

Cormac Volunteer Scheme (CVS)

Across Cornwall but focusing on Tincombe Nature Reserve, Saltash

Cormac

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: **Community Engagement**

Project overview (50 words max)

The Cormac Volunteer Scheme is in place primarily to engage local communities with their local Cornwall Council (CC) managed areas. Run by two Community Partnership Officers (CPOs), it supports around 100 volunteering projects across Cornwall. Sites range from individual planted beds, through to areas covering many acres including Tincombe Nature Reserve, Saltash.

52 words



Tincombe Nature Reserve Volunteers, Cormac

What were the biodiversity conditions on site prior to the enhancement? (100 words max)

Policy drivers came from a desire within the local community for volunteer groups to enhance sites both for visitors and wildlife.

Baseline data is available from the 2016 Tincombe Nature Reserve and Public Open Space Woodland Management Plan stated the site comprised of a mixture of formal parkland with a total of 5.5 hectares of woodland.

56 words



Plant bed at Tincombe Nature Reserve, Cormac

What were the reasons behind this project? (100 words max)

The overall scheme provides support for a range of volunteering works in line with Cornwall Council's environmental strategy which has been formally in place for over 10 years. CC's vision is to see volunteers engage with public open space in their local areas.

At Tincombe Nature Reserve, CPOs were contacted during and after Covid restrictions when the area had been well used by local residents and opportunities for enhancement noted. Initially used as a pilot for Forest for Cornwall planting initially, the volunteer team engaged and signed up to scheme during 2021 and have been developing the site since.

99 words

What were the biodiversity measures taken? (300 words max)

Across all Cormac Volunteer Sites:

- The ethos is project replicability across all volunteer sites (to greater or lesser extent depending on site and aims of volunteer group).
- Long term management lies with volunteers for all enhancement schemes.
- Care is taken to ensure that in event of demise of volunteer group, CC is not left with greater maintenance responsibility than baseline.
- The innovative volunteer policy and sign-up process allows agreed autonomy to volunteer groups, allowing the majority to work without direct Cormac staff supervision on site, minimising costs to company.

The measures taken at Tincombe were:

- New areas of habitat including orchard, wildflower meadows, bat and bird houses, alteration to mowing regime to allow differing sward lengths, tree planting (particularly in replacement for Ash loss), hibernaculum and bug hotels (created in conjunction with local schools), bulb and perennial bed planting.
- Arranging BioBlitz events to track biodiversity gain over time to document ecological value.
- Development of a 5-year Management Plan by volunteers as baseline to ensure works in line with Biodiversity Net Gain/CC Environmental Strategy

Engagement with local community is key to the scheme. CPO's provide support and point of contact for all internal teams. CPO's also support core volunteers in engaging further with the community. The "Tincombe Tea Party" has become a regular community event in the park, drawing over 1,000 local residents to the site on the event date in August last year. CPO's provide link to other CICs and local charities looking to link service users to volunteer groups for mental health improvement. These events and links naturally lead to an increase in the core volunteer team working on site.

The CVS has provided a series of composting facilities within the site, ensuring that all green waste is recycled on site. Cuttings and prunings from within the wooded areas are built into habitat piles on site.

307 words



Compost bin at Tincombe, Cormac



Mulching at Tincombe, Cormac



Further information (250 words max)

New project, Urban Green Shoots, led by Cormac's Making Space for Nature Manager is currently getting involved in the site for a further phase which will incorporate monitoring of the site.

Volunteer hours are monitored monthly. At Tincombe Nature Reserve, 758 hours were recorded last year (April 2023 – March 2024).

The legacy of the scheme at Tincombe is a (word of mouth) increase in general footfall through the park. The Tincombe Tea Party was created – an annual event bringing the local community together in the space with handmade, homemade and preloved stalls. There has also been an ongoing opportunity for local people to regularly volunteer with associated mental and physical health benefits. Links have been made to charities in Cornwall supporting people with mental health difficulties and offering opportunity for those individuals to work alongside the Tincombe volunteers.

The lessons learned from the CVS is to start small and develop as interest grows. Tincombe was the first site where a 5-year plan was submitted. Putting a process in place to develop such a plan is essential as it reduces staff time and costs in receiving requests and permitting works on an ad-hoc basis. This is because the basis is agreed for the next 5-years and reviewed/updated annually as part of that process.

Cormac will continue to support new volunteer groups. An induction pack is distributed to each group when they agree to sign up to the CVS as well as to individuals who are interested in finding out more about the scheme for information.

254 words

Project Team

- **Client:** Adam Chell, Countryside Manager, Cornwall Council
- **Team Members:** Jenny Heskett, Countryside Ranger, Cormac; Rebecca Dickson, Community Partnership Officer, Cormac; Latterly Melissa Ralph, Making Space for Nature Manager, Cormac and Kelly Strange, Urban Ranger from Urban Green Shoots team
- **Volunteer Organisations:** Friends of Tincombe



Cormac's Volunteer Scheme Induction Pack

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement? (100 words max)

Motivation came from the local community who wanted to enhance the space. Cormac's Volunteer Scheme supported them to achieve their aims outlined in their 5-year Management Plan. Largely because of the significant ongoing volunteer support, the site has been selected for further input and boost from the Urban Green Shoots scheme to go beyond what would be possible with just volunteer effort.

62 words



The first Tincombe Tea Party in 2021 and is now held annually.



Bug hotel created by the Friends of Tincombe



Pallet bench designed and built by the Friends of Tincombe

*All Photos: Friends of Tincombe,
<https://tincombe.insaltash.co.uk/friends/>*

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