

Your Region, Your Choice:

The Case for Cornwall

Cornwall's response to the
Government's Devolution White Paper



Cornish Constitutional Convention
Senedh Kernow

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1 Summary

The Government is to be congratulated on producing the White Paper Your Region, Your Choice as part of the process that has seen the establishment of devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London. Your Region, Your Choice proposes to establish English regional assemblies and must, therefore, also encompass the establishment of Senedh Kernow, an Assembly for Cornwall.

Since November 2000, the Cornish Constitutional Convention has been active in promoting the case for a fully devolved assembly for Cornwall. Cornwall is unique within the British Isles and is considered by the Convention and the people of Cornwall to be a special place. In devolution terms too, Cornwall is a special case that needs to be recognised in any regional assembly legislation.

Cornwall is ideally placed to benefit from devolution. There are institutions that are emerging from its Objective 1 programme and these are seen as forming the basis of the region of Cornwall. An elected regional assembly could and should follow as a natural consequence.

There is a strong demand in Cornwall for a Cornish Assembly. This needs to be recognised in any regional assembly legislation. It is essential that Cornish regional institutions be established quickly, so that the benefits of Objective 1 funding are sustained.

There is no valid argument based on size for Cornwall not having a regional assembly. Comparisons with equivalent European regions suggest that a modern Cornish assembly would be effective, flexible and able to react in a timely manner to resolve Cornish issues and grasp Cornish challenges.

The Convention understands that because Cornwall is a special case, the Government was unable to mention Cornwall directly within the White Paper. However, the Convention intends to play its full part in developing the process for devolving to the English regions and calls on the Government to continue to reciprocate by developing the means by which devolution for Cornwall will be implemented.

As part of this dialogue, the Convention is able to demonstrate that creation of a Cornish Assembly does not create an unwelcome precedent and that recognising Cornwall as a special case will not commit the Government to further, unwanted, changes in its devolution programme.

As part of our contribution to the debate, the Convention restates its objective: the establishment of a democratically elected and accountable Cornish Regional Assembly, Senedh Kernow, within the context of a Britain of Nations and Regions.

The Convention restates its desire to develop a fully devolved assembly for Cornwall that is fit for purpose, capable of addressing the severe and persistent economic problems faced by Cornwall and which will develop policies that will realise the full potential of the people of Cornwall.

The Convention has also presented its analysis of the White Paper: A General Review of the White Paper: 'Your Region, Your Choice' which is intended to make a positive contribution to the devolution debate and will be distributed to all Cornish MPs and, in summary form, to all County and District Councillors within Cornwall, together with this document.

The Convention expects to continue its dialogue with the Government to ensure that Cornwall, as a region of Britain and Europe, can take part fully in the next phase of devolution within the United Kingdom.

2 The Government of Cornwall

The Convention understands that because Cornwall is a special case, it would have been inappropriate for the Government to mention Cornwall directly within the White Paper. We also understand the need to avoid creating unnecessary problems that might detract from the process of establishing elected regional assemblies for England in a timely manner.

Our understanding, based on our reading of the White Paper, and based on dialogue with the Government, its advisors and officials is that the Government:

- 1) Accepts the situation of having a partly 'devolved' England, thus leaving part 'undeveloped' for a limited period. However, it recognises that there are risks associated with allowing unelected regional assemblies to operate for an extended period and would seek to reduce these risks where possible.

In the case of Cornwall we are particularly concerned that delays to a devolution settlement will further delay setting up the necessary institutions required to sustain the benefits of the first round of Objective 1 funding and would hamper effective implementation of a second round from 2006. It is likely that delays in establishing this 'institutional infrastructure' would cause significant damage to Cornwall's prospects of economic recovery.

- 2) Does not want to initiate a protracted or difficult review of boundaries. However, the Government needs local proposals to be forthcoming in order to avoid creating unpopular institutions or being perceived as forcing local people into new and difficult structures.

Given the popular demand for a Cornish Assembly, and the strong, negative reaction to a Southwest Assembly, this can only mean developing a new regional structure for Cornwall.

- 3) Is prepared to take a pragmatic view and is not hung up on neatness.

Creating relevant regional structures in Cornwall can be seen as creating the infrastructure required to support a Cornish Assembly. The current pattern of emerging Cornish institutions through Objective 1 has, we believe, created the precedent for this, as has the first round of devolution, where quite different structures were created for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London.

- 4) Acknowledges that the White Paper may not contain the ultimate and complete solution for England. This implies that further developments will be both necessary and acceptable.

First, a Cornish solution would be an integral part of this process: it need not create an unwelcome distraction or precedent. Second, that some mechanism will be required to settle issues that may arise from the current regional map. Cornwall has a mature and well-argued case and Cornwall would therefore benefit from an early use of this mechanism.

- 5) Has a concern about the problems that 'rump' unelected assemblies may create. In the event that the result of a referendum in a given region led to a 'No' vote, the result will be a region that will not work, and which no one wants.

An assembly for Cornwall provides the Government with an opportunity to demonstrate devolution working within Southern Britain. It would also lessen the chance of a 'No' vote for a Southwest regional assembly and, by positive example, might encourage a more positive response elsewhere.

3 Devolution for Cornwall

3.1 Position of the Cornish Constitutional Convention

Cornwall is unique: it is the only region where a fully-constituted constitutional convention has been established, springing from a grass roots desire to achieve a devolved settlement. This has only been possible because of the unique circumstances that apply in Cornwall: Cornwall is a unique region, with specific characteristics and needs.

This special case has been documented in *Devolution for One and All: Governance for Cornwall in the 21st Century*, published by the Convention earlier this year. Within it, the Convention makes the case that Cornwall has special needs that must be addressed, and proposes the establishment of a fully-devolved regional assembly along the lines of that created for Wales or Northern Ireland.

The Convention believes that this is the most suitable model for Cornwall and would be able to tackle the severe and persistent economic problems that exist in Cornwall and lead to economic recovery, and would build a successful region.

Devolution for Cornwall is not about structures and administrative arrangements, but about people achieving an acceptable level of economic prosperity and fulfilling their potential.

3.2 Cornish special needs

Cornwall, like Scotland or Wales, has always had a 'special status', not only legally, geographically, constitutionally, culturally and linguistically, but politically and economically. It is, therefore, not surprising that there has been sustained interest in devolution for Cornwall,

More recently, the desire for a major change in the way that Cornwall is governed has deepened, primarily due to the coincidence of economic and structural issues, an increasing feeling of disempowerment and exclusion, and cultural revival. This combination of factors is unique within the United Kingdom and points up the need to recognise Cornwall's case of 'special need'.

Because Cornwall can reasonably be considered a special case, we do not believe that providing Cornwall with a devolved assembly will set any precedent for any other part of Britain. Furthermore, Cornwall can legitimately be considered a region because:

- **Economic factors play a crucial role in differentiating Cornwall from Southwest England.** The fact of Cornwall's relative poverty and the importance of the need to implement an effective and sustainable Objective 1 programme cannot be understated. Economic and social issues are unusually prominent in Cornwall, with problems of seasonal and poor quality employment, low incomes and second homes dominating the local agenda. There is a strong and growing belief that Cornish solutions are required to solve Cornish problems. The fact that, in the UK, Cornwall alone is likely to qualify for a second round of Objective 1 funding is ample illustration of Cornwall's divergent economic behaviour.
- **Geography is a key differentiator.** This includes the overall settlement pattern, the lack of large cities and that Cornwall is a 'virtual island'. Transport, housing, planning, tourism and economic development are tightly linked and there is a long-standing, but frustrated, interest in the development of trade along the 'Atlantic Arc'. These factors mean that a careful, considered and tailored approach is required when developing strategy. Overall, Cornwall requires its own, integrated approach.
- **There is a very strong blend of modern political and cultural distinctiveness.** Many people come to Cornwall because they recognise its distinctiveness: there is considerable evidence that many new residents become strong supporters of devolution

for Cornwall. There is also an increasingly prominent 'diaspora' that is supportive of political and cultural innovation as well as the powerful role models provided by other Celtic nations and regions.

- **There is a strong consensus within Cornwall that Cornwall constitutes a 'special case'**. Cornwall is a cultural and linguistic region, and is independently recognised as such.¹ In Cornwall, peoples' perceptions are strongly influenced by these factors, even if they are not themselves involved in cultural or linguistic activities.
- **Cornwall has a special relationship with England, as a Celtic region that is both part of England and separate from it.** The anomalous constitutional position that applies to Cornwall together with historic links with European and Celtic regions contribute to the perception of difference. This special relationship is unique to Cornwall.
- **Cornwall appears to be the only region where there is a significant grass roots interest in devolution**, and this appears far greater than that evident in the standard planning regions, with the possible exception of Northeast England. Elsewhere in Southern Britain, there appears to be general apathy towards regional assemblies.

3.3 The Cornish economy

Your Region, Your Choice states, "English regions are all different". This is an important point, particularly for regions that exhibit particular economic or social problems, such as Cornwall or Northeast England. Divergent behaviour is often the defining characteristic of a region, and therefore distinct policies are required to address distinct problems.

In Cornwall's case, defining characteristics are all too clearly visible. To quote Viscount Waverley "Crossing the border between Devon and Cornwall is like falling off an economic cliff."² As far as Cornwall is concerned, economic factors are crucial. This divergent behaviour may be best summarised by a comparison of key economic indicators.³

Economic Indicator (1998)	Cornwall	UK
Average Weekly Earnings	£291.80	£384.50
Average Weekly Earnings as % ⁴	68.2%	100%
% GDP Contribution by Sector (Manufacturing)	14.8	22.0
% GDP Contribution by Sector (Finance & Business Services)	10.8	21.9
Professional Occupations as % of Total Workforce	6.8	10.7

This economic divergence not only makes the submergence of Cornwall into Southwest England undesirable in terms of policy objectives, but also makes it difficult to achieve favourable economic outcomes for Cornwall if policies fitted for Southwest England are applied to it.

3.4 Devolution – the direct economic consequences

Not only are there significant opportunities to improve economic outcomes by developing economic policies that are tailored to Cornwall's needs, but there are also direct, negative consequences of not doing so. Given Cornwall's weakened economic state, their impact can be considerable.

¹ Sandford, M., *The Cornish Question: Devolution for the Southwest Region*, p.45. Constitution Unit, 2002

² Hansard, 28 Feb 1997 : Column 1477

³ *Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective 1 Programme: Draft Single Programming Document*. GOSW, 1999

⁴ With 40% of women earning less than £190 p.w.

Cornwall's experience is that while it loses out on top public service jobs, relatively prosperous administrative centres have benefited, such as Exeter or Bristol (120 miles and 200 miles respectively from Penzance). Estimates of revenues lost to Cornish businesses by the relative absence of public servants located in Cornwall vary, but one estimate is that this amounts to £60m p.a., which would make a significant contribution to the Cornish economy. The actual extent of this loss of revenue may well be considerably higher.

3.5 Economic sustainability

In the White Paper, the Government raises the issue of sustainability.⁵ Again, this is an issue of crucial significance to Cornwall.

The fact that economic aid is required in the form of Objective 1 funding is, in our opinion, an admission of failure to develop an effective economic development strategy for Cornwall. However, that emerging institutions such as Cornwall Enterprise, Creative Kernow, Finance Cornwall, the University of Cornwall and Heritage Kernow are being established is a testament to the Government's commitment to making Cornwall's Objective 1 programme work.

This type of administrative devolution is required not only to deploy economic and social funding, but also to ensure that Objective 1 investment is sustained and that an over-arching Cornish strategy is developed.

3.6 Recognition of Cornwall as a regional entity

As a supplementary point, Cornwall is a NUTS II region. For statistical purposes, a NUTS II region is considered to be the basic European regional unit. Assessments of economic need (and therefore aid) are frequently made on the basis of NUTS II regions. Cornwall is considered to be a region of special economic need and particular identity, and has therefore been granted Objective 1 funding on this basis.

Whilst not suggesting that NUTS II status on its own defines a region for the purposes of devolved assemblies, we would conclude that, in Cornwall's case, the fact that it is a NUTS II region in receipt of Objective 1 funding contributes to Cornwall's overall case.

3.7 Cornish size - an issue resolved

The Convention notes that the White Paper makes what is, in our opinion, the untenable assertion that a 'critical mass' is required for 'viable regions'. This argues against the evidence. Cornwall, for example, is more than large enough to sustain a regional assembly when compared with equivalent European regions or states (e.g. Luxembourg, Estonia, Iceland or Cantabria).

The latest independent research with respect to Cornwall confirms this view,⁶ so we suggest that this line of reasoning is now no longer credible or relevant.

⁵ "Regional policy needs to take a sustainable, long term view". Cm5511: *Your Region, Your Choice*. HMSO, August 2002

⁶ Sandford, p68

4 Cornwall as a special case - the evidence

The fact that Cornwall is a 'special case' is not merely an assertion by the Cornish Constitutional Convention. It is based on a considerable and growing body of evidence. This comes from a wide range of sources: from academics in a number of fields, through the results of wider consultation, through popular support and from within the Convention itself.

This body of evidence demonstrates that Cornish devolution is:

- 1) Widely considered not only to be generally desirable, but beneficial to Cornwall, by the people of Cornwall in economic, social, cultural and political terms.
- 2) Achievable in both political and organisational terms.

In addition, there is strong contrary evidence that failure to achieve devolution for Cornwall will be unpopular and will be greatly resisted.

4.1 Beaufort Research poll

In February this year, Golley Slater & Partners conducted a review concerned with developing a strategy for ensuring that the benefits of Cornwall's Objective 1 programme are sustained.⁷ As part of this review, Beaufort Research was engaged to conduct a poll. One part of this poll (700 participants) was to assess the extent to which people would support a Cornish or Southwest Assembly. The results were overwhelming:

Response	%
In favour of a Cornish Assembly	46
Not in favour of any assembly	34
In favour of SW Assembly	12
Don't know	8

The research concluded that there is an exceptionally strong identity within Cornwall (92% agree) and that Cornwall has symbols of identity and positive strengths that are as yet unharnessed. It also identified a significant 'brain drain' and considerable social issues as major inhibitors to economic recovery.

4.2 Research conducted by The Constitution Unit

In July 2002, Mark Sandford of the Constitution Unit of the University of London, completed his review of regional government in Southwest England.⁸ This work was commissioned jointly by the Cornish and Southwest Constitutional Conventions, assisted by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation via the Campaign for the English Regions.

In summary, the report concludes that:

- 1) Size would not be an undue problem for a Cornish region,
- 2) A Cornish Assembly would be administratively feasible,
- 3) A single unitary authority for Cornwall would not deliver additional benefits for Cornwall over the current administrative solution,

⁷ *Qualitative Research Debrief: Living in Cornwall*. Beaufort Research, 2002 and *Perceptions and Awareness of Cornwall: Findings From A Quantitative Survey*. Beaufort Research, 2002

⁸ Sandford, Executive Summary

- 4) There are significant practical problems in attempting to create a Cornish 'sub regional assembly',
- 5) Separate legislation would probably be required to create a Cornish 'sub assembly',
- 6) There is no satisfactory means of combining a referendum for a Cornish assembly with that of a Southwest region - separate referendums would be required,
- 7) A Cornish assembly would not suffer from 'lack of clout'.

4.3 Devolution for One and All

Earlier this year the Cornish Constitutional Convention published its paper *Devolution for One and All*.⁹ The publication of this paper marked a significant contribution to the devolution debate. The document is a blueprint for a uniquely Cornish solution, focusing strongly on Cornish problems.

It was published ahead of the government's White Paper and not only documents the aspirations of the Convention and many others in Cornwall, but makes a number of proposals that we hope will be recognised as valuable input into the wider devolution debate. Some of the key proposals include the needs of peripheral communities to be adequately represented, including protection of the strong tradition of independent representation that exists in Cornwall (and perhaps elsewhere), strengthening the scrutiny role of Assembly Members (AMs), and establishing the independence of officers of the Assembly.

The document was based on a number of discussion papers that had themselves been developed subsequent to considerable consultation within the membership of the Convention and through workshops and plenary sessions.

4.4 Other evidence

As long ago as 1967 in Westminster, the Kilbrandon Report noted that Cornwall had a special identity, whilst more recently, Lord Whitty stated, "Cornwall is a special case ... and perhaps deserves special status and special respect."¹⁰

Respected independent commentators have also noted that Cornwall is a special case, requiring a unique settlement. Banks (1970) suggested that Cornwall should be granted special status, and in particular noted the need for a Cornish assembly to have a direct line to London.¹¹ More recently he has commented on the Government's White Paper on devolution. He notes, "It is not the purpose ... to argue [Cornwall's] case, except to note that it is most powerfully argued."¹² He goes on to propose options for alternative regions in Southern Britain. We note that all of his options show Cornwall as a separate region in its own right.¹³

4.5 Results of consultation

The Cornish devolution debate is striking. Not only has the level and quality of the debate been extraordinarily high, but also the extent to which popular demand is evident. Although this paper cannot commit the necessary space to document the extent of public interest, the authors feel that it is helpful to itemise some key areas of public response over and above that demonstrated by the poll carried out by Beaufort Research.

⁹ Devolution for One and All: Governance for Cornwall in the 21st Century. Cornish Constitutional Convention, 2002

¹⁰ Hansard, 21 Mar 2001 : Column 1465-1466

¹¹ Banks, J.C., *Federal Britain?* Harrap, 1970

¹² Banks, J.C., Comments Submitted by J.C. Banks on the White Paper, Cm5511: *Your Region, Your Choice*, Section 2.13

¹³ *ibid.* Appendix C

4.5.1 The Petition

The Convention has been careful to test the level of public support directly. This has been achieved through the use of a petition, which was subsequently delivered to Downing Street in December 2001. The figures (at the last major count in February 2002) are as follows:

Metric	Number
Total signatures (i.e. separate petition forms)	50,546
Cornish residents	41,650
% Cornish electorate	10.7%
Breakdown by Constituency	% Electorate
St Ives	13.7% (10,712)
Falmouth & Camborne	12.5% (9129)
Truro & St Austell	9.2% (7266)
North Cornwall	10.1% (8534)
South East Cornwall	8.3% (6549)

The wording of the petition is prominent and unambiguous, and refers to Cornwall as a special place needing its own representative body: a fully devolved assembly for Cornwall. The petition was independently audited, and a copy of the petition database was handed to the Prime Minister at Downing Street in December 2001. The original petition forms are available for public scrutiny in Cornwall Records Office.

The level of interest generated by the petition cannot be underestimated. The extent to which younger people have become involved in the petition gathering process itself is particularly interesting, with the majority of petition gatherers on the street being below the age of 24. We believe that interest taken by young people, for example the Cornwall Youth Forum, is an important indicator of the health of the campaign and the relevance of the issue to the people of Cornwall.¹⁴

4.5.2 The media

There has been an extensive programme by the Convention of monitoring the devolution campaign across Cornwall and the English regions. The results suggest that the Cornish campaign has generated considerable interest, over and above that shown in many other regions.

Within Cornwall, all the main local newspapers have carried articles on Cornish devolution, and this has generated considerable reaction in letters pages. Southwest radio and television channels that broadcast in Cornwall have all carried news items or documentaries on the subject and, in addition, national press and radio have also commented or provided news or other coverage (including BBC Radio channels 4 and 5).

4.5.3 Local authorities

Local authorities in Cornwall are also increasingly taking the view that the only viable region for Cornwall is Cornwall. The Convention takes most seriously the views of Cornish local authorities, not only because local authorities are important partners, but because they are important opinion formers and indicate the extent to which the devolution issue is more widely recognised and understood.

The position of the county and district councils is shown in summary form below:

¹⁴ *A Young People's Manifesto for Cornwall*. Cornwall Youth Forum, 2002

Local Authority	Position
Caradon District Council	Caradon has passed a resolution identifying technical concerns that it has with the White Paper
Carrick District Council	Carrick has passed a resolution in favour of referendum on the issue of a Cornish Assembly
Cornwall County Council	Cornwall Council has passed a resolution calling for a referendum in Cornwall on the question of a Cornish Assembly
Council of the Islands of Scilly	Position yet to be taken
Kerrier District Council	Does not want a south west seven-county assembly
North Cornwall District Council	North Cornwall has passed a resolution that it rejects the notion of a seven-county region and supports the notion of a Cornish Assembly
Penwith District Council	Penwith has passed a resolution that it rejects the notion of a seven-county region and supports the notion of a Cornish Assembly
Restormel District Council	Restormel has passed a resolution in favour of referendum on the issue of a Cornish Assembly

Over 40 town and parish councils have indicated that they are in favour of a Cornish Assembly. The Convention intends to continue to encourage public bodies to consider their position, and to present the results to the Government.

5 A settlement for Cornwall

The Convention believes that a successful implementation of the regional devolution programme will require more innovative approaches to be developed.

This is necessary in the short term to ensure that (1) referendums are held within a reasonable time scale, (2) that these referendums are won, and (3) that elected assemblies are accepted and valued by the people they serve. Flexibility will be required to overcome resistance to devolution, particularly in Southeast and Southwest England, where considerable political and practical problems will need to be addressed.

The government has identified the need to develop tailored solutions for each region through a process of consultation. If this consultation is to be effective, it may well include a degree of debate about boundaries, the timetable for implementation, the structure and, perhaps, powers and functions of an assembly. This consultation process will need to be at the heart of the legislation. Without it, it is unlikely that the new assemblies will be fully accepted or valued. We suggest that the notion of an Electoral Commission appears to be a promising development, which would provide a mechanism without becoming bogged down in endless disputes about boundaries.

In the longer term, changes to the powers and functions of regions may be required as they develop their roles more fully and focus on their individual priorities. The acceptance of variable geometry / geography is therefore an issue of pragmatism as much as it is one of principle.

5.1 Cornwall and the principle of "Variable Geometry / Geography"

Developing an acceptable and workable model for Cornwall would be one such development of this 'variable geometry' of 'variable geography' approach. We see the Cornish case as making an important contribution to the debate, since it demonstrates a clear need for the principle of variable geometry to be included within the legislation.

However, we accept the need to demonstrate that the creation of a new Cornish region would not set a precedent that would (1) lead to a 'domino effect' or (2) bind the Government to accepting other changes in other regions. In this section, our approach has been to discuss the key issues that have been identified to us by the government and present our response in each case.

5.2 The Orange County problem

The first of these issues is what has been called the "Orange County" problem. The Orange County problem could be said to apply where communities could opt-in or opt-out of a regional structure at will. If administrative boundaries were allowed to periodically shift, it would be likely that administrative and delivery difficulties would result, confusion would be created, and boundaries might become blurred or confused.

If this situation were allowed to exist, 'holes' might be created within a region where service delivery becomes difficult or costly, or might break down altogether.

However, this particular problem would not occur in the case of Cornwall. Cornwall has only one boundary, with Southwest England, and administrative separation of Cornwall would not result in delivery issues for Southwest England. In effect, the creation of a Cornish region would involve only the recognition of new administrative or management structures.

Creation of the proposed Cornwall administrative region could be viewed as a boundary change for Southwest England, with the new western limit being the Tamar. The effect of moving this boundary would be to create a new 'Cornish administrative region', without creating a 'hole' in Southwest England or affecting service delivery issues east of the Tamar.

An assessment of whether the Orange County problem might occur is, in our opinion, a key factor that should be taken into account when deciding whether to make changes to the current regional map.

However, the Orange County problem would not apply when creating a new Cornish region.

5.3 Unstable regional boundaries

The second issue to be addressed is that changes to regional boundaries might not be long-lived. If a community or communities were to request a change of regional boundaries in order to transfer from one region to another, any government would need to satisfy itself that there would not be calls to (1) reverse the decision or (2) implement counter-proposals, since changes to regional boundaries will have both cost and quality of service implications.

It is suggested that in order to effect a boundary change, evidence would need to be presented that would demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt, (a) the virtual unanimity of the request from the community concerned, and (b) that no counter proposals would be likely to emerge for a very long time. It is suggested that an appropriately constituted Electoral Commission would be an appropriate vehicle for arbitrating such changes and could lay down guidelines in this respect.

As far as Cornwall is concerned, this problem does not apply. We note that Cornwall's boundary with Southwest England was fixed in 936 A.D. with only very minor changes since, and there is a strong, and very long-lived, sense that Cornwall is a region in its own right.

5.4 Regional interfaces

Another factor that needs to be anticipated and prevented is where creation of new regions or changes to boundaries might create 'interface problems', such as a failure to agree over

infrastructure projects like bridge crossings, public transport subsidies, joint working arrangements over economic policies or health strategic planning.

In any national structure comprising regions there needs to be a means to establish effective joint-working with neighbouring regions, since failure to do so may lead to poor strategic planning and use of resources. We suggest that care will be required to ensure that such joint-working arrangements are effective and that this will probably involve (1) a top-down framework supplied by the Government to assist partnership arrangements with the regions, presumably including an expanded role for the committee of the regions, (2) all regional assemblies should have one or more committees whose job is to ensure the compatibility of strategic plans with those of neighbours, and (3) self-interest should be a powerful component in ensuring that regions work in a mutually beneficial manner in key policy areas.

In the case of Cornwall, joint working arrangements are likely to be considerably easier than for other regions.

Cornwall only has one direct regional interface for land based services, transport and planning: with Southwest England. The fact that Cornwall has only one landward neighbour is seen by the Convention as a major strength, since establishing effective joint working proposals and eliminating the possibility of future disputes will be relatively straightforward compared to most other regions.

6 A timetable for Cornwall

As the Cornish Constitutional Convention and others have pointed out, the legislation will require a means to resolve issues that may arise from the current regional map. If this were in the form of an Electoral Commission, an independent body able to make recommendations to ministers on regional boundary changes, it could develop suitable principles for allowing or rejecting changes to the regional map.

If an Electoral Commission were to be the means of recommending and regulating such changes, the sequence of events as far as Cornwall is concerned might be as follows:

- 1) The Cornish Constitutional Convention would present evidence to the Electoral Commission.
- 2) The Electoral Commission would make a recommendation to the minister for further consideration.
- 3) The Minister would then either accept or reject the recommendation, or request further evidence, or return the matter to the Electoral Commission.
- 4) Subject to acceptance by the minister, a Cornish referendum would be timetabled. A review of local government would ensue.
- 5) Once the referendum was held, and assuming that a 'Yes' vote resulted, a date for an election would then be set.

For the reasons stated earlier, a programme of administrative devolution is also underway, although in an admittedly ad-hoc manner and at a relatively modest pace. This is necessary to set up the institutions required to effectively implement and sustain the benefits of the Objective 1 funding programme.

We suggest that in parallel with the programme of implementing the necessary electoral arrangements, a more formal programme of administrative devolution should also be implemented. This would not only ensure that Objective 1 benefits are fully achieved but would facilitate the implementation of a Cornish Assembly.

It is suggested that a suitable template for this process of administrative devolution might be as follows:

- 1) Continue to build on the existing programme of creating Cornish institutions. This will assist with the delivery of key parts of the Objective 1 programme and could rationalise the delivery of key programmes where there is a need to 'shorten supply lines', or where there is an issue relating to identity.
- 2) These institutions would then be readied for integration into a Cornish Regional Development Agency. This new organisation would not only include the existing office of the SWRDA, but would also include Cornwall's development company (Cornwall Enterprise), Creative Kernow, Finance Cornwall and the proposed Heritage Kernow body.
- 3) Subject to approval by the relevant Minister within the relevant legislation, the new Cornish RDA would then be formally established.

As far as arrangements for the Government Office is concerned, the Convention proposes that a GO for Cornwall would also be created as part of the same arrangements.



www.senedhkernow.freeuk.com

Cornish Constitutional Convention

PO Box 7 Truro TR1 1WW Kernow