

History of the Fal Public Right of Way 2013 -2025



Friends of the Fal
Fran Swanson
November 2025

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Background

Local Maintenance Partnership

The Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP) (developed by Cornwall Council) is a partnership of the Local Authority with over 170 Parish and Town Councils. It provides cash grants to local (parish and town) councils to organise trimming and minor works on public rights of way.

Cornwall Council Gold path status

Four points to note –

1. All paths (except some 'dead ends') starting in or within 1km of the centre of a sub-parish settlement of >1000 people.
2. Paths providing established access to formal, well-visited visitor attractions, including identified ancient monuments, significant accommodation centres and businesses, based on ranger knowledge and consultation responses.
3. Paths known to be in popular use based on ranger knowledge and consultation responses.
4. Paths accessible to people with limited mobility or sensory impairments based on existing promotion, ranger knowledge and consultation responses.

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/countryside/public-rights-of-way/local-maintenance-partnership/>

Over the decades, the Public Right of Way alongside the River Fal in Grampound has been a contentious issue and remains so today.

Long before Friends of the Fal took on a lease from the Trewithen Estate to manage the neglected woodland, the footpath which runs from the main gate to the stream at the far end appears to have become a sticking point for whoever supposedly manages it. Over the years, there have been many people in the Parish Council who have tried to solve the issues this footpath presents.

Co-founders Fran Swanson and Sarah Roberon have leased the woodland since 2020, where this PROW runs throughout, following the River Fal.

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2013 COMPLAINT TO PC

Fal Footpath – January 2013

In January 2013, Grampound Parish Council received a complaint about the muddiness of the Gold Status PROW, caused by accumulated leaf mould/mud.

Parish Council resolved to hold a 'Village Walk' to assess the Fal and Mill Lane footpaths with a view to compiling a list of priorities regarding the work needed.

Cllr. Webb reported he had walked the path, and it seemed reasonable to him, considering the extremely wet weather. It was certainly better than before the rubble was laid, courtesy of Cllr. Egerton. Cllr. Webb read the relevant section of the maintenance agreement with CC, which is quite specific. In view of this, Members did not feel that any further action was necessary.

*Photo from left to right Parish Councillors–
Shirley Turner, Mark Taylor, Kay Chapman*



[It is thought that the maintenance agreement mentioned by Cllr Webb is referring to the cutting of the sides of the path agreement with Cornwall Council under the Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP), which is specific to maintenance of the sides of the footpath, not maintenance of the surface unless grass/weeds were growing in the centre of the path].



Muddy patch

Dry path

Photos of the Gold Path 'Fal river path' in Grampound with Creed Parish taken on the same day in June 2013 following moderate rain.

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2013 Mud Clearing

According to Parish Council Minutes

September 19th, 2013, PC Minutes

Footpaths –

Cllr. Egerton had met with Ms Penny Hodgson, the Cormac Footpaths Ranger and Ms Hodgson confirmed that it would be acceptable for the PC to arrange clearance of the mud from the Fal River footpath. Once cleared, she would try to arrange for a lorry-load of road planings to be provided to improve the surface (volunteers to spread them).

Since 2013, Parish Council have laid tarmac planings on the surface of the footpath adjacent to the River Fal and was considered as best practice due to the minimal cost to the Parish Council, however no consideration was given to the impact on the environment.

Planings are a by-product of road resurfacing and can be recycled and repurposed as temporary applications such as farm tracks, paths, hardstanding's and car parks and considered a cost-effective material for landscaping projects and the construction industry.

However, tarmac contains harmful chemicals which can affect our environment and wildlife.

The Big Concern is Asphalt (tarmac).

Road surfaces laid down in the 1980s or earlier may contain coal tar.

Coal tar is classified as hazardous waste since it contains significant quantities of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a group of carcinogenic compounds.

Road planings containing coal tar present a source of risk to human health via dermal contact and inhalation or ingestion of dust. As re-laid road planings are much more permeable than fully bound asphalt, leaching of PAHs presents a risk of surface water and groundwater contamination.

Planings can contain a high level of contaminants. These contaminants are dispersed by rainwater or leaf blowers, which are then carried away by the amount of flooding in the area and seep into the water table via the River Fal.

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2020/21 FRIENDS OF THE FAL

FotF approached the Parish Council with a request for gravel chippings on the Fal PROW to alleviate the quagmire that walkers have to navigate through, which is challenging enough for the more able, let alone members of the public with disabilities using mobility scooters or those with pushchairs.

The Parish Council were receptive to our offer to lay the chippings.

In October 2020, the Parish Clerk informed Friends of the Fal of the following:

“Bob [Egerton] has kindly kept me informed of your conversation with him. I understand that he has mentioned a lorry load of planings from Cormac, which would certainly be a cheaper option. I have absolutely no idea how much chippings would be, but in any case, I must point out that I do not have the authority to spend large sums of money – that is for Members to decide. As an aside I think I’m right in saying that twice in the last 10 years, hardcore has been laid on the path, but in a relatively short time, “disappears” into the soil.

[This is the first time during all correspondence with PC that ‘planings’ has been mentioned. Friends of the Fal were unaware that ‘planings’ were indeed **tarmac** and not ‘gravel chippings’ as previously requested and discussed with PC.

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2020

From the PC minutes

‘Noted Ms Penny Hodgson, Countryside Ranger from Cornwall Council’s Countryside Access Team (CAT) had carried out an inspection of the Fal River footpath and advised the public footpath is in an acceptable condition for a rural footpath’

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FEBRUARY 2021, PC MEETING

Friends of the Fal attended a PC Meeting via Zoom to discuss the material for the Fal PROW and were left feeling dismayed at some of the Councillor responses.

Both the Trewithen Estate and Westcountry Rivers Trust agreed with Friends of the Fal that tarmac planings were an unsuitable material for a countryside path adjacent to the River Fal, and felt it was not in keeping for a rural footpath. They agreed a more 'greener' solution should be explored.

We asked for a more environmentally friendly solution; however, the responses received from Parish Councillors were –

“ Members were not convinced that residents support/want the level of improvement proposed by FotF”

“ 'It's a rural footpath, what do you expect?'

“I'm Cornish and have always lived in the countryside and it's expected to have muddy paths’

“I like putting my wellies on and going for a muddy walk’

“We have always put planings down when needed, why should we change that?”

“Changes down by the Fal river have only happened in the last 12 months”

“So you think you know more than Cormac?”

“We find you abrasive”

Needless to say, the comments Friends of the Fal received were not what was expected from a Parish Council meeting to discuss their offer of laying gravel chippings and/or alternative solutions to path materials. The PC minutes were retracted where it stated 'Abrasive' and replaced with a different version.

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January 2021

The following photograph shows that despite the best efforts to blow the leaves off the path by the Parish Council, clear the mud and dress the path with tarmac planings, the footpath still fills with rainwater and mud, especially in the depths of winter.



Just one of the muddy areas on the Gold Status PROW

Parish Council was still in the Cornwall Council Local Maintenance Partnership in 2021, but as mentioned before, this is to cut the sides of the path, not to maintain the surface of the path, as per email from Cllr Bob Egerton to Sarah Roberson on February 18th, 2021

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FEBRUARY 18TH 2021

'Dear Sarah

Thank you for your email. I note your reference to discussions with Westcountry Rivers Trust, Trewithen Estate and South West Water. However, as I said in my briefing note, Cornwall Council, as the highways authority, is responsible for what is done on the path. Therefore, could I suggest that you discuss your proposals with them before reaching conclusions about what should be done or not done.

FEBRUARY 18TH 2021 SARAH'S EMAIL RESPONSE TO BOB EGERTON

Dear Bob,

We have already been in discussions with Cornwall Council, but thank you for the suggestion.

Any session with the Parish Council is to first make them aware that several growing issues require attention (as outlined already by the organisations previously mentioned) Any conclusions should be evidence-based with professional objectivity to provide the Parish Council and Cornwall Council with impartial, expertly balanced information, to derive the best course of action.

March 2022

In March 2022, Friends of the Fal received several loads of wood chippings for the creation of a new permissive path within the woodland. As there were more chippings than required, we used the surplus to improve sections of the public footpath, particularly in the boggy areas.

This was very well received by the many people who use the path, dog walkers, families with pushchairs and buggies, and individuals with mobility challenges. The improved surface meant dogs were no longer returning home caked in mud, pushchairs did not become bogged down, and those with reduced mobility or balance were less at risk of slipping. We were also mindful that some elderly residents who regularly walk this route are unable to wear Wellingtons, making a more stable surface especially important for them.

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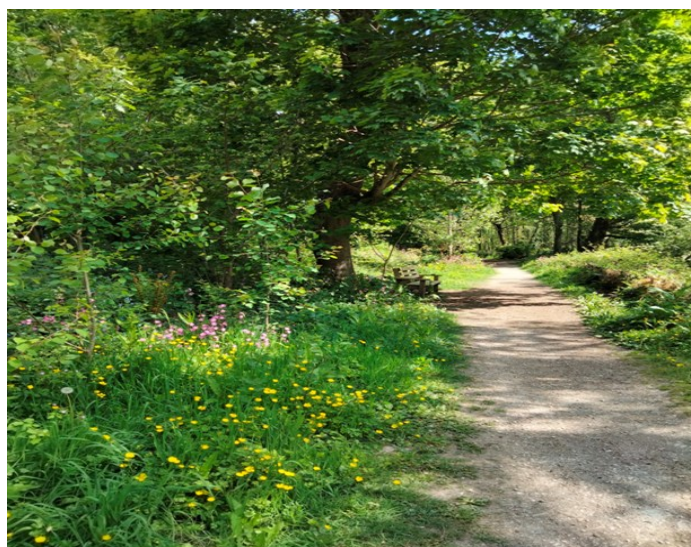
Despite the positive feedback from the community, Friends of the Fal later received a complaint, passed to us indirectly via the Parish Council, expressing concern that the wood chippings would eventually break down and contribute to more mud.

FOTF were well aware of this process and planned to use the broken-down chippings as mulch for new flower beds for the various children's groups, such as Girl Guides, Rainbows and the School.

FOTF were more than happy to continue laying the wood chippings, but if the consensus was that a muddy path is more preferable, then we will leave that to the PC.

Part of FOTF's Woodland Management plan is to let more light and air through the woodland by thinning trees & branches alongside the footpath.

The benefits of this will help to dry out the boggy sections of the path, which are shrouded by Sycamore, Holly and Rhododendron Ponticum, (an invasive species). It will also provide the woodland floor with beneficial native wildflowers for pollinators.



February 2024

PENNY HODGSON (COUNTRYSIDE RANGER) REPORT

Dear all, [Sarah Roberson, Fran Swanson, Lea Williamson (C.C) Michael Bunney (Cllr)]
February 8th, 2024

It was good to meet up and have a chat about Public Footpath Grampound 10 and the Friends of Fal group.

Thank you for sharing your document on PROW management. I can see a lot of time and effort has gone into putting this together. I have also read the other information you've forwarded to us.

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I think it's useful at this point to share the public rights of way legislation that is relevant in this situation so that we're all aware.

- Cornwall Council has a legal duty under the Highways Act 1980 to assert and protect the rights of the public to pass and re-pass along the footpath. CC (and Cormac working on behalf of CC) has a statutory duty to maintain the surface of the public rights of way network to a standard commensurate with its public use.
- Cornwall Council does not usually own the land over which a public right of way passes.
- Landowners have a statutory duty to the public to maintain gates and stiles on the PROW network (section 146) and to keep their hedges cut back to stop encroachment onto a PROW (section 154).
- Any private body or landowner wishing to undertake maintenance or improvement works on a PROW must first contact CC/Cormac to gain authorisation to go ahead with those works. PROWs are highways and are subject to the same legal requirements, such as insurance, correct qualifications for working on the highway or using plant (diggers) and primarily ensuring the safety of the public during any works.
- Parish Councils can enter into the Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP) to get funding from CC to carry out vegetation cutting on previously agreed sections of 'gold' paths, on behalf of CC.

This involves a third-party contractor to perform the work and invoice the Parish Council for reimbursement. The Parish Council will then offset the costs against the LMP allowance given to the PC by Cornwall Council CAT

- Unless Parish Councils own the land over which a PROW runs, they do not have the legal powers to manage PROWs. They can, of course, work with landowners and CC to manage PROWs if this is what the council agree they wish to do. Some parish councils have a designated footpaths officer who walks the paths and reports directly to CC when there's a problem, or works closely with landowners to resolve issues

NOTE: - PC pulled out of the LMP in 2022 without consultation with FotF. No attempt has been made to work with FotF to resolve issues.

- All public complaints relating to the PROW network should be reported to CC via the online reporting system, and we will respond. Public rights of way - Cornwall Council

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NOTE:- Any complaints about the PROW have historically been reported to the Parish Council and NOT Cornwall Council (Fol was requested). FOTF was not contacted and essentially did not receive communications regarding any complaint or issue.

I hope this information goes some way to helping with the wider issues you are facing surrounding Public Footpath Grampound 405/10.

I will look to visit the site in the next few weeks to assess the drainage issues and solutions available to the group.

Penny Hodgson | Countryside Officer | Public Rights of Way Cormac Solutions Ltd

Since 2022, FotF has managed the sides of the PROW (instead of the PC) and the surrounding woodland.

July 2024

As of July 2024, the Parish Council founded a new sub-committee, 'Countryside Access Project', intending to oversee all PROWs in Grampound. The available roles were not democratically open/ advertised to the residents of Grampound.

The sub-committee consists of past and present Parish Council members: Jane Sloane, Kay Chapman, Helen Bunt, Liz Fisher, Alison Ryves, Jo Shaw (Cllr), Bill Tomlin (Cllr)]

From July 2024 until August (13th) 2025 no agendas, minutes, Terms of reference, policy, process, or any other documentation were included on the Parish Council website, nor included in the Parish Council minutes, meaning this subcommittee was operating under the radar. All backdated minutes were then added on the 13th of August 2025 after Fran and Sarah raised a complaint that no documentation existed for this subcommittee on the PC website.

Parish Council and subcommittee Countryside Access Project (CAP) rejoined the Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP) after leaving the LMP in 2022. Both events were unbeknownst to Friends of the Fal and were not consulted on either of those events in 2022 and 2025. Please note, CAP appear to have several titles, such as Countryside Access Committee and Countryside Access Group, to then become Countryside Access Project (CAP).

Friends of the Fal placed an objection with Cornwall Council to the Fal PROW being reinstated into the LMP under the Parish Council, with the consideration of petrol machinery, and the practice of using planings would commence once again.

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As part of our environmental ethos, we do not use fossil fuel-powered tools such as petrol strimmer's, brush cutters, or leaf blowers, due to their impact on wildlife and the environment. Instead, we use traditional hand tools, such as scythes, sickles, and shears, supporting careful curation of the 1.5 meters either side of the PROW. Yes, it is arduous work, but the benefits to the environment, wildlife and everyone's health far outweigh the use of noisy, polluting, harmful machinery.

Cordless Leaf blowers and strimmer's are bad for the environment due to the speed at which they blow and cut, to the detriment of wildlife, spreading harmful pathogens like Ash Dieback spores around the woodland. Unless the machines are powered by renewable energy, they too are environmentally unfriendly. [See the Leaf Blowers & Strimmers article on FOTF's website].

June 2025

Parish Council Minutes of Grampound with Creed Parish Council **MINUTES OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON Thursday, 12th JUNE 2025**

CA/48/25 Local Maintenance Partnership - appoint contractor. Agreed to engage Josh Parkin as our approved contractor to carry out LMP works on our behalf. KC to contact Clerk to determine his hourly rate.

CA/49/25 Funding -

b. Application to Cornwall Councillor's Community Chest – Agreed we should bid for funding to purchase a leaf blower. Irv Bunt to obtain quotes for a suitable battery-operated appliance.

c. Budget for sundries – agreed to claim for strimmer cord, gloves and petrol. Also, printer ink and paper. To be submitted to Clerk.

Friends of the Fal placed an objection with Cornwall Council to the Fal PROW being reinstated and included in the LMP.

Grampound with Creed Parish Council Minutes for Full Council Meeting November 2025

70. Information Only / Future Agenda Items

b. GwC Countryside Access Group – Standing Item on Agenda Cllr Chapman

[Were any of the landowners/tenants who would be affected by this application informed? Trewithen and Friends of the Fal had no prior knowledge of the Parish Council/ Countryside Access Group's intention of rejoining the LMP, and no CAP documents existed on the PC website at this time.]

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There have been recurring Standing Items regarding Countryside Access Group in the PC Minutes every month, but with no mention of rejoining the LMP until June 19th, 2025, when the CAP minutes were finally published on August 13th.

Grampound with Creed Parish Council Minutes September 18th 2025

Information Only / Future Agenda Items

- a. GwC Countryside Access Group – Standing Item on Agenda
- a. The LMP funds are in the PC bank account.
- b. JP Jones has been appointed as the contractor.
- c. LMP money to be reduced next fiscal year, figure to be confirmed by CC next fiscal year. (This is due to the FOTF PROW being retracted from the LMP and the timing difference in payment received vs. the complaint raised by FOTF)

Grampound with Creed Parish Council MINUTES OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS COMMITTEE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON Thursday, 9th October 2025

CA/39 Local Maintenance Partnership – As we move into autumn and winter our planned pro-programme of works under this scheme will commence and our monitoring of conditions on PROW will increase. Plans are within budget.

Unfortunately, LMP funding will reduce in the next financial year as one of our gold paths has been withdrawn from the scheme. Full details were reported at the last PC meeting. We will be seeking an increase in our PC allocation to compensate.

Friends of the Fal Letter to Grampound Parish Council

We kindly request the Parish Council's support in the following:

1. Public Communication: Please help inform the community that Friends of the Fal (Fran and Sarah) now manage PROW 405/10. [only either side of the PROW] This could be done via the Parish Council minutes and local channels such as the Grampound Times, Grampound News & Events Facebook page, and the Countryside Access Group platforms like Instagram. This will help ensure that residents know who to contact with any concerns or queries.

2. Redirection of Queries: We ask that any complaints or issues regarding PROW 405/10 be redirected either to Fran and Sarah directly or through the Cornwall Council online portal using the appropriate forms.

https://secure.cornwall.gov.uk/form/auto/countryside_issue

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This is simply to ensure that any concerns raised by the community are addressed efficiently and through the correct channels. We are keen to avoid past misunderstandings and are committed to fostering a collaborative approach between our organisations moving forward.

We also look forward to working together on future projects, including the River to Reef Program, Natural Flood Management initiatives (Natural flood management program – GOV.UK) and other environmental efforts that support the well-being of our local landscapes and communities.

[Despite FOTF's repeated attempts to seek clarity for the community regarding the PROW, so far Fran and Sarah from Friends of the Fal have not received a positive response from Grampound Parish Council regarding our request to them for help to inform the community, only that we do it ourselves!]

Below is a poster produced by Friends of the Fal for the awareness of the community and the general public. We hope this will provide a useful point of contact should any matters arise concerning the Fal Woodland.

COMPLAINT OR ISSUE?
SEE IT, SAY IT, SORTED!

1 Fallen branches across the path?
Message/ WhatsApp Friends of the Fal. This is the fastest course of action and guaranteed to be sorted

2 Issue about the surface of the footpath
Either raise an issue using Cornwall Council portal or message Friends of the Fal - may take a longer time to sort

3 Worried about a fallen branch across the river?
Either raise an issue using Cornwall Council portal or message Friends of the Fal

4 Is there an issue with furniture?
Message/ WhatsApp Friends of the Fal. This is the fastest course of action and guaranteed to be sorted

5 Vegetation growing over path and blocking route?
Message/ WhatsApp Friends of the Fal. This is the fastest course of action and guaranteed to be sorted

6 Is there an issue with a gate?
Message/ WhatsApp Friends of the Fal. This is the fastest course of action and guaranteed to be sorted

Location - where exactly is the issue?
Try using the **what3words** app

Friends of the Fal Phone Number/ WhatsApp
07774048852
07817730459

Cornwall Council Portal
https://secure.cornwall.gov.uk/form/auto/countryside_issue

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Essentially, it is a guide to the complaint process to Friends of the Fal and not to the Parish Council, now they are no longer in the LMP. You can also find the poster in the FOTF's Noticeboard at the entrance to the Fal Woodland.

November 2025 SUMMARY

Historically, the Gold Status PROW 405/10 has been passed from pillar to post in terms of its management and has caused unnecessary problems for those who have, over the years, attempted to find some sort of resolution to the issues it poses.

Grampound Parish Council enlisted the help of members and volunteers to address the PROWs footpath issues, but ultimately, as we have seen, the path's surface should actually be managed by Cornwall Council, not the Parish Council nor Friends of the Fal.

Cornwall Council has a legal duty under the Highways Act 1980 to assert and protect the rights of the public to pass and re-pass along the footpath. CC (and Cormac working on behalf of CC) has a statutory duty to maintain the surface of the public rights of way network to a standard commensurate with its public use.

County Councillor Bob Egerton [Retired] confirms that Cornwall Council, as the highways authority, is responsible for what is done on the path.

Penny Hodgson (Cormac) has emphasised to those who have sought help with the PROW that '*the public footpath is in an acceptable condition for a rural footpath*'

The Parish Council have no legal powers over land they do not own.

No one is responsible for clearing the leaves, digging up the mud, or laying woodchip.

It was initiated by the Parish Council in 2013 following a complaint they received, and Friends of the Fal are now in the same position regarding public complaints.

Parish Council and Friends of the Fal are not responsible for the surface of the PROW, so where does that leave us?

For those who believe that the surface of the Fal PROW is inadequate, the best course of action is to contact Cornwall Council to raise the issue with them, as it is their legal and statutory duty to fulfil their obligations as set out in the Highways Act 1980.

Alternatively, the community could collaborate with Friends of the Fal to set up a working party to manage the surface of the footpath.

Fran and Sarah of Friends of the Fal hope this gives some clarity to the status of the Fal Woodland PROW and that we are not responsible for the upkeep of the path, although we do try our best to do what we can on an ad hoc basis, much the same as the Parish Council did in previous years.

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You may have noticed that the area inside the main gate up to the edge of the SWW (Southwest Water) pumping station has been resurfaced. This is because FOTF campaigned for 4 years to SWW to repair the deep, muddy ruts caused by SWW vehicles.



We also requested that they repair the damage to the bridge when one of their vehicles reversed into it during Storm Darragh in December 2024. This has since been completed.

Friends of the Fal are willing to engage with the community if anyone would like to help set up a working party to keep the path clear and install some drainage at the edge of the path

