

UNDERSTANDING THE COASTAL COMMUNITIES OF THE NORTH WEST

**LOCAL AUTHORITY
DISTRICT SUMMARY:**

HALTON

JUNE 2009



Halton contains two of the 47 communities considered within the regional study of coastal communities across the North West¹. This summary offers a high level extract of analysis into those communities.

- **Runcorn** sits directly opposite Widnes on the southern side of the River Mersey where the estuary narrows to form Runcorn Gap. It is an industrial town that hosts the former ICI offices and laboratories which now comprise the Heath Business and Technical Park which is a large employment centre, laboratory, conference, and leisure facilities². Runcorn hosts more than 26,000 jobs and is a net attractor of labour³. The town continues to act as a port on the Manchester Ship Canal.
- **Widnes** is very similar to Runcorn in its socio-economic characteristics however it does not have large employment sites like the Heath Business and Technical Park. As such it is a net exporter of labour, mainly to Liverpool, Runcorn and Warrington. Widnes has slightly higher average house prices than Runcorn and lower levels of deprivation⁴.

Data relating to the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of each settlement can be found in the [Understanding the Coastal Communities of the North West . Data Workbook+](#). This data can be brought together to provide a detailed picture for the coastal communities within Halton. The table below records the relative performance of each settlement against a set of summary indicators. It defines the performance of each community with reference to the sub-regional average for each indicator⁵.

Community	Population	Aged Pop.	Pop Growth	Low Income	Car Ownership	Deprivation	Unemployment	Retail & Hospitality	Access to Services	Employment Centre	House Ownership	Private Rented Housing
Runcorn	62,630	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
Widnes	57,540	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-

= about average, + more than average, - less than average
gaps indicate where Lower Super Output Area analysis was not possible for some settlements

¹ Understanding the Coastal Communities of the North West; Rural Innovation; June 2009

² www.theheath.com

³ See Understanding the Coastal Communities of the North West . Data Workbook; 2001 Travel to Work Summary

⁴ See Understanding the Coastal Communities of the North West . Data Workbook; 2001 Travel to Work Summary, House Prices and IMD Deprivation

⁵ A sub-regional rather than regional average has been used because of the significant impact of communities within Merseyside on the overall regional data. See main report, Geographic Analysis (page 6)

Typology

Within the main report four typologies of coastal communities have been identified; large urban areas, working towns by the sea, maritime towns and settlements of choice⁶.

Runcorn and Widnes have been categorised as a Working Towns by the Sea. These are places which cannot be described as seaside resorts or retirement communities. They no longer have a dominant economic link with the coast and lack the type of infrastructure which typifies coastal settlements - harbours, promenades and beaches. These communities share socio-economic characteristics with inland settlements, yet proximity to the sea still makes up an important element of their character. Future policy affecting Working Towns by the Sea should seek to ensure that the benefits offered by their particular types of coastal location are not overlooked, but will not place their coastal location centrally in their futures.

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⁶ See main report, Functional Typology of Coastal Settlements (page 82)