making space for sand

Lesson 4

Should a new holiday park be built at Penhale?



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
Environment Agency
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme
Part of the Resilience Innovation Fund
CORNWALL COUNCIL
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geography southwest
SOUTH WEST COASTAL MONITORING

Where is Penhale?



Penhale: 1:50,000 map extract

Penhale is a north-west facing sandy beach just north of Perranporth on the north coast of Cornwall.

At low tide, the bay extends to form a continuous beach 3km in length.



'Penhale' comes from the Cornish word '**Pennhal',** meaning **'end of marsh or moor'.**

Aerial photo of Penhale



Penhale is an extensive area of beach and sand dunes.

It is the largest dune system in Cornwall and the highest in Britain, reaching a height of 90m.

Much of the area is protected due to its rich biodiversity and historical heritage.

Whilst large parts remain undeveloped, in the south there is a holiday park and a golf course.

Part of the sand dunes is also used by the Ministry of Defence.





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What makes Penhale special?

Penhale is the most extensive area of sand dunes in Cornwall. It is home to rare plants, birds and butterflies, has a rich historical legacy and offers opportunities for adventure.









Adapting the coast from sea level rise

This image shows the changes in beach elevation (height in metres) between 2008 and 2023.

These alternating sand bars (blue) and depressions (red) cause dangerous rip currents!

Some accretion (blue) in the sheltered bay at Perranporth.

Some erosion (red) at the top of the beach (up to 3m) but the extensive dunes will protect the coast.



Biodiversity and conservation

- Penhale sand dunes are considered to be of great ecological importance.
- The dunes support a wide range of rare and endangered plants and is home to many species of birds (breeding peregrine falcons and choughs), butterflies and insects.
- The dunes have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



The chough, Cornwall's iconic bird, now breeding at Penhale Camp

Historical heritage

- In 2014, the remains of 1,000-year old St Piran's Oratory (small chapel) were uncovered in the dunes.
- There are scattered remains of lead mines on Penhale Sands dating back to the 16th century. Tin, iron and copper were also mined here.
- The military buildings of Penhale Camp were constructed in 1943 in preparation for the D-Day landings. The camp with its Nissan huts and barbed wire fencing has become an iconic landmark for walkers.



Photo: Rod Allday / Old mine workings on Penhale Sands

Leisure and recreation

Penhale Sands provides many opportunities for leisure and recreation.





- Walkers can hike the South West Coast Path which crosses the beach.
- The dunes attract bird and nature watchers (wild flowers, butterflies).
- Nearby holiday parks offer opportunities for camping.
- Adventurous activities include kayaking, fishing and kite surfing.

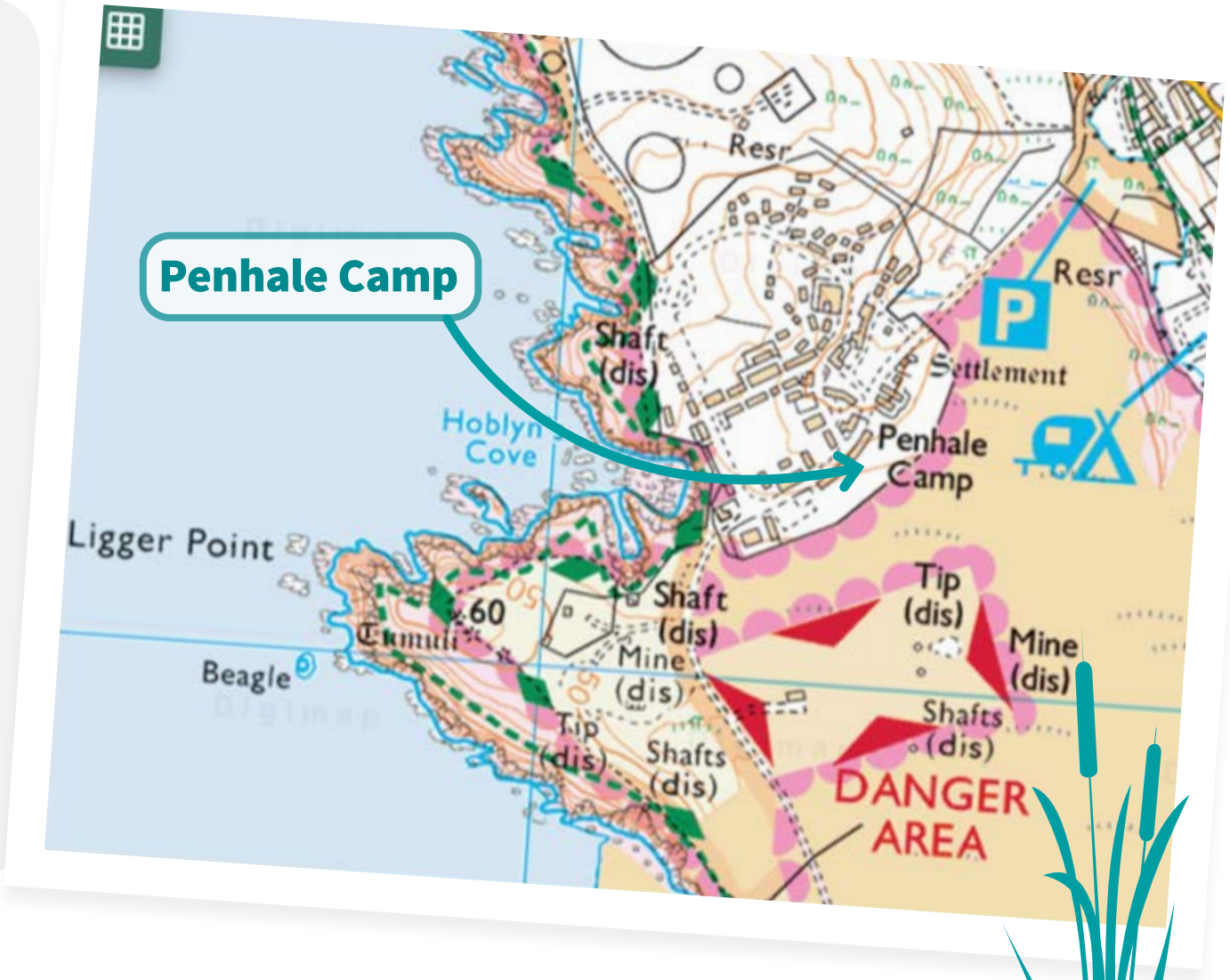
Should a new holiday park be built at Penhale?

- There is a proposal to create a new holiday park on the site of the former Penhale Camp military barracks.
- The 67-unit park will have a swimming pool, spa, restaurant/bar and a reception building.
- Whilst the development would bring economic benefits, there are serious concerns about the impact on the environment.



Where is Penhale Camp?

- Penhale Camp is at the northern end of Penhale Sands. Access is by local minor roads.
- It is adjacent to fragile sand dunes, home to rare flowers and plants. The sand dunes are important habitats for birds, insects and butterflies.
- Nearby is an abandoned mining area, with disused shafts and tips.



Arguments in favour

- The holiday park is an effective use of previously developed and currently abandoned land (the military barracks).
- The holiday park will provide employment for over 60 people and will improve the area visually.
- This would be the fourth CABÜ Cabin Holiday Hideaway in England and Ireland. The company is experienced in building in environmentally sensitive areas.
- The developers suggest that the park will provide 11,000 short-term holidays and will bring 25,000 visitors to the area, boosting the local economy.





Arguments against

- Penhale Sands is home to fragile and protected wildlife habitats, home to many rare species of plants together with birds, insects and butterflies.
- The dunes adjacent to the planned holiday park have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Penhale Sands has been designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) since 2004.
- There are concerns that traffic will worsen at an already dangerous road junction.
- The area already has three holiday parks. Another park would add to issues of traffic congestion particularly in the summer.

What do you think?



In this Activity, you will make use of the slide presentation, additional resources and your own internet research to decide whether the new holiday park should be constructed.

- Do the economic arguments in favour of the development outweigh the environmental concerns?
- Should the sand dunes be protected from further development at all costs?
- Should a few rare plants and birds prevent local communities from benefiting from more visitors?
- Is Penhale already developed enough?