

**Natural England**

**HEATH Project**  
**Tourism Deliverables**

**A Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism  
and Heathlands in Cornwall.**

*This Strategic Plan builds on the Integrated Visitor Management Plan and investigates the possible linkages that can be incorporated with HEATH as a component of visitor experiences.*

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Tourism is central to Cornwall's economy; however, more can be done to strengthen the viability and sustainability of tourism in the area and its ability to deliver year round benefits to the local economy and society. In addition many people agree that it is the quality of the landscape that underlies the reason for most visits, yet tourism has the potential to damage the very natural assets on which the industry depends. A strategic plan for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall is needed to provide an agreed framework within which the HEATH project team and its partners, both public and private sector, can collaborate to ensure the successful development and management of visitors to heath sites in Cornwall.

This strategic management plan builds on the integrated visitor management plan to help Natural England and the HEATH team identify how best to promote heath sites in Cornwall. It will ensure that there is an appropriate, co-ordinated and systematic approach to heath product development, visitor management and marketing, that involves all key stakeholders. The strategic plan is based upon an integrated approach to developing tourism in a way that balances the interests of the community and protects the environment and will help Natural England, the HEATH team and site managers understand the wider destination visitor management issues and establish a strategic framework and plan for heathlands in Cornwall.

## Method

This Strategy is based on a multi-stakeholder analysis; opinion gained from a process of local consultations, semi structured interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires, as well as a thorough review of relevant local, regional and national reports and surveys. The strategy builds on and pulls together the 3 other tourism deliverables carried out by CoaST for the HEATH project: the visitor payback report; sustainable transport report and the integrated visitor management plan.

## Opportunities & Challenges for Heathland Tourism

At present some heath sites in Cornwall are well visited by local community members and/or visitors, others are under used and have the potential to entice greater numbers, while some sites feel like they are bursting at the seams at certain peak times. Building on interest in the natural environment, the variation in the nature of heath sites in Cornwall, and the plethora of recreational activities that can be participated in at heath sites, many opportunities exist to drive forward heathland tourism in Cornwall. These include: building on and incorporating heath into the 'brand clusters' and 'experience themes' SW Tourism have identified in their strategy; using the assessment criteria of the Green Tourism Business Scheme as a lure to share more information with businesses and visitors; integrating the HEATH project work into the strategic plan for Cornwall to achieve the

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for its AONB; as well as building on local projects and initiatives that have stemmed from the HEATH project work CoaST has been delivering.

Despite the fact that there is already much literature in circulation about many of the individual heath sites in Cornwall (literature produced by conservation organisations; National Trust leaflets, Natural England leaflets, Cornwall Wildlife Trust Leaflets etc.), this research has found that heathlands are not well recognised by visitors, locals, business or marketing bodies. This presents a serious challenge for the HEATH project. A challenge that is compounded by the fact that no mechanism for communication currently exists between site conservation managers, or the environment organisations they represent, and local, county and regional marketing bodies. This is presenting some serious destination management issues, as marketing messages about the natural environment, that are not coming from conservation organisations, often clash with conservation management efforts. This is one of the biggest challenges identified in driving forward effective management and marketing of heathlands in Cornwall.

Interviews and feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders has suggested that the most effective way to integrate heath into the wider marketing message of Cornwall, could be to build on the Wealth of Wildlife Guide, produced by the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative, which breaks Cornwall into 7 habitat types, of which one is the heath environment, so that all visitor interfacing information about the natural environment builds on these 7 habitats to reinforce a consistent and concise message to educate visitors about the natural environment of Cornwall. These guides have been well received by businesses and visitors in Cornwall and many are keen to build on the bite size portions of information the guide provides. It is suggested that any future marketing of the natural environment in Cornwall builds on this 7 habitat format so that projects and organisations working with the environment can link into a marketing structure to feed through environmental information about each habitat; information about new projects that need promoting like the HEATH project; areas/issues of concern; sites/species that need de-marketing to avoid degradation or destruction; sites/species that can support more intensive marketing etc.

Building on this 7 habitat format would also provide site managers and the environment organisations they represent the opportunity to develop communication channels and links between those responsible for different sites, or with other organisations and projects responsible for different habitat areas. This could help ensure efforts to look after and protect each habitat type are complementary. In turn this would ensure that the messages being fed to SW Tourism and VisitCornwall or other marketing bodies would be consistent and balanced. It could also provide an opportunity for a group to be established representing the 7 habitat types, to work together on a range of projects to help educate and guide visitors around the environment of Cornwall in a more integrated, sustainable way.

## Strategic Aims and Objectives

Examining Natural England's strategic outcomes, the HEATH projects tourism deliverables and the targets that the Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan 2004 has, a set of key aims can be highlighted for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall:

1. To protect and gain value from the natural environment and cultural heritage of heathland in Cornwall.
2. To increase the economic and social benefits from heathland tourism.
3. To protect and improve the quality of life of local people.

The aspirations of local stakeholders for sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall have been reviewed and in light of this, an overall approach and direction for sustainable tourism is considered in a vision and set of strategic aims:

### **A Vision for Sustainable Tourism to Heathlands in Cornwall**

*"By 2015, heathlands in Cornwall will be distinguished by the way in which visitors' enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the heath environment and heath sites are making a positive contribution to the economic and social well-being of those who live and work there. The HEATH project in Cornwall will be regarded as a beacon for its leadership of the successful management and promotion of sustainable tourism in partnership with others."*

The following strategic aims define the approach:

1. For all those involved with tourism management and marketing around heath sites in Cornwall to be engaged with their development, management and marketing.
2. For identified heath sites in Cornwall to be recognised as sustainable tourism destinations, promoted in partnership by all those involved with tourism service delivery in the wider area.
3. For experiences of the highest quality to exceed visitor expectations – particularly in terms of interpretation of the heathland landscape.
4. For visitor products to enable discovery and exploration of the special qualities of heath sites in Cornwall.
5. For people to develop a greater understanding of, and respect for, the natural, cultural and built environment of heath sites in Cornwall.

6. For the natural, cultural and historic environment of heath sites in Cornwall to be protected and enhanced, strengthening support for this wherever possible through tourism.
7. For the tourism industry to identify new opportunities for tourism to deliver economic benefit to heathland conservation management.
8. For good quality visitor information about the heathland environment to be readily available in and around Cornwall.
9. For heathland tourism to support the quality of life of local communities, with opportunities for them to play a part in the creation and delivery of tourism experiences and visitor services.
10. For the movement of visitors to, in and around heath sites in Cornwall to have the least possible adverse impact on communities and the environment.
11. For heathland visitor management decisions to be well informed by accurate and current data.

It is important to highlight that Natural England has been created at a time of growing concern over the use of the world's natural resources. The use of England's natural resources for food and energy production, transport and housing is already putting great pressure on the natural environment. Climate change is adding both urgency and scale to what needs to be done. The challenge of Peak Oil will involve a forced and rapid transformation in the energy system on which our societies and lives depend (Heinberg, 2006); this will dramatically change how people understand, utilise, interact and access the natural landscape. This strategic plan for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall, strives to keep this in mind to ensure that any framework planned for the future takes the issues of the day into consideration, while offering the flexibility to adapt in these times of rapid change.

## Acronyms

AONB.....	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAPs.....	Biodiversity Action Plans
CDMO.....	Cornwall Destination Management Organisation
CoaST.....	Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project
CTF.....	Cornwall Tourism Federation
CWT.....	Cornwall Wildlife Trust
DEFRA.....	Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
EN.....	English Nature
Europarc Charter.....	European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
LNR.....	Local Nature Reserve
NNR.....	National Nature Reserve
NT.....	National Trust
SSSI.....	Site of Special Scientific Interest
VC.....	Visitor Charter

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Natural England's Strategic Direction

Natural England's Strategic Direction 2006-2009 states that it is here to *'conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the well being and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.'*

Natural England has therefore been charged with four strategic outcomes:

- England's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced.
- More people enjoying, understanding and acting to improve the natural environment, more often.
- More sustainable use and management of the natural environment.
- A secure environmental future.

These outcomes highlight that people, as well as the environment, are now at the heart of conservation efforts. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 sets Natural England a new purpose: *'to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development'*. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly team of Natural England strive to carry out these strategic aims by engaging with the big social and economic issues of the day, to show how a healthy natural environment is part of the solution and then working in partnership with owners and occupiers of SSSIs, through direct management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and through strategic partnerships and projects with others.

It is important to highlight that Natural England has been created at a time of growing concern over the use of the world's natural resources. The use of England's natural resources for food and energy production, transport and housing is already putting great pressure on the natural environment. Climate change is adding both urgency and scale to what needs to be done. The challenge of Peak Oil will involve a forced and rapid transformation in the energy system on which our societies and lives depend (Heinberg, 2006); this will dramatically change how people understand, utilise, interact and access the natural landscape. This strategic plan for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall, strives to keep this in mind to ensure that any framework planned for the future takes the issues of the day into consideration, while offering the flexibility to adapt in these times of rapid change.

## 1.2 The HEATH Project

The Cornwall HEATH is a ground-breaking and innovative project that aims to restore the ancient heath landscapes of West Cornwall and develop European partnerships to demonstrate sustainable landscape management and related spatial planning mechanisms across NW Europe. It will do this by developing demonstration sites of good heathland management practice in Cornwall that will inform key audiences, and enable them to access a range of practical processes and ideas.

In conjunction, a strong emphasis has been placed on identifying and re-connecting communities with the economic linkages associated with heathland through niche markets and tourism. With many local communities identifying heathland as an important environmental resource, communication is focused on showcasing to communities the economic and social benefits of protecting and marketing their heathland landscapes.

The HEATH project therefore has a significant tourism element and a number of deliverables that examine the socio and economic connection the environment, specifically the heath, has with tourism. Specifically:

- a strategic plan for tourism and heathlands (Action 4.6)

## 1.3 Why a strategic plan for tourism and heathlands in Cornwall?

People have lost all links with the heath landscape. We have become an industrialised, urban nation which has resulted in almost a complete loss of skills, understanding and community awareness of the importance of the heath environment. The aim of this strategic plan is to develop a framework to help reconnect people to the heath, to create a bridge between nature and local people and to promote better understanding of the heath environment. This strategic plan will highlight an effective way to inform the tourism industry in Cornwall of the economic, social and environmental benefits of conserving the heath landscape; demonstrate how the tourism industry and local businesses can get involved in conservation efforts; and provide direction as to how best to help the tourism industry, local communities and businesses communicate positive message about the heath landscape to visitors. As the Heathland Centre in West Norway highlights:

*“An important targeting group for more information [about heath] is the tourist industry and organisations. They have always had the advantage that their attractions have been surrounded by well managed cultural landscapes. This is about to change today. In order to avoid a further deterioration of the situation, it will be beneficial for the tourist industry to involve themselves in maintaining the landscape qualities. This is the main perspective of the new trend in geotourism.”* [It is worth noting here that 'geotourism' is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents (Tourtelot, 2003).] *“By giving these*

aspects more attention, and by focusing stronger on this in the marketing of destinations, tourism can provide important contributions to the safeguarding of traditional, cultural landscapes like heathlands. In addition the tourist business is important for the promotion of local food products e.g. from the heathlands" (Kvamme, Kaland & Brekke 2004).

Tourism is central to Cornwall's economy; however, more can be done to strengthen the viability and sustainability of tourism in the area and its ability to deliver year round benefits to the local economy and society. In addition many people agree that it is the quality of the landscape that underlies the reason for most visits, yet tourism has the potential to damage the very natural assets on which the industry depends. A strategy is needed to provide an agreed framework within which the HEATH project team and its partners, both public and private sector, can collaborate to ensure the successful development and management of sustainable tourism to heath sites in Cornwall. This strategic plan will help ensure that there is an appropriate, coordinated and systematic approach to heath product development, visitor management and marketing, that involves all key stakeholders. The strategic plan is based upon an integrated approach to developing tourism in a way that balances the interests of the community and protects the environment.

Although this is primarily a strategic plan for sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall, it cannot be delivered in isolation of tourism activity across a wider area of influence. The specific geography of heath site boundaries has little direct bearing on either the visitor experience or their perceptions of the destination environment. Consequently, it is essential that tourism to heath sites and heath product development is closely aligned with the wider environment and integrated into the wider marketing and management of Cornwall as a destination. It is also essential that this strategic plan fits alongside and within a hierarchy of national and regional tourism strategies, as well as with plans and policies for economic development, environmental management and cultural renaissance. There are, for example, significant common elements between the tourism deliverables within the HEATH project and the terms of reference within The Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan 2004 (CTFSAP 2004).

#### **1.4 Putting sustainable tourism at the heart of the strategic plan.**

Sustainability is the key principle of Natural England's work. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; this is clearly reflected in Natural England's Strategic Direction 2006-2009. It is important that this direction is reflected in this strategic plan and that sustainability is embedded to guide the strategic direction of heathland tourism planning and development. This document is therefore 'A strategic plan for **sustainable tourism** and heathlands in Cornwall'.

Sustainable tourism in this context is tourism that takes account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Making tourism to heathlands more sustainable means taking these impacts and needs more fully into account, in the planning, development and operation of tourism to heath sites. It is a continual process.

CoaST has been working across Cornwall in partnership on sustainable tourism issues with local, regional and national statutory, non-statutory, community and private sector bodies for the last 4 years. CoaST currently runs a number of specific initiatives, besides supporting and advising businesses, community groups and strategic bodies, and operates a county-wide network of over 1,000 members. For CoaST, successful sustainable tourism in relation to Cornwall's heathlands means increasing the opportunity for people to access and experience the heathlands natural and built environment in ways that minimise negative impacts on that environment and provide positive economic and social benefits to surrounding local communities.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 This report considers the following areas:

- The production of a plan and identity that will fit with the culture of the localised site/community but mesh with SW Tourism's brand cluster (Close to Nature) to ensure a more integrated marketing approach for the heathland sites to pull together the landscape specific, visitor management plans. This will guide the heathland landscape into a format that can then be effectively communicated to visitors.
- The identification of the heathland visitor demographic as well as mechanisms through which to engage with them.
- A brief review of visitor experiences at the selected landscape sites within the tourism 'hub' – this will look at the current perception of visitor experiences at sites within the project, identifying things that are particularly successful and those things which can be improved.
- An exploration of how best to integrate the heath landscape, particularly the cultural and archaeological aspects, within existing tourism planning and industry developments to capture a slice of the market.
- An understanding of how best to engage with local communities in and around the heathlands to engage and raise awareness within local communities around the economic and cultural importance of the heath landscape. Mechanisms to be identified as to how this can be delivered.
- An outline of an effective public communication, interpretation and engagement strategy to promote education and awareness of the heathland landscape to communicate the message of landscape promotion. Working with English Nature to incorporate, for example, how the heathland worked with the clean fields (Green areas) as part of the overall farm, and how this changed from Neolithic to modern day. Exploration of different media forms and associated costs.
- An outline of a site specific Visitor Charter (VC) based on a Cornwall wide template, tailored to the heath landscape. The VC will encourage more prudent use of resources and increase understanding of and respect for local diversity, distinctiveness and culture. This VC will build on the existing "visitor charter" developed by CoaST and recently integrated into the mainstream tourism website

portal for Cornwall. It suggests 5 ways in which visitors can behave most effectively to have positive impact, and would be modified to reflect the heath characteristics. This would also fit into the Future Footprints programme currently being run by Sustainability South West, on which steering group CoaST sits.

- An outline of a model for a welcome pack that could be distributed to TIC's and businesses in or near the represented landscape heathland; giving detailed information about the distinct but fragmented landscape, the biodiversity of the heathland as well as inspiring activity in the heathland. The model could then be tailored to specific geographic locations such as The Lizard Peninsula and West Penwith. Also to incorporate Visitor Charter (See Above), countryside codes etc.
- The identification of existing resources to initiate delivery of the strategic management plan.

## **2.2 Data Collection**

This Strategy is based on a multi-stakeholder analysis; opinion gained from a process of local consultations, semi structured interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires, as well as a thorough review of relevant local, regional and national reports and surveys . The strategy builds on and pulls together the 3 other tourism deliverables carried out by CoaST for the HEATH project; the visitor payback report; sustainable transport report and the integrated visitor management plan.

The key stages in these assessments included:

- A series of site visits.
- Meetings and interviews with HEATH project staff and site managers.
- Meetings/consultations with individuals, tourism businesses and organizations linked to the heath landscape in any way.
- An online survey of 112 tourism enterprises and individuals within and around the heath landscape to enquire about the perception, understanding and use of heath sites in Cornwall to draw out key issues, opportunities and trends.
- Semi-structured face to face interviews carried out with CoaST members, agency representatives, businesses not already part of the CoaST network and visitors.
- Any opportunity to discuss the heath landscape was grasped (i.e. face to face surveys with 30 individuals to enquire about the perception, understanding and use of

heath sites in Cornwall to draw out key issues, opportunities and trends, 2 community consultations and individual contact with a number of agency representatives). The rule was: get an informant/s onto the topic of the heath landscape and get out of the way. Informants were then able to provide views and information about visitor payback schemes that they thought important.

- Two area-based workshops for tourism operators and local community representatives attended by a total of 62 people.

## 3.0 The Policy Context: strategies which may affect sustainable tourism and heathlands.

An understanding of the influence of the broader policy framework for the environment and tourism is fundamental to this report.

### 3.1 European Policy Context

The **EU's Sixth Environmental Action Program** sets out the major priorities and objectives for environmental policy over the next 5-10 years. It identifies four environmental priorities for action: Climate Change; Nature and Biodiversity; Environment and health and quality of life; and Natural resources and waste. These priorities seek to encourage economic development that is sustainable, taking account of environmental issues and sets out important principals in terms of tourism supporting the social and economic needs of Cornwall while looking after the natural environment.

### 3.2 National Policy Context

**3.2.1 'The UK Sustainable Development Strategy'** is based on 5 principles:

- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Promoting good governance;
- Using sound science responsibly.

This strategy illustrates the role of the economy in achieving a just society and living within environmental limits. This strategic action plan should respect these 5 principles.

**3.2.2 'Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Tourism'** is all about social progress, environmental protection, prudent use of resources and stable economic growth. The strategy ensures the right development happens in the right place at the right time all the while protecting the environment. The findings and recommendations in this report sit comfortably with these aims.

**3.2.3 'Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity & Geological Conservation'** ensures that biodiversity and geo-diversity are incorporated into all proposals. It does this through a hierarchy of important sites and as Heathlands are included in Annex 1 of the European Habitats directive 92/43/EEC they would be well placed on this hierarchy. It makes biodiversity integral to social and economic development with the aims of conserving, enhancing and restoring biodiversity.

**3.2.4 'Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Historic Environment'** aims to optimise the historic environment and material assets through effective stewardship and protection of all aspects of the historic environment. The physical survival of the past is valued and protected for its own sake. Conservation is acknowledged to be complementary to economic growth; an aim the HEATH project is trying to realise.

**3.2.5 'Planning Policy Guidance 20 – Coast'** highlights the need to protect, conserve and where appropriate improve landscape, wildlife and recreation opportunity on the coast. Its aim is to balance economic, social, natural and historic aspects of the coastal environment. As much of Cornwall's heathland is coastal this plan is particularly relevant.

**3.2.6 'Planning Policy Guidance 21 – Tourism'** affirms that tourism's economic contribution is largely dependent on the environmental quality of the tourism destination and product. This strategy is particularly important in the context of this report as it highlights that tourism, if well managed, can act as a positive force for environmental protection.

### **3.3 Regional Policy Context**

A prime function of the Regional Assembly is to provide the lead on an Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), which presents a strategic focus for policy areas such as spatial planning, environment, cultural strategy, housing, waste and transport. The South West IRS was launched in November 2004. A number of important strategic plans have been/are being developed, all of which are relevant in some way to the environment and therefore this report. The most important have been highlighted below.

**3.3.1 'The Regional Spatial Strategy'** guides investment in transport and provides a framework for the preparation of the Cornwall Local Transport Plan. A number of key priorities for investment in transport are identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy – the most important priority that should be highlighted for this report is to 'promote more sustainable patterns of transport'.

**3.3.2 'The Regional Economic Strategy'** sets the goal of increasing sustainable prosperity and productivity for the region and all its people and aims to support business growth through the promotion of and development of key business sectors; tourism is identified as one of these growth sectors. An important role for the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and its partners in delivering the Regional Economic Strategy will be to facilitate the development of business clusters within these target sectors. Facilitating the provision of high quality physical and social infrastructure is a critical ingredient in nurturing the growth of these target sectors, this includes a high

quality sustainable transport infrastructure, essential to ensuring access for all to heath site in Cornwall.

**3.3.3 'The Regional Environment Strategy for the South West'** highlights the richness and diversity of the region's environmental assets and its importance, including to quality of life and as an economic driver. It identifies environmental pressures/opportunities and recommends effective protection, management and enhancement in response. The environment is placed firmly as an economic driver. In the context of this report it helps strengthen the case that tourism, if well managed, can act as a positive force for environmental protection.

**3.3.4 'Action for Biodiversity in the South West' (1997)** aims to protect and increase rare and important species and habitats. It is about protecting wildlife habitats and incorporating nature conservation into development where practicable.

**3.3.5 'The Regional Historic Environment Strategy'** recognises the historic environment as an economic driver. This strategy is of particular relevance as unlike any other resource, heathlands provide a direct continuous link to past civilizations. The relationship between the natural and historical landscapes is a major attraction for visitors, yet many people are still unaware that heathland is a living historical artifact. Of particular relevance to this report are some key objectives:

- Raising awareness of the historic environment and promoting integration with other policy areas.
- Highlighting role of historic environment in contributing to economic success by its attractiveness to commercial interests.
- The historic environment supports tourism industry and provides recreation opportunities.

As heathland is highly valued for its biodiversity, landscape and archaeological importance and as a resource for recreational activities, these objectives sit comfortably with the aims of the HEATH project.

**3.3.6 'Towards 2015', the SW Tourism regional strategy'** states three principle targets:

- quality
- destination management; and
- sustainable tourism.

It states that *"achieving the region's aspirations for quality and sustainable tourism can only be realised through destinations being effectively managed"*; and that *"a key part of delivering sustainability is ensuring that local people are involved in key decisions about the investment and the regulation of tourism at every level"*.

Currently (March 2007), the Cornwall Destination Management Organisation (CDMO) which will implement a tourism strategy across Cornwall and have responsibility for taking a partnership approach to the product management and marketing, is currently moving through a review process. This partnership organisation will ultimately be tasked with developing a destination management plan for Cornwall; there is an enormous opportunity for landscape related issues to be incorporated into the destination management plan to ensure optimum value *and* protection/enhancement of Cornwall's landscapes.

The landscape is the product that the majority of visitors to Cornwall value most – the very reason they visit the County - and there could be a huge price to pay if the landscape is not incorporated into the destination management plan; the very 'nature' and 'essence' of Cornwall's tourism industry could ultimately be destroyed if left out of the equation. The new CDMO arrangements should allow for much more liaison between product management, including visitor management, and marketing – all of which make up destination management. It is essential that Natural England and the HEATH project team start communicating with the strategic tourism bodies now to ensure that priorities for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall are fully understood and taken into account in the brave new world of destination management. The most effective channel for Natural England and the HEATH project to start communicating is the Sustainable Tourism Working Group that feeds directly into the CDMO.

### **3.4 Local Policy Context**

#### **3.4.1 'Economic Development Strategy - Strategy & Action'**

Strategy and Action is the economic development strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It focuses on key strategic issues that will deliver an agreed vision to 2012. It provides a platform to influence the new Convergence programme that will set out the UK approach to EU Cohesion Policy. Although there is no statutory requirement for local economic strategies, Strategy & Action is a positive approach to express economic development priorities for Cornwall. It sits alongside community strategies and local planning documents. Of particular relevance to this strategic plan is the Environmental Assessment of Strategy & Action which aims to ensure the environmental considerations inform and are well integrated with Strategy & Action's emerging policies and actions. The Convergence programme, yet to be finalised, will be promoting both the Lisbon (competitiveness) and Gothenburg (sustainable development) agendas, both of which should allow the importance of the economic, social and environmental value of the heath landscape to be acknowledged.

**3.4.2 'Cornwall Heritage & Culture Strategy'** is about building on cultural, artistic and environmental strengths for social and economic gain. The heath land is recognized as an important historical-cultural landscape. Unfortunately, 90% of Cornwall's heathland has been lost and the result has been a significant disintegration of heathland and a dramatic degradation of Cornwall's cultural sites. This strategy has an important role to play to help value the heath landscape as a cultural commodity.

**3.4.3 'Cornwall Community Strategy'** is a joint approach to dealing with the needs of Cornwall's communities and brings together various strategies and initiatives to improve the quality of life for all people in the County. The Community Strategy vision is expanded into three key themes: Individual Well Being; Strong Communities; and Quality of Living Environment. It is this final theme that is so important to this report, as the vision is for:

*“Cornwall as a special place and a strong sustainable community – its distinctiveness physical and cultural qualities protected and enhanced, recognised in the UK and Europe and providing the basis for a sustainable quality of life and environment for its people, reflected in a County . . . with an ecologically sound, aesthetically pleasing and pollution free environment . . .”*

The strategy states a number of headline actions which are of particular relevance to heathlands and therefore this plan:

- Improve the environmental sustainability of key sectors – tourism and fishing;
- To raise awareness and understanding of the environment, and build capacity for environmentally sustainable working within Cornwall;
- To enable Cornwall to make prudent use of natural resources;
- To enable Cornwall to realise the potential of the environment as a driver of economic prosperity;
- To safeguard and enhance the natural, historic and built environmental asset bases of Cornwall.

**3.4.4 'Environment Kernow':** Taking a triple bottom line approach to understanding the strategies that will impact heathlands in Cornwall it is important to question why Cornwall does not have an environmental strategy? Cornwall's Economic Strategy and Cornwall's Community Strategy both recognise the environment as a driver for economic growth but we do not yet have a strategy solely for the environment. We do however, have Environment Kernow, a partnership organisation that is developing capacity very quickly and, although they have no County strategic document to work to, consider themselves responsible for helping deliver related strategic objectives. Two of the key projects they are focusing on for 2007 are 1.) assessing the training needs and skills for the

“environmental sector”; and 2.) determining the environmental limitations to economic and population growth of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

**3.4.5 ‘Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plans’:** At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the UK Government was one of almost 150 countries that signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. In 1995 they published Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan, an ambitious document that listed national habitats and species of conservation concern, with detailed objectives to help protect and enhance them. Cornwall was one of the first counties in the UK to adopt this action plan approach. In 1997 the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative produced “Cornwall’s Biodiversity: Volume 1 Audit and Priorities”, identifying areas and species of conservation concern within the county. 1998’s publication “Cornwall’s Biodiversity: Volume 2 Action Plans” identified locally important species and habitats – together with objectives and targets to help conserve them. The CBI’s latest publication is “Cornwall’s Biodiversity: Volume 3 Action Plans 2004”. This publication completes the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan for Cornwall by including all UK BAP Priority Habitats and Species that occur in Cornwall.

Lowland heathland is identified as a priority habitat with the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plans; Volume 3 acknowledges that some of the current factors affecting heathland, such as “losses due to the action of public pressure (trampling damage, motorcycles etc.) or lack of public awareness impede management of site” come from visitor pressure. The Biodiversity Action Plan also identifies a number of actions to help address the threats that heathlands currently face. Actions of particular relevance to this report are:

- All partners involved in managing heathland in Cornwall must contribute to a positive attitude shift in public opinion, especially in understanding the need for positive management of heathlands. To be achieved through coordinated media campaigns and provision of ‘generic’ press releases.
- Assess existing publicity programmes and practice. Develop and disseminate good practice.
- Promote the importance of heathland through links with organisations such as Eden: the heathland exhibit and habitat act as a gateway to wider heathland issues in Cornwall.
- Appropriate public access to be developed that reflects public aspiration, protecting fragile habitats, maintaining health and safety and the wishes or owners of the land.

**3.4.6 ‘Cornwall Structure Plan’** is currently the key spatial planning strategy document for Cornwall. It was adopted in 2004 and covers the period to 2016. It is important to note that the Structure Plan will be phased out and replaced by the Regional Spatial Strategy

(RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). **'Local Development Frameworks'** are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing and development. The LDFs together with the RSS will provide the essential framework for planning in the Local Authority Area. The 6 districts in Cornwall are currently developing their LDFs, but for this report it is important to note that Cornwall County Council has been closely involved to enable a clear strategy to integrate the delivery of infrastructure to support the growth agenda for Cornwall. This will promote better participatory and representative input into the planning process, which will also mean hopefully greater understanding in planning departments of the triple bottom line value of the heath environment and landscape.

**3.4.7 'The Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan (2004)';** there are significant common elements between the tourism deliverables within the HEATH project and the terms of reference within The Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan 2004 (CTFSAP 2004). As one of the co-founding members of the Cornwall Tourism Forum (CTF) Sustainable Tourism Working Group, CoaST contributed significantly to the development of the CTFSAP 2004, and worked with the group to contribute to the development of the South West Tourism (SWT) Towards 2015 Strategy. CoaST was selected to deliver the required tourism elements of the HEATH project to ensure that the work within the HEATH project compliments that of the CTFSAP 2004. The common areas and targets this strategic plan shares with the CTFSAP and will contribute to are identified below;

- *Ensure industry and visitors share awareness of the cultural tourism product.*
- *Market the environment as an Added Value component of choosing Cornwall.*
- *Provide and interpretation base and usable products or the industry that interpret the built, natural, historic and cultural environment of Cornwall.*
- *Ensure via the planning process that the value of the natural, historic and built environment is seen also as a critical asset for the well being of communities, as well as for visitors.*
- *Support the CTF training strategy and other developments increasing sustainable awareness for tourism businesses.*
- *Develop separate mechanisms for increasing engagement with communities and use to influence future planning and development strategy.*

**3.4.8 'A Management Plan for the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)'**. Tourism is identified as a key force for change that can impact on the Cornwall AONB in ways that can lead to the erosion of the character of the AONB resulting in; a change to historic land use patterns; loss of traditional skills to maintain countryside features such as Cornish hedges; conversion of buildings that leads to "suburbanisation"

of the countryside; a loss of habitats and species diversity; visual intrusion of inappropriate development and the decline of rural communities. The AONB management plan acknowledges that tourism is also the main driver of the local economy and its long term future will depend on the appropriate management landscape and a sustainable approach to the management of the tourism industry itself. The plan strives to encourage the development of a sustainable tourism approach to the management of the tourism industry in Cornwall to benefit the economy, community and natural beauty of the AONB. As nearly all heath sites in Cornwall make up part of the AONB, this strategy compliments these goals.

## 4.0 Heath as a Component of Visitor Experience

### 4.1 Tourism & the Natural Environment

Tourism is central to Cornwall's economy and growing; tourism trends indicate that there is potential to increase tourist numbers, particularly in the shoulder months, and South West Tourism's strategy estimates that there could be a 13.5% increase in tourist trips to Cornwall between 2006 and 2011. This would take the total trips per year to over six million, with the vast majority being short breaks. South West Tourism's marketing strategy heavily promotes the landscape, yet tourism has the potential to damage the very natural assets on which the industry depends, and any predicted growth in tourism in Cornwall will put increasing pressure on the County's natural environment. More can be done to strengthen the viability and sustainability of tourism in the area and its ability to deliver year round benefits not only to the economy and local community but also the natural environment.

It is important to note that tourism is an extremely complex activity and there is little in Cornwall that is not affected by the economic, social and/or environmental impact of tourism. The Industry itself is no less complex. A simple view would be to understand the industry as being comprised of accommodation, attractions and transport providers. A broader view would include retailers and service providers, pubs, restaurants, cafes, galleries, museums etc. However its single greatest asset which serves to draw more than 80% of all visitors, the natural environment, is entirely free to access. Equally, commercial operations have no direct input into its management. Protection of the natural environment is fundamentally important to the tourism industry of Cornwall.

A study conducted by MORI on behalf of ABTA (2000), reported that

- 85% of UK holidaymakers believed that it is important not to damage the environment.
- 71% feel that tourism should benefit the people of the destination visited, through jobs and business opportunities.
- 52% said they would be interested in finding out more about local issues (environmental and social) in their chosen resort before they booked their holiday.
- The majority (64%) stated that they would be prepared to pay between £10 and £25 extra for environmental, social or charity guarantees- representing a 2-5% increase on a holiday of £500.

These figures suggest that aside from ensuring the long-term viability of the industry there is now a marketing and economic imperative for the industry to strive for high environmental standards (Penwith DC Tourism Strategy).

There are many issues facing the industry; seasonality, wages, staffing, quality standard schemes and loss of tourism accommodation to name just a few. However the main issue for the industry is how to improve its performance while protecting the environmental quality of Cornwall. A prosperous local economy should not be incompatible with high environmental standards, particularly when Cornwall is viewed as an area of outstanding natural environment (Cornwall County Council, 2005). It is also important to note that it is not only visitors to the county that consider the natural environment to be important, local people also value the environment highly, consistently ranking the natural environment as of very great importance to the quality of their life (Cornwall Strategic Partnership).

Cornwall has a population of just over 500,000 people and it is vital to acknowledge that this resident population also take on the role of 'visitor' as they move around the county to different areas and landscapes. Opening opportunities for local people as well as tourists to understand and enjoy the natural environment provides an opportunity to build a bridge between nature and people, to reconnect local populations with their cultural heritage and landscape, and give them the information to then communicate this relationship to guests. A strong emphasis of the HEATH project is on identifying and re-connecting communities with the economic linkages associated with heathland through niche markets and tourism, and efforts are focused on highlighting to tourism providers and local community members, the economic and social benefits of protecting and marketing their heathland landscapes. It is hoped that these efforts will lead to more local community members as well as visitors being encouraged to understand, explore and appreciate the natural environment, specifically heathlands.

## **4.2 Heathlands: an overview**

Lowland Heathland is one of the rarest and most fragile environments found in Europe. Traditional conservation practices of lowland heathland in the UK are threatened because there is no longer economic demand for heath products. 90% of Cornwall's heathland has been lost and the result has been a significant disintegration of heathland and a dramatic degradation of Cornwall's cultural sites and its unique plant and animal species. Yet Cornwall is acknowledged as the second most 'heathy' county in the UK, with some 6,750 hectares of lowland heath, which amounts to 11% of the UK resource. The UK supports approximately 20% of the world's total heathlands resource – Cornwall's contribution to this, at over 2%, is therefore significant.

Heathlands are included in Annex 1 of the European Habitats directive 92/43/EEC as 'a natural habitat type of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special conservation' (European Commission 2003). The UK therefore has an

international obligation to conserve this habitat type. Sufficient resource allocation is essential if nature targets and responsibilities are to be met. In the UK however, adequate resources are not currently allocated for nature conservation. The UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) provides a good example of this. Whilst BAPs stimulate long-term visions and set objectives, non-governmental organisations and government agencies are expected to compile and implement plans but receive little additional resource to do so. Those responsible for managing the environment in the UK are facing depleted budgets and keen to find ways to tap into visitor spend, this is especially true for those managing heathlands.

Although heathland is highly valued for its biodiversity, landscape and archaeological importance and as a resource for recreational activities by conservation organisations like Natural England, there is a lack of understanding or appreciation amongst the general public in the UK about the importance of heathland sites. Unlike any other resource, heathlands provide a direct continuous link to past civilizations and yet heathlands are often perceived by people as a wasteland. As Orr (1992) points out people will not value or fight to save what they do not love. It will therefore be very difficult to tap into visitor spend to protect an environment people do not care about. Even in Cornwall, where the relationship between the natural and historical landscapes is a major attraction for visitors, many people are still unaware that they are walking on a living historical artifact when they visit heath sites.

To help conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the heathland it is vitally important to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the heathland sites by the public, tourists and local community members. Encouraging more people to visit heathlands in Cornwall is a fundamental pre-requisite for this.

### **4.3 Heath Visitor Demographic**

At present some heath sites in Cornwall are well visited by local community members and/or visitors, others are under used and have the potential to entice greater numbers, while some sites feel like they are bursting at the seams at certain peak times. Interviews and surveys with visitors and local people have shown that very few people visit heath sites to observe and acknowledge it as a unique habitat. Instead they visit heath sites to participate in a wide range of recreational activities; to visit a well known 'honey pot site'; for long walks as part of a circular seascape; to visit a site of historical interest and enjoy a sense of history/spirituality; for the peace and quiet; for an adventure; to sketch; to look for flora and/or fauna; to bird watch; to go cycling or horse riding. As site wardens highlighted "heath sites are predominantly used as open access areas for basic

recreational needs" (EN warden, pers comm). It is therefore difficult to categorise visitors to heath sites as being part of a specific demographic.

However, people interviewed frequently talked about the "open space" in which they participated in their recreational activity of choice, highlighting how enjoyable it was to be "out in open, wild, unspoilt natural environment". This suggests that people visiting the heath are the kind of people that enjoy being outdoors in the natural environment. It is interesting to note that a distinction was made between heath and other spaces (e.g. the beach, woodland and parks) in which they could participate in their recreational activity of choice, with nearly all interviewees emphasising that the "open", "baron nature" of the heath landscape was a huge attraction.

#### **4.4 Opportunities for Heathland Tourism**

Building on interest in the natural environment, the variation in the nature of heath sites in Cornwall, and the plethora of recreational activities that can be participated in at heath sites, many opportunities exist to drive forward heathland tourism in Cornwall. These opportunities are now set in a regional and county wide context.

##### **4.4.1 SW Tourism: Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism**

SW Tourism Strategy '*Towards 2015: Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism*' highlights that consumer's characteristics and needs are changing as lifestyles change. They predict the tourist of tomorrow will be:

- Wealthier (for now)
- Healthier
- Older and more active
- Take multiple holidays
- Use short breaks as a survival tool
- Look for increasingly "experience driven" breaks

In light of these research findings, SW Tourism draws attention to a number of strengths, priorities and hidden opportunities the South West has in terms of tourism product. A number of these strengths, priorities and hidden opportunities are particularly relevant to this report and have been highlighted below; these have then been followed in italics by suggestions of how the heath product can be incorporated/embedded in each:

### **Strengths:**

- **Interesting villages, towns, locations to visit.** (A place can be made interesting through the information provided – bringing the local heath, history, folklore and heritage to life can add value to a location).
- **Beaches and coastline.** (In some areas there is an opportunity to highlight coastal heathland as a visitor attraction in its own right).
- **Place for peace and quiet and relaxation.** (Interviews with visitors to heath sites in Cornwall brought to light the fact that many heath sites are valued as 'wilderness' areas people go to relax and to experience peace and quiet – there is an opportunity to highlight this connection).
- **Unspoilt countryside.** (Interviews with visitors to heath sites in Cornwall highlight that they perceive heath sites to be unspoilt countryside- there is an opportunity to re-enforce this message).
- **History and heritage.** (Heathlands provide a direct continuous link to past civilizations, are home to many archaeological treasures, and have a wealth of folklore linked directly to the heath landscape. As the Integrated Visitor Management Plan discovered, there is an opportunity to bring the heathland to life through history and heritage and vice versa).
- **Facilities for walking rambling and cycling.** (As open access areas, heath sites offer opportunities for recreation activities, particularly walking and rambling. There is an opportunity to improve access to some sites and increase promotion to encourage more people to get out and about in the heath).
- **Chance to see wildlife in natural habitats.** (Heath sites are home to a wide variety of flora and fauna and are important habitats for many important species – guided walks of the heath environment, like the guided trail Goonhilly Earth Station run in partnership with Natural England site wardens around part of the heath in the Lizard NNR, are a great way to increase visitor understanding of heath flora and fauna).

### **Priorities:**

- **Availability of tourism information.** (There is a real opportunity to improve interpretation and promotion of heathlands to drive forward some indirect

visitor and destination management of heath sites in Cornwall. See *Integrated Visitor Management Plan, CoaST 2007*).

### **Hidden Opportunities:**

- **Range & availability of local produce, arts and crafts and souvenirs.** (*One of the aims of the HEATH project is the identification and promotion of heathland based products – there are also opportunities to bring the heath to life through the arts sector, including plays, poetry, art and crafts. Tourism businesses in Cornwall are hungry for ways to best bring the unique qualities of their area to life, whether through promotion of local produce on menus, promotion of local events and crafts, or the sale of local souvenirs*).

### **4.4.2 The Green Tourism Business Scheme**

SW Tourism have also made a commitment to support and promote The Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS), a marketing and advisory tool for tourism businesses supporting the local area and environment that was rolled out in Cornwall at the end of 2005. The scheme encourages businesses to operate more efficiently, identify actions that can increase customer comfort and satisfaction, and enhance their business image by demonstrating their environmental and ethical responsibility. Promotion of the heath environment fits into the GTBS criteria as it gives businesses an environment, a fragile habitat that is locally and internationally important, to support.

Through the GTBS assessment criteria, businesses are encouraged to find ways to raise awareness of the local natural environment, different habitats such as heathland, and initiatives such as the HEATH project. The scheme encourages businesses to provide as much information as possible to help visitors to find out more, get out and explore, as well as giving them the opportunity to help engage with conservation efforts; either by behaving responsibly while they are in Cornwall and enjoying the natural environment, or through donations and visitor payback schemes that generate a direct income for conservation activities. Supporting the heath environment and the HEATH project offers businesses a tangible habitat and project they can focus on to demonstrate their commitment to the natural environment. The promotion of GTBS presents the opportunity to better promote the heath landscape.

### 4.4.3 The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

A significant part of the landscape of Cornwall, already established as a key asset to the county's tourism industry, is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Developing well managed, sustainable tourism in the Cornwall AONB is a challenge that the Cornwall AONB Partnership would like to address through the adoption of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (Europarc Charter).

The Europarc Charter seeks to recognise parks which are following the right approach in developing and managing sustainable tourism. The Charter commits signatories to implementing a local strategy for 'sustainable tourism' defined as: *'any form of development, management or tourist activity which ensures the long-term protection and preservation of natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas.'* The Charter defines the shared responsibilities of the protected area authority, the tourist businesses and tour operator and is divided into three sections:

- Sustainable tourism for the protected area
- Sustainable tourism for tourism businesses in the area
- Sustainable tourism for companies organising tours in or to protected areas

The AONB Partnership will be working with CoaST to drive forward the Europarc Charter for the Cornwall AONB, and it is suggested that there is an opportunity here to ensure the heath habitat, much of which is in the AONB, is teased out as a landscape of importance within the AONB. As mentioned in the Integrated Visitor Management Plan (CoaST, 2007), indirect visitor management can take place via interpretation of the landscape, and as part of the Europarc Charter process the AONB partnership will be exploring the opportunity of producing visitor information about the natural environment of Cornwall, particularly the AONB, that can be used by businesses to educate visitors and act as an indirect visitor management tool. There is the potential for such information to include details of all of the habitats that make up the Cornwall AONB in Cornwall. For example, the AONB partnership could explore the opportunity to build on the Wealth of Wildlife Guide, produced by the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative, which breaks Cornwall into 7 habitat types, of which one is the heath environment, to produce visitor information that covers all 7 habitats represented in the AONB.

Two phases of work will now commence to drive the Europarc Charter forward; between May 2007 and June 2007 CoaST and the AONB Partnership will be carrying out an audit to explore

work already underway across the County that will contribute to Cornwall gaining Europarc Charter Status. This audit will enable gaps that currently exist to be identified and explore ways in which these gaps can be filled. The sustainable tourism components of the HEATH project will feed directly into this audit as there have been many 'on the ground' initiatives that have come to fruition through the sustainable tourism heath work. These initiatives stand as models of best practice on which the Europarc Charter will build. Between September 2007 and January 2008 CoaST will then be holding a series of workshops around the County to encourage involvement and buy in from businesses and community stakeholder's around the AONB sites in Cornwall. Again, there is an opportunity here for the heath habitat to be highlighted as a habitat of importance.

#### 4.5 Marketing the Heath

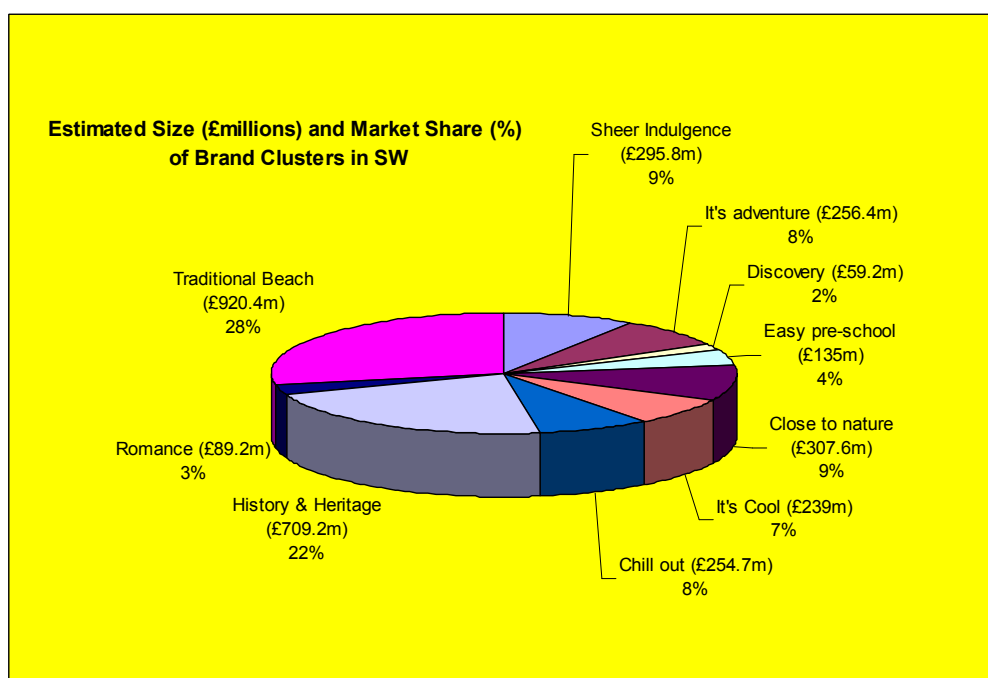
South West Tourism focuses on ten different marketing experience themes or "brand clusters" that focus around traditional markets and emerging growth markets:

##### Traditional Markets:

- Traditional Beach Holiday
- History & Heritage
- Close to Nature
- Easy Pre-school

##### Emerging Growth Markets

- Sheer Indulgence
- Romance
- It's Cool
- Chill Out
- It's Adventure
- Discovery



(Pie Chart from SW Tourism Towards 2015)

The themes of greatest relevance here are the 'Close to Nature' and the 'History and Heritage' brand clusters. The 'Close to Nature' brand cluster presents the SW as 'a green region', and a marketing campaign focuses on the promotion of world-class countryside, emphasising the quality of the environment and the amount of GTBS accredited businesses in the area working to look after the area. The 'History and Heritage' brand cluster builds on the fact that the rich and diverse historical landscape of the SW is one of the main motivations for people choosing to visit the region – particularly true for our overseas visitors, including the lucrative American market. The marketing campaign focuses on capitalising on this interest and there is an opportunity to ensure the heathlands as 'historical landscapes' are represented in this brand.

Despite the fact that there is already much literature in circulation about many of the individual heath sites in Cornwall (National Trust leaflets, Cornwall Wildlife Trust information, localised marketing literature produced by tourism associations or site specific guides), this research has found that heathlands are not well recognised by visitors, locals, business or marketing bodies. There is an opportunity to raise the profile of the heath environment in Cornwall and ensure it is acknowledged as a landscape of importance, particularly through SW Tourism's 'Close to Nature' and 'History and Heritage' brand clusters.

The Integrated Visitor Management Plan (CoaST, 2007) highlighted that rather than promote each individual heath site separately, heath sites in each geographical area should be promoted as part of the wider landscape. For example;

**The Lizard Peninsula** - The focus of heathland promotion for the Lizard should be through the geology, habitat and biodiversity importance of the area. Highlighting flora and fauna of interest that is dependent on the heath habitat would be the best way to compliment marketing literature already in circulation and build on the interest visitors to the area already have in the landscape.

**West Penwith** - The focus of heathland promotion for West Penwith should be through the archaeology /history and folklore of the area of which Penwith is richly endowed and well known. By bringing the landscape to life through the medium of storytelling the heathland is brought to life through the cultural and socio-economic ties Cornwall has with the heath environment.

**The North Coast** - The focus of heathland promotion for the North Coast should be through the old mine workings and mining activities that litter the area and dominate the landscape. This can best be achieved through the World Heritage Site designation.

These landscapes then need to be incorporated into the wider Cornwall destination marketing messages being presented through SW Tourism's 'Close to Nature' and 'History and Heritage' brand clusters or by VisitCornwall. This will help ensure that the heath sites are brought to life in a consistent format in each geographical area.

As mentioned above, interviews and feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders has highlighted that another way to integrate heath into the wider marketing message of Cornwall, could be to build on the Wealth of Wildlife Guide, produced by the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative, which breaks Cornwall into 7 habitat types, of which one is the heath environment, so that all visitor interfacing information about the natural environment builds on these 7 habitats to reinforce a consistent and concise message to educate visitors about the natural environment of Cornwall. These guides have been well received by businesses and visitors in Cornwall and many are keen to build on the bite size portions of information the guide provides. It is suggested that any future marketing of the natural environment in Cornwall builds on this 7 habitat format so that projects and organisations working with the environment can link into a marketing structure to feed through environmental information about each habitat; information about new projects that need promoting like the HEATH project; areas/issues of concern; sites/species that need de-marketing to avoid degradation or destruction; sites/species that can support more intensive marketing etc.

Building on this 7 habitat format would also provide site managers and the environment organisations they represent the opportunity to develop communication channels and links between those responsible for different sites, or with other organisations and projects responsible for different habitat areas. This could help ensure efforts to look after and protect each habitat type are complimentary. In turn this would ensure that the messages being fed to SW Tourism and VisitCornwall or other marketing bodies would be consistent and balanced. It could also provide an opportunity for a group to be established representing the 7 habitat types, to work together on a range of projects to help educate and guide visitors around the environment of Cornwall in a more integrated, sustainable way. For example, the group could work on the production of a visitor information pack that covers all 7 habitats (a recommendation of the Integrated Visitor Management Plan). Through CoaST and the Green Tourism Businesses Scheme, businesses could then be encouraged to carry these packs in guest rooms to help.

#### **4.6 Heathland marketing: part of heathland management.**

Indirect visitor management can take place via promotion and interpretation of the landscape; but promotion and interpretation of the natural environment in Cornwall is one of the management tools that is often out of the control of site managers as promotion of destinations is often done by a myriad of stakeholders, including local business, local, tourism associations, county wide and regional tourism and destination management and marketing

bodies. At present no mechanism for communication exists between site conservation managers or the environment organisations they represent and local, county and regional marketing bodies. This is presenting some serious destination management issues as messages about the natural environment and areas being promoted often clash with conservation management efforts. It is essential that communication channels between site managers and those responsible for destination management, marketing and promotion are in place to ensure the messages being communicated at all levels tie in with site management efforts.

#### **4.6.1 The Lizard Peninsula: A Model of Best Practice**

An outcome of the Sustainable Transport Report CoaST produced for the HEATH project (See Roberts, 2006), has been the development of a sustainable transport guide by the Lizard Peninsula Tourism Association (LPTA). The process of creating this guide has enabled the LPTA to develop links with local National Trust and Natural England site managers to ensure the messages the guide promotes about the local environment are consistent with conservation aims. With support from CoaST, the LPTA has been able to draw down substantial funding from the partners involved in the project and been able to co-ordinate a fantastically 'joined up' approach to the production of the 2007 marketing brochure. The tourism businesses on the Lizard are, for the first time acknowledging the role they can play in managing their destination to ensure visitor impact on the natural environment of the Lizard Peninsula is kept to a minimum. By starting a dialogue with the site managers the tourism businesses are learning which habitats and sites need more promotion and also starting to understand some of the pressures other sites face and how they can help steer visitors away from sensitive areas. They are starting to appreciate what impact visitors may have at different times of the year and grasping that they play a vital role in passing this information onto visitors.

One of the first things the tourism association has done is encouraged the site managers to get involved in the content of the text for the brochure so that the 'correct' messages can be conveyed to visitors. The LPTA are also doing a careful assessment, with site managers, of the images included in the brochure to ensure they are not highlighting sensitive areas that may be under pressure from over use, but are instead featuring areas that can withstand increased visitor numbers. The impact marketing images can have on visitor movement was recently highlighted in a case study of Hadrian's Wall; the management team at Hadrian's wall found a section of the wall was becoming greatly eroded by a concentration of visitors to one specific area. They eventually linked the problem to marketing brochures that highlighted this section of the wall in an image. By changing the image the site managers have found that they have been able to divert visitor movement to other, less sensitive areas of the wall (Car-Free Leisure Network Case Study, 2006).

Since the HEATH workshop businesses have been requesting further information as to why the heathland is an interesting habitat to explore and what makes it so important to the Lizard Peninsula. They are keen to explore other ways they can provide their visitors with information

about the natural environment and conservation projects on the Lizard and to encourage them to get out and about to visit these sites. To date CoaST has been distributing HEATH project leaflets that accommodation providers are placing in guest bedrooms; many businesses are hungry for more. A popular suggestion has been an environmental information pack that accommodation providers can place in guest rooms. Many businesses are acknowledging their role as informal education providers and started small library's about the environment on their doorstep. However, all feel that if this information could be condensed into a digestible, localised format to be left in guest rooms, more people could be encouraged to read it, take note and start exploring.

One business highlighted:

*"Most of my visitors come back year on year and need to be spoon fed information. If we can drip feed them new and interesting things to do and see in the local natural environment, I have no doubt more people would get out and about. Most of my time is spent pointing people in the direction of local walks and attractions and telling them about interesting projects in the area. People that come to the Lizard are here because they like the natural environment – they are interested. As businesses we just need some help in knowing what to tell them and where to direct them so they have a good time and keep their impact to a minimum".*

Another business stated:

*"I always point people to the coast path and it frustrates me – I know there is so much more on the Lizard to see but don't know where to start – I also know there are some sensitive areas and species and it makes me nervous sending people to places they could do damage".*

These two comments capture the general feedback we got from surveys and interviews – visitors are actively looking for places to explore when they visit Cornwall and businesses know there are some great places for them to tell their visitors about, but often businesses lack a) the knowledge to know where best to direct them to or b) the time to compile detailed information to pass onto guests. There is a huge opportunity here for the tourism sector and conservation organisations. The tourism sector has the chance to build on visitor interest in the natural environment and provide what the visitor is looking for and therefore increase the quality of the visitor experience, while the conservation organisations can raise awareness of projects and entice more people to access the environment in a responsible way to learn and value the work being done.

The LPTA sustainable transport map/brochure is proving to be a fantastic model to demonstrate how partnerships and a more proactive dialogue between the tourism industry and conservation organisations can benefit both sectors. The LPTA also host a

website [www.lizard-peninsula.co.uk](http://www.lizard-peninsula.co.uk) and are hoping that this website can be expanded to tie in with the sustainable transport map being developed to hold more information about transport links, walks, cycle routes and bridal ways and 'easy access areas' as well as more information about the natural environment such as site designations, issues and projects, such as the HEATH project, going on in the local area. If this model could be adopted across the county the concept of 'destination management' would come take on new life as businesses and community are given the opportunity to play a more proactive role.

## 5.0 Strategic Aims and Organisation

This section first summarises the key aims and challenges for sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall. It then reviews the aspirations of local stakeholders for sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall. In the light of this, the overall approach and directions for sustainable tourism are considered in a vision and set of strategic aims for the strategy. The organisation and resources needed to support sustainable tourism are addressed.

### 5.1 Key aims and challenges for sustainable tourism to heathlands

Examining Natural England's strategic outcomes, the HEATH projects tourism deliverables and the targets that the Cornwall Tourism Forum Strategy and Action Plan 2004 has, a set of key aims can be highlighted for sustainable tourism and heathlands in Cornwall. These are set out below. Under each, the main challenges of each are identified:

#### 1. To protect and gain value from the natural environment and cultural heritage of heathland in Cornwall.

The quality of the natural environment of the heath landscape in Cornwall, and its importance for conservation, are high. Protection of this special environment must be an overriding aim. There is little evidence that current visitor pressure poses any great threat to the majority of heath sites in Cornwall. The greatest challenge is to find ways in which the special appeal of the heathland natural environment and cultural heritage can be used more effectively to strengthen the tourism product that can be offered.

#### 2. To increase the economic and social benefits from heathland tourism.

Heathland in Cornwall is not a homogeneous area; rather a variety of heath sites, of different uses with varying economic opportunities. Re-introduction of grazing to some heath sites is already underway while at other sites the opportunity to re-introduce grazing is uncertain. At some sites tourism can easily compete as an economic option while at others there is little opportunity to increase the visitor facilities in or near the heath sites or the visitor numbers to the site. A key challenge is to increase the proportion of visitors that stay overnight in heathland areas, and to spread the benefits of tourism into the heart of heathland conservation management efforts. Particular issues are to bring in more visitors outside the main season, and to increase the level of spending per head that benefits the local economy and local communities and to find ways visitors can be encouraged to directly contribute to heathland conservation and management.

### **3. To protect and improve the quality of life of local people.**

The main benefit that tourism can bring to local people is probably economic, but is also important that tourism supports the rural services on which those that live in Cornwall depend. On peak days, the high numbers of day visitors require sound management to avoid a detrimental impact on local communities (see the Integrated Visitor Management Plan, Roberts 2007).

In this analysis, focus is given to the kind of tourism stakeholders would like to see at heath sites in Cornwall in the future, and how that might be achieved. Collective thoughts have been distilled into a prospectus that sets out:

- A. A set of proposed objectives.
- B. Collective ambitions for heathland tourism, how the image and product of Cornwall's heathland can be characterised, the process by which this could be achieved and the resultant visitor experience that would be on offer.

## **5.2. Priorities for the strategy's aims**

Taking the opinion gained from a process of local consultations, semi structured interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires together, some possible objectives for sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall have been highlighted:

1. Bring new economic benefit to conservation and management of heath sites.
2. Support existing tourism businesses in or near heath sites.
3. Offer opportunities and benefits to the communities in or near heath sites.
4. Support the services on which those who live in or near heath sites depend.
5. Deliver ancillary benefits to local populations and visitors e.g. health and well-being.
6. Encourage visitors to reduce their dependence on the private car when visiting heath sites.
7. Address seasonality and length of stay e.g. help promote a year round tourist industry.
8. Reduce the environmental impact of every £ spent by visitors.
9. Extend the range of tourism product offered in or near heath sites.
10. Celebrate the importance and distinctiveness of Cornwall's heathlands and heath sites.
11. Establish an identity for heathland in Cornwall.
12. Develop a visitor experience based on the special qualities (i.e. open, wilderness) the heath offers.
13. Manage the impact of visitors on the local community and natural and built environment.

14. Introduce visitors and local people to a better understanding of the importance of heathlands in Cornwall.

The mix of favoured objectives places an overriding importance on the economic benefits of sustainable tourism to heath sites in Cornwall, with particular emphasis on support for existing businesses. However, the list also suggests widespread support for the idea that tourism should be planned in such a way that it brings benefit to the communities in and around heath sites, and in fact that their interests should come before the interests of conservation.

As well as introducing visitors to a better understanding of heathland there is a strong feel for the concept of developing a visitor experience based on the special qualities of the heathland; establishing an identity for the heathland in Cornwall; and celebrating the distinctiveness of heathland in Cornwall. The trick in this strategy will be to gain support for these objectives by making them work for the others. The fact that a particular objective commands little support is no reason to avoid it: it simply means that more effort or lateral thinking will be required to bring people on board. A particular example of this is encouraging visitors to reduce their dependence on the private car, which may gain favour if it can be seen as a way of managing the impact of visitors on the local community or heath site.

The suggested objectives are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to serve as a guide when thinking about how to approach the formation of a balanced and comprehensive collection of objectives for the strategy. It is important to listen carefully to the messages that have been conveyed, and to be creative about how to incorporate them into daily operations.

### **5.3 Ambitions for sustainable tourism to heath sites in Cornwall**

Participants expressed their collective ambitions for sustainable tourism and heath sites as follows:

**IMAGE:**  
**Heathland in Cornwall to be recognised as ...**

- One of the rarest and most fragile environments in Europe.
- One of the world's most fascinating environments – essentially manmade and managed by humans for thousands of years.

- A cultural landscape on our doorstep that provide a direct continuous link to past civilisations.
- A place to find solitude, peace, quiet, open spaces and fresh air.
- A quieter, more relaxed alternative to beaches and coves of Cornwall.
- A quality experience.
- Easy to access.
- An all the year round pleasurable experience- opportunity to highlight that coastal heath is particularly beautiful in May-June when unique plants spring to life and again in August-September when the heathers are in bloom. As the wardens on the Lizard are keen to highlight "Heathlands are also great with a pair of wellies when it's wet and muddy!"
- A place to return to – a landscape with a wealth different sites to explore.
- Part of a vibrant community where people live, work and farm.
- An important part of well cared for villages whose character is little changed.
- A living working environment, producing good food, in ways that support both wildlife and people.
- A special place where wildlife can be enjoyed.
- A special place where archaeological treasures can be enjoyed and history and cultural heritage brought to life.
- A spectacular walking environment, with open access and an excellent network of paths and open access opportunities'.

**PRODUCT:**

**There needs to be....**

- Identified 'gateways' and 'honey pot' sites with easy access to heathlands, where people can learn more about heathland conservation and management and what to look out for and how to best enjoy the heath.
- Better signage for visitors to find their way to heath sites and around sites, via public transport, by car and on foot.
- Good, co-ordinated information readily available across heath sites in Cornwall with a consistent identity and message.
- A wide range of good quality accommodation and services near heath sites that raise awareness of heath sites in the local area and promote better understanding of this unique habitat and the importance of heathland management.
- Tourism initiatives that really benefit local communities and the local environment; for example sustainable transport initiatives like the one on the Lizard Peninsula (See Sustainable Transport Assessment by CoaST, 2006).

- Excellent opportunities to understand, and find out more about, the farming, wildlife, environment, folklore and heritage of heath sites.
- A good network of well maintained access routes at heath sites, offering choices for different levels of ability and types of user.
- A well planned and connected transport service that encourages visitors to enjoy new ways to explore the natural environment, particularly heath sites.
- No visible signs of erosion or degradation of heath habitat.

**PROCESS:**

**Sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall to be...**

- Co-ordinated by the HEATH project and site managers in partnership with tourism organisations.
- Supported by a partnership co-ordinating activity between the public and private sectors, combining interests and crossing administrative boundaries.
- Balanced around the triple bottom line; the people, the economy and the natural and built environment.
- Well branded, well promoted and locally known.
- Approached through market segments, particularly building on visitor interest in the natural environment and history and heritage as well as the 'Close to Nature' and 'History and Heritage' brand clusters promoted by SW Tourism.
- Integrated into the GTBS scheme as a local environment to highlight and support, either through information provision or visitor payback.
- Recognised by local communities for the part it plays in supporting local services and local jobs, within heath sites and in the surrounding area.
- Integrated in all ways: marketing, information and delivery.
- Supported by excellent information.

**RESULT:**

**Visitors to Cornwall's heath sites/heath experience feeling...**

- Calm, refreshed, relaxed.
- Fitter, healthy, shattered.
- Full with local produce/food.
- That their senses have been touched.
- That they have had an experience that they will want to tell others about.
- That they have learnt about a unique, rare environment.
- That they have a better understanding of heathlands, specifically their management and conservation.

- Wanting to contribute to the conservation and management of heathland in some way e.g. by joining CASPAN, becoming a member of the National Trust or donating through a visitor payback scheme.

## 5.4 Vision and aims

These ambitions are taken into account in the following vision and strategic aims, which underpin the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Heathlands in Cornwall.

### ***A Vision for a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Heathlands in Cornwall***

By 2015, heathlands in Cornwall will be distinguished by the way in which visitors' enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the heath environment and heath sites are making a positive contribution to the economic and social well-being of those who live and work there.

The HEATH project in Cornwall will be regarded as a beacon for its leadership of the successful management and promotion of sustainable tourism in partnership with others.

The following strategic aims define the approach:

1. For all those involved with tourism management and marketing around heath sites in Cornwall to be engaged with their development and management and marketing.
2. For identified heath sites in Cornwall to be recognised as sustainable tourism destinations, promoted in partnership by all those involved with tourism service delivery in the wider area.
3. For experiences of the highest quality to exceed visitor expectations – particularly in terms of interpretation of the heathland landscape.
4. For visitor products to enable discovery and exploration of the special qualities of heath sites in Cornwall.
5. For people to develop a greater understanding of, and respect for, the natural, cultural and built environment of heath sites in Cornwall.
6. For the natural, cultural and historic environment of heath sites in Cornwall to be protected and enhanced, strengthening support for this wherever possible through tourism.

7. For the performance of the local tourism economy to improve, identifying new opportunities for tourism to deliver economic benefit to heathland conservation management.
8. For good quality visitor information about the heathland environment to be readily available in and around Cornwall.
9. For heathland tourism to support the quality of life of local communities, with opportunities for them to play a special part in the creation and delivery of tourism experiences and visitor services.
10. For the movement of visitors to, in and around heath sites in Cornwall to have the least possible adverse impact on communities and the environment.
11. For heathland visitor management decisions to be well informed by accurate and current data.

## **5.5 Resources to deliver the strategy**

There is a strong history of the successful co-ordination and management of partnership working across Cornwall. The HEATH project partners include Natural England, The National Trust, and The Cornwall Wildlife Trust. The project is also supported by a wide range of organisations including Cornwall County Council, District Councils, the AONB partnership, the Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project and a wide range of local tourism associations. There is also now much interest from the private sector to support local environmental initiatives such as the HEATH project.

Although sustainable tourism is just one part of the whole spectrum of management actions being delivered by the HEATH project, it is clear that to thrive, sustainable tourism to heathlands in Cornwall will depend on successful implementation of many of the other objectives the HEATH project has, such as restoration of heath sites. Successful delivery of this sustainable tourism strategy will depend on consolidating the existing work and intended directions of the HEATH project, and extending the range of activity to incorporate new partners involved with the delivery of sustainable tourism in Cornwall, particularly initiatives such as the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, regional and county marketing organisations and local tourism associations.

The heath landscape and brand in Cornwall may be too small to make an impression on its own via some sustainable tourism initiatives, where widespread consumer awareness and market support are required for success. It may be that some initiatives are better

tackled collectively, such as heath sites on the Lizard Peninsula, or heath sites in West Penwith or even heath sites in Cornwall. What may strengthen the position further would be the habitats and designations of Cornwall coming together, for example under the umbrella of the Cornwall AONB partnership to drive forward sustainable tourism initiatives.

It is essential that heath targets are actively incorporated into other targets and funding bids and that a cross sector understanding of the value of the heath is acknowledged. Communication with other sectors, or strategic bodies will help ensure the value of the heath is considered, understood and incorporated into decision making and that there is a solid understanding of the skills needed to manage the heath environment appropriately and sufficient resources and support to ensure these skills are not lost. This will help facilitate joint decision making in the wider context as to what needs to be conserved, what needs to change, and how the heath can contribute to the big issues of the day such as food production, energy production etc.

## **6.0 Climate Change & Peak Oil: A word of warning. . .**

It is vital that the HEATH project and Natural England understand how climate change, resource depletion, future population predictions, and energy and food security developments will impact on the heath environment of Cornwall. Since the bid for the HEATH project was put together, the awareness and discussion around these topics has changed and it is important that the HEATH project team keep abreast of these issues.

In the last 18 months there has been a rapid shift in general awareness and understanding of issues such as climate change; for example the Stern Review (Nov, 2006) has been published and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), responsible for assessing the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation, is currently finalising its Fourth Assessment Report "Climate Change 2007" out of which new data is emerging. The reports by IPCC provide a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the current state of knowledge on climate change. Over the last 18 months the awareness and discussion around these issues has changed drastically. It would be a huge omission if these issues were not addressed now and it is therefore appropriate to start asking some questions about how heathlands fit into this complex puzzle for the future.

### **6.1 Direct effects of air pollution and climate change on heath habitats.**

Research is currently being carried out into the effects of atmospheric pollution on semi-natural habitats. Recent work indicates that heathland adjacent to roads is impacted by some of the emissions from car exhausts; the report suggests that vegetation can be adversely affected up to 100 metres away from the road. Continuing research in Holland indicates that air and noise pollution from roads may have an impact on birds in their vicinity; figures indicate that there may be a reduction in breeding numbers in areas adjacent to roads, suggesting that air pollution will impact negatively on heath habitats.

Global warming may have various effects upon the flora and fauna of the UK's and Berkshire heathlands according to another report. Positive effects may be to create the conditions for enhanced breeding success for birds such as the Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*), for the Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*) and other invertebrate species, and for reptiles such as the Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivapera*). Detrimental effects of higher temperatures may be greater frequency of damaging summer fires and increased pressure upon the water resources essential to valley mires and wet heath. Current research is exploring the contribution burning of heathlands makes to carbon emissions which encapsulates the debate about using heathland products as alternative energy sources (Heath Conference debate, Brittany 2007).

All of these reports and debates indicate that climate change and air pollution are affecting heath environments. It is therefore essential that Natural England and the HEATH team keep abreast of the issues, to ensure the promotion of heath sites as areas for recreation do not conflict with other needs, such food production or energy production, and that visitor management actions do not conflict with more pressing management issues and actions that may be necessary in the future.

## **6.2 Indirect impacts of Climate Change and Peak oil on heathlands.**

Although this document has tried to take Climate Change and Peak Oil predications into account, the debate around both issues is changing at such a rapid pace that it is impossible to deal with the topics adequately in the scope of this assessment. Both topics are going to have such an incredible impact on land resource use and visitor management that it is necessary to highlight these issues separately to encourage the HEATH project team and Natural England to start exploring the impacts they will have, not only on visitor management to heath sites in Cornwall, but on the wider strategic outcomes Natural England have been charged with, particularly 'a secure environmental future'.

In the process of this assessment it became clear that the majority of businesses and visitors we spoke with, although familiar with the concept of Climate Change, had not heard of Peak Oil. More alarming was the lack of awareness and understanding about Peak Oil amongst site managers and staff. All site managers were familiar with the issue of Climate Change and many were even able to list related changes they were noticing in the landscapes they manage, but few went on to talk about strategies to manage these changes. Natural England is strongly encouraged to start an education process with staff and site managers, to better understand the strategies that are being put in place to adapt to and manage the impacts of Climate Change and to come to terms with the issue of Peak Oil, particularly the affects it will have on land resource use.

As Heinberg (2006) states, 'the world is entering a period of change unlike any in history'. This change will involve a 'forced and rapid transformation in the energy system on which our societies and our lives depend'. The basic premise is that the rate of oil production will soon peak, if it hasn't already, and begin an inevitable decline. This is because the rate at which oil can be extracted from the earth's crust is subject to geological limits, and at some point those limits will begin to constrain our ability to produce at the ever-expanding rates that growing economies demand. Oil has been the main driver for growth during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it is the world's primary transportation fuel. We have become so overwhelmingly dependent on this energy dense and versatile substance because it is so cheap and convenient compared with all

previous energy sources. Peak Oil is going to affect land resource use in ways we are only just starting to grasp.

The warnings of Climate Change impacts are forcing strategic bodies and land managers to look ahead and prepare for a range of possible scenarios, for example; coastal erosion; flooding; drought; climatic changes that will affect flora and fauna; unpredictable weather patterns; increased public transportation promotion; and use and a change in recreational activities in the landscape. Peak Oil predictions are changing the goal posts again and will affect land resource use and visitor management in ways we can still only start to imagine. The following highlights and questions are based on current Peak Oil thought, adapted to the issues of heath management and have been designed to start the debate on how the heath landscape and site managers should prepare for the onset of Peak Oil. As oil production declines, prices (of oil and energy in general) will almost certainly rise. This will have a knock on effect for everything our society is dependent upon;

### **6.2.1 Transportation**

Transport as a whole (including freight) currently accounts for 60% of all oil consumed globally and the world's transportation systems are over 90% dependent on petroleum (Heinberg, 2006). As people feel the direct impact of oil price rises (at the gas pumps, the cost of public transport, hikes in air travel and freight) patterns of travel will begin to change. As a peripheral area a high percentage of the local population of Cornwall are dependent on car travel and at present 85% of visitors to Cornwall come to the county by car (Cornwall Visitor Survey, 2004/05). Most visits to the natural landscape of Cornwall are also made by car. This raises a number of questions. . .

*Will the number of visitors to Cornwall start to dwindle as fuel prices rise? Or, as the costs of international travel increases, will more people be having holidays to destinations within the UK? Will travel routes evolve, for example will Cornwall get more visitors arriving by boat rather than overland? Will more people be arriving in Cornwall via public transport? If so, does this mean that visitor numbers will continue increasing? Will frequency of visits to the countryside by car, particularly for recreation, start to dwindle because it becomes too expensive? Will sites that have public transport access increase in popularity while more isolated sites see a reduction in visitor numbers?*

Whatever the answers are to the above questions it is clear that there will be a major shift in the way the population in the UK is able to move around and that this will impact on recreational activities and visits to the countryside and therefore heath sites.

## 6.2.2 Food and agriculture

*"From farm to plate, the modern food system relies heavily on cheap oil. Threats to our oil supply are also threats to our food supply. As food undergoes more processing and travels farther, the food system consumes ever more energy each year".*

Danielle Murray, *Oil and Food: A Rising Security Challenge*, 2005

As the cost of importing food products starts to steadily rise, the UK will be forced to look at a sustained policy of agriculture, very similar to the efforts made during WWII; simply the need to set aside more land for food production. As Lucas, Jones & Hines (2006) emphasise in their report *Fuelling a Food Crisis* "The Common Agricultural Policy must be replaced by a policy framework than minimises fossil fuels use through the prioritisation of self reliance, so that Europe can meet this new challenge head on, delivering food security into the future, the current emphasis on ever increasing international trade needs to be replaced by policies to re-localise our food system."

It is not unrealistic to imagine that in the near future funding will once again be channelled into improvements to promote agriculture and secure land for food production, and the aims of protection and conservation will take a back seat. This could have an enormous impact on the heath landscape; from 1800 to the present day over 90% of heathland in Cornwall has been lost largely due to changes in farming practices as farmers were encouraged to convert heathland to improved fields. If this strategy is adopted again we could see any remaining heathland lost to farming. Although the HEATH project is re-introducing grazing and aims to develop a range of heath products, such as honey and beef, this may not prove productive enough to help sustain the population of Cornwall (500,000 and growing annually) and any visitors (5.5 million at present, but South West Tourism's strategy estimates that there could be a 13.5% increase in tourist trips to Cornwall between 2006 and 2011 which would take the total trips per year to over six million, (it is important to note that SW Tourism's strategy does not take into account any impacts of Peak Oil that will occur in that time)).

*Will the conservation of the heath landscape have to take a back seat to agricultural needs? If so, when will this shift in land use need to take place? Is there any way more intensive food production can be compatible with heathland restoration and conservation aims?*

Again, with no clear answers in sight it can only be concluded that these are the debates that need to be brought to the table sooner rather than later. Scenarios need to be explored and strategies drawn up to best manage any transition that is necessary, not

only the transition of land use but of people's perceptions and interactions with the landscape they live in.

**Tourism in the context of the global economy:** With an increase in energy prices businesses will start to feel the pressure and many will not be able to survive. The Hirsch Report predicts, for industrialized nations '*. . . increased costs for the production of goods and services, as well as inflation, unemployment, reduced demand for products other than oil, and lower capital investment. Tax revenues decline and budget deficits increase, driving up interest rates. These effects will be greater the more abrupt and severe the oil price increase is and will be exacerbated by the impact on consumer and business confidence.*'

Elsewhere the Reports authors note that;

*'Higher oil price volatility can lead to reduction in investment in other parts of the economy, leading in turn to a long-term reduction in supply of various good, higher prices, and further reduced macroeconomic activity. Increasing volatility has the potential to increase both economic disruption and transaction costs for both consumers and producers, adding to inflation and reducing economic growth rates.'*

*Will people be able to afford to travel for recreational purposes? Will businesses be able to survive to support a tourism industry?*

Whatever shape any future tourism industry takes it is clear that the tourism industry and the environmental sector need to prepare themselves as best they can and that it will only be those businesses, services and strategic bodies that have adapted to this changing landscape that will survive.

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