

**Present:**

**Cornwall Council (CC):**

**Cllr Martyn Alvey: Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change**

**Mark Holmes: Manager Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team; Environmental Adaptation Service; Nature Recovery Team**

**Nick Hayden: Program manager for the carbon neutral team (reports to**

**MH) Cllr Linda Taylor: Lead Cornwall Council**

**Cornwall Climate Action Coalition (CCAC):**

**John Carley**

**Andrew Stott**

**Tom Pine**

**Karen Jeffereys**

**Why Eat Plants?(WEP?), Plant Based Councils (PBC):**

**Steve Barnes**

**Simon Jones**

**Chrys McLaren (Climate Action St Austell (CASA))**

**Alison Trigg**

**Xen**

**Appologies: John Carley**

## **i. Introduction by CCAC**

Why Eat Plants? were invited to give a presentation and then ask questions regarding the possibility of Cornwall Council becoming one of the growing number of Plant Based Councils. The following is a summary of the meeting and thoughts from the Why Eat Plants? members. After the summary are the presentation slides and presentation videos.

### **1. Meeting Summary**

#### **1.1 Summary of Concerns**

While we (WEP?) are grateful for the opportunity to present our views, we felt that many of our core points were not acknowledged or addressed. The responses provided often didn't directly answer our questions, nor did they reflect a genuine engagement with the evidence-based concerns we raised.

Despite presenting peer-reviewed research on the urgent need to transition away from animal agriculture, there was no indication that this information was heeded. This suggests a

fundamental disconnect in our perspectives—where we are advocating future-oriented, science-driven policy, the current stance appears rooted in maintaining the status quo.

We are not seeking to remove all choice but to encourage ethical, sustainable leadership. Business should not come before ethics. Councils can and should lead by example.

## **1.2 Responses to Specific Points**

### **On Council Position and Plant-Based Commitments:**

- We note that there has been no shift in the Council’s position or even a move towards increasing the adoption of plant-based policies.
- We had hoped for openness to providing plant-based catering at Council meetings and encouraging such options where council have influence.
- While we understand that the Council cannot mandate farmer practices, it *can* offer encouragement and incentives—this should not be overlooked.

### **On Climate and Agricultural Impacts:**

- We commend the three county farms for achieving carbon-positive outcomes, but greater gains are possible through a plant-based transition.
- Arguments concerning topsoil run off or Cornish hedges are often used out of context. For example, soil loss can be addressed via green manure cover crops. Moreover, hedgerows being the only “sacrificed” land was deeply concerning and ignores broader habitat degradation caused by animal agriculture.
- Plant-based agriculture restores rather than depletes. It supports rewilding, reduces river pollution, cuts feed imports, and limits global habitat destruction.

### **On Food Security and Imports:**

- Whether feeding cattle or people, food imports are a reality. The question is efficiency and impact.
- Animal agriculture requires vast imports of feed (e.g., soya, corn) while plant-based systems can feed more people per acre with fewer inputs. We *can* feed the population through UKgrown plant-based foods and provide enough protein.

### **On Public Choice and Leadership:**

- It’s not about removing choice, but setting an example—as other councils have done. Just as going paperless didn’t restrict the public but showed a path forward, so too can plantbased leadership.

- "Personal choice" cannot override the collective harm evidenced by research. As with past public health changes (e.g., banning smoking in cars with children), leadership must sometimes guide behaviour.
- We encourage the Council to be bold in the face of climate necessity. As one of our speakers said: "Change is daunting, but climate change is terrifying." **On Meat Reduction Comments:**
- Individual councillors stating they have "reduced" meat is a start, but it's not enough—and it's anecdotal, not policy.
- How reductions are measured is unclear. Without clear targets and guidance, perceived progress may be overstated.
- We must ask: Did the attendees fully understand how much needs to change?

#### **On Education:**

- We strongly support the Council's acknowledgment of education as a powerful tool.
- Many people, especially younger generations, have not been taught how to cook with whole plant foods. Empowering them with skills and resources—like how to use tofu, legumes, and flavourings like miso and tamari—can be transformationally delicious.
- Farmers can adapt; they have a history of doing so. They already adjust to changing subsidy schemes—supporting transition to increased sustainable practices is a logical next step.

### **1.3 Final Reflections**

We would like to acknowledge the compliments given to our presentation—but respectfully ask: what exactly was being complimented? While kind, there was little evidence our input would lead to tangible action.

No motion has been put forward, and we note the lack of support for a farmer transition program, despite excellent examples such as Loveland and the Forest Garden in Falmouth. (Although this was not the main outcome we were asking for, the above matters were raised).

We also appreciated the feedback from councillors who were stepping down, though we wished there had been more opportunity for input from the attendant staff. Special thanks to TP and AS of CCAC for their ongoing support, insights, and post-meeting encouragement.

### **1.4 Next Steps**

Following the meeting, we have resolved to:

1. Re-Contact our MPs again to raise these issues at national level.

2. Wait until after the May elections to request another meeting with newly appointed postholders, if you would support us on that?
3. Pursue the supported education proposals, with the aim of engaging with schools and colleges.
4. Present to local town councils to expand outreach and support.

We warmly welcome any additional ideas or advice you may have.

### **1.5 In Closing**

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak and engage with your team and CC.

We remain hopeful that Cornwall Council will embrace the opportunity to be a leader in climateconscious food policy, and we look forward to continued dialogue.

Warm regards,

Chris McLaren, Alison Trigg, Simon Jones and Steve Barnes.

## **2. Supplemental Video Links**

The three videos scheduled to play within the presentation can be found on YouTube:

Sir David Attenborough

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDgGy2hL5S4>

George Monbiot

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6\\_4WU7HDxk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6_4WU7HDxk)

Sailesh Rao

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhJX1-D4AiQ>

