Research Project Proposal Phil Hill

JOIN-
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Contents

Introduction.

Community is the shared characteristics and values that people have in common - either ideologically, geographic environmental, or when considering the online community; it is people sharing a common interest or want to achieve something together. It is used to provide meaning to the lives of participants, creating a secular sense of purpose (Zoo & Durst, 2019).

My interest in community started as a way to reconnect with my own formative community. From an early age, I aimed to escape the trappings of a small working-class community, which was evident all around me in my home and my social group.

This urge has meant that I do not really find myself part of a community, even now in Watford, where I have lived for the past six years. The realisation of my alienation has become ever more apparent since the birth of my daughter, exacerbated by my wife's own similar experiences of moving far away from her native Canada.

It takes time for the mobile individual to lay the foundations and solid connections to feel part of something (Putnam, 2000, p.204), I seek to find a community where I fit.

Objectives.

- Continue to conduct in depth research and practical investigations into the role of community and its impact on society.

- Create a body of photographic work that provides meaning to the role of community and its impact on society.

- Aim to gain the support of the communities in which I will work to create strong connections and more impactful images allowing time to build relationships.

- Create collaborative responses together with the community that I photograph.

- Explore methods and strategies of how I can increase my profile as a photographer through publication, exhibition, grants & funding, and collaboration.

- Question and investigate my role and impact as a photographer.

Context.

Robert Putnam discusses a decline of 'social capital' in his book 'Bowling Alone' (Putnam, 2000); this broadly relates to the relationships that enable society to function. Whereas traditional community groups have historically served in providing the participants with the skills and knowledge to participate in society, civic engagement, for example, has decreased as education has risen over the past 30 years. Through additional education, people now have the skills to function within a society; these skills would have historically been nurtured through clubs, organizations and associations. This decline in social engagement has been attributed in part to the introduction of the television in the 1950s, and now through the fundamental impact of the internet and new online communities; we now seek to find our shared values in the privacy of our homes, online (Putnam, 2000, p.217).

I have become interested in the connections that people make with each other that enable them to engage in society and share values. As we move into an ever more individual and online world, it is important to consider what Roland Barthes referred to as the Idiorrhythmic and considered individuals within society in an attempt to ask the question: Is possible to create a community where everyone lives according to their own rhythm, and yet respects the individual rhythms of others (Johansen-Stene, et al., 2018, p.9)

However, I believe there is much positivity and clear sense of community, despite Putnam's proclamation of a decline. My project will be looking at this. In particular, I am interested in how traditional forms of community are being replaced as our society evolves to be ever more connected. Traditional community is categorised by Putnam: Civic, Religion, Political (Putnam, 2000) - areas that have a huge impact on our society, areas that can create and shape the culture and the lives of the people living in a specific location. I seek to discuss the notion of whether traditional community is in decline, or merely evolved. For me, this will be a look at my new community: **Watford.**

"Fantasmically speaking, there's nothing contradictory about wanting to live alone and wanting to live together"

(Barthes, 1977, p.4-5)

Context.

Selected Influences

Jack Latham's series 'Sugar Paper Theories' considered the role of photographic 'truth' and evidential imagery in the role of a notorious event in Iceland during the seventies. Latham's project was also a look at a community desperately seeking absolution and coming to terms with a miscarriage of justice. The openness of the community to make this project happen was vital to the success of the work as he worked collaboratively with the people deeply rooted in the case as well as those interested in a positive resolution. (Latham, 2019)

Clementine Schneiderman's collaboration with communities has been a great influence on how I might approach the project moving forward. Her commitment to sharing the work with the very communities that she photographed created a clear bridge between the sometimes esoteric world of photography and groups not usually associated with consuming photography in this way. (Schneiderman, 2019)

Figure 1. Spread from 'Sugar Paper Theories' by Jack Latham. (Latham, 2016, 144 - 145)

Figure 2. It's Called Fashion (Look it Up), Merthyr Tydfil from 'It's Called Ffasiwn' by Clementine Schniederman. (Schniederman, 2016)

Progress.

Somerset Carnivals are culturally significant for South West communities, however, little known outside of the region. Participants have been engaged with the clubs for many years, sometimes many generations of the same family, where it becomes a bonding experience, committing large amounts time, and financial resources.

The impressive spectacle of the carnival, the allure of fantasy, ritualistic performance, and what Alice Zoo refers to as 'adult Play dislocated from the bounds of real life and responsibility' (Zoo, 2019, p.43), is at the core of the Somerset communities that stage them.

I feel my work to date has been successful, providing a number of images that are some of the strongest in my current portfolio. I was able to come to terms with representation in my work and I have been able to create an image that moves past the performance of the subject into one that I direct, albeit with the knowledge of a continued dialogue between author, subject, and reader (Walker, 1997).

I have identified that the narrative and the sequencing of my work as a key area of development and have begun the process of research methods and strategies to develop this. Placing my subject in the environment that informs the context of the work is also a key area of development for me.

Looking at a familiar community was an important step in re-engaging my photography and building meaningful relationships with my subject. I see much positivity in the subject already, and this is something I am taking forward. My initial idea was to look back and re-engage. Crucially, I must now engage with where I am now.

Within ½ a mile of my house there are a range of community projects steeped in tradition and ritual. There is a local church who run a food bank across the street, a 'locals only' pub a hundred meters down the road and a children's centre up the road, who run a range of community initiatives. I would like to engage with and photograph some of these groups to ascertain how they have found their community.

Collaboration.

Fundamental to the work that I intend to create, I want to involve the people that I am photographing as much as I can.

Ideas for collaboration:

- **Exhibition**
- **Interviews**
- **Workshops**
- **Local dissemination**
- **Publications**

It will be an important part of my work to also engage professionals, academics, and specialist in the related fields of sociology and anthropology to support my research and collaborate on my project. **See Appendix 1** for details of how this will be structured during the modules.

Audience.

I aim to work towards getting my work seen and published over the course of this project, to have it appraised by my peers, raise the profile of the work, and ultimately for myself as a photographer.
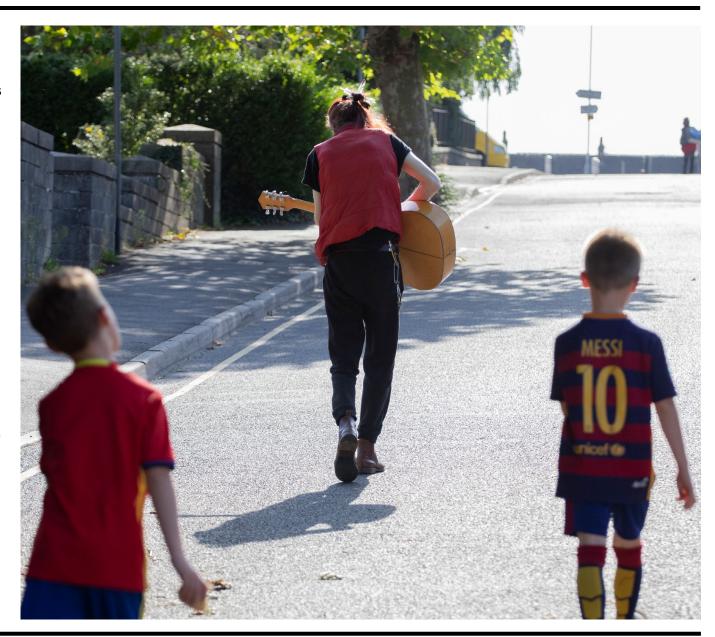
This will be a key focus for **Sustainable Prospects**, however, I am already promoting my work-to-date and have some interest from the BBC. I am currently in the process of creating some small postcard packs to mail to potential audiences, including sharing with the community I photographed.

Furthermore, I also intend to enter a variety of competitions to further raise profile. **(See Appendix 2)**

Engaging new Audiences

I intend to look into funding and bursaries, such as the RPS postgraduate, and will create an application for Arts Council funding.

Even if I am unsuccessful in these endeavours, I feel that it is important and valuable to engage in this process.

Timeline.

My project will be a series of smaller investigations that link to the upcoming modules

This will evolve as the project progresses and the impact of the module study becomes clear, however, I expect to look at the following key areas:

Civic - *Informing Contexts*

Relating to cities and towns, I aim to consider the civic-mind and identify how people interact and care for the communities that they live. This will be my initial area of inquiry whilst building relationships with other community groups and explored through a topographic approach focusing on the architecture and the environment of community.

Political - *Informing Contexts & Surfaces and Strategies*

Rising online connectivity has contributed to the exacerbated echo chamber of those seeking out validation of a viewpoint. Though additional research is required, I feel it is important to try and reflect this in my project.

Religious - *Surfaces and Strategies*

In the UK, only 1% of 18 – 24 identify as Church of England secularism is on the rise (Sherwood, 2018). What is replacing this, and what could the impact of this be?

Sustainable Prospects

After investigation and experimentation, I will look to identify the strongest area to continue my project, or a combination of these areas.

Resources and Skills.

I anticipate to continue working with similar resources as I have started to explore up until now. I have access to a range of photographic equipment through the college where I work - with studios, darkroom, digital suites, and a range of location photographic equipment.

- **My work will be shot digitally, which is as much a practical decision as it is an aesthetic one based on time and financial reasons.**

- **I have also started to experiment with location studio set ups to introduce a more controlled portrait into my series.**

A key area to develop skills will be the possible outputs of my work at the end. This will be a key area of focus during **Surfaces and Strategies**. Examples for consideration:

Twine

- Twine is an open source software for telling non-linear interactive narratives. I would like to explore the possibilities of creating a visual narrative using this.
- The series Black Mirror has used the software to plot the episode 'Bandersnatch' (Slade, et al., 2018)
- I could use the platform to create a narrative that may also be printed out and presented in a book format and digital online gallery.

Graphic Design and Illustration

- In addition to my photographic practice, I also work with illustrations and graphics. I will continue for the duration of the course and see how I can begin to bring these mediums together.
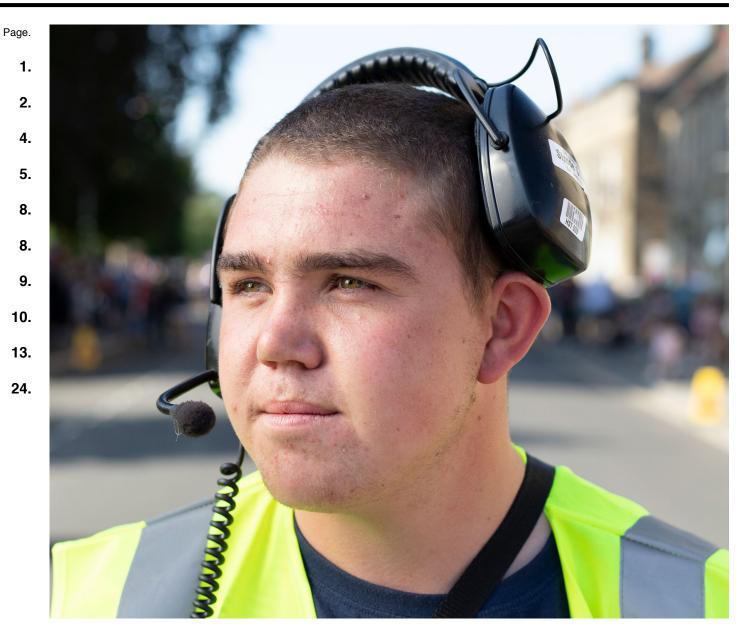- For example, the use of typeface in design can have a subtle impact yet fundamentally inform context.Helvetica is ubiquitous and is especially used on government information due to its readability and clarity. It supports the notion of stable governance (Helvetica, 2007).
- Any outcome I produce should consider the graphic elements that support, whether digitally, or in print.

Narrative

- I want to continue the research and work that I started in exploring Narrative and the sequencing of my images. A crucial area of development identified during the initial stages of my projects and key to the success of any outcome that I create.

Figures.

Appendix 1 - *Schedule of Events*

Study Block	Year	Module	Activity
SB2	**1**	**Informing Contexts:** This will be my opportunity to underpin my practice through the challenging and testing of ideas. I anticipate that fundamental changes to the evolution of my project will take place during this time. I have already identified that I wish to develop my Narrative and sequencing and this will be informed by semiotics, considering signifiers and the signified, and challenging the notion of authors and readers of my work. I also aim to continue the dialogue of representation between me and the subjects of my work.	I aim to build the relationships I need to begin my project. As a staging activity and investigation into the civic aspect, I will start by considering the environment of community and aim to create a topographic look at the civic centres of my locality, such as Church Buildings, community centres, and other community spaces. Whilst I am creating this work, I want to make the links and connections with community groups that will form the focus of future work, and may even lead to complementary images in relation to the above. For example, there are two food banks run by local church groups very close to me and as an area of investigation, I will also consider the impact that policies such as austerity has had on the community.
SB3	**1**	**Surfaces & Strategies:** During this module I would aim to start applying some of the grounding I had from the previous module. Hopefully with a better understanding of the context in which my work sits, I could then begin to apply this to the approaches in producing and sharing my work. I look forward to having my approaches challenged and actively seek to move out of my comfort zone here.	I want to look more closely at the political aspects of social capital idea. As I stated previously, I am interested in the role of the 'Echo Chamber' and would seek to explore a range of methods, techniques, and approaches to this subject to identify the most appropriate way of representing this photographically. Here I can also start collaborating with people within my work with the aim to use my teaching background to empower them to document their own story through workshops and mini projects.

SB1	2	**Sustainable Prospects:** I would expect to extend my contextual understanding of my investigations and look to build relationships with academics and professional bodies that would be able to inform and underpin my work. I am particularly interested in discussing my work and having it challenged by persons in the fields of anthropology and sociology. This is also an opportunity to identify and explore new ways to share my work through seeking funding and bursaries. I am interested in how I might incorporate a more research led approach would have to my practice and complement my background in editorial photography. I also would use this module as an opportunity to extend my current teaching practice and would be keen to look into opportunities to teach at an HE institution through lectures, workshops and collaborations.	I want to look at funding methods and as part of this I would be looking at creating an application for Arts Council Funding. I have started to explore opportunities for the publication of my work and I would expect to continue doing so here and also identify new avenues for my work to populate. At this stage of my project, I aim to have identified more direction in the work and would continue to develop on the areas outlined in my proposal with much more of a focus towards audience and dissemination of my photography.

Photographic areas of inquiry.

I have been identifying a range of areas to start building links in order to create images. There are inevitably going to be some access challenges, so I feel it is important to have a good range & increase my chance of success. This will continue throughout the whole of my project through research and development of the work, supported by new critical and contextual perspectives.

Civic

Local Pubs - *Traditional centres of the community*
Community hubs - T*he environment and landscape of community*

Political

Paternity Leave - *Loneliness on Paternity leave.*
Local political groups and societies
Food Banks - *The impact of austerity and when community takes the place of the state.*

Religious

Pathfinder clubs - *Seventh-day Adventist Church drumming corps*
Soul Survivor - *Anglican Church based in Watford*
Mawlid - *A procession takes place between the two mosques based in Watford*

Clubs, Societies, and Culture

Running Club
Cycling Clubs
Mid Herts Bonsai club
The Shamrock Club
Online Gamers - *Close but have never met*

Appendix 2 - *Associated Costs.*

Competition Entries - Timeline and Cost		
Date	**Portrait Prize**	**Cost**
Feb - Apr	Portrait of Britain	£10 single image - £35 up to 3 images.
May - Jul	Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize	£30 per image
Jul - Sep	Portrait Salon	£20 - Dependent on inital entry to TW
Aug	Iris Award (Perth Centre of Photography)	$35 AUD - Student entry up to 3 images.

Date	**Photography Awards**	**Cost**
Jun - Jan	Sony World Photo	Free
Jan - Apr	Royal Photographic Society International Photography Exhibition	£18 - £30 per
May	Palm Photo Prize	£30

Total Photography Award Budget:	**£130 - £170 approx.**

Appendix 2 - *Associated Costs.*

Expenses

Costs to create this work will mainly involve travel to and from the subject that I am photographing - aiming to keep this within a 10-15-mile radius. I have good access to the London area through a range of relatively cheap public transport options and access to a car.

Expense	Description	Cost
London Travel	Daily Off-Peak cap zone 1 - 9 *Reprenting maximum potential distance travelling from Watford (Z9) to Central London.*	£12.90
Fuel	Travel by Car - 40 MPG approx.	£5 per 40 miles travelled.
Per Diem	To cover shoot expenses, such as food, drink and incidental expenditure.	£20 - £30
Falmouth Face to Face Event	Travel - 300 Miles x2 (Watford to Falmouth). Accomodation	£75 £150 (Approx. budget - check near time for options)

Materials

Production towards outcomes:
I will be reviewing options for the output and production of my project and make appropriate choices for the work that I am creating. Informed decisions are to be expected to be made during the course of production.

Expense	Description	Cost
Marketing and Promotion	At various stages of project, production of marketing materials will be created, for example: -　　Post Card Sets -　　Mailing materials (Envelopes, postage etc). *This can be produced at cost through the college where I work.*	£50 per mailing

Appendix 3 - *Identified Future Reading.*

Photography

Burgin, V., 1987. *Thinking Photography.* 4TH ed. London: Macmillan Education LTD.

Cotton, C., 2014. *The Photograph as Contemporary Art (World of Art).* 3rd ed. London: Thames & Hudson.

Green, D., 1999. *Where is the Photograph?.* 1st ed. Brighton: Photoworks.

Mitchell, M., 2018. *In This Place.* [Online] Available at: https://margaretmitchell.co.uk/in-this-place [Accessed 27 11 2019].

Snyder, J., 1975. *Photography, Vision, and Representation. Critical Inquiry.* Autumn, pp. 143 - 169

Wells, L., 2003. *The Photography Reader.* Oxon: Routledge.

Wells, L., 2004. *Photography: A Critical Introduction.* Third Edition ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Community & My Project

Barthes, R., 2018. *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism).* Translation Edition ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Critchlow, H., 2019. *The Science of Fate: Why your future is more predictable than you think.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Dias, D., 2018. *The Ten Types of Human.* 1st Paperback Edition ed. London: Windmill Books.

Gladwell, M., 2019. *Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know.* 1st Paperback edition ed. London: Allen Lane.

Johansen-Stene, K., Refsum, C. & Schimanski, 2018. *Living Together – Roland Barthes, the Individual and the Community.* Wetzlar: Verlag .

Kropotkin, P., 1902. *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution.* N/A: Will Johnson.

McGarvey, D., 2018. *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain's Underclass.* 1st paperback edition ed. Edinburgh: Luath press Limited.

Piketty, T., 2017. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century.* Reprint Edition ed. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Said, E. W., 2003. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin.

Spinks, J. & Chandler, D., 2017. *The New Village.* London: Bemojake .

Vogl, C. H., 2016. T*he Art of Community: Seven Principles for Belonging.* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc..

Semiotics and Narrative

Barthes, R., 1977. *Image, Music, Text.* London: Fontana Press

Barthes, R., 1993. *Mythologies.* 1st Vintage Edition ed. London: Vintage.

Berger, J., 1973. *Ways of Seeing.* London: Penguin.

Genette, G., 1983. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.* Reprinted Education Edition ed. New York: Cornell University Press.

Lamarque, P. & Olsen Haugom, S., 2004. *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Lees-Maffei, D. G., 2007. *Show/Tell: Relationships between Text, Narrative and Image – An Introduction*, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire.

Appendix 4 - *Risk Assessment*

MA Photography Risk Assessment form

FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Please read the Risk Assessment Guidelines before completing this form which contains further resources, available from The Photography Centre.

Photographer's Name:	Phil Hill		Date(s) of Shoot:	10/2019 – 09/2021
Assistants' Names:				
Tutor / Supervisor:	Jesse Alexander, Paul Clements			
Location:	South East, UK			
Description of work:	Location shoots towards research project around the theme of Communities. Shoots will be either indoors, or outside. Editorial and environmental portraiture, Landscape, location studio sets.			

Persons at Risk   Identify all those at risk

Technical Staff:		Academic Staff:		Students:		Admin Staff:		Canteen Staff:	
Contractors:		General Public:	Y	Visitors:		Estates Staff:		Library Staff:	
Cleaning Staff:		Emergency Personnel:							

Other:		Especially at risk:	

Check list				
Equipment	Flash/tungsten	Stands/tripods	~~Hot lights~~	~~Smoke machine/fire~~
~~Flammable materials~~	~~Risk of Fire~~	~~Welfare of Assistant~~	**Welfare of model**	~~Working at Heights~~
Location	Transport to location	~~Parking~~	~~Vehicles/traffic~~	**Weather conditions**
~~Public~~	~~Confined spaces~~	~~Derelict Buildings~~	~~Animals~~	~~Children~~
~~Tides~~	~~Compressed Gasses~~	~~Water~~	~~Noise~~	~~Chemicals~~

PRIMARY RISK ASSESSMENT Example			
HAZARD	*What kind of hazards are there at the site or in your task?* *i.e.* **Light stand**	**RISK OF**	*What risks do those hazards create?* *i.e.* **Light stand falling over**
CONTROL MEASURE	*How are you going to minimise the risk associated with the hazards you've identified?* *i.e.* **weigh down light stand with sandbags**		

Please continue your risk assessment, adding additional pages as necessary.

HAZARD	**Equipment:** • DSLR and Lenses • Large reflectors • Mobile studio Kit	RISK OF	Causing injury from improper usage - *Lifting and Carrying* - *Loss, Damage, and Theft*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. Ensure that all of the information relating to the use of equipment is read and implemented. 2. When Packed into a bag, ensure that proper lifting and carrying techniques is used to avoid injury. 3. Care is taken in the handling of equipment which is prepared and packed away appropriately. 4. Risk of theft is minimized in the storage of equipment and supervision of when on photoshoots.		
HAZARD	**Flash/tungsten** • Speedlight flash gun • Studio lighting kit (Studio and Location) • Video LED Light	RISK OF	Causing injury from improper usage. - *Tripping* - *Heat* - *Electrical*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. Ensuring that all of the associated literature regarding the use if this equipment is read and assimilated. 2. When using larger studio flash heads, ensure that they are set up correctly and adhere to the controls put in place for lighting stands. 3. All leads are to be taped down and not cause a trip hazard, leaving a clear route into the set. 4. Studio lights can become extremely hot – Ensure that they are handled with care and everyone who enters and leaves the set is made aware of this 5. When using lighting on location – Ensure that I am not using electrical items in adverse weather, such as rain and wind.		
HAZARD	**Stands/tripods**	RISK OF	Falling over and persons tripping and injuring themselves on equipment
CONTROL MEASURE	1. Weigh down light stand with sandbags. 2. Ensure that sets and tripod setup is clearly marked 3. Clear route created on and off the set		
HAZARD	**Welfare of model**	RISK OF	- *Slips and Trips* - *Fatigue* - *Food and Drink* - *Improper information given*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. All information provided to ensure the model is aware of any potential hazards due to the location and set. 2. Model Releases are given and signed where appropriate – Models are provided with information regarding the shoot and the intended use of the imagery. 3. During prolonged photoshoots – Ensure that food and drink is provided/accessible.		
HAZARD	**Location**	RISK OF	- *Accessibility* - *Local H&S Conditions*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. Ensure that all local H&S information is consulted prior to engaging in photoshoots 2. Research the location in advance to ensure that I can set up and work safely 3. If appropriate, conduct an initial visit on the location to plan in advance of the proposed photo shoot.		

Appendix 4 - *Risk Assessment.*

HAZARD	Transport to location • Car • Public Transport	RISK OF	- *Delays & Cancelation* - *Breakdowns* - *Accident* - *Getting lost* - *Tolls and Fees*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. Ensure that I am aware and up to date with latest travel information related to public transport travel. 2. Download travel information apps, such as Bus Checker, Citymapper, and GWR (trains) 3. Keep a charged Travel battery to ensure I can charge my phone in a prolonged travel day and in the event of an emergency, or delay and cancellations. 4. Prior planning and research of travel to identify potential tolls and fees. 5. Where possible and appropriate, fees, tickets and tolls can be paid in advance		
HAZARD	Weather conditions	RISK OF	- *Adverse weather interfering with the intended use of equipment* - *Additional risk of injury associated with adverse weather*
CONTROL MEASURE	1. It is important to plan ahead and take the appropriate action for the conditions 2. Dress for the conditions 3. Stay up to date with the latest weather information, adhere to any weather warnings present		

On site risk assessment:	these are control measures that arose on your shoot

Emergency Information and Procedures	
Phone	Charged mobile phone with full signal / Nearest Payphone / Landline My Mobile Number is: +44 07580906651 A charged travel battery will accompany on any shoot.
Medical Expertise	Are you or a member of your team First Aid qualified? Do you know where the nearest one is? I have been a qualified first aider with some experience. During location shooting I will ensure that I am aware of the local arrangements for first aid.
Emergency Procedure	In the event of an emergency dial 999 or 112 ensure that you or someone with you can accurately describe where you are (ideally nearest postcode)
Medical Treatment	Minor Injuries Unit, Falmouth Hospital Open weekdays 8am to 8pm A&E Treliske Hospital, Truro, Open 24 hours
Evacuation procedures	Ambulance can evacuate from main road.
Incident/accident reporting	All incidents or accidents should be reported to tutor at Falmouth University

Assessment carried out by
•   I have ensured that I have reviewed the hazards and risks associated with this project and taken necessary steps to remove hazards where possible or reduced the risks associated with the remaining hazards to a minimum.
•   I have recorded the main hazards, risks and control measures in this document.
•   I have ensured that those working with me have been briefed on the nature of the tasks they are to perform, and are aware of the hazards associated with the task and the measures in place to reduce the risks associated with those hazards. (if applicable)
•   I will continually assess hazards and risks 'live' on site to ensure that nothing has been overlooked or has changed since initial assessment.

Signed:	Date: 3/12/2019

Assessment reviewed by

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