

# TOURISM & BEACHES.

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## BEACHES: A PUBLIC AMENITY OR A PRIVATE ABUSE

Kathryn Anne Langley writes : I shall fight until my last dying breath to keep the beaches in Cornwall open to the public. I know that your children may not be interested in what I am fighting for, but your grandchildren may well want to go to the beach when the natural resources on this planet have run out, and wonder why they are unable to get there..... today's developers having ruined for the future children that which we have always enjoyed.

Generations of my family who have gone before have taken for granted the freedom on the beaches around our beautiful coastline – it is not something to be given up lightly. I feel like one of the suffragettes who chained themselves to the railings of the government back at the time – and will fight for what I believe is right! This is the thin edge of the wedge. Cornish beaches must remain open for Cornish people and the visitors who come here to enjoy the Cornish coastline. After all, as agriculture, mining and fishing have been in decline – tourism has taken over as the main employment in this isolated peninsula.

It is ironic that on the Cornwall County Councils website under environment and planning it states: *"Cornwall's beautiful natural landscapes and natural heritage are what make this area so special."* Yet, this is the very same Council that is now considering massive desecration of this beach. Two of the three beaches were natural landscapes! Allow the proposed development and there will be no beach left!

I can only imagine an advertisement which says *"Come to Visit the Beautiful County of Cornwall where the artists have come for the light, people have been entranced by the beautiful gardens, the stunning scenes of the old tin mines against the backdrop of the cliffs in a glorious sunset."* To be followed up by **"Sorry, the beaches are closed!"**

This is exactly what happened to me. I came back from a holiday with my daughter in 2004 and my friend said "The beach is closed." I did not understand – why should the beach be closed and who had closed it? Carlyon Bay was definitely closed. A beach I had used all my life! This beach had been my childhood playing ground!

There were guards at Fishing Rock and Crinnis ends and it had been closed completely. I hardly ever ventured out of County, so to find that in the two weeks I was "missing" my local beach had been closed for the first time ever was unbelievable. From that day on I vowed to investigate the matter and establish how this could possibly have happened. I am glad to say that the beach was re-opened following an extensive fight by some like minded people and a legal public right of way now exists to the beach.

The incredible story which is actually fact can be taken up on the Carlyon Bay Watch Website to date – **[www.carlyonbaywatch.com](http://www.carlyonbaywatch.com)** See for yourself from the pictures on this website just how a beautiful Cornish beach has been destroyed by ugly boulders and rock armour and the demolition in part of some old buildings.

This wholesale vandalism was allowed by a Council on the promise of "jobs" for the locals. The jobs that never materialised because Mr McNally, the owner who promised those jobs and promised when the planning application went in that he would not sell the site - sold up as soon as he got permission to develop it. I refer to the original planning consent for the erection of holiday village with self-catering serviced hotel accommodation allied to additional central facilities approved under planning reference 87/20/00314/F on the 1.6.88. submitted in the name of Exchange Travel Agency Ltd. I was employed by Restormel Borough Council at that time and the general feeling in the office when the news came up that the Councillors had approved this application to build all over the beach was one of total disbelief. I spoke to several of the Councillors who made the decision and asked them why they had allowed this development to be approved. The overwhelming response was that it would create jobs for the locals. More than 20 years later, we are still awaiting the jobs and the beautiful beach we used to enjoy has been ruined.

I also went on to query the issues of public access to the beach and was told by more than one Councillor, that it would not be a problem. If there was any question of the public being banned from the beach, so I was told, permission would not have been granted. I also made a note at the time that there was an agreement to allow public access to the beach in the Section 106 Agreement. Mr McNally sat on the Tourism Consultative Committee that was set up to encourage and promote tourism in the area. He certainly used his powers of persuasion to do that.

It always used to be the case that planning applications were either outline or detailed – with all the T's crossed and the I's dotted. Furthermore all applications had to be determined on their own merits, irrespective of the history of whatever had gone before. The current application is something else entirely. How can the Councillors possibly be expected to make a decision on a huge question mark? Is history about to repeat itself?

Are the present Councillors about to be drawn into making the same mistakes as before?

I would like to draw your attention to a letter written by Michael Bruton, Chairman of the CPRE Cornwall printed in the Cornish Guardian dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011 in which he congratulates Cornwall Council on the creation of its Local Development Framework (LDF) – Planning Future Cornwall Core Strategy Options. He then goes on to say: ***However, while we in CPRE Cornwall welcome the draft core strategy, major parts of it are unsound. The document appears to allow too many properties to be built in locations which are unsustainable and without the needs of local people and communities being taken into consideration.***

In the penultimate paragraph he goes on: ***We feel also that Cornwall Council's housing policies are too developer-friendly to protect our designated landscapes and countryside in general. This gives potential free rein to developers to justify proposals to build anything anywhere, regardless of the consequences – as they will claim they are making the most of the environment.***

In the same newspaper I found an article headed "Call for more to be spent on beaches" with no named author. It contains the statement in the second paragraph that: *"The council currently has a budget of £287,000 for beach management services which are provided for council-owned beaches and private beaches."* (I wonder if any of this money has been allocated for Carlyon Bay?)

There is a further quote in the same article referring to beaches, from Councillor Bob Egerton which said: ***"This is one thing that Cornwall really, really, really does have that brings people into the county....."*** Which emphasises exactly what I have been saying from the beginning.

Every week in the Cornish Guardian there is a feature called 20 questions. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 issue Laura Carey from St Austell who lives at Carlyon Bay answered question 8. What would improve it: *"There are too many speed bumps in Carlyon Bay and the way they are going about this new development is ridiculous. They promised they wouldn't shut everything off to the OAPs."* Encouraging words from a young local resident.

Here we are today -more than 20 years after the original application was approved –left with a disastrous, dangerous mess on our local beach. When will common sense prevail? In my opinion, most sane reasonably minded people would like to see the mess cleared

away, the beach reinstated for everyone to enjoy and decent up to date leisure facilities build on the old Coliseum/Wimpy building site.

There has been much media coverage regarding the property market which is presently flooded. The reports are that there is a large supply of unsold property including second homes and that is unlikely to change in the present financial climate. You only have to take a drive around Newquay and look at all the hotels that have been demolished and turned into flats lying empty or not being developed. Some are being bought up en-mass for social housing because no-one else can afford them. There is also a great deal of local opposition to the proposed ecotowns in clay country. To build on the beach will merely exacerbate this problem and reduce an irreplaceable amenity for the whole St Austell Bay area.

Sadly the developers never seem to allow enough recreational space for children to play in. This is borne out on the ground by the need for the following. To quote Prince William *"Being able to play outdoors is a basic right of childhood."*..... taken from the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge – A Diamond Jubilee and 2012 Legacy Initiative. It seeks suitable blocks of land to be registered as amenity space. It is their vision that everyone across the country has free access to local outdoor space for sport, play and recreation – just what thousands of residents and visitors alike have enjoyed at Carlyon Bay, (as evidenced in the Village Green Document dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 Pages 15 – 25.) One of their mottos simply states *"Somewhere to go and Something to do"* - where better to go and do something than your local beach? Part of their advertising also says "Making a difference locally and an impact Nationally."

As I read through this document and everything it stands for – it felt as though I had brought so much of it together in respect of the beach at Carlyon Bay and what it meant to me personally. A National Treasure, this beach was recorded on the old tithe apportionment book of St Austell called Little Crinnis Estate and Cliffs Map No.2256 dated 1839 on the area as waste land of the Manor by William Carlyon and nil rent was payable. How things have changed over the years. Our most senior resident, who will be 100 years old this year, of Biscovey recalls how "everyone went to the beach for the Hope Teas". Uncle John Billing – Waggoner of Quintrells (now Bethesda Camping Park) recorded in the 1921 census, used to move beach huts to and fro with his horses.

Can you just imagine what impact Nationally it would make to have a beach covered by housing development with no jobs for the inhabitants? It really is time that Cornwall County Council and our MPs woke up to the fact that too much development in Cornwall will destroy the very tranquillity and nature of the County that the visitors come for – when will they wake up to reality?

This beach has certainly been abused for long enough. It is high time that the people who have been voted in to represent the Cornish people take the time to listen to them before it is too late. Water, water everywhere. In front. Behind. Below. And that's before it starts raining! Have they forgotten already the floods earlier this year? 2000 years ago it was written **Matthew 7 24-27** "*the foolish man who built his house on the sand*" – There will be one winner in the end, that is Nature herself!