

With thanks to Cliff Jones, DMG Print and Creative Edge in helping to produce this publication.



2009

Cornish  
Constitutional  
Convention

# The Cornish Assembly

## The next push

The new Cornwall Council unitary authority is a step along the way to secure effective, efficient, responsive and forward-looking governance for Cornwall, a peripheral, distinctive and different British region.

[www.cornishassembly.eu](http://www.cornishassembly.eu)



# Cornish Constitutional Convention

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## INTRODUCTION

**As Cornwall wakes up to its new unitary authority the opportunities for developing it press harder for attention.**

The economic climate will require creativity, boldness and focus if Cornwall is to navigate the turbulence and emerge with a productive and sustainable economy. It will require a strong relationship between public bodies and entrepreneurs, and a stronger focus for Cornwall as it seeks to compete in a range of markets, and takes its place in an array of partnerships – most importantly, Cornwall knows its own identity, and wishes that identity to be known and understood and to be associated with positive values.

The key opportunity is to bring all public services together under a single administration – to take the unifying principle to the next stage. This pamphlet sets out the Cornish case, and, once again, suggests that Cornwall holds an important key for Government in evolving and developing modern governance and service delivery for a new century.

The pamphlet describes how the new local government structure may be used to provide a foundation for developing a new form of strategic service leadership that can, within the overarching framework of statute, regulate and shape policy that enables the UK to promote unity through diversity, and enables Cornwall to evolve as a vibrant, distinctive and proud part of a renewed and vigorous British Isles, and to be tax-efficient and sustainable.

# THE CORNISH ASSEMBLY THE NEXT PUSH

## SUMMARY

It is not difficult to see, or to achieve when the time comes, a set of changes which would enable the Assembly to be developed without any great change in structure.

A slimmed Council would become the Assembly, assuming a higher role; the Delivery Areas would be democratised to become the delivery-driven local government of Cornwall, working with the Parishes to deliver services.

## PREFACE

**1.** In 2000 Cornwall was dealing with the aftermath of the closure of South Crofty tin mine. It was this cathartic incident that had given rise to the popular demand, led by Cornish Solidarity, for a root-change in regeneration. The closure had caused many people to consider the issue of identity in relation to brand, and to consider the extent to which it was vital for Cornwall to be clearly seen to be itself - not 'compromised' by the 'arranged marriages' of region-makers and apologists. It was perceived that future economic prosperity was bound up with Cornwall being clear and positive in declaring itself to be Cornish.

**2.** At the heart of the identity discussion lay two key issues –

- I. the need for clear, collective self-expression,
- II. the need for such expression to be clearly proclaimed by institutions that understood the Cornish situation (in all its multi-layered complexity) and could speak at high tables and low without risk of contradiction from within.

**3.** In other words, the colourful spectacle of too many local authorities falling over each other to command the strategic heights and to be present at ministerial and European tables had to be addressed. In Whitehall, Brussels or New York, Cornwall only ever has sufficient time to broadcast one clear message at a time. Making that message, and preparing the way towards stating it, has been often confused and ill-focused. We have often found it impossible to clarify who we are, what we want, what we would do, what

our objectives were because there were too many institutions and bodies trying to define the same thing in different ways!

**4.** Cornwall needed to come to terms with being competitive both in economic terms, and in relation to national and supra-national bodies in ensuring that it got a clear, well-focused message to the right places at the right times.

## THE CENSUS

**5.** In 2000 the Cornish<sup>1</sup> were looking forward to being recorded as a separately 'coded' ethnic group in the 2001 census. This breakthrough had been patiently achieved through a quiet coalition of local and parliamentary politicians, supported by officials in the local authorities and Office of National Statistics. The flow of the national discussion about cultural data, prompted by concerns about implementing policies driven by multi-culturalism, as well as by the outfall from Scottish and Welsh devolution and the drive towards a peace settlement in Northern Ireland, offered a moment when the Cornish position could be effectively and logically advocated.

**6.** It was seen by those advancing the Cornish case that progress depends upon understanding the wider political and intellectual environment, and inserting the Cornish 'question' positively and cogently as a means of helping the wider debate to move forwards. This was a sophisticated political insight that has led to some major achievements over the past decade.

<sup>1</sup> That element of the population of the UK that chooses to describe itself as such as a way of defining culture and identity (thereby attuning with the 'Fraser Judgement on ethnicity HoL: 1983)

## WORLD HERITAGE SITE

**7.** Amongst these are the World Heritage Site, which built a coalition of support both locally and globally. The UK Government was content to nominate the Cornish proposition, and found a willing audience at the United Nations (which manages the World Heritage programme). It remains excited by the prospect of bonding a number of other sites around the World (in Australia, USA and elsewhere) to make a unique global site that maps not only technological and industrial development but also the movement of peoples that has led to the emergence of the migration-driven super-states (USA, S Africa, Australia). The essence of the task was to use the talents at our disposal, to develop sufficient goodwill locally to form a 'partnership', and to form a coalition bonded by a mutually beneficial objective between Cornwall, the UK Government and other agencies, including the EU, council of Europe and UN.

**8.** This seems like very grand talk! But, the world is increasingly rendered 'local' by the power of communication. It is becoming increasingly important to foster cultural diversity as a counter-balance to potential homogeneity. There are emerging common agendas on climate change, regulating global business and infrastructures, positively managing health and poverty, and evolving the post-oil socio-economic shift in an equable and peaceful manner.

**9.** Understanding and operating at this level is quickly becoming part of the reality of being a dynamic and successful region. In this 'market place' it is essential to be culturally defined, creative and outward-looking, and environmentally engaged. Successful regions will be those that are both efficient and business-like, and easily recognisable. The key recognition factors will be the drivers for promoting a region's brand identity and must, therefore, relate positively to key brand values. This is as true in governance terms as it is in the commercial arena.

**10.** Cornwall's new Unitary Authority will need to develop objectives, policies, relationships and awareness at the national, continental and global levels. One of the most important aspects of the case for the identification of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a region (in functional as well as branding terms) is that it enjoys key attributes of, and is widely recognised as a Region already. Translating assertion and recognition into administrative and strategic reality will open up opportunities to build on Cornish strengths as the means of contributing positively to economic progress, environmental understanding, cultural diversity and social cohesion.

## ROOTS OF 'DIFFERENCE'

Tin is ONE key to the understanding of Cornish distinctiveness.' It's a bit too categoric as it is and might imply that tin is the most important feature of Cornishness, to the disadvantage of the rest of the argument in the document, I think. I (currently) think there are three main pillars to Cornish distinctiveness - ethnicity, Celticity, and tin. Cornish tin was one of the first metals to be used by man, over 4000 years ago, and is probably Britain's oldest export. With a multiplicity of uses, tin and its alloys, along with wool and lead, made up the bulk of Britain's exports until the late 17th century. Within Cornwall, a unique economic, legal and social infrastructure arose due to the industry, with many aspects emerging in advance of other areas. Extremely early capitalist systems (for Britain) developed from the 13th century in Cornwall and evolved into the efficiency of the cost book system with its ideology that one man could work and expect a share of profit by way of return. Famously, Cornwall's tin mining industry has been characterized by advances in technology and engineering, taken throughout the world by emigrating miners. Today, as tin prices rise again, South Crofty operates under the slogan 'Tin is Regeneration' and has an expanding workforce of 50 people.

## THE CORNISH LANGUAGE

**11.** The objective was clear and the benefits were not simply of cultural value but also financial and psychological. The task of building a partnership and of brokering a degree of trust and common ground was slow and painstaking. We now find funds flowing into language development. Perhaps the most important aspect of the process which has so far been undertaken has been the recognition that, if asked, the international community is not only aware of what is going on

in Cornwall, but is willing to support and assist in taking things forward. The invitations to the World's leading socio-linguists to form a 'Commission' to map out the path towards a standard written form of Kernewek were readily accepted by the top flight. Eventually, we saw the UK Government, the Council of Europe and international academics come together to celebrate and invest in Cornwall and Cornish culture.

## OBJECTIVE 1 - KNOWLEDGE & COMMUNICATION

**12.** The Objective 1 Programme has secured two major structural developments that stand us in good stead for the future. The first is a robust key into the virtual world of broadband. Cornish organisations and businesses can engage at a reasonable (though not necessarily competitively cosmopolitan!) speed in debate, transactions, partnerships and development via the Web. We are where we were during the peak period of the industrial revolution – in the heart of things, connected, with our ideas capable of persuading investment, and investors willing to engage.

**13.** We have also finally developed the replacement for Glasney College<sup>2</sup> at Tremough, Penryn. The Combined Universities in Cornwall project has developed a significant higher education campus at Penryn, in which there is a strong and growing element of globally significant research, especially focusing on the environment and engineering. Amongst other things, as the result of leaving its eponymous home, Camborne School of Mines has found a new and vigorous lease of life. Cornwall is also training doctors and dentists as part of this exercise and we are supporting the birth-pangs of the first University of the Arts at Falmouth (emerging from the union of University College, Falmouth and Dartington College of Arts).

**16.** Each aspect of Cornish evolution contributes to Cornwall's reputation as a mature and committed place with ambitions set in the context of achieving a distinctive economic and environmental identity – we now have both the means of generating Cornish ideas and of communicating them effectively into the global debates in a wide range of disciplines. One area in which this is proving to be quietly effective is that of human rights. The anomaly of having a People whose heritage and language are internationally recognised and protected, whose identity can be recorded on the national census but whose visibility as an ethnic group in a multi-cultural society remains opaque, to say the least. The most important element of achieving progress in the human rights field is to fix an objective and to coalesce a partnership around achieving it.

than complacency! On the other hand, in achieving big things, it is important to consider how we achieved them and to apply the lessons to how we consolidate and develop, and achieve the sort of fundamental changes that will place Cornwall on a sustainable, evolutionary and positive path for the future.

**18.** There also remains a very strong sense of being misunderstood. This affects perceptions ranging from the geographical assumptions of weather forecasters to the designers of regions, the layout of post-code areas, the assessments of strength and weakness which inform most strategic analyses and eventually affect the flow of public funds, the effectiveness of public policy and central assumptions about equality, fairness and social modelling. Much of this problem derives from a lack of capacity and commitment to codify and explain the Cornish situation to those who need to understand it in order to gain best value from their engagements.

**17.** Again and again we find that a robust partnership formed in Cornwall can win the confidence of major institutions – governments, supra-state and global – to contribute towards progress. This shift in perception has been essential to making the progress we have made, and should shape how we approach the future in terms of resolving the questions around future governance and human rights. We tend to achieve significant things and to then talk ourselves into believing they are nothing much. In one way, constant dissatisfaction with one's own efforts is a good thing – creativity breeds restlessness and restlessness is better

## MOVING FORWARD – 'DIFFERENCE' AND SUCCESS – CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

**14.** These are major breakthroughs. Again, they are coming about through a combination of intelligent development and consensus building. EU, Government, Universities and Agencies (public and voluntary, together with the private sector) all working together to generate development which contributes to Cornwall's long-term ability to function beyond its physical constraints, to celebrate key aspects of her culture that make such achievements possible, and will eventually enable Cornwall to contribute to resolving global challenges.

**15.** Truly Cornwall is a positive Region. It needs tailored governance structures to enable it to grasp opportunities properly, to build up relationships with its investors and funders, and to fully realise its potential. If it is to play a vibrant role in the UK and Europe as a distinctive, creative and outward looking region, then it needs the form of governance that will release its energies.

<sup>2</sup> A major seat of medieval learning destroyed by Henry VIII during the Reformation – a period when Cornwall and the State fell out to the point of going to War, and from which the relationship has yet to fully recover.



**19.** The long-term residual influence of outmoded and often mischievously formed perceptions about Cornwall and Cornish people and their culture may, to some extent, affect the formulation of policies leading to migratory trends that can easily be construed as a subliminally inspired effort to 'assimilate' Cornwall and to iron out the wrinkles of difference that motivate demands for specific and tailored treatment. The distinctive historical narrative that has long been suppressed within the supposed status quo has become more prominent as historians have re-focused British historical study to take account of different national and regional perspectives, such as those of Wales, Scotland and, increasingly, Cornwall. It is simply impossible to explore the Cornish story without concluding that it has a very distinctive narrative, a culture which owes much more to its peripherality, connectivity by sea with Europe, Africa, Ireland and Wales, and to fairly new links forged as a result of emigrations stimulated by economic collapse at the end of the 19th century and a degree of religious persecution against non-Conformists in the same period.

**20.** This 'difference' informs the identity of Cornish people and underpins the conviction held by many (articulated by a few) that the Cornish form a British ethnic group, a 'National Minority' which has evolved as a result of the upheavals of Europe. The UK Government is unwilling to openly recognise the legitimacy of Cornish ethnicity, and, as time passes, and arguments evolve, is becoming increasingly isolated in its opinion. Attempts to formalise the position by seeking the support of the Commission

for Racial Equality (CRE)<sup>3</sup> to establish case-law recognition of the Cornish, which would engage the protections of the Race Relations Act, have been constantly thwarted without good reasons being cited for the resistance.

**21.** We should not overstate the issue of Cornish ethnicity, or indeed of Cornish nationalism. Neither case nor their advocates seek cessation or independence. They seek an 'accommodation' which recognises Cornish difference within the overall structure of the United Kingdom. It is asserted that the UK would benefit from such an 'accommodation' because the arrangements thus secured would unshackle Cornish creativity and ingenuity and supply its outputs and ideas to the UK. The effect of Objective 1, which was a Structural Funds Programme conceived by Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, which initiated the notion of regeneration by promoting 'regional distinctiveness', was to reveal what potential lies beneath the surface of Cornwall, wanting only the confidence that springs from being granted constructive semi-autonomy over public strategies, services and budgets to flourish and to greatly enhance productivity. It is the intense desire to flourish that nurtures the sustained commitment to seeking an 'accommodation'. There is consensus in Cornwall around the concept of the Cornish Assembly. It finds expression in many forms in mainstream and 'fringe' institutions and bodies, including the main political parties in Cornwall, senior officials and holders of public office, and within a significant swathe of the general Cornish public<sup>4</sup>.

**22.** The Cornish case has been much rehearsed in Parliament and amongst constitutional academics in recent times. The debate has been stimulated by the attempts in the early 2000s to evolve democratic regional government. The Cornish case has stood out despite the ebb and flow of that discussion because Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly is a 'natural' region, strongly embedded as such in public consciousness, and with economic and cultural performance to underpin that perception. This is, of itself, a unique phenomenon. The strength and depth of Cornish culture, shaped by the physical

environment, the resulting historical narrative and by what we might term 'economic evolution' in the industrial and post-industrial eras means that the Cornish case both stands out, and is resilient – a long-term, sustained objective which enjoys consensual support and which is increasingly becoming a very favourable option for those who seek to creatively and incisively approach governance and productivity in the age of climate change and post-oil socio-economic adjustment.

## WHERE ARE WE?

**23.** Nobody asked Cornwall if it wished to be subsumed into a macro-south west regional zone. It's a pity that a Government, flushed with electoral success and reforming zeal, with Wales and Scotland excited by the prospects of devolution, and with a unique opportunity to de-centralise and to invigorate by not being jealous of power and control, did not take a moment to ask around. If it had set about regionalisation by asking for proposals for a regional network that could effectively replace the outworn legacy of World War 2 rationing and

munitions supply, which included the enormous and dysfunctional 'south west', it would have received some innovative ideas which would have created a patchwork of regions, big and small, some founded on expediency, some upon industrial synergies and one – Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - founded upon an historical, constitutional and cultural base and with a rapidly emerging will to positively address its growing economic failure and social deprivation.

<sup>3</sup> Now subsumed into the Equalities & Human Rights Commission

<sup>4</sup> In 2001 the Cornish Constitutional Convention presented an audited 50,000 signature petition calling on Mr Blair's Government to establish the Cornish Assembly. Subsequent opinion surveys showed support rising to 55% in 2004.

**24.** John Prescott, whose energy lay behind the regionalisation thrust, described in his preface to the White Paper, *Your Region, Your Choice*, how regions had emerged, like the Potteries in Staffordshire, that were bonded by the cultural forces of certain industries. These, he said, were outmoded, and needed to be replaced by units of a certain size, that could lead regeneration and provide a framework for social renewal. How sad, with hindsight, that Mr Prescott did not see that his discard of what he perceived as being sentiment (but which was actually organic region building) and its replacement with artificial constructs – zones - labelled 'modern' - was throwing away a key attribute of any successful region – that it means something to the people whose region it is and who populate it and drive it. By assertively setting aside the past Mr Prescott set the seal on the failure of his initiative to shape the future before it had even started.

**25.** John Major, a careful and sensitive man with a streak of political and reforming steel in his make-up, restored the County of Rutland and fought through the break-up of British Rail for a 'Great Western' brand. Perhaps Mr Prescott mistook such things as bourgeois sentiment and failed to examine his own imagination to discover that there are things, sometimes labels, sometimes familiar structures, sometimes values – that resonate with people at an emotional level. These resonances affect economic and social life as much as they inspire poetry or sculpture, or shape places or posit change.

**26.** Tony Blair picked up the strands of Mr Major's careful work in Northern Ireland and eventually delivered a pragmatic settlement to that most convulsive cultural struggle. Mr Major reassured all sides in Northern Ireland that their perspectives, no matter how eccentric or hard-boiled, would be valued and respected in the search for peace. In doing so, he encouraged the UK to sign the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, an action that holds out much potential for all the indigenous minorities of Britain, including especially the Cornish. This is work that transcends the everyday contention between Parties, so it is natural for leaders of Labour and Tory to pick up the traces of each others' work.

**27.** Mr Major had engaged with the regionalisation process, setting up Government Offices, and he had acknowledged the particular geographical issues that affect governance and investment in Cornwall, if only by establishing the 'Far South West' branch-office of Government Office South West (GOSW) at Plymouth. This was an acknowledgement of a situation which was, throughout the 1980s and 90s, exercising Cornish minds because Cornish people could see that the artificial 'marriages' forced on her by successive Governments, were counter-productive and damaging. The Major proposition – 'Devonwall'- was a step away from over-centralisation but proved to be a dysfunctional compromise. 'Devonwall failed, thereby proving the Cornish case; the failure of the EU Structural Funds Objective 5b programme, which was

applied to a construct of Cornwall, Devon and West Somerset, failed. The GOSW 'Far West' Branch would go on to very successfully understand the difference between Cornwall and Devon, and would administer the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Objective 1 Programme with flair, efficiency and widely acclaimed success.

**28.** In 1996 a report by Dr Judy Payne of the Plymouth Business School led to the disaggregation for statistical (and therefore public spending) purposes of Cornwall from Devon. She detected disparities arising in effective application of policy and public spending as the result of this centrally enforced 'marriage' which were intensifying deprivation in Cornwall whilst supplying more than was needed in Devon.

**29.** Disaggregation was to be followed by a successful popular campaign to achieve designation for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a NUTS2 Region – a pre-requisite to them being able to jointly apply via the Government for EU Structural Funds Objective 1 status. The closure of South Crofty tin-mine, and the newly emerging collective will to positively address the parlous state of the Cornish economy and Cornish community life and infrastructure combined, in 1997, to attract the attention of the incoming Labour Government. This was achieved through an inspired campaign by Cornish Solidarity which managed to ignite popular support for a series of actions that exuded serious intent combined with an attractively positive and modern cultural message – Kneehigh met the Stannary!

**30.** At this time, there was a very strong undercurrent of cultural assertion and of embarking as a community on the long path to a special, semi-autonomous 'settlement' or 'accommodation' that would set a positive and dynamic seal upon Cornwall's future. This attractive and outwardly directed and well-messaged campaign placed the Cornish case on the table. Little by little, with successes in economic regeneration, higher education, creativity, heritage designation, human rights and more widespread acknowledgement of the justice of their case, the Cornish community has won respect, converts and friends for its long-term campaign for self-realisation. At last it is becoming possible to lay to rest old and tired stereotypes and prejudices and to win equality in Britain, Europe and in the World. This conviction, together with the clear economic results derived from empowering Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a region, sustain the Cornish case. It will not go away as long as there are people inhabiting the Cornish peninsula, because the environment shapes the culture, and the culture invokes the conviction that semi-autonomy is the only lasting road to successful citizenship and to making a fruitful and fulfilling contribution to British life and prosperity.

**31.** It is incredible that the Government failed to link its drive towards regional devolution to the vivacity and identity of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It might have perceived that, if it wished to see rekindled regional dynamism as a means to stimulate provincial economic performance and, thereby, to relieve pressure on the rapidly over-heating South East, then investing in regions that have pride, identity, a spirit of self-help and a strong sense of cohesion, like Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, would be to provide a beacon. In 2000, with Objective 1 'in the bag' the (then) Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) launched its regionalisation project.

**32.** During the 1997 election, which had been county council as well as parliamentary, the very clear political mandate emanated from the electorate of Cornwall – with very little, if any, dissent – that Cornwall should be a region equipped with its own development agency – the Cornish Regional Development Agency!

**33.** Only a very small band of zealots espoused Cornwall's induction into a much larger (and previously discredited) 'south west' regional construct, but they asserted a significant political force during the early days of the new Council. Motions and resolutions were unhappily manipulated at 'county' Hall and, much against the will of the majority, in an example of semi-covert political horse-trading, Cornwall found itself unwillingly part of a 'partnership' (the new word!) set up to form a south west 'assembly'

and RDA. This laid the foundations for probably the most bitter and destructive division in the Cornish body-politic since the War of Five Nations (Civil War) in the 17th century.

**34.** The argument pitched two views of Cornwall against each other. The first, those of the indigenous community which has survived for thousands of years on the understanding that Cornwall is both itself and itself only, and is 'different' – that difference being described in constitutional – economic – cultural - religious terms at different times, and fuelling various forms of conflict, from military to legal and liturgical, in each of the past six centuries.

**35.** Against the indigenous perspective was now firmly pitched the external view, propagated by people rhetorically burdened with illiberal concepts such as 'balkanisation', over-egging the impact of Cornish nationalism by linking it to neo-nazism rather than to the fine liberal principle of preserving and enriching cultural diversity that characterises what might be described as 'celtic' nationalism within the UK and the British Isles. Such assertions were founded on ignorance, either genuine or assumed, and emanated from motives that are difficult to fathom. Emanate they did, and have led to Cornwall being increasingly disabled as perceptions of Cornwall within the government have become more and more confused and detached.

During the War of the Five Nations, when Cornwall assembled a very successful army to fight for the Royalist cause, in the hope that it would win a constitutional settlement that would include Cornwall in broader constructs but irrevocably seal Cornwall's 'difference' as a 'nation', Parliamentary prejudices fed by a hostile and prolonged propaganda campaign became deeply embedded in the 'national' psyche. Some people still claim to perceive traces of the stereotypes and behaviour patterns lambasted and lampooned so long ago, which underpin less durable, more positive impressions developed when somebody wanted something from Cornwall, such as the prowess of Cornish engineers during the nineteenth century.

**36.** Historical profiles of Cornwall and the Cornish have shifted from time to time, especially as economic demands outside Cornwall for Cornish products – wool in the Tudor period, tin and copper in the 18th and 19th centuries, engineering and skilled labour during the late 19th century – have ebbed and flowed.

**37.** The twentieth century was characterised by two key phenomena that have affected external perceptions of Cornwall - economic failure and population change

**38.** Economic failure – following the collapse of Cornish banking and the consequent loss of investment in new mining ventures, coupled with an inability to meet competitive pressures from overseas suppliers of tin and copper, the Cornish economy caved in. It has struggled to re-develop, and has spent much time and effort propelling Cornwall into the forefront of the British tourism trade. It is an international destination, highly praised and a significant earner. It does not invest to any great extent in skills and presents few if any challenges of the sort that Cornish people tend to relish, such as engineering and design, organisation and market-making.



# A SIGNIFICANT FLUCTUATION IN POPULATION

**39.** Despite much opining to the contrary, the farming and fishing industries have held their own despite significant reductions in labour and capacity, and remain fundamental planks of Cornish productivity. Indeed, farming and food processing is of equivalent value (and growing) to tourism in the modern Cornish economy. New world conditions offer significant opportunities to develop farming, both for food and fuel, and to further develop associated processing activities<sup>5</sup>. The new Newquay airport, coupled with a more imaginative approach to retaining and developing Cornish ports (eg Hayle, Truro, Par, Fowey, Padstow, Penzance) could further stimulate sustainable growth, especially if related to the broadband infrastructure which will be upgraded during the Convergence Programme, and to knowledge transfer opportunities from the Universities at Penryn and Falmouth.

**40.** By the 1930s Cornwall's population was in danger of falling to about 300,000. Post-war planning strategies highlighted population growth as a key objective. Unfortunately, the strategies have been more than successful, as post-war developments in public health care and personal mobility have made Cornwall an attractive proposition for many more people than the social or economic infrastructure or environment can cope with in a sustainable way. Big issues need

to be faced, and very serious discussions about future economic and social strategies need to be undertaken between Government and Cornwall. Climate change is a major propellant of this dialogue, with the Isles of Scilly critically threatened, and much of the economic infrastructure at risk due to increases in sea level, changes in growing seasons, viable crops and the capacity of the place to accommodate continuing population growth.

**41.** The population growth has been entirely generated by migration. In its earliest, Edwardian manifestation, it was fostered mainly by wealthy, self-sufficient people. Through the 1960s (after Harold Wilson's Government unleashed 'overspill' for a short period) with connectivity, public services and property speculation all 'improving', the trend has grown, attracting people seeking a safe environment to bring up children or to retire, employment (mostly in the public sector and services) and a 'quality of life'. The impact has been that Cornwall, starting from the base of being the first place to experience collapse of a major industry of the industrial revolution, has seen deprivation and relative poverty increase, economic performance decline, the environment become, in some parts, 'at risk', until EU Structural Funds intervention was necessary to arrest fundamental economic failure.

**42.** The underlying contracting trend of the Cornish population has continued, with many young people leaving in a constant stream in search of opportunity and fulfilment. For many of this group, the incentive has been less a matter of not wishing to remain in Cornwall, or even of not being able to find opportunities to develop, but rather the compelling conviction of their parents and grandparents that 'there's nothing left for we!'

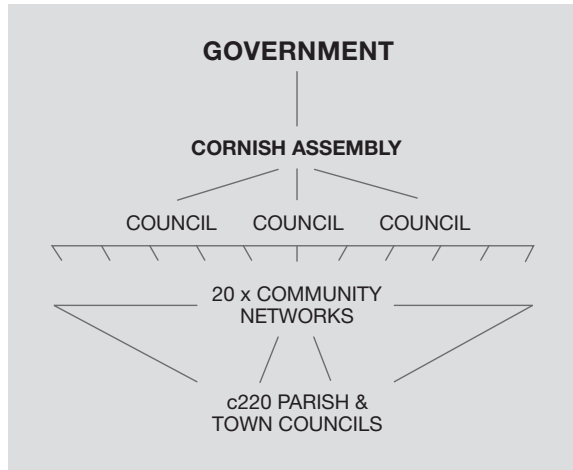
**43.** In turn, this has left the opportunities which have arisen for the new migrants to take up. By and large, this has not been such a painful process because the very distinctive physical character of Cornwall dictates to a large extent how things can be done and where. The planning system, introduced in 1947, has controlled some of the worst excesses of zeal, so that the coastline remains relatively unspoilt, and our town centres retain a good degree of their inherited appearance and scale. Despite the best efforts of developers and planners we have not seen a dominant urban centre emerge – not even Truro, where the population remains stubbornly modest, whilst much of the town's perceived economic power derives from the imposed presence of major public sector facilities – Cornwall 'county' Council, Treliiske Hospital and Carrick district council. The district council has disappeared, and the new

Council will disperse its activities, like the Health Service, taking advantage of new technologies and meeting responsibilities to reduce travel and carbon emissions. The effect upon Truro could well be contrary to that envisaged by regional planners, who wish to see it increase in population and economic clout!

**44.** It would be complacent to suggest that the new migrants have not altered the culture and human environment of Cornwall. However, it would be an overstatement to say that the 'difference' of Cornwall has been eroded or destroyed by them. Indeed, the nature of Cornwall challenges the individual, and if migrants are to flourish then they need to adapt and to learn. Those who do not bend like Cornish reeds before the gale find themselves eager to move on ere long! Population turnover is very high, whilst the number of Cornish returners is growing. In very recent times, with the new university and new job opportunities deriving from the structural investments of Objective 1, we are seeing a small but significant alteration in population structure and cultural identity as more young people choose to stay than go.

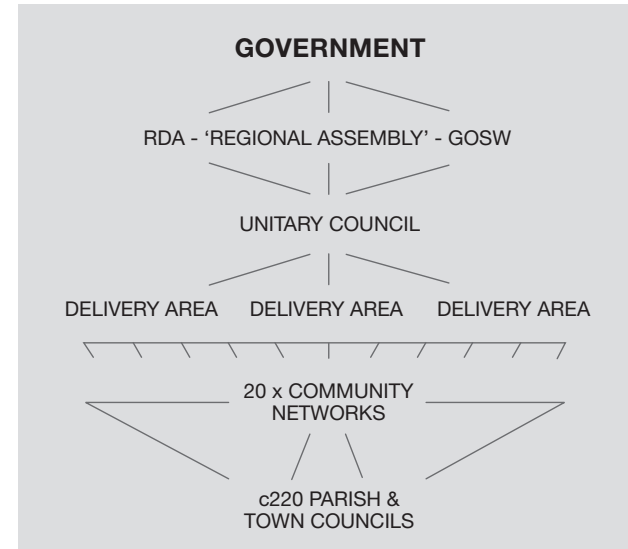
<sup>5</sup> This renewed demand for land-based production raises major questions about the demand for land generated by planned in-migration which has been sustained since the 1950s. The Cornish population has grown by about 70% since the end of World War 2. This population is critically reliant upon imported food and commodities. It might be argued that infrastructure needed to stimulate Cornish trade (ports in particular) competes for funding with infrastructure needed to service an unsustainably large population. The choices ahead, which need to be made soon to become effective during the next generation, are profound and difficult. Dialogue at a senior strategic level between Cornwall and the Centre is essential if such decisions are to be made.

## A REFINED NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



**45.** This latter trend is positively affecting the strength of Cornish identity, increasing demand for a Cornish orientation of the curriculum at all levels of education, encouraging increasing numbers of children and young people to self-identify as Cornish, investing in activities, events, symbols and creative outputs that are particularly and recognisably Cornish. Nowhere is this more the case than in the very rapid spread of interest in, facility with and demand for the Cornish language. The Government finds itself in a tricky position in relation to Cornwall, and it is this which should offer us hope that the Cornish Assembly can be achieved, and also represents some challenges for both Cornwall and the Government (of whatever complexion) in facing the future.

**46.** When the dust settles and the new unitary authority is clearly 'in business', with elections held and new structural arrangements bedding in, we will come to see that those structures provide Cornwall with the essential structural framework which, when the time comes, we will be able to adapt so that Cornwall's degree of autonomous self-rule can be extended and developed.



**47.** As Cornwall settles down to its new local governance structure it feels as if we have taken a significant step along a bigger journey. That journey is towards achieving a quality and standard of governance with enhanced autonomy whilst securing a greater voice and role for Cornwall in the unified structures of the UK at a level which challenges Cornish creativity and tenacity. In a sense it would fulfil Cornwall's sense of its own destiny, and in another sense, it would open up to a natural British region the challenge to develop methodologies and good practice which will meet the needs of a society that takes climate change seriously, is alert to the emerging need to adjust to diminishing oil supplies, and which is making the most potent use of new technologies to enhance life, prosperity and the global environment – the epitome of 'Think Global, Act Local'!

**48.** In the new structure the Unitary Council has 123 members, the Delivery Area Boards will be management-led, the Community Networks will be a member-driven interface between Parishes and the Unitary Council. Parishes will retain their local community context and functions, augmented and extended by arrangement with the Unitary as things develop.

**49.** It is not difficult to see, or to achieve when the time comes, a set of changes which would enable the Assembly to be developed without any great change in structure. A slimmed Council should become the Assembly, assuming a higher role; the Delivery Areas would be democratised to become the delivery-driven local government of Cornwall, working with the Parishes to deliver services.

## ISLES OF SCILLY

**50.** The Unitary Authority = about 40 members; 3 elected unitary councils = 30 members each, accountable to the 'over-arching' assembly. In all there would be 130 elected seats (+ Parish Councils). The Assembly would interface directly with Government via specified, departmental contacts. It could be scrutinised by a bespoke Parliamentary committee including the 6 Cornish MPs.

**51.** Arrangements involving community networks and parish councils would remain similar to those being established. Unitary Council members would be drawn from the divisions currently embraced by the 3 Delivery Areas. Each Community Network Area could furnish two members to the Assembly. Such arrangements would minimise electoral and structural changes necessary to implement the Assembly. The Assembly would not be a 'local authority'. It would function in a higher, more executive role, managing funds, establishing and monitoring policy, evolving strategy, advocating at key centres, promoting economic development and developing potential new markets. This proposal is not a covert means of reinstating a two-tier local government structure, but is rather a way of raising governance to a more meaningful level and greatly enhancing productivity and challenge.

**52.** With the exception of undertaking an electoral review to create Assembly 'constituencies' and delivery council wards, the degree of organisational change could be kept minimal, because the structures and budgets would have been integrated and organised during the process of incremental development.

**53.** The challenge for Cornwall lies in determining what it wants its Assembly to do, and to then set about persuading the Government to enable it to undertake the tasks. This could be done as one major gathering of powers, functions and roles, or collected incrementally according to priority, opportunity and evolving capacity. It is possible that the Government might consider entering into an agreement based upon a coordinated and agreed development plan that resulted within a period – say 10 years – in a reformed, comprehensive and cost-effective governance structure for all the public service, strategy and policy considerations for Cornwall.

**54.** The Isles of Scilly could be a partner in this process (and would be welcome), retaining its integrity as a distinct constitutional entity, but gaining significant benefits from joint management, joint working and joint purchasing. Certainly, in terms of climate change, service support, infrastructure and economic development, the relationship between Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has plenty of scope to mature. This it should do, if only to evolve a proper and mutually responsive approach to settling how the mainland and islands interact and work in partnership within the flux of a constantly changing external, global environment.

**55.** Equally, Cornwall may enjoy the opportunity to develop productive and innovative international partnerships with areas affected by Cornish heritage – for instance, California, Mexico, Michigan or Colorado, South Australia or South Africa. These might be initiated on the basis of shared heritage and mature, if opportunity and encouragement emerges, into evolving new economic ties and developing mutually beneficial markets and exchanges.

**56.** At the heart of such exciting concepts lies the need to forge a strong, interactive and creative relationship between the institutions of governance in Cornwall and the rapidly developing Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) and University College, Falmouth. Both have the potential to share knowledge and intellectual assets with Cornish industry, in all its diversity, and to evolve new ways of fostering and developing traditional and historic links. Therefore, one of the earliest and most important institutional developments to focus upon is to bring together the universities and Cornwall Council and to begin to evolve projects and thinking that can lead to productive and innovative outcomes.



## THE FUTURE OF HEALTH SERVICES IN CORNWALL

**57.** Following this, and with a complex and patient process of consultation and knowledge-sharing undertaken, the initial challenge will be to integrate health services and institutions in Cornwall into the governance structure. The Department of Health is looking at how it can devolve responsibility in order to enhance performance and to tailor services locally, along with reforming local accountabilities. The present 'strategic health authorities' are not working, certainly as far as Cornwall is concerned. The present infrastructure is elderly and very poorly located to meet the needs of the modern population, making best use of new technologies and ensuring that standards of service are locally available.

**58.** Cornwall has been in 'dialogue' (a polite way of putting it!) with the Government about its health services for the past decade, and has mounted a number of effective and increasingly professional campaigns. Ministers, from Frank Dobson onwards, have been challenged, and have altered their position on a number of occasions to ensure that Cornish needs are met. Cottage Hospitals were saved. St Michaels Hospital and West Cornwall Hospital remain open. The whole upper echelon of the professional health community (ie: consultants) have registered opposition to the removal of critical acute services from Treliske. Cornwall might be described as being in revolt over health services.

**59.** Underlying these headline issues is the perception, well researched and publicised by the Healthwatch Group, that Treliske is badly sited and causes the PCT to have to engage with three acute health providers (Derriford, Devon & Exeter and Treliske RCHT) to provide cover for all parts of Cornwall. This is expensive in terms of duplication and also places patients and families under pressure because of distances that have to be travelled. Barnstaple is not overly accessible from say, Boscastle!

**60.** It also means that resources cannot be focused upon meeting higher level needs which then have to be purchased from further afield. The service is clumsy and places many Cornish citizens in an inequable situation in comparison with people living in most other parts of the Country. It is also asserted by Healthwatch, with strong corroborative evidence, that the infrastructural inadequacies cause a chronic under-funding of the NHS in Cornwall (HW compare Cornwall with Dumfries & Galloway), and that the ensuing 'debt' causes ongoing instability, constrained development and pressure to 'centralise' critical services out of Cornwall.

**61.** This is a classic case of centrally derived policies failing to adequately provide fairly apportioned services to a peripheral region, causing inequity and poor performance. Treliske Hospital is now under intense pressure, is constrained in terms of future development, and will need to address the structural deficiencies of its key buildings before too much longer. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly urgently need to consider their own conjoined strategic needs and to work with the Government to develop resources that can re-provide infrastructure on a basis compliant with Cornish geography, the future needs of a place compelled by climate change and oil depletion to be more (not less) self-sufficient, and to govern public services to the highest standard.

**62.** This is a moment when, with confidence and a track record of being able to manage change well, Cornwall may engage with the Government to persuade it that its interest in devolving health service governance to 'sub-regions' could and should start with Cornwall. There is a clear demand for a much greater degree of accountability and a more focused use of resources to ensure that services are both high quality and accessible. There is nothing to stop Cornwall from advancing the view that the Unitary Authority could have its legal remit extended to embody a new Sub-Regional Health Authority. This would re-introduce a democratic element into the governance which would go a long way towards satisfying all those who feel that accountability in the NHS is a very complex and unsatisfactory affair in urgent need of reform.

**63.** The reforms include refocusing the structural strategy for health provision for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. There is a body of research, with strong popular support (cf 30,000 march at Hayle 2006), that advances the view that, because the infrastructure is insufficient to enable Cornwall to meet all its health provision requirements, the service is institutionally under-funded. There is a long-term need to re-position key facilities so that Cornwall has two district general hospitals operated by the same Trust, and that Treliske retunes its function to provide high level acute interventions and develops its training and qualification remit via Peninsula Medical School.

**64.** It makes no sense either in delivery terms or in cost-effectiveness for a Primary Care Trust to be commissioning acute care from three separate providers (RCHT, Derriford and Devon & Exeter), and finding itself in a position where it is increasingly unable to meet higher level needs within the area of its operation. One of the key truisms of governance is that, where it is undertaken in a peripheral region, it needs to over-provide and to tailor provision to achieve equality and performance and to respond positively to the geography of that region. Hence, the Healthwatch analysis should not be judged in relation to standard assumptions, but must be evaluated in relation to the geography of Cornwall. It is the particularity afforded by peripherality as well as by the distinctive environment giving rise to a readily identifiable and unique culture which drives the Cornish case for devolution to an Assembly.

**65.** The benefits in terms of efficiency and delivery will undoubtedly underpin the kind of social sustainability, together with a high degree of self-sufficiency that most observers agree will be what is required to ensure social standards as we enter into serious management of the impacts of climate change and reducing oil supplies.

**66.** A similar argument can be mounted in relation to the Police. The current arrangements for populating the Police Authority are unsatisfactory, especially when it is remembered that an increasing portion of the cost of policing is derived from the Council Tax. Finding an elegant means of promoting local accountability, whilst moving inexorably towards a 'national' police force, is a challenge which Cornwall could easily offer to assist in addressing. Again, the Unitary Authority could also embody the Police Authority.

**67.** It would be necessary to develop a plan with the Government for downloading regional powers and functions.

**68.** A Cornish Development Company would provide an excellent vehicle to finally rationalise economic development and to take on strategic functions and programme delivery. Indeed, with some expansion it could take these functions on today. The template for such devolution is already set out in the sub-national review, and this element of development should run concurrently with the forging of the institutional partnership between authorities and universities – so, early on.

**69.** So too, could the Assembly develop scrutiny and accountability mechanisms to regionally oversee utility contracts, transport franchises, Local Area Agreements and Service Level Agreements with Government Agencies (eg Highways; Boundary Commission).

## BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

**70.** Cornish governance has grown used to a deferential mode of operation, increasingly accepting templates and pro forma methodologies for implementing policy handed down from external agencies; acquiescing in an hierarchical assumption about the structure of Government that perceives regions and local government areas as sub-divisions of the Centre, rather than as semi-autonomous, vibrant and challenging

parts of a dynamic geo-team, bonded by values, respectful of diversities, united in common pursuit of principles and policy objectives which are less Government policy than commonly held principles and objectives towards which we all move in our own ways, open to challenge, receptive to innovation and acting in a spirit of self-assertion tempered by a strong sense of contributing to the greater whole.



**71.** The deference and the concession to hierarchical authority present obstacles of perception for those who are willing to be complacent and to perpetuate the 'quiet life'. They do not, however, reflect the agitation that constantly beats in parallel with the heart of the Cornish people. The Unitary Authority claims that it is acting in the interests of communities so harmonious, so bonded in common purpose that Cornwall, according to the hyperbole of, say, the Sustainable Communities strategy 2009, is so close to Nirvana as to warrant getting off the bus and walking the rest of the way.

**72.** It is a dangerous illusion easily succumbed to by bureaucrats and political institutions that efficiency in supplying the daily round of services, good husbandry of public resources and finding navigable ways to find grants to undertake 'projects' is sufficient to win the willing support of the communities they represent. However, a region such as Cornwall has a number of different dimensions and perspectives to its existence, all of which, from time to time, need managing and motivating – these range from fostering good environments to supporting spiritual enquiry to building links with places around the World which are proud of their links to Cornwall and wish to sustain and develop them – Pachuca in Mexico comes to mind, and the fact that there are as many as 5 million people of Cornish descent in the USA.

**73.** So too, Cornwall has links and relationships with other European regions. It is to be applauded that, recently, Cornwall Council finally cemented its protocol with Finisterre. It is equally lamentable that the InterCeltic Watersports Festival was poorly funded when it came to Cornwall. It took an instruction from the Government to make the Council wake up to its responsibilities to the Cornish language. Arts funding has resulted in the evolution of a vibrant 'Creative Industries' sector worth over £250m per year. Cornish organisations and practitioners, although they define much of what constitutes Cornwall's identity and 'difference' cannot obtain funding because Cornish culture is not within the 'remit' of the public funding strategy – what is it that lies at the heart of Cornwall Council that leaves it espousing Cornwall's 'distinctive' identity and then starving of cash and recognition those things and those people who make up that identity?

**74.** The key barrier to achieving the Cornish Assembly is Cornwall itself – if it cannot openly and freely form a cohesive and open society, and if it will not equably support cultural development for Cornish as well as other activities and forms, if it will not genuinely and enthusiastically celebrate Cornwall and assist its evolution, if it continues to focus upon policies that may be interpreted as

fostering assimilation into 'mainstream', homogenous social, cultural and historical narratives – if it dilutes rather than spices – then Cornwall's case for a form of governance properly suited to both its geographical situation and to its deeply felt and extensively and robustly argued case for devolution will falter. Self belief, individually and collectively, is everything in the game of winning deep change.

## CONSENSUS

**75.** As stated elsewhere, what persuades Governments more than anything else is that an objective, no matter how radical or singular, is credible only if backed by a strong, well-evidenced consensus of support. The Cornish Constitutional Convention has carefully brokered a strong degree of consensus around the general concept of a Cornish Assembly. During the negotiations and consultations prior to bidding for the unitary authority, it played an influential role in ensuring that the Government received the clear message that the new Council is 'a step along the way'. Amongst other things the Convention brought together a consultative meeting of the Principals of all key public services in Cornwall in health, further and higher education, Police and local government and achieved a general affirmation that the goal is worth aiming for and, with the right external conditions, is achievable and would repay the investment through establishing positive working and development environments.

**76.** There is much to do. In Cornwall there is a general consensus across significant portions of the political community that an Assembly is an achievable ambition. In the private sector there remains scepticism, and many organisations, particularly those in the voluntary sector, feel that essential linkages with wider networks and parent-organisations might be at risk.

**77.** The Convention has constantly maintained a clear and incisive Parliamentary presence in both Houses. This is due in great part to the leadership and selfless support of Andrew George MP. It is important in any future campaign that there is a strong agreement amongst Cornish MPs and Peers around a single definition and timetable. Parliament is where the case will be won or lost and their commitment and persuasion will be fundamental.

## CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

**78.** There is a risk that a change of Government might jeopardise the campaign. To counter this there is a general consensus that, in terms of the economy, climate change, fuel and energy, regulation, communication and safety that the increasingly global nature of these activities dictates a consensus amongst key political players in the central ground.

**79.** It is also true that all main Parliamentary Parties acknowledge the need to inject renewed dynamism into UK provincial economies in order to stimulate productivity and to relieve pressure on the south East. The Cornish case is attractive for two reasons – firstly, because it seeks to build upon significant regeneration success as a region achieved with Objective 1 and, hopefully, Convergence. Secondly, it offers a well-conceived, deliverable non-metropolitan option with

which to balance the generally accepted desirability of evolving 'City Regions'. This latter issue is important because, in moving towards 'city regions' the Government is faced with the question: 'What will you do in places not dominated by a metropolitan centre?' The Cornish Assembly holds a key to the answer to that challenge.

**80.** There is always a risk of radical shifts in policy, as much when Prime Ministers or Chancellors change within existing Governments, as when Governments themselves change. It is vitally important that the campaign continues to brief and to lobby Ministers and Shadows, as well as back-bench opinion, and to ensure that Peers are also informed. It is always very important to set the tone of the campaign and to be consistent. Cheerfulness and indefatigability are also important attributes of the campaign.

public both in and outside Cornwall. It has also treated the demise of the 'Prescott Initiative' as a liberation, not a failure!

**82.** However, the economic climate has changed. Cornwall's case must now rest upon the factors that can demonstrate that devolution will stimulate investment, productivity, innovation and wealth creation. In this it has had the infinite luck to have developed structural assets (universities, broadband connectivity, modern markets for modern activities – eg software development, environmental engineering) which, it is widely perceived, will be at the forefront of recovery strategies.

**83.** Also, Cornwall is a catalyst for creative and environmental creativity, and has a global reputation in some disciplines. These are assets to build on, and to bolster traditional industries associated with food production such as farming, china clay and fishing. China clay has much potential to develop value-adding satellite activity around it to lessen costs

and maximise value. The Cornish fishing fleet is now one of the largest and most efficient in Europe, whilst Cornish farmers are in the vanguard of efficient environmentally-friendly methods.

**84.** The foundations of the case for a Cornish Assembly must be that devolution will empower economic development and spearhead recovery by providing efficient, responsive governance and public sector financial management. There is research to be done in this area but the resources exist to do it if the new Cornwall Council gets behind the objective and utilises its capacity to build the case.

## RECESSION AND GLOBAL CONDITIONS

**81.** Clearly, economic conditions are important in affecting the environment and the rationale around important questions of policy. It is doubtful if the devolution project would have proceeded with the vigour that it did if economic conditions were not positive, and if an economic case was not made by recipients of devolution. It is equally clear that since devolution, whether it be to Scotland, Wales, London or Northern Ireland, it has stimulated significant change and socio-economic progress. Only where the

attempt was made to impose regions as a restructuring of centralised government, as in England, did it fail. Only Cornwall's has case stood out, because it has been tenaciously communicated and has been constantly injected into the heart of Parliamentary debate, and because it not only deploys a case for good governance of a peripheral region, but it is also founded upon an historical and cultural narrative that clearly defines Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a well-defined regional entity in the perceptions of the general



## CONCLUSION

**85.** There is everything to gain from continuing the 'change agenda' in Cornwall by setting the objective of forming the Cornish Assembly. It is gain for the UK Government, in terms of more efficient public service delivery and much-improved economic performance. Reputationally, the central government stands to gain much prestige from being seen to be taking an enlightened and open approach to ensuring good governance in a difficult, peripheral region. The empowerment of Cornwall would create self-belief and purpose, which would inspire and ignite creativity and skills, leading to Cornwall regaining her

position as a wealth generator, innovator and trading catalyst. The question is simple: 'Do we dare? And, if we do dare, then can we come together to achieve it? And, if we can come together in Cornwall, then can Westminster and Whitehall rise to the challenge of discarding old, deeply embedded perceptions and looking afresh at how to promote cohesion and productivity through empowering 'difference' and releasing the energy of a potently creative community?