

# CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION OF CORNWALL

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## Introduction

Cornwall, or properly Kernow in Cornish, is one of the nations that make up the UK. Physical isolation provides the key to Cornish history. A rocky peninsula, jutting out some 100 miles into the Atlantic Ocean, Cornwall stands at the extreme south-western corner of the British Isles. Surrounded by waves on all sides but one, it is practically severed from England to the east by the River Tamar, which runs almost from sea to sea.

Cornwall was first inhabited in the Palaeolithic period and the island of Britain was Celtic-speaking by the Iron Age. There is little evidence that Roman rule was effective west of Exeter and few Roman remains have been found. In the early middle ages, following the seizure of southeast Britain by Saxons, the British kingdom of Dumnonia emerged controlling all of south west Britain. For nearly 300 years Dumnonia remained relatively intact with a border roughly coterminous with the eastern borders of Dorset and Somerset.

However, the Battle of Deorham / Dyrham (577) acted to split the west Britons (the Welsh) from the south west Britons. Cornish and Welsh gradually evolved as separate languages, however, it is likely that Cornish remained mutually intelligible with Welsh until the 1100s. In the 800s the English kingdom of Wessex expanded further westwards after a series of battles, some won by the British some by the English, but eventually reducing the independent British state to the territory of Cornwall by 936, when the Cornish were expelled from Exeter/ Keresk (possibly the old British capital) and the rest of Devon to Cornwall. The border of Cornwall

and England was fixed as the River Tamar, where it has remained ever since.

The process whereby Cornwall came under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of England remains controversial. Cornwall was a separately named province, sometimes called West Wales, with its own subordinated status and title under the English crown, and with separate ecclesiastical provision in the earliest phase. There were subsequent constitutional provisions under the Stannary Parliament, which had its origins in provisions of 1198 and 1201 separating the Cornish and Devon tin interests and developing into a separate parliament for Cornwall maintaining Cornish customary law. From 1337, Cornwall was further administered as a 'quasi-sovereign' royal Duchy during the later medieval period.

The Cornish saw themselves and were regarded by others as a different nationality. In 1535, the Italian scholar Polydore Vergil wrote that: 'the whole Countrie of Britain ...is divided into iiii partes; whereof the one is inhabited of Englishmen, the other of Scottes, the third of Wallshemen, [and] the fowerthe of Cornishe people, which all differ emonge them selves, either in tongue, ...in manners, or ells in lawes and ordinaunces.' As Cornish people we are the products of our history, language and culture, and today this is reflected in Cornwall's vibrant cultural scene.

Cornwall today has a lively and vibrant cultural diary with numerous events throughout the year and across the country that attracts thousands of participants both from within Cornwall and abroad. Events range from large scale modern music festivals to highly traditional festivals such as the Padstow Mayday, a festival which stretches back to Cornwall's older pre-Christian, Celtic past.<sup>1</sup> The question discussed today is how do these cultural activities contribute to Cornwall's economic revitalisation.

We will discuss and analyse:

- Traditional Cornish cultural activities,
- The impact of Culture on economic revitalisation
- The impact of EU funding on the culture industry
- Current challenges
- How European best practice in governance shows how greater politi

- cal autonomy benefits culturally driven economic revitalisation,
- The latest European research which illustrates how regional/ national languages are an economic asset and driver for regional revitalisation.

## **1. Cornish cultural events - a brief survey**

There are numerous Cornish cultural events held throughout the year associated with Cornwall's rich history, language and culture. Some have been celebrated continuously since ancient times while other customs have been revived.

### **Padstow Mayday**

Perhaps one of the most famous examples is the Padstow Mayday featuring the Obby Oss, with two teams competing with each other for best 'Oss and bands. The event, celebrated at May 1<sup>st</sup>, Beltane, mid way through the Celtic year, celebrates the beginning of the summer, the light half of the year and is still noted as one of the days where the link between this world and the Celtic otherworld is at its closest.

Padstow traditionally sees many former citizens return from all over the world, and until fairly recently it remained a local festival, however, with the increase in tourism the festival has now become very popular with thousands attending, both Cornish and from elsewhere.

### **Golowan – Pensanns / Penzance**

In Penzance the Golowan festival (Goel Yowann/ Midsummer) is celebrated on June 21<sup>st</sup>, Golowan is celebrated throughout Cornwall with bonfires being lit throughout the country.

The Golowan Festival brings the past and present together in Penzance's community celebration of the traditional Feast of St. John. As well as the hundreds of local performers taking part, Golowan welcomes a host of national and international artists to participate.

To give some indication of the amount spent, the organiser of Golowan and Montol said that: "I did some provisional studies last year about spending during festival days. For example, average spend is £30 per person, 3,000 people attend

Montol Eve putting £90,000 into the economy. For larger events this could roll into millions. Golowan, for example, attracts 70,000 for Mazey Day with £2.1 Million estimated spend.”

Other traditional festivals include the Montol festival (Winter solstice, Penzance) Tom Bawcock’s Eve <sup>2</sup> (Winter solstice, Mousehole), Bodmin Ridings, Trevithick Day, Allantide (Samhain/ Halloween, Nos Calan Gaeaf, Furry Dance (Beltane, Hellys / Helston). All are intensely Cornish traditions that have become popular and open to all. They mark the year round Cornish calendar and that marks the turning of the seasons, so important to Celts, and continues the Celtic traditions.

### **Dydh Goel Sen Peran / St. Piran’s Day**

One example of a highly successful revived festival is the celebration of Cornwall’s patron saint, Sen Peran (St Piran in English) . According to legend Peran is the most famous of all the saints said to have come to Cornwall from Ireland. St Piran’s Day is very popular in Cornwall and the term ‘Perrantide’ has been coined to describe the week prior to this day. Many Cornish-themed events occur in the Duchy and also in areas in which there is a large community descended from Cornish emigrants.

The largest St Piran’s Day event is the march across the dunes to St Piran’s cross which thousands of people attend, generally dressed in black, white and gold, and carrying the Cornish flag. A play of the Life of St Piran, in Cornish, has been enacted in recent years at the event.

### **Gorsedh Kernow <sup>3</sup>**

This festival, derived from the Welsh Gorsedd celebration, has become an attraction in itself <sup>4</sup> Gorsedh Kernow exists to maintain the national Celtic spirit of Cornwall: to promote the study of literature, art, music and history; to promote the study and use of the Cornish language; to maintain and nurture links with other Celtic cultures. It gathers together some 60 cultural organisations making the Gorsedh an important cultural driver. Its annual ceremony has become a huge attraction to the Cornish, with prizes gaining a high prestige.

## **Modern Cornish cultural activities**

### **Cornwall Film Festival – Goel Fylm <sup>5</sup>**

The Cornwall Film Festival is an annual celebration of Cornish and international filmmaking. The Festival offers local and national premieres, professional development workshops, lectures and parties providing the opportunity to network with the UK's leading industry professionals. The film festival leads on putting people and resources together for Cornish language filmmaking.

### **Gig racing**

Cornish Pilot Gig racing, is one of the fastest growing sports in the Cornwall. The history of the Pilot Gig Clubs is from the days when vessels around the coast of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly needed a pilot to help them navigate their way through difficult waters to find safe harbour or negotiate a safe passage.

Coupled with these more traditional events, Cornwall has the added attractions of the Tate St Ives, featuring the work of the famous artist's colony in St Ives established in the 19th century. There is the futuristic attraction of the Eden project built in a disused clay mine, transforming it into a rich, global garden and now a major concert venue. While both are popular they are also seen as examples of external ideas of what sort of cultural tourism Cornwall should have.

In many ways Cornwall has re-launched its own brand as a cultural tourism destination, with development that is very much endogenous, from within the community itself, and established as a part of the Cornish cultural scene rather than activities aimed at what tourists are presumed to like, and where cultural events are for the consumption of tourists.

## **2. Cornish identity**

Cornwall has a strong sense of identity, heritage and cultural offering. Cornish ethnicity and surveys reveal an increasingly strong sense of Cornish identity within Cornwall.

## **Language**

The Cornish language is a critical aspect of Cornwall's identity and cultural heritage. Over the past decade there has been a noticeable surge in the use of the language by businesses and the public sector (Cornish Language Strategy). In 2007 the Quality of Life Survey showed that over 30% of respondents are positively in favour of increasing usage of Cornish in public life, with the most support being from the younger age groups.

The Cornish Language Strategy emphasises the importance of the language and the wider benefits that can be attributed to it. The language can be seen as a means of helping to build stronger communities and encouraging a sense of place and identity. It can also help people gain new skills and develop an increased sense of ownership among young people.

Other language communities have proven that the reinforcement of identity associated with language can be positive in the commercial world in marketing products and in Cornwall itself, particularly through cultural tourism initiatives and in terms of regional development and cultural heritage (Cabinet report on Cornish Language Policy).

In 2003 Cornish was recognised by the Government under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This seeks to protect and promote historical regional languages and the contribution they make to Europe's cultural diversity.

In November 2009 Cornwall Council adopted its Cornish language policy. This promotes the inclusion of Cornish to be considered for all council publications and signs and used as appropriate; this ensures that new road signs will feature Cornish where possible.

## **Heritage**

Heritage plays an important role in shaping the identity of a place and increasing residents' sense of belonging. National research from the Heritage Lottery Fund has found that nearly three quarters of local residents believe that investment in the historic environment makes local areas more attractive and 61% say it makes an area a better place to live (Cornwall Heritage Strategy).

Cornwall's heritage has many recognised and distinctive aspects from the

traditional Cornish symbols such as the St Piran's flag to the range of unique literature, folklore and legend and Cornish dialect stories. Cornwall's distinctive cultural offering encompasses Cornish music and Celtic institutions such as the Gorseth along with the inheritance of engineering, invention and technology that originated in Cornwall's mining industry.

It was only following the recognition of Cornwall's distinctiveness, including distinct and historic factors reflecting a Celtic background (ONS) that Cornwall was able to obtain European regional funding.

The heritage sector includes conservation, archives, museums, galleries, historic natural and marine landscapes and archaeology. Its unique role ensures heritage is a key driver for economic regeneration

### **3. The impact of cultural tourism in Cornwall**

The study 'Understanding the impact of cultural tourism in Cornwall' found that environment and cultural events are among the top reasons why people choose to visit. Arts and cultural events, the landscape and the beaches, were amongst the top three reasons identified by respondents as to what attracts visitors to Cornwall.

The most often cited reasons were:

- To attend arts or culture events (mentioned once by 80% of all respondents)
- Cornwall's landscape (71%);
- The beaches and seaside (69%);
- Cornwall's heritage (35%); and
- Cornwall's clean air (27%).

Cornwall's industrial landscape has also been recognised for its international significance through its designation as a World Heritage Site in 2006. This status provides for the identification, protection and conservation of natural and cultural sites deemed to be of outstanding universal value. World Heritage status gives recognition to Cornwall's mining excellence as a world class cultural heritage site and recognises the importance of Cornish mining's historic landscapes, outstanding mine buildings,

and its important role in technological innovation and scientific research.

Culture is a key contributor to Cornwall's economy. Recreation and culture remain the second highest category of average weekly household spend after transport (State of the South West, South West Observatory, 2009).

The economic contribution of cultural activity can be measured in terms of business turnover, employment rates and expenditure. Evidence also shows that jobs in the creative industries have been growing at up to twice the rate of the rest of the economy and one in 20 people now have creative occupations.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics demonstrate the role that cultural and creative industries has on employment in Cornwall. The information shows that there are approximately 27,300 people employed in this sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Tourism overall is one of the biggest contributors to Cornwall's economy and in 2007 the industry was estimated to be worth £1.6 billion with over 5.5 million visitors (South West Tourism).

### **The Wider Economic Benefits of Cultural Tourists in Cornwall**

Cultural events are a key driver in influencing people to visit Cornwall:

1. Cultural tourists, on average spend more than 'mainstream' tourists. Spend per head by cultural tourists on food and drink and shopping is around twice that of mainstream tourists;
2. Cultural tourists spend more on accommodation - on average cultural tourists spend £24 per head on accommodation compared to £16 per head by 'mainstream' tourists;
3. In addition to spending in local shops and restaurants, cultural tourists are also likely to seek out and purchase local Cornish products. Almost half of those questioned also planned to purchase or had purchased a cultural product during their stay;
4. Most cultural tourists interviewed stated they intended to make a further visit to Cornwall to participate in a similar event the following year, with 84% stating they were likely to do so. Allowing for an optimistic bias, this could generate a further economic impact of around £9.6 million;



5. Cultural tourists were also likely to make out of season visits - around 20% of those interviewed had made visits in the last five years to Cornwall in the winter or spring.

Cultural tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry in Cornwall. There is strong evidence that it is a growth market and cultural tourists spend more and stay longer;

6. Cultural events and festivals are perceived to make in important contribution to the overall image of Cornwall as a vibrant place in which to live and work;

The most common overseas places of residence mentioned included Germany, USA, Canada and Denmark.

#### **4. The Impact of European Objective 1 and Convergence Funding on Cornwall's cultural sector**

Studies have also been completed on the impacts of European funded expenditure on employment, business growth and Gross Value Added in Cornwall. It provides clear evidence of the potential impact on economic development of culturally orientated creative sector projects. The evidence from Cornwall also shows how a strategy can be developed for small countries and regions without significant urban conurbations.

Almost £43m (€65m) was invested in the creative industries in Cornwall in the 2000 – 2006 period, £33m in capital projects and £9.88m in business and skills support programmes.

The investment of £9.88m EU funds in business and skills support generated an estimated £104m extra income.<sup>6</sup>

A particular success is that the initiatives have paid off in making Cornwall a more attractive place to stay and work for young Cornish people.

Cornwall's Celtic heritage and national status created the foundations for a platform that could be used to gain European funding. For years it had missed out on European funding because it had been included within the richer south west UK

area. However, when activists were able to publicise and inform the Government about the difference in GDP, it meant that Cornwall became assessed separately. Subsequently this assessment showed Cornwall's relatively low GDP, and in turn this meant that it could now qualify for EU funding. Its a situation experienced by other ethnically distinct small nations and regions within states where their statistical invisibility and lack of political autonomy may lead to them being excluded from funding.

## **5. Challenges**

### **Autonomy - the political control of culture**

However, there have been problems, Cornwall would be far better served if there were more Cornish control over funds and the strategic management of European money. For the future, so as to ensure the development of the Cornish cultural sector, it will be necessary to ensure that Cornwall has a far greater level of political autonomy and the ability to act independently over strategic planning for its culture and cultural tourism industries in order to maximise the benefits and keep up the impetus established so far. European funding acted as a Cornish budget, but a budget that we had little ability to oversee or control.

### **Ownership of tourism**

It is vital that the Cornish retain control and ownership over their tourism industry both for its strategic development and in order for it to actually benefit Cornish people. The more traditional Cornish tourism industry has been owned by foreigners with the benefits going out of Cornwall. Cornwall needs to follow examples such as Greece or the Balearic Islands where businesses and property have to be majority owned by local people. Cornwall has suffered from tourism because it usually only creates low-paid seasonal work for the Cornish, while traditional industries have declined, and where local culture has been sidelined. With investment and local autonomy the Cornish are beginning to take control of the culture industry and to run it for their own benefit. In turn this success attracts culture tourists, but to events that are owned and managed by the Cornish.

### **Cornish culture developed for the Cornish, ownership of cultural tourism**

A Cornish researcher commented that: "We have to ensure that in emphasising the benefits to tourism of local culture that it does not turn the culture from being the lived practices of a population to something for tourists to consume. There is a difference between culture for the Cornish to culture for consumption.

- The Golowan festival organiser said that: *"I would argue the biggest economic benefit though comes from increased Social and Cultural capital, stronger distinct communities are more attractive to outsiders, cultural tourism is far more sustainable than usual tourism and people are happier. This is why I think the most important thing the Cornish political movement should do is promote Cornish culture for all and don't let the Tates, Edens, and the like dominate our cultural resources."*

## **6. The way forward. Autonomy: European best practice for regional revitalisation**

In Europe today if we are to look at the most well-off areas they often have strong autonomy. An autonomy where they retain control of their own taxes giving them the ability to plan their economy as they see fit. For example, Sud Tirol, the German-speaking province formerly in Austria but now in Italy, is, after years of substantive political autonomy, one of the wealthiest areas of Europe.

A recent report from the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA) underlined this autonomy dividend recently.<sup>7 8</sup> It underlines that while Culture has the potential to be the engine for revitalisation the full benefits may only be properly realised when that cultural dynamism is coupled with substantive autonomy allowing for the local government to steer and direct that energy.

## **7. Regional or minority languages, the economic advantage for regional/ national revitalisation**

I will now briefly discuss a new report also from Council of Europe's

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA) which explains how regional languages, usually coupled with a substantial level of autonomy, benefit regional revitalisation.<sup>9</sup> The report “Minority languages – an asset for regional development,” found that regional and minority languages of Europe constitute a valuable and underused resource for the development of Europe’s regions.

Language minorities play an important role in economic exchanges, particularly in the cultural industries, and are often key actors in developing trans-border cooperation. Regions which promote the minority languages present in their territories are reaping benefits in terms of economic growth. Regional languages also play a positive and sustainable role in regional development because preserving these languages necessitates a long-term development strategy based on good management of resources, while taking account of the need to preserve culture for future generations.

By encouraging their use in education and the public sector and making greater use of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, local and regional authorities can give their regions a strong competitive edge.

There is not time to discuss the report fully here but its main findings are listed below.

### ***Best practice of multilingual regions***

1. With good governance, the cultural assets represented by a multilingual population can lead to the successful sustainable economic development of a region.
2. Autonomy, in Sud Tirol and Catalonia, is particularly necessary in regional language areas as it enables politicians to create the conditions for promoting multilingualism as an essential component of the regional identity. It is no coincidence that European multilingual regions with legislative powers have experienced sound development, particularly in the socio-economic field.

## Overall Conclusions

1. Cornish cultural industries are having a huge beneficial impact on Cornwall's economic revitalisation.
2. It is essential that the cultural tourism is owned by the Cornish so as to benefit the Cornish from culturally driven economic revitalisation.
3. It is important that endogenous cultural activities are developed and supported that are for the Cornish as part of our culture, not cultural activities developed for solely for tourists.
4. The evidence from European best practice indicates that for Cornwall to fully benefit from cultural tourism it will require substantive autonomy.
5. The whole effort of revitalising a regional language in itself acts as a cultural and economic driver adding to economic revitalisation.
6. A people's language is the DNA of their culture, and is deeply interwoven into all aspects of a people's culture. By promoting culture we also promote our languages.
7. A confident people secure in their own cultural identity are a prosperous people.

## Notes

- 1 A short history of Cornwall from the BBC: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire\\_seapower/cornish\\_nation\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/cornish_nation_01.shtml)
- 2 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_Bawcock's\\_Eve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Bawcock's_Eve)
- 3 <http://www.gorsethkernelow.org.uk/english/ceremony.htm>
- 4 <http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/news/Gorseth-Kernow-seen-cultural-leader/article-2276771-detail/article.html>
- 5 <http://www.cornwallfilmfestival.com/>
- 6 'Counting on Creativity' report available at: [http://perfect-moment.co.uk/wb/media/download\\_gallery/pm\\_cc\\_report\\_download.pdf](http://perfect-moment.co.uk/wb/media/download_gallery/pm_cc_report_download.pdf)
- 7 <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1534789&Site=CM>
- 8 expl memo [https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CPR\(16\)3REP&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=Congress&BackColorInternet=e0cee1&BackColorIntranet=e0cee1&BackColorLogged=FFC679](https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CPR(16)3REP&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=Congress&BackColorInternet=e0cee1&BackColorIntranet=e0cee1&BackColorLogged=FFC679)
- 9 <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1584587&Site=Congress>