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CORNWALL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM (CCAF)

NOTES OF THE INQUORATE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JULY 2020

Date: Tuesday 21 July 2020
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Virtual On-line meeting

Present: Phil Allen, Ross Durkin, Nicholas Jeans, Esther Kieboom, Matt Luke CC and Carol Wilson.

Also in
Attendance: Patrick Aubrey-Fletcher

Apologies: Gerry Brain, David Ekinsmyth CC and Jacqueline Merrick

Officers: Rob Andrew – Head of Environment Assets and Service Delivery
Mike Eastwood – Countryside Access Team Leader
Sarah Goodall – Forum Secretary
Emma Coad – Democratic Officer

Minute no		Action by
CAF/2	Election of Chair for 2020/21 In view of there being no quorum this item was deferred to the next meeting. Esther Kieboom indicated that she would be prepared to undertake the role of Chair Elect.	
CAF/3	Election of Vice Chair for 2020/21 In view of there being no quorum this item was deferred to the next meeting. Ross Durkin indicated that he would be prepared to undertake the role of Vice-Chair Elect.	

CAF/4	Welcome to New Members The Forum welcomed to the meeting, Councillor David Ekinsmyth, Cornwall Council Representative. Unfortunately due to previous commitments Councillor Ekinsmyth was unable to attend the meeting today. The Chair provided an update on the current position regarding recruitment to the Forum which had been delayed due to Covid 19. She advised that a review was being undertaken of the membership and quorum with a view to reducing the numbers. She highlighted the issues associated with recruiting representatives from the Landowner sector. Patrick Aubrey-Fletcher confirmed that he would be happy to act as conduit between the Forum and Farming community to gain a greater representation from this sector. The Chair advised that she would be discussing the representation on the Forum with the Forum Secretary. The Forum discussed the recruitment process and the potential ways of recruiting to the Forum in the short term following the decision to defer formal appointments to next year. The Forum Secretary advised that clarification was being sought from the Council's Legal team regarding the recruitment process with co-option being explored as an option.	
CAF/5	Declarations of interest (on matters included in the agenda) There were no declarations of interest.	
CAF/6	Minutes from the meeting held on 28 January 2020 Due to the meeting being inquorate no decision was made on the accuracy of the minutes. The item would	

	be deferred to the next meeting.	
CAF/7	Matters Arising (Not otherwise included in the agenda) Due to the meeting being inquorate no decision was made on the accuracy of the minutes. The item would be deferred to the next meeting.	
CAF/8	CCAF Annual Report 2019/20 The Forum gave consideration to the CCAF Annual Report 2019/20. The Forum asked that the Annual Report be circulated to all appropriate bodies and was advised that a copy would be appended to the notes of the informal meeting.	Forum Secretary
CAF/9	Chairman's Announcements The Forum considered the following announcement by the Chairman: <u>COVID 19</u> The Chair advised that Covid 19 had highlighted the importance of footpaths and Public Rights of Way. Moving forwards the primary focus of the Forum in the new year should be on the development of the Local Management Plan.	
CAF/10	Countryside Access Service Update July 2020 [This item was taken at the start of the meeting to allow the Head of Environment Assets and Service Delivery to leave the meeting early.] The Head of Environment Assets and Service Delivery provided the Forum with an update on the Countryside	

Access Service. A copy of the presentation was appended to the notes of the informal meeting.

He highlighted the main points with reference to the following:

- Covid 19 Impacts
- Working Arrangements
- Network Management
- Legal procedures and Enforcement
- Opportunities moving forwards

He drew attention to the following areas of focus:

- Local Management Plan – potential to create a three year plan issues with forthcoming changes to the Parish boundaries;
- Definitive Mapping
- Many Parish/Town Councils financial struggles arising from Covid 19;
- Continue to work with CALC, LNP, T&P CIs and Public Health to deal with access issues arising from Covid 19;
- Potential role for CCAF to work with CC and T&PCIs to set up a pilot project for inspections of Public Rights of Way (PROW);
- Continue to harness the community spirit developed during Covid 19;
- Cornwall Council work with T&P CIs and NFU to make landowners aware of their responsibilities regarding livestock on PROW.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the following:

- The Social Prescribing Fund launched by Government;
- Role of T&P CIs to undertake inspections of PROW to reduce burden on Local Authorities;
- Role of Volunteer Groups and how to empower volunteers to do more.

Arising from the discussion on the above topics, the

	Head of Environment Assets and Service Delivery outlined the key priorities for Service: • Recruitment to the vacant posts; • Development of a Volunteering Framework; • Review of the Local Management Plan in the Autumn but may not roll out until 2021/22 due to T&P CIs elections in 2021; • Delaying the development of the Cornwall Access Strategy until the outcome of the 'Cornwall we want' exercise was complete. The Forum thanked the Head of Environment Assets and Service Delivery for his update.	
CAF/11	A30 Road Improvements Task and Finish Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Nick Jeans in respect of the A30 St Austell Link Road Improvement Task and Finish Group.	
CAF/11	Carclaze Garden Village Task and Finish Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Nick Jeans in respect of the Carclaze Garden Village Task and Finish Group.	
CAF/11	Coastal Access Working Group The Forum noted that an update had been circulated to Forum members in respect of the Coastal Access Working Group.	
CAF/11	Consultation Response Working Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Chair Elect in respect of the Consultation Response Working Group.	

CAF/11	Developing Parish Initiatives Working Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Phil Allen in respect of the Developing Parish Initiatives Working Group. The Working Group had identified five initiatives they wanted to raise with the Local Authority, namely: • Local Management Plan • Role of Parish Council in developing Definitive Rights of Way; • Maintenance of PROW along verges; • Improving the mining trails; • Input into the Health and Wellbeing Agenda to enable access to the countryside.	
CAF/11	Moorland and Open Access Working Group The Forum noted that there was no update in respect of the Moorland and Open Access Working Group.	
CAF/11	Multi Use Trails Working Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Nick Jeans in respect of the Multi Use Trails Working Group. The Forum noted the five areas of focus for the Working Group.	
CAF/11	Rights of Way and Definitive Map Working Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Ross Durkin in respect of the Rights of Way and Definitive Map Working Group. The Forum discussed the Countryside Access Strategy and the role of the CCAF in the development of the Strategy. Forum Members referred to the existing document and the potential for condensing this into a	

	five page strategy document which could be presented to the Local Authority for adoption. The Forum Secretary confirmed that she would circulate the latest version of the Countryside Access Strategy to Forum Members.	
CAF/11	St Austell China Clay Mineral Permission Review Task and Finish Group The Forum considered the verbal update given by Nick Jeans in respect of the St Austell China Clay Mineral Permission Review Task and Finish Group.	
CAF/12	Matters of Interest or Concern The following matters were raised: The Chair encouraged Forum Members to invite suitable candidates to come forward to join the CCAF.	
CAF/13	Review of Working Groups for 2020/21 The Forum reviewed the role of the Working Groups for 2020/21. The Forum was of the view that the current Working Groups should continue; the following points were noted: Consideration should be given to splitting the Rights of Way and Definitive Map Working Group. The Rights of Way Working Group could then focus on the Countryside Access Strategy with the Definitive Map Working Group concentrating on the Definitive Map at the appropriate time. In regard to the Moorland and Open Access Working Group, the views of Jim Flashman CC should be sought prior to any decision being taken.	

CAF/14	Date, Time and Venue of Future Meetings The Forum noted the dates of future meeting and the potential of it to be a virtual online meeting. The Chair thanks to Forum Members for attending the meeting.	
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The meeting ended at 3.55 pm.

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 CCAF 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. Three formal meetings were held in New County Hall on 23 July 2019, 29 October 2019, and 28 January 2020. Working Groups and Task & Finish Groups report back at our quarterly meetings. Our quarterly meeting scheduled for 28 April 2020 could not go ahead due to the Covid19 crisis, although an informal 'zoom' meeting was held on that date attended by 5 members of CCAF, plus Councillor Rob Nolan (Portfolio holder for the Environment).

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. The result is that many 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), which is very welcome.
- Where maintenance of footpaths has been delegated to the Local Parish Maintenance Partnership (LMP), 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.
- Phil Allen leads the CCAF Working Group Local Maintenance Partnership and is conducting an investigation into this. CCAF has repeatedly asked Cornwall Council for a list of parishes who have returned the responsibility for footpath maintenance back to the Council. In the coming year CCAF will strongly focus on the LMP.
- CCAF has also 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 with this, but so far this offer has not been taken up.

CCAF is engaging better in consultations on new developments

- **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.

Backlog in Definitive Rights of Way:

Cornwall Council still has a huge 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.

Latest news:

CCAF is particularly disappointed that on 23 July Cornwall Council decided to cancel the Council Inquiry into public access in the autumn of 2020. CCAF was due to provide evidence for this – it is not clear whether/when an alternative date for this inquiry will be set.

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.

Countryside Access Service Update July 2020

Covid 19 Impacts

Working arrangements

- Staff working at home
- Access to files / information / equipment
- IT issues
- Day to day management
- Site visits
- Scrutiny meetings cancelled and work programme being reviewed
- 2 staff left and recruitment temporarily suspended

Covid 19 Impacts

Network Management

- Increased use – daily exercise / local commuting
- Some closures / diversions linked to “shielding”
- Many Town / Parish Councils put up advisory signs
- LMP continued with local flexibility
- Delays to inspections
- Delays to capital programme

Covid 19 Impacts

Legal Procedures and Enforcement

- Few high profile enforcement cases
- Advertising notices “locally” is very difficult with CC offices closed
- Planning Inspectorate not accepting cases at present
- Requests / referrals keep coming in.....

Opportunities moving forward

- Recognition of the importance of PROW / Countryside Access
- APSE review
- Much closer links with CC low carbon ambitions
- Funding opportunities linked to Active Travel, Nature Recovery, Environmental Growth strategy etc.
- Major “Cornwall we want” consultation exercise for Covid 19 recovery plans.....”build back better”
- Review / refresh priorities and key strategies
- New “operating model” for Cornwall Council and review of service structure
- Multi-skilled post role profile developed to attract better quality candidates and recruitment being planned