

Report to STC December 2023

Cllr. Hilary Frank



1. Devolution Deal

The Level 2 Devolution Deal for Cornwall was announced by the Chancellor during his Autumn Statement in November. It was negotiated following the decision not to pursue a Level 3 deal, which would have required the introduction of a directly-elected mayor for Cornwall. Highlights of the Level 2 Deal are:

- The devolution of the adult education budget, giving the Council control over how best to support adult learners
- The creation of a Cornwall Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW) Commission
- £500,000 to support Cornish distinctiveness and the Cornish language

This falls far short of true devolution - it is a modest nod rather than a genuine handover of power. But it is a starting point, and the Leader of Cornwall Council has tasked the leaders of the political groupings in Cornwall Council to develop a Cornwall White Paper that sets out Cornwall's scale of ambition for autonomy, plus the specific asks.

2. Cornwall Council Overspend

Speaking at a meeting of the Customer and Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th December, Deputy Leader Councillor Harris advised that Cornwall Council's overspend in this financial year has increased from a predicted £8 million to £16 million. The pressure areas include housing, homeless, transport for children to school and children with special educational needs.

Cllr. Harris gave assurances that Cornwall Council is better off than many councils, but warned that without what he called "a decent settlement" from central government in December there would be major problems in two to three years.

3. Switching off Street Lights

Cornwall has 56,000 street lights, and in an effort to save money as well as reduce emissions, 35,000 of these will be switched off between the hours of midnight and 5am. 670 lights have already been switched off between these times, with the remaining lights to be switched off over the next few months.

4. Bus Stop on Wearde Road

The bus stop on Wearde Road was removed as part of the roadworks to widen the pavement and improve the cycling and walking routes to the secondary school. Cornwall Council will install a new shelter in January 2024, and will take on responsibility for its maintenance.

5. Oaklands Community Centre

The new committee of volunteers at Oaklands Community Centre has been working alongside Cornwall Housing to get policies, insurance and the building ready, and opened its doors on 25th November.

A varied programme of activities has been put into place to ensure the Centre will become a focal point for the community. More information can be found at: [Oaklands Community Centre - Bringing the community together \(insaltash.co.uk\)](https://insaltash.co.uk)

6. Urban Green Shoots - Tincombe

Cornwall Council has been successful in securing funding to deliver Urban Green Shoots projects to improve urban green spaces in Cornish towns, increasing their wildlife value, accessibility, and community enjoyment. It has been agreed that Tincombe will be the recipient of funding in the first phase of the rollout of the programme.

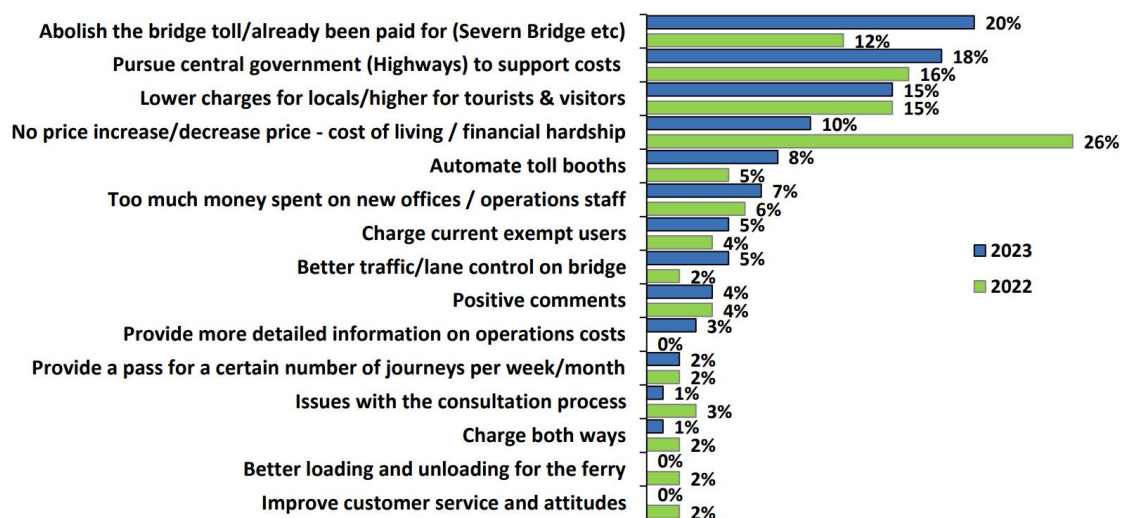
Ahead of next week's formal press release about Urban Green Shoots, a consultation event was held at the Oaklands Community Centre Open Day. This generated excellent feedback which will be incorporated into the finalised concept design, along with the survey responses on the Friends of Tincombe Facebook page.

7. Current Consultations/Surveys on Let's Talk Cornwall [Let's Talk Cornwall](#)

- Nature Recovery Strategy to protect, enhance, create and restore nature
- Healthier Weight Strategy to address the root causes of obesity
- Overnight Respite Services for work age adults
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy to guide the expansion of the chargepoint network across Cornwall
- Local Area Energy Plan, Call for Evidence
- Cornish Hedges Survey

8. Motion to Full Council calling for the abolition of the Tamar tolls

The campaign led by Tamar Toll Action Group (TTAG) to abolish tolls on the Tamar crossings has been gaining traction in recent months, generating an increase in the number of people asking for the abolition of tolls. This is clearly evidenced in the results of the recent consultation published on pages 59 onwards of the Future Finance Report, part of the agenda for the meeting of the Joint Committee to be held on 8th December: [Future Finance Report.pdf \(cornwall.gov.uk\)](#) As can be seen, 20% of respondents are calling for tolls to be abolished, an increase of 8% compared to the figures of the last consultation.



Data obtained by TTAG shows that in the month of January tag holders with a PL12 address paid £165,495.90 in tolls. Multiplied by 12, this gives an approximate annual outlay of just under £2 million being paid by tag holders in Saltash, Landrake, Tideford, St. Mellion, Trerulefoot, St. Dominic, St Germans and Hatt. Add in tag holders from other parts of SE Cornwall and the total climbs to over £3 million.

The focus of the Joint Committee's recent consultation and debate has been on how to address current funding issues. Under 2.64 on page 15 of the Future Finance Report, the Joint Committee acknowledges that the existing operational and governance model is likely to risk further cycles of toll rises. Further, although the Joint Committee is developing a Tamar 2050 programme, it is noted under 1.3 of Item 7 of the documents for the Joint Committee meeting that 'Tamar 2050 ... will not resolve the current lack of appropriate financial reserves nor prevent forecast deficits.' Despite this, Tamar 2050 does not include lobbying for the abolition of tolls as a proposed action.

I therefore seconded a motion to Full Council that was held on 28th November proposed by Cllr. Colin Martin calling on the Leader to work with the Joint Committee, Plymouth City Council and MPs to lobby government for the Tamar Bridge Act 1998 and its predecessors to be revoked and for tolls to be abolished. Here is an extract, but the text can be found in full on p.37 here : [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cornwall Council, 28/11/2023 10:30](#)

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| <p>Council calls on the Leader to work with the Joint Committee, Plymouth City Council, and MPs to call on the Government for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Tamar Bridge Act 1998 and its predecessors to be revoked.2. The tolls on the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry to be abolished.3. National Highways to take responsibility for maintenance of the Tamar Bridge.4. Government to fund the Torpoint Ferry in order to maintain the essential 24/7 transport link between Torpoint and Plymouth. |
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The Chair of Cornwall Council decided this should not be debated by Full Council, but instead referred the motion to a meeting of the Joint Committee, and Cllr. Martin and I have been invited to attend the meeting of the Joint Committee to be held on 8th December. Here are the recommendations that are being made to the Joint Committee by officers. They can be found on page 2 here: [Future Finance Report.pdf \(cornwall.gov.uk\)](#)

Recommendations to the Full Council of each parent authority via the Cabinet of each parent authority:

1. That having considered the contents of the report, including the responses from the public consultation an application for a toll revision, based on £3.20 cash and £1.60 tag, be made to the Secretary of State in accordance with the applicable legislation.

Recommendation to the Joint Committee:

2. That, having considered the Motion that was presented to Cornwall Council's Full Council on 28 November 2023, the Joint Committee will continue to lobby Government to provide funding for the bridge and the ferry, such lobbying to include a request for a review of the current legislation including the ability to apply RPI to tolls.
3. That officers incorporate the impact of the Joint Committee's above recommendations into the revenue estimates and capital programme for 2024-25 to be presented at an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee on 12 January 2024.
4. That the Tamar 2050 programme of activity be endorsed.

For reference, here are the results of the consultation:

