

Cornwall Councillor report – St Austell Bay Parish – October 21

I trust everyone had a good September as the weather now seems to have changed for the worse as we look towards the winter months.

I was pleased to work with Cormac and the Parish Council to form the traffic management sub-group, which subsequently held its first meeting last week. I look forward to working with all concerned to bring the concerns raised by the parish council and local residents forward and make some tangible positive changes over the coming months.

The controversial hybrid planning application which included sections in Duporth, Charlestown and near Charlestown School has been withdrawn by the applicant.

I met with the Charlestown History Group and have subsequently offered community chest funding to them to support their work around the Battery, as well as securing the Cormac volunteer trailer for their upcoming action day in November.

Cormac's stabilisation works at East Cliff, Charlestown started on Monday 11th October.

The contractors Alun Griffiths have been there from the 6th October to set up, which included bringing in welfare units and excavating trial holes at the top of the wall.

A legal closure has been processed by Cornwall Council, but this will only be used periodically during certain operations, and shouldn't last more than an hour or so on each occasion (mainly when lifting the excavator/telehandler off/on site).

Cormac have said they will do everything they can to keep disruption to a minimum.

It was also good to see Cormac cut back the vegetation on the fence at the bottom of Duporth Hill following my request.

Regarding footpaths **Charlestown West** is still with CC's Countryside Access Team to process the legal order to add the current permissive route to the Definitive Map and extinguish the current closed route. I am chasing this with senior management.

Duporth: All affected landowners have agreed to the individual draft s25 agreements and they are now with County Legal to formalise. Once this is signed off by CC and by each property owner, works on the ground will start. Cormac will have to be practical and avoid the very wet ground conditions expected over winter, so this may be pushed back to early spring.

The barriers are still being vandalised therefore we have instructed a fencing contractor to install palisade fencing to restrict the public walking on the unstable section – this is programmed for approx. 2 weeks time.

Vegetation Clearance:

The paths that myself and the parish council have passed over have all been cut (Chandlers Walk, Carlyon Bay diversion).

Signage:

Along with the parish clerk we have both passed on several reports of missing/damaged signs which have not been replaced. Cormac have to allocate our funds based on CC's risk matrix, and signage scores the lowest, even though they fully appreciate how vital signage is to users of the network.

One way to get around this, is if the parish council's contractor or a group of volunteers are willing/able to install signposts, which Cormac would supply and deliver what is required. This has worked in the past in Mevagissey Parish

I have met with the Quay Road Residents Group around their concerns about works being undertaken near where they live around parking issues and planning issues.

Meanwhile up at County Hall I was pleased to lead a campaign to get them to remove a fee for people purchasing affordable homes following action from councillors:

From 1 February 2021, Cornwall Council has been charging a non-refundable Section 106 eligibility assessment fee of £150 to people who are successful in purchasing an affordable/discount market scheme home in Cornwall.

Cornwall Council said this fee recovers the cost of assessing whether someone is eligible to buy an affordable home and that the fee will need to be paid by the person buying the property before they authorise the purchase.

I gathered cross party support for my motion which would have called for Cornwall Council to scrap the fee at September's Full Council meeting.

However ahead of the meeting Cornwall Council confirmed it will be scrapping the charge, thus avoiding the cost of the motion coming before the council, and potentially then being looked at for months ahead of any decisions being made.

I am pleased to see Cornwall Council listen to the concerns raised by me and the cross-party group of councillors who raised this issue and demanded change.

As a relatively recent purchaser of an affordable home in 2019, which my family and I saved for years to afford, I was astounded that Cornwall Council, at the beginning of this year, in the middle of a pandemic and housing crisis, introduced a charge for people buying such a property.

People buying an affordable home are already needing help to get on the housing ladder. It takes years to save a deposit and when you purchase a house you already have to pay thousands of pounds for solicitors fees, so it was simply abhorrent to me that Cornwall Council was contributing to this cost by charging them even more.

However I am pleased that Cornwall Council has seen sense and once this has been highlighted to the new administration, they have immediately taken steps to remove it, while ensuring that the overall service offered to the taxpayer is still a good one, and avoiding the costly process of the motion going before Full Council and proceeding through the council for months on end before a decision is made.

I was pleased to run a Marine Conservation Society beach clean on 26 September at Porthpean, where we removed several sacks of rubbish. Thanks to everyone who came out to support us.

Finally, I was pleased to meet Caitlin Lord this week, who is the new Community Link Officer for St Austell and Mevagissey, taking over from Helen Nicholson.

Helen has been a real help to me ever since my election in 2014 and I wish her all the best in her new role.

It was good to show Caitlin around the complete length and breadth of the Mevagissey and St Austell Bay Division, starting at the top of Bodrugan Hill and finishing at the top of Tregrehan Mills, and many, many places in between. I look forward to working with her in the future.