

Dear Clerk to Week St Mary Parish Council,

The Charter for Cornwall is a grassroots campaign calling for candidates at the forthcoming Cornwall Council elections to commit themselves to a more sustainable, longer-term vision for Cornwall. We are calling on voluntary organisations and town and parish councils to support the four pledges of the Charter, which can be found at <http://www.charterforcornwall.com/the-four-pledges> We hope Week St Mary Parish Council will join others in supporting this campaign.

Since the 1960s Cornwall's housing and population growth has run at a rate far higher than the UK norm. At present housebuilding rates are 40% higher than upcountry, while applications received for major residential schemes are 78% higher pro rata. The Government wants it to be even higher and Cornwall Council's Local Plan obliges. Despite the almost universal demand from local organisations for a lower housing target, councillors have, in the main, been unable or unwilling to mount a robust challenge to a higher target and demand fairer treatment for Cornwall and its communities.

While the planners prefer to talk about 'local needs', in reality the vast majority of the housing target will go to meet external demand and second 'homes'. In consequence Cornwall has become a developers' paradise, attracting speculative housing projects on the edges of our towns and locking us into a spiral of population growth. This threatens to undermine the economic gains of recent years and, in a context of austerity, overload the NHS and GP surgeries, schools and other services, while contributing to the growing congestion on our roads. In short, developers get the benefits; local communities suffer the drawbacks. Cornwall Council's only answer is more of the same.

Meanwhile, our young people struggle to access 'affordable' housing and our coastal villages become ghost towns in winter.

There has to be a better way. Councillors and local communities need to do more to work together to seek a more sustainable and longer term strategy for Cornwall, one that does less damage to our environment and heritage. May's Cornwall Council elections offer the opportunity to make the future of Cornwall an issue. We plan to ask all the candidates in those elections to sign up to the four pledges of a Charter for Cornwall. Currently, the Charter is open for consultation until February 4th. In February and March, we will be publicising it and asking supporters to lobby candidates as they declare themselves. In April/May we will be publishing their responses online.

The more organisations that declare their support for the Charter, the more chance we have to convince candidates to commit themselves to a change of direction. We need a more open and honest Cornwall Council responsive to its communities. We need councillors prepared to do more to defend our countryside and those aspects that make Cornwall special.

We hope that Week St Mary PC can support us, either by replying to this email or via the contact form on our website. If you have any queries please do get in touch.

Bernard, Pete, Julie

for Charter for Cornwall