Region benefit from a more coherent and higher quality tourist offer, which will help encourage repeat visits and longer stays. Through regular survey and market research work, the views of visitors to the Waterfront will be used to help shape MW projects and the wider strategic direction of the Programme.

**Waterfront Businesses** - The MW Succession Programme proactively supported the waterfront economy and its businesses through activities developed with, for example, The Mersey Partnership as Destination Management Organisation for Merseyside's tourism sector.

**Residents** - Through the MW investment in the public realm and leisure facilities on the Waterfront, recreational opportunities, leisure potential and quality of place have been improved for local residents. MW built upon its innovative community engagement work to ensure the needs and aspirations of local people were considered at both project and programme levels. The Succession Programme continued to place emphasis on the role of the Peoples Panel as a method of engagement.

**Investors** - MW's contribution to making the LCR a more attractive proposition with a unique sense of place has impacted positively on future investor behaviour and associated multiplier effects. This will benefit existing investors, encourage greater future investment and ultimately enhance the economic performance and stability of the sub-region.

**Communities of Interest** - Some of the MW activities will benefit specific communities of interest or user groups, such as golfers, walkers, ornithologists and cyclists. Where appropriate, specific user groups were involved in the development of projects. An example of this is the communications which have already taken place via neighbourhood committees and joint groups with Merseyside Police as part of the pilot activity for "Pride in our Promenades".

**Local Authorities** - The Local Authorities benefit from MW as the pan-waterfront approach provides a strategic justification, framework and associated funding for projects that might otherwise not progress as stand alone projects. MW also provided an arena for collaboration, shared experience and joint working. The involvement of the Local Authorities permeates all areas of MW's operation from Board representation to local project delivery.

**Regeneration specialists**- Through the ongoing programme of international research, advocacy and [www.globalwaterfronts.com](http://www.globalwaterfronts.com) website, MW provided access to a knowledge base of international experience and best practice, accessible to regeneration specialists and MW partners alike.

### **Project costs and funding sources:**

Mersey Waterfront has been supported by both the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and Government Office Northwest (through the ERDF Objective One programme)

Commencement Programme – NWDA £8.8m

Succession Programme – NWDA £10.9m ERDF £650,000 direct plus approx. £9m (amount ring fenced for waterfront related projects)

#### **TOTAL Project Funding**

NWDA £20m (£19.71M)

ERDF £650k (MW direct)

ERDF £9m approx (ring fenced amount not managed through MW)

This in turn has levered in both public and private match funding which has created a programme that will have brought £81m worth of investment to the Mersey Waterfront.

## Who was involved

Mersey Waterfront is a partnership project involving key stakeholders from across the area based at The Mersey Partnership, Liverpool.

These have included the following Local Authorities, private sector stakeholders and organisations:

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Liverpool City Council

Halton Borough Council

Cheshire County Council (now Cheshire West and Chester)

Warrington Borough Council

St Helens Council )

Knowsley Council ) although not on the waterfront both councils have a seat on the Board

Trinity Mirror North West

Atlantic Container Line

Mersey Basin Campaign

University of Liverpool

Environment Agency

Mersey Forest

National Trust

RSPB

Peel Holdings

Langtree Plc

British Waterways

Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Natural England

### Community groups

Through peoples panels and contact with community groups and representatives MW has worked with the local community to the shape the programme, identify local community priorities for their waterfront and fund projects, carry out environmental clean ups etc.

MW also works with a range of Local Authority, NGO and voluntary sector partners on a project-by-project basis.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council is the accountable body for both the Commencement and Succession Programmes.

The Mersey Partnership (TMP) hosts the MW Executive Team.

The MW Board is the Programme's independent decision making body with non-executive Directors representing local authority and other specific interests:

- Sara Wilde (Chair) – Regional Managing Director, Trinity Mirror NW2
- Professor Peter Batey (Vice Chair)– Chair, Mersey Basin Campaign

- Dave Moorcroft, The Mersey Partnership
- Cllr Jean Stapleton– Wirral MBC
- Cllr Lord Ronnie Fearn – Sefton MBC
- Ian Higby – Managing Director, Atlantic Container Line/Chair, Mersey Maritime
- Cllr Barbara Mace – Liverpool CC
- Walter Menzies – Chief Executive, Mersey Basin Campaign
- Cllr Andrew Needham – Cheshire CC
- Cllr Keith Morely – Halton BC
- Cllr Ron Round – Knowsley MBC
- Alan Stillwell – Merseytravel
- Richard Tracey - NWDA

The programme has also had 7 Technical Advisory groups where experts in their field have met to assist in the management of the programme, give advice to potential applicants and approve projects for funding from Mersey Waterfront

Peoples Panels - These involved local residents and interest groups in the development of the programme as a whole, as well as providing detailed input into individual project proposals.

### **Future care**

Through funding and legal agreements all projects that have received Mersey Waterfront funding have agreed to manage and maintain the waterfront to a high standard once capital works have ceased.

A good example of this is the Pride in our proms programme that has required each recipient (in this case Local Authorities and British Waterways) to commit to a 10 year maintenance plan and funding to carry it out for each piece of land improved.