

# Towards a National Assembly of Cornwall



**A policy statement from:  
Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall**

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## Foreword

Mebyon Kernow is leading the campaign for a National Assembly of Cornwall and this document sets out what it could mean for Cornish communities.

We are ambitious for Cornwall. We believe that a new democratic settlement is needed to ensure we can build a confident and outward-looking Cornwall, that has the power to take decisions for itself.

Join us and help us to make greater self-government for Cornwall a reality.



**Cllr Dick Cole**  
Party Leader

## Raglavar

Yma Mebyon Kernow ow ledya an kaskyrgh rag Senedh Kenedhlek Kernow ha'n skrif ma a dhispleg an pyth a allsa styrya rag kemenethow kernewek.

Ughelhwanssek on a-barth Kernow. Ni a grys bos edhom a ervirans nowydh demokratek rag surhe ni dhe allos drehevel Kernow gyfyanssek hag ow mires yn-mes, hag a's teves an gallos dhe wul erviransow hy honan.

Omjunyewgh genen ha ri gweres dhyn may fydh gwirvos moy honan governans rag Kernow.



**Cllr Dick Cole**  
Hembrynkyas

# Introduction

1. Mebyon Kernow believes that the historic nation of Cornwall, with its own distinct identity, language and heritage, has the same right to self-determination as other nations such as Scotland and Wales.
2. We believe that the people of Cornwall should have more say in how their lives are run and that locally elected politicians should be taking the key decisions about Cornwall's future – not unelected bureaucrats or disinterested ministers in London.
3. On St Piran's Day 2000, MK launched the Declaration for a Cornish Assembly campaign. The declaration stated the following:

*Cornwall is a nation with its own identity, culture, traditions and history – it also suffers severe and unique economic problems.*

*Important decisions about our future are increasingly taken outside of Cornwall and such decisions are often inappropriate or even contrary to the needs of our local communities.*

*Scotland now has its own Parliament and Wales its own Assembly – but Cornwall has been ignored. We had the artificial 'south west' region foisted upon us.*

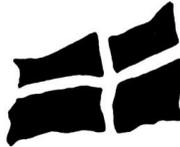
*We, the People of Cornwall, must have a greater say in how we are governed. We need a Cornish Assembly that can set the right democratic priorities for Cornwall and provide a stronger voice for our communities in Britain, in Europe and throughout the wider World.*

*I support the Campaign for a Cornish Assembly.*

4. Over a period of 18 months, a total of 50,546 individual declarations were collected, equating to more than 10% of the Cornish electorate. The declarations were presented to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street on 12th December 2001.

5. It is the view of Mebyon Kernow that the declarations demonstrate significant support for greater powers to Cornwall, and that a detailed proposal for a National Assembly should be developed and placed before the people of Cornwall in a binding referendum.

## I Support the Campaign for a Cornish Assembly



Cornwall is a nation with its own identity, culture, traditions and history - it also suffers severe and unique economic problems.

Important decisions about our future are increasingly taken outside of Cornwall and such decisions are often inappropriate or even contrary to the needs of our local communities.

Scotland now has it's own Parliament and Wales it's own Assembly - but Cornwall has been ignored. We have had the artificial 'south-west' region foisted upon us.

Cornwall has had to accept second best for too long.

**We, the People of Cornwall, must have a greater say in how we are governed. We need a Cornish Assembly that can set the right democratic priorities for Cornwall and provide a stronger voice for our communities in Britain, in Europe and throughout the wider World.**

**I support the Campaign for a Cornish Assembly.**

Signature .....

Full name .....

Further information (eg. pensioner, fisherman, housewife, councillor, etc.) .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Date .....

Please return to -  
**Campaign for a Cornish Assembly, c/o Dartington, Chyvelah Rd,  
 Threemilestone, Truro, Cornwall.**

**Important note -**  
 Your name will be added to a list, alongside the thousands of others calling for increased political power for Cornwall. This list will be presented to the Government as part of the campaign for an Assembly for Cornwall. This individual petition form will also be forwarded to the Prime Minister

***Best  
for  
Cornwall***

***Facing  
Our  
Future  
with  
Confidence***

Printed and published by  
 Mebyon Kernow - the  
 Party for Cornwall,  
 Dartington, Chyvelah Rd,  
 Threemilestone, Truro,  
 Cornwall.

## The evolving politics of the United Kingdom

6. Devolution has led to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, Assemblies for Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as an Assembly for London.
7. The devolved administrations have certainly grown in stature and authority in recent years, and constitutional change continues to rise up the political agenda across the whole of the United Kingdom.
8. The National Assembly of Wales gained limited law-making powers through the Government of Wales Act 2006, which were greatly extended in 2011 following a second referendum. The Wales Act 2014 devolved additional borrowing powers to the National Assembly, along with control of business rates, landfill tax and stamp duty. The legislation also included provision for a referendum on the devolution of income tax.
9. On 18th September 2014, the people of Scotland went to the polls to vote on whether their country should become a fully independent state, as set out in the Scottish Government's White Paper, *Scotland's Future*.
10. A total of 1,617,989 people (45%) voted to support independence, but this was opposed by 2,001,926 people (55%).
11. The no vote was underpinned by promises of additional powers for the Scottish Parliament from the leaders of the three largest London-based political parties. They argued that a "stronger Scottish Parliament" would actually strengthen the basis of the United Kingdom.
12. The Prime Minister along with the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties even signed a joint "vow," which pledged "permanent and extensive new powers" for Scotland. This led directly to the setting up of the Smith Commission by David Cameron in the immediate aftermath of the referendum vote.

13. The Smith Commission published its recommendations in late 2014 which included extra powers for the Parliament covering a range of areas such as taxation and welfare. This forms the basis of a new Scotland Bill.
14. The long-standing Silk Commission in Wales also reported its final findings in 2014, which recommended significant additional powers for the National Assembly. This has led to the publication of a draft Wales Bill, which is being energetically debated in the Principality.
15. Following the referendum, the Prime Minister attempted to shift the political debate away from Scotland. He pledged “a balanced settlement – fair to people in Scotland, and ... to everyone in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as well.” He ignored Cornwall.
16. The subsequent debate has been stilted. It has focussed on Tory demands for “English votes for English laws” as well as changes to local government.
17. It remains the view of Mebyon Kernow that there needs to be a mature, respectful and wide-ranging debate about the future of the whole of the United Kingdom and how it is governed.
18. There is certainly a desperate need to address the unequal constitutional relationships between the various nations and regions of the UK – including Cornwall – as well as the centralising influence of London and the South East of England.
19. Indeed, the future constitutional status of Cornwall should be at the very heart of this debate.

## **The so-called “devolution deal”**

20. On 16th July 2015, central government announced its “Cornwall Devolution Deal,” which had been agreed with the leadership of the unitary authority.
21. This top-down “deal” was extremely feeble and lacked ambition. It only allowed very limited new powers to the unitary authority, while giving other responsibilities to unelected bodies with little democratic legitimacy such as the Local Enterprise Partnership.
22. The headline announcements were that (i) Cornwall Council would have powers to franchise bus services, (ii) Cornwall Council would work with local health organisations on a plan for integrating health and social care services, (iii) Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly would be given Intermediate Body status to allow some limited control over EU funding, and (iv) the Local Enterprise Partnership would be given “more say on boosting local skills levels” and the ability to “integrate national and local business support services.”
23. Such reforms do not even merit being described as “devolution.” Indeed, the “deal” was so limited in scope that it did not merit legislation or even a debate in the House of Commons.
24. It is the view of Mebyon Kernow that central government is deliberately undermining meaningful democratic devolution to Cornwall by treating us as a “local government” unit of England, rather than a historic nation which merits greater self-government.
25. Cornwall needs proper devolution – not tweaks to local government – and the people of Cornwall need to construct a compelling public campaign to deliver a National Assembly that can deliver for our local communities.

## **A proper democratic settlement for Cornwall**

26. It is the view of Mebyon Kernow that Cornwall merits stand-alone legislation, similar to that afforded to the other Celtic parts of the UK.
27. Just like Scotland and Wales, Cornwall is a historic Celtic nation which, as well as having its own distinct identity, has a unique constitutional position that reinforces Cornish nationhood through the Duchy of Cornwall and Stannary Law.
28. It also has a distinct economic profile, with the lowest output in the whole of the UK. This is exacerbated by the centralised nature of the United Kingdom.
29. However, at the present time, Cornwall is alone amongst the Celtic nations of the United Kingdom in having no form of effective self-government. It continues to lack the powers to make important political, economic, environmental and social decisions for itself.
30. Government bodies, quangos and agencies which develop key strategies and policies are located outside of Cornwall and are not accountable to the people of Cornwall. They inevitably fail to recognise the strengths of Cornwall or understand the special needs of its communities. It means that approaches specifically relevant to Cornwall are rarely pursued by central government.
31. Mebyon Kernow is campaigning for the recognition of Cornwall as a distinct national community for all forms of governance and administration. At the heart of this, we are campaigning for a new democratic settlement, with the meaningful devolution of significant powers to a National Assembly of Cornwall.

# A National Assembly of Cornwall

32. Mebyon Kernow has a manifesto commitment to the creation of a legislative National Assembly of Cornwall, with powers broadly equivalent to the Scottish Parliament as set out in the Scotland Act 1998.
33. It is envisaged that the National Assembly of Cornwall would be created through a "Government of Cornwall Act."
34. The National Assembly would have the capability to create primary legislation within its various areas of competence, without reference to Westminster, as well as democratic control over most areas of domestic politics in Cornwall, and associated public expenditure, as listed below:

**Agriculture, fisheries and food**, including food standards and food security.

**Arts and culture**, including broadcasting, libraries, museums, and support for the Cornish language.

**Economic development**, including regeneration, promotion of trade and inward investment, and promotion of tourism.

**Education and training**, including school education, further and higher education, training policy and lifelong learning.

**Energy policy**, including renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.

**Environment and heritage** including all forms of environmental protection, flood defence and the protection of the historic environment.

**Health**, including full responsibility for the National Health Service in Cornwall.

**Home affairs**, including the police and other emergency services, prisons and emergency planning.

**Housing**, including investment in affordable housing.

**Local government**, including local government finance and taxation.

**Planning**, including a National Planning Policy Framework for Cornwall.

**Social services**, including child protection and support for the voluntary sector.

**Sport**, including a Cornish Sports Council.

**Transport**, including responsibility for all forms of road, air and sea transport, as well as support for the public transport infrastructure.

35. The National Assembly would also have the ability to vary a whole range of taxation instruments, including income tax powers.

### **The number of Assembly Members and electoral arrangements**

36. It is the view of Mebyon Kernow that the National Assembly of Cornwall should comprise approximately forty Assembly Members (AMs).
37. The AMs would be elected via multi-member constituencies, each returning 3-4 AMs, using the Single Transferable Vote system of preferential voting.
38. The full details of the number of AMs and constituency arrangements, based on geographic and community identity and the wishes of the people of Cornwall, would be agreed by a locally-based Commission following widespread local consultation.

### **The working of the National Assembly**

39. It is vital that the administrative apparatus of the National Assembly is structured for the best advantage of Cornwall, with robust constitutional procedures in place to ensure thorough and detailed scrutiny of the Cornish Government.

40. Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall would not, at this stage, wish to be overly prescriptive about how the National Assembly – and Cornish Government – would work. It is envisaged, however, that it would represent a significant break with the destructive adversarial politics of Westminster.
41. It is our view that all Assembly Members should be actively involved in the legislative programme for the National Assembly, which should be scrutinised, challenged and modified through a series of strategic committees and select committees, before being democratically agreed by all AMs in the National Assembly itself.
42. The creation of the National Assembly of Cornwall would lead to a locally-based civil service to support the new democracy in Cornwall, with an integrated structure covering the Assembly, local government and other public bodies.

### **Relationship with the Westminster Government**

43. The Westminster Parliament would retain authority over a range of areas. Matters reserved to central government would include benefits and social security, immigration, defence, foreign policy, and employment, trade and industry.
44. The relationship between the National Assembly and Westminster would be extremely significant and mechanisms would need to be put in place to ensure that Cornwall is able to work constructively in partnership with Westminster on matters of joint interest.
45. This would include a Secretary of State for Cornwall, who would work with the National Assembly and ensure that Cornish interests are effectively represented within the UK Government.

## **Relationship with the public sector in Cornwall**

46. The National Assembly of Cornwall would set the funding and policy framework for the majority of the public sector within Cornwall, which would include local government, educational institutions, health and other public bodies.
47. At the present time, the public sector is dominated by hundreds of unelected and unaccountable quangos, agencies and arms-length bodies. Locally, such bodies include:
  - Local Enterprise Partnership.
  - Local Nature Partnership.
  - Health and Wellbeing Board.
  - Public Sector Board.
  - Clinical Commissioning Group.
48. Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall is committed to ensuring that the responsibilities of these bodies are incorporated into departments of the new National Assembly.
49. However, we accept that a case could be made for a number of public bodies created on a Cornwall-wide basis. These could include Cornish Heritage (taking over the responsibilities of “English Heritage” and “Historic England” in Cornwall), Natural Cornwall (in place of “Natural England”) and a Cornish Sports Council.
50. The National Assembly of Cornwall would ensure open and accountable appointments to such public bodies and it would hold them to account for their actions, retaining the power to legislate in respect of their activities.

## **Relationship with local government**

51. Mebyon Kernow is committed to the creation of four principal councils to deliver local government services, within the framework of legislation set by the National Assembly. However, MK does acknowledge that some people would wish to see a smaller number of such authorities.

52. MK presently takes the view that each of the principal authorities should have 35-45 members, with the precise number of councils and councillors, as well as the boundaries and the electoral arrangements, to be agreed by a locally-based Commission following widespread local consultation. It is our view that councillors should be elected via multi-member constituencies using the STV system of preferential voting.
53. These councils would replace the unitary authority, though they would be empowered to work in partnership to provide some Cornwall-wide services where appropriate.
54. MK is committed to a grassroots "bottom-up" form of democracy and to the principle of subsidiarity with political decisions made at as local a level as possible, with support for the decentralisation of significant decision-making and resources to local town and parish councils.

### **Relationship with Europe and the wider World**

55. Mebyon Kernow believes that the National Assembly of Cornwall would work with regions and nations throughout the British Isles, Europe and the wider World.
56. The political recognition of Cornwall as a unit for greater self-government within the United Kingdom would also lead to greater opportunities to promote Cornwall on the global stage. These would include:
  - Representation on trans-national bodies such as the British-Irish Council.
  - Greater representation within the structures of the European Union, with Cornwall having its own Member of the European Parliament.
57. Cornwall would also be able to have representative offices in Brussels and other key locations, in order to promote Cornwall, its businesses and encourage trade and commerce.

## Financial basis of the devolution settlement

58. The devolved administrations within the UK are principally funded by a block grant from the UK Treasury. The block grants for the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Wales, respectively, are approximately £30 billion and £15 billion.
59. A National Assembly of Cornwall would be funded in a similar manner, with a needs-based financial settlement. This would be allocated to the devolved body so that it would be able to make the key spending decisions for Cornwall in accordance with the needs and priorities of the area.
60. Cornwall Council has estimated that, in 2008-2009, the total extent of governmental expenditure associated with Cornwall was about £3.8 billion.
61. However, this figure needs to be taken with significant caution, because government data often does not reflect Cornwall as a distinct economic unit. The total includes:
  - Some estimates of Cornwall's share of expenditure across central government's "south west region," rebased by population;
  - The funding of certain services based in Devon (eg. NHS hospitals in West Devon);
  - Cornwall's share of non-identifiable UK-wide expenditure (such as the state and government bureaucracy), the cost of which is deemed notionally shared across the whole of the United Kingdom, though the actual economic benefits are rarely felt within Cornwall.
62. The development of a block grant would also allow the historic under-funding of Cornwall and its public services to be addressed.

## **Economic basis of the devolution settlement**

63. The United Kingdom – even taking into account the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – is an over-centralised state, dominated by London and its hinterland. As a consequence, central government policies favour the South East of England. Other areas lose out and this is reflected in the economic performance of areas such as Cornwall.
64. Cornwall's Gross Value Added (per capita) in 2014 was only 70.2% of the UK average. It is the worst performing nation in the whole of the United Kingdom and, between 2015–2020, it will receive the top level of European structural funding to tackle Cornwall's low economic performance.
65. Central government has failed Cornwall and Mebyon Kernow believes that the best way to improve the Cornish economy would be for strategies and policies to be devised by those people who live in Cornwall and have a tangible stake in the success of their policies.
66. Mebyon Kernow maintains that the National Assembly of Cornwall would be in a strong position to build a more prosperous economy. It would, for example, be able to support Cornwall's traditional and emerging industries, build on Cornwall's sense of place, its unique brand, and maritime potential. It would also be able to prioritise infrastructure improvements that would benefit the Cornish economy.
67. The National Assembly of Cornwall would also have full responsibility for structural funding received from the European Union, which is of extreme importance for the economic regeneration of the area.

## **Democratic basis of the devolution settlement**

68. Democratically elected and locally accountable politicians in Cornwall presently have limited control over public expenditure.
69. The Westminster Parliament retains control over most political decisions of real significance. Local government makes up only a portion of the public sector, and central government continues to remove power and financial resource from local councils, transferring influence to unelected bodies.
70. The National Assembly of Cornwall would be ceded powers from central government and it would also reclaim powers exercised by a wide range of unelected bodies. As noted previously, the responsibilities of most of these bodies would be incorporated into the departments of the new National Assembly, though a small number of other Cornwall-based public bodies might be created.
71. Likewise, civil servants based in places such as Bristol and London would no longer be dealing with issues in Cornwall. Professionals dealing with, for example, Cornwall's environment, emergency services and principal highway network, would be based in Cornwall – creating many new jobs and boosting the local economy.
72. Mebyon Kernow would also work to ensure that the powers of local government are not negated, but enhanced where possible.
73. The decentralisation of political and economic power around the United Kingdom would help build a more federal form of governance, which would mean that it would not be appropriate for Cornish MPs to vote on matters which did not materially affect Cornwall.
74. With Westminster responsible for less areas of competence, it would also lead to a reduction in the number of MPs.

## **Tackling Cornwall's democratic deficit**

75. Cornwall is suffering from a massive democratic deficit, and has less democratically accountable politicians than most other parts of the United Kingdom.
76. Cornwall (population 540,000) is disadvantaged by not having a National Assembly that can legislate for the best interests of Cornwall and its people. In terms of local government, Cornwall only has 123 councillors on its single principal authority – each responsible for about 4,400 people. Prior to the centralisation of local government in 2009, Cornwall had 331 councillors on principal local authorities.
77. In contrast, Scotland (population 5.3 million) has 129 MSPs and 1,222 principal authority councillors, while Wales (population 3.1 million) has 60 AMs and 1,254 councillors.
78. The contrast with the local government arrangements in the neighbouring English counties of Devon and Somerset is also very stark. Devon (population 1,410,000) has 492 councillors, while Somerset (population 910,000) has 425 councillors.
79. The creation of about 40 Assembly Members and increasing the number of principal authority councillors to around 150-160 would help to democratise civic life in Cornwall.

## **Greater recognition for Cornwall**

80. Winning greater powers for Cornwall goes hand in hand with the recognition of Cornwall as a national entity, which would benefit its distinct cultural traditions and the rights of its people.
81. In 2014, central government bowed to years of pressure and recognised the Cornish people through the Framework Convention on National Minorities. This recognition is a landmark ruling and the challenge now must be for the people of Cornwall to achieve a wider acceptance of our right to greater control over our political, civic, and economic lives through the creation of a legislative National Assembly of Cornwall.
82. Other potential further gains could include:
  - A full Inquiry into the Duchy of Cornwall and Cornwall's ambiguous constitutional relationship with the Crown, and the contradictions between this constitutional status and present administrative arrangements.
  - The enhanced protection of the Cornish Language through the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.
  - The entry of representative teams into sporting occasions such as the Commonwealth Games, alongside teams from, for example, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.

## Benefits from devolution

83. When he launched his Government's plans for a Scottish Parliament in 1997, the late Donald Dewar stated that the aim was for a "fair and just settlement for Scotland within the framework of the United Kingdom." He added that it would be "good for both Scotland and the UK," that it would "strengthen democratic control and make government more accountable," and "reflect the needs and circumstances of Scotland regardless of race, gender or disability."
84. Mebyon Kernow wants the same "fair and just settlement" for Cornwall, which we believe would also be good for both Cornwall and the UK.
85. Devolution to Scotland and Wales has made a real difference to both countries – politically, economically, socially and culturally.
86. In September 2012, in a speech marking the 15th anniversary of the positive referendum vote for a Scottish Parliament, Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon eloquently summed up the significance of the democratic rebirth of her country.

"Fifteen years ago, the people of Scotland made the historic decision to reconvene the Scottish Parliament, meaning that some key decisions affecting our daily lives would be made in Scotland for the first time in three hundred years ... Scotland has achieved so much that we can all be proud of - right across the parliament and across the country.

"Scotland has led the way in the UK by introducing the smoking ban, we passed world-leading climate change legislation, we reintroduced free higher education in Scotland and have a record number of Scottish students at Scottish universities ... we have delivered 1,000 additional police officers and our National Health Service is being protected and promoted."

87. Specific examples of legislation, strategies and measures agreed by the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales include the following:

- Scottish Parliament passed the Adults with Incapacity Act to provide a framework to safeguard the welfare and finances of adults who lack the mental capacity to fully do so themselves. (2000)
- National Assembly of Wales appointed first Childrens' Commissioner in the United Kingdom. (2002)
- Scottish Parliament passed a Freedom of Information Act which was more extensive than the legislation which covered the rest of the United Kingdom. (2002)
- Scottish Parliament agreed free personal care for the elderly, enabling older people to live in their own homes for as long as possible. (2002)
- Scottish Parliament passed legislation to agree a statutory right to permanent accommodation for all homeless people. (2003)
- Scottish Parliament agreed a Land Reform Act, which introduced a community "right to buy" and a crofting "right to buy." (2003)
- Scottish Parliament pioneered a ban on smoking in bars, restaurants and all public places. (2006)
- Scottish Parliament introduced free eye examinations on the National Health Service. (2006)
- Scottish Parliament created a Human Rights Commission through the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act. (2006)
- National Assembly of Wales and Scottish Parliament both scrapped prescription charges. (2007/2011)

- Scottish Parliament introduced STV voting system for local elections. (2007)
- Scottish Parliament has put 1,000 more policemen on Scotland's streets since 2007. By comparison, funding cuts to "Devon and Cornwall" police mean that several hundred police officers have lost their jobs.
- National Assembly of Wales launched a mortgage rescue scheme to protect householders facing difficulties because of the recession. (2008)
- National Assembly of Wales and Scottish Parliament both abolished car parking charges at NHS hospitals. (2008)
- National Assembly of Wales and Scottish Parliament both reopened old railway lines including the Ebbw Vale route in 2008.
- Scottish Parliament passed a radical climate change bill, which set a target for 2050, an interim target for 2030, as well as annual targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. (2009)
- National Assembly of Wales and Scottish Parliament have protected Welsh and Scottish communities from the top-down reorganisation, and creeping privatisation of the National Health Service being experienced in Cornwall and England. (2010-ongoing)
- National Assembly of Wales became the first part of the UK to set statutory waste and recycling targets, in line with its long-term waste strategy *Toward Zero Waste*. (2010)
- Scottish Parliament reintroduced free university education for Scottish students studying in Scotland, whereas the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition at Westminster imposed tuition fees of up to £9,000 a year. (2011)

- Scottish Parliament introduced “zero waste” regulation to make Scotland one of the most resource efficient nations in Europe. (2012)
- Scottish Parliament imposed levy on large supermarkets, in order to support town centres and small shops. (2012)
- National Assembly of Wales passed a law to allow the suspension of the “right to buy” of council houses and housing association homes in areas of significant housing pressure. (2012)
- Scottish Parliament secured Commonwealth Games for Glasgow and Ryder Cup for Gleneagles. (2014)
- Scottish Parliament agreed to allocate additional funding to off-set the damaging “bedroom tax” imposed by the Westminster Parliament. (2014)
- Scottish Parliament introduced free school meals for all children in primary classes one to three. (2015)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q1. Would the creation of a Cornish Assembly lead to independence?**

A1. Mebyon Kernow is not campaigning for independence. As already explained in this policy document, MK is campaigning for a National Assembly of Cornwall, which would be within the framework of the United Kingdom. We believe it would enable Cornwall to become an empowered part of the UK.

### **Q2. Isn't Cornwall just too small for its own Assembly?**

A2. There are even independent countries, with populations smaller than that of Cornwall. These include Iceland (320,000), Luxembourg (525,000) and Malta (453,000). There are also countless examples of smaller regions that have devolved governments. This was acknowledged in central government's 2002 White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice*, which recorded regions such as Vorarlberg, Austria (350,000), Corsica, France (300,000), Valle d'Aosta, Italy (115,000), Flevoland, Netherlands (330,000) and Navarra, Spain (540,000).

### **Q3. We already have a unitary authority. Shouldn't we just ask for more powers for Cornwall Council?**

A3. There is a widespread misconception that Cornwall Council could somehow evolve into a Cornish Assembly, without any wider political reforms. A law-making Cornish Assembly would represent national government – controlling the majority of the public sector in Cornwall including the National Health Service, all aspects of education, a wide range of public bodies, and local government. In terms of local government, MK's model mirrors that of Scotland, which has 32 principal local authorities below the Parliament, and Wales, which is served by 22 principal local authorities beneath the National Assembly.

**Q4. Wouldn't a National Assembly of Cornwall simply be another layer of expensive politicians?**

A4. The National Assembly of Cornwall would be responsible for making strategic decisions about Cornwall's future. It would bring greater decision-making back to Cornwall, and it would do away with the need for so many unelected bodies. It would also lead to a significant reduction in the number of unelected individuals on such bodies with little or no democratic control.

**Q5. Wouldn't a National Assembly cost us all a lot more?**

A5. Mebyon Kernow is confident that a new democratic settlement for Cornwall would actually save money and boost the Cornish economy. The increased democratisation of the UK would lead to the abolition of a large number of unelected bodies, and the National Assembly of Cornwall would also ensure that much of the business of government and administration, presently carried out in places such as Bristol or London, would be happening in Cornwall – creating a significant number of well-paid new jobs. A National Assembly would also be best placed to manage the expenditure of the majority of the public sector in Cornwall and to create the conditions to develop a more successful and sustainable Cornish economy.

**Q6. Wouldn't it be better for Cornwall to be part of a greater SW region or to join forces with Devon?**

A6. Since the 1960s, central government, big business and unelected and unaccountable quangos have been vigorously pursuing a south west or devonwall policy solution for Cornwall. It has been variously argued that Cornwall's interests were best served by merging Cornwall institutionally with Devon or regionalism on the "big south west" model even though Cornwall and its representatives would inevitably be in a minority.

We have been told that the wider south west option would enhance the political and economic "clout" of Cornwall. In practice, evidence of this regionalism over the past four decades shows that the reverse has happened and is continuing to happen. Our economic performance is significantly behind the rest of the UK, our wages have fallen steadily further behind the UK average and Cornish jobs have been exported eastwards. We lost the Cornish Police Force to merger in the 1960s and, since then, the centralisation of a range of public bodies and organisations has undermined the Cornish economy and cost thousands of Cornish jobs.

**Q7. What would be the point of MPs after a National Assembly came into being?**

A7. The National Assembly of Cornwall would not be independent of the UK and local MPs would still need to play a full and constructive role at Westminster. They would need to represent Cornish perspectives on a wide range of issues that the National Assembly would not be responsible for, such as foreign policy and defence.

**Q8. Would the new Assembly need a new purpose-built building?**

A8. Mebyon Kernow considers that the National Assembly of Cornwall would not need such a new building. It is the view of the Party for Cornwall that existing buildings already in the public sector, such as "County Hall," could accommodate the new democratic settlement for Cornwall.

**Q9. Could you give an example of how it would work?**

A9. At the present time, politicians and communities in Cornwall have very limited control over planning. Central government has put in place a top-down National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Many people consider that the document's "presumption in favour" of development has led to unchecked and damaging development, which local communities have been unable to prevent.

Over the last few years, the unitary authority has been debating what Cornwall's housing target should be for the period 2010–2030, but central government imposed an inspection regime that has forced Cornwall to adopt a much higher target than that deemed appropriate by the majority of local residents.

Central government has also rewritten "affordable housing" policies, undermining the provision of local-needs housing that people can afford.

If there was a National Assembly, all decisions about planning and housing could be taken in Cornwall.

This would include the production of a Cornish National Planning Policy Framework to replace the NPPF produced by central government, which would allow policies and targets to be agreed locally without interference from Whitehall.

Planning decisions would be taken by local councils and any appeal process would then be controlled by the National Assembly – so that planning inspectors from Bristol can no longer over-rule the views of local communities and their elected representatives.

## **Chronology of devolution movements in Cornwall, Scotland and Wales**

- 1536 Act of Union between England and Wales.
- 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England/Wales. Scottish Parliament dissolved, but legal powers devolved to Scotland.
- 1752 Last meeting of the Cornish Stannary Parliament.
- 1885 Office of Secretary of State for Scotland re-established for the first time since 1745.
- 1886 Home Rule Association established in Scotland, along with Cymru Fydd in Wales.
- 1901 Celtic-Cornish Society (Cowethas Celto-Kernuack) established.
- 1904 Cornwall recognised as a Celtic nation by the Pan-Celtic Congress.
- 1912 *Cornish Guardian* called for domestic self-government for Cornwall.
- 1925 Plaid Cymru formed in Pwllheli.
- 1926 Scottish Office established.
- 1932 Cornish cultural pressure group Tyr ha Tavas founded.
- 1934 Scottish National Party established.
- 1943 A number of university students formed Young Cornwall Movement.
- 1945 Robert McIntyre won the Westminster seat of Motherwell for SNP in a by-election.
- 1949 Scottish Covenant launched. It demanded a Scottish Parliament and was signed by two million people.
- 1951 Mebyon Kernow founded in Redruth to campaign for "self-government in domestic affairs in a federated United Kingdom."

- 1964 Labour government established Welsh Office with a seat in the Cabinet.
- 1965 MK secured first seats on local councils.
- 1966 Gwynfor Evans won Westminster seat of Carmarthen for Plaid Cymru in a by-election.
- 1967 Winnie Ewing won Westminster seat of Hamilton for SNP in a by-election.
- 1969 Royal Commission on Constitution (Kilbrandon) formed to investigate UK's constitutional structures.
- 1973 Kilbrandon Commission noted Cornwall's distinct constitutional position.  
  
Kilbrandon Commission recommended devolved assemblies for Scotland and Wales, but proposals rejected as unworkable.
- 1974 11 SNP MPs and 3 Plaid Cymru MPs elected to Westminster.  
  
Stannary Parliament revived by campaigners.
- 1978 Scotland Act and Wales Act agreed at Westminster.
- 1979 Scottish electorate backs a Scottish Assembly, but vote falls short of the condition requiring 40 per cent of the electorate to vote Yes.  
  
Welsh voters reject devolution settlement.
- 1988 *A Claim of Right* published by Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.
- 1989 The cross-party and cross-sector Scottish Constitutional Convention launched.
- 1995 Scottish Constitutional Convention published final report *Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right*.

- 1997 Referendum demonstrated overwhelming support for a Scottish Parliament, with tax raising powers.  
Welsh voters backed the creation of a Welsh Assembly by a narrow margin.
- 1998 Scotland Act 1998 and the Government of Wales Bill introduced.
- 1999 Scottish Parliament reconvened in Edinburgh and National Assembly of Wales convened in Cardiff.  
*Cornish National Minority Report*, seeking protected status for the Cornish, published.
- 2000 Cross-party Cornish Constitutional Convention launched in Truro.
- 2001 50,546 declarations calling for a Cornish Assembly presented to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, but ignored by central government.
- 2002 Labour Government launched *Your Region, Your Choice* White Paper on regional government for England.  
Cornish responses to White Paper out-number those from the whole of England.
- 2004 MORI poll showed 55% in favour of a Cornish Assembly, with 70% supportive of a referendum.
- 2006 The Government of Wales Act handed new powers to the National Assembly, creating an executive body separate from the legislature.
- 2007 National Conversation on Scotland's Constitutional Future launched by Scottish Government.
- 2008 Formation of Calman Commission on Scottish devolution to review experience of devolution since 1998.
- 2009 Centralisation of local government imposed on Cornwall by local Liberal Democrats and the Labour Government.

2011 National Assembly of Wales achieved legislative powers through a referendum.

SNP won a majority of seats at election to form Holyrood's first majority government.

*Second Cornish National Minority Report* published with the support of all political groups at Cornwall Council.

Nearly 84,000 people self-identified as Cornish in the 2011 census.

2014 Welsh Government secured borrowing powers, as well as control of landfill tax and stamp duty, following recommendations from the Silk Commission.

The Cornish people secured protection as a national minority through the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

45% of voters in Scotland voted to support Scottish independence.

Smith Commission recommended more powers for the Scottish Parliament covering areas such as taxation and welfare.

Silk Commission recommended more powers for the National Assembly of Wales.

2015 56 SNP MPs and 3 Plaid Cymru MPs elected to Westminster.

Scotland Bill 2015/2016 and draft Wales Bill published.

## **Join Mebyon Kernow today**

Mebyon Kernow is a progressive and inclusive political party, which is campaigning for greater self-government for Cornwall.

Party members receive *Cornish Nation* magazine three times a year and have the opportunity to attend numerous events and to take part in campaigns to win a better deal for Cornwall.

Membership of MK costs only £15.00 a year (£8.00 unwaged or £20.00 for a family).

You can join online by visiting [www.mebyonkernow.org](http://www.mebyonkernow.org) or sending a cheque (made payable to Mebyon Kernow) to:

Mebyon Kernow,  
Lanhainsworth,  
Fraddon Hill,  
Fraddon,  
St Columb, TR9 6PQ

## Notes

## Notes



Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall,  
Lanhainsworth, Fraddon Hill, Fraddon,  
St Columb, Cornwall/Kernow TR9 6PQ.

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