Clerk: Mrs Sarah Rimell

Illogan Parish Council Community Office, Trevelyan Road, Illogan, TR16 4RC

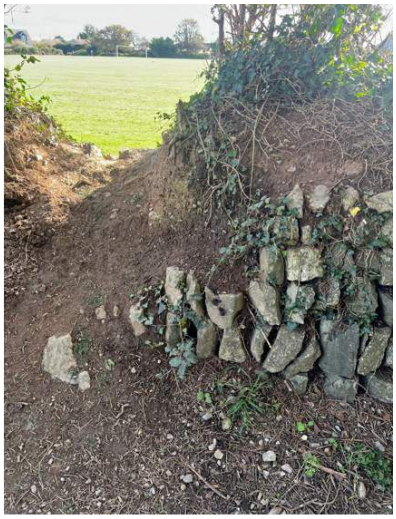
Telephone: 01209 711433

Email: enquiries@illoganparishcouncil.gov.uk

# Vandalism on the Wall in Illogan Park

The Council has received a request to clear the gap in the wall to create a formal walkway through the hedge and to reinforce the wall on either side of the opening. The volunteer gardening group has advised that they would be willing to undertake the clearance work and assist with reinforcing the adjoining walls.

At present, the gap is being used as a desire line (informal shortcut) into the sports field. Although repairs have been carried out on previous occasions, continued use of the area has resulted in the gap repeatedly deteriorating and reopening.



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The volunteer gardeners have recently repaired a different wall in Illogan Park with success:

Before

After

## Options for Consideration

**Option 1: Clear the gap, make a formal walkway and reinforce the surrounding walls.**

The Council agrees to the volunteer gardeners undertaking the clearance and formalisation of the informal walkway, with the Council funding the associated installation and material costs.

Formalising the access point and reinforcing the adjoining walls would help manage pedestrian use more effectively, reducing continued damage to the surrounding wall and improving its long-term condition.

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Potential Benefits to Option 1

- **Reduces damage to existing infrastructure**: The gap is already being used as a desire line, resulting in repeated deterioration and reopening of the area. Creating a formal access point may reduce ongoing repair costs and prevent further damage to the existing wall and hedge.
- **Reflects current park user behaviour**: As the route is already being used regularly, formalising the access acknowledges existing patterns of movement and may improve overall user experience within the park.
- **Enhanced appearance**: A deliberate opening can improve the visual appearance of the area compared to a continually damaged hedge and wall section.
- **Potential reduction in maintenance requirements**: Ongoing reactive repairs to the hedge, wall, and surrounding area may be reduced if the access point is formally established and appropriately constructed.

Potential Drawbacks to Option 1

- **Increased accessibility to the sports field**: Making the desire line a formal entrance may encourage greater use of the field and park from that entrance, which is currently not tarmacked, potentially increasing wear on grassed areas.
- **Safety risks**: An untarmacked access route may be less safe for entry and exit, particularly in wet weather or during heavy use.
- **Potential increase in anti-social behaviour**: Additional access and escape routes can make it easier for individuals to enter and leave the site, potentially increasing opportunities for vandalism, littering, or other anti-social behaviour.
- **Loss of natural boundary**: Creating a permanent opening may reduce the effectiveness of the hedge as a physical and visual barrier.
- **Initial costs**: Works would be required to create the opening, install a suitable path surface, and potentially provide signage, drainage, or accessibility improvements.
- **Potential ecological impacts**: Removal of sections of hedge may affect habitats for birds and other wildlife and may require ecological consideration.

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- **Expectation of further access improvements**: Formalising one desire line could create pressure for additional access points elsewhere within the park.

**Option 2: Replace the Wall to fill the gap and reinforce the boundary.**

The Council may either appoint a contractor or ask the volunteer gardeners to undertake the replacement and repair of the wall, with the Council contributing towards the associated material and installation costs. Undertaking these works would help restore the wall, remove the access point and stabilising the entire wall section.

Potential Benefits of Reinforcing the Wall and Blocking the Desire Line

- **Reduces unauthorised access:** Preventing access may discourage users from entering the sports field at an undesignated location and encourage use of established tarmacked path entrances.
- **Potential reduction in anti-social behaviour:** Fewer access points may make it more difficult for individuals to access the site for inappropriate activities or quickly leave the area after causing damage.
- **Preserves the original design and character of the park:** Maintaining the existing boundary may support the intended layout and appearance of the site.
- **Protects biodiversity:** Retaining and strengthening the hedge may preserve habitat value and maintain a green boundary.
- **Reduces wear on the field:** Restricting access may help prevent excessive foot traffic and damage to adjacent grassed areas.

Potential Drawbacks of Reinforcing the Wall and Blocking the Desire Line

- **May not address user behaviour:** The continued existence of a desire line suggests a genuine demand for access at this location. Users may continue attempting to pass through, creating ongoing maintenance issues.

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- **Ongoing repair and maintenance costs:** Previous repairs have not prevented the gap from reopening. Further reinforcement may require repeated intervention if users continue to breach the barrier.
- **Potential for increased damage:** More robust barriers can sometimes result in users causing greater damage in an effort to regain access.
- **May create negative public perception:** Residents may view the closure as unnecessary if the route is already well established and heavily used.
- **Potential displacement of the desire line:** Users may simply create a new gap nearby, resulting in damage elsewhere along the boundary.

**Option 3: Take No Further Action**

The Council notes the request but decides to take no further action at this time.

## Recommendation

Members may wish to consider Option 1, whereby the Council agrees to the volunteer gardeners undertaking the clearance and formalisation of the informal walkway, based on the success of previous wall reconstruction works and the assumption that there is a genuine demand for access at this location.