

West Penwith Habitat Surveys: Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (Survey Area 31(part) – 2022)

First published July 2022

Natural England Research Report NERR120

Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022)

Mark Beard



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ISBN: 978-1-78354-996-2

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Project details

This report should be cited as: BEARD, M.G. 2022. Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022). Natural England. NERR120

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Keywords

Penwith, SSSI, survey,

Further information

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Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022)

Vegetation survey:	Mark Beard & Alex Gilroy
Report compiled by:	Mark Beard
Date surveyed:	07/04/2022

1 General Information

1.1 Location

Site name/ No.	Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) / Site 31 (part)
County	Cornwall
Parish	Madron / Morvah
Central OS Grid Ref	SW 4226 3512 / SW 4228 3536
Natural England Area Team	Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly
National Character Area	West Penwith (No. 156)

1.2 Summary description

Area	2.17 ha
Altitude	200 - 225m A.O.D.
Aspect	moderate slope, south-easterly
Drainage	Predominantly dry

Survey area 31 Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common was originally surveyed in 2012 and 2014 by Cornwall Environmental Consultants and Hewins Ecology respectively (commissioned by Natural England). Those surveys (combined) covered an extent of some 148.59 ha but omitted two smaller but contiguous areas at Higher Bosulow and White Downs at the southern end of survey area 31, forming part of the same management/ecological unit. These smaller areas were surveyed in 2022 and are the subject of this report.

1.3 Access

Access to Higher Bosulow is possible via a public right of way along a track to the south, but then crossing private land past the abandoned buildings at Coronation Farm. Access to White Downs is possible via a public right of way from SW 4282 3538.

1.4 Tenure

Both parcels of land subject to survey are privately owned and survey was carried out with the permission of the landowner or using legal powers of entry.

1.5 Survey methodology

The site was surveyed by a 'walk-over' survey during which observations of the habitats present were made. For each distinct stand of vegetation observed a species list was compiled with an associated estimate of frequency based upon the DAFOR-scale and the most likely vegetation community type of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) (Rodwell, et. al., Volume 1, 1991, Volume 2, 1991, Volume 3, 1992) was assigned. This community assignment was implied, based upon a working knowledge of the NVC by the surveyors, and is not based upon an analysis of quadrat data. As such the full NVC methodology has not been applied. Nevertheless, the experience of the surveyors in the field is considered sufficient for the implied NVC communities to be reliable for the purposes of this survey.

2 Biological description

2.1 Habitats

The survey site supports mosaics of lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland and scrub/under-scrub habitats. Each habitat is discussed in turn below.

2.1.1 Mosaic: U4b (*Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, *Holcus lanatus*-*Trifolium repens* sub-community) / *Ulex gallii* scrub

Land at Higher Bosulow was occupied by a mosaic of acid grassland and *Ulex gallii* scrub. The ratio was visually estimated in the field at around 40% acid grassland: 60% *Ulex gallii*. Acid grassland was characterised by *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and *Holcus lanatus* with occasional *Potentilla erecta*. The presence of such species as *H. lanatus*, *Cerastium fontanum* and *Trifolium repens* all suggest a strong affinity to U4b acid grassland. The field parcel had some signs of recent cattle grazing, though no indication of supplementary feeding having recently taken place. Some surface exposed granite was observed suggesting thin soils. The presence of abundant *U. gallii* might suggest some affinity with a heathland community (e.g. H4 *Ulex gallii* – *Agrostis curtisii* heath, H8 *Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex gallii* heath), but the lack of other indicative dwarf-shrubs such as *Calluna vulgaris* or *Erica cinerea* make such associations tenuous and instead this element of the vegetation is treated as a scrub community not represented in the published NVC. It is possible it may have developed from H4 or H8 heathland vegetation.

2.1.2 Mosaic: H4 *Ulex gallii* – *Agrostis curtisii* heath / W25 *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* underscrub

A narrow strip of land at Higher Bosulow was occupied by a mosaic of heathland vegetation and bracken-dominated underscrub. The heathland was characterised by *Ulex gallii*, *Erica cinerea*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Agrostis curtisii* and *Molinia caerulea* and showed a strong affinity to H4 *Ulex gallii* – *Agrostis curtisii* heath. The under-scrub was characterised by *Pteridium aquilinum* and *Rubus fruticosus* and showed a strong affinity to W25 *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* underscrub. The ratio was visually estimated in the field at around 60% H4 heath: 40% W25 underscrub. No sub-communities were assigned.

This strip of land was bordered on all sides by low Cornish hedges. There was no evidence of recent grazing or other management at the time of the survey. An informal footpath was observed running through the centre of the strip (access to Watch Croft).



Plate 1 – mosaic of *Ulex gallii* scrub and U4b acid grassland at Higher Bosulow (note abandoned buildings at Coronation Farm adjacent)



Plate 2 – mosaic of W25 underscrub (foreground) and H4 heath (middle-ground) at White Downs (looking north toward Watch Croft); note low Cornish hedges on either side

2.2 Species

No rare, scarce or threatened species were noted during the survey.

3 Condition Assessments

Due to the small size of habitat present and that the survey areas form part of a larger extent of semi-natural habitat previously surveyed, no condition assessment were deemed necessary.

Table 1 Summary of habitats and vegetation communities

Site 31 (part) – Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (2022)				
Habitat	NVC communities	Area (ha)	Priority Habitat area (ha)	CA category
Acid grassland / scrub mosaic	U4b / <i>U. gallii</i> scrub	1.69	0.67	n/a
Heathland / underscrub mosaic	H4 / W24	0.48	0.29	n/a
Condition assessment reporting categories: Favourable (F), Unfavourable Recovering (UFR), Unfavourable No Change (UFNC), Unfavourable Declining (UFD)				

4 References

Groome, G. (2014) West Penwith Habitat Surveys: Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (survey area 31 – 2014). Hewins Ecology.

Rodwell J.S. (ed). (1991) British Plant Communities Volume 1. Woodlands and Scrub. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rodwell J.S. (ed). (1991) British Plant Communities Volume 2. Mires and heaths. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rodwell J.S. (ed). (1992) British Plant Communities Volume 3. Grasslands. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Sproull, J. (2012) West Penwith Habitat Surveys: Watch Croft (survey area 31 – 2012). Cornwall Environmental Consultants.

Appendices

Species lists for H4, U4b and other vegetation communities

DAFOR ratings:

D = dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare L = Locally (frequent, abundant, dominant)

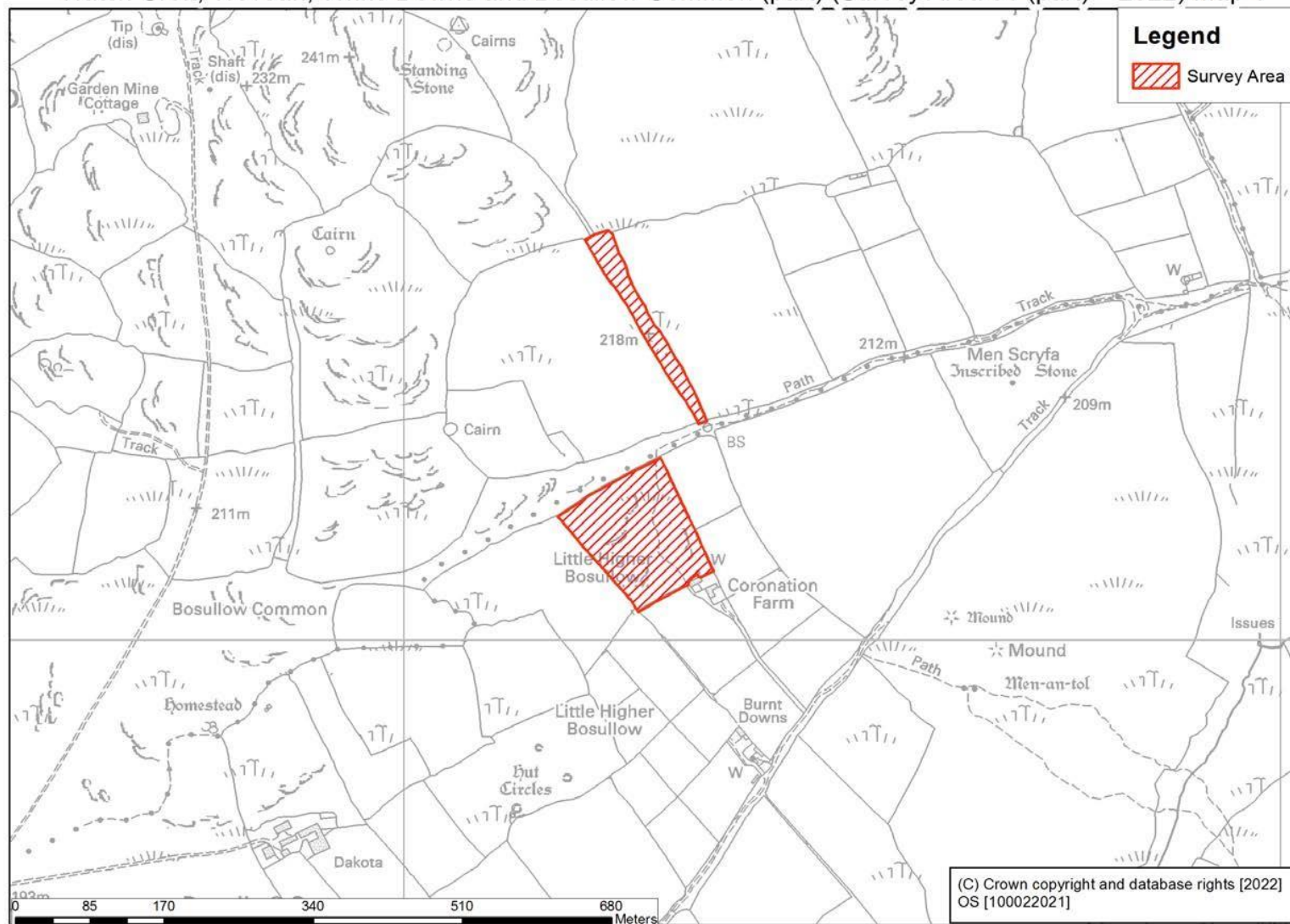
E = Edge (i.e. a species recorded from the margins of the mapped habitat/community)

Scientific name	Common name	Community / sub-community		
		H4	U4b / Ulex gallii scrub mosaic	W25
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	common bent	O	A	
<i>Agrostis curtisii</i>	bristle bent	F		
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	sweet vernal-grass	F	F	
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	heather	F		
<i>Carex binervis</i>	green-ribbed sedge	O	F	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	common mouse-ear		O	
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	pignut	O		
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove	R	O	
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	bell heather	F		
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	red fescue		O/F	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy			LF
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog		A	F
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	bluebell	O		
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	common cat's-ear		F	
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	soft rush		O	
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	common bird's-foot-trefoil		O	
<i>Luzula campestre</i>	field woodrush		O	
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	purple moor-grass	A	F	
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain		F	
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	tormentil	F	O	
<i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>	neat feather-moss	O	F	

<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken			A
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup		F	
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	bramble		A	A
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	common sorrel		F	
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheep's sorrel		F	
<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>	wood sage	O		
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover		F	
<i>Ulex gallii</i>	western gorse	A	A	
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	bilberry	ER		

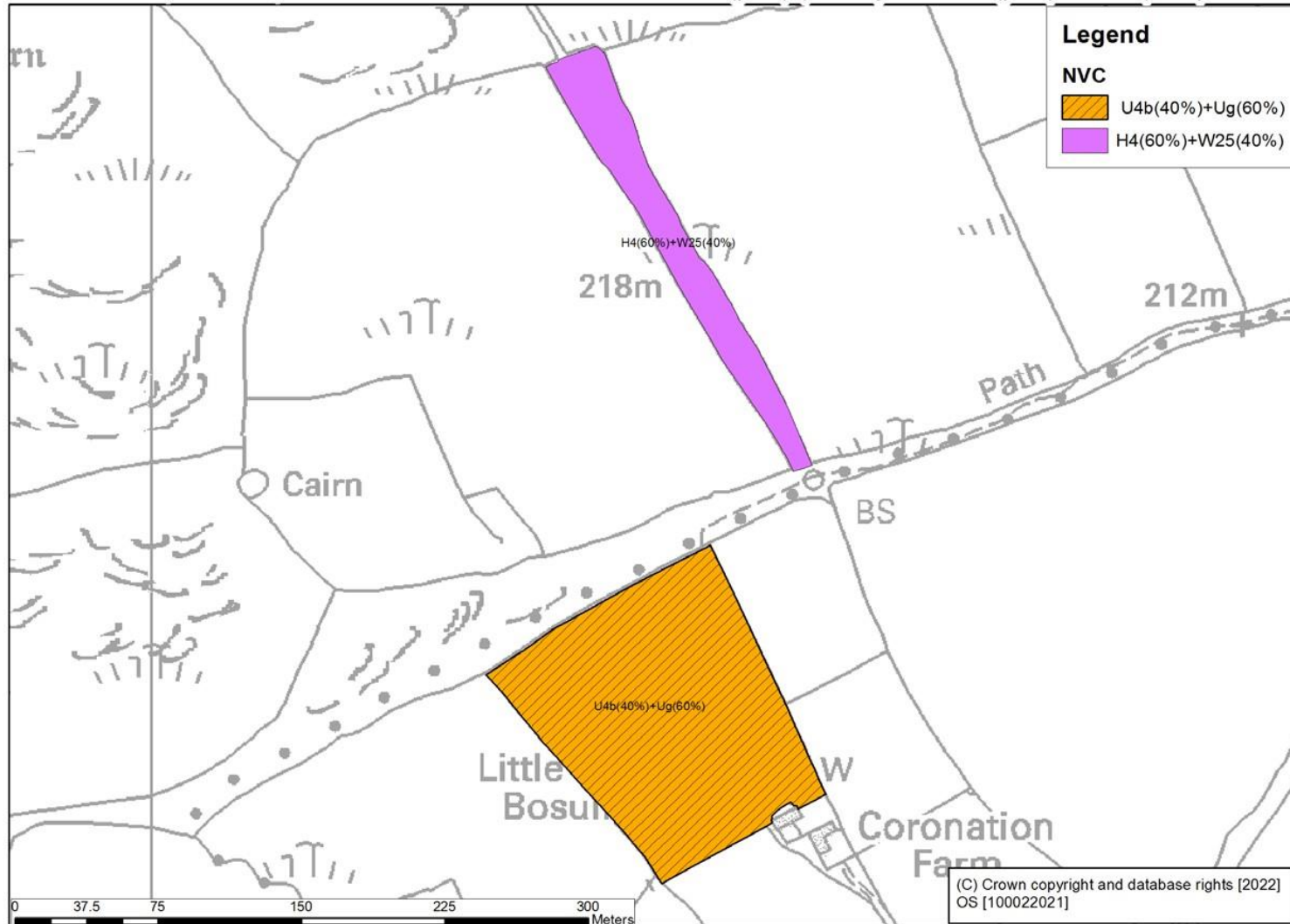
Map 1 Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosullow Common (part) 2022 survey area

Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosullow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022) Map 1



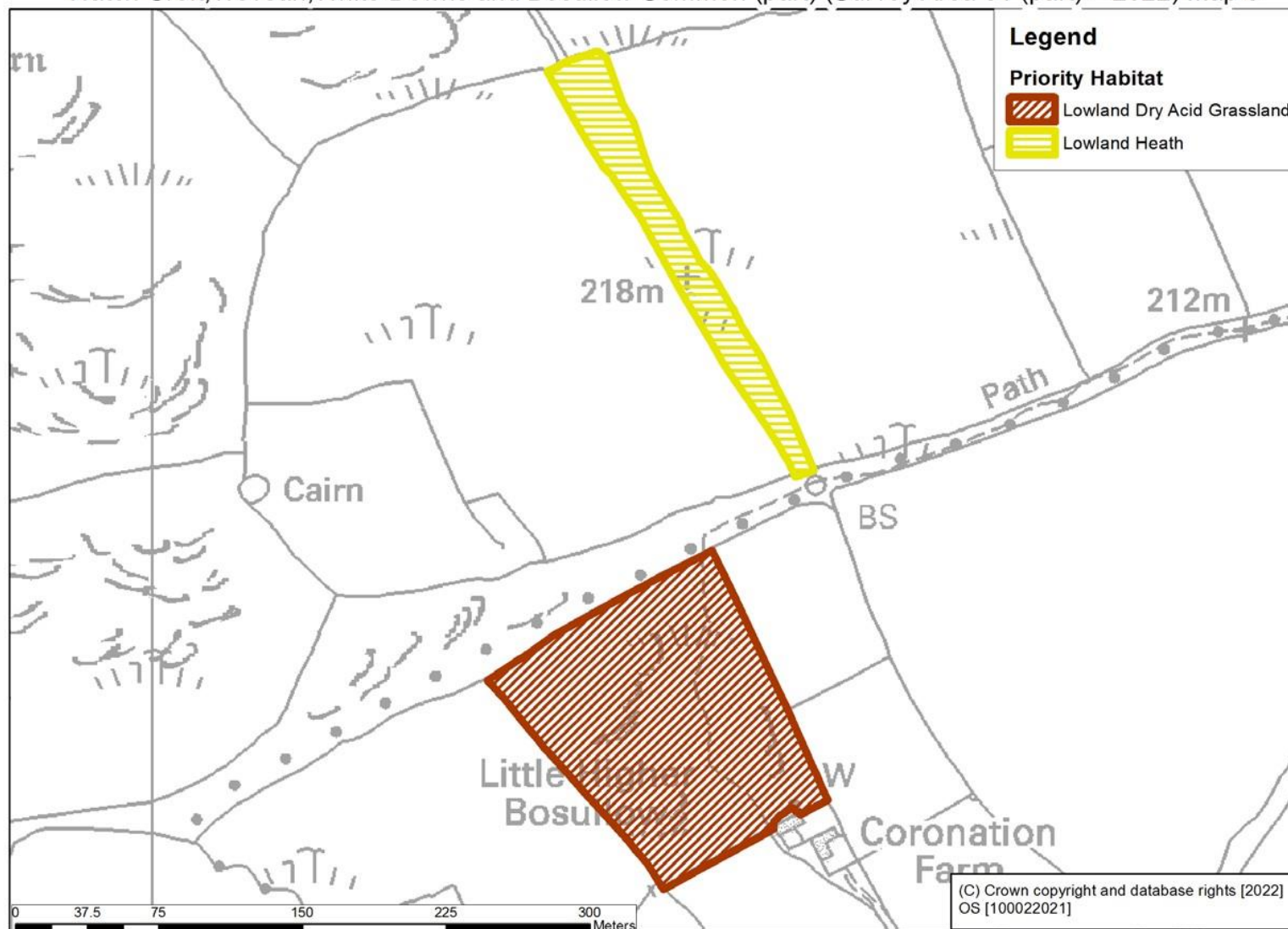
Map 2 Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosullow Common (part) 2022 NVC

Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosullow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022) Map 2 NVC



Map 3 Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) 2022 priority habitats

Watch Croft, Trevean, White Downs and Bosulow Common (part) (Survey Area 31 (part) – 2022) Map 3



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ISBN 978-1-78354-996-2

Catalogue code: NERR120

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