

# Listening to young people's views of the coast:

## Living Coast Youth Voice

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# Foreword

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

## Background

This research by Dialogue Matters (DM) and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) were commissioned by Natural England to carry out research for Natural England in order to build understanding about the views of young people (aged 11-18 years old) relating to their experiences and perceptions of the coast. This research took place with young people in Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria, as part of the Living Coast pilot project in 2018/19. This report accompanies a film that the young people made about the research.

There is little research, both nationally and internationally, that reveals young peoples' lived experiences and relationships with the coast. In many ways, young people between the ages of 11-18 represent an audience we know least about in terms of their attitudes, values and activities within the natural environment.

This research provides understanding of the benefits and challenges that young people face at the coast, at an important time when new stretches of the England Coast Path are planned along the coast of Barrow-in-Furness and Walney Island.

The research has sought to understand the richness of young peoples' lived experiences using methods, which reflect Natural England's Inspiring New Generations aims to provide young people with a greater stake in and voice about the natural environment. Providing ways for young people to reveal their experiences in ways that are meaningful to them, respecting and listening with an open mind, acknowledging their expertise were ways the research sought to contribute to social justice aims. The research used creative and participatory methods as well as a Participatory Advisory Group to ensure young people were involved in decisions about the research. Hence, this innovative, qualitative research is important, not only in relation to the findings, but also because of the methods used to understand young peoples' experiences. This includes the way the report is written in order to be accessible to young people, in contrast to traditional academic styles.

The findings highlight how the coast represents an important space for young peoples' inter-generational connections, as well as experiencing the natural world. The 57 young people who participated held a mix of attitudes towards the coast, with some finding it a place of enjoyment, peace to "get away from it all" and adventure, while others found it "boring", and a place where they perceived adults dis-trusted their presence and where they experienced harm.

The rich insights in the report can help us develop our understanding, not only about young people's life-worlds, but about the ways in which the 'benefits' and 'barriers' relating to the natural environment inter-relate in different ways, depending on the individual contexts of young peoples' lives. They demonstrate the complexity of ways in which socially embedded factors have a bearing on young peoples' experiences in the natural environment.

We hope the findings in the report will inform not only Natural England's work, but be of value across government and for our partners in the environment sector. We are immensely grateful to the individuals and organisations who supported this work within Barrow as well as the research team and colleagues in Natural England who made it possible.

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**Further information**

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**Living Coast – Youth Voice**

June, 2019

Diana Pound, Cath Larkins and Joel Pound  
with the young people of Barrow-in-Furness

## Appreciation and thanks

First, we want to thank all the young people who worked with us to create the knowledge and insights held in this report. That includes the young people who advised us on the research methods and commented on the findings, and those who took part in the sessions to share their views and opinions. We promised we would not reveal your identity so we can't thank you by name, but we are deeply appreciative of your time and your contribution.

**If you are one of those young people, you may be most interested in Chapter 3, where we report what young people said.**

We also want to thank the leaders and educators who invited the young people to take part, and who provided spaces for us to work in.

Thank you also to Art Gene, who helped us understand the area, helped run one of the sessions and enabled us to use a space in their building for one of the Creative Horizon events.

Finally, we wish to thank Natural England for wanting to hear what young people think about the coast, for commissioning our novel approaches to finding out the views of young people, and for supporting us in doing so.

## The reason for this research

Natural England commissioned this research because they wanted to:

- Fill a gap in knowledge and find out what young people think about the coast and how they use and enjoy it
- Understand what the young people of Barrow in Furness think
- Understand ways in which communities, living near the coast, can make the most of the England Coast Path

Natural England and its partners will use what they have learned from the young people of Barrow in their work, nationally and in Cumbria.

## About the report

Other groups we hope will look at this report include, in particular:

- The young people who took part
- Their youth leaders and teachers who helped
- Local groups and organisations who can use this information to make things easier for young people in the area

With that in mind, we have tried to write in a style that is easier to read than usual academic style research reports.

We hope young people, adults and organisations in Barrow-in-Furness will use this report to help more young people get to, enjoy, and feel safe by the sea.

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## Summary

We have summarised the knowledge that was co-created with young people here. However, we would like to encourage those adults who planned to read just this summary to also hear directly from the young people by reading Chapter 3.

## Introduction

Living Coast was a national partnership pilot project developed by Natural England<sup>1</sup> (an organisation that looks after nature and landscapes in England). Natural England wants to help people from all walks-of-life enjoy the benefits of a new long distance path around England: the England Coast Path. By 2020, the path will stretch for approximately 2,700 miles around our beautiful English coastline and open up new stretches of the coastline.

Natural England wants to understand how and why young people already use and enjoy the coast, and why others do not (or cannot). They want to know what can be done to help as many young people as possible benefit from the spectacular views, sea air, exercise and nature that the path and surrounding areas offer.

In this research, we worked with young people aged 11 – 18 to create new knowledge about what makes it easy or hard for them to make the most of the coast, and what they suggest would help. This is important because there is little other evidence about this, nationally.

This research took place in Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria – a place with a high quality natural environment and areas that fall in the bottom 10% and 3% nationally on measures of deprivation.

Cumbria was one of three Living Coast pilot areas in 2018/19. The other two are on the Durham Heritage Coast and the Solent. All three will inform how Natural England and its partners develop work at the coast.<sup>2</sup>

## Research focus

The study asked the following research questions:

- Q What do you think of the coast?
- Q How do you use the coast?
- Q How do you benefit from the coast?
- Q What makes it easy to go to, and enjoy, the coast?
- Q What makes it hard to go to, and enjoy, the coast?
- Q What would help you to go more often?
- Q What suggestions would you make to Natural England about how they can help?

## Methods used

Our methods mixed and blended methods, techniques and principles from participation practice and social science. To do this we:

1. In total, we met 59 young people from a mix of ages, genders, ethnicities, and distances from the coast, prioritising those who live in areas that fall in the lowest 3% or 10% in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
2. Set up a Participatory Advisory Group (PAG) of eight young people, aged 14, to be our research advisors, comment on our methods and help us interpret and analyse our findings.
3. Met with 47 young people in six groups, from a range of community and educational settings, for 90-minutes each. During these sessions, we worked with young people to create maps, discuss their good and bad experiences, ease of getting to the coast, and the influence of money, jobs, belonging and culture to their views of the coast.
4. Summarised what young people said in this first round in pictures.
5. Ran two 'Creative Horizons' events a fortnight later, in two sessions when 22 young people (of those who had taken part in the mapping sessions) were joined by 4 new young people. In these sessions young people took charge of which topics to explore and how to create new knowledge through art, story, rap, music, poems, drama, or discussion.
6. Faithfully reported what young people said in this report and in a film.

## Findings

We found that young people have a mix of attitudes towards the coast, with some finding it a place of enjoyment, peace, and adventure and others finding it boring, uncomfortable and a place of natural and human dangers.

Young people go to a mix of places. Some are familiar beaches, which are closer to home and easier to get to, and others are destinations young people enjoy with friends and family but require transport to get to.

Walking and dog walking were most often mentioned as activities to do at the coast, with some saying they swam in the sea but many others not mentioning swimming at all or saying they couldn't swim. For a few, cycling was a key part of enjoying the coast and a couple of young people mentioned angling and water sports.

Young people in all groups described psychological, physical and social wellbeing benefits of being by the sea. They said that it helped them cope with stress, be fitter and enjoy time with family and friends.

The things that made it easier to go included: their own attitudes and confidence, being able to get there, having someone available to go with, feeling safe and belonging and also the time of year and the weather.

The barriers to going to the seaside were numerous and interconnected and particularly hard for young people living with multiple pressures and disadvantages. Negative personal attitudes and fears included boredom and anxiety, such as about risks or body shaming. A range of issues around social barriers included not feeling safe from attack, feeling they didn't belong, that adults and peers were judging them badly as well as outright racism, sexism and homophobia. Young people also said they lacked information about where to go, how to get there, what to do once there, natural risks such as tides, quick sands and rock falls. Getting there and affording to go were practical barriers, as was having someone available to go with them. Litter and dirty beaches deter young people. At this exposed location, bad weather with fierce winds and driving rain can make it too unpleasant to go.

## Young peoples' messages to the Natural England and its partners about enjoying the coast:

- Help make it safe (from attack and by changing adult attitudes toward us)



- Help us get there
- Give us information
- Provide affordable events and activities
- Run nature trips
- Provide shelters

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Living Coast was a pilot project developed by Natural England<sup>3</sup> (an organisation that looks after nature and landscapes in England) in 2018/19. Natural England wants to help people from all walks of life enjoy the benefits of a new long distance path around England: the England Coast Path. By 2020 the path will stretch for approximately 2,700 miles around our beautiful English coastline.

Natural England wants to understand why some young people already use and enjoy the coast and others do not. They want to know what can be done to help as many young people as possible benefit from the spectacular views, sea air, exercise and better experiences of nature that the path will offer. This will also help new generations value, understand and have a greater stake in nature and natural places.

This is in keeping with a key aim of the Government's 25 Year Plan for the environment. In the plan, the Government says it wants to encourage people to visit and enjoy natural places more. They also want to improve social justice (fairness), so that people from the widest range of ages and backgrounds can enjoy the mental and physical wellbeing you get from being outdoors in nature. Their plans say they want to help *"children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment"*<sup>4</sup>.

The Government want to do this because spending time in nature can really improve our health, wellbeing and quality of life<sup>5</sup>. But not everyone is able to get these benefits as easily as others<sup>6</sup>.

### 1.2 Introduction to the research

Natural England commissioned a team of researchers led by Dialogue Matters. Dialogue Matters is an organisation that works around research and participation to do with people and the environment. Our team also included a leading expert on doing research alongside young people, who is based at the University of Central Lancaster.

The research took place in the Borough of Barrow in Furness and Walney Island in Cumbria. Barrow-in-Furness ranked first, of all English Boroughs in the 2015 heritage index for the quality of its landscapes and the number of its nature reserves<sup>7</sup>. But within the Borough there are also areas of high deprivation with parts that fall in the bottom 10% and some the lowest 3% nationally.

We worked across these areas with groups of young people aged 11 - 18 to draw out what they think about the coast, what helps and what makes it harder to enjoy the coast, and what suggestions they have about what would help them go more often.

We ensured young people could say what they thought in a variety of fun ways, including short sessions for them to create maps and discuss their views, and longer fun events using music, art, drama and movement.

### 1.3 How the research will be used

Natural England will use this new knowledge in two ways:

- To inform how Natural England and its partners understand young peoples' experiences
- To support Natural England's work with partners who will work with young people to develop their ideas and provide activities that would encourage them, their peers and their families to use, understand and protect their coastal environment.

The young people who helped to create this new knowledge, also hope other local people and organisations use it to help more young people get to, enjoy, and feel safe by the sea.

### 1.4 Use of the word "disadvantage"

There is no commonly agreed definition of the word disadvantage although it is in common use (for example by the Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>8</sup>). Definitions of that do exist focus on the lack of economic and social resources or '*circumstances and events that mean healthy development may not occur*<sup>9</sup>. None of the definitions includes lack of ability to get to and enjoy the benefits of being in nature.

When we use the word disadvantage in this report, it is to recognise and acknowledge that many of the young people we worked with are living with many challenges and pressures. These are not their responsibility and include place-based disadvantages (low income, high unemployment, and limited range of work opportunities) and experiences of social group status and structures (such as related to race, gender, and disability).

We deliberately wanted to include and work with young people who are experiencing poverty, young people in or leaving care, young carers, disabled young people, and young people excluded from mainstream education, young people with mental health concerns and ethnic minority youth.

### 1.5 The importance of young people, from disadvantaged areas, enjoying the benefits of being by the sea

The benefits from being in nature are not equally shared across society. Young people growing up in poorer areas tend not visit natural places as much as others do<sup>10</sup>. Interviews held between 2013 and 2015 showed that 65% of children from lower income households visited the natural environment compared to 77% in higher income households. Children and young people from ethnic minorities experience even more barriers (knowledge, cultural, and economic) to using natural places for relaxing and having fun. Children with disabilities or special learning needs have additional challenges in accessing natural places.

This matters, because research has shown that when people spend time in nature there are many mental, physical, social, life skills and restorative benefits<sup>11</sup>. These benefits may have the most effect for young people who feel marginalised<sup>12</sup>, are suffering mental distress, think they have low social and personal skills, are on the autistic spectrum or have other special needs<sup>13</sup>.

Visiting natural spaces to restore your own wellbeing<sup>7</sup>, or even thinking nature<sup>14</sup> is positively linked with concern about the environment.

Research also shows that preferences for familiar spaces develops by the 11-15 age category<sup>15</sup>, suggesting there may be a critical window for adapting to less familiar outdoor natural spaces. This

suggests that to benefit the most from nature, children and young people need to be out in, and familiar with, natural environments before these preferences begin to shape<sup>16</sup>.

For young people from disadvantaged areas, taking practical action to improve the environment brings benefits for themselves, nature and the wider society. For the individual this includes increased fitness, confidence, social skills, character development and employability. For nature, the result is healthier ecosystems. For wider society, the result is nature rich areas for recreation, less flood impact, and more carbon locked up which is better for the climate.

Young people from across society want to take meaningful social action including for the environment, with 29% of those not currently active interested in supporting animal protection or the environment<sup>17</sup>.

Social actions build life skills including empathy, problem solving, cooperation, grit, resilience and community involvement<sup>18</sup>. Starting this activity young not only increases the chances of these benefits persisting, but is also more likely to result in social action later in life<sup>19</sup>.

However, young people have visible and invisible barriers to making the most of the natural coast and the benefits that provides. This research found out what these are for the young people of Barrow-in-Furness.

## 1.6 Barrow-in-Furness and young people

The Borough of Barrow-in-Furness lies on the south coast of Cumbria and has a population of 67,500 (Council Plan 2017-2020) of which about 6,800 are 11-18 years old. Most young people are educated in one of three secondary schools or two colleges.

Young people here are learning and growing in a challenging context: 20% are living in poverty and four wards fall in the bottom 10% nationally for levels of child poverty. Barrow has four wards that rank within the 10% of most deprived areas nationally and some areas that fall within the lowest 3%<sup>20</sup>.

Youth unemployment is particularly high in Barrow (5.8%) with in the Barrow Island ward youth unemployment rates at more than five times the national average. Young people here also face a lower-than-average life expectancy and have a much greater chance of being overweight with over 30% of children carrying excess weight. Rates of looked after children are the highest in Cumbria, as are hospitalization rates from alcohol abuse by under 18s. There are a range of youth groups, sports clubs and other initiatives working with and supporting young people, but some are not well resourced.

## 1.7 Barrow in Furness and natural spaces

In 2015 Barrow-in-Furness achieved the top ranking score in the 2015 heritage index for the quality of its landscapes and the number of its nature reserves<sup>21</sup> (RSA<sup>22</sup> heritage index<sup>23</sup>).

Areas of natural coast include: Walney Nature Reserve, beaches such as West Shore and Biggar Bank, and surfaced running and wheelchair access along the Channelside Walk, Walney Greenway and Westfield Nature Trail.



Figure 1: Map<sup>24</sup> of Barrow and Walney Island. The area circled was the focus of the research. Red and blue lines indicate the England Coast Path. The red route around Walney is approved and will open in 2019. The blue route is the proposal for the England Coast trail which will be published in summer of 2019. The yellow sections will be optional alternatives for the main scheme.



Figure 2: Location of Barrow and Walney Island in the UK<sup>25</sup>

### 1.8 Focus of the research

This research helped young people aged 11-18, who live in Walney and Barrow-in-Furness, to develop and share new knowledge about what helps or gets in the way of them using, and benefiting from, being in more natural areas by the coast. The study asked the following research questions:

- Q What do you think of the coast?
- Q How do you use the coast?
- Q How do you benefit from the coast?
- Q What makes it easy to go to, and enjoy, the coast?
- Q What makes it hard to go to, and enjoy, the coast?
- Q What would help you to go more often?
- Q What suggestions would you make to Natural England about how they can help?

## 1.9 Approach to the research

The ethos of respecting and working with young people so they could speak for themselves and be taken seriously about their hopes and experiences, was at the heart of this research. They worked with us to co-create new knowledge and we supported some of them to take on roles as our research advisors.

The methods we used uniquely blended techniques and principles from participation practice and social science.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Preparation

To start the research, our team learnt more about the area and discussed our approach with Natural England, Art Gene and a group of young people in the area.

We followed rigorous ethics and consenting procedures to ensure:

- Voluntary informed fluid consent by over 16s and their care givers for under 16s
- Anonymity by ensuring comments did not reveal who said what
- Safety and confidentiality – safeguarding procedures were adapted to this research and discussed with the organisations who helped us meet young people
- Data storage met current legislation and ethical requirements
- Inclusion of ages, ethnicities, abilities, gender and location
- Information, transparency and feedback to make sure the young people who took part understood why we were doing the study, how their information would be stored, used, reported and sent out, and so they could be given a copy of this report
- Influence of and accountability to young people
- We could faithfully express what young people said, their wishes and recommendations, recording their views and coding and analysing outputs fairly.

To work out which organisations to approach, we created a table of all the youth organisations and places of learning in the area and gathered data about the location (IMD<sup>26</sup> ward rating, and distance from the England Coastal Path), age range, ethnicity and Ofsted Rating for places of education.

From this, we prioritised a spread of organisations and contacted them to invite their cooperation, hosting and help with engaging up to 12 young people each. Where a prioritised organisation was not interested in taking part we continued down the list to find a range of six places that were interested. Once an organisation said young people were interested, we sent them consent forms, safeguarding information and agreed a time.

### 2.2 Participatory Advisory Group

To ensure the research worked in the local area, we first formed a Participatory Advisory Group (PAG) of eight young people from Barrow. These young people advised us on methods, organisations to approach to contact other young people and helped us interpret and analyse research findings.

Doing research with young people involves a range of challenges for them associated with:

- The ability to contribute (communication styles, confidence, feeling safe, trusting the team, belief that their voice can make a difference, previous negative experience of their views and needs being side-lined by adults),
- The ability to take part (travel costs and safety, parental support, availability),
- The ability to focus (context, relevance, concentration spans, time of day, hunger),
- Appropriate ethics (ownership, interest, stress, fluidity of consent, ratio of facilitators to group size).

Working with the PAG meant we could understand and factor these barriers in to how the team did the research and make it more effective. Their advice meant we improved the mapping method, wrote clearer information about the reason for the study and that taking part would involve discussion but also the opportunity to write responses in private. The PAG strongly advised us not to hold the second more creative session on a Saturday, because no young person would come in their free time – and some may be working or taking part in hobbies.

### 2.3 Round 1: mapping and discussion sessions

We designed these sessions based on best practice, place-based, and participatory research with young people. Sessions ran for 1-1.5 hours and included:

1. Registration, consenting and collecting information about age, ethnicity and location.
2. Explaining why the research team were there and how what the group said would be reported by us and used by the Living Coast Partnership to influence a national framework aiming to benefit young people in Barrow and elsewhere.
3. Working in small groups with between one and four young people with one researcher: young people created hand-drawn maps of the area starting with where we held the session, where they went on a weekly basis, and how they travelled about.
4. Next the groups worked to draw on places they liked (with a green pen), places they would like to go to more often (with a yellow pen) and places they really didn't like (with a red pen).
5. The team then asked each group about the coast: if they went – how often, who with, what they did there and how they felt about that. If they didn't go, or not as often as they would like – why not, what they preferred to do and what made it easier or harder to go.
6. We then brought the small groups together into one larger group. The focus was to talk about how young people's use of the coast is affected by belonging, jobs, money, and the way their friends and families do things (culture).
7. Up to this point, young people had usually been working in groups and so the last part of the session invited them to respond to the research questions in their own words, or pictures, and pass them privately to the researchers. This enabled young people to say and express things they were not able to do in front of others.

What the young people said was recorded by audio recorders if individuals gave consent or in writing when they didn't. They could also respond in their own written words and through photographs of the maps.

Working with young people takes sensitivity and adaptation and these sessions were no exception:

- Many people, regardless of age, are not map literate, so some groups preferred to create their own 'maps' and pictures of the area and others chose to work on a base outline.
- The word coast did not always work well so the team sometimes switched to talking of 'beside the sea'.

- The number who turned up and who chose to stay involved varied – with numbers being more and less than the 12 proposed.
- Sessions were longer or shorter than planned based on room availability, timetables and other constraints.
- Rooms varied in how suitable they were for these sessions and whether or not other activities were taking place in the same room at the same time.

## 2.4 Round 2: Creative event

A fortnight after the mapping sessions we invited young people to take part in our ‘Creative Horizons’ (CH) events (our adaptation of Open Space technology). Our initial plan was that this session would be on a Saturday but the PAG strongly advised against it. Instead, we did two sessions. Each lasted two hours with one held in a place of education in the afternoon and the other in a neutral community art venue in the evening.

Key themes from the first round were summarised in picture format and put on the wall along with the research questions.

In the first round, young people cooperated with our methods and session structure. These CH events were for them to take charge of how they created new knowledge in response to the research questions and round 1 themes. They chose which themes to focus on and how to explore them e.g. via art, story, rap, music, poems, drama or discussion. Towards the end of the event, young people showed or exhibited their own work. To support music creation, we took music equipment. The outputs were photos, pictures, transcripts and video.

## 2.5 Transcribing and analysis

We typed up audio and written outputs, then coded and analysed them using an approach DM developed called Emergent Processing. This involves several rounds of clustering and sorting comments to group those saying similar things. From this, themes emerge and similar points and unique perspectives become clear.

Visual outputs (maps and pictures), and poetry, drama and songs were looked at to identify any new insights or messages not communicated during the discussion sessions.

The research team looked for the common themes and unique points, so we could report on the range of views. We also teased out the complex social, cultural and economic factors, which affect young people’s enjoyment of coastal areas.

Once the team had done the initial analysis and sorting, we took the findings to the PAG for their input. This was to enable local young people to identify any issues that groups had not voiced in the research, and to comment further on possible causes of barriers that groups had identified.

## 2.6 Facts and figures

### *Organisations involved*

Six organisations kindly agreed to help and host sessions, all with genuine interest. Some communicated that they appreciated the opportunity for their young people to have a say. Three of the six were places of education and three were youth organisations. We chose youth organisations and educational settings to provide access to a range of young people. This included young people who were experiencing poverty, young people in or leaving care, young carers, disabled young



people, young people excluded from mainstream education, young people with mental health concerns and ethnic minority youth.

### *Numbers and range of young people involved*

In total, we worked with 59 young people including 8 in the PAG, 47 in the mapping sessions and 4 new people who joined the Creative Horizon events.

The number who took part in the mapping sessions was 47 of which 22 also took part in the CH events, joined by 4 new young people.

The gender difference in the mapping was 27 females to 24 males. The age range spread well across the years with more 14 year olds than others. The young people were mainly from a white British ethnicity but 20% of young people declined to say or did not know how to answer this question.

In terms of location, we involved young people who lived within 10 minutes' walk of the sea and others who thought it might be more than an hour to walk there.

We also asked about the location of where they lived, 20% lived in wards that fall in the lowest 3% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)<sup>27</sup>, a further 15% lived in wards that are in the lowest 10%. The remaining 65% lived in wards that are mixed but have areas within them that fall in these lowest IMD categories.<sup>28</sup>

### Who was involved for the PAG

| Age range | Female | Male | Total |
|-----------|--------|------|-------|
| 14        | 5      | 3    | 8     |

### Who was involved in the mapping sessions

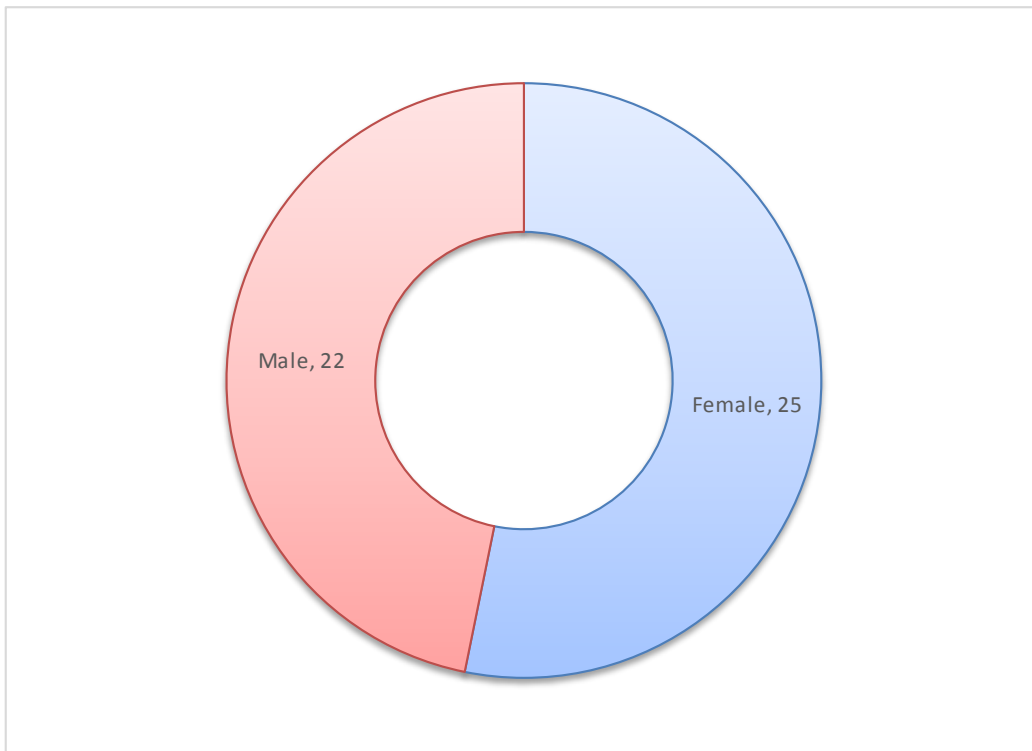
| Age range | Female | Male | Total |
|-----------|--------|------|-------|
| 11        | 2      | 3    | 5     |
| 12        | 3      | 0    | 3     |
| 13        | 3      | 1    | 4     |
| 14        | 10     | 9    | 19    |
| 15        | 2      | 3    | 5     |
| 16        | 0      | 0    | 0     |
| 17        | 3      | 6    | 9     |
| 18        | 2      | 0    | 2     |
|           | 25     | 22   | 47    |

### Number involved in the Creative Horizon Events

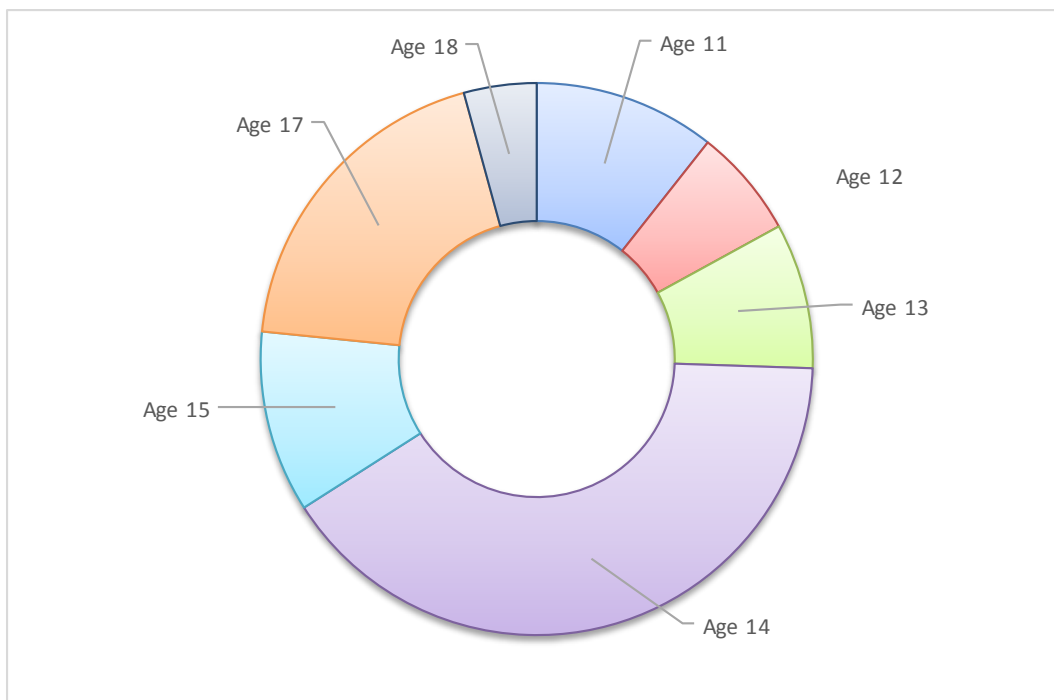
| When      | Number involved in mapping Session | New people who just took part in the CH event | Total |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|-------|
| Afternoon | 16                                 | 2   | 18    |
| Evening   | 6                                  | 2   | 8     |
|           | 22                                 | 4   | 26    |

### Breakdown of details in the mapping sessions

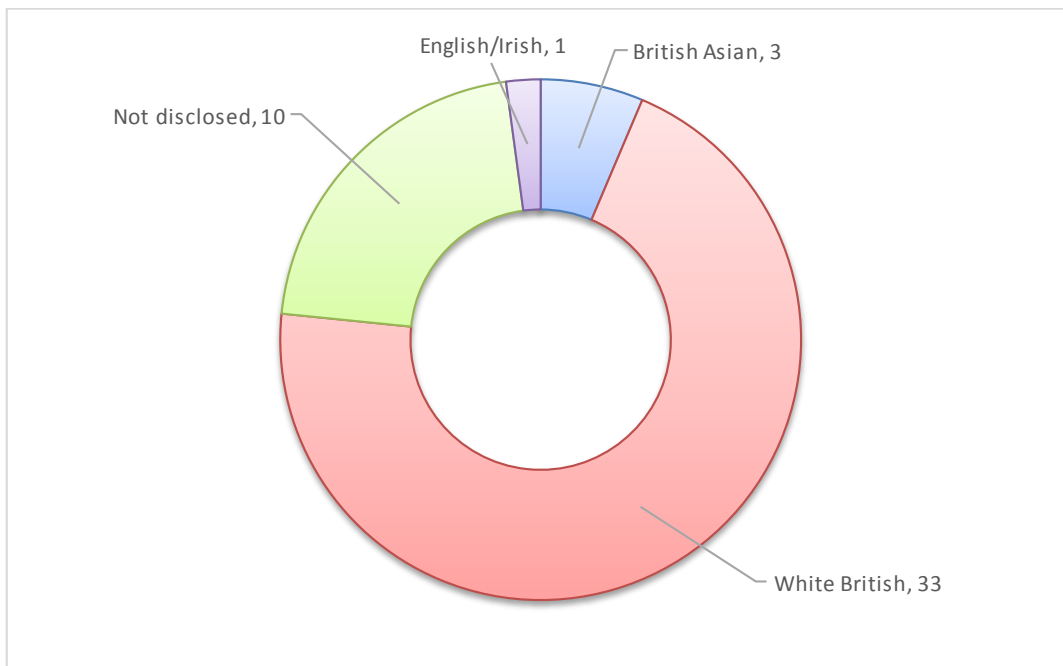
#### Gender



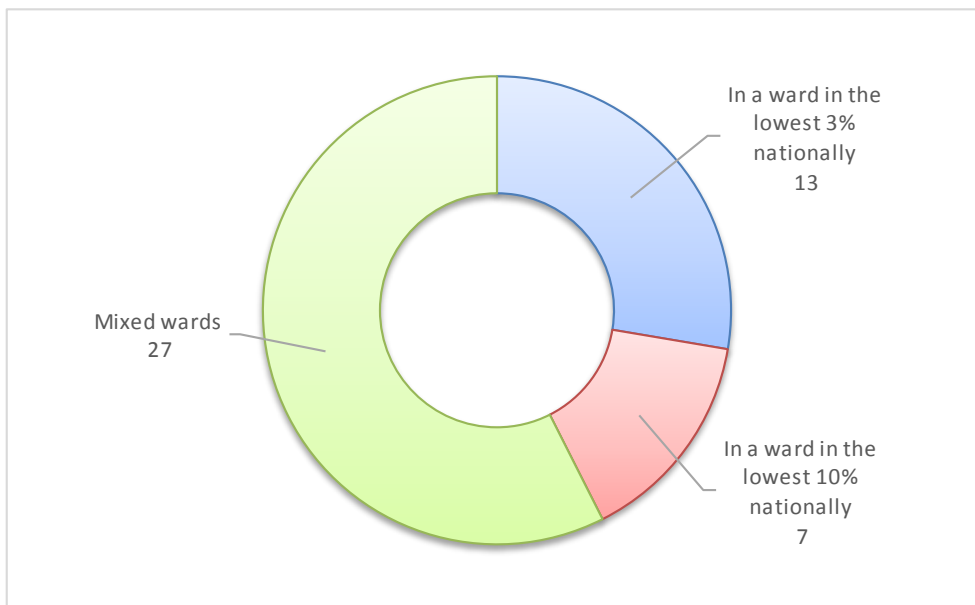
#### Age



### Ethnicity



### Wards where young people lived on the IMD indices



### 3 Findings

In this section, we have drawn out key points and in line with our ethos of promoting young peoples' voices, used their words to bring them to life – starting with their song:

#### Our song

##### **Verse 1**

Depressed teenagers sitting at home spending time playing on the phone  
Peace and quiet is all they seek, wanna get walking out on the street  
Anti-stress they need some relief, peer pressure keeps giving them grief  
Teenagers just want free time on their own, gotta get far away from home  
To the coast, to the coast

##### **Verse 2**

Old people shout when they're out by the beach, like hooligans messing get out of my feed  
They're judging kids but don't know us, even my dad he's making a fuss  
They don't believe we're trying to do good.  
No belief, no trust, don't act like they should, they say we can't do good but we could  
Just watch we can do good, they should  
Just watch, Just watch

##### **Chorus**

I do me! You do you! I think you're dirty mouth needs the loo!  
Listen to our song, we'll prove you wrong, trust me it won't take long  
Having a good time, nothing quite so fine  
Don't let anything get you down, it's here for you, its not far from town  
If it's not harming you it's good - so then you go home and eat some pud  
People can do what they want! But what you see isn't in the right font!

##### **Verse 3**

Old people said stop you're giving us headaches, the grief you give us you're stories are fake.  
All you talk about are us taking drugs and you think that we are all thugs.  
All we do now is sharing fun and hugs. Big difference between friends and grieving mugs  
You think that you're being protective. But I think you've got the wrong perspective  
Don't judge if you don't want to be judged. I think your mind needs a little nudge.  
Meeting people, making friends,  
Everybody realising makes the light in their head go on  
Having a laugh, getting dressed for weekend  
Ignore social media – such a phobia – and get away from screen

Such good memories

We're unstoppable, unstoppable, yea!

### 3.1 What do you think of the coast?

Young people have mixed views about the coast and this is related to how closely they live to it, how frequently they go to the coast and the experiences they have had there. Those who are closest to the coast and/or visit most often reported more positive views. Some perceive the coast as where they live and belong, not somewhere separate they go and visit.

Positive views included that it is a place of fun, where they belong and can spend time with your family and friends:

- *I like just being outside... it's nice being in places that are quiet but have, you know places with a beach noise like the sound of the waves. When I am there with family my brother and sister throw mud around which can be fun, but sometimes I just want to relax*
- *I saw a seal a year ago. We were at the beach with gran taking the dogs for a walk. She said if we brought our wellies we could splash in the waves. We made a deal. I'll only go if there's a deal! Like if we can collect pebbles, or pretty shells, build sand castles or go to the park.*
- *Just good times whenever I go*
- *I believe the coast is a valuable resource for the community and especially young people. It provides an area of natural beauty and one for recreation that isn't usually available*

Negative views are that there is nothing to do there, and it is dangerous or uncomfortable:

- *I don't like the beach area – it's cold around Barrow. Then the sand and the seawater and it irritates skin. I would see my friends, but I wouldn't go into the beach. I used to like going outside and exploring I guess. I don't like nature in general, beaches are too sandy, you get annoyed with the sand. I sleep instead, go to school and play games. I have been there, went with my family but I didn't find it enjoyable, I was bored and was 12.*
- *No I don't fancy anything to do with the coast*
- *It's boring because there's nothing you can do there – or you can build sandcastles but that's not fun*
- *The coast is a dangerous place to go:*
  - *You could die, fall on a rock,*
  - *The tide, it comes in pretty fast*
  - *If you go swimming the tide pushes you to the rocks*
  - *It's not a safe place, there's not enough people keeping a look out*
  - *It can be dangerous, but it can be good. You could get cut off by the tide if you don't know the beach well*

Some young people recognised that whether you like the coast or not depends on the individual, saying:

- *Depends on the person's view. People like different things*
- *Depends what they're like, some people might be litterers who don't care about anything. Some may be very nice to the place and look after it. Depends if people are interested in the coast, if they like it or not*

And some expressed concerns about climate change and future flooding:

- *Being near the beach is a nice feature for a town but living there does make me worried about the environmental impact that global warming might have to the town, e.g. rising sea levels leading to flooding of the town*

### The Alphabet Rap

|   |           |   |              |
|---|-----------|---|--------------|
| A | Amazing   | N | Natural      |
| B | Beach     | O | Octopus      |
| C | Cold      | P | Pets         |
| D | Dog       | Q | Quiet        |
| E | Exercise  | R | Rock         |
| F | Fun       | S | Scuba diving |
| G | Gush      | T | Turtle       |
| H | Happiness | U | Unknown      |
| I | Ice Cream | V | Views        |
| J | Jog       | W | Wind         |
| K | Kind      | X | Xciting      |
| L | Lost      | Y | Yucky        |
| M | Munch     | Z | Zand         |

## 3.2 How do you use the coast?

### 3.2.1 Going to destinations

Some coastal places were discussed as the easiest to visit (mainly the beaches at Walney Island: Biggar Bank, Sandy Gap and near the Round House). They are where a lot of young people mentioned going in the summer and were described as local every day places by those who lived nearby or who could get the bus to visit.

- *We go to the beach and either just sit on the stones with friends or walk along or go swimming. It is also used for dog walking or school trips*

The following three locations were talked about with particular interest from all groups regardless of proximity and whether the young person had visited them or not.

**Piel Island** is a small island that can only be reached by ferry, or by foot across a causeway at low tide, requiring knowledge of tide times. Some young people talked about going with a guide but others said they went on their own by cycling or walking to the ferry or across the causeway. The island is small with just a few fields, a pub and a castle. It is a place those who visit want to go to more and those who haven't want to get to. The Island offers a specific destination with an adventure to get to it and a sense of being somewhere very different.

- *I don't go much to Piel – I went more when I was younger. I'd love to go there and Biggar Bank more. Just don't do it much anymore... Fell out of it.*
- *We'd like to get to Piel more*
- *I'd like to go but can't*

**Roan Head** is a National Nature Reserve to the north of Barrow and offers a wild coast:

- *I go to Roan Head I just like it there, it's peaceful, people go there often for dog walks, my sister plays on the dunes on the big dune mountains. There's a little slope halfway through it and my sister just falls down the slope, like rolls down it and gets sand everywhere She's younger by 4-5 years*
- *Roan Head - my welly got stuck in the sinking sand and I lost my ladybird welly.*

**The Coastal Road, Bardsey Beach and Roy's ice creams:** All groups mentioned a location on the Coastal Road that serves 'great ice-creams' with many of the groups debating whether Roy's ice-creams, which is in a mobile unit right next to the beach, was better than the nearby Cumbrian Cow café, which makes their own. Those who hadn't been felt they had missed out. The frequency with which this came up in the discussions indicated a local culture about a destination, something to do there and then a discussion point afterwards.

- *I go on the coast, it's not on this map, it's quite far away. It's a good view, nice big coast road, and an ice cream shop. Not so good on a windy day, you get blown away.*
- *I found about Bardsey beach because of the ice cream place which is really nice. Roy's ice cream truck. It's quite popular*
- *Cumbria cow is better ice cream. It's further out in the middle*
- *I like to go to the Coast Road - It's got really nice for ice cream – Roy's Ice Cream truck or the Cumbrian Cow on a farm you can walk around*
- *I like going to get Ice cream on the coastal road – Roy's Ice Creams and Cumbrian Cow*

These three locations varied in landscape and what they offered but what they have in common is a sense of going to a special coastal place with particular things to do once there, a sense of being away from it all, and (often) relatively affordable food.

Understanding why these three locations drew particular attention and enthusiasm is therefore relevant to other coastal path areas and to the national framework.

### 3.2.2 Family outings and special occasions

Going to the beach with family members was particularly valued. For some this was the only way of getting to the beach but clearly doing something as a family was important:

- *I like all of it - because like my whole family gets together*
- *My mum and my dad, brothers, foster kids. We go because it's a family outing and we wouldn't go otherwise*
- *If I go it's to Walney beach with ice creams and dog walking - I go with my family and my friends and I feel calm*



Another reason for going to the coast is for special occasions:

- *Leaving party on the sand dune, one after exams, one before prom (no one turned up to that one though)*
- *With my family the birthday girl or boy has to go out crabbing with my grandad at 5 in the morning and then we cook the fish*

### Wanna be at the coast having fun - Rap

*Wanna be at the coast with my family, with everyone laughing along with me.*

*Got my dog walking along the beach saying woof, woof – come play with me.*

*Ye the coast got everything – it's got ice-cream and even flys and bees. Keeping it clean is important to me, so me and my friend can make more memories.*

### 3.2.3 Active adventures at the sand hills/dunes, gulleys/mudslides, ramparts and slag heaps

There are a number of coastal locations with sand hills and dunes on Walney and around Roan Head. The gulleys are steep sided channels down to and within the mudflats. The ramparts are some rock revetments placed to reduce coastal erosion which some young people like to climb over. The slag heaps (waste from the historic iron and steelworks) are right on the coast beside Walney Channel.

Sliding down the dunes in a variety of ways (snowboards, boxes, sleds) came up in four groups as a fun thing to do at the coast:

- *There are sand dunes in this area, I go sliding down the sand dunes on my snowboard*
- *Me and my cousin when to the West Shore sand hills and we got our old sleds, they were a bit broke but we fixed them up and popped a nail or two in them. Bad idea. We were going down the mudslides and we ended up going into the sinking sand*
- *We sit in the box and go down the hill, if we get stopped we go home*
- *I walk to the slagbanks – all the way round, all the way up and all the way back. My friends were on bikes*
- *A greater adventure (reported by a girl) was to slide down the gullies avoiding quick sands:*
- *I love going up the gulleys, love it, with rockslides, my mum doesn't like my going there. I go up like the one in Roos with the slag heaps. I slide down them, once I got pushed off! But isn't there sinking sand? Yes!*

### 3.2.4 Enjoying seeing and learning about wildlife

In five of the six groups young people talked about seeing wildlife (including the seal colony, natterjack toads) and the nature reserves.

- *I would want to go to the conservation area, you can go and see a lot of things, nature, in a calm environment. Don't think there would be sand inside the conservation area, I wouldn't go into it.*
- *The sand dunes at Roan Head - I like to roll down them. You can see the crabs come up and there are natterjack toads there*
- *Yes there is a special animal there*
- *We have Natterjack Toads at Walney Nature Park, they're almost gone. I know about them from geography*

The seal colony was of particular interest:

- *Best place on the coast is Seal Colony (south Walney)*
- *Seals around here, 20 pups this year, only 2 last year in the colony. It was a good number this year, unlike last year, think it's because of global warming*
- *I've seen the seals, I didn't mean to swim with it, it just popped out the water*
- *I want to see the seals.*

### 3.2.5 Swimming

People in three of the groups talked about swimming as a fun thing to do with some in the group saying they often went all summer. But others in the group mentioned particular occasions indicating they did not go very often and many either did not mention swimming or said they couldn't swim (see barriers).

- *I went in the sea with my mates, it was in the summer*
- *I was there, it was when I got drowned. They thought it was funny and dragged my legs under, but I didn't like the seawater.*
- *Been swimming in the sea in summer*

### 3.2.6 Walking and dog walking

Dog walking was mentioned a lot and clearly gave young people a reason to go to the beaches with family and friends or on their own:

- *I take my dogs to the beach*
- *Doggos love it*
- *I like going as a family because it brings the family together and my dog loves it down there.*
- *It helps for everyone to get a bit off fresh air, clear my head and have outdoor fun walking the dogs, and exploring*
- *The older you get the more it's like you're going for a walk on the beach, or your dog*
-

Walking to and from the coast and around the area was mentioned as part of a family or friends outing, but only a couple of times as an activity in its own right:

- *I've asked my mum and dad if we can walk around the edges of Walney, right round the coast. I don't know how long it would take but I want to do it*
- *Just walk and get lost in thoughts*

### 3.2.7 Cycling

Cycling to and around the coast was only mentioned by a few young people but those who did were particularly enthusiastic:

- *I bike it there, I like to get my bike lock it up in Rampside, get the ferry, go up to Piel Island, have a picnic over there, then come back. I bike it, I don't like going in the car because we should be using renewable energy sources like the windfarms, so we can use hydrogen as an energy method, so we produce less carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide and ruin the plantlife. Sometimes I take the bus, but I mainly just bike it everywhere*
- *I bike to Millon, hour, half an hour - it was a good cycle I got to see the nature and all the places all around that I don't see very often*
- *I go with my mates, we all have our own bikes*
- *If I'm biking with my friends I'll have one on the back of my bike, the lazy one who won't peddle!. So me and a friend will go by bike, him on his electric bike, and he'll have someone stood on the pegs holding on.*

### 3.2.8 Fishing

Three young people in one group discussed fishing as a reason to go to the coast. Two boys were keen anglers who went anywhere they could to fish, including reservoirs and ponds as well as shore angling. They also said:

- *We go fishing so we make the most of the coast, it also makes us care about the sea*

A girl joined in the conversation expressing that she felt she was asked to go fishing by her Uncle as an afterthought, because of being female:

- *One of my uncles is a fisherman and he takes my brother and cousin, they're all boys .....he has offered it to me..... but I don't like killing things – I would do things like this but I don't want to kill it*

### 3.2.9 Kayaking, sailing, power boating, rowing

Only one person talked about these activities but they had access to them by being a member of the Sea Scouts. The only other mention of sailing was someone who had sailed on a school trip to Coniston Water. This silence indicates that very few young people in the area have access to water-based recreation of any kind. Barriers are likely to include affording club membership, equipment and clothing.

### 3.2.10 Drawing

One person saw the coast as a place for creativity (although not locally):

- *I draw different places. One time a while ago I drew a beach in Scotland we went to for our holiday. We were on a hill having a picnic so I quickly drew it. A lovely view of this beach in a U shape and two mountains, we were sat on one of the mountains. So I just drew it and there was a little town in the middle.*

### 3.3 How do you benefit from the coast?

#### 3.3.1 Psychological wellbeing

Young people, who like the coast, were particularly eloquent about the psychological benefits they experienced:

- *It's a beautiful, wonderful place that gives you space to free your mind and make you feel nothing*
- *I like just being outside ... it's nice being in places that are quiet but have, you know places with a beach noise like the sound of the waves*
- *[I feel]..Dead chilled out and just happy, just buzzin*
- *I just feel calm. It's just nice there, it's really calm and peaceful, it's a nice environment*
- *I like the sound of the sea rolling in so if the tide is in its nice and relaxing. I love the sound of it. It's really nice and relaxing.*
- *I go to Piel Island because I'm feeling stressed or something, I'll go to the beach when I'm stressed because I love just the smell of the sea, sound of the waves, and the crashing. It just calms me*
- *It makes me feel free sometimes, there are a few people in it but there's lots of space.*
- *It's relaxing you can get away from all the stresses in your house and that*
- *I like going down the area when it's sunny, it's not too cold and it's a nice place to relax. I used to go with my friends when I was little, and just when it was sunny just take trips down. I'd go to the park, walk on the beach and clear my mind. When I lived in town my dad would drive, now I just walk there.*
- *If you're week at school is hectic you can just chill out whilst fishing*
- *You can escape and go into your own world*

One person, who had told us about a terrible personal attack which happened by the coast, said:

- *Going to the coast helped me. I was able to interact with some of the people there - it was out of the way, and it was getting out of the house. When it first happened I wouldn't stay in Barrow*

The coast was valued as a place to play freely and have fun:

- *As a young person you wouldn't just go for peace and quiet, but to have fun*
- *It helps for everyone to get a bit off fresh air, clear my head and have outdoor fun walking the dogs and exploring*
- *That sand beach is really fun to run and race up*

### 3.3.2 Physical health

Some young people recognised the benefits of the coast for exercise:

- *It has swings at the park (by the sea) and space to run around and use up your energy on the big patch of grass*
- *Walking along the coast gives more enjoyable exercise, such as with dog walking, while at the coast, as the surroundings are prettier and more open than the surroundings encountered while walking in the town centre or around Barrow*

### 3.3.3 Social interactions

A clear benefit of going to the coast was to spend time and bond with family and friends.

- *I like going as a family because it brings the family together and my dog loves it down there. We don't go out there that much.*
- *I think a lot of families go so people feel everyone feels belonging anyways*
- *Some old people go and go for walks with their grandchildren*
- *I use the coast as like a social/meet-up place with my friends*
- *I also use it as a place to have free time to just hang out with my mates*
- *[young people go to] have a good laugh with your mates.*

## 3.4 What makes it easy to go to, and enjoy the coast?

### 3.4.1 Your own attitudes and confidence

Young peoples' attitudes make a significant difference. If they know where to go, what the risks are, have the interest and confidence, they are more likely to go and say that none of the barriers stop them:

- *We go because we're cool*
- *We're more interactive in nature*
- *We're confident and not shy*
- *(If there are risks).. doesn't stop us you just have to be more careful of where you go - we don't really avoid it, we still go*

A confident female participant said:

- *I go whenever I want, as much as I like. I go when I feel like it*

### 3.4.2 Feeling safe and belonging

A small number of young people said that they felt safe going about on their own and this was linked to having family or friends to go to if you needed help:

- *I'm allowed in town at night because my cousin works at [insert place] in town, so if I need anything I can go there. I've got a safe place to go*

- *I'm lucky, most of my family are dotted around Walney so I've always got somewhere to go if there's an emergency - Yeah I feel I can go further, say if you need a drink, or you feel unsafe, there's somewhere to go.*

Some young people reported a strong sense of belonging to the area but feeling like they belonged or not was also a barrier.

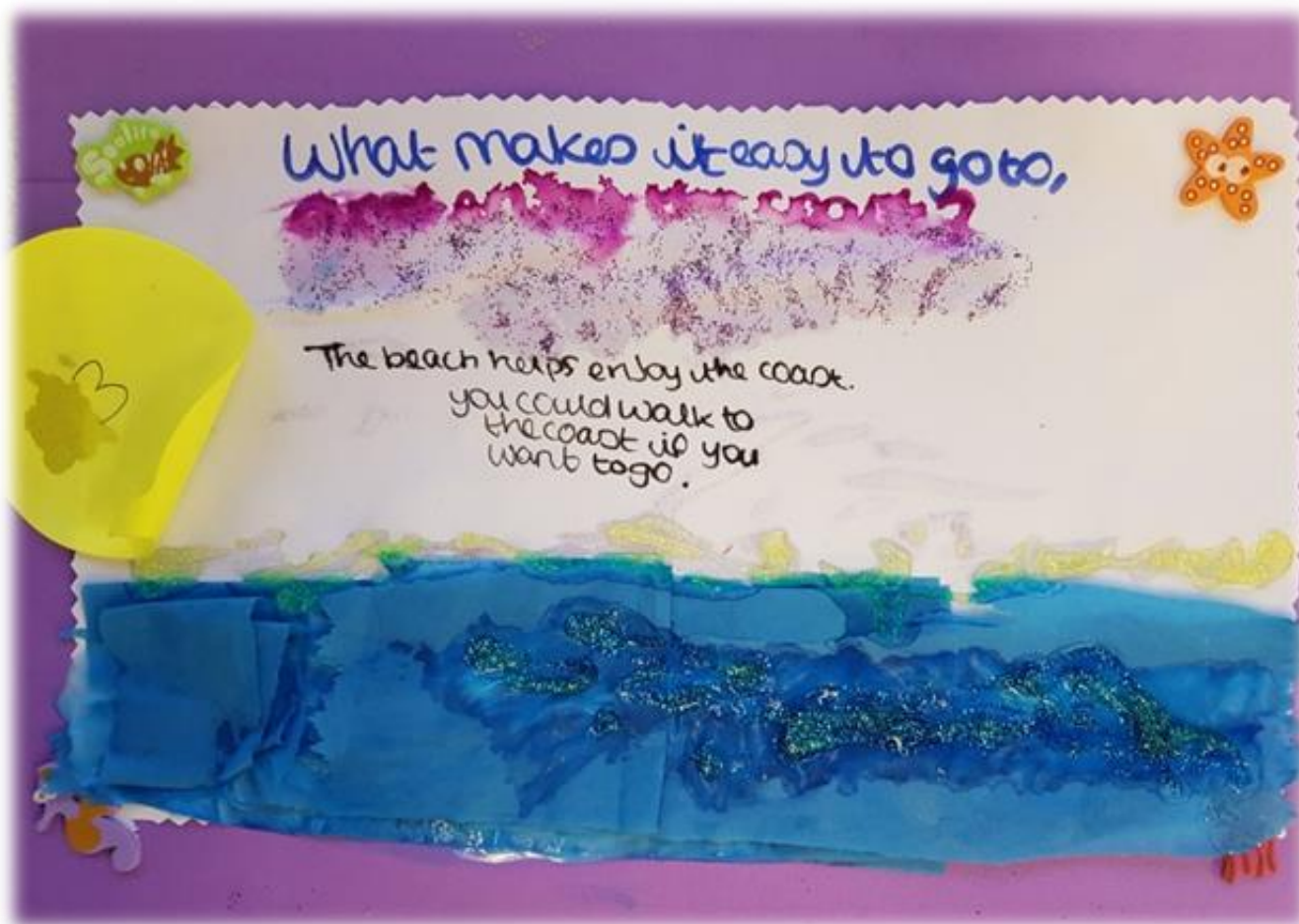
- *This is like my pride and joy what's in my heart, in the town*

### 3.4.3 Getting there and affording to go

A lot of young people told us they walked between their homes, places of learning, clubs, town and beach and, provided it was daylight, felt safe doing so. A few people also talked about getting to and around the coast by bicycle.

Walking to the beach is easiest for those who live on Walney:

- *Practically everyone lives right next to the beach – 5-10 minute walks*
- *Because of how close everything is, I don't need my family to get anywhere*



A couple of other individuals said they walked some distance to get there:

- *We walked in summer – it's an hour but better than sitting in the car*

For most of those living too far to walk to the coast some talked about the bus and feel safe using them but for others the cost and distance was a barrier. Many were dependent on getting lifts with family members or driving themselves – but this depends on time and having a car (see section 3.5.7 on barriers).

- *Mum and dad are taxis. I'll be driving soon though*
- *It'd take an hour and a half to walk so I get a lift*
- *My step dad - he works in Walney - he delivers [things] so he takes me*

### 3.4.4 Having someone available to take you

Echoing the comment from one young person who went to the sea to go crabbing on special occasions, young people said that having someone to take you or go with made it easier:

- *My step mum she works with young people so sometimes she takes us all to the coast*
- *Go with friends and their parents*
- *My dad used to work at [place] and then he'd take me down to the beach because he said it was nice and I'd play with my little sister on the beach in the sandy area. It's quite nice. It's got nice views. Because I was a kid I would have enjoyed myself... I was probably 15 last time I was there.*

Some young people described their family members as a taxi service and peers who could drive also helped them get to coastal spaces. In other instances, family members not only provided transport, but also an introduction to ways of enjoying natural spaces:

- *We were at the beach with Gran taking the dogs for a walk. She said if we brought our wellies we could splash in the waves. We made a deal. I'll only go if there's a deal! Like if we can collect pebbles, or pretty shells, build sand castles or go to the park.*

### 3.4.5 Time of year and weather

Time of year, weather, and day length have a big impact on visits to the coast. The coast here is exposed and windy so going in winter requires motivation and suitable clothing. Most of the young people said they really only went in the summer:

- *Summer we're able to stay out longer*
- *I go quite often – last time when it was summer holidays. It's been cold weather mostly. Went often in the summer to get in the sun and have ice creams. You don't want to go to the beach when it's cold or windy*
- *It looks nice when it's sunny because the water is glistening and you can see Black Combe*
- *In summer it's nice and relaxing but in winter its boring*
- *It's adventurous in the summer when it's not raining*

But a few said they liked to go in harsher weather:

- *I like being outside, winter or not. Winter is my favourite season*

- *I'd still go, I like the rain*

### 3.5 What makes it hard to go to, and enjoy the coast?

#### 3.5.1 Personal attitudes and feelings

Personal attitudes and feelings about the coast have a significant influence:

- *Some people feel they belong at the coast and some don't. Some like to go to places, like nature and they're not lazy. Others are afraid and have mental health – they don't have help like nurses.*
- *Some think it's boring and dirty*
- *It's boring because there's nothing you can do there – or you can build sandcastles but that's not fun*

A few young people talked about just wanting to stay in their rooms:

- *It's rare for me to get out of my room on a weekend. I feel no one will come there if I am in a mood – it's my own space*
- *Once every 3 months or so I go out.*
- *Don't like my family so I don't go away with them. I don't go with friends. I just sit at home*
- *Can't be bothered moving*

An issue that some girls talked about was being body conscious and body shaming:

- *Like the skatepark and beaches depends who is there. Like the chavs would judge you either way, the inappropriately dressed girls will judge you no matter what*
- *It's stopped me in the swimming baths, because I'm at the beach I am not planning on going in the sea*
- *I think it's because people are self-conscious, having people looking at them*
- *These days people are self-conscious, and with self-image deteriorating. Even in the water what are they going to think about me, they're going to talk*
- *Self-confidence is an issue*

Whilst others did not like being in crowds:

- *I go there (the coast), not often because I don't like being around too many people*
- *Don't want it too crowded, but some [people] about.*

#### 3.5.2 Feeling like you don't belong

A sense of belonging or not affected young people's ease with going to the coast. Those who lived closest to the most accessible beaches in the area, on Walney, felt they belonged but others from Barrow town less so.



- *Hard not to feel like you don't belong these days. Nowadays everything is like if you're not this way, or this way, then you're not that great. A bit about fitting in, but that goes with belonging. If you don't feel like you fit in, you don't feel like you belong*
- *Walney School pupils might feel like they belong at the beach, they can see it from the window. If you live in town and don't see the beach regularly [you don't feel like you belong]*
- *If you live in town and don't see the beach regularly [you don't feel like you belong]*
- *They (young people who don't live on Walney) aren't connected to the coast like we are, industrial buildings get in the way of the view and stop people appreciating the sea*

### 3.5.3 Fearing attack

Based on the amount of discussion and comment about this, fearing verbal or physical attack is the biggest barrier to going out anywhere including the coast. Some of the attacks and threats took place away from the coast but this had a wider impact on young people's confidence to go out anywhere else. Hearing about other young people being attacked also had this effect.

The following shocking accounts (from different individuals) speak for themselves:

- *I got attacked. It went on for 28 minutes, I got drowned, my head got hit, almost had my ribs broken, they broke my hand, ripped my hair out which has caused me to have alopecia. If the police hadn't turned up I might be dead. Broke my phone and glasses. Death threats followed.. I was scared to go outside.*
- *The skatepark is where lots of people go, it was vandalised though. Recently a 12 year old got stabbed there. It's a lot rougher, particularly after dark*
- *I don't visit [PLACE]. There are really mental kids there, last time I went there I got attacked*
- *In Barrow Island there's this place called [PLACE NAME], there's always tons of police vans there, there's just bad people there... trying to get away from there, they're just risking the people there. My friends have had syringes thrown at them*
- *If I am scared of going out the house, then I won't go to the coast*
- *[there are] Quite a lot of gangs – when I walk past them you feel intimidated and judged*

### Our Drama

A girl named Veronica and a boy named Cameron are playing football together on the beach. They get hot so they decide to buy an ice cream from the ice cream shop.

Two older teenagers who are known to be bullies are walking by. They see Veronica and Cameron and start bullying them. First they steal his wallet so that they can buy ice cream too. Then they parrot everything Cameron says mocking him. They steal their ice cream and beach towel. They pull Cameron's hair, steal his phone and run off.

Veronica and Cameron call the police to report what happened, but they don't get any answer from the police. Veronica and Cameron start arguing between themselves about what they should do next. Veronica gives up on the argument and walks away.

Years later Cameron decides to look up the bullies on the internet, he sees that they both made bad life decisions in their teenage years.

There is also fear of 'stranger danger' and drug groups, with one group openly talking about a paedophile in their area:

- *The paedos hanging about, or perverts*
- *Certain areas have druggies – there might not be very nice people around. Adults, possibly paedophiles, people who get high*

Day length is also an issue because of feeling unsafe to be out after dark:

- *It's a bit bad, I was out with my friends one of the days, and to get down to the beach from like ocean road and that. There's no path going down to the other path - so you have to walk down the hill and it was dark. And we couldn't see, and it was wet, so we were like 'I don't want to go down there' so we walked down the road, but it was foggy, so we couldn't see, and that was just like pretty on edge. Because it was too dark. So I probably wouldn't do that again.*

### 3.5.4 Racism, sexism and homophobia

Gender and ethnicity issues were also raised as barriers:

- *People laugh at you and bully you if you ride a bike. People think bikes are for boys so if you're a girl on one....*
- *I agree girls on bikes get bullied*
- *Racism - Being targeted just because you're from another country*

As noted above, regarding fishing, adults' gender perceptions also affected what opportunities were offered to girls.

- *That might also be related to gender of people lads are probably less afraid of going out at night, and then we have to be like 'no we have to be inside as soon as it starts getting dark' and in like well-lit places, not by ourselves*

Young people also spoke privately about their experience of sexual identity-based discrimination. Both adults and peers were described as being ‘behind the times’ or ‘not accepting’. This sometimes damaged young peoples’ self-esteem and meant they were excluded from peer groups. As a consequence, they lacked the confidence or friends they needed to feel safe by the coast.

### 3.5.5 Adults judging young people

In all groups we asked about attitudes to young people being at the coast and all groups responded with answers showing that they thought adults thought badly of them:

- *It's more a lot of adults really dislike kids, because they demonise them. They think 'oh they're only out to do bad to the environment, they're only going to do bad things, they're not going to do anything good. They're not here just to enjoy themselves*
- *Adults demonise young people, and don't think we should be out and about*
- *It really puts off kids from doing things and going outside. Adults automatically assume we are going to do bad. They hear it from the media as well.*
- *Adults think we're lazy... which I am!*

Some young people recognised that the adults may be concerned for their safety and that a rowdy group may be unwelcome because it is rowdy, not necessarily because it is young people.

- *Some just get a bit scared, but it doesn't mean to say they think you're in the wrong*
- *Suppose it depends on the group of people you surround yourself with, if you're with a rowdy group you won't feel welcome because people won't want you there being rowdy*

Some also acknowledged that young people do mess around but it's out of boredom.

- *Attitudes of young people toward the coast are not good, there's not much for young people to do so they mess around*
- *Kids mess around at the coast because there is nothing to do. Adults think that if there were things to do young people would ruin it but they wouldn't, the reason they ruin things is because there is nothing else to do*
- *Adults think they know what teenagers want but they don't. Its too long since they were our age and life for a teenager has changed*

Also that blaming young people for bad behaviour is not fair if they are grow up in rough areas:

- *Majority of older people they think we always cause trouble - but people grow up in rough places and it's not their fault*

### 3.5.6 Parental restrictions

In three of the groups they said a barrier was parents placing restrictions on young people to keep them safe:

- *I'm not allowed. If we go out at 4, I have to be in at 8, I'm allowed a few hours out. They sometimes get worried about where I am.*

- *Times you need to be back for. It's always in the back of your head how far can I go and still get back in time*
- *Bad parents – my mum hates me going to the beach she thinks I'll get drunk, do something stupid and die*
- *If it was starting getting dark they wouldn't let me out on Walney. If I am out in the dark then I should be with someone. The other day my friend, her dad and the dog walked me home. Or I get the bus*
- *They think it could be dangerous because of sinking sands and Morecombe Bay – I think it's that – the tides come in really quick*

### 3.5.7 Lack of information

A barrier that cropped up in different ways during the discussion was young people saying to others in the group that they didn't know about something they heard: the buses to go on, what was safe or not, different coastal areas, that there was a seal colony, and that a ferry went to Piel Island. This lack of local knowledge is an obvious barrier to going to the place or encouraging family members, carers, youth leaders or friends to take you there.

### 3.5.8 Not being able to get there easily

For those who don't live by the sea, getting to the coast is not easy:

- *(I don't go) as often as I would like. It's too far away to walk. I'd like to explore around and see where is good*
- *If you live nearby you will go, if not then no*
- *There are places I like to go that are far away from here*
- *I can't get there except by car, not many of them (beaches) are accessible by bus. I think Bardsey is a bit, but you'd have to walk a lot*
- *I don't like going on buses – only been 3 times and I don't know how they work. I've been with someone who knows how it works when I've been*

A couple of the young people said they visited the coast in Scotland or Devon on family holidays more easily than the coast near where they live:

- *I'm less familiar with the coast, I have further to travel - but I went to Devon!*

### 3.5.9 Not having money, time or someone to go with

Lack of funds causes an array of barriers particularly for those further from the shore. This includes not being able to afford to get there because you can't afford the bus, to buy a bike, or your family can't afford a car.

- *It's free to go to if you live near it. If you live further out it's harder. I would need a car*
- *Most young people in Walney and Barrow can't afford to go to the coast*
- *Some may not have money for the bus*

- *Buses keep raising their prices, 10p more every 6 months*

For those depending on family members or carers to take them to the beach some constraints related to time and money.

- *Most young people in Walney and Barrow can't afford to go to the coast*
- *It's free to go to if you live near it. If you live further out it's harder. I would need a car*
- *Sometimes need to pay for car parks*

Cost of clothing and equipment was another issue:

- *Could be clothing – on the beach there aren't many days you can go in shorts and tee shirt. Money for the right kit. Windy and rainy. The main attractions is camping but you have to have a tent*
- *People living in poverty may not be able to afford to go or have appropriate clothing*
- *Need money for a bike or to rent one*

The following is a group discussion about money:

- *Poor and can't afford it - can't afford bikes - if you don't have money you can't get out - money is from the devil - it's horrible - you can't afford things. This is getting dark!*

Not having the money for ice cream was a problem for some young people, but others had managed to overcome this through family connections:

- *My sister goes with her boyfriend. His great grandad or grandad works there so I get free ice cream*

In relation to lack of time, the most eloquent example of this was a young person who described how all the members of her family need to work but they all have different work patterns. Others also said their own and their parents' work and education commitments got in the way of free time to go.

- *When my mum's at work she works [list of days]. So [this weekday] is her day off, so it's hard for us to fit things in. Then my dad is at work he is on 13 hour shifts, getting up at 6/half 6 and getting home at 9. So when we're all working we have no time to fit things in. On a Saturday I'm in work and mum is in work, then chances are dad is in work. But then we might want to do something, and set it for a day, but then we're all in work. 13 hour is a lot and especially with some (not going to say what) but some of the stuff that goes on in our lives and my dad's so 13 hours shifts is a killer. No exaggeration, that's me being serious. Him working 13 hours could cause his heart to stop.*
- *I just never really had the time to go out there (to the coast). As soon as it hits the summer it's kind of holiday work, then back to school again. The opportunities not there.*

Where parents had employment on the coast itself, this enabled young people to access coastal places. An additional time-related challenge was short days:

- *I think it depends on how long you work and when you work. So if you work then when it's light you're not going to go to the beach in the dark*

### 3.5.10 Fear of natural dangers

Some young people perceived significant natural dangers of going to the coast, telling us it was a dangerous place to go. Risks included rocks falling on you and killing you, the sea pushing you onto the rocks when you are swimming, rip tides pushing you out to sea, the tide coming in very fast, areas of quicksand and jellyfish.

However, perceptions of risk were related to skill levels and knowledge of the area:

- *[Its] not really [scary] - I do know how to swim.*
- *Some people like going to the coast and some don't – some are scared, maybe they can't swim, some people go to have fun*
- *It depends if you know the times of the tide, know when not to go. It's safe enough in yourself with the right knowledge. It can be dangerous, but it can be good. You could get cut off by the tide if you don't know the beach well.*
- *Some see people swimming in the water, some don't. There used to be more, people are more afraid because we started getting jellyfish here. They don't realise it's moon jellyfish, they can't harm you*
- *I got chased by a seal in the sea once, last summer swimming near North Walney. It was scary*
- *I look on the tide watcher on the internet....(Friend replied) My mum can't trust the internet, she wouldn't believe it online, she would want to check*
- *I cut my foot open on barnacles when I was swimming then my friend left me and my foot was bleeding*

A number of people said they were not able to swim but many did not mention swimming at all:

- *My mates can't swim... so they're scared of going on the ferry they're like oh oh what do I do? I'm stood there with my camera taking pictures. ... They don't mind the beach if they can sit on the rocks they're fine, if it's got anything to do with swimming it's like trying to have chocolate as a fireguard.*

There was some parental fear of the sea and at times danger from strong tides and currents which only some young people knew how to navigate safely:

- *My step-mum is scared of the sea.*
- *I went swimming on Biggar Bank and got swept out. It's a riptide so you have to go diagonal. I am a strong swimmer, so it was ok.*

Also some of the girls felt unsure about going because of body shaming (see 3.5.1)

As well as lacking the confidence and skill to swim in the area and knowledge of where it is safe, one person said they didn't like going into the sea because there is a black layer under the surface of the sand which is very smelly. (This is a natural layer of dead natural material that rots without oxygen just below the surface and which people can mistake as a sign of pollution).

- *It's boring because there's nothing you can do there - You can't build a sandcastle here – it's not like proper sand, it's minging - If you start digging it goes black and it smells really bad*

### 3.5.11 Distraction from screen time

Young people recognised the issues with screen time and talked about it as something that young people do, and are expected to do, rather than something they personally get stuck in:

- *Nowadays people get glued to the tv and would think walking on the beach is boring*
- *Sometimes... A lot of the time. I think because of the technology it's weird for kids to be out. It's assumed kids will be glued on the phones, and it's weird for them to be out. 'you should be inside, on your phone'*
- *We get glued to things easily*
- *Usually I play Xbox if I have free time, do drawing, create music, or see friends*

### 3.5.12 Litter, syringes, dog mess

Syringes, dog mess and litter were a concern generally and particularly in one location with young people variously blamed people who used the adjacent park, the golf course, drunk people or that it gets blown in. A more serious issue for young people was syringes:

- *There's been syringes round there, so it's a bit dangerous*
- *Syringes – don't know what they are, but been there with senior school and the teacher was warning us about them*
- *On NCS (National Community Services) they said to put them [syringes] into these boxes, and pick them up with the grabbers.*

## Lexi's Happy Place

### A story

Lexi's happy place is to go and sit at the beach every day. And one day she starts to realise the build-up of litter. She always knew the litter was bad but it is getting worse as she grows. That night she attended a community youth club where she speaks openly about the litter problem. An older girl called Sophie completely ignores her and when she notices the posters about Lexi's campaign she tears them down, when Lexi wasn't looking. After Lexi found her posters were gone she told her mum whilst being upset. Her mum and family thought it was a ridiculous idea and ignored her. Lexi has had enough and decided to run away. Her mum finally finds her and she has a heart to heart with her. As they leave to go home, hundreds of people turn up to help Lexi save the community with a big litter clean-up.

### 3.5.13 Spreading of ashes

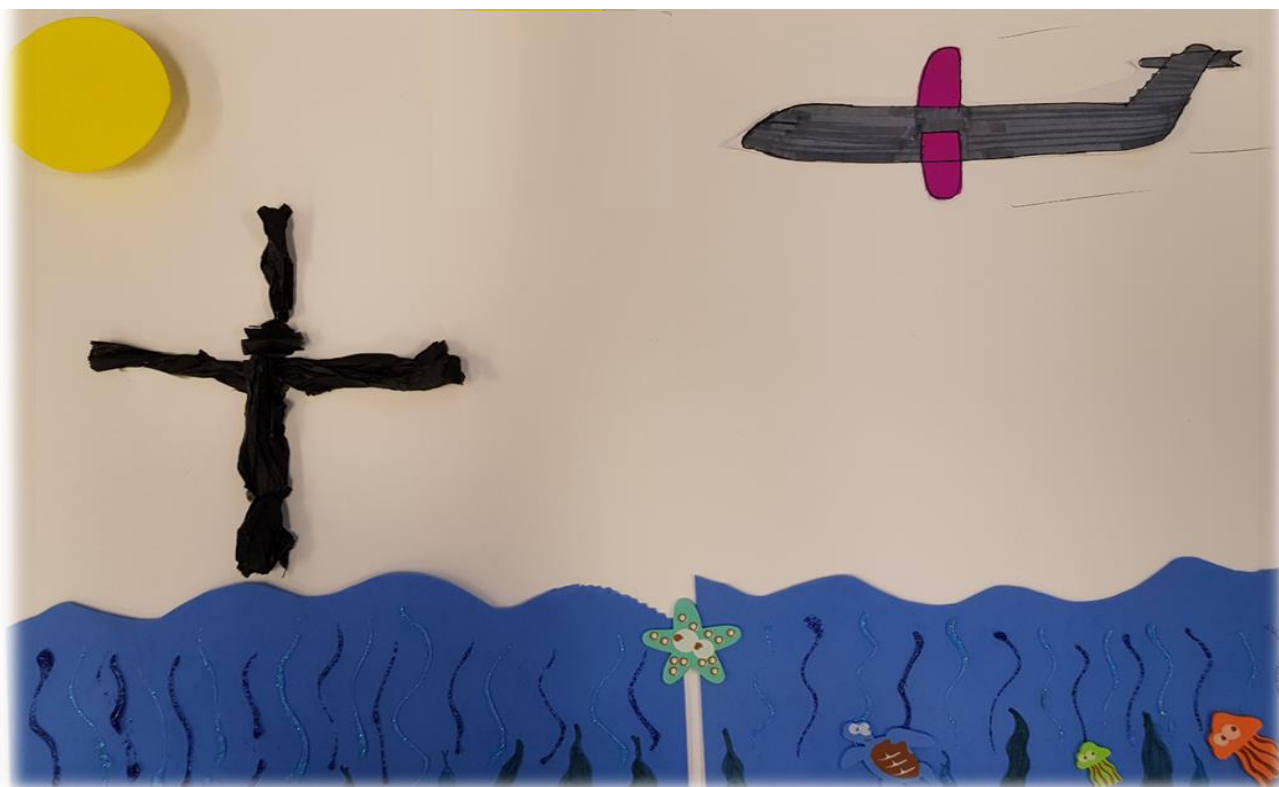
An unexpected barrier one young person raised was seeing people spread human ashes at the beach. Whilst only she made this point, others in the group reacted with concern. One was more pragmatic:

- *For me people like get ashes thrown in there and it's creepy thinking about it... Ashes from dead bodies. A lot of people I know want to get their ashes thrown there, then they get a bench put there, or put ashes in the bench*
- *The sodium chloride would dissolve it!*

### 3.5.14 Weather

Walney Island is an exposed coast and very windy. This study was done in November during some cold windy weather so this would have influenced the responses that the weather is rubbish and that if you go to the coast you feel cold. However some young people had the opposite view:

- *In winter the weather stops us going to the coast - not jobs it's the weather*
- *Weather is an issue, we live on Walney, it rains, we get the worst rain ever*
- *I don't mind about going more often. I like staying at home, being comfy and I like going outside, depends on my mood. Right now it's cold so I stay inside*
- *The weather is rubbish – it's just British. The thing that makes it hard to go to the coast is the weather, because the weather is usually miserable*





*What makes it  
enjoy the  
The weather  
it is not as fun*



*hard to go and  
coast?  
when it is wet  
there.*

*I have made this picture of the coast – the coast is  
hard to visit because of the weather!*

### 3.5.15 The nudist area

During the mapping sessions, a couple of young people, in different groups, identified that the nudist colony is somewhere they really wouldn't like to go (a red colour was used to mark these).

- *Nudist beach over here – wouldn't want to go to it*
- *The red area is where people sun bathe and swim without clothes on – I don't like that*

### 3.6 What would help you to go more often?

We asked the young people what messages they wanted to give directly to Natural England about how they and their partners could help:

#### Help make it safe

- To be reassured that people can be who they want to be and do what they want. For years I have been criticised and judged for what I eat, do and how I do it. I don't want other people to be mistreated for who they are and what they do or can do
- It would need to change in the world – social media is very big which links up people's belonging from all around. It would help if people felt more belonging in the coast and feel welcome there and shared it online. It might help people all around to go out, find areas

#### Help us get there

- Try to make it easier for people of all ages to get to the coast, e.g. some are unable to drive
- Transport – sometimes we can't afford a car, my mum and my dad sometimes don't have a car
- Free transport for kids to do activities, but for younger than 18 so they can get to places and adventure more. Then when they're older they'll know it's there to go to
- Need money for a bike or to rent one
- I would worry about bus, getting the wrong bus

#### Give us information and use social media

- More advertisement/awareness of what the coast has to offer and more education of how to get there
- It would help if it was advertised more, maybe on social media? You don't really hear about it.
- You could have a webpage, or twitter, Instagram. Hashtags dedicated to it. A name for it and having it as a hashtag is easier to identify it.
- You could target it through Huddle Hub on facebook of what's going on in Barrow, or Barrow Seek and Sell

#### Provide events and activities

- Have more activities around coasts for a wider range of ages
- To make use of the coast more often is if activities are not expensive
- I would like activities that they are not boring and they would be full of action and the activities would be fun and it would occupy the people and keep them out of trouble
- I think if there were more activities for kids/teens to do then it would occupy them and keep them out of trouble
- We need more activities like trampolining with friends
- There should be organised activities like orienteering
- Interactive (non-manned) activities on the beach

- I walk the dogs and play pass the pebbles – it’s when you get pebbles and draw on them then hide them, then people have to find it and hide it again – you post the picture on the Pass the Pebble Facebook page

### Coastal Rap

You need to make the coast easily accessible so [pause] make a ramp.

We’re easily bored [pause] (boring). We need more activities like trampolining with friends [pause]. (Yes please x4).

Help us now, help us now, we need entertainment so help us now! X2

### Activities Rap

Young people need more activities!

By the sea building sandcastles,  
ice cream, bike riding, football,  
swimming, camping, kite surfing,  
fishing down the beach.

There is lots of fun  
while we play under the sun

### Run nature trips

- Would be interested in doing biology on the beach if they did it. Could do sea creatures. There’s a sea colony near Walney, near Peele Island. Been seal watching
- I’d like to check out the nature, but nothing that makes a mess, just refreshing nature. Going by boat would be cool, and to check out the community over there (point on the map)
- It’s hard for young people to get to and enjoy the coast because of all the unused derelict land. There are plenty of areas that could be made safe for people to enjoy

### Provide shelters

- Have a shelter at the beach so activities are possible even in bad weather.



## 4 Discussion and suggestions

Our study shows that young peoples' previous experiences and the opportunities and resources available that affects the extent that they go to the coast. These key experiences and opportunities include: familiarity; belonging; family behaviour; resources and attitudes; attitudes and behaviour of unknown adults; experiences with peers; safety; young peoples' money and work; the appeal of and knowledge about particular natural coastal places; and intersecting experiences of disadvantage.

We discuss each of these by theme below but many of them intertwine for any one young person. To protect confidentiality, we have linked together comments from more than one person to illustrate how individuals experience a cluster of factors that either helped or limited their enjoyment of getting to and being by the sea. We also explore wider social causes of some of the issues, and how these relate to other research<sup>29</sup>.

In the second part of this section we have set out young peoples' recommendations and suggestions on how to remove some of the barriers to their enjoyment of the coast.

### 4.1 Discussion of findings

#### 4.1.1 Familiarity

We found that some young people are very familiar with the coast and this led them to use coastal areas more often.

Young people became familiar with the coast in different ways (explored more below). Once they had some kind of connection with an area, if they had the necessary support (e.g. permission, ability to get there, information and safety), young people continued to go. They also explored other similar areas, with other people or alone.

Young people become familiar with particular places because they lived close by (less than 20 minutes' walk away), have been taken there by family or school, or been introduced to them by friends. They described the benefits of going to these places for their social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

This study suggests that young peoples' relationship to natural places is far more complex than was found in an earlier study in Cumbria, which found disaffected young people saying they can't perceive the benefits of the landscape<sup>30</sup>. But in this study, some of the young people who were for example getting into trouble where they lived or within education, said they found going to familiar places as "peaceful", somewhere "to relax" and that "It changes the way I am or I feel about me personally". This echoes other research on the wellbeing benefits of "blue" spaces<sup>31</sup>.

Young people did tell us that not all young people are interested in the coast and that some don't appreciate it. But they more often said that barriers to using the coast were factors like adult attitudes and lack of activities, rather than young peoples' individual traits. Those who did not visit the coast because of distance still talked of other outdoor areas they liked to visit (e.g. reservoirs and parks).

There was some connection between socio-economic factors and place. In groups involving only young people living in areas of low employment, income, living environment and education, there was no familiarity with local coastal tourist destinations (e.g. Piel Island and Roan Head). However, some of these young people still had a sense of pride in and connection to the coastal places they knew.

### 4.1.2 Belonging

Young peoples' enjoyment of the coast is related to the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging, and this is linked to experiences with family, how close they live to the beaches, pride in place and self-esteem.

Young people identified that the coast provided a place to be with family and friends. This enhanced a sense of belonging to a place as well as to a group. They told us they thought that young people who regularly see the sea, from home or school, would have a stronger sense of belonging. The sense of belonging was also linked to a pride in place including where they lived, the town, island and particular beaches. Some had pride in the rich coastal wildlife they knew about, particularly seals and natterjack toads. It was also shown by the many young people who are worried about the problems of litter (on and off-shore) and debris such as needles. Pride also grew from where family members lived and worked and some told us they felt safer in the town or on Walney Island because relatives could be a refuge if they needed it.

For other young people, the coast was not theirs and they did not feel welcome. They saw the coast as a place that belonged to families. Times they felt they did not belong included when they were in groups with peers as well as when they were on their own.

The importance of a sense of belonging is underlined young peoples' recommendations for a social media campaign that encourages a diversity of young people to share photographs of themselves at the coast. Their aim was to encourage everyone to feel like it is somewhere they could be.

Young peoples' sense of whether they belonged at the coast was also linked to their sense of whether they felt like they, as individuals, fit with social expectations. This was connected to being the "right sort" of young person in terms of body image, confidence, sexuality, race and gender.

### 4.1.3 Family behaviour, resources and attitudes

Supportive families (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and siblings) enabled young people to enjoy the coast. They provided coastal experiences from an early age, help getting to the coast (driving, paying for travel fares or maintaining bicycles), money for food, clothing and equipment, and encouragement to explore.

This support and modelling was absent for some young people.

Adult family member's employment and leisure patterns were a significant factor. Where family members were employed at a coastal setting this increased young peoples' access. However demands on the time of family members, for long working hours, could act as a barrier. Where family members used the coast for leisure themselves – to fish, crab, walk dogs or just walk – it increased young people's familiarity with these places from an early age, and meant they wanted to go later with their friends. Where families had disposable income, this enabled activities (as explored in detail in 4.1.8). Where they were confident about exploring, this enabled their children's confidence (see 4.1.5).

The passing on of a feeling of belonging between generations may be eroded for some by changing patterns of adults' work and leisure. For example, coastal industries that sub-contract labour, creates a workforce that is only in the area for part of the week. Young people described the growth of new lodges and short-term accommodation for self-employed workers who travel to the area from across the country. This workforce is employed in the industries which young people said had generated a sense of belonging in the urban environment. This temporary workforce is present Monday to Friday and then goes back to spend weekend leisure time with their families elsewhere. The workers familiarity with this coastal area is not passed onto the next generation.

#### 4.1.4 Attitudes and behaviour of unknown adults

Young people described adults' attitudes and behaviour as a barrier to their enjoyment of the coast. They told us that adults assume young people are up to no good, engaged in risky behaviour, or were putting other people at risk.

In all six groups in this study the young people told us they experienced negative reactions to their presence at the coast or in parks, whether they were alone or in a group. This matches up with other research on young people in urban and wild spaces<sup>32</sup>. Negative reactions included 'dirty looks' and assumptions that 'we are out to cause grief'.

Young people experienced these reactions in places or whilst engaging in activities that would be seen as 'normal' or even 'positive' for adults. For example, they were walking with friends along popular beaches or clearing their heads of negative feelings by exploring nature reserves alone. Young people said they were 'demonised' and one group said the media reinforce this view of young people. Strikingly, we heard no examples of unknown adults giving positive responses to them being at the coast.

The PAG discussed these issues in a lot of detail because they felt this was one of the main barriers to being at the coast. They said:

*"Old people seem to think that young people don't understand the world as well as them. It's unfair ... everyone is equal and we should be treated the same ... If you can change adults attitudes you can make it possible for young people to go out more."*

We suggest that the lack of welcome and facilities for young people at the coast may be a reflection of deeper assumptions. At the Creative Horizon event, young people said "We need shelter on beach so we can go on bad days." But decision-makers who plan coastal facilities may assume that providing shelters for young people to gather, could encourage risky behaviour and put adults at risk. Providing facilities without also resolving the other factors (a sense of belonging, safety and pride), may reinforce these assumptions. For example, socially undesirable behaviour around facilities becomes a justification for removing them, rather than as a sign that more needs to be done to increase feelings of belonging, safety and pride<sup>33</sup>.

#### 4.1.5 Experiences with other young people

Whether or not young people feel familiarity and belonging is related to the behaviour of other young people.

Some of the young people we spoke with talked about how they involved their friends in visits to the coast and enabled new adventures and increasing familiarity. We heard young people invite others to go to the coast with them or offers of help getting there on the back of bikes.

Other young people were excluded from the coast due to experiences of violence and being attacked by gangs. And some described how visits to the coast with friends or family, helped them overcome experiences of bullying.

Young people who were familiar with the coast (because they lived very near it or had become familiar with it through family outings) opened up access to the coast for their friends. They organised activities and encouraged other people to come along. One young person said their family gave them permission to take part in adventurous activities and helped them get to places, and this clearly had a knock-on benefit for their friends. A girl described how her mother encouraged her to explore new places on her bicycle, and she then involved her friends in this adventure. Another young person said her aunt was effectively a taxi service for a whole group of friends. This shows

that friendship groups are an important bridge into more enjoyment of the coast - particularly for young people whose families were not providing this bridging.

Young peoples' sense of belonging and safety to enjoy the coast was at times undermined by their experience of violence and bullying from peers. For example, ideas that girls should not cycle or that ethnic minorities do not belong in Barrow, were shouted as insults (at the coast or away from it). This made some young people reluctant to walk or cycle to parts of the coast they wanted to use. Some young people, however, described how getting to the coast and experiencing safe times there with family or peers, or time on their own, could help them overcome difficult experiences of violence from other young people. Finding ways of both preventing and safely overcoming experiences of violence and bullying is therefore crucial.

#### 4.1.6 Safety

Young peoples' competence in navigating risk, and adults' perspectives on risk, enabled or limited young people's enjoyment of the coast.

Some young people with experience and confidence in coastal environments, told us they could safely do activities that might be seen as risky - and would be for inexperienced young people. This included swimming and mud-sliding down gullies. We also heard that some parents were concerned about their children doing these activities, and we did hear of incidents such as one young person who had fallen into sinking sand and another who had been swept out of their depth in the sea.

Some young people described how they cycled or walked for miles, travelled to locations or swam in seas. The assessment of what was risky appeared to vary considerably between different parents and it may be that this related to their knowledge of their children. Some young people themselves suggested that they did not feel competent to travel independently (and this was not related to age). Others said some parts of Barrow, which needed to be crossed to access parts of the coast, were dangerous.

Previous research has suggested that parental assessment of risks affecting children is related to their own fears and to cultural messages about childhood danger<sup>34</sup>. But outdoor adventure, which may be seen as risky, builds competence and increases self-esteem<sup>35</sup>.

There is a need to help young people understand and navigate natural and man-made hazards (e.g. litter) so they can be more independent in outdoor activities. Understanding how best to do this is an important area for further investigation.

#### 4.1.7 Young peoples' own money and work

The availability of family resources to pay for transport, food, clothing and equipment is important. But some young people, or their friends, had access to money and cars, which helped overcome any shortfall in family incomes. Other young people did not have access to paid employment. For some the lack of independent income combined with lack of free time because of heavy demands within education.

The development of screen-based leisure activities (such as gaming) is a factor in young peoples' leisure choices and reduces the time and interest in outdoor activities.

Lack of future local job security may also have an indirect impact. For example, young people in one group, said that in contrast to the experience of their fathers and grandfathers, 'you can't work there [the major employer in the area] for life' and that "Barrow has the highest rate of young people leaving for the city'. With the prospect of leaving the coast looming ahead for many young people, the incentive to develop hobbies that rely on coastal environments may be reduced. Of the young

people who talked about future career plans, very few named jobs that were associated with the coast.

#### **4.1.8 Appeal of and knowledge about particular natural coastal environments**

Coastal places offering peace, adventure (sliding down, swimming, cycling) wildlife, and places to walk dogs and eat food had a particular appeal. Which place appealed to which young person, appeared to depend on their personal interests.

For some, access to these was in part limited by not knowing about them. Many young people (including some who described the coast as boring or irritating because there was too much sand) had not heard of certain coastal areas or what was available there. For example, the seal colony was known to some young people but not others. Some young people also lacked knowledge and skills in the sorts of things (games, swimming, meditating, cycling) that could be done in coastal places.

Those with limited knowledge had no opportunity to decide whether a given coastal place would respond to their personal interests or to expand their interests. Young peoples' opportunity to gain knowledge was also limited by money. For example, lack of money for the ferry as well as lack of knowledge of the ferry limited access to the potential for adventure on Piel Island. Some young people had never experienced coastal places they wanted to go and eat at, and this appeared to be linked to lack of money for food.

Knowledge of coastal places and activities came from family, friends, school and individual's own sense of adventure.

To fix this, young people recommended that social media should be used to share knowledge about coastal places. This suggestion is of particular interest as another study<sup>36</sup> suggests that use of outdoor spaces and nature connection can be encouraged by using smart phones. That study suggests it may be particularly helpful for teens, girls and people of colour.

In our study, young people also recommended that more activities should be provided for them by the coast and this could be combined with useful information about what they can do where.

#### **4.1.9 Experience of multiple disadvantage**

Some young people experienced multiple barriers to their enjoyment of the coast, related to their social and economic situations.

In line with previous research about adult and youth access to outdoor leisure<sup>37</sup>, we found that young people who experienced discrimination based on their race or ethnicity were the most likely to experience barriers to their enjoyment of the coast. Barriers were related to lack of parental time and income as well as experiences of bullying from peers. There were some examples of lack of knowledge.

Also echoing previous research, girls experienced increasing barriers to their enjoyment of the coast as they grew older. This may be related to increasing pressure to conform to gender stereotypes. Family behaviour and attitudes were particularly influential in whether this barrier was overcome.

Young people who faced discrimination related to their sexual orientation or gender identity tended to favour (adventurous and peaceful) activities which they took part in on their own. Access to financial resources and recovery from bullying appeared to influence whether they also took part in coastal activities with others.



Some young people who lived in particularly deprived wards<sup>38</sup> reported barriers to access the sea related to family income and time, including long working hours, time to prepare for outings and the money to pay for travel for the whole family as well as lack of a family car. Extended family who provided transport and equipment were important for those young people who were able to overcome these barriers.

The PAG suggested that negative attitudes from adults could contribute to a cycle of multiple disadvantage. Young people growing up in areas of social deprivation and young people facing bullying often experience low self-esteem. This makes it hard for them to go out and enjoy coastal places. If they do go out but encounter negative attitudes from adults, this reinforces their low self-esteem, and their feelings that they do not belong. Negative attitudes from adults were seen as more likely when adults get stuck in ill-informed thinking – about young people, about identities and about communities.

## **4.2 Suggestions for helping young people enjoy the benefits of being by the sea**

### **4.2.1 Young peoples' suggestions**

Young people's direct suggestions are in Section 0. Here we have expanded on some of them.

#### **Safety and acceptance**

Young people often told us about feeling bullied by peers or judged by adults. As some young people pointed out in sessions and in the Creative Horizon events, a long-term goal should be changing attitudes so that young people can safely be who they are when at the coast.

Social media campaigns could help to achieve this. But PAG members noted that some adults would prefer information in the form of leaflets and newspaper articles. They want a summary of the findings from this research shared with adults and through schools - as a way of trying to get people to be more accepting.

#### **Events and activities**

Young people want more activities and events at the coast but these need to be affordable in several ways: to get to, to have suitable equipment or clothing for, and to attend. This would keep young people occupied and out of trouble.

#### **Getting there more easily and cheaply**

There is a clear need for better transport that is more affordable and easier to understand/use.

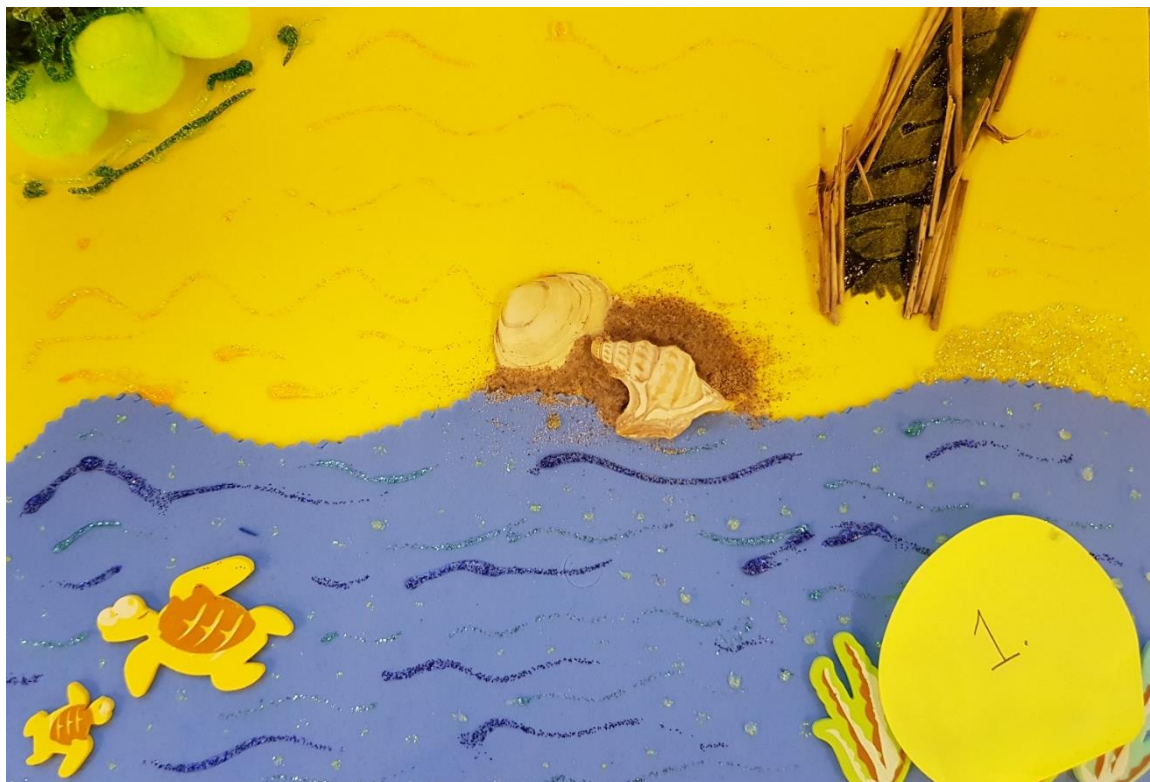
#### **More information and use of social media**

Young people think social media is a good way to share information about opportunities at the coast. Advertising will create more awareness of what the coast has to offer and how to get there. Currently young people aren't hearing about it much.

They also want information about how to keep yourself safe at the coast. The PAG suggested that this could include information about tides.

#### **Cleaner beaches**

Young people in several groups said that if there were more bins and cleaner beaches it would encourage them to go and one group suggested a summer scheme to pick litter on the beach. They suggested more bins along the coast for general waste and recycling. (Though some local context is that there is a landfill site on Walney which the sea is eroding. This is exposing plastic and other waste, which is washed onto the beach).



#### 4.2.2 Our suggestions

Whilst we were listening to the young people, and in our own team discussions afterwards, solutions also occurred to us. These are far from a complete list but we offer them as additional ideas and potential solutions.

#### Facilitate local young people, organisations and stakeholders to co-produce solutions for their area

- Bring key local organisations, service providers and young people together to hear and understand concerns what affects coastal use in their area and can then work how to work together to share resources and deliver high impact solutions.

#### Tackle bullying and violence

Finding ways to prevent and safely overcoming experiences of violence and bullying at the coast have emerged from this research as a key area to tackle. Our suggestions include:

- Ensuring that young peoples' reports of violence and harassment from peers receive a rapid response (for example from the police) and are treated seriously would make a difference.
- Tackle peer bullying by building young peoples' confidence (but not over-confidence) in themselves, by providing leisure, work or outdoor activities that increase self-esteem.

#### Change adult attitudes

Work to change adult attitudes with an information campaign targeting them to smile at and encourage young people they see at the coast.

It would also help to shift adult focus onto root causes and how they can be solved and off examples of (mis)behaviour.

#### Information

The young people have suggested the use of social media to provide information. From listening to them we think this needs to include where to go, when, how, what to do there, what you can see there, real risks and how to play adventurously but safely, and what they perceive as risks that they don't need to worry about.

### **Build outdoor confidence**

Some young people clearly had confidence about being out and about by the coast and others didn't. Suggestions for building outdoor confidence include:

- Provide sessions to give young people skills and confidence to be out and safe in coastal environments (like woodland bushcraft skills but for the coast)
- Run sessions where young people can try out new activities, and provide the resources (facilities, reduced transport costs, food, equipment and digital interfaces) to enable this.

### **Build friendship groups**

- Run events that encourage friendship groups to go or from and events that you get to free (or very low cost) if you bring a friend

### **Jobs**

- Provide information about coastal employment opportunities related to the coast such as new leisure activities

### **Transport**

- key solutions to enabling young people to use the coast involve better and cheaper transport and knowing how to use buses
- Consider a second-hand bike scheme and bike training
- The buses that go to the beach at Walney in school time may still run half empty in summer time and welcome any fares – explore the idea of a young person's very low cost Beach Bus pass in the summer
- More direct routes with reduced journey time will also help summer visits feel more feasible

## 5 Limitations of the research

This research went very well and achieved far more than was hoped for at the outset. Nevertheless, there are always limitations and lessons to learn:

### Consenting, ethics and timeframes

In order to meet ethical standards we needed signed parental/care giver consent to work with young people under the age of 16. Consenting is designed to give young people protection but at times had the effect of disempowering some who wanted to take part but did not have signed consent forms.

This was in part a consequence of the short lead in times between method and ethics approvals, and when the work had to take place to meet project timelines and avoid December (when young people's time and youth organisations are caught up in seasonal activities).

We also relied on organisations that had relationships with parents and carers, to help us get consent. The shorter lead in times combined with their limited capacity to organise this, did not make that easy for them and resulted in some organisations declining to take part.

### Not being able to meet young people out and about and at the coast

A useful method would have been to interview young people when they were out and about away from or by the coast. However, the need for care givers consents and related ethics rules that out.

### Adapting to the unexpected

When meeting with young people in groups we had to adjust to unexpected changes in times, rooms, numbers and sometimes other background noise. This meant we had to adapt our methods and focus group sizes at short notice. We took this flexible approach in order to be inclusive of all young people who wished to participate. In some circumstances it meant that we were not able to get as much in-depth information about individual participants' personal circumstances.

### Time of year

The research was conducted during the winter. This will have influenced the sorts of activities that young people had most recently taken part in and may have had an effect on the issues they reported, such as the impact of the weather.

### Group working

Working with young people in groups was positive as it enabled them to share knowledge about natural coastal environments that were unknown to some of them. They were also able to hear and add detail to each other's points and perspectives, recognising where they held views in common or where they held unique views within that group.

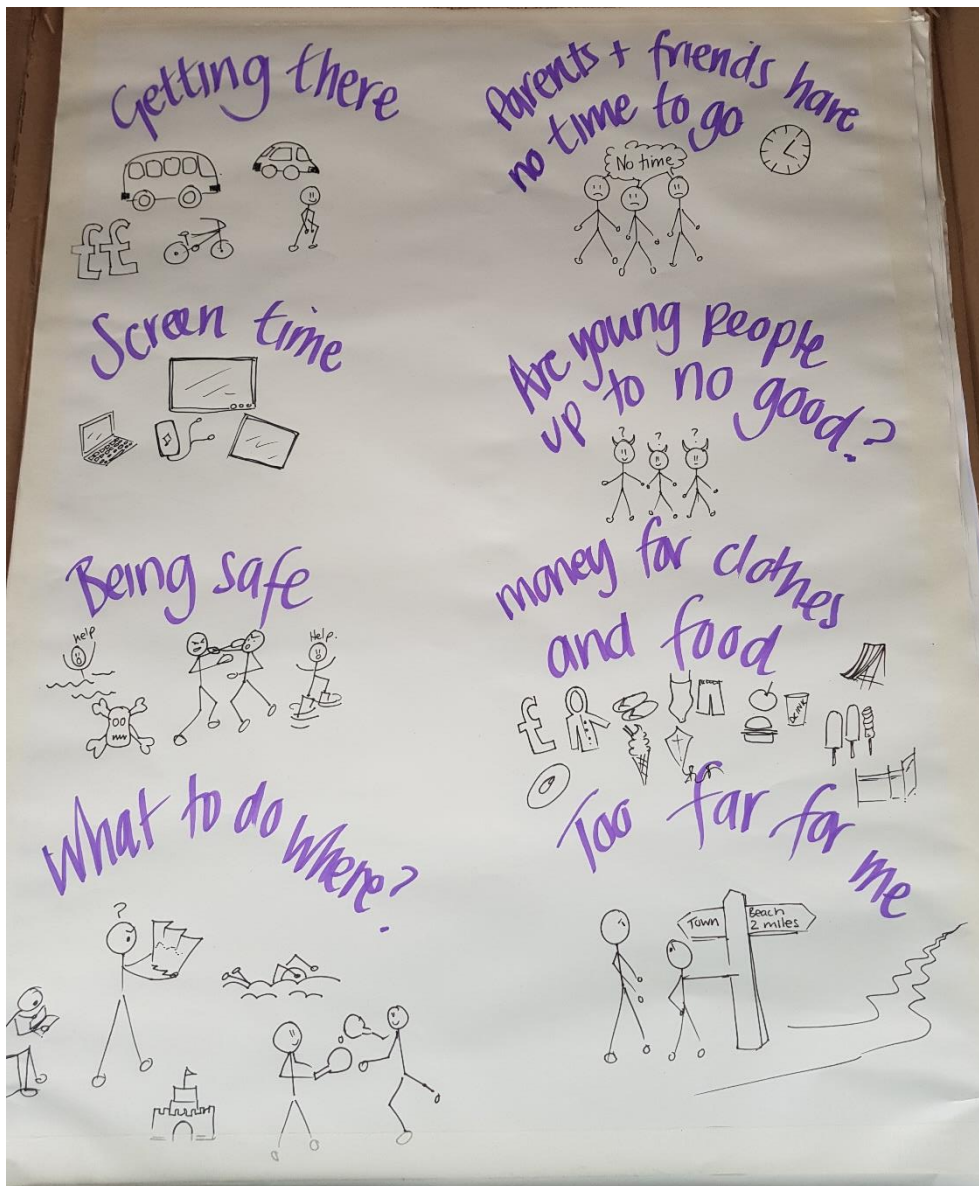
Even though they were working in a group, when there was high peer trust, and trust in the research team, they shared sensitive and difficult stories. It is still also likely that young people would be reluctant to discuss some things in front of peers.

### Suggestions for future research are

- Further work at Barrow and Walney to include 1:1 interviews so young people feel able to share concerns they would not reveal in front of peers. The maps made in this study could be used as a point of departure and individual young people could then take part in walking tours with researchers.
- It would also be interesting to repeating this research in different locations and contexts to tease out what barriers and enablers are particular to disadvantaged communities by the coast, and which are common to any coastal community, and being out in any natural space.

## Annex 1 Picture summary of findings from mapping sessions

This photo is the way the research team communicated the emerging issues from the mapping sessions, to those who took part in the CH events.



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- <sup>24</sup> Map courtesy of Natural England
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