



Cornish
Constitutional
Convention
SENEHD KERNOW

Blair Thompson
Chair, Cornwall Strategic Partnership
Cornwall Council
Treyew Road
TRURO
Kernow

10th May 2008.

Dear Blair,

I am writing in response to the invitation to advise the process of forming the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

I am struck by a number of assumptions which rather undermine the concept of sustainability. For instance, part of the visionary statement suggests that *'we look to the rest of the World to learn, share and teach, a place where we welcome people and new ideas with open arms'*. Well yes! But surely, Cornwall is a place which wishes to play a full and vibrant part in the affairs of the World, to encourage its citizens to perceive themselves as being of this place, but also 'citizens of the world'. Elsewhere, it is aspirationally stated that we will churn out leaders, assume (*'once again'!*) leadership in innovation, technology and discovery. So, the Cornish relationship with the World will be a two-way affair, absorbing and contributing.

Equally, in global terms, the strategy completely fails to acknowledge the existence of, or our responsibilities to, the Cornish diaspora – a growing global community of people for whom Cornwall plays a special part in referencing its identity and culture. Very many Cornish people sustain family networks across continents and from one hemisphere to the other. Radio Cornwall's most successful and widely heard programming is via its web-based **'Cornwall Connected'**. The Cornish presence on the Web is more than substantial, especially in comparison to other regions of similar size. This scale is enriched by the complexity and depth of engagement evidenced on the Web.

The only time, in the visionary section, that the notion of Cornwall playing a role in the World is when we identify it as a market place. In doing so it is important to encourage understanding that markets are not simply places where one goes to boldly sell what has not been produced before. They are places and communities which develop a relationship at many levels with other places and communities. Trade is an outcome of relationships, not the other way about! The important element in all this is to focus upon relationships – because, out of good relationships with other places and communities emerge opportunities for business, cultural exchange, mutual support, broadening understanding and influencing affairs on wider planes.

I must say that I spent some time in an eminently boring meeting yesterday studying the vision, aims and objectives of Cornwall Council, which emblazon every office and meeting room. I ask myself what is so wrong with them that we have to change them. In particular, I note the aim of **'Promoting Cornwall to the World'**. This is something we have done since the days when Hayle was the trading

port that welcomed Herodotus, and early Christian saints, such as the tin-smelting, boozing and yarn-spinning St Piran, made their way to Cornwall as a focal point (a spiritual trading station!) for delivering the key cultural and spiritual messages which have underpinned European civilisation for nearly 2000 years! Cornwall was, and remains an intrinsic part of networks and relationships which transcend state boundaries and even continents. We must not lose sight of this. We should allow it to influence and shape our administration, our advocacy (particularly within the UK), and our perceptions. It is an intrinsically Cornish habit, and we should ensure that we embrace within our contemporary enabling strategies the means to be able to fulfil our potential in the affairs of the World.¹

I'm not sure that '*joined up and connected*' (which seems rather electrical to me!), '*exemplary transport systems and digital connectivity*' or even '*exchanging information and ideas*' quite get to the nub of the cultural dimensions of world citizenship in the Cornish context. The '*collective vision*' certainly omits any sense of looking outward, of bonding the global Cornish community, of dedicating endeavour to making the World a place in harmony – and yet, we are the creators of Shelterbox; we have successfully rekindled our minority language; we have a World Heritage Site based upon our engineering and mining leadership; we have a world-wide community; we entice millions of people to come here each year from all over the World; we are a living place and culture on the Web; we are leading research and action in relation to climate change; we've established a university in a State which is reducing its number of universities, on a model which respects and nurtures post-industrial settlement patterns and lifestyles; we are world class engineers and thinkers, and we have a rich, growing indigenous culture founded in an ethnicity which is open and inclusive – where is the celebration Blair?

The trouble is that this whole exercise gives a very strong impression of dancing tentatively, nay coyly, around the clasped handbag of identity and culture, unwilling to signal whose bag it is or what lies inside, or which brave disco-queen will dare to pick it up and open it. ***Kernow bys Vykken*** – those three words are the vision statement for the collective future of Cornwall. The overriding sense which steams off the SCS to me is one of

DENIAL – DENIAL – **DENIAL!**

The most important things to say about Cornwall are that it is where it is, it is surrounded by sea which connects it to the world and makes the wind blow from three directions at once, and it shapes all those who live here, no matter for how short a time, to be inevitably Cornish – the environment moulds people to it so that they can survive and prosper. If you wish to achieve the fine (if bland) aspirations of the SCS then it is vital to acknowledge the interplay between people and environment – it is that interplay which lies at the root of culture, and, in Cornwall, the shape, location, elements and currents, rock and soil, rain and wind, seasons and shadows – which make all those who survive

¹ It may have escaped your notice, but the last Secretary of the European Commission was David Williamson, a Cornishman. We also just opened the Leach Pottery, at the ceremonies for which we heard leading Japanese artists and officials call for a renewed zen bridge of understanding and exchange between Kernow and Japan – 'Bring it on!' (as they say in Scotland these days!).

and prosper here bonded into an ethnic community which, for the sake of elegance and poetic simplicity we should describe as

CORNISH.

In those terms I think it is very limiting and lacking in confidence to suggest that we, the Cornish, in an age of communication and information, when our culture and its expressions (art and creativity) stand amongst the best in the World², should be saying we will measure our 'success' by achieving 'the best quality of life in the UK'! It is so comparative, and takes away from the real challenge, which is to establish a way of life that sustains, inspires and stimulates people and communities and which is compared by others to their own. If you wish to be distinctive, then you set the benchmarks, others follow. Your draft document is so unambitious!

The assertive statement about 'quality of life' raises serious questions of a philosophical nature about what we mean by quality. Most people look at Cornwall, for one reason or another, and perceive that we have a rich quality of life. In the collective vision (which you assert has been '*agreed by Cornwall*' – did I miss the referendum?!), the word 'beautiful' asks similar, profound questions. These questions are of profound importance at a moment in global life when we are collectively considering the challenges of climate change and oil depletion. For environmentalists, the concept of carrying packaged commodities home in the boot of a finely-engineered, carbon-emitting, resource-consuming 4x4 in a plastic bag to a centrally-heated, off-the-shelf brick-built estate house precisely one metre distant from neighbours either side, with manicured gravel and plastic pots populated with Bonsai shrubs, is Hell! And yet, for a consumer this is quality – an expression of prosperity; a set of physical circumstances which give rise to feelings of harmony and happiness. But then we find a conflict between the consumer and the environmentalist, which is all too often played out within the individual consciousness, and which certainly lies at the heart of our contemporary social discourse. This internal discourse asks serious questions about what we mean by quality and beauty.

In asking what we mean by 'quality' it is interesting to consider whether some of the aspirations set out in the Strategy would contribute to what people think of as a 'quality of life'. For instance, being '*open to new markets for our cutting edge services and products*' infers an approach to business which is about the sort of 'hustle and bustle' being complained about by people in the 'Sarf East'³. Being '*joined up and connected*' means that one's life can be overwhelmed with communication to the exclusion of contemplation and tranquillity. Contributing to community and economic success,

² listen to Mick Paynter's Kernow bys Vykken, or Let's Party like its 1399 by Bagas Degol; or Jim Carey's Bombrassa; see Sam Lanyon's installations; watch Kneehigh in Soweto; celebrate Pauline Sheppard's translation of The Ordinalia, directed by the late Dominic Knutton, at the Pleyn an Gwarry at St Just; read the work of Nick Darke, Mercedes Kemp, Simon Parker, Pol Hodge, Paul Farmer, Steve Hall, Carl Grose; touch the work of David Kemp – and so on; do so because the rest of the world does!

³ 'Broadcasting House', BBC Radio 4 – Sunday 11th May.

sustaining local businesses, volunteering, participating and being a good citizen are all very worthy – but, making the most of the one life we have to do things which make it feel fulfilled and well spent also means taking time to look at things, to think, to laugh and to otherwise feel, to interact with people, other beings and things in ways, and at times, which we choose. Living in a designed built environment which *'encourages us to interact with our neighbours and community'* suggests that the individual and individual expression and needs are to be frowned upon, designed out! This latter thought leaves me full of dread – it sounds like the sort of thinking which went on it post-revolutionary Moscow (see Dr Zhivago: Pasternak). What chance for Gaudi (Barcelona), or for Peter Lanyon (see Porthleven at Tate, St Ives).

It is absolutely right to communicate, to develop markets and products to sell in them, and to be good citizens and to apply principles of excellent design to everything we do. It is also right that we should offer through our strategies the opportunity to citizens to live as hermits if they wish, to be silent in contemplation, to live with what is rather than to manipulate elements in a designed way – to reserve the right to make choices which favour individuality at times when that is right. What the Sustainable Communities Strategy needs to strive for is to offer an environment to citizens wherein they can achieve a positive balance between the competing demands of individuality and social responsibility.

What worries me about the visionary statements is that they represent an inferred superficiality in our appreciation of what life is for the individual to whom it is the most precious asset. It is crass in the extreme to speak of having places in which to 'practise spirituality' – it is far more important to understand that the material and pastoral, the social and individual animal, are components of consciousness which each need to find space and expression, each need to be taken into account. Spirituality is not something which we practice in a place at appointed times, it is a fundamental aspect of being alive, of being conscious, and of having the unenviable challenge of needing to manage successfully a sub-conscious dimension of mental and emotional activity.

How can we offer free conditions in which such a debate can play out, in which people, individually and collectively, can search for and achieve balance? It is all very well to speak of 'quality' or 'beauty', but can a strategy which is required to provide the handbook for informing judgements about public expenditure in areas where choices about subjective values (such as quality, beauty, happiness) are paramount on a case-by-case basis allow itself to lay out such an unquantifiable and aspirational vision.

Turning to beauty, I recall perhaps the greatest speech I have ever heard delivered by a living person - Carl Skewes bounded Reskejeage Quarry, thus, under extant Stannary Law, preventing NIREX, a government agency charged with finding sites to dump nuclear waste, from exploring the mine-workings within the curtilage of the quarry as a potential site for storing (not dumping – how could I be so lexicographically lax!?). At a presentation by the Kerrier Groundwork Trust at which they described how they intended to use Derelict Land Grant to remove the waste of generations of mining from the area which is now Wilson Way (in the 'glorious city of CPR'), Carl stood up and quietly spoke about the landscapes of his childhood, made by his father, grandfather and great-grandfather in their toil and endeavour. He spoke of how the colours and the shapes, the steeps and the bottoms, were his world, how he found out about bravery, about tenacity, about how to be

respectful of the land and how to walk upon it with care as he explored. He looked Geoff Wolstencroft straight in the eye, challenged his idealism and his professional diplomacy and asked:

*'Do you wish to be responsible for sweeping away the landscape which, to me, is beautiful, because it is the place made by my people in their struggle to feed the children out of whom I am spawned, and whose descendants I, in turn have spawned, and it is the playground in which I found myself and by which I define myself. This derelict place is the landscape of my imagination, it is my piece of the planet. Here I sought to understand what it might be to be dead, and to fly. Here I dreamed I was Bert Solomon and Roy Jennings. Here I lost my heart to Amy Johnson and pledged my loyalty to General Gordon and Redvers Buller. Here I thought how I would never lose sight of the sky and I would stand upon the mine and keep watch while my father toiled below. You know nothing of this. You come and speak of clearance, of making good, of planting hydrangeas and rhododendron – plants from foreign lands which would treat of my heather and gorse as weeds. I expect you'd prefer peacocks to my old friend the daw. You wish to flatten my Himalayas, fill in my Grand Canyons, to green the pink dirt and incarcerate the grass beneath concrete and asbestos. I lay claim to this place as my own, as the place of me and my mates, and of our fathers when they played here. I want to bring my grandchildren here and calm their excitement so they might hear the wheezing in the chests and the whistling in windpipes as our grandfathers struggled for breath through the grip of emphysema. You call this place 'wasteland', 'derelict', and you wish to reclaim it. We see things very differently, don't we?'*⁴

Needless to say, the area was cleared, serviced and built upon. Where Carl Skewes once explored now stands Radio Pirate FM, broadcasting daily a programme of music and chatter which reduces culture to a bland filling of silence to provide a commercial base for advertising. Where do young boys go to explore today? Where can the whispers of ghosts be heard upon the evening breeze?

And here is the difficulty with pledging to secure a 'beautiful place'. It is more than likely that, in seeking to do so, you will destroy beauty, and you will create ugliness. When I go to Longdowns, above Penryn, and stand atop Goodygrane Quarry looking out across the granite bearing moors, I see rusty galvanise lean-to sheds in the corners of fields, and my heart leaps at the sign of human tenacity and at the deep colours of rust. A suburbanist would sweep them away whilst my eye lingers and my mind explores.

Today, I saw and heard a bal maiden in full flood – coarse jokes, innuendoes, a raucous love of life – draw laughing faces out of their self-absorption for several minutes queuing at the vegetable stall in the Pannier Market. Kay Pascoe was in full flood. She is not sentimental about Truro; she is, instinctively, the flesh and bones of the town. She'll stand up in all her 84 years and mix stories of almost-forgotten times of war with ribald observations about the sexual flirtations of young girls with 'more out than in, 'nd nawthin' much to dream about!' All around her saw her love of being alive, and they loved her for it. How, Blair, can you possibly hope to replicate that, or to enable the spontaneity and imagination of it, the self-confidence and tenacity of it, by printing a sentence in bold in a strategy which is simply a manual for guiding public expenditure.

⁴ Of course, Carl was more direct and poetic than this crude paraphrase. What I recall most of all was he spoke clearly and penetratingly, but scarcely above a whisper. The passion of his intent and meaning caused the crowded room to fall absorbently silent.

People lift themselves and each other to be their very best. I watched a young man whose workmate had died. As he visited him during his last days⁵ he was asked to support the dying man's wife 'when the time came'. Two hundred and fifty people, most of whom never step foot in a church from birth to death, crowded into St George's Church and that young man found strength for the wife, he found dignity and compassion for her, and he sustained a quiet and profound quiet about her as she wrestled with confusing emotions and desperation. What he found in himself that day is quality, it is beautiful – it is a wealth beyond material prosperity, and it was there in a moment of stark unhappiness.

I find the visionary sentiments (well meant though they are) very superficial. As a guide for the proper allocation of public finance I think them not only specious but also likely to breed confusion and conflict and to result in an impossible environment in which choices and decisions can be made. There will always be winners and losers. We struggle to be fair. We talk loudly about equality, and even louder about protecting diversity (whilst doing our damndest to eradicate it by promoting homogeneity and standardisation). If we set our decisions and choices against criteria derived from the assertion that *'Cornwall will be a place in harmony. A prosperous, happy and beautiful place that lifts people to be their very best'* then we will find it very difficult to find consensus, and we will set one set of perceptions against another, and will achieve neither success or failure.

Bob Dylan wrote:

*'There's no success like failure
And failure's no success at all.'*⁶

We should consider this enigmatic statement and ask ourselves if it is not better to be more prosaic, and less evangelical in our aspirations, and thereby to set ourselves tasks which are more likely to encourage consensus and to promote things which can be seen as good and positive by one and all.

When you speak of leaving *'footprints on our beautiful land'*, for the Cornish the footprints, the galvanise sheds of their forefathers are their story, their context, their culture, their palette and their landscape. Tour operators don't seek to take their fee-paying passengers to view Wheal Busy or Reskejeage. They don't stop at Rame or Longdowns. What will you decide to preserve or to beautify, and for whom, and by whose judgement?

You speak of understanding in-depth the *'aspirations of local people, both as individuals and as members of communities, across all strands of diversity'*. On the other hand, it is a struggle against dismissiveness, denial, aggression and spite for the Cornish, as an ethnic group, and as an indigenous British people, to gain the dignity of statistical visibility, the protection of the Race Relations Act, the right to be treated fairly and openly at work. The pseudo-science of race relations is now coming to consider the verbal, the linguistic body-talk, the look – as being manifestations of racism. So they may be. So too is it true to say that it is more difficult to act (as Ringo Starr opined) naturally if one is self-conscious about one's speech, humour, assumptions about commonly held beliefs, perceptions

⁵ He was the victim of a needle-stick at Treliske Hospital who died of Hepatitis 'C' at the age of 47 – do something about that!

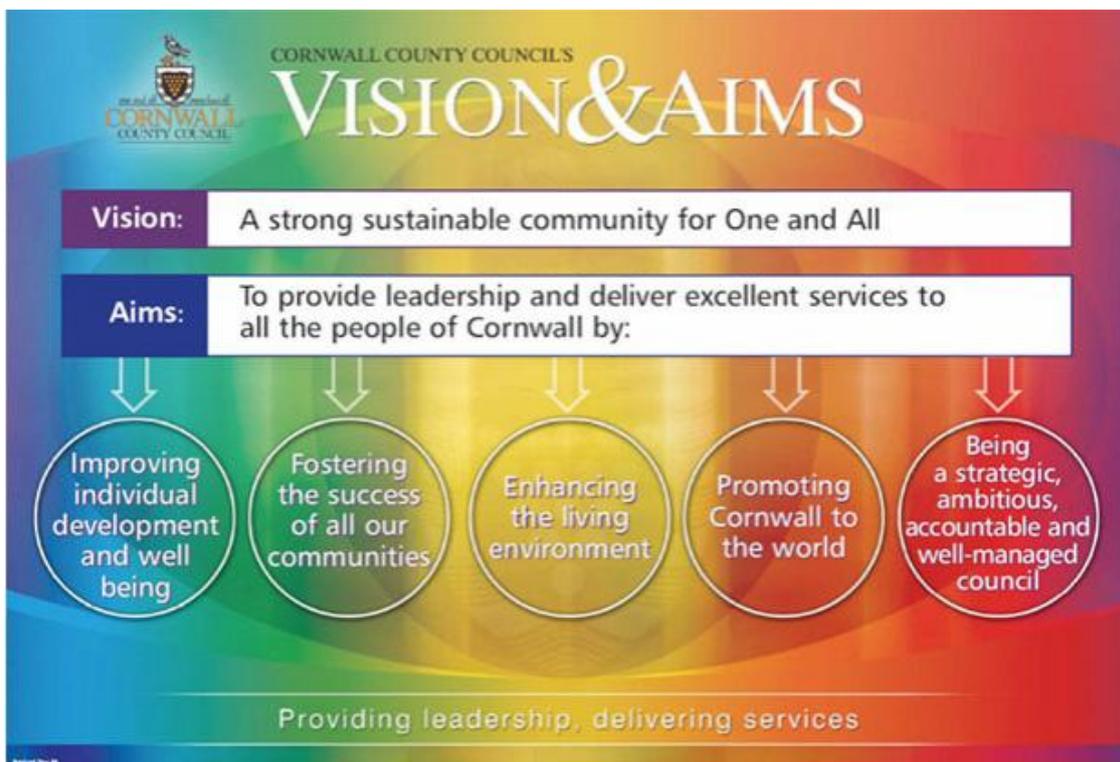
⁶ *'Love Minus Zero, No Limit'* – Bringin' it all Back Home – Bob Dylan

and so on. Culturally this can be seriously inhibiting. This is an everyday part of being Cornish. How will the SCS address this issue?

I find myself turning back to the vision and aims of Cornwall County Council as they stand. What is wrong with the vision:

'A strong sustainable community for One and All'

It is a vision which leaves contentious issues of subjective judgement out of the direction and leaves the debates about the purpose and outcomes of investments to be considered on a case-by-case basis, on merit, and in the context of both the situation and the moment. It is a well considered, widely framed visionary statement which offers both flexibility and direction but does not intrude or dictate in the way that the proposed vision might easily be construed to do. Stick with what you've got – it ain't broke.



History is a gathering process. It does not start when a new observer suddenly opens his eyes, or a new participant takes up his mace. It is a classic political trick to rewrite history to suit the mythology of one party or another, but it is not true. Simply rewriting perfectly adequate visionary statements for the sake of being seen to leave one's mark is not a mature or sensible approach. Did you notice that Boris Johnson and Ken Livingstone sat down and had a long talk about things the day after the London Mayoral election. It was a mark of maturity on both their parts that this could happen. The boastfulness of a lone and stupid BNP man was summarily ignored and the interests of people, community and common sense prevailed. Change is not an essential process but one which is sometimes necessary to address complacency or altered circumstances. We should beware of

allowing a mentality of change to distract us from understanding what is qualitative and valuable both about life and about public services. Sometimes, leaving well alone is a wise and mature course. I see no evidence of a debate about the present vision and aims which has proven the case for change – just a hasty desire to use ink on a blank page without any hope of a poem emerging!

I strongly commend the Strategic Partnership and all other actors to ask themselves whether continuing and adopting the present vision and aims of Cornwall Council is not the best course, and to conduct a clear, open and rigorous exercise to test the validity and applicability of the present aims and vision to the needs of the next 20 years. One thing is certain. The present vision and aims were formed to provide a foundation upon which to deliver services and to be creative and accountable for the public funds which pass through that institution's corporate hands. All actors should ask themselves in evaluating responses to this consultation whether the proposed changes will be as robust and accommodating as the present ones. In the present jargon, which are more SMART?

I think if you lost the rainbow background things might appear a great deal more clear than perhaps they do now!

I now turn to the strategic issues 'identified'.

I do not propose to work through these as many are self evident. Some, whilst of importance, affect a very small number of people. We must take care to avoid, in highlighting particular concerns, not creating the perception that there is a general problem. For instance, whilst there is a general sentiment that communities are fragmenting and that some individuals may feel isolated, it is also the case that there is much community bonding activity, much desire to participate in community life and that most communities make effort to embrace people who might experience isolation, for instance, people who are bereaved.

We should not ignore the very significant amount of voluntary activity undertaken by very many people, some through formal bodies, much as individual and usually unheralded, action. I have spent much time in recent months investigating the work of, and extolling the merits of Truro Railway Club. Some glib observers, including Wain Homes, the developer which sought to sweep aside the Club's premises without thought or remedial gesture, might conclude that this is a private drinking club. It does have a bar, and it does sell cheap beer. But, it also has 400 members of all ages. The subscription is a constitutional nicety, and, at £10 per year, is neither excluding nor prohibitive. The Club supports a range of activities and teams, raises substantial sums for charitable purposes, and provides a focal point for the less-well-advantaged community of Truro⁷.

⁷ A community living in Wards which were mysteriously discounted as deprived or poor by the Objective 1 Programme 'because they're in Truro. One key issue for you to consider as we move towards a unitary authority is the propensity amongst many to discriminate against Truro because they perceive of it as 'having everything and denying others all!'

OBITUARY

Robert John Harker 'Nokka'

ROBERT John Harker (Nokka), who died in Steeple Woods, St Ives on March 29, was a well-known figure in the area. He lived in the woods and was well liked and respected by the majority of those who knew him. He made many friends among those who visited the woods and who worked there as project volunteers.

Born at Hunstanton in Norfolk, in 1945, and brought up in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire he had a difficult childhood, and was always 'fighting the system'. He recalled hiding in a chicken coop where his mum couldn't reach him to avoid going to school to be 'brain washed'. Nevertheless he always spoke of his mother with great respect.

Nokka spent the last twenty years living with as little as possible. In fact, it was his aim to live with nothing. He abandoned conventional housing and modern amenities and had no income. In the woods he resided in a bender - the traditional gypsy shelter - using an open fire for cooking and warmth. He also preferred to wear as little clothing as possible and relied for sustenance on salvaging passed 'best sell by date' food from shops and on the goodwill of those who respected his lifestyle.

For some of these years he enjoyed a loving relationship with a female companion who supported his life-style. The couple had three children, two of whom were born in the Steeple woods' bender. Although his chosen life-style made it difficult to stay in touch he would often talk of his children who now live with their mother.

Seen as an 'anchor' in the woods, Nokka always had a fire going to feed anyone who



needed cups of tea and chapattis. Friends would sit round the fire enjoying his stories and humorous conversation. He was something of an aesthetic inspiration to others who shared his concerns over mankind's detrimental effects on the environment and disillusion with modern living.

He enjoyed walking alone along Carbis Bay and Porthkidney beaches and cut a striking, if unconventional figure, with his brown, weather-beaten face, a sincere (if rather stern) expression, dreadlocks and beard. In his own lifetime he became an almost figure of folklore - the guardian of the woods.

Nokka will be sadly missed by many who knew him. Some maybe living alongside him for a while or visited him by way of retreat, for he offered a balance to their lives. In these times of remembering him one thing is for sure, there will always be laughter.

Nokka leaves three daughters who live with their mother in New Zealand, and a sister who it has not been possible to trace.

Information contribute

From St Ives Times & Echo, 9th May 2008.

How will the SCS engage with, respect and learn from such people as 'Nokka' if we intend to design such expressions of individuality out of our society?

It supports families, embraces the lonely, the chronically disabled and sick, helps the bereaved. It provides space for meetings and maintains a caring and cheerful atmosphere. It does all this without subsidy (other than a 15% rate discount); is proud of its tradition of self-help. Its activities probably save formal caring agencies significant sums each year – there is no mechanism for evaluating this. The outpouring of public feeling about the threat to the Railway Club has been breathtaking – people and organisations from across the social spectrum have lent support and given in support of the fund to replace the premises. Many people appeared at the Planning Appeal. The moral issues which have arisen over this case have bonded Truro like no other cause since the attempt by Carrick DC to sell Truro City Hall in the 1980s⁸.

What this illustrates is that the assertion of isolation and fragmentation can be overcome. It is equally important to recognise the bonding and the support offered throughout Cornwall by so many for so many. That is not to say that people don't perceive an erosive threat.

We should not ignore the necessity of managing success. One key issue which arises in my researches is that there is an insufficient number of Cornish students applying to take courses at CUC. This is not because students wish to '*git out t'git on!*' but is because, having made the thing, the attitude of public institutions in Cornwall towards CUC is similar to that taken towards Eden – 'it's there but we don't have to do any more, until we're asked to bail it out!' The relationship between Cornwall Council and CUC is virtually non-existent. When was the last time you saw a CUC academic invited to advise the Council (or the LAA or the JIE) on policy matters? When was the last time you saw CUC asked to develop information and data on a particular matter? CUC includes world class academics, many in the forefront of their disciplines. It is an excellent institution. We regard it as a traffic management problem; as the cause of expenditure from the 'Safe' priority of the LAA. Some of our younger staff enjoy the better quality of bands which the students' union put on!

It is striking that the strategic issues do not include the impact upon Cornish communities and individuals at risk of isolation of the proposals to build 68,000 houses. This is the biggest challengeable challenge which Cornwall faces. At a moment when we have struggled, with a fair wind of central support and economic circumstance, to set our economy on a positive course, we are failing to argue against a level of population growth which, if considered over the past 100 years, is exponential and entirely unsustainable.

With a population of 520,000 Cornwall is entirely reliant upon oil to sustain food and commodities supplies. We have a very small (but very tenacious and trend-bucking) manufacturing sector. We export more of the food produced in Cornwall than we consume. We spend much time celebrating the exclusivity and elitism of Rick Stein, and too little considering conservation of fish stocks, fish farming and repopulating coastal communities with the skills necessary to maximise our ability to feed ourselves from the sea.

If the population grows to 650,000, as is projected in the papers blandly facilitating such growth, then the crisis will only deepen. It is insufficient to sit on pink-scrubbed hands and persuade ourselves that this is not the moment to contest with the Government the continuation of policies, fostered in the 1950s, which have ceased to be a solution to anything, and have instead become our

⁸ Unitary Authority staff and members should beware attempting any similar exercise – Truro loves its City Hall, and is proud of its new life as Hall for Cornwall.

major problem. Without standing and fighting on the key issue of reversing mass in-migration then all the strategic issues identified in your papers will simply worsen. The cost of addressing them will simply outstrip the combined resources of the Cornish tax base and the productive economy.

There are many for whom this is a 'difficult' subject because they have moved to Cornwall in recent times and don't much like being described as 'the problem'. They should discard such sentimental claptrap. The issue is not about individuals, but about strategic policy making and ensuring that it is set contextually in the realities of geography and social management. The 'vision' speaks of beauty. This does not simply raise philosophical questions but also questions how we can cling on to beauty if the ravages of habitation continue to spread like a rash across soft flesh. Amongst the geographical realities are issues about water supply, post-oil food production, waste management, the cost of health provision and social care.

There is also the very difficult question of equality. People who choose to describe themselves as Cornish experience a grievous sense of loss (see above). They see that they have been 'cleansed' from many communities as property is bickered over (some call this the 'property market'!) by people, companies and institutions with economic clout which completely eclipses their own. Can you imagine the mixture of emotions, thoughts and reactions as Cornish people see cob-cottages change hands for £500,000 to £1m+? Can you imagine what it is like for a family which has its roots in 'working the beach' forced by circumstance over generations to be living in Troon, where the horizons are glimpsed by looking down Dolcoath, not across the Atlantic? Does this mean anything to you? Do you dismiss it as the gibbering of a semi-crazed poet with a facility for crafting long sentences and manipulating Mr Dell's finest machinery? Equality involves offering one and all a sense of inner security and confidence about who they are, offering them the dignity of respect, and the opportunity to be themselves. Equality infers that nobody should need to think twice about how they express themselves in whatever company they find themselves.

Let me tell you, Blair Thompson and Helen Nicholson – I experience discrimination on a daily basis because I have to be consciously careful about how I express myself, how I interact, when to stay silent, when to speak. I find myself exchanging glances across crowded rooms as statements are made, pronunciations purposefully miscast, pious speeches are made about equality and fairness, which are, frankly, offensive. If I say anything I am dismissed, shouted down or accused of 'nationalism', 'balkanism', 'racism' and 'living in a dream world' (just a few examples from last week!). I was amongst those who were attacked for disrupting the Best Value Review of Fairness which took place some years ago by asking what the review was going to do about the Cornish. The external consultant was shocked to find that there was such an issue. Experience at the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry did not prepare them for the plight of a British indigenous people. Now, you see – I can hear the clucking tongues and hissing breath as you get to this point!

Now, when the largest minority⁹ in your community feels like that, and I assure you that they do, then you have a strategic issue which the SCS should be addressing. When you start talking about deprivation then surely it should embrace the issues arising from social discrimination.

⁹ 35 – 40%. In the PLASC survey of schools self-identification by young people as Cornish is growing year on year by about 4%.

I do not wish to paint the Cornish as a saintly group – it is not! There is work to be done on both sides, the most important aspect of which is to remove the concept of division by promoting a sense of respect and dignity amongst all groups in Cornish society, including the Cornish, and encouraging the Cornish brand of multi-culturalism (which is one of our most distinctive attributes) to evolve. There's an awful lot of stuff under the carpet!

I note that, amongst the strategic issues identified, the erosion of Cornwall's distinctive character and culture is highlighted. I also note that there is no outcome resulting from the strategy which will directly affect this situation. It represents an insufficient and superficial appreciation of culture to suggest that a focus on creative industries¹⁰, or a commitment to develop the image and brand of a distinctive Cornwall, comes anywhere close to addressing the fundamental aspects of cultural erosion.

Culture is not art. Art is an expression of culture, and in many ways contributes to a successful culture. A culture is the product of fundamental processes whereby a group of people who choose to settle or to populate a particular place develop behaviours and systems for managing survival and living successfully with and within that physical environment. This anthropological perspective enables us to understand how culture works. We can see art emerging from it in a variety of forms, as communication, as metaphysical exploration, as rituals which assist in collectively facing fear and distress, as entertainment at the feast; we can also see that art is (an albeit vital) output of a culture. The modes of decision making, internal debate, communal support, balance between individual and social need, organisational structures to facilitate change and to achieve projects, to defend and assert - these are the elements.

If we talk about an eroding culture then we should look at how we make decisions (for instance, the supplanting of a consensual process at county hall by the directorial approach of a controlling party) and whether this affects the quality of the inter-relationship with the physical environment. Perhaps we might consider how the nature of the physical environment of Cornwall has been affected by the onset of Broadband in terms of the need for movement, in terms of time management, in terms of re-brokering more time available to word-smithing professions for contributing to community life.

We do not tend to consider major decisions in a way which is sensitive to the culture of Cornwall, or to develop processes which are shaped by that culture. Neither do we consider how change might affect the physical environment, nor therefore whether such change might have a positive or negative impact on our culture. We tend to assume a slightly bemused grin when the word culture comes up and to wait for Friday to skip off to the pub to watch a band playing covers!

We talk of fragmentation and isolation, but we rarely (if ever) ask if the systems we use to deliver services, or the processes by which we define what services are required, are attuned to, or shaped by, our culture. The less we make of our culture then the more we can expect unsustainable lifestyles to be attempted, the more we can expect people to feel isolated. The more we allow distantly central directives to shape how we do things, then the more fragmented our society will become.

¹⁰ Including a project to achieve European recognition of Cornwall as a Region of Culture by persuading the EU to establish such a designation and to promote a designation process for the future

Cohesion is formed by evolving a cultural response to the physical environment which achieves modest comfort and success within the holistic scapes of the environment in which we are trying to remain established. The successful culture will live inevitably in harmony with, and sustainably within, the physical environment, otherwise success at survival will not be achieved. This does not mean that culturally defined communities are static. Connectivity affects the physical environment as much as physical obstacles such as mountains or physical advantages, such as fresh water in sufficient supply.

Therefore, the perception that Cornwall is experiencing an erosion of its distinct culture is correct, but it must draw its evidence from observing how we interact with, shape and are shaped by, our physical environment. We will then see that many of the strategic issues which have been identified actually refer back to the health of our culture. We will then begin to see how important it is to enshrine distinctively Cornish analyses into the design of education. Many young people leave Cornwall, not because they feel it is lacking in opportunity, or because it is limited, but because they do not have the processes, mechanisms and habits in their survival skill-set to live in Cornwall. Some are persuaded that there is an eldorado beyond the Tamar, and, whilst being well equipped to live in Cornwall, go because they will fulfil the aspirations of parents (or grandparents) or because they are restlessly impatient – many of these people become disaffected and unhappy. They yearn for Cornwall in the same way that my step-grandfather yearned for Poland – silently, deeply, as if the yearning was consuming him with its grief; in a manner which makes them numb to much of what goes on around them.

When we reach the point of understanding the seriousness and fundamental grip which culture has upon the individual and the group then we might develop a community strategy which is rooted in the culture of Cornwall. Then, we may find that the key strategic issues needing attention turn out to be different, and of more profound importance. They might even be more strategic. Then we might also find that there is empathy for the allocation of resources because they are addressing issues upon which there is a deep consensus. We should be careful to not confuse issues which are critically serious in character but relatively minor in scale with issues and concepts that are strategic – which embrace the whole place and affect the whole community, and which affect generally effective change or consolidate innovation into everyday usage.

I find within the list of strategic issues evidence of such confusion. Failure to distinguish between the specific and the general, between targeted action to address critical issues and the need to formulate a framework within which the general population can both develop and feel free to create, express itself collectively and to support individuals in their self-expression amounts to a significant failure of the strategic process. I sense that the SCS is in danger of failing on this count.

It is also in danger of failing to acknowledge the strength of current provision whilst focusing on specific failures. For instance, ICT infrastructure in Cornwall is at a very high level in terms of reach and quality. Cornwall, in partnership with BT, has pioneered Broadband provision in a scattered and peripheral settlement pattern. This means that there is a widespread and growing utilisation of Broadband for business purposes, which greatly enhances productivity. This is one of the key reasons why farming/food processing accounts for roughly 45% of Cornish productivity and is growing. It also accounts for the significant improvements in market penetration and client identification in the visitor trade, which is also leading to significant increases in productivity (despite the economic

downturn). Cornwall's adaptation to a knowledge-based economic foundation, focusing on environmental management and new technological development owes a great deal to the utilisation of Broadband infrastructure and efficiency. We have not achieved a perfect situation, and there is the need to constantly improve if we are to remain competitive. The truth is that Cornwall is competitive, productive and growing economically, and much of this is due to the ICT infrastructure installed with the assistance of Objective 1. We should not forget (although we are inclined to do so!) that the University campus at Penryn is augmented by 'rim' facilities and distance learning facilities, much of which is web-based. So too is the communication between Penryn and Exeter/Plymouth campuses. Cornwall is utilising a significant provision of ICT infrastructure. Our key strategic objective must be to upgrade and to improve quality to a consistent standard throughout Cornwall. We should also be offering support to businesses and entrepreneurs to understand how ICT can enhance their businesses. Language is important to ensure that we are sending well-sourced and evidenced messages to key funders, clients and users.

Provision is not 'inadequate'; it is significant and a key Cornish achievement. What is needed is the commitment to improvement and upgrading, to drawing more businesses, groups and individuals into using the infrastructure to enhance their lives and endeavours. So! Say that! Don't make a crisis out of an enhancement; don't make an expedition out of a journey; don't overstate the case!

It disappoints and concerns me that the SCS does not look through the period of its likely legitimacy and consider how changes evolved to manage and attempt to reverse (or at least stabilise) climate change may throw up new challenges, incur social consequences and require cultural shifts. The assumptions and premisses of the SCS seem rooted in a present reality which seems quite complacent, quite consumerist and completely lacking in awareness that, as well as climate change, the oil resources of the planet seems set to diminish quite rapidly.

Therefore, a key strategic issue should be that significant pressures emanating from adjusting realities associated with climate change and oil depletion (some of which relate to the balance spoken of above) will affect how we live our lives, how we relate to technology, what we ask technology and each other to do for us. It may offer (or demand) new partnerships between bodies focused on completely different priorities. For instance, will we be operating with oil or carbon tax codes? Will we regulate vehicle use or need to develop different and quite radical ways of heating, food production, energy generation, waste management? Why is this called the 'sustainable' community strategy if it doesn't get to grips with preparing the ground for likely changes that may occur within the operational period of the strategy? You therefore run the serious risk of the strategy being overrun by events. I suggest that it is better to over-provide for perceived eventualities than to feign ignorance and look surprised when the sun comes out!

The issue of connectivity is critical for Cornwall. We seem to be shaking off the compulsion to believe that the only communication channel necessary for future life to be sustained is up the A30. This is, of course, blinkered, counter-productive enslavement to centralism as a dogma, and to the notion that Cornwall is somehow to be tamed, homogenised and bullied into conformity. All the evidence is that the Cornish perspective is thoroughly and historically global. We invented the concept of the mobile workforce, pioneered inter-hemisphere communication, promoted the judicious understanding of other eco-systems (see all our gardens!), developed the international knowledge economy (see Holmans and mining industry in general). Who introduced steam technology to South

America? Who offered black Americans valuable insights into how a new relationship founded upon mutual respect and liberal values could be negotiated with white people (see Hibbard; Audio-visual study of Normandy Veterans – 2004). Who pioneered powered flight, invented the train, the motor car and the central braking system (Olds, Michigan, 1948)?

Connectivity occurs on a number of levels – mail between relatives; hi-tec exchanges between clients and contractors; physical movement of cargo and people; exchange of wisdom between institutions; spiritual engagement with environment and sub-conscious. Perhaps the first line of enquiry might be physical movement. Cornwall needs to consider its connective needs and then plan accordingly. In doing so it needs to consider the impact upon trade, movements of goods and people, changing expectations and shifting priorities. It needs to consider the demographics of connectivity. It also needs to consider how the world is shaping up in terms of managing climate change.

We sustain a population of 520,000 with trucks trundling in food and other goods on a daily basis. This is unsustainable. The price of oil is rising and, with supplies diminishing, is unlikely to fall again. The emissions from trucks arriving full and returning empty is profligate. It is quite possible to envisage a reduction in population as changes in social values and organisation – perhaps the re-emergence of the extended family – cause people to make different choices about lifestyle and economic activity. However, we should bear in mind that, in the 1870s, with a population of 350,000 and Cornwall one of the most prosperous economic regions in the UK, we could not sustain the population on the basis of using what we could produce for ourselves. Production methods, scientific knowledge and technologies were different – less efficient. Nonetheless, the lesson is a clear one – no matter if we experience a reduction in population, or stabilisation at present levels, or – God forbid! – an increase such as that projected by ONS, then it will be necessary to import food and goods. To do so sustainably will mean reverting to sea transport.

Cornwall has a network of ports, two of which are under direct threat and policy needs to change to save them for the future. These are Hayle and Par. We run the risk of losing both to speculative housing development – a very short-sighted proposition. It would denude Cornwall of its only North Coast port and its most modern cargo-handling port. It is urgent that we reconfigure our priorities and provide ourselves with the policy base to successfully defend these ports. It will be equally important to develop viable ways and means of operating the ports (and others). This will require a significant adjustment of perspective in planning policy and some fairly persuasive negotiation with the Government. I believe that this should be a central priority of Cornwall.

We need to be considering how the network of ports connects to landward population centres. What would be the best means of local distribution? How well are our ports connected to the rail network, and can we combine these to set up a secure and sustainable supply network. Certainly, Tesco's in Truro looks like the best placed supermarket in Cornwall in that it sits on a quay at the head of a navigable tidal estuary with good links to much of mid Cornwall. A renewed interest in the Newham branch line could make this a key strategic facility for the import and export of food. We need to consider this as a strategic issue and to set about securing land, planning for the maintenance of channels and investing in port infrastructure.

Perhaps the most important and critical maritime issues which require a clear strategic lead NOW are the future of the ports of Hayle and Par. Both these are under dire and immediate threat of obstructive development which could blight them as key maritime facilities serving Cornwall forever

more. Where is the measured debate? In what arena can such strategic issues be raised and resolved in the best interests of Cornwall?

Hayle is our largest (and one of Europe's oldest) cargo handling ports. It is Cornwall's north coast port. It can provide us with key links to Ireland, South Wales and Bristol without ships needing to round Land's End. It is a railhead and could, once again, host a power generation facility. It is also a key facility for servicing ocean-based power generation (if the RDA removes its finger and actually does something!), and a fishing port from which inshore farming techniques and processing could and should be developed. Building houses on it is simply an act of irresponsibility by people who are contemplating the immediate surroundings, not considering longer-term investment requirements and failing Cornwall.

Par is Cornwall's most modern general cargo port, sitting on the South coast, well connected to the Channel and to Europe (**never forget the inland waterways of Europe – they are the key to future trade and prosperity**). It was completely rebuilt in 1965, and maintained to a very high standard by ECC and its successors. It is served by a large facility of environmentally controlled (you can control the internal environment) storage buildings, currently used for china clay. It is directly connected to the rail network, including a private connection by road and rail to Fowey, which is a connected but one-cargo, deep draught port. Its hinterland is very significant, and it has better capacity and facilities for cargo handling than any other Cornish port (including Falmouth).

I should also add that Penzance has the potential to act as a staging post for ferries moving between Ireland and France/Mediterranean. Proposals for forming a facility to accommodate such services are in existence in sketch form, along with detailed proposals for providing modern docking facilities for the Scillonian. Perhaps bringing the two things together could provide a project that would greatly excite the EU, because it would promote connectivity in ways which have fallen away in the modern era but which, in times when we relied more upon the elements, and when connectivity fostered cultural interchange alongside trade, was of great importance.

Two other points occur. Firstly, we should not lose sight of Bude as a port, with an expansive hinterland, possibly connectible by rekindling the practical applications of the Canal and reconsidering rail connections. Secondly, Padstow is a good port in need of being re-connected to the rail network.

These thoughts may appear fanciful, but we should not forget that we are entering a period of significant economic and structural change, alongside social adjustments, all aimed at mitigating and managing climate change and responding to the challenges of reducing oil supplies. We might also consider, as a future challenge, the demographical changes possible through the influence of technologies upon economic activity, communication and lifestyle. In those contexts, looking ahead, taking stock of assets (both current and latent) and being imaginative are all vital components of long-term strategising. So too is developing the political will to invest long-term.

For a moment I think it important to reflect on creativity and spirituality. Each is an essential aspect of the whole human being, and each manifests itself in endlessly various ways. If we are to provide governance and services which foster them, then I consider it fundamental that we should enable both the spiritually engaged and creators to participate in the discourse which leads to strategies, policies, initiatives and the eventual flow of resources. Indeed, they should lead the discussion and

the facilitators should respect and enable the outcomes. However, I doubt whether the CSP or Cornwall County Council is really that serious about spirituality or creativity. Both are portrayed as being tools for engineering social harmony and economic competitiveness – and so they are! But! Creativity and spirituality reach out from beyond the material world to draw minds and imaginations into exploring and understanding a less tangible but arguably more exciting dimension of existence. Would Cornwall County Council contemplate granting a key employee working in the pensions department or the Treasury Management section a two year sabbatical to paint and sculpt? Would Cornwall County Council contemplate offering its premises as an exhibition venue for the resulting exhibition, or encourage it and its progenitor to tour schools to talk about creativity and art? I think the answer is self-evident, and therefore the founders of the Sustainable Community Strategy need to consider the nature of their creature's engagement with creativity and spirituality.

As for spirituality, I feel that self-expression and personal development find fulfilment when the environment which the individual and the group inhabits is able to be sufficiently experienced, and when it is respected for the comfort and insight it offers, the spiritual growth and maturity of those people and groups is both self-generating and not in need of institutional intervention. Indeed, I shudder at the notion that a local authority or its strategic partnership should tread anywhere near the intangible world for fear that it will make a mess. Why? Primarily because auditors, project managers, managers and deliverers need tangibles to measure their progress – the labourer does not measure the void he creates in digging a hole, but rather the pile he makes beside the hole, even though it is the hole which is useful, and the rubble that has to be 'managed'! But, the void is empty, nothing, mere space, an area surrounded by matter to be quickly rendered useful by being filled and recaptured for the material world. Spiritually, the experience of nothingness, of sensing the nature of void, of space, is where the experience is to be found – there, and in the process of making the void – of using a shovel to transfer matter to the side of the void to allow the experience of pure, unadulterated space to be undertaken. Confusing, isn't it?

It would be wonderful to think that bureaucracies and institutions would make the ballistic effort to shift their corporate perceptions and goals towards a deeper embrace of spiritual discovery and truth; that it would head committee reports with lines from poets or set outcomes which are not merely about addressing material disadvantage, but also about offering the materially advantaged to explore other dimensions of being besides the picnic counter of Harrods and the showrooms of Bugatti and Aston Martin. I doubt whether it is possible to take the decision-makers thrown up by the democratic process along such routes. It is also stretching credulity to think that electors cast their vote for such things to become part of what their council tax pays for.

However, I think it essential that, in casting the shape of services, training staff, writing and letting contracts and engaging with those whom we serve, we are aware of the spiritual implications and impacts of our actions. The General Duty speaks of 'well-being'. The dimensions extra to the merely material of 'well-being' oblige us to consider such matters. I return here, for a moment, to the issue of Cornish identity and how those people who describe themselves thus feel that their extra-material needs are understood and met. My experience of this is that it is best to sit in many meetings with a slightly deaf ear, smiling benignly and hope that my inner turmoil, anger and hurt does not show in my voice and face as I try to rise above sanctimonious, aggressive and simply rude discrimination perpetrated by very many people. Until you have sat in a room full of people and felt the necessity to be constantly alert to every syllable that you utter to ensure that you do not bring ridicule and

outrage upon yourself, or that you lose the argument for the sake of inadvertently expressing yourself as you feel naturally you should, or wish to – until you feel *that*, then it is impossible to communicate how it is to be Cornish in Cornwall today. If there is to be spiritual awareness and respect then here is a good starting point - in understanding freedom and ensuring that, in every aspect of relationships within the institutions and functions undertaken in the public sector at the instigation of electors and using tax-payers money, everybody in the room at any time is able to feel free to be themselves without inhibition or fear of recrimination.

In this context, as in those mentioned elsewhere in this deepening crisis of a consultative response, I feel that it is important to stand up for those whom institutions may judge to be excluded, disengaged, poor or deprived and to caution that, in pursuit of spiritual fulfilment as a corporate goal for those living in our communities, we do not encroach on peoples' right to be alone, to be 'outsiders', to be hermits. We should also recognise that over-development, perhaps driven by a notion that there is a trade-off to be had between profit-lusting speculators and social housing providers, will cause greater hurt and spiritual degradation by harming the environment in which people are able to evolve and grow, and by creating an overwhelming sense of loss, together with a sense of helplessness in the face of tidal surges of bureaucratic arrogance, of '*we-know-best*'ness. I feel tempted to mention my own experience regarding the imposition of a 'plan' upon Victoria Square, Truro – a parochial example, but one which demonstrates a number of reasons why institutions have to be very careful in acting if they are going to talk in sweeping and gregarious tones about 'well-being', spirituality, sensitivity or responsiveness¹¹.

Lastly, in looking at strategic issues, I turn to the notion of economic growth and its contribution to sustainable communities. The assertion is that

'unproductive and uncompetitive economy will lead to unsustainable growth and prevent sustainable communities'.

I simply, directly challenge this statement.

There is a fundamental debate about economic performance which relates directly to what can be achieved within the constraints of climate change mitigation and the shift to post-oil. The debate is made interesting and exciting by the addition to the mix of the potential of new technologies. However, as I point out above, it is likely that climate change and post-oil driven demographic changes will also impact upon the economic profile and potential of Cornwall. Most sectors will have to make adjustments – some may see a change in the market place – farming, for instance, is likely to see home demand intensify, which will require changes in the style of farming, possibly alterations in our perception of what makes a viable holding, different forms of distribution, stronger ties between farms and communities which may include farmers producing energy and managing local waste streams. Investment patterns could change radically and income streams be measured in combinations of bartered goods and services as well as money. Value and our understanding of it as a measurable concept in gauging economic outcomes may change. Indeed, we may find over the period of the strategy's direct influence (approximately 20 years!) that our perception of growth as the key output of economic activity may shift to one in which a lesser emphasis is placed upon wealth generation and is substituted by a requirement for goods and services which are more locally

¹¹ For further information see copious correspondence to Richard Fish 2006-8.

focused upon sustaining basic conditions for successful community life and individual well-being – in other words, we may be content to be assured that there is food on our plate, water in our bowl and a roof over our head.

It is most likely that the economy will function in two parallel modes –

1. to generate activity aimed at securing sustainable and quality lifestyles, in which local economic cycles, cooperative working and shared resources are necessary;
2. to work within the broader constraints of global sustainability, including, crucially, regulations aimed at mitigating climate change, to generate economic growth which is value adding and capable of providing a return to investors (who may be communities seeking sustenance collectively).

Economic activity will increasingly be geared to supporting a more localised way of life rooted in a balanced environment, empowered by sophisticated access to information and communication technologies, where development occurs only to meet identified need, and is a last resort, and where land is primarily perceived as a productive survival resource, and in which the natural world is able to thrive as an investment in the long-term sustainability of the planet.

It is critically important that the discourse underpinning the economic strategy for Cornwall is widely conducted and that it sets its future-thinking in the context of technologies, climate change and oil. This is a rapidly evolving debate which, at times, appears to have the potential to become pretty depressing. It should not be so – it is a debate about how to meet a challenge, and it is a debate in which Cornwall can not only take a lead, but can find strategies and solutions and can develop these to pass on through newly emerging markets.

One good example of how sustainability (and all the values which that concept embodies) meets the discipline of growth economics lies in the rapid development of the 'ShelterBox'. This is a simple idea, well executed, conceived from the outset to operate on a global scale, smart in communication, transport and organisation, and inspiring, not to mention useful and helpful. Whilst this is a charitable effort supported by voluntary contributions, it plays a part in Cornwall's branding, and demonstrates how Cornish culture can respond effectively and incisively to challenges. It is a good example of an economic development culture which is not driven merely by the lust for growth, but is rooted in compassion, good principles of medical practise, and in practical application which is inspiring, and therefore able to attract investment.

Outcomes

Some of the language used here is questionable. What does this mean:

'Reduce Cornwall's contribution to climate change'

Does it mean that we're going to give up research, environmental technology development, and so on, or does it mean we're going to produce less carbon?

My main point about the outcomes is that they are mostly rooted in specific service-driven outputs, rather than in strategic outcomes which derive from the services achieving their objectives and

targets. There should be far less outcomes and they should be couched in terms which define them as general outcomes set against key strategic objectives.

I now return to the issue of Cornish culture. This is not only the defining cultural identity which underpins the distinctiveness of Cornwall, rendering it unique in the world. It is also the way in which a very large minority of the population of Cornwall live their lives. It is how Cornish people organise themselves, make collective decisions, self-express, interact successfully with their physical environment, and by which they form and sustain relationships. The culture of the Cornish is also available to be adopted, adapted and to be useful in supporting in-migrants to acclimatise and to flourish. It is not jealously guarded.

It is cited as a strategic issue that Cornwall's distinctiveness, character and culture are being eroded. I assume that we have some explanation somewhere of how this occurring. I also assume that it is generally accepted that this is a bad thing to be addressed positively with strategies which reverse the trend. I further assume that, when we speak of culture, we mean culture, and not marketing. I have attempted to assist you above by offering a definition of culture, linking behaviour to the demands of the physical environment.

Therefore, I find it beyond credulity that the outcomes should include:

'Develop the image and brand of a distinctive Cornwall'

and

'Developing a region of culture and the creative industries'.

If these two outcomes are the sustainable Communities Strategy only answer to reversing the erosion of Cornish culture and distinctive character then it is laughably insufficient. It betrays a depressing lack of understanding which, as I suggest above, amounts to discrimination.

The 'Region of Culture' project is an initiative to persuade the EU to formulate a parallel designation to the 'City of Culture' which can be applied to regions (especially regions without cities!). It is a general aim of the project to underpin the ambition with the objective of evolving a measurable perception in Cornwall's very broad and diverse 'market place' of Cornwall as a region of culture. To do this will mean understanding in depth what we mean by 'culture', and shaping policies and strategies to embed a strong, vibrant and inclusive culture, building on the rich inheritance of millennia which Cornwall carries with it everywhere it goes. The creative Industries may or may not flourish as a result, but they are more likely to flourish if they respond to and reflect the culture of Cornwall in their creative outputs, contributing to the culture, defining, refining and provoking challenge. A culture which embodies creativity is a strong culture, and Cornish culture is one of the biggest in the world – which is why it is an international culture better recognised and celebrated on other continents than it is in Cornwall itself.

One key aspect of the erosive effect is the strong sense in Cornwall of being colonised. It is very important in considering the health of a culture to not rely upon external appearances for data. 'Obby 'Oss may go rollicking by each Spring, but how do people who live within their culture feel about the respect and recognition which their way of life, their values, their collective assumptions and behaviours commands in a society which outwardly professes inclusivity and equality. What

burden of cultural suppression do we inadvertently ignore as we brush up the paintwork of festivals and flagpoles?

When a child newly arrived at Secondary School says in class that he/she is Cornish, and that Cornish history includes events which are important to how we are today, and that St Piran's Day is a national day for Cornish people, and, in response, that child is told, quite firmly and in front of his/her peers that this is not so, that Cornwall is merely a 'county' so it can't have a national saint, and that Cornish is not a real ethnic identity, and that being Cornish doesn't matter – what inner confusion, what suppression, what damage is done to the self-esteem, the confidence or the learning capacity of that child? What price do Cornish children pay for the humiliation of being told that who you feel you are, and the place you feel yourself part of, are not right, not acceptable?

When you consider that most people who choose to describe themselves as Cornish do so knowing that they will need to be forever cautious about how they engage with others in mixed company, and that Cornish people experience a strong sense of being offended against when they see culturally ill-attuned structures and practises exercising 'authority' over their place, their life, their children, then you begin to see that, if you wish to have a 'brand' that celebrates and builds on the distinctiveness of Cornwall then you need to consider what lies beneath the skin of that distinctiveness if the 'brand' is to be convincing and founded in truth.

You might also consider that, if the proposed outcomes for addressing cultural erosion amount to marketing and art, then you will, one hopes, begin to see that the remedy is entirely misplaced and ineffective, whilst the ailment grows more and more deeply embedded as time goes by. I therefore challenge the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Strategic Partnership, and, in doing so, cite the excellent work done a few years ago by the 'Fairness Best Value Review'¹² (which has been summarily dismissed and buried by the Equality and Diversity Board). If the Partnership is serious about equality then it must positively and creatively address the issue of Cornish ethnicity in all its manifestations.

I do not consider that Cornish people are entirely pure in their compleynt. There is a great deal to be done to address prejudicial attitudes amongst many Cornish people; they are, after all, an indigenous people of the British Isles – they share the legacy of Empire, of wartime hatreds, and of isolationist phobias about the peoples of Europe. However, the Cornish also bring to the rather laden table of prejudices and attitudes some healing and some leadership.

1. For instance, black American GIs stationed here during the War, and comparing their treatment in Cornwall to that received on the East coast of England, cite the relationship between themselves and Cornish people as being inspirational in encouraging them to become part of the civil rights movement in America in the 1950s and 60s¹³.
2. Again, any historian of the Boer War will know that the Cornish refused to take sides in that conflict and that Emily Hobhouse, a Cornish feminist campaigner for human rights, defied the vicious denunciations of a vitriolic and jingoistic British press in order to raise awareness of the plight of women and children held in British

¹² Cornwall Council

¹³ See 'Reminiscences of D-Day' by Hibberd et al.

concentration camps in South Africa. She was supported by Sir Leonard Courtney, Liberal MP for Liskeard, who also introduced a Private Members Bill in all but two of his 22 years in the House of Commons calling for the enfranchisement of women.

These are examples of how Cornish culture has influenced world affairs in the past 100 years. One can find their influence in the trade union movement in Australia, or in early multi-culturalism on the goldfields of South Africa and America. One can find examples of immigrants being absorbed carefully and openly into Cornish communities.

When you speak of erosion of Cornish culture and identity you must consider what this means for Cornish people. For them, it is not about the decline of dialect or the emasculation of accents, or fading folklore, or about the loss of customs or the disappearance of feasts and pastimes. Rather, it is about being met with a groan in meetings when the issue of Cornish equality is raised; it is about overhearing snide and spiteful snippets whilst standing in the queue at the canteen; it is about being accused of xenophobia and prejudice when we speak of 'our land'. It is about seeing political controversy stirred up, with accusations of 'balkanisation' when we seek to have insignia and symbols removed from Cornish places which we, as a people, find offensive and triumphalist. When you speak of erosion then, for Cornish people, these are the things you speak of, together with the sense of loss and denial addressed above. A bit of gratuitous marketing and some arty-farty window-dressing ain't gonna get to the nub of it. So, what is to be done; what strategic outcome will be formulated which meaningfully and genuinely addresses the biggest equality scandal in Cornwall? Please don't add insult to injury by paying lip-service to a problem which blights Cornish society from Torpoint to St Levan.

Equally, in the Sustainable Communities Strategy it would be good to see a commitment to using the Cornish language in the business associated with the Strategy. It would also be good to see a strong commitment to the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site, not simply as a marketing device, but as a means of promoting understanding and international relations. It would be good to see the larger ambition – to establish additions to the WHS in Australia, America and elsewhere. We should see a clear recognition of the distinctiveness of Cornish culture as the optimum cultural framework for sustaining a successful society in Cornwall. It is not an exclusive culture – if you live on a peninsula in the way of so many shipping lanes, you can't afford to be isolationist. It is a culture which is needed by all those who wish to be secure, content and fulfilled living in Cornwall. It can be adapted to embrace different customs and beliefs, but its fundamental tenets are vital, whether you are running Social Services, an Indian Restaurant or a counselling service for minority interest groups in rural areas!

Most of all, it is very important that you respond to how Cornish people feel. To do this, you will need to accord Cornish people respect, and you will have to win their respect in the process. In his latest book 'Resist & Survive' John Angarrack speaks of deception and propaganda being tools used by the Government to diminish and demoralise the Cornish. Many Cornish people, far more than will envisage, never say so to any but one of their own, but they feel this, in one way or another. Many people feel that the propaganda includes accusations of prejudice, persecution, luring ships to shore and murdering survivors, or being thick or deceitful (for instance, see D H Lawrence, Letters 1915) and so on. Many sense that, in being offered a code on the census but being the one ethnic group which does not appear on lists issued to public bodies citing the minorities to be included with the

scope of equality work, they are being deceived. The challenge is yours. The sustainable Communities strategy must positively, openly and constructively address these issues if it to be genuinely a strategy which benefits all the people living in a cohesive Cornwall.

Lastly, I turn to the diagram which is supposed to illustrate how you will achieve the 'vision'. Firstly, I do not understand it. Neither do I comprehend why we need to aim for 'transformational change'. What does this mean? Perhaps, that we are so dissatisfied with everything about our place and ourselves that we are going to put ourselves into some clinic or other to undergo remodelling surgery!

There are always aspects of society which fall out of balance, or new factors which need to be integrated. Is the transformation really about finally getting rid of all this 'Cornish crap'¹⁴, dousing the non-conformist instinct, ending the penchant for digging thing up, terminating the past by a polite act of socially engineered cleansing, bring in loadza people to live in Redruth and Camborne who like party politix, speak the only true language, who sentimentalise and cherish but lose the spirit of the stones; who skid trials' bikes over our burial grounds – is that what 'transformational' means?

What about all the things which are good; all the people who are working towards a balance between sand and sea, between spirit and matter, between imagination and reason; what about the kids who are inspired by the air and the ocean – who want to take all the things their Grandfathers made and give them a place in tomorrow; what about the ghosts, the knockers, the fairies, the piskies – what about the search for our lost shadow – do you think I'm losing it saying all this stuff? I'm asking about all those things which we nurture, despite all the peer pressure and imperialism and bullying – I'm talking about the 'who' of what we are, the inscape of our community, the living heart of Men an Tol. I know you can't fit stuff like this into the Sustainable Communities Strategy, but you sure-as-hell need to allow it, and the values which it espouses, to infiltrate and inform. Transformation, like change, can be good or bad. I'm not sure what I want to see transformed, and what I want it to become. I think that evolution has much to do with transformation, and that strategies can only follow evolution with their corporate mouths hanging open at the coolness and unabashed cheek of it.

I once heard a debate between a Czech and a Briton in which each compared the other's approach to history. The Czech suggested that his people accumulated history; that his nation was what all its accumulated history made it today, and that it would become whatever the present generation chose to add to the chaotic life-fluid of past shared experience. The Briton said that history was a linear process – yesterday is gone, it does not affect how today is, and we should live in the moment allowing tomorrow to evolve as itself. This debate between cumulative and linear habits of evolution poses a question to the notion that the pinnacle of achievement is to aspire. Surely there is the key objective of survival to consider, not to mention the responsibility to be at one with the planet, to fit in with our surroundings, to be assertively mammal and homo sapien but to use our awareness to temper our ability to consume and destroy in the cause of longevity, sustainability and moral certainty. If we aspire to these things then our aspiration is not necessarily linear, progressive or upwards reaching.

¹⁴ Overheard in Cornwall County Council canteen – a conversation in half-tones between an officer and a member. Funny old world, innit?

What is it that we aspire to?

Equally, communities are not simply about living together. They are also about supplying a tolerant and appreciative environment in which the individual can flourish and self-express as an individual. A good community offers the individual essential freedoms (which come with responsibilities) which, in being expressed, may militate against collaboration – the community tends to celebrate and to identify with individual achievement – why else do we revere Churchill or David Hockney or Peter Lanyon or Emily Hobhouse? Is Cornwall not a place which accommodates within its strong and sustainable communities colonies of assertive, aggressive, imaginative creators – do our communities not offer safe haven to the individual. How did Nancledra deal with Arthur Caddick quietly and carefully whilst enjoying the fruits of his individuality on the school bus on Penzance Market days after he'd collected his Cornishman money (for last week's poem) and had toured the various catwalks of human discourse before journeying home to sleep it off and attend, late at night, to the vagaries of the electricity sub-station (his well-suited contribution to the success of community life).

So, I'm not sure that I buy 'collaboration' as a sole route for achieving the vision.

Surely there is a concomitant to 'prevention' – is that all we're about. Whatever happened to inspiring, enabling, creating, communicating...ya get da pickture?

So, from the haze of my mis-comprehension of your rasta (almost!) pyramid I deduce that achieving the vision is going to be a very dull affair which will fail to grip people and communities, leaving the SCS choking on mites deep in the shadows at the back of the shelf. Must do better!

Yours very sincerely

Vyager gans Geryow

(Bert Biscoe)

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