

STATES OF JERSEY



PLÉMONT HOLIDAY VILLAGE: GRANT TO NATIONAL TRUST FOR JERSEY

Lodged au Greffe on 3rd June 2014
by Senator Sir P.M. Bailhache

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to identify the appropriate means of funding a grant of £3.575 million to the National Trust for Jersey in order that the site known as the Plémont Holiday Village and adjoining land as identified on the drawing attached as Appendix 1 to this Report can be acquired for the benefit of the Island, subject to a condition that the National Trust for Jersey will thereafter demolish the former holiday camp and restore the coastal landscape to a natural state.

SENATOR SIR P.M. BAILHACHE

REPORT

Summary

The National Trust for Jersey (The Trust) has signed an option agreement with Plémont Estates Limited, which gives the Trust an opportunity to acquire the site known as the Plémont Holiday Village and adjoining land for £7.15 million. The Trust will provide half of the acquisition cost, plus approximately another £1 million to cover the costs of demolition and clearance, thereby providing a total of £4.575 million. The States are asked to agree to provide the balance of £3.575 million as a one-off payment to the Trust, on condition that the landscape will be restored to a natural state.

It is understood that the Minister for Treasury and Resources will provide comments in order to clarify whether the necessary funds might be made available for this purpose, and whether there would be any significant adverse impacts on other public funding priorities.

During previous considerations of this matter, there has always been a degree of uncertainty regarding the impact that planning decisions and other statutory processes might have upon costs, which in turn has resulted in a number of very close votes. States members are now presented with an opportunity to proceed in a way which removes this uncertainty by deciding upon a fixed one-off grant to the Trust, which will be used to secure this important part of our coastline for future generations of Islanders. A similar match-funding grant was afforded to the Trust in 1987 to secure the future of the historic buildings at Hamptonne.

Background

The future of Plémont has hung in the balance for many years. States members have debated, and often agreed, propositions relating to the acquisition of the headland at Plémont since 2006. However, uncertainty as to the cost of the land, particularly in the light of ongoing planning applications, and reservations regarding the use of compulsory purchase, led to a number of very close votes over recent years. When States members last considered this matter in December 2012 ([see P.90/2012](#)) the result was as close as it could have been, with 24 votes *Pour* and 25 votes *Contre*.

Following the approval of a planning application to build 28 homes in 3 clusters on the site in November 2012, a Planning Obligation Agreement was agreed and a permit issued in August 2013.

Many Islanders continue to oppose the plan to build houses and want the area to be returned to nature. In April 2014, the Royal Court decided that an appeal by parishioners of St. Ouen against the planning decision can proceed. It is understood that the case is not expected to be heard until September 2014.

If States members agree to this proposal, then the building would not take place and the Trust would acquire the site for the benefit of the Island. The Parish of St. Ouen would not need to pursue its appeal against the planning decision, and there would be a saving of legal costs both for the parish of St. Ouen and the Minister for Planning and the Environment.

Acquisition by the National Trust for Jersey

The agreement between the Trust and the present owners for the acquisition of the site removes the issues of uncertainty in relation to due process and value which have surrounded this matter for many years. In addition, the Trust has made a clear commitment to contribute towards the overall costs of acquiring the land, and to take responsibility for restoring it to nature for the benefit of the public, as well as its ongoing maintenance and management.

A copy of the letter from the Trust explaining the agreement that has been reached with the current landowners and the plans to return the site to nature is attached as **Appendix 2** to this Report.

Protecting our coastal environment

Plémont should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of the north coast environment running from Grosnez to Sorel and beyond. The north coast is of geological and archaeological importance, as well as being an outstandingly beautiful part of Jersey. Its beauty lies in its wildness and untainted character. However helpful the commitments made within the Planning Obligation Agreement, development on this site would have an inevitable negative impact on this area of the north coast.

The work which would be undertaken by The Trust to restore the land to nature is set out more fully in the Restoration Proposals attached at **Appendix 3**.

The photographs attached as **Appendix 4** give some indication of the expanse of unspoilt natural coast in which the Plémont land is situated.

Those continuing to protest against the development of Plémont come from all parts of the Island. The 'Line in the Sand' protest gathered 7,000 people to underline the point that the coastal landscape is special and should be protected. The petition signed by over 10,000 people made the same point, as well as the overwhelming support for the establishment of a Coastal National Park. Beyond our shores, the success of the Neptune Coastline Campaign in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in safeguarding nearly 750 miles of coastline is testimony to the immense public desire permanently to protect Britain's coastal landscape; and this is also reflected in the work of the *Conservatoire du Littoral* in France. The Parish of St. Ouen has continued the resistance to the development on behalf of all Islanders.

Once land has been developed, its natural state is almost always lost forever. The Trust has provided States members with an opportunity to respond to the continuing concerns of Islanders and to preserve Plémont as natural open space in perpetuity. The investment of public funds should be viewed in that context.

Statutory context

The land is in the Green Zone, on an exposed position of the north coast, and in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The original holiday camp was constructed before planning controls came into effect in 1945. The imperative to protect the Island's coastline has been included in every enactment relating to planning since controls were first introduced. It is included in Article 2 of the Planning and Building (Jersey)

Law 2002, which provides that one of the purposes of the Law is – “to ensure that the coast of Jersey is kept in its natural state”. But for the existence of the derelict former holiday camp, there would have been no question of any development taking place.

The Island Plan 2011

The Island Plan 2011 provides, at Policy NE7, that – “The areas designated as Green Zone on the Proposals Map will be given a high level of protection and there will be a general presumption against all forms of new development for whatever purpose.” The Plémont site is designated as Green Zone and is entitled under the Island Plan to “a high level of protection”.

Policy NE6 of the Island Plan provides that – “The Coastal National Park ... will be given the highest level of protection from development and this will be given priority over all other planning considerations. In this area there will be the strongest presumption against all forms of new development for whatever purpose.”. During the debate on the Island Plan 2011, the Assembly considered an amendment brought by Senator F. du H. Le Gresley which would have brought the Plémont site within the protection of the Coastal National Park. A number of States members expressed concern about the legal effect of such an amendment upon the planning application process, and as a result the vote was very close, with 23 *Pour* and 25 *Contre*.

If States members decide to support the Trust in acquiring the Plémont land, there seems no reason why it should not be added to the Coastal National Park.

The public purse

When this matter was considered by the Assembly in 2009, the then Chief Minister noted that, whilst the proposition identified the need for the States to agree an allocation of funds in excess of £5 million for the acquisition of the property, a more realistic assessment indicated the need for public funds in excess of £10 million (*see P.144/2009 Com.*). When the matter was considered again by the Assembly in 2012, the Minister for Treasury and Resources recommended that the sum of £5.5 million be allocated by the States to cover the costs of acquiring the site, with a net cost of £3.5 million following a proposed sale to the Trust for £2 million (*see P.90/2012 Com.*). The Minister for Treasury and Resources also noted that a higher figure could be agreed if a process of Compulsory Purchase were to be followed. The proposition noted that the maximum cost of acquisition was estimated at £8 million, with a maximum net cost to the States of £6 million.

The Trust has agreed with the current landowners a purchase price of £7.15 million. The Trust has committed to meeting half the costs of acquisition (£3.575 million) and has also committed to cover the costs of demolition and clearance (a further £1 million). If the States agree to support the acquisition of the Plémont land, then the majority of the overall cost will be met by members of the public contributing their donations, large and small, to the Trust. The States are being asked to consider a one-off contribution of £3.575 million to the Trust in order that this acquisition can proceed; a sum which is equal to the best case scenario considered in 2012 and which represents a considerable improvement for the public purse when compared to previous estimates.

Conclusion

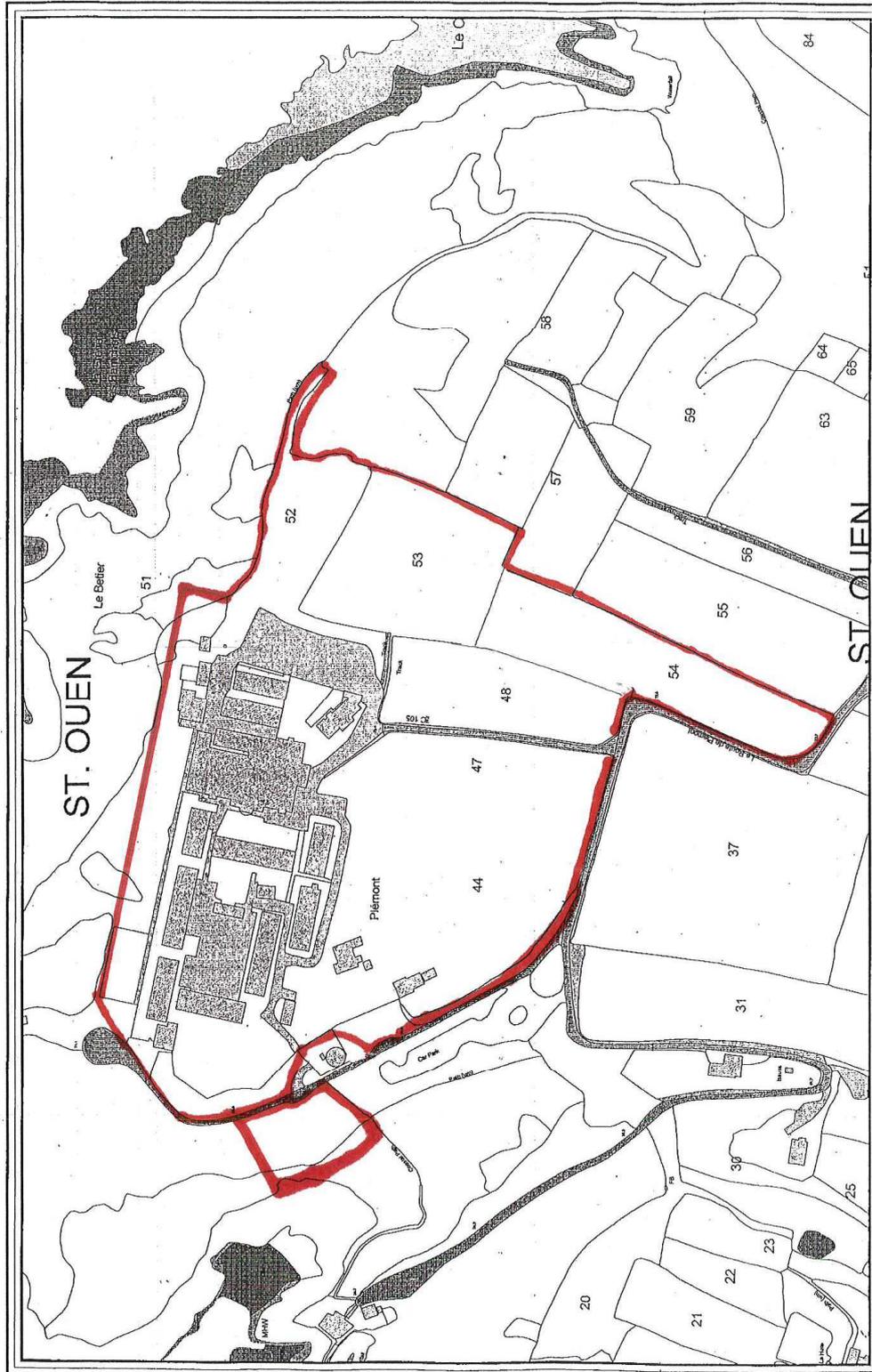
States members have agreed previously that, in principle, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Plémont Holiday Village and adjacent land should be restored to nature. The difficulty has always been the uncertainties surrounding the acquisition of the site and, in particular, the uncertainty regarding the cost to the public purse. The National Trust for Jersey and the owners of the site have now provided an opportunity for the States to support the acquisition of Plémont site which removes all such uncertainty, and which seeks to mitigate the cost to the public purse by contributions to be made by members of the public through their gifts to the Trust. I hope that States members will decide to respond to the ongoing concerns of Islanders by supporting the Trust and enabling the natural beauty of the Plémont north coast to be protected for ever and for everyone.

Financial and manpower implications

The Proposition would request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to identify the appropriate means of funding a fixed one-off grant of £3.575 million to the National Trust for Jersey, subject to the usual financial procedures and controls.

There are no manpower resource implications.

APPENDIX 1



Scale: 1:2500
Date: 29:05:14

Location Plan


States
of Jersey
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The National Trust for Jersey



15th May 2014

Senator Sir Philip Bailhache
Minister for External Relations
Chief Minister's Department
Cyril Le Marquand House
St Helier
Jersey JE4 8QT



Dear Sir Philip

Former Pontin's Holiday Camp, Plémont

As you are aware The National Trust for Jersey has recently entered into an option agreement with Plémont Estates Limited to purchase the former Pontin's holiday camp at Plémont for the sum of £7.15m. This is a wonderful opportunity to safeguard this area of coastline for ever and for everyone and through the generosity and foresight of our supporters we have managed to secure pledges of £3.5m towards the acquisition costs.

We would therefore like to invite the States of Jersey to support us in our endeavours permanently to protect the Plémont headland by agreeing to provide the Trust with pound for pound match funding for the purchase cost of the site, as occurred when we worked together to secure the historic buildings at Hamptonne. Should such a grant be made available the Trust would also cover the whole of the costs for removal of the derelict buildings as well as restoring the land to maritime heathland. We have received further pledges towards the demolition costs and envisage that, with the assistance of the Department of Environment, the Trust could potentially commence the demolition works later this autumn, so that the site would be completely cleared during the course of 2015.

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

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Coastline Campaign Website www.coast.je

We fully appreciate that such a grant is a considerable request, but we hope that States members will take into account that on this occasion we have a willing vendor, and that the grant in question is for the fixed amount of £ 3.575m. Hopefully this adequately addresses the concerns raised when the issue was previously debated in December 2012. Without doubt the opportunity to safeguard Plémont is now fully within our grasp and we wholeheartedly hope that States members will join us in our efforts to protect, restore and enhance a truly significant part of our wonderful coastline.

Yours sincerely



Celia L. Jeune
President of The National Trust for Jersey

Plémont Headland Restoration Proposals

This report outlines the National Trust for Jersey's broad restoration proposal for the Plémont Headland.

Context

The site lies in the north-west of Jersey in an area of outstanding beauty, bordering the Coastal National Park and within close proximity to Les Landes ecological SSI. Plant communities in the area immediately adjacent to the former holiday camp include species that commonly occur in Atlantic Heath Ecosystems, a priority habitat for conservation within the European Union. Faunal communities in the vicinity include many rare and important species such as Atlantic Puffins, Swifts, Stonechats and Green Lizards.

The Trust's overarching vision for Plémont is to:

- 1) **Restore** the skyline, by demolishing and removing the former holiday village buildings.
- 2) **Create** natural habitats on the site of the former holiday village consistent with vegetation communities found in the north west of Jersey.
- 3) **Enhance** the ecological value of habitats at Plémont and its surrounding area, by implementing a programme of conservation and land management works.
- 4) **Improve** public access and visitor facilities at Plémont.
- 5) **Engage** and involve the local community in the restoration process.

Details of how the National Trust would achieve these broad objectives are specified as follows:

1) Demolition and Site Clearance

The project will commence with the demolition of all the holiday village buildings, including in so far as practically possible their foundations. In addition, hard surface areas such as the tennis court, car parks, roads and site amenity areas will be lifted and cleared from site.

Once these works have been completed the ground will be landscaped to form an open terrain with occasional gentle undulations, as is typical of lowland heath. Landscaping works would largely be confined to the demolition area, as it is viewed that the grasslands immediately in front of this zone require little by way of modification.

It is known that a large population of Brown Rats are present in and around the holiday village buildings, as well as dwelling within the banks and hedgerows adjacent to the site. Demolition would force these rats into the surrounding countryside, negatively impacting upon wildlife, and so a rat eradication programme would be implemented during the demolition phase.

2) **Habitat Restoration**

At Nagoya, Japan, a new UN global strategy and vision for biodiversity was agreed, setting targets and objectives for 2020 and 2050 respectively. The United Kingdom and Jersey are signatories to this agreement and one of the commitments is that:

‘By 2020 measures will be put in place, so that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, further degradation has been halted and where possible, restoration is underway, helping develop more resilient and coherent ecological networks, healthy and functioning ecosystems, which deliver multiple benefits for wildlife and people.’

The restoration of the Plémont site and its surrounding environment would provide a wonderful opportunity for the Island to demonstrate its commitment to this UN Agreement and to be seen to be leading the way on the international stage with this initiative.

The Trust’s restoration strategy at Plémont is two-fold:

- 1) Habitat restoration and creation at the former holiday village site.
- 2) Habitat restoration of the Plémont headland and adjacent coastline.

Restoration of Land Occupied by the Holiday Village

As far as practically possible the Trust will strive to restore this land to species-rich heathland.

Being able to achieve this depends on the nature and characteristics of the underlying soil, a factor that is presently unknown. Post-acquisition, a comprehensive soil survey would be undertaken to establish this information, in order to develop the working restoration plan.

Dependent on the results of the soil survey, the two management options are as follows:

Objective 1) Species-Rich Heath

Species-rich heath is a vegetation community dominated by dwarf shrub plant communities such as Heather, Western Gorse and Broom. It is a very important habitat for a wide range of animal and bird species, including Dartford Warblers, Green Lizards and Yellowhammers. An example of a species-rich habitat is found at Les Landes.

This objective is our preferred option and could be achieved if soil conditions prove to be favourable after the site clearance. For example, if the soil is of sufficient depth, with an appropriate PH and possessing low nutrient values.

Management works to achieve this objective could include:

- Covering 50–70% of the ground with a biodegradable geotextile called geojute that is designed to keep soil in place.
- Allowing natural re-colonisation of heath plant communities over 60–80% of the site. It is believed that this approach is feasible as the seed bank may still be active below the built area and as the site lies within close proximity to other heathland areas.
- Direct sowing of heather/gorse on 20–40% of site from seed harvested from elsewhere on the Island, to establish pockets of dwarf shrub heath.
- Planting out thickets of gorse scrub to create bird friendly habitat.
- Planting out copses of native trees tolerant to the environmental conditions on the periphery of the site.
- Initiation of a species and habitat monitoring programme.
- Aftercare land management to ensure that the regeneration programme proceeds as planned.
- Phased control measures to protect young plant communities from being grazed out by rabbits. This would involve temporary enclosures similar to the Skylark safety zones at Les Landes or at Les Blanches Banques.

Objective 2) Patchy Heathland and Calcareous Grassland

Should soil conditions prove unsuitable for heathland regeneration because of high alkalinity or nutrient levels, then the Trust would undertake management measures to change the soil characteristics in an attempt to achieve objective one.

However, should there be insufficient soil on site after the clearance of the buildings, then it would obviously prove more problematic to create a species-rich heath across the entire site. This could be addressed by importing soil onto the site, but this would involve the potential transportation of several hundred thousand tonnes of soil across the Island. In addition, the majority of topsoil is unsuitable for heathland creation as it is often highly disturbed, eutrophicated and full of undesirable plant fragments and seed.

There may be small volumes of suitable soil available from future development sites, but it would probably take several years, if not decades, to secure the necessary quantities. However, this is something that the Trust could explore with the Department of Environment in due course.

Should it prove unfeasible to import soil, a more pragmatic solution may be to re-evaluate the restoration objectives for the site. The Trust would suggest that an alternative option would be to create a habitat comprising patchy heath, with areas of calcareous plant species and a higher percentage of gorse scrub. Such a habitat type would still be in keeping with the landscape and would be of high value to wildlife. Management works to achieve this objective would be largely similar to those as outlined above, for species-rich heath.

Holiday Village Grassland Management

The holiday village site also contains semi-natural habitat outside of the demolition zone. Notably there is a significant area of grassland comprising Fields O47 and O48 located to the south of the current development. Contrary to the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted by Plémont Estates Ltd., the Trust considers this to be an interesting and moderately diverse area of grassland. There are no plans to greatly alter this grassland, except to re-landscape the periphery so that it better blends into the proposed adjacent heath. Our plan would be to introduce grazing into this area to bring a fair proportion of this land back into agricultural usage, as well as help ameliorate the quality of the grassland vegetation communities.

3) Ecological Enhancement of Plémont Headland and Adjacent Coastline

The Trust believes that the restoration of this part of the coastline should not be viewed in isolation, but should also include the restoration of habitats in the surrounding area, thereby creating a sizeable conservation area for both wildlife and public enjoyment. It is the Trust's belief that such an approach is crucial to the long-term success and future management of the Island's Coastal National Park.

The Trust would therefore hope to form a management partnership with the Environment Department to consolidate resources and expertise in a combined effort to enhance the area as a whole in a more cohesive and comprehensive manner.

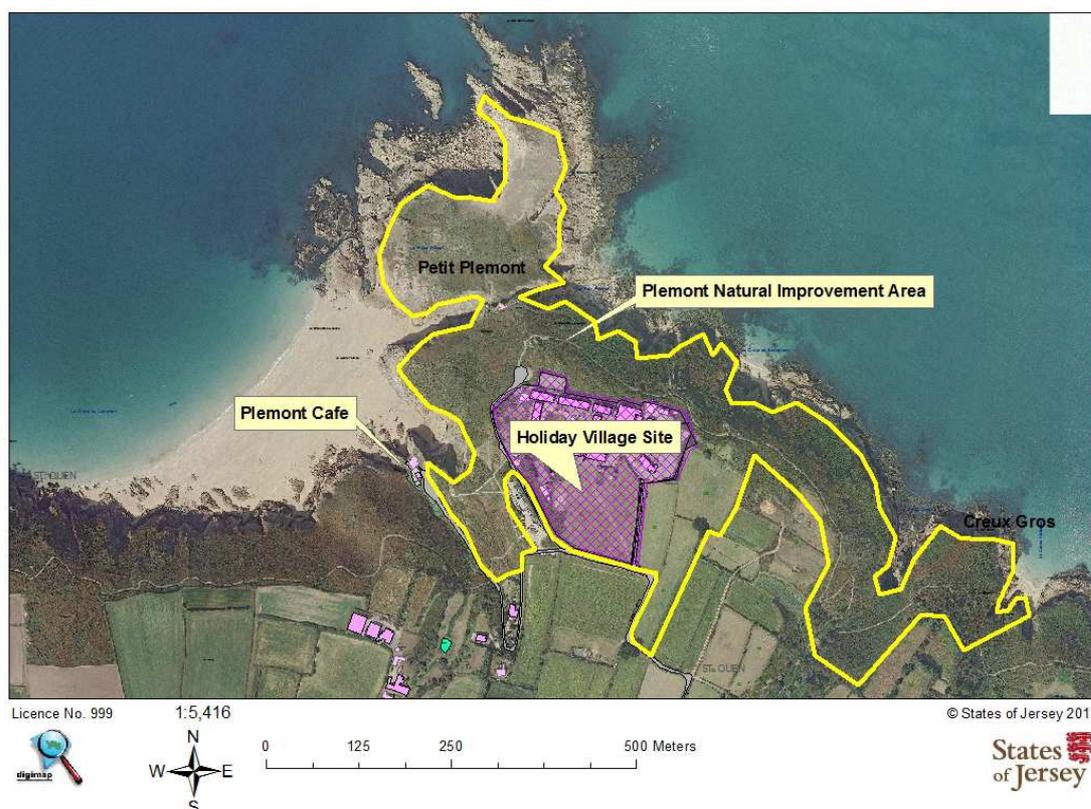


Figure 1. Map showing the extent of the natural improvement area.

Our conservation management aims would be:

- **Enhance Biodiversity and Agricultural Diversity**

To increase biodiversity and to enhance the quality of natural habitats in the area, the Trust would seek to implement land management measures that would centre on the introduction of a conservation grazing scheme.

In 2008 the Trust initiated such a scheme on similar terrain between Sorel Point and Devil's Hole. Four years on, the Sorel site is now grazed by a flock of over 100 multi-horned Manx Loaghtan sheep, a breed of sheep that is perfectly adapted to grazing on such tough terrain. To date, the sheep have had a very positive impact on the environmental quality of the landscape, with a significant increase in species-rich grassland and a welcome reduction in bracken coverage.



Figure 2. Sheep grazing the cliffs by Devil's Hole

Of course the introduction of extensive livestock grazing to coastal land is not just about conservation, because it also has the benefit of encouraging agricultural diversity and finding a feasible usage for some of the Island's poorer, low-grade land. The scheme also has high environmental credentials as there is no need for expensive fertilisers and agricultural pesticides to be applied to the land, and the by-products are high quality meat and wool, which can be sold locally.

Initial scoping of Plémont and its surrounding area suggests that this location would be a suitable location for such a grazing scheme. Grazing would expand the area of grassland on site, which in the long run would provide nesting and feeding habitat for a variety of sea and farmland birds.

Initially grazing could take place along the coastal fringe below the existing holiday village. In time, vegetation will re-establish on the site of the former holiday camp and then this could also fall into the grazing fold.

4) Public Access and Interpretation

Should the Trust acquire Plémont, it would also seek to improve visitor access to both the former holiday village site and also the wider Plémont area.

This would include:

Parking

During the summer season, there is insufficient parking to cope with visitor numbers. The Trust would liaise with the Parish of St. Ouen, the Environment Department and Transport and Technical Services regarding the expansion of the larger public car park to the West of the holiday village.

This could be achieved by closing the small informal car park to the north-west of the holiday village and returning this land back to nature. The closure of this small car park would make the Parish Road and track leading to it redundant, potentially allowing the road to become incorporated into the larger car park. It would therefore be our intention to submit such a proposal to the Parish of St. Ouen for their consideration and consultation.

The borders of the larger car park can also be squared off to increase its capacity.

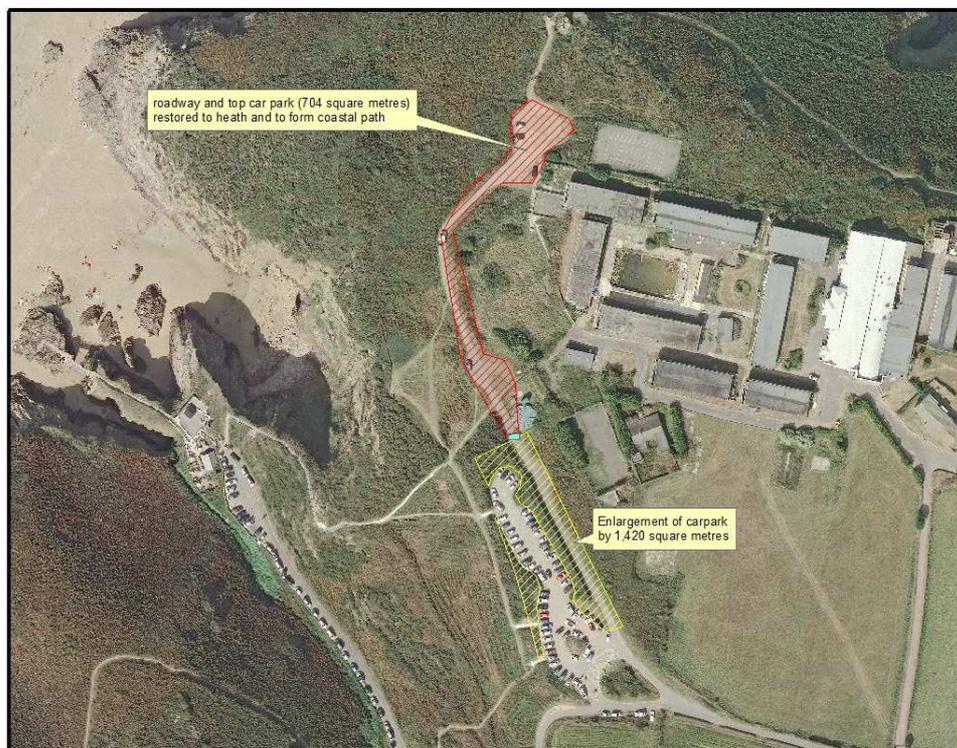


Figure 4. Parking Management Measures

Public Access

- Once the building site has been made safe, a new footpath will be constructed leading from the States of Jersey car park around the southern edge of the site, before linking up with the coastal path.
- Further footpaths through the former holiday village may be created subsequent to the restoration of heath species.
- Post-demolition, the Parish road leading through the holiday village entrance could be converted into another use if the Parish felt that this was feasible. The Trust would liaise with the Parish of St. Ouen and the Department of Environment to explore whether it would be viable to construct a bridle or mountain bike trail along this coastline, possibly between Les Landes and Grève de Lecq.

Site Interpretation

- A feasibility study will be instigated regarding the potential to convert the existing German Bunker into a public interpretation gallery and coastal viewing point. Such a centre could provide information on the Coastal National Park and its ecology. This observation gallery would also serve as a viewing point over the sea bird colony for wildlife naturalists.

In recent years the National Trust has undertaken improvement works at Devil's Hole. The key management objectives for this project were to soften the impact of the access footpath and safety fencing, to provide low-impact visitor viewing points and to offer site interpretation. It is our view that as a result of these works, the visitor attraction has been enhanced, whilst at the same time its aesthetic impact has been reduced upon the surrounding coastline. This project demonstrates that public interpretation can be provided at sensitive locations without significantly adversely impacting upon the landscape.



Figure 5 and 6. Before and after shots showing visitor improvement works at Devil's Hole

In 2013 The National Trust installed a people-counter at the start of the trail leading down to Devil's Hole. It has been recorded that more than 30,000 people have visited the site in the past 12 months, clearly demonstrating the appeal of Jersey's North Coast.

5) Community Engagement

Given the public investment in purchasing the site, the Trust would like to develop a policy of community engagement. This might entail:

- A programme of conservation tasks aimed at different users groups including the general public, schools, corporate and other community groups assisting with jobs such as:
 - invasive species control
 - hedge and shrub planting
 - weed management
 - habitat management
 - fence erection
 - species surveying and monitoring
- Raising awareness on management and biodiversity issues through a series of guided walks and educational activities



Figure 7. An example of a heathland restoration scheme whereby the old A3 road near Hindhead, Surrey was returned to nature. The picture above shows school-children getting involved with the restoration process by sowing heather seed along the route of the former road.

Examples of Heathland restoration on a former Derelict Site

In the UK there are several examples of restoration projects whereby derelict buildings and hard surfaced areas have been returned to heathland. The most significant of these is the restoration of the former military base at Greenham Common. Information on this project is shown in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

The Restoration of Greenham Common



Concrete Removal

Work to remove the runways and hard standing on the Common started in April 1995. Over 1 million tonnes of material, mostly concrete and tarmac, were broken up, recycled from site and sold. The revenue from the sale of materials is being used to help fund the restoration of the open areas to heathland and the demolition of the disused buildings and fuel installations.



Heather Spreading

A programme of spreading heather seed has also been undertaken in areas where concrete has been removed, and the regeneration of heather has so far proved extremely successful. Further seed spreading is continuing. Heather and gorse on the Common are now being mowed in a rotating cycle lasting several years. The rampant spreading bracken is also being kept under control by spraying with Asulox, a fern specific herbicide.



Bioremediation

Funding also helped to clean up fuel contamination with a bioremediation process. This contamination resulted from 60 years of aviation fuel storage in large (and progressively leaky) underground tanks at over 25 sites around the perimeter of the Common. Bioremediation is a process whereby natural fuel degrading bacteria are sprayed onto the contaminated soil. This avoids the use of chemicals and solves the problem in a natural way

This innovative process was developed especially for the site and worked successfully at the fuel depot sites where it was used. This resulted in large-scale excavations with 'biopiles' of contaminated material undergoing treatment. The bioremediation process was completed by 2003.



The demolition of the disused buildings and fuel installations began in September 1997. There is a proposal to keep the fuel depot located at the far eastern end of the site as a feature. The centre cross of the main runway, the control tower and the fire-fighting plane are also being kept as mementos. It is also hoped that at some stage in the future the control tower can be made into a visitor centre where people can learn about the varied wildlife on the Common.



Open to the Public

The opening of the Common started in September 1997 with a small section at the western end. The perimeter security fence was removed and replaced by a stock proof fence and ditch with suitably located public access points. Cattle were introduced onto the Common in May 1999, and their grazing will help to maintain the heathland. The final areas were opened to the public in May 2000. At long last local people and visitors can enjoy Greenham Common once again.

Buildings

This information has been taken from the Greenham Common Trust website:

<http://www.greenham-common-trust.co.uk/the-common/restoration>



