

Report into the stockproofing options of Rosenannon Downs

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Introduction

Rosenannon Downs is an area of common land and SSSI which is in the ownership of Cornwall Wildlife Trust. The Trust are proposing to reinstate grazing to the common after a gap of some fifty years with the aim of returning the SSSI to favourable condition. The following report is based on fieldwork aimed at finding the most visually sympathetic means of ensuring the common is stockproof. In addition to fencing, cattle grids are also planned in order to reduce the need for roadside fencing so as to maintain the open nature of the common. Other livestock requirement such as gates, watering points and handling facilities are also included in the findings.

Findings

Cattle grids

Southern cattle grid

The road from Rosenannon to St Breock Downs passes through Rosenannon Downs in a north-south direction. Where this road emerges from woodland to the south and into the open downs there is a straight section of road suitable for the safe placement of a cattle grid (Photo 1) with space either to the east or west for a pedestrian/equestrian by

pass. On the roadside to the south west of this location is a pool formed by a natural spring coming off the downs (Photo2). It is possible that stock may tend to congregate at this point in order to drink. This problem could be avoided by taking the new fenceline around the pool.

Northern cattle grid

The road crosses Cransworth stream which forms the eastern boundary of the site at this point. Although the road is less straight at the northern limit there is scope to install a cattle grid just within the boundary of the site adjacent to the stream (Photo 3).

Fencing

Southern boundary

The southern boundary runs east-west and for its entire length is currently obscured by woodland and scrub (Photo 4), this constitutes good dormouse habitat especially to the east where it is composed primarily of oak and coppiced hazel. To the west it is composed primarily of willow. For much of its length there is a track running parallel with this boundary which emerges from the woods to form a clearly defined boundary between woodland and gorse scrub (Photo 5). By installing the fence line on the southern side of this track it would be hidden and allow stock access to the gorse whilst excluding them from the woodland.

The track eventually enters Mr Maycock's fields via a series of gateways (Photo 6) which would need to be reinstated. Although there is a fence along the inside of Mr Maycock's boundary this will be an entirely new section of fencing, there is scope to hide it at within the scrub boundary for most of its length (Photo 7).

Western boundary

The western boundary is currently formed by a Cornish hedge for its entire length approximately 1.5 metres in height (Photos 8, 9,10,11,) . This hedge has a shallow ditch on Trust land. The height of this hedge means that a new fence would not be

immediately visible from the downs as its silhouette would be hidden. There are some indications of a remnant fence line along the length of this hedge (Photo 12).

Northern boundary

This boundary is currently fenced with a wire and concrete post fence (Photo 13). Although this fence is generally in good repair and stockproof, it would be advantageous to replace it with fencing of the same specification as that to be used on the other boundaries for the sake of continuity.

Approximately half way along this boundary there is a pond which appears to be permanent (Photo 14) and an associated large water butt (Photo 15) feeding a trough. Although the trough is not on our land, the butt is and therefore potentially could be tied in with a watering point serving stock on Trust land.

At the far north-eastern corner of the site there is a scrubbed over farm-track leading to Higher Cransworth Farm and eventually the Rosenannon-St Breock road (Photo 16). Although not currently used, it may be best to include a gate within the fencing plan at this point so as to allow future access if required, although the track itself is in poor repair. A gate at this point may also offer scope to install livestock handling infrastructure.

Eastern boundary

From the north eastern corner to the gate to the gate into Cransworth Common Farm, this boundary, running north-south, is obscured by scrub (Photo 17). There is a track running the whole length of the boundary which runs approximately 10m away from the actual boundary. Between the track and boundary, in places there is a tract of bramble (Photos 18,19) which could be used to hide a new fenceline. The fenceline would need to be tied in with the gate infrastructure at Cransworth Common Farm.

Heading south from Cransworth Common Farm is a well worn track leading to the road, this track has dense scrub to the east within which is a defunct post and wire fence. Reinstated, this fence would be hidden in scrub. To the south this fenceline would then need to be run along the road to meet up with the northern cattle grid.

Lower eastern boundary (below road)

The area below the road is bordered to the east by Cransworth stream. This area slopes downwards towards the stream which is bordered by scrub that could be used to obscure a new fenceline (Photos 20 & 21). However, in places there is a fairly steep drop-off into the stream and so a new fence would have to be quite far away from the bank.

To the south of this section a tributary flows from the spring mentioned in Southern cattle grid above. This tributary is lined by scrub that would obscure a new fenceline (Photo 22) which would run back to the road to meet up with the southern cattle grid. Rosenannon Bog lies south of this area separated from it by an area of woodland, it may assist when trying to gain consent from the Secretary of State if a stile were incorporated into the new fenceline and a path maintained through the woodland to the existing kissing gate into Rosenannon Bog.

Fencing lengths

The total lengths of fencing required assuming cattle grids are installed would be approximately 4300 meters.

Conclusions

Cattle grids

Fencing of the Rosenannon to St Breock road could be avoided for the most part by the installation of two cattle grids, however in order to link these up with the boundary fencing some short sections of the road would need to be fenced. Roadside fencing would be difficult to hide but would allow exclusion of cattle from the spring and pool at the southern end of the site. Post and rail fencing could be used to soften the visual impact. Both cattle grids would require pedestrian/equestrian by-passes.

Boundary fencing

The southern and eastern boundaries of Rosenannon downs are currently obscured by scrub which could be used to hide a new fenceline for much of its length.

The western boundary is formed by a Cornish hedge which offers little opportunity to hide a new fenceline but does mean that it would not be silhouetted against the skyline. The northern boundary is composed of a concrete post and wire fence which although generally stockproof may need to be replaced. There are no features which would enable us to hide the fenceline in this boundary, long term, it may be appropriate to replace a fence at this point with a continuation of the Cornish hedge of the western boundary.

Gates and stiles

A total of four vehicular gates would need to be incorporated into the fencing design. These include three gates into Mr Maycocks land to the south and one leading into the currently unused track in the north east corner of the site. A gate in this corner could also provide livestock handling facilities. Pedestrian/equestrian by-passes would need to be included in the design of the cattle grids and one stile incorporated into the fencing of the lower eastern boundary below the road to allow pedestrian access to Rosenannon Bog.

Watering points

Approximately half way along the northern boundary is a pool which appears to be permanent. There is a large plastic water butt next to the pool which feeds a galvanized water trough. Although the pool and trough are not on our land, the water butt is. Through consultation with the owner of the neighbouring land we may be able to make use of this as a watering point for stock on Trust land. A watering point in this area would have the advantage of drawing stock away from the road.



Photo 1. Proposed location for southern cattle grid



Photo 2. Spring close to southern cattle grid



Photo 3. Proposed location for northern cattle grid



Photo 4. Southern boundary just above road



Photo 5. Mid southern boundary



Photo 6. Gate into Mr Maycock's field in southern boundary



Photo 7. Southern Boundary from south west corner



Photo 8. Western boundary from south west corner



Photo 9. Detail of western boundary



Photo 10. Western boundary facing north



Photo 11. Detail of western boundary



Photo 12. Remnant fencing in western boundary



Photo 13. Existing fence line of northern boundary



Photo 14. Pond at northern boundary



Photo 15. Watering point at northern boundary



Photo 16. Track leading east from north eastern corner



Photo 17. North eastern boundary



Photo 18. Eastern boundary



Photo 19. Scrub in eastern boundary



Photo 20. Southern boundary below road



Photo 21. Southern boundary below road



Photo22. View along southern boundary back towards road

All photos by Jason Appleby.