

WHEAL MAID SOLUTIONS GROUP

Tuesday 21 October 2025

In Attendance:

Sue Allen
Kieran Crouch
Michael Hawes
Julian Hughes
Rob Knill
Nigel Nicholls
Poppy Nicholls
Chris Ring
Emma Roberts
Graham Sansom
Matt Sullivan

NOTES AND ACTIONS

1. Introduction and Welcome

In addition to the regular participants, Nigel and Poppy Nicholls had attended at the invitation of RW. They are keen horse riders who use the Poldice Valley and Wheal Maid on a regular basis.

Emma Roberts had attended at the invitation of MS. She is Chief Executive of The Cornwall Bicycle Project, a charity established to encourage and facilitate cycling whether for transport, physical and mental health, socialising, competing or for pure enjoyment.

2. Apologies

Zoe Abbotts
Colin Bridges
Kevin Furnish
Adrian Spalding
Michael Wigley

Jim Scown has presented his apologies but will be unable to attend future meetings due to a change in work priorities.

3. Summary Notes of the Meeting of 19 August 2025

These were duly noted. The actions would be picked up through the main agenda items of the meeting.

4. Project Trow – Strategic Management Plan

GS took the meeting through the revised Proposals. This is Revision 4 based on feedback and further walk arounds at the site, including with ecological experts including Marcus Rhodes and Professor Adrian Spalding.

It also takes account of an analysis of the site by 2 leading expert mountain bike trail builders who MS was able to bring down after a swift and successful fundraising exercise.

It is worth noting that the most common walking routes don't always align with public rights of way.

For the ease of identification, GS has broken the Project area down into 3 sections: Wheal Maid Valley, Poldice Mine Valley and Wheal Fortune.

The Poldice Valley is the second most used trail in all of Cornwall.

MS advised that there was a need to move mountain bikes away from multi-use trails.

Clear signage needs to be introduced at all the crossing points.

In terms of overall current and projected mountain biking use of the site, there are 3 zones. The first is identified by GS as the 'Core Trail Zone' which is well-defined. Next is Wheal Fortune which has some definition and then there is the 'New Trail Zone' located in the Wheal Maid Valley adjacent to the Core Trail Zone. In total, mountain biking under these proposals will account for around 25% of the total Project Trow area.

MS talked about how mountain bike trails are graded for difficulty in a similar way to ski runs. The trails would have increasing difficulty that riders could work through but there would be something for riders at every level, including a new pump track for beginners.

It is believed that the income generation from the mountain biking could fund the improvements for other site users.

ER agreed that mountain biking is at the heart of Project Trow but people will be able to access the site in many different ways.

NN felt that the problem of keeping off-road motorbikes away from the site will persist. The general view was that greater regulation and more structured use of the site will act as a disincentive to motorbike users.

MS referred to Cardinham Woods as an illustration of how things can improve when there is a proper management plan in place.

RK pointed out that 4x4 usage over the past 18 months has dropped off and that a bolted gate at the entrance to the Poldice Valley had helped.

GS referred to the phased approach which will be taken to the various elements of the proposals. As an example, re-routing the public right of way that goes through the middle of the mountain bike zones in the Wheal Maid Valley could take place but that would be in Phase 4.

Reference was made to the new Woodland Circuit which would be created at the top of the site. This would have a low impact on vegetation

It was also considered that the creation of the New Trail Zone would assist in habitat management.

GS provided a plan showing the main proposed walking routes. This is seen as a Phase 1 priority with associated waymarking and surface improvements.

GS also circulated a plan showing proposed parking and other facilities. Although it could be an ambition to have a permanent café by the end of Phase 4, initially, there could be a pop-up facility or a container such as they now have at Trebah.

KC cautioned against getting too wedded to the word 'café' at this stage. We had to consider other similar provision in the area. It was perhaps best identified as a 'multi-use space' for now.

It was agreed that highlighting other cafes in the area would be useful as part of the final documentation.

GS advised that there had been some discussions about the optimum place for the car park. One view was that putting it where there was the best view over the Valley would be preferable. However, GS and RW had spoken to Cornwall Council the day before and they wondered whether the car park should be more 'hidden,' nearer to the woodland.

The access to the car park would be via the track opposite the road leading to Tony Craze which is already used by the Cornwall Search and Rescue and is the access point for emergency vehicles.

The Council had also indicated there was potentially other land in their ownership adjacent to the site which could be used. In general, they were supportive of the direction of travel which fitted with their vision for the area. They obviously couldn't make any firm commitments at this stage.

There was a discussion about vehicle numbers and it was agreed that 30 was a sensible number of cars to aim to cater for, initially, in addition to the parking that is available near to Mount Wellington.

GS put up a slide showing some of the materials which will be used in the design including furniture such as benches. It is comparable to that used for the Camel Trail 20 years ago.

MH, who has great experience in this area, said that this was almost a perfect project in terms of fundraising. It has environmental regeneration, increased accessibility, sustainability, a young people focus and brings communities together.

KC advised that the final draft plans should include clear reference to emergency access given the potential for accidents.

5. Consultation

- Who

It was agreed that there needed to be engagement with the public following GS's final revisions which will include more detail on phasing.

Of the key stakeholders, Cornwall Council had been engaged the previous day.

The WHS are an important consultee but it is probably premature to do that prior to getting public feedback. Clear support from the local community will assist the engagement with the WHS. KC has contacts within the WHS and will provide a 'heads up' about Project Trow and indicate that we will formally consult with them in due course.

As youth provision is one of the key themes, the main secondary schools in the area should be approached along with the Youth Development Forum.

- How

There will be a one-day, face to face event for the general public. This will be a mixture of plans on boards, small group conversations around key elements of the Project, a formal presentation and an opportunity for young people to try out mountain bikes outside the venue.

It will be important that this is supported by effective social media and that all messaging is consistent.

Consideration will be given to other briefings prior to the consultation event with interested parties eg The Poldice Valley Trust.

A simple digital survey could be created to run alongside the face to face consultation.

- Where

It was agreed that the one-day event should take place at Crofthandy Village Hall being the closest to Wheal Maid.

It is anticipated that it will last from 2 pm to 9 pm. There could be a presentation at 7 pm setting out the whole Project in context.

- When

Although we don't want to lose momentum, late November would not give enough time to prepare and to give enough notice. December is always problematical for such events. It was agreed to aim for mid-January.

6. Future Actions

It was agreed that although a Business Plan would be required and potentially the appointment of a Project Manager....and both of these would need funding....nothing should be done until the consultation has been undertaken and the feedback analysed.

Finalising the draft Project and preparing and undertaking the consultation should be the only focus between now and mid-January.

7. Future of the WMSG

There is clearly a need for a meeting in early February next year once the consultation has been undertaken and the feedback analysed.

All agreed that it was important that all the stakeholder interests within the WMSG should be involved in the consultation and be present at the consultation event, if at all possible.

8. AOB

On behalf of the Group, RW thanked Mei Loci and, in particular, GS, for all their hard work on Project Trow which had been really important in progressing the initiative.

9. DONM

Not including the consultation event, the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 10 February 2026.

KEY ACTION POINTS

GS/MH to finalise draft Project Trow Strategic Management Plan including revised Plans and chronology.

GS and CR to map all the land ownership in the area covered by Project Trow.

MH/GS/RW to meet to work through consultation methodology and event in detail.

KC to liaise with WHS

JH to find possible availability for Crofthandy Village Hall for mid-January.