

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Cornwall

The courage to create a single Cornwall Council

means

fewer bureaucrats and councillors

which

saves tens of millions of pounds

and that means

**we can invest more in local schools, affordable homes,
transport, help for elderly and disabled people,**

and

**we can cut your council tax in real terms
over the next four years.**

That's what we call our fair deal for Cornwall.



Our fair deal for Cornwall

Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, growing Liberal Democrat influence in councils across Cornwall has delivered big investment in the things that matter to local people. Almost every school has been replaced, extended or refurbished, and exam results are now well above average. Investment in supporting elderly and disabled people has been increased. We are building more affordable homes earmarked for local people. Transport links have been greatly improved. And we led the successful campaign to win Objective One funding for Cornwall bringing in nearly eight hundred million pounds of investment boosting Cornwall's economy – meaning more and better paid jobs than ever before.

All this, and we have held Council Tax £175 *below* the national average - lower than four out of five councils across the country.

However, as times get harder, improving services and holding down Council Tax gets ever more difficult to deliver – and ever more important to local people. With seven different councils serving Cornwall, everyone had to pay for a huge number of bureaucrats and councillors running local services, not to mention confusion about who did what. Seven Chief Executives, seven Chief Solicitors, Seven Chief Planners – the duplication was endless. Plus 350 Councillors.

Liberal Democrats said enough is enough. Cornwall couldn't afford this waste and confusion to go on. One Cornwall Council will save over £70 million in the next few years by cutting this wasted duplication of bureaucrats and councillors. It gives Cornwall a single, more powerful voice, employing just one Chief Executive, one Chief Solicitor, one Chief Planner, just one third of the Councillors – and more and more similar savings at every level. Enough to open a council services 'One Stop Shop' in every major town, and to bring you better services, better access, and more accountability locally than ever before.

Creating one Cornwall Council will, with the Liberal Democrats, save enough to improve vital services like schools, affordable homes, and support for elderly and disabled people - at the same time as cutting Council Tax in real terms over the next four years.

Only the Liberal Democrats had the courage to make this change. It makes possible our promise of better services *and* lower Council Tax. It makes possible *all* the promises in this manifesto – Our Fair Deal for Cornwall.

Important Notice

At the last election we promised to keep Council Tax below average – this we have done, saving the average local Council Tax payer in Cornwall £175 this year alone. All our pledges in this manifesto can be funded as a result of the savings coming from the move to a single council, whilst allowing a cut in real terms in Council Tax over the next four years. So long as Government funding (which covers 70% of Cornwall Council spending) is maintained in real terms we can deliver all our promises in this manifesto.

Our top priorities

1. We will provide “10p first hour” parking (which we pioneered in Caradon) across at least one car park in every Cornish town and city, to keep our town centres alive and allow local shopkeepers to compete with out of town stores.
2. We will ensure at least 1200 new energy efficient homes, earmarked for local families and guaranteed affordable in perpetuity, are delivered every year.
3. We will freeze Councillors’ allowances - at a time when the economy is contracting and people are losing their jobs and savings, Councillors need to tighten their belts too.
4. We will increase the number of Community Support Officers/Police Liaison Officers in Cornwall - at least one extra for every local Community Network area.
5. We will, where a village school is at risk through pupil numbers falling to a single class, prioritise ways to keep it open so long as it can meet children’s educational needs.
6. We will deliver in partnership with the RDA through Convergence funding universal high speed affordable broadband to every household and business in Cornwall by 2013, and very high speed to business parks.
7. We will hold a rapid review, involving all parties and stakeholders, of the waste strategy to deliver the most environmentally friendly, cost effective and up to date local waste solutions available to Cornwall, including increased re-use and recycling, anaerobic digestion and all other available technologies.
8. We will make Cornwall the ‘Green Peninsula’, leading the way nationally in sustainable policy, technology and the way we do our business.
9. We will continue to increase funding above inflation for adult social services to improve support for elderly people and those with disabilities in Cornwall, and we guarantee to maintain support at home to those with substantive needs in addition to the legal requirement to support critical needs.
10. We will increase investment in Fire Services in Cornwall, improving the retained cover, and keep full time cover at Camborne and Falmouth.
11. We will guarantee One Stop Shops providing council services in every market town, answerable to each community through new local Community Networks – a stronger voice in local decisions than ever before at county and local level. We will also provide mobile services for the more remote areas. Council services will come to you, rather than you having to travel long distances to a Council office.
12. We can now promise to cut your Council Tax in real terms over the next four years, whilst maintaining and improving services. This comes as a direct benefit of creating a single council for Cornwall, which will result in over £70 million pounds worth of savings across the county.

This is what we call Our Fair Deal for Cornwall

Our Fair Deal for Household Budgets

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Liberal Democrats in Cornwall have kept your Council Tax £175 below the national average – the lowest of any comparable council - and will keep it that way.

According to the Audit Commission, under Liberal Democrat leadership Cornwall County Council has had amongst the best financial management of any council in the country, and a triple A credit rating – the best score possible.

Our drive for efficiency has led to savings of £20 million over the past two years which we have ploughed back into improving services – this is how we kept Council Tax £175 below the national average.

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is saving over £70 million more over the next four years in reduced bureaucracy and over 200 fewer Councillors – that's how we will cut your Council Tax in real terms over the next four years, without compromising on delivery of services.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will again keep Cornwall's Council tax below average and in addition we will cut your Council tax in real terms over the next four years.

We will increase support for young people, the elderly, disabled people, and affordable homes whilst cutting Council Tax, by using the savings from creating the single Cornwall Council.

We will freeze Councillors' allowances - at a time when the economy is contracting and people are losing their jobs and savings, Councillors need to tighten their belts too.

We will campaign for rapid changes by Government to bring Cornwall's share of national funding up to the national average

Compare the difference

After 18 years of Conservative Government, Cornwall became officially designated one of the poorest places in the whole of the EU, with very high unemployment and very low wages.

Nationally the average Council Tax in Labour and Conservative Councils is £1175. In Lib Dem led Cornwall we have kept the average bill to £1000, and still improved local services.

In Cornwall, Conservative, Labour, Mebyon Kernow and Independent Councillors opposed plans to cut costs and strip out bureaucracy through a single council. One Cornwall Council saves tax payers over £70 million over the next four years in less bureaucracy. That means we can improve front line services, provide local services through One Stop Shops in every town and community networks responsible for services in every area – *and we can cut your Council Tax as well.*

The Conservatives landed everyone with the unfair Council Tax, and Labour has done nothing to change it. With no link to ability to pay, pensioners and hard working families are hit by the same Council Tax bill as high paid executives and even the Prime Minister. Only the Liberal Democrats are committed to work nationally to abolish the Council Tax altogether.

Our Fair Deal for Education

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Liberal Democrats in Cornwall have consistently campaigned for, and delivered, greater investment in children's education – over the years greatly raising the proportion of county funds going to schools. Since 2005 Liberal Democrat led Cornwall County Council has won £20 million for refurbishing or rebuilding Cornish schools.

Now 58% of primary schools in Cornwall score a 'good' rating on their Ofsted inspection – compared to 48% across the region and 50% nationally. Not one school in Cornwall is failing.

Our Primary School Strategy for Change was commended for its excellence by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families – winning Cornwall an extra £18.5 million for refurbishment of primary schools.

Since 2005 we have delivered one new secondary school – the first in 30 years – and a second is on the way, as well as refurbishing and improving many more. These represent an investment in our children's education of £40m.

The percentage of students leaving school with at least 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C was 61.2% in 2008 – up from 55.7% in 2005.

We have helped deliver the Combined Universities for Cornwall Campus at Tremough, and are working to see this transformed into a fully fledged university over time.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will, where a village school is at risk through pupil numbers falling to a single class, prioritise ways to keep it open so long as it can meet children's educational needs - including supporting new affordable local needs housing for families in the community, using surplus space in the school for other community facilities, and federation with other local schools to provide support.

We will invest at least £9.5 million a year improving schools, and support schools becoming 'village hubs' to keep them open and to re-open facilities like community post offices and shops where that is viable.

We will build more schools. Our Primary School Strategy for Change will include £25 million of investment in rebuilding Camelford Primary School, and Torpoint Primary School, building a new school at Carclaze, and refurbishing existing buildings across Cornwall.

We will work with EU convergence funding and the Regional Development Agency to invest in training for skills for 16 – 18 year olds, and developing the Combined Universities for Cornwall towards a fully independent Cornish University.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national schools funding up to at least the national average.

Compare the difference

In contrast, successive Conservative and Labour Governments have given Cornish children a raw deal, allowing Cornish school far less funding per pupil than the national average.

Locally, prior to Lib Dem influence at County Hall, Conservative and Independent Councillors combined to squeeze school funding well below national average, leaving Cornwall with decaying schools, outside loos, large class sizes and poor books and equipment long after other parts of the Country had modernised.

Nationally, the Conservative Government by 1997 allowed Cornish schools over £100 less per child than the national average. That amounted to more than £100,000 less every year for a typical secondary school in Cornwall.

Under Labour, the shortfall has grown to £490 less per child today– so a typical Cornish secondary school now misses out on nearly half a million pounds every year compared to the national average.

Our Fair Deal for Health and Social Services

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Cornwall's Adult Social Services budget for elderly and disabled people has been increased by 48% (£38 million) since 2005 under Lib Dem leadership, supporting 33, 000 vulnerable adults.

Whilst some Councils elsewhere have cut social care to cover just those with 'critical' needs, Cornwall has continued free care at home for all those with 'substantive' needs.

Last year Liberal Democrats in Cornwall won our campaign to persuade Government that the Cornish NHS has been underfunded for years – leading to an increase of £94million for local NHS services.

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is saving over £70 million over the next four years in reduced bureaucracy and over 200 fewer Councillors – allowing this increased investment in adult care to continue. We have already earmarked another £7 million increase for adult care this year from these and other savings, whilst keeping Council Tax £175 below the national average.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will continue to increase funding above inflation for adult social services to improve support for elderly and people with disabilities in Cornwall, and we guarantee to maintain support at home to those with substantive needs in addition to the legal requirement to support critical needs.

We will extend free public transport to carers when travelling with the person they care for, anywhere in Cornwall (in addition to the existing free travel scheme for people with disabilities).

We will continue to increase the share of council spending going to children with disabilities.

We will campaign to bring together Health and Social Services in Cornwall to cut waste and guarantee seamless support from home to hospital and back again.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national health and social services funding up to at least the national average.

Compare the difference

The Conservative Government introduced funding formulas in the 1980s (still in place today) that left Cornwall's health funding well below the national average. Patients have suffered, as there has been less money to spend on their care than in the rest of the UK, with less funding for essential equipment, fewer staff, and poorer facilities than the rest of the country.

Despite the fact that Cornwall has two of the most deprived districts in the country, and all wards in the county are in the poorest 10% in the country and we have a rapidly ageing population, the Labour Government has frozen Cornwall's Supporting People grant for the next three years – a real terms cut which will hit vulnerable adults across Cornwall.

Although Labour have now admitted that NHS funding for Cornwall is still £56 million below what it needs to be this year alone, their policy determining how much extra money we get means we may never catch up. Meanwhile

Our Fair Deal for Law and Order

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Liberal Democrats in Cornwall have consistently campaigned for more police on patrol, fair funding for Cornish policing, and less paperwork tying them to the police station.

Locally, whilst local councils can't recruit police officers, we have invested in more CCTV systems and other measures to cut crime and anti-social behaviour.

Liberal Democrats in Cornwall introduced the first alcohol free town centre zone

We are stepping up the Council's partnership with the police to crack down on anti-social behaviour, through the new neighbourhood networks we have established.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will increase the number of Community Support Officers/Police Liaison Officers in Cornwall - at least one for every local Community Network Area.

We will work with police and local partners, through the new Community Network Areas we have established, to crack down on anti-social behaviour, vandalism and crime in our neighbourhoods, towns and villages.

We will crack down hard on underage drinking, and we believe that the Licensing Committee should use licence withdrawal powers against retailers who repeatedly sell alcohol to those under the age of 18.

We will use the powers proposed in the Police and Crime Bill to better regulate the types of bars and clubs which can open in our local communities.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national police funding up to at least the national average, to fund 250 more local police.

Compare the difference

The Conservative Government allowed Cornwall 57 fewer police per 100,000 people than the average for our population – a shortfall of 285 officers. The Conservatives actually cut the number of police, despite crime rising by 240% when they were in office.

Under Labour, the shortfall of police is still 250 officers, despite the fact that the police authority levy on the Council Tax has shot through the roof. Why should people in Cornwall have to make do with so few police on patrol and investigating crime?

Our Fair Deal for Families and Vulnerable Young People

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Cornwall Council provides services to 33,000 vulnerable adults and supports 100,000 children.

Cornwall County Council was one of the first eight Councils to sign up to the 'Every Disabled Child Matters' Charter which brought additional funding for parent carers and has improved the lives of disabled children all over Cornwall. In March 2008 we won £5 million of extra funding for disabled and vulnerable groups across the county.

In 2009 Cornwall County Council was awarded Beacon Status for its work tackling child poverty.

In November 2008 we won £60,000 of investment in childcare to help parents who want to get back in to work by funding childcare.

Our programme of targeted advice and education has seen the *reduction* of teenage pregnancies since 2005, now nearly 25% below the national average.

We have opened fifteen new Children's Centres across Cornwall. In addition to play activities for children the Centres also offer support for parents such as access to childcare and information about training and employment and parenting support services. We are also upgrading play areas in towns across the County.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

All families in Cornwall will be able to access a local Children's Centre facility by 2010.

We will invest in new or modernised children's play facilities in every Community Network Area.

We will extend free public transport to carers when travelling with the person they care for, anywhere in Cornwall (in addition to the existing free travel scheme for people with disabilities).

We will continue to increase the share of council spending going to children with disabilities.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national funding for vulnerable children up to at least the national average

Compare the difference

Under both Labour and Conservative Governments, the formula for funding Cornwall's support for vulnerable people has been held far below the national average. In 2006/07 Cornwall Council received 23% less per head than the average council, and less than a third of that which some other authorities received. As such Cornwall is in the bottom 11% of government funding per person in the whole country.

In 2005, before the Liberal Democrats took control of the County Council, spending on social care in Cornwall was the lowest of any County Council in the country. By 2008 our increases in social care spending meant that Cornwall had caught up with the average, vastly improving services – and by cutting bureaucracy and waste, we have still kept Council Tax £175 below the national average despite the lack of Government funding support.

Our Fair Deal for Pensioners & Vulnerable People

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Cornwall Council provides services to 33,000 vulnerable adults.

We provide care at home for all patients with substantial needs, whereas some other Councils have cut this vital service to the legal minimum (only those who are in critical need).

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is saving over £70 million over the next four years in reduced bureaucracy – allowing an extra £7 million for adult social care this year alone despite a freeze in Government funding. Since 2005 we've raised adult care spending by £32 million (40%), and it will rise another £6 million to £116.524 million by 2011. By cutting bureaucracy and waste we have also still kept the Council Tax below the national average - and we promise to keep it there.

Longer term, Liberal Democrats are campaigning for a seamless single health and social care service for Cornwall, cutting even more bureaucratic waste and ensuring joined-up care through the home to hospital and back again, essential for protecting vulnerable pensioners.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We guarantee to maintain support at home to all those with substantial needs, unlike Conservative and Labour led councils elsewhere - and still keep Cornwall's Council tax below average, cutting it in real terms over the next four years.

We will increase the share of County funding going to adult social services to improve support for elderly and disabled people in Cornwall, without increasing Council Tax, using the savings from creating the single Cornwall Council

We will maintain free swimming for the over 60s.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national funding for vulnerable adults up to at least the national average, and to fully reflect the high proportion of people over 60 in Cornwall.

We will campaign nationally to pressure Government to abolish the unfair Council Tax which hits pensioners especially hard, and replace it with a fair system based on ability to pay.

Compare the difference

The Conservatives in Government cut the pension link with earnings – meaning a single pension today is just £90.70 a week. If the link had been maintained, today the single pension would have been worth over £50 more each week.

Under both Labour and Conservative Governments, the formula for funding Cornwall's support for vulnerable adults has been held far below the national average – a shortfall of 20% per person or £28 million for the whole of Cornwall last year alone, placing Cornwall in the bottom 7% nationally of Government funding for Adult Social Care.

Locally, under Conservative and Independent control in the past Cornwall saw one of the lowest rates of support for vulnerable older people anywhere in the UK.

Our Fair Deal for Cornwall's Economy

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Liberal Democrats initiated the successful campaign for £793 million Objective One and £712 million Convergence funding for Cornwall – supporting projects from the University for Cornwall and Eden, making broadband more widely available in Cornwall, plus business investment and training programmes.

In addition to Objective One, since 2005 Liberal Democrats in Cornwall have secured £85.5 million pounds of funding for projects to improve infrastructure and make Cornwall a better place to do business. 3157 Cornish businesses have benefited from training and intensive personal visits from Business Link so far since December 2007.

The Liberal Democrats at County Hall stepped in with £28 million to keep open and modernise Newquay Airport when the Government decided to close it. 40% of users are business passengers.

We have secured funding for £29 million rail improvements across Cornwall, and £111 million in road improvements, since 2005.

We have secured EU Convergence funding to provide universal high speed broadband to every property in Cornwall, by 2013.

We pay 95% of all undisputed invoices within 30 days – far above the national average of 50%.

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is saving over £70 million over the next four years in reduced bureaucracy and over 200 fewer Councillors – savings which we will use to improve services for everyone and cut Council Tax in real terms.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will deliver in partnership with the RDA through Convergence funding universal high speed affordable broadband to every household and business in Cornwall by 2013, and very high speed to business parks.

We will invest £7 million in supporting local business through the Cornwall Development Company, and will support local buying and producers by sourcing local produce wherever possible and encouraging others to do the same.

We will apply a more responsive and speedy approach to planning to allow small businesses to grow appropriately and support people who want to work from home.

We will campaign for the Cornwall Development Company to gain responsibility for EU and other economic development support to cut out the regional and national bureaucracy holding up approvals.

We will campaign nationally for a new small business rate relief scheme to be available to all businesses with a rateable value under £25,000 – saving over £600 a year for the majority of small businesses.

Compare the difference

After 18 years under the Conservatives, Cornwall's economy was officially recognised as one of the poorest in the whole of Europe. Wages fell to the lowest in the country and unemployment rose to amongst the highest, yet they cut business and economic development support here. In contrast, today the percentage of people still seeking work after 12 months is less than half the national average.

Labour have stuck to Conservative funding formulas disadvantaging Cornwall. Business rates, set nationally, have shot up. The Labour Government has just turned down an EU offer to allow Cornwall a six month extension on European Development fund money - losing Cornwall £25 million pounds of investment.

Both Labour and the Conservatives have official national policy to end Cornwall's European funding – policies that would potentially cost Cornwall more than £500million of investment over the next 4 years.

Our Fair Deal for the Environment

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

Under Liberal Democrat leadership Cornwall County Council has improved its re-use and recycling from below average to above average. Our current recycling rate is 35% - an increase of 25% since 2005. We are committed to pushing that to 45% by 2015, far above the national average.

Lib Dem led Restormel Council has already introduced weekly recycling collections to every home.

The online car sharing system administered by Cornwall County Council has over 2000 users. Through this scheme over 715,290 miles are saved every year. This has not only cut emissions of carbon dioxide by over 220 tonnes, but also saved users a massive £71,000 in car related expenses.

We have improved Cornwall's footpaths through £2.1 million investment, and won £45 million pounds of investment to help make our waste management services more environmentally friendly.

We are funding Low Carbon Cornwall to deliver a nationally leading programme to tackle climate change.

We set up the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership to combine the expertise and knowledge of organisations within the public, private, health and community sectors in order to deliver a more sustainable future for Cornwall - which led to all Cornish Councils winning beacon status for sustainable energy in 2005/06.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

Liberal Democrats will make Cornwall the 'Green Peninsula', leading the way nationally in sustainable policy, technology and business.

We are committed to the Cornwall Climate Change Action plan (which we initiated, and was opposed by Conservative Councillors).

We will initiate a programme to increase the energy efficiency of homes and public buildings and businesses across Cornwall, helping the environment and saving money.

We will maintain weekly refuse collections and roll out weekly recycling collections to every home as soon as existing waste contracts allow.

We will increase Cornwall's recycling rate to at least 45% by 2013- (far above the 30% national target which we have already met and exceeded).

We will refocus Cornwall Council transport strategy towards supporting better high speed rail links and other low carbon transport solutions.

We will invest more than £1 million in Low Carbon Cornwall, to support Cornwall's low carbon programme, building on Cornwall's nationally recognised beacon status tackling climate change, with particular emphasis on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and low carbon skills and businesses.

We will work to make Cornwall a 'Fair Trade County' - Callington, Truro, Falmouth and St Austell have already led the way by being Fair Trade Towns selling and using fair trade goods which guarantee a better deal for farmers and the environment.

We will reduce the carbon footprint of Cornwall Council. By 2015, our Environmental Action Plan will cut carbon emissions from council building by 40% and reduce energy costs by £3.4 million.

Compare the difference

Conservative councillors refused to support the Cornwall Climate Change Action Plan, and the Conservative Party have a long record of opposing action to protect our environment.

Labour have failed to take the urgent action needed to effectively protect the environment and tackle climate change.

Liberal Democrats have an outstanding record of championing the environment going back decades.

Our Fair Deal for Homes

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

In 2005/06 only 292 affordable homes were built in Cornwall. By 2008/09 that was more than doubled to 750.

We have innovated with affordable shared-ownership schemes to help local people buy their first home, and invested in improving council homes.

We successfully led the campaign to end the unfair half price Council tax discount the Conservatives gave second home owners, spending the money raised on new affordable homes.

The Government has agreed to implement 46 out of 48 of Matthew Taylor MP's recommendations last year to the Prime Minister on reforming planning to support rural communities with more affordable homes and better paid jobs for local people.

In February the Labour Government forced Cornwall Council to increase rent on council houses by 5.5% for 2009/10. We campaigned for a lower increase and the Government have now agreed to allow us to cut the rent rise to 2.4%, saving families over £90 this year.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will ensure at least 1200 new energy efficient homes earmarked for local families and guaranteed to be affordable in perpetuity, are delivered every year.

We will enable local communities to identify need and suitable sites for affordable homes appropriate to their village, and help them deliver their plans through Community Land Trusts and other affordable housing solutions.

We will take the money we receive from second home owners' Council Tax and plough every penny back into providing more affordable homes for local people.

We understand that homes in our communities are important – but so are quality jobs. We will apply a more responsive and speedy approach to planning to allow small businesses to grow appropriately and support people who want to work from home.

We will involve the community in planning the growth of market towns to provide attractive new neighbourhoods with open spaces, shops, facilities and work places as well as affordable and market homes, in preference to huge suburban style housing estates.

We will campaign for rapid Government changes to bring Cornwall's share of national funding for affordable homes up to at least the national average

Compare the difference

The Conservative Government sold off council housing but did not invest the proceeds in new affordable homes. As a result Cornwall now has one of the lowest proportions of affordable homes in the country, and one of the worst housing problems. Plus the Conservatives gave half price Council Tax to holiday home owners, boosting demand for holiday homes and helping raise house prices way beyond local wages.

Under Labour, the gap between low local wages and high house prices is now amongst the worst in the UK, whilst affordable housing waiting lists and homelessness in Cornwall are at record levels. The Cornish housing problem has turned into a housing crisis, yet Labour still refuse to even acknowledge that second homes cause real problems in small rural communities.

Our Fair Deal for Transport

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

We have funded £29 million rail improvements across Cornwall, and £111 million in road improvements since 2005.

Our introduction of Truro Park and Ride means no more struggling to find a parking space – and the Real Time Passenger Information service we installed alongside it means passengers always know how far away the next bus is. This has helped contribute to a 19% increase in the number of bus journeys taken in the past year alone.

When the Government closed RAF St.Mawgan, Liberal Democrat led Cornwall County Council stepped in with £28 million to keep open and modernise Newquay Airport - preventing the loss of 3000 local jobs, and extending flights to many more destinations.

To cut congestion, we successfully campaigned for the A30 dualling at Goss Moor and the A38 Dobwalls Bypass. We have recently won the campaign for A30 dualling at Temple.

We are piloting the extension of “child fares” to 16 – 19 year olds to cut car use and help young people get to training, education and work whilst they are on low or no income.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will provide “10p first hour” parking (which we pioneered in Caradon) across at least one car park in every Cornish town and city, to keep our town centres alive and allow our shopkeepers to compete with out of town stores.

We will roll out our successful Truro Park and Ride scheme to larger towns across Cornwall wherever practical.

We will integrate public transport timetables, linking up bus and train services wherever possible, and invest in improving both services.

Liberal Democrats will refocus Cornwall Council transport strategy towards supporting better high speed rail links and other low carbon transport solutions.

We will campaign regionally and nationally to win funding to dual Cornwall’s A30 on the dangerous and congested Carland-Chiverton section and press for the Temple-Higher Carblake dualling project to be delivered promptly.

Compare the difference

In office the Conservatives repeatedly cancelled plans to complete dualling of the A30 at Goss Moor and Dobwalls, leaving a legacy of massive congestion, plus they disastrously privatised the railways and cut rail investment.

In a recent press statement the Labour government relegated every train service west of Bristol to ‘branch line’ status, with no firm commitment to new generation high speed trains for the South West when the Intercity 125s come to the end of their working lives.

Our Fair Deal for Food and Farming

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

We have through Objective One secured £10.2 million investment in supporting Cornish fishing, and £52.2 million in Cornish farming and food.

We have invested over £4 million in the County Farms since 2005 to enable affordable entry into farming.

We have established one of our County Farms as a 'learning farm' so that local children can learn about and understand farming and the valuable contribution it makes to our economy, and another County Farm provides work opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

We have started to use exception sites to ensure that there are more affordable homes for retiring agricultural tenants.

We have supported local farmers to set up farm shops where they can sell their produce at a price which will enable them to keep farming.

We have introduced farm based composting on two sites and five more have been identified.

Nationally, we have been fighting to ensure fair prices for farmers' produce against the power of supermarkets.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will invest in and manage the County Farms to maintain a viable, affordable farming option for new entrants in Cornwall, with no overall cut in acreage.

We will roll out local purchasing across all Cornwall Council services, sourcing food and other items locally by taking account of carbon footprint wherever possible. Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust now spends 83% of its food budget locally.

We will support initiatives to protect Cornwall's fishing quota and to improve the quality of fish handling and marketing to enable the industry to achieve best market price and local added value.

We will support food from Cornwall, local farmers markets, farm shops and shops selling local produce.

We will work with Town and Parish Councils to increase provision of allotments across Cornwall

Compare the difference

Successive Governments have let down farmers. Hundreds of local families have been forced out of farming in Cornwall by successive crises made worse by Government mishandling, not least BSE under the Conservatives, and Foot and Mouth under Labour. Under Labour, the situation for farmers went from bad to worse when Labour utterly mishandled the foot and mouth crisis.

For every £1 consumers spend on food in supermarkets', just 8 pence now goes to the farmer. No government has yet tackled the supermarket's abuse of their market power – whose record profits have too often come at the expense of bankrupted farms.

The Conservatives agreed the Common Fisheries Policy, destroying much of our fishing fleet and signing away

Our Fair Deal for Every Community

A Record of Action....A Promise of More!

We invest at least £19 million in community and voluntary groups each year and are committed to working in partnership with them.

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is accompanied by devolving new powers to every community within Cornwall – with a One Stop Shop for Council services in every town, and new community networks to deliver local services, answerable to that local community.

The new stronger Cornwall Council is the opportunity to regain more control over local issues from regional and national Government bureaucrats – the first step on the way to a Cornish Assembly.

The mid-Cornwall Credit Union (now part of the Cornwall Credit Union) supported financially by Lib Dem Restormel Council helped 200 families and individuals with their first month's rent or a deposit for a rented home.

Cornwall's unique culture, language and heritage is amongst our greatest strength. We have helped secure official recognition of our language and funding for its development. We will continue to champion Cornish cultural celebration and to ensure it is available as a building block for future economic and social development.

The Lib Dem Guarantee

We will guarantee One Stop Shops providing Cornwall Council services in every market town, answerable to each community through new local Community Networks – a stronger voice in local decisions than ever before at county and local level.

We will devolve through the Community Networks greater power to individual towns and communities which were artificially grouped together under the District Council system - plus the new Cornwall Council system saves over £70 million over four years through reduced bureaucracy.

We will explore formally devolving budgets to each Community Network to give them greater power to address local needs within the community.

We will set up a task group to give support and funding to help vital village halls requiring substantial capital investment to stay open.

We will spend at least £1 million to support Cornwall Credit Union - making possible their work to help households access affordable credit and tackle financial exclusion.

We will increase funds for Cornwall Citizens' Advice Bureau to enable them to recruit more debt advisors to provide households across Cornwall with good advice more promptly through the recession.

Compare the difference

The Conservative Government saw record numbers of local facilities close. For years they sought to close any school with less than 80 pupils, but Lib Dem Cornish County Councillors refused to accept this. Cornish bus services, Cornish local business and local affordable housing were all hit by the Conservatives' policies, to disastrous effect. Local affordable council housing was sold off and not replaced, whilst second home owners were given half price Council Tax. Powers were stripped from locally elected councils and given to London bureaucrats and local, regional and national quangos appointed by government ministers.

Under Labour, the erosion of traditional communities has continued. A further 59 Cornish Post Offices closed last year alone. More local community pubs and businesses have closed under a mountain of red tape and rising business rates. Council housing is still being sold off, conversion of full time local homes to holiday lets and second homes is still uncontrolled, whilst local people can no longer afford a home in many Cornish communities. Whilst the Government put £80 million into the Growth Fund to help tackle financial exclusion in communities further north, it gave nothing to Cornwall – one of the neediest and most deprived areas in the country.

We listen

Liberal Democrats realise that local people know what is best for their community, and want councillors who listen and respond.

Locally, Liberal Democrats know the power of listening. This manifesto sets out our clear record of achievement delivering improved services whilst holding Council Tax well below the national average. Of course we don't always get it right first time – but we always listen to what you have to say, and we do always seek to respond though it isn't always possible to deliver everything everyone would wish!

Fire services

Fire Services in Cornwall need improvement.

We will increase investment in Fire Services in Cornwall, improving the retained cover, and keep full time cover at Camborne and Falmouth.

Incinerator

In your responses to our public consultation on the proposed Cornwall Waste Incinerator proposed near St Dennis you highlighted the significant planning and environmental issues, which resulted in the planning application being refused. A new solution to Cornwall's waste needs to be found.

We will hold a rapid review, involving all parties and stakeholders, of the waste strategy to deliver the most environmentally friendly, cost effective and up-to-date local waste solutions available to Cornwall, including increased re-use and recycling, anaerobic digestion and all other available technologies.

One Cornwall

You consistently told us you can't afford high Council Tax, and want excessive bureaucracy cut back, a greater local say over services, and less Government bureaucracy.

In response, creating a single Council for Cornwall is saving over £70 million over the next four years in reduced bureaucracy and over 200 fewer Councillors – savings which we will use to improve services for everyone *and* cut council tax in real terms.

Creating a single Council for Cornwall is accompanied by devolving new powers to every community within Cornwall – with a one stop shop for local services in every town, and new community networks to deliver local services, answerable to that local community.

The new single council is also the opportunity to gain more control over local issues from regional and national Government bureaucrats – the first step on our way to a Cornish Assembly.

We can as a result of the savings delivered by One Cornwall now promise to cut Council Tax in real terms, whilst maintaining and improving services. That's because, as a direct benefit of creating a single council for Cornwall, there will be over £70 million pounds worth of savings across the County over the next four years.

Council Tax

Liberal Democrats have always argued that the Council Tax is a regressive and unfair tax, not based on ability to pay at all, and something that hurts the poorest most – whilst those wealthy enough to be able to afford a second home benefit from reductions.

Nationally, our MPs are campaigning for an end to this unfair tax and for it to be replaced with a fairer system, based on ability to pay.

But in the meantime, **your local councillors have kept Council Tax £175 below the national average - four out of five councils across the country charge more than Cornwall.**

In fact, as long as the government maintains the grants it gives to us, we will cut Council Tax in real terms over the next four years.

We will use the savings from creating a single Cornwall council to improve services for everyone *and* cut Council Tax in real terms. That is what we call Our Fair Deal for Cornwall