

Who We Are - What Are The Problems? - 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.

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.

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 major part of Cornwall’s economy and is being compromised by all these enclosures and unpredictable behaviour of grazing cattle.



Group of cattle obstructing the public right of way to Tregeseal Stone Circle (Carnyorth Common).

## *What Are Our Aims?*

Save Penwith Moors does not campaign against all 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, – 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 with any maintenance being done by cutting or small-scale controlled burns.

Much has now changed since SPM was set up in the summer of 2008. Higher Level Stewardship schemes [HLS] have been in operation on Carnyorth Common, parts of Watch Croft, Carn Galva and two crofts of Lanyon Farm: Men-an-Tol and Lanyon Quoit. However, no such schemes involving new stock proofing measures — although hoped for by Natural England and some farmers — have so far taken place on Nine Maidens Common or Chun Downs.

HLS on Carnyorth Common ended in the summer of 2017 but plans are in progress for a new 10-year scheme: Countryside Stewardship [CS]. We oppose this and will continue to campaign for removal of all stockproofing infrastructure installed in 2008 under the HEATH Project. As HLS agreements come to an end on our other areas of major concern any efforts to impose CS agreements will also be opposed.

We will also continue our role as unpaid and unofficial ‘monitors’ of West Penwith moorland. On a broader political front we 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’. In addition, we campaign for independent audits of all CS agreements as they are completed, as well consultation with affected local communities as new agreements come into the planning stage.

Co-ordinator Save Penwith Moors

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