The UK Government’s drivers for devolution are both economic growth and public service reform. In Cornwall we have embraced this but must not forget that the long held support for devolution to Cornwall is born from a strong identity and being a functional economic area. There has been an historic lack of fair funding and a feeling of distance deprivation – that our particular needs are not taken into account because of the distance from central Government decision taking. Our geographic position means that we have particularly strong natural resources that could be utilised for renewable energy and driving an economy with different foundations to the rest of the country but this has been frustrated by central Government policy. Our strong culture and heritage plays an important part in the Cornwall brand and our global recognition.

The Cornish Constitutional Convention usually describes the need for devolution in terms of being a functional economic area with a strong regional identity and that devolution to Cornwall could provide a model for other rural and peripheral areas. However, in some States, national identity is a key driver regarding devolved constitutional settlements. Given the questioning that arose at the witness session we feel it is important to state that Cornwall is a nation. This is evident through the Constitutional status of the Duchy of Cornwall. One aspect of this is, as put by House of Lords researcher Mr Kevin Cahill; "The Crown is not the only absolute owner of land in the United Kingdom. In 1855 the High Court ruled that: 'the whole territorial interest and dominion of the Crown in and over the entire county of Cornwall, is vested in the Duke of Cornwall'. So Cornwall is a separate Kingdom.”

Cornwall’s position is evident through the Government’s recognition of the Cornish as a national minority under the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. It is also evidenced by the recognition from others, such as Cornwall being the lead nation at the Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival in 2015. There is much other evidence that we can bring forward if there is an interest in this.

In terms of Cornwall’s regional distinctiveness this has long been recognised, for example, the Kilbrandon Commission noted that Cornwall had a special identity and Lord Whitty stated, "Cornwall is a special case ... and perhaps deserves special status and special respect." (Hansard, 21 Mar 2001 : Column 1465-1466)

With regard to our identity, we wish to see the devolution of culture, heritage and the Cornish language because of its value to our residents and the Cornwall brand. For example, the Cornish language, as the bedrock of our distinctive and unique identity, underpins and shapes the creative and cultural sector, which is a key part of the Local Enterprise Partnerships Strategic Economic Plan. This a sector which has doubled in size in the last ten years with employment increasing by 83.5% between 1997 - 2013.
The IPPR spoke of size in regard to the success of devolution. There is much evidence that
the success of regions is more to do with being a functional economic area and the
investment of social capital by residents due to shared identity. The Cornish Constitutional
Convention has a longstanding commitment to asymmetrical devolution. Both identity and
economic functionality are the key elements that drive a successful region: population size
internationally illustrates that there are successful devolved nations and regions which are
smaller than Cornwall.

Asymmetry is already a principle that has been established. Scotland and Wales are nations
different population sizes, London is a city region with a population bigger than both of
them and Northern Ireland is different again. In terms of the British Isles, the Isle of Man
and the Channel Islands have their own particular Constitutional settlements. Therefore, the
evolution of a federal structure within the UK is required and already suggested by what has
happened before.

The statistical separation of Cornwall and Devon with Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
becoming a NUTS 2 region has enabled significant economic funding to be directed to
Cornwall. There was, and continues to be, substantial economic divergence between
Cornwall and Devon, let alone the wider south-west. This separation resulted in the
previously masked poor economic performance of Cornwall being revealed and measurable.
The Cornwall Operational Programmes allowed the development of a bespoke strategy to
invest in creating new building blocks for the economy, bringing forward unique and
innovative projects such as the Combined Universities in Cornwall and the broadband access
project “actnow”. The 2014-2020 European Structural Funds is over 600million Euros.
Delegation of strategic decision making responsibilities, granted through the Cornwall Deal,
by giving Intermediary Body Status will drive higher performance through better local
knowledge, support the delivery of the EU’s simplification agenda and provide a joined up
approach to investment leading to higher outputs and results.

There are a number of areas where the Cornish Constitutional Convention would wish to
see further devolution, the detail of this can be found in our publications or we are happy to
provide further evidence.

With regards to fiscal devolution, “It is vital to give real economic power to the regions to
enable them to improve economic prosperity” (Cabinet Office, Your Region, Your Choice
2002). Given Cornwall’s economic profile with a prominence of micro businesses the
financial benefits to be achieved from the devolution of business rates does not provide the
same incentive for economic growth as it does in other areas. We would welcome a greater
retention of tax take within Cornwall. Given the current Government’s position, schemes
such as retention of uplift in income tax or stamp duty or VAT would seem reasonable
propositions, incentivising economic growth.
The Cornish Constitutional Convention would wish to see the demerger of Devon and Cornwall Police. By creating a Cornwall Constabulary more responsive to local issues we could ensure that financial and farming crime is dealt with more efficiently. Recently the House of Commons Devolution Select Committee (10th November 2015) discussed that Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners could be seen as an unnecessary further tier of governance. We would propose a combined Emergency Services for Cornwall, incorporating Police, Fire, Ambulance and Coastguard, which would not only be run more efficiently but would be more responsive to local need. In part, this stems from the success of the Transformation Challenge Award funding to integrate blue light services at the Hayle Tri-Service Station.

In response to the question of an English Parliament I will bring to your attention this quote from the Local Government Association report *English Devolution: Local Solutions for a Successful Nation*; “establishing another national Parliament is not the answer, for it misses a fundamental point and would let slip a golden opportunity. What people want is for more decisions about their futures to be made by those who live and work in their communities. Recent public opinion polling found that in every part of the country eight out of ten people of those surveyed supported giving more decision-making powers on issues such as tax, education and policing to local areas.”

In conclusion, Cornwall is a positive area making partnerships locally (such as with the Plymouth City Deal) and internationally (through organisations such as the Conference for Peripheral Maritime regions). There is compelling evidence that taking decisions closer to the people affected leads to better outcomes and saves the taxpayer money. Power should be transferred in such a way that decisions can be taken as close to residents as possible. Cornwall has already started on its devolution journey and the residents of Cornwall are keen for further devolution. Given the opportunity, Cornwall can provide a vibrant and successful example of devolution. Give Cornwall the powers and we will deliver, for Cornwall and for the United Kingdom.

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