

A Neighbourhood Development Plan for Polperro

Polperro Community Council is considering the formulation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for our parish, which should give us more say in how our community develops in future. The creation of this plan would be a major undertaking which will require active support from the Community as a whole.

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

Following the Localism Act of 2011 the planning system is changing in ways that will affect all communities, including Polperro. Within a broad policy framework for the county as a whole as set out in the Local Plan for Cornwall, communities are now legally empowered to set their own goals and priorities in the form of Neighbourhood Development Plans or their junior partners Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs). These plans will then be used to shape the future of the community. The scope of NDPs vary depending on local needs and ambitions, but typically they may include for example:

- setting strategic development goals for the community
- identifying any particular development projects that the community wants
- choosing where you want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- having your say on what new buildings should look like and what changes should be allowed for existing buildings
- acquiring and managing assets for the community, such as public toilets and income-earning assets
- granting planning permission for the new buildings that you want to see go ahead.

Once a Neighbourhood Development Plan is in place, Cornwall Council's planning officers will be legally required to take all aspects of the Plan into account when they determine whether a planning application is approved or refused. This legal requirement distinguishes the NDP from previous plans that have been drawn up for the parish. Moreover, by having a plan in place the community will be in a better position to secure funding and bring forward projects that will make a difference to local people.

However there are strictly enforced procedures for drawing up an NDP and getting it officially adopted. Most importantly, a plan will only be considered for adoption if it has resulted from a fully open and quite lengthy consultation within the community; and a legally binding referendum will be needed to complete the process. Officers from Cornwall Council are available to provide guidance and assistance, but most of work would have to be done by local residents.

Based on the experience of other parishes that have already embarked on this process, we would expect to need a steering group of 6-12 people, including several who are **not** members of the Community Council. Their principal tasks would be to identify, discuss, refine and record the goals and aspirations of the wider community, through a series of surveys and consultative events, and eventually to draft the Plan. These steps would take place over a period of at least 12-18 months.

Further information may be found in the "Introduction to neighbourhood planning" section of the Cornwall Council website: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/>

The first steps

Should we proceed? We are not required to do so and we should not under-estimate the level of commitment that would be required to produce a worthwhile document. However, not having a plan could leave us in a weak position compared to nearby areas that have prepared one, including Looe where the work is already under way; and preparing a plan should be a great opportunity for us to come together as a community and think constructively and comprehensively about the future of the parish. For both these reasons, and, crucially, if we have the active support of the community at large, we believe that drawing up an NDP would be very much in our interests.

Therefore we intend to arrange a preliminary, open public discussion of what a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Polperro might be like, what benefits it would bring to the community and what would be involved in producing such a plan. In order to give everyone a chance to be involved we propose to start with two introductory meetings,

- (1) **at the School on Tuesday 9th June** and
- (2) **in the Village Hall on Wednesday 17th June.**

Both meetings will start at 6.30pm and we plan to finish no later than 8.00pm.

The main goals of these first meetings will be to confirm that the community wishes to proceed, and if so to consider the scope of the plan that we want to see adopted and appoint a steering group to oversee each of the steps that will lead to drafting the plan.

We will advertise the meetings in due course, but meanwhile we believe the events will be more effective if we can begin generating ideas beforehand in order to focus (but not limit) our discussions when we get together. Therefore we are inviting local organisations and residents to send us their preliminary thoughts on any aspect of the future of Polperro, so that we can plan the meeting accordingly. In particular we would appreciate your ideas on whether and how, as a community, we could and should seek to:

- a. provide for the community's housing needs
- b. increase local employment opportunities
- c. improve local public transport services
- d. improve traffic flows within the village
- e. acquire assets in order to raise an income and provide improved community services
- f. improve the appearance and attractiveness of the village for both its residents and visitors
- g. improve facilities available for use by the community
- h. improve the community's "green" credentials
- i. prioritise each of the above topics

We would be grateful for your thoughts on any or all of these or any other issues that you consider important for the future of Polperro. We would be especially pleased to hear of any experiences that you might be aware of in other places that could be relevant to us.

Please reply to the email address below at your earliest convenience, but in any case by **31st May**. Thank you for your attention and we look forward to hearing from you.

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