

ARCHIVED NEWS 2010

CARNYORTH COMMON

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ADDED 27th February 2010

63% OF WALKERS WOULDN'T

A readers' poll in the Ramblers magazine *Walk* (issue 25 winter 2009 page 10) asked "Would you avoid following a footpath through a field of breeding Cattle?" 63% said no and 39% said yes. And this refers to experienced hardened walkers – how many casual walkers with dogs and/or children would be put off?

..... AND NOR WOULD MANY HORSE RIDERS

The following has been received from a 19-year-old lady horse rider who was brought up in St Just where she still lives – it speaks for itself.

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concern over the cattle grids and gates which have been unlawfully installed on the moors, obstructing horse riders and walkers alike.

As someone who's childhood features many good memories of horse riding on the moors, I was shocked to learn of the plans to basically shut off the moors which were once so open and inviting!

Since these ridiculous changes, I am one of many who have stopped riding on the moors altogether. The gates are extremely inconvenient for any horses that aren't good at helping their rider open them... let alone those horses who will refuse to go through the small openings. Also, the cattle grids are a massive health risk for our horses! All it takes is for the horse to spook and take off... should they accidentally run into a cattle grid, it would probably result in a broken leg and then death. Is it really worth it?

As for the longhorn cattle that have been placed on the moor, they're very intimidating and I wouldn't want to take my horse anywhere near them!! Anyone who is involved with animals should know that behaviour will always be unpredictable and they are likely to chase or attack walkers, dogs and horses at any time!

You have restricted access to one of the nicest places to horse ride in the whole area. It used to be such a pleasant place with no restrictions and brilliant places to canter/gallop and enjoy our countryside as it should be enjoyed! Not anymore.

For a Carnyorth item go to <http://www.horseytalk.net/BridleWayWatch2.html> *Read more here* and click on *Natural England Cattle Grids*

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ADDED Saturday 6th March

CRIMINAL DAMAGE ON CARNYORTH COMMON

The recent Forum was informed by the National Trust representative that wire fencing had been cut around fields on the southern side of Watch Croft and veiled accusations were made that SPM may have been involved in this.

The day following this announcement it was reported that extensive damage had been done to barbed wire fencing on Carnyorth Common near the end of Hailglower lane (probably during Thursday morning), and that lengths of cut wire caused a serious danger to horses passing by. By the afternoon work was in progress to repair the damage that had been reported to the farmer thanks to efforts by a supporter of SPM.

The timing of this new incident is highly suspicious after remarks made at the forum on the previous day. We are the only identifiable group opposed to this fencing and, as such, provide a useful target for those wishing to ‘point the finger’ of blame. It is significant that the damage must have been done on a bright sunny morning with excellent visibility – strange *modus operandi* for anyone undertaking criminal damage. Is there a hidden agenda going on here to discredit SPM?

TAKE NOTE: Yet once again I must emphasise that SPM, unlike both NE and NT who were responsible for installing unlawful cattle grids, has always campaigned lawfully and do not condone or carry out acts of vandalism or criminal damage.

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“QUIZZED OVER MOOR FENCING POLICY”

This was the headline in a short article published in *The Cornishman* (4/3/2010 page 4) reporting that representatives from Natural England had attended a meeting of St Just Town Council following heavy criticism over their fencing and grazing policy, with particular reference to Carnyorth Common. Following a discussion, the NE area manager, Matthew Carter, promised to address the issue of broken gates “and moving a cattle grid which had

caused some upset amongst residents” (this is the unlawful grid by Hectors House). Mr Carter also believed the Heathlands Forum was no longer working effectively.

By this I take it to mean that they are not getting their own way. Apologists for the HEATH Project and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) at the Forum have consistently been shown to be bungling and incompetent in both planning and execution, as well as continually ignoring views of the public. The unnatural chickens are now coming home to roost.

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ADDED 24th April 2010



LONGHORNS AT TREGESEAL CIRCLE - AGAIN

For the second year running a small group of longhorn cattle are now grazing on Carnyorth Common. They were photographed today once again around Tregeseal Stone Circle where they were using the stones as rubbing posts and obstructing footpaths. Unless they are stopped from doing this it is more than likely there will be a repeat of 2009 when several of the stones were destabilised.

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ADDED 1st MAY 2010

£500 a week – NOT BAD IF YOU CAN GET IT

BOSWENS AND CARNYORTH



Field gate open with the standing stone on horizon.

Below: the longhorns in the back-up field.



During a walk this morning I noticed a group of longhorn cattle grazing in a back-up field adjacent to Boswens Common (Dry Carn) with the field gate open to allow the cattle to go onto the moor. It is obvious they found the grassy field far too tasty to bother about rummaging about on the moor for something to eat but, if they do one day, there is the possibility that they will congregate by the standing stone where the scrub has been cleared and cause damage.



Boswens Standing Stone.

Later on, on Carnyorth Common, I saw the longhorns in their back-up field rather than on the moor although, from the evidence of dung and hoof prints, it was obvious they had been around the stone circle and along many of the footpaths.



Longhorns in the back-up field with feeding troughs.

If it was possible to determine, it would be interesting to know what percentage of their time the cattle are actually out on the moors and, when on the moors, how much time they spend away from the few grassy patches by the circle and alongside the paths.

It seems to me that, for a payment of about £500 a week of taxpayers' money for a period of 10 years, this experimental effort at 'conservation grazing' is most certainly not proving to be value for money.

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ADDED 15th MAY 2010

WHAT IS THE POINT?

I walked today past Boswens Common and on to Tregeseal Circle and around Carnyorth Common. I saw no cattle on either moor. Guess where they were? Yes, that's right - in the back-up fields grazing on delicious fresh grass. Just how often are they encouraged to 'do' any so-called conservation grazing on the moors? It does not seem very frequently, yet it is costing the taxpayer over £28,000 a year for this privilege. Value for money - I don't think so. It is high time this ineffectual, expensive and experimental scheme is scrapped once and for all.

ADDED 22nd MAY 2010

CATTLE

The most recent figure from the Natural England web site *Nature on the Map* gives a figure of £71,787.95 paid so far for the Higher Level Stewardship agreement covering 141 hectares

of Boswens and Carnyorth Commons that began in August 2007. Yet the cattle on both areas of moorland spend much – if not most – of their time grazing in back-up fields, and even that for only about seven or eight months of the year. It seems that the whole object of this very expensive ‘conservation grazing’ – ultimately paid for by the taxpayer – is not being realised or even attempted in any meaningful manner.

The Farming Wildlife Advisory Group report of February 2007 declared the moors of Carnyorth Common to be in good condition. So why is it now necessary to graze it after being left alone for decades and waste all this public money?

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OPEN AND TRANSPARENT?

A file of questions pertaining to Carnyorth Common was originally sent on 8th March 2010 to the Natural England office in Truro; on 26th March to the former NE Regional Director at Exeter; on 27th March to the Bristol office of NE who forwarded it “up the line” on 29th March. No reply was forthcoming so the Bristol office then sent the file to the new Regional Director at Exeter on 27th April for a response. On 12th May SPM requested a progress report from Exeter but to date, although the message was ‘read’, no answer has yet been received by us. Open and transparent – I don’t think so. More like shut and solid.

Save Penwith Moors has asked questions of Natural England over and over and over again but only get totally ignored or fobbed off with half answers. So now is your chance Natural England if you are reading this – and I know some of you do – to send SPM your answers to these unanswered questions. After all you are public servants – so come on and serve the public.

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ADDED Saturday 29th May 2010

CARNYORTH CATTLE GRID

SPM has sent an email to Cornwall Council Senior Countryside Officer (west) Environment Service enquiring if there has been any progress on the issue of the unlawful cattle grid on Carnyorth Common by Hectors House.

A response was received on 20th May stating: “Unfortunately the situation remains the same as when you originally reported this issue to us. The cattle-grid remains interference on the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of the public right of way but it also remains a

priority 4 offence of nuisance. Given the current level of resources for enforcement work on public rights of way and the scale of the existing problems on the path network, it is difficult to foresee when we will be able to deal with this issue. Nevertheless, your concern about the cattle grid will be logged on our system and we will respond to the issue should time and resources become available to deal with priority 4 issues.”

We deem this to be an appalling example of a government agency (Natural England) that has not only acted in contravention of the Highways Act (1980) but has since – when requested by us – declined to voluntarily remove this unlawful obstruction at their own expense, thus saving Cornwall ratepayers the cost of enforcement and upholding the rule of law.

Save Penwith Moors consider it is now high time Cornwall Council removes the obstruction and charge the costs to Natural England – a course of action that, I believe, has been used in the past against those guilty of creating obstructions on a public right of way.

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ADDED Saturday 5th June 2010

NON-CONSERVATION GRAZING



This morning I walked past Boswens Common and around the whole perimeter of Carnyorth Common. The longhorns at Boswens were, as seems to be usual, grazing in the back-up fields; at Carnyorth the cattle were also in their back-up fields but could not get out onto the moor even if they wanted to – the field gate was firmly shut. What is the point of spending over £26,000 a year of taxpayers’ money for this fiasco? It seems to me that the only conservation going on at present relates to the farmer’s bank balance.

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ADDED Saturday 5th June 2010

PASSING THE BUCK - AGAIN

Once again Natural England, through their Chief Executive, Dr Helen Phillips, insist that any problems and queries regarding Carnyorth Common Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) should be addressed to the farmer – not to Natural England – even though the HLS agreement was made between the farmer and Natural England who planned, executed and paid for the bulk of stock proofing on the Common.

It is now admitted that part of the Common is not in any agreement with NE even though, as SPM have pointed out, two gates were apparently erected in 2008/2009 on this land as part of the HEATH Project and are now being ‘maintained’ by the farmer (regular greasing of hinges etc). These two gates also had signs carrying the Natural England logo – but since vandalised – warning of grazing cattle and stating that “Conservation grazing is being carried out on this land as part of an Environmental Stewardship scheme managed by Natural England”. As Dr Phillips says this strip of land is not part of any agreement with Natural England how can it therefore be appropriate (or even lawful?) to install these signs?

The Chief Executive also confirms that they will “not be responding to any further requests for information” from SPM, nor “on matters relating to this and similar issues as we consider them to be manifestly unreasonable”. But in apparent contradiction of this statement they have told us that “further clarity” on this matter should be sought from Matthew Carter (Truro office NE) at 0300 060 4527 or matthew.carter@naturalengland.org.uk “who will be only too happy to help”.

So there you have it. Go ahead and contact Mr Carter and find out how “happy” he is to respond.

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ADDED Saturday 3rd July 2010

NOW YOU SEE IT - NOW YOU DON'T

On the Natural England web site *Nature on the Map* and on a map supplied to us under Freedom of Information, the area of the Higher Level Stewardship agreement for Carnyorth Common clearly shows a strip of land not included as part of this agreement [[see page 4 marked as A & B](#)]. The issue was brought up with Natural England in March 2010 as cattle could wander over this land of unknown ownership at will, and two gates were also installed as part of the HEATH Project. A recent chance look at the same map showed that this strip of land had now mysteriously been added to the HLS agreement [see <http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk/> and type into Search box AG00260864].

This raises some interesting points:

1. That the original map supplied under Freedom of Information did not represent the true area of the HLS agreement and was therefore false and misleading information.
2. That the owner of this land has now been traced and given permission for this land to be included as part of the HLS agreement. But, if this is so, then the HEATH Project gates and adjacent Cornish hedging were still installed many months ago without his/her authority and, additionally, if this is so, no information has been given to Save Penwith Moors even though it is a serious issue we have raised but have been ‘fobbed off’ with the response that it is all now up to the farmers/landowners to sort even though both the HLS agreement and the HEATH Project works were carried out through Natural England.
3. Finally, and the most serious possibility, is that the web site map has been deliberately ‘doctored’ to include this ‘unknown’ land after Save Penwith Moors challenged Natural England on the issues as described above.

Questions have been asked of Natural England but, if they run true to form, we are unlikely to get a realistic answer.

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NOW YOU SEE IT - NOW YOU DON'T (NE REPLY)

Natural England has now responded to this issue. Their web site *Nature on the Map* is operated separately from that agency and the changes we have identified resulted from a recent Rural Land Registry update that caused “incorrect changes to these maps”; none of

SPM's suggestions are correct and "this is a technical problem" that NE will endeavour to resolve. The original map supplied under Freedom of Information is the correct version.

However this begs the question: how many other errors are waiting to be uncovered?

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ADDED Saturday 17th July 2010

INFORMAL FORUM

An informal Heathlands Forum was held on Tuesday 13th July and attended by about 15 persons including representatives from St Just Town Council, Zennor Parish Council, Cornwall Council, Save Penwith Moors, Penwith Access and Rights of Way, The National Trust, Historic Environment Service, Open Spaces Society, and Cornwall Wildlife Trust. Natural England were notable by their absence.

The group walked around Carnyorth Common during which many of the problems created by the Natural England HEATH Project and Higher Level Stewardship agreement were pointed out and discussed. A future walk around this Common has been arranged by Save Penwith Moors to meet with a Natural England official from Truro when concerns and potential remedies can be discussed in greater detail.

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ADDED Saturday 24th July 2010

MORE FACTS ABOUT THE CARNYORTH CATTLE GRID

A recent Freedom of Information request by SPM reveals the following interesting snippets:

October 2009 Cornwall Council's Programmes Manager, Environment Service, confirmed that the council had no power to authorise a cattle grid across a bridleway and that this opinion was expanded by the Corporate Legal Services who confirmed that this also applied to public footpaths. **So why doesn't the Council abide by its own rules and get rid of this grid – now?**

February 2010 Natural England held a site meeting at the cattle grid and commented that the issue had to be resolved quickly as Hilary Benn [previous Labour Government Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] knew about this problem. **[SPM informed**

him!] Options for resolving the issue of this unlawfully installed cattle grid were discussed. Interestingly one of the three options considered was removal of the grid from the site and replacing it with a field gate, as had been approved by the former Cornwall County Council in the original Section 147 application by the then English Nature, and making good the track by back-filling the hole beneath the grid but leaving the by-pass gate and associated granite hedging. Yet two months after this meeting Natural England changed their mind and decided the issue was now the tenant's problem. **So what happened in the intervening period? We will probably never know if NE's past record of secrecy is anything to go by.**

The Cornwall Council Living Environment Manager confirmed that the Section 147 did not mention the cattle grid and that it should be moved – costs being borne by Natural England – and this would help retrieve some confidence from the local community, and that infrastructure (i.e. the cattle grid, gates etc) “needs to be correct” to enable management of the site for access, heritage and biodiversity. **So implying the cattle grid is not ‘correct’ for these purposes.**

May 2010 The Council's Senior Enforcement Officer expressed strong disagreement that the issue of obstruction of a public footpath by the cattle grid had only been given the low Priority 4 category of ‘nuisance’ and that it should have been a Priority 2 ‘obstruction of a permanent nature’, and that all steps necessary should be taken to get the grid removed.

The opinions of these two relatively high ranking council officials – the Living Environment Manager and the Senior Enforcement Officer – were disregarded (or ignored) by the Corporate Director of Environment, Planning and Economy who considered the cattle grid “is in keeping with its surroundings” and that enforcement action “would not be appropriate” and that the file will be duly closed. **I don't think so. SPM will be making a complaint to the Council on this and other alleged inappropriate actions. It is odd that one official declares that enforcement action will be taken “when resources become available”; others want it to be removed asap; while another says that the file is closed.**

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