Minutes of the
ANNUAL GWENNAP PARISH MEETING
Monday 13th April 2026, 6.30pm
Cllr Richard Williams, Chair, Gwennap Parish Council

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Steve Trelease and Cornwall Councillor John Thomas MBE

2. It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th March 2025

3. The Chairman's Welcomed all those in attendance

4. The Chairman's Report will be available to download on the Parish Council website.

5. Reports from local organisations.
   Mary Richards gave a report on the activities of the Frogpool Methodist Church, attached below and on the Parish Council Website.

   Karen Jeffereys gave a report from United Downs Environment Group (UDEG).
   UDEG had received a runners up, Cornwall Sustainability Award.
   UDEG and the United Downs racetrack had been working together and have an event "Nature's Rare Treasures" planned for 28th June 2026.
   The Community Market, Mills Hall, Carharrack continued with success. UDEG and Mitchell & Webber are lobbying the government regarding renewable HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) heating oil taxation. UDEG were continuing to roll out Community Conversations on the Local Area Energy Plan across Cornwall . Following the National Emergency Briefing, a film has been produced and is available nationally for screenings. The Parish Council agreed that UDEG could use Gwennap Parish Rooms for a screening of this film.

6. Questions from the electors, none received

7. Date of next meeting: April 2027

GWENNAP PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PARISH MEETING – APRIL 2026

Presenting the Annual Report on behalf of the Parish Council is always a mixed blessing. Whilst looking back over the past 12 months, you hope that the Council has made a tangible difference to residents' lives whilst fearing that we could and should have done a lot better. As ever, the truth lies somewhere in-between.

The past year was the first after the local elections. The six Councillors in post last May all chose to stand again…and we were all elected unopposed. Again, this is arguably a good and a bad thing. It was encouraging that stability was maintained and that everyone was sufficiently motivated to serve their fellow residents. The less positive aspect is that no-one else wanted to take their turn. Part of that is down to apathy, part to everyone having busy lives and maybe part of it is that people don't really understand what's involved in being a Parish Councillor. We often talk about the Parish Council's role to facilitate within our community but maybe we need to educate people a little more as to what we do.

Over the previous 4 years, we had focused on 5 main priorities which we had set post-election and reviewed at our Annual Strategy Day each January. Some of those have remained whilst others have come to the fore.

Affordable Housing is likely to still be a priority in 2029. We have focused our attention on two schemes: one at Gwennap Village for up to 10 homes and one in Frogpool where 9 units are proposed. The former scheme has been a rollercoaster for 7 years. Having been granted planning permission after a lengthy acquisition and consultation process, the Cornwall Community Land Trust (CCLT) found that the project was unaffordable and sought the assistance of Coastline Housing. After a summer of promise, it was determined that the scheme was still unaffordable and has been passed back to CCLT. They are still looking at options but only a supreme optimist would see this development happening. After so much time, money and effort, this is a blow to the many on the Homechoice Register who would have seen this as their opportunity to get on the housing ladder whilst staying in the area they call 'home.'

Thankfully, the situation with the Frogpool site is a lot more positive and building work should be commencing in June. We will liaise closely with Coastline to try and minimise the disruption for residents during the building works.

Cornish Lithium and Cornish Metals have both been active with exploration sites within the Parish, in recent years. Things are generally quieter now, but Cornish Lithium were granted planning permission in March for a geothermal project on land adjacent to the Copper House at Burncoose Nurseries. Concern was expressed about the visibility and noise aspects of this development and the Council's response to the consultation was suitably challenging. This work will commence in 2027.

We have continued to chair regular community engagement meetings with Geothermal Engineering Limited as their power plant began supplying electricity to the National Grid in February. This attracted national headlines and our Vice-Chair was quoted in the Guardian newspaper.

This was Greg Foxwell's last act as a Parish Councillor as he has now stepped down. He served for over 5 years and was an active and robust presence on the Council. His passion and clarity will be missed. I am grateful to Councillor Hughes for agreeing to take his place as Vice-Chair. Councillor Moses has been co-opted to fill one of the vacancies on the Parish Council with the remaining place set to be filled over the coming weeks.

The Wheal Maid Solutions Group has continued to meet at bi-monthly intervals. This culminated in a Consultation Event at the Crofthandy Village Hall on 21 January. Over 130 people attended from 32 different settlements to express their views on the Feasibility Study, which was compiled and presented by Mei Loci, Landscape Architects, based in Truro. It was a lively occasion with strong views expressed both for and against. It should be stressed that, at the current time, this remains a vision only which we will continue to explore. The Wheal Maid site is a much-loved facility and resource but it is costly to maintain and insure. 'Do nothing' is not a sustainable option. As we move towards defining Stage 1 of the implementation, we will continue to consult with local residents, environmentalists, the mountain bike community and other stakeholders. Whatever the outcome, and as ever, any progress is dependent on external funding, this process has been an excellent example of community collaboration and engagement and we thank everyone who has contributed thus far, for their time and effort.

Several representatives of the Mining Villages Regeneration Group have been involved in the Wheal Maid initiative and I would like to pay tribute, in particular, to Rob Knill of Chacewater Parish Council for his strong leadership of the MVRG and his personal commitment to supporting the work on Wheal Maid.

The United Downs Environmental Group (UDEG) continue to be the 'green conscience' of the Parish. They are active with a number of initiatives in the UDEG area but have also continued to develop a strong relationship with Purple Cornwall Limited, the company which manages the United Downs Raceway. The willingness of UDEG members to engage and the openness of Crispin Rosevear to respond positively to their ideas is a tremendous demonstration of the power of understanding and compromise. I am grateful to Councillor Hughes for being the Parish Council representative within this relationship. UDEG were also Highly Commended for Trees for Nature & Growth at the Cornwall Sustainability Awards 2025.

This has been the first complete year of 'Twenty is Plenty' within the Parish and it appears to have been a success in encouraging lower vehicle speeds. Some residents, in Gwennap village and Frogpool, who live adjacent to 30 mph roads, believe that they should have a similar reduction to the speed limit or other speed calming measures. Two Vehicle Activated Signs, one powered by solar panels and purchased by the Parish Council recently, have been put up between Pulla Cross and Frogpool and early data would appear to suggest that they are having a deterrent impact. The campaign to reduce the speed limit through Gwennap village is continuing, led by Councillor John Thomas MBE, our divisional Cornwall Councillor.

Engaging with residents remains a key priority. We have been more active on social media but that still needs to improve. We alternate our regular meetings between Crofthandy Village Hall and the Parish Rooms at Pulla Cross but residents will generally only attend if there is something they are unhappy about or they wish to speak for or against a planning application.

The future of the Parish Newsletter was in doubt due to its cost and less than compelling content but the latest issue has received very positive feedback and with a re-design planned and more dynamic content, it has been reprieved and will continue to be a means of reaching out to our parishioners. We have stopped sending it by post but it is available electronically and many still receive a paper copy through their door. My thanks go to the loyal volunteers who deliver it three times a year.

The plans for the 'new' Parish Rooms at Pulla Cross were approved last year. The construction costs were challenging before but, given the global situation, are likely to increase even more. The Business Case for the project was prepared on our behalf by an external specialist who compared our facilities and what we are seeking to do with other, similar populated Parishes in Cornwall and Devon and their building projects. Whilst that doesn't reduce the cost, it does provide encouragement as to what can be achieved. We have asked our consultant to identify grant opportunities for us but we will have to look at creative ways for fundraising. This might mean transferring the Parish Rooms and Playing Fields into a separate charitable trust.

We have recently set up a Working Group to oversee our Play Area which remains extremely popular with families both within and outside the Parish. Our approach to its maintenance has been reactive and we recognise the need to have a forward-looking strategy which schedules replacement as well as repairs to existing equipment. We also wish to continue with our commitment to make the play area as accessible as it can be to everyone.

Our other significant consultation initiative over the past year has been in relation to drafting our Neighbourhood Priorities Statement. This sets out the residents' vision for the Parish between now and 2050. This will be our contribution towards the new Cornwall Local Plan, being drafted by Cornwall Council, and its guidelines for our area. In essence, our Parishioners value where they live. Whilst most recognise the need for additional housing, they do not want this to compromise the beauty of their surroundings and the rurality which they cherish. Although the NDP only covers the period up to 2030, this engagement demonstrated that all of its priorities are still considered valid and important. We also recognise that a vibrant business community is important to the Parish's prosperity and we will look at ways to engage with that community on a regular basis. It is anticipated that this document will be signed off by the Parish Council in May before being put to residents for their final endorsement.

The storms and incessant rain of the early part of 2026 proved a challenge to everyone with power cuts, fallen trees and flooding. In considering how to respond in a supportive and holistic way, we once again were challenged by the disparate nature of our Parish. Centralised assistance from the Parish Rooms would have been of limited benefit. Getting a generator would not be a cost-effective solution. Providing useful general information and ensuring good communication from all relevant

statutory bodies throughout any period of disruption are things we can do. We will also update our Emergency Plan.

In addition to the specific initiatives set out in this Report, the Parish Council has dealt with a large number of individual questions, concerns and complaints. Not all of these are things over which we have any control or responsibility but we can exert influence and sometimes just being there as a sounding board is important.

At the heart of this is Chris Ring, our Clerk, who gets dozens (sometimes hundreds) of emails each week and who patiently trawls through and deals with them all. Many of these are unseen by the Council or anyone else and his role as conduit between the residents, the Parish Council, Cornwall Council and our MP is pivotal. His financial management is exemplary and having just completed our latest Internal Audit, it is worth quoting from their report: 'Gwennap is an effective, well-run, beacon, Parish Council.' He has also been responsible for raising valuable grants to support our project work.

I must pay tribute to others who contribute significantly of their own time to support our community:

The car boot sales were again well supported and owed everything to the organisation of Nick and Michelle Malabar. It is disappointing that they still struggle to enlist volunteers to help with car parking as this is a rare initiative which enriches the lives of many across our Parish.

This lack of volunteer support means that there won't be a fete this year. The hope is that Helen Rowe and her loyal team will be able to organise something for next year. Maybe missing out will prompt others to come forward.

The 3 churches in our Parish provide not only a spiritual home but also much-appreciated social hubs for the community. The Women's Institute provide a similar and valuable service.

Cusgarne Primary School is a wonderful facility for young people and if we lost it, the impact on our Parish would be devastating. Whilst that does not appear imminent, the significant reduction in pupil numbers over the past year is cause for concern. We look forward to working with the school to explore ways in which we can help promote everything it has to offer. Hopefully, a new permanent headteacher who starts next week will be an important step for stability and growth. I thank Councillor Freeman for leading on this.

I'd like to thank Helen Neale, our Cornwall Council link officer, for helping us to navigate our way through to the right Cornwall Council service and Councillor John Thomas MBE for his general support and financial contributions from his Community Chest fund.

The Parish requires many practical jobs to be done throughout the year, both small and large and we thank Paul Tregwidden for all the maintenance and repair work he does, often at short notice.

Ann Gazzard and her daughter have opened and closed the Playing Field gates, kept the Parish Rooms clean, the Richard Jory bins emptied and have generally maintained a watchful eye on all those valuable assets.

Lou Hitchens and Clare Wicks, in particular, have done an amazing job in undertaking litter picking in such a proactive way. Their selflessness is an example to all.

Our Unsung Heroes this year were Ian Bolitho and Mary Richards. They are both individuals who see where there is a need and meet it without question or fanfare. There will be others too who have shopped for their neighbours, picked up a discarded drinks can off the road or removed a hanging branch across a footpath. You are all 'heroes' and we thank you!

Almost finally, thanks go to my fellow Parish Councillors for being passionate about their area, listening to everyone with fairness and understanding and being willing to give up their Monday night once a month to try and add some value to residents' lives. Being in public service means that you will not be popular with everyone…and it is all the harder because the support of those who appreciate what you do is often drowned out by those who think you are useless. Be reassured that you are respected more than you think and if you're not, who cares? You're doing the right thing in the right way and that's all that matters!

And finally, I have spent all this report looking back but we must have one eye on the future. Over my time in office, the Parish Council has worked hard to keep the precept down…restricting increases to keep pace with inflation. That is unlikely to be possible in future years. Reductions in national spending have led to Cornwall Council tightening its budget and costs are going up everywhere and for everything. In order to fund eg the future strategy for the play area or costs in respect of Wheal Maid, we will need new funding and that is unlikely to come from external grants. We will have to pay for initiatives ourselves. This year, our neighbouring Parish Councils increased their precepts by 20, 30 even 40 per cent. We will face similarly difficult decisions when setting our precept for the next financial year but, as always, we will put the interests of all our residents first and we will explain the reasons for any increase.

Thank you

Richard Williams
Chair
Gwennap Parish Council

FROGPOOL METHODIST CHURCH

Frogpool Methodist Church remains a welcoming part of our village offering religious fellowship and a warm welcome to members of our community. Our building is available for weddings, baptisms and funerals whether you have a connection with the Church or not.

Since the closure of Carharrack Methodist Church last March members of their congregation have joined us. We now hold one service on the fourth Sunday of each month at the Mills Hall instead of at Frogpool.

We have a busy coffee morning on the last Thursday of the month. There is a ladies group meeting twice a month creating craft items, some of which the village enjoy at Easter, Remembrance time or Christmas, when the decorations are hung outside. For a light hearted afternoon we hold a Beetle Drive with Cream Tea each month. All these events offer a warm welcoming space for people to meet together, to form new friendships.

For the last few years we have held a Remembrance Concert with Nankersey Male Choir and are joined by the School. An Act of Remembrance is held on Armistice Day in the Courtyard or Schoolroom, depending on the weather. In December we hold a Community Carol Service again joined by the School.

For the last few years our Minister has led the Carol Singing at the Cornish Arms which is very much enjoyed by those who attend.

We offer seating at both the front and rear of the building where people can take time to rest from their busy lives and at the rear admire the ceramic decorations made by members of our school and community.

We wish to remain very much at the heart of our community and warmly invite anyone to join in any of our activities.