

Bodmin Moor

Managing an ancient and modern pastoral landscape

To develop and maintain resilient and environmentally sustainable pastoral practice

Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP)

Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs)

Bodmin Moor Vision

~ Summary Version ~



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For Cornwall National Landscape and Cornwall Council

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Cattle and sheep graze Rillaton Common while visitors explore the Hurlers stone circles and Stowe's Hill, with its Neolithic tor enclosure, dominates at rear left. Such a pastoral scene may have been experienced when these monuments were created c 4000 and 5500 years ago (Pete Herring, 2020).

This is a reduced version of a more comprehensive report presenting a strategic review of Bodmin Moor's Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP), Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs), and the broader Bodmin Moor Vision¹. Commissioned by Cornwall Council and supported by the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) initiative, the review addresses the evolving challenges and opportunities in managing Bodmin Moor's unique pastoral, archaeological, and ecological landscape.

Purpose and Scope

The review updates the original HEAP (2003) and PALs (2007), integrating new archaeological findings, ecological data, and stakeholder input. It aims to balance heritage conservation, biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable pastoralism across Bodmin Moor's rough ground.

Key Findings

- **Historic Significance:** Bodmin Moor contains exceptionally well-preserved prehistoric, medieval, and industrial archaeological features and landscapes, including stone circles, field systems, and mining remains. Aside from the industrial remains, all of the surviving tangible and intangible heritage is rooted in very long-term pastoral use of the Moor reaching back six thousand years.
- **Ecological Value:** The Moor's ancient semi-natural grasslands, shaped by millennia of grazing, support rare species and habitats, contributing to national and international biodiversity goals.
- **Landscape Character:** The open, intervisible nature of the Moor is central to its aesthetic and cultural value, with visibility and ease of access of monuments and landscape features vital to public engagement and heritage understanding.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Farmers, commoners, conservationists, and local communities share deep connections to the Moor, with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) informing sustainable land use.
- **Environmental Pressures:** Reduced grazing, the consequent scrub encroachment, climate change, and development threaten both biodiversity and archaeological visibility.
- **Policy and Governance:** Integration of PALs into Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes is essential. Commons governance, succession planning, and financial viability are key concerns.

¹ Herring, P, Attwell, D and Ratcliffe, D, 2025. *Bodmin Moor: managing an ancient and modern pastoral landscape to develop and maintain resilient and environmentally sustainable pastoral practice*, Report for Cornwall National Landscape and Cornwall Council.

[Full report details](#)

Principal conclusion

- Bodmin Moor is a living, working landscape of international significance. Its future depends on integrated, place-based management that respects its deep history, supports resilient pastoralism, and enhances its ecological and cultural value. The HEAP and PALs provide a robust framework for navigating change and securing the Moor's legacy for generations to come.



Cheese-Wring, S Prout 1804

‘But our best neighbour – and he's choice and good
Is the wild moor there's the best neighbourhood
It keeps vast herds of cattle, I profess,
and flocks of sheep even almost numberless
Thus we our stock do summer on the Down,
And keep our homer grass till winter come...’

Seventeenth-century verse, from the Spoure Book, Trebartha, North Hill

Strategic Recommendations

The report proposes an agreed Aim that all actors and agencies can accept and work towards:

- **To develop and maintain resilient and environmentally sustainable pastoral practice.**

A number of proposals are suggested in order to achieve that aim; these are summarised here:

- **Maintain Grazing:** Support three-species grazing (cattle, sheep, ponies) to preserve and enhance biodiversity and archaeological visibility.
- **Manage Vegetation:** Control furze and bracken to protect heritage assets and maintain open landscapes.
- **Enhance Monitoring:** Use aerial imagery and GIS to track vegetation changes and inform management.
- **Support Commons:** Strengthen commons governance and incentivize active grazing through tailored ELM options.
- **Raise Awareness:** Embed PALs in planning tools and promote their significance to stakeholders and the public.
- **Invest in Resilience:** Develop flexible, well-funded agreements that reflect the true costs of upland farming and support younger generations.

Summary of the main report

1. Introduction

This section outlines the purpose and scope of the review, commissioned by Cornwall Council to update the Bodmin Moor Rough Ground Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) and Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs). Originally developed in the early 2000s, as part of the Bodmin Moor Vision, the HEAP and PALs aimed to balance the needs of heritage conservation, nature recovery, and sustainable pastoralism.

The 2025 review responds to evolving challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and shifts in agri-environment schemes. It emphasizes the need for integrated management that respects the Moor's deep 5 to 6 thousand-year history of pastoral land use, its archaeological richness, and its diverse semi-natural habitats. The introduction also highlights the interdependence of the historic and natural environments, noting that the pastoral communities, ancient semi-natural grasslands and archaeological features have co-evolved over those millennia.

The section sets the tone for a collaborative, evidence-based approach to managing change, engaging stakeholders such as farmers, landowners, conservationists, and local communities. It stresses the importance of maintaining the visibility and integrity of heritage assets and the pastoral story they tell while supporting resilient farming practices so that the Moor continues to be a living landscape. The introduction concludes by reaffirming the value of the Bodmin Moor Vision as a shared framework for sustainable land management, rooted in both historical continuity and future adaptability.



Cairn (foreground), cists (centre right) and ancient semi-natural grassland on Hamatethy Common, St Breward (Pete Herring, November 1998).

2. Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP)

This section introduces HEAPs as strategic tools for managing the historic environment in a proactive, inclusive, and locally grounded way. Originally developed in Cornwall in the early 2000s, HEAPs aim to go beyond preservation by integrating heritage management with natural environment, land use, and community interests.

The Bodmin Moor Rough Ground HEAP was the first of its kind, designed to address the unique challenges of managing a landscape shaped by over 5000 years of continual pastoral farming.

The HEAP framework is structured in four stages: understanding the resource, assessing character and significance, identifying forces for change, and developing plans and strategies. It emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders, including farmers, landowners, conservationists, and local communities, to ensure that heritage values are recognized and embedded in decision-making.

The section outlines the principles underpinning HEAPs, such as inclusivity, transparency, and recognition of time-depth in landscapes. It also highlights the need to

consider both tangible and intangible heritage, including traditional ecological knowledge and communal values. Overall, the HEAP provides a flexible and collaborative framework for managing change on Bodmin Moor in ways that respect its historic, ecological, and cultural significance.



View north from ancient semi-natural grassland on Carkees Tor towards the three great hills, or mountains of St Breward, Rough Tor, Garrow and Brown Willy. Garrow (centre) has curving medieval strip fields on its nearest, southern slope (Pete Herring, February 2025).

3. Understanding the Resource (HEAP Stage 1a)

This section provides a foundational overview of Bodmin Moor’s rough ground, its stakeholders, and the components that define its historic and semi-natural character. It identifies key stakeholder groups—farmers, landowners, commoners, conservation agencies, archaeologists, and local communities—each with distinct but overlapping interests in the Moor’s future.

The landscape is described as a mosaic of ancient semi-natural grasslands, scrub, heath, and woodland, shaped by over 5000 years of continuing pastoralism, principally through summer grazing. The section emphasizes the importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), passed down through generations of pastoralists, which informs sustainable grazing practices and land management. It also highlights the need for a renewed Bodmin Moor Vision to address contemporary challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and the decline of traditional farming.

The section draws on palaeoecological evidence, including pollen analysis, to demonstrate how human activity has shaped the Moor’s vegetation since the Neolithic period (from c4000 BC). This evidence supports the classification of the landscape as

ancient semi-natural grassland, maintained through millennia of grazing, rather than as degraded heathland. Such ancient semi-natural grassland is itself a precious resource, much diminished in the British Isles (through agricultural improvement, neglect, afforestation, and other forms of development), making survivals like that on Bodmin Moor especially valuable. Overall, this section lays the groundwork for understanding the cultural, ecological, and historical significance of Bodmin Moor's rough ground and the need for integrated, informed management strategies.



PAL 14 Goonzion Downs. Land cover in 2005 (CC aerial photo, from CSHER). Dense furze developing in SW portion and to the SE of the northern crossroads; the beginning of a transformation of the ancient semi-natural grassland was clearly detectable and informed the concerns about reduction in grazing levels that led to the initial Bodmin Moor Vision, HEAP and delineation of PALs on Bodmin Moor.



Goonzion Downs. Land cover in 2025 (© Airbus, obtained from Google Earth Pro, with thanks). Rapidly being covered by furze (black-green) and bracken (rust coloured) leaving very little grassland and greatly reducing the biodiversity of the common. Trajectory is clearly towards the common becoming largely covered with impenetrable furze, obscuring most of the complex archaeological remains. Its roots will affect below-ground remains and its closed canopy will block light to other plants and the common will be transformed from a heterogenous biodiversity to a form of monoculture that makes resumption of grazing very difficult, and which provides very little benefit to the semi-natural environment, none to the landscape, none to those who enjoy exploring the common, none to the historic environment, and little to the commoners who graze the fragmentary survivals of the ancient semi-natural grassland.

4. Deepening Understanding of the Resource (HEAP Stage 1b)

This section presents a detailed narrative of Bodmin Moor's transformation into a pastoral landscape over more than 5000 years.

It begins with the Mesolithic period, when small groups of hunter-gatherers began modifying the natural environment, creating glades and using natural landmarks like tors and pools as gathering places. In the Neolithic period, the introduction of domesticated livestock and dairying practices led to the gradual replacement of woodland with grasslands. Monumental structures such as tor enclosures and stone circles were constructed, often in relation to significant landscape features, reflecting both ritual and practical land-use decisions.

The Bronze Age saw the establishment of extensive permanent pastures and the construction of ritual monuments and settlements, with evidence of dairying and transhumance (summer grazing of livestock accompanied by those who milked them and made the winter's cheese). Later prehistoric periods introduced more extensive field systems (for mixed farming) and settlements, while maintaining large areas of common grazing. The early medieval period continued this pattern, with transhumance central to land use.

The section also explores the administrative structures that supported commons management, including drift pounds and seasonal grazing rules. The narrative concludes with the later medieval, post-medieval and modern periods, highlighting the continuity of pastoralism, the impact of industrial activities, and the evolving relationship between people, livestock, and the landscape.



The Neolithic tor enclosure on Stowe's Hill, including the heavily banked citadel-like enclosure at the southern summit (top right) would have required many thousands of person-days to gather the heavy blocks of granite and then construct. (Steve Hartgroves, Cornwall County Council, c1995, courtesy of CSHER)

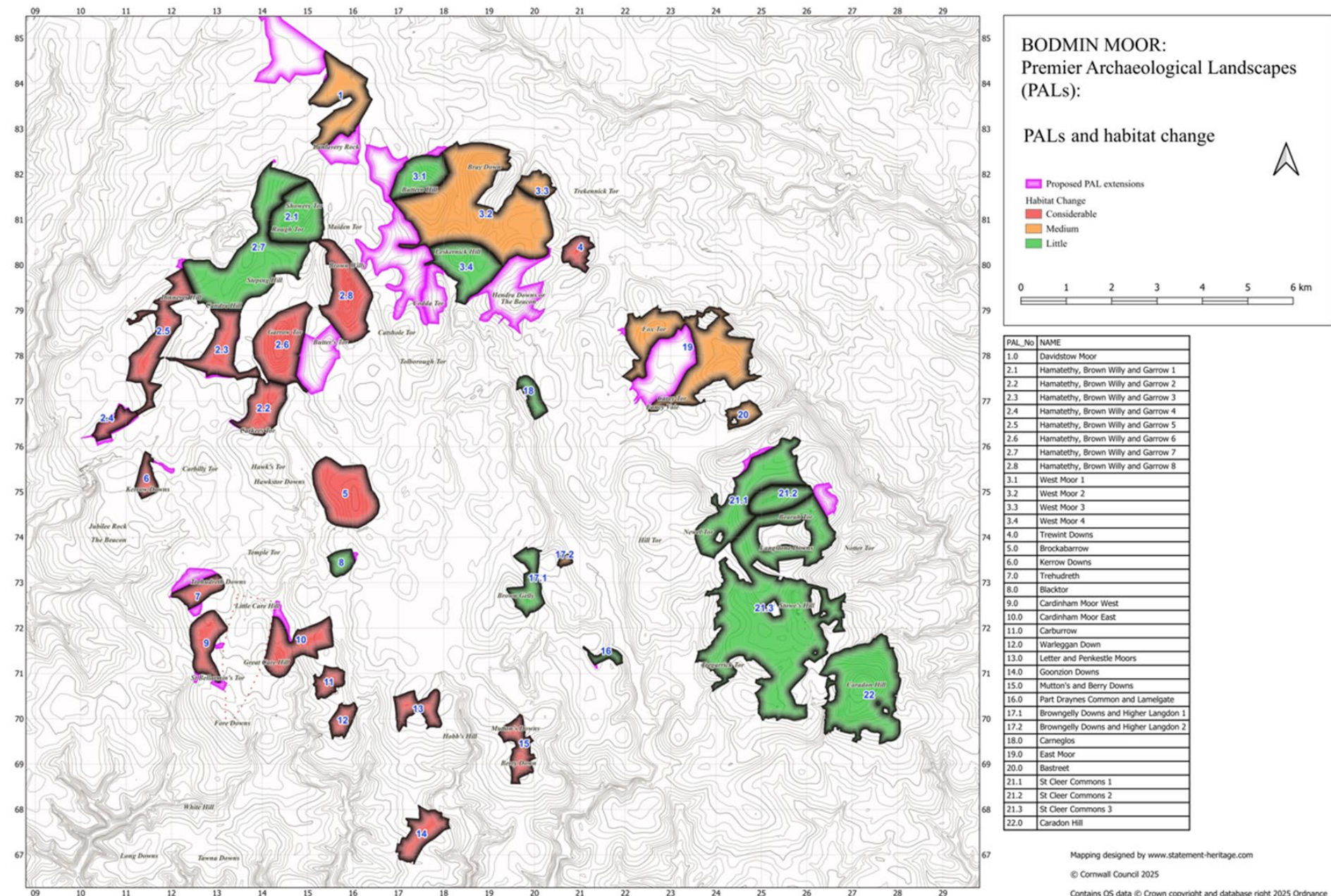
5. Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs)

This section outlines the purpose, criteria, and current status of the 22 Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs) identified on Bodmin Moor. PALs are areas of exceptional archaeological and historical significance, selected for their density, diversity, coherence and preservation of heritage features. The criteria for selection include the concentration and association of monuments, completeness of relict landscapes, chronological complexity, preservation quality, uniqueness to Cornwall, contribution to landscape character, and accessibility.

The PALs encompass a wide range of prehistoric, medieval, and post-medieval features, including settlements, field systems, ritual monuments, and industrial remains. The 2025 review updates the mapping, colour-codes prehistoric and historic periods, and places it in dynamic GIS. It also thoroughly reviews the textual descriptions and narratives of each PAL, incorporating new archaeological data, changes in vegetation, and stakeholder feedback.

The review also proposes boundary adjustments for some PALs to better reflect current understanding of the extent of significant features. The section emphasizes the importance of integrating PALs into broader land management strategies, including Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, and highlights the need for continued monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management.

PALs are presented not as isolated heritage zones but as integral parts of the wider pastoral and ecological landscape of Bodmin Moor, requiring coordinated efforts to preserve their visibility, integrity, and cultural value.



6. Character and Significance (HEAP Stage 2)

This section evaluates the character and significance of Bodmin Moor's historic environment using the framework of Historic England's Conservation Principles. It applies the four heritage values—Aesthetic, Communal, Historical, and Evidential—to assess the Moor's cultural and environmental importance.

Aesthetic value is derived from the sensory and intellectual stimulation offered by the landscape, including its open vistas, intervisibility of monuments, and the dramatic interplay of natural and human-made features.

Communal value reflects the deep connections local communities and visitors have with the Moor, shaped by centuries of pastoralism, shared customs, and spiritual associations.

Historical value is illustrated through the continuity of land use, from prehistoric pastoralism to modern grazing, and the visible traces of past societies embedded in the landscape.

Evidential value lies in the Moor's exceptional preservation of archaeological features, offering insights into human activity over millennia.

These values, and other ways of appreciating significance – like considering a place's rarity, distinctiveness and condition – can be applied to the whole of Bodmin Moor as an entity, as an internationally important historic landscape, then each PAL (as is done in the individual PAL documents) and then elements within those.

They can also be applied to types of place (like marshes, open commons, enclosures of rough ground, etc) and types of site (as in Appendix 1).

The report includes a summary statement on the significance of Bodmin Moor as a whole:

The commons and other rough pastures of Bodmin Moor are among the handful of places in Europe where extensive and clearly visible prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval settlements, fields and pasture boundaries survive alongside contemporary ceremonial and ritual monuments, and also alongside large areas of open or undivided grazing land, the ancient commons.

The section also highlights the ecosystem and cultural services provided by the Moor, such as biodiversity support, flood regulation, and educational opportunities. It emphasizes the need to consider both designated and non-designated heritage assets in planning and management, advocating for a holistic approach that integrates heritage, ecology, and sustainable land use.



The bridge between Brown Willy (right) and Butterstor, taken in November 1988 (Pete Herring).

“The bridge is also a vivid link to other earlier ways that pastoralist predecessors did things...to create a bridge that carried and carries large cattle across a stream for several hundred years... it belonged to those long millennia and centuries when people did not use wheeled vehicles to get around the Moor, but instead walked or relied on taming and riding the native ponies”

7. Changes affecting Bodmin Moor’s pastoral landscape (HEAP Stage 3)

This section explores the evolving pressures and opportunities shaping Bodmin Moor’s pastoral landscape. It identifies key forces for change, including climate change, shifts in agri-environment schemes, rewilding initiatives, abandonment and neglect, and development pressures.

The report emphasizes the need to balance environmental goals with the preservation of the Moor’s historic and semi-natural character, and the need to base decisions on clear understanding of the development and value of both.

Rewilding and wilding are discussed as both opportunities and risks—while they may enhance biodiversity, they can also obscure archaeological features and disrupt traditional land use. Natural Flood Management (NFM) is highlighted as a strategy to mitigate climate impacts, with peatland restoration and woodland planting offering potential benefits. However, these must be carefully planned to avoid damaging heritage assets including the Moor’s ancient semi-natural grasslands.

Development threats such as road improvements, forestry, and renewable energy projects are also considered, with recommendations to assess their impact on landscape character and archaeological visibility.

The section underscores the importance of integrating PALs into Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and ensuring that heritage considerations are embedded in future land use planning. It calls for collaborative, place-based approaches that respect the Moor's deep history while addressing contemporary environmental and economic challenges.



Heavily bracken infested hut circle on the downs prior to chemical treatment. Rhizomes will probably have disturbed soil layers and the palaeo-environmental record (David Attwell).



A turf stead on the edge of a mire community. These small-scale features are easily lost in Molinia dominated grasslands (David Attwell).



The Nine Stones Circle on East Moor with ponies in the background. Livestock ‘rubbing’ has eroded soils and caused some stones to fall. (David Attwell).

8. Evolution of Agri-Environment Agreements and Support for the Uplands

This section traces the development of agri-environment schemes and upland support policies from the late 20th century to the present, highlighting their impact on Bodmin Moor’s pastoral landscape. It reviews initiatives such as the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance, Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), Countryside Stewardship, and the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes.

The section emphasizes the importance of grazing in maintaining the Moor’s historic and semi-natural environment, noting that reduced stocking rates have led to scrub encroachment and loss of archaeological visibility.

It discusses the financial challenges faced by upland farms, particularly commoners, and the need for tailored support mechanisms that reflect the unique conditions of Bodmin Moor. The section also explores the role of new funding streams, such as biodiversity net gain and carbon markets, and the potential for integrating PALs into these frameworks.

It calls for dynamic, place-based approaches that avoid homogenization and support traditional pastoral practices. The section concludes by stressing the importance of commons governance, stakeholder engagement, and the development of innovative management models to ensure the viability of upland farming and the preservation of Bodmin Moor’s cultural and ecological heritage.



The restored Stripples Stones at Hawks Tor undertaken using a HAP grant funded through HLS (David Attwell).



Capital grants have allowed re-investment in traditional boundaries such as Cornish hedges and drystone walls across Bodmin Moor (David Attwell).

9. Plan and Strategy (HEAP Stage 4)

This section outlines a forward-looking strategy for managing Bodmin Moor’s historic and semi-natural environment and landscape through collaborative, informed, and adaptive planning and agricultural support.

It emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders—particularly farmers, commoners, and landowners—through inclusive methods such as “kitchen table discussions,” which have revealed strong support for maintaining traditional pastoral practices and concern over declining grazing levels.

The overarching aim is to integrate Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs) into Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and broader land-use decisions. The strategy includes raising awareness of PALs, embedding them in GIS and planning tools, and improving access to historic environment data. It also proposes targeted actions such as scrub control, visibility restoration of archaeological features, complexes and landscapes, and support for three-species grazing (cattle, sheep, ponies).

The section highlights the need for flexible, well-funded agreements that reflect the true costs of upland farming and support commons governance. It also addresses wildfire risk, succession planning, and the integration of heritage with biodiversity and climate goals.

The strategy concludes with a call for a renewed pastoral vision that balances environmental stewardship with cultural continuity, ensuring that Bodmin Moor remains a living, working landscape shaped by its deep history.



Technology may have a role to play in targeting better outcomes for PALs using invisible fencing systems. There are two manufacturers now producing systems and the marketplace is likely to grow. There can be issues with signal, deployment and costs which will need to be addressed within future scheme design to encourage take up (David Attwell)



Collars may be able to reduce pressure on some key monuments where livestock rubbing and erosion is an issue (David Attwell).

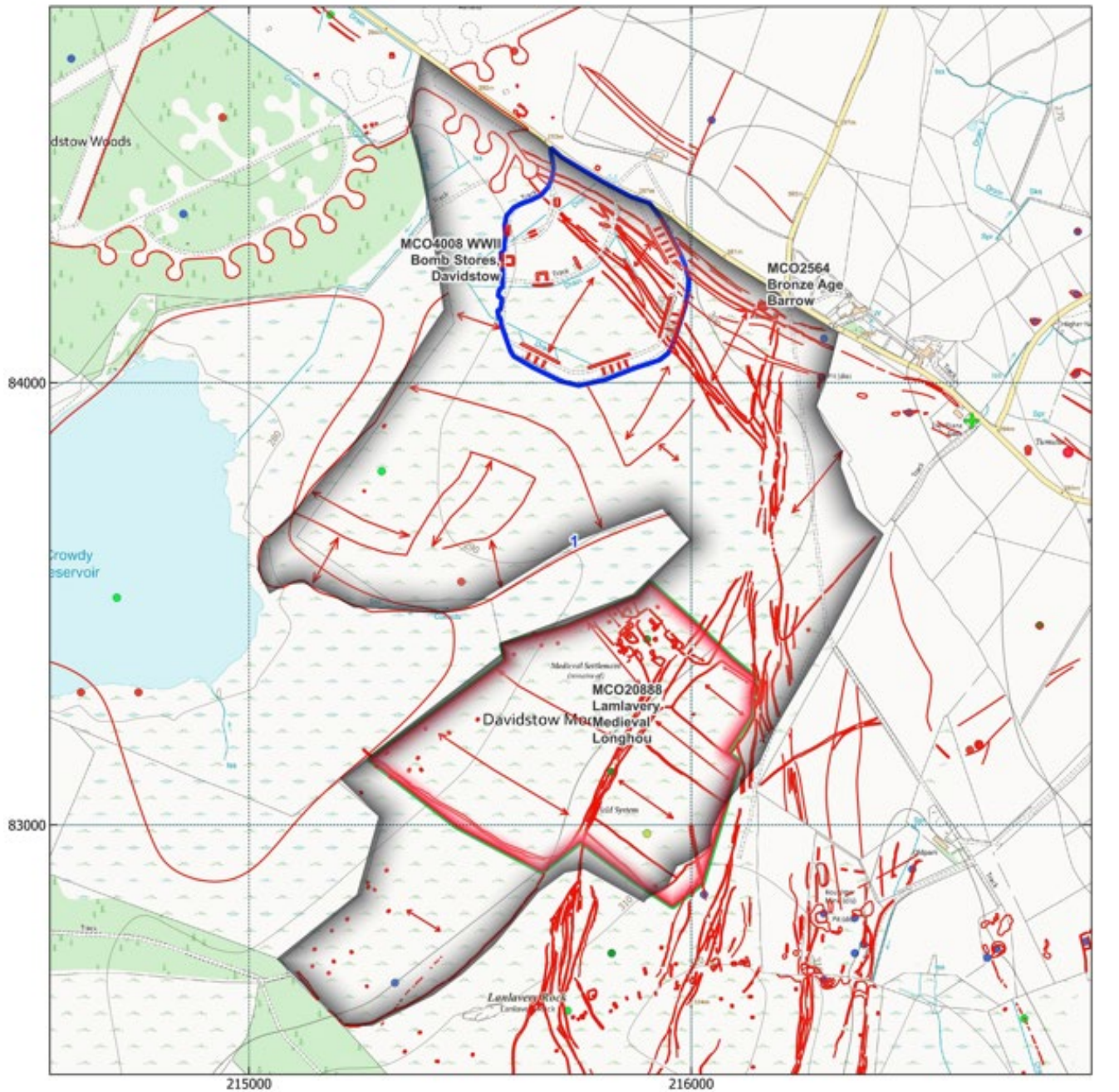
Summary of the PALs reviews and HEAP Appendices:

Premier Archaeological Landscape reviews

For each of the 22 individual PALs on Bodmin Moor an updated report with new more comprehensive mapping has been produced. These reports include the following:

- The PAL's location, geology and topography
- Its land use history, including reviews of historic maps
- Its historic environment
- Heritage and other designations
- Summary of changes between 2005 and 2025
- A Historic Environment Action Plan for each PAL, including reviews of issues and opportunities
- Recommendations

A new more comprehensive map has also been produced for each PAL, exemplified here with that for PAL 1, Davidstow Moor



- PAL Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Scheduled Monuments @ Risk
- Feature Groups
 - Prehistoric
 - Medieval
 - Post Medieval
 - Aerial Mapping Transcriptions
- CSHER point data
 - Prehistoric
 - Early Medieval
 - Romano British
 - Medieval
 - Post Medieval
 - Modern

Dominant Habitat: Dry Acid Grassland

Habitat Change: Medium

Notes: Low furze spread into molinia grassland areas, especially SW of medieval fields near Lamlavery Rock. Heath fires reduced, contained by farmers' tracks.

PAL 1 Davidstow Moor

www.statement-heritage.com

Cornwall Council

Contains OS Data © Crown
Copyright, All Rights Reserved
2025 Ordnance Survey
AC000817921

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HEAP Appendix 1: Archaeological Site Types on Bodmin Moor's Rough Ground

This appendix categorizes and describes the wide range of archaeological features found across Bodmin Moor, organized by period and function. It includes:

- **Prehistoric Sites:** Long cairns, chambered tombs, stone circles, rows, menhirs, hut circles, and field systems from the Neolithic to the Iron Age.
- **Medieval Sites:** Settlements, longhouses, field systems, crosses, chapels, and holy wells.
- **Post-Medieval and Modern Sites:** Farmsteads, beehive huts, and pastoralist shelters.
- **Industrial Sites:** Tin streamworks, mines, quarries, tramways, and china-clay works.

Each type is briefly described with notes on typical threats and management considerations.

HEAP Appendix 2: Summary of Kitchen Table Discussions

This appendix captures insights from informal stakeholder meetings with farmers, commoners, and landowners. Key themes include:

- Concerns over stocking rate assumptions and scheme design.
- Support for early PALs agreements and targeted scrub management.
- Challenges with commons governance and non-grazier participation.
- The need for flexible, well-funded schemes to support younger graziers.
- Importance of animal health, especially tick-borne diseases.

HEAP Appendix 3: Bodmin Moor North SSSI Designation

This includes the full text of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notification for Bodmin Moor North. It outlines:

- The site's unique geology and upland habitats.
- Its importance for rare plant species, invertebrates, and breeding/wintering birds.
- The ecological value of its grasslands, mires, and heathland mosaics.

HEAP Appendix 4: Proposed Amendments to PAL Boundaries

This appendix details recommended changes to the boundaries of the 22 Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs), based on updated archaeological evidence and landscape analysis. Adjustments include:

- Expanding PALs to include newly identified features.
- Refining boundaries to better reflect topography and land use.
- Enhancing protection for underrepresented areas, especially in the south and west of the Moor.