

Council Report: Footpath Improvement Works

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Council's consideration and approval to progress an application to Cornwall Council for funding under the enhanced Local Maintenance Partnership (LMP) scheme, to deliver improvements to parish footpaths.

2. Background

Cornwall Council are offering grants of up to £15,000 for footpath improvement works under the enhanced LMP scheme.

- No work can be undertaken without prior approval from Cornwall Council.
- All works must be completed and claimed for before 31st March 2026.
- Works must provide clear benefit to users of public rights of way.

The office has identified multiple issues across the footpath network including missing signage, damaged structures, and other hazards. Improvements would enhance safety, accessibility, and enjoyment of the network for residents and visitors.

3. How the Scheme Works

- The Parish Council investigates the costs of proposed works.
- Detailed costings and quotes are submitted to Cornwall Council for consideration.
- If approved, Cornwall Council issues a Purchase Order.
- The Parish Council arranges and pays for the works.
- An invoice is then raised and Cornwall Council reimburses the agreed costs.

4. Issues Identified

Signage Needs – Multiple footpaths lack signage, have damaged signs, or require replacements.

Structural Issues – Examples include broken gates, a damaged bridge, and drainage/flooding issues.

Accessibility Issues – A stile on Footpath 20 is difficult for elderly users.

Vegetation/Obstruction – Fallen trees and overgrowth restrict access on some routes.

(A full schedule of issues and proposed actions is provided in Appendix A.)

5. Outline Cost consideration Framework

Costs will vary depending on whether a contractor is required or the work can be undertaken by our staff. Below is a list of costs that will need to be considered to undertake these works.

- New / replacement signage/reinstatement of existing signs.
- Vegetation clearance.

- Tree clearance.
- Stile adaptation.
- Gate repair/replacement.
- Bridge repair/replacement.
- Ditching/drainage improvements.

6. Options for Council

Option A – Do Nothing

- No additional officer time required.
- Existing problems remain, with possible deterioration and ongoing complaints.

Option B – Partial Submission

- Apply for funding for selected priority works (e.g., signage and obstructions).
- Lower cost and officer time requirement.
- Some issues remain unresolved.

Option C – Full Submission (Recommended)

- Apply for the maximum grant to cover all identified works.
- Addresses long-standing issues, improves accessibility and safety, and leaves a long-term legacy.
- Requires officer time to prepare application, obtain quotes, and manage delivery.

7. Risk & Considerations

- Landowner Responsibilities: Some works may fall under landowner obligations and will require clarification.
- Officer Capacity: Additional staff time will be required to prepare applications and oversee works.
- Funding Ceiling: Costs must not exceed £15,000, though staged works could be considered.

8. Financial Implications

- Maximum Cornwall Council grant available: £15,000.
- Parish Council may need to cashflow works before reimbursement.
- Potential in-kind support from landowners could reduce costs.

9. Conclusion

The improvements highlighted above would significantly enhance the usability, safety, and enjoyment of the parish footpath network for both residents and visitors. While some of the smaller tasks could be undertaken by Parish staff, responsibility for certain works may rest with the respective landowners. Further investigation will therefore be required to clarify ownership and responsibilities before applications are made.

This project would require collaboration with the Countryside Access Team and with landowners to ensure correct installation of way markers, appropriate permissions, and

smooth delivery of works. There may also be opportunities for landowners to contribute towards works, thereby reducing overall costs.

If the Council chooses to proceed, dedicated officer time will need to be allocated to:

- Investigating and obtaining quotations for proposed works.
- Liaising with Cornwall Council and landowners.
- Preparing and submitting funding applications.
- Overseeing the delivery and completion of works.

By pursuing this opportunity, the Parish Council would not only address long-standing maintenance issues but also leave a lasting legacy of improved public access, safer paths, and greater enjoyment of the parish's countryside.

Appendix A – Summary of Footpath Issues

Signage Issues

Footpath	Issue	Action for Consideration
3	No signage present	Install new sign
4	No signage present	Install new signs
5	Missing signage on route	Install new sign
10	Sign down	Reinstate sign
11	Sign laying down	Reinstate sign
13	Missing sign	Install new sign
14	Missing signage	Install new sign
18	No sign at top of path	Install new sign
20	Sign laying down	Reinstate sign
26	Sign illegible	Replace with new sign
Other Issues		
Footpath	Issue	Action for Consideration
10 & 12	Multiple fallen trees obstructing path	Clear trees and ensure path is passable
20	Stile difficult for elderly users	Install handrail/handhold for accessibility
4	Broken bridge	Repair or replace bridge
8	Broken gate	Repair or replace gate
11	Broken gate	Repair or replace gate
13	Floods regularly	Improve drainage at entrance/ dig out old ditches
27	Vegetation encroachment on tarmac path	Clear vegetation