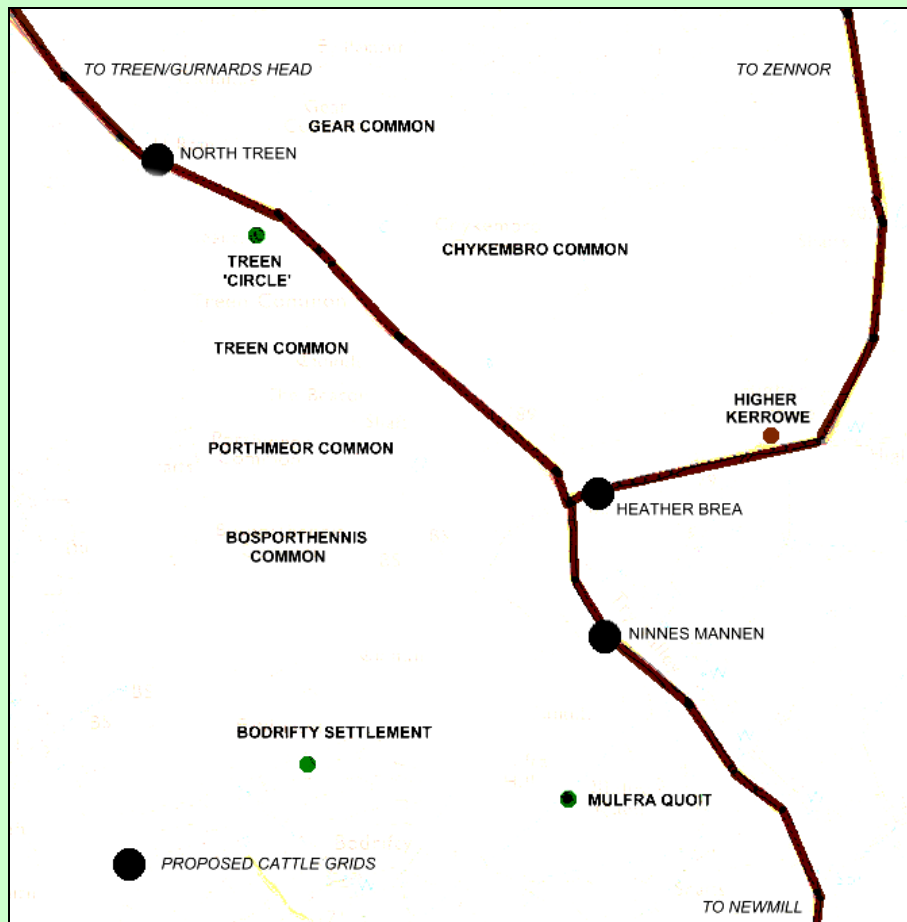


MULFRA/TREEN COMMONS

SOME NOTES ON PROPOSED HEATH PROJECT ENCLOSURES





At the end of 2005 the HEATH Project had their eyes on grazing the moors at Mulfra/Treen and, as part of stock proofing, intended to install three on-highway cattle grids named as North Treen, Heather Brea and Ninnes Mannen. Fortunately this plan has never materialised – yet – but might well be resurrected in the future. The area, having several owners, is subject to at least three ESA agreements all ending on 30th April 2012, although it is unclear how great the extent of proposed grazing here was to be, or if it included the area around the quoit.

In November 2005 an official of English Nature noted: “We have been discussing with the Lizard and to a lesser degree the West Penwith communities the ideas behind the cattle grids. We are resisting any form of planning approval as yet as we don’t want the natives to get restless, these are still only proposals and we can change if the community hates the idea”.¹

At a meeting of the HEATH Project held in Truro on 20th December 2005 a summary of on-highway cattle grids for West Penwith included two grids for Mulfra/Treen Common at 452361 & 443358. It was noted that further community consultation was required to “assess the willingness of people to accept open grazing across this region”.²

Four days before Christmas 2005 a meeting was arranged by English Nature to meet up with [named blanked out] at Treen/Chykembro Common to “test the water and see the reactions” for open grazing along the commons, the concept of cattle grids, commons restrictions and potential benefits under new Stewardship payments.³

At the end of 2005 English Nature considered this site to be the least developed for agreeing suitable grazing, and that the Ninnes Mannen location might need Secretary of State approval since it was so close to Mulfra Hill; some opposition to these three cattle grids was expected.⁴

The grid at North Treen was by a lay-by and it was wondered if this was long enough to provide a by-pass without “additional landtake”. It was also queried whether its proximity to Porthmeor Cottage would cause a problem of noise nuisance.⁵

North Treen Common was selected [for the cattle grid] “as it does not fall within the common on the west and provides sufficient visual line for traffic. It also represents the start of the open ground and as such lessens possible views amongst the community that the grid degrades the open appeal of the common”.⁶

The location of Ninnes Mannen was based on the ability of stock to escape on-coming vehicles; further south towards Newmill the hedges are high enough to restrict cattle movement off the highway. There is space on either side to provide a by-pass bay.⁷

It was asked whether the grid at Heather Brea could be single track as is much of this road to Zennor.⁸

A meeting of the HEATH Project held on 27th January 2006 in Truro mentioned that the plan for Mulfra is being “revisited to allow for a greater area of grazing heathland to be included in the project” and “if a new 10 year agreement could be set up then this would give entitlement to the HLS payments”.⁹

In the final report by Natural England to the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2009 it was stated: “Challenging to progress [expected that when ESA ends in next 3 years may enter HLS] Mulfra Downs [private] 107.”¹⁰ If this happens then, naturally, the area will doubtless have to be stock proofed with fences, gates etc. and leave us with yet another loss of open space in which to walk and ride.

A few points are worth making on remarks from English Nature's comments above.

1. We are resisting any form of planning approval [for the cattle grids] as yet as we don't want the natives to get restless, these are still only proposals and we can change if the community hates the idea
2. It was noted that further community consultation was required to "assess the willingness of people to accept open grazing across this region
3. Some opposition to these three cattle grids was expected
4. It was also queried whether its [cattle grid] proximity to Porthmeor Cottage would cause a problem of noise nuisance
5. It [cattle grid] also represents the start of the open ground and as such lessens possible views amongst the community that the grid degrades the open appeal of the common

These remarks show that community opposition could, in theory at least, affect grazing plans and that English Nature were willing to consult with local communities even though some opposition was expected. So why did opposition to fencing other areas later come as such a surprise to Natural England?

English Nature also took into account noise nuisance from cattle grids – why did Natural England not consider this at Carnyorth Common?

In addition the visual impact of cattle grids on the landscape was considered an important consideration – again why did Natural England not consider this for Carnyorth, Watch Croft or the B3306 coast road by Carn Galva?

Perhaps some officials working for English Nature were more open to local public opinions and concerns, even though they dismissed them as 'natives'?

¹ Email 22/11/2005 16.12 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

² Notes from the HEATH Project meeting on the 20th December 2005 at the St Clements Building, OCH, Truro ©Natural England/Cornwall Council

³ Email 15/12/2005 10.56 © Natural England to Defra and Cornwall Council

⁴ Email 29/12/2005 15.49 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

⁵ Email 29/12/2005 16.12 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

⁶ Email 29/12/2005 16.12 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

⁷ Email 29/12/2005 16.12 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

⁸ Email 29/12/2005 16.12 © Natural England to Cornwall Council

⁹ HEATH Project UK partners steering group meeting 27th January 2006 @ 2pm Held in the Coach House Meeting Room, Truro office ©Natural England/Cornwall Council

¹⁰ Heritage Grants Final Grant Payment Request And Completion Report –dated 17/03/2009 covering the period May – December 2008. Report by Steve Clarke (NE) © Natural England