

July Update to the Torpoint Community

Cllr Rob Parsonage

Tamar Crossings and Torpoint Ferry

A Summit of Joint Committee Chairs, Portfolio Holders and the Chief Officer met with Members of Parliament representing both Cornwall and Plymouth to discuss the way forward. The MP's provided guidance on their wishes going forward.

Following the Summit, at the Tamar Crossings Joint Committee meeting held at the end of June, I tabled an amendment to the proposal to increase the Tamar Tag (TAG) fee from **80p to £2 per month**. This ensured that the proposed increase was fully debated and that the wider issues affecting users of the crossings were properly scrutinised.

During the debate, I challenged why bus operators continue to receive free crossings while many passengers travelling into and out of Cornwall still pay higher fares. I also questioned why bikers the Torpoint Ferry are charged, while bikers crossing the Tamar Bridge travel free, creating an unfair disparity for residents of Torpoint and the Rame Peninsula.

While MPs argued against increasing the TAG fee, any future operating deficit will ultimately require financial support from Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council if alternative funding solutions cannot be identified. A Finance Workshop is due to take place this month to examine the longer-term financial position of the Tamar Crossings and explore the options for increasing income to halt the decline in reserves.

I will continue to represent the interests of Tamar crossing users, keeping everyone informed.

Thanckes Park Car Park

The payment machine at Thanckes Park Car Park has now been installed. However, there has been a delay in commissioning the system, resulting in parking charges being delayed.

During the last two weeks we have seen an average of 3 cars parked compared to 25+ before the introduction of charging. Records will be maintained and reported to Cornwall Council quarterly, and should this occupancy continue, a case will exist to have the car park returned to being free. Cornwall Council's Portfolio Holder for Transport had this explained to him

My priority remains ensuring that Thanckes Park remains accessible to everyone and that decisions affecting our community are based on evidence, value for money and common sense.

Changes to the Planning Process

The Government is progressing significant changes to the planning system through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. If approved, these reforms are expected to reduce the number of planning applications determined by elected councillors, with more decisions delegated to planning officers. This is not seen as a positive step forward, by most Councillors.

Current proposals indicate that many smaller residential developments, including schemes of up to nine homes, are likely to be determined under delegated powers unless they meet specific criteria requiring committee consideration.

The role of Town and Parish Councils within the planning process is also expected to change. The Government has indicated that further guidance will be issued on how local councils will be consulted and how their views will be considered before the new arrangements come into force.

These reforms have not yet been fully implemented. They will only take effect once the legislation has completed its passage through Parliament and the necessary regulations and guidance have been published.

I will continue to monitor these changes closely and keep residents informed, as they have the potential to significantly alter how local planning decisions are made and the level of involvement available to elected Members and local communities.

Highways Improvement Programme

Following discussions with Cornwall Council, the design changes to the parking layout at St James have now been agreed. I have been advised that this scheme is expected to be one of the first projects delivered as part of this year's Highways Improvement Programme.

These improvements are intended to enhance parking arrangements and improve safety for residents using the church and maintaining the entrance open for weddings etc.

No Mow May, June and July

Many residents have contacted me regarding the height of grass around Torpoint, raising concerns about visibility at road junctions, pedestrian safety and the general appearance of our town. I have also made representations to Cornwall Council highlighting these issues.

The recent period of hot, dry weather has added another concern. In many areas the long grass has become tinder dry, increasing the potential fire risk from discarded cigarettes, broken glass and other sources of ignition.

To better understand the level of risk and any appropriate mitigation measures, I have sought guidance from Cornwall's Chief Fire Officer. This will help ensure that any future representations to the Council are supported by professional fire safety advice.

I will keep residents updated once I receive a response and will continue to press for a balanced approach that protects biodiversity while ensuring public safety remains the priority.

Torpoint Infant and Nursery School & Carbeile Junior School Amalgamation

At a Cornwall Council meeting, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Schools, Hilary Frank, a decision was made that both schools should amalgamate after the summer of 2027, subject to several work items such as new access, car parking and changes within the school. This is the end of one era for the TINS, and the start of a new era for the facilities. There is a process to be followed in identifying stakeholders to take the TINS forward into the next decade and beyond that as, your Councillor I will be championing to ensure the best use of the TINS, for Torpoint and the community; this was agreed with Torpoint's Mayor. The process to identify stakeholders will commence in September, after the summer holidays.