

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 1st November – 2nd December 2022

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings of Cornwall Council during the last month, I attended Full Council, Constitution and Governance Committee (dealing with the final phase of the review of parish council boundaries), Chief Officers Employment Panel, Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the councillor working group on the consultation linked to Cornwall Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (in advance of the next Customers and Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

I attended the hearing into the application for the extension of the traveller site on the Kelliers, meetings of St Dennis Parish Council and St Enoder Parish Council (three), a briefing with Cornish Lithium, and meetings about a housing development and the Thomas Playing Field, both in Summercourt, plus a visit to St Dennis Youth Club.

In addition, it was great to attend the celebration for the 20th anniversary of the Cornish language being recognised as a minority language.

I have also attended a number of meetings via TEAMS video-conferencing including a monthly meeting for China Clay Area members, a meeting about a Strategy for the China Clay Area with senior officers, a catch-up about road safety matters, a council briefing in advance of the latest Full Council meeting, two meetings about the 2021 census with the Office of National Statistics, and a briefing about a proposed "devolution deal."

I also had further online meetings about a range of local issues.

2.0 Cornwall Council

2.1 "Devolution deal"

On Friday 2nd December, a Government Minister (Dehenna Davison) and the leader of Cornwall Council (Linda Taylor) signed a "devolution deal" for Cornwall. The Conservatives will soon be launching a ten-week consultation on the document, which will start on Friday 9th December.

From my perspective, the promise of additional funding for Cornwall in the "deal" is to be welcomed, but the "deal" itself is not devolution at all. And as someone who has campaigned for meaningful devolution for his entire adult life, I am desperately disappointed that this is the best that governing politicians in Westminster and Truro can come up with. It does not include far-reaching powers being transferred from Westminster to Cornwall as happened in Wales and Scotland, which have their own parliaments. The "deal" is simply a range of accommodations between central government and the unitary authority.

I will be making further comment on the "deal" in the near-future but, in the meantime, the devolution deal can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cornwall-devolution-deal-kevambos-digresennans-kernow>

2.2 Solar farm applications

There are four proposals for solar farms in or around the division of St Dennis and St Enoder.

The planning application for a solar farm at Tregonning Farm (PA22/01511) in Newlyn East Parish will be going to a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee on 15th December. I understand it will be recommended for approval. While the solar farm is not in my division, the cabling for the scheme will be excavated through St Enoder Parish, including along the old A30 through Fraddon and Indian Queens.

There will be a pre-application consultation event on another solar farm, which is proposed for land at Burthy Row / Chytane near Fraddon, on 7th December. It will be held at Fraddon Village Hall, between 2.00 and 7.00. There is also a website associated with the project. This can be found at <https://fraddonsolarfarm.co.uk> and it will have a virtual consultation, which is going live at 2.00 on 7th December.

Local residents may also remember that a company called Statkraft did consultations on two potential solar farms in the Spring of 2021. These were located on Tresithney Farm between St Columb Road and Whitecross (St Enoder Parish) and at Trerice (St Dennis Parish). There have been no updates for the last twelve months, so I recently contacted the company. I had a conversation with a representative of the company and received the below follow-up email message.

"The solar team at Statkraft has been recruiting for new team members over the last year after some long standing Solar Century staff left unexpectedly. This has meant the team has been significantly under-resourced at a time when other projects were in later stages of development and not been able to engage at the level that Statkraft expects on our projects in Cornwall. I apologise for this and the concern that it has caused the local community.

"Statkraft aims to bring a 'good neighbour' ethos to all of its projects. I would like to assure you that our communication will be a lot better going forward and I trust that we can have a good working relationship with yourself and the community. In this, I will be supported by internal communications colleagues as well as our communications consultants but as I say I am personally open to discuss the project at any time.

"With the Trerice site, we will be reopening consultation in the New Year with the community and with some new surveys, etc, and will be hoping to make a planning submission around April/May next year. I will be in frequent communication regarding this going forward.

"With regards to the White Cross site, this is in a less favourable position in terms of planning and we are aware of the potential risks and effects it could cause. As such we are doing some more surveys on this at the moment and seeing how best it could be shaped/reduced to minimise any effects. There is a chance we will not move forward with this project if the risks are still too great."

I will publicise further news as and when I get it.

2.3 Clay Area Strategy

On 1st November, a meeting was held between a number of senior officers from Cornwall Council and councillors from the China Clay Area to discuss the "Towards a Strategy" document for Clay Country. Some progress was made about greater support

for economic development in our area. I will report more, when the nature and extent of the support is confirmed.

2.4 2021 census

For many years, I have been involved with the campaign to secure a Cornish nationality tick-box on the 2021 census. I was very disappointed when the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the UK Government refused to allow such a tick-box, especially after they recognised the Cornish as a “national minority” in 2014 and promised to treat the Cornish in the same manner as the “UK’s other Celtic people, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish.”

Between 29th November and 2nd December, it was confirmed that 108,860 people (across Cornwall, England and Wales) wrote-in Cornish on the census – a 30% increase on the 83,499 who did so in 2011. In Cornwall, 17% of residents (96,380) recorded their nationality as Cornish.

I am heartened that so many people made the conscious decision to write-in Cornish. This is a powerful statement of the strength of our national identity, and it strengthens my resolve to press the ONS to include a Cornish tick-box in the next census and, more immediately, to challenge all Government departments and agencies to include Cornish as an identity option on official forms.

2.5 Parliamentary boundary review

The review into the boundaries of the UK’s 650 parliamentary constituencies commenced in 2021 and came up with proposed new boundaries, which split Clay Country between a revised St Austell and Newquay Constituency and a revised South East Cornwall. I am pleased that the plans have been modified and Clay Country will now be kept together in a new St Austell and Newquay seat.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

3.0 Multi-use trail

In previous reports, I noted how I had submitted an unsuccessful application to a Natural England “seed corn” fund to support the work to scope out, design and cost what needs to be done to turn the section of defunct railway line between St Dennis and the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve into a multi-use trail. I have been contacted because Natural England have an under-spend and it looks like these works can now be funded after all. I am presently liaising with Cornwall Council, the G7 legacy project and Natural England.

4.0 Cornish Lithium

4.1 Update on investment zone proposal

In my last report, I reported that Cornwall Council had submitted bids for 17 distinct areas to be covered by investment zones. This included Cornish Lithium at Trelavour.

However, following the resignation of Liz Truss as Prime Minister, it was confirmed in the subsequent Autumn Statement that all local authority bids for zoning would not be taken forward. It is understood that the UK Government will keep the policy but, in the future, will re-engineer it to focus on a smaller number of locations.

4.2 Meeting

On 8th November, I was pleased to have a meeting with a number of employees of Cornish Lithium at the Trelavour site, in order to discuss their project and how they will keep local people informed.

5.0 Proposal for solar farm at Trerice.

See section 2.2 for update

6.0 Highway schemes

Cornwall Council will soon be consulting on two small highway schemes in St Dennis Parish, which have been brought forward through the Community Network Panel's highway scheme. These are an additional pinch-point at the southern end of Hendra Road (to slow traffic entering and leaving the village) and a small degree of parking restrictions near the kebab shop (where some households have had difficulty in gaining access to their homes).

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

7.0 Planning

As usual, there are numerous planning applications being considered in St Enoder Parish. Listed below are some planning updates, which people may find of interest.

7.1 Housing development in Summercourt (PA22/08134)

A number of local residents have raised objections to the affordable housing led development of 20 dwellings in Summercourt, opposite New Row. Cornwall Council has also raised queries about aspects of the proposed scheme. I have met with objectors on a couple of occasions. I also recently chaired a meeting between a representative of the landowners and the objectors to discuss how elements of the development might be redesigned to address their concerns.

It is anticipated that a revised scheme will be completed in the next few weeks.

7.2 Solar farm proposals in St Enoder Parish

See section 2.2 for updates.

7.3 Six extra gypsy / traveller pitches at Little Meadows, Toldish (PA20/03553)

Cornwall Council refused planning permission for six additional gypsy / traveller pitches at Little Meadows, Toldish, because of the adverse impact on the local countryside. The applicant appealed the decision to the Bristol-based Planning Inspectorate and a hearing was held in the council offices in Bodmin on 2nd November. At this hearing, I presented evidence on a range of matters on behalf of St Enoder Parish Council and others. The decision is expected in a matter of weeks.

7.4 St Columb Road (PA22/07995)

The application for four two-bedroom flats at St Columb Road, by the road going to the rear of the Co-op has been refused because of an under-provision of car parking spaces.

8.0 Highway matters

8.1 Study into road through Fraddon and St Columb Road / Improvements at Sea View Terrace

I had a meeting with a senior highway officer on 3rd November about two ongoing assessments of local highway issues. I can confirm that a draft of a road safety audit from Penhale to the Halloon roundabout has been completed and I fed back some of my initial thoughts. A further follow-up meeting will be held quite soon.

In terms of proposed road safety improvements at Sea View Terrace, on the road between Fraddon and St Stephen, Cornwall Council is proposing two vehicle-activated signs warning people to slow down as they approach the terrace of houses in the locality, along with an improved parking area for residents. I hope to have finalised plans in the near-future.

8.0 Parish Council

I continue to work with the Parish Council Clerk on a range of local projects. This month, there was an important meeting with HAGs (who installed the play area in the Thomas Playing Field) about the future maintenance of the equipment. Also present were the Parish Clerk and Cllr Mark Kessell.

9.0 Remembrance Sunday

I was pleased to attend the annual Remembrance Sunday event at St Enoder Churchtown on 12th November and to read out the names of the fallen. I was also pleased to supply information about three servicemen (Wilfred Pearce, Wallace Ambrose Truscott and Trevor Carus Wilson) who were lost in the First World War and whose lives were featured in the church service.

The service at St Dennis was held at the same time as the St Enoder event and I was therefore unable to attend. I remain grateful to the Chairman of St Dennis Parish Council, Julia Clarke, who ensured that a wreath was laid on my behalf at the St Dennis commemoration.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

10.0 Advice

Over the last month, I have also assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics.

Please note: I neglected to post my October report on social media and I will therefore be posting an enlarged post comprising my activities through both October and November.