

Agricultural Overview

Mabe Parish is dominated by two main industries - agriculture and quarrying. This has been the case for centuries and is what the parish as we know it today was built from.

Land types vary over the parish which extends to approximately 2,500 acres. Large areas of downs and poorer land are intersected by areas of higher quality farmland and 'improved farmland'. The official land classification is either Grade 3 (good to moderate) or 4 (poor), typical due to the land lying on Carnmenellis granite. Most soils are a coarse sandy loam whereby the topsoil can be easily worked for agricultural operations however there is extensive granite bedrock beneath.

Agriculture remains a valuable source of employment in the parish and farming sectors represented include livestock farms (dairy, beef & sheep), arable, horticultural, as well as smaller scale enterprises (to include pig, poultry, llama etc).

Permanent and temporary (rotational) grassland provides grazing for dairy and beef cattle and sheep.






Cropping within the parish over the recent years includes:

- Cereals - Wheat, Barley, Oats & Oilseed Rape
- Vegetables – Potatoes, Cauliflower and Broccoli
- Daffodils

In the past few decades many smaller land parcels have been split off from commercial farming enterprises for equine grazing and a general desire for residential properties to have extended domestic curtilage. Farms have also become multiple smallholdings, which can be seen most in the western / Halvasso area of the parish. Other areas of farmland (and farmyards) have been lost to quarrying, residential development predominantly in Mabe village and commercial development including the University at Tremough, Household Recycling Centre at Carveth and industrial units at Parkengue / Kernick.

Map showing Agricultural Land Classification:



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|---|---|------------------|
| 1 |  | Excellent |
| 2 |  | Very Good |
| 3 |  | Good to Moderate |
| 4 |  | Poor |
| 5 |  | Very Poor |

Field Boundaries & Hedges

By far the most common boundary feature to be seen in Mabe Parish is the traditional Cornish hedge which comprises of an earth and stone bank. Local granite (of which is plentiful and often lifted directly from the field enclosures during agricultural reclamation works) forms functional and decorative stone facings, their primary historical purpose being to mark property boundaries and to make field parcels livestock secure.

More importantly today, these hedges support a considerable wealth of flora and fauna, providing generally undisturbed habitat for a wide range of plant life and animal species. The hedges are also highly effective in carbon sequestration. Carbon can be sequestered in both the trees above the hedge and within the roots, organic litter, and soil matter within the hedge.

The irregular network of hedges also serves to filter and reduce the volume of / speed at which surface waters can travel downhill, reducing the risk of flooding and improving the quality of water reaching our drinking water reservoirs, rivers and the sea.

Hedges are a vital and important feature within our landscape, regulating air and water quality through intercepting pollutants, maintaining essential diversity and habitats and preserving the visual scenery of the locality.

Dry Stone Walls can also be found around the parish although in much reduced numbers than the traditional Cornish earth and stone hedge, an example of dry stone walling can be seen from the footpath that crosses the field linking the top of Carnsew Farm track to Antron Hill. Constructed from granite without the addition of soil these dry stone walls form field boundaries and provide a different habitat, reptiles including lizards and snakes can be seen basking on the warm stones in fine weather.

The Carnmenellis Granite 'downs' areas and 'redundant and working quarry' landscapes of the parish provide yet another habitat type, one which Mabe boasts above many other parishes. These areas, often perceived as 'poor' land actually offer a highly valuable conservation landscape abundant with rough scrub and flowering gorse which provides an essential early source of nectar for bees and nesting area for birds. The man made cliff edges of the quarries provide habitat for birds and bats that may otherwise not be seen including Buzzards and Stock Doves. At flooded quarries you will find invertebrates such as dragonflies, amphibians and reptiles all supported by the post-industrial plant growth and sheltered nature of the quarries.

Stewardship of Mabe Parish's Farmland

It is believed that approximately 760 acres, being 30% of Mabe Parish's total land area, is commercial farmland that is managed to enhanced environmental standards under the 'Countryside Stewardship' scheme. This is on top of other farmland (not in a 'Countryside Stewardship' scheme but farmed as a commercial enterprise) and other field parcels (e.g. smallholdings and extensive domestic grounds that are not commercial businesses) that may also be being managed in ways to respect and improve our natural environment.

The scheme is a 'competitive scheme' in which land managers must demonstrate that the changes being made result in environmental improvement in the local area. It is not an automatic scheme in which all land is eligible.

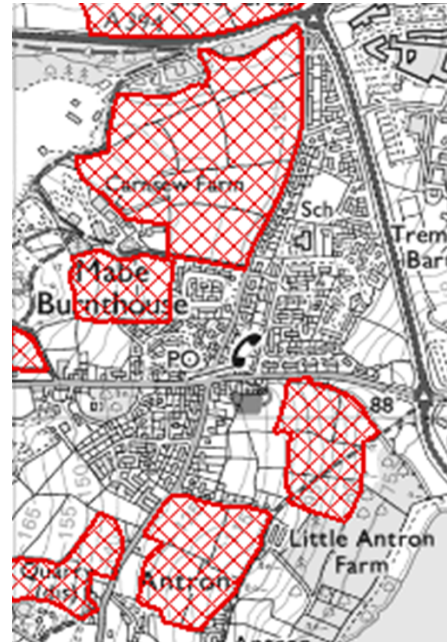
The scheme delivers a broad range of environmental benefits. The main priorities are to protect and enhance the natural environment, in particular the diversity of wildlife and water quality.

Adopting Countryside Stewardship management options to farmland provide the following benefits:

- Wildlife and nature – restoring habitats, providing food and nesting places, creating areas for rare flowering plants and managing hedges.
- Water/flooding – making water cleaner and reducing the risk of flooding by encouraging changes to farming practice and improving farm infrastructure.
- Pollinators – ensuring the right resources for the wild pollinators where they are needed most.
- Other priorities – historic environment, landscape character, genetic conservation, educational access and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The impressive extent to which commercial farmland in our parish has been accepted onto this enhanced land management scheme demonstrates the value of it as a natural asset to our community. The willingness of farmers to work in such ways shows that the continuation of a thriving agricultural industry within the parish, one that works to supplement the natural environment, is of huge importance to them.

Map showing areas of farmland immediately bordering Mabe village which are managed to the enhanced 'Countryside Stewardship' standards.



University of Exeter, Tremough

Mabe Parish is undoubtedly privileged in having an 'association through location' with the University of Exeter at Tremough. The university and its staff and students possess a wealth of enthusiasm, expertise and facilities that the parish can draw on regarding agriculture, climate, energy and the wider natural environment. The university regularly actively engages with local businesses on projects which result in benefit to the local area.

One example being the '**Farms for AONbees**' project which was a collaborative effort between Cornwall AONB, The University of Exeter and local farmers (including ones within Mabe village and parish). This project studied to enhance pollinators and pollination across landscapes, finding management solutions that benefits both bees and business. The project also increased understanding of how different land management options, cropping rotations, and cropping locations impact colony numbers and bee populations. Most of the farmland within the immediate village setting was used in this project and subsequently now adopts management practices where pollinators are taken into high consideration.

Continued collaboration with the university on research projects is important to the local area. The land assets that enable those projects to be carried out on the doorstep of the university must remain available going forward.

Water Quality

All but a very small area to the far south of the parish lies in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) or a combined NVZ and Drinking Water Safeguarding Area. This is due to the land topography and watercourses feeding into the drinking water reservoirs of Argal and College and / or the Penryn River, Falmouth Estuary and Bay. Farms in Mabe Parish within the water catchment have been working with South West Water and the Upstream Thinking Project to improve the quality of the water in our streams and reservoirs. Farmland is an essential tool in effectively managing water (as opposed to urban environments which can't 'hold or filter' water). A comprehensive and diverse range of actions are being taken, including:

- Changes to field cropping to provide better nutrient retention and reduced water run-off,
- Exclusion of livestock from watercourses,
- Improved storage for farmyard manures, slurry and other effluent,
- Installation of rainwater harvesting systems where the rainfall would otherwise contribute to run-off,
- Reductions in the qty of and changes to the types of nutrients and chemicals applied to crops.
- Creation of densely vegetated buffer strips, field margins and run-off bunds.

Many of the actions taken have been within the immediate Mabe village area on lands bordering the existing residential properties, often water from roads is diverted into fields, the safeguarding of this agricultural land to allow the continuation of these mitigating actions going forward is essential for the wellbeing of our waters and overall health.