

WENDRON PARISH EVIDENCE OVERVIEW REPORT

No 8: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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1. Introduction

1.1 The natural environment is one of the defining components of Wendron Parish and a central part of its rural character, local identity and long-term sustainability. The Parish extends across approximately 12,500 acres, or 5,058 hectares, in inland west Cornwall between Helston and Redruth. Its physical geography is varied and distinctive, comprising rolling farmland, upland moorland, granite geology, wooded valleys, watercourses and historic mining landscapes. Together these create a parish that is environmentally rich, visually distinctive and historically layered.

1.2 The River Cober is the main watercourse flowing south through the Parish towards Helston, and it is joined by a network of smaller streams and tributaries, including the Tolcarn, Medlyn and Mellangoose Streams. These watercourses help shape the area's valleys, wetlands and semi-natural woodlands, and are important both to agricultural productivity and to biodiversity. Stithians Reservoir, which straddles the parish boundary, is also a major environmental feature, functioning both as a strategic water supply and as an ecological and recreational resource.

1.3 Wendron's natural environment cannot be separated from its human history. The landscape bears the imprint of prehistoric activity, long-established farming and Cornwall's mining heritage. That combination of natural processes and historic land use has produced a countryside of strong local distinctiveness, including Cornish hedges, historic field patterns, pockets of heath and woodland, scattered mature trees, mining remains and a network of habitats supporting wildlife. The stewardship of these assets is therefore central to the NDP's wider objective of conserving Wendron's character while allowing for appropriate and sustainable change.

2. Planning Policy Background

2.1 The statutory and policy framework for the natural environment is substantial. Section 40 of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** requires public authorities, including local planning authorities, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in exercising their functions in England. The **Environment Act 2021** introduced mandatory biodiversity net gain in the planning system, and government guidance states that, unless exempt, development in England is generally required to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain.

2.2 National policy in **the current National Planning Policy Framework**, published in December 2024 and amended in February 2025, places strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and

enhance the natural and local environment by protecting valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, securing net gains for biodiversity, preventing unacceptable pollution and remediating degraded land. Paragraph 188 requires plans to take a strategic approach to habitats and green infrastructure and to plan for natural capital enhancement at catchment or landscape scale. Paragraphs 192 to 195 address habitats and biodiversity more specifically, including ecological networks, measurable net gains, SSSIs, irreplaceable habitats and habitats sites. Paragraph 198 requires planning policies and decisions to identify and protect tranquil areas and to limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

2.3 At Cornwall level, the **Cornwall Local Plan** provides the strategic local framework. Policy 23 requires development proposals to sustain local distinctiveness and character and to protect and enhance Cornwall's natural environment, taking account of landscape sensitivity and capacity, cumulative impact, dark skies and tranquillity. Policy 25 addresses green infrastructure and expects important assets to be protected and enhanced, with development demonstrating how green infrastructure has informed place-making, connections, open space and long-term maintenance. Policy 16 also links environmental quality with health and wellbeing, including access to open space and active travel. The Cornwall Climate Emergency Development Plan Document, adopted on 21 February 2023, adds more detailed policy on biodiversity net gain, tree canopy, green infrastructure and climate resilience.

2.4 Other relevant policy and guidance includes the **25 Year Environment Plan** and the **Environmental Improvement Plan**, which both promote nature recovery, resilient ecosystems, cleaner water, cleaner air and better engagement with the natural environment; the **Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan**; the **Cornwall Environmental Growth Strategy**; the **Cornwall Planning for Biodiversity and Net Gain SPD**; the emerging **Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Nature Recovery Network**; and the **World Heritage Site Management Plan**. Together these provide a strong basis for an NDP approach which protects important habitats and landscape features, secures biodiversity gain, strengthens ecological networks, and supports both environmental quality and community wellbeing.

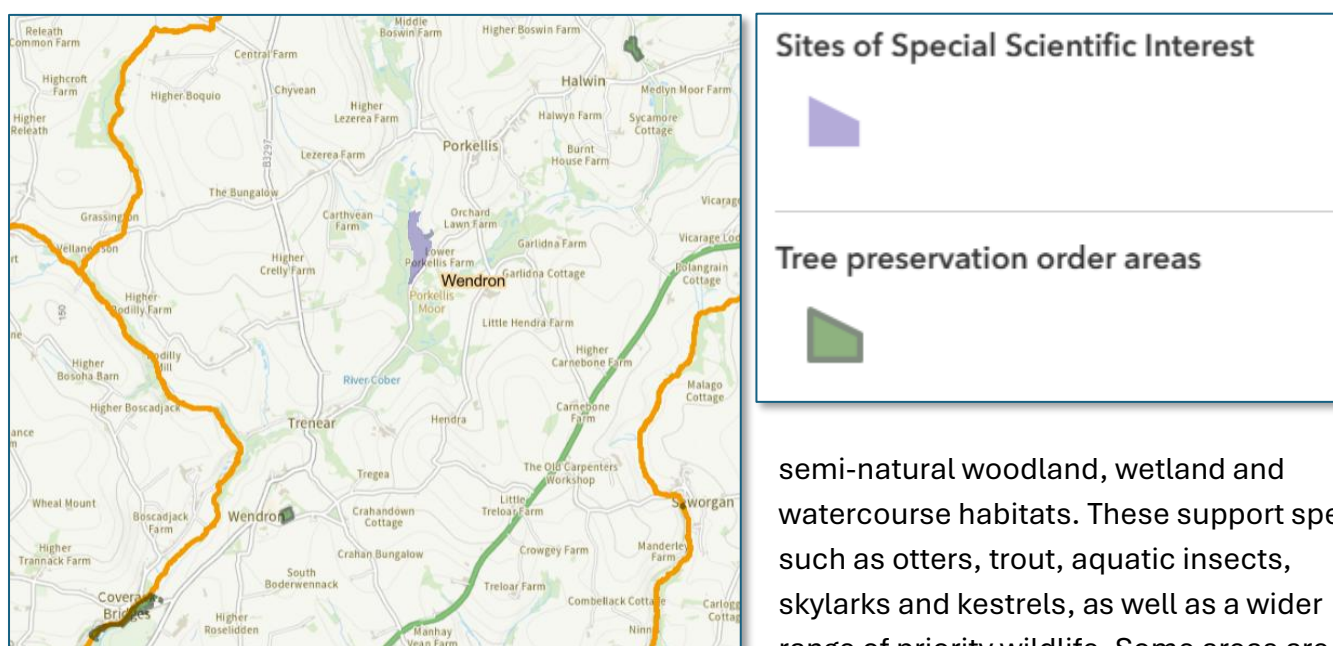
3. Baseline

Designation/Issue	Features
Ecology/Biodiversity	
Special Area of Conservation	None in the Parish but within the ZOI for Fal and Helford SAC. This is a sheltered site on the south-west coast of England, with a low tidal range and a wide range of substrates resulting in a wide range of communities representative biologically one of the richest examples of sandbanks in the UK. This area supports examples of sheltered intertidal mudflats and sandflats representative of south-west England and is particularly recognised for the importance of the species living in the sediments. This site is a ria system in south-west England that supports of marine inlets and shallow bays. The Fal and Helford is an example of saltmarsh vegetation in a ria (drowned river valley), a physiographic type restricted to south-west England and west Wales. Within this ZOI, proposals for any net increase in residential units will have a likely significant effect on the qualifying features of the European Site(s)

	(habitats site(s)) through increased recreational pressure when considered either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
Special Protection Area	Not in Parish but within 10km of Falmouth St Austell Bay SPA Falmouth Bay to St Austell Bay SPA is on the south coast of Cornwall, covering the marine environment incorporating five shallow, sandy bays; Falmouth Bay, Gerrans Bay, Veryan Bay, Mevagissey Bay and St Austell Bay. It also includes Carrick Roads, an estuarine area which meets the sea between Falmouth and St Mawes, and part of the tidal Helford River. The river complex areas are part of a ria system, typified by steep sides and slow tidal currents, with subtidal rocky shores and exposed intertidal mud on creeks and river branches. The diversity of marine habitats is reflected in existing statutory protected area designations, some of which overlap or abut the SPA. Qualifying species – black throated diver, great northern diver and Slavonian grebe.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (inc sites designated for geodiversity)	West Cornwall Bryophytes to the SW of Porkellis. The West Cornwall Bryophytes SSSI is a group of seven locations of former mining activity, that form a single SSSI. This site is special for its population of rare and scarce bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) which are adapted to growing on copper-rich substrates. The NE IRZ states that for the closest settlement which is Porkellis, residential development of over 100 houses will trigger the need for further assessment. The other settlements are further away and there is no threshold given for residential development.
National Nature Reserve	N/A
Local Nature Reserve	N/A
County Wildlife Sites	County Wildlife Site across the parish, mainly concentrated in the middle – North and predominantly moorland
Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat	Areas of woodland, moorland and lowland heath spread across the parish
Landscape	
National Landscapes	N/A
Area of Great Landscape Value	Approximately 2/3rds of the Parish (mainly middle – North) is in the AGLV or candidate AGLV
Natural Resources	
Air Quality Management Area	N/A
Agricultural Land Classification	Mainly grade 3 and 4, with a patch of grade 5 at Carnmenellis
Flooding and drainage	Flood Zone 3a around Stithians Reservoir and around Porkellis (Flood Zone 3a = land assessed as having between a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding or a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of flooding from the sea in any year) Flood Zone 3b around Stithians Reservoir and around Porkellis (Flood Zone 3b = Functional Floodplain comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood).
Coastal Vulnerability Zone	Not in CVZ
Mineral Safeguarding	N/A
Landfill	N/A

3.1 Wendron is a rural parish of high environmental and landscape value. The countryside is shaped by granite uplands, rolling farmland, valleys, streams, reservoir waters and a strong agricultural pattern of enclosed fields and dispersed settlement. The Parish is mainly covered by Cornwall Character Area 10, Carnmenellis, with southern parts lying within Character Area 6, Hayle to Helston Hinterland. The northern part of the Parish also lies within an Area of Great Landscape Value, extending from Burras across to Stithians Reservoir and towards Carn Brea. This reflects the scenic quality and distinctive character of the northern landscape.

3.2 The Parish supports a range of important habitats, including upland heath, rough grassland,



semi-natural woodland, wetland and watercourse habitats. These support species such as otters, trout, aquatic insects, skylarks and kestrels, as well as a wider range of priority wildlife. Some areas are

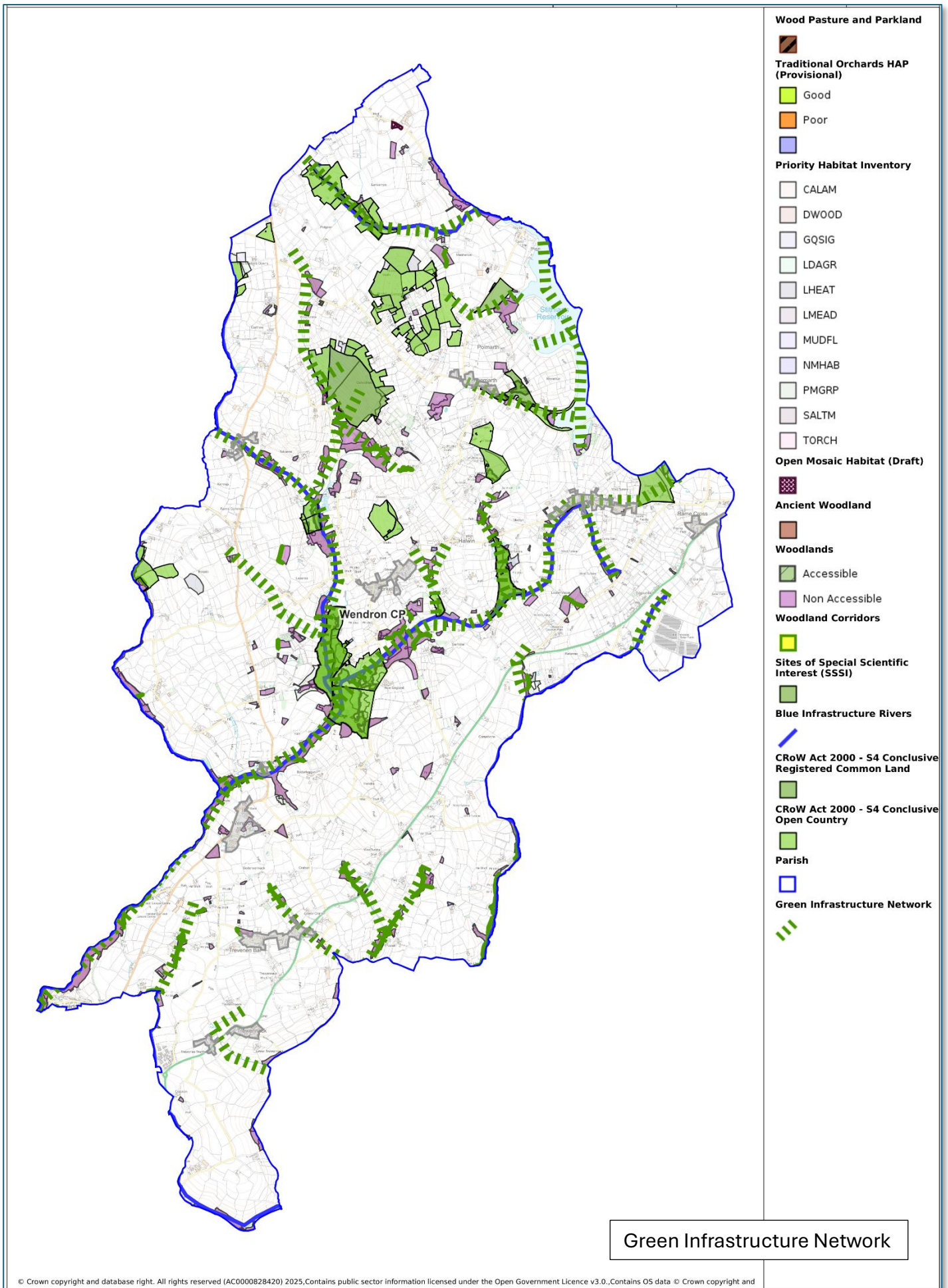
designated as **County Wildlife Sites** and others fall within a **Site of Special Scientific Interest** [West Cornwall Bryophytes at Porkellis Moor]. Although public access is relatively limited, the environmental value of the countryside is high, both in ecological terms and in its contribution to landscape character, tranquillity and informal enjoyment.

3.7 Trees and woodland features also make an important contribution to local amenity and environmental quality. In recognition of their public value, specific **Tree Preservation Order Areas (TPOAs)** have been identified within the Parish. Tree Preservation Orders may apply to individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands that make an important contribution to public amenity, and consent is required before works are carried out to protected trees. The identified TPO areas in Wendron are: **Coverack Bridges, The Old Vicarage, Wendron, and Land at Medlyn, Porkellis.** These designations reinforce the importance of mature trees and treed settings to the character of the Parish and highlight the need for development to take proper account of their contribution to landscape quality, biodiversity and local distinctiveness.

3.8 Collectively, the County Wildlife Sites, common land, village greens and protected tree areas demonstrate that Wendron possesses a rich and varied environmental resource extending well beyond nationally designated sites. They form part of the **wider green infrastructure network of the Parish [see map below]**, support biodiversity, reinforce rural character, and contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Their presence strengthens the case for an NDP approach that protects ecological assets, respects open land and treed settings, and uses development as an opportunity to strengthen habitat connectivity and environmental quality.

3.9 A veteran wild apple tree is recorded on the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory within Wendron Parish. It stands on open moorland in a publicly accessible location. Its importance lies not only in its age and form, but also in the habitats it supports, including lichens, mosses and ferns as epiphytes, together with associated invertebrate interest, showing that it functions as a small but valuable ecological resource in its own right.

3.10 The presence of this veteran wild apple reinforces the wider importance of Wendron's scattered trees, hedgerow trees and moorland-edge vegetation as part of the Parish's green infrastructure network. It also illustrates that individual trees, even where not covered by a formal designation such as a Tree Preservation Order, may make a significant contribution to biodiversity, local character and ecological continuity. As such, the recorded veteran tree strengthens the case for a precautionary approach in the NDP towards the retention, buffering and careful management of veteran and notable trees, recognising that once lost they cannot be quickly replaced in ecological or landscape terms.



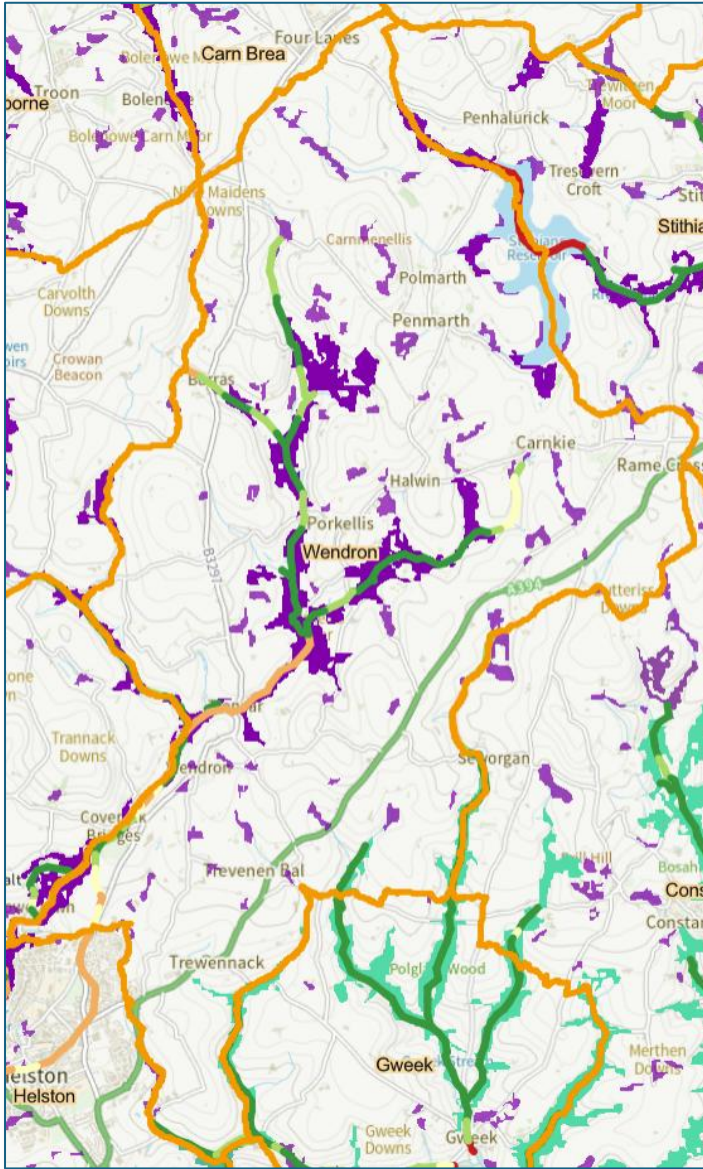
3.11 The Parish is **not heavily wooded**, but it contains an important structural network of scattered trees, hedgerow trees, woodland pockets, hedgerows and Cornish hedges. These features are disproportionately important in a sparsely treed landscape. They define field patterns, contribute to enclosure and visual rhythm, provide ecological connectivity, store carbon, filter air and water, moderate local climate and support a wide range of species. Their contribution is therefore both functional and cultural. Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are central to both biodiversity and climate resilience. They provide shade, shelter, carbon sequestration, water interception, flood mitigation and habitat connectivity. The evidence supports a planning approach in which major development is expected to be accompanied by proper arboricultural assessment and management, adequate woodland buffers, and landscaping schemes that meet canopy expectations and use appropriate local provenance species.

3.12 Cornish hedges are among the most distinctive features of Wendron's countryside. They are both historic boundary structures and living habitats, often functioning as "vertical meadows" and wildlife corridors. They help preserve the legibility of historic field systems, contribute strongly to local identity and support birds, bats, reptiles, pollinators and other wildlife. Their loss or erosion, whether through development, agricultural intensification or poor repair, would therefore diminish both biodiversity and landscape character. The notes also draw attention to the fact that Cornish hedges are not automatically protected in the same way as all important hedgerows, making local policy and community stewardship especially important.

3.13 Agriculture remains the dominant land use, with a mixture of pasture, livestock farming and smallholdings. This has helped preserve the rural pattern of the landscape, including regular field systems and traditional boundaries. The historic reputation of the area for cattle rearing is part of this agricultural identity. At the same time, the countryside is not static. Renewable energy infrastructure, including wind turbines, solar development and the Manhay Geothermal Project, is now also part of the changing landscape. This creates the need for careful balance between environmental enhancement, climate response and the protection of landscape character.

3.14 Biodiversity net gain and ecological connectivity are major baseline issues for the Parish, as noted above. Cornwall's draft **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** outlines developing proposals for how this can be achieved. By creating, protecting, enhancing and restoring a Cornwall Nature Recovery Network, it aims to help restore ecosystem and human health while strengthening the foundations of a prosperous Cornish economy. One way this may be supported is through the restoration of wildlife species formerly found in Cornwall. To inform this, a study was commissioned into the potential benefits and challenges of reintroducing species that once lived in the county. The study considered beavers, water voles, red squirrels, pine martens, wild boar and wildcats. It does not constitute a plan by Cornwall Council to reintroduce any of these animals, nor does it amount to a statement of intent on behalf of any other organisation.

3.15 In the Wendron Parish area the Species reintroduction feasibility study mapping shows a considerable potential to accommodate lost wildlife species [see below].

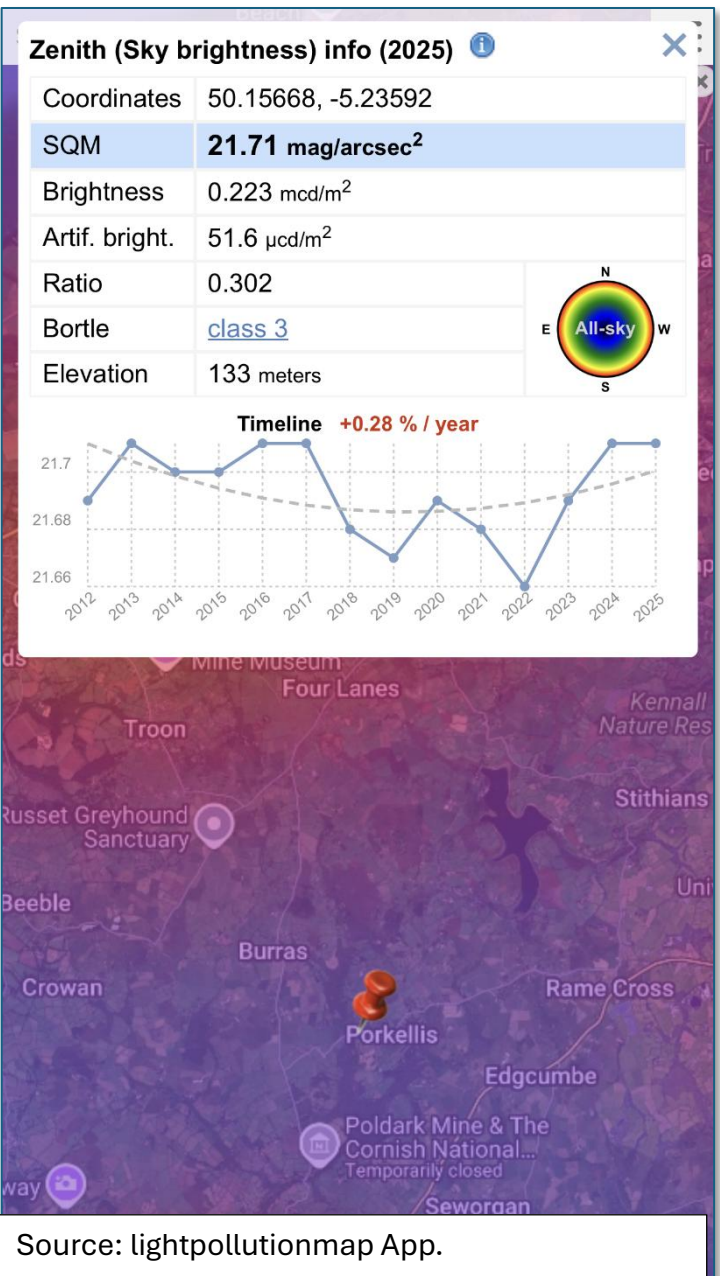


Species reintroduction feasibility study mapping

Please note that the mapping is only indicative of areas that may be suitable for different types of nature recovery. Any projects wishing to undertake reintroduction in any area **MUST** always involve landowners, land managers and local stakeholders from the outset to ensure local ownership and involvement.

For more information about the Species reintroduction feasibility study, please see <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/species-reintroductions>.

3.15 Tranquillity and dark skies are also important environmental assets of the Parish. The centre of the Parish has notably dark night skies, falling within Bortle Class 3, with a Sky Quality Meter (SQM) reading of around 21.7

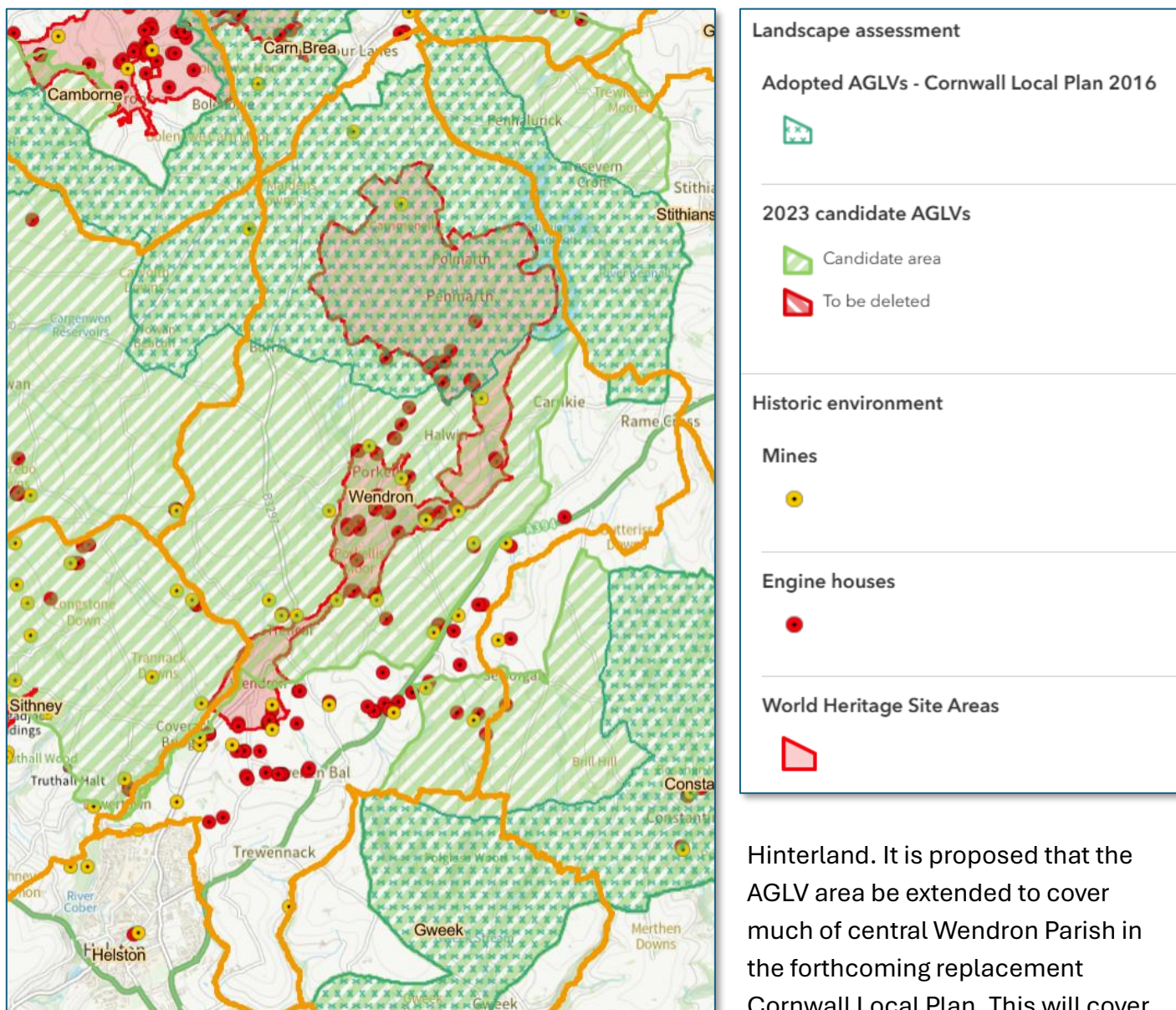


magnitudes per square arcsecond. This indicates a rural sky with very low levels of light pollution, where the Milky Way is clearly visible in suitable conditions, many stars that cannot be seen from built-up areas are easily observed, and natural darkness remains an important part of the local environment. On the Bortle scale, Class 3 skies are regarded as relatively dark rural skies, where artificial light is limited and generally does not dominate the night-time scene. SQM readings in the range of about 21.0 to 21.7 are commonly associated with these darker conditions. These qualities are part of Wendron's rural identity and contribute to recreation, health, wellbeing, biodiversity and low-impact tourism. They also have ecological value, especially for nocturnal wildlife such as bats and moths. Poorly designed

or excessive lighting, and intrusive noise in otherwise quiet rural areas, can therefore have effects that are both environmental and social.

3.16 Pollution and disturbance need to be considered in a broad sense. This includes not only air, water and soil pollution, but also artificial light, noise, land instability and the cumulative effects of incremental change. In Wendron, these issues can affect biodiversity, water quality, rural amenity and the experience of the landscape. This is particularly relevant where development is proposed in open countryside, near watercourses, close to wildlife sites, or in areas where dark skies and tranquillity are still strongly apparent.

3.17 Landscape. The northern area of the Wendron Parish is recognised by the 2016 Cornwall Local Plan as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). An AGLV signifies land of exceptional scenic quality and unique characteristics that warrant special protection from development. This designation was established by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. The AGLV encompasses the entire northern boundary area from Burras across to Stithians Reservoir in the east and up to and including Carn Brea (north west), and across just south of Camborne. The Parish is mainly covered by Cornwall Character Area (CCA) 10 Carmenellis, with southern areas close to Helston covered by CCA 6: Hayle to Helston



the significant part of Wendron Parish that lies within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site (WHS), a UNESCO-designated heritage asset of the highest international significance.

3.19 Although only part of the Parish lies within the WHS boundary, a much wider area falls within the setting of the WHS, i.e., the surrounding landscape that contributes to its character, legibility and significance. Development within this setting can directly or indirectly affect the integrity and authenticity of the WHS, as well as the ability to understand and appreciate its historic value. It is therefore essential that development proposals within the setting of the WHS are assessed with great care, with particular regard to their impact on views, historic features, landscape character and the wider rural and historic qualities that support its significance. Whilst the proposed extension of the AGLV will partly address this, it is sensible to ensure that development within the setting of the WHS respects its presence nearby.

3.20 Cumulative impact is a particular concern. Development that may appear minor in isolation can, when added to other changes over time, result in substantial harm. Incremental increases in traffic, lighting, visual clutter, noise, and poorly designed buildings or materials can gradually erode the qualities that justify World Heritage inscription. Such change may be difficult or impossible to reverse and can undermine both the visual coherence of the WHS and the ability to interpret and appreciate it within its landscape setting.

4. Community Feedback

4.1 Community engagement shows that **the natural environment is one of the defining concerns of local residents**. In the first stage of consultation, open spaces, views of the countryside, walks and trails, and rights of way were all rated very highly, indicating strong attachment to the Parish's landscape setting and its opportunities for recreation and everyday contact with nature. The second, more detailed survey reinforced this picture. Residents identified features such as Porkellis Moor, walking routes, village greens, riverside areas and other landscape features as valued community assets, and repeatedly emphasised the importance of protecting the natural landscape, preserving heritage features and retaining Wendron's rural character.

4.2 The consultation evidence also indicates **clear support for an approach to development that respects environmental limits and local distinctiveness**. Respondents overwhelmingly favoured small-scale, locally appropriate development, with strong preference for conversion of existing buildings, infill within settlement boundaries and community-led housing schemes, rather than forms of growth that would appear intrusive in the countryside. There was a consistent view that new development should respect the existing settlement pattern, landscape character and heritage of the Parish. Community facilities and accessible green spaces were also seen as important, with support for the protection of village halls, local pubs, sports clubs, village greens and community-accessible nature spaces. There was also support for community-led rewilding and nature recovery projects, particularly on lower-value agricultural land.

4.3 The survey findings further show that **environmental quality is closely linked in local opinion to wellbeing, infrastructure and everyday functioning**. Earlier consultation identified concern about traffic conditions and road safety, while later responses referred to the condition of lanes, footpaths

and wider connectivity. Better drainage, utilities and digital infrastructure were also seen as important, suggesting that residents view environmental stewardship and practical resilience as closely connected. Business feedback broadly supports this picture. Respondents highlighted the peaceful rural setting, proximity to nature and ability to work locally as key advantages of the Parish, while also identifying infrastructure constraints such as energy costs, unreliable digital connections, road quality and poorly maintained bridleways. Taken together, the consultation evidence indicates strong support for policies that protect the natural environment, reinforce rural character, improve access and green infrastructure, and ensure that change is managed in a way that sustains the qualities people most value about Wendron.

5. Implications for the NDP

5.1 Landscape-wide approach. The natural environment in Wendron should be treated as a connected landscape system rather than as a small number of isolated sites or designations. Watercourses, reservoir edges, heath, woodland, hedges, trees, grassland, wildlife sites, farmland and settlement edges all interact to create the Parish's ecological and landscape character. The NDP should therefore support policies that protect and strengthen this wider network.

5.2 Biodiversity gain and nature recovery. The policy framework now requires development to move beyond simple protection and to deliver measurable biodiversity gain. The NDP should therefore support an approach that follows the mitigation hierarchy, protects existing habitats wherever possible, strengthens ecological corridors, and directs off-site compensation or gain towards the local green infrastructure network and the wider Nature Recovery Network.

The strategic aim should be to not simply to avoid loss, but to strengthen connections between higher-value habitat areas, restore degraded features and ensure that new development contributes to long-term ecological resilience. Potential measures include native planting, enhanced hedgerows, bat and bird boxes, hibernacula, wildlife access points, habitat-rich SuDS, wetland restoration and re-wilding of suitable areas

5.3 Green infrastructure as place-making. Green infrastructure in Wendron is not only an ecological resource, but also part of landscape character, climate resilience, drainage, recreation and health. The NDP should therefore expect development to retain and enhance the most important green infrastructure assets, use them as part of the design structure of proposals, and secure long-term maintenance and connectivity.

5.4 Trees, Cornish hedges and hedgerows. These features make an exceptional contribution to the identity and functioning of the Parish. The NDP should provide strong support for their retention, repair and enhancement, and require proper surveys, management planning, buffering and replacement where loss is unavoidable. Particular care should be taken to ensure that new boundary treatments and any replacement Cornish hedges respect local stone type and traditional facing patterns.

5.5 Dark skies and tranquillity. Wendron's quieter countryside and dark night skies are environmental assets in their own right. The NDP should therefore support development that protects these qualities, limits intrusive lighting and noise, avoids harm to nocturnal wildlife, and where

appropriate supports low-impact forms of enjoyment, education and tourism associated with dark skies and tranquil landscapes.

5.6 Water environment and habitat corridors. The River Cober, Stithians Reservoir and the Parish's smaller streams should be recognised as important ecological, landscape and drainage assets. The NDP should support development that protects water quality, respects riparian habitats, strengthens buffers and makes positive use of SuDS and wetlands as part of biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancement.

5.7 Rural character and environmental distinctiveness. The natural environment of Wendron is closely tied to its agricultural and historic landscape. The NDP should therefore ensure that future development is rooted in place, respects topography and field pattern, avoids suburbanising effects in the countryside, retains grass verges and boundary features where possible, and integrates new planting and landscape treatment in ways that reinforce local character.

5.8 Overall implication. The natural environment evidence supports an NDP approach in which development conserves and enhances valued landscapes, protects and reconnects habitats, strengthens biodiversity, respects tranquillity and dark skies, and uses green infrastructure as a core part of place-making. In Wendron, environmental quality is not a secondary matter. It is fundamental to the Parish's identity, resilience and long-term sustainability.

ENDS