

Cornish Nation

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Cornwall needs action to tackle the housing emergency

First AUOB Kernow march / Updates on MK campaigns for more powers for Cornwall / Tributes to Frank Granger and Tamsin McKenna-Williams

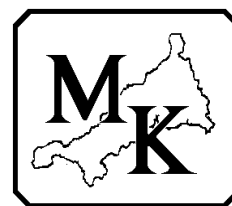
Far-reaching changes are needed to tackle the housing emergency in Cornwall

MK has challenged the UK Government to bring forward a range of fundamental interventions to deal with the increasingly dysfunctional housing market.

Central government is failing to address the severity of this housing emergency, and it is refusing to bring forward the fundamental changes that are necessary to reform the out-of-control housing market.

Mebyon Kernow is calling on the UK Government to:

- Make changes to the planning system to prioritise the delivery of high-quality and genuine affordable housing. It is wrong that the present set-up makes it easy for developers to get planning permission for expensive open-market properties and many developments provide no affordable homes at all.
- Redefine the definition of affordable housing and link to local incomes. In recent years, central government has made “affordable” housing more expensive with “affordable rent” units which have a limited discount from market rents, and the recent introduction of “First Homes” which could cost up to £250,000. Cornwall needs local-needs housing at an appropriate level of affordability.
- Increase investment in the provision of proper affordable housing. It is important to ensure that a higher percentage of new dwellings are affordable homes and not open-market properties. This can be delivered through government investment.
- Safeguard all existing rental properties owned by registered providers. The loss of rental properties from the public sector through “right to acquire” and other mechanisms needs to be curtailed. A number of housing associations have sold off some of their older properties rather than carry out renovations. MK maintains that all existing social rent properties should be retained in public ownership.
- Make changes to the planning system to control second homes. A longstanding policy of Mebyon Kernow is to introduce planning restrictions to stop and then reverse the spread of “second homes.” Part of this would relate to all existing dwellings being designated as principal residences.
- Introduce a council tax premium on “second homes.” It is clear that “second homes” are a massive social problem and councils should be given the right to charge a council tax of at least 200% on such properties.
- Introduce rent controls on private sector properties. The ever-increasing cost of rental properties is damaging the quality of life of thousands of households, and measures to make open-market rents less expensive are much needed.
- Explore further mechanisms to better regulate the housing market. This should include the development of a “local housing market” for Cornwall with more “local occupation” criteria on properties and an expectation of all-year-round-residency, plus restrictions on marketing associated with estate agents.



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Cornish Nation 86

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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Home rule for Cornwall

Cornish Nation reports on the first “All Under One Banner” march, which brought people together to demand devolution for Cornwall

Since 2014, AUOB (All Under One Banner) in Scotland has been organising public marches and rallies in towns and cities in support of Scottish independence. The largest march took place in Glasgow in May 2019, with some estimates suggesting that it attracted 90,000 participants, though Police Scotland downplayed this to 35,000. AUOB Cymru was launched in 2019 and started to hold marches that year with the support from the linked organisation Yes Cymru.



This phenomenon has now reached Cornwall and the first-ever AUOB Kernow march for Cornish self-determination took place on 9th October 2021 in St Austell. Integral to the organisation of the event were MK members Cllr Julie Fox and Garry Tregidga. Speaking to *The National* newspaper in Wales, Garry Tregidga explained that the organisation had been “formed to act as a catalyst to promote greater discussion over the future of Cornwall at all levels.”

He told the media: “Our historic right to self-determination is crucial in order to revitalise democracy and thereby enable ordinary people to address major cultural, social and economic issues that we are faced with on an everyday basis.

“It is a mechanism by which Kernow can ‘catch up’ with our Celtic cousins through a sustainable programme of marches and rallies to build community support for self-determination. As in Wales, there is a need for leading political figures to initiate a civic conversation over our constitutional future.

How far is the status quo sustainable? Should we be considering devolution or even other forms of greater autonomy?”

Garry Tregidga has also emphasised how comparisons between Cornwall and Wales and Scotland will show people both the benefits of greater self-government, and the disbenefits of the centralised Westminster system. More power will allow elected representatives to properly tackle many of the problems facing Cornwall such as a weak economy, which leaves many with “poorly paid jobs and limited opportunities” while much wealth is “funnelled out” of Cornwall.

He added: “Conservative MPs are not representing our area. They are representing London and the Conservative Party. I think people are therefore frustrated. So, if representation in Westminster is not addressing their concerns, then the answer is or should be greater autonomy. Certainly I think that’s the way that people in Cornwall are thinking.”

The St Austell march was definitely a success and a very positive first outing for AUOB Kernow, and should give great encouragement for future efforts.

It was good to see so many Mebyon Kernow members taking part in the march and that the speakers included MK Deputy Leader Cllr Loveday Jenkin. It was also heartening that AUOB Kernow worked hard to reach out across the political spectrum and that the crowd was addressed by representatives of the Green, Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties. The Conservative Party was absent from proceedings, while other speakers included Matt Blewett from the influential campaign pressure group Kernow Matters To Us and independent councillor Bert Biscoe.

More marches are being planned and it is up to us all to make them bigger and even more successful. The AUOB steering group is inviting all supporters of a National Assembly or Parliament to attend the next march, and bring along national flags and banners, plus five friends as well. Let’s rise to the challenge and help build the momentum for Cornish home rule.

We would like to thank AUOB Kernow, Cllr Emily Brown, Cllr Dick Cole, European Free Alliance Youth, Cllr Loveday Jenkin and Cllr Sam Richards for photographs used in this magazine.



Housing emergency

Protesters have taken to the streets of Cornwall to demand reforms to the damaging housing market

There has been a housing crisis in Cornwall for two decades. Throughout this period, Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall has been campaigning for action to combat the magnitude of the situation, which would need the direct intervention of central government, its various agencies and local authorities. But now, it can only be described an emergency. One Cornish councillor summed up the situation quite well, using the analogy that “somebody has had a bonfire going for a while and has now thrown three gallons of petrol on it and it is now an inferno.”

MK maintains that individuals and families have a fundamental right to good quality and affordable housing in their own local communities. But such rights are being denied to thousands and thousands of households, because of a housing market that is out-of-control and dysfunctional.

The cost of housing for purchase is simply unsustainable, especially in a low wage area. Recent figures from “Rightmove” show that properties in Cornwall had an average price of £327,569, with detached dwellings (on average) selling for £442,573, terraced properties for £239,936 and semi-detached units for £265,168 – all out of reach for so many people on Cornish wages.

Many Cornish communities have seen a massive jump in house prices. According to the Halifax Building Society’s “seaside review,” in 2020 the average house price in St Mawes was £339,912, but 12 months later this had increased by 48% to £501,638. Padstow has seen a dramatic leap as well to an eye-watering £616,368 – but unaffordability is a problem across the whole of Cornwall.

Rental costs have likewise exploded with many monthly rents being in excess of £1,000, while there continues to be under-provision of genuine affordable housing. Whitehall and Westminster politicians have even made subsidised housing more expensive. The ridiculousness of the present situation is exemplified by central government’s latest affordable housing “product” known as “First

Homes,” which could cost as much as a quarter-of-a-million pounds!

It is little wonder that so many families are struggling to access housing that properly meets their most basic needs.

At the same time, it is scandalous that a lot of people have multiple properties – including “second homes” and bolt-holes – many of which stand empty for the majority of the year. In many parts of Cornwall, the very fabric of local society is being undermined – not least because of external misconceptions of Cornwall being nothing more than a holiday or leisure area.

“We cannot live like this any longer, and we won’t accept growing mass homelessness of people in Cornwall and ever-expanding house prices becoming an accepted part of life. We demand action. We demand change. We demand dignity. We are not just bartenders, ice cream servers and lifeguards. We are people who deserve to be able to rent and buy where we live.”

Bella Smith

What has been an intolerable situation has nonetheless been getting even worse. Part of this may relate to the pandemic, with more people working from home and looking to move from urban areas or to buy “second homes” – just as the UK Government allowed a “stamp duty” holiday to further inflate an already overheating market.

Newspapers have even reported that Cornwall had “replaced London as the number one place that people are looking up on Rightmove,” while 44% of documented house

purchasers in 2021 came from east of the Tamar.

Described as a “perfect storm” by some commentators, a large number of families have been evicted in recent months as rental properties are sold on or turned into holiday accommodation or airbnbs.

There is a growing anger and there have been a number of demonstrations, the largest of which was held in Truro on 21st August. Organised by 21-year-old Bella Smith from Newquay, the event demanded: “No more second homes. No more exorbitant rents. No more holiday lets over council homes. Enough is enough.”

Bella told the media that she had decided to organise the demonstration “as a space for people to come together and be able to share their stories and experiences within this housing/rental crisis ... from young people in retail to new families and near-elderly locals, who have been completely cut off from being able to access affordable housing.”

She described the housing emergency as “truly dire and penetrative,” challenging the Westminster Government, Cornwall’s six MPs and Cornwall Council to do more to solve the “roots of the problem.”

Her words were inspirational: “We cannot live like this any longer, and we won’t accept growing mass homelessness of people in Cornwall and ever-expanding house prices becoming an accepted part of life. We demand action. We demand change. We demand dignity. We are not just bartenders, ice cream servers and lifeguards. We are people who deserve to be able to rent and buy where we live.”

Mebyon Kernow was ably represented at the Truro demonstration by Cllrs Emily Brown (top right) and Loveday Jenkin (top left), who delivered well-received speeches which included calls for Cornwall to have control over all aspects of housing and planning policy.



Speaking out

Cornish Nation *reprints two of Cllr Dick Cole's recent columns from the Cornish Guardian newspaper about artificial regional constructs and adult social care*



Throughout my adult life, I have been involved in campaigns for Cornwall to be a political, economic and cultural unit in its own right.

But the political establishment, big business, and even many local councillors, have been vigorously pursuing a regionalist agenda in which Cornwall is submerged within “Devonwall” or “South West” bodies.

We have often been told that Cornwall's interests are best served by merging it into larger areas and that it would boost Cornwall's clout. The reverse has happened.

I remember how business and some media interests came together at a conference in Newquay in November 1987, called at the behest of the Duke of Cornwall, to allow the proponents of “Devonwall” to push a proposal for a Devon and Cornwall Development Company. It was followed, in the early 1990s, by the Westcountry Development Corporation.

Similarly, when the Conservative Government established Training and Enterprise Councils in 1990-1991, the opportunity to create a much-needed Cornish-based institution was lost. Instead, a giant Devon and Cornwall TEC was formed. The election of a Labour Government in 1997 did not change things. Calls for a Cornish Development Agency were ignored and a SW Regional Development Agency – stretching from the Isles of Scilly to Swindon – was

created. An unelected regional chamber for the “South West” followed along with a top-down spatial strategy that proposed shockingly unsustainable levels of house-building.

It has been little different under the Tories since 2010. For the last five years, their MPs, plus public bodies and vested interests, have been pursuing the concept of a “Great South West,” which covers Cornwall and the English counties of Devon, Dorset and Somerset.

Recent newspaper reports now claim that the Government wants to merge the “Great South West” with another nonsensical central government construct called the “Western Gateway,” which covers Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, Swansea and Cardiff.

Businessman Mark Duddridge, a prominent supporter of the “Great South West,” declared – without any sense of irony whatsoever – that it would be hard for “our Cornish voice” to be heard “if we have something that reaches up to Gloucester and South Wales.” He has also made the fanciful claim that “we have tried to get the ‘Great South West’ recognised as a region ... everyone in the ‘Great South West’ wants that to happen.”

That is simply not true. All this talk of a ‘Great South West’ and a ‘Western Gateway’ is a nonsense. It is Cornwall, as Cornwall, that needs to secure the tools to be able shape its own future. (12th August 2021)

One of the pressing issues of our age is the crisis in adult social care, which is having such an adverse impact on so many families and the public sector, especially the NHS.

UK Governments have long promised action on this issue, though the financial burden has continued to fall on local councils. In recent years, Whitehall has even instructed councils to add a 3% “social care precept” onto council tax, while local authorities struggle to provide other services – not least because of cuts in government funding.

The Conservative Party's new approach to social care was recently announced, with measures that included a 1.25% increase in national insurance payments, specifically

defined as a “health and social care levy,” with a similar charge on share dividends.

Perhaps the most recurring criticism of the changes has been that the levy would disproportionately hit working people on lower and middle incomes, as higher earners (over £50,000) pay less NI as a share of their income. There has also been widespread comments from councils and charities about how the scheme does not go far enough to deal with the problems.

It was voted through parliament on Wednesday 8th September by 318 Conservative MPs. Five Tories rebelled and a further 37 abstained, while not one opposition MP supported the changes.

Councils are especially worried because it has been made clear that most of the extra money will go to the NHS until 2024, when more will be diverted towards social care. There appears to be an expectation that councils will need to keep pushing up council tax because of social care pressures. One newspaper has even reported that “ministers privately believe that average council tax rises of at least five or six percent will be levied next year to help meet the shortfall.”

There is little to contradict such reports in the supporting text to the Health and Social Care Plan, which said: “We expect demographic and unit cost pressures will be met through council tax, social care precept, and long-term efficiencies; the overall level of local government funding, including council tax and social care precept, will be determined in the round at the Spending Review in the normal way.”

This shift in the Government's approach to health and social care has also come in for considerable criticism for breaking the Tory manifesto commitment not to raise taxes. But it needs sufficient public resource to fund the services we all depend on, and that money must be raised through taxation. For me, it must be about taxation being properly fair and redistributive with the better-off paying more, and a greater crackdown on tax evasion and avoidance. (15th September 2021)

Bardh Meur nowydh

Dh'y solempnita mis Gwynngala, Gorsedh Kernow a dheklaryas bos Mab Stenek Veur avel hy fenn nowydh

Yth esa solempnita Gorsedh Kernow synsys yn Porthbud dhe dhy' Sadorn an 4sa mis Gwynngala. Hwarvos marthys da o ha merkyans mar bosedhek a honanieth kenedhlek Kernow, gans 13 den – y'ga mysk eseli MK Konseler Michael Bunney, Ken Rickard ha Colin Roberts – grontys bardheth rag aga gonis meur dhe Gernow.

Ober Gorsedh Kernow, kepar ha lies kowethas aral, re beu konstryns dres an 18 mis eus passys. An solempnita 2020 o byghanhes dhe marnas 30 den, mes yth o possybyl rag Bardh Meur Elizabeth Carne, Melennek hy hanow bardhek, dhe dheklarya Gorsedh dhe vetya pub bledhen a-ban 1928, ha dre nessa Bresel an Norvys ha lemmyn dre COVID-19.

Elizabeth re beu lev gallosek rag pub tra Kernewek, ha'y thermyn teyr bledhen re dheuth dh'y worfen. Y tal dhedhi bos gothus gans an pyth a wrug hi kowlwul, yn arbennek yn presyow kales. Hy hannas Bardh Meur, Pol Hodge (Mab Stenek Veur), re beu ynstallys avel an Bardh Meur nowydh.

Pol yw bardh an yeth kernewek, adhysker bewek hag ombrofyer kyns MK rag etholans teythek, neb, yn bledhenyow a-gynsow re omdhiskwedhas avel Sen Peran orth hwarvosow dhe verkyas dydh kenedhlek Kernow. Pol a vydh Bardh Meur da hag y hwra kewsel yn ughel rag Kernow gans nerth ha passhyon.

Jenefer Lowe (Gwythvosen) re beu ynstallys, ha Pol yw feusik rag kavos person mar roasek ha kreftys dh'y weres gans oll y ober yntra lemmyn ha 2024. Jenefer re ros hy bewnans tevesik yn unn oberi rag Gonisogeth kernewek ha rag lies bloodh hi a operas rag Konsel Kernow avel Dyghtyer Displegya rag Kernewek.

Lies den orth Gorsedh a omlowenhas yn arbennek rann a'n Arghdrewydh Gorsedh Kembra, Myrddin ap Dafydd. Ev a gewsis yn Kembrek, Sowsnek ha Kernewek, yn unn leverel bos an dhiw genedhel a Gernow ha Kembra a gevren termyn eus passys ha lemmyn, mes yth o hwansek dhe fogya war ober yw res gwith an dhiw genedhel y'n termyn a-dheu.

Gorsedh Kernow held its annual bardic ceremony in Bude on Saturday 4th September. It was a wonderful occasion and a positive celebration of Cornwall's national identity, with 13 men and women – including MK members Cllr Michael Bunney, Ken Rickard and Colin Roberts – awarded bardships for their exceptional service to Cornwall.

The activities of Gorsedh Kernow, like so many other organisations, have been constrained over the last 18 months. The 2020 ceremony was restricted to only 30 participants, but it did allow Cornwall's Grand Bard Elizabeth Carne, whose bardic name is Melennek (Greenfinch in English), to declare that the Gorsedh had met every year since 1928, even during the Second World War and now COVID-19.

Elizabeth has been a powerful advocate for all things Cornish, and her three-year term of office has now come to an end. She should be very proud of what she has achieved, especially in recent difficult times. Her deputy, Pol Hodge (Mab Stenek Veur – Son of a Great Tin Ground), has been installed as the new Grand Bard.

Pol is a Cornish language poet, an enthusiastic educator and a former local election candidate for MK, who in recent years has also appeared as St Piran at events to mark Cornwall's national day. Pol will make a tremendous Grand Bard and he will speak up for Cornwall with great determination and passion.

Jenefer Lowe (Gwythvosen – Honeysuckle) has been installed as Deputy Grand Bard, and Pol is lucky to have such a respected and talented person to help him with all his work between now and 2024. Jenefer has dedicated her adult life to working for Cornish culture and for many years worked for Cornwall Council as the development manager for the Cornish language.

Many people at the gathering particularly enjoyed the contribution of the visiting Archdruid of the Welsh Gorsedd of Bards, Myrddin ap Dafydd. He spoke in Welsh, English and Cornish, pointing out that the nations of Cornwall and Wales share both a past and a present, but he was very keen to focus on the work needed protect the two nations in the future.



Cornish news and views

New mayor for Camborne

Many town and parish councillors representing the Party for Cornwall are stepping up and taking on positions in their local communities. *Cornish Nation* is pleased to report that long-standing town councillor Zoe Fox has been elected as the Mayor of Camborne, while Cornwall Councillor Loveday Jenkin has become the Chairman of Crowan Parish Council and Cllr Mike Tresidder is the vice-chairman of Sithney Parish Council. (19th May 2021)

No Devonwall – this time!

The Boundary Commission (for England) has published initial recommendations for revised Westminster seats. It is recommending six whole constituencies for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

A statement from MK's National Executive said: "This outcome is as predicted by Mebyon Kernow, because Cornwall's present electorate means that it justifies exactly six seats. But the legislation does not protect Cornwall's national border. If, as predicted, Cornwall's population continues to rise faster than the UK as a whole, it is extremely likely that in the next review – due in about eight-ten years – it may be impossible to stop Devonwall.

"That is why MK is continuing to campaign for the legislation to be amended to Keep Cornwall Whole, now and into the future." (8th June 2021)

EFA Youth

A number of MK members attended the virtual General Assembly of the European Free Alliance's youth movement (see below).

Attendees included Mael Garrec (Penryn), Cllr Sam Richards (Lanner) and Billy Warren (St Ives) who took the opportunity to share experiences with activists from political parties representing other stateless nations and cultural regions. (8th June 2021)

MK comment on G7

On the day that the G7 Summit commenced at Carbis Bay, MK's leadership team challenged the UK Government to use the event as an opportunity to commit itself to the delivery of a meaningful devolution settlement for Cornwall.



In a statement, Cllrs Dick Cole, Loveday Jenkin, Andrew Long and Michael Bunney said: "World leaders at the G7 Summit will be addressing global issues of immense significance, and we sincerely hope that they will use their time in Cornwall to 'step up' efforts to tackle climate change and boost the global response to the pandemic. This must include financial support for a vaccine roll-out in poorer countries.

"But we would challenge the UK Government to also use the G7 as an opportunity to promise a comprehensive devolution deal for Cornwall, which builds on Cornwall's place as one of the five nations of the United Kingdom.

"Our members feel it would be fitting for an international summit of this magnitude – held in Cornwall – for ministers to pledge to meet all their obligations towards the Cornish as set out in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

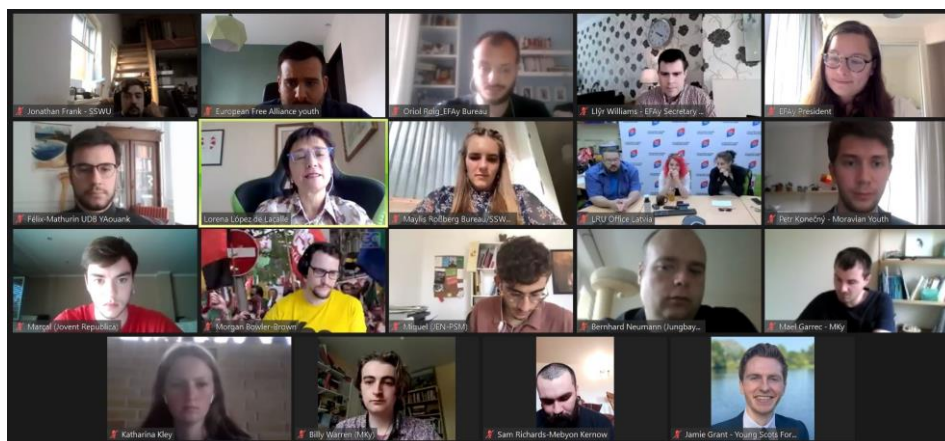
"The Government claims that 'the whole of Cornwall will reap the benefits of hosting the G7,' many politicians are talking about 'putting Cornwall on the map' while there is much speculation what legacy there will be from the event.

"In terms of legacy, we want to see positive and concerned actions to tackle the poverty and inequality that so many Cornish residents face. We want Government ministers to view Cornwall as more than just a picturesque backdrop to G7. And what better legacy could there be than parity with the other Celtic parts of the UK, such as Scotland and Wales, in terms of influence and investment, and a comprehensive devolution deal, which would deliver a Cornish Assembly or Parliament? This would ensure that we have the powers to build a political, economic, environmental and cultural future that everyone in Cornwall can be proud of." (11th June 2021)

"County deals"?

The Conservative Government has announced a plan for "devolution" through a series of "county deals," which Mebyon Kernow has condemned as "not devolution at all." Commenting on the news, MK's leadership team said: "It is certainly frustrating when politicians from London-based parties speak about 'devolution.' The focus always seems to be on very limited accommodations between the centre and local government. It never seems to be about real devolution as enjoyed by the residents of Scotland and Wales."

The Conservative leadership in Cornwall has expressed an interest in a "county deal" but – as with the previous administration in Truro – the approach is all about tweaking local government. The "expression of interest" letter to a government minister made much of Cornwall's one principal council as a "mature unitary authority" with "strong, visible and accountable place leadership," while also bigging up the "strength" of the unelected and unaccountable Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board.



The leadership team added: “We should be campaigning for a National Assembly or Parliament for Cornwall, yet so many politicians show an unbelievable lack of ambition for their nation, and find it all too easy to acquiesce in Cornwall being submerged and lost in artificial regional constructs. This damages the very being of Cornwall, and it is disappointing to see that the letter to the Housing Minister pledging that the unitary authority will defer to the ‘Great South West’ project.” (13th August 2021)

Regional funding

A report from the Institute for Government (IfG) think-tank has claimed the relationship between central government and the devolved administrations will be damaged by a Whitehall “power-grab” with regard to the future distribution of “regional development cash” in place of the structural funding that would have come via the European Union. It is also suggested that Cornwall would be amongst the “biggest likely losers,” not least because it is not listed among the Government’s new “priority areas.”

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales had previously received larger sums than England, via the structural funds, with the report stating that “from the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund combined in the 2014–20 cycle, England was allocated €7.1bn, or €130 per person; Scotland €940 million, or €180 per person; Northern Ireland €510m, or €280 per person; and Wales €2.4bn, or €780 per person. Compared with England, allocations of EU structural funds per person were therefore a little over a third higher in Scotland, more than twice as high in Northern Ireland, and six times as high in Wales.”

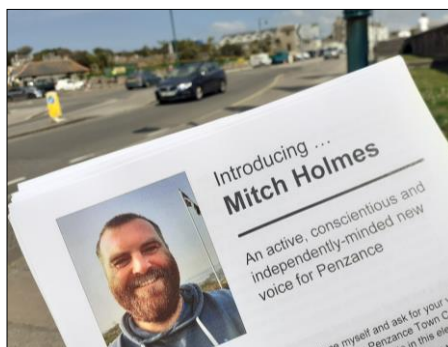
The document acknowledges that the governments in Belfast, Edinburgh, and Cardiff took the lead in “disbursing those funds,” while the “promised replacement” known as the Shared Prosperity Fund will be “controlled by the government in London.”

It also addresses how the devolved nations are putting pressure on the Conservative Government to live up to the pledge in their 2019 general election manifesto that promised they “would at a minimum match the level of EU spending” going forward.

The IfG document is largely silent on the “hidden nation” of Cornwall, but does reference that “in 2014–20, Cornwall was allocated €1,011 per person.” Commenting on the report, MK leader Cllr Dick Cole said: “Cornwall should receive the funding that has been promised and we will keep campaigning for a new democratic settlement through which a Cornish democracy can decide how such investment is allocated and spent. (20th August 2021)

Penzance election

MK members have been on the election trail supporting Mitch Holmes who was a candidate in a by-election for a seat on Penzance Town Council (Promenade Ward). Mitch secured 189 votes (16%). This was a very creditable showing in a five-way contest, especially when MK was the only political party in this most recent contest that had not contested the same seat in May.



Party leader Cllr Dick Cole said: “I would like to thank Mitch and his helpers for their efforts in this recent campaign. Every time, someone stands for election for MK, it helps make our Party stronger and shows that there is an alternative to representatives of London-based political parties.” (9th September 2021)

U-turn on planning change?

Reports are emerging that the UK Government’s planning reforms are to be scrapped or “watered down.” MK councillors and activists have been to the forefront of opposition to the changes in Cornwall, which were announced in the “Planning for the Future” White Paper about 12 months ago.

MK made it clear that the existing National Planning Policy Framework is not “fit-for-purpose,” not least because of the

“presumption in favour” of development which has led to unchecked and damaging development that local communities have been unable to prevent. But the proposed changes would undoubtedly have made this situation even worse and would have been a disaster for Cornwall, its communities and environment. At this stage, it is not known what form the revised policy framework will take, but Mebyon Kernow is continuing its campaign for all aspects of planning to be fully devolved to Cornwall. (11th September 2021)

ACORN demonstration

Parish councillor Sam Richards (Lanner) represented MK at a demonstration in Falmouth, organised by ACORN (a union for renters and an anti-poverty organising group). Sam took the opportunity to make the case that greater self-government for Cornwall could be a key factor in helping solve the housing emergency. (25th September 2021)



“Devonwall” metro-mayor?

During a discussion about devolution at the 2021 Labour Party Conference, the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, put forward a proposal for a “Devonwall” metro-mayor. According to one journalist. This was “greeted with big cheers in the hall.”

The suggestion was rubbished as “ridiculous” by Mebyon Kernow leader Cllr Dick Cole, who added that: “Cornwall needs proper devolution. We need a National Assembly or Parliament like the other Celtic parts of the United Kingdom.” (30th September 2021)

Frank Granger

Cornish Nation *remembers the life of a prominent Mebyon Kernow activist in the Penzance area during the 1990s and 2000s*

Frank Granger, a former MK town councillor in Penzance and Mayor, passed away on 14th July 2021 at the age of 84.

Frank was the first Mebyon Kernow councillor to serve as the Mayor of Penzance and he was especially proud to welcome Gorsedh Kernow to the town during his mayoral year.

As a younger man, Frank was an officer in the Royal Marines and, for a period, he was based in Plymouth. It was during this time that he fell in love with Cornwall and he spent much of his precious leave in the West Penwith area. This experience meant it was inevitable that he would move to the west of the Tamar in later life.

He was also a successful businessman, who held senior executive positions throughout Africa, Australia, USA and Europe, while being a fellow of the Institute of Directors and a range of associated professional bodies.

A successful martial arts specialist, he was a Judo international and had been a black belt since 1959. He even served as the coach for the Zambian national team in the 1970s, and he was later President of Ju Jitsu clubs in Penzance and Truro.

Frank had a degree in psychology and, following his move to Cornwall, he ran seminars for unemployed people as a consultant with the local employment service. He fully understood the issues faced by people in Cornwall and wanted Cornish communities to have a greater say in their futures through a Cornish Development Agency and a Cornish Assembly.

He chose to join Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall and, on four separate occasions between 1998 and 2006, he stood for election to Penwith District Council in the Penzance South ward, which covered the Newlyn and Mousehole area.



His strongest showing was in 2004, when he secured 525 votes. He was also an MK candidate for Penzance Town Council in 1999, missing out by just 21 votes. He was however returned unopposed in 2004.

Three years later, he was re-elected with 844 votes, finishing second in a six-way fight for three seats. He became part of a four-strong Mebyon Kernow group on the council along with Richard Clark, Simon Reed and Phil Rendle.

As a town councillor, Frank was extremely active and hardworking. He represented Penzance Town Council on a wide array of local bodies including the Penzance Chamber of Commerce. He was active with the Newlyn Fisheries Forum and was one of four trustees for the Newlyn Fishermen's Memorial Fund, as well as being a Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator for his local area through which he served on the Penwith Area Crime Prevention Group.

In addition, he sat on Dowager Lady Robinson's Fund for the Blind, the local Old People's Forum and Penzance in Bloom.

In 2007, Frank was the first Mebyon Kernow councillor to serve as the Mayor of Penzance, and he was especially proud to welcome Gorsedh Kernow to the town during his mayoral year (pictured above with his wife Linda).

Mebyon Kernow members who worked with Frank will undoubtedly remember him as an energetic campaigner, who was extremely dedicated to his local area. Through his political, community and sporting endeavours, he certainly made a positive difference to the life of so many people in West Cornwall and further afield.

We are very much thinking of his widow Linda at this sad time.

Tamsin McKenna-Williams

Celebrating the life of a champion for the rights of children, a campaigner on Cornwall's unique constitutional position and MK councillor

Tamsin McKenna-Williams, who represented Penzance on Cornwall County Council and the unitary authority for a total of twelve years, passed away on 9th September 2021 at the young age of only 52.

“Tamsin was a woman, fierce and loyal, with a strong personality and a tremendous intellect.”

Tamsin was brought up in London and, in her younger days, she worked in the fields of finance, social services and welfare rights, before moving to Cornwall in the 1990s. She soon became fascinated by Cornwall's distinct constitutional position, the significance of which she wanted brought more to the fore of modern life, and carried out considerable research into this subject, alongside her mother Penny and many others.

Tamsin first put herself forward for public office in 1999, when she stood for Kerrier District Council as the Mebyon Kernow candidate for Illogan South. She missed out by less than 40 votes, but did serve on Crowan Parish Council for a short period.

Tamsin soon after moved to live in Penzance, where she joined the Liberal Democrats and, in 2001, she was elected to Cornwall County Council for the East division of the town. Four years later, following a boundary review, she was one of three councillors elected to serve the large multi-member division which covered the entire parish of Penzance.

She did not support the centralisation of local government in Cornwall, but chose to stand for election to the new unitary authority in 2009. She was elected to the Penzance Central division and, in 2012, she rejoined MK and crossed the floor to become the sixth member of the Mebyon Kernow group on the authority, sitting alongside Dick Cole, Stuart Cullimore, Loveday Jenkin, Andrew Long and Neil Plummer.



At that time, she described herself pleased to rejoin a political party that was “free from the vested interests that dominate the London-based parties,” adding that “it had become increasingly obvious to me that many of Cornwall's problems are a consequence of bad decisions made by the London parties, and it is clear to me that the local activists of the London-based parties continue to be undermined by the actions of their party bosses in Westminster.”

One of Tamsin's closest friends has described her as “a woman, fierce and loyal, with a strong personality and a tremendous intellect.” Everyone who worked with Tamsin will recognise that description and recall her proud record of public service as a councillor and an advocate, who stood up against social injustice wherever she saw it.

She loved Cornwall and was wanted to win a better deal for local communities – but especially Penzance – and unsurprisingly, Tamsin wanted to see a Cornish Assembly.

Most people will probably remember her as an enthusiastic and forceful advocate for the best interests of children. As a mother to two sons, who she described as the “most awesome blessings in her life,” this was very much a calling for her.

In the County Council, she was at the heart of initiatives relating to anti-bullying, the extended schools programme and looked-after children. On the unitary authority, she was the Lib Dem's Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services for three years and she also spoke up for MK in this field.

She did not stand for re-election in 2013 and re-entered education, graduating with a degree in applied social sciences from Plymouth University four years later. In recent months, she had been putting her qualification to good use in the field of social care, though this was sadly to be curtailed far too soon.

Our thoughts are with Tamsin's family; her mother Penny, and her boys, Sam and Jago.



Kenedhel Gernewek

