

# Cornish Nation

No. 89    October 2022

£1.50



***Dick Cole marks 25 years  
as leader of Mebyon Kernow***



## Chaos in Westminster ...

Speaking at a meeting of Mebyon Kernow's National Executive in July, Deputy Leader Cllr Loveday Jenkin described recent political machinations in London as "beyond satire." She was commenting on the turmoil around the end of Boris Johnson's premiership, following the resignations of over 60 ministers, parliamentary private secretaries and trade envoys. She was also critical of a Conservative Party at war with itself in a truly dysfunctional Westminster political system.

It is difficult to comprehend how the chaos which followed the appointment of a successor took UK politics even further past parody.

The ill-conceived gamble that was the mini-budget back-fired, and did massive and ongoing damage to the UK economy and the prospects of millions of households. But then, there was the new Prime Minister sacking the new Chancellor for following her instructions. A few days later, there was the bust-up and sacking of the new Home Secretary, followed by a "confidence vote" in the House of Commons that led to the unedifying spectacle of Tory MPs jostling and rowing in the division lobbies. It was so bad that the resignation of Liz Truss, after only 45 days in post, did not come as a surprise.

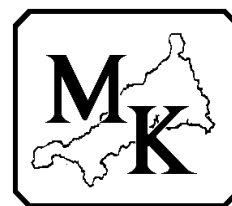
Even the truncated leadership contest to elect Rishi Sunak as the third Prime Minister of 2022 descended into farce, when Boris Johnson jettied home from his Caribbean holiday to launch, and then back out of, a campaign to reclaim the office of PM from which he had only just been ejected by colleagues because of Partygate and related scandals.

It was absurd to see some of the MPs, who quit their government roles only three months previously to force Johnson out, clamouring to bring him back, which led to yet more "blue-on-blue" bickering and infighting, with a number of MPs stating that they would not continue to serve in the Conservative cause if Johnson returned as Prime Minister. Some felt he would "be gone by Christmas" if reinstalled, because of the pending "Privileges Committee" which is tasked to investigate claims that he misled Parliament. One prominent MP described their parliamentary party as "completely riven" and "ungovernable."

It would be tempting to fall into the trap of enjoying the shambolic disarray of the Tories, but we must never forget that their failings are having a devastating impact on the lives of ordinary people in Cornwall and across the wider United Kingdom.

## Well done to Dick

It is right that this edition of *Cornish Nation* properly celebrates the 25th anniversary of Dick Cole's election as MK leader. A fantastic champion for Cornwall, he has worked so hard for a democratic future for our nation, devolution through a National Assembly or Cornish Parliament, progressive policies to build a fairer and more socially just society, greater protections for Cornish identity and culture, and so much more. His drive and dedication, as MK's principal spokesperson and an active elected councillor, is remarkable, and it is an extraordinary achievement that he has had the commitment and energy to serve in his leadership role for a quarter of a century.



### Contents

An interview with MK leader Cllr Dick Cole	3
Widespread unhappiness at <i>Finding the Cornish Dream</i>	6
<i>Cornish Nation</i> investigates the Battle for Trevalga	7
Cornish news and views	8
MK backs the Royal Cornwall Museum	8
Ryan Congdon calls for Cornish team in Commonwealth Games	8
MK condemns central government "mini-budget"	9
MK councillors fight to save Fire Control Centre	9
An folen Kernewek	10
Report on housing costs	11

### Cornish Nation 89

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

Membership of MK costs only £15.00 a year (£8.00 unwaged) or £20.00 for a family. Life memberships are £300 (aged 64 and below), £150 (aged 65-74) or £100 (aged over 75).

For further information, contact:

Mebyon Kernow,  
Lanhainsworth,  
Fraddon Hill,  
Fraddon,  
St Columb, TR9 6PQ

07791 876607 (General inquiries)  
[www.mebyonkernow.org](http://www.mebyonkernow.org)

# An interview with Dick

*October 2022 marked the 25th anniversary of Dick Cole's election as the leader of Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall*



In order to look back over Dick Cole's 25-year tenure as the leader of Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall, *Cornish Nation* asked Party Development Officer, Cllr Michael Bunney, to interview Dick about his commitment to MK and Cornwall.

**Michael Bunney (MB): It is quite an achievement to have served as leader of Mebyon Kernow for 25 years.**

**Dick Cole (DC):** It is real privilege to lead MK and I believe it is vital that Cornwall has a political party, which exists to win greater self-government for Cornwall and demonstrate there is an alternative to politics based on the Westminster bubble. It has certainly been a very large amount of hard work. I hope that MK members will feel I have led by example, as I have never asked people to do anything that I wasn't also happy to do myself or was already doing. But while I might have been the "head" of Mebyon Kernow, I would like to thank everyone who has worked for MK during the last 25 years and this is a very long list. In preparing for this interview, I did a little number-crunching, and found that during my period of leadership more than 140 people have contested elections as official Mebyon Kernow candidates, 17 members have served on principal authorities and over 80 have served on town and parish councils.

**MB: Are you the longest serving leader of a UK political party?**

**DC:** That is how I often get introduced, but it is not actually true. The Socialist Labour Party was founded in 1996 and the leader has always been Arthur Scargill. That is 26 years to my quarter-century.

**MB: Let's go the very beginning. When did you first get interested in Cornish nationalism?**

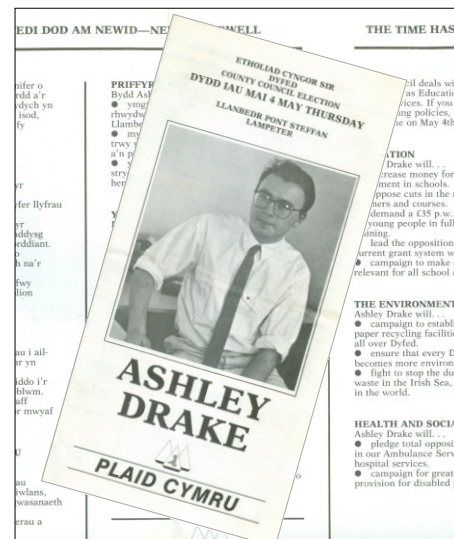
**DC:** Obviously, I inherited an instinctive Cornishness from my family, but as a teenager I read a lot about the history of Cornwall and I also started to explore my Celtic identity. The first General Election I properly remember was in 1983, when I was 16. My home parish was then part of the North Cornwall constituency and I avidly followed the campaign of the Cornish Nationalist Party candidate James Whetter. When my class at Newquay Treviglas School discussed the General Election, nominees were sought to speak in favour of each of the four candidates. I ended up representing the CNP. I also tried to persuade many of the adults I knew to vote for James, and my grandfather even painted a sign – "Better with Whetter" – which we displayed on a local hedge!

**MB: When did you join MK?**

**DC:** I think it was in about 1988, just before I left Cornwall to attend St David's University College in Lampeter. I left school in 1983 and worked as a farm worker, and I closely followed what MK was doing during that time.

**MB: Do you remember the first election campaigns you were involved with?**

**DC:** Yes. When I was at university, I helped with the Plaid Cymru campaign for the Lampeter seat in the 1989 Dyfed County Council elections. The candidate was Ashley Drake, who later founded Welsh Academic Press and published the book *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism* (written by Bernard Deacon, Garry Tregidga and me) in 2003. Ashley continues to be extremely supportive of Mebyon Kernow and is a party member.



It was also in 1989 that I helped with MK's campaign in the European Parliamentary Election. Colin Lawry was the candidate. I helped with leafleting and assisted Colin Murley and Pedyr Prior with their "loud hailer" car in many parts of Cornwall, but I do recall being mortified when they managed to drive through a pedestrianised area in St Austell. In terms of Westminster seats, I played a very small part in the successful campaign of Plaid Cymru's Cynog Dafis to become MP for Ceredigion and Pembroke North in 1992. I had been the Secretary of Plaid's branch in the university for a couple of years and, through this, twice represented Plaid at political hustings.

**MB: And what about getting involved with the running of MK?**

**DC:** I think the first formal MK meeting I attended was in April 1990. MK's leader Loveday Carlyon has stood down, the Party had been struggling and an "emergency" meeting had been called by MK's London branch. The invite stated: "The only topic on the agenda will be whether we wish to continue as an organisation at all." I knew how important this gathering at Murdoch House in Redruth was. I travelled down from Wales on the train and cadged a lift home to Indian Queens with John Bolitho, who later became a councillor on North Cornwall District Council.

Loveday Jenkin became MK's ninth leader at a later meeting in 1990 and I became more actively involved with MK's organisation from that point. I continued to be a student in Wales until 1994 but, at MK's 1992 AGM, I became joint press and campaigns officer with Colin Lawry. Looking back now, it was such a different time. MK press releases were sent to local newspapers by post, before we purchased a FAX machine. I also fought my first election in 1993, when I was one of seven candidates for Cornwall County Council. I stood to raise MK's profile and on the basis that I was not going to win the contest.

**MB: You mention elections. It would be fair to say you have contested a number of elections for MK?**

**DC:** I am proud to have stood as an official MK candidate on 15 occasions; ten local elections, four parliamentary contests and, in 2009, I topped the MK list which we put forward in the "SW England" seat for the European Parliament. We achieved 11,534 votes in Cornwall, as well as a further 3,341 from the east of the Tamar, 39 on the Isles of Scilly and 8 on Gibraltar! It was good we were able to contest this election – thanks to two sizable donations. It took place on the same day as the first elections to the new unitary authority, giving MK more publicity for the local battles, which were the priority for MK.

**MB: You have been quite successful as a local candidate?**

**DC:** I was elected in 1999 at my fourth attempt, when I was standing for the two-seat ward for my home parish of St Enoder on Restormel Borough Council. To be frank, I did not expect to win, but I put a lot of effort into the campaign as I was hoping to be well-placed for the subsequent election when, I assumed, the more senior of the two sitting councillors would no longer be standing. I was most grateful for the help in that election from a number of MK members who did some canvassing, including Conan Jenkin, Tom Tremewan and Hilda Wasley. I have since been re-elected six times and I believe this is because I have worked hard for my local area. I am proud of what I have done – helping people, supporting a wide range of local groups and securing numerous grants to

deliver projects, which range from new community buildings and new play equipment to various environmental improvements. Most recently, I was chuffed to be re-elected to Cornwall Council in 2021, but for the new enlarged seat of St Dennis & St Enoder.



**MB: Do you think that MK councillors do well as advocates for Cornwall?**

**DC:** Absolutely. Between 2013 and 2021, I was proud to lead a four strong group on the unitary authority (comprising Cllrs Loveday Jenkin, Andrew Long, Matt Luke and myself). We were only four out of 123 but, in terms of work ethic and getting stuck in, we really "punched above our weight." The number of councillors was reduced to 87 in 2021, but we managed to increase our numbers to five with your fantastic win in Grampound and St Mewan. Our group of six (including Tamsyn Widdon, the Green Party councillor for Penryn) – which is larger than the Labour Group – continues to actively engage on all manner of issues, though it is more difficult to influence decisions being taken by a majority Conservative council.

**MB: But it has been much harder to poll well in Westminster elections?**

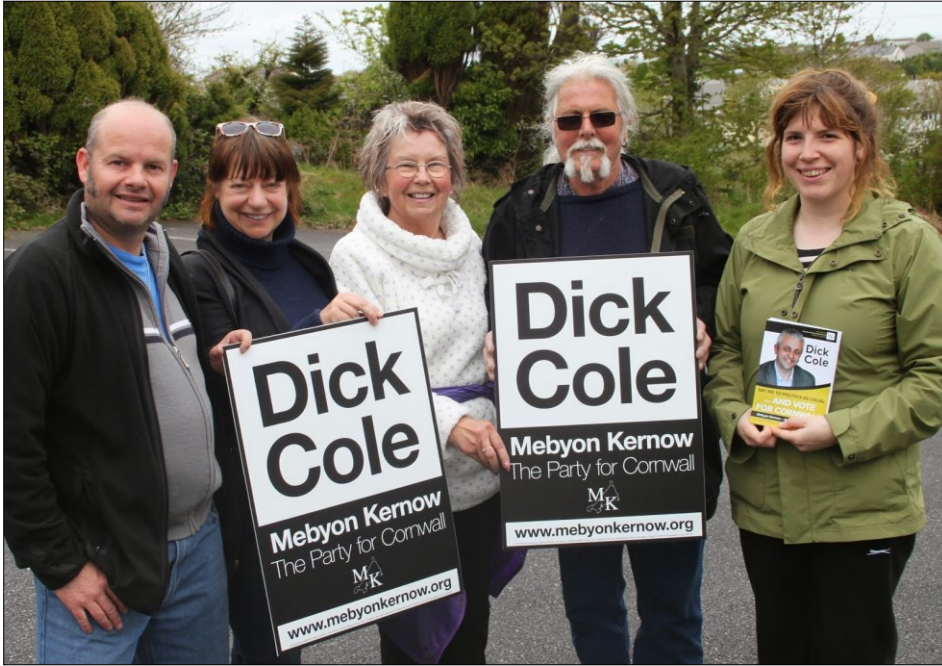
**DC:** First-past-the-post makes parliamentary elections very difficult for parties like MK,

while the main television media outlets are dominated by the established London-based parties and we are always denied party election broadcasts. My first parliamentary contest in North Cornwall in 2005 was very much about raising MK's profile, principally through the "freepost" leaflet delivered to all households across the constituency, while a handful of us distributed a few thousand additional leaflets. But in the St Austell & Newquay seat in the 2010 General Election, we ran a really comprehensive campaign. I was selected in September 2007 and, over the next three years, I really thought that we had created considerable momentum. We focused on a range of important political issues and my track record as a local councillor. My prominent role in opposing the waste incinerator at St Dennis and my opposition to the unitary authority certainly helped give me a high profile in the area and though I did not expect to win, the feedback was truly excellent. There was even considerable speculation that Mebyon Kernow would achieve a very creditable third place. But sadly, it was not to be. The Lib Dems ran a concerted "MK vote is a wasted vote" element throughout their publicity materials, and I polled 2,007 votes (4.3%). It was probably because of the raised expectations, that this was the greatest personal disappointment in my political "career." It was also jarring to see the Liberal Democrats immediately go into coalition with the Tories, given successful Lib Dem campaigns were founded on an argument that "the only way to stop the Conservatives is to back the Liberal Democrats."

**MB: I was your agent in the 2019 General Election and share your frustrations.**

**DC:** Absolutely. As you will recall, it is difficult being told by someone that you are the best candidate, or that MK's policies are the best for Cornwall. But they are voting for someone else because MK cannot win. We also have to acknowledge that most of our parliamentary campaigns have been less extensive than those of our main opponents; we have had fewer people leafleting and we have spoken to fewer voters. In the coming months, MK needs to carefully review how we approach future Westminster elections in the future.





**MB: An obvious focus for you must have been making the case for “home rule” for Cornwall?**

**DC:** For decades, MK has had to make the case for greater self-government for Cornwall and I am proud to have played my role in numerous campaigns linked to our calls for a National Assembly or Parliament. I am particularly proud to have authored the “Declaration for a Cornish Assembly,” which was signed by 50,000 people in 2000-2001.

**MB: Are you happy with the progress that has been made:**

**DC:** No. MK members have pushed so hard for devolution, but I remain disappointed at how representatives from London-based political parties have, so often, undermined our efforts. The Labour Government ignored the 50,000 declarations, while the Lib Dems co-opted the language of devolution to centralise local government into a single unitary authority in 2009. They promised it was a stepping-stone to more powers. It wasn't. And now the Conservatives are pushing a “county deal,” but it is about limited accommodations with Cornwall's unitary authority. It is not the devolution enjoyed in Scotland and Wales, and it is frustrating that our opponents are happy to see Cornwall trapped as a unit of “English” local government. Our fight for national government for Cornwall must continue and that means winning our own Parliament.

**MB: I cannot interview you without exploring how many people see you as a champion of Clay Country:**

**DC:** Thank you. On a personal level, it has been a great experience to represent part of the China Clay Area as a councillor and I have tried to fight for the whole area – which is not treated as a priority from those in authority. I have been proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with local residents on a wide range of big issues, such as opposition to the so-called ecotown. At the moment, one key priority for me is pushing for Cornwall Council to act on a strategy document for Clay Country, which I helped to write. On a political level, MK has polled well in the China Clay Area. For the last two local elections, Mebyon Kernow has been the most popular political choice in the district. Matt Luke has been elected in Penwithick & Boscoppa, while others including Brian Higman and Garry Tregidga have achieved really good results. It would be great to see these local successes replicated elsewhere as well.

**MB: And what about the future?**

**DC:** There is so much work still to do and I have every intention of continuing to work for Cornwall with my fellow MK members. I am particularly looking forward to the upcoming launch of *Towards a Cornish Parliament*, which will underpin our ongoing campaign for a new democratic settlement for Cornwall.

## Photographs

**Front cover** (from top, left to right)

- At the launch of *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism* in 2003, with Garry Tregidga and Bernard Deacon.
- Making improvements at the Fraddon Millennium Green.
- At the campaign launch for the 2005 General Election, along with Conan Jenkin (Truro & St Austell), Graham Sandercock (South East Cornwall) and Hilda Wasley (Falmouth & Camborne).
- Celebrating the (initial) refusal of the planning application for the waste incinerator in 2009, with councillors John Wood and Fred Greenslade.
- Taking part in a debate during the 2010 General Election.
- Pictured at Wheal Martyn, in the heart of the China Clay Area, where Dick is an active campaigner.
- At the launch of *Towards a National Assembly of Cornwall* in 2014.
- Campaigning against the imposition of a Devonwall parliamentary seat at Lowender Peran in 2016.
- On the campaign trail with Michael Bunney, just before the lockdown in 2020.

## Page 3

- A publicity photograph from 1997.
- Leaflets from the first election campaign that Dick helped with.

## Page 4

- At Lys Kernow in 2017, with Andrew Long, Matt Luke and Loveday Jenkin (MK's councillors on the unitary authority).

## Page 5

- MK members helping with Dick's 2015 General Election campaign: Matt Luke, Julie Tamblin, Helen Rawe, Pete Hedger and Sioned Haf.

## Back cover:

- Being interviewed on the BBC Politics Show, also during the 2015 General Election.

# Finding the Cornish Dream

Cornish Nation *reviews the latest “lifestyle” programme, which distorts the reality about housing in Cornwall*

Some weeks ago, a representative of Mebyon Kernow was invited onto Radio Cornwall to discuss a new three-part television series on Channel 4. It was titled *Finding the Cornish Dream* and had yet to be broadcast.

Not a documentary as such, it had been described as a “branded entertainment partnership,” which aimed to “build awareness” of a UK residential property portal provider known as “On The Market.” Indeed, it was all about estate agents showing “prospective buyers around dream homes in Cornwall” and helping them to “navigate its thriving property market.”

---

**One prominent actor described it as “the most awful piece of work” he’d ever “had the displeasure to watch,” while other comments on social media variously and rightly described the series as shameful, grotesque, disgusting and toxic.**

---

The MK spokesman made the rather obvious comment that the programme would almost certainly be about a mythical “lifestyle-Cornwall” for an external audience, rather than about the “life-struggle Cornwall” that is a reality for so many. It turned out to be even worse than predicted.

If you haven’t seen this programme – which could be better named as “selling Cornwall to the highest bidder” – it will not surprise you to know that the accompanying commentary was all about beaches, charming villages and market towns, beaches, rolling countryside, beaches, dramatic wilderness, more beaches and award-winning beaches.

In terms of the actual properties, the principal focus was on dwellings (with ridiculous price-tags) in coastal or secluded rural locations.



One couple, we were told, had “searched high and low for their dream house and after scouring all the local estate agents, they finally managed to secure a house overlooking the beach.”

The house near Newquay cost £1.45million and they then spent a similar amount on largely rebuilding it. The couple themselves stated that their “priority” was “great family memories.”

But it is now registered with Airbnb and in October 2022 you could have booked it for a week for £14,735 (made up of seven nights at £11,700, plus a service charge of £2,135 and a cleaning fee of £900). It has since transpired that the owners of this house already owned the next-door property, that is also an extremely expensive Airbnb.

Then there was the estate agent hyperbole and distortions relating to the Nansledan urban extension at Newquay being carried out by the Duchy of Cornwall and the so-called eco-town (renamed as the West Carclaze Garden Village) near Penwithick, described by the programme as sitting between “coastal shores and the wilds of Bodmin Moor.”

With so many local households struggling to access basic housing to rent or purchase at a sensible price, or indeed facing evictions because owners wish to sell their properties or turn them into airbnbs, this programme was unbelievably crass and insensitive.

It has been described by one local journalist as “property pornography” and the programme did not in any meaningful way address the unaffordability of housing in today’s dysfunctional housing market in Cornwall. Meanwhile, the single reference to the Cornish as a national minority was spectacularly misjudged.



Anger at *Finding the Cornish Dream* is certainly shared by a lot of people across Cornwall. One prominent actor described it as “the most awful piece of work” he’d ever “had the displeasure to watch,” while other comments on social media variously and rightly described the series as shameful, grotesque, disgusting and toxic.



# Battle for Trevalga

*Tenants fear for their future as a historic North Cornwall estate is marketed as a redevelopment opportunity*

The 1,200-acre estate of Trevalga, located between Tintagel and Boscastle, comprises a manor house, six farms and 17 homes, most of which is tenanted. The estate was purchased by “Lord of the Manor” Gerald Curgenven in 1934 for £14,000. He died in 1959 and left the estate in a will trust to benefit Marlborough College, where he had been schooled. The will desired that the estate should be preserved and improved and “as far as possible not sold or broken up.”

On 24th June, the tenants received a letter from the trustees of the Gerald Curgenven Will Trust stating that Trevalga would be put on the market. The tenants believe that the Trust is not acting in line with its legal duties and the fabric of their community is under threat. They started a campaign to halt the sale, challenging the Charity Commission to investigate what was happening, but the Commission declined to intervene.

---

**“Trevalga is a priceless time capsule, mercifully unscarred by holiday home ownership and unbridled tourism, which have ripped the hearts out of so many Cornish communities.”**

---

Trevalga is for sale with a guide price of £15.75million. The company dealing with the proposed sale has stated that it is subject to all existing tenancies “with the security of tenants remaining unchanged” adding that “the trustees have explored thoroughly the future of the estate within the trust structure that binds them and have concluded it is time for there to be a new owner not so constrained.”

The reality is that even though a number of homes have passed down through the generations, only two continue to have assured tenancies.

The more recent introduction of shorthold tenancies mean that the majority of households would have little security of tenure following the sale – especially if any new owner is “less constrained.” The actual sales blurb for the estate describes it as a “remarkable, private ring-fenced estate on the north coast of Cornwall with varied income streams and a myriad of leisure, amenity and redevelopment opportunities.” It is little wonder that local residents are frightened of what is likely to transpire.

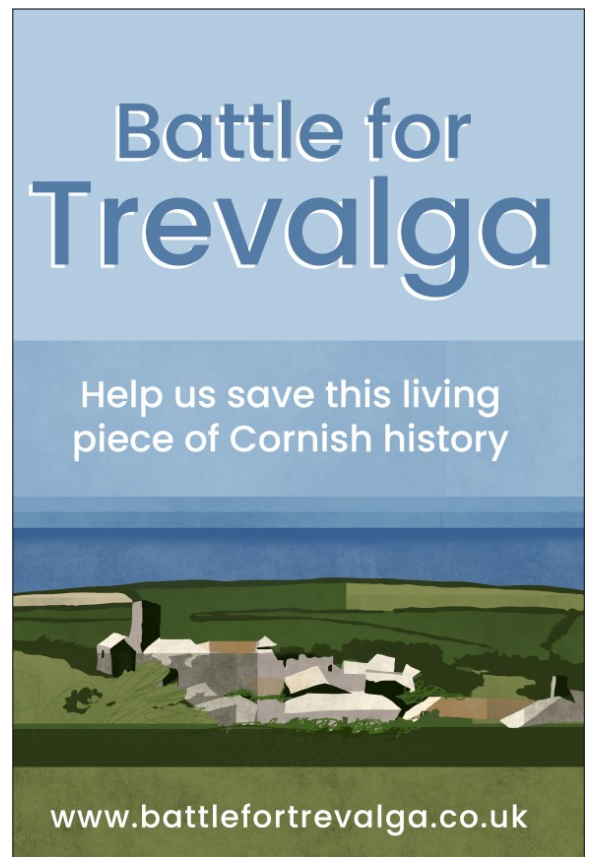
Speaking on behalf of the “Battle for Trevalga” campaign, Serena Partrick, who has always lived in the hamlet, said: “We’re facing the twin tragedies of people who have lived here all their lives — and in some cases families who have been here for generations — potentially losing their homes alongside the devastating loss of a living piece of Cornish history.

“Cornwall has a massive housing crisis with more than 21,000 households currently on the housing waiting list. There are people in Trevalga on shorthold tenancies who could be evicted with just eight weeks’ notice. There’s no way they could afford to rent anywhere else in this area and possibly not in the whole of Cornwall.

“Trevalga is a priceless time capsule, mercifully unscarred by holiday home ownership and unbridled tourism which have ripped the hearts out of so many Cornish communities.

“This isn’t just our battle — it’s a battle which needs to be fought by anyone concerned about the loss of one of the last unspoilt corners of coastal Cornwall. Once its special magic has gone, no amount of money will ever be able to bring it back.”

Residents of the settlement are adamant that the sell-off goes against the wishes of Gerald Curgenven.



Peter Pracownick and his family have lived in Trevalga for 26 years. He has told journalists that, when he moved in, the trustees told him verbally that he would never have to leave so long as he paid his rent: “I was told it would never be sold or broken up because that is how it is mentioned in the will.” This has been confirmed by other tenants.

Peter has described the situation as “devastating,” adding “we would have to start again and we can’t start again. There are families that have been here forever and starting again isn’t an option. We’ve neither got the time, energy, or the money. Even if we did, there isn’t even anywhere to go.”

---

Further information about the campaign to save Trevalga can be found on their website: <https://battlefortrevalga.co.uk>.

# Cornish news and views

## MK backs RCM

Mebyon Kernow challenged the Conservative-run unitary authority to do all it could to find vital funding to safeguard the future of the Royal Cornwall Museum. This followed the announcement that the Museum had failed to secure funding from Cornwall Council through its Culture and Creative Investment Programme, and subsequent reports that the facility could be at risk. MK councillors variously wrote to the relevant portfolio holder Carol Mould and the leader of the Council, Linda Taylor.

Cllr Michael Bunney, who has worked as a history teacher and teaches part-time at Tremough, said: "The Museum is such a fantastic facility and at the heart of our heritage offer. I see it as the flagship of Cornish heritage. I know these are tricky financial times, but the message I am receiving is that the Museum may have to close, which would be devastating. MK councillors are calling on Cornwall Council's Cabinet to find a way to support the Museum and to prevent its closure." (5th July 2022)



Update: significant pressure from across Cornwall has led to the unitary authority making some transitional funding available to assist the Museum in preparing itself to apply for lottery and other funding to safeguard the institution.

## Broken politics

A leading member of MK described the chaos at Westminster, which led to the resignation of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister, as "beyond satire."

Speaking at a meeting of MK's National Executive, Deputy Leader Cllr Loveday Jenkin said: "The events of the last few days have shown that the Westminster system is dysfunctional and the recent chaos is simply beyond satire. Instead of focussing on the cost of living crisis and working to safeguard our important public services, the Conservative Government has selfishly been at war with itself. The manner in which the Prime Minister refused to resign, when it was clear he had lost the support of his MPs, was wrong. But the speed with which Tory MPs launched leadership campaigns demonstrated how their personal ambition tainted proceedings.

"The over-centralised Westminster system is not working, and the ongoing political games in London will do nothing to improve the lives of people in Cornwall. It is clear to me that the UK needs significant political reform, and that should include meaningful devolution, which will give the people of Cornwall more control over their own destiny." (8th July 2022)

## Games in 2026?

The 2022 Commonwealth Games took place in Birmingham between 28th July and 8th August. Speaking as the Games got underway, Cllr Ryan Congdon (MK spokesperson on sport) said: "The Cornish were formally recognised as a national minority through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2014, but there continues to be significant barriers to the proper recognition of the Cornish nation. Just as we campaign for greater political and economic powers, it is right that we also seek greater representation in sports as a national minority.

"A total of 72 nations or territories are represented at this year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, and Cornwall will be the only Celtic land and constituent part of the United Kingdom without a team. In addition to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, there will also be teams from other parts of the British Isles such as Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man – all with populations much smaller than that of Cornwall.

"Our recognition and constitutional rights should mean that (Kernow) the nation of Cornwall has the same opportunities for its

people as those of the other Celtic countries. Why shouldn't Cornwall be represented at the Commonwealth Games with our flag flying proudly alongside the other Commonwealth countries, both large and small?"



Cllr Congdon, who serves on Camborne Town Council, added: "As a keen supporter of Cornish rugby, I would love to see men and women wearing Cornwall's black and gold in the Commonwealth rugby sevens competition. Just think how exciting that would be for our nation and such a boost for representative sport in Cornwall."

The next Commonwealth Games will be held in 2026 in Victoria, Australia and MK is calling on the UK Government and the Commonwealth Games Federation to recognise Cornwall as an international sporting nation. (28th July 2022)

## Energy cap?

Mebyon Kernow welcomed the government announcement of an energy price cap for households, plus support for businesses, but criticized Liz Truss's new administration for refusing to consider a windfall tax on large energy companies.

MK's leadership team issued the following statement: "It is to be welcomed that the UK Government has concluded that it must intervene to cap energy bills, but we remain concerned that it is not seeking a windfall tax on the energy companies. It is simply wrong that the cap will be funded through borrowing and repaid by consumers in the long-term, while companies will make bumper profits because of this terrible crisis. The Tory cap has been set at an annual charge of £2,500 for the typical household for the next two years, which is significantly up from the present cap of £1,971 a year, and the pre-April figure of £1,277.



The statement from MK concluded: “We call on the UK Government to put fairness at the heart of its legislative programme and to start by introducing a windfall tax, which would allow the cap for an average household to be reduced – further safeguarding those low-income households in greatest need.” (9th September 2022)

## Save the Aviation Centre

Party activists on MK’s National Executive unanimously gave their backing to the Cornwall Aviation Heritage Centre, which the Conservative-run unitary authority is seeking to remove from Newquay Airport. A statement from MK’s National Executive was as follows: “Mebyon Kernow fully supports the desire of the Cornwall Aviation Heritage Centre to remain on the Newquay Airfield site. The heritage of the airfield is extremely important and we challenge the leadership of Cornwall Council to work with the Centre to safeguard its future and to allow it to grow into the future.” Cllr Dick Cole was among the councillors who challenged the Economy portfolio holder on this at a recent meeting of Cornwall Council. (23rd September 2022)

## Budget for the rich?

Mebyon Kernow hit out at the Conservative Government’s “mini-budget,” which would massively benefit the rich and do little for the less-well-off. Measures from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, included the abolition of the top 45p rate of income tax for high earners, the removal of the cap on bankers’ bonuses, the cancellation of a planned increase in corporation tax, and the removal of stamp duty on properties worth up to £250,000. It was also estimated that the overall “tax cutting” package would require an increase in government borrowing of over £70billion.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies confirmed that the richest 10% of households would gain the most from the changes in tax policy. The Government itself estimated that the abolition of the top rate of income tax would benefit 629,000 people (earning more than £150,000) about £10,000 a year, while the Resolution Foundation said that individuals earning £1million would get an annual £55,000 tax cut.

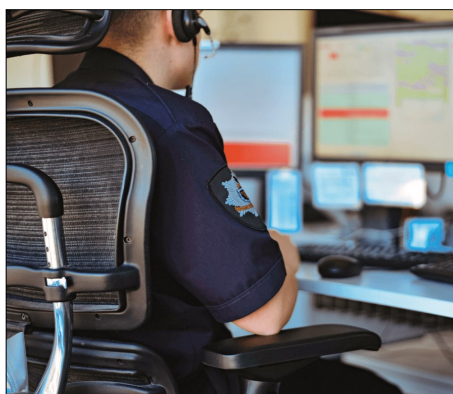
MK spokesman Cllr Michael Bunney slammed the announcement: “This is a shameful Tory budget for the rich, based on their ideological obsessions with ‘trickle down economics,’ which we know does not work. Taking on billions of pounds of debt to benefit the corporations, the rich and super-rich – while millions of households are struggling to make ends meet – is ridiculous.

“This is irresponsible economics. No British chancellor has ever chosen to permanently increase borrowing by so much. The Conservatives are gambling with our economy and risking the security of the many, to benefit tax cuts for the few. This budget won’t help the majority of people in Cornwall and it will just benefit wealthy friends of the Tories.

“The priorities of the UK Government are all wrong. To boost the incomes of bankers and the wealthy, while at the same time coming up with a requirement for part-time workers suffering in-work poverty to secure better-paid work or to have their benefits cut, is absolutely criminal.” (23rd September 2022)

## Save Fire Control

Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall has opposed the proposal from the Conservative-run unitary authority to close the Fire Control Centre at Tolvaddon.



A statement from MK’s National Executive stated: “Mebyon Kernow opposes the loss of the Fire Control Centre and the centralisation of this important service to a ‘partnership’ based outside of Cornwall. We stand in solidarity with the Fire and Rescue Service, the Fire Brigade Union and, in particular, the control staff who work so hard to provide a

fantastic service, taking 999 calls and mobilising fire engines to emergencies.

“We reject any assertion that this important control service could be better provided by people based to the east of the Tamar, who will have little knowledge about Cornwall. We call on the leadership of Cornwall Council to step back from this foolish proposal and to work with one and all to strengthen public services within Cornwall.”

MK councillors Andrew Long, Matt Luke and Loveday Jenkin spoke out against the proposed loss of fire control at a meeting of the unitary authority’s Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Matt Luke said the safety of people in Cornwall should be paramount: “The fire control centre is the heart of our fire service. If we lose it we lose the heart of our fire service. It is not just about money.” (6th October 2022)

## Economic chaos

Commenting on the fall-out of the Conservative’s mini-budget and the resignation of Liz Truss as Prime Minister, MK leader Cllr Dick Cole declared that the Conservative Party’s claim to “economic competence” had collapsed.” He said: “The Tory ‘fiscal event’ caused the pound to fall to its lowest-ever level against the US dollar, forcing a £65billion intervention from the Bank of England to calm markets. There was panic in pension funds, while there have also been massive hikes in mortgage payments as a direct result of the increase in interest rates, with hundreds of (less expensive) mortgage products getting withdrawn.”

There may have a reversal of large elements of what was proposed in the “budget for the rich” from September, but it is expected that the Conservatives will bring forward cuts in public expenditure, and possibly welfare payments, in order to address the problems caused by their policies.

Cllr Cole added: “It is low-income and middle income households which will suffer from the combined impact of the rising cost of energy, food and other essential commodities, higher mortgage payments, the real-terms reduction in benefits and cuts in public services.” (12th October 2022)

# Gwenno

## *Dydh marthys da rag an yeth Kernewek ha tressa albom Gwenno solo henwys rag Pewas Mercury*

Bryntin yw bos albom nowydh Gwenno dewys avel onan a'n 12 henwys rag Pewas Mercury, menowgh deskryfys avel "pewas an moyha rowethek yn ilow Predennek." Ynwedh *Tresor* yw kynsa albom nag yw Sowsnek bos henwys rag an pewas. Ynno, yma hynsyow skrifys yn tien yn Kernewek, marnas unn hyns yn Kembrek. Yma hemma gans titel *N.Y.C.A.W.*, dyworth "*Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth*" gans styr "Nyns Yw Kembra Dhe Werth," lavar kaskyrgh meur gerys dyworth Cymdeithas Yr Iaeth.

Ilowydh aswonys yn ta ha presentyer PW, Gwenno a devis yn Riverside, Kardyd, hy herens bardh Kernewek ha skriker Tim Saunders, ha Lyn Mererid, aktivydh neb o gorrys yn prison diwweyth awos bos hy rann rag gwiryow yeth Kembrek. Hy thas a's megis yn Kernewek, ha'y mamm kewsyl Kembrek dhedhi. Gwenno a dhenas aga yethow mes ynwedh aga warneth bolitek, a wra dos mes yn hy ober.

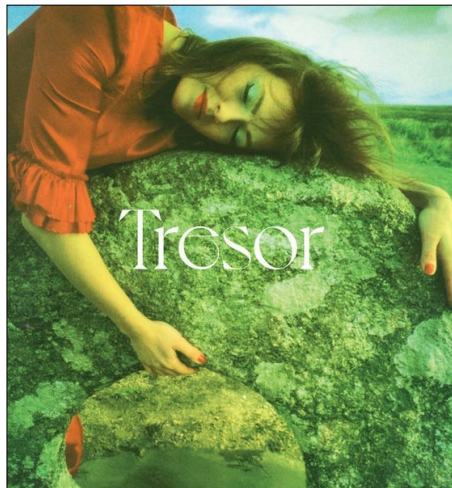
Gwenno a dhallathas avel donsyer, owth omjuna *Lord of the Dance* pan o hi 16, ow performya ha triga yn Las Vegas rag diw vledhen. Y'n termyn ma, y hwrug hi diskudha ilow elektronek ha, pan wrug dehweles tre, hi a dhallathas "sewya ilow heb ken" kevys yn yntanans a'n tardh ilewydhyon Gembrek ow kavos sewen yn fros meur. Hi a dhyllis nebes hynsyow ilow elektronek kyns performya gans The Pipettes, yndi popp Brighton yntra 2005 ha 2010.

Hag owth oberi gans hy hesaskorrer, kesoberer ha gorti, Rhys Edwards, Gwenno a askorras lies EP. Yn 2014, y tyllis hi hy hynsa albom hir solo, yn yeth Kembrek *Y Dydd Olaf* (An Diwettha Dydh), ha'y nessa onan yn 2018. Hemm o *Le Kov*, albom oll-Kernewek, a wrug fogella strif rag Kernewek bos gweladow, kekkefrys an gwesek yntra demondys tornyaseth ha tir ow kodhav boghosogeth tynn.

Gwenno re gewsis a-dro dhe fatel wrug hi skrifa *Le Kov* yn y esedhva yn Kardyd, mes rag hy thressa albom hi a spenas termyn yn Porthia may hyll hwithra gwell hy hevrennow Kernewek.

An albom ma o awenys pella gans lies benyn nerthek ha fogellys war hy "viaj a dhasdiskudhans" wosa bos kar.

*Tresor* yw heb mar tryghans meur personek rag Gwenno, mes yth yw nowodhow bryntin rag yeth Kernewek, ow sevel bri dre Gernow ha'n bys pella, yn unn golonnhe moy ha moy pobel dhe dhyski hag omLOWENHE taves kenedhlek Kernow.



It is fantastic that Gwenno's latest album was selected as one of the 12 nominees for the Mercury Prize, often described as the "most prestigious award in British music." *Tresor* (Treasure) is also the first non-English language album to be nominated for the award. It comprises tracks written entirely in Cornish, with the exception of a single track in Welsh. This is titled *N.Y.C.A.W.*, from "*Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth*" meaning "Wales Is Not For Sale," a popular campaigning slogan from Cymdeithas Yr Iaeth.

A well-known musician and television presenter, Gwenno grew up in Riverside, Cardiff, her parents being Cornish poet and writer Tim Saunders, and Lyn Mererid, an activist who was twice imprisoned because of her part in campaigns for Welsh language rights. Her father raised her in Cornish, while her mother spoke Welsh. Gwenno absorbed not only their languages but also their political awareness, which often comes through her work.

Gwenno started out as a dancer, joining *Lord of the Dance* when she was 16, performing and living in Las Vegas for a couple of years. Around this time she discovered electronic music and, when she returned home, she started "pursuing music blindly," caught up in the excitement of the 1990s surge in Welsh artists hitting the mainstream. She released some solo electronic music tracks before performing with the Brighton-based indie pop band The Pipettes between 2005 and 2010.

Working with her co-producer, musical collaborator and husband, Rhys Edwards, Gwenno produced a number of EPs. In 2014, she released her first solo full-length album, the Welsh language *Y Dydd Olaf* (The Last Day), and her second one in 2018. This was *Le Kov* (Place of Memory), an all-Cornish language album, which centred on the struggle of Cornish to be visible, as well as the clash between the demands of tourism and a land suffering intense poverty.

Gwenno has spoken about how she wrote *Le Kov* in her living room in Cardiff, but for her third album she spent time in St Ives so that she could better explore her Cornish connections.

This album was further inspired by a number of powerful women and focused on her "journey of rediscovery" after becoming a parent.

*Tresor* is undoubtedly a great personal triumph for Gwenno, but it also represents fantastic news for the Cornish language, raising its profile across Cornwall and the wider world, encouraging more and more people to learn and enjoy Cornwall's national tongue.

We would like to thank the Battle for Trevalga, Chris Bowden, Cllr Dick Cole, Cornwall Council, the Institute of Cornish Studies, Ann Reynolds, Gwenno Saunders and Paul Williams for photographs and images used in this magazine.



# Local housing affordability

*Important report published by new research unit from the Institute of Cornish Studies*

In March 2022, the Institute of Cornish Studies launched a new Social and Economic Research Unit, which it stated was set up to help fulfil the founding aim of the Institute's first director Charles Thomas to "study of all aspects of ... (our) past, present and future." The emphasis in SERU will be on Cornwall's present and future. It is anticipated that it will investigate the considerable poverty and inequality to the west of the Tamar, while also exploring Cornwall's massive social and economic potential, cultural possibilities and environmental activism. SERU's founding aims are (i) to facilitate and conduct high quality social and economic research in Cornwall, (ii) to build a network of partners in local government, education and the third sector, (iii) to build an independent and autonomous research culture in Cornish organisations, and (iv) to develop a programme of high quality social research methods training for partner organisations.

The Unit has already published a short *State of Cornwall* document, while Malcolm Williams and Phoebe Lawlor have just brought out a sobering report titled *Local Housing Affordability in Cornwall*. It can be downloaded from the website of the Institute of Cornish Studies. Printed below are some extracts from the document.

This research is an examination of local housing affordability in Cornwall. Rather than looking at affordability in Cornwall as a whole, we have conducted analysis down to postcode level for both buying and renting.

The overall conclusion is that whilst there are variations in house prices and rents across postcodes, there are very few postcodes where there is no affordability crisis. There are six postcodes where there is positive affordability for flats. By this we mean that there is no gap between earnings and mortgages. Sadly, in these six postcodes only 12 properties were sold in the last year. The story for terraced housing is that there are many more properties sold in the cheapest six postcodes (246), but there was an affordability gap in each of these

postcode areas. Camborne was the lowest priced location, and had an affordability gap of just under £11,000. Conversely the most expensive location for buying a flat was Port Isaac – St. Endellion with a mortgage gap of £441,674!

The locations where the most properties are sold are often the most expensive, which is likely the function of a property market, in Cornwall, that is shaped by affordability of those purchasers outside of Cornwall and buying into the Cornish property market.

Renting is equally difficult. We took a census of properties listed for renting on Rightmove on the 30th June this year. There were only 171 for rent across the whole of Cornwall! The only locations where there was positive affordability, based on the median monthly salary were Redruth, St. Austell and Liskeard. Unfortunately, at the time of our census there were only 14 properties available for rent in those towns.

Possibly the greatest crisis facing Cornwall at this present time, is one of housing affordability. In January 2022, the mean price per property to buy was £302,121, compared to £286,292 for England, and the average cost of private sector renting was £825 per calendar month. Although the mean price to buy is not far off the average for England, wages are considerably below the English median and are in the bottom 20% for England and Wales, across Cornwall.

This report has been almost wholly descriptive, but the description is that of a massive affordability crisis across Cornwall. It is a crisis that afflicts not just those seeking to buy property – even the most modest property, but those who seek to rent property – put it another way, those who are just trying to find somewhere to live!

There are many other parts of the United Kingdom where there are very high house prices and there are other areas, where wages are very low. But there are few places where these things exist together.



One obvious conclusion, from this research – and indeed confirmed in other work, is that long term Cornish residents are competing in a property market, which is in effect external to Cornwall. That is, those buying property are either people coming from parts of the country with higher house prices (and can enjoy a premium by selling elsewhere and buying in Cornwall), or they are possibly earlier immigrants benefiting from that premium. What they are not are Cornish citizens earning the median wage, or even rather more than the median wage. If the median wage rose would this help? Certainly (say) a 30% increase would bring lower priced properties within reach of many more households. The problem with this is supply. Those areas with the greater supply of housing are somewhat perversely, the more expensive. Those areas with cheaper housing have fewer properties for sale ...

Further work is needed on the Cornish housing market, to further explore the factors that make it what it is, but equally work needs to be done to see how other countries and regions tackle the kind of housing pressure problems we face in Cornwall. These things will be part of the focus of the work of SERU over the coming months and years.

# Dick Cole

**Mebyon Kernow**  
The Party for Cornwall



[www.mebyon.org](http://www.mebyon.org)

