

Annual Review of the Cornwall Plan (2021-2022)

*Research into partnerships and collaborative
working for the delivery of the Cornwall Plan*

Citation

Wills, J., Collins, C., Mukhopadhyay, R., and Turner, R. (2022). Annual Review of the Cornwall Plan (2021-2022). Research into partnerships and collaborative working for the delivery of the Cornwall Plan. Environment and Sustainability Institute, University of Exeter, UK.

Contact

Professor Jane Wills: j.wills2@exeter.ac.uk

Dr Rachel Turner: r.turner@exeter.ac.uk

Claire Collins: Claire.Collins@ioz.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Cornwall Council and a British Academy grant (grant number SSF\210011 'Shared Understandings of a Sustainable Future'). We acknowledge support from Tess Ax, Jessie Hamshar, Oscar Marsh and Gemma Mitchell. Artist Keith Sparrow did a brilliant job in illustrating the debate at our workshop. We are grateful to everyone who agreed to be interviewed and those who contributed to the workshop in January 2022.

Research into partnerships and collaborative working for the delivery of the Cornwall Plan

Introduction

In December 2020, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (CIOS) Leadership Board committed individually and collectively to work together to deliver The Cornwall Plan and formally review progress each year. This summary presents findings from research carried out by the University of Exeter to support an annual review of the Cornwall Plan. This work was commissioned by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (CIOS) Leadership Board as part of their commitment to formally review progress to deliver the Cornwall Plan in the year 2021. It also contributes to a larger project, funded by the British Academy, to explore new forms of goal-based governance in the pursuit of sustainable development. This research report provides an assessment of the partnerships and collaboration involved in producing and delivering the Cornwall Plan.

The Cornwall Plan, published in 2020, is designed to represent a vision of Cornwall for 2050. The plan was formulated in response to broad engagement processes called 'Let's Talk Cornwall' during which an estimated 4,000 people took part in either surveys, face-to-face events or by sending written comments. There are six broad 'transitions' within the Cornwall plan, which cover issues including housing, transport, carbon reduction, sustainable food and healthy communities. A key element of the Cornwall Plan is recognising that no one organisation can deliver these outcomes on their own, all partners have committed to support the cross-cutting outcomes of the Cornwall Plan with a shared ethos of Together We Can. The Cornwall Plan articulates a collective vision with the ambition to enhance the resilience, support problem solving of complex challenges, and increase fairness and sustainability in Cornwall.

Our research was split into two main tasks: interviews with representatives from partner organisations and council teams (October and November 2021), followed by a workshop with executive officers and political leaders from the Leadership Board in January 2022. The findings from the interviews fed into the design and content of the workshop and our aim was to further interrogate ways to support partnership working and greater collaboration. The results of the interviews are presented first, and we then move on to a summary of the workshop, ending with some recommendations and reflections about the further development of this work.

Aim

This research aimed to explore the status of partnerships and collaborative action underpinning the development and delivery of the Cornwall Plan.

Objectives

- Identify knowledge and perceptions of collaborative action for the Cornwall Plan;
- Ascertain ways to strengthen the partnership and make recommendations for the next phase of development;
- Explore ideas for engaging wider civil society and community organisations in the ambition and delivery of the Cornwall Plan

Research to explore collaborative action for the Cornwall Plan

Interview methods

Semi-structured interviews, consisting of open-ended questions, were conducted with 23 participants during October to December 2021. Sampling was targeted to recruit only individuals involved in the conception and delivery of the Cornwall Plan. Final participants included council representatives (n=11) engaged in various activities including economic growth, nature recovery, education and children, council leadership (n=3) and external partners (n=9) engaged in health, housing, business, environment, voluntary action, police and local councils.

Open-ended questions were separated into three central themes: knowledge, roles and responsibilities, and challenges and solutions. All interviews were recorded, and then transcribed with the assistance of Otter.ai software.

Data were analysed by thematic analysis, a process by which key themes in the data are identified and coded accordingly. An inductive approach to thematic analysis was used; a process through which codes are initially generated by identifying themes based entirely on the data (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003; Miles et al., 1994). Codes were then refined and arranged in a hierarchical manner to reflect relationships between themes, with the final coding structure including a description of themes shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Final coding structure used for analysis of data

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Engagement with the plan	Perceptions of the plan's purpose	Understanding and opinion of the overall purpose of the plan
	Development and consultation	Feelings of engagement and stewardship with development processes for the plan
	Awareness	Knowledge of the plan and its contents
Action driven by the plan	Perceptions of roles and responsibilities	Identified responsibilities, on a personal and organisational level, for delivery of the plan
	Changes to working	Changes in culture and ways of working that have been stimulated by the plan
	Collaborative action	Description of practices and ideas around collaborative working
	Alignment with existing work and strategy	Relationship of the plan to existing work, including organisational strategies
Future implementation of the plan	Finance	Description of issues relating to finance and budgeting
	Broader socio-economic context	Relationship of the plan to broader socio-economic context, and potential challenges or opportunities
	Public engagement	Understanding of the role of public engagement in relation to the plan
	Timescales	Perception of timescales for the plan, and deliverables, and iterative revisions of the plan

Metrics	Knowledge, perceptions and use of metrics to measure delivery and accountability
Working together	Suggestions for how to work together going forwards and identified challenges

Illustrative anonymised quotes from interviews are used in this report to illustrate the findings and these are attributed to either 'council' or 'partner' respondents to aid understanding while preserving anonymity.

Interview findings

Engagement with the plan

Perceptions of the purpose of the plan

Interview results were analysed to ascertain overall understanding and opinions regarding the purpose of the 'Cornwall Plan' (hereafter referred to as the 'plan'). Many understood the plan to be an overall framework or guide that sets out broader goals for all future work. This was summarised by one council interviewee as, *"I think it's providing a frame through which some of that business planning works"* and another as *"an articulation of a broader plan to act as a guide, to shape some of those other things that sit underneath that"*. The plan was also viewed as an overall vision and agenda, explained by one council representative who said, *"I think the Cornwall plan gives you a really clear vision of what a safe, sustainable Cornwall looks like and that there are actionable ways to get better"*. Similarly, one partner expressed their view that it was a way of looking forward in terms of planning strategies saying, *"it offers that sort of very high-level forward-looking sort of strategic convening"*.

Both partners and council interviewees felt the plan could act as a 'lens' through which individual plans and strategies can be viewed and judged for their utility in achieving the overall 'goal' or vision of the plan. It was also seen as a move towards a more cohesive way of ensuring individual priorities and strategies of different organisations match up in the future. The plan was envisaged as a way of bringing together individual plans and priorities that have traditionally been rather siloed. One council representative stated that although the plan may initially act as a prism through which different strategies and individual priorities are viewed and created, the plan should also act as an overall lens to ensure there is a level of strategic continuity, stating, *"what that lens [referring to the plan] will do is take those strategies and close them so actually they stay aligned for the longer term"*.

There were identified challenges in how the plan would deliver on its purpose and how partners would, in reality, use it to adapt and align individual strategies. Some partners felt that it may be difficult to turn what they viewed as relatively high-level statements and aspirations into action. Some felt that achieving clarity in how these statements and/or vision can be turned into relevant action points was a key priority. For example, one partner stated, *"some of those overarching statements are visions for quality of life but they aren't actually designed to be delivered"*.

Development and consultation

Overall, both partner and council interviewees broadly felt that the plan represented a breadth of opinions on the desired vision for Cornwall in the future. The consultation processes that preceded its development were praised for being relatively far-reaching amongst partner organisations and council representatives. For example, one partner said, *"the data that pulled those visions together was huge, the amount of consultation of individuals and forums and groups...they did an amazing job pulling it all together"*. As a result, many partners felt that 'their' section, i.e. the one that was most relevant to their organisations, represented their viewpoints fairly well. However, the extent to which consultation processes had accurately captured and incorporated wider viewpoints, e.g. from across civil society, was identified as a key weakness and a priority for the evolution of the plan. This was represented by one partner who said, *"we felt that there were big sectors of our community that didn't have that potential to engage"*. Another partner said there was need for wider future engagement, questioning, *"how can it be a Cornwall document rather than a Cornwall Council document?"*.

The relatively short duration of consultation processes was identified by both council and partner representatives as a weakness. Some partners felt that they should have been included in the process sooner and that it should have been a lengthier process, with one saying, *"I think evolving these ideas needs to take much longer"* and another said, *"what I criticise the Council for not doing is making sure [the process was started] with all partners right from the beginning of it"*. Moving forwards, there were some who felt the process could operate in a more collaborative manner, with more organisations represented from now on, in order to make it feel truly 'co-designed'.

Council interviewees explained that the evolution of the plan had been affected by COVID-19 and a change in council representation, resulting in it occurring over a shorter period of time than might have been desired. Some described it as *"rushed"* and *"written at pace"*. Both partner and council interviewees said the process wasn't iterative, and there should have been more opportunities for a wider group of stakeholders to feed back throughout. Relatedly, some explained that they felt the COVID-19 pandemic had changed individual visions and priorities and that, as a result, the plan may reflect a 'snapshot' of this time period, thus reducing its relevance throughout its lifetime (2020-2050). One council interviewee stated, *"I think the information was taken at a bad time in people's lives"* and further stated *"I would have wanted to have revisited those [some of the questions in the consultation process]...because a lot has changed"*.

Awareness and knowledge

All interviewees said they were aware of the plan, and many said they could identify key messages or 'headlines' from it. However, the level of knowledge was highly variable between interviewees. Council interviewees generally had greater awareness than partner interviewees, however, confusion between which plan was being discussed was evident in interviews with both. There were several examples of interviewees consistently answering questions in relation to a different plan, suggesting they were finding it hard to distinguish between the many different plans that exist. This reflects the number of plans and strategies that individuals have to currently work with.

Results suggest that most interviewees were primarily familiar with sections that are directly relevant to their job roles. One council interviewee summarised this by saying, *"well, I'm very familiar with one of them...the one that I've been involved in. So, I have a kind of a passing knowledge of the rest of it"*. Most partners explained that they didn't regularly read the plan, particularly sections not relevant to them, as there wasn't an identified need to. Some specifically stated that they had not attended any events or carried out any work that would require familiarising themselves with the plan. One partner explained, *"I think we're reasonably familiar with it [the plan], probably more familiar with our own section rather than other people's because I can't remember a time...that everybody was in the same room"*. Another partner stated, *"I haven't read it, so I think I know what the headlines are, but I haven't yet had the time or the forums in which I've had to look at it [plan]"*. This lack of widespread knowledge of the plan led one partner interviewee to question, *"well, it's not something I visit regularly. I might have read it once...So I would question this plan's adoption as a Cornwall plan"*.

It is unclear as to the level of knowledge and awareness amongst wider members of staff within partner organisations. One council interviewee raised this as a potentially important question moving forwards saying, *"how aware is everybody in those organisations [partner organisations] of the Cornwall plan and is working towards it?...They might be very aware, or they might not, I don't know"*. Further, the extent to which wider organisations and voluntary groups across Cornwall are aware of it was also raised as a potential concern.

Action driven by the plan

Perceptions of roles and responsibilities

In order for the plan to be delivered, interviewees acknowledged the need for partners and organisations to identify individual and collective roles and responsibility for the plan. Council interviewees emphasised that the plan was not their responsibility alone, and that they envisaged themselves in more of an overseeing or coordinating role. One council interviewee explained, *“Cornwall councils’ responsibility is an enabling, coordinating and supporting function”* and stressed *“that Cornwall Council can’t deliver the Cornwall Plan [on] its own”*. Some partner organisations identified specific roles and responsibilities for themselves and their organisations, but this appeared to be mostly because they represented action they were already delivering, or had to plans to deliver, prior to the plan. Other partners expressed confusion as to what they were required to deliver with one partner interviewee stating, *“as far as what we can do, and what we can guide other people to do, I probably need to be more knowledgeable and delve a bit more into the depth of what needs to be done”*. Another explained that they weren’t sure of their roles and responsibilities as they weren’t sure what action was needed to deliver the plan saying, *“I think we want more design which is deliverable rather than these visions and goals”*

Interviewees raised issues with how to identify ‘cross-cutting’ roles and responsibilities, that would deliver against multiple sections of the plan due to a lack of familiarity with other sections. For example, action around climate change and the environment was broadly discussed by interviewees and many identified particular actions and responsibilities that they were doing, or planned to do, to deliver against the plan. This may be owing to the fact that awareness and action on such issues is increasing in wider society, along with a rise in feelings of shared stewardship around the environment. Therefore, individuals may be more accustomed and familiar with taking individual action, so can more easily transfer this to their job roles. However, ascertaining personal and organisational roles and responsibilities for some deliverables, such as housing, may be viewed as something that can only be tackled by specialist, often state-based, interventions.

Alignment with existing work and strategy

Throughout interviews, many existing strategies and policy interventions were discussed, and many interviewees identified cohesion between action already being delivered and deliverables under the plan. Some explained that this was because the plan had broadly represented partners’ intentions moving forwards and didn’t feel there was a need for formulation of new plans. However, many felt that delivering the plan would require new, more specialised plans at an organisational level, or would require adapting old ones. One council interviewee stated, *“most of the real delivery, I suppose, is going to sit through things that are spun underneath it, and projects and plans which sit underneath that”*. There was evidence that some action had been taken already, with one partner stating, *“since this plan was produced, we’ve actually aligned our strategic goals around what we’re trying to achieve [in] the organisation that I represent”*. Further, one council interviewee stated, *“there’s certainly the data and space strategy, the localism strategy and the environmental growth strategy, two of which have been published, which are clearly and explicitly aligned with the Cornwall Plan”*.

Key challenges in aligning the plan with existing plans and strategies were identified as a lack of understanding as to the hierarchical structure of plans and one partner remarked, *“I wish somebody would just tell us the hierarchy of strategic planning”*. Further, in talking about how the plan aligned with existing strategies, there was again confusion between plans due to the similarities in language and deliverables.

Cultural shift in ways of working

Council interviewees clearly voiced intentions for the plan to stimulate a new way of working that relies on partnerships. Some also explained that they hoped it represented a shift in the perception and actuality of the role of the council. One council interviewee, for example, stated *"I think that the plan itself represents our ambitions to be a convener of partnerships for Cornwall"*. The importance of moving to these ways of working was reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic and G7 event, as these had highlighted the opportunities and strengths in working collaboratively, with one council interviewee stating, *"[the G7] has given us confidence ... in terms of what we can achieve"*. A partner interviewee elaborated, *"this piece of work [the Cornwall Plan] came out of an agreement that the one thing that nobody wanted to lose from COVID was that different way of networking and understanding other organisations that were working within Cornwall, and how you could improve things by making better links between those organisations"*.

The plan wasn't broadly considered by interviewees to represent a complete cultural shift in collaborative working and action in Cornwall, as many felt there were already many existing examples (particularly during COVID-19). However, by stipulating priorities around working collaboratively, council interviewees felt that it did concretely express future intentions along these lines. For example, one council interviewee stated, *"I don't think the Cornwall plan necessarily defines that [a new way of operating within the council] because it is very high level, but I think what it is talking about is how we are developing our relationships in place"* and another explained, *"it's not necessarily a new plan...it's a different way of working, having those priorities across the council"*.

Some interviewees suggested that a novel aspect of the plan was the shift towards a more place-based approach to priorities and working. Accordingly, one council interviewee stated, *"I think there is [with the plan] an opportunity to talk about these themes spatially"*. Adopting place-based decision-making, with local leaders making more strategic decisions about investment and development, was an important aspect of the plan for some interviewees as it would support further devolution. For example, one council interviewee said, *"our ambition was always to have a kind of devolution perspective, [anticipating a] devolution deal, which secured further powers and funding from government to help Cornwall in making its fastest possible progress on the plan"* and another stating, *"I think the devolution ask is really important to help us deliver the Cornwall plan"*.

In terms of collaborative action stimulated by the plan, there were examples of discussions being enacted between partners and council representatives, but these didn't appear to have been widely translated into action. Some interviewees explained that this was due to the relatively short timeframe that had passed since the plan had been finished, or a lack of clarity as to when and how to do it. One council interviewee said, *"I haven't got in touch with them [partner organisations] about Cornwall plan stuff, really, because there hasn't been anything to contact them about until we started doing this kind of internal assessment that we're doing now"*. How new ways of collaborative working could be enacted wasn't clear for many interviewees and some felt they needed further guidance as to how to go about this moving forward. Some council interviewees felt this should be led by partners themselves stating, *"if the Cornwall plan's really working, it will be pushing partners to go where are these bits where we need to talk to the partners about where we have bits of overlap"*. Examples of collaborative working to deliver against one of the transitions were provided, e.g. action for the Integrated Care System. However, this wasn't stimulated specifically by the Cornwall Plan and, therefore, may not represent an ideal example for how completely novel partnerships can be stimulated through the plan. Overall, interviewees repeatedly identified a need for further meaningful discussions around linkages between sectors, with one partner stating, *"should we also be*

trying to see what we can do to help with their environmental agenda and their economic agenda? We haven't had that sort of conversation or structure to be able to do that".

Future implementation of the plan

Public engagement

There was a significant identified challenge in how to share the plan and incorporate wider viewpoints and opinions of wider civil society. For many interviewees the plan felt like it was a representation of just those who held a professional and occupational interest in it. One council interviewee commented, *"there's a need to shift the focus [away] from conversations with people who have the same level of vested interest in the plan"*. A lack of substantial engagement with the wider public during its development was identified as a potential current challenge. One partner explained, *"the biggest challenge is the fact that it hasn't been granulated as a vision where every citizen can play their part ... how do we steward, as custodians [of] this plan? And make it real?"*.

Moving forward, both partners and council interviewees felt that systematic engagement with the public would help ensure the plan reflected wider societal views. In doing so, some felt there would be greater investment in the plan as it would be more meaningful in the eyes of a greater number of people. For example, one partner questioned, *"how do you use the plan, to strengthen the voice of the people, to make it meaningful"* and another stated, *"the challenge is making that document live in the communities that hold on to those values"*. This was also identified as vital to foster action to deliver the plan amongst wider society and voluntary organisations. One council interviewee stated, *"[there is a] need to move the focus to what can communities do to help themselves rather than being reliant on the council"*. Wider society should feel meaningfully engaged in the design of the plan to encourage wider civic action.

Due to the relatively long time span of the plan, some felt that iterative engagement processes would also help ensure that the plan consistently reflected wider societal needs and priorities. Some felt that these should be at least once a year and that wider public engagement should be a key current priority, particularly as priorities and needs would have shifted substantially since the plan's inception. One partner explained, *"I think what they're going to have to do is go back out to the people and find out what it is that people want now because their wants will probably have changed over the last sort of couple of years"*.

In considering how to conduct engagement, there were repeated assertions that a broad demographic of society should be represented. The need to ensure young voices are represented was key for many, as one council representative stated, *"the plan, as it stood, didn't really take into consideration the voice of the child"*. How best to deliver meaningful engagement according to different wants and needs across society was discussed, with interviewees identifying that different formats will be required. One council interviewee said, *"but how do we engage young people now? Say actually, this plan is about your future?"*. Another council interviewee more broadly questioned *"so, the other point for me would be that we must engage people who don't normally get engaged well"*.

Measuring delivery of the plan

Ensuring that there is accountability and a measure of progress towards achieving the plan was a key discussion point for interviewees. One council interviewee said, *"what will be key, and what we've still got some work to do is really on nailing down measures of success, about getting that journey to 2050"*. Another council interviewee further stated, *"I think you've just got to be absolutely focused on delivery, you know, months go by, what have we achieved, let's make some decisions. Let's really be time focused and outcome focused"*. That said, partners

and council interviewees alike appeared unclear how deliverables would satisfy the overarching vision of the plan. One partner stated, *"what's missing is ... the golden thread that takes the Cornwall Plan down - whether it be into transport, housing, health, education, jobs - it's missing the golden thread. Tell us how you're going to do it!"*. Therefore, the identification and responsibility for tangible deliverables was seen as a key priority, particularly for partners.

Partners explained that they would need help in adapting deliverables according to their capabilities. They further questioned whether metrics would adequately reflect local contexts, with one partner stating, *"it's not that joined up, it's their targets and their indicators. It's not our local target or local indicator"*. Therefore, which metrics are used should be a collaborative decision and one which could further encourage collaborative action. A challenge repeatedly identified by interviewees was how to measure the attainment of goals using metrics, with one council interviewee explaining, *"one of the major challenges that I found is, building indicators that are able to be measured"*. The challenge of how to accurately measure progress was linked to the need to establish mechanisms for accountability, which was an important issue for many. One partner stated, *"[plans are] only going to be a success, if there is some degree of organisational accountability ... [in] delivering them"*.

The need to communicate progress towards these deliverables was also identified as key for ensuring continued support and engagement with the plan. One partner explained, *"you have to regularly communicate the distance you've travelled...and then you have to use that to co-review together and adjust your course of action, adapt, adjust and change"*. Therefore, interviewees suggested that identifying short-term metrics would be key.

Timescales

The timescale of the plan (2020-2050) was identified as both a key positive, in that it offers a long-term vision for Cornwall, as well as a key challenge, as continuous revision of the plan would be required in order to ensure that it meets the shifting needs and priorities of Cornwall. Discussing the positives of having a long-term vision one council interviewee stated, *"so, I think it's a good thing that the council and people we work with have a long term view of our place and how we want it to be"*.

To meet the challenges associated with the long timespan, both council and partner interviewees explained that inherent flexibility needs to be built into the plan as one council interviewee explained, *"it's difficult to predict what will be important in 2050"*. Further, one partner interviewee stated, *"the needs of the people of Cornwall in 30 years' time are going to be very, very different"*. Interviewees suggested that this flexibility could be achieved by iterative reviews of priorities and needs of wider society, and how action under the plan delivers against these. Further, the importance of breaking down deliverables and actions into goals measured against smaller timescales was emphasised.

Financial systems and priorities

How to fund action associated with delivering the plan was a key discussion point. There were feelings that funding should be linked with work under the plan and/or specific deliverables. This view was expressed by both council and partner interviewees, with one council interviewee stating, *"I think there's a need to link the plan to money and that's a gap we've got in the current plan"* and one partner stated, *"you've got to stop individual financial envelopes, you have to have one pot...and to take a system based approach to achieving this"*. *"I think there's a need to link the plan to money and that's a gap we've got in the current plan"*

Several challenges were identified in how to link funding with the plan. Firstly, existing governance and organisational structures mean that funding is not always determined by

partners and/or the council. Accordingly, one council interviewee commented, *“I think the plan has to guide and shape resource allocation. However, for partners, what resources they get isn't shaped locally”* Secondly, as the plan consists of mostly high-level objectives, some interviewees questioned how that could be linked to the allocation of funding.

Overall, some interviewees felt considerations about finance were completely absent currently, which failed to recognise the importance of funding in ensuring plans were deliverable. This led to concerns that if deliverables weren't linked to finance, then they would not be achieved.

Steps towards successful collaborative action

Overall, there was an identified need to first raise awareness around the importance of working together. Interviewees felt that it was time to translate words into action and identify potential ways of collaborative working and synergies between deliverables. One partner stated, *“Look, plans can't be done by committee in a closed room. Not if it's a Cornwall plan. So, I would like to add let's stop planning for 2050. Let's start together right now. Let's be present future, let's focus on that emerging future and call it into the now together”*.

Despite a clear desire to work collaboratively, interviewees identified some initial challenges. Firstly, changing existing ways of working would require substantial effort as there is a need to actively identify synergies. One council interviewee identified, *“that's quite a challenge, really, when you've got people delivering services and projects, which are often in kind of smaller silos”*. Secondly, as well as identifying and seeking out new partnerships, the manner and styles of working may differ between partners and the council and therefore partnerships will need to be sensitive to this.

Key findings

Following analysis of interview data, a number of key findings for future work to ensure the success of the plan were identified (Table 2). From these, several questions were highlighted that fed into the design of a workshop attended by council and partner representatives in January 2022.

Table 2. Key findings from analysis of interview data and relevant questions designed to explore these issues further

Key finding	Relevant question
Knowledge and awareness of the plan was highly variable and was particularly poor in relation to areas not directly relevant to interviewees	<i>Is there a need for further collaborative events that include holistic discussions around the plan?</i>
There is a paucity of understanding of how aware the wider population, including those from voluntary organisations and groups, are aware of the Cornwall Plan and its utility	<i>How can individuals from across organisations be engaged in delivering the plan?</i> <i>How can wider civic society and organisations become involved with the plan?</i>
Both councils and partners felt that there was a need to determine how to shift ways of working towards stronger collaborative action across organisations	<i>What examples of existing collaborative action have been stimulated by the plan?</i> <i>How can partners and council representatives foster new partnerships and stronger collaboration?</i>

The ability of the vision to reflect current needs and priorities during its long timeframe is unclear for many interviewees	<i>How to ensure that throughout the timespan of the plan (2020-2050), it accurately reflects wider societal needs and priorities.</i>
--	--

Priorities

The Cornwall Plan was identified as being ambitious in terms of its scope and comments were made about the need to work collaboratively to identify priorities for delivery. The importance of identifying such priorities was a dominant theme for interviewees. One council interviewee explained this as being about, *“extracting those elements of the Cornwall plan that are priorities....so our priorities are you know, housing, adult social care, careers”*. There was a sense that this was a key next step for delivering the plan, as summarised by one partner who said, *“[let’s] start to prioritise what needs to be done and start to deliver it”*. Partners explained that it was important that this process was collaborative, to ensure partners and the council are equally represented, with one partner explaining, *“this vision requires a balancing of priorities and the priorities of the partners”*.

Some noted that the long-term nature of the vision made it especially pertinent that priorities and action be associated with agreed upon timescales and deliverables. Council representatives and partners alike commented that this process of identifying priorities was essential to *‘put the words into action’* and to maximise the benefits of working together, rather than working in sector-based or organisational siloes. The potential of having ‘scaled priorities’, including both short and long-term targets, and those considered to be small, medium and large, was suggested by interviewees, in order to deliver both quick wins and foster the relationships needed to deliver the long-term goals for Cornwall.

Interview data was analysed to identify and describe the top three priorities of interviewees and the number of interviewees who mentioned each (split into council and partner interviewees) (Table 3). Results indicate a strong degree of overlap between the priorities of partner (Figure 1A) and council (Figure 1B) interviewees. Issues such as housing, health and wellbeing and employment were most commonly identified as key priorities (Figure 2). Collaborative action, and working towards common goals, was also identified as a priority. Accordingly, identifying specific priorities, and overlaps between them, was seen as key to enabling collaborative working and was prioritised for further discussion at the workshop held in January 2022.

Table 3. Categories of identified priorities for council representatives, partner representatives and overall

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Interviewee type		Overall (n)
			Council	Partner	
Environmental sustainability	Carbon neutrality	Reduction of carbon, e.g. through renewables, and attainment of carbon zero targets	2	1	3
	Sustainable growth	Incorporation of sustainability considerations across all areas	2		2
	Nature services	Improving maintenance and management of public spaces		1	1
	Nature recovery	Improving biodiversity and provisioning around nature		1	1
Infrastructure	Housing	Increasing provision of affordable housing, including for local and vulnerable people, and working collaborative with the private sector	7	4	11
	Transport	Improvement of public transport provisioning	1	1	2
	Health and wellbeing services	Increasing quality and provision of health and wellbeing across all demographics	4	1	5
	Social care	Improving social care services	1		1
	Integrated care system	Successful implementation of the integrated care system by enhancing partnerships and collaborative working	2	1	3
Economy	Employment	Broadening availability of jobs across sectors, and providing well paid jobs	3	1	4
	Education and skills training	Improving education and in-work skills and training to create equal opportunities and enhance work force	2	3	5
Community	Community culture and values	Creating and maintaining community culture and cohesion, including values and ways of working adopted through COVID-19	1	1	2
	Community engagement	Meaningful engagement with communities	1		1

	Safety	Improving community safety	1	1
	Equality	Addressing social inequalities	2	2
Ways of working	Adopting the Cornwall Plan	Maintaining motivation and implementing the Cornwall Plan	1	1
	Budgeting and planning	Systematic and collaborative approaches to financial planning and provision	2	2
	Collaborative action	Culture around collaborative working	4	3
				7

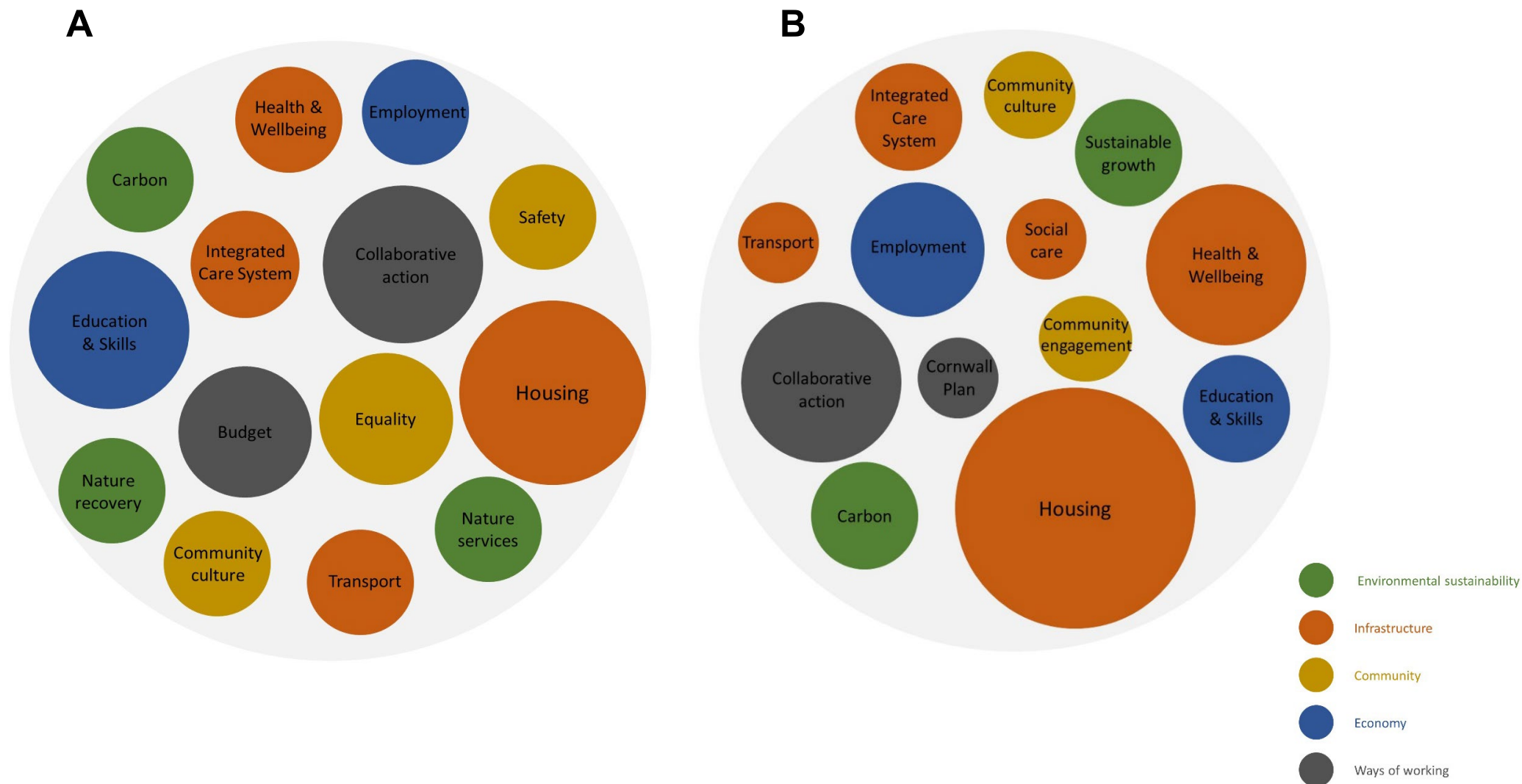


Figure 1. Identified priorities for partners (A) and council (B) interviewees, represented by proportionally sized circles to indicate the number of interviewees who identified this as a priority area.

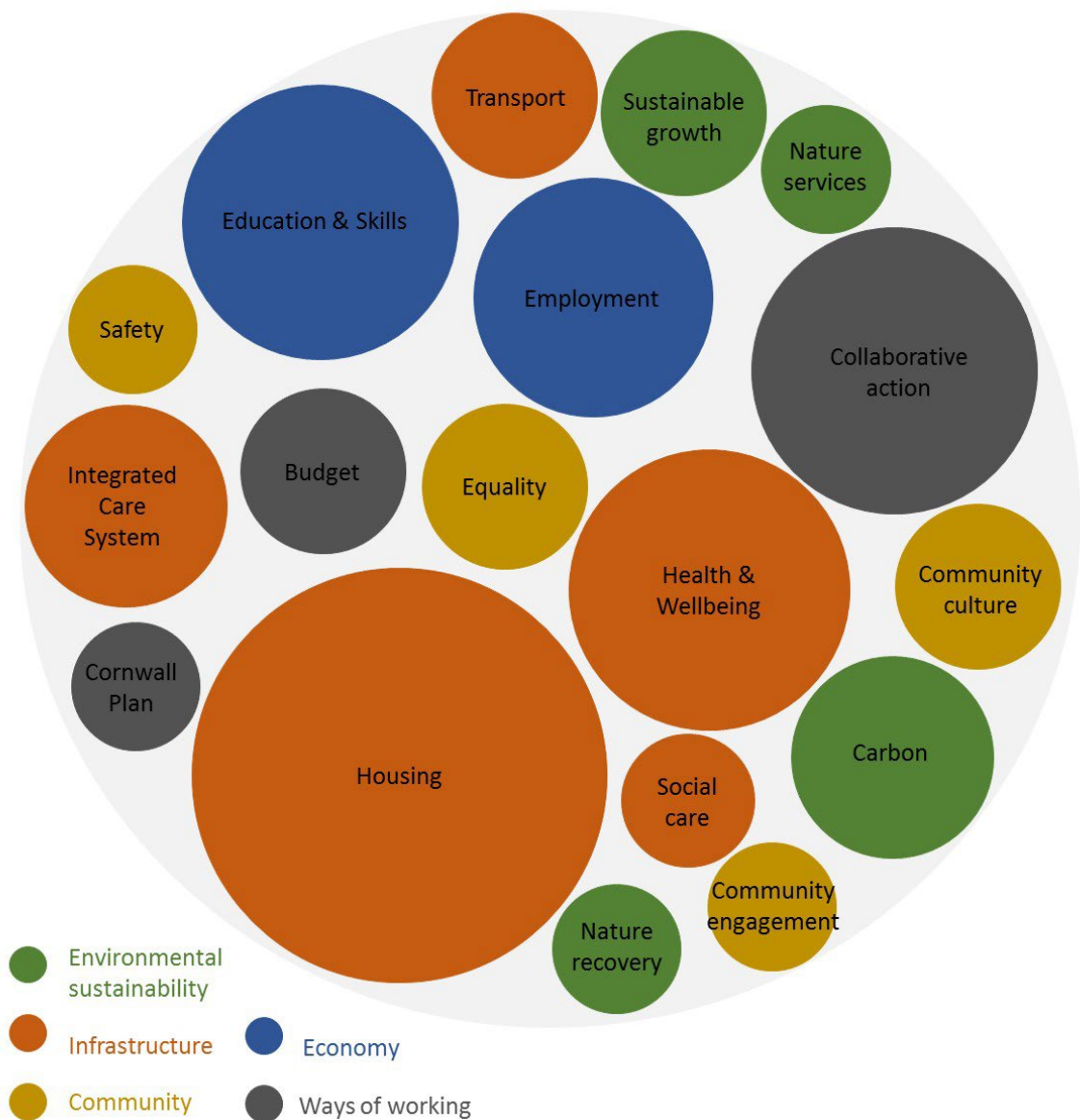


Figure 2. Identified priorities for all interviewees, represented by proportionally sized circles to indicate the number of interviewees who identified this as a priority area.

Cornwall Plan Workshop

On 26th January 2022, an online workshop was convened by the Environment and Sustainability Institute (ESI) in partnership with Cornwall council. The event was organised online due to the national pandemic but organised to allow plenty of time for participation and debate. The workshop was attended by 27 participants from the Leadership Board (comprising executive officers and politicians from Cornwall Council, and partner organisations including economic growth, nature recovery, education and children, housing, policing and safety, health and wellbeing, the voluntary sector, business and army representatives). This workshop was designed to follow up on the issues and priorities identified through the interviews, exploring how to identify and enact mechanisms for successful partnership working and further collaboration to deliver the plan. In addition, there was an identified need to gather suggestions for how best to engage the broader community and civil society organisations, as interviewees had identified this as a key next step for the plan.

The event was opened by Councillor Linda Taylor, on behalf of the Leadership Board and as Leader of the council, and it began with a presentation outlining the key findings from our research. This was followed by a break-out group to facilitate discussion and a plenary feedback session. The second half began with a presentation from Bristol City, outlining the work they are doing to foster partnership working over shared goals for their city, followed by another round of break-out discussions. The material from the two break-out sessions and plenary discussions was collated as additional data for our research.

Workshop methods

The two breakout sessions were chaired by University of Exeter facilitators and workshop attendees were split into four breakout groups, with 4 to 7 attendees in each. These were video recorded, and conversation was stimulated by five discussion questions and the use of virtual 'post-it notes' on which attendees could write their thoughts. The aim of these breakout groups was to: 1) identify shared ways of working towards achieving priorities for Cornwall, 2) gather ideas for engaging the wider community, including businesses, civil society and voluntary groups, in delivering the Cornwall Plan. Break out group topic and questions were as follows.

Breakout group 1: focus on one priority (as shown in Figure 2) as a group to discuss as a breakout group.

- 1) Why is this priority important for Cornwall/relevant for you?
- 2) Which partners could work together to address this priority?
- 3) What practical steps could you take to collaborate and deliver change?

Breakout group 2: focusing on engaging the wider community with the Cornwall plan

- 1) How can we engage communities in tackling challenges to achieve the aspirations of the Cornwall plan?
- 2) What concrete actions could be taken over the next 12 months to engage communities, businesses and civil society in delivering the plan?

Audio recording of the workshops were transcribed using Otter.ai software and audio was attributed to either 'council' or 'partner' attendees as with interviews. Transcripts were then also analysed using thematic analysis as described for interview transcripts, with breakout group 1 and 2 initially analysed individually in order to identify themes in answers to each

question, and then collectively to identify key themes dominant to the whole workshop. The two plenary sessions were also analysed to identify key themes.

An illustrator provided summary illustrations (n=5) to capture the debate and we have included these alongside the relevant text below.



Figure 3. Illustrative summary of the overall workshop findings relating to the annual review of the Cornwall Plan

Workshop findings

Breakout group 1: priorities

Reflecting on shared priorities

During the first breakout group, participants identified one key priority to focus on and initially discussed why this priority was important. The majority (three out of four groups) chose housing as their key priority, with the remaining group choosing health and wellbeing.

In discussing why their chosen priority was important, groups discussed the scale of the impact and that it was a pertinent, important issue for everyone that reflects wider priorities of residents in Cornwall. Groups also discussed the importance of considering the broad impact of each priority on wider elements of the system. For example, in discussing housing, participants explained that this can have a wider effect on many other factors, such as health and the economy, and explained that advances in housing would also relieve pressure on other services.

When explaining why housing was a priority, as summarised in Figure 4, participants explained that it was important because it is a rapidly shifting situation that is rapidly worsening. There was an identified need for tangible concrete actions and that the plan should, therefore, be prioritising this as a central concern for the next year.

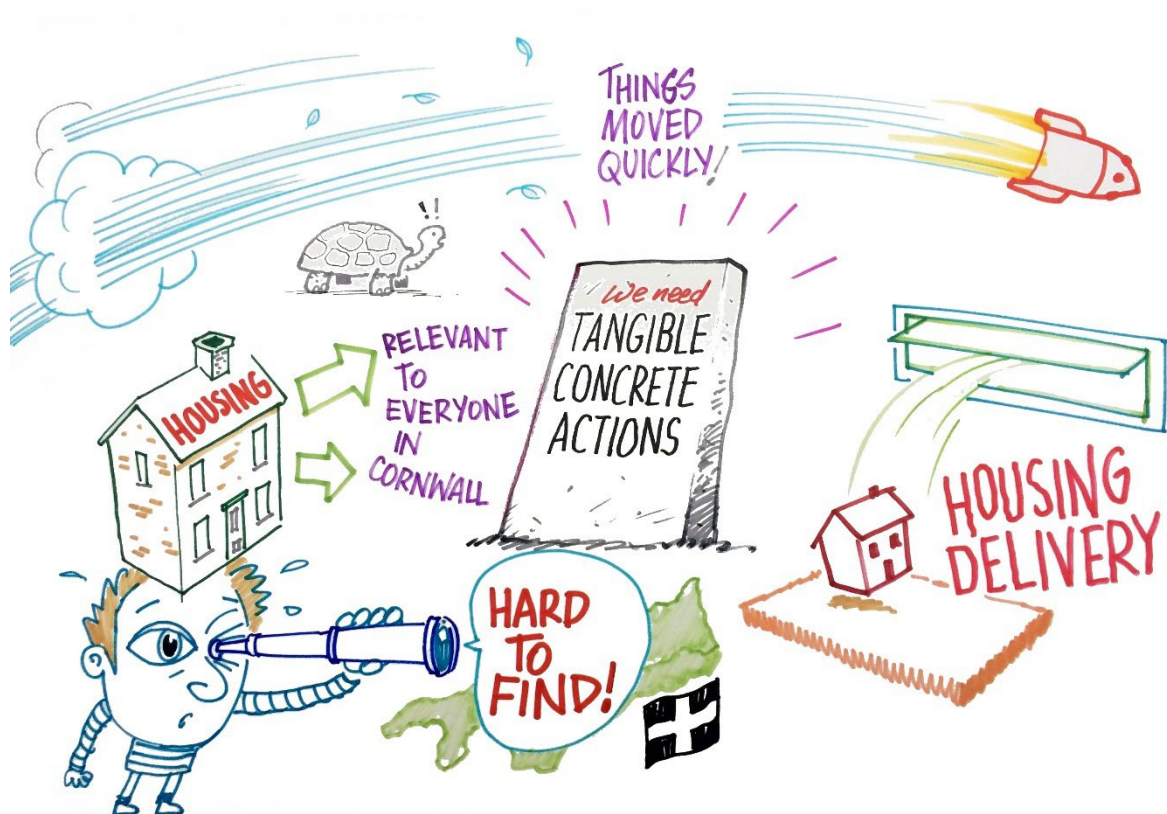


Figure 4. Illustrative summary of participant responses to the question “Why is this priority important to consider?” with answers from the 3 breakout groups that chose ‘housing’ as their priority

Prioritising working together

In thinking about why it is important to work together, participants explained that collaboration makes it more likely to be successful, maximising the potential impact of each partner. As summarised in Figure 5, people felt that ‘talking is key’ and can help shift decision-making from being told what to do to feeling actively involved.



Figure 4. Illustrative summary of participant responses in Breakout group 1 about prioritising working together and next, practical steps

Thinking specifically about which partners could work together, and in what manner, the following suggestions were made:

- **Health and wellbeing:** organisations involved in nature and the environment alongside traditional health and wellbeing organisations (e.g. the NHS). This was identified as a key potential partnership due to the increasingly acknowledged benefits that the natural environment can have on health and wellbeing. One participant explained, “we know that people who are more connected with nature are healthier and happier”.
- **Housing:** construction companies should be working with education and training partners to ensure sustainability and quality in the workforce to deliver these projects
- **Housing:** public sector companies should be working with land developers to identify potential brownfield sites and maximise public assets
- **Housing:** community-based organisations should be working with the wider community, e.g. potentially to encourage change in use of spare rooms/houses and ensure they go to lodgers rather than being used as holiday lets.

Practical steps to deliver change for identified priorities

A summary of practical steps suggested by workshop participants that could potentially deliver change for identified priorities is included (Table 4). Suggestions focused around the key themes of ‘creating a dialogue’, ‘wider partnerships’, ‘policy and strategy’ and ‘resources (financial and assets)’.

In terms of creating a dialogue, the need to continue discussions and approach these in a regular, systematic manner was seen as key. Participants felt that sufficient resources and time was needed to allow ideas around potential partnerships to become fully formed. Suggestions around creating these discussions included having agreed upon contacts within organisations to facilitate discussions and the creation of smaller groups to discuss pertinent issues. Relatedly, participants felt that having a clear determination of responsibilities and roles within these partnerships would be key, and that collaborative working will represent a 'spectrum' with different degrees of involvement. Other policy and strategy-based solutions included clearly distinguishing between short and long-term priorities, as both are important for working towards the visions but there needs to be realistic expectations for delivery, as well as facilitating data sharing between organisations.

With respect to wider partnerships, there were discussions about how collaboration should include communities and voluntary organisations as these are key stakeholders in enacting change against some of these priorities.

Table 4. Key themes in participant responses to the question: what practical steps could you take to collaborate and deliver change?

Step	Potential suggestions
Creating a dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having agreed upon contacts who can facilitate such conversations • Integration of individuals across all job role levels, and not just restricting it to more senior members of staff
Policy and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defining short and long-term priorities • Working backwards from the end goal • Creating a 'hub' or centre where numerous organisations are based to help facilitate collaboration • Facilitating sharing of data on issues between partners, and making it clear as to how this data can be accessed and by whom • Clear determination of roles and responsibilities within partnerships • Mapping of current roles and responsibilities of partners to determine who is already engaged and working on issues
Wider partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about how to drive behavioural change within communities themselves, e.g. in changing attitudes towards holiday rentals • Maximising the role of community organisations • Further devolution of powers to allow further decision-making at a local level
Resources (financial and assets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferring assets and budgets to local communities to allow them to engage actively in collaboration • Asset mapping to identify who holds responsibilities for assets across Cornwall to speed up identifying potential partnerships

In terms of taking practical steps in working together, several key challenges were identified. Firstly, the scale of required discussions was considered as a potential barrier, as one participant summarised during the plenary regarding who should be working together to tackle housing, "*which partners can work together? The short answer is everybody*". Therefore, how to systematically organise and facilitate such large-scale discussions may be particularly challenging. Furthermore, also relating to discussions and communication between partners,

there can be unique complications when stakeholders are incredibly busy and operate at a national scale (e.g. NHS, especially during COVID-19). Identifying exactly who needs to be engaged within these organisations is key, and participants identified a need to include individuals within organisations across job levels. One group explained that they felt it was important to think about 'at what level' conversations need to happen, and that they shouldn't be restricted to more senior individuals within organisations

Breakout group 2: wider community engagement

During the second breakout group, participants were asked to focus on how to engage the wider community in delivering the Cornwall Plan. Participants highlighted the importance of doing so, with one stating "*the community must be part of the solution. It just has to be*" and one council participant explaining that the success of the plan was "*about actually doing it within community*". Overall, there were three key overarching priority areas for community engagement discussed during the workshop, which were: 1) how to ensure a broad demographic of society is engaged, 2) how to communicate progress with the plan, 3) how to use engagement to ensure the plan truly represents the priorities and needs of the wider public.



Figure 5. Illustrative summary of participant responses in Breakout group 2 about how to engage communities

During breakout groups, participants were asked to suggest possible actions for the next 12 months to enable successful community engagement. Suggestions focused around strengthening existing capacity for community organisations, determining priorities and needs and practical ideas for conducting events (Table 5).

Participants regularly highlighted that partners, such as town and parish councils and the Voluntary Sector Forum, already have existing knowledge and strong links with community organisations, and that this should be capitalised on. Emphasising the existing strength in community spirit across many areas in Cornwall, participants felt that local problem solving is the most effective way to deliver change against some aspects of the plan. Further, and especially over the last two years, local pathways to deliver action have become well-established, and many of these are reliant on two-way engagement, e.g. between trusted partner organisations and communities. Therefore, engaging with communities should seek to use these existing pathways as a level of trust already exists as well as an understanding of how best to engage. Specific suggestions for strengthening existing capacity included a formal ‘mapping’ of community organisations and their existing activities and roles.

The need to identify and meaningfully incorporate the priorities and needs of community members was repeatedly stressed. This was summarised by one partner who said, *“we need to shift to a really connected approach where our public feel like they’re involved in the conversation as opposed to being spoken to”*. Another further elaborated, *“this is about talking to people about shared worries and problems and concerns”*. This was seen as a key priority in order to foster feelings of stewardship and ownership of the plan, as it was delivering shared priorities, rather than those of council or partner organisations. Participants reiterated the importance of setting goals that are ‘smaller’, and more achievable on a short-term basis and that align closely with local priorities. One partner said, *“I do think...that people often feel divorced from those big strategic outcomes, they’re not identified locally”*. Relatedly, the importance of communicating the attainment of any goals was stressed, in order to ensure there is a sense of progress for the wider community. Participants felt that communicating visible, tangible results will help to enhance long-term engagement with the plan and related vision. Identifying needs and priorities could be facilitated by annual votes and short pulse surveys.

In discussing practical ideas for how to conduct engagement events, participants positively responded to the examples provided from Bristol including holding annual gatherings. There were discussions about how to ensure that these engaged with different sub-sections of communities, particularly young people. One council participant questioned, *“how do we get through to the ‘never take a survey, I don’t care people’?”*. Participants felt that there wasn’t going to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution with different demographics likely to engage with different types of events. Further, there were questions about how examples can be drawn from urban contexts like Bristol which are much larger in scale. Overall, participants tended to support smaller gatherings as they would be better suited to the geography of Cornwall, as large-scale events, e.g. in towns and/or in Truro, would require people to travel and, therefore, reduce the likelihood that people might be willing to contribute. Engagement events that travel around Cornwall visiting a range of places were suggested as better to ensure a wider demographic is engaged.

Table 5. Key activities suggested by participants in response to the question *‘what concrete actions could be taken over the next 12 months to engage communities, businesses and civil society in delivering the plan?’*

Theme	Suggested activities
Strengthening existing capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping out existing community organisations and their roles and responsibilities • Revisiting existing plans and work that has identified community needs and priorities, such as Parish Plans, to see how that aligns with the Cornwall Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting priorities and visions for community engagement that is aligned with existing community organisations and their activities
Ascertaining priorities and perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct short pulse surveys to regularly assess priorities and plans • Ask the Cornwall Youth Council to annually vote on priorities (with the suggestion of one key priority for the next year) • Consider participatory budgeting processes to enhance understanding of priorities • Determine the effect of the plan on local priorities in order to convey the importance of the plan to local communities
Conducting engagement events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid events incorporating virtual and in-person elements • Creating guidance for all organisations on how to engage in community engagement and how to collect data from these • Translation of messaging and strategy into easily understood messages for residents • Enhance annual conversation events • Conduct Facebook live events • Develop further ideas and strategy around branding for the Cornwall Plan, including creating a website and/or other marketing materials • Set annual targets for engaging residents with individual, small-scale, goals

Recommendations

Based on our research findings, this report identifies key recommendations for the future development and implementation of the Cornwall Plan. Overall, findings from both interviews and the workshop reflect a desire for the plan to exist as a living document that can be revisited periodically, ensuring that it continues to reflect the needs of Cornwall. Reviewing the plan in this iterative manner will also ensure that it stays alive in the minds of both partners and the wider community and will help to encourage feelings of ownership of the vision and goals. The recommendations identified below expand on this challenge and identify avenues for further consideration.

Partnership working

Interview results showed there is value in continued discussions about the exact role of the plan, and its position in relation to the hierarchy of existing plans and strategies. This will help to clarify the particular roles and responsibilities for partners and help to identify the goals that are shared in order to encourage collaborative working. These discussions are also needed to further encourage engagement with and ownership of the plan across the Leadership Board and within partner organisations. This is seen as especially important for partners who may feel slightly disengaged with the plan, particularly with sections that are not viewed as their 'own'.

Collaborative discussions and events or forums organised around the plan could further embed it as a shared vision. It is important that these events engage individuals across all levels within each institution, since there is a perception that, to date, the plan has been primarily devised and coordinated by senior strategic members of the Leadership Board. Such discussions could help to identify opportunities for more integration across Leadership Board institutions at an operational level, e.g. what types of actions can be realistically enacted, shifting it from purely a 'strategic/visionary' document to an operational one.

The identification of priorities, and action points to deliver against short and long-term time scales will help to ensure work under the plan is realistic and manageable. This will also make it easier to document the impact of the plan and associated actions, and to identify indicators and measures of change against these short and long term goals. This requires a process of reflection and review to be established that will enable the identification and description of shared priority areas, e.g. housing or healthcare, on an annual basis, enabling collaborative action across the Leadership Board. Such processes will also enable ongoing reflection and iterative development of the plan to ensure that it reflects contemporary needs across Cornwall over its life-span.

Identification of short term priorities and action plans will require accompanying processes to monitor delivery, attainment and outcomes, and to communicate these across the Leadership Board and to the wider public. These processes could be incorporated into an Annual Review of the Cornwall Plan that would form part of the regular work of the Leadership Board.

Extending partnership working into local civil society

Our findings indicated strong appetite for engaging wider civil society and community organisations in realising the ambitions of the plan. Accordingly, trialling how engagement events can be best enacted should be a key priority. Consideration should be given to the mechanisms that could be established to incorporate information about the priorities and needs of local communities, in order to reflect these in the ambitions and vision of the plan.

This will require efforts to ensure that a wide range of social groups and organisations are involved in these processes, with attention paid to reaching those who might not usually engage in such events. This process should not only be consultative, in informing the priorities of the Leadership Board, but collaborative and enabling, promoting wider engagement in addressing shared priorities, and strengthening public voice and capacity to take action. Learning should be taken from existing examples, such as Bristol, to capitalise on existing knowledge and adapt approaches to best suit the Cornish context.

Next steps

Further research will be conducted by the University of Exeter, funded through a British Academy grant, to explore people's ambitions for change and their motivations for taking part in local activity. This research funding will provide the means to organise an engagement event in May or June 2022, which will be designed to include young people, civil society organisations, businesses, community groups, local councils and faith organisations. This event will trial how civil society can be engaged in identifying and setting priorities for the plan on an annual basis. Learning from this process will help to demonstrate how existing institutions, as represented on the Leadership Board, can support lay expertise and community action going forward. A short report will summarise this learning and be shared with the Leadership Board to integrate any recommendations into future action to support and deliver the Cornwall Plan.

Conclusions

Overall, this study identified that implementation of the Cornwall Plan relies on both successful collaboration between partner organisations as well as engaging wider civil society with the plan. Consistently and systematically engaging with Cornwall's residents will ensure that the plan is adaptive and reflects the priorities and needs of citizens. This will further help residents to consider the plan as a shared vision for Cornwall and galvanise support and engagement in delivering change. It will help to turn a document into activity and, as one participant said, *"when we come to reflect in 12-months' time I want us to recognise that this is a living project and not a forgotten document"*.