

Sandhead: Rewilding Project

April '23 to March '24

£36,000

Dumfries & Galloway
Council



Sandhead, damage to natural vegetation caused by parked vehicles.
© Alex Whannel (2023)

Overview:

The project establishes an area for re-wilding. It will be fenced and signed to prevent vehicle parking, which compacts the sand and damages the fragile vegetation. This aims to help reduce coastal erosion and flooding, given the potential benefits that nature-based solutions may have in coastal erosion control, whilst supporting wildlife, and allowing visitors to enjoy the beach.

What we are hoping to learn:

We will use nature-based solutions to slow down the coastal erosion in this area.

It is expected that the re-establishment of the natural vegetation / dunes will act as a natural barrier to help retain the beach and make it more resilient.

This case study can be seen as a practical example of the use of nature-based solutions in the adaption for the future effects of climate change in Scotland's coastal environment.

“Where overuse has accelerated erosion, we hope that employing a nature-based solution will aid in the adaptation to the expected coastal changes which will occur as a result of climate change.”

**Brian Templeton, Team Leader –
Dumfries and Galloway Council's
Flood Risk Management Team**

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#ReWilding



#1. April 2023

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Some of the grassed area has very limited biodiversity and isn't that robust with damage from vehicles.

Overview:

The project established an area for re-wilding, which was fenced and signed to prevent vehicle parking to help protect against potential damages to the fragile vegetation. The aim is to help reduce coastal erosion and flooding, using the potential benefits that nature-based solutions can bring in control of coastal erosion, supporting wildlife, and continuing to allow visitors to enjoy the beach.

What we are learning:

- We expect the re-establishment of the natural vegetation / dunes will act as a natural barrier to help retain the beach and make it more resilient, although more time is required to fully assess benefit.
- Importance of working in partnership with local experts - A vegetation survey was carried out in July 2023 by the Solway Firth Partnership, showing that there is already a good community of seaside plants. It is their deep / extensive root systems that can contribute to binding the sand together.

Photos from vegetation survey, courtesy of Nic Coombey, Solway Firth Partnership



Grass leaved orache



Marram Grass



Sea beet



Sea mayweed

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March 2024

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The fence allows for the reestablishment of the backshore vegetation. Photo courtesy of Nic Coombe

Overview:

The area for rewilding was established and is now protected by a fence, preventing further degradation of the beach vegetation. New signage has been installed, including informative signage explaining the aims, benefits and reasons for implementing this project, as well as what the public can do to contribute. Access to the beach has been maintained through 6 paths (with matting that protects the sand and allows for vegetation growth), a slipway and a designated area for parking. New benches and picnic tables have also been installed to allow the public to still enjoy the beach.

We learnt:

Importance of communication and engagement – following an initial public consultation by Stoneykirk Community Council the project has been accepted by some, opposed by others, largely those out with the area.

Monitoring - long-term monitoring is required to assess expected against actual benefits.

Maintenance – while fencing/matting is relatively new, financial agreement will be required for ongoing maintenance.

Watch a video [here](#) (start at 25:30 mins) 

Vegetation thriving.
Photo courtesy of Gordon Baird



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