

The Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve

Green Heritage Site
Conservation Plan

2025 - 2030

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PREFACE

In 2006 limited restoration of the buildings on Hilbre took place based on a report 'The Hilbre Island Study Centre' that I presented as an option for managing the Victorian cluster of buildings. The Bunkhouse became the 'Day Room' with new furniture and kitchen and the Buoymaster's Store provided sleeping accommodation with three bedrooms, kitchen, study and lounge with a log burner. In 2008 the composting toilets were installed and a Volunteer Coastal Wardens Scheme was created. The Wardens were allowed to stay overnight supporting the Ranger and undertaking research, usually as part of a degree qualification. In 2009 a comprehensive survey of all the Council managed buildings on Hilbre was undertaken. Each building report detailed work required to ensure good maintenance of the buildings. A new electricity supply was made to the Telegraph Station (and for the new bespoke display cabinets) and the front door to the Buoymaster's House was refurbished. In 2010 a new generator was purchased and a new lintel installed above the Buoymaster's Workshop doors. The following year a new building survey, commissioned by Wirral Council's Asset Management, recognised the need to undertake roofing repairs to the buoy-master cluster of buildings that also included repairs to the perimeter walls including the cliff top garden wall that had collapsed. In 2013 the Hilbre Bird Observatory was encouraged to submit proposals for using Telegraph House and in the same year extensive repairs were undertaken to the Buoymaster's Stores and Workshop.

Over the last twenty years or so there has been investment by Wirral Council to maintain the Victorian cluster of buildings on Hilbre. Most of the work however has been undertaken to ensure their survival and has not been part of a wider, long-term plan for use of the buildings. Whilst the Telegraph Station and Day Room are well-used and well-managed, Telegraph House, the Buoymaster's House, Workshop and Stores were just a reminder of the historical use of the site and its strategic position to assist in safe navigation of the Dee Estuary and River Mersey. In 2024, over twenty years since the 'The Hilbre Island Study Centre' report was presented, the Hilbre Community Land Trust Limited was established by the Friends of Hilbre, Hilbre Bird Observatory and British Arts and Design Association. Their aim is to manage the Victorian buildings as a community arts and science resource.

It's an exciting time for the islands and this conservation plan aims to support the work of the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust and as part of an application for a Green Heritage Site Award.

Josef Hanik
Wirral Country Park, Heswall Dales and Hilbre Islands Manager

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve consists of three small tidal islands within the Dee Estuary on the north west coast of England. The estuary is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation and a Ramsar Site (Wetland of International Importance) and is therefore one of the most highly protected sites in north west Europe.

The island archipelago consists of Little Eye, Little Hilbre (more commonly known as Middle Eye) and Hilbre. Together with the surrounding foreshores they form the Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve are that are the freehold property of the Wirral Council.

The reserve is a Green Flag Park. Wirral Council have an appointed Hilbre Islands Manager to oversee the day to day running and development of the reserve supported by a team of Rangers based at Wirral Country Park.

Whilst the Rangers have the day to day responsibility for the islands, including public safety and ensuring compliance with policy, the Friends of Hilbre (a Registered Charity) are an invaluable part of the wider management and undertake public open days, seal watching, conservation task days and assist with the overall management of the reserve.

In 2024 the Hilbre Community Land Trust Limited was established to protect and enhance the reserve and recognise its contribution to regional, national and international biodiversity; to conserve the landscape character and historic values of the reserve and to provide social and educational opportunities for people to develop their enjoyment, education, understanding and appreciation of the reserve consistent with its natural character. The Hilbre Community Land Trust Limited will be a major part of the islands' future and development of the reserve.

This plan addresses the immediate conservation management of heritage features of the Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve and is intended to provide information on the islands' heritage assets and interpretation of the of the islands' history and landscape character. It will also be part of an application for Green Heritage Status recognising the unique features of the reserve and how these assets are integral to the management of the islands by the Hilbre Islands Management Committee.

Chapter headings have followed those provided as main guidance for Green Heritage Site Accreditation. If you wish to find out further information about this document or submit any suggestions, please contact:

Wirral Parks and Countryside

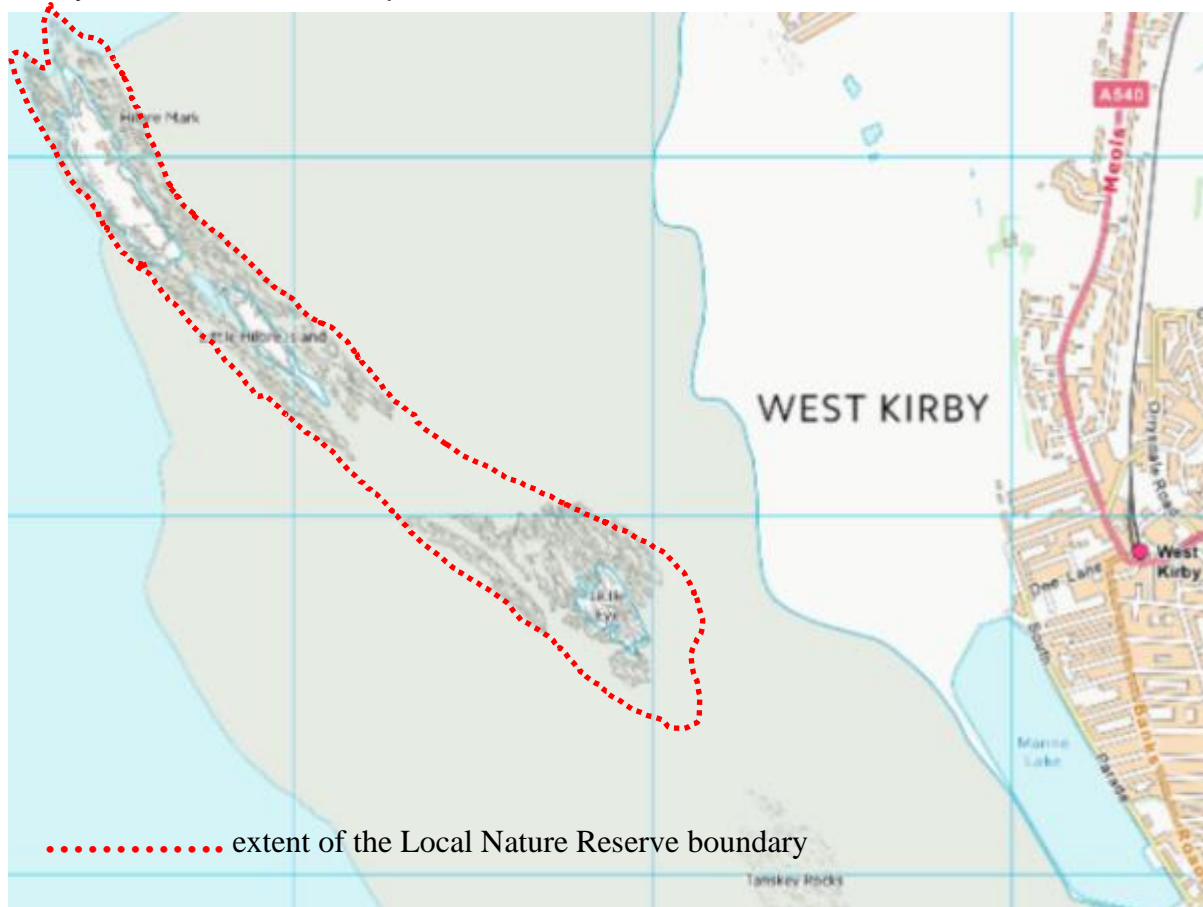
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2.0 SITE INFORMATION

2.1 Description, Map, Site Designations and Constraints of Tenure

The history of the Hilbre Islands dates back to the Triassic Era when the sandstone bedrock was laid down some 200 million years ago. Much closer to the equator than we are today, the area we know as Merseyside and Cheshire consisted of sandy deserts that would flood periodically. The wet sand would dry and be compressed under more and more layers of sand and, over millions of years, pressure and heat would result in creation of the sandstone rock. The Hilbre Islands are the most westerly extent of the Bunter Sandstone Ridge of the Triassic period (180 million - 225 million years old) that extends to Helsby. Locally, the ridge continues to the south and is visible at low tide at Tanskey Rocks and Caldy Blacks on the West Kirby and Caldy foreshore. When the last glacial period covering the UK ended about 25,000 years ago, the islands were probably still attached to what we know today as the mainland of Wirral. As the climate became warmer, and the ice caps continued to melt, the sea level rose. The islands were then probably separated from the mainland around 5,500 BC and at about the same time as the British Isles were separated from what we know today as the European mainland. The revetment works of the past 150 years and the construction of the former Lifeboat Station have done much to prevent erosion at the north end of Hilbre Island. However, Little Eye has now been heavily eroded and reduced in size. The process of erosion by the sea creates many features of geomorphologic interest such as cliffs, caves, stacks, wave-cut platforms and small sandy beaches and that is part of the character of the reserve.



Map of the Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve

The Hilbre Islands are a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the 'National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act' 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. LNRs must be controlled by the local authority through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner. The main aim must be to care for the natural features which make the site special. The Hilbre Islands are within the Dee Estuary which is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). These are known as Natura 2000 sites, the name given to the European Union-wide network of nature conservation sites established under the EC Habitats and Birds Directives. The Local Nature Reserve is also a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) registered Bird Sanctuary. The CAA is the statutory regulator of domestic use of airspace and prime UK legislation is detailed in the Civil Aviation Act and the Air Navigation Order. These provide the key domestic legislation that the CAA uses in its day-to-day business and that includes a requirement to consider low flying prohibitions over designated areas.

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral owns the Freehold title to the three Hilbre Islands and the tidal foreshore within the Local Nature Reserve originally purchased by Hoylake Urban District Council from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company on 18th December 1945. The following covenants (abbreviated) are enforced:

- The purchaser and its successors will not use nor permit the use of the property for any industrial purposes or for the provision of entertainment by means of swings, roundabouts, sideshows or similar or other amusements of a fairground character
- The purchaser will administer the property for recreational purposes to the end that the property may be preserved for the enjoyment of the public under proper control
- The purchaser will make and enforce byelaws for the regulation of the property
- The purchaser will not erect nor permit to be erected on the property any buildings or structures except such as may be reasonably necessary to provide facilities for the public for shelter, bathing, boating, refreshment and sanitation, all such buildings or structures to be of suitable permanent construction and of a character unlikely adversely to affect the amenities of the district;
- The purchaser will maintain and keep the property including all buildings and structures erected thereon at all times in good order and condition.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board retained the right to keep on the islands a survey mark and a navigation light (now the responsibility of Trinity House Lighthouse Authority), a tide gauge and any necessary buildings in connection with them. The Board also retained the right to visit the islands at any time in order to maintain or repair these facilities. The foreshore surrounding the northerly part of Hilbre Island approximately north of a straight line between Hilbre Point and the Lighthouse at Point of Ayr is subject to certain Crown reservations. Among other things these reservations effectively give the public *"full and free right to walk or otherwise, pass to and fro over and to fish and bathe upon and to gather seaweed or ware and to land thereon goods and passengers from vessels and boats and to embark therefrom goods and passengers in vessels and boats"* The public originally also had the *"full and free right to ride (or) drive over this area of foreshore"*, but this right was withdrawn in 1980 with the consent of the Crown Estate Commissioners. This was to prevent people claiming the right to drive motor vehicles over the foreshore.

2.2 Management Structure

A Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Manager (based at Wirral Country Park) oversees the day-to-day maintenance and management of Wirral Country Park, Heswall Dales Local Nature Reserve and The Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve. A team of Rangers based at Wirral Country Park (5 full-time permanent and 2 part-time permanent) manage the three sites to meet the Council's aims and objectives. The Rangers wear a distinctive uniform and vehicles are liveried with the Council logo. The Rangers are a very visible and approachable link with the public and management and much of their work is liaising with visitors and user groups. The Rangers are required to respond to incidents, customer comments and reports across all three sites 7 days a week and, as with visitors to the islands, the tide and weather are the most important factors on being able to access the islands. A daily presence on the islands by Council staff is not possible but the support and 'island community' of leaseholders and volunteers ensure a well-managed site who regularly meet informally on the islands.

Whilst Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside are responsible for the 'top' of the islands, Wirral Council's Coastal Defence Team are responsible for the cliffs and 'lower' parts of the reserve. Wirral Council Asset Management are responsible for the buildings and built infrastructure of the islands.



A meeting of the Hilbre Islands Management Committee in the Buoymaster's Museum

A formal 'Hilbre Islands Management Committee' meets twice a year including a visit to the reserve during the summer months. The list of representatives referenced are considered 'lay members', as they are recognised for being key points of contact and bringing their own expertise and can therefore be invited as appropriate.

The Hilbre Islands Management Committee:

Key Stakeholders with one vote per group

The Hilbre Island Trust comprises of the following three stakeholder groups:

Friends of Hilbre

British Arts and Design Association

Hilbre Island leaseholder (Hilbre Bird Observatory)

Hilbre Island leaseholder (Bungalow 4)

Hilbre Island leaseholder (Mersey Canoe Club)

Hilbre Island leaseholder (Bungalow 3)

Nine Councillors with one vote each (One Councillor is voted as Hilbre Islands Management Committee Chair)

Non-Voting Council Officers

Assistant Director Parks and Environment

Senior Programme Delivery Manager

Assistant Senior Manager Parks, Allotments and Countryside

Assets and Surveying Manager

Manager Wirral Country Park, The Hilbre Islands and Heswall Dales

Ranger Wirral Country Park, The Hilbre Islands, and Heswall Dales

Senior Manager Flood and Coastal Risk Management

Representatives to be invited when required/to aid a particular discussion at a particular meeting. (Non-voting rights)

RNLI

Natural England

Environment Agency

Marine Maritime Organisation

HM Coastguard

The Hilbre Community Land Trust Limited (a Community Benefit Society) is a partnership between the Friends of Hilbre, the British Arts and Design Association and the Hilbre Bird Observatory. The Hilbre CLT is a single constituted management entity that, in November 2024, signed a short-term lease agreement with Wirral Council to manage the Victorian cluster of buildings on Hilbre maintaining, restoring and developing the buildings, systems and services and to attract funding. If funding is successful, the Hilbre CLT will submit more detailed proposals for the development of the buildings as a community-based arts and science hub and enter into a longer-term lease agreement with the Council.

2.3 Island History (taken from the Hilbre Islands Management Plan)

The three islands are known today as Hilbre, Middle Eye (also known as Little Hilbre) and Little Eye. They originally formed part of the mainland and became tidal after the last Ice Age ended about 11,500 years ago. In archaeological terms the islands are of great importance as the range of finds shows that there has been a human presence from very early times. Recent surveys on the three Hilbre islands have located a number of probable Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) sites dated from approximately 5,000 BC. These were the first people to visit the islands after the Ice Age. They were hunter-gatherers who used flint tools and lived off fish, shellfish, deer, nuts and berries. By the Neolithic period (New Stone Age), the stone technology had changed and the first farmers started to settle (approximately 3,400 to 2,500 BC). There are finds of flints dating to this period from the Hilbre islands. Similarly there have been finds from the Bronze Age, including a bronze socketed axe dated c1800 BC and a human burial dated about 800 BC. There is also evidence of cooking and field boundaries from this time. The Romans also visited Hilbre and left some objects which were later found, including bronze buckles and pottery. They did not appear to settle as there has been no evidence of any structures. Nineteenth century suggestions that a Roman Pharos (lighthouse) was erected on Hilbre has not produced any evidence to support this idea.

Cheshire after the Norman Conquest was controlled by the Earl of Chester and several subordinate barons. The baron who was the Norman feudal overlord of this part of Wirral was Robert of Rhuddlan. Some time prior to 1080 he gave West Kirby and Hilbre to the Abbey of St Evroul in Normandy. In 1140 St Evroul transferred West Kirby and Hilbre to Chester Abbey. A Benedictine cell of two monks was maintained on the island as a dependency of Chester Abbey until its dissolution in 1538. Stone remains of graves found on Hilbre dating to the 10th and 11th centuries indicate that there was a religious presence on the island from before 1080 when the island was granted to St Evroul's Abbey.

An Anglo-Scandinavian cross head was found on Hilbre dated to the 10th or 11th century and a Hiberno-Norse grave slab found on Hilbre was dated to the 11th century. Hilbre's place name did not appear in records until 1140, when recorded as Hildeburgheye, meaning Hildeburgh's Island. As a Saxon personal name, this suggests a connection with an earlier time before the Norman Conquest. There was no English saint called Hildeburgh and the likelihood is that she was a relative of one of the local landowners in Cheshire or North Wales. Hilbre chapel's dedication appeared in deeds from the 13th century as St Mary the Blessed Virgin. The rector of St Bridget's, West Kirby, had renounced his claim over the chapel on Hilbre and his reward was an annual mass on 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, in Hilbre's chapel. He established an annual group visit of his parishioners to Hilbre starting in about 1234. The 'pilgrimage' was therefore likely to have been only a local festival, giving the people of West Kirby parish a holy day on Hilbre to hear Mass in the chapel of St Mary the Virgin. Whether the chapel was always open for public prayers is not known, but its disappearance at the Abbey's dissolution suggests that it was more akin to a private oratory for the use of the monastic cell on the island.

The Benedictine cell on Hilbre established by Chester Abbey consisted of two monks and their servants. They maintained fishing boats and monitored the local anchorages and fisheries. They also collected the tithes from West Kirby parish and also ran a

farm in Little Meols. After the Reformation, Chester Abbey became the cathedral of a new diocese of Chester which included Hilbre. The Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral remained the owners of Hilbre until 1856 when the islands were sold to the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks, later becoming the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board.

The islands were leased to various people over the years. In the 16th to 18th centuries Hilbre Island and Hyle Lake became an important anchorage for shipping in the Dee Estuary when the river at Chester was silting up. Trade was mainly to Dublin or Belfast and across the Dee Estuary to Welsh ports. Their cargoes included local farm produce and processed leather goods from Wirral, and raw skins, timber and fish from Ireland.

Erosion of the sand banks eventually split the protecting Hoyle Bank into two portions and caused the Lake to disappear rapidly during the 19th century. Hilbre Island was also used as an embarkation point for shipping troops, horses and equipment to Ireland during Elizabeth I's Irish wars and again during Cromwell's Irish campaign. In 1690 William III travelled from Chester to Hoyle Lake on his way to Ireland to fight the Battle of the Boyne. The local legendary story of 10,000 men camped together on Hilbre could have originated from the total figures of soldiers embarking from Hyle Lake in 1690. There would not have been space for so many men and officers' horses on the islands at one time.

Salt refining took place on Hilbre in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Rock salt was discovered in Cheshire in 1670. In 1692 there was a scheme to produce salt on Hilbre. It was shipped to Hilbre via the Mersey along with coal from the Lancashire coalfield. The rock salt was boiled in seawater on the island. There are traces of this industry still visible in the north of the island.



Hilbre Island 26659

A public house on Hilbre was first recorded in 1793 to cater for the crews of the small vessels who used the harbour. A traveller recorded in 1813 the local gossip about the Hilbre innkeeper and his wife that 'their riches have been gained principally by wrecking, for which business their situation here is said to be admirably calculated.'. Hilbre's public house is still remembered locally as The Seagull Inn, a name which never appeared in official records.

Two tall wooden sailing markers were built at opposite ends of Hilbre around 1810. The footings of the northern marker can still be seen as two sets of perpendicular troughs cut into the bare rock. These are mistakenly called monks' graves. In about 1840 these markers were replaced by a new pair of markers, one on Little Eye and one on the shore off Hoylake. Sailing directions of 1840 showed how they should be lined up in the sight of sailors of small craft, to lead the ships into the Hilbre Swash and other safe channels. Rebuilt at least once in the next 100 years, the markers were demolished in World War II to avoid becoming landmarks to enemy aircraft. There are still remains of a base on Little Eye and traces of the other on the shore at low tide between Hilbre and Hoylake.

In 1826 the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks acquired the lease of the islands from Chester Cathedral in order to set up their first semaphore telegraph station for communicating messages from Holyhead to Liverpool. The line of stations ran through Anglesey, Puffin Island, the Great Orme, Llysfaen near Abergele, Foel Nant, Hilbre Island and Bidston Hill to Liverpool. The first station was a wooden structure just north of the present stone building. The first message was sent in 1827. The stone telegraph building which is there today was built in 1841. It was originally flat roofed with two vertical posts, each bearing four hinged arms. A control system of levers was operated from a bench under the signals which has left marks still visible on the stone floor of the signal room. Rotating sockets in the wide bay window allowed several telescopes to be trained on the neighbouring stations of Foel Nant and Bidston Hill and on the flag signals from ships at sea. The record time for a message to pass from South Stack in Anglesey to the Dock Office in Tower Building, Liverpool, was claimed as 5 minutes. In 1860 the semaphore system was replaced with an electric cable which remained in use until 1939.



A separate house for the Telegraph Keeper was also built in 1841 which later became the residence for the islands' wardens. By late 1837 Trinity House had installed a buoymaster and his family on the island. His job was to maintain the buoys around Wirral and the Mersey coast. The buoys were towed to the island, lifted with a small crane up the cliff and rolled on trolleys into a lofty store room. Here they were cleaned, painted and repaired before returning to their positions at sea. After severe storm damage, by 1850 Trinity Board had erected a new house with additional store and outbuildings. These buildings have now become the museum. Trinity House removed the buoymaster and his family in 1876.

In 1848 a stone boathouse and launchway were built on Hilbre for the Hoylake No 2 lifeboat where it was possible to launch at any state of the tide. It had become very difficult to launch the Hoylake boat at every state of the tide due to the severe silting in the area of Hoyle Lake. The lifeboat was still operated by the same Hoylake crew, who would walk over to Hilbre to launch the boat at low tide. In 1894 the Royal National Lifeboat Institution took over all the local lifeboats. The Hilbre station closed in July 1939 as the motor boats at Hoylake, New Brighton and Rhyl were now able to ensure the safety of shipping in this part of Liverpool Bay. The Hilbre lifeboat saved 21 lives in 44 launches before its closure.

Lying beside the lifeboat slip there is a deep narrow cutting in the sandstone rock. This is part of the system to measure the depth of the tide along with a wooden ruler to mark the tide depth. It is all connected to a recording system above to provide a record of tide heights and times to predict future tidal cycles. It was decommissioned in 2009.

In 1856 the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral sold the freehold of the three islands to the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks. Two years later they became the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. Hilbre Island as it appears today is almost completely the creation of the Dock Trustees and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. In addition to the buildings, they also carried out extensive repair work to prevent erosion of the cliffs during the 1890s.



Hilbre was a frequent venue for prizefighting in the 19th century. The contests usually took place in the early hours of the morning to foil the authorities but the police constables stationed at Frankby and Hoylake had some success in preventing them. The prize fights attracted a lot of interest, being reported as far away as Preston and Birmingham. There are also stories of cock fighting which were arranged in the deep hollow near to the present Mersey Canoe Club. The organisers made use of steamer boats to bring the audience to Hilbre, and to remove them promptly when the tide ebbed, so as to evade the law. The island was also popular as an excursion destination in the 19th century. Visitors would sail to the island for an 'aquatic excursion' before returning to their departure point. Entrepreneurs made several attempts to set up amusements on Hilbre or on Little Eye. In 1885 there was a proposal to form a Marine Establishment on Hilbre 'for the purposes of recreation, boating and bathing and to connect the same with Hoylake Railway by means of a tramway'. The Dock Board required more detailed information and the request was subsequently dropped. In 1893, Henry Summers proposed to build a pier from West Kirby to Middle Eye with ornamental pavilion buildings. Again, the Dock Board did not approve the plans. The property built by Trinity House was leased to a succession of individuals after the buoy store was discontinued. By 1881 it was the base for the Hilbre Island Club, established as a club for old bachelors with strict rules, for example no females were allowed except for the wife of the Club caretaker. Later the rules were amended to allow married men. The Club continued until 1931 when new tenants took over the premises. A lease was granted for the construction of a clubhouse for the Mersey Canoe Club in 1897 and leases were also granted for the construction of holiday bungalows in 1896, 1904, 1908 and 1923. The Dock Board and their various tenants became increasingly concerned at the number of day trippers. August Bank Holiday of 1911 brought 2,000 visitors. There were a number of attempts to prevent public access but the public outcry was such that the Dock Board eventually settled on a method of controlling the number of visitors by issuing tickets that had to be obtained in advance. Even this system was not introduced without local opposition. As an aid to control, iron railings and gates were erected around Hilbre Island and Middle Eye in 1912 and a Dock Board policeman was employed on Sundays and Bank Holidays to enforce regulations



During the Second World War Hilbre was one of 14 'starfish' sites for Liverpool. These 'starfish' decoys were a series of controlled fires set off in fire baskets during an air raid to imitate an urban area targeted by bombs. It was in use on Hilbre from 1 March 1942 to 8 April 1943. Also in 1942 a 'QL' decoy was added as part of a series of decoys to protect Bootle Docks. This was in use between 2 October 1942 and 1 May 1943. The 'QL' decoy displayed lights to simulate the marshalling yards and factories at the northern end of Bottle docks. This was all operated by the RAF from a control room on Hilbre and the fire baskets and lights were placed on Middle Eye. The control room mound on Hilbre was nicknamed the air raid shelter. In 1945 Hilbre was sold to Hoylake Urban District Council with a number of covenants designed to safeguard them from undesirable development. In 1974 when local government was reorganised, Hoylake UDC considered handing over the islands to the National Trust. The newly elected Wirral Borough Council, however, placed on record its determination to pursue a policy safeguarding the islands from undesirable development and to preserve and maintain their character for the enjoyment of the public.



A succession of Wardens have lived in Telegraph House to look after the interests of the islands. In 1985 the post of Warden was changed to Countryside Ranger with wider responsibility for the Dee Estuary. In 2010 the Hilbre Island Ranger post was lost as part of a cost cutting exercise and the islands were managed by the Local Area Parks and Countryside team. In 2020, following a restructure within Wirral's Parks and Countryside, the islands are now looked after by a Manager and team of Rangers responsible for Wirral Country Park, Hilbre Islands and Heswall Dales and based at Wirral Country Park.

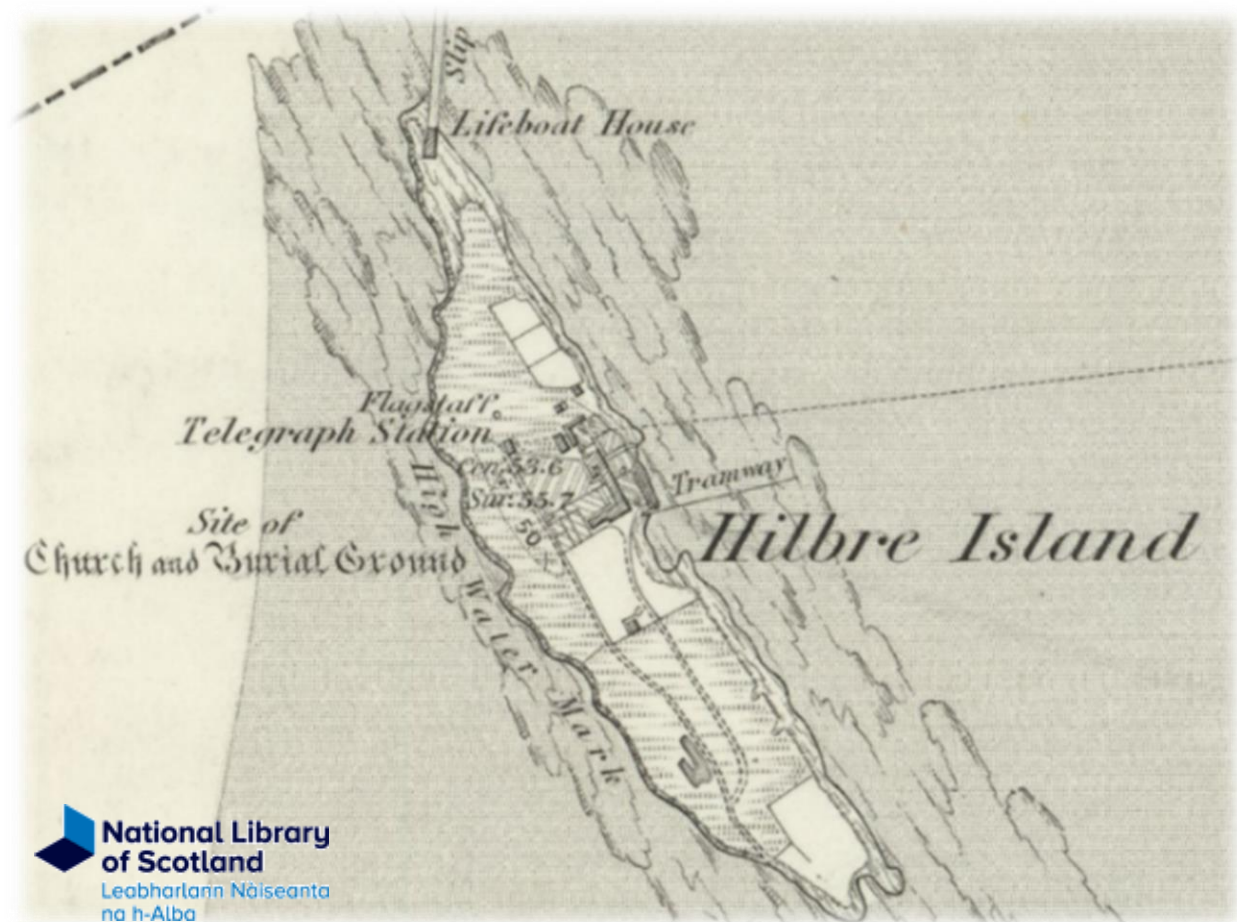
Many thanks to the Friends of Hilbre for providing this section of the Conservation Plan. Postcard images are from the author's collection

3.0 CONDITION OF HISTORIC FEATURES

3.1 Identifying and Recording Historic Features

Most of the man-made structures/features on the islands are well-known and are part of an Annual Site Safety Inspection. Landscape features are identified by their inclusion in historical records, photographs and other archive material including historic maps. The map record provides a fascinating insight into how Hilbre Island developed into a major site for assisting navigation into the River Mersey. High definition aerial photographs have revealed/confirmed old use of the land and foreshore and archaeology and historic finds have revealed a history of possible habitation going back to the Stone Age. Photographs and postcards also reveal a more recent history and continued research by scholars continue to add to the historical record of the islands. The structures/features of the islands recorded here is essential so that measures are put in place to ensure future management takes these into account. This Heritage Conservation Plan is a record of the islands' historic features and will be updated accordingly.

The Hilbre Island Trust have prepared detailed proposals for the development of the Victorian cluster of buildings. The detailed proposed work on the buildings is outside the scope of this plan but the catalogue of historic features of the buildings undertaken by Smith Young Architects in their Hilbre Arts, Science and Sustainability Centre Architectural Report, December 2022, has been included with permission.



Map extract from Cheshire Sheet XII.NW Revised: 1897 to 1898, Published: 1899

3.2 Catalogue of Historic Features

Description	Condition	Notes
Lifeboat Station Slipway (High Water)	Poor	Unlikely to improve
Lifeboat Station Slipway (Low Water)	Poor	Unlikely to improve
Lifeboat Station	Structurally sound	Needs interpretation
Metal Ladders		
Tide Gauge Cutting		
Tide Gauge Room	Water ingress	
Marker Footings	Good	
Victorian Sea Defences	Eroding	
Quarry		
Quarry Windlass		
Midden		
Old Bird Observatory Site		
Mersey Canoe Club	Very Good	Leaseholder
Boatshed	Structurally sound	
Slipway		
Day Room	Excellent	Leased to Hilbre CLT
Toilets (excavation of)		Excavation recorded
Slate Shed	Very good	
Goat Shed	Very good	Leased to Hilbre CLT
Pig Sty		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Fog Cottage		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Telegraph Station	Very good	Leased to Hilbre CLT
Marker Footings		
Well		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Greenhouse (site of)		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Telegraph House and Gardens		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Buoymaster's House and Gardens		Leased to Hilbre CLT
Buoymaster's Stores	Structurally sound	Leased to Hilbre CLT
Buoymaster's Workshop	Excellent	Leased to Hilbre CLT
Salt Pans		
Trackway		Also listed as Tramway
Bungalow 3	Excellent	Leaseholder
Bungalow 4	Excellent	Leaseholder
Starfish Control Room	Good	
Vacant Plot		
Hilbre Bird Observatory	Excellent	Leaseholder
Pond		
Slipway	Good	

3.3 Catalogue of Other Landscape Features

Feature and Location	Condition	Notes
Lady's Cave		
Niffy Bay		
Niffy Bay Bird Hide		
Hilbre Fault		
Large Sandstone Bridge	Good	
Small Sandstone Bridge	Good	
Trinity House Beacon	Good	Managed by Trinity House



A marker footing excavated into the sandstone on Hilbre and often referred to as the 'Monk's Grave'.

3.4 Catalogue of Items in the Buoymaster's Workshop Museum

Description	Condition	Notes
4 wheels (trolley?)		
Wooden sideboard and top		
Ratchet wrench		
Pulley with lignum vitae wheel (Steve Brown fishing officer) Thrown out of Whitley's bungalow		
Block from late 19 th c sailing ship with smaller shackles so used for smaller vessels		
Pulley block		

Description	Condition	Notes
Pulley block		
Iron rings 5no.		
Fishing line anchor		
Maritime light		
Iron clamps 4no.		
Assorted cartridge cases 15 no.		
Iron Shackles		
Shoe from shrimp trawl net		
Small wooden block		
Assorted pulleys		
Wooden block		
Boat hook		
Storm cone		
Oars from lifeboat 5 no.		
Oar rocks from lifeboat house 2 no		
Boat radar reflectors		
Trolley Frame	Corroded	
Hand Auger	Slightly corroded	
Mooring Peg?	Corroded	
Crop Sprayer? Arm 7 Navy C S Ltd	Dented	'Seed + Implement Department Victoria Street, Westminster'
Trolley possibly for canoe		Timber frame with metal axle and wheel
Telegraph station Weather Vane	Base corroded. Top painted	Copper
Spars/ boom from local fishing boats	Woodworm and cracks from drying out	
Cast iron gate post	Top / broken bottom	Found 7m west of midden steps! W H Peak & Sons Liverpool
Metal support with ring	Corroded	
Rectangular metal object with treaded bolt to top	Corroded	
Pulley winch and chain		Heavy object
Boom from fishing boat	Main fixing broken. Woodworm	
Ships timber		Slight curve
Ships timber		Slight curve
Ships timber		Slight curve
Carpenters wood saw	Woodworm	Hung on wall
Survey mast joint for timber		Very heavy

Description	Condition	Notes
17 th century pump framework from salt works cistern.	fragile	
Cabinet maker's wood saw		Hung on wall
Bow saw		
Shrimp cooking vessel		Photo in MaCafee family of this vessel with Duke of Edinburgh and others
Part of ring from ships main mast and bracket for top mast		
Grappling hook – 4 pronged from fishing boat		On wall
Metal object		
Work bench with 2 no vices		
Boat hook		On wall
Saw		On wall
Hook off end of crane		On wall
Hand winch from Buoystore		
Crane hook		
Saw – double handle		Broken with many teeth missing. Hung on wall.
Pulley block with associated chains		Hung on wall
Wooden pulley block		Hung on wall
4 wire eyes with bolts		Hung on wall
Saw double handle	Corroded	Hung on wall
Fender		On floor
Fender		Hanging from beam
Fender		Hanging from beam
Trunk		



The Buoymaster's Workshop Museum

3.5 Merseyside Historic Environment Record Listings

Merseyside Historic Environment Record is hosted for the local authority by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. Access to the Merseyside Historic Environment Record is through the Heritage Gateway website. Records found on the Heritage Gateway website have been abbreviated here and don't include references to the citations or quotes used. The map has been compiled using the grid references used for each record. It's as accurate as possible given the space to include the whole reserve but hopefully shows the extent of historic environment records for the Hilbre Islands.



Map of Merseyside Historic Environment Records on the Hilbre Islands

1. Telegraph Keeper's house, Hilbre Island

Former public house, later Telegraph Keeper's house, on Hilbre Island. "Until the last few years one single beerhouse was the only habitation". The inn, variously called the Seagull, the Boat or just Inn, is recorded in Alehouse records from 1793 up to 1828. "Part of the inn is now incorporated into the custodian's residence... The keeper's residence, originally part of the Seagull beer-house and extended in 1841 when the telegraph station was [re-]built." The dwelling house for the keeper "is of the standard four room design but has a plain four sided chimney, unlike the more elaborate ones elsewhere. The present doorway is not where it is marked on the original plan. Outside are a walled garden and pigsty". The southern range connecting with the later Buoy Master's house could be the surviving trace of the inn. The Telegraph Keeper's house was built in 1841, using a design adopted by the military for their signal stations. At the southern end, a former cottage was converted to animal quarters, later becoming the assistant's accommodation. There is a date stone which reads 1841.

2. The Bunkhouse or Workman's hut, Hilbre Island

The Bunkhouse or Workman's hut on Hilbre Island.

The Bunkhouse was probably built in the 1840s or 1850s. During the First World War 21 men were garrisoned in the building. Built in the late 1840s it housed the stone masons employed in making repairs to buildings and building erosion protection walls on the island. It is brick-built and was originally one large room with a side store.

3. A burial beneath a cairn, Little Eye

An inhumation was found beneath a cairn on Little Eye. (1)

In 1874 a deposit of human remains was found on Little Eye. The bones were within a hollow in the rock and had been covered by loose stones collected from the area.

4. Flint arrowhead, between Little Hilbre Island and Little Eye

A flint arrowhead found in the 19th century between Little Hilbre Island and Little Eye. Possibly not British, it may be of North American origin. The arrowhead was found on rocks between the two islands in the early 1870s(?) and was serrated along both edges.

5. Irish penny of Elizabeth I, Hilbre Island

An Irish copper penny of Elizabeth I, dated 1602. Found in March 1948 by the keeper on Hilbre whilst digging in the garden of his house there

6. Hilbre Island Telegraph Station

Hilbre Island Telegraph Station, one of a chain built in 1828 using semaphore signals, replaced by the extant structure in 1841 and switched to using a wired electric telegraph in 1861. In 1847 the former beer house on Hilbre was in use as a residence for agents of Trinity House and the person attached to the Liverpool Telegraph. The Trustees of the Liverpool Docks acquired the lease for the land in November 1828, in order to construct one of a chain of telegraph stations. The semaphore arms were controlled from within the building, standing to the north of it. The building itself was replaced in 1841. The semaphore system was replaced with an electric telegraph in 1861.

From the National Heritage List for England:

Telegraph Station. 1841. For Liverpool Dock Trustees. Painted stone with slate roof. One storey with bowed north end. Bowed end has small-paned glazing with 4 brass gimbals for telescopes. East facade has timber platform and elliptical-headed entrance. Hipped south end. Built as part of a relay of 7 stations from Point Lynus to Liverpool transmitting information on merchant ships sailing to Liverpool.

7. Neolithic arrowhead, Little Eye

A leaf shaped Neolithic arrowhead found on Little Eye. The arrowhead is 37mm by 19mm and weighs 2.6g. It is a Type 3C

8. Worked flints, Hilbre Island

Flint arrowheads and flakes found on Hilbre Island.

In the 1860s and 1870s, a number of flint finds were reported from the shore, some identified as coming from Hilbre Island. These included arrowheads and flakes. A Neolithic axe was also recorded for this location but is possibly a duplicate.

9. The Monk's Bath, Hilbre Island

A rock cut feature, known as the Monk's Bath, Hilbre Island.

"In his [Mr Hughes, telegraph keeper] garden was a square excavation in the rock, said to have been used by the monks as a bath".

The square hole was occupied by a greenhouse by the late 19th century.

Excavated in 1926, it was found to be unsuited to holding water owing to fissures. It could have been excavated as a grave but it was also suggested that it was dug to provide root space for plants in the greenhouse. It contained animal bones; sheep, ox and domestic fowl.

10. Late Bronze Age urn, Little Hilbre Island

A Bronze Age urn found in a pit on Little Hilbre Island. Further fragments, supposedly from the same urn, were found in 1978 and in 1979. "Erosion on the outer (south-west) side of the island in January 1965 exposed a bucket-shaped urn inverted in a small pit sealed by shallow topsoil. The fill of the urn consisted of dark compact soil with a number of moderate-sized stones. No hint of a cremation burial was seen. A slight depression to seaward containing a few crumbs of pottery indicates the possibility that there were other vessels, but these have been eroded by the sea. The vessel is in a very poor coarse fabric containing quartzite grits; none of the rim survives. Date presumably Late Bronze Age, and maybe from a small flat cemetery. Find noted initially by Professor Craggs. The urn is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester."

11. Inhumation burials and a medieval grave slab, Hilbre Island

Inhumation burials and a medieval grave slab, Hilbre Island.

In 1864 the telegraph keeper was breaking stones to repair the adjacent roadway from the beach on Hilbre Island. A large stone was exposed and found to be a grave slab with an incised cross. Four burials were found under it; one of a child, though to be eight or nine years old, another of a person about 15 years of age, one thought to be the original burial below the slab and a fourth, thought to be more recent. Some pottery was found during this work, fragments of a red jar and large water crocks of the 14th-16th centuries. The slab was found within six feet of where the cross head had been found in about 1852. The site was within 15 feet of the

cliff edge. The site lay in nearly a quarter of an acre of open ground. The slab with the cross was described in 1893 as being built upright into the wall of a shed on the island. The head of the cross was encircled by a double nimbus and there were roughly worked chevrons each side of the shaft. The slab is in the West Kirby museum. It is a grey sandstone, possibly dating to c.1100.

12. Former site of a house and barn, Hilbre Island

A house is mentioned in 16th and 17th century documents relating to Hilbre Island. A lease of 1551/2 names a house of Hilbre. It was, along with a barn, described as burnt down and ruined in a document of 1649/50. Feron and Eyes chart of the sea coast produced in the 18th century records a ruined house on the island. The house or the barn could have been the medieval chapel, repurposed following the Dissolution.

13. Late medieval-early post medieval pottery and animal bones, Hilbre Island

Late medieval-early post medieval pottery and animal bones, Hilbre Island. Found in September 1946, due west of the freshwater pond on the edge of the cliff: two pieces of sheep bone and two sherds of rough, partly glazed pottery dated to the 15th/16th century.

14. Former site of a tramway, Hilbre Island

The former site of a tramway, Hilbre Island.

The 1st edition 25" OS map of 1874 shows a tramway on the east side of the island, running down to the beach. It may have been related with the Buoy Store on the island. It does not appear on the 2nd edition map of 1898.

15. Lead key, Hilbre Island

A lead key found on Hilbre Island. Found by metal detecting in c.1982 on the beach on the leeward side of the island.

16. Buried land surface, Little Hilbre Island

In 1979 it was noted that a dark deposit was visible in the cliff face at several locations on Hilbre Island. It occurred at a depth of c.30cm. At one site it appeared to be associated with burnt sand. Samples from the deposits found charcoal from oak, birch and alder.

17. Hilbre Island Lifeboat House

Hilbre Island Lifeboat House. Built in c.1849, the station went out of use in the mid 20th century. The lifeboat house was operated by the Trustees of Liverpool Docks in 1847. The stone for the building was quarried from the island. A ladder providing access up from the foreshore was added in 1852. The original sandstone slipway was augmented by a steel one in 1904. It was taken over by the RNLI in 1895 and operated until December 1938.

18. Roman pottery and a post hole, Hilbre Island

Roman pottery was found on Hilbre Island.

In 1926 an excavation was carried out on Hilbre Island. One trench, Site I, found a post hole. It was two feet in diameter and 13 inches deep. This was partly sealed beneath a layer of burnt clay c.four feet large. To the south of this was a well defined patch of blackish earth, lying on the surface of the rock, in which were

found 23 sherds of Roman pottery, representing at least three vessels. One vessel had roulette-notches around the shoulder, another had painted decoration and the third was a pot. Newstead thought they dated to the second century AD. The pottery has more recently been dated to the 3rd or 4th century.

19. Buckles, Hilbre Island

Two double buckles were found in the 19th century on Hilbre Island. They were described as of different sizes, in bronze.

20. Spindle whorl, Hilbre Island

A pottery spindle whorl found on Hilbre Island in the mid 19th century. It was described as a spindle whorl or perforated disk of light coloured terra-cotta.

21. Clay tobacco pipes, Hilbre Island

Clay tobacco pipes were found on and around Hilbre Island over a number of years by visitors and the rangers. There were eight bowls, 91 stem fragments and three mouthpieces. The earliest piece was dated c.1640-70 and had a maker's mark of EB. Other pieces were of 18th and 19th century date.



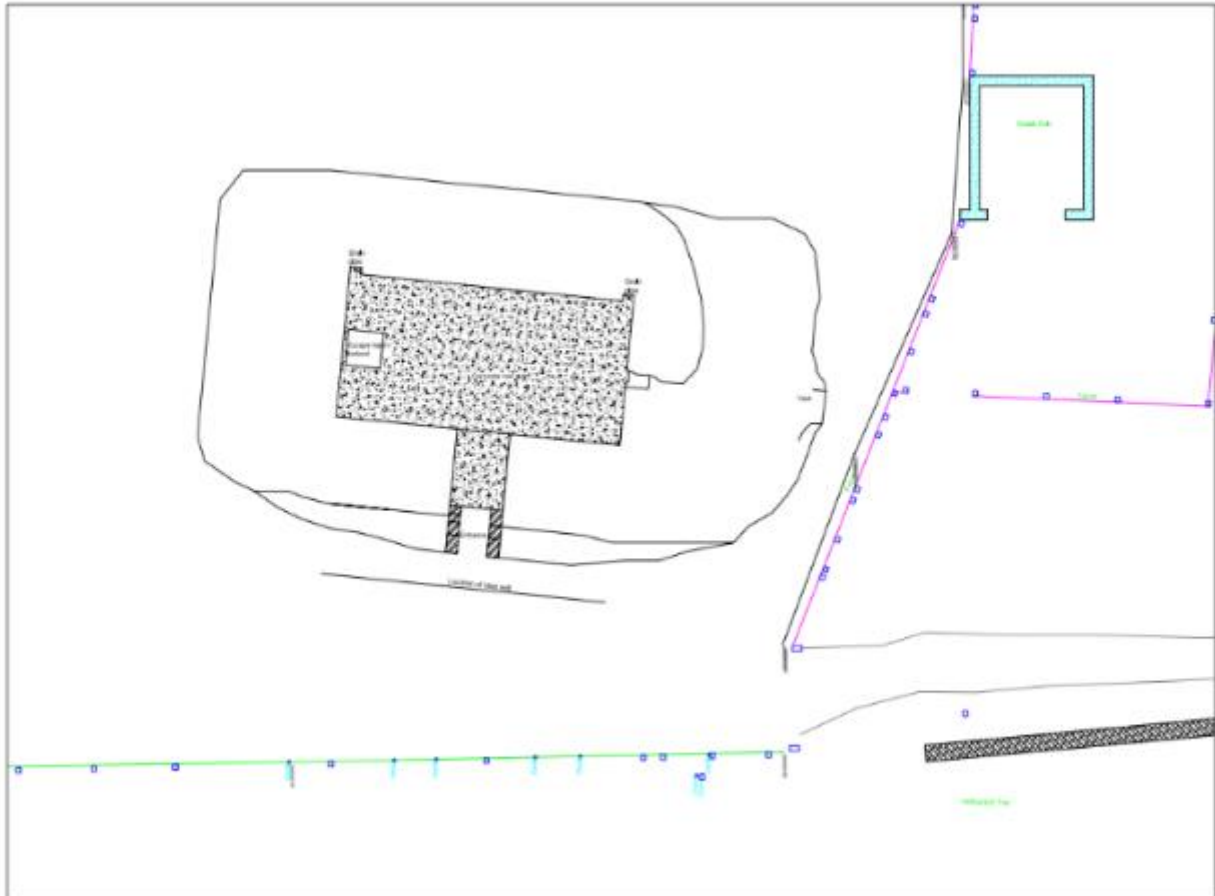
An archaeological excavation was conducted prior to the erection of the two composting toilets north of the Day Room and immediately east of the Slate Shed on Hilbre Island intermittently from September to November 2007. The report was written by Clare Ahmad and Jeff Speakman and recorded a total of sixteen pieces of clay pipes including plain and decorated bowls.

22. Medieval floor tile fragments, Hilbre Island

In 2006-7 National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation in the garden of the bird observatory on Hilbre Island. A fragment of medieval floor tile, of Cheshire County Type 188, was found. It was probably of 15th or 16th century date. A second fragment with no surviving glaze or decoration was also found.

23. Second World War Starfish bombing decoy site control bunker, Hilbre Island

The control bunker for a Second World War Starfish bombing decoy site on Hilbre Island. The decoy apparatus appears to have been on the sands around Little Hilbre, with the bunker on Hilbre Island housing the generator and control equipment. There is a hollow running from the bunker where the cables were salvaged.



Sketch of the Starfish Control Bunker on Hilbre by Roy Forshaw, 2011. The Air Ministry drawings for a Starfish Control (CDT 557/41) were smaller than the building on Hilbre. It is possible that the original building was extended or rebuilt to also house the controls for a 'QL' decoy, which was built as part of the 'C-series' of civil decoys for Liverpool to protect Bootle docks and that was brought into operation slightly later.

24. Undated midden, Hilbre Island

An undated midden found in 1939-41 on Hilbre Island.

A midden was found following a small landslip which exposed a black layer sealed beneath later deposits. It was investigated in 1939-41. Shells of edibles species and charcoal were the only finds recorded from the deposit

25. Location of a windmill on Hilbre Island

Former location of a windmill on Hilbre Island.

Fearon and Eyes' chart of 1738 recorded an old mill on Hilbre Island.

26. Medieval pottery, Hilbre Island

Several fragments of medieval pottery were found on Hilbre Island.

The sherds were of 13th century and later medieval coarse wares and were found on the beach to the south east of the main island during a field trip.

27. Medieval and post medieval pottery, Hilbre Island

Medieval and post medieval pottery found in the 19th century on Hilbre Island.

26 sherds of pottery, of 12th to 17th century date, many unglazed, others partially so. A fragment of a rim of a large jug in coarse reddish ware, unglazed.

28. Worked flints, Hilbre Island

In 1981 and in 1983 two worked flints were found on Hilbre Island.

They were both small and undated.

29. A possibly early medieval building, Hilbre Island

In 2006-7 National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation in the garden of the bird observatory on Hilbre Island. A number of post holes with packing stones in them were found. Within the same area there was a deposit of clay which appeared to have been burnt, possibly serving as a hearth. No datable material was found associated with these features but it was thought that they might date to the early medieval period. In 2016-7 a community excavation extended the earlier trench on the alignment of the post holes, to the north and south. Further post holes were found along with an area of cobbles.

30. Post medieval pottery, Hilbre Island

In 2006-7 National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation in the garden of the bird observatory on Hilbre Island. A sherd of a probably 16th or 17th century cup was found, along with sherds probably of 17th date and three of late 17th to late 18th century date.

31. Flint blade, Hilbre Island

A flint blade found in 1872 on Hilbre Island.

It was found on the top of the cop or raised fence near the telegraph station.

32. Site of a salt works, Hilbre Island

The former site of a salt works on Hilbre Island. Traces of the salt works were noted in the late 19th century. The salt works were established in 1692. Eight pans were to be built for boiling brine but only four were actually constructed. The industry apparently continued for many years but no end date is recorded. Surviving features include a semi-circular shaft cut out of the rock cliff on the eastern side of the island, with a circular emplacement in the rocks below. A tide trap was created, consisting of rock-cut tanks to retain water from high tides. A depression on the island is known as the salt pan and thought to be related. The salt works were built in 1692. An indenture is dated 6th December 1694. Eight pans were to be built but only four were erected. The works were leased to Thomas Slyford, he was cited for tax evasion relating to rock salt in 1708. A new lease was issued on 26th November 1717. A lease for the island was granted on 1st April 1730 to John Glegg but no mention of salt making was included in the details of the buildings and gardens on the island. A lease of 1759 notes the right to erect a salt refinery but not that one was operating. In 1974 a trench was dug in the northern part of the

island to investigate the salt works. A foundation of dressed sandstone blocks was found, along with a layer of clinker. Some clay tobacco pipes were found.

33. Shell midden, Little Eye

A shell midden on the eastern side of Little Eye.

A bed of mussel shells was observed in the eastern face of the cliff on Little Eye in 1926. A small hone was found in this deposit.

34. A well, Hilbre Island

A rock-cut well, nearly 40 feet deep, on Hilbre Island.

35. Possibly medieval floor tile, Hilbre Island

In 2003 the National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation in the garden of the Telegraph Keeper's House. A small fragment of a possibly medieval floor tile was found.

36. A possibly prehistoric post hole, Hilbre Island

In 2006-7 National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation in the garden of the bird observatory on Hilbre Island. The earliest feature found was a rock-cut post hole. It may have been of prehistoric date and was sealed by sandy layers, one of which contained a probably prehistoric sherd of pottery. A second sherd of prehistoric pottery was found in a later layer.

37. Inhumation burial found near Little Hilbre Island

An inhumation burial found near Little Hilbre Island, probably sometime before 1922. A photograph from Cheshire Record Office shows a skull and two long bones. They were probably recovered from a burial as the lower jaw is still present.

38. 18th/19th century midden, Hilbre Island

An 18th/19th century midden on Hilbre Island. Found in 1947, it contained pottery and pipes of the late 18th and early 19th century.

39. Roman brooches, buckles and glass beads, Hilbre Island

Roman brooches, buckles and glass beads found on Hilbre Island.

A large fibula (bronze) with the upper part retaining its blue enamel, found on Hilbre Island, with two bronze buckles, spindle whorl (terracotta) and a large blue glass bead. A glass bead was dug up by a rabbit on Hilbre Island. It was "of a bright cobalt blue, veined with enamel of yellow, banded with a small thread of green". A slightly later report includes an additional brooch. Two barrel shaped beads were found in 1867 in the garden of the telegraph keeper's house. An opaque greenish blue barrel shaped bead was found in 1870.

40. Worked flints, Little Hilbre Island

Worked flints are said to have been found on Little Hilbre Island.

"Flint arrowheads, scrapers and other implements have been found particularly at the Red Stones, Little Hilbre and the Eye".

41. Supposed location of a beacon, Hilbre Island

A beacon is recorded as having existed on Hilbre Island from the 13th century. Charts of the early 19th century still recorded beacons on the island. John Scot,

Earl of Chester paid for the maintenance of a light on Hilbre Island. "The most ancient light or beacon on this coast was on Hilbre". An account of 1813 records that "Hilbre is most important as a station for two beacons, which are raised upon it, as guides to vessels through the Swash". The earliest references to a beacon, or light, on Hilbre are a confusion for maintenance of a light in Hilbre chapel. Collins' chart of 1689 and Fearon and Eyes' chart of 1755 do not show any lights on the island. Thomas' chart of 1813 does not include any mention of lights or beacons on the island. The only navigational point detailed is the "white and only house on Hilbre Island".

42. Site of a Second World War bombing decoy site, Little Hilbre Island

Former site of a Second World War bombing decoy site, Hilbre Island.

A Second World War 'Permanent Starfish' bombing decoy, SF11L, located at Little Hilbre. It was constructed to deflect enemy bombing from Liverpool. It is referenced as being in use between 01-MAR-1942 and 08-APR-1943. It was also the site of a 'QL' decoy, which was built as part of the 'C-series' of civil decoys for Liverpool to protect Bootle docks. This is referenced as being in use between 02-OCT-1942 and 01-MAY-1943. The 'QL' decoy displayed lights to simulate the marshalling yards and factories associated with the northern end of Bootle docks.

43. Site of a building, Hilbre Island

In 2007 National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out an excavation. A rock cut floor was found with possible post holes. This may have been a mid 19th century animal pen. It was filled with 20th century rubbish. Foundations of an earlier building were also found.

44. Late 17th century spoon handle, Hilbre Island

A base silver spoon handle with initials and possible maker's marks. T and E, each with a cross above, on the reverse an X and a horse shoe shaped mark. The handle has three lobes and is thought to date from 1660-1720. Found in late 1981 by metal detector on the beach at the northeast end of Hilbre Island.

45. Flint blade, Hilbre Island

Flint blade found near the lifeboat house Hilbre Island in 1983. Fragment of a triangular section blade, ridged with point.

46. Mesolithic site, Little Eye

A Mesolithic site on Little Eye.

In the mid 19th century it was noted that "flints are chiefly to be met with on the beach of the Little Eye, washed out from the sole remains of the rapidly-diminishing bank (surmounted by the landmark), and in the face of which examples may at times be found protruding". They were also described as protruding from the bank on the north eastern or landward side. Ten worked flints, including six arrowheads, a knife or scraper, a scraper, two cores, along with other flakes, were found in the bank or on the beach in 1871. Further flints were found in 1873: two arrowheads, two notched flakes, a blade, two chisels, a thumb flint, three scrapers and 15 other flints. Between 1978 and 1983 worked flints were collected from eroding deposits around Little Eye. The material was of Mesolithic date. The finds were drawn and photographed before being deposited in the Merseyside County Museum. In June 1997 the National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit carried out a small

investigation of the eroding edge of Little Eye. Several small features with struck flintwork, shell and charcoal belonging to an early prehistoric hunter-gatherer site were found.

47. Late Bronze Age Irish socketed axe, Little Hilbre Island

A Late Bronze Age Irish socketed axe found on Little Hilbre Island in 1926.

The loop and socketed end were missing. The piece was 4.7cm long and 2.7cm across the blade. There was a band of three plain rings or cords around the axe below the loop. It was thought to be of Irish manufacture.

48. Bronze Age flints, Little Hilbre Island

Bronze Age flints were found on Little Hilbre Island during surface collection in 1978, 1979 and 1981. In total, five worked (or possibly worked) flakes were found by members of the Merseyside Archaeological Society.

49. Late 17th or early 18th century pipes, Hilbre Island

Clay pipes of the late 17th or early 18th century found on Hilbre Island.

In 1926 an excavation found fragments of clay pipe stems and a bowl of a Fairy Pipe type. Probably of late 17th or early 18th century date.

50. Medieval inscribed spindle whorl, Hilbre Island

A spindle whorl was found on Hilbre Island "among debris of medieval buildings... It is imperfect, but the legend appears to have been 'Ave Maria Gracia'"

51. Saxon cross head, Hilbre Island

Saxon cross head, Hilbre Island.

A circular cross-head of Anglo-Saxon date, found in 1853 by the Telegraph Keeper when breaking up rubble to resurface the nearby road to the beach. Similar cross-heads were found at St. Johns, Chester, and "must have been the work of the same carver or of his school". A class B Chester-type cross (with spandrel bosses). T-fret as vine, knots on arms and ends of ear, socket for separate shaft. Probably dates from about AD 920 onwards.

52. Lead key, Hilbre Island

A lead key found on Hilbre Island. Found on the south west side of the island in the cove.

53. Buoy Master's House and Buoy Store, Hilbre Island

The Buoy Master's House and Buoy Store on Hilbre Island.

In 1836 Trinity House proposed creating a buoy keeper's station and a buoy store on Hilbre Island. In 1850 the Trustees of Liverpool Dock, from whom Trinity House sublet the land, complained that they had not been informed of the building of the new house and store. The buoy station must have been active from the late 1830s or early 1840s as reference is made to staff of Trinity House being resident on the island in 1847. It is not clear what buildings were used before the current structures were apparently built in 1850, or shortly before that date.

From the National Heritage List for England:

SJ 1888 HOYLAKE HILBRE ISLAND (east side)

8/25 Buoy master's house and buoy – store

G.V. II

House and store. c.1836. Roughcast, with slate roof. L- plan; house of 2 storeys and 3 bays with adjoining one- storey wing to left. Windows are sashed with glazing bars. Central entrance to house has overlight with glazing bars and 4-panel door. Wing for buoy storage etc. now mostly converted to domestic use has gable to end bay with small bell attached. Casement windows to south facade, sashes with glazing bars to north. Entrance with C20 porch and side entrance with paired doors to store in end bay. 2 gable-end stacks to house, small stack to wing. Listing NGR: SJ1849188003. The buoy master initially lived in a row of cottages which were badly damaged in storms in 1846/7. The cottages were then demolished or incorporated into the current building in 1850 [though an undated plan and a watercolour of 1826 appear to show the cottages located further to the north]. The building stands within a former quarry, possibly the basis of a dispute over unpermitted quarrying. The buoy store adjacent to the house was built in 1850. The store was extended to the west at a later date. To the west of the extension is the former shippon, one of the earliest Trinity House buildings, possibly dating from c.1837. It initially housed a pigsty, stable and privy, with a hayloft above. It was later converted into accommodation for the assistant buoy master. Trinity House left the island in 1876. (Status: Listed Building Grade: II

54. 16th century German tokens, Hilbre Island

Two 16th century German tokens, found on Hilbre Island in the mid 19th century. Two jettons - obv. HANNES KRAVWINCKEL IN NVR rev. GOTTE ALLE IN DIE EERE SEI and the second with the same obv. but rev. GOT ES REICH BLEIBT EWIG. Minted in Nuremberg in the 16th century. They were found in the 1860s and '70s.

55. Location of the chapel of St Hildeburgh, Hilbre Island

Former location of the Chapel of Hilbre, or Hildeburgh, a pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon chapel.

"This Church [West Kirby], with ye Church of ye Island [supposed to be a church built on Hilbre Island] were given to [the] Abbey of Retria [St Ebrulf/St Evroul] in Normandy by Robert de Rodelent, one of ye Barons of Hugh E[arl] of Chester, ab[out] an[no] 1081". The abbot and convent of St. Evroult [in Normandy] issued a quitclaim to St. Werburgh's for the vill and church of [West] Kirby and the chapel of Hilbre. There is no date for this but it is thought to be of c. AD 1150 or earlier. A dispute between the two is dated to the early 13th century: "The Pope on 23rd March 1204/5 ordered an enquiry to be made... concerning the church and manor of Kirkebi and the Chapel of Wodecot." This name of Hilbre chapel does not occur elsewhere. It could indicate that the priest or monk residing on the island had a wooden dwelling. A second quitclaim relates to the chapel: William rector of [West] Kirby, with the consent of the Bishop [of Coventry] for Hilbre Island with its chapel retaining nothing but the offerings on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary [August 15th], saving the rights of burial and of the mother church of [West] Kirby. This is thought to date to AD 1287. The last monk on the island was Robert Wyngham or Wiggan, described as prior of the cell of Hilbre when in 1540 a pension was assigned to him on the suppression of the abbey. The island was given to the new cathedral of Chester in 1541. It was later leased to the Rowland family. When the cathedral chapter was repressed under the Commonwealth the island was described in 1649/50 as "commonly called Hilbre Island... where upon was formerly a house and barns, but now burnt down and ruined". There were Saxon monks of the Benedictine order, replaced at the conquest by two Normans

of the same order. The chapel was dedicated to the Virgin. The chapel was called Capella de Hildeburgheye when it was passed to St. Werburga, Chester. When it passed to Basingwerk Abbey, William Fitz Richard, the Rector, quitclaimed by deed the island with its chapel and appurtenances to the abbey, reserving the right of sepulchre. William of Lancelyn gave the monks the lake and fishery of Hoylake together with a tenement in Meols. Leland's Survey of 1540 recorded that "there was a celle of monkes of Chester, and a pilgrimage of Our Lady of Hilbyri". The only surviving traces of the building were a portion of a doorway and some flagstones said to built up in outhouses. "Of this cell there are not the slightest remains. But of the Church of St. Hildesburgheye several interesting relics have been found. About 1853... head of fine cross... it no doubt stood in the ancient cemetery and near the church, a large number of flag stones from the floor of which have been found and utilized... Another relic of the early Hilbre Church was found several feet under the sod near the site of the cross, in the shape of a piece of cornice moulding or pilaster in stucco, and of excellent composition... well squared foundation stones, which plainly belong to a superior erection, remain as the foundation etc. of a cart house, and not improbably formed part of some ecclesiastical buildings." Excavations by Professor Newstead in 1926 were fruitless in regard to finding any trace of the church or the monastic cell and chapel. If any remains exist, he considers it most likely that they are beneath the present houses. Four stones at the north end of the island are pointed out as remains of the chapel and the O.S. suggests a site on the south west side, but both of these, according to Newstead, may be disregarded. An Anglian cross-head, dated by Collingwood to c.1030 was found in the cemetery in 1852, now in Grosvenor Museum, and in 1864, a Norman grave-cover was discovered together with several deposits of human remains, probably of the 11th or 12th century. The slab is in West Kirby Museum. It was a Benedictine cell (or hermitage?) founded at an unknown date, dissolved in c.1539

56. James I sixpence, Hilbre Island

A James I sixpence found in a rock pool on Hilbre Island. Found in 1978 by Mr Colter from Liverpool. Identified by the finder as second coinage of 1604-1609. Clipped and worn.

57. Medieval pottery, Hilbre Island

In 1978 a sherd of medieval pottery was found on Hilbre Island.

58. Medieval annular brooch, Hilbre Island

A medieval annular brooch found on Hilbre Island.

Described as a spindle whorl, inscribed Ave Maria Gracia, and found amongst debris of medieval buildings on the island. Later described as being inscribed with IESVS NAZAR and having been found in a bank.

59. Post medieval customs house, Hilbre Island

A post medieval customs house existed on Hilbre Island.

60. Site of an 18th century summer house, Hilbre Island

The former site of an 18th century summer house on Hilbre Island.

Laurie and Whittle's chart of 1794 has a Summer House marked on Hilbre Island.

3.6 Architectural report extract

In December 2022, Smith Young Architects produced a 'Hilbre Arts, Science and Sustainability Centre Architectural Report' for The British Art and Design Association (BADA). The following (and table) is an extract (used with permission from BADA):

In order to fully understand the critical physical aspects of the listed structures a heritage appraisal has been undertaken. Each element of the external and Internal fabric has been assessed against significance and condition on a scale listed below. An overall value for each element is derived by adding the two figures.

Significance

1 - none 2 – low

3 - medium 4- high

5 – critical

Condition

1 - poor

3 - average

5 - good

These figures provide a general heritage value of key elements to assist in determining future actions.

Item	Significance	Condition	Value	Notes
Telegraph Station				
Stone Walls	5	3	8	whitewashed
Elliptical door and opening	5	3	8	
Multipaned bow window	5	3	8	Inc brass gimbals
Slate roof	4	1	5	Deteriorating rapidly, timber gutters missing
Internal stone and timber walls	4	3	7	
Stone floor	4	3	7	Raised timber section to bay window
Buoymaster's House				
Roughcast render stone walls	5	3	8	Some damaged render to front & rear
Chimney stacks	5	3	8	Two with multiple pots
Slate roof	4	3	8	Recently re-roofed
Rainwater goods	2	1	3	Plastic modern
Timber sash windows	5	3	8	New putty required
Front door	5	5	10	Includes original ironmongery
Internal walls – lath and plaster	3	3	6	
Lath and plaster ceilings	3	1	4	Significant damage to first floor
Doors and joinery inc skirtings	3	3	6	
Original fireplaces x 2	5	5	10	One to gf one to ff
Utility room fittings inc bread oven	4	3	7	

Timber and stone floors	4	3	7	Stone to rear gf only
Staircase and balustrading	5	3	8	Several timber spindles missing
Buoymaster's Workshop				
Rendered stone walls	4	3	7	Modern render
Slate roof	4	3	7	Recently re-roofed
Rainwater goods	2	1	3	Plastic modern
Timber sash window	5	3	8	
Exposed roof trusses	5	5	10	2 primary trusses
Stone floor	5	3	8	
Timber partition wall to store	4	3	7	
Buoymaster's Store				
Rendered stone walls	4	3	7	Modern render
Slate roof	4	3	7	Recently re-roofed
Timber roof trusses	5	5	10	Concealed by modern ceiling
Rainwater goods	2	1	3	Modern plastic
Timber casement and sash windows	4	3	7	3 sash to north elevation
Porch to south elevation	2	3	5	Modern
Internal partition walls and doors	2	3	5	Non-original
Plaster ceilings	1	3	4	Modern. Original trusses above
Timber floor	2	1	3	Modern with rising damp
Kitchen fittings	1	3	4	Modern



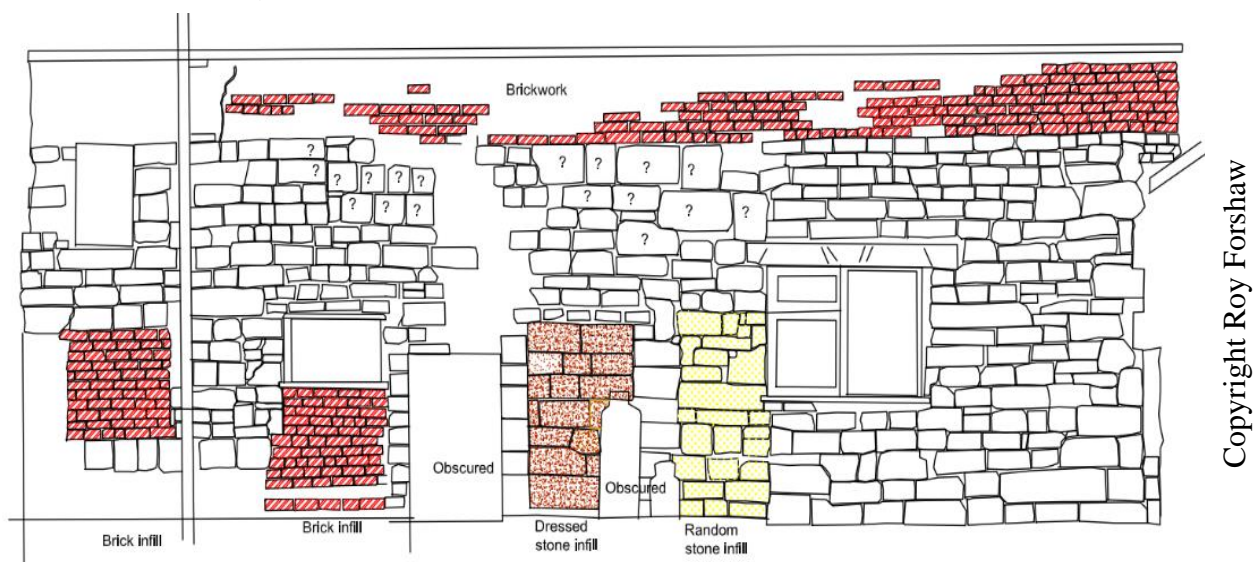
The original bronze door handle on the Buoymaster's House

3.7 Survey and archaeological work

A large portion of the island (buildings and topography) has been recorded by Roy Forshaw from National Museums Liverpool. A lot of new detail has been noticed such as an early slipway at the north of the island probably predating the Lifeboat Slipway. Other features on the beach include cut outs in the rock where stone blocks supported the rails for a tramway operated by Trinity House. This was used to bring buoys and supplies at low water to the Buoymaster's Store. What may be fish traps have also been found on the Hoylake side of the island. The buildings were measured and drawn with individual stone bonding showing an interpretation on the various phases of construction using computer aided design software. Image corrected photographs were imported onto the drawing and the stonework and brickwork bonding traced. Blocked-in openings, extensions and reuse of earlier dressed stone blocks have been shown. Over the centuries dressed stone blocks have been salvaged and reused in other structures and the drawings will be used to identify the various stone types including type of material, masons finish and dimensions. There is a possibility that some of these blocks came from the chapel and monk's cell.

The Korec Group provided a Sencefly Swinglet flying drone survey which took detailed plan photographs from the air. This has proved particularly useful in identifying rock cut features on the beach areas which are reproduced to scale in high definition. At the southern end of the island early field boundaries and excavations into banking have been measured. These boundaries appear on early plans and have yet to be dated accurately. Elsewhere undulations in the ground are more apparent as the grass is shorter.

The salt works remains at the north of the island were measured and aided an application for funding a community archaeology excavation. Dating from the late 1690's the salt works was never modernised and its remains are a valuable record of early salt making.



Telegraph House elevation recorded by Roy Forshaw showing the combination of stonework and brickwork used in its construction and detailed using computer aided design software

In 2016 a Community Dig took place on Hilbre Island. The project, organised by the University of Liverpool in collaboration with The Friends of Hilbre, was built on a previous project in 2006 when evidence of an ancient building was uncovered on the plot of land adjacent to the Hilbre Bird Observatory. The post-holes of a rectangular structure were found that may belong to the early medieval period (AD 400-1100). Dwelling houses from this period are rare finds in north-west England, making this a particularly important discovery. Other finds from the 2006 dig included pieces of prehistoric pottery and medieval tile, a testament to the island's longstanding place in the lives of local people. Sieved soil in the 2016 dig produced a range of finds from the pre-historic (heat-shattered stone) and the partial base of a stoneware tankard dating to the late 17th Century along with some flint and a number of heat-shattered stones. This method of heating water was used during the pre-historic period as well as the early medieval period. A small pottery handle was found, probably late medieval or early post-medieval along with the partial base of a tyg (multi-handled drinking cup). This piece probably dates to the late 16th or early 17th century. It was probably made locally, possibly in Buckley. A strong concentration of cobbles was found in one of the trenches. These stones were probably collected from the beach and transported for use as building material and possibly belongs to the period between AD 400 and 1200. Several test-pits were dug in the northern part of the island to investigate elements of the late 17th-mid-18th century salt processing works.

Due to the importance of the islands as a prehistoric site it is policy that any excavation work is preceded or accompanied by a representative of the University of Liverpool's Archaeology Department. Metal detecting is not allowed on any part of the reserve.



The University of Liverpool have been invaluable in recording and providing advice on any work that requires excavation on the Hilbre Islands

3.8 Assessment of Historic Features

Considering its location at the mouth of the Dee Estuary, that has one of the fastest tides and highest tidal ranges in Europe, and that the islands take the full force of north westerly winds, the islands' landscape and associated historic features are in remarkably good condition. Practical management on the islands takes place throughout the year but, due to weather, tides and daylight working hours, most practical management takes place from March to September. An Annual Site Safety Inspection at the beginning of the year will identify any particular issues that need attention and prioritises work required. The intention is to have all repairs done ready for the Easter Holiday and the first Friends of Hilbre Seal Watching/Open Days of the year.

In 2018, Lambert Smith Hampton and AMION Consulting were commissioned by Wirral Council to provide a report identifying options for securing the future of Hilbre Island. The report recognised the lack of income generation from the islands with which to maintain the buildings and therefore a need for the Council to identify a solution reducing its liabilities and providing a more sustainable future. Nine options were suggested and impact and risk assessment criteria used to score the options. A 'managed decline' option ranked most highly overall, followed by 'do nothing' and then an option for Community Asset Transfer. Whilst the report recommendation was a 'managed decline' there was a strong belief that a Community Transfer should continue to be sought and Wirral Council's responsibilities, as protectors of the islands environment, historic features and their value as a special place to local people and visitors, also needed to be considered.

In April 2021, Wirral Council was contacted by The British Art and Design Association (BADA). The Merseyside-based group had already been in contact with the Friends of Hilbre and Hilbre Bird Observatory, local elected members and Chair of Wirral's Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to look at options for managing the Victorian cluster of buildings on Hilbre.



“All walls, tracks, steps, fences, buildings and heritage ruins are all in remarkable condition for a windswept island” Green Flag Judges 2023.

A draft report was circulated to council officers for initial feedback and to see the scope of the project. BADA, the Friends of Hilbre and the Hilbre Bird Observatory formed a Hilbre Steering Group and produced a more detailed feasibility study showing building restoration phases and the opportunities for a science and art-based centre of excellence on the reserve. In 2024 the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust Limited was formed and a short-term lease agreement signed between the group and Wirral Council. This is the most significant change in the way the buildings have been managed in decades and has allowed, for the first time in many years, Wirral Council to concentrate on other aspects of managing the Local Nature Reserve and notably its wildlife, history and heritage.

Whilst the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust Limited will start to develop the buildings, meet with potential stakeholders and encourage funding, Wirral Council will continue to work with the Friends of Hilbre and assist with their Seal Watching and Open Days, Volunteer Task days and interpretation for schools and through events. It will allow a better assessment of historic features and how they are managed and production of this Conservation Plan and application for a Green Heritage Site Award will demonstrate a commitment by Wirral Council to protect the historic landscape and its associated features.



The Chair of the Friends of Hilbre passing over the original Telegraph Station Compass to Williamson Art Gallery and Museum where it will be catalogued and put into safe storage. The Friends of Hilbre paid for a replica compass that can be viewed by the public in the Telegraph Station on their Open Days

4.0 USE AND ENJOYMENT OF HISTORIC FEATURES

4.1 Hilbre Island

Hilbre Island is approximately 13.5 acres in size at Mean High Water with a plateau of 8 acres and, as the largest of the three islands with its buildings, and other historic features, is the focal point for most people when visiting the reserve. The Friends of Hilbre organise Seal Watching and Open Day from March to September each year, providing information to visitors and where sales of refreshments and souvenirs helps to generate an income for the Registered Charity. Money from this and from membership fees and donations is all used to help manage the reserve. In the last few years the Friends of Hilbre have provided noticeboards in Telegraph Station, the Slate Shed, paid for minor building repairs and a replica compass from the Telegraph Station so that it can be displayed whilst the original is in safe storage at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum. The Telegraph Station is itself a focus for visitors to Hilbre and the Friends of Hilbre open this and the Buoymaster's Workshop Museum to visitors on their Open Days.

The Friends of Hilbre manage a website that provides information on the islands' wildlife, history and heritage, safe crossing information and events. They also publish a quarterly newsletter and members undertake task days on the islands assisting in managing the habitats within the historic landscape. Shelter on the island is limited but the Day Room can be made available to visiting groups including schools for use as a classroom. Guided tours usually include a visit to the Lifeboat Station and possibly even a visit inside the Seawatching Hide maintained by the Hilbre Bird Observatory or to the observatory itself. For ramblers and other groups and individuals, the Slate Shed provides limited shelter and it contains interpretive boards and seating.



Display cabinets and interpretive boards in the Telegraph Station



The Friends of Hilbre Seal Watching and Open Day in September 2024

4.2 Little Hilbre or 'Middle Eye' and Little Eye

Middle Eye is 5.5 areas in size at Mean High Water with a plateau of 2.5 areas. Little Eye is 6 acres although it has a plateau of just 0.05 acres. A Late Bronze Age urn, an axe, arrowheads and worked flints have been found on Middle Eye and Little Eye along with shell middens suggesting evidence of the site being used by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. For many visitors, Middle Eye is a place of refuge and contemplation away from the busier Hilbre Island. The grass plateau also provides an area for people crossing to Hilbre to rest. Little Eye is often the destination for visitors including dog walkers and runners and people who see the little outcrop of sandstone as a 'target' to aim for rather than the further Middle and Hilbre islands. Little Eye constantly changes with the accumulation of windblown sand covering large areas only to be washed away by high tides and exposing more sandstone.

4.3 Events and Activities

As well as the regular public Seal Watching, Open Days and members Task Days, the Friends of Hilbre also organise other events and activities sometime in conjunction with other stakeholder and community groups. Each year the Friends support three wider events - the Wirral Walking Festival, the Wirral History Fair and the Wirral History and Heritage Open Days. In November 2024 Liverpool John Moores University, British Art & Design Academy, Friends of Hilbre and the Rangers worked together to run a creative expedition to the islands focussing on the ecology of Hilbre with sessions about wildlife, literature and poetry. The event was part of Being Human - the UK's festival of the humanities, organised by the University of London, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It was a fantastic way to celebrate and demonstrate how humanities inspire and enrich our everyday lives, help us to understand ourselves, our relationships with others, and the challenges we face in a changing world.



Being Human - the UK's festival of the humanities on Hilbre in 2024

Wirral Council policy is that any events held on its land need approval from the Wirral Events Committee. Part of the event consultation process is with the Hilbre Islands Manager to ensure that no other consents are required or if the event is refused as it would adversely affect the status of the islands with particular reference to its status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the reasons for its designation. A Filming Application also needs to be submitted for any commercial filming to the Liverpool Film Office (agents for Wirral Council). Natural England, the statutory body for ensuring protection of the designated Dee Estuary SSSI produces a list of operations likely to damage the special interest. These include:

- Dumping, spreading or discharging of any materials
- Killing, injuring, taking or removal of any wild animal or their eggs/nests of any wild animal or the disturbing, taking, damaging or destroying of any wild animal in its place of shelter including pest control.
- Destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, turf or peat.
- Extraction of minerals, including shingle, hard rock, sand and gravel, topsoil, subsoil, shells and spoil.
- Destruction, construction, removal, rerouting or re-grading of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, including soil and rock exposures.
- Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above and below ground.
- Modification of natural or man-made features (including cave entrances) and clearance of boulders, large stones, loose rock or scree and battering, buttressing or grading rock-faces.
- Use of vehicles or craft.
- Recreational activities.

Any activity must be able to show that it would not adversely affect the Site of Special Scientific Interest and the reasons for its designation



Sunset walk to Little Hilbre

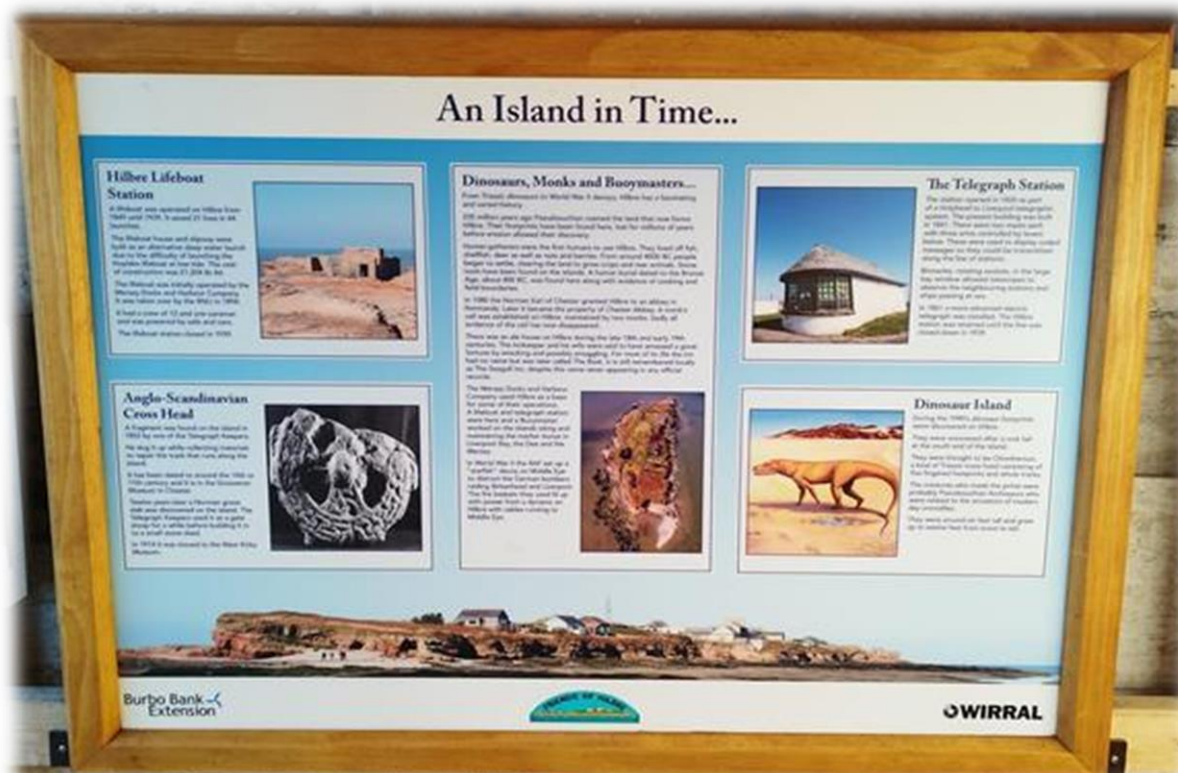
4.4 Interpretation

As well as the main noticeboard on the mainland (West Kirby Beach) and on Hilbre Slipway, there are interpretive boards in the Slate Shed and in the Telegraph Station. Within the Telegraph Station are cabinets with some finds from the islands

The Buoymaster's Workshop is open to visitors on Friends of Hilbre Open Days or by appointment. Various workshop items and other objects from within the Victorian cluster of buildings are on display in an informal museum of artifacts. The items on display have been catalogued (and appear in this Conservation Plan) and may be added to especially with the refurbishment of the Victorian cluster of buildings.

The Friends of Hilbre maintain an excellent website with a section detailing the history of the islands along with safe crossing information. The website also includes details of the archaeological digs and a gallery.

Many first-time visitors are concerned about safe crossing to the islands – not surprising as they are crossing the mouth of the Dee Estuary that has one of the fastest tides and highest tidal ranges in the world. To assist visitors, the information provided is kept as simple as possible and referred to as 'the three hour golden rule'. People wishing to cross are told to check the high water tide times for the day of their proposed visit and take into account British Summer Time – not shown automatically on some tide tables. Visitors can leave using the only recommended safe crossing route from West Kirby. It is safe to cross from West Kirby 3 hours after high tide. Visitors must leave the island at least 3 hours before the next high tide. This is for crossing to the islands at low water. Information about crossing to the islands, and staying over high tide, is no longer published on either the Council or Friends of Hilbre websites.



One of the displays boards in the Slate Shed

In 2020 the Wirral Country Park-based Rangers started a Facebook page to keep people up to date with developments at Wirral Country Park during the Covid pandemic. In 2023 The Hilbre Islands were included in posts and in 2024 the Rangers launched a podcast telling people what can be seen at that time of the year and with information about forthcoming events.

Ranger Matt Thomas has been a regular guest presenter on BBC Radio Merseyside's Naturewatch for over a decade. He's now accompanied by Ranger Jo Boots and the two Wirral Country Park-based Rangers reach an audience of several hundred thousand with their social media releases.



Wirral Country Park Rangers Jo Boots and Matt Thomas are regular guest presenters on BBC Radio Merseyside's Naturewatch

4.5 Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Further Education

Due to the crossing time (approximately one hour each way) many primary schools don't use the islands as an educational resource. It is unlikely that Key Stage 1 pupils would visit the islands but the older year groups could visit Little Eye, Middle Eye or Hilbre and learn about the natural history of this special habitat, how the islands were an essential part of trade to Liverpool and local culture and how they were formed.

Colleges and universities already use the islands for study and there is an opportunity to work with secondary schools through a Countryside Stewardship education programme where all the environmental features of the islands would be examined.

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5 – 7	7 – 11	11 – 14	14 – 16
Year groups	1 – 2	3 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundation subjects				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages ¹		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education	✓	✓	✓	✓

English Primary Schools Curriculum Core and Foundation Subjects



40 students studying Architecture at Liverpool John Moores University spent an afternoon on Hilbre. They were working on a design project linked to an island environment

5.0 MAINTAINING HISTORIC CHARACTER & APPEARANCE

5.1 The Friends of Hilbre

Established in 2001, the Friends of Hilbre are at the heart of everything that is Hilbre. They have been the driving force behind the management of the islands for over twenty years and in 2024 joined with the British Art and Design Association and Hilbre Bird Observatory to form the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust Limited to manage the Victorian cluster of buildings. In 2023, bestselling author Ann Cleeves OBE, became the first Patron of the Friends of Hilbre. Creator of detectives Vera Stanhope, Jimmy Perez and Matthew Venn, Ann Cleeves lives in Northumberland where the Vera books are set but she lived on Hilbre for four years with her husband, Tim Cleeves, who was appointed Custodian of Hilbre Islands in 1978. Her first published writing was actually for a chapter in “Hilbre, The Cheshire Island” and, about Hilbre, she once said: *“It’s a wild, wonderful, lonely location - the perfect place for a murder”*. Perhaps Ann will find inspiration for a new crime-solving character who lives on a small tidal island!

The Hilbre Island Ranger uses the Hilbre Island Management Plan as a guide to organising practical conservation task days with the Friends and other groups. However, health and safety work and storm damage will always be the priorities and the logistics in getting larger maintenance work can be challenging. The Friends’ continued support, enthusiasm and is greatly appreciated and acknowledged.

Although the Friends of Hilbre are a member of the Hilbre Island Land Trust Limited with responsibility to manage the Victorian cluster of buildings, they will continue to work closely with the Rangers and undertake environmental conservation tasks throughout the reserve and undertake events and activities including their open days and access to the Buoymaster’s museum.



The Friends of Hilbre have worked in partnership with Wirral Council for over 20 years to manage the Local Nature Reserve at the mouth of the Dee Estuary

5.2 The Hilbre Bird Observatory

The Hilbre Bird Observatory was formed in 1957 and is one of several international bird observatories and accredited by the Bird Observatories Council. Their primary purpose is to conduct long-term monitoring of bird populations and migration, and individual observatories are located at prime migration points where a daily census is taken. An integral part of their work is bird ringing, undertaken under license and co-ordinated by the British Trust for Ornithology. This provides data for guiding conservation policies of such bodies as Natural England. The observatories enable and encourage volunteers to participate in scientific studies of birds and the environment and the results are made freely available to researchers and to the public who are welcome to visit the observatories by appointment. Detailed observations of birds have been made at Hilbre for over 60 years and about 1,000 birds are ringed annually. In all, 223 species have been recorded on the islands. Full details of observations including frequencies of sightings are given in the annual Hilbre Bird Observatory Reports. The Hilbre Bird Observatory has a fascinating blog with some fantastic images: <https://hilbrebirdobs.blogspot.com>

Along with the Friends of Hilbre, the Hilbre bird Observatory joined with the British Art and Design Association in 2024 to form the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust Limited to manage the Victorian cluster of buildings. The Bird Observatory will provide schools and other groups with the opportunity to learn more about their work and bird migration recording (as well as Hilbre wildlife recording) in the Telegraph House once it has been refurbished and made suitable for visiting groups. This will highlight not only the importance of wildlife recording but also the value of the Hilbre Islands as a wildlife resource.



A member of the Hilbre Bird Observatory checking one of the Heligoland traps

5.3 The Hilbre Island Community Land Trust Limited

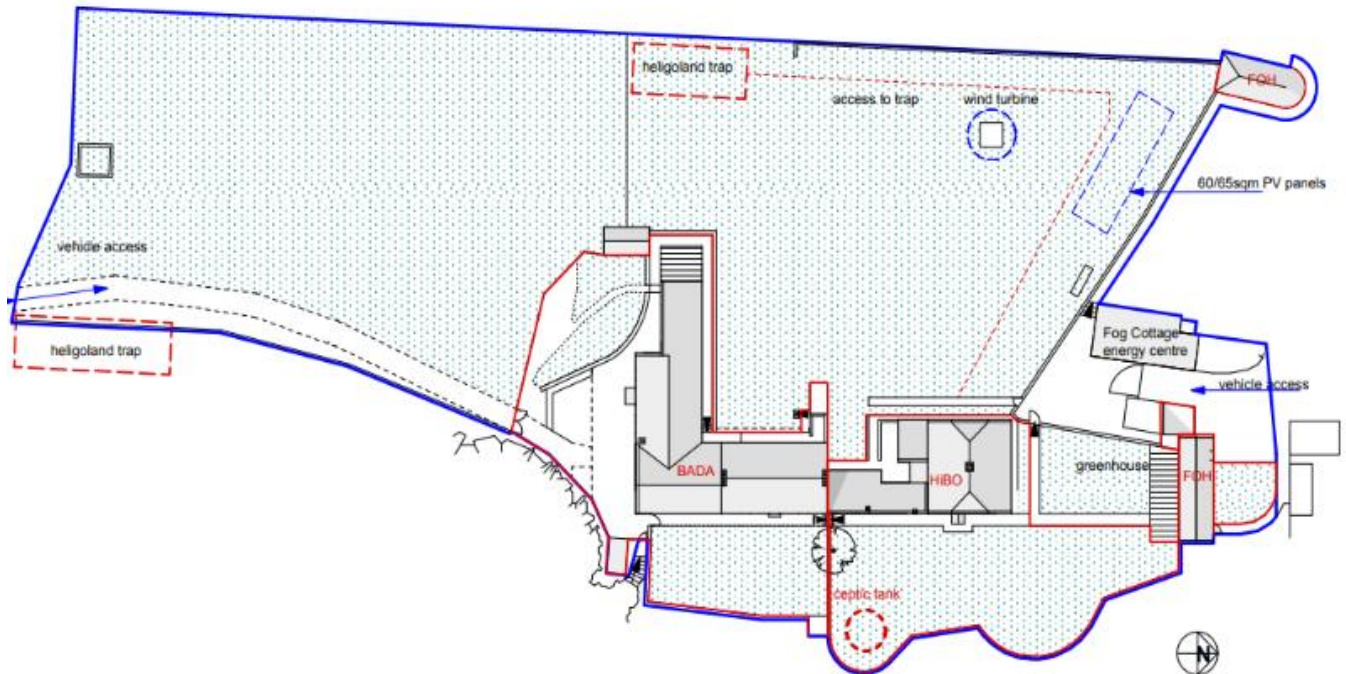
In 2018 Lambert Smith Hampton and AMION Consulting were commissioned by Wirral Council to undertake an Options Appraisal for securing the future of the buildings on Hilbre. Although the option for 'managed decline' scored highest, the second, third and fourth highest scoring options were to work with a Not for Profit Partner, either as a Building Trust, Education Partner or Community Asset Transfer. With a lack of in-house funds Wirral Council needed to look at options that would reduce its liability and hopefully find an option for more sustainable management of parts of the reserve, most notably the buildings, but also the associated paddocks and gardens.

In November 2023 The British Art and Design Association, the Friends of Hilbre and Hilbre Bird Observatory (with support from local elected members and Chair of Wirral's Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee) presented a report for managing the Victorian cluster of buildings on Hilbre to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee. The report was approved and in 2024, the British Art and Design Association, Friends of Hilbre and the Hilbre Bird Observatory formed the Hilbre Island Land Trust Limited. Whilst each group retains its independent membership and aims, they have come together to manage the Victorian cluster of buildings as a centre for community art and science. This is the biggest change to the management of the reserve for decades and is a very exciting project that has been fully endorsed by Wirral Council through a lease agreement. Plans for restoring the buildings date back to 2006 with 'The Hilbre Island Study Centre' and then by the Friends of Hilbre and Hilbre Bird Observatory in 2011 when, after a restructure within Wirral Council, Telegraph House (previously used for accommodation for a site-based Ranger) became vacant and responsibility for management of the built assets on the reserve became the responsibility of the Council's Asset Management Team. In a letter to Wirral Council, the Friends and Observatory expressed the desire to enter into a Community Asset Transfer Agreement and establishment of a trust to manage Telegraph House under a lease agreement with the Hilbre Bird Observatory and the Buoymaster's Store would be managed to provide residential accommodation and based on the earlier proposal for a 'Hilbre Island Study Centre'. Even in 2011 the estimated cost of the project was £250,000.

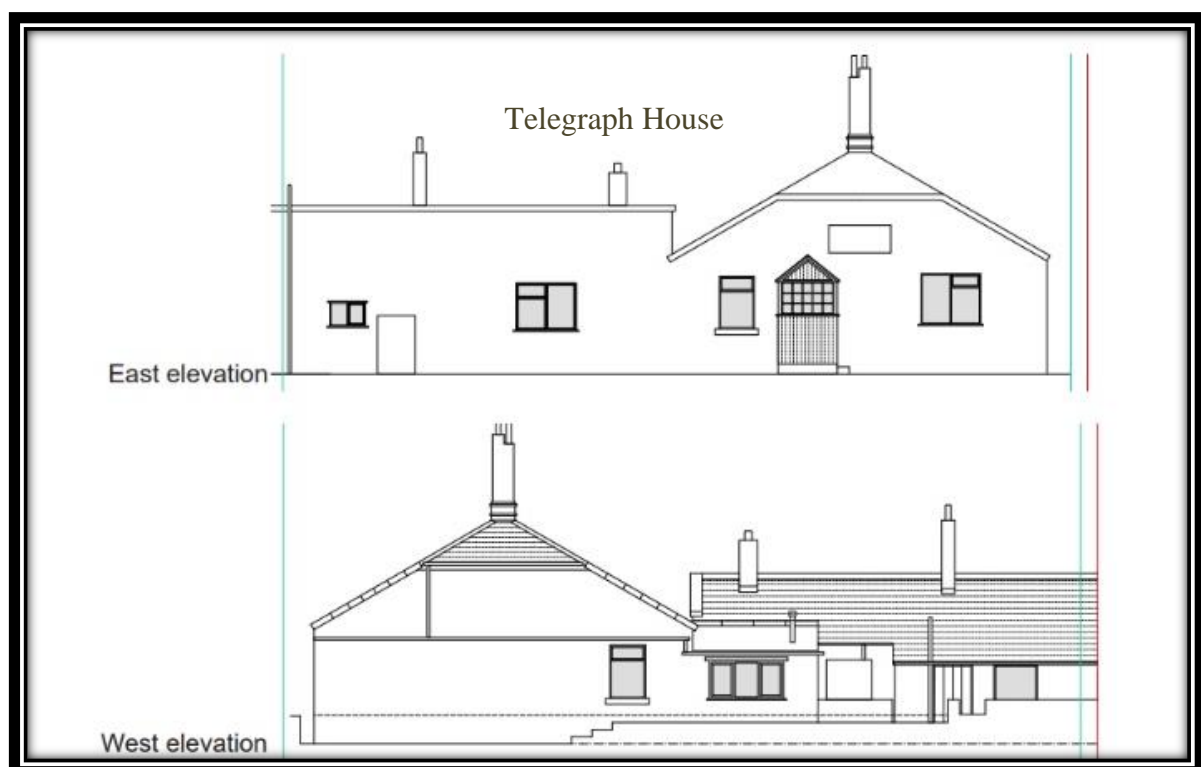


Members of the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust with television presenter Steph McGovern bestselling international author Anne Cleeves and fellow crime writer Margaret Murphy

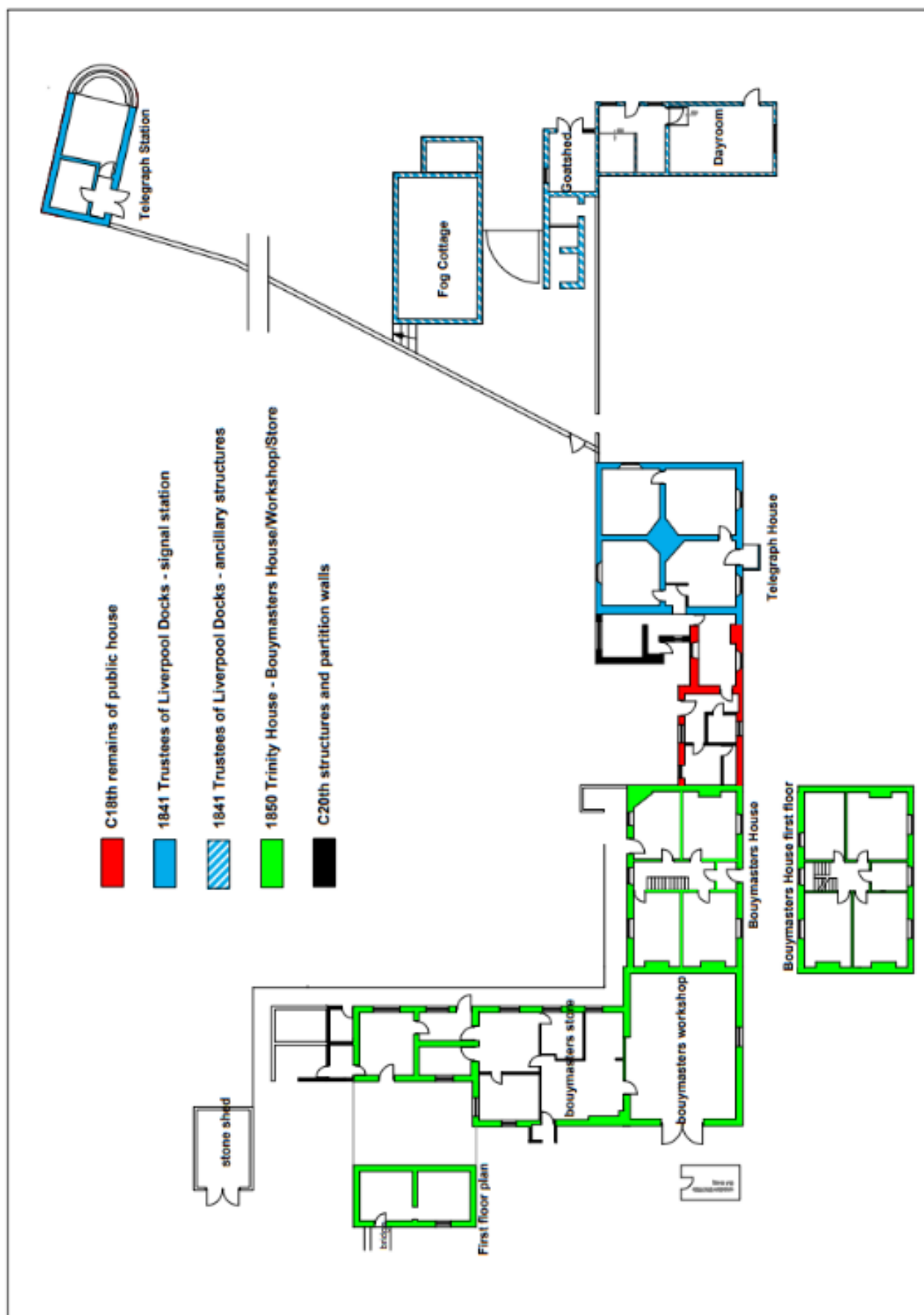
In 2022 The British Art and Design Association (BADA) commissioned Smith Young Architects to undertake an architectural report for the proposed Hilbre Arts, Science & Sustainability Centre. The report has formed the basis development of the Victorian cluster of buildings on Hilbre. The detailed drawings and assessment have been used here with kind permission from BADA and the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust.



Area leased to the Hilbre Island Community Land Trust



Detailed line drawings of the buildings will contribute to the historic record



The Hilbre Island Community Land Trust have commissioned reports that give a detailed plan of the buildings and that provides excellent reference to their original construction dates

The Hilbre Island Community Land Trust has provided a detailed breakdown of how each of the partners will contribute towards the project:

Friends of Hilbre:

- Refurbish the existing Day Room to create a space where community and school groups can meet
- Upgrade the existing kitchen to the Day Room to meet modern hygiene requirements and allow for simple catering such as tea and coffee to be provided
- Repair various dilapidated aspects of Day Room such as gutters
- Upgrade service provisions to allow for adequate heating and power to Day Room
- Install rainwater harvesting system and filters to enable provision of potable quality water
- Repair and replace gutters and roof on the Telegraph Station to prevent further water ingress
- Provide suitable power and heating systems to the Telegraph Station

(The Telegraph Station will in the first instance be administered by the Hilbre CLT with potential future transfer to the Friends of Hilbre.

Hilbre Bird Observatory:

- Repair and upgrade existing fabric of Telegraph House, including gutters, windows, internal panelling
- Provide adequate heating, power, and lighting services to Telegraph House, in the first instance heating can be provided via bottled gas cylinders/boilers before replacement with centralised systems
- Provide rainwater harvesting systems and filters to enable provision of potable water
- Remove some modern partitions within the bathroom areas of Telegraph House
- Create a ringing room accessible directly from outside
- Upgrade and extend existing pressurised fire suppression misting system
- Refurbish existing septic tank provision for WC and Bathroom
- Refurbish existing kitchen to domestic standard
- Maintain access to existing Heligoland traps

British Art & Design Association:

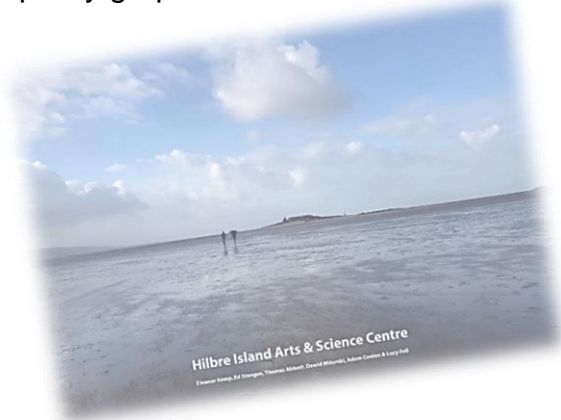
- Secure and repair existing doors and windows on the Buoymaster's group
- repair and upgrade rainwater goods connecting into harvesting tanks with filters
- Repair internal finishes to Buoymaster's House, ceilings, walls, floors, including installation of insulation between lath and plaster and sandstone walls
- Convert Buoymaster's Store into studio space, upgrade insulation, to walls and ceiling, remove surplus partitions
- Convert Buoymaster's House to cellular studio accommodation based on existing room layout
- Provide toilet and shower facilities required to service studio accommodation.
- Install waste treatment system to meet Environment Agency standards for sensitive locations
- Add kitchen and wood burner to Buoymaster's Workshop for use as principal social space

- Upgrade existing kitchen to Buoymaster's Store to provide utility provision required by academic researchers
- Convert Bouymaster's Store first floor to overnight accommodation for artists and researcher
- Provide new heating, lighting and small power required throughout complex.
- Create disabled access and provision of facilities to mobility standards where possible
- Replace/repair Buoymaster Store floor where rising damp is identified
- Repair/upgrade bridge to first floor of Buoymaster Store and create new stair access to allow connection to ground floor studio spaces
- install fire suppression misting system throughout Buoymaster's group

Community Land Trust:

- Repair external fabric to Fog Cottage, including fascias, rainwater goods and render
- Upgrade and repave existing diesel generator with bio-diesel generator
- Install new batteries, inverters and control gear to service all buildings with associated power cables
- Repair roof and replace rainwater goods to Telegraph Station
- General repairs and decoration to Telegraph Station
- Install new wind turbines and photovoltaic panels connected to Fog Cottage to provide sustainable renewable energy for entire project
- Reconstruct original greenhouse based upon surviving fragments
- repair and maintain existing fence and sandstone walls to boundaries

One of the most valuable contributions made by the Hilbre CLT has been the commissioning of various reports. The reports Hilbre Island Arts & Science Centre by Liverpool John Moore University (2022) and the Hilbre Arts, Science & Sustainability Centre Architectural Report by Smith Young Architects (2022) have provided some excellent information on the Victorian cluster of buildings including condition appraisals, line drawings and photographs along with the development phases for restoration and commissioning of the buildings with artists impressions and other quality graphics.



Information in reports commissioned by the British Art and Design Association will be invaluable as a source of information for building conservation

Phase 2 Environmental

Phase 2 = 12 Artists (Day + Night) = 6 Artists (Day) = 18 People

Heating

- Addition of Air Biomass Stove to large communal space to heat the space.

Cost = £3,000 for new air biomass stove

Electricity

- Adding to existing PV system (4kWp)
- New Wind Turbine (5kW)
- Adding batteries to store electricity for use.

Cost = £5,000 new PV system (4kWp)
= £3,500 new solar batteries (13-4kWp)
= £20-25,000 new wind turbine (5kW)

Water

- Solar Hot Water system to heat tank of water for taps/showers.
- New rainwater collection system to allow for drinkable filtered water.

Cost = £15,000 for Solar Hot Water system

Transport

- Introduction of electric bikes, available for rent to travel to and from the island, reducing travel times and maintaining time on the island.

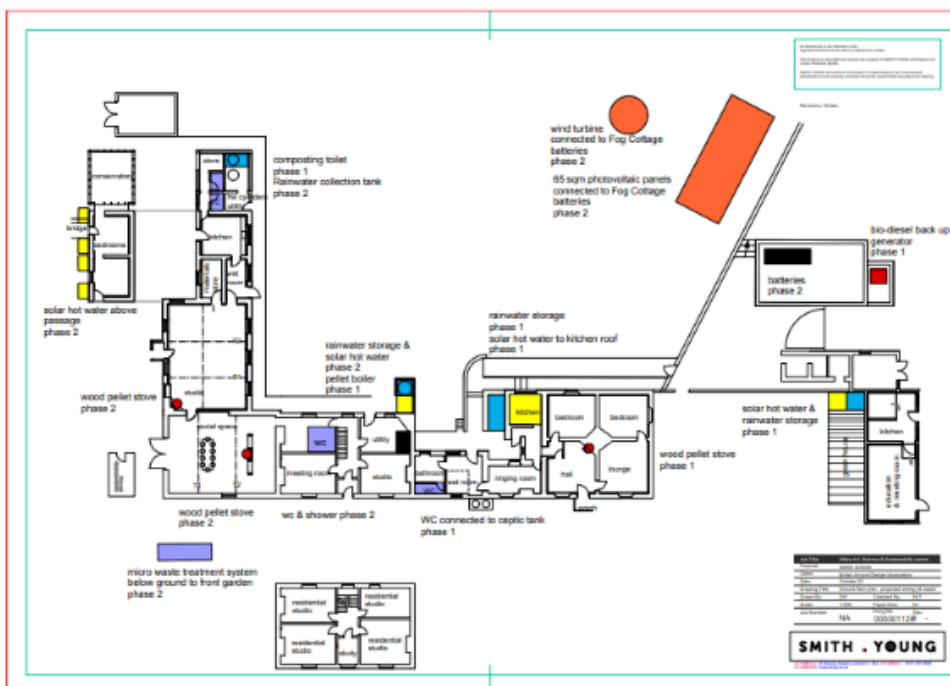
Cost = £1-2,000 per electric bike

Woods & Moore Local, 2019
Greenpeace, 2015
Government of the UK, 2019
Kerr, 2017

Woods & Moore Local, 2019
Greenpeace, 2015
Government of the UK, 2019
Kerr, 2017



Diagram of renewable energy and options for Hilbre Island from Hilbre Island Arts & Science Centre by John Moore University Liverpool students



This section of the report should be read in conjunction with the Sustainability Report prepared by Dr Simon Tucker.

All the existing energy, heating, lighting, water and waste systems to all buildings are considered redundant.

Within phase 1 a number of small scale interventions will enable the buildings to function at a basic level. These include; composting toilets to the Bouymasters group, upgrading the existing septic tank to Telegraph House and installing a new bio-diesel generator in Fog Cottage to provide a base line of power and lighting to all buildings.

Phase 2 will involve the CLT installing a set of PV panels and wind turbines within the west field to provide full power and lighting to the entire complex. These will be connected to the battery store in Fog Cottage. Additional heating will be provided to the Bouymasters group through utility pellet boilers and wood pellet stoves. A waste water micro-treatment plant will be installed within the front garden of the Bouymasters House to enable provision of additional toilets and showers. Solar hot water panels will supply kitchens and bathrooms with excess energy being stored in hot water cylinders.

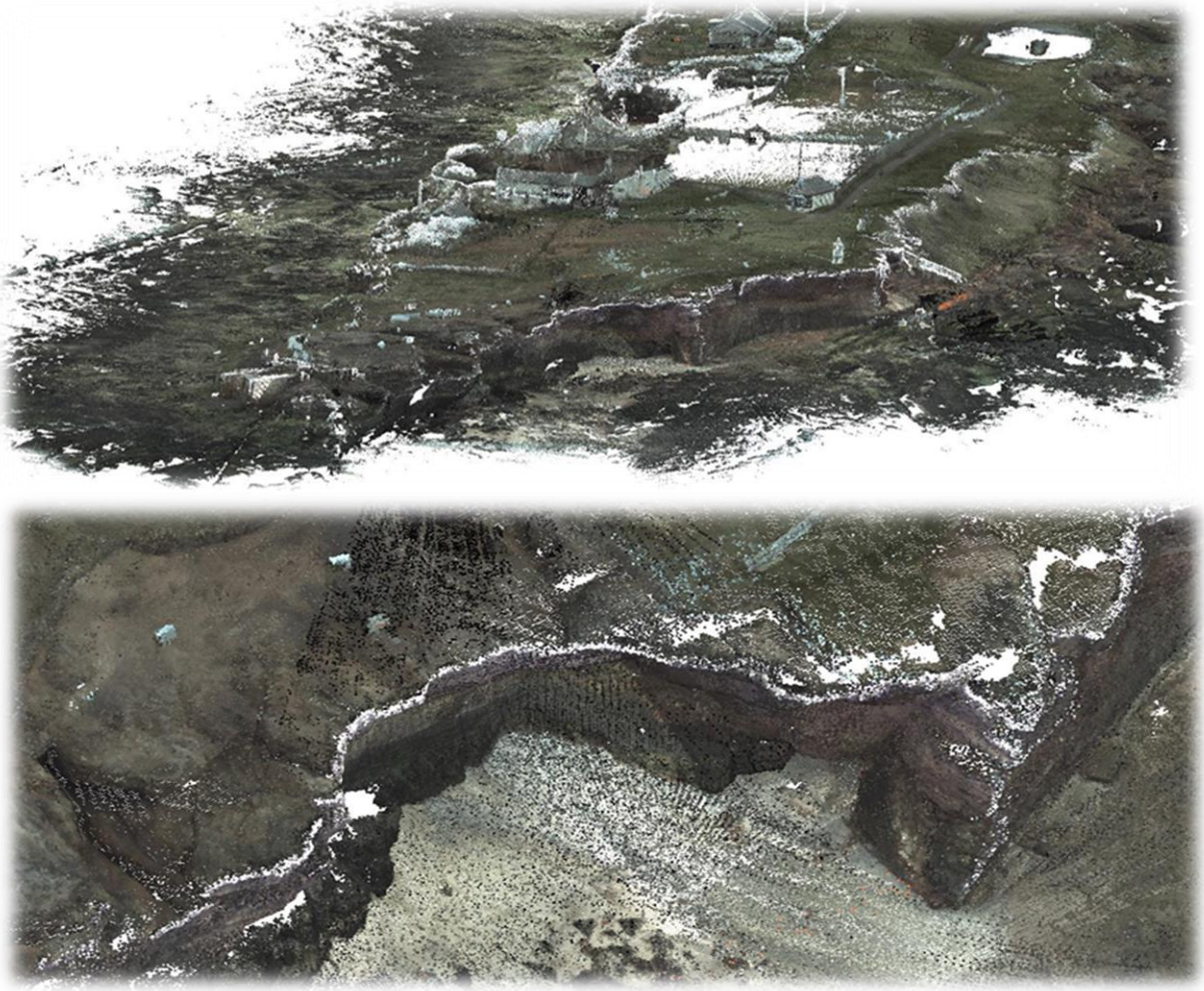
Even with all these systems the project will have a finite energy supply. To manage this it will be subject to detailed energy monitoring and modelling of use patterns to provide an exemplar of informed energy consumption.

Proposed Design - Phase 2 Power, water & waste systems – summary from the Hilbre Arts, Science & Sustainability Centre Architectural Report by Smith Young Architects

5.4 Wirral Council Flood and Coastal Defence Mapping

On the 18th April 2024 a laser scan survey was carried out capturing level and profile information for Hilbre Island and Middle Eye. Colleagues from Sefton Council's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management team undertook the survey under the remit of the Liverpool Bay Coastal Group monitoring programme. The laser scan survey is a surveying technology that uses laser beams to accurately measure the distance, shape, and position of objects in a given environment. The laser scans the area and collects data, which is then processed to create a highly accurate 3-dimensional model. Following the survey, a point cloud is generated which can be used for a variety of tasks such as creating a traditional topographical survey or a full 3-dimensional model. Now that a baseline survey has been carried out, future surveys will be used to monitor areas of concern, enabling accurate comparisons to be made between surveys. These comparisons will give a valuable insight into erosion rates and could help develop predictive models to forecast future changes and to assist with future project viability and management of the Hilbre Islands.

The images below are of a low resolution compared to the actual data files produced. The 3-dimensional model resolution is much higher, allowing for accurate comparisons of future surveys. This survey is the first such survey and will act as a baseline for future surveys.



Images from a laser scan of Hilbre Island capturing detailed levels and profiles

5.5 Wirral Council Rangers Environmental Conservation Management

Most of the environmental conservation management of the reserve is undertaken via the Hilbre Islands Management Plan. The islands are a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR). To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment and it must be controlled by the local authority through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner. The main aim must be to care for the natural features which make the site special. There is no legal necessity to manage an LNR to any set standard but there are agreements in place with the Hilbre Island leaseholders to ensure that the special habitat is protected both as an LNR and as the islands are within the nationally designated Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest, European designated Dee Estuary Special Protection Area, Dee Estuary Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000 sites) and internationally designated Ramsar Site (a wetland of international importance).

Hilbre Island, Middle Island, Little Eye and Tansky Rocks are listed as the Hilbre Site of Local Importance for Earth Science. They represent significant exposures of Wirral's underlying geology, including good examples of geological formations or geomorphological processes, and especially where they possess special value for education and especially the record of Chirotherium footprints found on Hilbre in the 1980s and fossilised footprints found near Middle Eye, similar to those at Crosby, discovered in 2024.

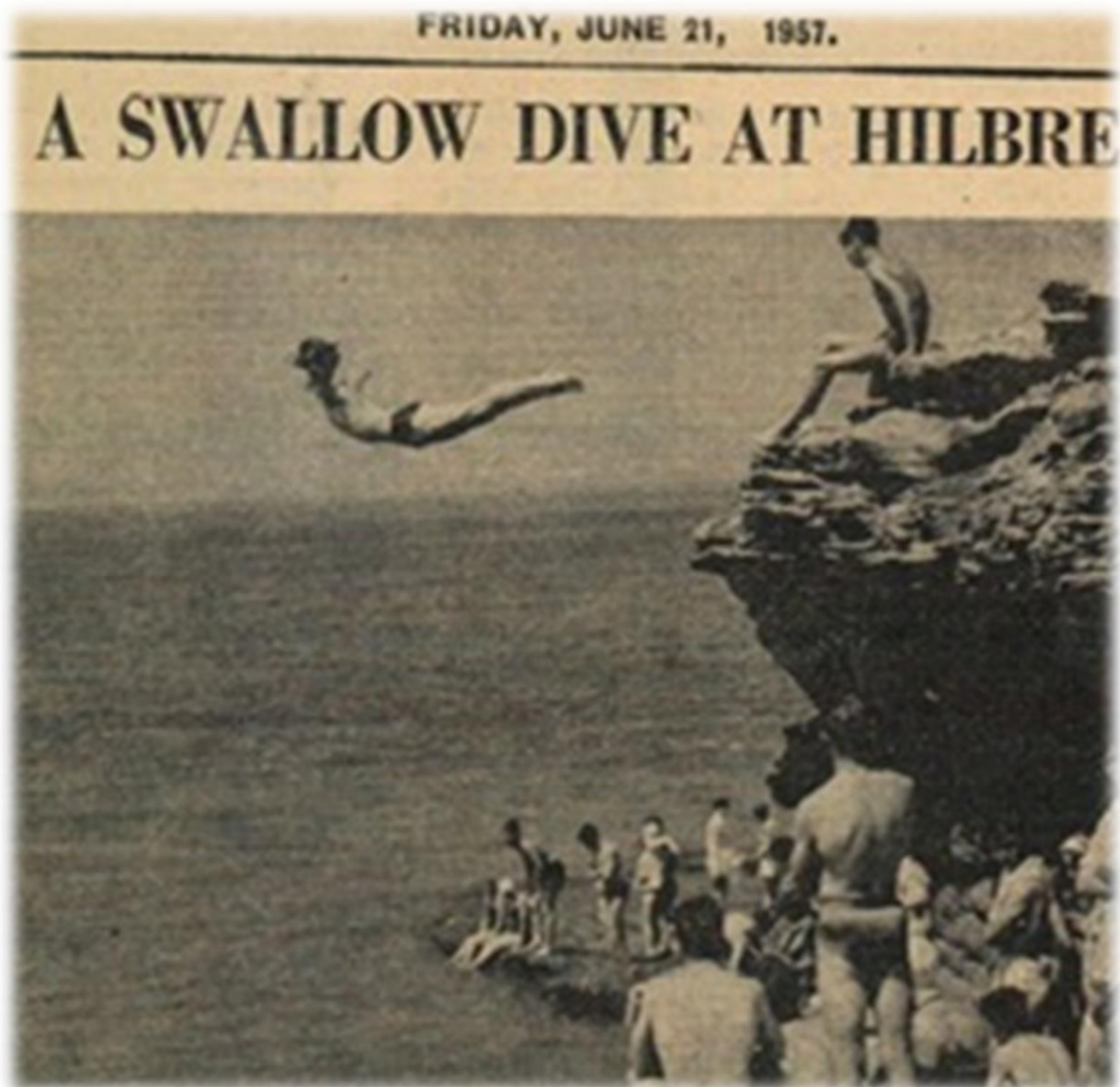
Sensitive management is required taking into account these designations. For this reason, some management projects can take considerable planning and consultation.



Wirral Country Park-based Rangers undertaking bracken management to protect the brickwork of the Starfish Control

5.6 Archives

One of the most important projects planned to take place over the next five years is the collection and cataloguing of Hilbre images, press cuttings and other printed and written material along with objects associated with the islands. Hilbre has been described as 'an island lost in time' due to the lack of running water and electricity along with the wooden felt roofed cottages and disused Victorian buildings. As we embark on a project to restore the Victorian buildings and look at state of the art renewable energies and waste treatment, we are even more keen to keep a good and accessible record of the islands' history and what's happening as we move forward with one of the biggest changes to the management of the islands in decades. The Friends of Hilbre have been collecting information for years and there is a great photographic record of events spread between the Hilbre Bird Observatory, Mersey Canoe Club, Wirral Council Rangers and Archives Service as well as in local press and magazines.



Old photographs can provide a fantastic record of events on the islands

Postcards and leaflets also provide an excellent record along with old newsletters produced by the Friends of Hilbre and Wirral Coastal Rangers but hard copies may need to be digitally recorded and stored for access, to reduce space required and to ensure that they are not easily destroyed or lost. Apart from a historical record, the imagers can be used to inform about future management of the Hilbre Islands. Items, including some from the restoration of the Victorian buildings, will be catalogued and, if they are donated or part of the existing 'Hilbre estate', will be displayed in the Buoymaster's Museum, Telegraph Station or within the restored buildings.

Part of the project will be to contact the Grosvenor Museum in Chester, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum in Birkenhead and Liverpool Museums to see what records and objects they hold and for them to be recorded.

The Hilbre tide gauge was removed from the island after it was damaged by a storm in 2011 and now, along with photographs of various sailing vessels around the island taken in the middle part of the twentieth century, it forms part of a Dee Estuary display in the Visitor Centre at Wirral Country Park. As the Manager and Rangers who manage the Hilbre Islands are based at Wirral Country Park, and because there are plans to develop the Visitor Centre displays to include more about the Hilbre Islands, Wirral Country Park and Heswall Dales (also by managed by the same staff) there may be an opportunity to store archive material at Wirral Country Park in a safe and secure location within the Visitor Centre.



A second photograph of divers at Hilbre, but this time it clearly shows the man-made wall below the diving board

6 APPENDIX

6.1 Site Inspections

Site inspections are undertaken every time a Ranger visits the islands. However, a comprehensive Health and Safety Inspection is undertaken each year and recorded using the following checklist.

Parks and Open Spaces Annual H&S Inspection Checklist

SITE		Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve	
Date of inspection:			Signed:
Inspector (1):			
Inspector (2):			
Items referred to (Asset Department) / (External Contractor) for repairs:			
Broken fire door on Day Room			
General comments/observations/recommendations:			
Items for Managers attention:			
Manager name:			Signed:
Date checked:			
Manager's comments:			

ENVIRONMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Is the tree canopy above footpaths and play areas visibly free of dead, dying, diseased or loose branches?				
Is the tree canopy above surrounding pavements/roads visibly free of dead, dying, diseased or lose branches?				
Are all footpaths clear of overhanging vegetation/branches that could make contact at head height or below?				
Are all invasive non-native species identified with the team and either cordoned off, due to be removed or on a treatment plan?				
Have all known hotspots been checked for sharps/needles/drug paraphernalia or broken glass?				
Are there clear sightlines that enable people and vehicle users to see what's ahead and around them?				
INFRASTRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are footpaths in a safe condition and free of trip hazards?				
Are steps in a safe condition and free of trip hazards?				
Are bridges in safe condition with no visible subsidence of the balustrades, walking surfaces safe and railings securely fitted?				
Are fencing and gates safe with no gaps, sharp edges, or protruding fixings?				
Are culvert grills safe, clear, adequately fixed, and free-flowing?				
STREET FURNITURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are the benches safe to sit on with no cracks or visible signs of damage? Are the legs free from cracks and have no visible sign of damage?				
Are the bins set in the ground correctly? Are the frames free from visible signs of damage? Does the bin have a liner in it?				
Are the lampposts/bollards/Telegraph poles structurally sound (free of cracks/splits), free of damage and any access hatches securely fastened?				
Are the feeder pillars free of paint damage, structurally sound (free of cracks/splits), and door secure and locked?				

Are CCTV camera poles structurally sound (free of cracks/splits), free from damage? Are the cameras/LED units damaged at all?				
SITE SIGNAGE	✓	✗	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are water safety warnings visible and free of surrounding vegetation?				Repair damaged life ring holder
Are fence notice boards or signage in a safe condition with no damage, securely fastened, with no sharp edges or protruding fixings?				
Are interpretation lecterns in a safe condition with no damage, securely fastened, with no sharp edges or protruding fixings? Are they clearly legible and free of graffiti?				
Are upright notice boards/interpretations in a safe condition with no damage, securely fastened, with no sharp edges or protruding fixings? Are they clearly legible and free of graffiti?				
Are entry signs in a safe condition with no damage, securely fastened, with no sharp edges or protruding fixings?				
Fire assemble points are present, and are the signs visibly clear and in the correct position?				
Is vehicle/pedestrian restriction/signage in place? Are they in the correct place and clear to read?				
Service yard site safety signages - are they in the correct place and are clear to read?				
MONUMENTS AND SCULPTURES	✓	✗	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Do monuments, bandstands, flagpoles, and sculptures appear structurally sound? Are they free from damage/graffiti?				
Do walls appear structural sound: free from bowing, large mortar cracks, loose/missing bricks, or copings.				
SPORTS AND PLAY FACILITIES	✓	✗	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are tennis court surfaces, signage, nets, fencing, gates and surrounds safe and in visibly good condition?				
Are MUGA surfaces, signage, fencing, gates and surrounds, goalmouths, and basketball hoops safe and in visibly good condition?				
Are Outdoor Gym surfaces, signage, and equipment safe and in visibly good condition?				

Are Play Area landscape features: Shelters, fencing, trees and vegetation safe and in visibly good condition?				
Are games greens fencing, surrounds, gates, and surfaces safe and free from damage or deterioration? Has the irrigation system been tested recently and serviced?				
EXTERNALS OF BUILDINGS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are building roofs visibly in good condition with no missing tiles or lead?				
Are building walls visibly in good condition? (Timber cladding, brick, plaster)				
Are gutters, downpipes and surface water drains visibly clear?				
Are manholes sitting flush and secure to the frame? Is drainage from buildings free from issues?				
EXTERNAL ACCESS AND EGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are all access routes kept clear of combustible materials?				
Are external access and exit routes clear, in good order and free from trip and slip hazards?				
EXTERNAL AREAS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	FURTHER ACTION
Are structures, i.e., sheds, containers, and external storage, in good repair and secure?				
Are fragile roofs adequately safeguarded and signed?				
Are adjoining walls, fences, and gates in good condition?				
Are service yard materials stored safely and secure? Are walking/driving surfaces free from slip/trip/puncture hazards?				
ADDITIONAL NOTES				

6.2 Green Heritage Site Accreditation

Green Heritage Site Accreditation focusses on a site's heritage conservation and interpretation, recognition of historic features and relevant conservation statements and links with the management plan. Scoring for Green Heritage Site Accreditation places higher emphasis on the conservation, protection, interpretation and use of the designated Heritage Site. The Desk assessment contains 4 categories or scoring, and the site visit contains 10 categories. The categories for scoring during assessment are as follows:

Desk Assessment

- Presentation of Conservation Plan or statement
- Strategic and policy and background
- Community involvement and marketing
- Integration of Heritage Management

Site Visit

- Good conservation standards
- Historic features given prominence
- Historic features integrated into the life of the site
- Information available and evidence that historic features are enjoyed by the public
- Relevance of historic landscape design – integrity understood and interpreted
- Horticultural displays contribute to historic character
- Recognition and appropriateness of historic tree and plant collections
- New and replacement features enhance or conserve the historic character and appearance

The Hilbre Islands Heritage Conservation Plan provides a concise catalogue of historic features along with a detailed history of the site and the park's development. It details current management with regard to the input of stakeholder groups, events and activities and interpretation of historic features and provides a Action Plan and Project Bank listing current and proposed projects to further enhance the park's history and heritage.

“What can you say, it is full of natural beauty that changes with the seasons, it provides a lot of habitat for various species and the electronic tracking of birds provides so much accurate information to recognised organisations all over the world. Who would think that you could have an organised Butterfly Walk on such a windswept island, but the Friends Group have, It is good how you interact with John Moores University not just on environment projects but interior design and art as well. It is a privilege to be asked to assess this site. The Rangers know what they are talking about and have the wellbeing of this site at heart. Have you ever thought of going for the Green Flag Heritage Award because you have got it all there.

Well, done you deserve a Green Flag”

From the Green Flag Judges' Feedback Report 2024

6.3 Countryside Stewardship

Countryside Stewardship (CS) provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters and land managers to look after and improve the environment. It is the intention to enter into a CS Agreement in 2025 to manage the vegetation, preserve the historic landscape and increase educational opportunities on the Hilbre Islands.

CS agreement opportunities for the Hilbre Islands include:

- increasing biodiversity
- improving habitat
- designated features – archaeological features of national significance (scheduled monuments) and Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG)
- traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings
- undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE)
- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this provides a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible above-ground features
- maintain or restore registered parks and gardens, including structures or features that contribute to the original design intentions or feel of the parkland or provide for their biodiversity and amenity value

CS supports Defra's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) 'for our country to be the healthiest, most beautiful place in the world to live, work and bring up a family'. It also supports Defra's strategic objective of 'a cleaner, healthier environment, benefitting people and the economy'.

A CS Agreement would include free access to Ranger-led educational tours of the islands focussing on their ecology, importance as a unique rocky shore habitat in the Dee Estuary Natura 2000 site and Ramsar Site, historical importance and more ancient history dating back to their formation over 230 million years ago. A Ranger-led tour of 3 to 4 hours would include:

- Fully accompanied with two Wirral Rangers
- Fully risk assessed with emergency accompanying vehicle
- Free postcard, pencil or poster for each pupil
- Free Seashore Search ID sheets
- Visit to the Lifeboat Station, Buoymaster's Museum and Telegraph Station
- Seal watching (scopes and binoculars provided)
- Wet weather shelter and/or classroom if required

CS allows up to 20 visits per year to be claimed under any educational agreement.

6.4 Hilbre Islands Heritage Action Plan

This Action Plan uses the Heritage Site Assessment criteria as a focus for the heritage management of the park. It identifies areas requiring action to meet and maintain the Heritage Site standard and takes into account Heritage Site Judging Assessment and with actions that can be undertaken within existing resources or some minimal additional funding.

CONDITION OF HISTORIC FEATURES				
1.0 Good Conservation Standards				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
1.1	Publish the Heritage Conservation Plan on the Wirral Council Website next to the Park Management Plan (Wirral Section)	2025	Wirral Country Park Manager	Providing access to conservation heritage policy
1.2	Apply for Green Heritage Site Award Status	Yearly starting in 2025	WCP Manager	Green Heritage Site Accreditation
1.3	Catalogue of any work undertaken on historic features detailing materials used/excavation notes	On-going	WCP Manager	Green Heritage Site Accreditation
1.4	Ensure facilities management providers are aware of the heritage conservation standards	On-going	WCP Manager/Hilbre Island Trust	Green Heritage Site Accreditation
1.5	Ensure that contractor are aware of the historic importance of the reserve and the built landscape	On-going	WCP Manager	Green Heritage Site Accreditation
1.6	Continue cataloguing items and articles of interest including those retained by Wirral/Cheshire Archives	On-going	WCP Manager/Cheshire Records Office and Wirral Archives/Wirral History and heritage Society	Council policy Green Heritage Site Accreditation
1.7	Continue cataloguing items and articles of interest by Williamson Art Gallery and Museum and Grosvenor Museum	On-going	WCP Manager and museum Curators	Council policy Green Heritage Site Accreditation
2.0 Historic features given prominence				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
2.1	Remove Bracken growing around the Starfish Control	Yearly	Rangers and Friends of Hilbre	Green Heritage Site and CS Agreement
2.2	Promoting the Hilbre Community Land Trust	On-going	WCP Manager	Green Heritage Site
2.3	Dee Estuary display at Wirral Country Park	2025	WCP Manager	Hilbre and WCP Green Heritage Sites

2.4	Lifeboat Station interpretation boards	2026	Rangers and Friends of Hilbre	Green Heritage Site
3.0 Restoration / re-creation of landscape features				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
3.1	Pond management	2027	Rangers, HiBO and Friends of Hilbre	Habitat management and Council policy re inland waters risk assessment (maintenance of perimeter)
3.2	Boat Shed Slipway maintenance	2027	Rangers and Friends of Hilbre	Management of an historical feature. Green Heritage Site
4.0 Historic features intact and in use				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
4.1	Highlight Slate Shed as wet weather shelter	2025	Rangers and Friends of Hilbre	Green Flag/Green Heritage Award and P&C support of community/friends groups
4.2	Continue to support the Friends of Hilbre Open Days with a Ranger presence	In-going	Rangers and Friends of Hilbre	Green Flag/Green Heritage Award and P&C support of community/friends groups
5.0 Historic Features integrated into the life of the site				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
5.1	Sea watching hide use for events	On-going	Rangers	Continued improvements to visitor enjoyment
5.2	Boat Shed use for Ranger facility/store	On-going	Rangers	Management of an historical feature. Green Heritage Site
5.3				
6.0 Information available & evidence that historic features are enjoyed by the public				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
6.1	Provide 'historical news' on social media and link with projects whenever possible	On-going	WCP Manager and Rangers	Green Flag – Community involvement
6.2	Countryside Stewardship educational visits	2025	WCP Manager and Rangers	Green Flag/Green heritage Award Community involvement
6.3	Pedestrian counter	2025	WCP Manager and Friends of Hilbre	Monitoring of public engagement on the Dee Estuary SSSI
MAINTAINING HISTORIC CHARACTER & APPEARANCE				
7.0 Relevance of Historic Landscape design integrity understood and interpreted				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
7.1	Maintain Laser Survey	On-going	Coastal Team	Monitoring of erosion and forecast for future management
7.2	Repaint lighthouse	2025	Trinity House	Improve profile
8.0 New and replacement features conserve or enhance the historic character and appearance				
Ref	Action	Target	Resources	Justification
8.1	Working with the Hilbre Island Community Trust to ensure aims of Green Flag/Heritage Awards	On-going	WCP Manager/Hilbre Island Trust	Green Flag/Green Heritage Awards – Community involvement
8.2	Refurbish the Hilbre Islands/West Kirby Beach/FOH Noticeboard at West Kirby Beach	2025	WCP Manager	Green Flag/Green Heritage Award and P&C support of community/friends groups

6.5 Hilbre Island Project Bank

These projects require additional resources and funding outside the scope of the existing day to day resources available.

Project	Cost estimate and Resources Required	Justification, policy fit and evidence of need
Lifeboat Station Restoration	Repointing, cleaning £10k	Green Heritage Award
Lifeboat Slipway Restoration	Spraycrete to secure remaining sandstone blocks £80k	Green heritage Award. May eventually need attention as a H&S issue
Boat Shed modernisation	New floor, roof, doors, office space £10k	No access to leased buildings. Could be done in phases over several years
Access route (Middle Eye)	Level off and fill route to make access safer/easier £40k	May become a requirement for emergency vehicle access with residential use of the Victorian buildings
Zero Water Toilets upgrade	Replace existing composting toilets with Natsol upgraded zero water toilets with new cladding, new steel vents £20k	The toilets will need an upgrade with expected increase in visitor use and will require a better method for emptying

