

# ARCHIVED NEWS 2010

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ADDED 9th JANUARY 2010

### **NATURAL ENGLAND FAQs – some responses**

A Natural England web site *Frequently Asked Questions around the HEATH Project and heathland management in West Penwith*

[[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/FAQ%20West%20Penwith\\_tcm6-15742.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/FAQ%20West%20Penwith_tcm6-15742.pdf) ]

poses a number of questions that address many issues which Save Penwith Moors have brought up over past months; yet this document was never presented to the Heathland Forum nor was SPM told it even existed until now. Why? Is it merely a PR exercise to impress those higher up the ladder - Ministers, Chief Executives of NE/NT, and others.

Natural England, having set up the moorland grazing regime, have now 'passed the buck' to farmers. Here are a few of our comments.

Farmers carrying out grazing on HEATH sites are responsible for considering all aspects of animal welfare including grazing on contaminated land (page 3); **have any tests been done?**; farmers are responsible for the actions of their stock and – generally – are liable for injuries caused by their animals (page 7); they should carry out a risk assessment before grazing is re-introduced to an area (page 6); **once again has this been done? - SPM have repeatedly asked about this without any satisfactory answers.** Cattle may be taken off the common during busy/school holiday times if the farmer decides there may be “a possible conflict due to higher numbers of people” (page 6): **this implies that cattle and people do not make a safe 'mix'.**

NE say they have erected gates or stiles on all tracks and pathways (page 4). **Have they forgotten that there are two public rights of way accessing Carnyorth Common where this was certainly not done (St Just 146 & 141) and that these paths remain – so far – impassable at their access points?**

ESA agreements did not allow installation of new fencing but rules can be overridden for environmental benefits if fencing is sensitively sited in the landscape (page 5). **So what is the point of having ESA agreements when barbed wire fencing can be installed anyhow to accommodate a new Natural England scheme?**

NE ask “*Has the Highways Act been breached by the installation of gates or fences?*” and answer themselves by only mentioning a single cattle grid “wrongly installed across a bridle way” (page 5). **Once again there has been a memory loss: another 'unlawful' cattle grid was installed by HEATH on Carnyorth Moor.**

The final question “*Why was it necessary to have a report on the West Penwith Moors compiled by an independent environmental consultant, John Waldon?*” mentions that as many stakeholders were consulted as possible, and “it was interesting that the vast majority of people questioned were not against grazing of the Penwith Moors, per se” (page 8). **This is not surprising since the ‘vast majority’ consisted of individuals and organisations connected in some way with Natural England (often financially). The report was, of course, only drawn up after most of the new fencing, gates and cattle grids had already been installed – so no ‘level playing field’ there then.**

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ADDED 13th FEBRUARY 2010

### **OFFICIAL COMPLAINT**

An allegation has been sent to Natural England’s official complaints procedure (our complaint has been sent directly to the Chief Executive, Dr Helen Phillips) that they failed to abide by European environmental law as laid down in the Aarhus Convention (1998) and subsequent European Directives, in that they failed to communicate with the West Penwith community from the start of the HEATH project and so denied local people a say in the decision-making process – a failure that has since led to much of the antagonism now going on. We are therefore asking that HEATH should be declared invalid for the areas of Carnyorth Common, Watch Croft, Carn Galva and Lanyon Farm, and then that all new fencing etc be removed forthwith from these areas.

### **MONEY – MONEY – AND MORE MONEY**

SPM has always maintained that implementation of the HEATH project had far more to do with money being doled out than any deep concern for biodiversity.

The old ESA payments (some of which do not finish for a few more years) were much less than the new Higher Level Stewardship payments: £85 per hectare for current ESA and £200 per hectare for HLS.

Yet even the ESA payments are not inconsiderable. The National Trust property of Carn Galva (102 hectares) have been paid £78,030 for the 9 years since 2002, and payments for Lanyon Quoit and Men-an-Tol Crofts (70 ha) came to £53,550 for the same period [NE letter 22/01/2010]. But despite these generous payments of taxpayers’ money very little return can

be seen, indeed, the National Trust had the audacity to complain that Carn Galva moors are now in a poor condition – what have they done with all the ESA money for the past two decades?

The HLS payment of £200 per hectare is the basic rate for our moorland areas although there are many extras that can increase the basic by some 25-50%. These may include management of archaeological features on grassland @ £16 per hectare and a supplement for native breeds at risk @ up to £70 per ha. [©

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/NE%20ES%20HLS%20Payments\\_tcm6-6455.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/NE%20ES%20HLS%20Payments_tcm6-6455.pdf)].

Both Longhorn and Belted Galloway cattle are on the Natural England approved list of native breeds at risk (cattle) [©

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/esf004nativebreeds\\_tcm6-6485.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/esf004nativebreeds_tcm6-6485.pdf)]: Longhorns are being grazed on Carnyorth Common and it is intended that Belted Galloways will be grazed on Carn Galva – thus boosting payments by a significant amount.

According to the Natural England Final Report to the Heritage Lottery Fund dated 17/3/2009 Annex A [©Natural England] Carnyorth Common grazed area is 110 hectares; Watch Croft 100 ha; Carn Galva 142 ha; Lanyon Farm 100 ha, thus making a total of 452 hectares. If just the basic HLS payment is considered then the grand total for annual grazing payments for ‘our’ four areas will be  $452 \times £200 = £90,400$  per annum. Since the agreement is normally for 10 years the grand total will be almost a million pounds – **and this is a minimum**. No wonder the scheme is so popular with some people who have now been mysteriously converted into concerned ‘environmentalists’ after many years of indifference.

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Approximate costs of HEATH and Higher Level Stewardship of the four areas for which SAVE PENWITH MOORS request a grazing exemption

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#### NOTES:

1. The grazing payments represent the minimum of £200 per hectare and in practice are likely to be some 25-50% higher when additional supplements are added on.
2. Some sites are not yet fully stock proofed so there will be additional future costs.
3. Infrastructure costs derived from documents received from Natural England under Freedom of Information [Refs: *Receipted Accounts* ©Natural England, *Interreg IIIB NWE Projects* –

*Verification of Expenditure, Payment Claim No.9 'Investments' Ref Date 30/11/2008 and Interreg IIIB NWE Projects – Verification of Expenditure, Payment Claim No.3 Final 'Investments' Ref date 31/03/2009; ©Natural England.*

SITE	AREA	INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS	GRAZING PAYMENTS (over 10 years)	TOTAL
Carn Galva	142 ha	£160,000	£284,000	£444,000
Watch Croft /Trevean	122 ha	£65,000	£244,000	£309,000
Lanyon Farm	100 ha	£31,000	£200,000	£231,000
Carnyorth Common	110 ha	£42,000	£220,000	£262,000
	474 ha	£298,000	£948,000	<b><u>£1,246,000</u></b>

If we take the whole area to be newly grazed under the HEATH Project then the finance becomes astronomical.

A list of all 24 new grazing sites considered under HEATH in West Cornwall (The Lizard, & Penwith) total an area of 2224.7 hectares. By far the largest area is Goonhilly Downs (4 sites) at 1029 ha; the smallest being 10ha of Kynance Cove – both on The Lizard. [Heritage Lottery Fund Final Grant Payment Request and Completion Report dated 17/3/2009 Annex A new grazing ©Natural England]

At £200 a hectare for 10 years the minimum cost to the tax payer will be £4,449,400 – and this is just for the grazing payment, excluding the infrastructure costs which probably come to well over a million pounds.

To hazard a very rough guestimate, and this is all it can be without full access to relevant documents, the complete total cost of infrastructure and 10-year grazing payments will be:

HECTARES	INFRASTRUCTURE	GRAZING @ £200ha + 25% supplements	TOTAL
2224	£1,250,000	£5,625,000	£6,875,000

If you are reading this and work for Natural England, and feel it is too high a figure - or even far too low - then please communicate and give us the complete break down. Thanks!

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ADDED 6th FEBRUARY 2010

### **GETTING 'TEASY' AND BREAKING OFF ENGAGEMENT**

In response to an SPM email sent to Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP regarding alleged non-compliance of Natural England to the provisions of the Aarhus Convention, a reply was received from Natural England, Executive Director based in London. In this letter he categorically refutes any suggestion that NE is not abiding by 'Aarhus' and claims NE "has gone out of its way to engage with the public" – but West Penwith residents will know better. SPM has already sent a letter to the NE Chief Executive detailing the reasons why we consider 'Aarhus' has not been followed and we will continue to press this issue with the utmost vigour.

A somewhat different attitude to engagement is expressed in a recent letter from the Natural England local Area Manager. He claims that all our correspondence had placed a considerable burden on their resources and that many questions had repeatedly been asked, so that they could no longer continue "to expend this level of resource on continuing correspondence on these [questions already asked] and related issues" and that "In light of the extent, nature and intention of previous communications this means that we may refuse to respond to further requests or correspondence".

SPM has replied that questions have had to be asked over and over again because no clear and satisfactory answers were given in the first instance, and that it has been the failure of NE

to abide by ‘Aarhus’ and involve the public at an early stage that has resulted in most of the complaints made over the past 18 months so that any burden now created is of their own making.

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ADDED 27th FEBRUARY 2010

### **PROBLEMS ON THE ISLES OF SCILLY**

A letter and article in *The Cornishman* (25/02/2010 pages 10 & 47) reports that islanders on St Mary’s are organising a petition objecting to electric fencing, burning and grazing of headlands undertaken by The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.

The Trust’s conservation measures – sounds a familiar excuse – were described by a local hotel proprietor as nothing less than vandalism, while a former equerry of Prince Charles complained that freedom of access and safety of path users was being compromised.

The implementation of a policy that is, apparently, as heavy-handed and unpopular as that being imposed on West Penwith, has generated concern for the fencing off of “long cherished” free access areas now being churned up by animals into mud and excreta so that former wide open spaces now look “closed and ruined”. Is this what we have to look forward to in West Penwith?

The Natural England web site <http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk/> informs that 484.28 hectares covering many of the islands are under Higher Level Stewardship agreement with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust at a total cost of £1,229,992.02 and that the agreement ends in January 2018.

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ADDED SATURDAY 6th MARCH

### **VOCIFEROUS MINORITY TOO MUCH FOR NATURAL ENGLAND**

Natural England attended its first Heathland Forum meeting (having missed the last two) for several months and announced its intention to place a moratorium on communication with SPM.

In view of their denials, anecdotal references and misleading statements this will help SPM target its campaign at the political and media outlets that we have recently explored.

NE's response fits a national pattern of resisting local, and reasonable, requests for public, unfettered, access to historic open access sites.

The expenditure of circa £48m (HLS) in Penwith over the next 10yrs as against cut backs in other services is wholly wrong and represents a wilful waste of money with very limited community benefits whilst Fire Services are cut back, elderly facilities are left to closure and Cancer services are unreliable. Multiplying HLS expenditure across the UK will see expenditure of Billions over 10yrs with no guarantees other than that a select few will build up very healthy pensions.

There are less costly alternatives. Alternatives that offer employment, invite public participation/ownership and maintain the "timeless beauty of the Penwith moors" to promote tourism, exercise and recreation. Alternatives that do not represent massive environmental damage (£48M represents massive material damage).

Cost (in terms of historic damage) was not factored into the NE equation. Means is as important as benefit in landscape maintenance.

NE are now in receipt of the questions they claim to have answered (but failed to do so) but, of course, they are in denial.

S.Yandall

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ADDED Saturday 20th March

### **MONEY EXCITES A SUDDEN APPETITE FOR CONSERVATION**

Save Penwith Moors has been described as an ill informed "cow fearing" protest group that is "trying to whip up opposition in the local community against grazing the moors". [*tumpline stackyard – agriculture on the web*

[http://www.stackyard.com/news/2010/02/environment/07\\_penwith\\_moors.html](http://www.stackyard.com/news/2010/02/environment/07_penwith_moors.html)]

This statement is in itself 'ill-informed'. We do **NOT** campaign against grazing 'the moors' but only the fencing and grazing of a few specific areas of well-used local moorland:

Carnyorth Common, Watch Croft, Carn Galva and two crofts of Lanyon Farm (Men-an-Tol

and Lanyon Quoit Crofts) that was imposed on the local community by Natural England without any consultation, but with the offer of generous annual payments for grazers at a time of severe national recession.

Although we are not against moorland grazing as such, we would ideally like to see an embargo placed on further enclosure of open moorland bordering and adjacent to the Tinnors Way track from St Just to St Ives, and to keep the present perceived wilderness for the benefit and enjoyment of 'Penwithians' and tourists – so vital for the local economy – at a time when almost the whole of West Penwith (inland and coastal) is a Natural England target area for Higher Level Stewardship with its attendant fencing and grazing.

We have suggested to Natural England that the areas bordering the Tinnors Way should be left for at least 10 years with only selective maintenance by manual, mechanical and burning methods, but that if the experimental grazing regime on other areas should be found to be overwhelmingly beneficial then, and only then, should the management issue be reconsidered for 'our' areas.

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ADDED Saturday 27th March

### **NATURAL ENGLAND NOT A GOOD PLACE TO WORK**

An article published in The Guardian (7/11/2007) *Where the wild things are*, gave an insight into the first year of Natural England – the government body that "works for people, places and nature" – formed in 2006 from a merger of English Nature, the Countryside Agency and part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

It was pointed out that NE did not lack ambition and was reported as being well on the way to becoming the government's land management agency. "If NE cannot help us, and our wildlife, to survive climate change, then no one can."

It was admitted by NE that the process of integrating the new body had been challenging and disturbing for NE's staff of 2,500. Staff morale had been tested by a questionnaire: 61% said their morale was "not high" and less than half said that NE was a good place to work.

There were, apparently, serious complaints how decisions were made within the new larger organisation whereby even small decisions needed the authority of the executive board. Also,

at a time when staff had their pay frozen, the Chief Executive, Dr Phillips, was voted a salary of £140,000 plus a 13.5% bonus on top.

The director of Friends of the Earth thought that NE should be taking advantage of “a golden opportunity to engage with the public” and described NE’s overall approach as being “technocratic”

For full article go to:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/nov/07/conservation.guardiansocietysupplement>

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ADDED Saturday 27th March 2010

### **‘AMATEURS’ VERSUS ‘PROFESSIONALS’**

Save Penwith Moors notes that Natural England’s denial of direct communication and Freedom of Information requests is directly related to SPM discovering serious systemic flaws within the HEATH project and the organisation driving it.

Illegalities, financial laxity, disregard of local opinion, representation of myth and anecdote as fact, a total lack of accountability and the exposure of employees’ private details to public scrutiny have all been symptomatic of Natural England’s presence in West Penwith.

The denial of FOI access is, in our opinion, the means by which Natural England intend to prevent SPM accessing any more information to aid our campaign for achieving a grazing exemption for Carn Galva, Watch Croft, Carnyorth Common, and two crofts of Lanyon Farm.

Natural England’s claim that we are vexatious and stress their staff may, within the above context, be true: however the use of laws designed to protect organisations from fallacious requests should not be applied in cases where claims are genuine, and in the best interests of the wider public that need to hold public bodies to account.

Natural England, in denying us access, place a greater emphasis on self preservation than the duty of care which is expected by the wider public. Just what have Natural England to be afraid of? What are they hiding? And why should SPM be denied just because we pose questions that would not be necessary had the Natural England HEATH project lived up to their ‘expert’ description?

Natural England, as ‘professionals’, should have found none of our ‘amateur’ questions stressful or vexatious; neither should they have found any communications a burden or taken a lot of time answering as, being experts, our missives could not have been demanding. And neither would they have been repetitive had they been answered fully and clearly in the first place!

[NOTE: the FOI requests being denied relate to receipted invoices for HEATH Project works that were found to be unlawful or unsatisfactory, and had to be ‘undone’, in order to find out exactly how much taxpayers’ money has been wasted through Natural England’s incompetence.]

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ADDED 3rd April 2010

### **WE DO NOT WANT TO SPEAK, LOOK OR LISTEN TO YOU**

Natural England have made it clear to Save Penwith Moors that they are unwilling to answer our questions - many of which are passed on to us by members of the general public - and are now refusing to supply documents under Freedom of Information

### **NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE**

A comprehensive and helpful letter has been received by SPM from the National Audit Office following our complaint that public funding has been wasted on HEATH Project work that had to be ‘undone’. The letter notes that although the cattle grid destined for the southern end of the bridleway on Watch Croft – and never installed – awaits relocation to Carn Galva (the driveway to Bosigran Farm) the Project was signed off by Natural England as “completed” and a final report issued to the funding providers. The NAO considers this to be “poor project management to sign off projects before all installations are complete”. These concerns were raised with NE “who accept that this part of the Cornwall project could have been managed better”.

So there we have it. An admission, at last.

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ADDED 10th April 2010

### **VALUE FOR MONEY OR MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN?**

The DEFRA web site asks if there is enough funding for Higher Level Stewardship and answers itself by stating that the budget provides for over £700,000,000 for new HLS agreements between 2007 and 2013 – some £280 million more than for previous new Countryside Stewardship and ESA agreements.

[<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/sectf.htm#q2>]

ADDED 17th April 2010

### **NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE AARHUS CONVENTION**

Our letter dated 1st February 2010 to the Chief Executive of Natural England regarding alleged non-compliance with the Aarhus Convention and similar European Directives concerning public participation has still not been replied to. The matter is now going through the official Natural England complaints procedure to try and get a resolution to this totally unsatisfactory situation.

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ADDED 1st MAY 2010



### **FRANCE AND THE NETHERLANDS – TOO MUCH FREEDOM**

A large parcel of documents received from Natural England under Freedom of Information relating to HEATH Project correspondence between NE Head Office in Sheffield and the Interreg office in France has been found to contain many items of sensitive information. These not only include personal and bank details of past employees of English Nature (forerunner to NE) but also of people connected with the European project partners based in France and the Netherlands: Parc Naturel Regional d'Armorique, Syndicate Mixte Espaces Littoraux de la Manche, Conservatoire Du Littoral, Bretagne Vivante, Alterra and Hoge Veluwe.

At the local Heathlands Forum held in Penzance on 3rd March 2010, the Natural England (Truro) representative was handed a sheet of Frequently Asked Unanswered Questions: item

15 stated: “Why were private bank details supplied by NE under FOI [Freedom of Information], and other documents supplied under FOI were not the finished articles but only drafts?” And again he was told in a letter from SPM dated 8th March 2010 of the inclusion of private details on previous Freedom of Information documents (bank account numbers etc), no acknowledgement or action was apparently taken until his superiors were contacted on 22nd March, after which Natural England immediately instituted “urgent attention”.

Both Natural England and Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment in the UK were informed and a full investigation regarding Natural England has been undertaken.

However at that time only details of English Nature employees were known about. Save Penwith Moors has now alerted the European partners of this leak of sensitive data.

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ADDED 8th MAY 2010

### **DISCLOSURE OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

Following disclosure by Natural England of personal data of former English Nature and European partner employees connected with the HEATH Project, a letter has recently been received by SPM from the previous Labour Government's Minister for Marine and Natural Environment, Huw Irranca-Davies MP, stating; “I very much appreciate your co-operation and responsible approach to this issue”.

However he then goes on to write that he was satisfied the HEATH project “has been properly implemented” and did not intend to take any further action in this regard.

SPM consider this statement to be wholly unacceptable in view of the irrefutable evidence we have submitted to his department (DEFRA) and to Natural England that the HEATH project has been beset with systemic failings from its inception.

To name just a few:

- lack of initial consultation with local communities in alleged breach of European legal requirements (Aarhus Convention) and neglect of Natural England’s own Communication Plan, even extending to our member of parliament and other local representatives being unaware of the initiative,
- installing unlawful cattle grids in breach of the Highways Act, and unsatisfactory works with regard to the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme that had to be rectified so

wasting public funding for the initial works (Heritage Lottery Fund and European Development Regional Fund),

- disregard of local opposition, including that of local councils, once plans became known about, and a continuing apathy in consulting with users of the moors and West Penwith residents,
- continuation of moorland cattle grazing despite a decrease in public access, several accidents involving horse riders and damage to Tregeseal Stone Circle,
- disregard of their moral and legal obligations regarding the disabled,
- unsustainable and environmentally destructive actions,
- release of documents under Freedom of Information that were uncompleted drafts or contained numerous clerical/typing errors and omissions that altered the information content to give a misleading interpretation.

It is now apparent that the above named government minister was prepared to condone and support unlawful and scandalous actions within his own environmental agency, rather than serve the British electorate, the Exchequer and our environment with impartiality.

Now that the previous administration has been swept away, SPM feel sure that the new minister will act with greater integrity and objectivity when he has been briefed on the above issues that are causing such dismay and anger amongst those who actually use the moors of West Penwith.

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## **WASTE OF EUROPEAN FUNDING**

Following a recent complaint to the Communities and Local Government office, European Policy and Programmes Division, that our allegations that European funding for the HEATH project had been wasted on having to ‘undo’ unlawful and unsatisfactory works – made last autumn but still not addressed – a response was forthcoming from the Complaints and Ombudsman Liaison Manager.

The original person responsible for this issue had been ‘chased up’ and responded with the remarks that “The issue has been extremely complex and time consuming” and had involved consultation with a number of stakeholders including the French Programme organisers and had “taken far longer than we expected”.

## **WASTE OF HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDING**

Following correspondence with the South West office of the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding the same issue (as above) and their unsatisfactory response, the complaint has been escalated to the Chief Executive. No reply has yet been received.

ADDED 15th MAY 2010

## **NATURAL ENGLAND REQUEST A MEETING WITH SPM**

Following our report to Natural England about release of sensitive personal data as part of a Freedom of Information delivery of documents, a meeting with SPM was requested by the Delivery Manager, Customer Standards & Improvement Team, Systems, Knowledge & Information (SKI), Natural England, who had been asked by the Executive Director Corporate Services, Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Information Assurance, Natural England, to undertake an internal inquiry into the alleged release of personal data. What do these verbose job titles actually mean?

A very amicable and informative meeting took place at Men-an-Tol

Studio on Thursday 13th May and demonstrates that even though NE show a distinct unwillingness to communicate with us on issues of moorland management, it is perfectly obvious that they are willing to engage with us when it suits their own agenda.

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ADDED Saturday 12th June 2010

## **“ILLEGAL ENGLAND”**

Much has been written on the breakdown of law and order in inner cities.

One of the factors, for many, in deciding to relocate to the 'gentler', more relaxed and scenically beautiful West Penwith is the presence of visible disorderly conduct where they currently live.

Would it surprise those people to find out that a government QUANGO, Natural England, is adding to the degradation of law and order in West Penwith and thus setting an example of government respect for its own laws and the level of respect they hold for the local public? In the knowledge that two former Labour Government ministers, Huw Irranca Davies and Hilary Benn, knew of this and failed to act, the word 'government' does apply.....

.....These are **OUR** laws, **OUR** moors, **OUR** children's futures and **OUR** problems to resolve.

If NE are to be a vehicle of resolution they must show respect, bow to and buy into **OUR** wishes and never forget they are accountable to **US** - the public.

In portraying themselves as victims of stress and vexation they fail to recognise that it is NE that has imposed on **OUR** lives and freedoms. In failing to recognise or allow us our legal right to participate in matters that effect **OUR** environment and denying us access to negotiation (on the flimsiest of grounds) they invite open criticism.

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ADDED Saturday 26th June 2010

### **NOT GUILTY M'LUD**



Natural England Executive Director for Regional Delivery (some title) has written to us stating that although they “could have improved our communication with the public” they do not accept that they have failed to comply with articles of the Aarhus Convention, not that they have breached international law. Hence they will not be declaring the HEATH Project invalid – as applied to ‘our’ areas – “nor will we be returning funding nor removing stock proofing in these areas”.

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ADDED Saturday 3rd July 2010

### **NOT DOING WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN**

The Open Spaces Society has just completed an 84 page guide – *Finding Common Ground* – that takes account of local community interests in common land. The General Secretary of the OSS makes several points very pertinent to the Save Penwith Moors campaign and, with the guide, can be viewed on-line by following the link below. Among points made are that grazing, fencing etc can meet opposition “unless the community is involved in their making”; that fencing, even where desirable, is “a physical and psychological barrier and can change the nature of the common”; that “if these ideas [fencing, grazing etc] are introduced without involving the community the common will be a battle ground, when it should be a place for peaceful enjoyment, where all interests co-exist harmoniously”.

In view of the contents of this report it is very ironic that it was commissioned and funded by Natural England whose Common Land Major Project Manager says that commons, although mostly having designations protecting wildlife and archaeology, as well as the landscape itself, can be treasured at a local level “for quiet enjoyment, dog-walking, or simply as a place to escape and to enjoy scenery”; and that “We need to ensure that the interests of local communities are always at the heart of decision making, when considering the future of commons.”

There are some very pertinent remarks about the use of fencing "which is one of the most controversial issuers". [see the report especially Page 40 Item 7.1]

Perhaps *Finding Common Ground* should be required reading by all Natural England employees and PUT INTO PRACTICE. Shame they did not take this stance when they implemented the HEATH Project and Higher Level Stewardship schemes in West Penwith.

<http://www.oss.org.uk/finding-common-ground/>

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ADDED Saturday 10th July 2010

### **UNREASONABLE- OBSESSIVE – HARASSMENT – ANNOYANCE**



These are a few of the words used by our Natural England Area Manager to describe Save Penwith Moors requests for information and for a response to various issues affecting our local landscape. And this despite Richard Benyon MP (Minister for Natural Environment at DEFRA) commending SPM for their “responsible approach” regarding disclosure of sensitive personal staff information released to us by Natural England, and the Executive Director, Corporate Services, writing to us from London on the same subject that: “I am grateful to you for alerting Natural England to this matter, which is now receiving my urgent attention as the Executive Director responsible for Information Assurance”.

Natural England responds to ministerial recognition of our ‘responsible attitude’ by refusing to answer our questions anymore.

Officials in Truro are now telling us off for asking too many questions that are, apparently, causing an unreasonable burden amounting to harassment of Natural England staff. We are accused of

- being “demonstrably obsessive and manifestly unreasonable” in the amount of correspondence that is “designed to cause disruption or annoyance”;
- sending “often rude and disrespectful” emails;
- repeatedly questioning NE staff at Forum meetings “often aggressively”;

not reporting meetings or replies accurately;

- implying that NE officers “do not know what they are doing”;
- and ridiculing NE staff on our web site.

Don’t these thin-skinned people ever read newspapers, listen to the radio or watch TV: even the royal family, prime minister and leading public figures have to undergo biting criticism and ridicule: remember the satirical TV show *Spitting Image*?

Yet, despite Natural England's whingeing, regular users of local moorland are expected to tolerate their unreasonable and annoying programme of physical and visual destruction while enduring inconvenience and harassment from roaming cattle.

It is perfectly obvious that information released to date by NE has shown up many instances of mediocre planning; unlawful, dubious and unsatisfactory works; waste of public money; poor project management; lack of any local consultation later followed by a total dismissal of local objections; release of sensitive personal information; and on and on.....

It is no wonder that Natural England do not want to open up any more cans of worms by releasing more information and accelerating their own corporate decay.

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### **BUT NATURAL ENGLAND NOW OFFER TO MEET WITH SPM**

Despite above remarks, the Natural England South West Regional Director offered to travel down from Exeter to meet with Save Penwith Moors. Three members of our action group met with him on July 5th and spent two hours walking around Carnyorth Common where we were able to point out many problems. The meeting was well worth while and the view was expressed that we all wanted to find solutions. It is worth pointing out that this was the very first occasion in over two years of campaigning that any NE official has made a direct offer to SPM to meet face-to-face on location. It is a welcome change from past negative attitudes but what the long term outcome will be remains to be seen.

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