



CORNWALL ACCESS FORUM - ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

CCAF is an independent body set up to advise Cornwall Council on matters involving public access to open air recreation. CCAF members are volunteers and represent the interests of both landowners and users, such as walkers, wheel chair users, cyclists, and horse riders.

In 2019 we got better representation of people with mobility problems (and other impairments), through the appointment of our member Steve Wilson. By increasing awareness and removing minor obstacles some larger stretches of trails and beach can suddenly become accessible for people with impaired mobility. By considering public access at the development stage of infrastructure and housing projects, better results can be achieved at lower cost than if retro-fitted.

I would like to thank all CCAF members who have been working tirelessly to provide a voice on behalf of all who are interested in public access. Our four quarterly meetings were held in New County Hall on 23 July 2019, 29 October 2019, 28 January 2020, and 28 April 2020. Working Groups and Task & Finish Groups are report back at our quarterly meetings.

Maintenance of public footpaths remains at risk

- The Council budget 2019-2020 for maintaining rights of ways remained tight, and maintenance focused primarily on high risk/high impact footpaths only.
- There is a considerable risk that so-called 'bronze foot paths' are no longer maintained, and could be lost.
- In 2019, the Council set up a small-grants budget (£60,000 in total), which Parishes can bid for money for maintenance projects (e.g. path resurfacing)
- Where maintenance of footpaths has been delegated to the Local Parish Maintenance Partnership, there is considerable variation in the standards by which parishes care for their public footpaths. Some Parish Councils are doing a brilliant job, while in other parishes paths are becoming increasingly impassable/inaccessible.
- During this financial year 11 parishes declined to undertake the cutting of the inland paths. Of these, 4 were previous partners, the remaining 7 have always been non-partners. Phil Allen leads the CCAF Working Group Local Maintenance Partnership and is conducting an investigation into this.

- CCAF has asked Cornwall Council (again) to review their Countryside Access Strategy (2007), and it's Action Plan, which is unrealistic and out of date. CCAF have offered to assist Cornwall Council to make this happen.

CCAF is engaging better in consultations

Major housing developments:

- CCAF provided input in two major housing development consultations at Hayle and at Launceston
- Despite a request by CCAF to be informed of coastal developments that could have an impact on the experience of people using the South West Coast Path, none have been received.

Infrastructure developments:

- CCAF has provided detailed input in A30 junctions. Nick Jeans, previously chair of CCAF has worked tenaciously to engage key decision makers at the Council and Cormac to make sure suggestions to improve public access are incorporated in their plans.

New multi-use Trails:

- Exciting new multi-use trails to Truro have been announced (funded by Highways England): St Agnes – Truro (8 km), Trispen – Idless (4 km), St Newlyn East – Carland Cross (4km) and Perranporth-Newquay (14km). CCAF is engaged at an early stage to make sure these are fit-for-purpose and connect with existing routes.
- CCAF is also supporting the ongoing development proposals for the Clay Trails.

The Working Group on Coastal Access has done excellent work

- Steve Church has led the Coastal Access Working Group and provided detailed scrutiny over Natural England's proposals for Penzance-St Mawes and Marsland Mouth-Newquay. Proposals for two other lengths, Newquay-Penzance and St Mawes-Cremyll are expected to be finalised in 2020.
- CCAF is also supporting an initiative for a long-distance trail along the Tamar (using existing paths), connecting the South West Coastal Path, resulting in a route around Cornwall.

Definitive Rights of Way:

- After a long campaign from CCAF, Cornwall Council has obtained more resources to deal with backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders (or DMMOs) registering old rights of way that are at risk of being lost. We thank Lucy Wilson, who stood down from CCAF this year, for her excellent work on DMMOs.

Working with partners:

- For each CCAF meeting, we invite a 'partner organisation', with whom we discuss issues and explore opportunities for working together. Recent visits included the NFU

(National Farmers Union) and iWalk (a walking app), and future invitees include the National Trust and the South West Lakes Trust.

Looking ahead:

- Expect to hear more from us via Facebook and in the press. Ross Durkin, our new vice-chair (with a publishing background) is revamping CCAF communications. We will also have a stand at the Cornwall Show – please come and see us there.
- We are providing evidence for a Council Inquiry in public access in the autumn of 2020.