

WMSG, 10/02/2026

In Attendance:

Richard Williams (Chair)
Chris Ring
Julian Hughes
Kev Furnish
Kieran Couch
Mathew Sullivan
Emma Roberts
Matt Oakley
Colin Bridges
Sue Allen

- Apologies for absence were noted from Richard Ryder, Zoe Abbott, Michael Wigley, and Adrian Spalding.

- The notes from the October 21st meeting were reviewed and accepted as an accurate record.

- An outstanding action item regarding land ownership in the area was mentioned as still needing work.

Debrief of the January Consultation Event

- Description:

- The group reflected on the consultation event held in January, which was considered a success.

- Over 120 people from 32 different settlements attended, showing widespread interest in the Wheal Maid area, including representatives from Crofthandy (11), Carharrack (10), Gwennap Parish (18 total), Redruth (9), Truro (8), and Falmouth (9).

- The atmosphere was positive and engaging, even among those with concerns.

- The presentation by Graham was praised for being well-delivered and for handling challenging questions effectively.

- Promotional efforts, including outreach to bike shops, bike groups, and social media, stimulated significant interest.

- The event highlighted the strong sense of community among mountain bikers and demonstrated the project's potential to promote well-being and inclusivity.

Survey Results and Public Perception

- The meeting went through the AI generated summary of the Survey findings.

- 84% of 300 survey respondents found the proposals beneficial, including mountain bikers, horse riders, and others. 7% were against.

- 68% of respondents said they would visit more often if the proposals were implemented.

- The survey identified nuanced feedback, with some respondents wanting beginner-friendly options.

- The plan is to review the survey results to balance the positive in-person feedback with written responses.

- The high quality of the initial proposal was credited for generating significant goodwill.

- Top reasons for support included strong overall approval, support for more trails, safety improvements, reducing illegal motorbike activity, benefits for young people, and local economic benefits.

- Top reasons against the proposal included:

- Fear of Overdevelopment: Concerns about the site becoming overly sanitized and commercialized with a cafe, visitor hub, and expanded tracks.

- User Conflict: Potential for conflict between cyclists, walkers, and horse riders was a significant concern, including the issue of silent electric bikes spooking horses.

- It was agreed that the project must be implemented in phases with consultation at each stage to manage these concerns.

Community Organization and Future Structure

- A discussion arose about the lack of a formal club or entity for the mountain biking community, making 'official' communication and entering into a legal relationship with the Parish Council difficult.
- The need for a formal entity was raised to manage insurance, risk, and communication with the Council.
- Matthew Sullivan noted the mountain biking community is often disparate but there is an appetite to form a more structured group, with many willing to contribute financially (e.g., £50 annual membership) or through volunteering.
- The group agreed this is an important point to address.

Stakeholder Engagement and Site Use

- User Co-existence: There was a suggestion that various groups (mountain bikers, off-road motorcyclists, horse riders, walkers) should have an opportunity to propose uses for the land to foster coexistence. The proactive mountain biker proposal has accommodated biodiversity and heritage concerns. A suggestion was made to formally declare footpaths and bridleways to satisfy walkers and horse riders.
- Stakeholder Weighting: A key discussion was how to weigh the opinions of different stakeholders (local residents vs. visitors), especially with a small but vocal minority of residents opposing any changes. The final decision rests with the Parish.
- Engagement: The need to engage all user groups (e.g., Ramblers, motorcycle clubs, horse riders) was highlighted. Kieran has approached World Heritage Site (WHS) representatives and Richard has arranged a meeting with Tamsin Daniel, the Protected and Heritage Landscape Officer with Cornwall Council. Gavin Henderson (Cormac) and Stuart Croft (Environmental Officer) were reportedly enthused by the project.
- Opposition: A comprehensive and detailed objection from an influential individual was discussed. The objection raises points on the consultation process, conflict with the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and various liability issues and responsibilities. A formal response will have to be sent in due course.

Balancing Access, Conservation, and Environmental Risks

- Heritage: It was noted that current heritage assets in the area are deteriorating, and the project could help address this through interpretation panels and maintenance. Continuous engagement with WHS is crucial.
- Access and Trespass: The issue of "trespass" versus "free, unregulated access" was discussed, as some locals resist being labelled as trespassers. The goal is to be inclusive and encourage responsible use for all activities.
- User Separation: While some trails will be designated for mountain bikes only, there will also likely be pedestrian-only trails. Good signage and sensible junction designs are needed to manage interactions.
- Contamination: The historical contamination of the site was raised as a significant issue of public concern. Airborne toxic dust is a key risk, and dust monitoring was suggested. A new contamination assessment might be necessary.
- Habitat Conflict: A potential conflict was identified between mountain biking on bare, gravelly ground and the preferences of butterflies that also favour this habitat.

Project Management, Funding, and Legal Structure

- Formal Structure: The project is too large for this Group or any individual within it to drive forward. A dedicated project manager and a formal organizational structure for the MTB community (like a CIC or CIO) are necessary.
- Funding a Project Manager for drawing up a Business Plan for Phase 1 and setting out the remaining phases: The cost is estimated at £800/day, requiring a budget of at least £20,000. It was suggested the Parish Council could consider allocating £10,000 by way of match-funding. It was also suggested that a partnership with Cornwall Council could be sought. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is another potential source.
- Legal Entity (CIO/CIC): Forming a Community Interest Company (CIC) or a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO) would assist in applying for funding, obtaining a licence from the

Parish Council and securing the appropriate insurance. A CIO is preferred for its charity status and funding opportunities but it takes longer to establish and there is more governance involved.

- Funding Sources: The National Lottery, Mines and Minerals Fund, Environmental Agency, and Paul McKinley Foundation were mentioned as potential funding sources.
- Insurance: A formal organization would need its own public liability insurance, which is expensive but necessary for funding applications.
- Phased Approach: A consensus emerged to recommend a phased approach, starting with "quick wins" like a beginner's track, improved off-road parking, and addressing safety issues. This would demonstrate benefits and help build support.
- Parking: Improving parking is a priority. A conversation with the leaseholder of the stock car track about using their car park was suggested as an interim solution and/or Cornwall Council identifying and making available land adjacent to the Raceway.

Actions

- Continue work on identifying land ownership in the area (CR)
- Explore the formation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO) for the MTB (MS/ER)
- Investigate funding options for hiring a professional project manager (All)
- Put in an application (expression of interest) for SIL funding for a project manager, asking for £30,000 (RW/CR)
- Consider engaging a professional fundraiser (eg Eleanor Hoskin) to review funding opportunities (RW)
- Speak to Cornwall Council to get in-principle agreement and resolve any land-related issues (RW/KC)
- Speak with Tamsin Daniel on the 25th February to discuss the project and any WHS concerns (RW/KC)
- Brief the local MP on the project (RW)
- Formulate a reply to the detailed objection letter (RW/KF)
- Quiz Crispin Rosevear about parking possibilities at the next parish council meeting (CR/RW)
- The WMSG recommend to the Parish Council that they proceed with the initiative but on a phased approach and with appropriate consultation at every stage (RW/CR)
- Research insurance requirements and costs for a CIC/CIO managing mountain bike trails (MS/RW)
- Review engagement methods with all user groups (Off-road motor bikers, horse riders, walkers, local residents) (RW/KF/JH)
- Schedule a follow-up meeting in approximately 3 months to review progress (RW)