

Cornish Nation

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Mebyon Kernow councillors oppose Conservative cuts

Cornwall short-changed by Shared Prosperity Fund
National Health Service in crisis / Local election news
from Scotland and Wales / A tribute to Derek Collins

“Give us our money, Boris”

It was shameful to watch Cornwall’s Conservative MPs claim that Cornwall’s allocation of £132 million through the Shared Prosperity Fund was a “good deal,” while they also attempted to rubbish the expectation that £300 million would be made available to Cornish communities over the next three years.

We would like to share an extract from a recent collective editorial from the *Cornish Guardian*, *Cornishman* and *West Briton* newspapers, which condemned the actions of Conservative MPs.

Conservative MPs ... have now doubled down on that claim [*about it being a good deal*] with a hastily-assembled report from the House of Commons Library which surmises that “any attempt to estimate how much Cornwall would have received had the UK remained part of the EU would require so many assumptions as to make the result effectively meaningless.”

One MP then celebrated its findings with an ill-conceived Twitter post which read: “Claims made by opposition leaders and repeated in the media that Cornwall received £100 million per year in EU funding are wrong, according to independent research we have commissioned – a pity no-one bothered to fact-check before running the story.”

The barbed remark cannot go unchallenged, especially as the £100 million figure comes from her own counterparts on Cornwall Council.

For the record, the Conservative leadership at County Hall stated in a report in November last year that it was “crucial” the Government provided £700 million to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly over the next seven years to replace EU funding.

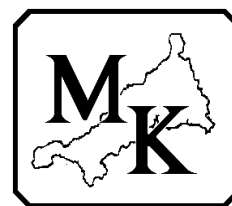
Despite the numerous attempts by Conservative MPs to muddy the waters of the Shared Prosperity Fund ... the paper trail remains the same, as do the promises which were made by their Prime Minister Boris Johnson to “carve a discreet fund from the Shared Prosperity Fund” that would “replicate the (European Union) money coming to Cornwall.”

Cornwall is being short-changed, and the only ones who claim it is not are the Conservatives in Parliament and at County Hall – the very people who should be fighting for Cornwall rather than celebrating a miserly settlement that remains £168 million shy of their own numbers.

This allocation isn’t about politics. It is about the people – those people who need the money which was promised to pull themselves and their communities out of genuine poverty.

Cornwall has consistently shown its faith in the Conservatives at the polls but, sadly, it is getting very little in return.

While Cornwall is to receive less funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund, it also continues to suffer from systemic Government underfunding. So many of our public services are cash-strapped – the National Health Service is struggling to cope, education in Cornwall gets less than elsewhere and local government is continuing to make deep cuts. This cannot be allowed to go on.



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Cornish Nation 88

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Broken promises on funding

Anger across Cornwall as replacement money for EU structural funding is less than half of what was promised

The Conservatives have repeatedly pledged that funding through the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) would at least match the size of the European Union funds that Cornwall would have received if Brexit had not happened. The promises were made by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, plus local MPs, while budget statements pledged the investment would "at a minimum match the size of EU funds in each nation and in Cornwall, each year."

The most recent report produced by the Conservative-controlled unitary authority stated that, "in order to be no worse off," Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly would "need to receive £700 million from the UKSPF over the coming seven years."

But it is now clear that the size of the overall Shared Prosperity Fund budget is simply inadequate for the Government to meet its promises.

On 13th April 2022, it was confirmed that the annual budget figure for the whole of the United Kingdom for 2022/23 would be £400 million and then £700 million in 2023/24. What the Government stated was the level of "average annual EU funds" of £1.5 billion would not be reached until 2024/25 – which might even be after the next General Election.

Some of the supporting information linked with the Government announcement makes comments about the "allocation formula" taking into account local population data and a "broadly based measure of need, including factors like unemployment and income levels." But this is all a distraction, because the promised level of funding will not be delivered.

The Government announcement also confirmed that Cornwall would have a three-year settlement worth £132 million – less than half of the anticipated £300 million.



These "cuts" have been widely condemned, particularly across Cornwall, Wales and the North of England. But prominent Conservatives in Cornwall have welcomed the funding and, though it may well be true that Cornwall will still be getting more funding "per head" than elsewhere, it is a struggle to see how they can justify the position of central government.

Put bluntly, Cornish communities will not be getting the full amount of funding that had been promised.

It was only 18 months ago that one Cornish Member of Parliament suggested that statements from a Government Minister had "shot down claims from Cornwall Council that Cornwall will be short-changed" under the Shared Prosperity Fund. He went on to challenge the-then Liberal Democrat / Independent council to "retract their damaging statements" and to "move on" from "always thinking the worst and taking a pessimistic view."

It seems that their pessimism was extremely well-founded.

At this time, we thought it would be worthwhile to share some reactions to the announcement about the Shared Prosperity Fund:

"We have a very strange situation here in Cornwall with Conservative MPs jumping up and down about 'false claims' about Cornwall's replacement EU funding. However the 'claim' was made by the leader of Cornwall Council, the Conservative leader of Cornwall Council.

"Furthermore the bid for £700m made by Cornwall Council from the Shared Prosperity Fund was, I understand, supported by Cornwall's MPs who, it appears, never challenged this figure.

"The bid for £700m was also presented to the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board – the membership of which includes Cornwall's MPs. So, if the MPs think the numbers are wrong why didn't they say so at the time?"

Local journalist Richard Whitehouse

"So Kernow gets far less than promised. UKSPF £132m over next three years. Watch the Tories come up with their phoney soundbites. Who is surprised? What a sad state our country is in."

Former Independent leader of Cornwall Council, Cllr Julian German

"This is what many of us call levelling down – making Cornwall poorer as a result of a direct Government decision."

Independent councillor Tim Dwelly

"It is quite strange for me, as one of the 'opposition leaders' in Cornwall, to be criticised by Cornwall's Conservative MPs for supporting the official position of Conservative-controlled Cornwall Council, when it comes to the Shared Prosperity Fund."

MK Leader Cllr Dick Cole

Blackheath Declaration

June 2022 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the commemoration of the quincentenary of the Cornish rebellion of 1497

525 years ago, the people of Cornwall rebelled against the English state after King Henry VII demanded additional taxes to fund a war in Scotland. Thousands of Cornishmen marched to London to air their grievances, under the leadership by Michael Joseph (An Gof), a blacksmith from St Keverne, and Thomas Flamank, a lawyer from Bodmin. They were joined by a nobleman, Lord Audley, as they moved through the English county of Somerset. The Cornish host camped near Blackheath on the 16th June, but were attacked on the following day.

The three leaders were captured. An Gof and Flamank were executed at Tyburn on 27th June, with the blacksmith telling the crowd that he would have “a name perpetual and a fame permanent and immortal.” Audley was beheaded on the following day. The bodies of the two Cornishmen were decapitated and the fragments of their remains were placed on display in various locations. It is documented that the heads of the three men were placed on poles on London Bridge.

But as An Gof predicted, he and the others have not been forgotten. It is 25 years since the quincentenary of the rebellion, when thousands of people took part in various commemorations which were structured around a re-enactment of the march.

The marchers arrived in Blackheath on Saturday 21st June 1997, a sea of Cornish flags, led by Constantine Silver Band and made their way to the site of the battlefield. Many of the marchers returned to London one week later, this time with St Keverne Silver Band, to visit Tyburn and mark the 500th anniversary of the executions of An Gof and Flamank.

The march itself was a powerful display of Cornish pride and resilience that surpassed all the expectations of the organising team. It was very much promoted as a cultural celebration, but there were obvious political aspects to the endeavour. The *Western Morning News* rightly noted it was “about much more than simply remembering and revelling in the past,” adding that Cornwall still suffered “injustice and hardship compared to other parts of Britain.”



The marchers issued a bilingual “Blackheath Declaration.” It stated: “In recent years, Cornwall has once again not been treated fairly in proportion to our needs – particularly in comparison with the assistance rendered to our Celtic cousins in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.”

It had four demands: a Cornish Development Agency, a Cornwall seat in the European Parliament, a university campus in Cornwall, and the teaching of Cornish history, culture and language in schools. Twenty-five years on, it is right that we look back at what progress has been made with the demands.

Starting with the biggest positive, university education is now a reality, but we never did get our own Development Agency or Euro-seat.

In early 1997, Cornwall County Council had supported a CDA (by 71 votes to one) but, weeks after the “Blackheath Declaration,” councillors ditched this position and acquiesced to the Government’s chosen option of a “SW RDA” stretching past Bristol. In terms of the Euro-seat, an inquiry was held in Taunton and Cornish representations were ignored.

From 2009 until Brexit, Cornwall ended up in a multi-member SW constituency, and Westminster politicians continue to refuse to legislate to protect Cornwall’s territoriality, as shown most recently by what happened with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020.

Great work is being done with regard to the teaching of the Cornish language in schools through Go Cornish, and Cornwall Council is working with local schools to build a Cornish curriculum. But central government is dodging its obligations and cut funding for the language in 2016, which massively restricts what can be achieved.

In 1997, there were also numerous calls for more powers for Cornwall and a parliamentary Early Day Motion praising the marchers called for a Cornish Assembly. Twenty-five years on, establishment politicians are talking about “devolution,” but they are only promoting tweaks to local government – not meaningful self-government for Cornwall.

Looking forward, the campaigns for Cornish identity and culture, and greater self-government, must continue and become much stronger.

Images:

Above: the statue of An Gof and Flamank erected in St Keverne in 1997.

Below: Marchers at Tyburn on Sunday 29th June 1997.



Cornwall's NHS is struggling

Significant ambulance queues at Treliske are a symptom of the health and social care crisis gripping Cornwall

In recent days, the Royal Cornwall Hospital called a “critical incident” following delays in discharging patients due to bed blocking. Similar alerts were declared throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and in October last year when its emergency department became overwhelmed with patients.

There have been numerous reports of up to 30 ambulances queuing outside the hospital at Treliske, struggling to drop off patients to the only emergency department in Cornwall.

A spokesperson for the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) said that queuing ambulances were due to the whole health and social care system being “under sustained pressure,” while many patients were having to wait longer for an ambulance than is acceptable. Some professionals have even stated that the situation was “putting lives in danger.”

The latest “critical incident” came a short period after the Care Quality Commission reported that “significant work” was needed to alleviate the extreme pressure on National Health Service and emergency care services across Cornwall.

A severe ongoing problem, it is little more than six months since a horrified paramedic spoke out to say that people in Cornwall were dying because ambulances were unable to reach them. The ambulance worker informed the media: “Cornwall is a dangerous place to live at the moment if you’re ill.”

In a lengthy email to the press, the health worker said: “I am writing this to you from the back of an emergency ambulance queued up outside Treliske Hospital with the other 22 ambulances parked up around the emergency department. We have been waiting hours, but that is now the norm and we are all having to get used to this. There are 44 trained paramedics, technicians and ECAs looking after 22 patients.

“In hospital there is a room set aside where two paramedics look after four patients but they are still part of the ambulance queue and have not really entered hospital. Most of the emergency ambulance resource is here parked up doing nothing.

“We all hear the desperate calls from SWASFT control looking for any crews to attend CAT 1 calls which are life-threatening

and we have to get to within seven minutes but no one can move. And so the patient suffers but that’s ok because they and their families will never know that we have let them down. Each one is an individual case that never gets publicity.

“No one ever gets to see the quantity of calls that we attend way beyond the target times. No one ever gets to count up the deaths that now occur weekly due to the log jam at hospital. And that’s ok because nothing changes, we never see the managers or directors trying to sort out this mess. We should all accept it and know this is how it will be from now on.

“There have been loads of reports in the press about ambulances queuing up and it never strikes a nerve with the public. Why is it a big story that patients are having to wait six to eight hours in the back of an ambulance? But if they knew how many were dying needlessly then it would be on the front pages of every national newspaper. The Government would be forced to act, but that will never happen because it’s hidden from view ... lost in a sea of other stories. But imagine that it was your wife, husband, dad or mum, granddad or grandma that lost their life because of the failure of the NHS and SWAST to get to you in time, then it will mean something to you but only then when it’s too late.

“If the air ambulance was made to queue up like all the emergency ambulances at hospital for eight hours with a sick patient inside there would be public outcry, so why is it different when it’s an emergency ambulance? The chances are that it will be an emergency ambulance that saves your life rather than the air ambulance.”

MK comment

It is chastening to hear direct from workers in Cornwall’s NHS giving first-hand testimony about the crisis in health provision and expressing their abject frustration at what is happening. All levels of government need to listen and act. Lives are at stake.



Speaking out

Cornish Nation *reprints two of Cllr Dick Cole's recent columns from the Cornish Guardian newspaper about Right to Buy and the housing crisis*



In 1980, Margaret Thatcher's Government introduced Right to Buy through its first Housing Act, and the legislation allowed council tenants to purchase their homes at a significant discount from their open-market value.

As a consequence, some two million rental properties were sold. I agree with the view of Polly Neate, the Chief Executive of the homelessness charity Shelter, that this tore "a massive hole" in the stock of much-needed affordable housing.

I would add that the loss of so many social rent properties over the last forty years – which were largely not replaced – has been a significant contributory factor to the out-of-control, dysfunctional and unbalanced housing market that exists today.

I was therefore extremely alarmed to see newspaper reports that state the Prime Minister is looking into re-energising the concept of Right to Buy by extending it to tenants of Housing Associations.

I could hardly believe what I was reading. One "Government source" was quoted as saying that: "The Prime Minister has got very excited about this. In many ways it is a replica of the great Maggie idea of 'buy your own council flat.' It is 'buy your own housing association flat'."

It is a bonkers plan. There is so much that needs to be done to combat the housing crisis,

but selling off social rent properties is not any part of any answer.

Again, I agree with the comments of Polly Neate. Extending Right to Buy is indeed "half-baked" and a "hare-brained idea." It is the "opposite of what the country needs" and "there could not be a worse time to sell off what remains of our last truly affordable social homes."

A prominent thinktank has also pointed out the inequity at the core of the proposal, noting that it "offers huge financial benefits to those who qualify for social housing" – perhaps many tens of thousands of pounds – "while providing nothing for those ... who pay much higher rents in less secure private tenancies."

It is telling that progressive governments in the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales abolished Right to Buy in 2017 and 2019 respectively. The Northern Ireland version of the scheme will end in August.

Right to Buy should also be ruled out in Cornwall and England. Politicians should instead be prioritising the provision of proper local-needs housing, legislating to protect those in private rented accommodation and to control rents, while rolling back the spread of second homes and airbnbs. (11th May 2022)

Ten years ago, I wrote about how figures released by the Office of National Statistics showed Cornwall to be the "second home capital" of the United Kingdom, and that the National Housing Federation had warned "second homes" were increasingly pricing local people out of their communities with the countryside becoming a "place for the well-off to enjoy at weekends."

This was also at a time when a prominent London author and journalist had written a piece about how he had "agonised" about buying a "second home," stating he initially feared he would be seen as an absentee "invader." But somehow, he came to the conclusion that: "However unfair it is that some people can afford holiday homes while young locals find it impossible to get started

on the property ladder, Cornwall would die without second homes."

I described this as "twaddle" and quoted a local journalist who wrote: "The last thing any struggling community needs is to be patronised and treated like a basket case by those who have, by their greed, been the architects of many of its ills. By purchasing a property in a village, holidaying there a couple of times a year, and thereby transforming that village into a playground of the rich, these leeches suck the heart out of communities."

It was my view that the housing market was already in crisis and "totally out of control." One decade on, the situation is even worse, not least because of the inaction of the UK Government.

While there are a range of factors making the present housing emergency so bad, there are an increasing number of metropolitan commentators, once again, trying to rubbish concerns about second homes – particularly to the west of the Tamar.

One recent article in the *Daily Telegraph* was nonsensically titled: "Why Cornwall can't survive without second home owners." The piece was extremely insensitive. It promoted the argument that second homes are good for the economy. It described concerns about the impact of the multiple-property-owning households as "attacks," it was critical of the proposed registration of "rented holiday homes" and, unbelievably, described the need for lifeboat volunteers "to live within five minutes of the station for a shout" as a "niche local issue."

A separate piece in the same newspaper misrepresented the comments of the airbnb boss Brian Chesky to generate a deliberately inflammatory headline that said: "Cornwall risks becoming 'xenophobic' without outsiders."

Such crass comments should not deter campaigners for housing justice, and we should be ever more determined to build a new political system that prioritises need over wealth and privilege. (25th May 2022)

Gwiryow yeth

Kenedhel Gernewek a *hwither faladow Governans RU dhe wul lagha rag gwitha an yeth Kernewek*

Gans hag yn-mysk laghans gwarnys yn Kows an Vyghternes o Laghen Honanieth ha Yeth (Iwerdhon Kledh), a wra gorra a-rag fardel “taklow honanieth ha yeth,” yn unn fogella war Iwerdhonek ha Skots-Olster, an dhew.

Mebyon Kernow re dhynherghis an Laghen ma, a sew gwithow yn lagha rag Kembrek hag Godhalek Albanek (dre Senedh Albanek) an dhew. Mes yma own a hemma ow kasa Kernewek an unnsel yeth Keltek heb gwithow laghel a-ji laghans a-bervedh.

An kedhlow skoodhya a lever bos governans RU dhe wul seulabrys avonsyans a-bris gans komyttiansow a-dro dhe wonisogeth ha honanieth, dell yw skrifys y’n bargaen “*Degvledhen Nowydh, Nesans Nowydh*,” o akordys yn mis Genver 2020 avel rann assayans kavos Kuntelles Stormont oberi arta. Kyns oll, yth yw merkys bos £2 milvil arghansereth ros dhe Fond Darlesans Skrin rag Iwerdhonek ha Skots-Olster Iwerdhon Kledh hag yth yw skrifys bos Governans RU dhe bareusi rag aswon Skots-Olster avel minorityta kenedhlek dres an Akordyans Framweyth rag Gwitha Minorityts Kenedhlek.

Y dal bos merkys bos, pobel an hengov Skots-Olster yw hwath anaswonys avel minorityta kenedhlek, yth esa arghans kevys rag “arghans darlena” ha Laghen Yeth seulabrys y’n dowlan laghans Governans.

Moy ages eth bledhen yw a-ban Kernewek o aswonys avel minorityta kenedhlek, mes yma Governans RU ow fyllel dhe wul y ambosow. Laghans ha ragdresow dhe les dhe genedhlow Keltek ha’ga yethow, yn sempel, nag w gwrys rag Kernow ha’n yeth Kernewek.

Ynwedh Governans RU re dhyllis Paper Gwynn gans titel: “Ha Nessa: Golok an Governans rag argylgh dharlena” a-rag a Laghen Media. Yn tiswaytus, an Paper Gwynn o taw yn kever govyn rag gonis darlena poblek rag Kernow ha, yn rann a-dro dhe yethow rannndirek ha minorityta nys yw an yeth Kernewek kampollys vyth.

Hemm yw an keth avel styr gocki yn tien a “yethow rannndirek ha minorityta a’n RU” yn Chartour BBC 2016, yw konstynys dhe “Kembrek, Godhalek Albanek, Iwerdhonek ha Skots-Olster.”

Nys yw hemma da vytholl, mes dhe’n lyha, an Paper Gwynn a ros chons. Y’n skriften, an Governans a lever lemmyn “bri a dowlennow darlena yn yethow rannndirek ha minorityta teythek” a wra bos “kler yn laghans.” Res yw bos representyansow gwrys dhe wovernans kresek, h’agan ES ow rag demondya parder gonisegethek yntra Kernow ha’n kenedhlow Keltek erel. Res yw dh’agan demondys (i) kavos an daffar rag yethow rannndirek ha minorityta yn pub Laghen Media dhe gavos yn arbennek Kernewek ha rag (ii) Laghen Yeth Kernewek dhe vos dros yn-rag lemmyn.

Included within the legislation announced in the Queen’s Speech was an Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Bill, which will put in place a package of “identity and language measures,” focusing on both Irish and Ulster Scots.”

Mebyon Kernow has welcomed this Bill, which follows protections in law for both Welsh and Scottish Gaelic (through the Scottish Parliament). But it is concerning that this will leave Cornish as the only Celtic language without any protections embedded in domestic legislation.

The supporting information states that the UK Government has already made significant progress on its commitments relating to culture and identity, as set out in the “New Decade, New Approach” deal, which was agreed in January 2020 as part of efforts to get the Stormont Assembly up and running again. In particular, it noted that £2 million in funding has been allocated to Northern Ireland Screen’s Irish Language and Ulster Scots Broadcast Funds and it is also stated that the UK Government is making preparations to recognise the Ulster Scots as a national minority through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

It is noteworthy that, while the people of the Ulster Scots tradition are yet to be recognised as a national minority, monies have already been found for “broadcast funds” and

a Language Bill is already in the Government’s legislative programme.

It is more than eight years since the Cornish were recognised as a national minority, but the UK Government is failing to meet its obligations. Legislation and initiatives relevant to other Celtic nations and their languages are simply not being brought forward for Cornwall and the Cornish language.

The UK Government has also published a White Paper titled: “Up Next: The Government’s vision for the broadcasting sector” in advance of a Media Bill. Disappointingly, the White Paper was silent on the request for public service broadcasting for Cornwall while, in the section on regional and minority languages, the Cornish language is not mentioned.

This mirrors the ridiculous definition of “regional and minority languages of the UK” in the 2016 BBC Charter, which is restricted to “Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish and Ulster Scots.”

This is so unsatisfactory, but the White Paper does at least present an opportunity. In the document, the Government now says that the “importance of programmes broadcast in the UK’s indigenous regional and minority languages” will be made “clear in legislation.”

It is vital that representations are made to central government, and Cornish MPs to demand cultural parity between Cornwall and the other Celtic nations. Our demands must (i) seek the provision for regional and minority languages in any Media Bill to specifically include Cornish and for (ii) a wide-ranging Cornish Language Bill to be brought forward now.

We would like to thank Cllr Dick Cole, the *Cornish Guardian*, Plaid Cymru, Paul Williams and the Yorkshire Party for photographs and images used in this magazine.

Cornish news and views

MK Spring Conference

In March, MK members gathered at Heartlands in Pool for the Party's first face-to-face Conference since the onset of the pandemic. A key focus was the "Levelling Up" White Paper, which included confirmation that Cornwall was one of nine "local authority areas" to have been invited to commence discussions about a "county deal."

Debate at the Conference focussed around a briefing on the document, which:

(a) Rubbished claims that it represented the "biggest shift of power from Whitehall to local leaders in modern times" offering "London-style" powers.

(b) Pointed out that the "devolution" on offer was not really devolution at all, but limited accommodations with local council structures.

(c) Informed participants at the event that the White Paper contained a "devolution framework," which offers three levels of "devolution," and that the "level three" option being explored by the Conservative administration in Cornwall would need to be accompanied by an elected mayor or governor who would become the leader of the unitary authority.

(d) Made it clear the limited new responsibilities were less than the "trailblazer deeper devolution deals" for "Mayoral Combined Authorities" in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands; and much, much less significant than the meaningful devolution achieved in Wales and Scotland.

In his keynote address at the Conference, Cllr Dick Cole argued that any proposed "county deal" was inadequate and the people of Cornwall – a Celtic nation – need to work and campaign to achieve democratic parity with Scotland and Wales, through the creation of Senedh Kernow / a Parliament for Cornwall.

He said: "Westminster politics has corralled Cornwall's aspirations for more powers into limited accommodations between local government and the centre. We need to put pressure on the unitary authority and the wider political class in Cornwall to have the courage to go beyond the unambitious constraints of the present 'devolution' debate as configured by the UK Government. We need to build a powerful campaign for a Parliament for Cornwall."



The event also included a "Devolution – what next for Cornwall" debate and, as well as Cllr Cole, speakers included Cllr Linda Taylor (Conservative leader of Cornwall Council), Cllr Andrew George (Lib Dem), Cllr Stephen Barnes (Labour), Cllr Tamsyn Widdon (Green) and Cllr Julian German (Independent).



Other speakers at the event who addressed the need for greater devolution for Cornwall included Andrew Climo, Dr Garry Tregidga and Dr Joanie Willett (above). Ian Saltern meanwhile gave an update on campaigns relating to the national minority status of the Cornish. (12th March 2022)

Second homes

MK has welcomed the news that the Welsh Government, from April 2023, will raise the maximum council tax premium which local authorities can charge on a second home.

It will be going up from 100% to 300%. The premium – an additional charge on top of council tax – will mean second home owners in Wales could be charged up to four times the amount of a permanent home.

In a public statement, Cllr Loveday Jenkin noted that because Cornwall has been denied devolution, it does not have the power to do the same as in Wales, and called for further action to control second homes and permanent homes being turned into airbnbs.

"Wales is in a similar housing emergency as Cornwall. This week, I have been dealing with people being evicted. A family who have been living in the same home for 15 years are now in temporary accommodation in a caravan.

"What about the right of people in Cornwall to have a first home? What about the right not to be driven out of their communities? Some people are having to move to temporary accommodation outside Cornwall. It is all so wrong and against their human rights." (14th March 2022)

Ships and Castles

The Conservative administration on the unitary authority continues to make a series of extremely unpopular cuts, which included the closure of the Ships and Castles leisure centre in Falmouth. Local members from the town and surrounding areas opposed the closure, as did MK councillors.



This included a “call-in” of the decision just days before the closure. MK leader Cllr Dick Cole was one of the councillors on the scrutiny committee and has described the process as “extremely frustrating.” Speaking after the last meeting, he said: “We were tasked to scrutinise the Cabinet decision on leisure provision and the closure of the Ships and Castles, but were denied access to detailed financial and related information. This made the whole thing quite farcical, and when we maintained an objection, it was ignored by the Cabinet.” (31st March 2022)

Outdoor education centres

The Tory Council also decided to close Cornwall Outdoors, the organisation which runs outdoor education provision at three centres and provides residential breaks for children to experience a variety of outdoor activities. A new operator is being sought for the centre at Porthpean, near St Austell, but the future for Carnyorth, near St Just, and Delaware, near Gunnislake, look very bleak.

The sites were deemed “surplus to requirements” and it was agreed to advertise them for sale on a freehold basis, though they would initially be marketed for a ten-week period for “community use.”

MK councillors opposed the loss of Cornwall Outdoors and joined local people in raising fears that it was likely that the buildings – both former schools – would be lost to community use and would get converted into residential accommodation.



In one discussion about Carnyorth, Cllr Loveday Jenkin said she had seen no real evidence of any community consultation about the future of the site and “if it is marketed on a freehold basis, it will lose its community use. She added: “It is incredibly of value to West Cornwall and its young people. Even Helston pupils have been there for outdoor education experiences, so it’s not just the local parish that it is important to.” (31st March 2022)

Planning matters

Mebyon Kernow councillors continue to be at the heart of numerous planning matters and Cllr Andrew Long played a leading role in the rejection of an unpopular proposal at Gillyflower Farm, near Lostwithiel, at a meeting of Cornwall Council’s Strategic Planning Committee. More than 300 people had raised objections and a large number of people protested outside of the meeting.

Committee member Andrew Long proposed that the application, for a horticulture / agronomy centre with 19 holiday lodges, should be refused due to the harm it would have on the character of the Area Great Landscape Value and the heritage assets in the area. He also challenged claims about the economic and community benefit of the scheme, which he said did not comply with a number of planning policies including the Lostwithiel Neighbourhood Plan. It was refused by seven votes to four. (14th April 2022)

Stadium woes

The decision of Cornish Conservatives to no longer seek funding for the Stadium for

Cornwall from the “Levelling Up” programme has been ridiculed by Mebyon Kernow.

A spokesman from the Party said: “The excuses about business cases or the nature of government funding do not stand up to scrutiny. In the 2015 General Election, the Tories announced they would fund the Stadium. There were no caveats or conditions, just a straight-forward pledge to voters. By not delivering on that promise, it will forever be remembered as a cynical ploy to harvest votes, and nothing more.” (28th June 2022)

In recent months, there have been a number of unacceptable and generalised criticisms of Cornish people by prominent individuals and journalists. During an interview for a podcast focussing on Cornish matters, Tim Smit of the Eden Project ill-advisedly branded (many) Cornish people as “tossers” who were not articulate. He later partially back-tracked from his comments and apologised.

There was then widespread coverage of a statement from Gordon Ramsay. The celebrity chef who previously had a £7 million property in Cornwall, said: “Trust me I absolutely love Cornwall. It’s just the Cornish I can’t stand.” He had been speaking on a Radio 2 show.

The leader of MK was contacted by newspapers regarding what Ramsay had said. Cllr Dick Cole released the following statement: “I am really disappointed to hear Gordon Ramsay’s divisive comments and his lack of respect for the Cornish people. It is shocking that he deems it OK to make such a public statement that he would presumably not make about other national or ethnic groups. It does need to be pointed out that the Cornish are protected as a ‘national minority’ – just like the Welsh and Scots – through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

“I sincerely hope he will reflect on his words and apologise. Many people living to the west of the Tamar do not enjoy as good a life as Mr Ramsay, and I would welcome the media doing some features on poverty, the housing crisis and other socio-economic problems suffered by ordinary people in Cornwall, as well as the need for greater support for Cornish identity and culture.”

Success at the ballot box

The SNP and Plaid Cymru have achieved their best-ever local election results, with the Yorkshire Party doing well in a mayoral contest

In the May elections to Scotland's 32 councils, the Scottish National Party again finished as the party with the largest number of councillors. The SNP recorded strong results across most parts of the country and increased its total number of councillors by 22 to 453. By comparison, Labour won 282 seats, a gain of 20, while the Tories managed 214 seats, a loss of 63.

In an election fought using a proportional system (the single transferable vote), the SNP took control of Dundee Council, winning 15 of the 29 seats. In addition, the SNP is the largest party on twenty councils. As a consequence, the party has entered into coalition arrangements in four councils (Aberdeen, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway and in the Highlands), while it has minority control in ten other areas (Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross and Renfrewshire).

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon described the result as "stupendous" and a "quite incredible outcome" for a political party that has been in Government at Holyrood for 15 years.

She said: "We have not only won the election – an eighth consecutive election victory since I've been leader – but won it overwhelmingly. We have increased our share of the vote and the number of councillors we have."

Nicola Sturgeon added that the collapse of the Conservative vote represented a strong condemnation of the scandal surrounding the Prime Minister and "lockdown parties" at 10 Downing Street, and sent the "clearest possible message to Boris Johnson and the Tories."

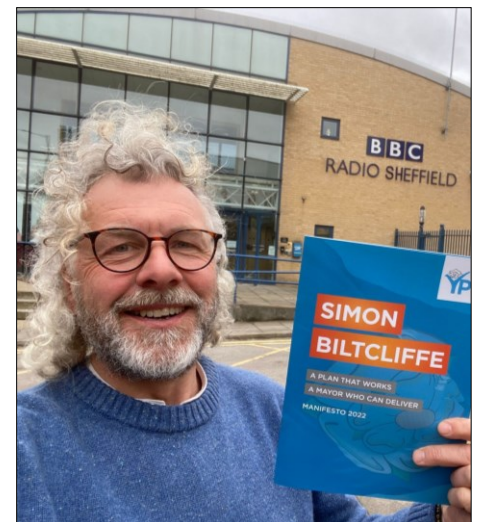
Plaid Cymru out-performed the predictions of all political commentators and secured overall control of four of the 22 local authorities in Wales. It retained control of Gwynedd Council, where it won 44 of the 69 seats, and gained Carmarthenshire (38 of the 75 seats), Ceredigion (20 of the 38 seats) and Ynys Mon (21 of the 35 seats).

In some places however, the party lost seats and the total number of Plaid councillors was 202 – overall a slight drop of six elected members. In comparison, Labour achieved 526 councillors, an increase of 66.

The Conservatives meanwhile had another bad election. They managed only 111 councillors, a drop of 86.

Commenting on the results, Plaid AM Delyth Jewell said: "This is the first time since local government reorganisation (in 1996) that Plaid Cymru has secured a majority on four councils. It can only be interpreted as a huge vote of confidence in Plaid Cymru leadership in local government, and a result of the excellent track record of Plaid Cymru councillors in all these areas."

Plaid Cymru made positive progress in a number of local authorities including Wrexham, where the number of councillors was tripled, and the Vale of Glamorgan. Post-election negotiations mean that Plaid councillors are now part of administrations in Conwy, Denbighshire and Neath Port Talbot.



The Yorkshire Party's Simon Biltcliffe meanwhile achieved a total of 34,857 first preference votes (13.4%) in the election for a mayor for South Yorkshire, out-polling Green Party, Liberal Democrat and Social Democratic Party candidates. Covering the Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield areas, the Yorkshire Party actually came second to the winning Labour candidate in the Barnsley part of South Yorkshire where they achieved 23.2% – an impressively strong showing.

Derek Collins

Cornish Nation remembers a passionate Cornishman, who served as the Mayor of St Austell

Derek Collins, who passed away in March at the age of 69, was the first member of Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall to serve on St Austell Town Council.



Born in Portscatho in 1952, he grew up on the Roseland and went to school in Gerrans and Tregony before a period at Camborne Technical College, where his interest in electronics developed. He worked as a TV and radio repairman in Truro for a number of years before acquiring an HGV licence and then working for ECLP in the clay industry and at the driers at Par.

Derek met his wife Gillian in 1977. They married three years later and their daughter Emma was born in 1993. Gillian has described Derek as a “good man” with a “dry sense of humour” and remembers how they met: “I came down to Cornwall with a friend who was working in St Mawes. I had glandular fever and my friend invited me to take some time out and come down to Cornwall. I met Derek at Portscatho Social Club. I was looking for somewhere to stay at the time and looking for work and his parents very kindly put me up. It just developed from there.”

Derek loved anything to do with music and radio, and he was one of the founding members of Radio St Austell Bay, from where he could often be heard across the airwaves.

His first foray into Cornish politics came in 1981, when he was one of five Cornish

Nationalist Party candidates standing for election to Cornwall County Council. His candidacy was in the St Austell East division and he achieved 201 votes. More than 25 years later, in 2009, Derek was a successful candidate in the first-ever elections to the new St Austell Town Council. He was elected in Poltair Ward – this time for the Lib Dems.

In October 2011, he resigned from the Liberal Democrats, who had gone into Coalition with the Conservatives, and joined Mebyon Kernow. In a statement issued to the press, he stated that he could no longer “in all conscience” remain a member of a political party, which had chosen to “back a Conservative Government and implement Tory policies.” He said this was a “bitter pill,” which he “could not swallow.”

As a town councillor, he was particularly active on the Planning Committee, which he chaired for many years. He played a leading role in opposing inappropriate developments around St Austell.

In 2013, he stood for MK in the St Austell Poltair division of Cornwall Council and secured the support of 187 electors (21% of votes cast) in a four-way fight.

At this time, he was re-elected to the town council in Poltair ward. There were ten candidates for the four seats. Derek did extremely well and polled 278 votes, which equated to the support of more than 30% of electors. He came third, outperforming four independents, two Conservatives and one Labour candidate.

Within weeks of his re-election, Derek was chosen as the Deputy Mayor of the town. The Mayor was Steve Double, who became the Conservative MP for St Austell and Newquay in 2015. In his tribute, the MP described Derek as a local man who loved the St Austell area while noting that, because of their different political viewpoints, Derek was “never backward in letting you know his views.”

One of Derek’s proudest moments was when he became Mayor of St Austell and represented the town at various events over the next 12 months. Derek was particularly proud to lead the town’s Remembrance parade in November 2014.

At this very sad time, our thoughts are with Gillian and Emma.





Kenedhel Gernewek

