



Cornish Nation

No. 84 January 2021

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Be Cornish on the 2021 census

**MK celebrates 70th anniversary / Party members condemn
“bonkers” planning changes / More news and views**

The campaign for greater self-government for Cornwall

Mebyon Kernow has been at the forefront of the campaign for meaningful devolution to Cornwall for seven decades.

Party members have consistently made the case for a Cornish Assembly, with detailed proposals set out in the policy document *Towards a National Assembly of Cornwall*.

MK has linked this ongoing campaign to what has been achieved in Wales and Scotland, through the creation of the National Assembly of Wales and the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Party policy makes it clear that we want to achieve the powers won for Scotland through the Scotland Act 1998, while the National Assembly in Wales has secured additional powers over the last two decades and has been renamed the Welsh Parliament / Senedd Cymru.

At a recent meeting of the MK National Executive, a majority of members agreed that MK's push for devolution would be stronger if we explicitly sought a Parliament for Cornwall.

It was considered that the term "Assembly" has been undermined to some degree through calls for a Citizens' Assemblies, while other political groups continue to blur the distinction between calls for a Cornish Assembly and local government activities.

Mebyon Kernow is presently consulting members and supporters on this modification to party policy. Please let us know what you think.

MK's 70th anniversary

On 6th January 2021, MK members did their best to mark the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Party for Cornwall through social media and the supply of information to the press across Cornwall and further afield.

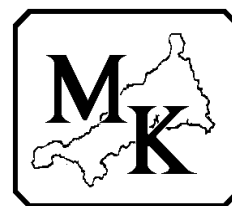
Because of the ongoing coronavirus crisis, it was not possible to mark the occasion with a conference and / or a social event, but the leadership team of MK is looking at what might be possible later in the year.

It was heartening, however, to see the extremely positive editorial in the *Cornish Guardian* / *Cornishman* / *West Briton* newspapers about MK. The editorial stated that "Mebyon Kernow is making a difference to Cornish politics" and has made a "lasting contribution to Cornwall," with a "political voice that continues to punch above its weight." It added that MK "has never faltered in its determination to see Cornwall – and its people – given fair representation at all political levels" and quite rightly concluded that MK is still "up for the fight."

6th May 2021

As this edition of *Cornish Nation* goes to press, the UK Government has made it clear that they anticipate the council elections, due to take place on 6th May 2021, will not be postponed. Guidance on how to campaign in a pandemic has yet to be produced.

At this time, please think how you might be able to help MK get its message out in these elections – whether as a candidate or an agent, or a deliverer of leaflets and posters.



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Cornish Nation 84

Cornish Nation is a magazine which is distributed free to all members of Mebyon Kernow.

Membership of MK costs only £15.00 a year (£8.00 unwaged or £20.00 for a family).

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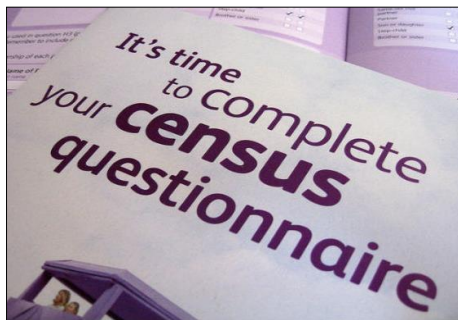
Niverans an bobel 2021

Mar pleg, perthewgh kov skrifa agas kenedhlogeth Kernewek ha dewis yeth y'n niverans an bobel 2021

Dy'Sul, 21sa mis Meurth yw dydh niverans an bobel hag yth yw chons rag pobel Kernewek dhe govadha yn sodhek aga honanieth Kenedhlek.

An Governans re naghas arta kavos kist-dyckya, mes Sodhva Genedhlek Statystek re ros kod niverans dhe "Cornish" hag tus a ylli ri destuni aga hemowekter dre dhewisow yn-skrifa.

An SGS re ambosas – rag an kynsa prys – i dhe wul derivas leun dielvennel a-dro dhe'n poblans neb a leverel aga bos Kernewek, gans testennow, y'ga mysk yagh, anedhyans, ober hag adhyskans.



Govyn 14 a wra govyn: "Pyth yw agas honanieth kenedhlek?" Kist-yow-tyckya profys yw "Predennek," "Sowsnek," "Kembrek," "Iwerdhonek Kledh," hag "Aral." Hemm a styr mars eus hwans kovadha agas kenedhlogeth avel Kernewek, y hyllogh hwi tyckya an gist "Aral" ha skrifa "Kernewek" y'n spas ena.

Mall yw gans an SGS kavos meur a dus lenwel an niverans war-linen dell yw possybyl, hag y fydh gans an huni war-linen lies lostlavar. Tamm nowodhow posedhek yw hemma; rag an govyn honanieth kenedhlek, yth yw an skrif skodhyek gans "Kernewek" avel ensampel a genedhlogeth "Aral."

Govyn 15 a wra govyn: "Pyth yw agas bagas ethnek?" Pypm rann a wra deskriba efander ledan a lies keyndir ethnek. Rag ensampel, yn-dann "Gwynn," an dewisyow yw kuntelles "Sowsnek, Kembrek, Albanek, Iwerdhonek Kledh po Predennek," "Iwerdhonek," "Jypsonnek po Tremenyas Iwerdhonek," "Romek" hag "Aral." Yn-mysk bagasow ethnek erel yma "kemyskys po lies"

ha "Du." Rag agas kovadha avel Kernewek, res yw dhywgh dewis an rann a berederowgh hwi bos an gwella keyndir ethnek ledan, tyckya kist "Aral" ha skrifa kernewek y'n spas ena.

Govyn 10 a wra govyn py le a veu tus genys, ha govyn 18 a wra govyn: "Pyth yw agas yeth veur?" Y'n dhew gas, y hyllogh hwi usya kist-yow "Aral" rag agas kovadha avel genys-Kernewek po avel Kerneweger, mars yw gwiw.

An niverans a ygyrians dhe vos sur bos agan Kernewekter kovadhys. Mar pleg, kewsewgh gans agas teylu, kowetha ha kentrevogyon dhe surhe i dhe gemeres yn leun chons a'n dewisyow skrif-yn.

Ynwedh, yma edhom leverel bos an niverans ma arhwithrans dhe les, a wra kovadha kedhlow bos usys gans governans teythek ha kresel, awtoritys yagh ha maynys erel dhe dowlenna ha provia servisyow poblek. An sewyansow a vydh usya gans governansow yn termyn a-dheu pan ervirons i py myns a arghans yw ros dhe rannow dyffrans a'n Ruwvaneth Unys – dismygys yw rag pub person neb a wra fyllel dhe gowlwul an niverans, an Konsel, ha Kreslu a wra war-barth kelli moy ages £300 yn fondyans poblek.

Sunday 21st March is census day and this represents an opportunity for Cornish people to formally record their national identity.

The Government has again refused a Cornish tick-box, but the Office of National Statistics has allocated a census code to "Cornish" and individuals will be able to evidence their Cornishness through write-in options.

The ONS has also promised that – for the first time – they will produce a full analytical report on the population who identify as Cornish, covering topics which will include health, housing, work and education.

Question 14 will ask: "What is your national identity?" Tick-boxes offered are "British," "English," "Welsh," "Scottish," "Northern Irish" and "Other." This means that

if you wish to record your nationality as Cornish, you can tick the "Other" box and write in "Cornish" in the space provided.

The ONS is keen that as many people fill out the census online as possible, and the online version will contain a range of prompts. One positive piece of news is that, for the national identity question, the supporting text will give "Cornish" as an example of a "Other" nationality.

Question 15 will ask: "What is your ethnic group?" Five sections will describe a range of broad ethnic backgrounds. For example, under "White," the options are a collective "English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British," "Irish," "Gypsy or Irish Traveller," "Roma," and "Other." Other ethnic groups include "mixed or multiple" and "Black." To record yourself as Cornish, you will need to pick the section which you think best represents your broad ethnic background, tick the "Other" box and write in "Cornish" in the space provided.

Question 10 will ask where individuals were born, while Question 18 will ask: "What is your main language?" In both these cases, you can also use "Other" boxes to record yourself as Cornish-born or as a Cornish speaker, if that is appropriate.

This census represents an opening to ensure that our Cornishness is recorded. Please speak with your family, friends and neighbours to ensure that they take full advantage of the various write-in options.

It also needs to be stated that this census is an important survey, which will record information to be used by central and local government, health authorities and other agencies to plan and provide public services. The results will also be used by future governments when they decide how much money is allocated to the different parts of the United Kingdom – it is estimated that for every person that fails to complete the census, the Council, NHS and Police will together lose over £300 in public funding.

Doing it ourselves

Malcolm Williams, a professor of social research methodology at Cardiff University, explores concepts of self-management for Cornish communities

When I was an MK Town Councillor, in St Just, in the 1980s, people would often say “so what you going to do for us, boy?” and my response was, “well what are you going to do?” How can we help you to help yourselves? Our success in getting people to do things for themselves was, I confess, limited and our only real triumph was the organisation of a “rubbish strike” to reinstate our back door refuse collection in the town!

But in those days our principle in St Just, and more widely in MK, was not just of devolution of power *to* Cornwall but devolution of power *within* Cornwall.

This was not so crazy or ambitious as it sounded. Our sister party in Brittany, the Union Democratique Breton (UDB) had a policy of “autogestionnaire” or self-management that carried that principle all the way through from Breton devolution, to community and workplace devolution of power and resources.

Whilst this was a policy for UDB, it was an actuality in some local authorities in England, notably Islington, Basildon and Norwich, where council services and local democracy were devolved to smaller communities that empowered them and brought a sense of ownership and dignity. New “community councils,” whose role and extent was largely determined by the communities themselves and in turn connected with what we now call the “third” sector and community groups to “do things” themselves. It was the time of the Thatcher cuts to benefits, to councils, to the arts and education, and it was a time of high unemployment and falling wages. Sound familiar?

Ironically, what did for these initiatives was not the Tories and their policies, but the growth and finally coming to power of New Labour, with a more centralist and paternalistic agenda.

Though the 1980s were a dark period, in so many ways, it was a period when people gained confidence in self organising, or self-management, through decentralisation, but also through the necessities resulting from the Miners’ Strike.

Our principle in St Just, and more widely in Mebyon Kernow, was not just of devolution of power *to* Cornwall but devolution of power *within* Cornwall.

Meanwhile in the 1980s, the Italians, never a people to do things by half measures, were doing it themselves, in many cities, Milan, Rome and Bologna in particular. In these cities workers, students and the unemployed set up *Centros Sociale Autogestito* – Self-Managed Social Centres. Some of these had official status and were supported by local authorities, some were “squats” in abandoned buildings. Their ambitions and actions were radical. Not only were the centres used for concerts, films, yoga classes, discussion groups and counselling for drug addicts, but to provide “safe spaces” for women, ethnic minorities and (what we now call) LGBT persons. But they also intervened in the spaces vacated by the state to provide services. These interventions, were not just “them,” but involved to a greater or lesser extent the wider community.



Fast forward fifteen years or so and self-management came to Cornwall! The 1997 Labour Government set up a number of Sure Start initiatives in “deprived areas,” of which Cornwall had plenty. These were aimed at improving the life chances, through health and education, of young children, by working with families and the community. Most initiatives were “top down” and members of the poverty industry were parachuted into communities – including those in Cornwall. In fairness, they mostly did a great job. But on the Treneere Estate, in Penzance, something very unusual happened and I think, all but unique in Sure Start. A group of women got together and “did it themselves.” They campaigned for and got the first grassroots and first Sure Start in Cornwall – Sure Start Lescudjack. Both the benefits and the successes were predictable. This was an initiative started by the community and responsive to the needs of that community. It didn’t always measure up to the “national” Sure Start metrics, because what it was doing were things relevant to and empowering for that community.

Now – here’s a thought. Whilst there is a large and even growing desire for devolution *to* Cornwall, what about self-management or “doing it ourselves” as a way to go for our communities?

For local people to organise and identify what matters, what’s missing and what can change our communities from the bottom up? Maybe this means working with existing organisations and resources, but maybe creating those resources and even being prepared to be a bit militant about it! If we challenge the status quo of the position of Cornwall, in the United Kingdom, to be consistent we should challenge the status quo within Cornwall!

After all, in 1982, though our ambitions were greater than our achievements, we did actually win the “rubbish strike” in St Just!

Levelling up ... really?

Cllr Dick Cole looks at governmental claims that they are seeking to address regional inequality across the UK

In their 2019 manifesto, the Conservative Party pledged that it would “share prosperity across the country” and address “longstanding economic challenges in parts of the country.” The document stated that the Prime Minister was committed to “an agenda for levelling up every part of the UK” because “in the 21st century, we need to get away from the idea that ‘Whitehall knows best’ and that all growth must inevitably start in London.”

“Remarkably for a much-hyped statement on levelling-up opportunity across the country, the chancellor’s words ring hollow as weaker local economies will be getting less money than previously in the aftermath of the pandemic.”
Helen Bernard

In recent months, this levelling up agenda to “reduce regional disparities” across the UK has been an almost constant refrain from senior Conservatives, while a number of their MPs have set up a think-tank to boost “Britain’s lagging areas.”

Given such public pronouncements, it is little wonder that so many people are disappointed at the content of the recent Spending Review.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer did reveal a new “levelling up fund” worth four billion pounds, but added that “any local area” would be able to bid for projects. It seems nonsensical to me that a fund designed to combat regional inequalities is not targeted at poorer areas with a lower economic performance.

Helen Barnard, the director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was particularly condemning. She told the media that: “Remarkably for a much-hyped statement on levelling-up opportunity across the country, the chancellor’s words ring hollow as weaker

local economies will be getting less money than previously in the aftermath of the pandemic.”

It is my view that if the United Kingdom Government is serious about regional inequality, it needs to do more than come up with a one-off “levelling up fund,” that actually contains less money than is being spent on individual transport projects in and for London. An estimated £19 billion is already being spent on the latest Crossrail project in the UK capital, plus over £80 billion on the HS2 alone.

The Government needs to live up to its promises by looking much more seriously at how it can rebalance the economy away from London which one member of parliament, a few years ago, described as a “giant suction machine draining the life out of the rest of the country.”

In his statement, the Chancellor also mentioned the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – which will replace EU structural funds – and pledged that, across the United Kingdom as a whole, it will at least match EU receipts.

It was extremely disappointing that he did not specifically promise that Cornwall – one of the two poorest parts of the United Kingdom – would receive at least as much investment that it would have expected to receive from structural funds.

The Prime Minister has just set up a “Build Back Better Council” of business leaders, which he says is also about “levelling up opportunity for people and businesses across the UK.”

It has been reported that there are 30 members on the Council, of which 22 are based in London. I understand that three others are based in towns just outside the UK capital, two in the Midlands, one in Cambridge, one in the north and one in Scotland. Apart from being so London-dominated, isn’t it telling that there is no-one from Wales, Northern Ireland or Cornwall?

I have no confidence that these thirty place-men and place-women will understand the needs of communities in Cornwall, such as St Dennis (below). It seems to me that the Government’s whole “levelling up” agenda will turn out to be a farce.

We would like to thank the BBC Politics Show, Chris Bowden, Camborne & Redruth CP of Mebyon Kernow, Cllr Dick Cole, Cllr Ryan Congdon, Cllr Loveday Jenkin and Ann Reynolds for photographs used in this magazine.



Campaigning for Cornwall

As the Party for Cornwall celebrates its seventieth anniversary, Cornish Nation shares a selection of photographs from the last twenty years

In recent *Cornish Nations*, we have looked back at the earliest days of Mebyon Kernow and some of the Party's electoral highlights. In this edition, we are pleased to go down a more recent "memory lane" with a selection of images from the last two decades.

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From top left:

- Candidates for the 2003 district council elections pictured outside the village hall at Fraddon.
- MK founder-members Ann Trevenen Jenkin and George Pawley White at the 2003 launch of the *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism* book.
- Candidates at the 2005 General Election: Graham Sandercock (South East Cornwall), Conan Jenkin (Truro & St Austell), Hilda Wasley (Falmouth & Camborne) and Cllr Dick Cole (North Cornwall).
- Plaid Cymru President Dafydd Iwan at the Rally for a Cornish Assembly in 2006, which marked the fifth anniversary of 50,000 declarations being delivered to 10 Downing Street.
- Cllr Helen Cullimore, Cllr Michael Champion, Cllr Alan Sanders and Cllr Stuart Cullimore from Camborne Town Council, plus Cllr Loveday Jenkin from Kerrier District Council, with a petition in support of the fire service in 2006.
- MK's group on Penzance Town Council in 2006: Richard Clark, Simon Reed, Frank Granger and Phil Rendle.
- Campaigning for devolution, and against local government changes, in 2008: Cllr Michael Champion, Cllr Loveday Jenkin, Cllr Alan Sanders, Conan Jenkin, Cllr Richard Clark, Cllr Dick Cole, Cllr Simon Reed, Mayumi Reed, Cllr Stuart Cullimore, Cllr Frank Granger, Cllr Phil Rendle, Cllr Helene Cullimore, Cllr Matt Luke and Ann Trevenen Jenkin.
- Plaid Cymru's Steffan Lewis, MK's Dick Cole and the UDB's Gwendal Rioual at MK's 2008 Conference.

We hope that members and supporters of Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall will enjoy viewing the pictures, which will undoubtedly bring back many memories of past election and other campaigns for many activists.

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From top left:

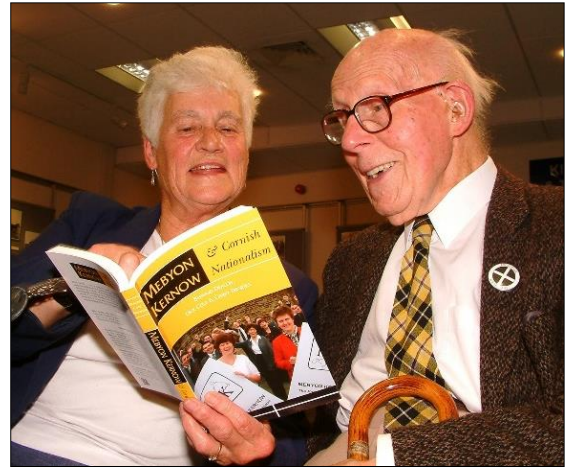
- Cllr Loveday Jenkin speaking at protest against excessive housing growth in the Camborne area in 2009.
- Joanie Willett at Mebyon Kernow's 2009 Conference.
- Candidates at the 2010 General Election: Cllr Loveday Jenkin (Camborne & Redruth), Joanie Willett (North Cornwall), Cllr Loic Rich (Truro & Falmouth), Cllr Dick Cole (St Austell & Newquay), Cllr Simon Reed (St Ives) and Cllr Roger Holmes (South East Cornwall).
- The protest on the Cornish bank of the Tamar against the imposition of a Devonwall parliamentary seat in 2010.
- SNP MSP Kenneth Gibson at a rally marking the tenth anniversary of 50,000 declarations being delivered to 10 Downing Street in 2011.
- The UDB's Zofia Nehr speaking at MK's 2012 Conference.
- Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Andrew Long and Cllr Rob Simmons at the launch of the first edition of the policy document *Towards a National Assembly for Cornwall* in 2014.
- Cllr Andrew Long reading about the recognition of the Cornish as a national minority in 2014.
- Cllr Rod Toms, Julie Fox and Shaun Tofts campaigning on Truro's Lemon Quay in support of home rule for Cornwall in 2014.
- Stuart Cullimore, Cllr Zoe Fox and Cllr Loveday Jenkin at an event at Treliske in support of Cornwall's National Health Service in 2015.

But importantly, our principal focus must always be to look forward and, in the coming weeks and months, to get more and more people involved with our campaigns to win a better deal for Cornwall and all its communities.

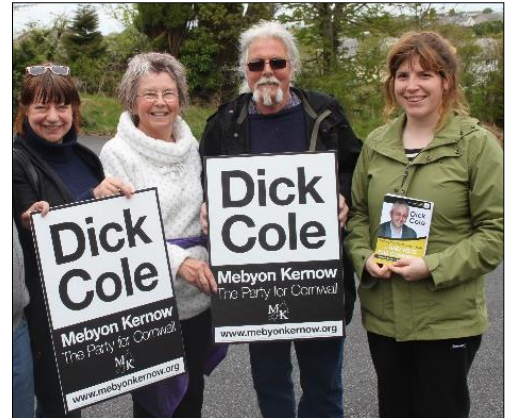
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From top left:

- Candidates at the 2015 General Election: Cllr Stephen Richardson (Truro & Falmouth), Cllr Rob Simmons (St Ives), Cllr Dick Cole (St Austell & Newquay), Cllr Loveday Jenkin (Camborne & Redruth) and Cllr Andrew Long (South East Cornwall). Not shown: Jerry Jefferies (North Cornwall).
- Cllr Dick Cole on the Politics Show in advance of the 2015 General Election with Jo Coburn, Andrew Neil and the SNP's Stewart Hosie.
- Some of the many thousands of leaflets coming off the printing press in 2015.
- On the campaign trail in the 2015 General Election: Julie Tamblin, Helen Rawe, Pete Hedger and Sioned Haf.
- Anti-Devonwall protesters at Polson Bridge in 2016, including Cllr Zoe Fox, Howard Tresidder Tonkin, Cllr Michael Bunney, Roy Gill, Cllr John Gillingham, Kevin Bennetts, Alice Waddoups, Cllr Loveday Jenkin and Jerry Jefferies.
- Leafletting in Clay Country for the 2017 Cornwall Council elections: George Trudgeon, Diana Trudgeon, Cllr Brian Higman, Cllr Matt Luke, Cllr Michael Bunney, Joanie Willett and Nessa Brown.
- MK councillors elected to Cornwall Council in 2017: Cllr Andrew Long, Cllr Matt Luke, Cllr Loveday Jenkin and Cllr Dick Cole.
- Attendees at the first Cornish National Minority Summit in 2019: Dr Bernard Deacon, Dr Garry Tregidga, Julie Fox and Mark Elton.
- Ryan Congdon out leafletting in St Austell during the 2019 General Election.







Cornish news and views

Support for farming

Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall has slammed Conservative MPs for voting down an amendment to the Agriculture Bill, which would have ensured that all future agricultural and food imports would need to meet domestic standards in terms of animal health / welfare and food safety. The vote was lost by 332 votes to 279, with just 14 Conservative MPs supporting the amendment.



MK economy spokesman Cllr Andrew Long slammed the Conservatives for breaking yet another election promise, as in their manifesto for the 2019 General Election, they had pledged to “raise standards” in areas such as “animal welfare, agriculture and the environment.”

He added: “It is most telling that representatives of the farming industry have been very critical of what happened in the House of Commons. The NFU in Scotland said that the vast majority of their members were ‘bitterly disappointed’ while the NFU President Minette Batters expressed concern that the ‘future of British food and farming is at stake’ and that ‘without proper safeguards on future trade deals we risk seeing an increase in food imports that have been produced to standards that would be illegal here’.” (21st October 2020)

Free school meals

A member of Mebyon Kernow’s leadership team has applauded local businesses and charities for stepping up to provide free meals for needy children during the October half-term holiday. It followed the decision by Conservative MPs to not provide “free school

meals” for children in low-income families during the half-term and Christmas breaks in the coronavirus crisis.

Speaking at a virtual meeting of MK’s ruling National Executive, Michael Bunney said: “It is shameful that all of Cornwall’s Conservative MPs voted against providing hungry children with free school meals during the holidays. This is more evidence of Westminster being out of touch with the needs of struggling families and MPs failing to understand how hard life is for many ordinary people.”

He added: “We should all congratulate and support the local businesses and charities for the fantastic work they are doing for families in need at this difficult time. A child is never responsible for the poverty they grow up in, and they are never at fault for the inadequacies in their upbringing. In my 22 years as a teacher, I’ve seen child poverty increase and it is deplorable that the need for free school meals and food banks has risen so sharply in Cornwall over the last five years.

“As a teacher, taking children to the food bank in St Austell, on the last day of school before the Christmas holidays, was one of the most significant and upsetting experiences I’ve had. The communities of Cornwall are stepping up to fill this gap and, yet again, are doing an amazing job of looking after each other. But basic needs such as food should not be reliant upon charity and community action.”

Thankfully, due to food campaigners such as Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford, and a range of charities, altruistic businesses and individuals, the UK government was pressured into a massive u-turn on this issue. (24th October 2020)

British-Irish Council

Representatives of the governments of the UK, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey met at the 34th British-Irish Council Summit on 6th November 2020, which was hosted virtually by the Scottish Government. The focus of the gathering was the economic recovery in the context of Covid-19, and the significant and potentially long-lasting social impacts of the health emergency. Once again, the nation of Cornwall was not represented.

A new councillor

Cornish Nation is pleased to be able to report that at a virtual meeting of Camborne Town Council, MK’s Ryan Congdon was co-opted onto the Council.



A passionate Cornishman, he grew up in the town, went to Camborne School and secured a degree in politics from the University of Plymouth. Also a community-minded individual, he has raised a significant amount of money for charity through long-distance cycling. These efforts included John O’Groats to Lands End (Bath Rugby Foundation) and Southampton to Truro (Bloodwise), both in 2013, plus Venice to Rome (Macmillan Cancer Support) in 2016.

He has been an active member of Mebyon Kernow for a number of years and he serves on the Party’s National Executive. A keen sportsman, he has played for local football and cricket teams, and he is MK’s spokesman on sport. Ryan is also a Cornwall Council candidate for the May 2021 elections. (23rd November 2020)

Devonwall threat

On Monday 14th December, the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill secured royal assent. The legislation will set the framework for future reviews into the boundaries of parliamentary seats in the House of Commons, but does not include a clause to ensure that “Devonwall” seats are not created in the future.

Mebyon Kernow has criticized Cornwall’s six MPs for failing to amend the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill in order to guarantee that cross-Tamar seats would not be allowed.

When the MPs had an opportunity to get the legislation changed – at third reading in the on 14th July – they failed to act.

An amendment to stop “Devonwall” was moved latterly in the House of Lords, but it was not pushed to a vote. Peers did however vote to increase the potential variance in constituency size from 5% to 7.5%. This would have helped make a cross-Tamar seat less likely – though not impossible – but Conservative MPs in the House of Commons rejected this change on 10th November.

MK’s leadership team issued the following statement: “In 2014, the UK Government accepted that the Cornish are a national minority through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In doing this, they signed up to numerous obligations, which included respect for the territorial integrity of Cornwall.

“We cannot understand why the Westminster establishment has such a problem with meeting its obligations and were simply dumbfounded when Cornwall’s MPs failed to move an amendment to protect Cornwall (and the Isles of Scilly) as an electoral area.

“How can they ever claim to be standing up for Cornwall, if they refuse to safeguard the very existence of Cornwall as a political, economic, cultural or electoral area?”

It remains the case that the forthcoming review will undoubtedly recommend six Cornish seats, but the Office of National Statistics predicts that Cornwall’s electorate will rise much faster than that of the UK as a whole and, by 2030, it could be statistically impossible to stop Devonwall,

Housing numbers u-turn

The UK Government has announced a rethink of its proposed “standard method for establishing housing requirement figures,” which would have imposed a figure of around 4,000 new properties on Cornwall each year – equivalent to a twenty-year housing target of more than 81,000 dwellings. (See *Cornish Nation* no 83).

There will however still be a top-down target from central government and figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government suggest that the annual target for Cornwall would now be 2,820 housing units per annum – equivalent to a

twenty-year housing target of 56,400 new properties.

Announcements are still awaited about the other planning changes proposed in the Government’s Planning White Paper – which were strongly opposed by MK.

Mebyon Kernow leader Cllr Dick Cole has said that the u-turn does not go far enough and the revised housing target would still be too high for Cornwall: “It remains the view of the Party for Cornwall that the wider proposals in the Planning White Paper should be ditched, and responsibility for all aspects of planning and housing should be devolved to Cornwall – so that communities and politicians to the west of the Tamar can decide what is right for Cornwall.” (17th December 2020)

More “bonkers” changes

Mebyon Kernow has also been at the forefront of opposition to further proposed changes to the planning system. The UK Government’s latest idea is to allow commercial and industrial premises to be changed into housing without the need for planning permission, which Mebyon Kernow has described as “bonkers.”

The Government is seeking to create a new “permitted development right” that would allow “shops, offices, light industrial, restaurants, gyms, medical facilities and nurseries” to change to residential use without the need for planning permission.

The consultation document stated that the proposed new “right” would apply “everywhere ... not just on the high street or in town centres.” It also stated that there is “no size limit on the buildings that can benefit from the right.”

Mebyon Kernow leader Cllr Dick Cole described the proposed planning changes as “ill-prepared and inappropriate,” adding that the changes as presently proposed would allow some very large buildings on strategic industrial estates to become housing without the need for a traditional planning consent. Important employment space would also be lost and local planning authorities would be completely powerless to stop buildings, in inappropriate and unsustainable locations, from becoming residential properties.” (28th January 2021)

MK comment on G7

Prominent Cornish politicians and public figures have been queuing up to rejoice at the news that the next G7 summit of world leaders will take place in Carbis Bay in June. The leader of Cornwall Council, Julian German, has declared that he wants to ensure there is a “lasting legacy” to the west of the Tamar, while the Prime Minister has suggested that the event will “showcase” Cornwall to the world.

From MK’s perspective, we fear that West Cornwall will simply be a pretty background for the talks, and there will be little focus on the reality of modern Cornwall.

As the political commentator Bernard Deacon has said: “Swarms of journalists will descend from across the globe eager for copy. But will all they devour be the same stale old imagery of Cornwall as just a tourist destination? Can Cornwall be presented as more than a picturesque backdrop?”

We sincerely hope the summit is a success and meaningful progress is made to tackle climate change and other global ills. But there is much to be concerned about – not least that we are still in the teeth of a worldwide pandemic.

At the last G7 in France, more than 13,000 police officers, plus military personnel, were used to deal with protestors and the Assistant Chief Constable of the Devon and Cornwall Police, Glen Mayhew, has said that “it will be the biggest security operation” ever undertaken by the force.

It has been well-documented that the cost of past summits in the UK have not been fully met by central government, and it cannot be right that Cornish taxpayers may have to meet a significant element of the cost of the summit in these very straitened times.

It has also been proffered that the economic benefits of the event to Cornwall would be £50 million, with suggestions that this is part of the UK Government’s new levelling-up agenda. But it is most certainly not part of any strategic attempt to combat the economic inequality that plagues the United Kingdom. (22nd January 2021).



Kenedhel Gernewek

