

ARCHIVED NEWS ITEMS 2009

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13th MAY 2009

CASPN STATEMENT

I have just discovered a statement by CASPN (which was never sent to Save Penwith Moors) that was published in an article entitled 'The Penwith Moors Saga' on the Heritage Journal web site for January 2009. Here it is.

CASPN are there to protect and look after the ancient sites. We don't want to be used as a political football for either side to bolster their stance. We do recognise that there are virtues in grazing the Moors, which could be of benefit to the sites, which have become completely overgrown and inaccessible, but equally we feel that any extension of existing fencing on the Moors is unacceptable and counter-productive. We strongly felt that it would have been far better if a Management Plan had been drawn up for the whole Moors, with public consultation and discussion, rather than the piecemeal schemes that are now going on, whereby each landowner (of the 3 schemes) are doing their own thing, without any regard as to what is happening on the rest of the Moors.

Ref: <http://www.heritageaction.org/?page=theheritagejournal&show=0,01,2009>

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17th JULY 2009

NEWS BLACKOUT?

Our local newspaper *The Cornishman* states that it has been at the heart of all things local in Cornwall since 1878 and that it believes "in celebrating and giving voice to local people", as well as aspiring "to support our readers to make a difference and to encourage passionate conversation".

Up until the end of February this year *The Cornishman* ran reports and letters - both for and against the HEATH Project - on an almost weekly basis. Since then there has been an almost total rejection of letters and press releases with new information in support of Save Penwith Moors campaign, although a long letter from Natural England extolling the virtues of their plans for Penwith moors was published on 28th May and the National Trust has been given space to publicise their 'propaganda' walks on Carn Galva and Watch Croft.

The previous *Cornishman* reporter covering West Penwith told us last spring that the controversy surrounding the HEATH Project was one that had produced more correspondence than any other issue in recent years. Yet it now seems to be largely ignored

and pushed into the background. If you are reading this and support our campaign please consider writing or emailing your opinions to:

The Editor, The Cornishman, Harmsworth House, City Wharf, Malpas Road, TRURO, TR1 1QH or email letters to cmletters@c-dm.co.uk

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SUMMARY OF 'OUR' 4 AREAS

MEN-AN-TOL & LANYON QUOIT CROFTS

There has been no activity since the HEATH project finished installing their fencing and gates in the spring. Not all stock proofing has been completed and no paths cut back to facilitate access.

CARN GALVA

The National Trust has begun remedial work to rectify their disastrous drain/ditching/upcasting but this is still a long way from completion. No gates have been installed on the southern side of the moors and the area is therefore not yet stock proofed. Some of the new paths cut out in the winter have thankfully been trimmed again recently.

WATCH CROFT

No further stock proofing appears to have been done since the cattle grid was removed in February. Some of the new paths cut out in the winter have thankfully been trimmed again recently.

CARNYORTH MOOR

This is the only one of 'our' areas to be completely stock proofed and grazed by cattle, although they seem to be only sporadically on the moors and spend much of their time in adjacent fields. When on the moors they congregate around paths, gates and the stone circle where they have spectacularly failed to trample down surrounding bracken – this has been cut back manually! Although warning signs on the new gates have been put up, no such sign was displayed by the granite stile on the public right of way from Carnyorth onto the moors: this is frequently used by local dog walkers and groups of children from Carnyorth Outdoor Centre – it is a serious oversight that has been reported to Natural England who say that grazing will still continue.

The two water troughs have still not been installed. Bridle gates have proved to be unsuitable for horse riders who have extreme difficulty (and danger) in trying to negotiate them, and have resulted in one serious accident: Natural England is supposed to be looking into this issue. Most public rights of way are still overgrown and unwalkable.

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29th JULY 2009

NATURAL ENGLAND DOESN'T DO WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN

On Natural England's own web site (<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>) they declare: "Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings".

Yet in the *The Sunday Times* (26/7/2009 page 4 News Review: Emma Duncan) it was reported that Helen Phillips, chief executive of Natural England, thinks that wind farms should be built in national parks as part of the battle against climate change. But, as Emma Duncan remarks: "If Phillips is the principal guardian of our rural beauty spots, I don't hold out much hope for their future".

In the same issue (page 21) Atticus reported that Natural England will pay three 'health walkers delivery officers' up to £32,100 a year: their purpose being "to increase participation in health walks". In other words they are to be employed to tell people to go for a walk – do we really need our taxes to fund such a stupid waste of money in times of economic recession? Will free-roaming cattle, gates and numerous new fences put up under the auspices of Natural England encourage walkers? It is already very clear that the numbers of people using Carnyorth Moor has dropped considerably since cattle were introduced some weeks ago.

If Natural England is not concerned about ruining the visual and physical attractions of national parks with wind turbines they are certainly not bothered about despoiling the moors of West Penwith with miles of barbed wire fences and dozens of new gates. To quote a bit of modern jargon: this agency is demonstrably 'not fit for purpose' and needs to do some serious 'joined-up thinking'.

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3rd AUGUST 2009

PORTHGWARRA



Gate and fencing near cliffs at Porthgwarra (24/9/2008)

A despairing letter has been received from a gentleman in the Midlands who has, over many years, spent considerable holiday time in a cottage at Porthgwarra: he comments on the grazing scheme along local cliff tops under the auspices of the RSPB (oddly) and has encouraged us to prevent cliff grazing in our area. He points out that:

Animals have been killed or injured falling off the cliffs.

Regular visitors to Porthgwarra will not now walk the coastal path there for fear of cattle that include freely grazing cows with calves and bulls.

The coastal paths have been badly eroded in places

The breeds of cattle being used are all dairy cattle and, allegedly, the farmers involved have merely been encouraged to extend their grazing rights for existing herds.

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8th AUGUST 2009

INTERNATIONAL CELTIC CONGRESS

The following email was sent (3/8/2009) by Craig Weatherhill to various people and organisations including Natural England, The National Trust and Cornwall Council:

"As some of you will be aware, I have just returned from the International Celtic Congress in Sligo, Eire, where I was invited to give the lecture on Cornish place-names. "Not nearly far

enough", according to a certain Mr Brookes, in a comment made at the last Heathland Forum meeting.

I was amazed just how well informed many members of the Congress, from all six Celtic nations, were of the problems that have been created by Natural "England" and the National Distrust on the iconic, culturally important Penwith Moors. These people included several Doctors and Professors of international acclaim and I can state quite categorically, that, to a person, they are appalled. Among these people are such eminents as Doctor Martin Timoney (Eire), archaeology; Doctor Simon Taylor (Scotland), historian; Doctor Jean-Yves Le Moing, Celtic Studies, (Brittany); Dr Brian Stowell, Celtic Studies (Isle of Mann); Professor Hywel Wyn Owen, toponymy (Wales) and Professor George Broderick, Celtic Studies (Isle of Mann). Many other members of the Congress also approached me on the subject and held precisely the same horrified views.

They expressed to me their horror at the illegal actions and environmental vandalism caused to this landscape by externally based bodies, as well as the series of lies we, the concerned public, have been told (the latter, of course, includes the recent leaflet that was circulated by the National Distrust) by the aforementioned pair organisations, and by Cornwall Council as well. Not to mention the appalling level of arrogance and contempt shown by these bodies to the native Cornish people. It seemed that I could tell them little they did not already know, but was happy to add flesh to the facts they knew.

The International Celtic Congress, overall, wishes to join Save Penwith Moors in taking up the cudgels against these appalling and externally motivated "management" schemes which are today's major threat to a landscape that is an integral part of our Cornish and Celtic culture, identity and heritage."

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31st OCTOBER 2009

REPLY TO NATURAL ENGLAND LETTER (extract)

Sent to the Regional Director South West, Natural England, 29th October 2009

“Thank you for your very brief reply to my letter dated 12/10/2009 that, sadly, continues the regrettable lack of any meaningful dialogue with those who are also keen conservationists, yet disagree profoundly with the methods being used by Natural England bureaucrats to achieve their aims.

Unlike agencies concerned with implementing the HEATH Project, including your own, we have always acted with integrity within the law. It was not us who committed unlawful acts by both planning and, then installing, cattle grids across public rights of way (Watch Croft, Carnyorth Moor); by breaching ESA rules by digging deep long ditches that had to be filled in; by breaching the Highways Act by installing a drain pipe that flooded three public footpaths; whose work on Carnyorth Moor has resulted in at least three serious equestrian accidents and deterred people from walking on open access moorland.

But, perhaps the most serious incident to come to light so far has been the attempt by Natural England in a letter to the Interreg office in Lille explaining that the cattle grid un-installed from Watch Croft last February **had then been** reused on Carn Galva when – and we have both photographic and written evidence of this - it was always lying in the exact position to where it had been removed months previously until it was finally taken off site last month.

This grid and its ‘twin’ are now confirmed by the National Trust as being held “pending agreement with Natural England through the ESA for use elsewhere on National Trust land”.

This deception appears to have been an attempt to prove to a major fund provider (European Regional Development Fund through Interreg IIIB North West Europe) that money had not been wasted. I do not know who was responsible for passing on this deceit to your agency but – and this must of necessity only be alleged – I suspect it might have come from a National Trust official in West Penwith. Would you confirm or deny this please?

In view of the fact that the two cattle grids intended for Watch Croft were funded under the HEATH Project that has now been completed, will Natural England now be reimbursing the principal fund providers (Heritage Lottery and ERDF)?

I have also just received written confirmation from Cornwall Council that installation under Natural England HEATH of a cattle grid on Carnyorth Moor “is an unlawful obstruction on the public footpath”. This grid was shown on a plan drawn up by Natural England (Joe Oliver) and dated 17/11/2008.

These unlawful acts and breaches of the Highways Act and ESA regulations demonstrates a clear lack of care for the legalities of stock proofing in Natural England’s planning stage of the HEATH Project. As lead partner for the HEATH Project we hold your organisation responsible for these appalling and unprofessional incidents.

In conclusion I hope that Natural England will take this opportunity to seriously consider alternative proposals for moorland management of a handful of specific sites in West Penwith as put forward by Save Penwith Moors – our position has also not altered.”

Copies were sent by email to:

Miranda Abrey (Communities and Local Government, London)

Dr Helen Phillips (Chief Exec NE)

Matthew Carter (NE)

Ross Champion (NE)

Vaughan Robbins (NE ESA)

Viktoria Varga Lensces (Brussels European Commission)

Christophe Wacquez (Interreg North West Europe, Lille)

Tom Brewer (Heritage Lottery)

Clare Breen (Brussels SW Office)

Graham Watson MEP

Andrew George MP

Huw Irranca-Davies (Minister at DEFRA)

Alex Raeder (National Trust)

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7th NOVEMBER 2009

MONEY AND HEATH PROJECT WASTE OF IT

The two major fund providers for the Natural England HEATH Project were The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) channeled through Interreg IIIB North West Europe. The HEATH Project finished at the end of March 2009 and it has largely been these sources of funding that have enabled the stock proofing of many areas in West Cornwall to go ahead. For works in West Penwith the HLF gave a flat rate grant of 39% and ERDF a variable percentage of around the 50% mark – the total running into many hundreds of thousands of both pounds sterling and euros.

It is now apparent that not inconsiderable amounts of this public funding have been squandered through installation of unlawful and unacceptable works that have had to be ‘undone’.

The National Trust were responsible for installing a cattle grid across the full width of a bridle way on Watch Croft; a drain pipe on Carn Galva that flooded three public rights of way; and a long deep ditch that breached ESA regulations and had to be filled in – twice. In addition Natural England had a cattle grid installed across the entire width of a public footpath on Carnyorth Moor that has been found to be an “unlawful obstruction”: it remains to be seen if it will be removed.

The cost of remedial works on National Trust land has had to be borne by the Trust and must therefore represent the annual subscription of quite a few members [Annual individual subscription (aged 26-59) of £35.63 annual direct debit or £47.50 on a credit/debit card]. This is a disgraceful enough but is not the whole story.

Since the two cattle grids intended for Watch Croft, paid for and installed with HEATH Project funding, are now being held in storage for future use on NT property, it is obvious that they cannot now be used for a Project that has been completed and audited. It is our contention that the Trust should, as a matter of sincerity, repay fund providers for initial costs incurred for purchase and installation of these items. After all it is ultimately the public who have paid for it all.

The same also applies to Natural England for the ‘unlawful’ grid on Carnyorth Moor.

In passing it is pertinent to go back over a year to when Mr Ruut Louwers, Programme Manager of Interreg IIIB, wrote a letter to Andrew George MP on 19th September 2008. In this letter he states that: “...the programme only funds actions which are compliant with national, regional or local legislation, funding towards any actions found to be unlawful would be withdrawn”. Let us see if he keeps to his word.

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7th NOVEMBER 2009

CORNWALL COUNCIL REPLIES TO SPM

In response to a letter from SPM to the Chief Executive of Cornwall Council a reply dated 27th was received written on his behalf by the Living Environment Service Manager.

Some interesting points were made:

- “Unfortunately it would appear that there have been some aspects of the project that have not been as successful as others for a variety of reasons. In particular, the HEATH Project activities relating to some sites in West Penwith do not reflect the level of project management that would normally be expected. I am confident that Natural England would share this analysis.”
- That John Waldon’s report (see below) on a vision for the Penwith Moors highlighted some of the weaknesses of the HEATH Project, and the writer went on to welcome some of his potential ways forward to learn from past mistakes.

- That the Council is keen to work with others to develop solutions “through the West Penwith Heathland Forum” that “could develop some real solutions in the longer term”.
- That the Council “see it as essential that the community is properly engaged, informed and involved in how best to resolve some of the issues” and will work with Natural England and other partners “to try and rebuild some of the confidence that has clearly been lost as a result of the HEATH Project in the area”.

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JOHN WALDON REPORT

A Vision for the Moors and Related land in West Penwith, Cornwall; Report to Natural England by John Waldon, September 2009

John Waldon is an independent consultant, hired and paid by Natural England to produce this report: it is not entirely complimentary to his ‘pay-masters’ and reflects some issues commented upon by Save Penwith Moors. Here are a few selective notes.

Landscape Importance & Tourism

“The extensive views in this open countryside give a real sense of wilderness and open countryside, unspoiled by 20th century developments”. (page 10)

“...the entire landscape is of national, if not international, historic importance.” (page 12)

“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.” (page 19)

“The landscape is of great importance and an essential ingredient in the area’s tourist industry.” (page 7)

“The coast and downs provide some of the finest walking in the country.” (page 14)

“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.” (page 15)

Identity & Protection

“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.” (page 7)

Management

“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.” (page 6)

“Each of the units requires a specific management plan that recognises that area’s special assets and constraints”. (page 6)

“Due to the poorer soils – quality and quantity –and exposure to the Atlantic the productivity of the rough ground is low and unreliable.” (page 16)

“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.” (page 19)

“..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.” (page 7)

Consultation

“...it would be important for those with local knowledge and expertise to be included [in a restricted number of consultees to consider a draft statement on the moors].” (page 8)

“Their [the West Penwith moors] timeless quality is of particular importance and therefore any changes have to be well considered and justified.” (page 3)

“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.” (page 7)

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THE HEATH PROJECT – INTENTIONS AND REALITY

The application for funding under the HEATH Project by English Nature (now Natural England) made to Interreg IIIB North West Europe in about 2003, makes it quite clear that what they wrote in this application has singularly failed to materialise. Also comments made in an Activity Report sent to Interreg at the end of 2005 makes some interesting points about bracken clearance and consultation with the public.

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21st NOVEMBER 2009

WORLD BANK REPORT ON GLOBAL WARMING SUPPORTS SPM

A World Bank report (via New York Times) for the Copenhagen Summit highlighted the lack of meaningful research on the contribution of cattle to global warming. Formerly it was thought that cattle contributed 18% of the greenhouse gases which are fuelling climate change. The World Bank report puts the figure at 51% when all the cattle support functions are accounted for.

This puts our stewards' contribution to climate change at x3 their estimate and supports SPM's assertion that the means of management is propelling the changes which NE/NT are attempting to control. The World Bank also clearly stated that cattle are as unnatural in their contribution to climate change as is a car exhaust pipe! In essence the World Bank see cattle as an industrial process not a natural one.

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12th December 2009

"NATURE MANAGES US" [by Steve Yandall]

There are some clear parallels between Ian Cooke's article on enclosures and the current state of our planet.

Humanity is a 'superior' race with complex motivations and the means to achieve much.

I have no doubt that the same mindset behind the enclosure of land and the consequent suppression of, and cruelty to, other human beings is at the root of our current problems. A mindset that treats the exploitation of nature as sustainable, keeping the majority of our populace in ignorance and engaging in practises which can only accelerate planetary change.

Yes, Government policy via environmental stewards is what I allude to. Sadly we expect destruction from industry but to see our own representatives walking blindly into a global catastrophe with a management plan that encompasses the factors which caused the problem is unforgivable.

Every agency appears blind to the fact that nature manages us. Millenia of being nurtured by the Earth seems to have produced a subliminal belief that nature is forgiving and that we can adapt to and manage whatever the Earth response may be!

The coming decades will prove that nature actually manages us and, rather than 'Mother Earth', she will prove to be more ruthless than any dictator ever born.

The enclosure of Penwith Moors to adopt 'traditional' methods is yet another 'nail' in OUR environment's coffin. Nature's response will be far worse than SPM's resistance. Nature will replace what we have with something alien and, you know what, very few people will notice because the enclosures, as through history, will have excluded those that are likely to fight to retain this Cornish gem.

I would ask everyone involved to exercise their consciences regardless of agendas, policies or employment to effect immediate changes which will ensure our grandchildren respect their forebears.

Sustainability is the current 'buzzword' but how much can be sustained through future generations? Government policy encompasses 'pyramid' social structures (having banned financial ones) which encourages population growth, aspirational growth etc with no chance of sustainability as we are driven from our coasts by inundation into a far more densely populated hinterland with some of our best agricultural land under water.

Within 3 generations this will lead us to a critical breaking point - people/nature/food etc. How do we prioritize?

There is no doubt that individual wealth will drop as will aspirations however the quality of life need not be effected if, and only if, we can balance our needs against natures and, through our children, teach a harmonious appreciation of nature, an appreciation of our direct endeavours and an appreciation of community.

We have a debt to nature for her tolerance thus far and a debt to the future--a future far beyond a parliamentary session or even a generation.

This debt should start to be paid today in West Penwith.

19th December 2009

WILL MACHINERY BE DRAGGED ACROSS THE MOORS?

In December 2002 the Heritage Lottery Fund gave a total grant award of £979,500 to the English Nature/Natural England *Restoring the Sea of Heather* project [later renamed as the *HEATH Project*] to ‘restore’ 3,526 hectares of maritime heath across Cornwall: £100,000 of this grant was spent on machinery. The Asset Register lists a number of items costing over £1,000 including: a Project Vehicle, Bracken Bruiser, Tractor, Flail Mower, Platform Trailer, Cattle Crush, Cattle Trailer, Mobile Cattle Crush, Water Bowsers.

Purchase of the items above for the Natural England HEATH Project raises the probability that tractors will be used (and are likely to already have been used on the Lizard) to pull a bracken bruiser, flail mower, trailers and cattle crush across moorland rich in archaeology – both above and below ground. We therefore ask the following questions of Natural England:

1. Is it intended to use heavy machinery, as outlined above, on West Penwith moorland?
2. If so, will there be permanent and professional supervision of contractors to prevent a disaster as happened with The National Trust on Carn Galva?
3. Will an assurance be given that tractors will not create new permanent or semi-permanent tracks across open moorland?
4. Purchase of a bracken bruiser, flail mower, scythes and bracken swipes all imply that there will be work carried out by hand/machine rather than reliability on cattle to do the job of bracken and scrub clearance. Why is this?
5. If this machinery is not planned to be used in West Penwith will it be lying idle for long periods? Or will it be used/leased/rented by non-HEATH project farmers?