Minutes

Date:	28th July 2025
Time:	14:00 – 17:00
Location:	NCH Council Chamber / Microsoft Teams
Chair:	VACANT
Vice Chair:	Carol Wilson (CW)
Attendees:	Cllr Julian German (JG), Cllr Karen LaBorde (KLB), Kay Driver (KD), Shelley Barrett (SB), Steve Church (SC), Rob Knill (RK), Jeremy Elvins (JE), Jim Hancock (JH), Paul Rabbeth (PR), Phil Allen (PA), Donald Martin (DM), Jane Tomlinson (JT), Jon Rowell (JR), Tanya Bicknell (TB), Charlotte Evans (CE)
Apologies:	David Cooper, Bill Makin, Cllr Steve Webb, Martin Howlett

1. Welcome and Introductions

Carol Wilson (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting. New members introduced: Councillors Karen Labour, Julian German, Steve Webb, and Rob Knill. All other attendees introduced themselves.

2. AGM Business

a. Previous minutes - AGM minutes (2024) adopted, proposed by PA, seconded RK.

b. The Chair's Report, presented by the Vice Chair on behalf of DC, highlights the forum's progress over the past year, its focus on enhancing collaboration with Cornwall Council, the upcoming Rights of Way Improvement Plan update, and acknowledges the contributions of retiring members..

c. Presentation and Adoption of Annual Report (Retiring Chair) - The report was circulated to members in February. The forum formally adopted the report with a proposer and seconder.
d. Re-appointment of members - Shelley Barratt formally reappointed.
e. Appointment of new members/Councillors - Councillors Karen Laborde, Julian German, Steve Webb, and Rob Knill (Parish Councillor), formally appointed. It should be noted that Rob Knill's application related largely to his Chairmanship of both the Mining Villages Regeneration Group (MVRG) and currently the Roseland & Truro Community Area Partnership (CAP), in addition to his role within his own Parish Council of Chacewater. Between them, the R&T CAP and MVRG cover 24 Town/Parish Councils and the outcomes, aims and objectives from the CLAF will be fed back into both forums.
f. Election of Chair - David Cooper volunteered to stand as Chair. There were no other nominations, and he was elected with a proposer and seconder.
g. Election of Vice Chair - Shelley Barrett volunteered to stand as Vice Chair and she was elected with a proposer and seconder.

It was suggested that a card of thanks be sent to both Victoria for chairing and Nick Jeans for being a member of the forum for many years and the amount of work he carried out.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

a. Review minutes of 22nd April 2025 – JH proposed and SB seconded. It was also noted that the presentation on Complaints Priority Policy by David Wood had also been circulated with the minutes.

4. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Consultation Launch (Charlotte Evans)

Following an invitation from Cornwall Council (CC), SB, KD and DC attended a meeting on the 17th July, with CE, to learn about the Council's planned approach to the review of its ROWIP.

CE introduced herself as the senior environmental officer overseeing the capital programme. She outlined that the ROWIP is a statutory 10-year plan, last published in 2007, and emphasised the need for it to be regularly evaluated and aligned with CC's broader strategies (environmental growth, net zero, nature recovery, health and well-being, equality, and inclusivity).

The plan's development will focus on listening to all users and stakeholders, integrating their needs and priorities, and ensuring the plan is realistic, impactful,

and place based. The goal is to have the new ROWIP adopted by the end of the financial year, starting with a baseline survey for all users, followed by stakeholder focus groups in the autumn, and a formal consultation on the draft plan in the new year.

A "Let's Talk" online page and baseline survey will be launched, with publicity in local newspapers and through parish councils and social media.

CE invited the forum to set up a working group to engage with the ROWIP process and provide ongoing feedback, highlighting the importance of forum involvement and early engagement. She clarified that focus groups will be organised by stakeholder group, with direct engagement for groups like the forum, landowners, and youth council (TBC).

Questions

- Coverage of the Cornishman newspaper was raised, highlighting the need to ensure all areas of Cornwall are reached. CE acknowledged this and mentioned plans to address any gaps in coverage. It was also suggested that local networks, such as town and parish councils are used to spread information.
- Constitution of focus groups: It was explained that CC's role is to record feedback and engage with named representatives from official groups, as well as stakeholder groups without a formal constitution.
- Budget: In relation to the process of creating the new RoWIP, budget should not be viewed as a limitation as sufficient staff resource has been found to progress the RoWIP. Requirements for additional funding can be assessed and made on a priority basis. In relation to future funding for implementation of outcomes in the Improvement Plan, the Plan itself will be a tool in asking for a securing adequate resource and funding.
- JH raised the issue of inclusive countryside access, mentioning his involvement with the Green Lane Association and offering a document on inclusive access for forum members, which is also available on line.
- Cllr Julian German mentioned that in other councils, Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding can be used for rights of way, but in Cornwall it is currently restricted to highways. He would like to see CC change its internal decision-making to allow LTP funds to be used for public rights of way and bridleways etc and suggested this could be considered as part of the ROWIP. This point was acknowledged by others as an opportunity to raise the profile and value of rights of way for future funding considerations.

Presentation slides to be circulated.

5. Constitution Review

- A revised version had been circulated and was adopted at the April meeting, with this AGM acknowledging that adoption.
- Suggested updates:
  - Item 2.1 Change references from "Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" to "Cornwall National Landscape" to reflect the current terminology.
  - 3.1c refers to neighbourhood development plans, ensuring the forum can provide input on rights of way and public access in these plans.
  - It was proposed to include the forum's ability to advise on improvements to the coast path in the terms of reference, with detailed wording to be provided later from Steve Church.

The forum agreed to reaffirm and update the constitution as discussed, with technical corrections and expanded remit for coast path advice.

6. Cornwall Council Update (Jon Rowell)

Staffing: Full team expected by September, with recent internal promotions and a new senior technical officer joining.

Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs): Over 50 new applications received this year; backlog remains due to high volume and legal requirements. Applications not properly served on landowners are registered but not processed until compliant.

Public Path Orders: Mainly diversions and very few extinguishments had a significant backlog, which has improved after a moratorium was imposed to address unresolved cases. Many cases depend on landowners constructing paths before orders can be confirmed, causing delays. A staged payment system is now in place: applicants pay at each stage, and the process does not move forward until payment is received. Since lifting the moratorium, new applications are arriving slowly, and the team aims to process about 30 public path orders per year, which also generates income. The backlog is now better managed, but some cases remain stalled due to landowner inaction.

Planning Inspectorate Delays: Significant delays in processing legal orders due to changes and admin issues at the Planning Inspectorate, leading to extended resolution times.

Commons Applications: About 10 processed per year, with almost all requiring hearings. The council acts as the registration authority, so preparation for public inquiries is less intensive than for other case types. There is a significant backlog, but it is gradually reducing since no new applications can be made.

7. Cormac Update (Donald Martin)

- Managing over 120–130 active capital schemes this year, with 28 already delivered and aiming for completion by year-end, despite resource pressures.
- The second cut of the Southwest Coast Path is underway; parish councils are actively involved in maintenance and delivery.
- Proactive Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP) and enhanced capital support continue for parish and town council priorities.
- CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) is being rolled out for legal and operational management, with future plans for public-facing features.
- Collaborative projects include integrated asset management system review and emergency management training.
- New degree-level apprenticeship role to support Countryside Service and Rights of Way teams.
- Focus on improving volunteering, streamlining work instructions, proactive maintenance (especially byways and drainage), and standardising bridge designs.
- Increased collaboration between environment inspectors and arboricultural services for better enforcement and notice serving.
- An online reporting system for public rights of way is being improved, with CAMS expected to enhance tracking and communication.
- Multi-use trails are receiving significant capital investment, with ongoing work on surfacing and structures.

ACTION: DM to share the list of active projects with the forum to improve transparency and coordination.

8. Working Group Review

The forum reviewed and restructured its working groups, consolidating and clarifying their focus and membership. The need for clear terms of reference and officer support was highlighted, especially for new members.

Meetings will be arranged after the summer break. **ACTION: TB to arrange.**

Main working groups confirmed:

- **Major Schemes Consultation Group:** Focus on large-scale developments and their impact on rights of way - Members: PA, KD, CW, SC
    i. A30 Connectivity
    ii. Saints Trails
    iii. Consultation Response WG (LTP Review),
    iv. Coastal Access WG,

v. Moorland and Open Access WG)

- **Multi-User Trails Group:** Addresses maintenance, improvement, and promotion of existing trails - Members: JE, RK, PA, SC
- **Parish and Town Liaison Group:** Engages with local councils to support rights of way initiatives - Members: PA, RK, CW
- **Health and Well-being & Accessibility Group:** Merged to cover equality of access, including disability and broader health benefits - Members: JH, SW
- **Rights of Way Improvement Plan Group (RoWIP):** Key strategic group for input into the new ROWIP - Members: SB, DC, PA, JH, RK, KD
- **St Austell China Clay Mineral Permissions Review Group:** Focusing on footpaths through China clay pits - Members: CW, JW and Ollie Howe

9. Correspondence to the Forum

- Email from the SW Coast Path Association (Julian Grey) inviting members to attend its forum; it was forwarded to members at short notice. SC attended as an independent and reported it focused on experiences and enthusiasm for the coast path.
- Email from the British Mountaineering Council invited the forum to submit evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature. The invitation was circulated, but no members responded before the submission deadline.

10. Any Other Business

- **Meeting room suitability:** The Council Chamber is unsuitable due to poor acoustics etc and it was requested not to use this room again. Whilst assurance was given that future meetings would be booked in more appropriate rooms, members were reminded that formal committee meetings take precedence over any other bookings when it comes to room allocation.
- **Expenses claims process:** JT asked members to indicate how often they claim expenses to consider setting up a more efficient system, possibly a single annual claim or using a volunteer scheme. No other specific AOB items were raised before the meeting closed.

11. Time and Date of Next Meeting

28th October 2025, 13:00 – 16:00, NCH Grenville Room

Forum Membership (as at date of meeting): *PLEASE UPDATE IF NECESSARY*

Landowner/ Manager Group (7)	*User Group (7)*	*Others Group (3)*	*Cornwall Council (3)*
Bill Makin Jim Flashman Martin Howlet	Carol Wilson David Cooper Paul Rabbeth Philip Allen Shelley Barratt Stephen Church Rob Knill	Jeremy Elvins Jim Hancock Kay Driver	Karen LaBorde Julian German Steven Webb