

ANNEX 2

Informal report on investigation into various issues

concerning the West Penwith Moors

Commissioned by Natural England (January 2011)

Annex: Answers to Save Penwith Moors Campaign questions, comments and complaints following a visit to Carnyorth Common.

- 1. Bridle gates not hung properly between granite posts, gaps too narrow.*
- 2. Catches dangerous and close too quickly for riders to pass through safely.*

The gate width was selected after discussions with equestrians who considered a 6-foot gate would be too heavy to handle from a horse. They are hung on the „inside“ of the gate posts (rather than between them) to ensure that they swing shut against the post and remain stock-proof even if they are left unclosed. Catches on these gates are supplied as a kit for bridleway use with the Centrewire trombone latch, a standard piece of high quality equipment for equestrian gates.

A range of riding abilities can be encountered on the Penwith Moors and issues that might be routine for an accomplished rider (shutting speed of gates, configuration of mounting blocks, design of catches etc) might challenge a less experienced equestrian. There must be agreed standards if we or others are going to try to establish consistent equestrian access across the Moors. We have remedied the most dangerous hazard at the cattle grid near Hectors House.

- 3. Strip of land not included in HLS agreement but 2 gates installed across PROW under Section 147 application by NE who were neither the landowner nor the occupier.*
- 4. Cattle introduced under the HLS for Carnyorth/Boswens Common agreement allowed to graze on land that is not part of this agreement.*

Gates were installed here to avoid the need to install approximately 800m of additional fencing to make the land stock-proof. To avoid the need to fence across open moorland a section 147 (via the HEATH Project) application was made to erect the gates and hedging across two public rights of way. Payments are not made for this area of land.

- 5. No footpath signs at two PROW where they leave the road by Hectors House even though former CCC partner in HEATH.*

This is the responsibility of Cornwall Council and not the HEATH Project. The Council has added the missing signs to the log of issues for that area and new signs will be erected as soon as resources are available to replace them.

6. No indication of open access signage.

There are several areas of open access land in Penwith that currently do not have signage. The Council has bid for, and is due to receive, some funding from Natural England under the Access Land Management Scheme. Signs for Carnyorth Moor will be added to the list of potential works to be delivered under the scheme.

7. Unlawful and dangerous cattle grid still in place, any resolution being considered by NE?

8. Section 147 was for a gate across this PROW not a cattle grid, any supervision by NE of work when it was being done?

The original gate and grid layout was agreed with the relevant authorities and BHS and the work was supervised. Subsequent information led to a reappraisal and the gate was changed. Safety issues are now resolved.

9. Intimidating signs still in place where they have not been vandalised.

Replacement signs have been commissioned. These will be reversible and will advise when stock are on or off the moor.

10. The 2 water troughs still not installed on the moor, only source of water in back-up field.

11. Both water troughs intended for installation very close to PROW so creating potential hazard for walkers and riders.

Both troughs are now installed. Their positioning was guided by: a desire not to trench across historic sites and historic landscape; the location of existing water supply; the rise above the bore-hole and an ambition to locate the troughs in exposed sites that would provide necessary water but discourage cattle from lingering there.

12. Old fencing left in place (near the 'pond') that enclose an area supposed to be part of conservation grazing but there is nowhere for cattle to enter this land. This fencing should be removed as unnecessary.

HEATH removed 500m of redundant fencing where landowners/tenants agreed its removal. We will review the remaining fence in consultation with the relevant landowners/tenants.

13. New fencing and gates cut across open access land at the end of Hailglower Lane.

Tenants / graziers were involved in the discussions behind this fencing.

14. Cattle have not trampled down bracken and scrub around archaeological sites or anywhere else.

15. Cattle destabilised stones of Tregeseal Stone Circle.

We are pleased that volunteers work to keep archaeological sites clear. Cattle will contribute to this but because grazing levels are (deliberately) very low we would not anticipate instant results. Our advice from archaeologists is that, on balance, cattle grazing provides a cost-effective long-term solution to keeping ancient sites accessible and visible.

16. Two PROW entry points onto Common never opened up under HEATH and virtually all path clearance has been done by PROW since the Project ended despite improved access being a cornerstone of the Project.

It was never the intention that PROW improvements would be funded through the HEATH project. Cornwall Council has a statutory duty to maintain PROWs and they have funding to carry out these duties.

17. Cattle spend most of their time in the back-up fields, and when on the moor tend to graze along the tracks/paths, the stone circle, and around gateways.

It was apparent from a recent visit to the site that cattle were finding their way into sheltered corners with bramble and bracken and beginning to open these up, along with old overgrown track ways through the heather. The agreement for Carnyorth is for 10 years, we do not expect rapid results but rather a convergence on an equilibrium between stands of pure heather with different age structures and other heath-related habitats.

18. No indication is given to the public when cattle are on or off the Common.

See response at Point 9 above.

19. No evidence of any benefit to biodiversity etc in the second year of grazing. Has there been any official monitoring? If so by whom?

20. The current situation on Carnyorth supports concerns about the variable results attributed to grazing.

See response at Point 17 (above). The baseline condition of the site is defined by the Farm Environment Plan, part of the HLS agreement. The HEATH Project commissioned a Phase 1 vegetation survey alongside a quadrat & mapping survey using NVC (National Vegetation Survey) methodology. Grazing across Rough Land in the West Penwith ESA was monitored over a number of years and a final report by Toogood et al indicates a loss of condition and diversity of heathlands ascribed to withdrawal of grazing.

21. Payment was made under HLS for some 16 months before stock-proofing began and some 21 months before any cattle were put on the Common.

Funds were withheld for the period during which the farmer did not graze the land.

22. The presence of cattle has seriously decreased the number of walkers and riders accessing the Common.

While we remain sensitive to the public perception of cattle we are confident that most countryside and access organizations accept grazing as an essential element of Britain's landscapes and seek collaboration between graziers and the visiting public.