

Dear Cllr Leigh Frost

11-Dec-2025

In July Cornwall Council [backed a motion](#) calling on the Government to formally recognise Cornwall as the fifth nation of the United Kingdom, alongside England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland/the north of Ireland..

We are delighted that the Council working together with MPs and Cornish civic society has achieved another important step toward that recognition with Cornwall 'likely' to achieve a bespoke devolution deal, with Devonwall ruled out as an option. This also comes with the Cornish language getting equal recognition and protection with other indigenous British languages under the European charter.

We now have to build the case for Cornish nationhood, which is about *identity as a nation* to strengthen the case for fair funding alongside other nations and articulate our vision. We share your belief that Cornwall must be empowered "*to shape our future on our own terms*" and we encourage you to explore how wider public backing could be built in the form of a properly convened citizens assembly.

Why public backing in the form of a citizens assembly is essential

Cornwall Councillors are elected by and for the people of Cornwall. Turn out at local elections is an issue which is part of broader cynicism about politics, fear about taxation and concern about decision making. Although various expressions of public opinion appear to support the journey to nationhood; the concept is not as well understood as it could be. That's why the Council needs the active support of the communities that it serves to build the detail of what nationhood would mean.

So, we would like to work with you on establishing that citizens assembly and the appointment of an objective stewarding committee to support it: including independent voluntary and community organisations, and constitutional experts. We sketch out some brief notes in the annex to this letter below.

"*To shape our own future*" are words that will resonate with many who feel they have no real say over the decisions that affect their lives. There is real hunger for change but people need to know how your leadership will translate into practice:

- What are the constitutional rights, powers and resources that Cornwall needs to make that happen? Do these include fiscal powers? Powers over housing and planning?
- Does the transfer of real power stop at Cornwall Council? Or will parish councils and local communities also have real power "*to shape their own future*"?

We believe that with greater powers over transport, housing, and economic development must come stronger democratic participation and accountability. A Citizens' Assembly would give the people of Cornwall a meaningful voice in shaping the next stage of our story.

The questions outlined above are not intended as criticism but as an invitation to deepen public understanding and engagement. We realise that the Council will be working on these questions and more, so this is a great opportunity to evolve

representative civic engagement that can support your work through lived experience.

The answers to these questions will determine the extent to which public support can be mobilised. A high profile properly convened 40-50 member citizens assembly would give a safe space for these questions to be aired and addressed in a deliberative and thoughtful manner. We sketch a brief outline of a citizens assembly which we hope you will find helpful (see appendix below) and we highlight one key point: central to its success will be a diverse and representative sample of Cornwall's population based on key demographic criteria such as age, income, housing tenure, location in Cornwall along with equality protected characteristics such as gender identity, ethnic identity and faith.

Our commitment

As signatories to this letter, we are willing to play our part. Should you decide to convene such an assembly, we commit to working with you to maximise public support. Some of the signatories have also offered to be part of a Stewarding Committee that gives oversight to the process to ensure fairness, balance and transparency in how the citizens assembly is conducted.

All we ask is that you involve us from the outset so that we are clear about how you plan to proceed. There is an increasing body of local expertise in using citizens juries and assemblies. The council already has experience of using *stratified random sortition* for the resident's energy panels; Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum applied the same process in setting up the Penzance citizens panel in 2019, as did the Bude Community Assembly.

A Shared and Inclusive Nationhood

Cornwall's national identity is proudly multicultural. Everyone who lives here, contributes to its communities, and values its distinct culture belongs in this conversation, irrespective of birthplace or background.

In setting out this proposal we acknowledge there are risks. But the greater risk is to isolate the progress that we now need to make to solidify Government promises. The current governance arrangements are widely experienced as distant, opaque, and overly centralised, which risks weakening trust in democracy. We need change and we hope you will see this moment as an opportunity for bold and imaginative leadership.

List of Signatories

Andrew Yates, Chair of Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum

Gavin Barker, Trustee, Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum

Jane Johnson MBE, Chief Executive, Disability Cornwall & IoS

Zuzanna Michajluk, Community Partnership and Engagement Officer, Disability Cornwall & IoS

Sandy Lawrence BEM, Chief Executive, Bridges for Change

Steve Paget MBE

Advocates for Disability JUSTice (ADJUST)

Gemma Pople, Chief Executive, Konnect Communities

Matthew Kenworthy Gomes

Engagement Director, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum

Clinton Sealy Jnr

Transformation Cornwall Operations Director

Stephen Horscroft, Vice Chair Kernow CPRE

Helen Trevaskis

Writer and Illustrator

Alana Scott

Annex: citizens assembly for Cornwall

Recruitment

1. **Set up an independent Stewarding Committee** to ensure balance and impartiality. This should also include the Youth Council.
2. **Advertise through Cornwall Council website**, newsletters and via the voluntary sector to create a pool of interested applicants (minimum 200-250). Use Google Forms (free) to create a pool of 200 plus applicants. To get a representative sample the form should ask category questions relating to age, income, housing tenure, occupational status, ethnic identity (Cornish, other), along with equality protected characteristics such as gender identity, faith etc
3. **Conduct democratic lottery to choose 40-50 people.** a) Use council newsletters and Cornwall Council tax database to advertise the citizens assembly b) From a pool of 200+ interested applicants [Use Panelot](#) (free online automated software) to conduct stratified random sortition to arrive at a citizens assembly of 40-50 people which reflects Cornwall's demographic profile.

The three phases of a deliberative assembly

Learning

Assembly members first learn about an issue in depth. The citizens assembly listens to a presentation by the Cornwall Council leader outlining the key demands put to Westminster as well as the importance of preserving Cornwall's cultural identity and history. Ideally, the presentation includes how such additional powers would be exercised in partnership with local parishes and local communities.

To ensure balance and avoid accusations of bias, assembly members would listen to other voices on the topic of Cornish autonomy. These include representatives from Cornish Association of Local Councils, the voluntary sector, businesses, campaign and trade unions. It would also include asking for a response from each of the local party leaders.

Assembly members are normally empowered to interrogate speakers but in a way that is thoughtful and respectful, based on 'conversational guidelines' agreed by the assembly at the outset (e.g. Listen without interrupting, use respectful language, be open to learning, find common ground etc)

Deliberation

Aided by impartial facilitators, participants then engage in small group face-to-face deliberation where they reconsider their initial ideas on the topic in the light of the evidence and testimonies from the learning phase, but also with respect to the arguments and experiences of their fellow deliberators.

Decision making and recommendation

The learning and deliberative work enables participants to arrive at a considered judgement, ideally endorsing and backing the demands made by Cornwall Council. It is important to allow some flexibility for amendment as well as for strengthening demands for autonomy.

