

STATES OF JERSEY



PLÉMONT HOLIDAY VILLAGE – ACQUISITION BY THE PUBLIC AND SALE TO THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR JERSEY

Lodged au Greffe on 27th September 2012
by the Chief Minister

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to approve the acquisition by the Public of the site known as the Plémont Holiday Village and adjoining land as identified on the drawing attached as Appendix 1 to the Report;
- (b) to negotiate with the owners for the purchase of the said land at a fair and proper price to be agreed by the Minister for Treasury and Resources;
- (c) to agree that, in the event of it not being possible to agree a fair and proper price with the owners of the land, the Minister for Planning and Environment should be empowered, in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 119 of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002, to acquire the land and any interest therein by compulsory purchase on behalf of the Public in accordance with the provisions of the Compulsory Purchase of Land (Procedure) (Jersey) Law 1961;
- (d) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to make the payment or discharge of the expenses incurred in connection with the acquisition of the said land and any interests therein, and of the payment of all legal expenses, from central reserves;
- (e) to agree that, following the acquisition of the land, it should forthwith be sold to the National Trust for Jersey for a consideration of £2 million subject to a condition that the National Trust for Jersey will thereafter restore the land to nature;
- (f) to authorize the Attorney General and the Greffier of the States on behalf of the Public to pass any necessary contracts in connection with the acquisition and subsequent sale of the site and adjoining land.

CHIEF MINISTER

REPORT

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.”

Introduction

The sentence above was written by Theodore Roosevelt when arguing for the essential need to conserve and protect areas of great natural beauty within the United States. The absolute need to protect the natural beauty of our countryside, and in particular the glorious coastline, is exactly the same in Jersey. Many people would consider that the future of Plémont has hung in the balance for far too long. The States decided as long ago as 10th October 2006, on the proposition of then Connétable K.P. Vibert of St. Ouen, that it was in the public interest for the headland at Plémont (namely the site formerly occupied by the Plémont (Pontins) Holiday Village complex and the surrounding associated land) to be preserved as open space for the enjoyment of the Public of the Island, but the means of realizing that decision has so far been elusive. The issue was considered by the then Council of Ministers, but a decision was deferred until the then Minister for Planning and Environment had determined the then current planning application. The Minister refused that application in June 2008.

Questions were put to Senator T.A. Le Sueur, then Chief Minister, during 2008, as to the future of Plémont, but the Council clearly had concerns as to the cost of acquiring the land. On 29th September 2008, the Connétable of St. Ouen lodged a further proposition (P.152/2008) requesting the Minister for Treasury and Resources – (a) “to open negotiations with the current owners of Plémont Holiday Village site, St. Ouen, with a view to ascertaining their willingness to sell the site and, if appropriate, determining an agreed value for it; and (b) to present the outcome of the negotiations to the States to enable members to decide what further action, if any, they might choose to take.” The States approved the proposition by 37 votes to 6 (with 2 abstentions) on 22nd October 2008.

Negotiations were instituted, but it was clear that the owners had in mind a price that was regarded by the Treasury as unrealistic, and no agreement proved possible.

On 9th September 2009, the Connétable of St. Ouen lodged a further proposition asking the States “to approve, subject to the availability of the necessary funds voted by the Assembly, the acquisition by the Public of the site known as the Plémont Holiday Village site”, if necessary by compulsory purchase. The States debated the proposition on 19th and 20th January 2010 and rejected it by 23 votes to 19. One of the crucial reasons for rejection was undoubtedly the uncertainty as to the cost of the land if the matter had proceeded to compulsory purchase.

Three material changes have occurred since that decision justifying, in my view, the reconsideration of this very important matter. Firstly, the headland at Portelet has been subject to residential development, leading to a considerable public outcry. Secondly, greater clarity has been obtained as to the likely value of the land in the event of it being acquired by compulsory purchase. Thirdly, there is a clear commitment by the National Trust for Jersey indirectly to contribute towards the costs of acquiring the land and to take responsibility for restoring it to nature for the benefit of the public. These changes are considered in more detail below.

Planning history

Development of the site first took place in about 1874 when the Plémont Hotel was constructed. During the 1930s the hotel was demolished and Jersey Jubilee Holiday Camp was built on the existing site. It should be noted that there were no planning controls in existence at that time. After the occupation there was a change of name and the camp was re-opened in 1946 as Parkin's Luxury Holiday Camp. In 1961 the site was sold to Pontins and re-modelled and renamed as Pontin's Holiday Village, and later Plémont Holiday Village. The Village catered for 400 holidaymakers.

In 1998 Dandara, with the approval of the owners, Scottish and Newcastle, applied for planning permission to construct 117 two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses and apartments. Senator P.F. Horsfall, then President of the Policy and Resources Committee, called for the States to acquire the land and to restore it to nature. In January 1999 the application was overwhelmingly rejected at a Parish Assembly in St. Ouen. Later that month, the National Trust for Jersey lodged its objection, and also called for the land to be restored to its natural state. In March 1999, Dandara's application was refused as being contrary to Green Zone policy. A notice of appeal to the Royal Court against the planning refusal was lodged but not pursued.

In October 2000, Scottish and Newcastle, the owners of the sites at Plémont and Portelet, announced that both holiday camps were closing for business. The possibility of the States acquiring the Plémont site was urged by the National Trust over the next few years, and discussions took place between the Trust, Scottish and Newcastle and public officials. In January 2001, Scottish and Newcastle applied for permission to change the use of the holiday village from tourism to residential accommodation. The company was advised that the application could not be determined in the abstract.

In June 2002, following the submission of a tourism viability report, the Planning and Environment Committee conceded that it could not refuse permission for a change of use solely on the ground of loss of a prime tourism site, and indicated that it would be willing to consider some limited form of residential development, subject to being satisfied that there would be no adverse ecological impact on the surrounding area and that a significant environmental gain could be demonstrated. The Committee decided that it would not support any major residential development, or any residential development of the same floor-space area that existed, or any form of "housing estate" style of development. The advice was issued without prejudice to consideration under the normal planning process. The advice was issued shortly before the coming into force of the new Island Plan on 11th July 2002.

Between 2002 and 2006, a number of schemes were put forward, all of which were rejected on grounds of unacceptable scale or design, and failure to demonstrate significant environmental gain. In December 2005, Plémont Estates Ltd. ("the owners") acquired the site for £4.85 million.

In February 2006 the owners discussed with the National Trust a revised plan to build 36 houses. In exchange for the Trust's support, the owners would offer land that could be returned to nature. Alternatively, the owners were willing to consider selling the land to the States. The National Trust launched the Coastline Campaign to raise awareness of the plight of Plémont. In September 2006 the Trust launched an appeal for funds to buy the land. In October 2006, as mentioned above, the States resolved that it was in the public interest that Plémont should be retained as open space. In

October 2006 the National Trust for Jersey presented to the then Chief Minister, Senator F.H. Walker, a petition signed by 10,300 Islanders supporting the restoration to nature of the Plémont land.

In May 2008, the then Minister for Planning and the Environment, Senator F.E. Cohen, against officer recommendation, refused the application for permission to construct 36 houses. He gave the following reasons –

- “1. The Plémont Holiday Village site lies within an area of outstanding landscape and amenity value on the Island’s north coast, and forms part of a wider area of the north coast which is highly valued by Island residents and visitors for its scenic quality, remoteness and tranquillity. On the Island Plan the site is located in the Green Zone. Notwithstanding that the site presently comprises an unsightly ‘holiday village’ complex, it is considered that the application proposal for a residential development on the site, by virtue of the scale and extent of the proposed development and number of units (36), would be inappropriate in this location and have an adverse visual impact in the landscape which would unreasonably harm the existing character, appearance and ambiance of the area; also that the proposal would not result in a substantial environmental gain such as to justify an exception to the presumption against development in the Green Zone. As such the proposal would be contrary to Island Plan Policies C5 (Green Zone), C2 (Countryside character), G2 (i), (ii) and (iv) (General Development Considerations) and G15 (Replacement Buildings).
2. the proposed residential development, by virtue of the scale/number of units, in conjunction with the remote location of the site relative to community facilities and services, is contrary to Island Plan G1 (Sustainable Development) which requires, amongst other things, that development proposals should seek to integrate new development with the existing built-up area – the rationale for which is to reduce car trips and encourage sustainable modes of transport.”.

Although the Island Plan 2011 has now replaced the Island Plan 2002, nothing of substance has changed in so far as the treatment of the land at Plémont is concerned. The relevant provisions of the Island Plan 2011 are considered below.

In April 2009, the owners applied for outline permission to demolish the existing holiday village and to construct 46 two-bedroom and 27 three-bedroom self-catering units with associated facilities. In November 2009 the application was refused by the Minister, again contrary to officer recommendation, on grounds similar to those given above.

On 16th November 2009 the owners applied to construct 28 houses, set in 3 individual clusters. Difficulties with the northern boundary led to this application being withdrawn, but it was in substance reinstated in December 2011, excluding the land in disputed ownership. The owners assert that the application involves returning two-thirds of the site to nature, although the National Trust for Jersey rightly disputes the precise proportion, on the ground that some of the land lies between the 3 clusters of houses and is likely eventually to be domesticated.

Statutory context

There is no doubt that, but for the existence of the derelict remains of the former holiday camp, planning permission would never even be contemplated for the construction of 28 houses on this site. The land is in the Green Zone, on an exposed position of the north coast, and in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The original holiday camp was constructed before planning controls came into effect in 1945. From the very beginning, the States had been concerned to protect the coastline from unsuitable development, and it is likely that the constructions at Plémont and Portelet were in the minds of those who framed the original Regulations shortly after the Liberation of the Island. Regulation 5 of the Preservation of Amenities (Jersey) Regulations 1947 provided that, in considering whether or not to grant consent, the Committee should “have regard to the beauty of the landscape or countryside, the view from any road and the other amenities of the locality, ... and **shall in no case consent to the erection or extension of a holiday camp or other like establishment.**” [Emphasis added].

The Preservation of Amenities (Jersey) Regulations 1950, which replaced the 1947 Regulations, provided at Regulation 5 that “the Committee shall have regard to the beauty of the landscape or countryside, **the aspect of the Island from the land or from the sea**, the general amenities of the locality, **the desirability of keeping the coasts of the island in their natural state**, ... and ... may refuse consent to the erection of any building where the Committee is of opinion that the erection of the building would be detrimental to ... the locality.” [Emphasis added].

The imperative to protect the Island’s coastline has been repeated in every enactment relating to planning since then. It is now to be found in Article 2 of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002, which provides that –

“2 Purposes of Law

- (1) The purpose of this Law is to conserve, protect and improve Jersey’s natural beauty, natural resources and general amenities, its character, and its physical and natural environments.
- (2) Accordingly it is the intention of this Law –
 - (a) to ensure that when land is developed the development is in accordance with a development plan that provides for the orderly, comprehensive and sustainable development of land in a manner that best serves the interests of the community;
 - (b) to protect sites, buildings, structures, trees and places that have a special importance or value to Jersey;
 - (c) to provide for the orderly management of transport and travel, both on, and from and to Jersey;
 - (d) **to ensure that the coast of Jersey is kept in its natural state;**
 - (e) to control advertisements in Jersey; and
 - (f) to impose other necessary controls on the development and use of land in Jersey.” [Emphasis added].

But for the existence of the former holiday camp which has disfigured the Plémont headland for a long time, there would be no question of any development taking place. This is an important consideration for the States in deciding whether or not to re-affirm its commitment to the acquisition of the site in the interests of the public. However, the former holiday camp does exist, and it is necessary therefore to consider the relevant parts of the Island Plan.

The Island Plan 2011

The Island Plan 2011 provides at Policy NE7 that – “The areas designated as Green Zone on the Proposals Map will be given a high level of protection and there will be a **general presumption against all forms of new development for whatever purpose**” [Emphasis added]. The Minister for Planning and Environment recognizes, however, that within this zone there are many buildings and established uses, and that to preclude all forms of development would be unreasonable. Thus, the following types of development will be permitted only where the scale, location and design would not detract from, or unreasonably harm, the character of the area:”.

There follow a number of instances where development might be permitted, none of which is relevant except paragraph 5, which provides “Redevelopment of an existing non-residential building where its use remains the same.” It would, therefore, unless the tourism use can be said to have been abandoned, be open to the owner to restore the derelict buildings of the holiday village to use for a tourism purpose. Subject to the issue of abandonment, that is an option for the owner, and would set a calculable value for the purpose of acquisition by the States, albeit a value lower than the value attributable to land with permission to develop 28 houses. If the tourism use has been abandoned, the land is to be valued as agricultural or open heath land.

The owner seeks, however, to exploit a provision in Policy NE7 which follows the listed exceptions.

“For the avoidance of doubt:

...

c. there will be a presumption against the use of commercial buildings for purposes other than for those which permission was originally granted *[sic]*. Exceptions to this will only be permitted where:

...

ii. their demolition and replacement with a new building(s) for another use would give rise to demonstrable environmental gains and make a positive contribution to the repair and restoration of the landscape character of the area through a reduction in their visual impact and an improvement in the design of the buildings that is more sensitive to the character of the area and local relevance. It is expected that such improvements would arise, in particular, from reductions in mass, scale, volume and the built form of buildings; a reduction in the intensity of use; more sensitive and sympathetic consideration of siting and design which ensured the local relevance of design and materials; and a restoration of landscape character.”.

The owner's argument is that by moving this proposed development of 28 houses in 3 separate blocks to the southern end of the site, and removing the derelict holiday village, there would be a "demonstrable environmental gain" which would "make a positive contribution to the repair and restoration of the landscape character of the area". This is, of course, a matter for the inspector appointed to conduct an Inquiry, and ultimately for the Minister for Planning and Environment. The counter-argument is that a housing development of this scale in an exposed and otherwise unspoiled area of the north coast would have an equally negative impact upon the landscape. It would remove the unsightly ruins of the holiday camp, but it would not involve, in any objective sense, an environmental gain.

The Plémont site is designated as Green Zone and is entitled under the Island Plan approved by this Assembly to "a high level of protection". This proposed development would mean losing forever the incomparable wildness and natural state of this part of Jersey's coastline, contrary to all the planning legislation that has been in existence since 1945.

During the debate on the Island Plan 2011, the Assembly debated an amendment brought by Senator F. du H. Le Gresley which would have brought the Plémont site within the protection of the Coastal National Park. Policy NE6 of the Island Plan provides that – "The Coastal National Park ... will be given the highest level of protection from development and this will be given priority over all other planning considerations. In this area there will be the strongest presumption against all forms of new development for whatever purpose." The amendment was lost by 23 votes to 25. A majority of members appears to have been concerned about the legal effect of such an amendment upon the outstanding application by the owner for planning permission. If members adopt this proposition, and the Public acquires the Plémont land, there seems no reason why it should not be added in due course to the Coastal National Park.

The international dimension

The longstanding statutory protection for Jersey's coastline is evidence enough that successive generations have wanted to preserve, intact and unspoiled, the natural beauty of the Island's coast. It is relevant nonetheless that many other countries have adopted similar policies with a view to conserving the beauty of their coasts. The National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland now cares for some 720 miles of coastline in the United Kingdom. The Neptune Coastline Campaign was founded in 1965 with a governmental grant of £250,000 (the equivalent today of £3–4 million) and has since raised over £67 million to help save and protect some of the country's most beautiful stretches of coast.

In France *Le Conservatoire du Littoral* has an annual budget of €30 million (including €25 million for acquisition, if necessary by compulsory purchase). It now administers over 750 miles of coastline for the people of France. It is said to be passing a contract a day for the acquisition of land, and has now entered a partnership with the Landmark Trust called Landmark France to protect historic buildings on the coastline.

For the States to enter a partnership agreement with the National Trust for Jersey to save Plémont from development would be entirely consistent with international trends.

The environmental arguments

It is important not to view Plémont in isolation, but as part of the north coast environment running from Grosnez to Bonne Nuit and beyond. The whole area is of immense geological and archaeological importance. But from an environmental perspective, whether one views the area from the sea, from Grosnez or from further east, the Plémont headland with the adjacent land is, apart from the eyesore of the derelict holiday village, a stunningly beautiful part of Jersey. Its beauty lies in its wildness and untainted character. However well-designed and architecturally attractive the proposed 3 clusters of houses may be in themselves, they would despoil the area. The suggestion that a part of the land would be handed over to the Public once the development is complete is, of course, superficially attractive, but the price of restoring to nature the land on which the holiday village is built is the despoliation in environmental terms of the adjacent land.

It is significant that those protesting against the development of Plémont come from all parts of the Island. The 'Line in the Sand' protest gathered 7,000 people to underline the point that the coastal landscape is special and should be protected. The petition signed by over 10,000 people made the same point. The widespread fury at the development at Portelet, however architecturally interesting the houses might be, was a feature of the recent election meetings. Once land has been developed, it is almost always lost forever. That is why the opportunity that the States and the people of Jersey now have to put right an environmental mistake and to preserve Plémont for the future should be grasped with both hands.

The only apparent justification for building houses in the Green Zone at Plémont is that there is an existing development in poor condition, which needs to be removed. It is unnecessary in this report to deal with the planning arguments as to whether this is a "brown field" site justifying a departure from the rule that building is not permitted in the Green Zone. The contention is that building should not take place, and that the Public should acquire the site for the benefit of this and future generations.

Acquisition by compulsory purchase

In Jersey, although not in the UK, acquisition by compulsory purchase has traditionally been regarded as a remedy of last resort. Following the States' resolution in 2008, the States Property Office opened negotiations with representatives of the owners. These negotiations did not progress far. In November 2009 the owners' agents published a document entitled "The Green Plan" in support of their current application for planning permission. The document indicated that – "the value of the site, for the purpose of returning the land to nature, has been established at circa £14.7 million less demolition costs". This valuation bore little relationship to the cost of acquisition in 2005 (£4.85 million) and was apparently based upon the price of £800,000 paid by the States for the Bal Tabarin site in 2001.

The National Trust for Jersey has obtained a valuation based upon the current plans of the owners, and another valuation has been obtained by Jersey Property Holdings. It would not be appropriate to place these valuations in the public domain, because they contain information that it would not be sensible to reveal at this stage. Suffice it to say that the upper end of the valuations is in the region of £7.8 million.

Clearly, the value of land depends upon what the owner is permitted to do with it. The valuations referred to above have been based upon the assumption that planning permission would be granted by the Minister for Planning and Environment to the application currently before him for the construction of 28 houses. It is possible, at the lowest, that such permission would not be forthcoming. The Minister has referred the application to a Public Inquiry to be conducted by an independent Inspector whom he has appointed. The Inspector has received submissions and is conducting a hearing. The Inspector's conclusions will affect the value of the land.

Whatever the Inspector's conclusion in relation to the current application before the Minister, however, the value of the land would ultimately fall to be assessed, if the States agree to this proposition, by arbitrators appointed by the Royal Court for that purpose. The arbitrators would be bound to assess the value as being "the amount which the land might have been expected to realize if sold on the open market by a willing seller on the date on which the Inferior Number of the Royal Court made the order vesting the land in the public." (see Article 10(2) of the Compulsory Purchase of Land (Procedure) (Jersey) Law 1961 ("the 1961 Law")).

The provisions of the 1961 Law apply only where the provisions of another Law have conferred power on the States to acquire land by compulsory purchase on behalf of the Public. The relevant Law for this purpose is the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002. Article 119(1) of that Law provides that –

- “(1) The States may acquire land by compulsory purchase in accordance with the Compulsory Purchase of Land (Procedure) (Jersey) Law 1961 if the States are satisfied that the land should be acquired for a purpose of this Law specified in Article 2.”

Article 2 of the Law provides that –

- “(1) The purpose of this Law is to conserve, protect and improve Jersey's natural beauty, natural resources and general amenities, its character, and its physical and natural environments.
- (2) Accordingly it is the intention of this Law –
-
- (d) to ensure that the coast of Jersey is kept in its natural state;
-”

The Law Officers of the Crown have confirmed that compulsory purchase is open to the States in this case.

Article 3 of the 1961 Law provides that –

“3 Plan to be prepared and money voted

No land may be acquired by compulsory purchase on behalf of the public unless –

- (a) a plan showing the land to be acquired has been approved by the States; and
- (b) a credit of the monies necessary to meet the expenses to be incurred in the acquisition of the land has been voted by the States.”

The plan showing the land to be acquired is attached to this Report. As to the monies necessary to meet the expenses of acquisition, the Minister for Treasury and Resources has indicated that, if the States were to approve this proposition, the costs of acquisition would be sourced initially from central reserves, but the intention is that the Fund would be reimbursed either from receipts from the States of Jersey Development Company Limited or the proceeds of sale of other land.

Sale to National Trust for Jersey

If the States agree to the acquisition of the land at Plémont, whether by compulsory purchase or by agreement with the owners, it is the intention that the land be sold to the National Trust for Jersey to be maintained for the benefit of the Public of Jersey. The States are accordingly requested, as part of this proposition, to agree to the onward sale of the land to the National Trust for the sum of £2 million. The National Trust would commit to restoring the land to nature at the expense of the Trust. A letter from the President of the National Trust for Jersey is annexed as **Appendix 2**. The offer from the National Trust is unconditional, save that some requests are made in relation to fees chargeable by States departments.

It is also suggested that, if the acquisition price by the States is less than £5 million, the National Trust might benefit from 50% of that reduction. It is envisaged that the costs of demolition and clearance, and the restoration of the land to maritime heath land, is likely to be in the region of £1 million. That figure includes the cost of dealing appropriately with the asbestos present in the buildings.

If the States agree to the acquisition of the Plémont land, a significant part of the cost will be met by members of the public contributing their donations, large and small, to the National Trust.

The costs of any arbitration would of course have to be met by the States. The costs of the Lesquende acquisition, which lasted many years and which was beset by many legal complexities, formed the basis of an estimate given to the previous Council of Ministers in its report in 2010. It is thought that that estimate is not, in the context of Plémont, a valid comparator. This would be a relatively straightforward arbitration to establish the market value of the land. The costs should not exceed £200,000.

The maximum costs of acquisition are therefore estimated at £8 million (£7.8 million + £200,000). The National Trust for Jersey would purchase the land for £2 million and meet the expenses of restoring the land to nature. The maximum net cost to the States is therefore estimated at £6 million. It is hoped, however, that the actual costs of acquisition would be lower than that maximum figure. The photographs annexed at **Appendix 4** give some indications both of the existing derelict buildings and the expanse of unspoilt natural coast in which it is situated.

Restoration to its natural state

Some have questioned what is involved in “returning the land to nature”. Clearly, the Environment Department will have the last word in relation to what works are appropriate and desirable. However, the National Trust has commissioned and prepared a document entitled *Plémont Headland Restoration Proposals* which is annexed to this report as **Appendix 3**. It is hoped that the proposals document will give members an idea of the intentions of the Trust in this respect. It should be noted

that Field 48 to the east of the Holiday Village site is not in fact included within the site identified in paragraph (a) of the proposition.

Conclusion

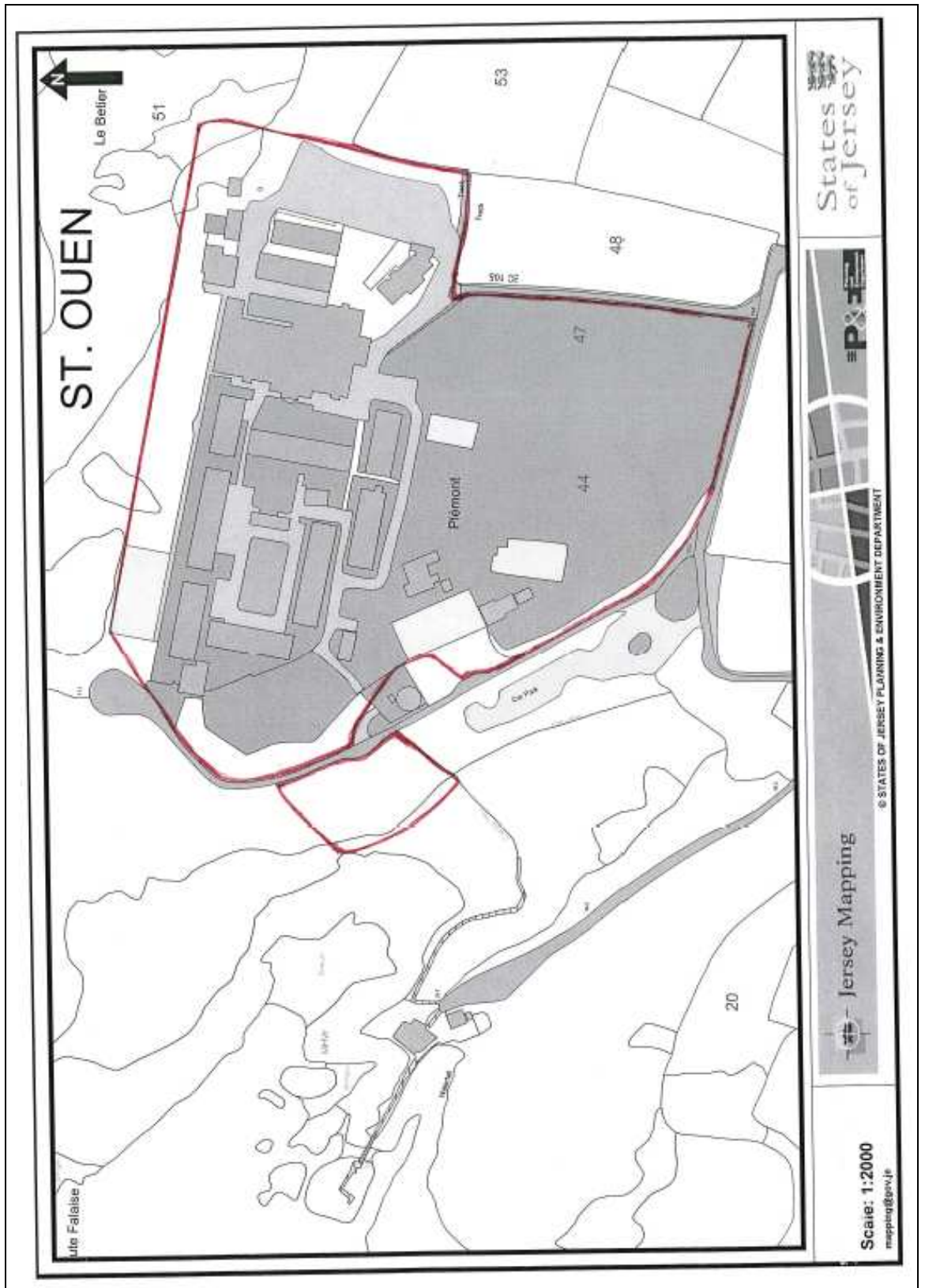
It is hoped that few members would disagree that, in principle, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Plémont Holiday Village and adjacent land should be restored to nature. There is, of course, a balance to be struck between the desirability of achieving that end and the cost to the public purse of doing so. The proposition before the Assembly involves a suggested partnership between the States and the National Trust for Jersey. The exact costs of the acquisition of the land and its restoration to nature are inevitably not yet known, but the expectation is that the contributions to be made by members of the public, through their gifts to the National Trust for Jersey, will represent a figure not far from 50% of the overall total. This seems a reasonable compromise. The preservation of the unspoilt beauty of the north coast in the vicinity of Plémont is worthy of that price.

Financial and manpower implications

The Proposition would authorize the acquisition of the land shown on the plan, by compulsory purchase if need be. The estimate of the financial implications is that the net cost to the States would not exceed £6 million. The financial cost may be less, but that will depend upon a number of factors, including the outcome of the Public Inquiry established by the Minister for Planning and Environment. The costs of acquisition will be sourced initially from the Treasury central reserves, but the intention is that the vote will be reimbursed, either from receipts from the States of Jersey Development Company Ltd. or from the proceeds of the sale of other land.

There are no manpower resource implications.

The Chief Minister would like to extend his thanks to the Assistant Chief Minister, Senator Sir P.M. Bailhache, for his involvement with the proposition, and the Council of Ministers for its support.



The National Trust for Jersey



28th August 2012

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

Dear Sir Philip,

Acquisition of Plémont Heath Land

The National Trust for Jersey is grateful to you for your efforts in trying to save a vital piece of the North Coast. We believe that the members of the States of Jersey will have the foresight and determination to acquire these cliff top vergées for the benefit of the Island and for the enjoyment of Islanders and visitors for all time.

In this regard I write to confirm that should your proposition succeed, The National Trust for Jersey has agreed to acquire the former Plémont Holiday Village site from the States of Jersey directly for the sum of two million pounds. The Trust would also commit to remove the derelict buildings and to clear the site as soon as it is able. Thereafter it would be the Trust's intention to restore the land to maritime heath land and to maintain the land in a way which enhances the habitat of cliff dwelling flora and fauna.

There are no conditions in relation to this offer other than a request that should the acquisition costs of the States prove to be less than £5,000,000, the Trust might benefit from 50% of that reduction so that these funds could be applied towards the cost of demolition and restoration. In addition, on the basis that the National Trust for Jersey would be carrying out the wishes of the States Assembly, we would kindly request that any dumping and planning fees in relation to the

demolition works be waived by TTS and the Environment Department respectively. Whatever the costs of acquisition by the States, the Trust would commit to buying the site for £2 million.

Without a doubt such an undertaking presents an enormous challenge for the Trust, but when we undertook the challenge of saving 16 New Street, we accepted the risks in the secure knowledge that our friends, supporters and the Island as a whole would help us along the way. We sincerely believe that safeguarding Plémont is also achievable and we hope that States members will join us in supporting your proposition to help protect part of Jersey's coastline for ever and for everyone.

Yours sincerely

Celia L. Jeune
President of The National Trust for Jersey

Plémont Headland Restoration Proposals

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

Context

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

The Trust's overarching vision for Plémont is to –

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

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

(1) Demolition and Site Clearance

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

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

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

(2) Habitat Restoration

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

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

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

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

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

Restoration of land occupied by the Holiday Village

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

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

Dependent on the results of the soil survey, the 2 management options are as follows:

Objective (1): Species-rich heath

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

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

Management works to achieve this objective could include –

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

Objective (2): Patchy heathland and calcareous grassland

Should soil conditions prove unsuitable for heathland regeneration because of high alkalinity or nutrient levels, then the Trust would undertake management measures to change the soil characteristics in an attempt to achieve Objective (1).

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

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

Should it prove unfeasible to import soil, a more pragmatic solution may be to re-evaluate the restoration objectives for the site. The Trust would suggest that an alternative option would be to create a habitat comprising patchy heath, with areas of calcareous plant species and a higher percentage of gorse scrub. Such a habitat type

would still be in keeping with the landscape and would be of high value to wildlife. Management works to achieve this objective would be largely similar to those as outlined above, for species-rich heath.

Holiday Village grassland management

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

(3) Ecological enhancement of Plémont headland and adjacent coastline

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

The Trust would therefore recommend that in the longer term consideration is given to consolidating the Trust's holding to include Petit Plémont, as well as the stretch of coastline located between Plémont Café Creux Gros approximately 1 km. to the east. This land was generously gifted to the Public by Mrs. Hart in 2011.

This would create a cohesive area that would enable the Trust to introduce a comprehensive management plan.

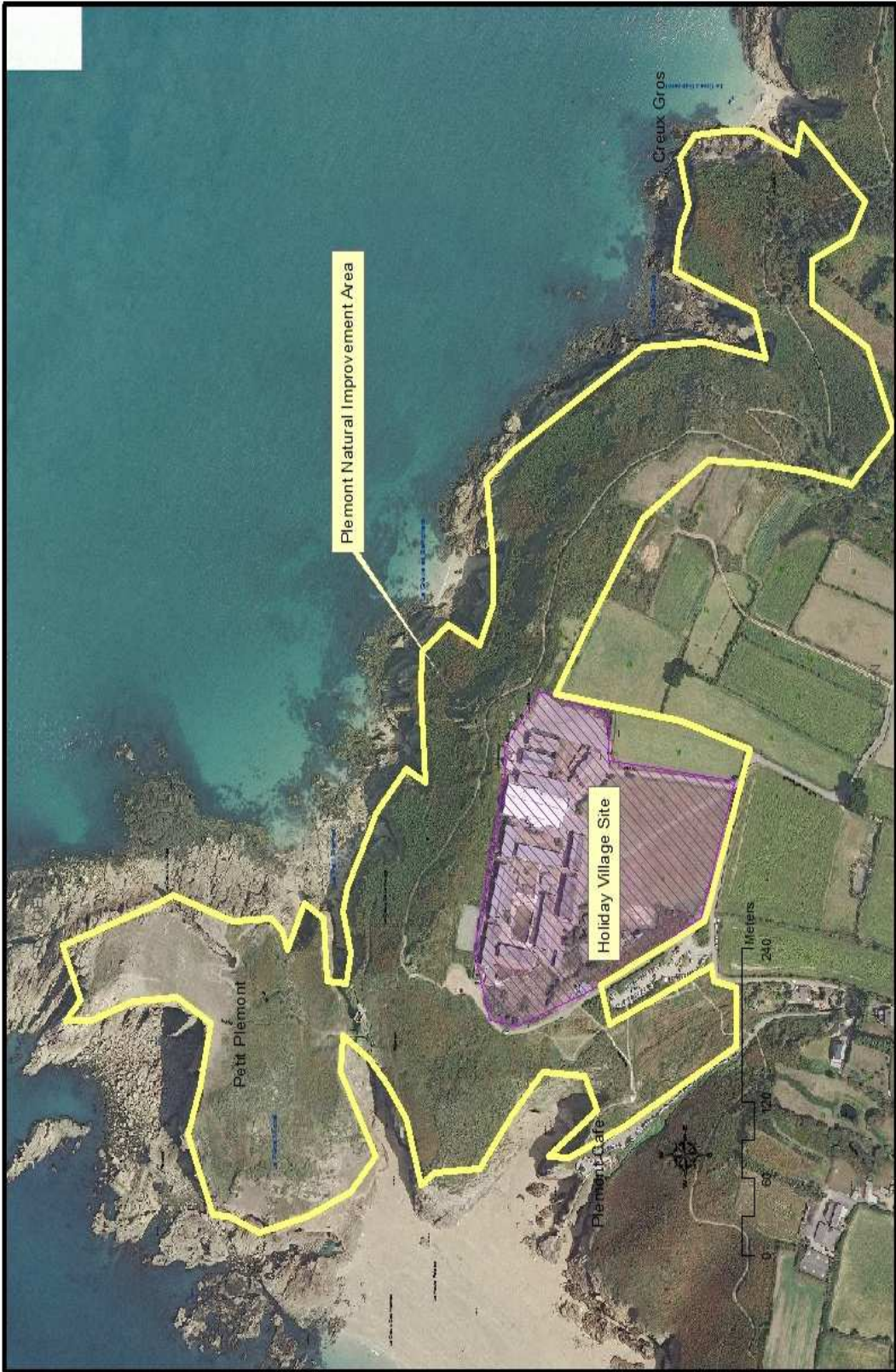


Figure 1: Map showing the extent of the natural improvement area

Our conservation management aims would be –

- **Enhance biodiversity and agricultural diversity**

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

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



Figure 2: Sheep grazing on the cliffs by Devil’s Hole

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

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

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

The Sorel grazing project has resulted in little adverse impact on public usage, with people still able to undertake a wide range of recreational activities such as horse-riding, mountain-biking and walking within the grazing area.

Fencing on site is largely of low visual impact, as care is taken to erect it adjacent to walls, hedges, banks or behind ridge lines. Selective gorse planting can also act as screening.

- **Creation of a seabird sanctuary**

Plémont is known as being a very important area for birdlife, particularly seabirds. Notably, it supports Britain's most southerly colony of nesting Atlantic Puffins, a species that is fondly associated with the Island. There is a sizeable colony of Swifts present, and it is also believed that other significant birds, such as Storm Petrels and Manx Shearwaters nest on this promontory.

A report on Atlantic Puffins produced by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in 2008 for Plémont Estates Ltd. describes the perilous plight of the Jersey Puffins. However, it also states that if the colony at Plémont is to stand any chance of survival, it must be protected from disturbance, but more significantly, from predation from brown rats and cats.

The report recommends that this could be achieved by the erection of a predator exclusion fence at the gateway to La Tête de Plémont by the site of the lower Napoleonic defensive structure. This would isolate the headland from the mainland and prevent rats from preying on ground-nesting seabirds. To complement the erection of the exclusion fence, a rat eradication programme would need to be instigated to remove any rats from inside the exclusion area.

Should the Trust acquire this land, it would seek to erect such a fence in this location. The fence would serve the dual purpose of keeping predators out of the seabird sanctuary, as well as acting as a livestock containment fence.



Figure 3: Location of predator exclusion/livestock fence

There is a view that it may be too late to save the Atlantic Puffin from becoming locally extinct, due to numerous factors. However, the Trust's opinion is that whilst there are still Puffins nesting in Jersey, an effort should be made to give the last remaining birds every possible chance to continue to live and breed on these shores. Should our efforts fail, then we believe that the introduction of such management measures would still be worthwhile, as at the very least, the creation of a seabird sanctuary at La Tête de Plémont would benefit other rare and declining seabirds such as Storm Petrels and Manx Shearwaters.

For this project to be effective, public access may need to be regulated during the breeding season. The Trust is aware that La Tête de Plémont is used by local fishermen, so in order to accommodate their continued usage of this land, a permit system could be introduced following extensive public consultation.

(4) Public access and interpretation

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

This would include:

Parking

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

This can be achieved by closing the small informal car park to the north-west of the holiday village and returning this land back to nature. The closure of this small car park would make the Parish road and track leading to it redundant, allowing the road to become incorporated into the larger car park.

The borders of the larger car park can also be squared off to increase its capacity. The Trust would be willing to pay for the costs of expanding the car park, subject to Transport and Technical services taking on its future maintenance.

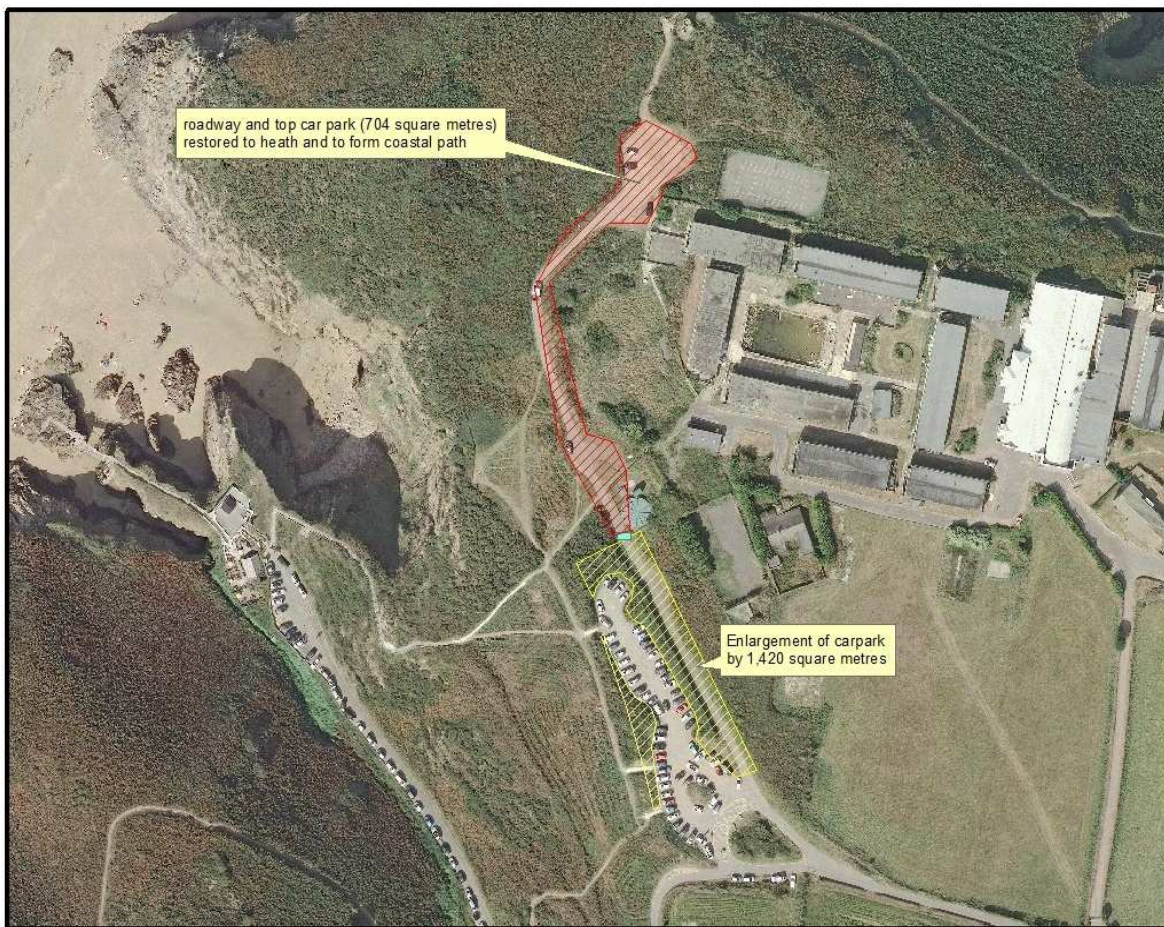


Figure 4: Parking management measures

Public access

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

Site interpretation

- Interpretation lecterns will be erected in suitable locations around the new nature improvement area, providing information on the site's history, restoration and wildlife.
- A feasibility study will be instigated regarding the potential to convert the lower Napoleonic defensive point at the gateway to La Tête de Plémont into a public interpretation gallery and coastal viewing point. Such a centre could provide information on the Coastal National Park and its ecology. This observation gallery would also serve as a viewing point over the seabird colony for wildlife naturalists.

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



Figures 5 and 6: Before and after shots showing visitor improvement works at Devil's Hole

In 2011 the National Trust installed a people-counter at the start of the trail leading down to Devil's Hole. It has been recorded that more than 20,000 people have visited the site in the past 12 months, clearly demonstrating the appeal of Jersey's North Coast.

(5) Community engagement

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

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



Figure 7: An example of a heathland restoration scheme whereby the old A3 road near Hindhead, Surrey, was returned to nature.

The picture above shows school-children getting involved with the restoration process by sowing heather seed along the route of the former road.

Example of a heathland restoration on a former derelict site

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

The restoration of Greenham Common



Concrete removal

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



Heather spreading

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



Bioremediation

Funding also helped to clean up fuel contamination with a bioremediation process. This contamination resulted from 60 years of aviation fuel storage in large (and progressively

leaky) underground tanks at over 25 sites around the perimeter of the Common. Bioremediation is a process whereby natural fuel-degrading bacteria are sprayed onto the contaminated soil. This avoids the use of chemicals and solves the problem in a natural way.

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



Buildings

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



Open to the Public

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

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

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

