

North West Awards for Coastal Excellence 2025

Awarding progress & potential

north west coastal forum

The Awards Scheme

1

Recognise and celebrate outstanding achievement in and contribution to the long-term sustainable management of our coast and nearshore environments

2

Spread the word of good practice throughout the North West - and beyond!



Award Categories

Lifetime Achievement Coastal Champion

- Significant contribution to coastal sustainability
- Leadership
- Being an inspiration to others

Early Careers Coastal Champion

Coastal Community Action

- Significant contribution to community benefit and the coast arising from the work carried out

Coastal Best Practice

- Significant benefits to coast and/or near-shore marine environments and local communities and businesses arising from the work carried out
- Significant contribution to long-term coastal sustainability

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The North West Awards for
Coastal Excellence

 **Winners 2025** 

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Coastal Champion Winner

Early Career

Shovi Anjum



north west coastal forum

Shovi Anjum

Coastal Champion Winner 2025

Early Career

champion
empowering
inclusive

Project Officer

Solway Firth Partnership

- Leads coastal resilience and conservation efforts along the Solway Cumbrian Coast

Area:

- Solway Cumbrian Coast, St Bees - Scottish Border

Key Projects:

- CLEARcoasts Project
- Solway Carbon Project

Evidence-based and scalable

- ★ Pioneering hydrodynamic research on honeycomb worm reef

Community-first approach

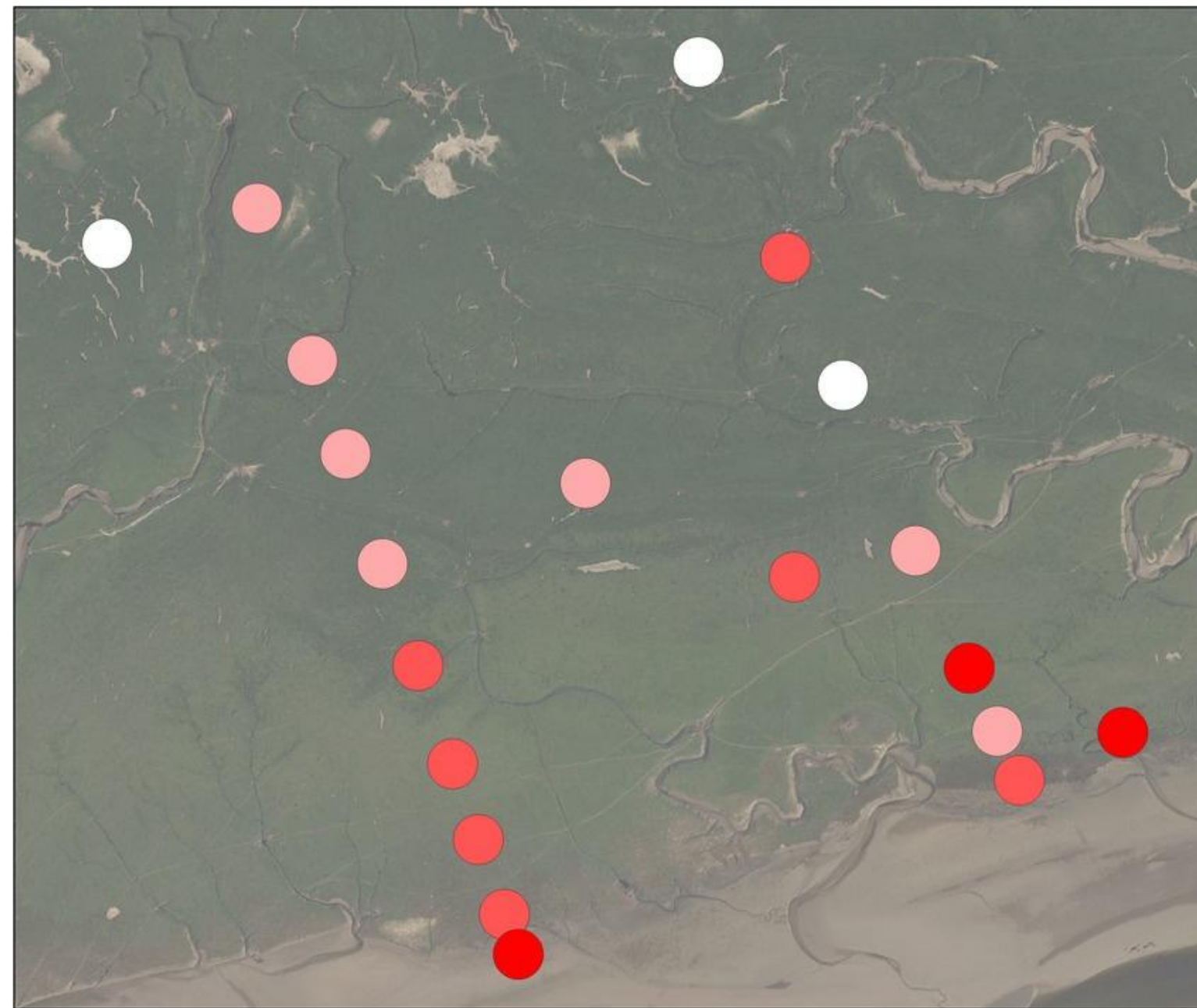
- ★ Actively engages local **stakeholders**: landowners, policymakers and citizen scientists
- ★ Equipped **landowners** across Solway Coast National Landscape with **actionable insights**

Citizen science monitoring

- ★ Training volunteers to deploy and maintain **MiniBuoys**
- ★ Building a long-term monitoring group of citizen scientists

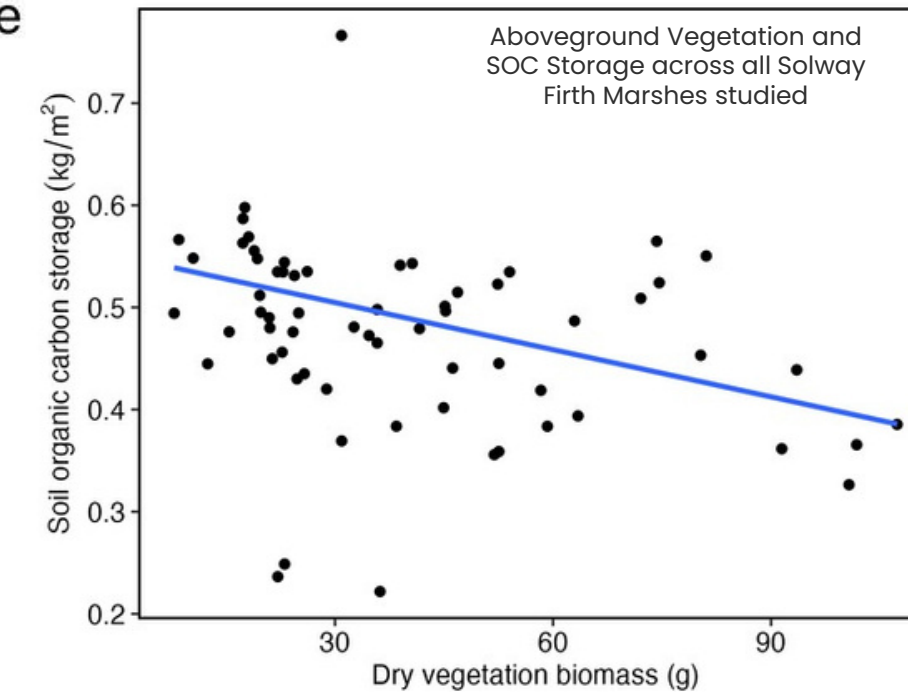
ROCKCLIFFE

Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) distribution across Rockcliffe's saltmarsh



Rockcliffe

Organic carbon stock (g / cm³)



Why is mapping carbon important?

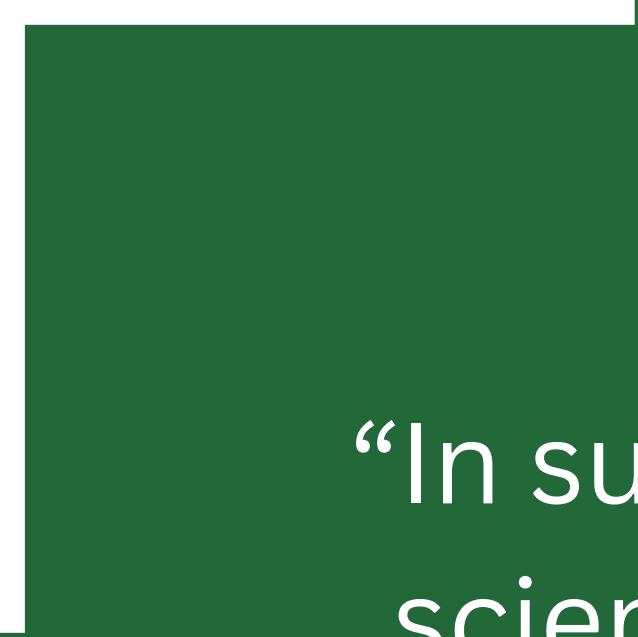
- Establishes a baseline against which to monitor changing carbon stocks over time. Offers insight into how tidal flow, vegetation, soil type etc.
- influences carbon accumulation. Areas with high carbon stocks would suit conservation priorities, whilst areas with lower or more variable carbon stocks might benefit from restoration efforts.

"Grams per cubic centimetre"


A measure of **soil carbon density**, showing how much carbon is stored in a given soil volume e.g. 50 g/cm³ means each cubic centimeter of soil contains 50 grams of carbon.

Interpreting patterns:

- Carbon stocks were generally highest in the low marsh zone.
- Carbon stocks tended to be highest when plant biomass was low. Both patterns are in reverse to what we expect. It **may be** that the sandy substrate and therefore low-nutrient environment of the Solway Firth means marsh plants decrease carbon storage by mining the soil of nutrients (Terrer et al. 2021).



“In sum, Shovi’s **interdisciplinary** work spans from scientific research to community engagement to drive **long term coastal resilience**, addressing key challenges in conservation by trying to connect **data-driven** decision making with **inclusive practices**.”



Shovi Anjum

Coastal Champion Winner 2025

Early Career

“At the Solway Firth Partnership, Shovi took on the missions of both projects with zeal; to empower local stakeholders in developing, implementing, and evaluating coastal restoration programmes to build sustainable and resilient ecosystems in the Solway Firth.”

“She was able to bridge the gap between landowners, conservation agencies, researchers, and policymakers through conference presentations, writing articles, and making site visits.”

“Shovi is a champion for the Cumbrian people, elevating their views to shape coastal habitat restoration practice”

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Coastal Champion Winner
Lifetime Achievement



Susannah Bleakley



north west coastal forum

Susannah Bleakley



Coastal Champion Winner 2025

Lifetime achievement

open

honest

challengin
inspirational

Key Roles:

- Freelance Consultant
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Our Future Coast
- North West Coastal Forum
- Chair of the Partnership of Irish Sea Coast and Estuary Strategies (PISCES)
- Coastal Adviser to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Key Projects:

- BeachCare
- Headlands to Headspace
- 700 Days to Transform the Bay
- North West and North Wales Coastal Group
 - Flood Risk Innovation Programme Project

Morecambe Bay Partnership

- ★ Small charity to major charity delivering multi-million pound projects
- ★ Dedicated leadership

Volunteer groups

- ★ Establishing BeachCare groups
 - Local volunteers received training and equipment
 - Now self-governing

Local heritage

- ★ Oral history projects around local fishing communities & traditions
- ★ Creating 'Seldom Seen' maps



Crowning achievements



**Headlands to
Headspace**



**700 Days to
Transform the
Bay**



<https://www.britannica.com/animal/curlew>

Susannah Bleakley

Coastal Champion Winner 2025

Lifetime achievement

“....a wizard at spotting an opportunity and seeing potential.”



“Susannah has been a tireless champion of the Northwest Coast for over 30+ years and been 100% dedicated to protecting it, and caring for it and getting other to see its value.”

“Susannah is an absolute force of nature and a force for good on all things coastal. Never mind what she's achieved for the communities and wildlife around the Bay and beyond - she's helped me immensely over the years with sound advice and wise words of wisdom and has been wonderful to work alongside on a number of projects.

“She's an outstanding inspiration - cheerful, positive, with huge amounts of drive and energy.”

“She has always taken an interest in the detail and smaller scale activities too – running litter picks, talking to volunteers, remembering people’s names and their birthdays - recognising that small actions and valuing individual contributions, making people feel seen, which can lead to long term interest and larger scale impact.”

“I can’t quite believe she’s never received a Coastal Champion Award before – certainly it’s long overdue.”



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Coastal Best Practice Winner

 **Morecambe Bay Seascape Restoration
Project (Seagrass Elements)** 

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Morecambe Bay Seascape Restoration Project (Seagrass Elements) Coastal Best Practice Winner 2025



**Lead Organisation: Cumbria Wildlife
Trust (CWT)**

Morecambe Bay Seascape Restoration Working Group:

- Lancaster University
- Barrow Borough Council
- Wyre council
- RSPB
- North West Coastal Forum
- MMO
- Eden Project North
- The Bay
- Manchester Met university
- Blue Marine Foundation
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Holker Estates
- Our Future Coast
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Cumbria University
- Cumbria County Council
- Arnside and Silverdale AON

Piloting

- ★ Seagrass restoration in the Walney Channel
- ★ Pilot for further restoration in wider areas
- ★ Working with local stakeholders users, & other organisations to scope feasibility of further restoration projects, e.g.:
 - saltmarsh
 - biogenic reefs

Aim

- ★ Restore and expand important coastal, intertidal and marine habitats around Morecambe Bay
- ★ Support key economic fishery species, water quality, coastal tourism locations, climate mitigation. adaption & carbon sequestration



Morecambe Bay Seascape Restoration Project (Seagrass Elements) Coastal Best Practice Winner 2025



Key achievements

- ★ Mapped and assessed the condition of seagrass beds
- ★ Collected over 10,000 *Zostera noltii* seeds
- ★ Seagrass seed storage facility established at South Walney Nature Reserve
- ★ Conducted baseline surveys and environmental assessments
 - including water quality, tidal dynamics, sediment analysis and biodiversity monitoring
- ★ Engaged 20 volunteers and coastal champions
- ★ Trained 8 Marine Futures Interns
- ★ Supported 7 University dissertation projects
- ★ Strengthened local and national collaboration
 - Participation in the Noltii Network, ReMeMaRe Symposium, and other seagrass restoration initiatives



Deploying BRUVs and collecting water samples with Cumbria Canoeists



Surveying seagrass extent and condition



BRUV footage snapshot



Seagrass seed collection





Seed sorting and storage in the “Seagrass Shed”



Seed bag packing



Seed planting in winter



Seagrass engagement – bracelet and information stand at Irish Sea Day, St Bees



Congratulations to all the NW ACE 2025 Winners!

For more information about the 2025
awards and previous winners, please visit:
nwcoastalforum.org.uk