

## PAL 6 Kerrow Downs, Blisland, Historic Environment Action Plan



*Highland cow on NW slopes where the dense furze uphill to the left is approaching closed-canopy. (Pete Herring February 2025.)*

### Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 114753

Extent: 33 ha (81 acres)

#### *Geology:*

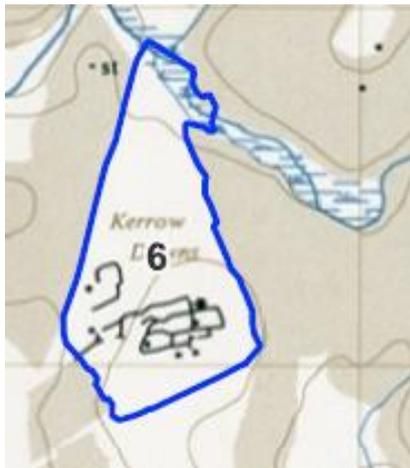
Granite. A few large boulders midslopes; otherwise a scatter of moorstones.

#### *Topography:*

Rounded hill, with most of the PAL on north-facing slopes, running down towards the De Lank River at Delphy / Delford Bridge. Highest point towards south of PAL at 236 metres (774 feet), falls to 208 metres (682 feet) beside De Lank in NW corner. A large irregularly shaped pool lies at the northern foot of the main slope; it is plotted on modern maps and may have been considered a modern feature, but the land it lies in was called Black Pool Common in 1840 (Blisland Tithe Apportionment), suggesting it is natural.

#### *Current management and structures of ownership, commoners, etc:*

Common land, Kerrow Downs, CL184.



- Prehistoric field and enclosure boundaries
- Stone banks and ramparts
- Hut Circle
- ◄ Long cairn (oriented)
- Cairn/barrow
- Stone Circle
- ⊙ Henge (with stone circle)
- Stone row
- SE Stone Setting
- SI Standing stone

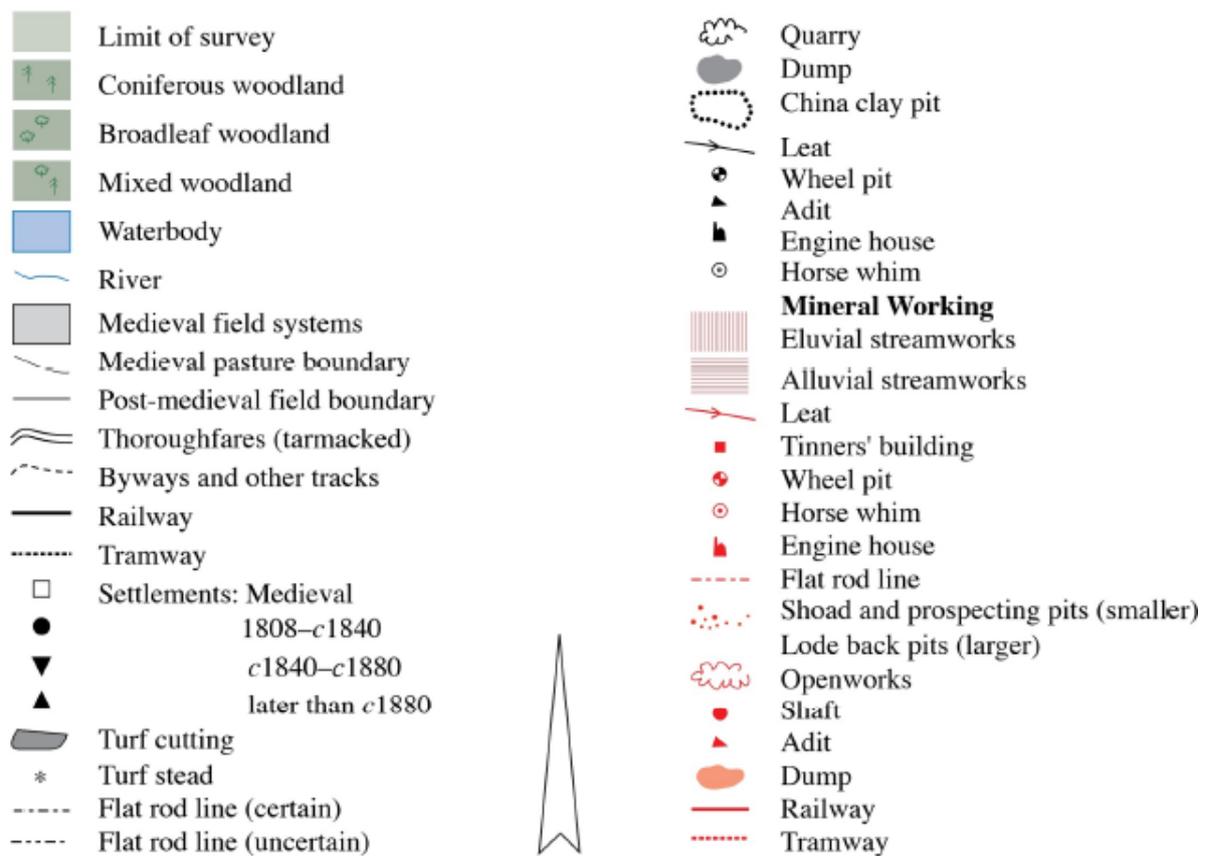
Extract from Prehistoric overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



- Cultivation ridges
- Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries, based on the O.S. 1808 two-inch MS map, and tithe maps.
- Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries found by air and ground survey.
- Embanked enclosure
- Surviving settlement, recorded before 1540.
- Surviving settlement, recorded between 1540 and 1808.
- Deserted settlement, recorded before 1540.
- ▲ Medieval longhouse
- △ Post-medieval dwelling (abandoned)
- Other medieval structure
- Other post-medieval structure
- LANK 1278 Cornish place name, and earliest recorded date.
- Hulker 1407 English place name, and earliest recorded date.
- ⋯ Parish Boundary c. 1840

Extract from Medieval and later landscape to c1808 overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 2; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).





Extract from *Post-medieval and industrial overview map* (Herring et al 2008, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).

## Land use history

### Pre-1748

This PAL is quite low-lying but its marginality lies partly in its aspect, north-facing, exposed to the prevailing north-westerlies, as well as in its spread of boulders. Over 3000 years ago a roundhouse settlement was established within a small field system of rectangular fields on the high northern slope whose slope is concave and steep, meaning it was comparatively well-drained. The fields' walls were substantial and appear to have been used for cultivation as well as to keep livestock in (or out). They survive so well because there is little sign of significant later use of the area, other than as open rough pasture.

### Thomas Martyn's 1748 map.

Shown as open ground.

### c1810 OS drawing

Shown as open rough grassland with unfenced lanes on its W and E sides. Appears to show round houses as features, therefore relatively open to view.

### c1840 Tithe Map

The top of the hill was called Kerrow Down in 1840 (Blisland Tithe Map) and was owned by Sir William Molesworth, leased by Ann Lean and occupied by Jane Lanxon (TA 105). The northern slope, labelled Black Down on the map, was recorded as Black

Pool Common in the Blisland Tithe Apportionment of 1840 (TA 1780), though at that date it seems to have been owned by John Wallis, leased by Zechariah Rogers and occupied by John Bunt of Black Penquite, the farm immediately to the west.

#### *c1880 OS map*

Shown as rough grassland with some clumps of Furze. Stone stony in area with round houses and fields, presumably mistaking archaeological remains as natura?

#### *c1906 OS map*

No change.

#### *Modern*

By the time of the 1965 Commons registration the two parts were included in the extensive Blisland manor commons. Given the lack of later prehistoric and medieval fields on this slope, it seems likely that this had been common land for much of the historic period.

## Historic Environment

### Summary of main heritage assets

#### *Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual*

Two 'tumuli' (i.e. cairns or barrows) were first recorded in the 1970s. The northern one (MCO 22708, PRN 3044), a **large circular turf mound**, 18m in diameter and 0.5m high, was considered an uncertain barrow partly because it was in an unusually low-lying position (though no credible alternative was proposed by the OS). The southern one (PRN 1998), placed in a more typical position on the crest of the northern slope, facing towards the significant hill Rough Tor, was described in 1973 as a 14m diameter **platform cairn** with a perimeter rim and a slight ditch.

#### *Prehistoric domestic and agricultural*

A well-preserved **rectilinear field system** (MCO21112, PRN 1927.09), with some of the character of a coaxial field system (generally of Middle Bronze Age date in Cornwall; Herring 2008). It is positioned on the higher northern slopes of Kerrow Downs in an area that was never farmed again, hence its good preservation, and appears to have been associated with a **settlement** (MCO21111; PRN 1927) of at least 8 quite **large roundhouses** (typically 7 to 8 m in diameter internally), most with substantial slabs forming inner and outer faces of stony walls. Some of the houses are integrated with the field boundaries, which are **stony banks** up to 1.5m wide and in places as high as 0.8m, with occasional upright slabs. It is likely that they were originally stock-proof, and that the agriculture practiced within them was mixed arable and grazing.

#### *Medieval*

A settlement called Kerrow located immediately to the SW of the PAL was recorded as early as 1356 (MCO15120). Its name is Cornish and is probably the plural of *ker*, 'fort, round'. No known fort lies nearby and it is possible that the name referred to the several substantial prehistoric roundhouses. Mapped as a Farm House by Thomas Martyn in 1748.

#### *Industrial*

There are well-defined remains of an **alluvial streamworks** (MCO24237, PRN 12691) with all three of Sandy Gerrard's Types represented: hatches, and cuesta and parallel

linear dumps. Drainage channels weave through the area of working and the river itself has been split into two courses, the northern one probably deliberately created to relieve drainage problems. The streamworks may be of several phases.

**Two tinner's buildings** were also noted, apparently associated with the alluvial streamworks. PRN12691.01 to the south of the streamworks is rectangular, approximately 3.1m by 1.8m internally, turf walled with banks to 0.6m high and a gap for a doorway at the north end of the east wall. PRN 12691.02, built into a parallel dump of an alluvial streamworks, is rectangular, measuring approximately 2.0m long by 1.1m wide internally. A door gap is at the south end of the west wall and there is a possible fireplace at the north end.

The well-preserved earthwork of a **leat** runs diagonally down across the gentler lower northern slope of the PAL to a ramped launder support a short way south of a 19<sup>th</sup> century **waterwheel pit** whose granite walls include stones split by tare-and-feather. The wheelpit is damaged at its southern end but is at least 7m long and 2.1m wide. The function of the waterwheel is unclear – there is no sign of a stamping mill or dressing floor, or a shaft that it might have pumped. It might have operated flatrods for barn machinery at one of the nearby farms.

Moorstones on the higher slopes of Kerrow Downs have been subjected to quite intensive **stone splitting**.

#### *Post-medieval and modern*

Delford Bridge is a fine early modern **clapper bridge** with five spans and strong rectangular piers with upstream cutwaters to the east, probably built in the 1870s to replace an earlier narrower packhorse bridge shown on Thomas Martyn's map of Cornwall of 1748 and depicted as a very narrow structure on the Blisland Tithe Map of 1840 (Berry 2007). It stands immediately downstream of a broad **ford**, from which the place is named.

There is a line of three **granite boundstones** curving around the northern crest of Kerrow Downs, from west to east MCO61720, MCO61726 and MCO61725. They have WH for Hayward, formerly Wallis on the northern sides and M for Molesworth on their southern sides so are property boundaries. They are shown as small circles linked by a chain line, depicting a property boundary on the 1840 Blisland Tithe Map, dividing 'Kerrow Down' (on the hill's summit) from 'Black Down'.

Two more **boundstones** stand just west downstream of Delford Bridge, MCO64138 and MCO61721 have H for Hayward and MX for Molesworth of Blisland manor (Langdon 2006; Moore 2024).

#### *Intangible cultural heritage*

Delford Bridge has been a locally popular picnicking and bathing spot for many decades.

#### *Significance of landscape visibility*

The platform cairn on the northern crest of the down appears to have been carefully placed to be seen skylined when approaching up the hill from the north. Platform cairns appear to have been especially important for viewing the wider landscape from and the views from this one, over the valley of the De Lank River and towards Rough Tor, were probably also significant in prehistory.

The intimate relationship of the roundhouses and the rectilinear fields their inhabitants probably created and farmed is significant, allowing people today to see how people over 3000 years ago lived in this marginal position.

The uneven ground of the alluvial streamworks with diversion channels and pools adds considerably to the beauty of the setting of Delford Bridge, whose sharp design is also attractive.

## Designations

### Historic Environment

#### *Scheduled Monuments*

There are no Scheduled Monuments.

#### *Heritage Assets assessed as being of National Importance*

This part of Bodmin Moor was not covered by the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP). The following sites were assessed as satisfying the criteria for National Importance using the criteria employed by the MPP and were therefore proposed as candidates for formal assessment for Scheduling during the Evaluation of Bodmin Moor (Rose and Herring 1990).

Following the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) these non-designated heritage assets are demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments. 'Substantial harm to or loss of [these] should be wholly exceptional' (NPPF, para 206).

Detail:

- A 14m diameter **platform cairn** (MCO 4456, PRN 1998) with a perimeter rim and a slight ditch.
- A **large circular turf mound**, probably a **barrow** (MCO 22708, PRN 3044)
- A well-preserved **rectilinear field system** (MCO21112, PRN 1927.09), with some of the character of a coaxial field system (generally of Middle Bronze Age date in Cornwall; Herring 2008). It is positioned on the higher northern slopes of Kerrow Downs in an area that was never farmed again, hence its good preservation, and appears to have been associated with a **settlement** (MCO21111; PRN 1927) of at least 8 quite **large roundhouses**.
- Well-defined remains of an **alluvial streamworks** (MCO24237, PRN 12691) to the east of Delford Bridge; includes a tinnens' building (MCO24239, PRN12691.01).
- **Tinnens' building**, MCO24238, PRN12691.01 to the south of the streamworks.

### Natural environment designations:

#### *Sites of Special Scientific Interest*

The whole of the PAL lies with the Bodmin Moor North SSSI.

#### *Special Areas of Conservation*

The streamworks lie within the River Camel Special Area of Conservation, ref UK0030056.

#### *Cornwall Conservation Areas*

NA

## Other designations

### *Common Land*

Part of Kerrow Downs CL184

### *CROW Access Land*

Yes, whole PAL.

### *Registered rights of way.*

None

### *Neighbourhood Development Plans*

Yes, Blisland, made in 2023.

## Historic Environment Action Plan

### Change between 2005 and 2025

(Overview derived from comparison of CCC 2005 aerial photography, available as a basemap on the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, and the Airbus 2025 satellite imagery as viewed from Google Earth aerial photos.)

- Significant increase in furze cover throughout, despite several campaigns of cutting it back (visible in the 20 years of aerial photography).
- Some of the furze is merging to create a close canopy, preventing livestock moving other than through narrow passages, causing erosion.
- Unfortunately, the worst growth is in the area of prehistoric roundhouses and fields.

## Issues

Spread of furze.

- Reducing the diversity of the ancient rough grasslands and their flora and fauna, including their invertebrates.
- Obscuring the more ephemeral archaeological remains.
- Will begin to cause erosion as vehicles and livestock are confined to ever narrower tracks.
- Encourage tick-borne diseases in livestock and wild fauna.



European furze rapidly covering much of the northern slope of Kerrow Downs (Dan Ratcliffe, January 2025).



*Roundhouse on western slopes shortly after removal; of furze cover (Pete Herring, May 2018). Unfortunately the furze has since returned and covers much of this slope.*



*Round house to E of summit; one of the more visible of the several here. The others overgrown with furze. (Pete Herring February 2025.)*

## Opportunities

To better guide grazing levels on the common by closer understanding of the flora and fauna of the ancient semi-natural grasslands.

## Recommendations

- Address the growth of furze on the roundhouse settlement and cairns at summit.
- Adjust grazing to push back the conversion to furze.

## Adjusting the extent of the PAL:

Extend along the De Lank River to Bradford to include the remainder of the alluvial streamworks, and bring in the Bradford fords and clapper bridges, etc.

## Other initiatives or suggestions

- Further archaeological recording of the roundhouses and cairns.
- Pursue the antiquity of the Black Pool.
- Pursue the function of the water wheel pit and its leat.
- In time, there will be a need for active removal of furze from areas known to have prehistoric and industrial remains.

## References

Berry, E, 2007 *Delford Bridge Archaeological Assessment*, Truro, HES

Langdon, A, 2006 *Blisland Commons Boundary Stone Project*, Blisland Commoners Association

Moore, P, 2024 *Bodmin Moor's Boundary Markers, a Legacy in Stone*, Peter Moore

## Appendix 1 2007 PAL text

### 6 Kerrow Downs

#### *Historic Environment*

Kerrow Downs is typical of the smaller areas of open moorland on Bodmin Moor, and is one of the most visited locations on the moor given the presence of Delford Bridge. The visual interaction of the sites on the brow of Kerrow Downs with the rest of the moor is very striking and unexpected.

The main features within this mini landscape are a settlement of eight round houses, a platform cairn and an associated field system. The round houses are scattered throughout the field system in a random arrangement (though most are located on the hill slope). They are largely circular in plan with internal diameters ranging from 6.0m to 7.0m. House walls survive as stony turf covered banks, with inner and outer facing slabs usually in situ. Entrances, where recognisable, tended to be in the south-eastern, down slope, quadrant.

The field system consists of sub-rectangular fields laid out in a grid pattern, with boundaries surviving as turf covered stony banks (with some upright stones) and stony lynchets. The area of ground in which this field system and settlement survive is relatively stone free although this is probably due to stone splitting and removal as there are numerous pits and stone splitting sites dotted across the hilltop.

To the north of the PAL, on the De Lank River, there are alluvial tin streamworks, representing all three identified types (hatches, ramped dumps and parallel dumps). Drainage channels weave through the area of working and the river itself has been split into two courses, the northern one of which was probably deliberately created to relieve drainage problems. The northern-most tip contains Delford Bridge, a postmedieval clapper bridge, and well known 'honey-pot' for visitors to Bodmin Moor.

#### *Natural Environment*

#### **Notified Features:-**

**Acid Grassland** – Bristle Bent grassland (U3 - *Agrostis curtisii* grassland), Bent-Fescue grassland (U4 - *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Galium saxatile* grassland), Mat Grass grassland (U5 - *Nardus stricta* - *Galium saxatile* grassland)

**Populations of nationally scarce butterflies** – Marsh Fritillary (*Eurodryas aurinia*), Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*).

**Butterflies which have experienced substantial declines** – Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*), Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*), Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*).

**Nationally rare and scarce dragonfly species** - Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*), Small red Damselfly (*Ceriagrion tenellum*).

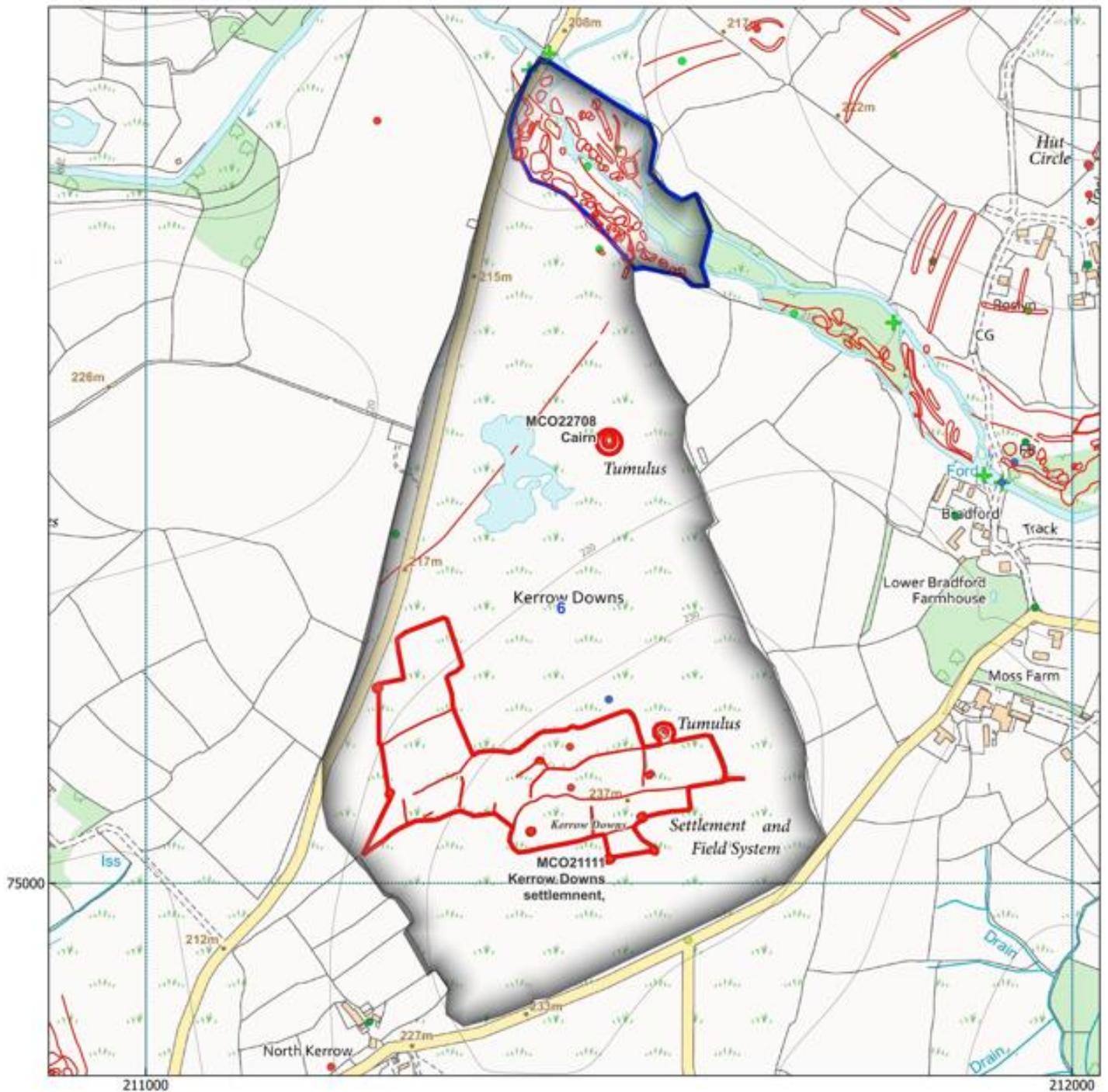
### **Outstanding Dragonfly Assemblage**

#### *Designations*

No current HE designations.

Bodmin Moor North SSSI (unit 24)

#### *Vision*



- 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: Western Heath Mosaic

Habitat Change: Considerable

Notes: Significant increase in furze cover throughout, despite several campaigns of cutting it back (visible in the 20 years of aerial photography)

Some of the furze is merging to create a close canopy, preventing livestock moving other than through narrow passages, causing erosion. Unfortunately, the worst growth is in the area of prehistoric roundhouses and fields

## PAL 6 Kerrow Downs

[www.statement-heritage.com](http://www.statement-heritage.com)

Cornwall Council

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