

Truro
27th November 2011

Dear Edwina,

I am caught in a 'perfect storm' - John Crowther is recuperating from his operation, Caroline is in Vietnam, the Mayor and our President is otherwise engaged and I have been reminded that I am booked to attend an event at St Agnes as the guest. I was booked 18 months ago and omitted to include the date in my diary going forward. Therefore, I cannot attend the Truro Civic Society meeting on Tuesday 6th. I am very sorry for this - it is an oversight on my part .

However, I am hoping that the Society will agree to appoint Armorel Carlyon as chair for the evening. It falls between the public meeting about the Eastern park and ride (December 1st, Cornwall Council, 6pm) and the Strategic Planning Committee which will determine the application on December 15th (Cornwall Council, 10am). I'm glad to say that the TCS submission to the planning application process at Cornwall Council has been well received and referred to by the Planning Officer, Mr Lloyd.

Armorel is a leading member of the Truro Conservation Area advisory committee. It is undergoing some changes at the moment which are proving difficult to get settled; **its important that TCS understands this process and ensures that the Committee continues to provide good quality advice to the Planning Department which is given due recognition and value - its this latter point which is critical.**

In January we will see the publication of the draft Core Strategy. This is a replacement for the Structure Plan. It will be big and complex and will be projecting significant growth in development - one of the key questions is to consider whether growth of development can be matched by expansion of either the economy or the service infrastructure to support it so that Cornwall retains its essential character and our communities continue to be vibrant, creative and positive as they are today. The environmental challenge is how to neutralise carbon whilst consuming farmland and increasing population.

The Mayor is leading the Neighbourhood Plan with the aim of trying to influence the shape and content of the Core Strategy element that refers directly to Truro. We seem to have a key debate breaking out about future land use - do we use it to build or to produce food? Which opportunity will the future most value - housing or farmland?

We have covered these questions many times in our discussions - we are coming close to needing to take a position.

We may also wish to consider if we contact the Mayor to indicate that TCS would like to become more closely involved in the work to formulate the Neighbourhood Plan. At the moment a series of Working Parties are meeting on a range of topics.

I have held a discussion with a lady called Charlotte Ratcliffe, who is an artist and project manager. She is assisting the Planning Department in embedding the changes at the Conservation Committee. We have also discussed the possibility of her seeking within the Department to take on the project to work towards a meritorious replacement for the lamented Millpool Birdge. I fear that, in agreeing to let this go, I have made a mistake - I should have stood my ground, not simply for the bridge, but for the principle that conservation is better than destruction, because the more we are able to narrate the story of our place through the artefacts and survivals, the better we will understand ourselves and our sense of direction for the future.

The stadium project received outline planning consent despite a paucity of information about transport, sewage, drainage or a business plan. I recall two weeks at the Higher Newham Inquiry when all Parties discussed value - ie how much can be extracted in obligations against projected costs, leaving the developer a 'reasonable' return. Lack of a business plan means that the committee had no idea one way or another if this is a credible proposition or not - they just passed it. It stands referred to the Secretary of State, and the Society may wish to consider a letter to the Secretary of State urging him to refuse the application on the basis that the Council had insufficient information on which to base a reasonable decision, and, as the applicant, should be expected to do much better - as well, indeed, as any other developer with whom it deals.

You may consider that, as an objector to the proposal, it would be good to write to the secretary of State encouraging him to call-in the application and to refuse it on the ground of inadequate information about infrastructure, services or transport.

I am glad to say that the future of the semi-derelict land along the bank of the River Kenwyn from Bosvigo Bridge to Merrifeld Close has moved a step closer to being resolved. The Planning Committee has granted consent for five houses clustered towards the Merrifeld Close end of the land, with a long access from the bridge through a managed public amenity area beside the river, which will provide a semi-formal extension of the Coosebean land.

I'm afraid that the Coosebean land remains unresolved and Truro city Council is still waiting for an agreement to be made that will enable it to assume responsibility for it. Our trip will therefore be delayed until the Spring, I suspect. Meanwhile, the Council is taking over land at Tregolls beside the bed of the somewhat depleted River Glasteinan (Tinney), along the Beechwood Park approach road. I worry about where the Glasteinan has gone - it is a mere trickle, although it still outpours at Town Quay, but, given the drainage of both Penair and Tregurra into its valley, there seems to be precious little brook doing any babbling! I note with interest that, on a map of 1887, once annotated by Hamilton Jenkin and owned by Charles Henderson, there is a fish pond marked lying behind Truro Police Station - I assume that one of the stilts of the modern building stand in it - *'cops on a pike's head!'*

I went to a meeting at Falmouth of Falmouth, Penzance and Truro Civic Societies with the new Civic Voice. We heard a lengthy presentation from the joint Director of CV, which is visiting many Societies to try and ascertain how it should develop in support of, and reflecting the concerns of, Civic Societies. It was a constructive meeting and, for the first time in my experience, the three Cornish societies came together. Relations are cordial and there is a strong sense of wanting to come together. Mike Jenks, Chairman of Falmouth, has suggested that we might seek joint membership - a move which needs some debate - it would put Cornwall forward as an entity, thereby asserting our distinctiveness, but it might also mean that, should it be necessary, three votes would become one.

I think it would be good to see if we can arrange a joint meeting - perhaps a talk by somebody mutually interesting. I was very impressed by Mike Jenks. He is a senior academic whose interest is sustainability of the built environment. Perhaps we might invite him to offer a view of the future role of Civic Societies in Cornwall and how he views the Core Strategy in terms of sustainability and conservation - perhaps he should choose the subject!

The CV speaker got a parking ticket and I have agreed to share one third of the cost (£25) which I hope is agreeable to you. My key message from Truro CS to CV is that we would like to know what services a federated body would provide to individual societies to support them in their work. When we know what's on offer we will be in a better position to consider whether to join or not. In the meantime, we are happy to participate in efforts to form and define the organisation.

I would ask that you consider if we should pay a subscription to enable us to be involved in this initiative.

Again, I am very sorry not to be able to attend this evening. Caroline has stopped sending e-mails from Vietnam which means she is enjoying her visit and has put Truro to the back of her mind - good! John tells me he is improving after a lengthy and querulous journey. Edwina continues to be a rock amidst the shifting sands of my ineptitude and indolence - for which I thank her. See you at the Christmas lunch.

Best wishes

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PS There is an e-petition at www.savetruro.co.uk which, if you have not already done so, you may care to sign.