

HILBRE ISLANDS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

FRIDAY 6TH APRIL 2001

RANGER REPORT 2000

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Annual Rangers Report for the Hilbre Islands LNR. A number of issues are raised for discussion and members are asked to note its contents. The report is structured on Hilbre Islands LNR Management Plan, part 3.

2.0 PROTECTION OF THE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

- 2.1 Communication with local water sports and yachting organisations and individuals regarding disturbance of wildlife is ongoing.
- 2.2 The presence of rats on Hilbre was discovered. Their migration to Hilbre was, in part, due to a countrywide increase in their numbers. It is probable that these rats originated from the stone blocks around the Marine Lake and in front of the sand dunes at West Kirby.

After taking advice from the R.S.P.B., C.C.W., and Wirral Pest Control, 23 poison feeding stations were set up. These stations were continually monitored and replenished when necessary.

Baited wax has now been put out to test for the presence of rats.

3.0 COASTAL PROTECTION

- 3.1 Small scale rock falls have been occurring along the east side of Middle Eye. The major fall being in the northernmost bay. A sign has been fixed there to prevent people endangering themselves. The situation is being monitored.
- 3.2 The undercut section of the sea defence walls were surveyed by Alex Williams of the Coastal Protection team in the Borough Engineers Department and possible solutions have been put forward. As of yet no decision has been made.
- 3.3 Work is ongoing at the undercut section of cliffs at the main slipways (south beach).
- 3.4 Some expertise has been sourced for building the protective/supportive walls needed at the soil margins along the east side of Hilbre between Lady's Cave and Chapel Hill.

4.0 VISITOR MANAGEMENT

4.1 Types of booked groups (1999 figures in brackets)

Primary Schools	11	(17)
Secondary Schools	16	(20)
Further Education	6	(7)
Special Needs	1	(2)
Youth Groups	16	(14)
Ramblers	22	(16)
Natural History	17	(16)
Other	47	(40)
Guided Walks	13	(13)

4.2 Number of groups booked in each month.

January	1	(1)
February	3	(0)
March	3	(1)
April	6	(6)
May	22	(20)
June	35	(37)
July	28	(29)
August	19	(21)
September	16	(21)
October	12	(11)
November	3	(4)
December	1	(2)

4.3 Occasional disturbances of birds by non-local jet skiers were noted, and some were spoken to.

4.4 Six photography hides were set up in Little Eye.

5.0 ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT

5.1 A draft ecological management plan has been completed, from which specific projects for Hilbre can be developed.

5.2 Little Eye
No monitoring work done during 2000.

5.3 Middle Eye
No monitoring work done during 2000.

5.4 Bracken was pulled in various places on Hilbre.

5.5 Both rock Sea Lavender and Sea Spleenwort have been mapped. Further vegetation mapping will take place when an aerial photograph is received.

6.0 ESTATE MANAGEMENT

6.1 Maintenance work included:

- Repairs to fences and gates.
- Litter picking.
- Mowing.

6.2 The low mortared wall constructed near the north end of Hilbre is being continued.

6.3 The litter bin was removed to encourage people to take their litter home. This seems to work very well.

6.4 The bunkhouse gas cooker needs replacing.

6.5 One break-in occurred in one of the leased bungalows.

6.6 One incident of vandalism occurred during the summer with both fences and benches being broken and burnt. In the same incident the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. tide garage was broken into and seriously damaged.

One vandal was caught as he signed his graffiti using his real name.

6.7 One Landrover was stolen whilst on the mainland with approximately £2,000 worth of equipment in it including telescope, tripod, binoculars, G.P.S. and Coastguard radio. A replacement Landrover has been purchased.

6.8 The Bouymasters buildings were inspected and the woodworm problem was found to be not as serious as was first thought. Installing air vents and re-nailing floorboards, together with small scale woodworm treatment should then allow redecoration to take place.

6.9 The lifeboat slipway damage has increased and is being monitored.

6.10 Telegraph House
Internal maintenance is ongoing.

7.0 RESEARCH

7.1 Hilbre Island Bird Observatory report was published.

7.2 A draft management plan was re-written for discussion.

8.0 INTERPRETATION

- 8.1 Guided walks to Hilbre were continued in 2000, including extra unpublicised guided walks which were used to alleviate the problem of overbooking. These unpublicised walks have proved very useful.
- 8.2 Hilbre information leaflets are now on sale at the Marine Lake office.

9.0 SAFETY

- 9.1 The beach lifeguards continued to be extremely effective.
- 9.2 Due to incidents occurring and for added safety minimum crossing times both to and from Hilbre have been increased from 3 hrs to 3.5 hrs either side of high tide on tides over 9.5m.
- 9.3 Evacuations
 - 9.3.1 Two helicopter evacuations occurred during 2000. One casualty was unconscious after slipping and hitting her head, the other slipped and broke her leg.
 - 9.3.2 One casualty was evacuated by inshore lifeboat after suffering a dislocated shoulder.
 - 9.3.3 Four casualties were evacuated by Ranger Landrover.
- 9.4 Regular coastguard training sessions are attended by the Ranger to provide Coastguard cover for the Dee Estuary.

10.0 DEE ESTUARY VOLUNTEER WARDENS

- 10.1 The D.E.V.W. continued very successfully, helped by the outgoing West Kirby Ranger and the new West Kirby Ranger, Lynne Greenstreet.

11.0 MERSEY DOCKS & HARBOUR COMPANY

- 11.1 Tide gauge maintenance was as usual.

12.0 TRINITY HOUSE LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE

- 12.1 Lighthouse maintenance was as usual.

13.0 H.M. COASTGUARD

- 13.1 The lifeboat was called out 8 times by the Ranger due to people becoming stranded.

13.2 The Ranger was called out once to observe a boat in transit in a potentially dangerous situation.

13.3 The Ranger was called out five times for a search of the estuary and islands for missing people.

13.4 The Ranger was called out once to search for a runaway racehorse.

14.0 RANGER TRAINING

14.1 Continuing in-house training relating to Hilbre.

15.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, IMPLICATIONS, PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are none arising from this report.

16.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

16.1 Hilbre Islands are a local nature reserve and a site of Special Scientific Interest and make an important contribution to Wirral's biodiversity.

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 The report may be of particular interest to members in the Thurstaston and Hoylake wards.

18.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None have been used in the preparation of this report.

19.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

19.1 That the report be noted.

A J WORTHINGTON
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES AND TOURISM