

HAYLE TO GODREVY TOWANS

MANAGEMENT PLAN

September 2014



Dartmoor ponies grazing on Mexico Towans, October 2013.
St Ives and Carbis Bay in the background.
(nb: 'Towans is Cornish for sand dunes)

Report by Martin Rule, Environmental Consultant

**To
The Towans Partnership**

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	page 3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Environmental setting of The Towans.....	6
Map 1 – Ecological Designations.....	9
Map 2 – Landscape & Planning Designations.....	10
1.2 Background to The Towans Partnership.....	11
Map 3 – Towans Ownership (indicative).....	12
1.3 Background to this Project.....	13
2. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT PLANS & POLICIES AFFECTING THE TOWANS	14
2.1 Land Management Plans.....	14
2.2 Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030.....	16
2.3 Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Plan 2010-2015.....	19
2.4 Hayle Area Plan 2005-2025.....	20
2.5 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan.....	21
2.6 Cornwall Maritime Strategy 2012-2030.....	22
2.7 Beach Management Strategy 2011-2015.....	22
2.8 Cornwall Green Infrastructure Strategy 2012.....	22
2.9 Other relevant plans.....	23
2.10 The Sands of Time Plan 1994-1999.....	24
3. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN	26
3.1 Summary of one-to-one meetings.....	26
3.2 Summary of other relevant meetings.....	27
3.3 Summary of visitor questionnaires.....	28
3.4 Overall summary of consultation.....	30
4. THE KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE TOWANS TODAY	32
4.1 Ecology and landscape.....	33
4.2 Development pressures and Planning.....	35
4.3 Information and education.....	36
4.4 Visitor impacts.....	38
4.5 Infrastructure.....	40
4.6 Beach-related issues.....	42
5. EXPLORING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RANGER	44
5.1 Draft Ranger job description.....	44
5.2 Funding opportunities.....	46
5.3 Securing funding for a ranger post.....	47
5.4 Recommendation to Towans Partnership.....	48
APPENDIX I – Glossary of Environmental Designations	50
APPENDIX II – Detailed descriptions of Plans & Policies mentioned in Chapter 2	51
APPENDIX III - List of policies in ‘The Sands of Time’, 1994-1999	63
REFERENCES	66

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Chapter 1 describes the great wealth of wildlife and heritage features present within the project area and also describes how cherished the area is for recreation by both local people and visitors.
- Chapter 1 then explains the background to the Towans Partnership and the rationale for this current project, namely, to explore the need to deliver a co-ordinated presence here to raise the Towans' profile and protect its values. This is driven partly by the belief that multiple-ownership is leading to a lack of coherent site management.
- Chapter 2 describes the range of land management agreements in place here. Most of the Towans lie within an SSSI, which is currently classified as being in 'unfavourable condition', due mainly to scrub encroachment. This makes it a priority for Natural England to address.
- Chapter 2 then summarises the wide range of plans and policies of relevance to the Towans. Over many years, many organisations have highlighted the values of the Towans and have developed plans and policies accordingly, to result in a framework that, in theory at least, enables the Towans to be properly-regarded during the planning process. Reference is made to *Appendix II* here, which contains much relevant additional information.
- Chapter 3 describes the 3 forms of consultation undertaken. Meetings were held with 20 local companies; 82 visitor questionnaires were completed and analysed and direct contact was made with local schools, councils and a range of other relevant groups.
- A wide range of views resulted; these are described. All the businesses clearly understand the link between a high-quality environment and their guests' enjoyment. Many of them are actively involved in direct habitat management; most would be keen to see the profile of the Towans improved through a single co-ordinated person, and several at least would be prepared to support this financially, although expressed the need for this to be fairly shared.
- Many of the visitors come to the Towans frequently, and feel quite passionate about them. Many expressed that the area should be more or less kept as it is. A wide range of other specific comments was gathered.
- Several local schools responded and are keen to make more use of the Towans, but expressed that this would be greatly helped if there was a clear, dedicated contact point. This was echoed strongly by Duchy College.
- Chapter 4 describes the range of issues affecting the Towans today, generated via the consultation process. These are described under 6 themes: Ecology and landscape, Development pressures and planning, Information and education, Visitor impacts, Infrastructure and Beach-related issues.

- Under each theme, the priority-rating, responsibility and current and future action is then described. Naturally, the situation is variable across such a range of themes, but one that frequently recurred is that the creation of a physical presence/single contact point for Towans-related issues would greatly help address a large number of the issues.
- In summary, the creation of a high-profile, clearly-identified ranger-type role, operating across the whole Towans, was widely supported by many of the consultees, and would clearly be able to address many of the issues raised during consultation.
- Chapter 5 explores the establishment of such a ranger role. A draft job description is provided, with the following key tasks: Education/promotion (25% of time), Liaison/outreach (25%), Practical site management (20%), Project management (15%) and Specific projects (15%).
- Chapter 5 then describes funding options to deliver this. A range of funding opportunities is listed. The Towans Partnership is not in a position at present to make a funding bid, due to its current structure. However, Duchy College has expressed with some enthusiasm a desire to host this post and to lead on bid-submission.
- **It is recommended that the Towans Partnership accepts this offer from Duchy College, while at the same time seeking formal offers of support from local businesses who expressed their support during the consultation process.**
- The aim should be to have the post ready for the spring/summer 2015 season.

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Finally, a huge 'thank you' to all the landowners, business owners and site visitors for being so willing to share your views and enthusiasm for the site in order to try to improve this special area.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Environmental setting of The Towans

Lying behind Hayle's famous 'three miles of golden sand', the sand dunes from Hayle to Godrevy comprise the second largest dune system in Cornwall. Only the Towans at Perranporth are more extensive.

The dunes mainly comprise broken-down seashells which have been blown onshore. They are calcareous and support lime-loving plants rarely found in Cornwall, which is predominantly made up of acidic granite. It is the richest site west of the River Fal for vascular plants; indeed over one fifth of all plants recorded in Cornwall occur here.

Many rare and scarce invertebrates occur here also, including one fifth of the UK's most protected butterfly species, perhaps most notably among these the Silver-studded Blue, which occurs more abundantly here than anywhere else in the country.

Scarce and declining birds including Skylark, Linnet and Starling occur here at important densities, and the dunes provide home to reptiles also, in particular adders and common lizards – both protected species.

Ecological designations

In view of these high ecological values, virtually all the dune habitat within the project area is designated as **nationally important for wildlife** – Gwithian to Mexico Towans Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Godrevy to St Agnes SSSI.

Two other important sites – Gwithian Green and St Gothian's Sands – are designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), while these and virtually all the other coastal and wetland ecosystems within the project area are classified as County Wildlife Sites, a non-statutory designation given to habitats considered to be of at least **county-importance for wildlife**.

Map 1 displays these areas, while Appendix I comprises a full description of all the environmental designations mentioned in this report.

Human use of the Towans

The peace on the Towans today belies its previous life. Through the late 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, large areas were given over to the manufacture of dynamite. This was of particular importance during World War One, with the area being known – even today – as ‘Dynamite Towans’. The remains of blast banks, tracks and other structures can clearly be seen today all over Upton Towans.

Around Gwithian, tin streaming took place from early times, and larger-scale sand and gravel extraction took place here, and around the Hayle River mouth, until recent years.

Today, the Towans and their adjacent beaches are quite clearly extremely popular destinations for visitors throughout the year for a wide range of activities from dog walking to kite surfing. Many tourism-based businesses have developed here, making the area second only to Newquay in terms of the amount of accommodation available to holidaymakers in Cornwall.

St Ives Bay and its catchment

Looking westwards from the Towans, the views across to St Ives and the hills of Penwith are among the best in Cornwall. These hills, in fact, along with Godrevy headland at the north of the project area, are actually included within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – see Appendix I. Such areas are considered to contain **landscape of national importance**.

Other dunes occur at Porthkidney, across the Hayle River mouth, reaching almost all the way to St Ives.

Looking inland from the Towans, Copperhouse Creek reaches up from Hayle Harbour towards Loggans Mill. This tidal creek comprises one arm of the Hayle Estuary SSSI, a nationally-important wildlife site designated primarily for its important wading and water-fowl populations. Most of the SSSI is owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), comprising **one of only two RSPB reserves** in the whole of Cornwall.

Landscape and Heritage designations

The wide range of historic, scientific and landscape values briefly outlined above has long been cherished by the local community, as well as visitors. The whole dune system and adjacent coast has been conferred with a variety of designations which seek to protect these values, in particular, through the planning process (this is explored more fully in Chapter 2).

Map 2 shows these areas and Appendix I provides an explanation of each designation.

In 2006, the port of Hayle became a designated part of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site, a **designation of international importance**, putting the mining-related remains here on a par with the Taj Mahal, Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Egypt.

Summary

Hayle is therefore uniquely-blessed among Cornish towns for its rich abundance of wildlife, heritage remains and outdoor recreation areas, both within its heart and on its doorstep.

The area contains features of county, national and international heritage value.

Protecting, safeguarding and enhancing these assets is an on-going challenge, however, especially given our ever-growing population and appetite for development.

This Plan outlines actions that will contribute to part of this work, specifically within the Towans, but with an eye to the wider St Ives Bay catchment.

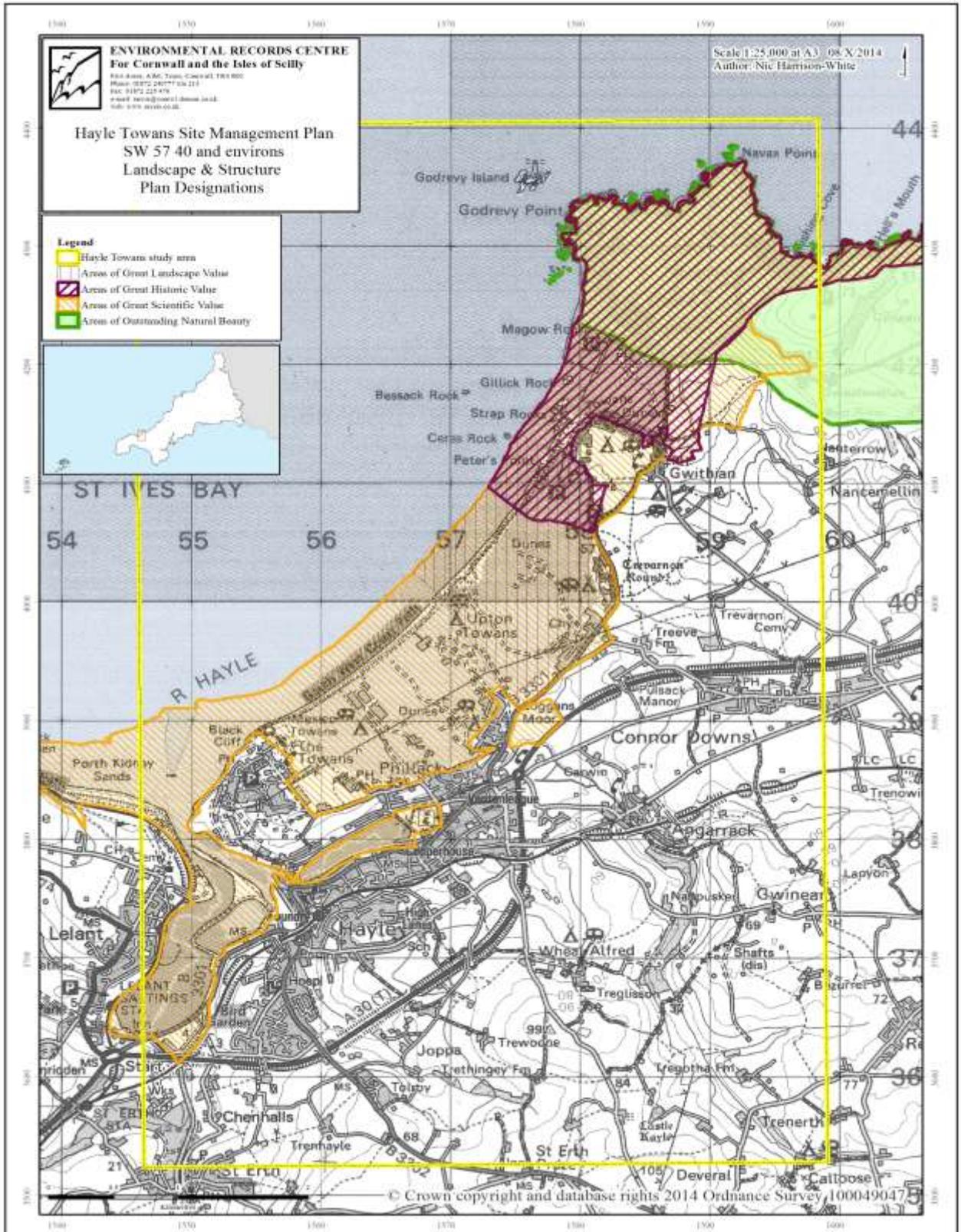
A Silver-studded Blue on the Towans



*The Towans is the best site in the UK for this rare species.
(Photo by Dick Goodere)*

The following two pages contain Maps 1 and 2, depicting the wide range of environmental designations within the project area.

Map 2, showing various Landscape and planning designations



1.2 Background to The Towans Partnership

The pressures facing the Towans have been known for a long time. Twenty years' ago, Cornwall County Council's Countryside team published 'The Sands of Time: A future for the Hayle to Gwithian Towans, 1994-1999'.

From that report a non-statutory, advisory body, **The Towans Partnership**, was formed in 2002. The Partnership is a forum involving people who have an interest in and/or a responsibility for the conservation, protection and management of the Towans.

One key concern at its inception was the fragmentation of ownership and management across the Towans –see **Map 3**, overleaf. It was recognised that there was a need to facilitate communication between different agencies and groups in order to identify issues and to assist in coordinating and addressing concerns.

It has no management powers but it can advise, recommend, lobby etc, as well as ask people to attend meetings to explain decisions or aspects of concern to members.

The Partnership meets quarterly and has representatives from local communities together with representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors involved in conservation. This includes representatives from the Countryside and Beach section of Cormac solutions, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, The National Trust and Natural England.

It also includes private landowners, holiday parks and businesses and councillors from Cornwall Council, Hayle Town Council and Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council.

The Partnership remains active and meetings well attended.

However, cost-savings in recent years in a number of organisations have resulted in reduced input from several partners, most notably from Cornwall Council's Countryside team, which used to provide significant valuable input from staff based at Tehidy Country Park.

Map 3, Showing the complexity of land ownership across the Towans (boundaries are indicative only)

Towans Land Ownership/Management

Scale 1:21,000



1.3 Background to this Project

The Partnership has felt for some years that there is a need for a co-ordinating role on the Towans, to try to address the fragmentation issue, foster volunteer activity, share good practice, etc.

In response to dwindling core resources, the Partnership saw a need to look outwards and try to secure funding from elsewhere to make this happen.

Following the development of a solar farm in Gwinear-Gwithian Parish in 2012/3, an opportunity arose to bid for funds to the Cornwall Community Foundation, arising from the tariffs from this development.

Hayle Town Council and Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council also contributed, with the result that a one year post of Towans Project Officer was created from September 2013 with the following brief:

- Consult local communities, businesses, landowners, voluntary bodies etc;
- Ascertain what issues, problems, aspirations they have for the Towans;
- Review all relevant existing Plans/policies affecting the Towans;
- Explore the need for a co-ordinating, ranger-type role for the Towans;
- Produce a job description for a ranger;
- Produce a Towans Management Plan (this report);
- Seek and ideally secure funding for a 3-5 year ranger post to commence within 6 months of this project.

This Report is the summary of that project

2 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT PLANS & POLICIES AFFECTING THE TOWANS

A number of national and local organisations have produced plans and policies of relevance, at least in part, to the Towans. These generally fall into one of two categories:

- Specific land management plans for parts of the Towans, or;
- Development-related plans or policies, either strategic or specific.

The key current plans and policies are outlined below.

Appendix II provides more detailed text on the most relevant documents.

2.1 Land Management Plans

As described in the Introduction, the great majority of the Towans lies within the Gwithian to Mexico Towans SSSI.

Natural England (NE) actively encourages owners of SSSIs to develop and adopt plans to ensure that their portions – ‘units’ - of the SSSI are managed effectively to protect and enhance the various ‘interest features’ – those for which the SSSI was designated – into the future.

The main mechanism for carrying out appropriate SSSI management is through the government-funded Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS). Several areas of the Towans benefit from such schemes – see bullet points below. The HLS scheme results in a formal 10 year Agreement between the landowner and NE. The HLS scheme ends for new applicants in 2014 – see Chapter 4, following.

Every six years NE carries out a Condition Assessment of each SSSI - a sort of health check – to ascertain how well each unit is being managed. Significantly, the last review in 2009 resulted in the Gwithian to Mexico Towans SSSI being classified as in ‘**unfavourable condition**’ due to the extent of scrub and non-natives species reducing the extent of open dune grassland for which the SSSI was designated.

Natural England and the relevant landowners formed a plan to address this. As a result, 4 landowners signed up to 5-year Conservation Enhancement Schemes (CES) with Natural England in subsequent years. The area of scrub to be reduced across these 4 holdings during the 5 years’ is around 36 ha, which equates to nearly 10% of the total area of the SSSI.

The various land management plans relevant to the Towans are briefly summarised below (*refer to Map 3*):

- **Upton Towans** Cornwall Wildlife Trust Reserve – this is the largest unit of the SSSI. The property is owned by Cornwall Council but managed by CWT. It benefits from an HLS Agreement, running until 2018. Protection of important archaeology is a key component, along with control of scrub and invasive species and improvements to access and site information. Grazing with livestock does not take place at present. CWT manages the site with the

guidance of a Site Management Plan. This plan was last comprehensively updated in 2006, but regular reviews of work at Upton take place. *A summary of the management objectives for Upton Towans can be found in Appendix II.*

- **Mexico Towans** is privately-owned and is subject to a CES Agreement, running until September 2017. Reduction of about 8ha of scrub and invasive species is a key element of the work, which will be delivered in part through pony grazing, which was established in autumn 2013.
- **Lethlean Towans** is privately-owned and subject to a CES Agreement running until September 2017. This is one of the few areas of the Towans where pony grazing has taken place almost continuously in recent decades, under the instigation of Cornwall Council. Grazing will continue, but about 2,5ha of additional areas of scrub and invasive species need to be cleared.
- **Phillack Towans** is quite a large unit, privately-owned, and run in part as the tourism business ‘Sandy Acres’. A CES Agreement commenced here in 2013 and will run until October 2018. Again, pony grazing, started in 2013, will be used in part to deliver the required scrub reduction of around 16ha.
- **St Ives Bay Holiday Park** lies between Phillack and Upton and was instrumental in 2012 in helping to broker the 4 CES Agreements with Natural England. Clearly understanding the threat to the Towans from scrub encroachment, the Park was already undertaking some scrub control at its own cost, but this will be significantly increased until September 2017, to deliver around 9.5ha of scrub reduction. Ponies are being used in places.
- **Gwithian Green** is a Local Nature Reserve managed by Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council. An annual programme of scrub cutting and invasive species control takes place with students, volunteers and a contractor. The LNR entered into HLS in 2012.
- **Gwithian Towans** comprises 26ha of land owned by the Hockin Trust but managed by Cornwall Council. The property was subject to a 10 year-long Countryside Stewardship Scheme, but that ended in 2014. Currently, Cornwall Council has not felt able to sign-up to an HLS Agreement – see Chapter 4.
- **St Gothian’s Sands** is a Local Nature Reserve between Gwithian and Godrevy, around the mouth of the Red River. Formerly a sand extraction pit, the site was purchased by Cornwall County Council in 2004 to develop as a nature reserve. It is currently being assessed for potential designation as an SSSI. *Appendix II contains a brief outline of the sites’ objectives.*
- **Godrevy Point and beach** is an iconic part of the Cornish coast owned by the National Trust. It is subject to a property management plan. Two crucial elements to this are coastal erosion management and people management. With at least 200,000 cars visiting each year, this location is ideal for the dissemination of information about the local environment.

2.2 Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030

During the last decade or so, there have been significant changes to the Planning system, both in terms of its policy framework and content as well as delivery mechanisms, at both the national and local level.

Probably the most significant change locally came in April 2009, with the creation of Cornwall Council as a single unitary authority, from the previous Cornwall County Council and 6 district councils.

Nationally in the same period, there has been a major review of all Planning Policy Guidance, with the stated aim to make the Planning process more streamlined and transparent, while at the same time maintaining a robust structure and policies and putting more decisions into the hands of local communities.

In response to this, many areas are engaged in producing Neighbourhood Plans – these are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. In the meantime, a wide range of previously-adopted policies remain and are used in the decision-making process.

Cornwall Council is currently engaged in further consultation on its proposed Local Plan for 2010-2030. This Plan will replace many of the policies from the previous Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and the adopted local plans of the former District Councils.

National context of Cornwall Local Plan

The new Local Plan for Cornwall has been prepared within the context of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Within the NPPF, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, stating that the planning system ***“should recognise the value of our natural and local built environment and contribute to its enhancement”***.

A more detailed explanation of what the NPPF means regarding sustainability is listed in Appendix II, but within that context, Cornwall Council is developing its own range of General Policies. Several of these are listed below, as the most relevant for the Towans (*again, a fuller explanation appears in Appendix II*):

Policy 23 - Natural Environment

Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall’s local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall’s natural environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance

Policy 24 - Historic Environment

Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall’s local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall’s historic environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance

Policy 26 - Flood Risk Management and Coastal Change

Development should take account of any adopted strategic and local flood and coastal management strategies

Policies ‘saved’ from former Penwith Local Plan

Cornwall Council will retain some policies from the former Penwith Local Plan at least until they have been reviewed as part of “*the emerging Allocations Document*”. In the meantime, these continue to form a valid part of the decision-making process.

Those policies listed below are considered to be of particular relevance to the Towans. Many of them specifically refer to areas conferred with some of the heritage designations described in Chapter 1 and shown on Maps 1 and 2.

CC1 Development will not be permitted where it would significantly harm the landscape character, amenity, nature conservation, archaeological, historic or geological values of the coast and countryside of Penwith.

CC2 Proposals which maintain, enhance and facilitate the enjoyment and understanding of landscape character, amenity, nature conservation, archaeological, historic and geological values in the coast and countryside will be permitted.

CC5 Development will not be permitted where it would cause significant harm to the character and amenity of the Areas of Great Landscape Value.

CC7 Proposals for development which would significantly harm the nature conservation value or geological interest of an SSSI will not be permitted.

CC8 Development will not be permitted where it would significantly harm the nature conservation or geological interest of Areas of Great Scientific Value, County Wildlife Sites, County Geological Sites, ancient woodland sites and Local Nature Reserves. Where development is permitted any impact on such values must be minimised and conditions will be imposed, or a planning obligation sought, to ensure that mitigating measures are undertaken.

CC11 The creation and management of landscape features and habitats which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna will be encouraged by:- (i) management agreements with landowners and occupiers; and (ii) establishing local nature reserves

CC14 Proposals for development which would have a significant adverse effect on the shoreline or adjacent coastal waters in terms of its landscape character, amenity, nature conservation, archaeological, historic and geological values will not be permitted

CC16 Proposals for development within the Areas of Great Historic Value and those affecting archaeological remains of county importance will not be permitted where it would harm:- (i) the historic character of the landscape or (ii) the value, character or setting of the remains

However, two former Penwith Local Plan policies which do relate specifically to the Towans are **not recommended for retention**. This has caused considerable concern locally and is discussed more fully in Chapter 4. Those policies are:

TM5 Within the Towans area, between Hayle and Gwithian, the provision of new, or the extension or intensification of existing, holiday accommodation sites will not be permitted.

TM8 Within Gwithian Towans proposals for replacement chalets, extensions or other structures will be permitted where they are constructed of, or faced in, timber with dark coloured pitched roofs. Standardised units will not be acceptable and an individuality of design in keeping with the overall character of the site will be required. Unless originally constructed differently all replacement chalets must be of single storey design.

A chalet directly adjacent to dune habitat



The temptation to expand or intensify development onto the Towans is very real. In many places there is no physical demarcation or boundary marking the SSSI.

The Planning process is the only check in place to prevent such things occurring, and the Towans' special values need to be robustly communicated during the process.

2.3 Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Plan 2010-2015

Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council produced a Parish Plan in 2010, outlining a wide range of issues, aspirations, objectives and projects within the parish.

The Council is committed to working with all the relevant groups, individuals and organisations to deliver these outcomes over the coming years.

Two of the Objectives are of particular relevance to the towans, namely:

Objective 5: Establish the post of Warden to safeguard and manage the Towans environment and Gwithian Green for the community; and

Objective 7: Protecting and preserving our heritage and our community assets
The full text of these objectives appears in Appendix II.

Gwithian Towans Design Guide

Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council recently produced a Design Guide for Gwithian Towans. It sets out guidance on how any future development within the Towans should look. The Guidance states that it:

“will help to maintain the quality of the environment of the Towans and assist those with aspirations to improve or rebuild their plots and buildings to do so with an awareness of the opportunity they have to contribute to the long term identity of the Towans.”

The local planning process should utilise this guide during its decision making on individual planning applications in this area.

A profusion of meadowsweet on Gwithian Green



Gwithian Green LNR, in the care of the parish council, is the richest botanical site within the Towans which is itself the richest botanical site west of the River Fal. One fifth of all plant species found in Cornwall occur within this small LNR.

2.4 Hayle Area Plan 2005-2025

The Hayle Area Plan 2005 was a community-led strategic plan for the development and regeneration of Hayle and surrounding parishes of Gwinear-Gwithian and St Erth.

Two of its priority areas relate to topics of relevance to the Towans:

- heritage, culture and environment; and,
- tourism and sustainability.

A range of issues, objectives and actions was identified. *These are explained more fully in Appendix II*, but of particular relevance to the Towans are:

Among the key issues affecting heritage, culture and environment:

- ***The Towans area is inadequately protected; the Towans are affected by excessive dog waste, pylons, and extensive parking and access demands, yet this area is one of Hayle's greatest assets.***

Among the projects listed are:

Project 22: Preserve and protect the Towans and the coastline

To initiate and support measures that will preserve the environmental assets of the Towans and the coastline, and provide enhanced protection against the demands of a tourism-led economy

Project 23: Access to the harbour and beaches

To ensure that the community continues to enjoy proper access to the harbour and beaches. To manage access to the beaches in a sustainable manner

Opening the new beach access ramp at the Bluff, spring 2014



This ramp upgraded one that was in very poor repair, and will enable people of all abilities to access the famous '3 miles of golden sands' from close to Hayle.

(Photo by John Bennett)

2.5 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan

Produced by the Environment Agency, with input from many other partners, including Cornwall Council and Parish and Town Councils, a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) provides a broad-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal change. It sets out a long-term policy framework to manage these risks and acts as a strategic planning document that will guide decision making.

The SMP “seeks to find ways to manage the risks of coastal change in a way that does not tie future generations into costly and unsustainable approaches, while trying to balance potential conflicting interests along the coast”.

The first SMPs for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were adopted by the Local Authorities in the late 1990s. Since then, significant progress has been made in the understanding of how climate change and sea level rise may affect the coast and there has been an important political shift towards longer term sustainable development and land use planning.

SMPs contain broad objectives, but then review each section of coastline in turn, providing specific statements on their likely future evolution. *A fuller text of the statements relating to the coastline within the project area appears in Appendix II.*

In summary, a policy of ‘non intervention’ is preferred wherever possible, which allows natural processes to dominate. This certainly accords with the various SSSI objectives for the area.

However, active erosion and loss of dunes in some places is both observed and anticipated, as is the associated threat to infrastructure, access roads, car parks etc. With this in mind, a specific Dune Management Plan should be produced.

A policy of re-alignment is suggested for the area around the mouth of the Red River. This would need to fully consider and protect the range of assets and property in the hinterland around Gwithian.

It should be noted that although the SMP is a statutory document, its primary purpose is to influence the local decision-making process rather than directly implementing actions itself.

The reader is encouraged to study the more detailed text in Appendix II, as it contains quite a range of location-specific statements.

2.6 Cornwall Maritime Strategy 2012-2030

Cornwall Council adopted its Maritime Strategy in 2012. The document is based around 7 over-arching and cross-cutting themes, each supported by a high-level objective and a number of aims.

Objective G is of particular relevance to the Towans area, stating:

Ensure Cornwall's natural and historic maritime environment and culture is renowned worldwide, and is a source of pride and inspiration to residents and visitors.

This Objective has a range of stated aims, which are listed in Appendix II.

2.7 Beach Management Strategy 2011-2015

Cornwall Council's Beach Management Strategy focuses on those beaches owned, managed or leased by Cornwall Council. It sets out a vision to:

“Recognise, maintain and where possible enhance the value of beaches and the contribution that they make to the economic, environmental and social well-being of Cornwall and its communities through effective and integrated management.”

It highlights some of the main pressures that beaches are facing including a changing climate and sea level rise, budgetary pressures and human pressure arising from use of beaches.

The aims of the strategy are listed in Appendix II.

2.8 Cornwall Green Infrastructure Strategy 2012

Cornwall Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy takes a fresh look at managing existing and future provision of natural and semi-natural spaces in Cornwall, including:

- Green Places – Historic, natural, semi-natural and designed areas such as parks, woodlands, informal open spaces, allotments, street trees, multi-use trails, churchyards and other publicly accessible open rural and urban spaces
- Blue Places – rivers, waterways, canals and lakes
- Yellow Places – beaches

The strategy was produced with a range of partners, in order to inform the emerging Local Plan. It sets out a Vision for green infrastructure in Cornwall, identifies key themes and actions, **seeks to understand the socio-economic value of green infrastructure and helps to determine and prioritise future investment in green infrastructure.**

The strategy seeks to work both at a strategic and a local level, and has a close relationship with many aspects of relevance to the Towans, including environment, habitats, landscape, accessibility, economy and climate change.

An extract from the strategy describing the values in investing in green infrastructure appears in Appendix II.

2.9 Other relevant plans

Those Plans and policies described above are those deemed to be of most direct and current relevance to the Towans Project area.

However, in considering the Towans area within the context of the wider St Ives Bay environment, a number of other key documents gain more relevance. These are not described in detail here, but are listed for ease of future reference:

- **Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2011-2016** – of relevance, as the Towans is visible from AONB-designated land;
- **Cornwall Strategic Flood Risk Assessment level 1** – of great relevance to Hayle town and estuary, while the Towans are not deemed to be in a high-risk flood zone;
- **Hayle Estuary Management Plan 2010-2015**– contains a wide range of actions seeking to ensure Hayle Harbour and Estuary functions sustainably into the future;
- **Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site Management Plan 2013-2018** – of great relevance to the protection of WHS assets in and around Hayle and Hayle Harbour;
- **Cornwall & Scilly Landscape Character Study 2005-2007** – although now out of date, provides useful baseline information and recommendations that continue to be of relevance in the planning process

Aerial view across St Ives Bay



Showing Red River LNR bottom right, entering St Gothian's LNR, with Gwithian Green LNR, bottom left. (Photo by Sally Foster)

Effective, more wide-ranging environmental benefits often result from adopting a more holistic view of an area.

Engagement with these other plans and partners may prove mutually beneficial in future.

2.10 The Sands of Time 1994-1999

As described in the Introduction, The Sands of Time report was instrumental in leading to the creation of the Towans Partnership and to achieving a range of outcomes on the Towans in subsequent years.

Although the report is now out of date, a synopsis is provided here as much of its content continues to be of relevance to local decision-making and influencing/lobbying today. Also, it remains the only plan ever written specifically and exclusively for the Towans and so should not be overlooked.

The Plan's vision stated that:

'Today's challenge is to look at the area as a whole, balancing the needs of visitors, conservation and local industry so that the area can be enhanced for everyone's enjoyment without risking the repetition of serious erosion of post war years'.

A range of Objectives was stated as follows:

- Manage the Towans to the standards of Heritage Coast status and raise the profile and aesthetic quality of the area.
- Utilise the plan to organise and bid for grant aid and funding from local, national and European sources.
- Promote and strengthen the partnership approach between organisations and generate further support.
- Set out the management targets and recommend projects for action, incorporating a mechanism for the future monitoring and review of the area.
- Ensure the plan has an influential advisory role which is complimentary to the statutory planning system.
- Use the plan to represent a shared vision for the future, fostering an identity of purpose and collective responsibility for the management of the area.

The Issues affecting the towans 20 years' ago were:

- Nature conservation
- Archaeology
- Recreation and access
- Information provision and interpretation
- Traffic and transportation
- Tourism
- Pollution (inc dog fouling and litter)

The Plan then described 40 policies to address the concerns. Some policies were very specific, others more generic.

A range of projects was then described to meet the objectives listed and deliver an improved, more sustainable Towans ecosystem. Of the 37 projects listed, 19 were site-specific while the remaining 18 covered the whole area.

(See Appendix II for full list of policies and projects).

Looking to the future, the Plan ended by stating that ‘positive benefits of the plan should be seen as an encouragement of:

- **Sustainability** – *through green tourism and public transport*
- **Attraction of resources** – *grant aid for the area*
- **Working partnerships** – *a continued cohesive working between local organisations, tourist operators, landowners etc*
- **Tourism development** – *extending the current season and providing themed holidays attracting the higher spending market*
- **Raising awareness** – *amongst everyone so that the area continues to be respected, looked after and further information is provided.*

The Sands of Time may have shifted in many ways over 20 years, but the ethos of that document seem remarkably relevant today.

Summary

The majority of the Towans habitat is currently being actively managed under various schemes to address its ‘unfavourable condition’ status. However, all these schemes are time-limited and resource-limited.

The Towans are included or referred to, directly or indirectly, in a wide range of plans and policies by a range of organisations. A framework for their protection and retention exists, therefore.

The key issue is to ensure that the appropriate weighting is given to the Towans in any decision-making or resource-allocation.

This remains a challenge, in particular through the on-going changes being made to the planning process and given the complexity of issues that need to be balanced in the decision-making process.

3. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

Engagement with all sectors of the community in and around the Towans was seen from the outset as critical to the success of the project.

Three methods were adopted to achieve this:

- One-to-one meetings with key businesses, organisations etc
- Attendance at other relevant meetings to promote this project – eg Parish Councils, Hayle Harbour Advisory Group
- Completion of visitor questionnaires, outdoors on the Towans

In addition to regular meetings with the project Steering Group and the full Towans Partnership to discuss issues, the findings of this consultation process provides the key evidence-base for the output of the project, namely strong support for the intention to seek funding to get a ranger in-post to co-ordinate Towans activities.

3.1 Summary of one-to-one meetings

Meetings were held with 20 local **companies and landowners** who have a direct interest in the Towans. The vast majority are tourism-related businesses. Full reports of each meeting, including contact details are kept on file by the Partnership for future, ongoing reference, but the following points are made below:

- **Majority** carry out routine, daily litter picking and keep landholding tidy;
- **Virtually all** the main landowners within the SSSI are now committed to habitat management work funded by Natural England, while **several** landowners carry out habitat management of their own;
- **All** have a clear understanding of the value of the local environment to their business, linked to their guests' enjoyment;
- **Several** are particularly passionate about environmental issues and would be valuable ambassadors of a ranger-type role;
- **Many** expressed frustration that they sometimes do not know who to contact on certain Towans-related issues, and that a single, co-ordinating contact point would be very helpful to them and their guests (the Partnership seemed by many to have a rather low profile);
- **Several** have expressed a willingness to support this project financially, depending upon details of what is involved;
- **All** would welcome improved information on wildlife etc, be it boards, leaflets and/or walks – while **several** already utilise the services of a local person to carry out guided walks and beach games;

- **Majority** described concern about litter, dogs' mess and other human-related problems;
- **Many** described a high degree of pressure and some conflict regarding beach usage; this seems to be increasing over time;
- **Several** expressed concern that various issues such as poor beach access, dog-related issues, car park and toilet-opening times are causing long-standing guests not to book to return in future years;
- **Majority** seemed very open to discussing concerns and wished to engage more fully with the Partnership to everyone's benefit, although several expressed difficulty in attending meetings.

3.2 Summary of other relevant meetings

Local Schools

All the schools in and around Hayle were contacted about the project. Of these, two primaries responded, one in particular (Connor Downs) has started to become closely involved with the project, with the aim of developing a regular series of outdoor lessons to be delivered each year within the Towans.

The intention would be to roll this out to other schools in the area, and further afield over time. Again, the view was expressed strongly that having a **clear contact point** for Towans-related issues and activities would be very helpful, and would be likely to encourage more active involvement from other schools.

Duchy College

The project has also become actively involved with Duchy College at Rosewarne. Staff at Duchy are particularly enthusiastic about the long-term prospects of the project, to the point where they are seriously considering being able to host the ranger post. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 5, following.

This would be regarded as building on their previous active involvement in the Towans through various courses run at Rosewarne which include elements of:

- Practical conservation work;
- Environmental monitoring, and;
- Environmental education, in collaboration with local schools.

Others

The project was discussed with a range of other local organisations, listed below:

- Hayle Town Council
- Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council
- Save our Sands
- Beach Users Group
- Hayle Chamber of Commerce
- Hayle Harbour Advisory Group

No doubt other groups exist that would also benefit from discussion about the towans and its management. Many issues of synergy exist between these groups and organisations and there would be much to be gained of mutual benefit from working closely together.

3.3 Summary of visitor questionnaires

In order to ascertain views and opinions from people actually visiting the Towans, several visits were made to complete visitor questionnaires. In total, 82 were completed in a range of places and at different times of year.

During December, questionnaires were completed at St Gothian's, Upton Towans and Gwithian Towans, during late July (school holidays) more were completed at Gwithian beach/towans and Godrevy car park. Finally a few more were completed at Mexico Towans in September.

Findings are not strictly scientific, as some interviews were with one person while others were with a group, all of whom contributed their views. The process was considered valuable, however, in gaining an impression of people's thoughts and concerns about the area.

The key findings are described below:

Why do you visit the Towans?

People were not limited to one answer here. Of the reasons mentioned:

- 38 came to **walk dogs**
- 27 mentioned **peace, quiet, scenery, enjoying open space**
- 16 visited mainly to **access the beach**
- 12 came for **exercise**
- 9 mentioned **surfing or swimming**
- 9 came to observe **wildlife**
- 2 came to take **photos**, while 1 person specifically visited because **access is 'flat – good for disabled person'**

Where do you come from?

Results here showed a very equal share between 'locals' and 'visitors':

- 40 came from within a roughly 5 mile radius (St Ives-Leedstown-Pool)
- 8 came from elsewhere within Cornwall
- 32 came from elsewhere in the UK
- 2 were foreign visitors (both German)

How often do you visit the Towans?

Answers to this question seem to reflect the previous one:

- 50% of people came at least weekly – many of these came daily, to walk dogs
- 50% visited monthly, annually or occasionally. This includes 6 'first-timers'.

These findings suggest that the Towans attracts two distinct groups of people:

- A significant number of **locals**, many if not most of whom visit **frequently, and throughout the year**;
- A significant number of people from **across the UK** as well as abroad. Most of these, as might be expected, were interviewed during the July survey and many were drawn **primarily by the beaches**.

Did you know the Towans are rich in wildlife?

Not everyone replied to this, but of those who did:

- 61 said yes
- 3 said no

The final questions were:

Do you have any concerns or issues about the Towans?

Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

These are open questions and were very useful in engaging the respondent in conversation, through the course of which a wide range of views, comments and ideas came forward:

- 43 people stated the view that the **Towans should be ‘kept more or less as they are’** – not over-developed or over-commercialised
- 37 people expressed concern about **dog mess** not being picked up/dogs not being kept under control
- 10 people were concerned about **litter**
- 10 people suggested **more information** would be useful
- 10 suggested that **more dog bins** would be useful
- 10 were concerned about **poor beach access**
- 6 were concerned about **Red River sewage**
- 4 mentioned concerns about **toilets being in poor condition** and having poor opening times
- 4 mentioned concerns about **adders**
- 3 were concerned about **erosion** (although they all agreed it was natural)
- 3 mentioned concerns about **too much ‘people pressure’**
- 3 wanted **more benches**
- 3 wanted **more guided walks**
- 3 others offered to **get involved in a local group** (they gave contact details)
- 2 suggested changes should be made to **dogs on beach legislation**
- 2 suggested **gas barbeques** should be provided to prevent unauthorised ones
- 2 were concerned about **motorbikes**
- 2 were concerned about impacts from **Western Blocks**
- 2 would consider paying a **season ticket to walk dogs**, if the funding went into managing the area – through a warden, for example
- 1 mentioned concerns about **homosexual activity**
- 1 wanted **better parking**
- 1 was concerned about **pollution if South Crofty re-opens**
- 1 considers the **pony-grazing/scrub control to be good**, while.....

- 1 other definitely **did not like the pony grazing**, due to concerns about dog walking in those areas
- 1 **did not like the new stock-proof fence**, but is now used to it
- 1 said the **area is too busy**, while another said more guided walks would be a bad idea as it would cause more people-pressure
- 1 wanted **fewer fences**, especially around paths
- 1 was concerned about **'free camping'** on the Towans
- 1 was concerned about **impacts from horse riding businesses** visiting the Towans – droppings etc
- 1 was concerned about **excessive weed in St Gothian's lagoon**
- 1 stated strongly that the **area needs to be friendlier to visitors**: car parks, toilets and beach access are poor/expensive and give a bad impression – don't feel welcome, may put people off returning

As expected, this exercise captured a wide range of views, but the overall impression gained was that visitors cherish the area for whatever reason they visit and are very willing to share ideas on how the Towans can be protected and improved. It was particularly noteworthy that 3 respondents suggested a willingness to help with a new local group, and have provided contact details.

3.4 Overall Summary of Consultation

From the various consultations described above, the following main issues are considered of current relevance to the Towans:

- The need for **improved information** for all visitors and site users
- The need to **improve the profile of the Towans, and the Towans Partnership** – logo, updated signboards, improved meeting arrangements etc
- Strong support for a **co-ordinated resource – ideally a person** rather than an organisation - to which enquiries can be made, projects suggested, etc
- The desire to see **more effective enforcement of poor practice** – especially relating to dog mess, litter and anti-social behaviour
- The desire to see a **general tidy-up of the area**, especially path entrances and around car parks (notably Upton), but to **retain the overall essence of the area** without encouraging new developments or large-scale landscape changes
- The need for **more resources for scrub control**, but linked with information explaining the rationale for the work
- The desire to ensure that all those benefitting from such a role have **contributed a share of funding**

Summary

The key point is that through having a clear, single point of contact regarding the Towans, the profile of the Towans would be raised significantly.

Environmental issues affecting the Hayle-St Ives Bay locality would receive more co-ordinated attention from all groups.

Information board at Gwithian Green LNR



Provision of information about the Towans was frequently mentioned during consultation, both with companies and visitors.

*The application of a consistent style and theme across the whole Towans would help to highlight that the area is one coherent ecosystem.
(Photo by Dick Goodere)*

4. THE KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE TOWANS TODAY

This chapter describes in more detail each of the key issues affecting the Towans today.

Issues are sub-divided under various relevant themes and then described in turn in the following format:

- A brief description of the various issues included within the theme;
- An indication of the percentage of respondents who raised the issue;
- Suggested priority-rating for action;
- A statement describing who is responsible for action-delivery;
- Notes describing any recent or current action;
- Suggested actions required in the future, noting who would be responsible for delivery.

Many of the issues are inter-related and could appear under a number of themes, but for brevity they are discussed under the theme deemed most relevant.

4.1 Ecology and landscape

Clearly, the designation of most of the Towans as SSSI and/or LNR reflects the extremely high ecological value of the area. The area is cherished by many people, locals and visitors alike, as a pleasant place to come to relax in a wild outdoor setting.

Of the questionnaire respondents, 61 (74%) stated that they knew the area was rich in wildlife. Most holiday businesses interviewed stated a clear belief that the high quality of the local environment continues to be a reason why many people choose a holiday in this area.

Issues

The following points of concern were raised:

- **Scrub encroachment** – this is a key issue for Natural England, hence their funding of various HLS and CES agreements. Several landowners are also very aware of the need to reduce scrub on the towans;
- **Resources to address scrub encroachment** – concerns were raised about the possible lack of funds to carry out this work in the future;
- **Information provision** – a greater explanation of why scrub management, grazing, fencing etc is required would be valuable

Priority rating

Given the national significance of the SSSI designation, and the current unfavourable condition status of the SSSI, dealing with this issue is considered to be of:

HIGH PRIORITY

Responsibility

Landowners are responsible for ensuring that their portion of the SSSI is well-managed, but **Natural England** has a responsibility to encourage this and to help to seek funding to support the work. Scope also exists to involve volunteers in the work.

Recent/current actions

- Five landowners have entered into formal HLS or CES Agreements in the last 2 years, while Upton Towans continues to be managed by Cornwall Wildlife Trust under their existing HLS Agreement;
- A local volunteer group exists at Gwithian Green and successfully involves a range of local people and groups in active site conservation;
- Discussions have been held regarding setting up a local volunteer group at Upton Towans to help with site management work. Another group could be set up to work at St Gothian's LNR.

Proposed future actions

- Secure Agreements on all units of the SSSI when current Agreements end;
Natural England

- Ensure existing Agreements are adequately funded to deliver all the work required; seek more funding where necessary;
NE, with landowners
- Provide and disseminate information relating to SSSI management work, to ensure **all** Towans users gain an understanding of the work;
Landowners, via Towans Partnership
- Continue to encourage the setting up of local volunteer group/s to assist with the work as well as other Towans-based activities such as education.
CWT, with TP

Footpath entrance to Mexico Towans, November 2013



A new perimeter fence was placed around much of Mexico Towans in autumn 2013, to enable the SSSI to be grazed with ponies. This change inspired mixed opinion, but will enable scrub to be reduced in that locality.

The provision of kissing gates and information signs at access points onto Mexico Towans was critical in helping to continue to facilitate public access and to explain why the work was being done.

*It will also assist with reducing unauthorised motorbike access onto the Towans
Note sign on left hand gate post*

4.2 Development pressures and Planning

Within the SSSI, the Towans should continue to be protected from new built development. However, this cannot be taken for granted, and certainly those areas of Towans lying outside the SSSI will continue to be at risk from development.

The visitor questionnaire survey revealed that a significant proportion (33%) of visitors came to enjoy the peace and quiet, the views and the wildlife, and that the majority - 52% - wished the area to be 'more or less left as it is.'

Issues

Three key issues were raised:

- The possible **loss of former Penwith Local Plan policy TM5** that specifically sought to prevent the provision of new, or the extension or intensification of existing holiday accommodation within the Towans between Hayle and Gwithian;
- The ongoing **increase in growth of Hayle, Camborne and Redruth**, and a belief that this will increase visitor pressure on the Towans;
- The relatively **low public profile of the values of the Towans**, despite its popularity, may lead to the area receiving an insufficient weighting in the decision-making process.

Priority rating

Given the permanence of impacts resulting from built development, addressing this issue is considered to be of:

HIGH PRIORITY

Responsibility

Sections 2.2-2.9 above give a flavour of the complexity surrounding the Planning system. However, **Cornwall Council** is the main authority with influence in this sector, along with Hayle Town and Gwinnear-Gwithian Parish Councils.

Recent/current actions

- Both Hayle Town and Gwinnear-Gwithian Parish Councils are in the process of producing Neighbourhood Plans to help influence the shaping of their respective areas in future years. Ensuring that the Towans' profile is raised through these plans is essential;
- Direct lobbying of Cornwall Council to retain policy TM5 should continue

Proposed future actions

- The profile of the Towans would be raised significantly by the creation of a dedicated ranger, or 'champion', who could lobby, negotiate and encourage where necessary, to ensure that the Towans gains a higher weighting in the decision-making process.

Towans Partnership

4.3 Information and education

Lack of up to date information about the Towans was a recurring, common theme within both the visitor questionnaire survey and the local businesses consulted.

Issues

- **Lack of a single point of contact** from whom to gain information or channel enquiries to is a problem for many local businesses and visitors;
- **Poor quality of interpretation boards** on the Towans gives a negative impression of the Towans;
- Lack of a knowledgeable, **co-ordinating person on the Towans** prevents local schools and colleges from making much use of the area for environmental education;

Priority rating

Given that the provision of good quality, up to date information about the Towans influences and assists action on all other issues, improving delivery in this area is considered to be of:

HIGH PRIORITY

Responsibility

Provision and dissemination of Towans-related information is not a statutory function of any of the organisations involved here. This perhaps underlies the problem and accounts for the current situation.

Of all the relevant organisations involved here, the **Towans Partnership** appears to be best placed with taking a lead on this, given its stated aims.

Recent/current actions

- Within the last year, the Partnership has created a logo, letterheads and a website – these need additional promotion;
- The Partnership has recently re-printed 10,000 copies of the ‘Sands of Time’ leaflet and distributed them to local businesses, councils etc;
- Haven Holidays has recently produced and erected a new information board on their property;
- At least 2 local businesses employ a local person to run guided walks in the Towans

Proposed future actions

- The provision of new interpretation boards at key locations on the Towans;
- The development of a series of regular guided walks;
- Continued promotion of the Towans via the Partnership website;

- The development of a regular programme of lessons/workshops etc on the Towans for school and college groups;
- All of the above would greatly benefit from the creation of a dedicated ranger, who would have a high-profile, co-ordinating role, thereby significantly raising the profile of the Towans in the process.

Towans Partnership, with local businesses/sponsors

Observing Helford's herons



Many people expressed a desire to see more guided walks on the Towans. A dedicated ranger would be well-placed to organise an annual series of themed walks, with the help of local experts and enthusiasts, to help raise the profile of all aspects of the Towans' environment.

Helford Marine Conservation Group, a community-run volunteer group, has successfully run such events for over 22 years'.

The picture shows people observing the heronry on the banks of the Helford. As well as enjoying a pleasant few hours' outdoors, the survey contributed valuable data to the National Heronries Census.

There is huge scope for similar activities on the Towans (but without the herons!)

4.4 Visitor impacts

Many people's enjoyment of the Towans seems to be marred by the actions of other visitors and site users. A number of issues were mentioned during the questionnaire surveys and also in discussion with the various local companies.

A recurring theme was that many people do not expect any action to be taken or for the situation to improve - almost an acceptance of an ever-decreasing cycle of decay. This certainly contributes to a negative impression of the Towans.

Issues

- Various **dog-related issues** were voiced by 58% of questionnaire respondents. Of these, not picking up dog waste was the biggest concern (45%), followed by inadequate or poorly-sited dog bins and issues relating to dogs on the beach;
- **Litter** being left – in particular, bottles and barbeques from parties;
- **Unauthorised activities** taking place – for example, cycling and motorcycling;
- **Anti-social behaviour** of a sexual nature around Upton Towans.

Priority rating

These issues do not affect the actual fabric of the Towans, unlike the first two themes described previously. However, given the high number of visitor responses and the negative overall impression that is gained of the Towans by not trying to address these issues, taking at least **some** action is considered to be a **HIGH PRIORITY**.

Responsibility

Clearly, we all have an **individual responsibility** to behave appropriately; most people do – it is the minority who don't. This is when enforcement action can be employed.

Cornwall Council is responsible for enforcing dog waste collection, emptying dog waste bins and monitoring the beach dog ban at Gwithian. However, town or parish councils do have the right to make future dog control orders, following full and thorough consultation, but they would then be responsible for future enforcement.

Cornwall Council is also responsible for emptying litter bins at several locations on the Towans, although it does not have a statutory duty to actually provide bins.

Recent/current actions

- Discussions have been held regarding setting up a local volunteer group at Upton Towans to provide some 'eyes and ears' support to CWT;
- Discussions have been held with local Police regarding anti-social behaviour at Upton Towans

Proposed future actions

- Creation of a regular visible presence such as a ranger, on the Towans, would probably greatly help to reduce incidents of all these issues;
- The ranger could actively work with local communities to run awareness-raising campaigns and support local groups in helping to make these activities socially-unacceptable;
- The ranger would provide a useful co-ordinating role, acting as a clear link between visitors, local companies and the relevant enforcing body to take swift action as necessary.

Towans Partnership, with local businesses/sponsors

Opening the new beach access ramp at The Bluff, spring 2014



Several of the Towans' access points, such as Gwithian Towans and Upton, are level and having parking nearby. These lend themselves to the development of multi-access paths, which would enable more people to visit the Towans.

With an aging population, this is likely to become an ever-increasing requirement.

Along with the already-popular King George Memorial Walk in Hayle, the Towans area could become known as a place where people with mobility needs can access open space, fresh air and wildlife.

(Photo by John Bennett)

4.5 Infrastructure

The condition, location and accessibility of various infrastructure such as car parks, access paths and toilets has a direct bearing on the management of the Towans and on people's enjoyment of the area.

A number of local companies as well as around 20% of questionnaire respondents raised a range of issues regarding infrastructure.

Issues

- Issues relating to **car parks** were raised, including: the relatively-imminent erosion of the road to Godrevy car park; revenues received for car park fees not being spent within the area and the high cost of parking;
- Access to the **toilet at Gwithian Towans** was an issue for a number of people, in particular, problems caused by its limited opening times;
- **Access to the beach** was problematic for a number of people, in particular at Peter's Point since the established access steps were irreparably damaged early in 2014;
- Lack of clarity on **public access routes** within the Towans was also raised.

Priority rating

Again, while these issues do not affect the actual fabric of the Towans, they clearly contribute to people's enjoyment and impression of the Towans. Trying to address these issues is considered to be a: **MEDIUM PRIORITY.**

Responsibility

A range of quite different issues is contained within this theme, many relating to very specific locations or structures. Therefore responsibility is quite complex. It is considered that the **Towans Partnership** is probably best placed to have an overview on the whole situation and to encourage action to be taken as and when necessary by the relevant authority or landowner.

Recent/current actions

- Hayle Town Council recently led and delivered a project at the western end of the Towans near The Bluff to create a purpose-built multi-access ramp down to the beach, improving what was previously a dangerous access structure;
- The National Trust has been in consultation for some time with the landowner regarding the ongoing erosion threat to the Godrevy access road

Proposed future actions

- The repair of, or creation of a new access to the beach in the locality of Peter's Point needs to be fully explored;
- Improved signage of public access areas within the Towans would be useful;

- Further investigation into the creation of a multi-access route within Upton Towans CWT reserve should take place; **CWT**
- The creation of a dedicated ‘towans champion’ (ranger) would help to coordinate, lobby and encourage a wide range of improvements to the various towans-related infrastructure, for example, helping to seek funding where required. **Towans Partnership, with local businesses/sponsors**

Storm damage to Peter’s Point Steps, February 2014



A key access point from the Towans down to the beach, the steps at Peter’s Point were severely damaged by storms during late winter 2014.

*Cornwall Council considers them to be beyond repair.
This has caused considerable inconvenience through the 2014 holiday season.
Solutions need to be explored with some urgency.*

4.6 Beach-related issues

While this Project aimed to avoid becoming too closely-focused on beach-related issues, the Partnership is nonetheless highly aware of the critical links ecologically, economically and socially between the Towans and the beaches.

It could be argued that the Towans are the ‘poor relation’ compared to the beach, as 20% of questionnaire respondents said they only visit the Towans to access the beach.

Issues

- Confusion over **dog access areas**, lack of **enforcement of the dog ban**, poor/illogical access to dog areas and aggression of people when challenged were raised by quite a few people;
- **Beach litter** and concerns over regular cleaning was raised by both visitors and a number of local companies;
- An increase in **anti-social behaviour** was noted by some, perceived partly to be due to pressure for space at busy times;
- Many beach users, surfers etc are concerned about **water quality**, in particular, the frequency of sewage spills into the Red River from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) further upstream, and the serious problems caused by high-profile closure of the bathing waters at Gwithian/Hayle
- Many of the infrastructure issues described in 4.5 previously, relate to beach users – in particular, **poor beach access**

Priority rating

With regard to the Towans, these issues are regarded as **LOW PRIORITY**.

Of course, most visitors do not separate the Towans from the beach; rather, any negative experiences tend to affect their impression of the whole area. Given this, the Towans Partnership should seek management solutions to address all issues raised, whether predominantly beach or Towans-related.

Responsibility

As with the previous theme, a range of quite different issues is described here, therefore responsibility is quite complex. It is considered that the **Towans Partnership** is probably best placed to have an overview on the whole situation and to encourage action to be taken as and when necessary by the relevant authority or landowner.

Specifically, **Cornwall Council** has responsibility for dog-related issues and for beach cleaning on areas owned by the Council. **South West Water plc** is responsible for the CSOs along the Red River.

Recent/current actions

- Several local organisations and companies carry out regular or occasional beach cleans here;
- A range of local interest groups etc have recently increased the publicity around the CSO/bathing water closure issue

Proposed future actions

- A ranger could help to co-ordinate some of the beach-related activities, such as beach cleaning and providing information about bathing water quality.

A surfer at Gwithian



Co-ordination of activities relating to both the beaches and the Towans would be a useful part of the role of a ranger, in this increasingly-busy location.

(Photo by Sally Foster)

Summary

A wide range of issues affects the Towans.

Some of these are subtle – hidden even – such as development pressure or scrub encroachment, but do in fact threaten the future integrity of the Towans.

Others – litter and dog’s mess, for example - are more obvious and affect people’s enjoyment of the area and give a poor impression.

Responsibilities for these issues are complex; after all, this was a key reason for the instigation of this project.

A key recurrent solution mentioned is to develop a physical presence on the Towans to co-ordinate action, raise the Towans’ profile and develop greater awareness of the Towans’ environment amongst all visitors and within all sectors of the local community.

5. EXPLORING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RANGER

As described above, the various landowners, organisations etc living and working in and around the Towans continue to carry out much valuable work to protect the Towans and keep its environment in a reasonable condition.

This could continue, but activity would be ad hoc and un-coordinated at best.

The relatively straightforward act of creating a single person as a point of contact to co-ordinate all the various activities and organisations together would create a step-change in activity levels across a range of issues, and would raise the profile of the Towans and its values significantly.

Given the widespread support for this, the project has explored various funding opportunities around how to deliver this outcome.

Firstly, in order to be clear about what is required, a draft job description was developed – see below.

5.1 Draft Ranger Job Description

Key objectives of Ranger Post:

To be the key contact point between all users, owners and managers of the Towans, and to co-ordinate effective on-the-ground action, resulting in improved understanding, enjoyment, protection and management of the Towans for and by the whole community, and safeguarding of its precious wildlife.

Key tasks:

The role is based on one full-time post, 37 hours/week. The number in **bold** next to each heading is a suggested approximation of the time allocation (percentage) that should be spent on each area of work.

1.1 Education/promotion (25%)

This is the main, high-profile, focus of the role. Specific tasks as follows:

- Help to set up a national curriculum-based series of activities to be delivered on-site within the Towans, catering for all Key Stages
- Promote this to all local schools; help to co-ordinate its delivery
- Promote this facility to other schools, further afield, in future years
- Set up and run a series of guided walks within the Towans, at various times of day and season to engage with as many people as possible
- Set up and run specific walks and activities for local holiday parks/campsites etc, having discussed and agreed their requirements

1.2 Liaison/outreach (25%)

This is closely linked to the previous task, equally high-profile:

- Set-up two local groups, one based around Upton Towans, the other around St Gothian's/Gwithian (based on 'Friends-of' style)
- Set up a Towans Volunteer Group – could well be a sub-group of the previous
- Maintain regular contact with all landowners and known user groups; attend any relevant local meetings – eg Residents' Assoc etc – to raise profile
- Maintain close liaison with enforcement officers to reduce anti-social behaviour such as littering and dog mess, in particular highlighting recurring or escalating problems.
- Develop and deliver awareness-raising campaigns on anti-social issues, with local groups, schools etc, to change mind-sets.
- Produce regular publicity about the Towans Project, to a wide audience

1.3 Practical site management (20%)

At the current time, most of the Towans' holdings are within active land management schemes, which deliver their own actions. The Ranger role could be complementary in the following ways:

- Identify and deliver, with the Volunteer Group, specific practical tasks to be delivered on-site, with the agreement of the landowners.
- Develop opportunities for the Towans to be used as a training location for countryside management skills, to derive additional value/benefit from tasks carried out.
- Provide a co-ordination role between all the various landowners to share best practice, advice etc so that Towans are managed as a coherent ecosystem.

1.4 Project Management (15%)

To ensure that the project becomes and remains sustainable, the Ranger will need to make sure that effective project management takes place. Of particular importance are the tasks listed below:

- Ensure that all actions listed within the Towans Management Plan, and subsidiary Annual Action Plans are progressing on time.
- Review actions and progress regularly; provide updates to funding organisations within the timescales they require.
- Continue to seek and pursue funding opportunities, in particular, seeking ways of generating funding beyond the initial 3-5 year period to ensure Project is fully sustainable.

1.5 Specific projects (15%)

It is likely that specific projects will emerge over time. The Ranger should provide a useful co-ordinating role wherever possible, without becoming distracted in detailed delivery. Currently, the following projects have been identified:

- Upgrade on-site interpretation – boards, Apps, leaflet
- Produce information on access within the Towans
- Assess local transport requirements/opportunities
- Assess the need for closer links with beach management actions

This draft job description has been widely circulated within the Partnership and discussed with some of the local businesses etc during the consultation process. Its actions are quite clearly aimed at addressing the various issues described in chapter 4.

The challenges of making this a reality are discussed below.

5.2 Funding opportunities

The project has explored a range of funding opportunities that might be of relevance to creating a ranger-type post. These are listed below:

- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – the most relevant fund under HLF is ‘Our Heritage’, which provides grants of £10,000-£100,000. Projects need to conserve or enhance aspects of national, regional or local heritage within the UK;
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) – this foundation aims to ‘improve the quality of life throughout the UK’. The environment, education and social change strands appear relevant to this project. Unusually for funding bodies, EFF is willing to support both core and project costs;
- Natural England/Defra – NE already funds a considerable amount of work on the Towans, directly associated with SSSI management. Other NE/Defra funding might become eligible to support an awareness-raising role here, possibly more likely if the post was widened in scope to include Hayle Estuary SSSI and St Ives Bay;
- Local Authorities – both Hayle Town Council and Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council have contributed funding to this current project and have indicated a willingness to continue if possible. Cornwall Council could also be approached;

- Cornwall Sustainability Foundation (CSF) – provided a significant portion of funding for this current project. Given that CSF will be in place for at least the next 25 years, it may be able and willing to support the next phase of the Towans project;
- Local companies – as described previously, several local companies expressed a willingness, at least in principle, to support this project financially, either towards staff time and/or in the creation of such things as interpretation boards;
- Others – a range of other funds and funding mechanisms exists from European to local level such as INTERREG, Landfill Tax, car parking charges, local fundraising. These have not been explored in detail at this stage.
- Penwith Community Development Trust – while not a direct funding body itself, this Trust provides great help to organisations regarding signposting towards funding, co-ordinating volunteers, etc, and the Partnership would do well to maintain a dialogue with them.

It is considered likely that external funding (eg. HLF, EFF etc) would be likely to contribute up to around 75% of project costs. This would leave 25% to be raised locally.

Continuing to seek and pursue funding opportunities has been incorporated into the draft ranger job description, with a particular emphasis placed on seeking ways of generating funding beyond the initial 3-5 year period to ensure the Project is fully sustainable in the long-term. This would include a full and ongoing review of any and all potential funding opportunities listed in the bullet points above.

5.3 Securing funding for a ranger post

Through this project, it has been found that the desired ranger post accords well with several funding organisations, and that several local companies have expressed a potential willingness to support the project financially. The profile of the Towans has been raised and some momentum has developed.

In particular, some of the staff at Duchy College are particularly enthusiastic and have expressed serious interest in hosting the post. This is being explored in detail and the following benefits are noted:

- Duchy College’s educational aims have considerable synergy with the aims of the project to greatly expand environmental education within the Towans;
- Duchy has a proven track record of Towans-based activities;
- Staff at Duchy have a clear interest in and understanding of the project;

- Duchy has capacity and is experienced in employing and managing staff;
- Duchy has the physical space to host the post and is close to the Towans, thereby minimising travel time/cost etc;
- Duchy is apolitical and independent and therefore likely to be able to work with the range of partner organisations, companies etc in an even-handed way;
- Duchy has not been subject to the same degree of budget cuts as some of the other Partnership members in recent years, indeed, staff are being actively encouraged to investigate entrepreneurial links with external companies.

5.4 Recommendation to the Towans Partnership

The current structure of the Towans Partnership, being without a constitution, bank account and elected officers, negates it from making any funding bids.

While this may change in the future if the Partnership decides to change its structure, in order to maintain momentum, *it is recommended that the Partnership accepts the offer of Duchy College to submit a 3 year project bid in late 2014/early 2015 on behalf of the Partnership.*

The post would be hosted by Duchy College, who would be responsible for day to day staff management.

However, the ranger's work would be guided by a steering group, comprising a subset from the Towans Partnership, in the same way as has overseen this current project.

At the same time as the bid is being prepared, the Partnership would seek firm contributions of financial assistance from local companies, councils etc.

Longer-term outlook

The longer term aim of the ranger post would be to seek **all** funding from local companies, councils, etc, in anticipation that the original funding organisation will only support the work on an initial 'pump-priming' basis.

For this to succeed, the ranger will have to prove their value to those local companies in terms of delivering outcomes that add value to their businesses, assist with their day to day operation, promotion etc.

This will be no mean feat but is an exciting and achievable proposal.

APPENDIX I

Glossary of Environmental Designations described in Introduction

World Heritage Site (WHS) – A natural or man-made site, area or structure recognised as being of outstanding international importance and therefore as deserving special protection. Sites are nominated to and designated by the World Heritage Convention (an organisation of UNESCO). Statutory designation.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – designated originally under the 1949 National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act, now replaced by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, AONBs are considered to contain landscape of national value, and the designation seeks to encourage conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Statutory designation.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – designated under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), gives legal protection to the best sites for wildlife and geology in England. Sites are identified under the criteria contained within ‘Guidelines for selection of Biological SSSIs’ or the ‘Geological Conservation Review’. Statutory designation.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – designated under the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act, 1949, now amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act, 2006. To qualify as LNR, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment (or a combination). LNRs are normally owned, leased and/or managed by a local authority. Statutory designation.

County Wildlife Site (CWS) & County Geology Site (CGS) – usually such sites are identified by a local Wildlife Trust or Geo-conservation Group. Sites contain features, habitats, species etc deemed to be of at least county-wide value. Non-statutory designation.

Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) – designation was established under the Town & Country Planning Act, 1947, and is applied to land deemed to have ‘particular scenic value’ – but of less significance than an AONB. Statutory designation.

Area of Great Scientific Value (AGSV) – contained within the Cornwall Structure Plan, this designation is applied to many areas, often including and/or around the edges of, land already designated SSSI. The precise definition and selection criteria are unclear. Presumed to be statutory designation.

Area of Great Historic Value (AGHV) – contained within the Cornwall Structure Plan, this designation is applied to many areas, usually where a particular density of historic remains occurs – such as mining landscapes or prehistoric field or settlement systems. The precise definition and selection criteria are unclear. Presumed to be a statutory designation.

APPENDIX II

More detailed descriptions of various Plans and Policies mentioned in Chapter 2

1. Upton Towans CWT Reserve – Site Objectives

Objective 1

Ideal Objective : Safeguard archaeological and landscape features

Operational Objectives : i) Ensure evidence of the National Explosives Factory and mining activity are conserved to a high standard;
ii) Ensure landscape character of the site is maintained and where possible, improvements are made which retain the wilderness qualities of the site

Objective 2

Ideal Objective: Enable natural geomorphological processes to proceed

Operational Objectives: i) Ensure the dynamics of the sand budget are better understood
ii) Ensure movements of sand within the site are allowed to proceed as naturally as possible, without unduly impacting upon adjacent landowners

Objective 3

Ideal Objective: Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats in a favourable condition.

Operational Objectives: i) Ensure the status of habitats is well understood
ii) Ensure all habitats are not damaged and the existing mosaic of habitats is maintained

Objective 4

Ideal Objective: Maintain populations of important or legally protected species in a favourable condition.

Operational Objectives: i) Ensure the status of important or legally protected species is well understood
ii) Ensure important or legally protected species are not threatened
iii) Improve the status of key species, where appropriate
iv) Encourage new key species where this will not conflict with other important features.

Objective 5

Ideal Objective: Provide for free pedestrian public access at a level consistent with the maintenance of features of interest.

Operational Objectives: i) Gain an increased understanding of visitor numbers and activities
ii) Manage public pedestrian levels and use
iii) Increase the enjoyment of visitors using the site
iv) Eradicate damaging activities by members of the public

Objective 6

Ideal Objective: Improve public involvement and understanding of the site and encourage scientific research

Operational Objectives: i) Increase public understanding of the site
ii) Support the use of the site for educational visits
iii) Support the use of the site for research
iv) Increase public involvement in the management of the site
v) Ensure all records relating to the site can be made available to the public, in an accessible format

Objective 7

Ideal Objective: Provide sufficient facilities for the site to be managed effectively whilst fulfilling all legal and other obligations.

Operational Objectives: i) Fulfil all legal obligations
ii) Fulfil all non-legal obligations

2. St Gothian's (formerly known as 'Gwithian Sandpit') – Site Objectives

1. To positively manage the regeneration of Gwithian Sandpit from an industrial site to a Local Nature Reserve. To safeguard the intrinsic flora, fauna landscape and archaeological features of the site and to maintain and enhance the diversity of habitats, conserving notable species through positive practical conservation.
2. To carry out more up to date ecological surveys, specific to the Gwithian Sandpit site, to gather data on flora, fauna and vegetation.
3. To offer use of the area for informal recreation and provide access to and around the site for all visitors where possible, without compromising the conservation interests of the site.
4. To sensitively interpret the sites' natural and historic heritage through the provision of appropriate media suitable to the setting and for use by wide ranging user-groups.
5. To provide and promote a wide and varied programme of environmental education and offer study and research opportunities to benefit the site and the individual.

3. National context of Cornwall Local Plan

The new Local Plan for Cornwall has been prepared within the context of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Within the NPPF, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, stating that the planning system:

***“should recognise the value of our natural and local built environment and contribute to its enhancement.*”**

The NPPF says the planning system should contribute by:

- *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
- *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;*
- *minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible ... including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and*
- *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value...

Furthermore:

To minimise impacts on bio-diversity and geo-diversity, planning policies should:

- *promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;*
- *aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests...*

The NPPF also encourages protection of ‘designated heritage assets’, stating:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification... .. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”

So, within this context of sustainability, Cornwall Council has adopted a range of General Policies. Those of particular relevance to the Towans are listed below:

Policy 23 - Natural Environment

Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall's local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall's natural environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance through the following measures:

1. Cornish Landscapes

Development should be of an appropriate scale, mass and design which recognise and respect the distinctive and diverse, landscape character and coastline as being vital to Cornwall's economy whilst having regard for the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape asset, the potential for cumulative impact and the wish to maintain dark skies and tranquillity in areas that are relatively undisturbed as set out in the Cornwall Landscape Character Assessment and supported by the descriptions of Areas of Great Landscape Value. In areas of undeveloped coast, outside main towns, only development requiring a coastal location, and that cannot be achieved elsewhere, will be acceptable.

2. The Cornwall and Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Ensuring that any proposals within the AONB or affecting its setting, conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, is appropriately located to address the AONB's sensitivity and capacity and delivers the objectives of the Cornwall and Tamar Valley AONB Management Plans including the interests of those who live and/or work in them.

*(Note: While the towans do not lie within an AONB, they are clearly visible from AONB-designated land at Godrevy and the hills above St Ives, and so **the setting** is relevant.)*

3. Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and Geo-diversity

Specifically ensuring that with direct and cumulative impact:

a. international, national and locally designated sites for nature conservation are safeguarded from inappropriate development including appropriate buffer areas and provision made for their management based on up-to-date evidence and management plans.

b. conserves, protects and enhances features of biological or geological interest (including Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species), and provide for their appropriate management.

c. ensure no net loss of existing biodiversity and enable a net gain in biodiversity by designing in biodiversity, and ensuring any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated and/or compensated for.

d. the importance of habitats identified in the South West Regional Nature Map and the creation of a local and regional biodiversity network of wildlife corridors and local wildlife sites, helping to deliver the actions set out in the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan are recognised.

4. Mitigation

Where development will result in loss, the Council will seek appropriate and proportionate mitigation and/or compensation such as replacement habitats.

Policy 24 - Historic Environment

Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall's local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall's historic environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance through the following measures:

- a. Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment of designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings, including historic landscapes, settlements, Conservation Areas, marine environments, archaeological sites, parks and gardens and historic buildings.*
- b. Protect, enhance and promote the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site and its setting; supporting the adopted management plan.*

Assessment and mitigation

Development and management proposals should be informed by proportionate historic environment assessments and evaluations. Where the balance of a decision in favour of development results in the loss of a heritage asset, the Council will seek appropriate and proportionate mitigation by using planning conditions, management agreements and obligations.

Policy 26 - Flood Risk Management and Coastal Change

Development should take account of any adopted strategic and local flood and coastal management strategies.

4.Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Plan 2010-2015

The full text of the two Objectives of particular relevance to the Towans is:

Objective 5: Establish the post of Warden to safeguard and manage the Towans environment and Gwithian Green for the community

“The Parish Council recognises the unique benefits that Gwithian Towans brings to both residents and visitors. Although we do not own any of the Towans, nor have any direct responsibility for them, we are clear that the volume of visitors impacts negatively on the Towans themselves, in terms of habitat; on residents at Gwithian Towans in terms of visitor numbers and volume of cars, and on all of us in terms of public health matters and dog waste.

We are also concerned to properly maintain and safeguard the unique environment of Gwithian Green - the nature reserve in the care of Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council. We currently benefit from the work of volunteer members of the community to advise the Council when there are problems such as ‘fly-parking’ on the site, but the site needs maintenance and development. Therefore it is our intention to press Cornwall Council to invest in the appointment of a Warden.

We will work through the established Towans Partnership, which offers us an opportunity to extend the role to include Upton Towans and Hayle Towans, in partnership with those landowners and with Hayle Town Council.”

Objective 7: Protecting and preserving our heritage and our community assets
“The Parish Council is concerned to be proactive in preserving those assets and aspects of our Parish that help define our heritage, and the quality of our environment. As a community we enjoy the benefits of living alongside a number of specially designated environments; and we have a number of listed structures and defining settings that need to be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

We need to ensure regular dialogue with those groups and organisations with responsibility for particular assets within our community, such as St Gothians Nature Reserve, understand their longer term plans and objectives, and commit to supporting in the most appropriate manner.

We should also seek to influence future plans where we have concerns or ideas for improvement, and use our powers as a Parish Council wherever necessary to meet our objective.”

5. Hayle Area Plan 2005-2025

The more detailed text regarding key issues, objectives and actions relevant to the Towans is:

Among the key issues affecting community well-being were:

- *Hayle and the surrounding parishes see an opportunity to use the asset of the superb beaches the area has to offer to create a water-sports centre, but they also want other leisure and community facilities— particularly playing fields, covered swimming pool, parks and more meeting space.*

Among the key issues affecting heritage, culture and environment:

- *The Towans area is inadequately protected; the Towans are affected by excessive dog waste, pylons, and extensive parking and access demands, yet this area is one of Hayle’s greatest assets.*

Among the issues affecting tourism and sustainability:

- *Tourism should work to preserve and protect our environment, not be allowed to change or damage the very assets that attract tourists and are enjoyed by residents: tourism development must necessarily provide sustainable solutions for the future.”*

The Plan identified priority areas and goals for these themes as follows:

Community well-being

‘We will improve the life of residents, enhancing the quality of their leisure time, their safety, health and well-being. We want vibrant, engaged individuals making the most out of and contributing to their community.

We want to establish a sense of place, and pride in the environment in which we live and work.

Heritage, culture and environment

‘We will seek to preserve and promote our unique cultural, industrial and environmental heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of both residents and visitors, making a unique contribution to the cultural and economic regeneration of Hayle’.

Tourism and sustainability

'We will develop a quality tourism offer that maximises our environmental, historical and cultural heritage, creating a sustainable, year-round industry that will increase the economic contribution of tourism to our economy...'

Under these themes, two specific Projects are of particular relevance here:

Project 22: Preserve and protect the Towans and the coastline

The objective

To initiate and support measures that will preserve the environmental assets of the Towans and the coastline, and provide enhanced protection against the demands of a tourism-led economy

Action

This project proposes a co-ordinated approach to monitoring the impact of proposed tourism on Hayle area beaches and Towans, including degradation through foot traffic, horses, vehicles, sport users, and the monitoring of levels of litter, waste, illegal camping and parking.

The project also investigates the procedures and processes necessary to achieve Marine-Protected Status for our coastline, and Blue Flag status for our beaches. A working group to be set up to work with relevant agencies and partners; their purpose will be to advise Town and District Council, and beachfront landowners, of the steps necessary to properly protect the Towans, and to work towards Marine- Protected and Blue Flag status. The group will set out a plan of action, identify areas of responsibility, and act as both facilitator and pressure-group to achieve the goal.

Project 23: Access to the harbour and beaches

The objective

To ensure that the community continues to enjoy proper access to the harbour and to the beaches. To manage access to the beaches in a sustainable manner

Action

This project seeks to ensure that as the harbour area is developed, and as proposed measures to preserve and protect the Towans and coastline are introduced, that the community continues to have proper access to the harbour and beaches.

This project also recognises the importance of good beach access to our tourism industry, and as a vital part of community life and heritage. It recognises that the demands placed upon that environment through vehicular access, parking, and pedestrian access, needs proper management, so there is an urgent need to agree a management policy by all those identified. A long-term vision for the sustainable management of beach access is vital to the preservation of the environment, and of the natural assets enjoyed by residents and visitors.'

6. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan

The more expansive text from the SMP, relating most directly to the Towans area is as follows:

All SMPs covering England and Wales have been reviewed in recent years. The key objectives for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are:

- *Manage the risks to communities from flooding and erosion and support their adaptation*
- *Establish a long-term action plan which helps to minimise and reduce the reliance on defences in the future*
- *Support the diverse character of the landscape & seascape*
- *Allow natural evolution of the shoreline wherever possible*
- *Minimise impacts upon the historic environment*
- *Support nature conservation and minimise habitat impacts*
- *Support the viability and core values of coastal settlements*
- *Support tourism and recreational opportunities*
- *Support the adaptation and resilience of transport links*

The Reviews of the coastline covered by this Project are of critical importance to the Towans area in the immediate and medium future. They are listed below:

*The 2011 SMP Review for **Black Cliff to Godrevy Point** (Policy Development Zone: PDZ10) found that erosion and flood risk was very low risk (and no assets at risk) at Black Cliff so no intervention would be required. No active intervention is the preferred approach. This would allow natural processes to dominate, satisfying high level objectives for the SMP. It would also support the criteria and designated features of the Gwithian to Mexico Towans SSSI.*

*There may some loss of dune front expected in response to sea level rise along the **Mexico to Gwithian Towans** frontage. Continued blow out development along the dune front in response to access points from the holiday parks is also likely. Whilst a non-interventional approach is preferred to accommodate the natural variability of this area and allow natural response to climate change impacts, the dunes are under pressure from existing development and infrastructure and from access through the dunes.*

The Cornwall Beach and Sand Dune Management Strategy concluded that some management of the dune system is required. A Managed Realignment policy is therefore proposed to support this management, and a specific Dune Management Plan should be produced to direct the delivery of this policy.

Although the dunes are anticipated to undergo erosion and rollback by up to 60m by 2105, it is possible that sufficient contemporary sources of sand and sediment exist in the near-shore zone to keep pace with rising sea levels and prevent significant roll back of the dune line occurring, at least in the short to medium term.

With predicted losses of up to 12ha of sand dunes this is considered an area of significant coastal change and, combined with the role the dunes play in the local economy, Land Use Planners should consider identifying the entire dune area as a Coastal Change Management Area. This should review the need for, and, as necessary, facilitate any relocation of development from within the dune system.

*A low level realignment of the frontage which would allow natural response of the back of **Gwithian beach and the mouth of the Red River** to sea level rise is preferred in this location. This approach would allow the natural variability in the frontage to respond naturally to sea level rise although historically a large amount of sediment has been taken out of the system at this location due to sand mining which was actively carried out until around 2005.*

The managed realignment approach should take into account the objectives of the Local Nature Reserve lying behind the sandy bund which currently delimits the position of the shoreline. The existing development centred around the Sandsifter restaurant and bar is not indicated to be in the flood or erosion risk zone. It must also take account of the important archaeological sites located at Gwithian, including the scheduled Chapel and Conservation Area.

*There is a cliff recession risk along the **Godrevy** frontage which will at some stage affect the current access road to the National Trust car parks located at the **Godrevy headland**. These car parking areas represent the largest single area of parking for vehicles in west Cornwall. The potential closure of these car parks due to loss of the cliff road access therefore represents a wider problem in this part of the county than simply loss of revenue to the National Trust. The risk is likely to be particularly acute beyond epoch 1 (2025) however. Given the soft nature of the cliffs (unconsolidated material mixed with loose, friable slate, it is thought that the reasons for cliff failure along this frontage relates to rainfall and freshwater run-off alongside the erosive action of waves at the base of the cliffs during high tides and storms.*

*Despite this risk a no active intervention approach (NAI) is preferred and this would sit in line with the National Trust's approach of not intervening with natural coastal processes, as set out in their Shifting Shores policy. In addition, the eroding cliffs at **Godrevy** are providing a source of sediment to the beach which is locally important and NAI will allow this source to be maintained. Nonetheless the potential loss of the parking remains a significant local issue and some form of realignment of the road may be considered. There are however two primary constraints to this, the first being that the Godrevy Point SSSI extends across the dunes and down to mean low water. Therefore any landward realignment of the road would impact on part of the SSSI dune habitat. Secondly, the consent and agreement of a third party landowner would be required.*

*Establishing alternative parking may be an important part of the solution at **Godrevy**. Significant parking areas are already established at **Gwithian** just to the south and this area is not constrained by an AONB designation, whereas the AONB would need to be considered if alternative parking were considered to the north of the current site.*

The preferred plan and policy would aim to support the SMP high level objectives and those landscape objectives of the Cornwall AONB and Heritage Coast Designations. It would also support the nature conservation and scientific objectives of the Godrevy Head to St Agnes SSSI. An additional consideration however is the archaeological value attached to Godrevy. Described as a 'honey pot site' a number of important finds have been made in this area. Together with concern over the access road, it is possible this issue may instigate further investigation into the frontage and the mechanisms of cliff failure. Possible solutions such as cliff drainage and ground water management could be considered if freshwater issues were confirmed to be principle factors leading to cliff falls and slumps."

7. Cornwall Maritime Strategy 2012-2030

Objective G is of particular relevance to the Towans area, stating:

Ensure Cornwall's natural and historic maritime environment and culture is renowned worldwide, and is a source of pride and inspiration to residents and visitors

This Objective has the following aims:

G1 - Engage, educate and inform people about Cornwall's coast and seas. Inspire and encourage people to have pride in the management of the maritime environment in active partnership with the Council.

G2 - Support the implementation and management of the UK statutory and voluntary Marine Protected Area network. Maximise opportunities for collaborative working with other designated areas such as the AONB and World Heritage Site. Explore opportunities arising from other land-based and marine designations as appropriate.

G3 - Promote within Council departments and beyond, a better understanding of the marine and coastal environment and the significance of natural and historic assets. Ensure that relevant Council functions are undertaken with respect to these.

G4 - Work collaboratively with all sectors to secure the protection and sustainable management of Cornwall's maritime natural and historic environment through a range of public and private investment.

G5 - Seek opportunities for environmental growth and enhancement through habitat creation and species recovery, heritage restoration and improved management.

G6 - Protect Cornwall's significant geo-diversity from damaging activities. Safeguard marine mineral resources for future use.

G7 - Understand, maintain and enhance the distinctive character and setting of local coastal towns and villages, ports and harbours. Promote high quality seaside architecture, access, signage and innovative design that is inspired by and sensitive to local seascapes, landscapes and townscapes.

G8 - Promote Cornwall's natural and historic environmental qualities as positive assets, essential in enhancing quality of life and in attracting tourism, business and innovation that recognise, protect and enhance the maritime environment.

G9 - Promote and support maritime natural, historical and cultural activities and events to celebrate Cornwall's distinctive environment and heritage. Further encourage maritime-based arts and cultural activities, including festivals, events and venues.

8. Beach Management Strategy 2011-2015

On those beaches owned, managed or leased by Cornwall Council, its Beach Management Strategy aims:

- a) To put in place appropriate integrated management techniques to sustain and enhance the economic, environmental and social value of beaches*
- b) To encourage wider involvement and participation within beach management, so that it reflects a more local vision*
- c) To promote the importance and raise awareness of beaches and their wider value to Cornwall; consequently defining Cornwall as an exemplar in beach management*
- d) To provide guidance, direction and the setting of standards for managing activities on beaches*
- e) Improve the physical, intellectual and equality of access to beaches*
- f) Make full use of beaches and related open space as a resource to promote physical activity and leisure and thus to improve health and wellbeing of residents and visitors*

9. Cornwall Green Infrastructure Strategy 2012

The following extract from the strategy sets out the values in investing in green infrastructure.

“There are many benefits socially, economically and environmentally which can be reaped from investing in high quality green infrastructure, these include:

- Identifying ways to adapt to or mitigate against effects of climate change, for example using trees for natural air cooling and absorbing CO₂*
- Dealing with flood alleviation and water management through increasing use of permeable surfaces, creating up stream water catchment systems, designing in Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) schemes etc.*
- Providing opportunities to adopt more healthy lifestyles through increasing and enhancing natural spaces to provide more opportunities for natural play, recreation and enjoyment*
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and landscape through encouraging and adopting new land management approaches to deliver biodiversity gain and landscape enhancements*
- Improving social inclusion and health and well-being through provision of better living environments and high quality and accessible natural spaces near housing which improves and enhances the desirability of living in these areas*
- Supporting economic activity through provision of quality environment, local distinctiveness and cultural awareness that appeal to businesses and encourage investment*
- Promoting sustainable transport through planning for new and enhanced green and blue corridors, for cycling, walking and water transport*
- Supporting sustainable communities by providing links to necessary facilities and services*
- Designing and creating attractive environments around and within new and existing residential and employment areas increases desirability*

- *Supporting and increasing the tourism offer by making environmental improvements that increase the setting, functionality and accessibility of destinations*
- *Creating and managing productive landscapes, such as forestry and community growing spaces to increase new economic opportunities and strengthening links between people and their environment*
- *Make available learning spaces such as outdoor classrooms that can provide opportunities and subject matter across academic disciplines to understand more about how we live, how our culture has evolved and where we are going in the future as well as supplying the potential for the attainment of new skills*
- *Delivering statutory obligations such as the requirement to legally protect the public rights of way network provides an opportunity to enhance their use for health and well-being purposes, as sustainable transport choices and to add new links to the existing rights of way network and thereby reconnect breaks in routes and provide links to key destinationsetc*

APPENDIX III

List of policies contained within 'The Sands of Time', 1994-1999

Nature Conservation

- Retain a mosaic of diverse habitats (at least 10% bare sand)
- Protect, enhance and establish regular monitoring of species
- Rationalise public access on the Towans avoiding where possible areas of particular fragility
- Promote the site as an area for scientific study and educational use
- Resist any new proposals for development within the area for example the expansion of holiday sites and applications for sand extraction

Archaeology

- Support should be given to the orderly completion of all sand workings to conserve the buried landscapes of the Towans
- The site of the National Explosives Works is of high archaeological interest and its potential for education and sensitive interpretation should be explored whilst the site is retained and conserved
- The importance and fragility of the buried landscape should be taken into account in any proposals for development and management. The use of metal detectors should be discouraged on undisturbed areas of dune to prevent objects being removed from their original context
- The Upton Towans site will be included in an application for World Heritage Site within the county

Recreation and Access

- The use of the Towans and beach should remain at its present level and any new development should be resisted
- Recognise the importance of the Towans as a recreational resource
- The intensification of use for informal recreation of the Towans should be encouraged towards well defined areas where environmental damage can be monitored and controlled
- Access to the beach and dunes should be considered and access routes rationalised to cater for the recreational demand and ensure against further erosion of the site
- Recreation management should link with opportunities in the wider area
- Encourage the contribution towards the care and maintenance of the environment by everyone
- Encourage joint action between the private sector and public agencies to care for the environment and upgrade the area
- Promote environmentally sustainable recreational activities

Information and Interpretation

- Provide access and interpretative information emphasising the importance of the Towans as a valuable natural and historic resource
- Promote awareness and understanding of the natural and historic qualities of the area through sensitive interpretation

Traffic and Transportation

- Minimise the impact of tourist traffic on the Towans and provide alternative transport
- Increase in car park capacity should be avoided, but should aim to accommodate current levels of use and provide low-key alternatives to relieve pressure on honey pot areas
- Alternatives to private car use should be assessed and encouraged (including the local rail service, Hoppa bus services etc)
- Assess the visual impact of car parking areas and re-landscape where necessary
- Implement traffic control measures using natural barriers to prevent ad hoc parking on verges etc
- Carry out traffic calming schemes where appropriate

Tourism (and future tourism)

- Emphasis should be placed on quality rather than quantity in the provision of facilities, the management of the environment and the marketing of the Towans
- Assist tourist enterprises to carry out environmental audits of their operations
- The principles of the Penwith District Environmental Tourism Plan will be adopted
- Assess the feasibility of extending the current tourist season to attract special interest visitors on sustainable holidays
- Look to establishing a Local Tourism Heritage Trust for the Towans area

Pollution

- In co-operation with relevant organisations look at ways of dealing with dog fouling on Gwithian Towans Common and other areas
- Be aware of environmental health standards within the area and aim to monitor and make available to visitors Water Quality Statistics
- Implement a 'take your litter home with you' policy and aim to remove existing litter bins (which can create local problems).

List of 'Achievable Projects' contained within 'The Sands of Time', 1994-1999

Area-wide Projects

- Access rationalisation from tourist sites & car parks.....and providing more information about beach access points
- Beach access from Coast Path – liaise with landowners & agree appropriate beach access points for public use.
- Interpretative boards – wildlife, history & conservation at main access points: Harvey, Phillack, Upton, Gwithian Towans & at holiday parks.
- Towans booklet with info on wildlife, walks, map etc ('Sands of Time' leaflet)
- Prevent unauthorised vehicle access onto the Towans
- Rationalise, landscape & improve car parks to a high visual standard.
- Asses public transport requirements & opportunities through market research
- Towans & Hayle linked together under corporate identity through info & signs
- Encourage participation in environmental audits of tourist parks

- Establish a Local Tourism Heritage Trust to attract grant aid & provide project advice
- Marram planting to stabilise blow-outs on fore dunes & eroded pathways; regular monitoring.
- Identify areas suitable for Countryside Stewardship.
- Signing – aim to retain local place names; encourage a more co-ordinated & aesthetic approach to road & footpath signing in the area.
- Remove small-scale eyesores, redundant fencing & structures where appropriate.
- Carry out archaeological assessment from Hayle to Gwithian (inc mining survey).
- Produce education activity guide for local schools & groups.
- Assess main areas of poor visual impact & aim to improve these.
- Assess potential for themed holiday promotions such as bird-watching, surfing, land yachting, kite flying etc.

Location-Specific Projects

- Gwithian Towans Common

Produce a landscape improvement plan for the site to include: car park rationalisation to prevent erosion, beach access & safety, eyesore removal, signage, footpath management.

- Gwithian Green Common

Scrub control, re-introduce grazing, pond creation, access provision.

- Upton Towans-Gwithian Towans Common

Scrub control, monitoring of invasive bracken, gorse, sea buckthorn; removal where appropriate.

- Upton Towans

Building safety works to preserve industrial heritage.

- Upton Towans

Circular walks using sustainable trackways & paths; waymark/interpret. Monitor & manage beach access path.

- Gwithian Towans Common-Godrevy

Coast path continuation across beach; installation of footbridge across Red River.

- Strap Rocks Coast Path

Path maintenance to prevent further erosion.

- Harvey Towans

Monitor & advise on plans for this area.

- Phillack Towans

Provision of small car park, better road & beach access, screened by dunes.

- ARC Site

Feasibility and consultation over small-scale car park on old sand quarry workings & beach access.

- Harvey Towans & Gwithian Towans

Encourage regular dialogue etc with chalet residents over conservation issues.

- Riviere Towans

Aim to improve coastline by moving holiday units back from visually intrusive areas in consultation with Haven Leisure.

- Near Godrevy Towans

Area landscape plan to encourage a wetland area for wildlife.

- Harvey Towans

Ferry link from Lelant to Harvey Towans to link coast path.

- Hayle

Rural rail link, Hayle to St Erth, promoted as day trip; promote circular walks and beach links etc. Needs promotional material.

- Near Godrevy Towans

Integration of field opposite ARC site into management for wetland meadows.

- Gwithian Towans

Feasibility study into erosion affecting beach steps' stability.

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