



09 South Coast Central

Falmouth Bay, River and the Roseland

Location

This AONB section covers the south central part of the Cornish coast from Porthpean near St Austell in the east, the Roseland Peninsula, the Fal Ria including Carrick Roads to just south of the A390 near Tresillian and west to near Perranarworthal and the edge of Penryn in the west

Roads blends with the coast there are low rocky cliffs and headlands between which are sheltered sandy beaches.

The tidal extent of the rivers reaches far inland to Truro and Tresillian. At high tide the reflective water catches the colours of the sky as it laps against low banks of exposed rock. At low tide extensive mud and sand banks edge the remaining winding ribbon of water revealed in a daily cyclical rhythm of changing character. Views over the immense expanse of water at the Carrick Roads give a sense of vast scale whilst further inland the ria system feels remote and increasingly enclosed, especially in the smaller creeks.

Extent

Approximately 16,000 hectares or just under 62 square miles and forms just over 16% of the whole of the Cornwall AONB (including Carrick Roads upstream from Trefusis Point/St Anthony Head).

Statement of Significance

The two distinct yet complementary areas of landscape character of the Fal Ria and the Roseland make up this beautiful AONB section and are described separately below.

The Fal Ria

Whilst sharing many of the qualities of the Helford Estuary the component parts of the Fal Ria (a flooded river valley) landscape are of a significantly larger scale and extent.

The River Fal meets the open sea at the broad expanse of the Carrick Roads, an internationally important sheltered deep water harbour capable of receiving large ocean going vessels. Stretching far inland of the Carrick Roads is a winding network of intertwining creeks and river valleys that are considerably more extensive than those of the nearby Helford estuary. The rivers and creeks sit amongst their landscape of steep sided small twisting valleys between rounded ridges creating a setting of strongly rolling topography. Where the mouth of the Carrick

Visually the dominant landcover is mature often dense estuarine Sessile Oak woodland cloaking the slopes along the waters edge. In places this woodland is extensive and seemingly untouched by human interference despite a long history of productive management lending a timeless primeval air to the watercourses. In other parts woodland has been partially or fully cleared where occasional large fields come right to the waters edge giving a more domesticated impression. This rich and productive farmland on the rounded convex hilltops between the creeks is a mix of pastoral and extensive arable uses giving considerable seasonal changes in colour. This seasonally changing agricultural scene is set in a constant and strong framework of Cornish hedges some of which display their construction in bare stone faces whilst many others are well vegetated and lined with mature trees strongly enclosing and defining the mostly small to medium irregular fields of medieval origin. However a proportion of larger recently enclosed straight sided fields adds variety to this overall field pattern.

In addition to the extensive Sessile Oak woodland the untamed presence of nature is further strengthened along the valleys and watercourses by a varied



range of semi-natural wetland habits including tidal saltmarsh, intertidal mudflats, reed beds, and fens whilst heathland and scrub reinforce the rugged undomesticated openness of the coastal margins.

Set amongst this strong natural framework are many distinctive landmarks and subtle historic remains. The many indications of defended Iron Age farm enclosures emphasise how long this productive land has been settled and the eye catching castles at St Mawes and its counterpart at Pendennis Castle (outside the AONB) have guarded the strategically important Carrick roads since the time of Henry VIII. St Anthony's lighthouse is a distinct focal point marking the transition to the open sea.

Across the Carrick Roads the visually imposing extent of the towns of Penryn and Falmouth including docks, cranes and busy moorings provides a strong contrast to more tranquil locations further up river. Despite the nearby presence of large towns settlement is scattered and small in scale, especially so away from the coast and waters edge. Villages cluster at the heads of creeks and around some of the numerous small quays whilst dispersed farmsteads abound throughout the agricultural land. Estates and ornamental parklands are a feature of the countryside and waters edge most notably at Trelissick and Tegothnan and with their mature ornamental vegetation they lend an exotic yet domesticated air to the waters edge.

Many small lanes link villages and farms often densely edged on both sides with mature trees

creating enclosed leafy tunnels and at Trelissick the King Harry Ferry emerges from the wooded banks providing a link for cars and pedestrians. The waterways are now extensively used for recreational and commercial boating with many small craft moored in sheltered locations or moving slowly across the water having a strong visual presence especially in the vicinity of settlements.

The Roseland

Separated from the Fal Ria by a pronounced ridge that crosses the narrow strip of land inland of Gerrans Bay, the Roseland has a coastline of sweeping and extensive bays with majestic cliffs rising above rocky shores, sandy beaches and small coves all sculpted by the erosion of their soft killas rocks. Accentuating and defining the form of the bays are distinctive rocky promontories which extend from inland ridges, notably at Nare Head, Dodman Point and Black Head where the harder basalt and dolerite better withstand the power of the sea. A geologically interesting extensive raised beach at Pendower stretches all the way to Nare Hotel. Sharply intersecting the cliff line is the gently rolling topography of the inland plateau whose subtle ridges are dissected by incised stream valleys. There are far reaching panoramic views from the rugged cliff tops complementing the enclosed and peaceful farmed landscape inland.

The arable and pastoral fields are predominantly of medieval origin being medium in scale with irregular boundaries that range from bare low stone walls near the exposed coasts to being broad and well

vegetated in the sheltered valleys. These hedges support occasional surviving and regrown elms. In some locations the outlines of early strip field systems are preserved in the current field patterns. Woodland occurs on steep valley sides, alongside streams and in valley bottoms often in combination with other valuable wetland habitats such as fens and rush pasture strengthening these ribbons of semi natural vegetation that weave through the agricultural land. Coastal rough ground including scrub and bracken emphasises the wildness of the cliff tops.

This markedly tranquil landscape is relatively free of man made land marks or structures. However it is rich in discernable pre-historic features from the largest Bronze Age burial mound in Cornwall at Carne Beacon to the County's largest prehistoric enclosure at the Iron Age cliff castle at Dodman along with numerous other traces of ancient human occupation and activity.

Estates and ornamental parklands are a feature of the countryside most notably at Caerhays and Heligan taking advantage of the sheltered valleys. Some attractive coastal villages shelter in the coves at stream mouths or have developed around picturesque small harbours as at Mevagissey and Gorran Haven. Inland apart from the churchtowns of Veryan and Gorran settlement is a sparse but even distribution of hamlets and farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes with high hedges and blind corners. Traditional black and white painted metal finger signs are a distinctive feature amongst these rural lanes.

Management

- The National Trust manages significant and extensive sites around the coast of the Fal Ria at Trelissick Gardens, Turnaware Point, Nr. St Mawes, and St Anthony Head and along the exposed south facing coasts at Portscatho, Gerrans Bay, Nare Head, Dodman Point, Near Gorran Haven and Black Head.
- Parish Plans are in place at Feock, St Just-in-Roseland, Gorran and St Ewe. Parish Plans are under preparation in Mylor, Veryan and Tregony. The Parishes of Carlyon, St Austell Bay and the Pentewan Valley (along with St Austell Town Council) were created in June 2009.
- St Just-in-Roseland Parish Plan is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in the Cornwall Council Local Development Framework.
- The Truro and Threemilestone Action Plan seeks to guide development of these large settlements that lie close to the AONB.
- Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative aims include 'All of the Coast' improvement for bird life and catchment area farming.
- The ancient sessile oak woodlands have largely fallen out of their previous long historical productive and economic management.
- The Fal Estuary is included in a candidate Special Area of Conservation, one of only two being proposed for its large shallow inlets and bays. (the other being Plymouth Sound). The designation is also for saltmarshes, intertidal mudflats and subtidal sandbanks.

Condition

- Holiday sites around Mevagissey, Gorran Haven, and Pentewan are unnecessarily visually intrusive by their location, layout and design.
- The design and scale of some modern development for example on the fringes of Falmouth, Malpas and at other small water side settlements is visually intrusive.
- There is poor or non existent footpath access around much of the Fal Ria and Carrick Roads.
- Change is taking place at some farmland to non agricultural uses – e.g. keeping horses.
- Native deciduous woodlands of the Fal Ria and sheltered local valleys throughout the Roseland to Porthpean are generally unmanaged and in places fragmented.
- In parts of this section there was significant loss to disease of hedgerow elm trees with impact on habitat connectivity and landscape character.

South Coast Central Guiding Principles

It is intended that these local guiding principles will support the actions of the AONB Partnership and other stakeholders and that their actions will be informed by them. Note: Some local issues may be addressed by strategic policies.

GP09.1 Ensure that the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB is fully taken into account in development proposals for expansion of Truro, Falmouth and Penryn and at waterside small settlements in order to retain the character of the Fal Ria landscape. Particular care should be taken to ensure that no development is permitted inside or outside the AONB which would damage its natural beauty, character and special qualities.

GP09.2 Seek reduction in landscape and visual impacts and better integration of existing holiday sites, visitor infrastructure, car parks and signage. Pay particular attention to the increase in scale, massing, associated development and respecting local character in external works, landscaping, site design and layout at Mevagissey, Gorran Haven and Pentewan.

GP09.3 Support provision of affordable housing in settlements such as St Just in Roseland; St Mawes; Gorran Haven; Mevagissey and Pentewan provided that there is access to local services, identified local need and that by location and design this fully respects historic settlement pattern and local vernacular including locally characteristic materials and that this conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the AONB.

GP09.4 Seek consideration of the cumulative landscape and visual impact from individual developments on local character and tranquillity for example along the shores and slopes of the Fal Ria.

GP09.5 Require assessment of the landscape, visual and cumulative impacts of future proposals for tall structures such as farm scale, community and commercial wind turbines along with masts and utilities infrastructure within the context of the evidence base including the emerging Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Supplementary Planning Document. Those proposals which have an adverse impact on natural beauty should not be supported.

GP09.6 Support consideration of landscape and visual impacts on the AONB landscape around the Fal Ria, Carrick Roads and associated creeks from increasing or changing patterns of water based access, leisure and commercial activity and their related infrastructure such as moorings, jetties, car parks and yards and seek conservation and enhancement of tranquillity, dark night skies and local character.

GP09.7 Support consideration of improved car free access options including, foot, cycle, bus and boat for example from Truro, Falmouth and Penryn in a manner that conserves and enhances the AONB.

GP09.8 Support appropriate improvements to footpath access around the Carrick Roads and its creeks with respect to the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 which does not encourage an increase in traffic levels or the provision of further car parks in the area.

GP09.9 Support management of visitor car parking in quiet and remote tranquil rural areas in the Fal Ria and throughout the Roseland up to Porthpean such that levels of use do not increase and visual impacts are reduced by use of carefully located unobtrusive small scale dispersed rural car parks set back from the coast for example as managed by the National Trust at Vault Bay and Dodman Point.



GP09.10 Seek protection of the landscape setting of key landmarks such as St Mawes castle, St Anthony's Lighthouse and others from negative impacts by new development including housing and lighting and seek enhancement of their settings.

GP09.11 Encourage the productive management of broadleaved woodlands for example around the Fal Ria in a manner that is consistent with conserving and enhancing local landscape character and biodiversity.

GP09.12 Encourage in the context of a wider landscape scale approach the extension of Sessile Oak woodlands around the Fal and its tributaries and in the inland and coastal valleys of the Roseland. Consider opportunities for small scale planting of local provenance native tree species such as Sessile Oak, Hazel and Alder to act as a future seed source where this is currently absent or sparse to assist subsequent natural regeneration.

GP09.13 Encourage the management of hedges to allow elm and other hedge tree regeneration or, where appropriate, planting of native or locally naturalised tree species on hedges in order to restore landscape character following the impacts of elm disease including raising awareness that such local hedges were previously considerably more treed.