

CHAPTER 7: LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHS

Digital imagery was collected within each habitat type in 2013, 2014 and 2016. These photos support the qualitative assessment of vegetation change that may occur as a result of project activities.

Many of the photos show no obvious differences between 2013, 2014 and 2016. Differences in vegetation height for example are unlikely to be noticeable until after several years, although actual vegetation heights were measured during the vegetation surveys and are shown in Appendix 5.2. All the photos are available for analysis. Those photos which show obvious differences between the three years are shown in Appendix 7.

The most noticeable differences can be seen in the foreshore habitat across all three islands due to storms in the winter of 2013/2014. On St Agnes much of the foreshore had been washed away by the 2014 surveys, but by 2016 there had been some stabilisation of the habitat with some vegetative growth. The foreshore on Gugh is generally more protected from south-westerly storms and was therefore less affected, but some foreshore habitat was lost in 2013-2014, not all of which was replaced by 2016. On Bryher, the storm effect was greater, with large boulders and sand pushed onto the coastal grassland habitat, affecting the height of grasses in the area that lies close to the foreshore. By 2016 the foreshore had partially recovered but the vegetative cover was perhaps only 50% whereas before it had been up to 100% on the higher foreshore.

The storms and high winds also affected habitats immediately behind the foreshore e.g. the coastal grasslands on Bryher which were badly “burnt” in 2014 but showed signs of good recovery by 2016. On Gugh the heathlands were badly affected by wind blow and salt, but by 2016 the effect was hard to see. Recovery here appears to be rapid.

Landscape photos of the scrub clearly show the changes in gorse flowering due to storms and other variable local weather patterns; little gorse flowering is visible in photos taken in May 2014. In 2016 the scrub on St Agnes shows signs of having been opened up, probably due to cattle pushing through the scrub.

All these changes would have affected the general ecology of these areas.