

**A Vision For The Moors and Related Land in West
Penwith, Cornwall.**

**Report to Natural England, by John Waldon
September 2009**



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Proposal: To secure agreement between the agencies and stakeholders on the potential of this area whilst providing a context for agri-environment schemes and future land management.

The moors and enclosed land of West Penwith are one of the finest examples of an “historic landscape” in the country, containing a wealth of archaeological sites, expanses of lowland heath and areas of high recreational value. Due to the importance of these resources and to the relatively small area that they occur in the potential for conflict between competing land management exists. This initiative would address the relevant issues and seek to provide a clear view of what this area should look like in the future; a vision that is supported by all the agencies, land-owners, farmers and stakeholders. It would use the visioning process as developed on Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor.

Introduction

This report sets out the context and outcomes.

Considerable public unease over recent land management on several sites within the rough ground of the Moors had resulted in the establishment of the West Penwith Heathland Forum (WPHF) in October 2008. Membership is set out in appendix 1.

Discussions with key players including the WPHF suggested that a focus on the West Penwith Moors, within the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) boundary would bring the most benefits.

Initiatives to establish a shared vision for the future on two upland areas had recently been completed (Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor). Natural England wished for a similar process to be considered for West Penwith. As the initiative progressed it became apparent that seeking a vision using the same process would not be successful. The knowledge base within the statutory agencies was insufficient, especially for the ecological interests. It was therefore agreed to adopt a new approach, dividing the initiative into four stages:

1. To assess what the local community, and those involved with managing the area, believe are the issues that require action and to identify what would help.
2. To provide a brief introduction to the access, ecology and historic environment of the West Penwith moors.

3. To describe what the area might look like in the future (an overview or vision) and how appropriate land management might be provided.
4. To provide recommendations for further work and actions.

Stage 1 – listening

A limited consultation was under taken. Most members of the West Penwith Heathland Forum (see appendix 1), a number of local farmers (partly facilitated by the NFU), Zennor Parish Council and St Just Town Council were invited to discuss their concerns and suggest what might help avoid concern over land management in the future. In addition opportunities to discuss issues with members of the local communities were taken.

It is clearly evident that those who enjoy access to the downs and moors are passionate about the area and feel a degree of ownership for the sites they regularly visit. The moors are held in great esteem by those who visit them and by those who may not know them so intimately but think of them as an integral part of the West Penwith landscape. Their timeless quality is of particular importance and therefore any changes have to be well considered and justified.

These discussions identified a number of themes/issues. In no particular order they are:

- Poor communication between those responsible for moorland management and those who use and visit the moors. This included confusion over whether consultations were intended to seek the views of the local community or just a means of informing others on what was to be done.
- A lack of clarity on the importance of the Moors; just what are they important for?
- Why do the Moors need to be managed?
- The West Penwith Moors lack a clear identity and a single contact point. No one body or individual is identified as having overall responsibility and who can be contacted at times of concern and able to resolve issues.

The meetings with farmers also recognised the issues above but tended to focus on slightly different issues:

- The most obvious concern related to the ending of the ESA and whether the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS) would be available.
- The loss of the area's identity following the demise of the ESA.
- Need for better communication and flexibility over local "traditional" land management.
- Importance of preparing the ground prior to grazing or burning.

There were also significant concerns over a number of site specific issues. These included inappropriate fencing, damage to sites and impediment to access (by foot and horse). Whilst steps to mitigate these problems have been taken there still remains a breakdown in trust and communication between those who are responsible for the activities and those who perceive it as inappropriate and, possibly, illegal activity. Resolving these specific issues lies outside of the brief for this initiative but, never the less, such issues have to be recognised as both the initial driver for a vision and as a potential barrier to delivering it.

It was proposed to progress the initiative by defining the importance of the area and making the case for management for the resources.

Stage 2 – Defining the resource.

A number of workshops were organised to which those organisations that have a regulatory role were invited. In addition those organisations that hold data specific to the area were also invited. The initial objective was to be alerted to relevant data and information. All participants are listed in Appendix 2.

These meetings resulted in a draft statement on the importance of the West Penwith Moors. This draft was used for a limited consultation with individuals who have specialist or local knowledge. A final version was then produced (Annexe 1).

Discussion with the agencies and organisations established that information on the natural environment was available but not readily accessible, especially by the general public. Confusing terminology and apparent differences in how the vegetation was described suggested discrepancies between the organisations. There was also little to confirm the area's importance.

The information on the historic environment is reasonably robust although local amateurs claim, with some evidence, that further information is available. The programme of scheduling monuments was abandoned following the designation of the ESA in 1987. The inadequate programme of scheduling suggests a poorer archaeological resource than what is actually there. Clearly most of the archaeology found on the moors is of national or international value.

The natural environment is in a similar situation. The lack of national designations, indicating national or international importance, suggests that the value of the wildlife is of insufficient value to merit notification. This is clearly not the case. For example the lowland heath is of national importance and some bird communities qualify for international recognition.

The West Penwith Moors and Coast are of international importance for stonechat and qualify for designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and

receive protection under the EU Birds Directive for that species. Where a site qualifies for classification as an SPA, but has not been classified (it is identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA)) the original provisions of the first sentence of Art 4(4) Birds Directive apply obliging Member States to take steps to avoid deterioration/disturbance.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species are those that are considered of national conservation significance or importance. The areas of lowland heath are a Priority BAP habitat as are some other less extensive habitats.

The lack of relevant designations has also resulted in a poorer understanding of the area's ecological value. Often due to the demands of protected sites elsewhere the statutory agencies have not regularly assessed the area or conducted studies. An exception was the condition assessment of the lowland heath undertaken in 2005/6. There is a less robust evidence base than other similar sized sites of the same significance. The result is that the depth of knowledge held by individuals within the statutory organisations is less than that required to construct a vision using the same process as on Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor. There are however a number of individuals and organisations that do have significant information as demonstrated by the number of records held by the Cornwall Record Centre and reports provided by the RSPB and Cornwall Wildlife Trust. This knowledge especially that held by local individuals needs to be integrated into future initiatives.

The principle outcome from stage 2 was a statement on the natural and historic resources found within the area. This statement is factual and hopefully non controversial. It has benefited from comments and evidence provided by all the participating organisations and key individuals.

Stage 3 – Managing the resource and describing its future

A short statement describing the past land management is included in the note on the resources (annexe 1). This is very brief and serves only to provide an introduction and explain that land management has played a significant role in creating the landscape and special qualities associated with the West Penwith Moors. All the land is in private ownership. A proportion is also registered as common land with others (usually farmers) having rights over it. The rights of the land owners and commoners must be respected at all times.

Efforts to manage the lowland Heath and the archaeological sites that lie within these areas of rough land are a source of concern to some members of the local community. The justification for management of the lowland heath has to be clear and robust. (see annexe 2) Such an approach is provided in *Managing Archaeology and Historic Landscapes on West Cornwall's rough ground*, CCC 2008 and *Carn Galver Grazing: nature conservation implications*, J Lister, National Trust, 2009. However neither papers appear to have a wide public profile.

Land management of the rough ground is necessary to sustain the area's special qualities. Only a few people argue that no management is the best course of action. In fact there is a strong lobby for additional management to secure better access, protect archaeological sites and conserve species and habitats.

Whilst there is widespread support for management there is considerable concern over what are the most appropriate management techniques and the accompanying infra-structure (fencing in particular). There are also issues over ensuring the area is prepared for grazing, with an appropriate breed of cattle and access.

The diversity of the area combined with the density of the potentially conflicting priorities, that require management, suggests that one form of management is not appropriate. The landscape was created by various land management techniques and this diversity needs to continue; different techniques complementing each other. This approach that would go some way to signal to the local community that the issue of management has been seriously considered. Each of the units requires a specific management plan that recognises that area's special assets and constraints.

However there is agreement between the agencies and nature conservation organisations on what they would wish to see the downs and moors look like in the future. An over arching statement on what the area should look like has been drafted and subjected to some limited consultation. This is set out in annexe 3. This might be referred to as the overall vision for the area. Whilst useful to set the scene its value is limited and requires more refinement and consultation.

Part of the information necessary to the initial stage of preparing a management plan for each moorland unit is available. Some existing base-line data is provided by the HEATH Management Assessments and HEATH Environmental Reports. These would require editing and supplementing with additional information. They then could be used as a consultation draft. The resulting statement would then become a robust base on which to describe the ideal management. This approach could offer real community engagement and ensure that the management is appropriate to the local situation. If such an approach could be realised before 2011 then the bulk of future Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) applications could benefit and ensure that the new agri-environment schemes reflect the objectives of the vision.

HEATH Management Assessments focus on the historic environment and are available for the rough land divided into 38 units. These are listed in annex 3. The HEATH Environmental Reports are available on a similar scale for 6 areas together with a "Generic Guidance document: Management of Roughland Registered Common Land"

This information only came to light towards the end of this work. It is clear that both sets of reports have not benefited from a widespread consultation and are not easily accessible. The Management Assessments focus on the

historic resources and are very comprehensive. They contain probably too much detail and additional information. The Environmental Reports, on the other hand, appear to offer more generic information (whole ESA) rather than site specific information. This reflects the lack of ecological information. (*Note I have not read all the reports and base this comment on only two of the six reports*).

The ESA is closed to new applicants and all the agreements end before or in 2014. Approximately 73% (over 135) agreements will terminate in 2012. The loss of the ESA will result in the loss of identity for the area and remove the only direct protection of the historic and natural resources. Without the protection afforded by notification, for SSSIs, or scheduling, for the monuments, some of these national or international resources may be lost or damaged. Whilst cross compliance linked to the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) will prevent deliberate damage it will not address the gradual decline in the value of the resources caused by neglect or the lack of management.

The HLS must be widely available within the old ESA boundary if the public benefits secured since 1987 are not to be lost. The landscape is of great importance and an essential ingredient in the area's tourist industry. Although access is modest and lacks quantification it has huge potential. The two most obvious assets – the ancient field systems and the low land heath – demand addressing by HLS. The financial incentives within HLS will focus on the heathland/rough land and this must not be to the detriment of the enclosed land. A whole farm approach should be considered in recognition of the field systems on the clean land and the rough land (lowland heath).

The preparation of Farm Environment Plans, a necessary part of HLS application, provides an opportunity for the rough land management plans to be delivered. However there should not be a presumption that grazing on the rough ground will be applicable to every site and would provide the correct management in every case.

Stage 4 - Next steps and Recommendations

This part of the initiative is presented as a number of recommendations. Whilst the report is to Natural England the recommendations are offered to a much wider group including non government organisations, local groups and local government. This report is intended for a wider audience. The recommendations have not been allocated. Allocation of the recommendations and coordination of the resulting actions would benefit from coordination and this might be a role for a forum or steering group.

Communication

Better communication is essential. Any further changes to the management of the downs need to be explained and justified to those who use them and are passionate about their future. This could be achieved by building on successful initiatives such as the National Trust's "meet the cows" events and the RSPB's chough clubs in local schools. However these sorts of initiatives

have a specific target audience and so only directly involve a small number of people.

New initiatives might include:

- Regular updates and presentations to local organisations and councils that explain the importance and need for management on the Moors.
- Creating further opportunities for local people to engage in practical management. This might be to encourage more people to join existing working parties or to create new ones.
- Providing publicity and publications that celebrate the area's natural and historic environment. Information is not readily available in an accessible form. The paper West Penwith Moors: a note on the resources found on the downs and moors, annexe 1, is offered as a first step. It provides an introduction and is agreed to by those involved in its preparation. It would require editing and rewriting to make it suitable for a wider, public, more generalised readership.
- Use the forthcoming AONB review and the rough land management plans as opportunities for engagement with the local community. This would require consultation; with the resulting feedback from those consulted being considered and actioned.
- The loss of identity provided by the ESA will also become an issue. It needs to be replaced by further initiatives that strengthen the West Penwith Moors brand.
- Retain the working group of organisations and agencies created to help this project. Exchange of information and expertise between these groups and within the agencies could be improved.

Securing a vision

It was not possible to provide a detailed and shared vision for the area within the scope of this project, partly as a result of insufficient ecological data. However the framework for such a vision is available. The overarching vision has had some peer review and is suitable for further scrutiny. Under that statement needs to be management plans for each unit. All of these rough land units have a description of its historic and cultural importance already in place. These statements could be combined with similar statements that include the ecological value and access issues. The resulting drafts could then be offered as part of a widespread consultation or to a restricted number of consultees. If the latter route is chosen it would be important for those with local knowledge and expertise to be included.

Land Management

- The case for why land management is necessary has to be constructed. This report includes some of the necessary information and references. This information then needs to be communicated to the key audiences.

- Provide support for local initiatives such as Penwith Access and Rights of Way Forum (PAROW) and the Cornish Ancient sites Protection Network (CASPN) whilst ensuring they benefit from a wider membership, including those that can advise on nature conservation and land ownership.
- Provide a network for all those involved in land management to communicate with each other and exchange good practice. This network should include those farmers actively engaged in land management of the rough land. The work of the network should include regular meetings for farmers to explain HLS and how the agreements might be delivered. (Using the ESA model).
- HLS needs to be available for the entire area and be offered for the whole farm. A model application should be provided that addresses the historic and natural resources. This might recognise the field boundary systems as archaeological features. The coastal cliff tops require recognition as a BAP habitat and for their role in providing essential habitat for the expanding chough population and the areas of lowland Heath as priority BAP Habitat.

Main Recommendations:

1. Review the role of the West Penwith Heathland Forum. The new forum would require an expanded membership to ensure expertise is included. Its role should include steering and coordination of the main activities occurring within the area. The membership should reflect its new role; one of improving communication and identity.
2. The draft note on the resources found within the area should be re-written for a wider audience and made available. It would benefit from being endorsed by all the main players including non statutory groups such as the Save Penwith Moors.
3. Creation of a focal point (person or place) where issues can be addressed efficiently and effectively. This would provide for a more speedy response to concerns and issues. It could also coordinate and help inform future initiatives by improving communication with the local community and other groups.
4. A forum for farmers within the area should be reinstated. This would encourage the exchange of good practice and enable concerns to be aired. It should promote preferred land management techniques and breeds of stock.
5. Designation of the national and international important historic and natural environment should be completed.
6. Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) must be available to the entire area. A model application, that addresses the protection and enhancement of the fields' boundaries and rough ground, should be constructed and promoted to encourage whole farm applications.
7. With the land owners consent a simple statement of the importance and preferred management of each moorland unit should be drafted using existing reports. This should then be subject to a wider consultation. The resulting note could then influence the Farm Environment Plan with any future HLS application.

Annexe 1

West Penwith Downs and Moors: a note on the resources found there.

The area addressed by this note is the West Penwith Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) or the Prime Biodiversity Area of the West Penwith Natural Area, (see maps for both). It includes the open moorland, often locally referred to as 'rough ground' and "clean land"; the enclosed land between the moorland and the north coast. The area covers some 9,000 ha.

This note has been subjected to a limited consultation. References are provided for some factual statements. The process of compiling the information from many sources, especially verbal comments from experts, has resulted in lack a specific literary reference for much of the text. It is intended to be a factual description of the area's important natural, cultural and historic environment.

The landscape.

The area is a windswept granite peninsula to the far west of Cornwall with a coastal shelf along its western and northern edge.

The area's underlying geology is responsible for prominent granite bosses which, following subsequent erosion, have produced the distinctive, acid hills of West Penwith. The gently rounded hills are, in places, topped by outcrops of weathered carns, as at Trencrom Hill. Watch Croft, the highest point, reaches 252m. These curious rock formations and large boulders are typically surrounded by rough ground – boulder strewn moorland of lowland heath. This boulder strewn landscape is a result of periglacial activity during the last ice age. Today it is an exposed, open landscape with few trees apart from linear woodland in the small river valleys, shallow depressions and around farmsteads. The extensive views in this open countryside give a real sense of wilderness and open countryside, unspoiled by 20th. Century developments.

The higher unenclosed land is known locally as "the downs". This predominately open landscape is characterised by the general lack of trees, although there are scrubby wet willow dominated woodlands in the valleys. These wetter areas are referred to as 'the moors'.

Surrounding the rough land is a plateau sloping gently away from the hills towards the coast where it falls as impressive vertical jointed granite cliffs to the sea. A narrow band of slates and volcanic rock borders the granite around parts of the north coast, giving rise to lower, darker-coloured cliffs; associated with this junction between the granite and the slate is the mineralisation which has given rise to the worlds famous St Just mining area. On the plateau, between the cliffs and downs, is an intricate, small scale pattern of stone

hedged fields, reflecting a pre-historic field pattern. These Cornish hedges are hard exposed stone incorporating enormous boulders (grounders) that can also be seen lying in the open fields. Enclosure patterns include fine examples of 'infield-outfield' field systems. (ref 1).

The landscape is heavily influenced by man and on the rough land traditional management practices such as grazing, burning and collection of bracken for bedding and gorse for fuel have all influenced the landscape and vegetation found there today.

The coastline is designated as Heritage Coast; as an example of the nation's most beautiful, undeveloped coastline, which are managed to conserve their natural beauty and, where appropriate, to improve accessibility for visitors. The entire area falls within the Cornwall's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This designation reflects the national importance of this area.

References and further reading:

Ref 1 England's Landscape; The South West, R Kain 2006.

SW Region: Environmental Capital Pilot, LUC, 1999.

The Cornish Landscape, Countryside Commission, 1997.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study, 2009. (LCA Nos. CA02 & CA03).

Cornwall's Geology and Scenery, Colin M Bristow, 2nd edit 2004.

The Geology of Cornwall, R.M.Barton 1964

The Cornish Landscape, W.G.V. Balchin, 1983

Geology of the country around Penzance, British Geological Survey, 1988

Historic environment and archaeology.

The bulk of the boundaries which make up the field systems of West Penwith are amongst some of the oldest continually used boundaries in the world, with many having their origins in the Bronze Age (2500 – 800 BC) and even in the preceding Neolithic period. These field patterns were laid out by some of the first settled farmers in Britain, usually radiating out from a central settlement. The areas of rough ground and heath contain further field boundaries and settlements dating back to prehistory, but these sites, always being on slightly marginal land, were abandoned and now often only survive as low stone and earth banks. On the north coast the present strip like holdings, running from the cliffs to the moorland, have their origins in prehistory.

A large concentration of prehistoric ritual monuments are to be found in both the rough and improved land, including iconic sites such as Chun and Lanyon Quoits, Men an Tol, and the Nine Maidens stone circle.

Later hill forts and cliff castles top many of the moorland summits and coastal promontories, such as Castle an Dinas, Trencrom, Chun Castle and Trereen Dinas on Gurnard's Head. Inland there are survivals of Romano-British courtyard house settlements such as Chysauster and Bosulow Trehyllys, along with enigmatic fogou sites.

Medieval farming practice is reflected in field and place names, with the occasional crow (stores or pig/fowl houses) built into field boundaries or farmyards. Most modern hamlets with their low granite-walled buildings and scantle slate roofs are on the site of their medieval predecessors. There are occasional survivals of strip fields similar to those which characterise medieval farming practice elsewhere but on the whole, the field pattern laid down in prehistoric times was not significantly altered.

This exceptionally rich historic landscape is capped by the remains of mining features of global significance, through the engine houses and processing buildings of Geevor and Levant to the miners' terraces and smallholdings around St Just, through to over 100 shafts recently noted on Watch Croft. The importance of the St Just mining heritage is celebrated by World Heritage status in 2006 when this area was included in the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscapes World Heritage site.

Although the area contains a notable concentration of Scheduled Monuments, with about 130 features protected, this number does not adequately reflect the significance of the area where the entire landscape is of national, if not international, historic importance. Threats of destruction over twenty years ago lead to proposals to Schedule the entire parish of Zennor, which were dropped in favour of the designation of the area as an ESA.

References and further reading:

The archaeological and historical importance of West Penwith, A. Reynolds, Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council, 2007

The Archaeology of the Moors, Downs and Heaths of West Cornwall, Peter Dudley, Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council, 2008.

Managing archaeology and historic landscapes on West Cornwall's rough ground, Graeme Kirkham, Cornwall County Council 2008.

Belerion; Ancient sites of Land's End, Craig Weatherhill. 1981

Antiquities of West Cornwall, Guides 1 & 4, Ian Cooke, 1990

Cornovia; Ancient Sites of Cornwall & Scilly 4000BC – 1000AD, Craig Weatherhill, 2009.

Journey to the Stones, Ian McNeil Cooke, 1996

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1215>

Natural environment.

The downs and moors are an extensive and significant matrix of semi-natural habitats whose ecological value is enhanced due to their close proximity to one another. Historic maps show that there has been loss and fragmentation of the rough ground over the last century. Although smaller than formerly, there are about 3,500 ha of rough ground remaining, these areas of connected semi-natural habitats are vital to the survival of Cornwall's' wildlife. The wildlife of the rough ground is inextricably linked to the surrounding enclosed pastoral and mixed farmland and mining heritage both in terms of providing important requirements for mobile species and the means to sustain an open landscape.

This area of West Penwith comprises several Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats and is home to a number of BAP species. BAP habitats and species are those that are considered of national conservation significance/importance.

The most abundant of these habitats is lowland heathland covering some 1,450 ha. (Ref 1), although this figure is considered low by Natural England. The lowland heathland of West Penwith is important in an international context. This is rare habitat that supports a wealth of wildlife and Cornwall supports 2% of the world's lowland heathland resource. (see Additional Notes). Heathland in Cornwall is notable for its oceanic influence, particularly in areas like West Penwith, which display typically "western" heathland characteristics. It has also been described as a sub-maritime dwarf-shrub community. (Ref 2). These heathlands are predominately a mix of heather *Calluna*, bristle bent grass *Agrostis curtisii* and Western gorse *Ulex gallii*. Additional characteristic plants include European gorse, hawkweeds, scabious and fine grasses. Plants associated with the wetter areas include purple moor-grass and cross leaved heath. Surveys in 2005/6 found those areas that were surveyed in West Penwith not to be in favourable condition. (Ref 3)

As well as heathland, there are additional important habitats, including the following BAP habitats:

- Lowland Dry Acid grassland that consist of nutrient poor grasslands that support a range of specialist species.
- Wet Woodland; a generally willow dominated wetland habitat characteristic of low lying wet valleys – this habitat is very important for birds, invertebrates and mammals.
- Fen; a wetland habitat that supporting a range of wetland plants and important habitat for a range of birds, invertebrates and mammals.
- Purple Moor grass rush pasture; a wetland grassland habitat with rush species, this habitat supports specialist plant species and a range of wildlife.
- Cliff and Slope; the hard rock cliffs and cliff tops.

The downs of West Penwith provide support a range of important species including:

- Invertebrates with over 25 species of BAP moth recorded, and 2 BAP butterfly species likely to use these habitats (small pearl bordered fritillary & silver studded blue)
- Breeding Birds include nightjar, grasshopper warbler, stonechat (in numbers qualifying for IBA status), skylark and Dartford warbler. The wintering population of hen harriers is of national importance. The cliff tops and adjoining land are particularly important for the expanding population of choughs. Other BAP birds are also known to use habitats in the area including: bullfinch, cuckoo, golden plover, dunnock, lapwing, linnet, reed bunting, song thrush and yellowhammer. (Refs 4 & 5).
- Reptiles including adder, common lizard, grass snake and slow worm, which are all BAP species

- Amphibians including the BAP species common toad
- Mammals including BAP species like greater horseshoe bats, brown long eared bats, otter and hedgehog
- Lower plants including over 30 nationally scarce and 12 nationally rare mosses, lichens & liverworts have been recorded in the area.
- The habitats in West Penwith contain a range of important plants, including over 10 nationally rare and 15 nationally scarce species that have been recorded in the area. Habitats in West Penwith are also suitable for a further 8 BAP species (Vigur's eyebright, purple ramping fumitory, coral necklace, three lobed water crowfoot, yellow centuary, pale dog-violet, annual knawel) that have all been recorded in the area.

(Ref 6 for all habitats and species apart from those indicated)

Many of the areas of semi-natural habitat in West Penwith are designated as County Wildlife Sites, however, this is a non-statutory designation and as such these sites are not protected. Much of the area receives little or no statutory protection. The few Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs), within the former ESA, are limited to part of the coastal strip - Aire Point to Carrick Du. There are significant areas of SSSI quality habitat that are not notified, especially on the rough ground. To improve its ability to withstand the impacts of climate change the area's potential to link or expand small or fragmented sites requires assessment.

References and further reading:

Ref 1 Natural Area Profile, CWT et al, 1996

Ref 2 Heathlands, Nigel Webb, New Naturalist 1986

Ref 3 The condition of lowland heathland: results from sample survey of non-SSSI stands in England. Natural England Research Report NERR002.

Ref 4 West Penwith wintering hen harrier surveys 2005/6 and 2006/7, RSPB.

Ref 5 West Penwith ESA; Breeding Bird survey 2005. RSPB.

Ref 6 Cornwall's Biodiversity Volume 3: Action Plans 2004, Cornwall's Biodiversity Initiative 2004

A Natural History of Land's end, Jean Lawman, 2002.

The Nature of Cornwall, Rennie Bere, 1982

The Land's End, W H Hudson, 1908

The Cornish Landscape, Countryside Commission, 1997

Access/recreation.

The coast and downs provide some of the finest walking in the country. The National Coastal Footpath follows the cliff tops and further footpaths cross the fields often linking hamlets and villages. On the higher ground all the rough land is in private ownerships but has public open access rights under the CROW Act. There is also a mix of undesignated, historic routes and definitive footpaths. There are also some specifically permissive paths. There are around 400 miles of definitive Rights of Way in West Penwith, one of the

highest concentrations of definitive rights of way in the county. However not all of the Coastal Footpath is a definitive Right of Way.

Across the high moors many old tracks remain some of them dating back into prehistory. These were used for driving livestock and were busy during the tin mining days for transport of goods and movement of people. The moors have always been freely ridden by horses although this is by deemed consent of the relevant landowner. Historic definitive maps mark the access routes to the open moorland areas only; it is therefore assumed that historic rights prevailed on the moorland. Whilst there are around 40 miles of definitive bridleways in West Penwith only about 35 miles are usable. The proportion within the study area is particularly low, around 4 miles, increasing the importance of routes without official dedication.

Some of the archaeological sites attract a significant number of visitors and some, such as Chun Quoit, Men an Tol, and the Nine Maidens stone circle, are of world renown. The networks of access routes, especially footpaths, together with the area's historic monuments are especially important to the local community and to visitors. These resources have the potential to contribute even more significantly to the region's tourism.

Many of the paths are blocked, overgrown or do not connect from road to road or to another footpath or bridleway. Many deliver you into a farm lane or farmyard over which there is no recorded right of way. This has become an increasing problem as many long-established farms (where residents have been used to walkers, riders) have been sold off and new owners preventing people from using these long established customary routes. Often where a path crosses a parish boundary the definitive path stops or there are changes to its status. Many of the moorland paths have become very narrow through becoming grown in. They then become very eroded and gullied by water, riding and walking. Off road motor cycling is considered to be a problem in some areas and one area of rough land is offered by the owner for organised motor cycle events with the intention of relieving pressure elsewhere.

Access to some of the most impressive archaeological sites, including Chun, Mulfra and Zennor Quoits, and to many of the considerable number of lesser known sites could be improved. Linking existing paths and creating routes to join areas of access land would provide longer routes.

In 2002 to address some of these issues the Penwith Access and Rights of Way (PAROW) forum was established. The Objectives of PAROW are to promote and achieve wider access to public rights of way, paths and open land in Penwith, with further development of the network, in partnership with all aspects of the community.

References and further reading:

PAROW web site: <http://www.parow.org.uk/>

West Penwith Bridleways Association web site:

<http://www.bhsaccesscornwall.org.uk/westpenwithbridleways/>

PAROW, work done on the Moors of Penwith, 2009.
The Cornish Landscape, Countryside Commission, 1997.

Land use and management

Evidence of human history pervades the landscape, more so in West Penwith, perhaps, than anywhere else in Europe. People have been present in West Penwith since the end of the last Ice Age, approximately 10,000 years ago. Large areas of the peninsula were deforested during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (6,000 to 2,500 years ago). This clearance appears to principally have been for pasture with some arable. The limited available evidence for West Penwith shows little or no heathland in the Prehistoric period, a marked contrast with the Lizard. At Chysauster, environmental analysis carried out in association with the excavation of a Bronze Age barrow suggested oak-hazel woodland on an acid brown-earth soil with little evidence for heathland when the barrow was built. The diversity of herbaceous plants identified, including grasses, plantain and cereals, did, however, suggest evidence for pre-barrow agriculture. (Ref 1).

Much of the pattern of enclosure has remained almost unaltered over the last 2,000 years with the strip like holdings, running from the cliffs up to the crest of the moorland ridge, having their origins in prehistory. Throughout that period the rougher ground, on the cliff top and on the higher downs, has developed into a vegetation type dominated by dwarf shrubs and heathland. All the rough land is owned by someone, a small proportion of which has common rights over it. The downs have invariably been an integral part in the farming practices, in providing seasonal grazing for livestock, allowing the enclosed land to be cultivated or rested. the predominant breed of cattle farmed in both West Cornwall and Scilly was the 'Cornish Black', an old, unimproved breed described as 'very small, of a black colour, short-horned, very hardy, and weighing between 3 and 4 cwt. The 'Cornish Black' is extinct, although evidence of the breed dates back into prehistory. Few were left in Cornwall by 1845 but they belonged to a breed loosely labelled the 'Celtic Shorthorn' and given summer pasture on the croft land, where they subsisted on what they could find; this being done to allow the pasture fields on lower ground to recover and regenerate. This breed was gradually replaced by Jerseys and Devon-Shorthorn crosses between 1825 and 1850. (Ref 2).

Due to the poorer soils – quality and quantity - and exposure to the Atlantic the productivity of the rough ground is low and unreliable. These areas have come in and out of farming; reflecting the type of farming and the social situation that prevailed at the time. The rough land provided other important resources in addition to the grazing of cattle, sheep, goats and ponies. Turfs were cut for fuel, bracken gathered for bedding, and people still living recall gorse or furze being harvested for fuel. In the last 70 years an emphasis on intensive dairy and beef production on the more productive land. This resulted in changes to the types (or breeds) of cattle, most not suitable for the rough ground. The other activities such as turbarry (turf or peat cutting) and bracken cutting also stopped.

In the 1970's and 80's agricultural policy and financial incentives encouraged the improvement of land including the creation of larger fields. In response to threats to the existing field boundaries, clearance of earth-fast boulders from the ground and the ploughing of the rough ground in 1987 the West Penwith Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) was introduced. This voluntary agri-environment scheme had management options for both 'clean' and 'rough areas': The main option, available on all land, provided for the maintenance of the historic field pattern within the ESA and included prescriptions for maintaining stock-proof hedges and walls, ponds and weatherproof traditional buildings, retaining large boulders within fields and protecting features of historical interest. The prescriptions specific to rough land prohibited agricultural improvement by cultivation and re-seeding, or by the use of fertilisers, lime and most pesticides. At the height of the ESA's popularity, a little over 3,000 ha. were entered in to the rough-land tier. Later additional management options for field margins and the retention of winter stubbles to increase the value of arable fields for farmland birds were added.

Over the last 20 years or so a few farmers have continued to use the rough ground as part of their farming practices; often to reduce the demands on their enclosed land at certain times of the year. Certain land owners, especially the National Trust have increased grazing on the rough land and today about 300 ha. of the downs and moors have some grazing in place.

Probably over the last hundred years the use of fire has also increased. Deliberate burning to provide better vegetation for the grazing livestock is a wide-spread practice on other rough ground in South West England (known as swaling). Whilst the bracken and furze had an economic value there was little incentive to destroy it; however as this vegetation began to dominate the land judicious burning was introduced. More recently wild fires, caused by arson or accident, have increased causing damage to archaeological remains and often to the detriment of rare plants and animals. Examples of the lichen flora lost due to fire include two very rare Red List species and two Nationally Scarce species. (Ref 3).

In 2005 Environmental Stewardship (ES) was launched and the ESA closed to new applications. Most of the ESAs come to an end in 2012. Natural England, the Government's agency responsible for ES, is seeking to encourage the owners and commoners to apply for ES. Multi-objective applications will be encouraged that secure protection of the clean land, especially the field systems, and the rough ground.

References and further reading:

Ref 1 Scaife, RG, 1996. Pollen analysis of the Bronze Age cairn and a peat profile, in G Smith, Archaeology and environment of a Bronze Age cairn and prehistoric and Romano-British field system at Chysauster, Gulval, near Penzance, Cornwall, *Proc Prehist Society*, 62, 203-9

Ref 2 'On the Farming of Cornwall', by W.P. Karkeek, published in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1845, pp.400-462; and G.B. Worgan, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cornwall, 1811.

Ref 3).Carn Galver Grazing: nature conservation implications, J Lister, National Trust, 2009

The Archaeology of the Moors, Downs and Heaths of West Cornwall, Peter Dudley, Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council, 2008.

Managing archaeology and historic landscapes on West Cornwall's rough ground, Graeme Kirkham, Cornwall County Council 2008.

West Penwith ESA monitoring report, 1996, RDS.

West Penwith ESA Roughland Management Plan Strategy 1997, Bowden.

West Penwith ESA Policy Review 2002, Bowden, Glasson, Hughes, Robbins and Trehane.

Additional notes:

- The Important Bird Area (IBA) status of the West Penwith Moors and Coast for stonechat does afford the area protection under the EU Birds Directive for that species. Where a site qualifies for classification as an SPA, but has not been classified (IBA) the original provisions of the first sentence of Art 4(4) Birds Directive apply obliging Member States to take steps to avoid deterioration/disturbance. The boundaries of the IBA can be found on the Government's MAGIC site. Ref. RSPB
- Definition of Lowland Heath: The term "lowland Heathland" relates to a landscape, which encompasses a range of vegetation communities that have developed on extremely impoverished acid soils occurring in areas with low contrasts in temperature and moderate but regular rainfall. In southern Britain lowland heathland is usually regarded as occurring below an altitude of between 250m and 300m (984 ft). Ref. Heathlands; a natural history. N Webb 1986

Annexe 2

West Penwith: management of lowland heath

A draft note that has not benefited from consultation

Lowland heathland is a non-climax vegetation type that requires management if it is to retain its value as the habitat for numerous plants and animals associated with it. Without management other vegetation will dominate and its value lost. The dwarf shrubs also require management if access is required. There is evidence that the lowland heathland is in unfavourable condition (ref 1). Scrub is invading (ref. 2) and the vegetation is losing the diversity that is so essential for it to retain its ecological value.

Management has, in the past, been provided by grazing (various livestock), cutting, burning and by the effects of wind and salt spray.

There are areas where the extreme elements (wind and salt) provide sufficient control of the vegetation but such areas are restricted to the most exposed sites close to the coast. Cutting by machine and by hand has continued to play an essential role in maintaining access routes and making archaeological monuments accessible. Such activity has also reduced damage to sites from invasive plants especially gorse and bracken.

Today the most sustainable form of management of lowland heath in southern England is considered to be grazing with cattle, supplemented by cutting and controlled burning. In West Penwith grazing may not be appropriate for the whole area. There are areas where mires, old mining shafts and lack of suitable vegetation make the ground unsuitable for grazing cattle or other livestock. Where grazing is to be introduced the vegetation may require preparation by cutting or burning.

References:

Ref 1 The condition of lowland heathland: results from sample survey of non-SSSI stands in England. Natural England Research Report NERR002

Ref 2 Carn Galver Grazing: nature conservation implications, J Lister, National Trust, 2009

Note by John Waldon, July 09

West Penwith Downs and Moors: A vision for the rough land.

The cliffs, fields, downs and moors of West Penwith combine to provide a landscape of immense importance; valued and celebrated for its wildness and history. The landscape is extremely important for its unique collection of historic, cultural and natural assets found in close proximity to one another.

Over the next 25 years the extent of the rough land will be retained and where opportunities arise extended to increase its capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Where appropriate, efforts to provide links between the areas of rough land will be taken and the entire resource managed sustainably to provide a diversity of habitats and species, including those associated with lowland heath. The lowland heath will support an optimum range of species. The wealth of archaeological sites, including the internationally important field systems and stone monuments, will be protected, enhanced and appropriately managed. Access onto and across the downs via the existing network of paths will be improved to encourage more people to enjoy this remarkable area, including where appropriate, the historic sites.

Each area of rough land has unique qualities requiring specific attention. Each of these units will have a statement that describes the main landscape, historic and natural features, cultural context and preferred management regimes that will provide both the protection and enhancement of the resources and secure their optimum state.

Appendix 1

Members of the West Penwith Heathland Forum

William Maddern - Sancreed Parish Council
Rob Poole - Cornwall Council
Peter Bowden - Natural England
Geoff Osborne - Zennor Parish Council
Ian Cooke - Save Penwith Moors
Craig Weatherhill - Save Penwith Moors
Adrian Bigg - PAROW
Steve Yandall - Save Penwith Moors
Jon Brookes - National Trust
Steve Crummay - Cornwall Council
Roy Mann - Madron Parish Council
Debbie Evans - Minute Taker
Andrew George MP
Stephen Bone
Sandy Angove
Richard Angove

Appendix 2

Participants in one or more of the workshops that prepared the note on the resources of the West Penwith Moors and Downs.

Jon Brooks NT
Paul St Pierre RSPB
Paul Boddington NT
Victoria Whitehouse CWT
Ann Reynolds CC HES
Ann Preston-Jones EH/CC HES
Steve Crummay CC
Colette Holden C AONB
Vaughan Robbins NE
Peter Bowden NE
Liz Cartwright CWT
Claire Rodger CWT
James Parry NT
Claire Mucklow RSPB
Nick Russell EH
Dave Lewis CC

The following individuals were invited to provide further information or comments:

Ian Cook
Craig Weatherhill
Donald Lockhart
Graham Ronan
Adrian Bigg

Meetings were held with:

St Just TC
Zennor PC
Richard Angove plus 12 farmers
Jan Beer
Rob Poole