

North Wirral Coastal Park

Wirral Parks, Coast and Countryside

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The North Wirral Coastal Park became established in 1986 with the appointment of a Ranger to manage the site. The entire length of the park is bordered on its seaward side by a manmade embankment. An embankment of some description has been present on the north Wirral foreshore for some 250 years. The remains of a forest can be found over much of the area including notably off the Meols foreshore and a recent publication 'Meols: The Archaeology of the North Wirral Coast' recognises the area as one of the most important archaeological sites in the country for the amount of metal work found here during the 19th Century; a catalogue of more than 4,000 items mainly dating from the medieval period.

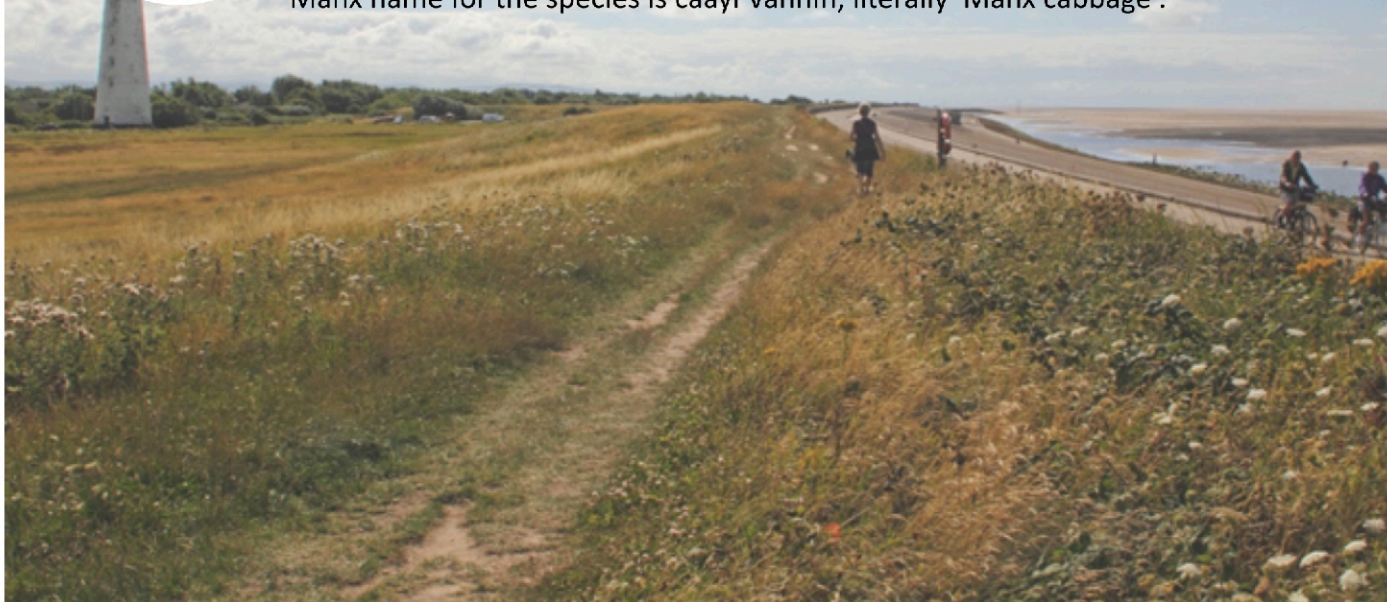
Built in 1763 by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, Leasowe Lighthouse is the oldest brick built lighthouse in Britain. It stands one hundred and one feet (27 metres) tall on Leasowe Common in Wirral and was one of four lights on the North Wirral Foreshore, used to guide ships into the entrance to the Rock Channel and the port of Liverpool. Now a grade II Listed monument, the Lighthouse features guided tours and special events with displays about Leasowe Lighthouse, the North Wirral Coastal Park and the Wirral Coastline. The Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse formed in 1989.

The beaches and sand dunes of North Wirral Coastal Park are one of Wirral's most important assets. The beaches, at Meols, Moreton and Wallasey are all listed as 'recommended', in the Marine Conservation Society's Good Beach Guide, the guide's highest accolade. Well worth a visit!



Isle of Man cabbage

The Isle of Man cabbage (pictured right) can be found on the North Wirral Coastal Park and is considered rare as it only occurs in the Isle of Man and Western Britain. Often found along footpaths through coastal dunes, were trampling, wind and disturbance help in the plants spread and success. Preferring light sandy well drained but moist soils (but not limited to them). The plant can grow in acidic, neutral or alkali soils and can thrive in semi-shaded or no shade. It is a biennial and grows to 0.3 m, with yellow flowers. The Manx name for the species is caayl Vannin, literally 'Manx cabbage'.



Grayling Butterflies

The Grayling is the largest of the British 'Brown' butterflies but it is still tricky to see especially when stationary. It is supremely well camouflaged, and often only seen when in flight when the orange eyespots are visible. They need a warm microclimate and occur on a wide range of dry well drained soil types.



The Graylings typical habitat is sparsely vegetated with sheltered sunny areas and patches of bare ground with small tussocks of fine grass on which they lay eggs.

Colonies are often found in coastal areas and sand dunes as well as salt marsh, cliffs and sometimes further inland on lowland heath and old industrial sites. The North Wirral Coastal Park is ideal habitat for the Grayling with its shifting dunes, salt deposition and regular disturbance are all factors in its favour. Add to that the mosaic of butterfly food plants like birds foot trefoil, tufted hair grass and Marram grass. Unfortunately, the numbers of grayling have dropped in the UK by 45% since the 1970's and as such are a classed as a significant species on the Wirral and well worth looking for.

Vernal Mining Bee (*Colletes cunicularius*)

The largest of the nine species of miner bee in Britain. It is usually found in coastal dune systems in North West England and North West and Southern Wales. These bees are often found nesting in large groups, called aggregations which have been found in groups of 18,000 nests in Wales. They usually forage almost exclusively on creeping willow but have also been seen foraging on dandelion. The bees fly in early spring (April to May) and live in nests consisting of a number of chambers branched off a single inclined tunnel (45-55cm deep). The bees use their paint brush like tongues to coat the inside of the chambers with a cellophane like substance which is waterproof and resists fungal attack, whilst keeping the humidity at an optimum level for the development of their larvae.

