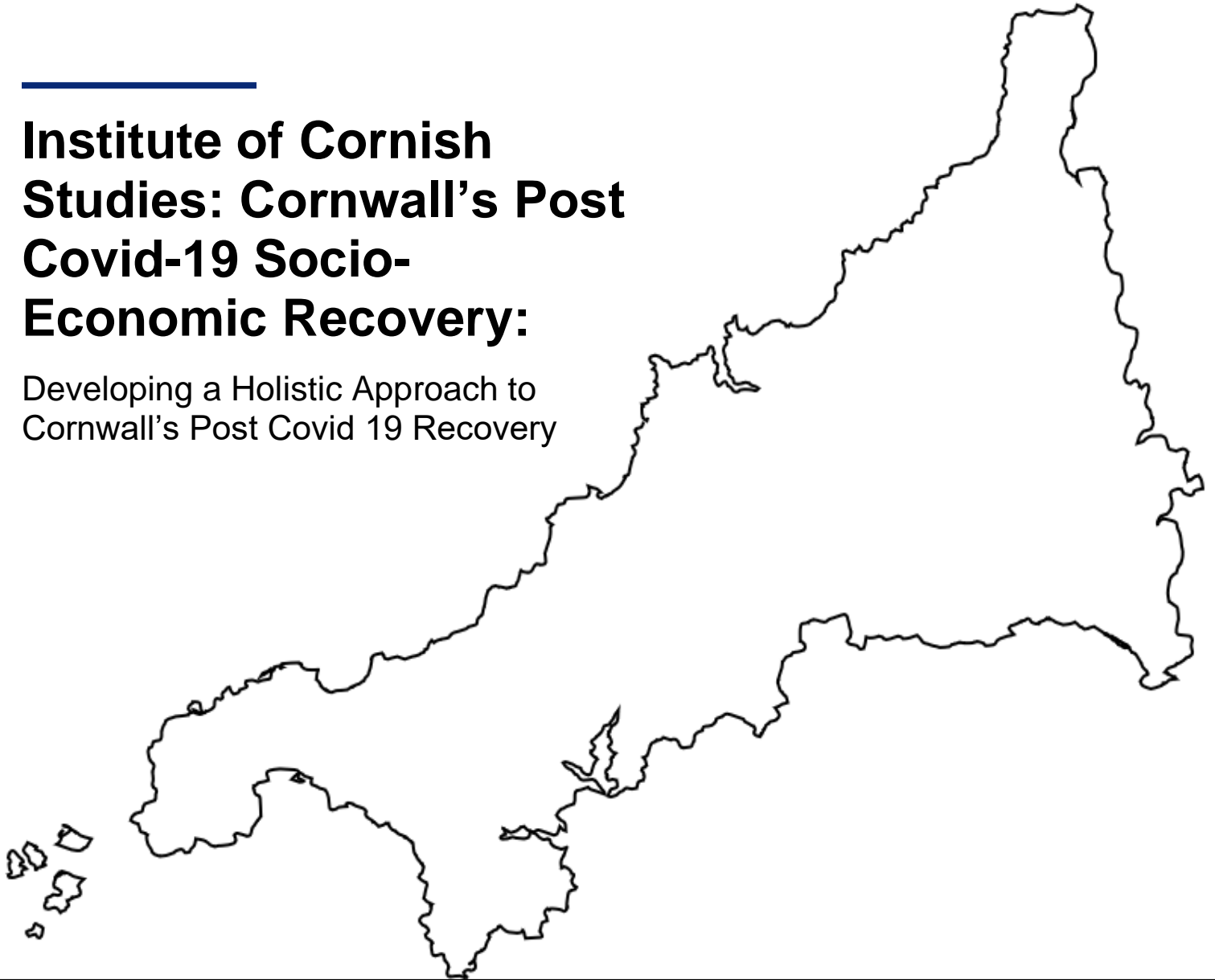


---

# **Institute of Cornish Studies: Cornwall's Post Covid-19 Socio- Economic Recovery:**

Developing a Holistic Approach to  
Cornwall's Post Covid 19 Recovery



**July 2020**

---

**By Zachary Collins**

---

# Community Engagement and Adaptive Potential through Sustainable, Circular Economy Approaches.

## **Forward:**

This interdisciplinary report draws on research and findings from the Institute of Cornish Studies (ICS) and other groups across the University of Exeter regarding the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 on Cornwall and how we can meet these challenges. Our research is presented in 4 key sections: Culture, Heritage and Society; Politics and Government; Environment and Health; and Economy and Business. We argue that this recovery needs to be based on community engagement to build resilience by fostering adaptation.

Under the heading of 'Embracing Change', our recommendations for Cornwall's holistic recovery include: a focus on innovation within the circular economy, embracing new measures of success, an awareness of the effects of our stories, enabling inclusive growth and providing greater community engagement.

Currently, our communities are very unequal. Whether this relates to inequalities of knowledge, wealth, transportation, or opportunities. To address this, we need to have a better understanding about how people access and receive information about changes to our economies and communities, and make sure that routes in to new and emerging industries are clear and straightforward for individuals seeking to up/reskill. We also need to make sure that the benefits of investments circulate around Cornwall, asking questions such as 'how can technological developments serve the needs of local economies', and 'how can local economies feed in to new developments'.

We know that many of our businesses are being badly hit by Covid-19. But current measures of success do not make visible all of the impacts on individual businesses in order for plans to be put in place to make things better. We can change this by switching our measures of success from broad-brush tools like GDP, to something more targeted such as PAYE (Pay As You Earn), which makes visible things like individual incomes and individual experiences, which can be missed in region-as-a-whole statistics.

We need to be much more reflective about the kinds of stories that we tell about Cornwall, what their effects are, and what kinds of futures and possibilities do they open up. How well do our stories share the fact that we have a number of really exciting, innovative, and dynamic sectors in our

---

economy beyond tourism? Can we use the visitor economy to showcase to visitors and locals alike, that Cornwall is not *only* a nice place to visit. We also have a world-class maritime industry; a strongly performing digital economy; our own international clothing brands; a lively creative sector; and local innovators doing things as revolutionary as turning recovered discarded fishing nets into kayaks and swimwear.

How can we tell stories about this broader insight to life in Cornwall? We need to be better at sharing information around our community. As democratically elected, participatory bodies that people also know about, town and parish councils have an enormous potential as spaces to share information between the wider public, businesses, and Cornwall Council so that we can better address local needs. They can be at the nexus of ensuring that we have a truly inclusive recovery. As we move forward we need to explore how we can help town and parish councils to play this kind of role much more strongly.

Covid-19 has created a lot of challenges for us. But it also opens up opportunities for doing things differently, and doing them better. Here at the Institute of Cornish Studies we are really happy to be able to feed in to this conversation, bringing together research from across the University of Exeter's Cornwall campuses, to consider how we can build back better.

Dr Joanie Willett, Dr Garry Tregidga,  
Co-Directors, Institute of Cornish Studies,  
University of Exeter, Penryn Campus.

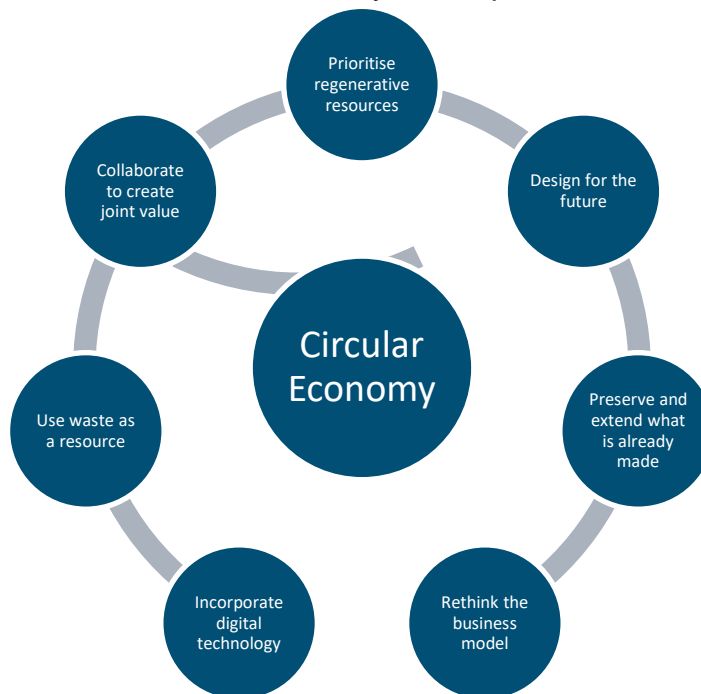
---

## **Introduction:**

The Institute of Cornish Studies has worked closely with our community for decades, building links between the University of Exeter and our wider community in Cornwall. Through continuing our research, we aspire to help support the people in Cornwall in areas including the economy and business. The emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic means that sharing our research with a view to our collective recovery, has never been more urgent.

We have produced this report to convey the key socioeconomic challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic within Cornwall, and highlighting interdisciplinary research taking place across the university that can help identify these challenges and offer solutions to the crisis.

To make our recommendations and to develop a holistic approach to Cornwall's future post Covid-19, we use the relatively new concept of the 'Circular economy', adopted by Cornwall Council in order to account for the social and ecological foundations of society. This concept is comprised of 7 key features and taken from the Circular Economy online platform, which include:



---

These features have already started to take shape amongst Cornwall's economy, directly generating 17,886 jobs within Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Clos), helping to reduce the risks associated with resource scarcity and price volatility by shortening the supply chain and providing online sharing platforms that have become even more successful and prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Policies which conform with features of the circular economy concept can help to ensure that:

Recommendations for policies can be made that promote social solidarity and resilience to help improve the health and economic performance of Cornwall in the fight against future pandemics.

Adaptation to Covid-19 is framed in this report under the concept of 'resilience'. By taking steps that build a resilient economy and society within the complex system that is Cornwall, we can work together to take a unified approach to future decision-making and ensure our society improves as we recover from the pandemic.

Supporting adaptability corresponds with established goals seen in Cornwall's Strategic Economic Plan, encouraging greater autonomy and innovation that addresses the needs of Cornwall's expanding population, rather than just adopting the approach to 'recover' from the pandemic and quickly returning to normality. There is an opportunity here to harness the creative power of a global research institution, utilizing expert knowledge to make improvements to Cornwall's socio-economic base for a more sustainable and resilient future.

## **Background:**

In April 2020, the UK economy shrunk by a record 20.4% as a result of the spread of Covid-19 across society, requiring the rapid escalation of lockdown measures and social distancing that brought with it the closure of businesses and a furlough initiative on an exponential scale. As a result, this drastically altered the economy of Cornwall, where the two highest employment sectors are in Wholesale and Retail trade and Human Health and Social Work Activities (15.8%). Therefore,

the vital measures swiftly taken to save lives and control the spread of the virus have had a distressing impact on the 23,000 enterprises within Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, which would usually contribute £9.5 billion a year in GVA to the UK's economy (CIOS LEP, 2016).

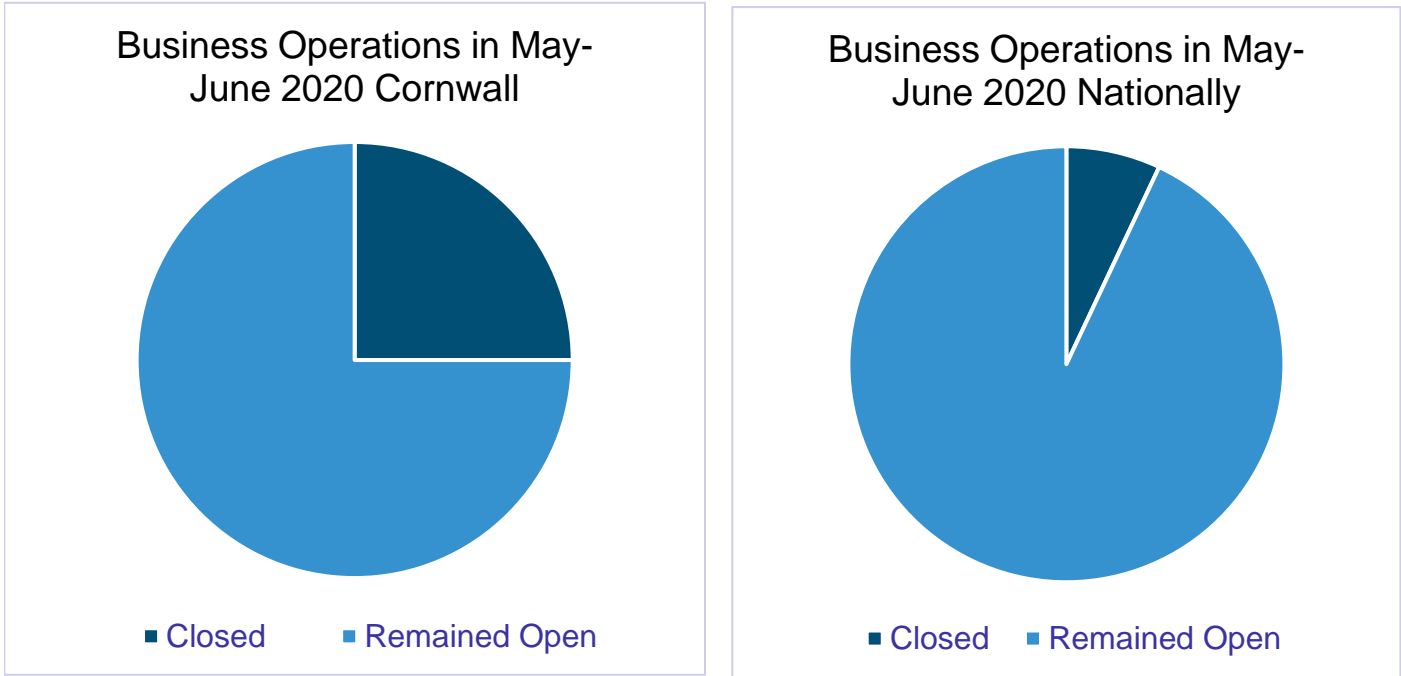


Figure 1: Business Operations in Cornwall and UK-wide. (Cornwall Council 2020)

These measures have resulted in Cornwall having one of the lowest numbers of Covid-19 deaths (203 registered up to 19/06/20). However, the local economy and livelihoods have been negatively impacted by the virus, in addition to the major disruption to Cornwall's economic activity associated with public health restrictions and social distancing. This has created an impact that will be generational in its scope.

Subsequently, in response to Covid-19, Cornwall Council has taken a leading role in conducting daily briefings and online meetings to try and coordinate a societal response to the situation. Key to this effort is the production and analysis of a 'Residents Impact Survey' launched in late May into June 2020, gathering responses from 500 residents, 65% of which were aged between 35-64 years old (Cornwall Council, 2020). From the responses, it was clear that a large proportion (42%) had felt their wellbeing had been adversely impacted by the pandemic whilst 45% were worried about the future, understandable given that 25% of business owners had to close, compared to only 7% nationally, as shown in Figure 1:

---

The effects of Covid-19 on the local economy and society's collective health and wellbeing is therefore evident, requiring tailored approaches in the coming months to address these challenges.

However, there are apparent positive outcomes from the pandemic and ensuing lockdown. 73% of respondents acknowledged that their community had pulled together during the height of the pandemic, with a further 70% willing to maintain home working and reduced travel after the pandemic in order to benefit the environment. People also appreciate the natural environment a lot more, and green space and wildlife has been able to thrive away from human activity. Nationally, estimated carbon emissions in 2020 are already predicted to fall by 4% from 2019, comparable to the rates of decrease needed year-on-year over the next decades to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees of warming (Friedlingstein, 2020).

The impact of community engagement and prioritising sustainable practices has been evident during the pandemic, enabled through the actions of society. To continue and build on these actions, the adoption of policies that promote a circular economy is key, alongside greater community engagement to ensure these policies are accepted within society. The following section explores projects undertaken by academics at the University of Exeter, in order to consider what steps we can take moving forward.

## **Research:**

Recent University of Exeter research has been arranged into four key sections as presented below, all of which are all vital to the economic and social composition of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. More details can be found on the [Institute of Cornish Studies Website](#).

## **Culture, Heritage and Society:**

Cornwall has 25% more Arts, Entertainment and Recreation opportunities compared to the UK, which means that the Culture and Heritage of Cornwall is essential to the success of these industries. As a result, the creative sectors continue to experience growth within Cornwall, enabled through the marketisation of historic sites such as the Minack Theatre and the development and growth of industry-leading study through Falmouth University (NOMIS, 2020).

---

Culture and Heritage is so important when adapting to events such as Covid-19 because people need to be equipped with creativity and the autonomy to imagine a new future. Our creative, cultural and heritage industries help us to achieve a mental dexterity that can recognise and harnesses potential and opportunities for the future.

Tourism has dominated the economic landscape, with a reliance on seasonal, low-skilled labour (Willett, 2016). Further, and in common with other regions, people sometimes imagine Cornwall as being 'backward', which (in common with other peripheral, and/or rural areas) 'stigmatises' the region and affects what people think we are capable of. This adds to the economic precarity initiated by events such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response, studies by DeSilvey illustrate how locations and places that form part of the cultural and heritage image of Cornwall, such as those managed by the National Trust, tend to construct narratives that prioritise long-term conservation in order to maintain notions of recreational heritage that fulfil tourist demands (DeSilvey, 2012). However, when catastrophes occur, charities such as these struggle to maintain this drive for conservation when economic and social resources are restricted. Therefore, we need to know more about human encounters with the landscape, creating proactive strategies that prepare communities for future change by allowing the transformation of social and cultural services in response to restrictions on social interaction. Such strategies include the notion of progressive ruination to create 'entropic heritage' by allowing historic sites to change with time. These strategies become even more necessary in the face of Covid-19 when staff are furloughed and do not have access to follow strict maintenance procedures of historic sites. If the public equally support such movements and allow for natural decay and progression, efforts can instead be focused on direct human impact within communities, such as providing healthcare facilities whilst not ignoring the cultural legacies of communities. Crucial to this effort is the need to understand communities before constructing narratives of action, addressing their immediate concerns whilst not forgetting their cultural backgrounds.

Subsequently, progression is key, with public engagement crucial in this effort. An awareness about how our communities are changing is really important if people are to be able to keep up with the newer economic sectors which have been emerging over recent decades (Willett, 2020). Sometimes, people don't notice where the new opportunities lie, and so can get stuck in old stories about the Cornish economy.



---

Other spaces offer important opportunities for redeveloping our communities. For example, the voluntary sector is well placed to help to seek solutions that aid service provision (Walker et al, 2020). For example, and working in partnership with Volunteer Cornwall and the Covid-19 Befriending scheme, 'Smartline' is developing a new technology that helps to equip the elderly and isolated with online device and software skills, helping to tackle the isolation caused by the Pandemic. Volunteers and participants are matched for weekly social calls that improve social interaction and reduce the effects of loneliness (Morrissey et al, 2020). Digital technology can help address social challenges and make charities more resilient in the face of national lockdown, but only when these innovations recognise and address both client needs and those of the organization. Currently, only 1% of charities use digital technology directly in their service provision, which can inhibit opportunities for change as the idiosyncratic needs of various actors must be fulfilled (Walker et al, 2020). Funding is therefore crucial in the provision of training and movement to online platforms (Sainsbury and Wills, 2020). The role of community cohesion and collective engagement is equally necessary to supply volunteers and maintain connections amongst the community, especially to those within the digital divide.

Overall, it is evident that significant adaption to the provision of social services, be that in cultural and recreational heritage-led activities or critical voluntary service provision across Cornwall, is essential during and after Covid-19. The ability to adapt quickly to such circumstances, be that through changes in practices such as conservation of physical heritage sites, or movement to online service provisions, is being examined and tested as part of a resilient drive for change. Policy recommendations need to address the current difficulties faced by the restriction of direct provision of cultural and social services, rather than a 'return to normal' attitude that will not be able to cope with future and inevitable crises.

## **Politics and Government:**

In support of the need for public engagement, it is necessary to investigate the role of local government initiatives both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic to discover whether their role had been successfully applied to the management of Cornwall's society and economy and subsequently dictating their level of resilience.

In surveys conducted by Willett and Tregidga, despite the enormous investment made, interviewees didn't feel that EU structural funding had significantly benefitted their lives (Willett et al, 2019).. With Covid-19 taking a devastating toll on the economic wealth of EU countries and with BREXIT getting underway within the UK, now is the time to address exactly what the public feel they require for their wellbeing and lifestyle, which must be tailored to address specific community concerns as part of a strategic planning initiative. Willett (2020) argues that we need to imagine Cornwall as a complex adaptive system, understanding how the various parts of our social, economic, and environmental community interconnect. Therefore, as communities seek to recover from the effects of Covid-19

---

and businesses begin to open again, communities must act as a whole organism, coordinated by Cornwall Council and their local parish councils.

Key to the recovery of businesses as part of the Circular Economic model is the need to address transient trade, with the establishment of secure pathways between traders and producers. Politics in Cornwall has an opportunity to work closely with communities, in order to understand exactly what consumers want and require in their localities. This includes a recognition that Cornwall's wants and needs will be unique to our region (Tevi, 2020).

One such initiative encouraged by the research partnership 'Tevi' is the shortening of supply chains and formation of more locally produced products, achievable through reusing and refurbishing by-products within the local economy and selling them on high-streets and amongst the community, seen with the global establishment of Repair Cafes (Tevi, 2020). However, these opportunities must account for local demands to ensure there is a market for such products whilst informing local careers education and decisions within the local labour market. This falls under the role of the CLOS LEP, building partnerships and growing regional innovation systems (Willett, 2020). To coordinate these circular-economic initiatives, it will be necessary to augment direct engagement with Cornwall Council and involve Town and Parish Councils that have already been given greater responsibility. A study by Wills helps to illustrate how the devolution of council assets Town and Parish Councils has enabled greater local community interest in decision making and management of localities, giving people greater power to control their future direction, influenced by the pride invested within the local community by residents (Wills, 2019).

Such community developments are significant in altering the socioeconomic foundations of Cornwall, especially at the time of Covid-19. One successful example of devolution is in Falmouth, whose Town Council now manages parks, public toilets, and public spaces. With Covid-19 requiring additional procedures in social distancing, the town council can now play a direct role in the management of events, working with local businesses and community groups to coordinate a response that provides effective relief for residents and businesses whilst adhering to government guidelines, since the council can now establish their own contractual agreements to enable better flexibility of staff and workload coordination.

Greater political decentralisation and devolution is essential to help business and communities decide what they need and what future developments are required. This will help to ensure a more resilient local community with stronger, more targeted service provision and support networks.

---

Decision making should take into account new approaches that encourages ethically and socially justified goals to be constructed and adhered to when making decisions (Walker et al, 2020). Commonalities should then be discussed and engaged with by key actors to develop common objectives, vital as Town and Parish Councils take an increasingly dominant role in local decision making within Cornwall. A vital part of this new drive is the need and protection of public engagement to combat against peripheralising narratives that contribute to perceptions of place and address local needs in return for support (Willett, 2020).

## **Environment and Health:**

Despite the challenges of Covid-19 to the NHS health system and the alteration of our social lifestyles, Cornwall continues to be a leading region in health and wellbeing studies, and using new technologies that work with the environment towards a sustainable future. Despite lockdown restrictions, there has been an exponential increase in cycling and walking in public spaces across Cornwall, taking advantage of the landscape and natural coastal features with evident wellbeing benefits (Friedlingstein, 2020). In order for these benefits to continue, the quality of life in Cornwall relies on a healthy environment provided through the sustainable management of green and blue spaces. It is estimated that ‘£2.1 billion in health care costs could be saved if every household in England had access to green space’ (Cornwall Environmental Growth Strategy, 2015). In support of this drive towards ensuring the natural environment can continue to benefit the health and wellbeing of Cornwall’s residents, pioneering projects have been undertaken to investigate the impact of engagement with nature, which in turn can lead to greater protection of Cornwall’s environment.

One such project is ‘Informing environmental investment for health outcomes’, part of the South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity (SWEPP) initiative that is spearheaded by the University of Exeter. The projects involved are aimed to deliver economic and community benefits whilst protecting and enhancing natural resources, offering a sustainable method of conservation that is backed by the community (Bell, 2018). Due to the pandemic, a shift to online webinar platforms created a unique session that discovered the benefits of Dartmoor National Park, using expert advice from university academics to work with local communities and their interaction with the park during lockdown. By providing a platform to map and build a stakeholder network involved with the management of the park, local residents were able to influence future priority areas for park maintenance. This includes ensuring contractors work on the preservation of the park through ecological restoration could continue whilst allowing public access, vital at a time where interaction with nature is crucial for many individuals undergoing quarantine. In addition, the project was used as an opportunity to conduct focus groups with young people to

---

discuss how the natural environment can benefit mental health by accessing Cornwall's natural capital. Such initiatives were essential in helping volunteers provide wellbeing activities for local residents that didn't depend on external funding initiatives, such as access to technology, but instead promoted the use of the landscape to offer this service in the form of walking groups. This led to community recognition of the importance of preserving Cornwall's natural capital. Such findings are supported in further quantitative studies by the University of Exeter, such as studies from Williams et al that 'mental wellbeing is significantly positively associated with social cohesion', enabled through these interactions between community groups and the natural environment (Williams et al, 2020).

Agriculture in Cornwall uses nearly 80% of land coverage, however, only 1 area is graded as 'Excellent' agricultural land (Cornwall Environmental Growth Strategy, 2015). Therefore, the implementation of new advanced microclimate modelling software by the university has helped to identify locations in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly that are most climatically suitable for growing specific crops, even down to the scale of individual fields using both past and future climate projections (Gardner et al, 2020). This method of modelling has engaged local farmers in their support of a more holistic assessment of crop suitability, using the developed LAGAS mapping tool in partnership with Cornwall Council's 'Environmental Growth Strategy'. Not only has the application of this new technology been crucial during the Covid-19 pandemic by helping farmers respond to demands in food production more efficiently, it has also created the opportunity to shorten the supply chains whilst piloting the rural deployment of 5G technology to support these mapping systems that can be set up on site, rather than remotely. Whilst this possibility may not be pursued during the Covid-19 pandemic due to social distancing restraints, it could offer an opportunity to engage local apprenticeship and education programs so young people can physically see and take part in new quaternary job sector roles.

In addition, this technology has been found to enable farmers to reduce the amount of land they cultivate to make a profit, helping to create more space for biodiversity development and green space expansion. These efforts, combined with expertise from the university and Cornwall Wildlife Trust in offering carbon offsetting through afforestation, has allowed Cornwall as a region to continue to lead in the development and conservation of natural capital and associated wellbeing benefits. These schemes must continue as Cornwall moves out of Covid-19, ensuring best practice is maintained and encouraged as part of Cornwall's future socioeconomic response.

Whilst it is essential that the university takes part in coordinating and assisting in the conservation of Cornwall's nature environment, the university has also committed to working directly with Public Health England and other national health organisations to provide an immediate response to the direct human health threats posed by Covid-19. One such initiative is the work with Applegate organization to use their existing technology to set up a 'free, non-commercial service to match demands and supply for items such as PPE and sanitiser', helping to get millions of items to the frontline at times when the purchaser had exhausted other options (Costa, 2020). A database of

---

more than 70 academics has been set up to aid in this effort and coordinate supplies, with a grant from Innovate UK to continue the operation. Evidently, the university has been instrumental in creating a resilient tool to address supply chain disruptions that can respond the future crises, demonstrating the university's commitment to aid local and national efforts in the fight against Covid-19.

The university is also directly involved in the national research taking place around the pandemic within the UK. 'DECOVID' research collaboration between the Alan Turing Institute, NHS Trusts, HDR UK and other academic partners including members from Exeter's medical school and academics from the Penryn Campus are working with real-time health data to identify factors for more effective clinical treatment strategies. A pioneering 'human-in-the-loop' analytics platform has been set up to support clinical decision making within Cornwall's hospital and others around the UK, enabling Cornwall to a leading region in health research and collaboration on a national scale (Shaddick et al, 2020).

The development of new technological industries within Cornwall over the recent past and future has directly supported the community's response to Covid-19.

Another industry which offers opportunity for the future, is Space Technology. Academics from across Cornwall's campuses have encouraged the development of Newquay airport as the UK's first spaceport and Aerohub Enterprise Zone, with a potential to generate over £189 million and 500 local jobs by 2030. Whilst the development of such projects are welcome within Cornwall's future economy, they have also played an active role in the response to Covid-19 through the production of face masks and the development of satellite mapping the most vulnerable areas with Covid-19 cases in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Council (CIOS LEP 2019). More might be done with these new technologies and industries in order to address current crises within Cornwall as part of an holistic effort to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, and using activities that support the drive for a circular economic response. These industries have the potential to help deliver more diverse skills and job roles in the future.

Overall, platforms such as SWeCAN and LAGAS, that bring together expertise, activities, and tools for the benefit of the environment and community must be encouraged and can play a leading role in regional Covid-19 recovery.

## **Economy and Business:**

---

As established previously, it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a dramatic effect on Cornwall's economy, directly impacting local businesses as well as the regions economic output. The 2017 Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of the population was 67.7% of the UK average, resulting in Cornwall receiving over £1 billion from the European Union Structural Funding investment between 1999-2018. Whilst it may be therefore considered that there is the risk of a dependency on these funds, they have been instrumental in providing a high speed broadband across Cornwall to combat rural peripherality (Willett, 2020). However, this development has played an even greater role in the face of Covid-19, with the need for remote-working becoming a customary practice both now and into the future, allowing businesses to continue to work remotely where possible.

Despite advances in technology provision, there are still disparities in the access and utilization of such technology when all areas of Cornwall are examined. Furthermore, there has been extremely low levels of business investment in research and innovation, accounting for just 0.22% of GDP, the lowest of any LEP area in the UK (CIOS LEP 2016).

Whilst the continued development and effects of Penryn Campus emerge in Cornwall's economy, the skills needed to fill graduate jobs are still not very well known amongst Cornwall's population. Despite excellent programmes such as the 'Unlocking Potential' program and the Apprenticeship scheme, people need to be supported further to help them to understand the kinds of skills that they need to invest in, if they are better able to play a role in Cornwall's changing economy (Willett, 2020). These kinds of knowledge are highly important if Cornwall is to be able to adapt effectively in such turbulent economic times.

For that to happen, Cornwall's reliance on tourism in recent past as the driver of economic development must be reduced. Whilst it directly accounts for 12% of the regional gross value added, with a £2 billion visitor spend annually (CIOS LEP 2019), it also means that Cornwall's 'shop window' to the wider world presents the region as an isolated and sleepy space, and misses the opportunity to showcase some of our other interesting and dynamic economic sectors.

Further, although Cornwall's small business sector adds to its adaptive agility, some businesses have found that over 80% of product volume has been lost overnight, with a gloomy forecast of 3 years needed to adequately recover (Tevi, 2020). As a result, the pandemic has laid bare Cornwall's reliance on tourism and its annual 5 million holiday makers that support the small to medium sized enterprises in our towns across Cornwall. With 19.5% of the economically active being self-employed and with 88.4% of all businesses in Cornwall having between 0-9 employees, the region

---

is classified in the lower third of UK Local Authority Areas and has suffered devastatingly from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, ongoing studies by Ellis and Ireland have shown how the public's reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic has taken the form of 'moral panic', in which it is suggested that the actions of tourists and the public in congregating on beaches and in some cases disregarding authority measures such as social distancing, is a reaction against the imposition of social order (Ireland and Ellis, 2020). These actions have been represented in local media coverage that is centred around the challenges in shifting boundaries of host/guest exchange and public health concerns as part of the wider communities response to the pandemic. These responses come together to form an ethnographic perspective which illustrates local viewpoints which must be listened to and accounted for as Cornwall looks to recover from the pandemic.

Primarily, to support residents, strong and growing incomes are vital, which cannot be just seasonal and focused on the public sector. One of the key areas to combat such challenges are developments in productivity, forming an essential part of Cornwall's socioeconomic recovery and the acknowledgment of a dependency on local markets. One such initiative leading the way in this drive for change is 'Tevi', set up through the University of Exeter to help businesses thrive through the transition to a circular economy. This report has so-far highlighted the need for Cornwall's businesses to adapt to this new framework in order to allow for greater community cohesion and resilience by working directly with stakeholders and over 350 businesses together through networking events and bespoke environmental policies offered to businesses. Such services are continuing and remain vital during Covid-19, such as through the 'Packshare Falmouth' business tech-company that developed an app to allow clients to share surplus packaging when stocks ran

**The prospect of having over 70,000 unemployed staff by the winter, alongside a challenging labour market has demonstrated the vital need for action.**

low, helping to eliminate waste and allow organisations such as food banks to continue to provide relief to local communities and individuals severely affected by the pandemic. This systemic perspective has helped to extend the future use of materials with added environmental benefits, but also demonstrates the potential for new initiatives to have a resounding impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities in times of crisis.

Similar initiatives encouraging the reuse and redesign ideologies of the circular economy have a strong potential in Cornwall's post Covid-19 economy. A study by Saunders and Willett demonstrates opportunities for making, mending, and modifying consumer products – in this instance, clothing (Saunders and Willett, 2020). Whilst social distancing places limitations, as the restrictions begin to relax, 'informal' schemes could play a vital role in helping to encourage new pro-environmental norms whilst offering a supportive network that can ensure practices continue to

---

be upheld. They also feed in to Cornwall's exciting clothing industry, build on the cooperation that some communities showed during the lockdown, and provide opportunities for sharing knowledge and skills.

Finally, for Cornwall to 'build back better' and encourage continued innovations within the economy, new industrial advances must be acknowledged and built upon as restrictions ease. One such sector that should have a vital role in the future of Cornwall's socioeconomic formation is the Marine and Maritime sector, which already contributes to over £1.1 billion to the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly economy and has seen a 31% growth in marine businesses since 2007-8. Amongst this expansion, over 90% are SME's, micro organisations or unregistered traders (Pye et al, 2017). The impact to these small companies by Covid-19 has of yet to be fully investigated, however it is expected to require strict attention and commitment over the coming months if this vital and innovative industry is to remain. With plans in place for expansion and mixed-use operations, staffing has become a major concern especially in remote peripheral regions due to travel and access issues, with company distribution showing a linear pattern along the road infrastructure 'spine' in Cornwall that reflects historic patterns of European funding investment (Pye et al, 2017). Therefore, with the need to access and involve remote communities in this industry, improvements in the regional infrastructure and attention paid to deprived communities must be prioritised in the effort to promote a holistic recovery from Covid-19. Already, new technologies such as the 'Road XS Software' featuring smart journey tracking and route planning help to optimize community transport through offering feedback loops that are integrated into vehicles in real time, allowing transport of volunteers and workers around Cornwall during the pandemic.



---

## Conclusions:

We need a circular economy that drives innovation. Businesses need to be able to adapt and be flexible to new advances in digital and physical technology.

For a strong, inclusive socio-economic recovery, we need to build on existing infrastructure and encourage the involvement of all communities.

To ensure that our recovery is inclusive, we need new measures of success beyond GDP and wealth indicators, to ensure that the experiences of all our communities are visible. This includes living standards, in-work progression and unemployment figures being used, such as using average PAYE to help design strategies that directly affect job types and pay discrepancies.

## Recommendations:

Over the course of this report, the challenges of Covid-19 and subsequent opportunities for development and improvement amongst Cornwall's socioeconomic composition have been evidenced. In summary, the following recommendations are based on these findings and should be used to ensure Cornwall moves towards a circular economic model that prioritises sustainability and community involvement, creating a holistic approach that can benefit current and future residents, business owners and individuals. Overall, the recommendations are about 'Embracing Change':

1. Ensuring innovation is encouraged through a circular economy, providing technological investment in the creative sector that remains within local economies.

- 
2. Developing and embracing new measures of success- i.e. average PAYE- in order to get a better eye to detail when analyzing inequalities.
  3. Being aware of the effects of our stories on Cornwall's present and future development.
  4. Inclusive growth by making sure we are better connected to our communities- and the community is better connected to us to aid resilience efforts.
  5. Facilitating better community engagement using our parish and town councils to share information and address local needs.

## **References:**

---

Bell, S. (2018) SWEEP: Informing environmental investment for health outcomes. *European Centre for Environment and Human Health*. University of Exeter.

Circle-Economy. (2020) Circular Economy- Practical, Scalable Implementation of the Circular Economy. [Online] Available at: <https://www.circle-economy.com/> [Accessed 20/06/20]

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership. (2016) *Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Vision 2030*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cioslep.com/vision/vision-2030> 17/10/18 [Accessed 22/06/20]

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership. (2016) *Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP Employment and Skills Strategy: Refreshed to cover the period 2016-2030*. [Online] Available at: [https://www.cioslep.com/assets/uploads/documents/1469447094\\_Employment%20and%20Skills%20Strategy%20\(new%20version\).pdf](https://www.cioslep.com/assets/uploads/documents/1469447094_Employment%20and%20Skills%20Strategy%20(new%20version).pdf) [Accessed 24/06/20]

Cornwall Council. (2015) Cornwall's Environmental Growth Strategy 2015-2065. *Cornwall Council and the CIOS Local Nature Partnership*. [Online] Available at: [https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/24212257/environmental-growth-strategy\\_jan17\\_proof.pdf](https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/24212257/environmental-growth-strategy_jan17_proof.pdf) [Accessed 23/06/20]

Cornwall Council. (2020) Cornwall Council Residents Covid-19 Impact Survey. *Enventure Research*. [Online] Available at: <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/4384/widgets/13099/documents/5218> [Accessed 25/06/20]

Costa, F. (2020) Applegate PPE and Sanitiser Sourcing. *College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences*, University of Exeter.

DeSilvey, C. (2012) Making sense of transience: an anticipatory history, *SAGE Journals*. Volume 19, issue 1, pages 31-54.

Ellis, L. and Ireland, M. (2020) Unintended consequences of COVID 19 for tourism and local communities in Cornwall. *Institute of Cornish Studies*, University of Exeter.

Friedlingstein, P. (2020) How coronavirus could change Earth's trajectory. *Research and Innovation*, University of Exeter. [Online] Available at: <https://researchandinnovation.co.uk/how-coronavirus-could-change-earths-trajectory/> [Accessed 20/06/20]

Gardner, A. et al. (2020) Climate Risk and Opportunities for Agriculture in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. *Environment and Sustainability Institute*, University of Exeter.

---

Morrissey, K. et al (2020) Smartline Project to combat isolation during lockdown, *University of Exeter Research and Innovation*. [Online] Available at: <https://researchandinnovation.co.uk/smartline-project-to-combat-isolation-during-lockdown/> [Accessed 19/06/20]

Pye, J. et al. (2017) Cornwall Marine and Maritime Growth and Innovation Report 2017-2018. University of Exeter Business School

Saunders, C. and Willett, J. (2020) Fast Fashion and the Global Climate Emergency: Changing How We Think About Clothing and Developing a Sensibility for Sustainability. *Institute of Cornish Studies*, University of Exeter.

Shaddick, G. et al. (2020) Call for Covid-19 rapid response data science taskforce. University of Exeter. [Online] Available at: <https://www.turing.ac.uk/work-turing/research-and-funding-calls/call-covid-19-rapid-response-data-science-taskforce> [Accessed 25/06/20]

Tevi (2020) Resilience in the age of COVID-19. University of Exeter. [Online] Available at: <https://tevi.co.uk/resources/> [Accessed 26/06/20]

Tevi (2020) Recovery, Renewal, Resilience: The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) POST Covid-19. University of Exeter. [Online] Available at: <https://tevi.co.uk/recovery-renewal-resilience-the-local-industrial-strategy-post-covid-19/> [Accessed 22/06/20]

University of Exeter Regional Engagement Strategy: Green Paper. (2020) *Innovation, Impact and Business*, University of Exeter

Walker, T., Esmene, S., Colebrooke, L., Leyshon, C. and Leyshon, M. (2020) Digital possibilities and social mission in the voluntary sector: the case of a community transport organisation in the UK, *Voluntary Sector Review*, vol 11, no 1, 59–77, DOI: 10.1332/204080520X15787076882640

Willett, J. (2018) The Periphery as a Complex Adaptive Assemblage: Local Government and Enhanced Communication to Challenge Peripheralising Narratives. *ACME: An International e-Journal for Critical Geographies*.

Willett, J., Tidy, R., Tregidga, G., Passmore, P., 2019. Why did Cornwall Vote for Brexit: Assessing the Implications for EU Structural Funding Programmes. *Environment and Planning C*. 37 (8) 1343-1360.

Willett, J. (2020) Challenging peripheralizing discourses: Using evolutionary economic geography and, complex systems theory to connect new regional knowledges within the periphery, *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol 73, Pages 87-96

---

Williams, et al. (2020) Social cohesion, mental wellbeing, and health-related quality of life among a cohort of social housing residents in Cornwall: a cross sectional study. *BMC Public Health*.

Wills, J. (2019) A new geography of local government: The changing role of Town and Parish Councils in Cornwall, UK. University of Exeter.

Wills, J. and Sainsbury (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on the community and voluntary sectors in Cornwall. A report for Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, University of Exeter.