



Action for Cornish Path-moss

Ditrichum cornubicum is a globally rare metallophytic moss presently known only from two old copper mines in Cornwall (it appears to have gone from the Irish site). At both Cornish sites it has been in long-term decline, as vegetation succeeds and a green blanket slowly covers metal-rich spoil. Some of the locations where it was known in the recent past are now grassland and gorse scrub. Re-exposing significant areas of metal-rich spoil is the only way to save the moss from extinction in the wild, but digging up SSSIs and World Heritage Sites is not done easily. After lengthy negotiations, several trial scrapes were made at Phoenix United Mine in September 2015, coordinated by Natural England and in collaboration with The Duchy of Cornwall. The image above shows a scrape in preparation, with a current population of *D. cornubicum* in the foreground. Upon returning to the site in July 2016 it was a great pleasure to find a good population of the moss had already colonised this scrape, perhaps from dormant tubers. This led to a bid for Heritage Lottery funding, to expand the work, headed by Plantlife and Natural England. If successful, the future for this globally rare species will look a lot brighter.

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