

100
YEARS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Cornwall Kernow

Cornwall **Matters** January 2026

CPRE Cornwall newsletter

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A message from our Chair, Rowena Swallow

Dear Members,

Bledhen Nowydh Da! Happy New Year 2026!

We'd like to thank you all most profoundly for supporting CPRE locally and nationally this year - it is an especially challenging time for everyone financially, so we are ever more grateful - but in the face of some of the biggest challenges ever faced by the Cornish Countryside and Coast, you are not only helping to conserve and defend, but are also making an investment in the future, for Kernow, for Cornwall and for England.

The Duchy of Cornwall has more parishes than anywhere else in England, with a total of 218 in all - a ceremonial County, one of the Celtic Nations, and the homeland of the Cornish people - it's arguable that there are few places more distinctive, jewelled or precious. Its future lies with those who care for and invest in it, amongst whom yourselves; the countryside and coast connect and sustain us all.

This year, CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, founded in 1926, celebrates its 100th Anniversary. In the founding and early years, the organisation aimed to protect rural areas from sprawl and development. An early focus was around advocating for rural planning, the creation of National Parks, and the establishment of green belts to preserve the Countryside's character; it has gone on to play a hugely significant role in the passage of legislation, has raised public awareness about the importance of preserving landscapes, and has advocated for policies that support sustainable development, local distinctiveness, biodiversity and culture.

CPRE's long-term commitment to environmental advocacy through working 'horizontally' has made it one of the least-siloed, most influential organisations in the Country, dedicated to preserving the beauty and integrity of the Countryside.

Many current pressures were familiar to our founders, but in this Centenary Year, new threats have emerged - nature is in freefall and climate change is altering landscapes in real time. Our Centenary Vision is for a Countryside that's greener, a Coast that's cleaner, and a more resilient future for the generations to come.

Thank you for supporting the Campaign, and for your love for Kernow, Cornwall & England -- thank you, in this Centenary Year, for your part in their future.

This issue includes an outline of the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, which is embedded in the government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill, now the Planning and Infrastructure Act, 2025, which became law on December 18, 2025, after receiving Royal Assent following its passage through Parliament. It has serious implications for Cornwall, where our greatest need is for social and genuinely affordable new housing. Andrew Climo sets out the risks we face.

Ahead of the new **Local Plan** that the NPPF requires, Cornwall Council has been consulting with Town and Parish Councils and other groups – Jenny Cruse explains how this has been working and how the Plan is being prepared.

Stephen Horscroft covers the issues surrounding the proposal to establish lithium mining in Cornwall. Besides the inevitable environmental consequences – for residents and for nature – there is also the possibility that it may contribute to some local economic growth.

Please note that **Farm Cornwall**, a local charity supporting the farming community, is looking for **new Trustees**: see the brochure on their website for details: <https://www.farmcornwall.co.uk>

The deadline for applications is 26 January 2026.

As always, we'd like to thank all our members for their ongoing support. We welcome feedback, especially on any planning issues in your area. And please catch up on our social media posts – if you can give us a 'like', that would always be appreciated.



What is the National Planning Policy Framework & Why it Matters

Andrew Climo

1. What is the NPPF?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpins all land use planning in England (and therefore Cornwall) and it is designed from the ground up to promote sustainable development, which means promoting development. The 'sustainable' part is sometimes more elusive, even perhaps debatable.

The NPPF was re-published on 12 December 2024 and took immediate effect for decision-making, with transitional arrangements for plan-making. It has the explicit goal of boosting house building, rolling in previously agreed changes and introducing new ones. The key elements of the update include a stronger emphasis on delivering housing, including new methods for assessing need, a sharpened 'brownfield first' approach, and adjustments to the treatment of onshore wind and the release of Green Belt land.[1]

Alongside the update, additional consultations were launched such as proposals to build-in a presumption in favour of development on brownfield land, as already proposed in March 2024.[2] These changes have transformed the planning landscape and have created a

potential 'open season' for those wishing to push through development opportunities that previously would not have been agreed.

Finally, two wider policy tracks now strongly interact with the NPPF. One potentially conflicting and dampening development lies in the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Requirements, set out under the Environment Act 2021. These requirements were applied to small sites as well as large developments from April 2024 onwards.[3]

The second policy initiative, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (2024–25), if it becomes law, is intended to accelerate both infrastructure projects and house building. It will streamline the planning process, explicitly removing barriers to development, and this means fewer steps in the planning process, fewer opportunities to block schemes, and a greater role for ministers in prioritising schemes.

Practically, for example, this includes contentious elements such as removing the right to consult with those affected by compulsory purchase but it also implements innovations such as removing the need to produce paper reports, which are likely to be broadly welcomed. Planning Appeals, for example, will still be possible. Much of the bill relates to electricity generation, distribution and storage, and is intended to address significant issues with Britain's energy infrastructure.

Perhaps it is with energy that the most fundamental changes are taking place. Crucially, solar and onshore wind projects now fit within the same plan regime as any other type of energy initiative, and this means that a streamlined planning process applies, and again, the presumption is that these should progress, and progress quickly. In order to focus on infrastructure, the government intends to create over 150 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the up to date list of which may be found on the [NSIP search facility](#).

These presently include major road schemes, large solar farms, transmission lines, hydrogen plants, offshore wind, and rail projects. This is generally to be welcomed, but there is the obvious risk that ecological issues may be overridden.

There are other innovations, such as those intended to support local authorities in recouping planning administration costs, but those are outside the scope of this article.[4]

2. Does this weaken planning and environmental protections?

Without doubt, in the broad scheme of things, the tilt in favour of development, in general and housing in particular, reduces the ability to challenge planning decisions and elevates

the risk that ecological issues will be ignored. Changes in policy do give those making plans more opportunities to propose, promote and secure planning applications, and they also change the nature of interaction with the Planning Inspectorate, whose role is to support development, both implicitly and explicitly.

Whilst the government's brownfield-first presumption proposals might appear to favour brownfield development, the general trend towards development and streamlined (i.e. quicker) processes will mean fewer and shorter opportunities to challenge. Moreover, there is a rational concern that this presumption in favour of development may extend to greenfield development proposals. In practical terms, it removes much of local councils' ability to determine an appropriate settlement density, one of the few tools available to protect the character of each area.[5]

Crucially, the greenfield–brownfield distinction is itself being eroded, as government pushes for the release of lower-quality farmland, now surreptitiously being referred to as 'grey belt', although the 'grey belt' concept is contentious and does not command public support.[6] As our own research indicates, England has land for about 1.48 to 1.49 million homes, over half of them already with planning permission. This demonstrates that a brownfield-first approach can reduce pressure on semi-natural and agricultural greenfield land if policy is enforced.[7] In addition, conservation groups say that this will normalise piecemeal erosion of peri-urban habitats, which are often crucial for species movement and public access, in the absence of binding nature-recovery mapping within local plans. In all, the grey-belt concept should be treated suspiciously.

Moreover, for Cornwall specifically, the notion of 'lower quality' land is problematic, as much of its farmland is less productive, being either upland, coastal, bordering small settlements, or in valleys, in which it is difficult to use the large scale agricultural machinery of today. In this context, solar farms are also problematic since, unlike East Anglia, for example, Cornwall has few flat areas where solar farms can be sited without visual impact. A top-down policy approach would not recognise these distinctions. Similarly, many of Cornwall's urban settlements are located within river catchments, and the presumption in favour of development works conflicts with the principles set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) safeguards.[8] This is very much an issue for Cornwall's protected sites, including Goss Moor, Carine Common, Crowdy Marsh, the Fal, Helford, Bostraze/Leswidden, the Lizard, Newlyn East, North Cornwall Coast, Penhale, the Camel, St Austell Clays, Tamar Estuaries Complex, Falmouth Bay to St Austell Coast.

CPRE faces emerging challenges within this new policy landscape: how to respond to a more rapid planning cycle, how to provide high quality evidence, and how to influence outcomes before the window closes. Moreover, the task is becoming more complex, more nuanced. How best should we monitor the cumulative effects of new housing on ecological networks and biodiversity, as well as on public services? And how should we position ourselves to protect Cornwall's most critical environments? Without doubt, CPRE's expert role is now more important than ever.

Notes:

- [1] The [December 2024 NPPF](#) PDF (amended 7 February 2025 to correct cross-references) is the current baseline policy document.
- [2] [Debate on Reform of the Planning System March 2024](#).
- [3] [Biodiversity Net Gain](#), DEFRA, 2023, 2025.
- [4] [Guide to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#), MHCLG, 2025.
- [5] [LGA Response to the NPPF Consultation](#), 2024
- [6] [Government Response to Consultation](#), 2025, see Question 23.
- [7] [CPRE "State of Brownfield"](#), 2025.
- [8] [Habitat Regulations Assessments](#), 2023.



Why does Cornwall need a New Local Plan?

Jenny Cruse

Cornwall needs a new Local Plan because the current one is no longer sufficient to meet higher housing targets set by the government, and the existing Plan's policies are

ageing. It is also being updated to incorporate recent changes, such as the declaration of a Climate Emergency and a shift in transport philosophy to prioritise community needs over car-centric growth.

Housing targets have increased:

The government's standard method for calculating housing needs has changed, requiring Cornwall to plan for 4,421 new homes per year instead of the 2,707 in the existing plan. The current plan cannot meet this new requirement, meaning some of its policies are now considered "out of date".

Age of the plan:

Since the current plan is more than five years old, the council must be able to demonstrate that it remains "up to date" and can meet the housing numbers and the current Concept of Sustainable Development.

Therefore, all planning applications currently refer back to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), requiring us to find in favour of the 'Presumption of Sustainable Development':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Such needs would be Social, Economic and Environmental. However, soundings indicate that Environmental needs are set to be outweighed by the Social/Economic needs.

Timeline to produce the Plan:

Formal construction of the plan to commence in February 2026, with the plan to be completed by circa 2028.

This will be followed by the Examination and Adoption process that will lead to adoption circa January 2029.

An initial public survey can be accessed on the Council's 'Lets Talk' page where you will find links to various important documents.

<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/planning-for-our-future>

Interim policy statement from Cornwall Planning:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/4vgdpzic/interim-policy-statement-final-april-2025.pdf>

Baseline report:

<https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s191421/Local%20Plan%20Update%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Draft%20Baseline%20Report.pdf>

Draft plan:

<https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s191423/Local%20Plan%20update%20-%20Appendix%203%20-%20Draft%20Engagement%20Plan.pdf>

Public Consultation

Public Consultations (Walk-in events) are currently taking place all over Cornwall, where the public is invited to attend and have their say. A list of these is available on the Cornwall Council website.

Lost Neighbourhood Plans

There must be a certain amount of embarrassment among Officers, regarding the fact that only eleven out of 77 Neighbourhood Plans in Cornwall are deemed to be 'in date', based on the rationale that those plans make specific site allocations that are deemed to be of sufficient size and are protected by section 14B in the NPPF. These plans involved the public, specifically the Parish Councils, in a huge amount of work, including public engagement and hours of very hard, high-level, detailed presentations. All of that work was undertaken by volunteers. There was also funding available to enable the Parish Councils to engage with the public thoroughly. A new system called a Neighbourhood Priority Statement (NPS) is now being piloted. It is hoped that original detail can be incorporated into these new Statements. No funding has been made available for their preparation.

A call for sites.

As part of the Government's directives, Cornwall Council has issued a "Call for sites" to provide a land supply for up to 2050. The initial returns were sifted through by a board of Developers and Planning Officers for suitability. There was a link supplied to the public to make comments, which I shared at the time, but the system was not easy. It may still be followed through the Council website until the 1st January 2026. I commented on two sites in my division when I was the Local Member:

<https://cfs.cornwall.urbanintelligence.co.uk>

The Climate Emergency

Cornwall declared a climate emergency in 2019, and the new Plan is being developed to include policies that address this directly, helping to shape a more resilient future for the region. For example, all new approved applications must provide housing to a carbon neutral standard and if this is not achieved a £25,000 levy is taken for each house built, which is then used to retrofit the Council's existing housing stock.

Changed transport philosophy:

The new plan is moving away from the "predict and provide" model, which led to more traffic and pollution. The new "decide and provide" model will focus on working with communities to plan for their specific needs and create healthier, more sustainable places. Notably, there appears to be traffic monitoring in areas designated for development.

However robust the "transport plans" appear on planning applications, the reality is that people are generally very reluctant to use public transport (if it is available) or bicycle or pedestrian means of getting about. The noticeable increase in traffic on all our roads will certainly not improve and is set to increase substantially.



Photo credit: Cornish Lithium PLC

Lithium Futures?

Stephen Horscroft

How many times have you read or heard that 'all Cornwall has got is tourism?'

In fact, the annual Business Register and Employment Survey (2024) from the Office for National Statistics suggests that just c.5% of people in Cornwall were employed in holiday accommodation related activities. The 'reliance' comes in the multiplier effect – supplies, construction, food, and marketing. We can estimate that anything between 5 and 8 jobs are reliant on one tourism job: meaning that in 2024, anything between 60,000 and 90,000 jobs could be supported by 'tourism': around 39% of all employment in Cornwall.

The 'rub' comes in value. Some sectors are likely to have a range of jobs within them. A Head Chef can earn around £35,000 a year, but a waiter closer to £20,000. However, if one takes a sector like 'mining' – where there is an even longer Cornish tradition – then a typical wage across the sector is in the region of £35,000 a year, with skilled engineering and technical roles closer to £50,000. These are also highly transferable skills across a range of higher value sectors, including construction, marine, energy, and digital. Across these sectors, Cornwall has a vital role to play in the UK's future.

Lithium is part of the mining jigsaw. In the 1990s, we saw the closure of the remaining tin mines in Camborne and Pendeen and a reduction in the number of people employed in the clay industry in and around St. Austell. Almost thirty years later, the re-opening of South Crofty could create three hundred new jobs – a few dozen have already been created, with estimates of up to 1,300 additional jobs through supply chains. Already, around eight hundred people work in mining across Cornwall, helping to secure another 2,500 jobs. Both tourism and mining are concentrated activities. Most tourism-related jobs are focused on St. Ives, Newquay, Looe, Bude and Mevagissey. Most mining related ones are in Camborne and the Clay Country villages. Whereas Camborne is an industrial/post-industrial urban landscape, it may be argued that the clay villages are not culturally the same, having smaller populations, rurality, and less employment diversification.

Lithium mining across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset could deliver in the region of 2,500 high value jobs. The company Cornish Lithium suggests it wants to create a 'circular ecosystem economy', focusing on community reinvestment and the environment through the reuse of materials and waste from operations. This is now a necessity under planning law – 'environmental net gain' – to support biodiversity, as well as the use of waste aggregates in areas such as shipbuilding.

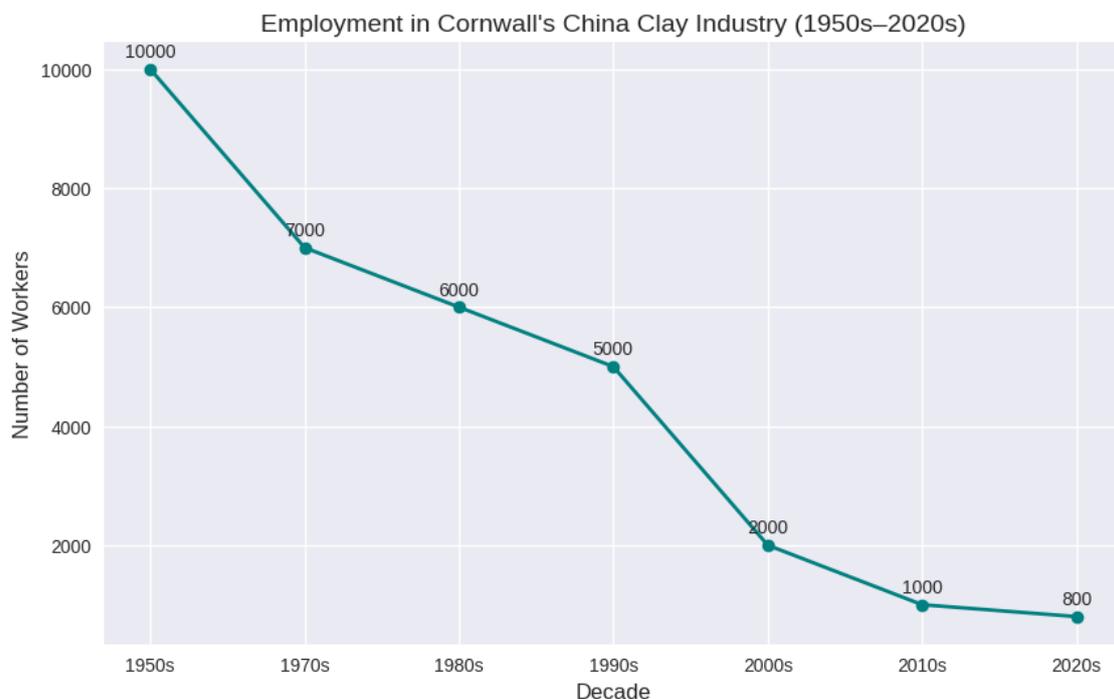
Currently, teams of academics, social scientists, geologists, and environmental experts (although not all in Cornwall) are employed to support research due to the complexity of the issues faced by the industry. The stated aim is to achieve innovative and minimal

impact exploration technologies and to move away from traditional mining techniques, where extraction proved to be expensive and therefore of less economic impact. Lithium is essential for electric batteries and storage, and therefore to the current government's commitment to net zero. It also represents an opportunity for greater energy independence from Middle Eastern and US oil and Chinese lithium as the transition continues to electric vehicles and the uptick in electric bikes.

If we think about Cornish mine engine houses, they are now an established part of the landscape: covered in ivy or surrounded by gorse or woodland in Chacewater, through to defying the sea on the rocks at Botallack. They are part of our international status as a World Heritage Site - and part of our tourism attraction as well as an essential element in the story of the Cornish nation.

In a significantly less populated Cornwall 200 years ago, with no welfare state and extreme poverty, how these engine houses looked in the landscape would have been unimportant compared to how we see them now.

China clay is a more recent major environmental and economic feature of the Cornish economy. As tin and copper mining fortunes tailed off toward the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, so china clay production increased in and around St. Austell. Even up to the 1990s, 5,000 people were directly employed in the china clay industry there. By now, the 2020s, this has declined to only around eight hundred.



In a contemporary way, the clay tips with their family and community legacies from the industry have left a deep cultural/social consciousness among the people of the wider area. Clay waste helped create the 'Cornish Alps' – on a bright day visible across a wide area of Cornwall – with an 'outside the window' presence and fond memories of playing on 'flatty' and 'pointy' tips near the village of St. Dennis: emotive cultural emblems.

The company Cornish Lithium now employs one hundred people, with most living and working in Cornwall. Their extraction plans are focused on low carbon techniques, and they state that their site at Trelavour will generate around eight hundred jobs during construction and around three hundred jobs during its 20-year operation, and over that time an £800m impact on the Cornish economy.

There are, however, a range of other environmental challenges where the community may have concerns. These include lorry movements through the villages (already an issue with china clay), utility infrastructure and upgrades needed for the project including water storage. Some of these also have the potential for positive environmental outcomes, not least the potential for a new community trail linking St. Dennis to the Goss Moor nature reserve.

So there is, in fact, a long way to go before lithium extraction can begin. Assuming the project receives planning consent in 2027 there will be three phases to the project including construction for operation (2029) and (assuming the end of operational production by around 2050), another three to five years of land restoration work when – interestingly – the sites are mooted for Cornish Lithium as being suitable for residential use (we would presumably be into yet another Local Plan period by then).

Planning



Gillyflower Golf Club, Lostwithiel.

Eden Project co-founder Sir Tim Smit and his son, Alex, have had an appeal dismissed over their proposed development at Gillyflower Golf Club. The proposal, previously refused by Cornwall Council, was for 19 accommodation drums, a clubhouse, a car park, a reception, and a classroom.

Key concerns included how the plans would affect the character of the surrounding Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and nearby historic assets including Restormel Castle, a Roman fort, Grade II listed Lanhydrock park and garden, the Grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew, a listed battlefield relating to the 1644 Battle of Lostwithiel, the Restormel medieval deer park and the Lostwithiel Conservation Area (CA).

The planning Inspector found that the positioning of the clubhouse and the drum units "would add further significant intrusion of built form onto the site". "As such, it would represent an uncharacteristic and overly prominent form of development in that part of the AGLV, up the lower slopes of the valley side and apart from the settlement edge," He concluded that the proposed development would harm the character of the surrounding AGLV. "As such it would be contrary to policies 2, 5, 12 and 23 of the Local Plan and saved policy 14 of the Restormel Local Plan."

Recent Decisions

<p>APP/3352494 (PA23/02502) Gillyflower Golf Club Clubhouse, 19 holiday lodges DISMISSED</p>	<p>Land At Ramoth Way, Perranporth 7 dwellings Planning application PA25/05916 APPROVED</p>
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Objections Awaiting Decision

<p>Lost Gardens of Heligan Car park and crossing Planning application PA/25/02624</p>	<p>Castle Horneck, Penzance Development of 140 dwellings Planning application PA25/00085</p>
<p>Pandarosa Farm, Bodmin Development of 58 Dwellings Planning application PA23/07573</p>	<p>Cold Northcott Wind Farm Repowering & extension of wind farm Planning application PA23/02727</p>
<p>Tyringham Place, Lelant Development of 50 dwellings Planning application PA25/01847</p>	<p>Halgavor Moor Development of up to 540 dwellings. Planning application PA20/10618</p>

Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate

APP/3373503 (PA24/00042) Pendower Beach House Hotel 20 unit aparthotel complex	APP/3368536 (PA22/02896) Penhale Camp, Holywell Bay Holiday and leisure park.
APP/3369960 (PA24/06454) Cove Hill, Port Navas Self-build dwelling	APP/3352891 (PA23/05034) Land South Of Pengelly, Bosavern Construction of a pond
APP/3370949 (PA23/09696) Land At Lanyon Farm, Gwinear Solar farm	APP/6000863 (PA25/00680) Boat Cove Lane, Perranuthnoe Replacement chalet



CPRE campaigns for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to promote, enhance and protect a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy. Founded in 1926, we're a grassroots organisation, with more than 100 local groups, a branch in every county and 60,000 members and supporters. CPRE is a registered charity (1089685) and a company registered in England (4302973).