

GOFA – report on activities for 3 months to end of September 2025

GOFA was established to provide a mechanism for recycling quality household goods (furniture, white goods and small electrical appliances) no longer needed by the original owners, but with more than enough useful life left in them for potential new owners. GOFA has been successfully doing this for many years in the Penzance and West Cornwall area. The charity now employs 3 members of staff who are the backbone of the weekly operations, but are ably supported by a band of volunteers.

Activity during the three months to the end of September has been lower than average with both donations and sales not meeting targets. This is not unusual because we are operating in a difficult economic climate. As with all businesses we have the additional overheads of employer costs and general inflationary pressures to contend with, but GOFA has a far less predictable supply chain! Andy Law has proposed that we establish a working group to actively address this situation and identify sustainable, independent funding streams going forward and this group is looking to meet in December 2025.

The board of trustees is made up of volunteers with a wide range of experience and meets quarterly. We are currently seeking a new company treasurer to join the board following the resignation of the current incumbent in the post.

CH & AL

26/10/25

Councillor Andy Law

PENZANCE COMMUNITY FLORA GROUP REPORT – November 2025

Regretfully, I have been unable to attend recent Committee Meetings of the PZFG, due to other, unavoidable commitments. However, here is a brief update on my previous report of July 2025.

As always, amazing work continues to be done by a small number of dedicated, committed and hard-working individuals in this group, keeping the streets of Penzance blooming, full of colour and vibrancy; particularly important during the Spring and Summer months (and the Golowan Festival), when the town is full of visitors and the importance of making a great first impression rises. This does not of course take away from the pleasure us locals gain from seeing the plants and flowers in our town on a daily basis.

The amazing volunteers continue to put in many hours of work to keeping Penzance looking so lovely and the latest breakdown of hours is:

Volunteer hours (September 2024-25) 1565.5 hours

Admin hours (September 24-25) 358.25 hours

Total Flora hours 1923.75 hours

As well as the wonderful hanging baskets and planters around town (particularly attractive this year I thought), work continues on maintaining and developing the Veterans Memorial Garden at the Fire Station; the Sunken Garden at the Library and Abbey Slip.

All members of the Committee have agreed to stay on and three new volunteers were recruited. As always, despite the recruitment of three new volunteers, capacity remains the single most challenging issue for the PZFG, as does the increasing age of many of the volunteers. An important part of the role of the PZFG is the support they are able and happy to offer to local people, who are not volunteers in PZFG, but are interested in doing their bit to improve the planting in common areas where they live. As an example of this, the area at the top of the Slip has become increasingly difficult for PZFG to keep going as the ground, although small is so hard to dig and the removal of waste is exhausting to take down to Wharf Rd and back up, several times. However, DH, a resident nearby offered to take the area over and continues to keep the area attractive. The PZFG have offered support and guidance to her and offered to support her with plants etc if required.

Andy Law

REPORT FROM OUTSIDE BODIES – PENZANCE/CONCARNEAU TWINNING ASSOCIATION – PENZANCE COUNCIL – 10 NOVEMBER 2025

The Association continues to prosper, with a programme of locally-based social events supplementing a calendar of exchanges and visits with our partners in Concarneau. Here are a couple of updates since my last report:

Visit of the Bagad to Golowan 2026

During my visit to Concarneau, I spoke to a number of members of the Bagad Bro Konk Kerne (the Concarneau pipe band), who were such a success when they came for Golowan in 2024. They said they were very keen to come back to Penzance for the 2026 festival, and this has since been confirmed in an e-mail from their new President, Martin Le Meur.

I then organised a meeting with the Twinning Association (Karen Bennett and Peter Crumpler), the Golowan team (Kim Tillbrook and Martin Venning), and the Golowan Band administrator (Roger Doo). We agreed to start the ball rolling on organising a visit, and are awaiting a response from Martin Le Meur on how many musicians will come, and for how long.

The aim is to finalise the arrangements as early as possible so that the participation of the Bagad can be included in the official festival programme. Even without much publicity, their involvement in 2024 was a huge success, so a higher profile visit in 2026 has the potential to attract substantial public support. That in turn would make a great contribution to the ties between Penzance and Concarneau, and more widely the Celtic connections between Kernow and Breizh.

And given the number of young people who play with the Bagad, this is also a great way of fostering enthusiasm for twinning with the next generation.

Concarneau Christmas Market 2025

A group of five members from the Twinning Association (Karen Bennett, Peter Crumpler, George Daniel, and Terry & Bonnie Jacskon) have volunteered to represent Penzance at the annual “Village de Noël” (Christmas Market) in Concarneau, alongside representatives from the other Concarneau twin towns (who are each offered a stall).

They will be taking a range of locally themed gifts to sell (the classic saffron cake and fairings, but also a selection of other items). Just as importantly, they will be promoting the twinning association itself, and the Penzance area.

Cllr Stephen Reynolds – Penzance Town Mayor

REPORT FROM OUTSIDE BODIES – PENZANCE REGENERATION COMPANY
PENZANCE COUNCIL – 10 NOVEMBER 2025

Penzance Regeneration Company (PZRC) is a community-owned entity that is responsible for three of the ongoing regeneration projects in Penzance: Market House, 94 Market Jew Street (“94 MJS”), and 28-30 Market Place.

PZRC is currently constituted as a Community Interest Company (CIC), and is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors (including the Town Mayor as designated representative of Penzance Council). The Town Clerk attends PZRC Board meetings in an advisory capacity.

The ultimate aim is for operational management of the three projects to be handled by three separate legal entities, with the PZRC Board fulfilling an oversight role. The PZRC Board is in the process of recruiting further volunteer Board members to populate the boards of the operating entities.

Market House (Town Deal project)

Fox Construction, the contractors retained by PZRC for the restoration of the eastern end of the building, are now on site and work is well under way.

In the lower ground floor, for potential occupation by the Penzance Council corporate services team (including the Town Centre Help Desk), work has begun with restoration of the drains and sorting out the levels.

The initial phase of works has revealed further remnants of the building’s past, from previously-hidden tongue-and-groove panelling to WW1 recruitment posters. These items are a visible record of the past lives of the Market House; they are being carefully removed and stored off site, and where possible will be reinstated in the refurbished building.

Lloyds Bank have announced that the branch that currently occupies the west end of the building will close towards the end of January 2026. Prior to that announcement, Lloyds had recently signed a two-year lease extension with PZRC (as landlord), which remains in place despite the closure. PZRC has not yet had access to the west end of the building, and negotiations with Lloyds are ongoing as to their intentions, so it would be premature at this stage to consider any proposals for future uses of the west end in the event that the branch closes as planned. However, the building is community owned and any future use would have to be viable, and in line with PZRC’s social purpose.

94 MJS (Town Deal project)

The old Poundstretcher building (or the old Tesco for those with longer memories), now owned by Cornwall Council, is to be taken by PZRC on a 30-year lease. The project involves fitting out a bouldering centre (for all ages) on the top two floors – a more family-oriented offer at street level, and a more technical offer at first floor level. The basement area is currently envisaged as providing a wellness/conditioning zone ancillary to the main offer on the top two floors.

Initial work on the shell of the building is being carried out by Corserv for Cornwall Council, prior to handover to PZRC's contractors to begin fitting out. PZRC have launched the tendering process, but delays to the Corserv element of the project are such that the date on which PZRC's contractors can go on site is likely to be pushed back beyond January 2026.

28-30 Market Place (Future High Streets funded project)

PZRC has acquired the freehold of the old Lou's Shoes building at the bottom of Causewayhead, currently regarded as one of the biggest eyesores in Penzance town centre. The aim is to deliver 8 affordable one-bedroom apartments on the upper floor reserved for local people (through Cornwall Housing), and a retail space at street level. Contractors are now hard at work on site and are making good progress, especially on opening up the ground floor space and preparing utilities connections.

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The Town Clerk and I are continuing to support and advise the Board members as these projects move forward, helping to ensure that these regeneration projects are to the long-term benefit of our local community.

Cllr Stephen Reynolds – Penzance Town Mayor

**REPORT FROM OUTSIDE BODIES – CALC LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE
PENZANCE COUNCIL – 10 NOVEMBER 2025**

The Town Clerk and I represented Penzance Council at the most recent meeting of the Larger Councils Committee of CALC (Cornwall Association of Local Councils), hosted by Falmouth Town Council on 16th October.

The two main items under discussion were the new Cornwall Local Plan, and the demise of Visit Cornwall.

Cornwall Local Plan

Adam Birchall (Cornwall Council Head of Planning Policy) gave a presentation about the current situation on the Local Plan. The current Local Plan expires in 2030 so a new Local Plan is needed, and in addition the current Plan does not deliver enough housing to meet the new housing targets imposed by central government – so as things stand, there is a “presumption in favour of development” for new housing development applications.

Initial work has started on a new Local Plan that will last until 2050. Under new government policy, planning authorities have only a 30-month timeframe to complete a Local Plan, but the government has not yet issued regulations on the plan-making process, so the formal process cannot start yet. However, evidence-gathering is ongoing.

Initial engagement events have been held (including a drop-in session at St Johns Hall in September), but there was criticism from many of the local council representatives that these events had been too short (three hours) and inadequately publicised. There was a general feeling from the town councils present that local councils should be brought more closely into the conversation, given that we see and scrutinise every planning application in our locality and have a fund of place-specific knowledge. Adam admitted that the engagement events could have been handled better, and will consider how this can be improved.

One issue raised was the number of empty properties – difficult to measure precisely, but roughly estimated by Adam at around 20,000 county-wide. David Rodda (clerk to Truro City Council) mentioned a local initiative in the city to return empty units above town centre shops to residential use (town centre “densification”), and the possibility of waiving discretionary Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as an incentive for developers; this seems logical, as by definition such properties are already served by existing infrastructure. Adam agreed to look at this as a county-wide option, and it would of course be potentially useful in Penzance.

Adam also mentioned the contribution that Neighbourhood Plans could make to the Local Plan, and singled out the Penzance NP as an exemplar of locally-developed, evidence-based policies that can serve as a framework for place-specific policies within the Cornwall Local Plan. Because our NP has only recently passed examination, it seems to be particularly well placed in that regard.

Adam also suggested that the new Local Plan will take a differentiated approach to different parts of Cornwall, taking account of the opportunities and constraints of each area, and looking closely at issues like connectivity and transport in deciding where to prioritise housing allocations.

The new Local Plan is something we should all take an interest in, because it will shape how our communities develop in the years ahead. The Town Clerk and I are in communication with the Planning Policy Team on various issues (such as the affordable housing quota for our area, and affordable keyworker housing), and we will make sure that members and residents are informed of any future opportunities for engagement or consultation.

Visit Cornwall

An agenda item was devoted to the announcement that Visit Cornwall had gone into liquidation, and the implications for local councils. Key to the discussion was the recognition that the demise of Visit Cornwall was an issue not just for the classic coastal tourist towns, but also for some of the less obvious destinations.

There was a strong feeling that local councils should be involved in discussions around any alternative solution, and the Town Clerk has subsequently informed me that this is being progressed by the Larger Councils Clerks group, who are seeking a meeting with Sarah Preece (CC portfolio holder responsible for tourism).

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Finally, the meeting was an opportunity for me to meet informally with other Mayors. Following discussions at this and other events, I have offered to restart the unofficial Mayors Forum, of which I organised regular meetings during the previous council term. We are looking to set up an initial online meeting in November to gauge the level of interest, look at next steps, and identify any priorities.

Cllr Stephen Reynolds – Penzance Town Mayor

REPORT FROM OUTSIDE BODIES – PENWITH CAP - PENZANCE COUNCIL – 10 NOVEMBER 2025

I represented Penzance Council at the quarterly meeting of the Penwith Community Area Partnership on 1st October, and at an online meeting of the Penwith CAP Transport and Connectivity sub-group on 8th October.

Below is a summary of some key points.

1. Integrated Care Board

Juliet Ferris (Place Director West Cornwall at the NHS Cornwall & IoS Integrated Care Board) gave a presentation at the 1st October meeting. Two issues that emerged from the presentation and subsequent discussion were:

- Outpatient appointments at West Cornwall Hospital: following the resolutions passed by Penzance Council, and a presentation by members of West Cornwall Health Watch, Juliet agreed to look at obtaining a definitive list of the available clinics operating from the new Outpatients Department at WCH.
- Keyworker housing: Juliet's presentation mentioned recruitment as one of the issues facing the Integrated Care Board, and confirmed that affordability of accommodation was a disincentive for candidates applying for posts in West Cornwall – even candidates from within Cornwall can be reluctant to apply, because the commute would be too arduous and relocation too expensive. I therefore undertook to write to Rob Lacey from the Cornwall Council Planning Policy team to raise the possibility of allocating dedicated keyworker housing as part of the new Cornwall Local Plan. He has taken this on board and will be looking at potential solutions.

2. Transport issues

Dan Rogerson (Cornwall Council portfolio holder for transport) spoke to the CAP meeting on 1st October and took questions. He mentioned that new contract talks with operators for 2028 are beginning, and that there is a need to lobby for better buses across Cornwall; this resonated with many of the CAP delegates, who have often expressed frustration with the use of large, heavily-polluting double-deckers that are significantly oversized relative to some of the streets and lanes they have to negotiate.

Gemma Hall (Cornwall Council Integrated Network & Partnership Manager) attended the Transport & Connectivity sub-group online meeting on 8th October, focusing on bus services. Issues relevant to the Penzance parish were:

- Real time passenger information screens: these are important in providing service updates for people unable to access smartphone apps (which includes a substantial portion of the older demographic of bus users in the Penzance parish area). I reminded Gemma of previous requests I had made for the bus stops at Newlyn Bridge and Sona Merg Close (Madron Road, Heamoor) to be added to the network; she has agreed to add them to the list.

- Mousehole Christmas Lights: Gemma agreed to work with bus operators and the event organisers to improve public transport access and reduce traffic congestion at this year's event.
- Potential EV bus provision: Gemma offered to provide updates on future rounds of ZEBRA (Zero Emission Buses for Rural Areas) funding, to identify opportunities to replace the ageing diesel fleet still in use on some routes.

3. Active Cornwall Place Based Partnership Working

Tim Marrion (Partnership Manager for Children, Young People and Families at Active Cornwall) gave a presentation at the CAP meeting about the £2 million of capital funding that is being made available to tackle health inequalities in the Penzance Parish area, especially among our youngest and oldest residents. Penzance is one of two locations in Cornwall chosen for the funding (alongside St Austell), out of 80 locations across England.

Tim highlighted that one of the reasons for Penzance being selected (apart from the high level of measurable health inequalities) was our track record of successful collaborative working across the public and voluntary sectors, and our willingness as a community to adopt a solution-focused approach.

The Town Clerk has since met with Tim for initial discussions on how to pull together an integrated, multi-agency proposal by the April 2026 deadline.

4. Smartphone Free Schools

The CAP meeting was informed that Hilary Frank (Cornwall Council portfolio holder for Children, Families and Schools) has picked up on this issue, which was initially taken up by Newquay Town Council and has since been progressed by Penzance Council (at our last full council meeting) and subsequently by Truro City Council and others. Hilary is keen to spread the word county-wide and is arranging for a representative from Smartphone Free Childhood to make presentations to each of the 12 CAPs in Cornwall.

Cllr Stephen Reynolds – Penzance Town Mayor