

Chair's Address to Cornish Constitutional Convention AGM



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Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Officers and the Steering Group for their hard work throughout the year. It has not been our most high profile year, but we have been contemplating the future and 2014 will see a greater level of public activity.

The Steering Group, on behalf of the members of the Cornish Constitutional Convention, have been thinking about what we need to do and the tenants of a Cornish Assembly. Thank you to Pedyr and Stephen for bringing papers forward and for stimulating debate.

The Steering Group has reaffirmed our fundamental tenants that; we are charged with advancing progress toward a democratically-elected Assembly for Cornwall, that we should be examining real and realistic models of constitutional change for Cornwall, and we should be speaking the truth to power – something we have always done well – by explaining the advantages of, for instance, the 'Cornwall Deal', to the UK government in order to achieve by increment what we would like to achieve by referendum-backed Act.

The Cornish Constitutional Convention recognises that Cornwall Council is the one democratic representational body that Cornwall has and that the Convention needs to provide a 'critical friend' service to the Council. The Convention will continue to oppose any threat of south west regionalisation of Cornwall.

The Cornish Constitutional Convention will continue to advocate for a Cornish Assembly based on four key themes;

That a Cornish Assembly would allow more affordable government for Cornwall. This will be achieved by:

- Functions responsible for Cornwall based in Cornwall
- Genuine devolution to town and parish councils
- No reinvention of local government tiers
- Health and Police under Assembly control
- Significant tax varying powers
- Full devolution of business rates income
- Power of Member recall by the electorate

That a Cornish Assembly will deliver responsible economic growth. This will be achieved by:

- Focusing on and protecting a unique natural and historic environment
- Utilising this environment to generate economic possibilities
- Recognising that 'growth' is not exponential
- Focusing on skills and jobs opportunities for those already in Cornwall
- Prioritising growth in the skills and experience base of the Cornwall workforce

That a Cornish Assembly will support Cornish culture. This will be achieved by:

- Recognising that Cornish culture is the bedrock of identity and autonomy
- Supporting, protecting and enhancing the jobs, assets and opportunities afforded by Cornish culture and identity

That a Cornish Assembly will ensure an inclusive Cornwall. This will be achieved by:

- Equality of opportunity and protection for all regardless of their sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, sex, religion or political belief.

In order to take this message to a wider audience we will seek to produce a document restating the case for a Cornish Assembly. We will seek to influence the manifestos for the forthcoming European and then UK elections. We will seek to win the support of our Parliamentarians and Cornwall Councillors.

Today, we call for a Cornwall and Isles of Scilly European constituency. A Cornwall and Isles of Scilly European constituency will provide a real link to our MEP; it will recognise both our historic and modern identity and status. A Cornwall and Isles of Scilly European constituency is essential for the election to have validity and meaning, and it is essential for our voice to be heard clearly in Europe.

There is much interest in what is happening in Brittany and Scotland. There is a debate, not only about the future of Scotland, but about the future of the United Kingdom. We must ensure that Cornwall's voice is strongly heard. We must ensure that where there are lessons to be learnt, we learn them, and where opportunities arise, we take them.