



Atlantic Coast & Valleys Project

The North Cornwall coastline is characterised by a landscape of flat land incised by steep-sided valleys, once composed of a variety of very species-rich habitats.

by **Fiona Tooke**
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Changes in land management along this stretch of the coast in the last 50-70 years have resulted in subtle alterations to the landscape and a decline in biodiversity.

Conservation measures have been under way for some years, focused mainly on the valley areas. This year, a new phase in the Atlantic Coast and Valleys Project has begun, with the aim of restoring and revitalising a 15km stretch of the coast. The project is concerned with two areas: the North Cornwall coast from Welcombe Mouth to Sandy Mouth and, further south, from Trebarwith Strand to Delabole Point.

The Eden Project has had a long association with Atlantic Coast and Valleys. As part of ongoing habitat restoration works in the area, the Eden Nursery propagates cuttings of wild thyme plants provided by the National Trust. Several thousand plug plants have been raised this way and have been planted out in the area. The re-establishment of thyme is critical for the re-introduction of the Large Blue butterfly.

Such a multi-faceted project calls for an interdisciplinary team. This has been formed by a large number of organisations from across Cornwall and beyond and is led by North Cornwall District Council. At the end of 2005, Atlantic Coast and Valleys was one of five projects

nationally to receive funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnerships grant scheme. During the course of 2006, this funding is being used to assess the landscape in terms of its ecology, historical features and accessibility. Further analysis will establish the current economic profile of the area. Trials are under way into techniques to re-establish maritime grassland communities on the cliff edges. This summer wildflower seeds have been collected from the area in preparation for re-seeding programmes over the next few years.

At the end of this year the development work will form part of a bid to be re-submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding of a 3-year implementation phase which will see the landscape works undertaken on a large scale. Key to the success of the project will be the involvement of the local landowners and farmers and support from the community. Methods of land management aimed specifically at promoting wildlife are encouraged by several agri-environment schemes. Participation in these schemes can deliver a number of the objectives of the project. Arising from the landscape restoration work, there will be an accompanying skills training programme, improvements in access, both for visitors to the coastline itself and through wider availability of information.

An update on the project's progress will appear in a future edition of the *Friends* magazine.

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