

Who We Are - What Is The Problem? - What Are Our Aims?

Who We Are



Protest Walk 2008

After discovering that plans were surreptitiously being prepared by Natural England to install extensive barbed wire fencing, numerous gates and several cattle grids across the previously unobstructed moorland forming the iconic physical and spiritual heartland of the Land's End Peninsula (West Penwith), a group of six concerned local residents came together at the beginning of July 2008 under the name of Save Penwith Moors [SPM] to encourage and co-ordinate lawful public opposition.

The preliminary plans to stock proof these open access areas was part of the trans-national Northern European HEATH Project and was intended as the first step prior to introducing grazing animals as part of 'conservation grazing' agri-environmental schemes, both of these projects involving large sums of taxpayers' money.

What Are The Problems?

The problems are many and varied. Firstly there was a total initial lack of honest and open communication with affected local communities and stakeholders at the planning stage (local councils, walkers and horse riding groups in particular) so that the public were faced with a *fait accompli* in the form of visual vandalism whereby the perception of natural unspoilt wilderness, so valued for recreation by locals and tourists alike, was – and still is – being ruined by obtrusive and alien stock proofing. Implementation of the HEATH Project was incompetent and, in some cases, unlawful: installation of cattle grids that had to be relocated and unacceptable large excavation works – so wasting considerable sums of public money.

Widespread public frustration and anger led, in some cases, to criminal damage (wire cutting and fencing destruction) that was wrongly blamed on Save Penwith Moors even though we had publicly condemned such actions.

Once a Heathlands Forum was set up in November 2008 through the initiative of SPM there was still no meaningful dialogue – only dogmatic restatements of Natural England’s own position: there was no in-depth consideration of any management other than grazing as the primary method.



Once cattle were introduced there was an escalation of problems: many people were put off going onto these areas by intimidating signs and the potential dangers from free roaming large cattle; horses were injured or frightened by the appearance of new gates; damage and degradation of a number of internationally important archaeological sites was caused by cattle congregating around

the stones; cattle failed to trample bracken in and around monuments so that volunteers still have to cut scrub down by hand.

Natural England has failed to 'move with the times' and take account of social change whereby many people from UK and abroad now have more leisure time, annual holidays, access to private cars, and improved air, rail and road links. This tourist industry is a mainstay of Cornwall's economy and is being compromised by all these enclosures.

What Are Our Aims?

Save Penwith Moors does not campaign against all new fencing and grazing but stands for the lawful removal of all new stock proofing (fencing, gates and cattle grids) from a few selected areas of the most popular open access moorland for local and tourist recreation on foot and on horseback, areas that amount to under 3% of the Natural England Higher Level Stewardship [HLS] target area for Penwith – we do not feel this is an unreasonable request.

Some of these areas contain iconic archaeological sites – Men-an-Tol, Lanyon Quoit, Chun Castle & Quoit, Tregeseal Stone Circle – that we consider should be left ungrazed for at least a ten year period with any maintenance being done by cutting or small-scale controlled burns. As part of our campaign we are now applying to re-register as common land many moorland areas to achieve a degree of legal protection against unaccountable development including new stock proofing and to

give the public an opportunity to express their views during mandatory consultation when re-registration is successful.

Since several of 'our' areas now have HLS agri-environmental agreements [AEA] in operation it has become necessary to make a few adjustments to our campaign objectives.

We now campaign for:

CARNYORTH COMMON (1): Permanent removal of all grazing animals; Removal of all HEATH Project stock proofing as well as old redundant fencing dating from mid-1980's; Replacement of current HLS agreement with an organic agri-environment scheme that excludes grazing.

HIGHER/CHUN DOWNS (2): Any proposed AEA scheme to exclude new stock proofing with the area managed under non-grazing organic management.

WATCH CROFT (3): No further stock proofing to the east of the bridleway (Morvah 11) with the current (Trevean Farm) HLS scheme allowing this area to be under non-grazing organic management.

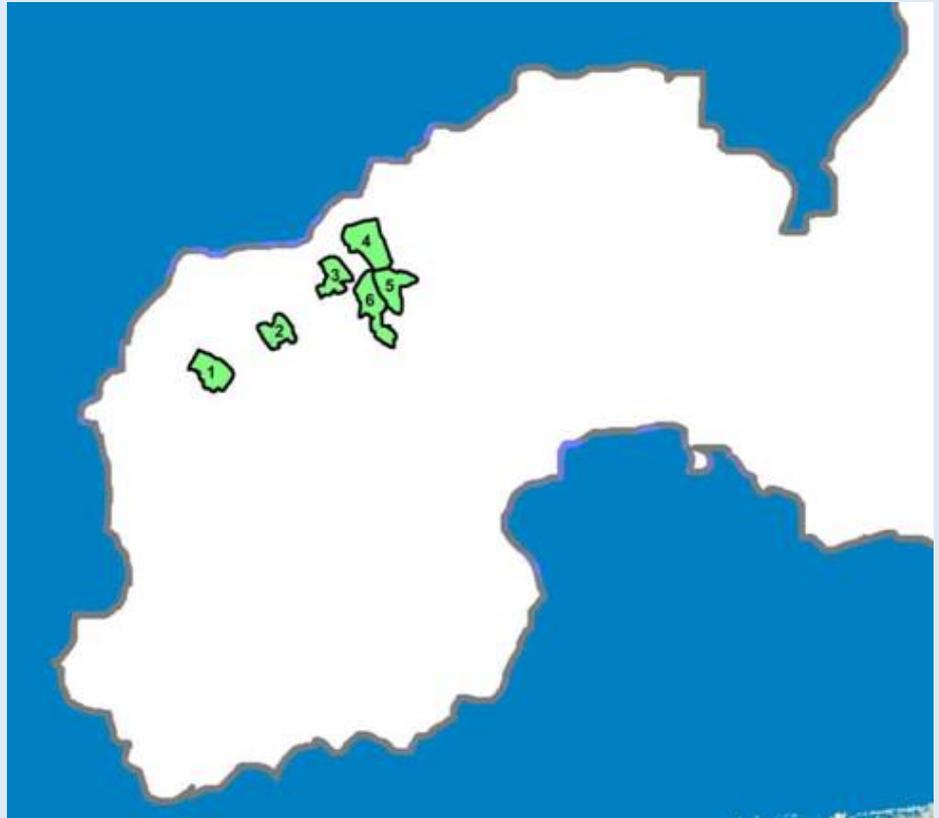
CARN GALVA (4): Removal of all HEATH Project stock proofing including the two cattle grids on the B3306 with the current (Bosigran Farm) HLS scheme allowing this area to be under non-grazing organic management.

NINE MAIDENS COMMON (5): Any proposed AEA scheme to exclude new stock proofing with the area managed under non-grazing organic management.

LANYON FARM [Men-an-Tol and Lanyon Quoit Crofts] (6): Removal of all HEATH Project stock proofing as well as old redundant fencing dating from c.1970's. The current HLS scheme to allow for non-grazing organic management only.

THE FUTURE

Although Carnyorth Common is still being grazed, and stock proofing and grazing has now been carried out on parts of Watch Croft, Carn Galva and the two Lanyon Farm crofts, we will continue our campaign as stated above while insisting that any breaches of procedure and/or unsatisfactory outcomes will be brought to the attention of those concerned for remedial action - we will continue our role as unpaid and unofficial 'monitors'



of West Penwith moorland. [NOTE: Our requests for non-grazing regimes only covers a proportion of each relevant HLS agreement's total area of heathland, and will therefore leave the remainder available for grazing and provide a useful comparison of management methods.]

On a broader political front we will campaign for the removal of Natural England and English Heritage from Cornwall and for them to be replaced by locally accountable and staffed replacements that can work independently of Defra – a true 'localism' as declared in Government policy.

Co-ordinator Save Penwith Moors

Edited November 2016