

Five Year Strategy for Morecambe Bay Curriculum

About Morecambe Bay Curriculum

The Morecambe Bay Curriculum is an educator-led movement and a cross-sector partnership supported by Lancaster University, Lancaster and Morecambe College, University of Cumbria and the Eden Project. Together, we encourage and empower children and young people to become the change-makers and innovators that our planet needs, through a community-curated, place-based approach to learning about sustainability and the environment.

The heart of the Morecambe Bay Curriculum is the community of educators, who together curate the content and bring the project to life at a grassroots level. Children and young people explore the themes of environment, sustainability and place using the ecosystems surrounding the Bay as a classroom. Collectively, teachers are driven by their hopes for the young people with whom they work, and seek to prioritise their wellbeing, support their future careers, and ensure the Bay is somewhere everyone feels proud to live. Together we can encourage and empower young people to see the tangible positive change their actions make to the environment.

As we approach our fifth anniversary since starting this project, we have decided to develop a strategic plan that will guide our work for the next five years, from 2025 to 2030. This plan will help us to articulate our vision, mission, and values, set our strategic goals and objectives, and define our measures of success and impact. The strategic plan will also help us to communicate our purpose and achievements to our stakeholders, funders, and supporters, and to attract new resources and partnerships.

Most importantly, the strategic plan will enable us to align our activities and efforts with the needs and aspirations of the community we serve, and to ensure that we are making a positive and lasting difference to the people and places around Morecambe Bay.

Our purpose and values

The core of our work is in **Education and Learning**. We believe education and learning are essential for personal development, social inclusion, and economic prosperity. We also believe it should be relevant, meaningful, and enjoyable, and that it should reflect and celebrate the unique identity of Morecambe Bay; its incredible biodiversity, its specific strengths and challenges and its cultural heritage.

Working alongside educators who equip children and young people to care for the planet and participate in the Green Economy, we will empower them to be change agents. We advocate for the recognition and support of Morecambe Bay as a distinctive and diverse learning region.

Embedded throughout everything we do is our focus on **Place, Sustainability and Environment**: improving ecosystems of the Bay and increasing connection to nature.

We envision a Morecambe Bay where children and young people are proud of their heritage and culture, curious about their environment and community, and confident about their future and potential. Our programmes and activities therefore also contribute to at least one of three wider change dimensions:

- **Mental and Physical Health:** Longer, healthier and more positive lives
- **Work and Local Economy:** Sustainable and inclusive economic growth and green jobs
- **People and Community:** Strengthening pride in place and community

Our values are the principles that guide our work and shape our culture. They are:

- **Head, Heart and Hands:** we will embed knowledge, values and skills through a flexible approach to pedagogy which enables learners to develop and apply ideas in practical contexts.
- **Strength in the Collective:** we recognise our ambitions can only be achieved by involving and working alongside a variety of partners and perspectives to strengthen and grow our work.
- **Learning from each other:** we value the power of peer learning amongst educators, young people, employers and anchor organisations around the Bay to spread ideas, innovation and good practice.
- **Celebrating Place:** we use a strength-based and bottom-up approach that recognises and values the unique assets of the people and places of Morecambe Bay; inviting ideas and inspiration from across the Morecambe Bay Curriculum membership.

The context of our work

Our work is informed by and responds to the external drivers and trends that affect the people and places of Morecambe Bay, including:

The ecological crisis and the need for environmental stewardship: Morecambe Bay is home to a diverse range of wildlife and habitats, including internationally important wetlands, woodlands, limestone pavements and sand dunes. The Bay faces multiple threats from climate change, pollution, overfishing, invasive species and coastal erosion.

- The State of Nature (2023) report highlights that the UK is now one of most ‘nature-depleted’ countries, but Morecambe Bay offers hope, as the largest intertidal area in England and one of the biodiverse areas in terms of flora and fauna (Pollastri et al, 2023).
- 52% of young people worried about lack of action on climate change, 61% lacked a sense of agency in being able to tackle the climate crisis. (Climate Care)

We will raise awareness and appreciation of the Bay's natural heritage and foster skills and attitudes for conservation and restoration.

The economic and social challenges and the need for inclusive growth: Morecambe Bay is one of the most deprived areas in the UK, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, poor health outcomes and limited opportunities for young people.

- Morecambe Bay is made up of vibrant communities but it contains pockets of severe deprivation surrounded by more affluent areas which masks the depth of deprivation across the Bay. Some of these deprived areas are in highest deprivation bracket in country (Citizens Advice North Lancashire, cited in [APPG for Coastal Communities Coastal Inquiry Update report 2024](#))
- Morecambe Bay presents clear indications of deprivation, its economic activity rate and employment rate are lower than the national average: 69.7% compared to 77.3% and 63.9% compared to 71.1% respectively. ([Morecambe Bay Poverty Report 2020](#))
- Lancashire is rated in the bottom 20% in the country for ‘Promising Prospects’ by levels of university education, professional work, and earning, and in the second highest 20% of ‘Precarious Situations’ measured by levels of unemployment, economic inactivity and lower working-class employment. ([Social Mobility Commission](#))

- Many areas in Morecambe Bay display a substantial rate of child poverty. The percentage of children in poverty in Barrow-in-Furness is 22%; in Morecambe is 21% and 18% in Lancaster. The national average is 20.2%. ([Morecambe Bay Poverty Report 2020](#))
- Significant health inequalities exist in the Bay, with lower than average life expectancy and higher than average mortality rates for those under the age of 75 in Copeland, Barrow-in-Furness and Lancaster . ([NHS Midlands and Lancashire Equality Related Demographic Profile for NHS Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group, 2020](#)).

We will address these challenges by developing relevant and engaging learning experiences that link to local needs and aspirations, health and wellbeing, and by creating pathways for progression and employability in emerging green sectors and in support of the renewed tourism generated by the Eden Project.

The need to respond to the challenges and opportunities that arise within the education and community sectors.

- Challenges in school that have only increased post-covid; poor attendance, and mental health challenges leading to overburdened educators.

The [NCVO Road Ahead](#) report summarises other key challenges as:

- The potential impacts of a change in government, local and regional elections, and increased scrutiny on campaigning and advocacy work.
- The tough economic climate, high inflation and interest rates, reduced charitable giving and public sector funding, and rising demand for services.
- Big shifts created by AI and the climate crisis, bringing greater opportunities to advocate for a greener and equitable future for everyone.
- Opportunities to strengthen local participation and community empowerment, and increase the flexibility and accessibility of volunteering.

The cultural and historical diversity and the need for community cohesion:

Morecambe Bay has a rich and varied history and culture, shaped by its location at the crossroads of different regions, nations and influences. We want to recognise and celebrate the cultural legacies that young people stand to inherit.

- There are unique archeological remains spanning 13,000 years including 2 historic promenades, iconic follies and lookouts, Iron Age hillforts, Bronze Age stone circles, Viking graves, important ritual and religious sites, a crucial Victorian

railway, and internationally significant industrial, maritime and World War heritage.” ([Morecambe Bay Partnership Culture and Heritage.](#))

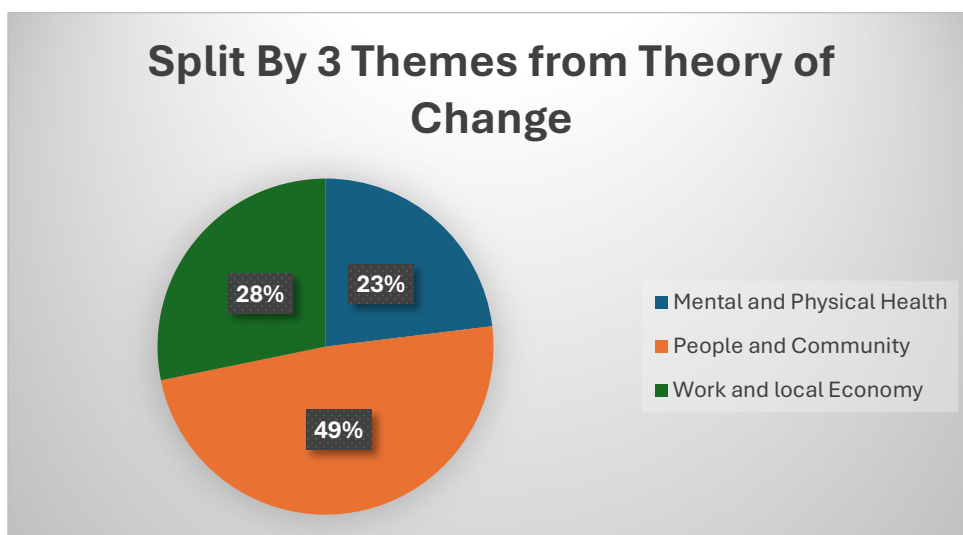
- As a coastal community, the Bay has been a significant point for trade, industry, and cultural interactions between different regions and nations. (A History of Morecambe, Alan Crosby, 2004).
- Cumbria has a rich storytelling history and the landscapes and seascapes have inspired writers and poets for centuries. From the ancient folklore and Viking tales, to the beloved characters of Beatrix Potter and the poems of William Wordsworth to the paintings of John Ruskin.

We will celebrate the diversity and distinctiveness of the Bay, and promote a sense of belonging and identity among its residents. We will use creativity to stimulate innovation and social change. The curriculum also fosters intercultural understanding and dialogue, and encourages active citizenship and social action.

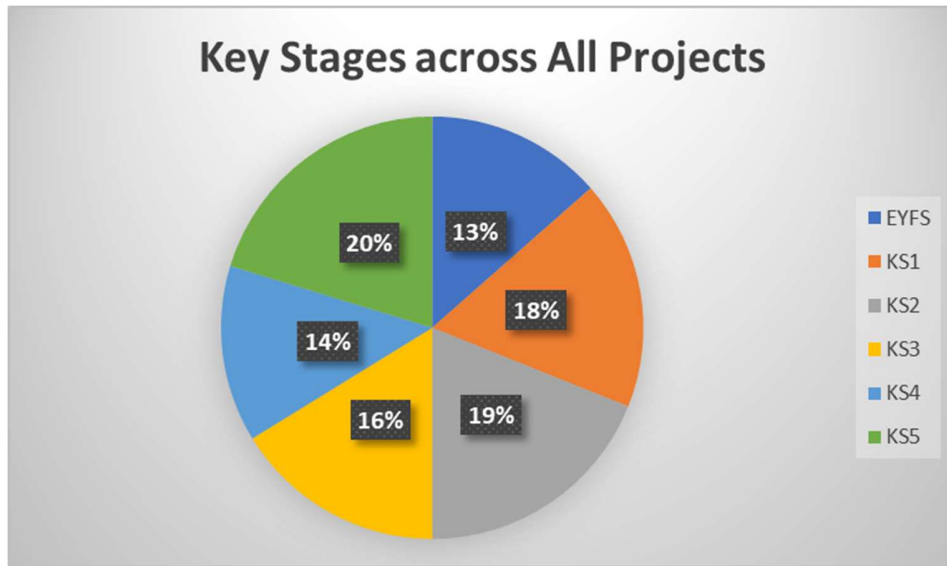
Our focus and impact to date

Through this work, educators have found and developed comradeship, networks, training, joy, and an increased connection with the vocation of teaching.

These partnerships have resulted in 33 projects being collectively delivered under the Morecambe Bay Curriculum umbrella covering a variety of themes and involving people at all educational stages. We analysed our past projects by key themes from our Theory of Change (see pie chart overleaf). All the projects deliver outcomes related to Education and Place, Sustainability and Environment. Over half (58%) covered multiple themes. There was a much higher proportion of projects addressing the theme of People and Community (49%) compared with Mental & Physical Health (23%) and Work and Local Economy (28%). We will seek to balance this through selecting a single theme to provide a focus for working groups and broader activities each eighteen months.



There was a fairly even balance across the different key stages, with 42% of projects covering multiple key stages. 40% of projects were focused on Primary education whilst 30% were Secondary and we would like to balance this in the future.



Reflecting on our achievements to date, we have identified the following success factors which we are proud to celebrate:

- The commitment and collaboration of people, partners, and stakeholders;
- The breadth, scale, volume, and variety of projects that addressed different themes and key stages;
- The freedom and organic growth that allowed flexibility and responsiveness to the needs and interests of the participants;
- The creative thinking and innovation that enabled solving issues and generating new ideas;
- The MBC badge as a mark of validity and credibility that enhances the reputation and recognition of the projects.

We have also identified challenges that we face, including:

- Evaluating and measuring the impact and outcomes of the projects in a consistent and meaningful way;
- Embedding the projects into the curriculum and overcoming the time constraints and financial barriers that limit the scope and reach of the projects;
- Balancing a collaborative and participatory approach with providing structure and guidance for the MBC membership.

As we develop our strategic priorities for the next five years, we will build on and leverage our strengths whilst responding to the challenges.

Strategic objectives 2025-2029

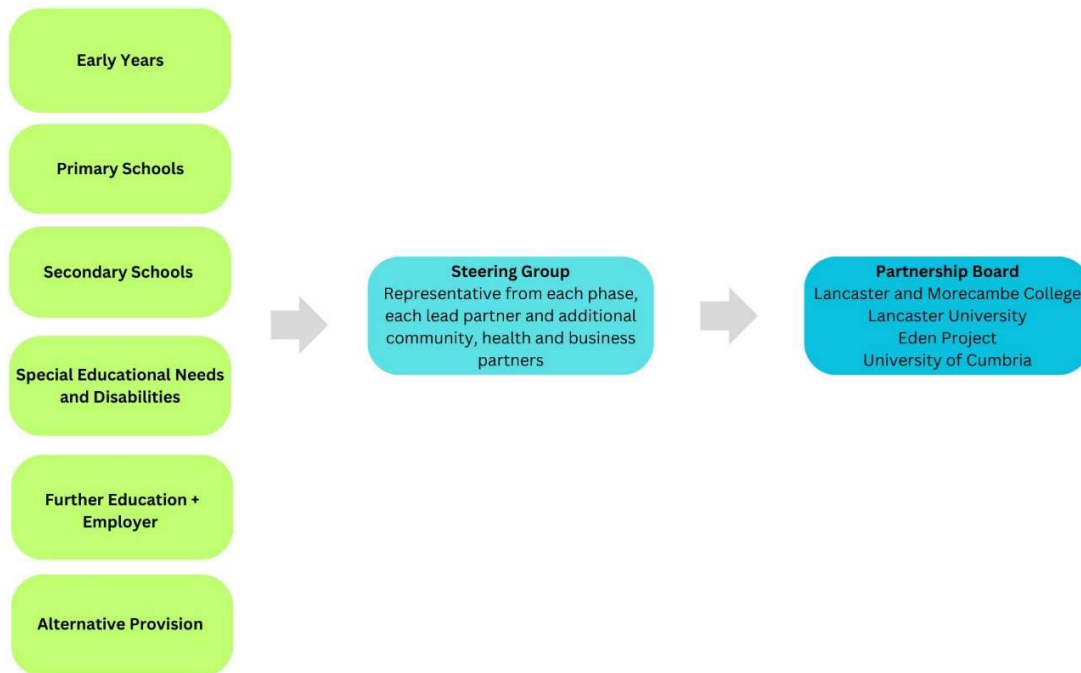
Over the five year period of this strategy, we will focus on the following strategic objectives:

- 1. Facilitating the MBC partnership by bringing together expertise, partnerships, alliances and stakeholders to deliver our ambition and ensure participant involvement at a strategic and operational level. We will:**
 - a. Select a theme from our Theory of Change periodically to provide a focus point for activities in Working Groups. Working groups can incorporate these themes into curriculum, projects and campaigning/advocacy. Transition to greater delegated authority and self-management of working groups.
 - b. Provide the structure, support and tools to MBC Members to enable them to design and grow projects, increase accessibility and representation, and monitor delivery and impact over the next five years.
 - c. Build our collective understanding of the journey a young person experiencing the Morecambe Bay Curriculum can expect and how that links to day-to-day teaching; from early years, to primary, secondary and post-secondary education.
 - d. Grow the membership of the Morecambe Bay Curriculum to ensure that every teacher and child around the Bay has access to high quality, locally focused, environmental education opportunities.
- 2. Capturing and communicating the depth and breadth of our impact more effectively to build the credibility and recognition of the MBC.** Building on our work in 2023 on our Theory of Change and Impact Framework, we will:
 - a. Complete a retrospective evaluation of the first five years of MBC.
 - b. Develop impact tools for Partnership Board members, the MBC Steering Group and members to support Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.
 - c. Build evidence base for the MBC approach including peer-reviewed, REFable outputs published in academic and professional journals.
 - d. Use learnings to influence regional, national and global policy and practice.
- 3. Identifying and enabling mechanisms to support the long-term financial sustainability of the MBC.** Led by the Partnership Board, we will:
 - a. Scope potential funding opportunities aligned with our strategic priorities and develop a fundraising plan. Review and evaluate the opportunities we pursue to inform future funding priorities.
 - b. Ensure the financial, physical and human resources are secured to sustain the project into the next strategy cycle.

Governance Structure

We recognise that the governance structures that were so pivotal to our past success need to adapt and evolve to deliver our future ambitions.

Our Steering Group will continue to be made up of diverse representatives from different stakeholder groups. We have re-shaped our Working Groups to have a pan-bay focus split by different ages/educational phases, with 5-15 people in each working group. Guided by the chosen theme, each group will be supported to decide their focus and determine how they want to collectively achieve their goals. A representative from each working group will attend a regular Steering Group meeting to provide an update on their activities.



Implementation and review

We will produce a detailed annual delivery plan that sets out the success indicators, actions and responsibilities against each of our strategic priorities. We will also support the working groups to develop their annual activity plans relating to the annual theme.

The Partnership Board will maintain oversight of the strategy through the following mechanisms:

- Simple dashboard with RAG rating based on delivery plan
- Reports from Steering Group meetings where Working group leads will share their work

At the mid-point of this strategy cycle we will review our strategic priorities to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose. The delivery plan will be refreshed annually.

How this strategy was produced

This strategy builds on work completed in 2023 to develop our Theory of Change and Impact Framework. We engaged external consultants, Silverdale Associates, to carry out several consultation activities to inform and co-design our strategic priorities, including:

- Analysis of past MBC projects
- 1:1 interviews with Partnership Board members
- An away day with Partnership Board and Steering Group members including additional working group members.
- Consultation with Working Groups.
- Follow up meetings with the MBC delivery team, Partnership Board and Steering Group to analyse the key themes and priorities to produce this document.